



(LEMS 8067)

Beethoven Sonatas & Trios

The Queen's Chamber Trio

Robert Zubrycki, *violin*

Peter Seidenberg, *violoncello*

Elaine Comparone, *harpsichord*

2 CD SET

CD ONE

Sonata in G minor for Cello and Harpsichord,

Op. 5, No. 2 (1796)

Dedicated to King Friedrich Wilhelm II of Prussia

Adagio sostenuto e espressivo

Allegro molto più tosto presto

Rondo: Allegro

Sonata in D Major for Violin and

Harpsichord, *Op. 12, No. 1 (1797/98)*

Dedicated to Antonio Salieri

Allegro con brio

Tema con 4 Variazioni: Andante con moto

Rondo: Allegro

Ludwig van

Beethoven

(1772-1827)

CD TWO

Trio in E-flat Major for Violin, Cello and Harpsichord, *Op. 1, No. 1 (1795)*

Dedicated to Count Karl von Lichnowsky

Allegro

Adagio cantabile

Scherzo: Allegro assai

Finale: Presto

Trio in C minor for Violin, Cello and

Harpsichord, *Op. 1, No. 3*

Dedicated to Count Karl von Lichnowsky

Allegro con brio

Andante cantabile con 5 Variazioni e Coda

Menuetto: Quasi allegro

Finale: Prestissimo

Program Notes....*Elaine Comparone*

Beethoven's First Dedication

At age eleven, Beethoven dedicated three keyboard sonatas to Maximilian Friedrich, Prince Elector of Cologne. His dedication letter reads:

Most illustrious!

Music from my fourth year began to be the first of my youthful occupations. Thus early acquainted with the gracious muse who tuned my soul to pure harmonies, I became fond of her, and, as it often seemed to me, she of me. I have already reached my eleventh year; and since then often has my muse whispered to me in inspired hours: "Try for once and write down the harmonies of thy soul!" Eleven years old—methought [sic]—and how would an author's air become me? And what would masters of the art probably say to it? I almost became diffident. Yet my muse so willed—I obeyed, and wrote.

May I now venture, most illustrious Prince, to place at the foot of your throne, the first fruits of my youthful works? And may I venture to hope that you will bestow on them the benevolent paternal look of your encouraging approval? Oh yes! The arts and sciences have always found in you a wise protector, a generous patron, and budding talent has prospered under your noble, paternal care.—

Full of this encouraging assurance, I venture to approach Your most serene Highness with these youthful attempts. Accept them as a pure offering of childlike homage, and look graciously on them, and on their young author.

The above appears on the reverse side of the title-page of the first publication. The title is as follows:

"Three Sonatas for Keyboard dedicated to the Most worthy Archbishop and Prince Elector of Cologne, Maximilian Friedrich, my most gracious Lord.

Dedicated and composed by LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN, Aged eleven. Published by Councillor Bossler, Spires. No. 21 Price 1 fl. 33 kr.”

According to the original edition of the three pianoforte sonatas in E flat, F minor and D published in 1783, Beethoven was not eleven, but thirteen years old. Not only the composer, but many of his friends, maintained for a long time that he was born in 1772. Even Johann Aloys Schlosser, in the first small biography of Beethoven (1828), wrote: “Ludwig van Beethoven was born in the year 1772.”

In a letter to Dr. F. G. Wegeler, Beethoven noted: “—there is one thing that you must bear in mind, namely, that a brother was born before me who was also called Ludwig, only with the additional name Maria, but he died... Unfortunately I have lived a long time without even knowing my age.“

Compounding the confusion, the official entry in the church book of St. Remigius at Bonn listed 17 December, 1770 as the day of baptism. Also, at a 1778 concert given by Beethoven’s father, tenor singer to the Elector of Cologne, he introduced little Ludwig as a six-year-old.

Chamber Music with Keyboard

The keyboard trio claims two forbears: the trio sonata and the accompanied keyboard solo. In the trio sonata, a bass instrument, such as the viol, cello or bassoon, doubles the line played by the keyboardist’s left hand. The keyboardist improvises an accompaniment of chords and melody over this shared bass line, guided by figures indicating chords, creating the basso continuo. Together, the bass instrument and keyboard provide support for two other, usually treble, lines. Such an arrangement requires four musicians to play the three lines of a trio. Examples of trio sonatas include myriad works by Corelli, Vivaldi, Telemann, Handel, Johann Sebastian and Karl Philipp Emanuel Bach, among many others.

