

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)

| Piano Sonata No. 25 in G, Op. 79 | |
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| 1 Presto alla tedesca | 4.59 |
| 2 Andante | 3.10 |
| 3 Vivace | 2.05 |
| Piano Sonata No. 24 in F sharp, | |
| Op. 78 "For Therese" | |
| 4 Adagio cantabile – Allegro ma non troppo | 8.05 |
| 5 Allegro vivace | 3.13 |
| Piano Sonata No. 9 in E, Op. 14, No. 1 | |
| 6 Allegro | 7.03 |
| 7 Allegretto | 3.02 |
| 8 Rondo (Allegro comodo) | 3.10 |
| Piano Sonata No. 10 in G, Op. 14, No. 2 | |
| 9 Allegro | 7.00 |
| 10 Andante | 5.53 |
| 11 Scherzo (Allegro assai) | 3.37 |
| Piano Sonata No. 19 in G minor, Op. 49 No.1 | |
| 12 Andante | 4.05 |
| 13 Rondo (Allegro) | 3.45 |
| Piano Sonata No. 20 in G, Op. 49 No.2 | |
| 14 Allegro ma non troppo | 4. 17 |
| 15 Tempo di Menuetto | 3.26 |
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Mari Kodama - piano

Total playing-time: 67. 44

Recording venue: Concertboerderij Valthermond (The Netherlands, 3/2008, 1/2010). Recording producer: Wilhelm Hellweg • Balance engineer: Jean-Marie Geijsen Recording engineer: Daan van Aalst • Editing: lentje Mooij Piano: Steinway & Sons D-274 • Piano-tuner during recording: Michel Brandjes

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For me, the year 2010 started with recordings. In the little barn in Northern Holland, in a town called Valthermond where we met last, the 'usual team' gathered to record Beethoven Sonatas Op. 10. This team included Wilhelm Hellweg (producer), Jean-Marie Geijsen (sound engineer) and Michel Brandjes (piano technician). The CD will be No. 6 in the cycle and consists of a collection of small sonatas, which is another way of saying 'for beginners'. In fact, they are not easy at all...

We were completely snowed in and it was extremely calm, as hardly any vehicles dared to brave the nearby roads. We worked intensively 12 hours per day, the only breaks being our ritual of cooking lunch between sessions. This year, piano technician Michel expanded his repertoire to include salads, using his secret dressing recipe, which included roasted pine nuts and olive oil from a private farm in Italy.

Mari Kodama

Lyrical Islands

The great Canadian pianist Glenn Gould said he had come to real-L ize that Beethoven was just always too busy being Beethoven. One would agree with this only too readily, were it not, for instance, for Beethoven's six piano sonatas recorded on this CD (and, of course, a few others works), which in no way fit in with the image of the "titan", as indicated by Gould's remark. Within the music literature, the sonatas are considered "easy", especially with regard to the demands made of the pianist – and therefore they are considered ideal introductory works for the advanced piano pupil. As regards the standard of composition, they each provide a perfect example of the great art of simplicity. Thus the subtle differentiations and extreme skill with which the composer wrote the works are not clearly apparent upon first hearing. Within the cosmos of Beethoven's 32 Piano Sonatas, they represent lyrical islands, being less religiously fervent and affirmative as his other works in this genre (which also enjoy greater popularity and public success). The lyrical attraction of these sonatas is certainly also due to the specifically educational purposes for which they were written: accordingly, Beethoven also had to consider the pianistic skills of his pupils when composing the works.

The Sonatas Op. 14 were written during 1798 – 99 and published in Vienna in that latter year. They were dedicated to the Baroness Josefine von Braun. Musicologists have noted an affinity with Mozart in the Sonata No. 1 in E major; perhaps even more obvious than this stylistic resemblance is the statement of the introductory movement, which sounds specifically like chamber music and conjures up a dense four-voice tangle. (Thus, it is not surprising that Beethoven rearranged the work in 1801/02 as his String Quartet in F major.) Opus 14, No. 1 is a sonata disguised as chamber music. And thus it seems one is listening here to a humorous and entertaining piece of music, teeming with ideas, rather than a powerful performance of self-indulgent virtuosity. Although it is structured in accordance with the sonata-movement form, there are no contrasting tensions that need to be relieved, to a certain extent, in a slow movement. And thus, the second movement is an Allegretto, melancholy in character, although the tone of the Trio is reminiscent of Haydn. The Rondo-Finale plays with the harmonic possibilities of the cadenza in a humorous and ironic manner. Its associated work in G major possesses an elegant, though not chatty tone; brilliantly witty, yet not overemphatic. The flow of the music is melancholy, idyllic – and yet without any ulterior motive, as is otherwise so typical of Beethoven. The expert Beethoven scholar, Siegfried Mauser, recognized in this "an organic process [...], within which the development appears to run its course in accordance with the natural laws of growth, without any deliberately employed exterior intervention." With some amazement, one realizes that the motivic-thematic treatment is not allotted any role here at all! On the contrary, Beethoven extends the boundaries of expression that were later to be developed into epic dimensions by Schubert. The Andante is (for the first time in Beethoven's compositions) a variation movement – accordingly, the theme is simply varied and not "developed", examined only as far as its technical possibilities within the movement are concerned. The final Scherzo is full of rhythmic and metrical shifts; and a two-quaver metre is superimposed upon the three-quaver beat.

