



Into the open... Beethoven's chamber music with piano

### **Success in Vienna – the piano trios op. 1**

With the help of written recommendations from Bonn and assisted by his teachers, Beethoven had quickly succeeded in being accepted into Viennese music circles. He made himself a name as a piano virtuoso and was acclaimed as a exceptionally gifted improviser. With his self-confidence thus boosted he ventured to have the first of his works which he considered worthy of being given an opus number printed in Vienna: the three piano trios op. 1. The way in which these first substantial works were published was unusual. According to the terms of the contract the composer paid the music publishing house Artaria 212 guilders for printing the trios. In return the publishers undertook to provide Beethoven with 400 copies for 400 guilders and to buy back the printing plates for 90 guilders. Beethoven secured for two months the sole rights of sale for Vienna at 1 ducat (4½ guilders) per copy. Only then were the publishers allowed to sell the work on their own account. Beethoven issued an invitation to the public in the “Wiener Zeitung” newspaper for advance orders – and with success, as can be seen from the list of subscribers which precede the notes. 123 persons, (many of them notable personalities) ordered a total of 241 copies and we can assume that Beethoven made a handsome profit.



Prince Karl von Lichnowsky (1756-1814)

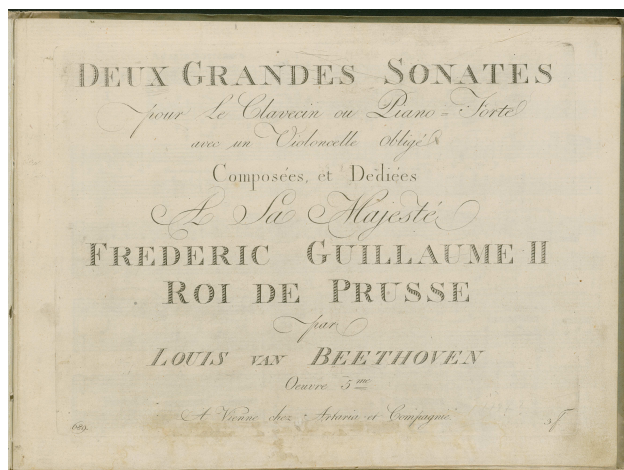
Beethoven dedicated the trios to his most important patron at the time, Prince Karl von Lichnowsky, in whose residence he lived for a period (circa 1793-1795). There he could “test” his compositions during private musical soirées. Present at the preview of op. 1 was Beethoven's former teacher Joseph Haydn, who advised against the publication of the third trio. Indeed the trio in C minor shows Beethoven to be an artist who was already independent of his teachers, and who was able to find his own personal expression in an individual piece of music. By contrast the first trio is somewhat conservative, while the second anticipates with its lyrical, slow movement the harmonious sound of Romanticism. In all three the violin and the cello stand out as lead instruments alongside the piano, freeing themselves from the function of simple accompaniment. New for the whole opus is the expansion from three to four movements with the addition of a dance part. This results in a readjustment of the importance of the individual parts of the composition: the scherzo and the lyrical middle movement form a central pair sandwiched between the cornerstones of the first and last movements.



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### Beethoven "on tour" – the cello sonatas op. 5

In the course of his only regular concert tour, in 1796 to Prague, Dresden, Leipzig and Berlin, Beethoven played in Potsdam as well for King Friedrich Wilhelm II of Prussia, who had gathered at his court a number of well-known musicians, including the cellist brothers Jean Pierre and Jean Louis Duport. Beethoven played together with the king's first cellist (and his cello teacher) Jean Pierre Duport. Beethoven also composed for him the two cello sonatas op. 5, which they performed together for the art-loving monarch. With these sonatas Beethoven broke fresh ground. Mozart had established the accompanied violin sonata, but for the cello there were virtually no comparable works. In places the cello part is still quite subordinate, but in other places the melodic structure makes it clear that the cello has left this subordinate and supportive role and taken over a leading part. For his dedication of op. 5 Beethoven received a palatial present: a golden box filled with Louis d'or.



