



**DUX 1253 / 2017**



---

**Ludwig van BEETHOVEN**  
**Joanna TRZECIAK – piano recital**

\*\*\*

**Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827) :**

- \* Six variations on an original theme in F major, Op. 34 (1802)
- \* Sonata No. 30 in E major, Op. 109 (1820)
- \* Sonata No. 8 in C minor, Op. 13 Pathétique (1798)

---

**DUX Małgorzata Polańska & Lech Tołwiński ul. Morskie Oko 2, 02-511 Warszawa**

tel./fax (48 22) 849-11-31, (48 22) 849-18-59

e-mail: [dux@dux.pl](mailto:dux@dux.pl), [www.dux.pl](http://www.dux.pl)

**Aleksandra Kitka-Coutellier – International Relations, [kitka@dux](mailto:kitka@dux)**

**Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770-1827) was composing in unusually interesting and challenging times; the political order in Europe started undergoing violent changes; new ideological movements were growing in strength, heralding a turbulent epoch of the upcoming Romanticism. The composer had an important role in that process. He was one of the last great classics who had used and developed the whole stylistic potential of the dying epoch. At the same time, he was also a pioneer of the new movement, as he understood the stylistic changes and he anticipated them in his compositions which were frequently ahead of their time. Both Classical and Romantic stylistics in Beethoven's works were so masterfully integrated that in the case of the composer it undermines the traditional discourse of dichotomic juxtaposition of the Classical and Romantic periods. Beethoven was renowned and appreciated mainly for his symphonic pieces, however, he was also a great pianist. When he was working on his piano compositions, he could transform the music from the inside, from the position of an artist who investigates technical and expressive capacities of the instrument and translates them into a new musical language.

Beethoven was composing 6 Variations on an original theme in F major, Op. 34 since May 1802. He was working on that cycle (and also on Variations, Op. 35) after leaving Vienna for Heiligenstadt, a nearby village, where he stayed until autumn, trying to cure his progressing hearing problems. The nature always had a positive impact on the composer; he almost idolatrised it. Echoes of calm and mild, leisurely existence can be observed in the very theme of the variations, which Beethoven composed by himself, he did not borrow it. It brings to mind a cheerful Mozart's phrase in the classical ABA structure in the "pastoral" F major key. Beethoven subjects it to subsequent changes in consecutive short variations. To ascribe a different key to each variation, following a scheme of descending major thirds, was quite innovative. All variations are maintained in major keys except for the fifth one which is in C minor, yet it modulates into C major to return to the original F major key through the dominant. The time signature is also surprisingly variable; from two-beat, through three-beat metre to a full bar. The tonal contrasts and sudden metric changes may have been the reason for Beethoven not subjecting the theme to far-reaching modifications; in the reprise (titled *Adagio molto*) he evoked it in its initial form, which was meant to enhance the piece's cohesion. Those were the first variations that the composer valued, which manifests itself in the fact he gave them an opus number and dedicated them to one of his most talented pupils, Duchess Barbara Odescalchi. In the future he would successfully face this musical form.

However, the genre which he developed most in his contemporary art of playing the piano was the sonata. Out of the sonatas presented on the CD, the first one chronologically is the famous Pathétique Sonata, Piano Sonata No. 8 in C minor, Op. 13 composed in 1799 and dedicated to Prince Karl von Lichnowsky. The piece received its byname from the publisher who was impressed with the tragic expression of its sounds. Yet the drama and pathos are present only in a few themes; it is reinforced with contrasted dynamics. The rich music material also includes very gentle and sweet themes, as the melody in *Andante cantabile* bringing to mind passages from Mozart's Sonata K. 457 (also in C minor) which may have inspired Beethoven. The composer structured his work as a three-movement piece with the melancholic introduction *Grave* before the first movement written in the form of sonata allegro based on three themes. Dynamic and agogic contrasts (he uses semihemidemisemiquavers!), mix of cheerful moods with melancholic and dramatic ones, finally the development work where the material from the introduction was also used – all those features lead to a dramatic climax in the coda. After the already mentioned second movement featuring a lyrical melody, perhaps one of the most beautiful ones by Beethoven, the final third movement of the cycle follows – *Rondo: Allegro*. The composer, paying attention to the internal integrity of the piece, included here fragments of the themes from the first movement, as well as from the middle one. The rondo movement is already not as dramatic as the opening *Allegro*, yet it has typical for Beethoven vigour and strength.

