

DANIEL LOZAKOVICH
violin
BEHZOD ABDURAIMOV
piano

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)
Violin Sonata No. 9 in A major Op. 47 (Kreutzer)
Adagio sostenuto - Presto
Andante con variazioni
Finale. Presto
(approx. 35 minutes)

INTERMISSION

CÉSAR FRANCK (1822-1890)
Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano
Allegretto ben moderato
Allegro
Recitativo-Fantasia
Allegretto poco mosso
(approx. 30 minutes)

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810-1856)
Violin Sonata No. 1 in A minor Op. 105
Mit leidenschaftlichem Ausdruck
Allegretto
Lebhaft
(approx. 18 minutes)

Ludwig van Beethoven

Violin Sonata No. 9 in A major Op. 47 (Kreutzer)

Beethoven's "Kreutzer" Sonata is a monument in the violin repertoire, remarkable for its unusual length and for the technical demands it places on both violinist and pianist. The willful juxtaposition of its three oddly disparate movements may perhaps have been motivated by the equally odd circumstances of its rushed composition.

In 1803, the violinist George Bridgetower (1778-1860), a musical prodigy of mixed Polish and West Indian parentage, had arrived in Vienna and been introduced to Beethoven by his patron Prince Lichnowsky (1761-1814). A concert date was set for them to appear together, for which Beethoven hurriedly wrote two sonata movements to precede a finale in A major that he had originally intended for his Op. 30, No. 1 violin sonata.

Relations between the two musicians were exceptionally cordial, by all accounts, to the point that Beethoven even allowed himself to tease his bi-racial violinist colleague with a jocular inscription atop his manuscript of the sonata — one that would likely get him sent off for cultural sensitivity training today:

Mulatto sonata, composed for the mulatto Brischdauer [i.e., Bridgetower], a great madman and a mulatto composer.

But relations later soured between the two, for reasons unknown, and Beethoven changed the dedication of the sonata, devoting it instead to the celebrated French violinist Rodolphe Kreutzer (1766-1831), who apparently found the work unintelligible and was not known to have ever performed it in public.

When the sonata was published in 1805, its title page bore an inscription referencing its unusual characteristics that read: "written in a very concertante style, almost like a concerto." The grand style in this "concerto-like" work is evident in the sonata's epic proportions and especially in its display-oriented virtuoso figurations, in the first two movements especially.

* * *

The first movement is a rumbly, grumbly affair with a flair for dramatic pauses and a motivic obsession with semitones. It opens with an *Adagio sostenuto* slow introduction in the manner of a Haydn symphony.

The opening bars, however, are played by the violin alone, in multiple stops, as if to proclaim and display the skill of the violinist right from the outset. The piano then re-states violin's A-major musings but in A minor, establishing a dark, suspenseful tone for what is to follow.



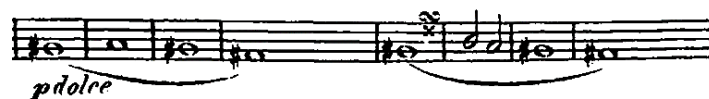
But suspense is not the only thing happening here. The motive of a rising semitone gets repeated over and over again in two-note groups, in what will become a kind of motto opening for each of the movement's three themes.

So when the pace quickens to Presto with the introduction of the first theme, it begins with this rising semitone and follows on with a series of strutting quarter notes in A minor.



Well, so much for this being a sonata in *A major* !

The movement's second theme could not be more contrasting. Gone are the jumpy staccato quarter notes in the minor mode, replaced by a smooth, stepwise major-mode melody that ranges over the modest space of a 4th. And of course, its violin melody begins with...a rising semitone,



while the first phrase of the piano's "gypsy-inflected" closing theme in E minor is virtually nothing *but* a series of rising semitones.



Gluing the exposition together are innumerable sequences of tremolos and various types of muscular passagework thundering over wide swathes of the keyboard that seem aimed at filling the ear with as much piano sound as possible. One might well suspect that in writing this sonata for his duo partner Beethoven is slyly making sure the audience knows just who it is who is making the violinist sound so good.

The development section concentrates on the “gypsy” theme almost exclusively as it spirals through key after key until Beethoven prepares us for the arrival of the recapitulation in a series of dramatic pauses, each followed by coy hints – and many rising semitones – that the first theme is crouching in the wings ready to pounce, which of course it does. Then Beethoven adds a beefy coda that toys with bringing the movement to an end several times before it rushes clattering to a final emphatic cadence in A minor.