Original edition of the Sonatas for piano and cello op. 5

### Dedicated to the teacher – the violin sonatas op. 12

Beethoven dedicated his first violin sonatas op. 12 to the then most important and influential man in the Viennese music scene: Antonio Salieri. Shortly afterwards he took lessons from him in Italian vocal and opera style. Other scholars of Salieri were Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Franz Liszt and Franz Schubert. He was not only the royal director of music, but from 1788 to 1795 also president of the Tonkünstler-Sozietät (Musicians' Society) and later vice president. In that capacity he signed a letter which gave Beethoven free entrance "to all future academies". The society organised benefit concerts, in which Beethoven played an active part, on behalf of widows and orphans of Viennese musicians. The association had resolved to grant all artists who had already made significant contributions, or from whom one hoped to receive such contributions, free entrance to the concerts.

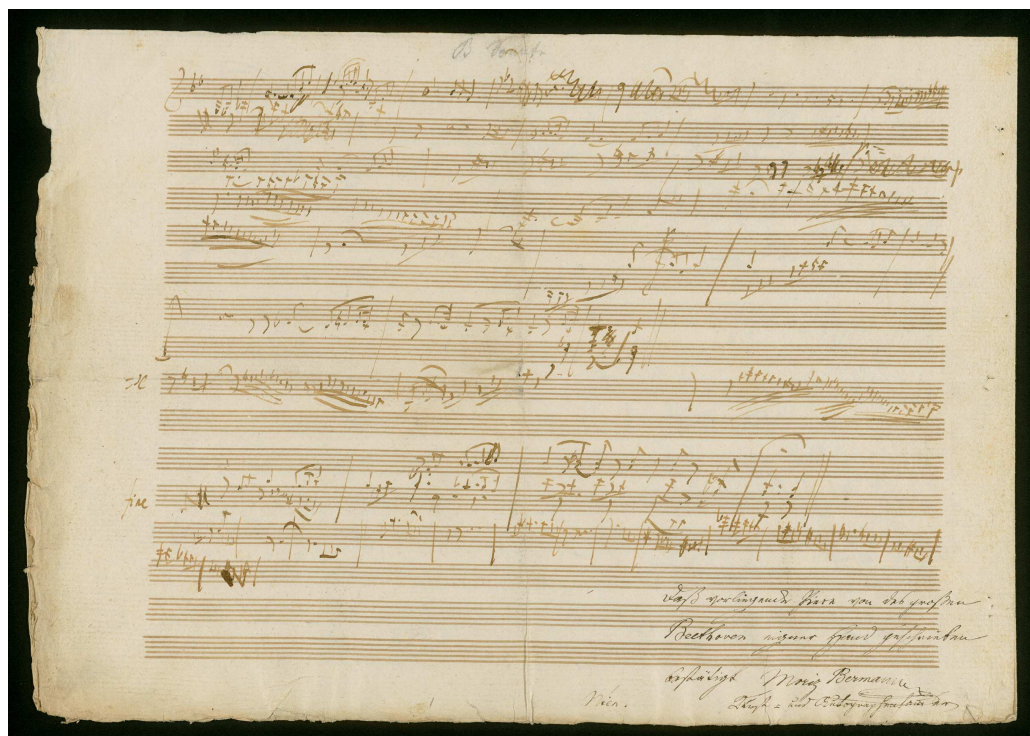
The violin sonatas retain the familiar three movement form with a slow middle movement, but additional markings such as "Allegro piacevole" or "Adagio con molto espressione" serve to expand the width of musical expression. The instruments throw motifs and ideas to each other like a ball. A critic of the time wrote that when he listened to the works he felt like someone who "entered an attractive forest intending to take a stroll and [...] at last came out again, weary, exhausted and joyless".