K.P.E., a quintessential keyboardist, goes off the beaten track a bit by specifying that the keyboardist’s right hand may substitute for a flute or violin in a trio sonata, while his father’s sonatas for violin and obbligato harpsichord (actually trio sonatas) oblige the harpsichordist to play one of the treble lines. In these pieces, J. S. offers an optional viol part that doubles the harpsichordist’s left hand.

As the title suggests, the accompanied keyboard solo features the keyboardist in the primary role with, in most cases, an accompanying violin. Jean Joseph de Mondonville (1711-1771) may have composed one of the earliest examples of such a piece in his F Major Sonata. C.P.E. Bach and Mozart both wrote sonatas for violin and harpsichord that qualify as accompanied keyboard solos. Early on, composers such as Karl Friedrich Abel and John Christian Bach added to these keyboard and violin duos a cello part that doubled the bass, thereby creating the first keyboard trios. J. C. Bach, in his later trios, varied the cello’s role with melodic material independent of the keyboard’s bass line. German and Austrian composers were not the first nor the only ones to create trios in which the keyboard figured prominently.

Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764) flourished in a musical culture rich with solo keyboard works. In addition to his three slim volumes of harpsichord solos, he composed five suites for harpsichord with two accompanying instruments, flute or violin and viol or cello (LEMS 8040). While Rameau maintained that the suites were practically as effective without the other two instruments as with them, he frequently gave these instruments important melodic material that acted not as an accompaniment but as a true counterpoint to the harpsichord's lines.

Mozart built on all these ideas in his trios. By the time of his last three trios in 1788 (LEMS 8054), the violin part demands a virtuoso and the violin/cello duo functions as an independent unit, an equal partner to the keyboard (in addition to its accompanying role). Beethoven went still further in developing the roles of the violin and cello in the keyboard trio. However, the typography on the title page of his Opus 1 belies that progress. The arrangement and appearance of the words clearly claim a dominant role for the keyboard and a subsidiary one for the strings.

CD ONE

**Sonata in G minor for Violoncello
and Harpsichord,**

Op. 5, No. 2 (1796) Dedicated to Kaiser

Friedrich Wilhelm II of Prussia

Adagio sostenuto e espressivo

Allegro molto piu tosto presto

Rondo: Allegro

After four years in Vienna, Beethoven embarked upon a tour of northern Germany and Bohemia. His tour, from February to July 1796, took him to Prague, Dresden, Leipzig and Berlin. His friend, violinist Ferdinand Ries, wrote:

He played several times at the court [that of Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm II], where he played the two grand sonatas with obbligato violoncello, Op. 5, written for Duport, first violoncellist of the King, and himself. On his departure he received a gold snuff-box filled with Louis d'ors. Beethoven declared with pride that it was not an ordinary snuff-box, but such a one as might have been customary to give an ambassador.

Friedrich Wilhelm II, nephew to Frederick the Great—the flute-playing monarch whom Karl Philipp Emanuel Bach served and for whom Johann Sebastian composed The Musical Offering—played the violoncello well enough to participate in quartets and orchestral rehearsals. He provided operas by Gluck and Mozart and oratorios by Handel to entertain his Berlin courtiers. While Beethoven dedicated his sonatas to the King (no doubt for political reasons as well as for the King's love of the violoncello), the cellist Jean Louis Duport probably inspired them.

Duport was the first to codify a new approach to the technique of his instrument and extend its sonic possibilities. He brought the violinist's range of brilliant new

technical effects: arpeggios and figuration patterns, difficult bowings, double stops and exploration of the higher register. Apparently Beethoven sent him an inscribed copy of Opus 5 because, in a letter, Duport thanks Beethoven for the dedication and expresses a desire to play with him.

Cellist-composers, such as Luigi Boccherini (also a favorite of King Friedrich Wilhelm II), had produced many technically virtuosic but emotionally tepid pieces, including sonatas with simple, typically figured bass accompaniments for the keyboard. Beethoven, however, is the first to exploit thoroughly the expressive and technical range of each instrument resulting in an equal, simultaneously brilliant partnership.

At the close of 1796 or the beginning of 1797, Beethoven played the sonatas with Bernard Romberg, an admirer and colleague of Duport. Shortly thereafter, Artaria published them, with advertisements in the *Wiener Zeitung* on February 8, 1797. Again, Ferdinand Ries's quoted description of the pieces as "two grand sonatas with obbligato violoncello" continued to reinforce the perception of these pieces as composed primarily for keyboard, in spite of Beethoven's creative extension of the cello's role. The naming process did not catch up with Beethoven's compositional advances until Op. 96 in the simple description, "sonata for keyboard and violin."