* * *

The second movement *Andante* presents a theme of an intimate character followed by four variations and a coda. Supported by the simplest of harmonies, the theme carries a gentle lilt from its off-beat syncopations in the melodic line, while numerous trills in both the violin and piano parts prepare us for the series of “frilly” variations that follow.



The first variation dances with a keyboard texture that sparkles with trills and mordents twinkling atop a pattern of triplet 16ths while the violin merely chirps away with an occasional “Oh yes, quite!” on one note. By way of compensation, the second variation gives pride of place to the violin in a constant stream of repeated-note chatter over an oom-pah accompaniment in the piano. The obligatory *minore* variation comes next, slip-sliding through the notes of the minor scale in a turgid series of chordal harmonies that sometimes change on every 16th note. Variation IV returns to the major mode to create the most embellished thematic variant of all, featuring real and written-out trill figures in the upper register, such as these:



These “sound blurs” are often connected by thrilling chromatic runs. So in this variation we can hear already the composer’s interest in creating walls of pure sound with trills, a fascination he will explore in later works such as the finales of the “Waldstein” Sonata, Op. 53 and the Piano Sonata in C minor, Op. 111.

The last movement — which Beethoven had already written when he assembled this sonata for his 1803 concert appearance with George Bridgetower — is a buoyant sonata-form finale with a much lighter, more transparent texture. The heavy, saturated sonorities of the two previous movements are nowhere to be found, replaced instead by the joyous interplay of individual melodic lines tossed merrily between the instruments in a relentless chatter of lively dialogue.

But this *Presto* finale presents Beethoven with the problem of how to get the listener’s ear from the F-major tonality of the variation movement to the A-major tonality of the finale. The solution he arrives at couldn’t be simpler: he just brings down a sonic sledgehammer in the form of a massive two-fisted A-major chord in the piano, extending sonorously over four octaves.



F major? What F major? We’re in A major now, haven’t you noticed?

The first theme is then introduced in a kind of fugato, infected with the toe-tapping rhythm of the tarantella, as is the skippy-dippy second theme later on.



And while Beethoven, with a pair of short *Adagio* sections in the coda, tries to convince you that things are moving too fast and need to slow down, in the end there is no denying the momentum that has built up, and the movement rushes to its concluding cadence with the hilarious inevitability of an inflated beach ball falling down a set of stairs.

César Franck

Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano

It will be a while yet before the Huffington Post is read by musicologists as a scholarly journal, and yet Alan Elsner, the Huff-Po reporter hot on the trail of breaking news in 19th-century Belgian chamber music, is not wide of the mark in observing that:

There is a kind of breathless religious ecstasy to Franck's music—soaring themes; simple, pure harmonies; those ceaseless, swirling, gliding accompaniments. This, one feels, is truly the music of the angels.¹

The work inspiring such shortness of breath and heady spiritual delirium in the intrepid journalist is, of course, Franck's Sonata in A major for violin and piano, a wedding present by the composer to the Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe. The sonata was in fact performed at the wedding in 1886 by Ysaÿe himself and a wedding-guest pianist.

The *Allegretto ben moderato* first movement floats in a world of harmonic uncertainty. It opens with a number of dreamy piano chords, each followed by a simple chordal interval, as if giving the pitches to the instrumentalist, who then obliges by using them to create a gently rocking, barcarolle-like melody, the outline of which will infuse much of the work as a whole.

The image shows a musical score for the first movement of César Franck's Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano. The score is in A major, 3/4 time, and marked "Allegretto ben moderato". It features a violin melody and a piano accompaniment. The piano part begins with a series of chords, marked "pp" (pianissimo), and includes a section marked "molto dolce" (very sweet). The score includes fingerings (13, 5) and pedal markings (ped. *) for the piano part.

This theme, played by the violin over a simple chordal accompaniment from the piano, builds in urgency until it can hold it no more, and a second theme takes centre stage in a lyrical outpouring of almost melodramatic intensity but ending in a dark turn to the minor.

¹ Alan Elsner, "Music and Spirituality: Thoughts on Cesar Franck's Violin Sonata," *Huffington Post*, November 28, 2011, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/music-and-spirituality_b_1112982.

a tempo

a tempo sempre forte e largamente

5 3 2 1 2 3 1

Pa. * Pa. * Pa. Pa. * Pa. * Pa.

The violin will have none of it, however, and dreams both sleepwalkers back to the major mode for an amicable review of the two themes, both in the home key. The serenity of this movement results from its rhythmic placidness, often featuring a sparse, simple chordal accompaniment in the piano, and very little rhythmic variation in the wandering pastoral “de-DUM-de-DUM” triplets of the violin.