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## Hunting for ideas – Beethoven's sketches

Beethoven's sketches, which are often extremely difficult to decipher, were handwritten working papers intended solely for his own use. He kept them carefully until his death. He jotted down ideas, outlines and drafts for almost all of his works, making his sketches an ideal source from which to study the genesis of his compositions. Initially Beethoven jotted his sketches on single or double leaves of paper or loose sheets. From the autumn of 1798 he began to use bound sketch-books. Later he used small-format booklets which he could put in his pocket and take with him when he went for a walk or visited a tavern. After Beethoven's death the sketch-books were pulled apart and individual sheets were sold off to collectors and aficionados, and with the years they became spread out all over the world. This was the fate of the sketch-book from the summer of 1800, which Beethoven had tacked together from different music-sheets, some of which had already been written on. A double sheet and a single sheet from this book are today in the collection of the Beethoven House. Among other things, Beethoven wrote sketches on them for the violin sonata op. 23. This, together with its sister composition the "Spring Sonata" op. 24, he dedicated to the richest man of the Austrian monarchy, Count Moritz von Fries. It is one duty of the Beethoven Archive to study the sketches and make accurate reproductions and legible transcriptions available to the public. Richard Kramer reconstructed the sketch-book and the facsimile and transcription were published in 1996.



Sketches for the Sonata for piano and violin op. 23

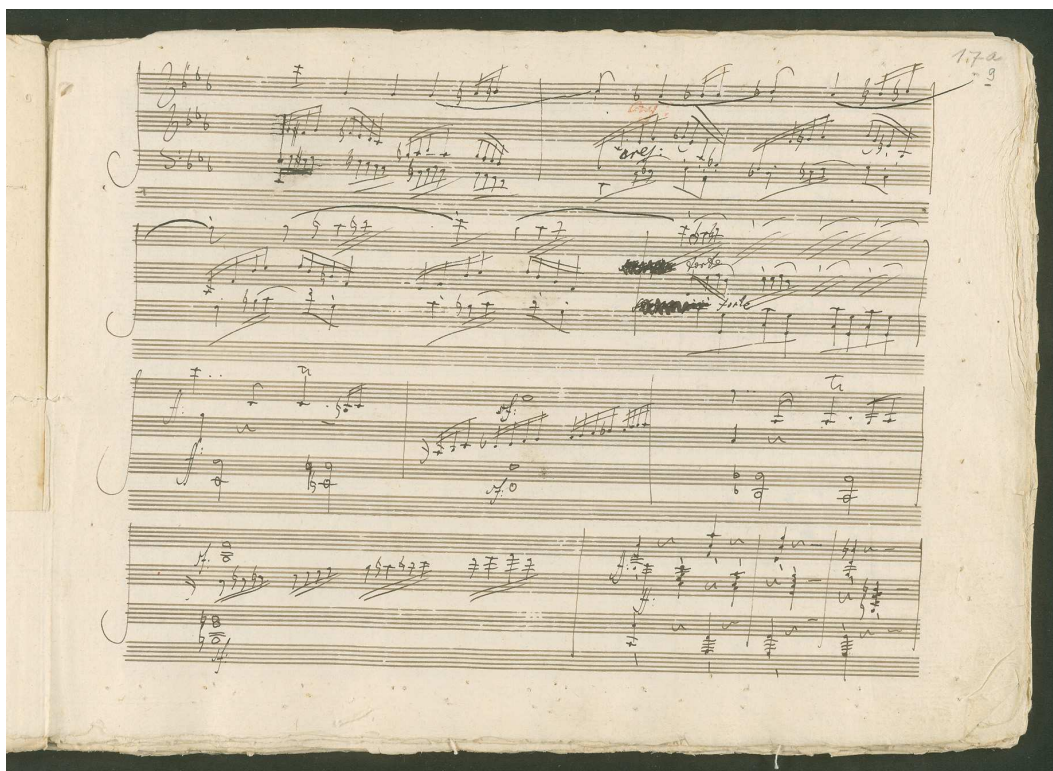




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## Notes on Beethoven's way of working I