In fact, the above-mentioned "simplicity" of the Op. 49 Sonatas recorded on this CD – both published in Vienna in 1805 – i s already underlined by the title awarded them by Beethoven: Easy Sonatas. Both pieces are early works, written between 1795 and 1798. The late publication date may well be due to the specifically educational purposes of the works – in this case, the demands made of the pianist are less strenuous than in Op. 14, and the two-movement works are also clearly shorter, both requiring just about eight minutes to perform. Nevertheless, here again Beethoven demonstrates his skill in combining strenuous compositional demands with relative modesty, as far as form and pianistic technique are concerned. As regards the structure, the Andante of the Sonata in G minor is a perfect example of a sonata movement, even though it runs its course in a simple and non-dramatic manner. The Finale, written in the major key, varies the Rondo form in a highly surprising manner and contains a number of minor-key references to the first movement, which now sound cheerful, admittedly. The associated Sonata in G major is introduced by an Allegro that follows the dualistic sonata principle, followed by the concluding second movement, a Minuet based on Rondo form.

The expressive character of the Sonatas Opp. 78 and 79 also classifies them as "lyrical islands" within Beethoven's piano cosmos. He wrote his Op. 78 in October 1809, four years after the dramatic outburst of his Appassionata. As is the case with both works of Op. 49, the Sonata in F-sharp major – dedicated to the Countess Terese von Brunsvik – also consists of two movements. And, furthermore, it is full of surprises. Not only due to the choice of key – whose six sharps form a major challenge for the pianist, and which was never again employed in this genre by the composer – but because Beethoven also explores new paths, thanks to the great intimacy of its basic character. With due brevity, the four introductory bars encompass most of the important elements of the movement. However, they do not form a slow introduction, nor do they replace the missing slow movement. On the contrary, they are bursting with poetic sonority, expressing the quintessence of intimacy and providing more than just a hint of future compositions by Schubert. Neither

is the basically lyrical character of the first movement put to the test by the second theme: motivic-thematic treatment and pianistic virtuosity clearly give priority to sonority. On the other hand, the turbulent motivic writing and semiquaver passages in the playful Rondo definitely require a greater dexterity from the pianist.

To quote Beethoven, his Op. 79 – composed in 1809 – is a 'sonatina'. This is all the more remarkable, as this work is more technically demanding than the Op. 49 sonatas (take, for example, the rhythmic complicity of the Rondo-Vivace). The first movement is introduced by a motif based on a third interval, which further determines the course of the work, resurfacing as it does in the two remaining movements: first in a melancholy minor key, then in a rhythmic revival. Thanks to the striking deployment of the third interval, the work was nicknamed the *Cuckoo* Sonata.

Franz Steiger English translation: Fiona J. Stroker-Gale



Mari Kodama

Pianist Mari Kodama has established an international reputation for her musical sensitivity and outstanding virtuosity. In performances throughout Europe, USA and Japan she has consistantly proven the profound aesthetics of her very personal and unique style.

Recent concert highlights include, Beethoven concerto performances with orchestras in Berlin, Montreal, Baden-Baden, Bad Kissingen, Singapore, Osnabrück, and in appearances at the Schleswig-Holstein and Bad Kissingen Festivals

Ms. Kodama's recent performances of Mozart concerti with the Philharmonia Baroque San Fransciso, Detroit Symphony, and Gulbenkian Orchestra in Portugal recently brought glowing reviews. She also has recently appeared with the American Symphony Orchestra, the Vienna Symphony, on tour in the Netherlands with Radio Chamber Orchestra and with Jonathan Nott and the Bamberg Symphony,. In Japan, Ms. Kodama is a regular guest of major Japanese orchestras, most recently

the Tokyo Metropolitan Orchestra and the Yomiuri Nippon Orchestra in Tokyo.

A brilliantly well-received performance of the complete Beethoven Sonata cycle in Los Angeles launched Ms. Kodama's United States of America reputation, and was followed by acclaimed recital appearances in New York, Paris, London, as well as throughout Japan, Spain and Germany, and much of the rest of the U.S.A. The Los Angeles Times pronounced her performances of the Prokofiev Third Piano Concerto "commanding and electrifying."

Ms. Kodama is a founding artistic director of the Musical Days at Forest Hill, a festival of chamber music presented by Ms. Kodama and Kent Nagano near their home in San Francisco. Overwhelmingly enthusiastic responses prompted the evolution of the intitial single event into its current ongoing regular series. In recent seasons Ms. Kodama has invited friends and colleagues from the Vienna Philharmonic, the Berlin Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris to participate in the Forest Hill festival, as well as prominent soloists from France, Austria and the United States. Included are established performers who reflect the generation of young international artist including baritone Dietrich Henschel and composerpianist Ichiro Nodaïra, composer Unsuk Chin, pianist Momo Kodama, and violinist Viviane Hagner.

Ms. Kodama has played with such orchestras as the Berlin Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, Philharmonia Orchestra, Hallé Orchestra, the Montreal Symphony, the NDR Symphony Orchestra, Vienna Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Berkeley Symphony, the American Symphony Orchestra, and the NHK Orchestra in Japan. She made her New York recital debut at Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall in 1995. Her U.S. festival appearances include Mostly Mozart, Bard Music Festival, the Hollywood Bowl, California's Midsummer Mozart Festival, Ravinia, and Aspen. In Europe she has appeared at festivals in Lockenhaus, Montpelier, Salzburg, Aix-en-Provence, Aldeburgh, Verbier and Évian, among others.

Born in Osaka, Ms. Kodama left Japan as a child and was raised in Germany, Switzerland, France, and England. At the Conservatoire National de Paris, she studied piano with Germaine Mounier and chamber music with Geneviève Joy-Dutilleux. Following conservatory she studied with Tatiana Nikolaeva at the Salzburg Mozarteum and became a private pupil of Alfred Brendel.

