

Beethoven: Three Piano and Violin Sonatas: Nos. 5, 7, 9

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Beethoven played the violin – and especially the viola – but his writing for the violin is often considered unfavorable to the instrument. In his sonatas for piano and violin (this is his order), besides their musical virtues, and though the piano continues to be the main instrument, the violin often takes a leading and independent role, which were rare (if existing at all) in previous works of the genre. With his sonatas for piano and cello, he actually invented the genre; this cannot be strictly said about his violin sonatas (Mozart wrote some masterworks in the genre before), but one could still say that he brought it to maturity in terms of the violin role, which, historically speaking, was to shape subsequent development. This achievement was obtained gradually, where the three sonatas discussed here hold a prominent place.

Beethoven: Piano and Violin Sonata No. 5 in F op. 24 ("Spring")

The sonata was written in 1801 and dedicated, like its predecessor op. 23 in A minor, to count Moritz von Fries. Fries was one of Beethoven's patrons and supporters in Vienna, mainly in the beginning of the 19th century (until he went bankrupt). He was also the dedicatee of the string quintet op. 29 of the same year, and of the much later seventh symphony op. 92. The sonata has four movements. The name "The Spring" was not given of course, by Beethoven. Its general calm and pastoral character stands in sharp contrast to the highly energetic and stormy mood of the preceding one in A minor (op. 23), which was originally intended to be published together with it (M. Solomon: *Beethoven*, Granada, 1977, p. 149).

First Movement – Allegro

The movement is in sonata form, consisting of an exposition, with its first and second themes, development, recapitulation of the exposition and coda. Its general mood fluctuates between the calm and agreeable to the more energetic joyful, which is shadowed by threat and tension, where the germ of each phase is concealed in the preceding one.

The **first theme** is a calm, long and pastoral melody, which is yet marked by a rhythmic motive and typical tensed appoggiatura points (4, 6, 8), which emphasize the non-symmetric ending of the phrase. Both these elements are emphasized at the end

of the presentation of the theme (from b. 20 at every bar), where the piano takes it over, turning it to the dominant, and are to be exploited later in the movement.



The sharp transition to the second theme begins with a shocking E-flat expansion of the rhythmic motive of the beginning, rolling to a sort of "German" cadence (with a raised IV) to C minor, soon changed to the major – a duality which will dominate the second theme. The chromatic descent at the end of the transition will recur at the end of the exposition, and again at the end of the recapitulation, and again in the transition to the coda,

The **second theme**, in C major (the dominant), begins in a simple joyous syncopated call with major/minor exchanges.



The turn to the minor leads to a threatening shadow in a sequence of diminished chords, which leads to its closing section, which ends in a full chromatic descent deep in the bass. Note the reminders to the appoggiaturas of the beginning in this descent (e.g. in bars 80, 82).

The **Development** starts with a forte chord of the major III (A) and what seems to be a beginning of the rhythmic motive of the first theme. But this is soon left aside and the development in its entirety is devoted to the second theme – running it in a cycle of fifths of minor keys (Bb – F – C – G – D – A) – all, except the last, in minor, until it reaches back to the recapitulation in F major. The major III here has a somewhat similar effect to that of the shocking E-flat (which in the context of C is again III) at the transition to the second theme, and this will recur at the beginning of the development and of the coda.

The **Recapitulation** (from b. 124) changes the order of the piano and violin taking over the theme. The transition to the second theme is again surprising, starting at a second below its start at the exposition, again leading by a passage dominated by the sort of a German cadence, with the chromatic descent, to the second theme in F, as expected.

The recapitulation surprisingly ends with a D major chord (210), as if beginning another development. But actually there starts a **coda**. It starts with a great expansion of the chromatic move of the transition section of the exposition, and the rest of it, instead of dealing with the second theme, is wholly devoted to the first theme, as if compensating for its lack in the development.

Second Movement – Adagio molto espressivo

The apparently simple movement in B-flat is in a rather unusual form of A – B – A' - C. B is in the dominant F, and A' back in B-flat, is a decorated form of A with a turn to the minor, which leads to C.