Study of the manuscript of Beethoven's violin sonata op. 30 no. 2 reveals the composer's way of working and the process of creation which culminated in the finished piece of music. When he had written the piece down once, he usually carried out several series of amendments, albeit seldom as neatly as here. Whereas he made minor changes in red crayon and deleted or added single notes, here he has cut a double sheet (p. 17a) to size and sewn it over the first version (p. 17b) of the score, thus declaring that invalid. The final version is written on this sewn-on page. The page can still be turned (the back is blank) and it is possible to read the first version and see exactly which amendments have been made: in fact the right hand of the piano part has been lowered an octave. In other places this is more difficult, for instance when the bottom left-hand corner of the new double page has been affixed with sealing wax. Other manuscripts also contain such pages which have been similarly glued on. Here a researcher can usually only make educated guesses.



Manuscript of the Sonata for piano and violin op. 30 Nr. 2

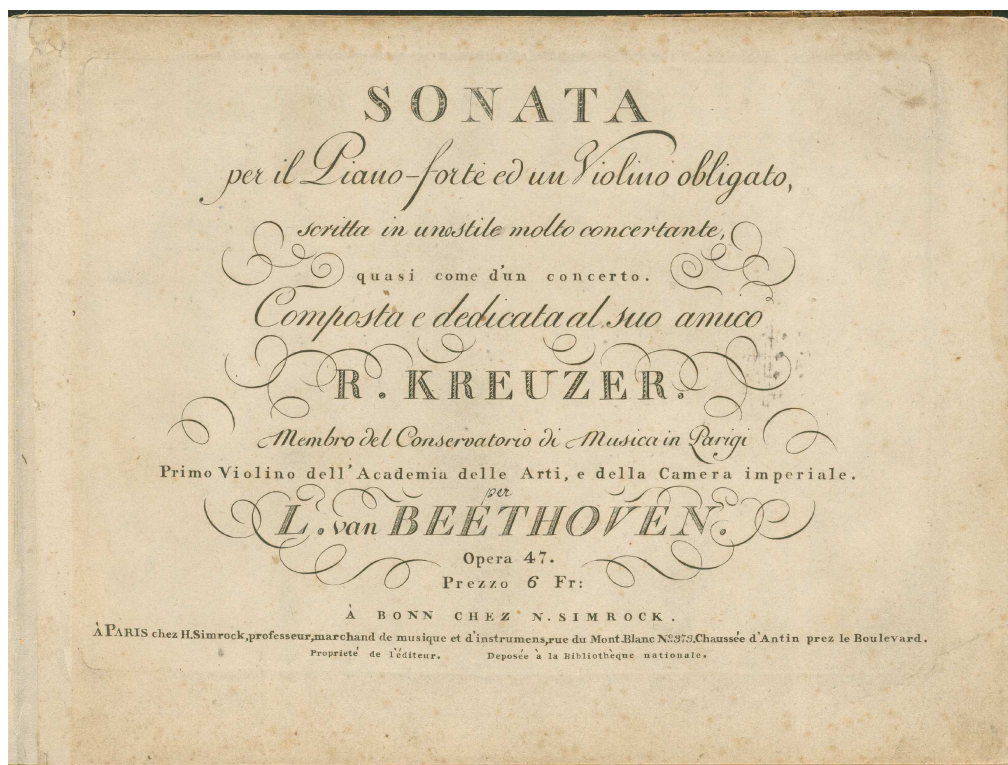
On the original edition we find for the first time the term “Sonates avec l’Accompagnement d’un Violon”, whereas before it had always just said “with violin”. The instrument has been upgraded, “accompaniment” is no longer meant in an inferior sense, but rather indicates an equality of status.