Where drama breaks out for real is in the *Allegro* second movement, one of the most challenging in the chamber repertoire for the pianist. This sonata-form movement bolts from the starting gate with a swirling vortex of 16ths in the piano, fretting anxiously over a chromatically creeping theme in the mid-range that is soon picked up by the violin.

passionato

mf

Its worrisome collection of motives is based on the same small-hop intervals that opened the first movement, but reversed in direction and cast in the minor mode.

A sunnier mood prevails in the second theme

a tempo

a tempo

which, however, ebbs away as both instruments take stock of the ground covered in a sober interlude marked *Quasi lento*, which is based on the opening “fretting” theme, but in augmentation (i.e., longer note values).



The development section engages in a full and frank discussion of the two themes until the convulsive agitation of the opening lento theme returns in the recapitulation. Despite the turbulence roiling at the heart of this movement, it still manages to pull a major-mode ending out of a hat for its final cadence to conclude its “race-to-the-finish-line” coda.

The slow third movement, a free-form meditation marked *Recitativo-Fantasia*, is bruised with the memory of the first movement’s bliss. Its opening musings contain a bewildered quotation of the first movement’s opening theme.



As this thematic material is brooded over, the violin tries to change the subject several times in distracted flights of fancy but eventually agrees to join with the piano in a ruminative journey that passes from nostalgic reminiscence to heart-wrenching pathos. The searing intensity of the octave-leap “wailing” motif at the end of this movement is the most profound moment in the sonata.



No major-mode ending here.

All tensions are eased, all hearts healed, however, in a last-movement rondo that offers up a simple tuneful melody in continuous alternation with brief sections of contrasting material.



This tune, so harmonically rooted as to suit being presented in strict canonic imitation (like a round), is shaped from the melodic outline of the theme that opened the sonata, bringing its cyclical journey to a close. Even the “wailing” motif from the previous movement is recalled to the stage to give it, too, a happy ending.

British musicologist David Fanning got it right when he intuited the celebratory meaning beneath Franck’s remarkable use of imitative counterpoint for the end of this “wedding present” sonata:

It is hard to resist reading this as a musical symbol of married bliss, especially when the dialogue is placed even closer together, at a distance of half a bar rather than a full bar, on the deliriously happy closing page.

Robert Schumann

Violin Sonata No. 1 in A minor Op. 105

Sonata form in the Classical era of Haydn and Mozart was predicated on presenting two contrasting themes, each with its own expressive character, in two distinct key areas. But by 1851, Robert Schumann had other ideas.

And so, in that year, he composed two virtually monothematic sonata-form outer movements that de-emphasize key relationships for his Violin Sonata No. 1 in A minor, Op. 105, to more closely represent his misty poetic ideals.

Organic unity through continuous evolution is Schumann’s aesthetic goal in this sonata rather than balanced contrast and the resolution of large-scale tensions between key areas. His is an aesthetic of blending, and the two “sister” themes of this sonata’s first movement provide a vivid example of the process.

The work opens with a darkly passionate but restless theme in the violin, heaving with two-note sigh motives and rippling with hemiola in its alternation of 6/8 and 3/4 measures.

Mit leidenschaftlichem Ausdruck (♩ = 68)

4^{te} Saite

His second theme is identical in mood and is in the same rhythm. It sounds just like a continuation of the first theme, and it even shares some of the same keyboard texturing.

But themes are not the only object of Schumann’s “blending” aesthetic. He also blends the timbres of his performing forces, as well.

Note how low in the range the violin plays, especially at the opening, on the G string. Schumann makes the violin into an honorary viola, with the piano figuration doubling its melodic line to create a kind of single, integrated piano-and-string instrument presenting the movement’s themes.

The two instruments are like an old married couple that complete each other’s sentences and echo each other’s sentiments. All the more natural, then, are the passages in canonic imitation in the development section, which slides hand-in-glove into the recapitulation as if by magic. One moment, you see, you are hearing the opening melody in augmentation, i.e., stretched out in long notes, and the next you are hearing it at normal speed — and the recapitulation has begun without your even noticing it.

The only note of real contrast in the movement comes in the brisk coda that suddenly looks at its watch, gathers its hat and coat and heads for the door in a sweeping gust of 16th notes.

* * *

Schumann composes neither a real slow movement nor a zippy scherzo for this sonata but instead writes a kind of intermezzo at *Allegretto* tempo that combines the functions of both. With its short musing phrases and quizzical

mood, it resembles the *Andantino grazioso* intermezzo from Schumann's Piano Concerto.