Sonata in D Major for Violin and Harpsichord, Op. 12, No. 1 (1797/98)

Dedicated to Antonio Salieri

Allegro con brio

Tema con 4 Variazioni: Andante con moto

Rondo: Allegro

Beethoven dedicated the three sonatas of Opus 12 to Antonio Salieri, one of his teachers in Vienna. Serving as the Imperial Hofkapellmeister since 1788, Salieri gave free instruction to aspiring opera composers with little money. Beethoven went to him for advice in song composition and submitted his settings of Italian texts. Salieri criticized them in terms of verbal accent and expression, rhythm, metrical articulation, thought, mood and, ultimately, their singable quality.

Through this study of Italian song with Salieri, Beethoven learned also to treat his German texts with greater care than before. Some historians, however, say that Salieri found his student to be recalcitrant and difficult.

Artaria advertised the publication of Opus 12 in the *Wiener Zeitung* of Jan. 12, 1799 as "sonatas for pianoforte or harpsichord with obbligato violin." Composers turned out sonatas and trios for private performances in small salons, so it was unusual for Beethoven and his Viennese friend, the violin virtuoso Ignaz Schuppanzigh, to play one of the Opus 12 sonatas at a benefit concert for the singer Josefa Duschek on March 29, 1798.

Playing chamber music in a public concert remained an atypical event until after the composer's lifetime. The program, preserved in the archives of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, lists a sonata with accompaniment to be played by Beethoven but makes no mention of the obbligato violin. Nor does this excerpt of a critic's reaction to Opus 12:

This critic who was not previously familiar with the composer's keyboard pieces, must admit, after having great difficulty worked his way through these curious, extraordinarily difficult sonatas, that he felt like a man who expected to take a stroll through an inviting wood with a congenial friend, but who found only hostile entanglements, and finally emerged from the thicket exhausted and disheartened.

Undeniably Herr van Beethoven is going his own way, but what an eccentric, tortuous way it is! Intellect, intellect, and more intellect, but without nature, without song! Indeed, there is nothing in the music but a mass of learning without even a good method of conveying it. It is dry and uninteresting, a forced attempt at strange modulations, an aversion to the conventional key relationships, a piling up of difficulty upon difficulty until one finally becomes impatient and loses all pleasure in the task. Another critic has already said nearly the same thing, and we can only agree with him completely.

And yet this music cannot be dismissed altogether. It has its value, especially as an exercise for already accomplished keyboardists. There are always those who like things that are too difficult in concept and presentation, things that seem to go against the natural grain. To play these sonatas precisely as they are written would give such people a certain pleasure as well as a sense of achievement. If Herr van B. would only assert himself a little less, if he would only consent to the natural idiom, he could certainly, with his talent and his zeal, produce much good music for an instrument which he seems to have mastered exceptionally well.

Beethoven, for his part, had some suggestion for the reviewers: ...advise your critics to be more circumspect and intelligent, particularly with regard to the productions of young authors. For many a one may become dispirited who otherwise might have risen to higher things. For myself, far be it from me to think that I have attained such a degree of perfection as to be beyond criticism. The outcry of your critics against me was humiliating, yet when I began to compare myself to other composers, I could hardly bring myself to pay any attention to it. Still I remained quite quiet, and said to myself, "*they do not know anything about music.*" And I had all the more reason for being quiet when I saw how certain people were being praised to the skies who here (in Vienna) have very little standing.

CD TWO

**Trio in E-flat Major for Violin,
Violoncello and Harpsichord,**

Op. 1, No. 1 (1795)

Dedicated to Count Karl von Lichnowsky

Allegro / Adagio cantabile / Scherzo:

Allegro assai / Finale: Presto

**Trio in C minor for Violin,
Violoncello and Harpsichord,**

Op. 1, No. 3

Dedicated to Count Karl von Lichnowsky

Allegro con brio / Andante cantabile con

5 Variazioni e Coda / Menuetto: Quasi

allegro / Finale: Prestissimo

A critic in 1806 praised the Opus 1 trios of 1795 as “strong, powerful and moving.” Beethoven had introduced them to Viennese musical society at a soirée held in 1793 (or early January of 1794) by his friend and patron, Prince Karl Lichnowsky. Some accounts number Haydn among the listeners, while others claim that he was in England at the time. Beethoven’s composer-friend, the violinist Ferdinand Ries, writes of the evening:

Most of the artists and music-lovers were invited, especially Haydn, for whose opinion we were all eager. The Trios were played and at once demanded extraordinary attention. Haydn also said many pretty things about them, but advised Beethoven not to publish the third, in C minor. This astonished Beethoven, inasmuch as he considered it the best of the Trios, as it is still the one which gives the greatest pleasure and makes the greatest effect....I therefore took occasion to ask Haydn himself about it. ...he said he had not believed that this Trio would be so quickly and easily understood and so favored by the public.