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### The “obligatory accompaniment” – the violin sonata op. 47

The new weighting of the instruments is clearly indicated in the title of the original edition of the violin sonata op. 47: “Sonata per il Pianoforte ed un Violino obligato, scritta in uno stile molto concertante, quasi come d’un concerto” – „Sonata for piano and obligatory violin, written in a most concertante style, just like a concerto”. The violin is no longer treated as an “accompanying” instrument, but it has become for the first time equal in status to the piano, it is “obligatory” and therefore indispensable. The brilliant virtuosity of the sonata with its most demanding style justifies the expression “just like a concerto”. For Beethoven’s contemporaries it was unfamiliar, new and different, which led to the critic of the Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung (the most important musical newspaper of the time) to write of a “strange work” which expanded the boundaries of the genre but at the same time filled them in. Beethoven composed the sonata for the violin virtuoso George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower, with whom he performed it at the premiere in May 1803. The printed edition however is dedicated to the then star violinist Rodolphe Kreutzer, which is why today it is also known as the “Kreutzer Sonata”. In a letter to Nikolaus Simrock, publisher of the first edition, Beethoven wrote of Kreutzer, “He is a good and dear man, who has given me very great pleasure during his stays here, I much prefer his modesty and naturalness to all that exterior without interior of most virtuosos”.



Original edition of the Sonata for piano and violin op. 47



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## **The sufferings of publishers – notes on Beethoven's way of working II: the cello sonata op. 69**

Only the original manuscript of the first movement of Beethoven's cello sonata op. 69 still exists. It contains, however, not the "Fassung letzter Hand" (the definite version written in Beethoven's own hand), but rather it reflects the process of the work's creation through a number of phases. It begins as a neat, clean copy but develops slowly into a sketch, which makes it particularly interesting. An examination of the second theme of the first movement (underlined with red wavy lines) shows that Beethoven has crossed out the original notes of the piano score and replaced them with others. This new counterpart to the second theme is also to be found in another source, a manuscript written by a copyist, which today is in the collection of Amsterdam University Library. This manuscript copy, however, also contains notes which are not included in the version on display here. Since the exhibited manuscript was barely legible, (please leaf through the facsimile on the music stand) Beethoven appears to have made a second one which was used as a master copy but which no longer exists. Beethoven has corrected the copyist's transcript and made some fundamental amendments. This corrected version was then used as a printer's copy. Thus it becomes understandable why there are so many differences between our manuscript and the first printed edition (e.g. the piano score). In this case then, the manuscript with the greatest material and ideal value cannot be used as a source for a true original score, since only the corrected copyist's manuscript shows Beethoven's intentions in their final form.



Manuscript of the Sonata for piano and cello op. 69

The story however does not finish there. Even after the publication of the printed edition Beethoven sent the publisher further corrections, most of which relate to mistakes made by the engraver of the first edition. It is obvious from the number of revisions and amendments how intensely Beethoven worked on this sonata and how obsessed he was with achieving a sound balance between the two instruments with their differences of range and register. Finally he did achieve the greatest possible equilibrium, the cello and the piano form a consummate unit.





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### **Of scattered pages, ghosts and fortepiani – the piano trios op. 70**

At the top of his sketch-book page Beethoven wrote down ideas for the designation of the first movement of the second trio of op. 70 and below that in nine staves sketches for the first movement of the first trio and in the last four staves ideas for the final movement of the second trio. Originally the page was part, as were many others, of the so-called “Pastoral Sketchbook” (it contained mainly sketches for the Pastoral Symphony). The book, today in the collection of the British Library, now contains only 59 of the original 96 pages. The others were sold or given away, as single pages or in bundles, as early as the nineteenth century. Three are in the possession of the Beethoven House. Some good detective work enabled the page on display here to be conclusively assigned to the book. The small blot of ink just above the third block of notes from the bottom of the page (Beethoven closed the book before the ink was dry) corresponds exactly with an imprint on a page in a bundle which is now in the State Library in Berlin. This bundle is known to have been removed much earlier from the said sketchbook.