Third Movement – Scherzo – Allegro molto

The main theme of this very short and witty Scherzo in F, is a period of four bars per stanza, repeated twice, the second stanza of which ends on the dominant. The middle section plays on the typical rhythm of the main theme, in the major III (A). The Trio is also a symmetric period of 8 bars each stanza.

Fourth Movement – Rondo – Allegro ma non troppo

This is a very agreeable and flowing rondo. It can be compared to a somewhat similar rondo – the fourth movement of the piano sonata no. 11 in Bb op. 22, written about a year earlier. Their general atmosphere is similar, and they have many features in common like, for instance, their beginning with a relatively long upbeat starting with a pause, a typical use of appoggiaturas and more.

RONDO. Da Capo.
Allegro ma non troppo.

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system shows a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature. It contains a few measures of music, including a whole note chord. The second system is more detailed, starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. It features a treble clef staff with a melody and a bass clef staff with a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The melody includes various intervals and rests, while the accompaniment provides a steady rhythmic foundation.

A conspicuous feature of this rondo is the repeat and development, after the third refrain, of the first episode, which makes it sound almost like a second subject of a sonata-form movement. Both episodes are mainly in the minor: the first – in C minor, and the second in D minor. In the above mentioned repeat of the first episode it turns into the relative major (E-flat) of its original C minor, where it is modulated in various keys orienting to F minor, but from there it moves up by a chromatic scale to the last refrain in F major. The movement ends with a coda.

Beethoven: Sonata no. 7 for Piano and Violin, op. 30/2 in C minor

Beethoven played the violin – and especially the viola – but his writing for the violin is often considered unfavorable to the instrument. In his sonatas for piano and violin (this is his order), besides their musical virtues, and though the piano continues to be the main instrument, the violin often takes a leading and independent role, which were rare (if existing at all) in previous works of the genre. With his sonatas for piano and cello, he actually invented the genre; this cannot be strictly said about his violin sonatas (Mozart wrote some masterworks in the genre before), but one could still say that he brought it to maturity in terms of the violin role, which, historically speaking, was to shape subsequent development. This achievement was obtained gradually, where the sonatas op. 24 (the spring), op. 30, and op. 47 hold a prominent place.

This sonata, the second in the three sonatas op. 30, was composed in 1802, and, like its sisters to the opus number, dedicated in 1803 to the "Caesar" (Tzar) Alexander I. Alexander had just been crowned as Emperor (1801) and great hopes of liberalism were connected with him. The sonata is in four movements (besides it, only no. 5 op. 24 in F, and the much later no. 10 op. 96 in G have four movements).

C minor – the key of the 5th symphony, the Pathétique sonata for piano op. 13 and the last piano sonata op. 111 – is considered, particularly with reference to the first movements, as having a special character in Beethoven: both tragic and heroic. But it sometimes has a softer and more introvert shade, like in the 3rd Piano Concerto op. 37 (completed in 1800). It is the latter to which this sonata belongs.

First Movement – Allegro con Brio

First theme – The skeletal character of the first 8 bars phrase is typical: In its naked character, in unison, with no harmony or decoration, and hardly any melody, it has a special tension, almost frightening, much like the opening of the 3rd Piano concerto.



It consists of two motives – a descending triad with a "decorative" rhythmic filling (A) and then a descending fourth followed by a chromatic ending (B) – all in unison and in piano. Motive (A) is repeated on the IV degree, melodically forming an

interval of a fourth from G up to C. This fourth will prove important in the sequel, particularly in the second part of the second theme. On its entrance, the violin repeats (A), where the accompaniment of the piano enhances the tensed and threatening character, and in b. 13 makes a little variation on B, taken up by the piano in b. 17.

The second theme consists of two sub-themes (or one can rather talk of two themes in the secondary "group"). The first (bb. 28-51) is in sharp contrast to the first theme. It is, as usual, in the relative major – E flat – and has a jolly, rhythmic character. In the second sub-theme tension and dramatic drive intensify, playing on the rising fourth motive, which, as noted, was presented nakedly right at the beginning. Here 52-4, which recurs throughout the section:



This rising fourth is on a I-IV harmony in the first theme, and here, in the second, it is on V-I one, and yet, melodically the identity of the interval impresses on our ear. The I-IV progression (on Eb) itself is emphatically stated at two peak points in this passage (58-59) and (68-69). The rising fourth is also much expanded in a transition passage between the two sub-themes of the second group: C (47) – D (48) – Eb (49) – F (50).