In any case, Beethoven waited for two years before sending the trios to the publisher. Perhaps, having heard Haydn’s criticism, he reworked them as he was known to do with other compositions. Some analyze the delay as a shrewd business move. By informally circulating the trios in manuscript for a substantial period so that musicians could play and hear them, he guaranteed their eventual acceptance by a comprehending public and multiplied the number of potential subscribers.

One of Beethoven’s biographers, Anton Felix Schindler, wrote that Beethoven did not always publish his works in the order of their composition:

Some were withheld for further revision; some lay hidden for years in the publisher’s desk for commercial or rather speculative reasons. As for the chronological order of the works, even Opus 1 is misleading. The C minor Trio that stands third in the collections was actually the first to be completed. It may have been placed after the trios in E flat major and G major to create an effect of increasing tensions from one to the next, or perhaps the composer felt that when presenting three works of a kind in one publication he should place the weakest one in the middle.

On May 9, 13 and 16, 1795, an advertisement in the Wiener Zeitung (Vienna Newspaper) appeared inviting subscriptions for Beethoven’s “three Grand Trios.” Three days later the composer signed a contract with Artaria & Co. The subscriptions totaled 241 copies. As Beethoven paid the publisher one florin per copy and the subscription price

was one ducat, he made a considerable profit (4.5 Florins=1 Ducat).

Beethoven's dedicatee, Karl, Prince of Lichnowsky, Count Werdenberg, of the Granson dynasty, frequently welcomed Beethoven into his home as a guest. While he resided with the Lichnowskys in Vienna during 1794-96, Beethoven also maintained a country home. According to Franz Gerhard Wegeler, a childhood friend of the composer:

... the Prince was a great lover and connoisseur of music. He played the keyboard, and by studying Beethoven's pieces and playing them more or less well, sought to convince him that there was no need of changing anything in his style of composition, though the composer's attention was often called to the difficulties of his works...there were performances at his house every Friday morning, participated in by four hired musicians...Beethoven always listened with pleasure to the observations of these gentlemen...to cite a single instance, the famous violoncellist Kraft, in my presence, called his attention to a passage in the finale of the Trio, Op. 1, No. 3, to the fact that it ought to be marked 'sulla corda G,' and the indication 4/4 time which Beethoven had marked in the finale of the second Trio, changed to 2/4. Here the new compositions of Beethoven, so far as was feasible, were first performed. Here there were generally present several great musicians and music-lovers. I, too, as long as I lived in Vienna, was present...

The Instruments:

For this recording Elaine Comparone plays her 1968 replica of a 1720 Blanchet harpsichord built by William Dowd (Cambridge, Massachusetts) with a disposition of two sets of 8' strings, one set of 4' strings, a lute stop and hand coupler. Robert Zubrycki plays a 1700 violin made in Milan by Giovanni Battista Grancino; and, Peter Seidenberg plays a cello known as "Ex Romberg," built in Rome by David Tecchler in 1703 and owned by Bernard Romberg.

Out of the Box:

A Harpsichordist's Note

Why not merely play and record these pieces on a piano? As a harpsichordist, my major argument is that it has been done many times. Why not try a fresh approach? The harpsichord makes a sound with unique acoustical qualities not shared by modern or early pianos. Firstly, the instrument's plucked strings blend better with bowed strings than do hammer action keyboards; and secondly, it does not drown them out. It may be softer, but makes its presence felt with a sparkle absent in piano sonority. I do not regard early music as the sole property of those who play antique instruments or replicas of antiques. Pianists who play modern grand pianos clearly share my opinion as is evidenced by their many performances and recordings of harpsichord music by Bach. But, at the same time, their interpretations of Mozart, Haydn and early Beethoven are farther away from the aural imaginings of these composers than my harpsichord performances might be. Harpsichord sound stirs my imagination as piano sound never did. That is why I try to play whatever music lends itself to the instrument. As long as it is idiomatic, I will play it!