In his analysis the poet and composer E.T.A. Hoffmann was hardly able to control his enthusiasm for the way in which “B.[eethoven] carries the romantic spirit of music deep in his soul and with what great genius, what sobriety, he breathes it into his works”. Indeed the trios op. 70 raise the genre to another level. The ensemble has a fuller, heavier sound. The string parts are clearly more difficult and space-filling than ever before and thus the piano can expand, with five-finger chords and much use of pedals. The dramatic gripping and atmospherically dense “Largo” movement casts an immediate spell on the listener. Beethoven's pupil Carl Czerny wrote at the time that the movement reminded him of the first appearance of the ghost in “Hamlet”, thus coining the name “Ghost Trio”. In fact Beethoven jotted down on one page not only sketches for this movement but also ideas for an opening witches' choir to the opera “Macbeth” which he planned but never actually composed. In his review Hoffmann waxes lyrical about the special sounds which contemporary fortepiani could make, and which of course cannot be reproduced on modern instruments. “When the main theme is played by violin and cello, the piano usually has only a phrase in 64th sextuplets, which should be played *pianissimo* and *leggermente*. This is practically the only way in which the sound of a good piano can be demonstrated in such a surprising and effective manner. If these sextuplets are played by a deft and light hand, with raised dampers and celeste closed, a purring sound is produced, reminiscent of an aeolian harp and harmonica, which when united with the bowed sounds of the string instruments, has a particularly wonderful effect. When not only the dampers are raised and the muffler pedal is used, but also the shifting action, which moves the manual so that the hammers strike only one string, out of the beautiful Streicher piano floated up sounds which enveloped the soul like soft, ghostly visions and enticed one into a magic circle of strange notions”.

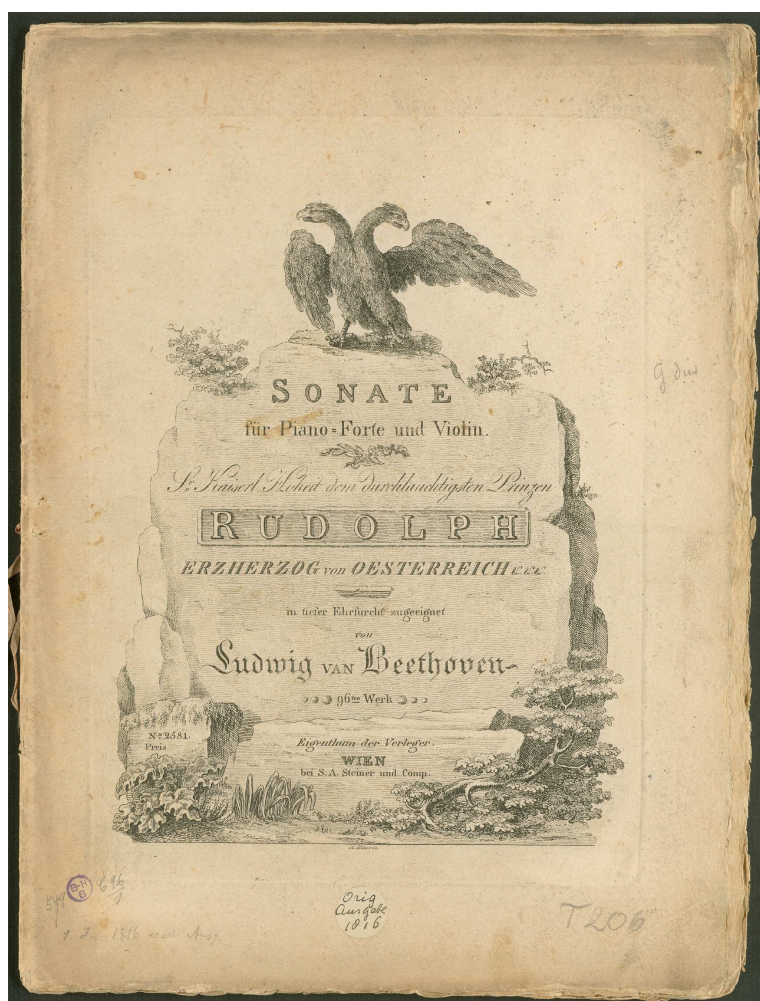
Certainly Dorothea von Ertmann, Beethoven's favoured pianist, understood how to make use of these assets when she played the first trio from the copy displayed here. Beethoven himself wrote in the fingering presumably especially for her.