The **Development** also consists of two main parts, the first dealing with the first motive of the main theme (A), modulating it from E in various keys, with some sharp transitions (e.g, Eb minor (80) to B major (81)) until it gets to Ab (95) – which is, again, the IV of Eb – in which the second part begins, developing the second theme. This section again is highly modulatory, in which the main points are Ab (95) – F minor (101) – Db (103) – Gb minor (106) – F minor (109) – C minor (111) – G (113) – C minor (125).

The **Recapitulation** begins (b. 125), after a great preparing crescendo at the end of the development, in fortissimo. This is in sharp contrast to the quiet and tensed beginning of the exposition – as if the great tension of the beginning is at last here erupted and resolved, and the resolution is with the same skeletal theme in unison. The second theme enters here not in C minor, as expected, but in C major (161). It gets back to the minor only in the second sub-part (b. 185)

The movement ends with a long **Coda**, which is almost another development, beginning in C major. Its last part (from b. 230) – a bravura passage typical of the heroic style – begins with a chromatic element reminiscent of the main theme (B).

Second Movement – Adagio Cantabile

This adagio in Ab major is in grand A – B – A' form, with a long Coda, where B (33) is in Ab minor, and the A' (52) is highly decorated repeat of A. The **coda** (86), which at first might be heard as introducing a completely new material, is built in fact on the motivic germ of the main motive of A – the third descent C – Bb – Ab (1-2), echoed in the tenor by Eb (1) – Db (2) – C (3), which with the same notes is rhythmically compressed in the bass of (2-3).



This, in straight and inverse form of a rising third, becomes the main motive in the coda – explicit e.g. in (105-106), and somewhat more concealed in its very beginning (86-87). The close relationship between this germ and the main melody of A is twice displayed where in between two occurrences of the typical rising third of the coda, Beethoven inserts a reminder of the A melody in the major VI (F), first by the violin (90-95) and later by the piano (99-101). Here from b. 83



Third Movement – Scherzo – Allegro

The scherzo is in C major (with a wink to A minor in its middle section). Its easy-going flow is disturbed by emphatic sforzandi on the weak (third) beat. Note also the break of the periodic symmetry at bb. 17-18.

The **trio**, also in C major, is a canon of sorts between the violin and the bass (the canonic texture is broken in the second part in the transition back to the tonic).

Finale – Allegro

This great movement is a glorious finale to this great sonata. It is back in C minor. It is in sonata form with a long coda (most of it in Presto).

The stormy and nervous character of the beginning, deep in the bass, is expressed right at the start by an emphatic use of the somewhat irregular "German" chord (IV5/6 with an augmented sixth), which serves as a secondary dominant leading to the dominant (G), in an intense and short crescendo to a fortissimo (1-3).



The great effect of it is enhanced by the answer, which is a balanced simple progression to the dominant through its regular VII.

All this sounds as an introduction to what seems to be the main theme proper (b. 15), and we shall call it the introductory theme, but as we move along, this apparent main theme immediately collapses back to this deep turmoil of the introductory bars, which prove to be essential to the whole movement.

The **second theme** (b. 39) is, as usual in the relative major (E \flat). It is jerky and witty with its staccato motive, but shares with the first theme its nervousness and rapid harmonic moves. The exposition ends in a sort of a third theme, more melodious in character (b. 73), but this is immediately cut and falls back onto the nervous minor seconds of the beginning.