The Sonata No. 30 in E major, Op. 109 belongs to the cycle of sonatas which were created in 1820-1822, in the last, mature phase of the composer's output. That was a great time for Beethoven's works and his creativity. He had already thoroughly exploited compositional techniques, while his developed style expressed his artistic personality to the fullest. He was still willingly working with classical forms, extended with elements of the new musical language; he was also often drawing from techniques and genres of the remote past, eagerly referring to the Baroque polyphony. The profound emotionality permeating his pieces was devoid of sentimentalism and it continues to deeply touch the audience.

The Sonata comprises three movements. The first one, *Vivace ma non troppo – Adagio espressivo* – is structured according to the sonata allegro form. Beethoven used strongly contrasting themes – the first one is short and unusually cheerful, maintained in a delicate *piano*; the second one is dramatic, it interrupts the atmosphere with a sharp *forte*. The thematic work is remarkably rich – plenty of unexpected modulations. The duration of the movement is surprisingly short, which proves Beethoven's perfectly dominated technique and tendencies for condensation of musical language. Before the last chord resounds completely, the second movement of the cycle, *Prestissimo*, follows attacca. Here we will find the highest number of references to the Baroque counterpoint technique, developed in a masterful way, adding

to the Sonata seriousness and meditative depth. The atmosphere of the first theme from the opening *Vivace* will not be repeated, as it is drama and emotions that prevail. It will not be any different in the third movement, *Andante molto cantabile ed espressivo*, thought as a theme with six variations in the Baroque style. The increase of movement achieved by more and more concentrated and each time smaller rhythmic values pose a huge challenge to the performer, of whom this movement requires particular virtuosity and precision. It is especially noticeable in the last variation, plenty of astonishing effects, which the composer was drawing from his experiences related to improvisation. The final return of the melody, enabling all the emotions to calm down, constitutes the perfect final accent of that unique composition.

*Agnieszka Jeż*

Translated by *Żaneta Pniewska*

**Joanna TRZECIAK** – born in Cracow, she spent her youth in a country where the quest for material goods was not the most important issue. “To be” was more important than “to have.” One can lose the fortune, yet the wisdom and knowledge are indestructible. That was the motto she learned at home and to which she is still faithful, even after many years of living in Belgium.

She was born to a family of historians, pharmacists, and lawyers; she was discovered by a rhythmic teacher and she quickly discovered the world of music and studied with great passion. After graduating from the High Music School in Cracow, she continued her studies at the then Higher Music School in Warsaw in the class of Prof. Jan Ekier. After receiving her diploma, she went to the Pyotr Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow, the then Mecca for pianists, which was enabled to her by a scholarship of the Ministry of Culture and Art. She studied there in the class of outstanding pianist and teacher Lev Vlasenko. The fact that the professor was an active concert pianist had an extraordinary influence on his teaching style. “Practical” tips concerning mental preparation before a concert, recordings in a studio, or how to develop a concert repertoire were of extreme importance and they remained a guidance for life. In the subsequent years, it was the years-long friendship and cooperation with Prof. Irina Rumiancewa which shaped the artistic profile of Joanna Trzeciak.

Apart from dedicating her time to concerts with orchestra or recitals performed in Europe, both Americas, and Asia, the pianist spends a lot of time on recordings. She is particularly interested in original and less frequently performed works. After recording Karol Szymanowski’s Sonata No. 1, the artist released four Rondos and the Sonata No. 1 by Fryderyk Chopin. Then two CDs with pieces by Johann Nepomuk Hummel were published. The majority of them have been recorded for the first time. The interest in such a repertoire is a result of working on the pieces composed by Chopin in his youth and of the willingness to discover the origins of the brilliant style. The effects of the years-long work and detailed exploration of libraries in Bratislava and Brussels, carried out with significant help of musicologists and producers of the Slovakian Radio, have been noticed by the international industry press and awarded with, e.g., “5 Diapasons.” All the aforementioned recordings have been released by the Belgian company Pavane.

The originally, often controversially developed repertoire of the pianist’s recitals is one of her characteristic features. Confrontations, contrasts, concepts. The CD featuring five Polonaises by Fryderyk Chopin and five *Études-Tableaux* by Sergei Rachmaninoff released by the Catalan company KNS is a fruit of those particular explorations.

Joanna Trzeciak continues to have a hectic work schedule. Next to an incessant work on mastering the piano playing, she also dedicates a lot of time to her second great passion – hikes in high mountains. She does it with equal persistence, dedication, and ambitions.