The Queen's Chamber Trio

Violinist ROBERT ZUBRYCKI, cellist PETER SEIDENBERG and harpsichordist ELAINE COMPARONE form the core of The Queen's Chamber Band, a nine-member, New York City based ensemble that since 1996 has enriched Manhattan Island's cultural life with its annual concert series in major halls and churches. They created The Queen's Chamber Trio out of enjoyment of each other's musicianship experienced in The Queen's Chamber Band and love for the great trio literature commonly performed today on violin, cello and modern grand piano.

The Queen's Chamber Trio made its New York debut at Carnegie's Weill Hall in September of 2002 with a concert of music by Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven entitled "A Viennese Threesome." In January 2006, Lyrichord Discs released the Trio's first recording, *The 1788 Trios of Mozart* (LEMS-8054), as a celebration of the 250th birthday of the composer and a featured item in the label's Early Music Series. A recording of Haydn's late trios followed (LEMS-8081). This Beethoven double CD set continues the series, but by no means ends it.

The Queen's Chamber Trio takes as its *raison d'être* the perusal of chamber music literature with keyboard during the time when the fortepiano began to usurp the popularity of the harpsichord as the primary accompanying and solo keyboard instrument of the day. In the late 18th century, musicians who elected to play contemporary music on harpsichord instead of fortepiano might be categorized as reactionary, but in this day and age, the Trio's approach is decidedly revolutionary.

For their confidence in my ability to make this music sound on the harpsichord, I thank my talented and congenial colleagues Bob and Peter, who first launched the idea of exploring this repertoire. Their sensitivity to me, the music and to each other; their interpretive imaginations; and, the unique musical personality that each expresses with consummate artistry through his instrument reflect their extraordinary qualities as human beings. I thank Producer John Ostendorf for his deft, patient and entertaining management of the recording sessions and for his constant encouragement and friendship. Thanks to Dan Czernycki and David Barnes for the artistic quality of their recording and to Stephen Epstein for his meticulous editing. From Peter Seidenberg goes a special thanks to his wife April Johnson, who, with her superior sense of style and acute aural skill, assisted in the recording of his sonata. Special thanks to Lyrichord President Nick Fritsch, whose faith in our artistic integrity propels our work.

Finally, thanks to our patrons, who made possible this recording: **The Sheila Bakerman-Gilson Memorial Fund; Martha J. Fleischman;**

Evan Mirapaul;* Simon Ticho;* Laurence Neuman;* and Henry Seidenberg**

*Contributors to The Seidenberg Cello Fund **Special thanks from son to father.

THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER TRIO

Violinist ROBERT ZUBRYCKI serves as Concertmaster for the St. Peter's Bach Festival and principal violin with the Orchestra of St. Ignatius. He is a member of the American Symphony Orchestra, Opera Orchestra of New York and the Stamford

Symphony Orchestra. He is principal second violin for Amici New York and has performed as Concertmaster and soloist for the OK Mozart Festival. As violinist for the Abaca String Band, he has performed at the White House, the Chautauqua Institute and the Newport Music Festival. During the summer, he performs at the Bard Festival with the American Symphony Orchestra. In his free time, Bob can be found in the garden at his home in upstate New York.

Cellist PETER SEIDENBERG served for four years as principal cellist with Century Orchestra Osaka. He has performed throughout Europe, the US and Asia, making his concert debut in 1983 with the Chicago Symphony. He has been soloist with the DePaul Chamber Orchestra, the Eastman-Rochester Philharmonic and the New American Chamber Orchestra. He was a founding member of the Elements String Quartet. He has played with members of the Cleveland, Tokyo, Juilliard and Emerson Quartets and has participated in the Marlboro, Aspen and Norfolk summer music festivals. He has recorded for RCA, Pantheon and, with The Queen's Chamber Band, for Lyrichord. His marriage to violinist April Johnson has produced two daughters, Beatrice and Olivia.

Since her acclaimed New York recital debut as a Concert Artist Guild award winner in 1970, harpsichordist ELAINE COMPARONE has maintained a varied career as recitalist, soloist with orchestra, chamber musician, organist and choir director, recording artist, impresaria, teacher, and collaborator with composers, choreographers and video artists. A former Fulbright Fellow and Affiliate Artist, she has taken her harpsichords to performances in every state of the continental United States. In France, Italy and England she has performed her unique interpretations of Scarlatti. In 1978 she founded Harpsichord Unlimited, a non-profit organization dedicated to stimulating interest in the harpsichord as a living, contemporary instrument. In 1992 she formed The Queen's Chamber Band, modeled after the ensemble created by the "London Bach" for Queen Charlotte Sophia, wife of "Mad" King George III. Adelphi University recently appointed her Professor of Harpsichord.



The Lyrichord Early Music Series

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