The **development** (b. 94) starts by repeating the beginning of the exposition, but the main theme is taken here in the major and expanded. When it comes back to the minor (b. 134) it proves to be the backbone of the whole development, which is contrapuntal in its texture where all motives are combined: the main theme, the

introductory theme with its minor seconds, and the melodious third theme (in a sort of inversion). Here from the middle of this section (b. 142)



The **recapitulation** (b. 165) modulates the main theme to Bb minor (b. 179), and then, as expected, to the second theme in the tonic (b. 201). From there it is quite ordinary, where its ending returns to the introductory theme, modulating to the virtuosic **coda** (Presto). This presto, besides its virtuosic brilliance, ingeniously combines the main motives of the introductory theme: the minor seconds motive and the fourth descent from F to C (bb. 11-14), thus closing the movement in a sort of an embracing circularity and coherence. But this circularity is a Beethovenian one – it is more a spiral than a circle: it has a definite direction towards a culminating peak, which has a heroic and victorious character, expressed here (as often) in the trombone-like calls of V-I in the bass at the last 17 bars.

Beethoven: Sonata no. 9 for Piano and Violin, op. 57 - "Kreutzer Sonata"

This grand sonata, in three movements, was composed in Mai 1803, between the oratorio "Jesus in the Olive Mountain" op. 85 (first version) and the third symphony op. 55 in E-flat – "Eroica", namely, within Beethoven's "heroic period". In the first edition Beethoven wrote that it is "very concertantic" (Solomon 269). And indeed, like the shortly coming Eroica symphony and piano sonata in C op. 53 ("Waldstein"), it has immense dimensions for its kind – it is not only the longest among the piano and violin sonatas, but perhaps the longest sonata written up to its time (and for many years to come – even longer than the Hammerklavier sonata for piano op. 106). It is grand not only in its length but also in its tone-range (particularly in the violin part) and its dynamics.

It was performed, right after its completion, in Mai 1803 by Beethoven and the distinguished English violinist George Bridgetower, who was its intended dedicatee. Bridgetower is reported, however, to have offended a woman Beethoven knew, while drinking with the composer in a bar. They quarreled, and the raged composer withdrew the intended dedication, and dedicated it to the French violinist R. Kreutzer, who probably never played it, claiming that it was unplayable. He was very wrong and the sonata became not only very popular, but considered by many as the crowning example of its genre.

The sonata is known as being in A major, but only its last movement is in that key, and the first movement, in spite its key signature which indicate that key, is in fact in A minor. The middle movement is a theme and variations in F major. For the following discussion I assume a general knowledge of the diatonic tone system the elementary rudiments of Harmony, and of the structure known as "sonata form".

First Movement – Adagio sostenuto – Presto

The movement begins with a slow introduction, which is full of surprises and, as quite characteristic of Beethoven's slow introductions, with hints to the coming events.



The first surprise is the opening festive and majestic chordal statement (4 bars) by the violin solo. This, if I am not mistaken, is unprecedented: I don't know of any previous piano and violin sonata to begin with the solo violin. The statement moreover is chordal and very unfavorable to the violin. This statement is indeed in A major, though the movement as a whole is in A minor.

Second surprise – the piano then begins as if repeating this phrase, but soon turns it into a minor mode, in which the bulk of the movement is to proceed.

Third surprise – in b. 7 the piano enters into a "deceptive cadence" (F major instead of A minor) and then, in a chordal dialogue with the violin, modulates into C major – the relative major of A minor – and then to D minor.

This highly modulative character of the introduction is also replete in minor-seconds moves (bb. 8-18), which develop into a more elaborate chromatic progression (11-13). We shall call it "the minor-seconds motive". Another conspicuous motive is the descending thirds of the beginning. We shall call it the thirds motive.

All these elements are going to be of great significance throughout the movement.

First theme, in presto, enters with the violin playing on the minor-seconds motive. Both the sliding to C major and the chromatic move we encountered in the introduction are immediately operative here (bb. 36-45). Here from b.18



We then have another deceptive move: after a fanfare cadence (bb. 81-90) we move into a nice melody in E major (b. 91). This may appear to be the first significant establishment of A major as the tonic. However, it is deceptive since it immediately turns into the minor mode (E minor) in which the secondary theme group proceeds. Using the minor V as the key of the secondary theme in a minor-key movement in

sonata form is quite common in Beethoven. Therefore, this in fact establishes A minor as the tonic. In between there is an additional theme in the secondary group, which many may hear as the secondary theme proper (bb. 116-144). This theme exploits a motive in the first theme over which we skipped in silence (bb. 45-48). It consists of a sort of a dialogue of ascending and descending thirds between the violin and the piano.