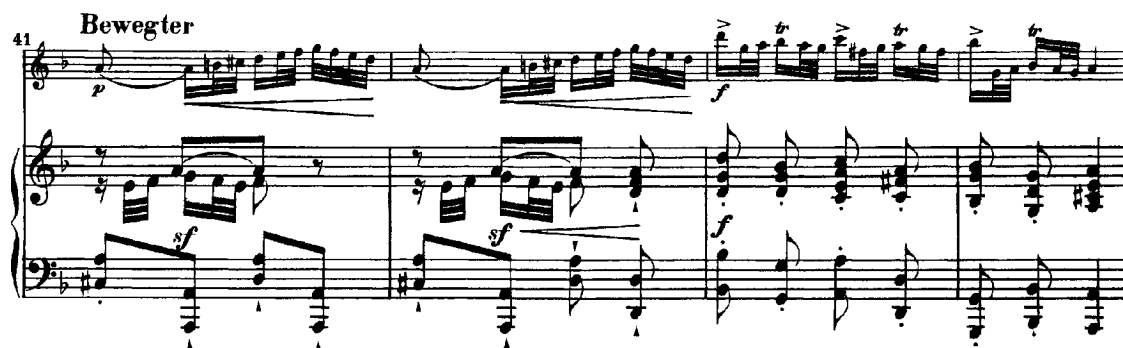
Structured in the form of a rondo, it opens in what seems to be mid-thought, childlike and curious as it reviews the notes of the F-major scale before indulging in one of the many thoughtful pauses that populate this movement.



Its first rondo episode is quite the opposite. It consists of one long, timid phrase in the minor mode that simply refuses to cadence at all until returning to the opening refrain tune.



The second episode, by contrast, will have none of it and kicks off its shoes to dance around the campfire with gypsy abandon.



But all dance parties must end sometime, and the movement ends in the mood of mild amusement and curious questioning with which it began.

* * *

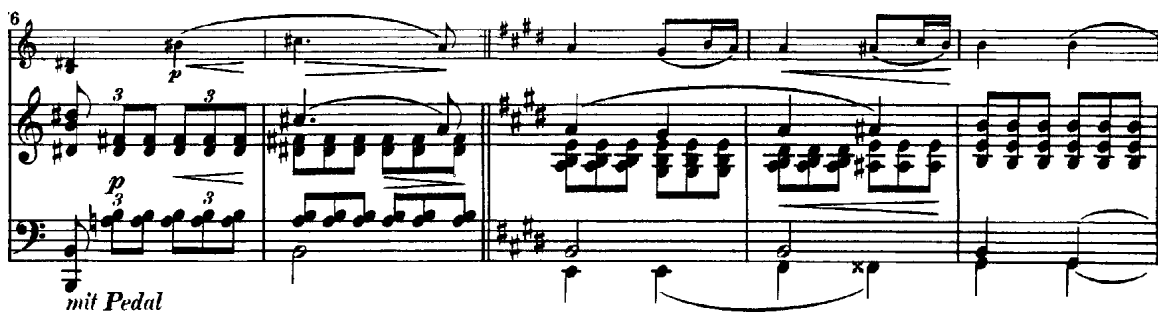
Schumann's sonata-form finale lives up to its billing. It is certainly *lebhaft* (lively), opening with an “ants-in-the-pants” *moto perpetuo* that features the violin and piano as a dynamic duo sharing equally in the excitement.



Lyrical impulses do break through, however, in a second theme in F major. But even here Schumann “blends” the two themes together with a reminder of the frantic opening.



The real surprise of the movement, though, comes in the development section, which unexpectedly bursts into song with a completely new lyrical melody plumped up by loving, pillowy triplets from the keyboard.



But just like the “official” second theme, even this dreamy escapade is laced with references to the opening patten of 16ths, as is the sudden nostalgic recall of the sonata’s opening bars that initiates the coda.

The image shows a musical score for the 4th string of a violin, labeled "4te Saitte". The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a melodic line in the upper voice and a rhythmic accompaniment of sixteenth notes in the lower voice. The piece is marked with a box "D" in the top left corner. Dynamics include "p" (piano) and "pp" (pianissimo). The score shows a sequence of sixteenth notes in the lower voice that are a rapid-fire sequence of the little semitone sigh motives from the first movement's opening theme.

Those rascally 16ths are everywhere in this finale, but here, finally, we see where they come from. They are just a rapid-fire sequence of the little semitone sigh motives from the first movement’s opening theme (!) that Schumann lets have the last word in closing out this organically conceived, unusually unified sonata.