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## Not only the symphonies are great – the “monumental work” Opus 97

The “Archduke Trio” op. 97, the last piano trio which Beethoven wrote, looks somewhat like a little symphony and sounds like one too. The two central movements are broader in dimension than those of Opus 70 and of substantial construction – the scherzo coming before the lyrical slow movement. With its chordal piano sound, the cello responsible for the melody and the violin somewhat in the background, it is indeed in its sound far removed from earlier chamber music. Like the trio, Beethoven's last accompanied solo sonata, the violin sonata op. 96, is also dedicated to his benefactor, pupil and friend Archduke Rudolph, who performed the premiere together with the brilliant French violinist Pierre Rode during a soirée at the house of Prince Lobkowitz in December 1812. Beethoven dedicated more works to him than to anyone else, for instance the piano concertos op. 58 and 73, the piano sonata “Les Adieux” op. 81a and the piano sonata op. 106.



Original edition of the Sonata for piano and violin op. 96

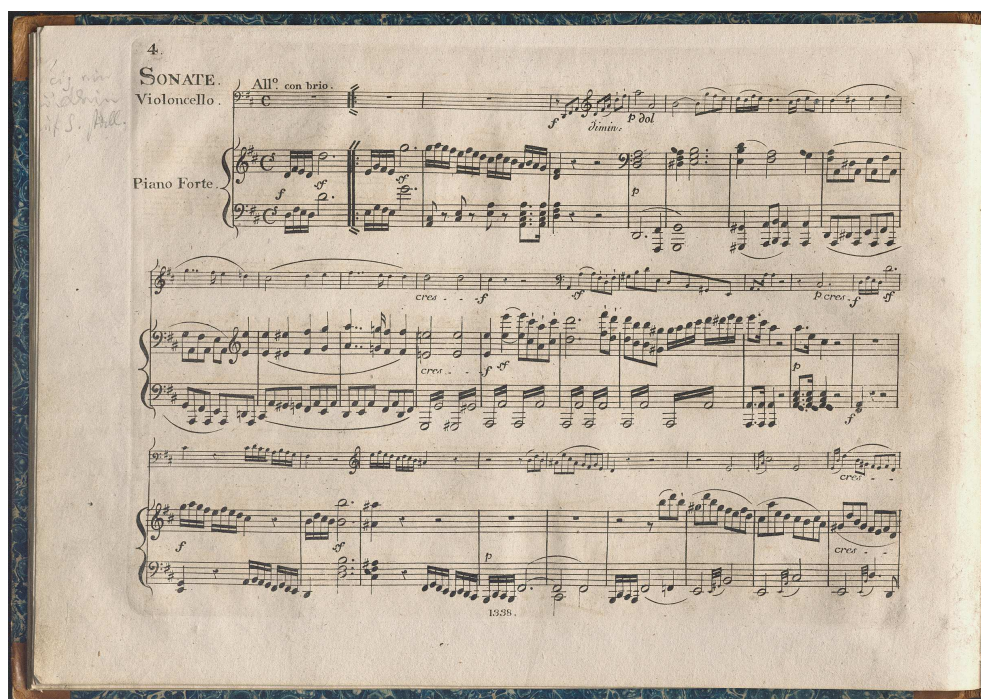




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## **Editions: problems and solutions – the cello sonatas op. 102**