The last section in the **secondary theme group**, which many hear as the secondary theme proper, is definitely in E minor and proceeds by exploiting the minor-seconds motive over the broken chord of E minor (b. 144). So, all main themes build on the minor-seconds motive.



The development begins with this last part of the secondary group on F major – obviously hinting at the deceptive F major of the introduction – which soon modulates into F minor (b. 230), in which most of the development proceeds. A particularly beautiful combining of the minor-seconds motive (in the violin and the upbeat of the piano eights) and a development of the thirds motive (in the piano part) modulates through various scales reaching D-flat major (b. 258). Here is the thirds motive from the first subject (b.45-48)



And here is the beginning of the combining section in the development (from 221)



And if anybody doubts the connection between this section in the development and the thirds motive of (bb. 45-48), here comes the second half of the development (bb. 270-300), modulating on various scales, in which the connection to the thirds motive is even clearer. The rest of the development (bb. 300-344) modulates with great

rhetoric emphasis of the minor-seconds motive, back to A minor where the recapitulation begins.

The **coda** is marked by its excessive use of the minor-seconds motive and its expansion into a full chromatic scale (bb.537-547) – something that was already hinted at in the introduction. At the end of this chromatic rising our thirds motive re-appears in great emphasis (bb. 547-559). The movement ends with a bravura coda to the coda, which definitely emphasizes A minor as the tonic to the whole preceding edifice.

Second movement – Andante con Variazioni

Beautiful as the variations are, this movement gets its charm mainly from the delicate beauty of the theme. It has a duple structure: phrase A in F major has 8*2 bars, and keeps the tension to the real cadence to F up to the last bar. Then comes phrase B in C major with 11 bars. This duple structure repeats with slight changes to the end of the theme.

1st variation – maintains the structure, the harmony, and the general melodic line of the theme in a completely different texture of staccato triplets. It is mostly a piano piece, where the violin adds slight rhythmic decorations.

2nd variation – is, in contrast, definitely a violin piece, with minimal and simple piano accompaniment. Its texture is again different, blurring the syncopated character of the theme.

3rd variation is in F minor. It again keeps the general structure, with the repeats marked, again as in previous variations, by double lines. Melodically it goes further from the theme than the other variations, and is marked by a thick and rich harmony.

4th variation – the last one, returns to F major, and is again in a completely different texture – much more pianistic and virtuoso.

The movement ends with a sort of a free, phantasia-like **coda**, which, in contrast to the previous variations, which followed the theme rather strictly, is a "free variation", for which the theme is nothing but melodic and harmonic inspiration.

Third Movement – Finale – Presto

This is the only movement in the sonata, which is in A major. It was originally written as the final movement of the sonata no. 6 in A major, op 30/1 (Solomon, 150). The movement is in sonata form. It is dominated by its rapid and sweeping rhythm, and

role-exchanges between the piano and violin. However, one cannot miss the emphatic role of the minor second, which connects it to the first movement. This is clear already in the abrupt and energetic **First subject**, which starts in a sort of contrapuntal section in three voices. And when it gets to the more stretched out and steady **second subject** in E major (bb. 62-68), the affinity to the second theme and the minor-seconds motive in the first movement becomes clear. Here from b. 62:



The **Development** starts at modulating the second theme through C, D minor, E minor/major, and then, instead of coming to A it gets into a long section in F major (213-230), which begins a long section in the development, developing the first subject. The reader may recall that a surprising F major was important both in the introduction and the beginning of the development of the first movement. A peculiar feature of the recapitulation is that it starts on VI (F#) minor, and then proceeds with slight changes to A.

The movement ends with a very long **coda** consisting of several parts, all of whose elements are derived from motives of the first subject: The dramatic first part (bb. 455-488) reaches a dominant-septachord. The second transitory part with two adagios (bb. 489-501) emphasizes with unusual rhetoric gestures (with "German chords") the germ motive of the primary subject. The third – a bravura ending from b. 501 to the end.

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