

The Beethoven Seminar

WITH JOEL WIZANSKY

The Beethoven Seminar is a forum for exploring, through a lively mix of discussion and performance, a variety of topics relating to Beethoven's piano works. The Seminar is centered around a core set of lecture-demonstrations, and can be expanded to include master classes, other presentations, student performances and/or a recital by Mr. Wizansky; the format is flexible so as to accommodate the needs of each presenting institution and its students.

The goal of the Seminar is to seek a deeper understanding of the inner workings of Beethoven's music, and through that understanding to achieve greater insight into its performance. The lecture-demonstrations examine a variety of structural and aesthetic ideas which recur in the composer's piano works; these serve as a departure point for discussion and can be integrated with other musical issues that arise naturally in master classes. The resulting counterpoint of ideas cultivates new angles and perspectives for approaching Beethoven's decidedly many-sided works.



The Seminar features pianist Joel Wizansky, renowned for the depth of his understanding of Beethoven's music and his ability to communicate that vision both at the piano and in words. Former Adjunct Piano Faculty at the Peabody Conservatory, and currently Lecturer at the Yale School of Music, Mr. Wizansky has appeared as soloist and chamber musician and presented master classes and lecture-recitals across the United States, Europe and Asia.

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A SERIES OF LECTURE-DEMONSTRATIONS FORM THE CORE OF THE SEMINAR AND ALSO SERVE AS DEPARTURE POINTS FOR DISCUSSIONS AND MASTER CLASSES. POSSIBLE TOPICS INCLUDE:

- **THE INTEGRATION OF INTRODUCTION.** In the course of his creative life, Beethoven takes many techniques inherited from the high Classical style and extends them in new directions, and frequently the piano sonatas serve as a workshop for these developments. One of the most interesting examples is the treatment of slow introduction, which the composer seeks increasingly to integrate with the main body of what follows. Throughout the sonatas we can trace a fascinating process of experimentation, as Beethoven explores a variety of ways of merging introduction and Allegro – both thematically and temporally. Focus on the sonatas Op. 13; Op. 31, No. 2; Op. 81a and Op. 111, and the trio Op. 70, No. 2.
- **THE FANTASY-SONATA.** Another original notion that weaves its way through the 32 is that of the Fantasy-Sonata. It originates with the two sonatas so named in Op. 27 - or more precisely with the preceding sonata Op. 26, and though the title does not reappear Beethoven clearly picks up this conceptual thread - a key element of which is the shifting of the weight of the sonata away from its traditional position at the beginning toward the end - in the late works. Corollary design experiments also considered are the two-movement sonata, which first appears in the singular Op. 54 and culminates transcendently in Op. 111, and the "Two Towers" approach of the great middle period works.
- **FROM THE RIDICULOUS TO THE SUBLIME: THE DIABELLI VARIATIONS.** Lecture-recital. When the composer and publisher Anton Diabelli brought Beethoven a little waltz of his own devising and asked him, together with 50 other composers, to submit a single variation for a sort of Viennese contemporary musical sampler, the master was predictably disdainful. But the silly tune apparently got under his skin, for it eventually became the foundation of one of his grandest yet most idiosyncratic creations. We examine how a few basic elements from the theme provide all the material for this hour-long encyclopedia of variation technique, and also how the unique comedic/spiritual world of the work derives from its unlikely source and the composer's relationship to it.
- **MORE THAN A NICKNAME: "PASTORALE" IN BEETHOVEN.** "Pastorale" is an aesthetic genre dating back to the Renaissance, comprising artistic evocations of shepherds, woodland meadows, streams, and bucolic country life. We naturally associate it in Beethoven with the nick-named Sonata Op. 28 and Sixth Symphony, but it turns out that these two quintessential examples are the very tip of the iceberg, and that Pastorale is an amazingly prevalent trope throughout the composer's work, the piano music in particular. Among just the 15 early sonatas, for example, eight have Pastorale rondos. We can trace the evolution of this genre from the earliest sonatas through the last.