Before a musicologist prepares a new edition of a composition, he studies and compares all sources which are authentic and (still) available. Discrepancies among the different sources are noted in a “critical report”, since he can only choose one alternative for the score. For the cello sonatas op. 102 manuscript copies made by a reliable copyist and revised and corrected several times by Beethoven himself provide the main source. For example, in the corrected copy the last note of the fourth bar of the cello part is a D<sup>1</sup>. Beethoven had the work printed from this copy in 1817 by the Bonn publisher Simrock, after the publisher's son Peter Joseph Simrock had visited him a year earlier in Vienna. Incidentally this is the first contemporary printing of the full score (the parts for all instruments are printed below one another instead of there being a separate sheet for each instrument) of chamber music by Beethoven. Another edition was published two years later in Vienna, engraved from a different copy, which had also been proof-read by Beethoven. In this edition the note in question is not D<sup>1</sup> but C sharp<sup>1</sup>. Nor does Beethoven's original manuscript, which still exists, provide conclusive proof – either note could be meant. Only recently have we found out what Beethoven's real intention was: a very special copy of the Bonn edition emerged, in which Beethoven himself has corrected the note in question and written in the margin, “C sharp – a clanger from the house of Simrock”. And so we know that C sharp is correct! On the next page we find the comment, “2 he-goats from the sheep-pen of Simrock” referring to missing instructions for the cello: pizzicato (plucked with the fingers) and arco (played with a bow). In Simrock's defence it must be said that he produced a neat and correct engraving from the copy, on which Beethoven himself had overlooked the mistakes. During the preparation of the Vienna edition the composer read through this copy of the Bonn edition and made the corrections and amendments. The ultimate version is now available to all musicians in the new edition of the original score (Henle, Munich).



Original edition of the Sonata for piano and cello op. 102 no. 2 with corrections by Beethoven



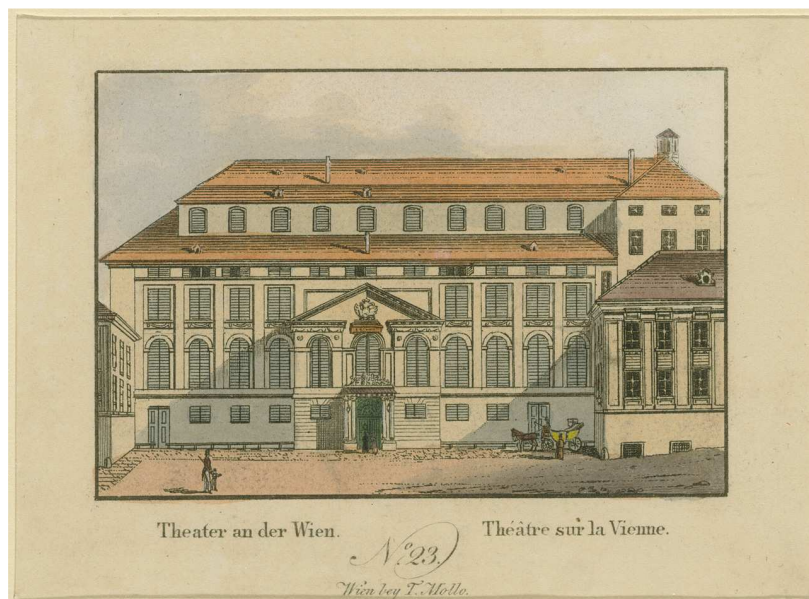
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Beethoven would have liked to have had the cello sonatas published in England as well, but his agent had to tell him that the publishers considered the works too difficult and unplayable: "I have offered your sonatas to a printer, but they say they are too difficult and would not be saleable, and consequently make offers, such as I cannot accept, but when I shall have played them to a few professors, their reputation will naturally be encreased by their merits, and I hope to have better offers". Beethoven's contemporaries were perplexed about these unusual and "strange" works which broke irrevocably with all traditions, as is shown by the review in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*. On the other hand, the royal director of music in Mannheim, Michael Frey, pointed out their originality after he had heard Carl Czerny and Josef Linke perform one of these sonatas: "It is so original that one cannot possibly understand it the first time".

### Mozart, the model

Beethoven composed four cycles of variations on aria themes from Mozart operas. The variations on "Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen" were composed shortly after a performance of the *Magic Flute* in the Royal Theatre in Vienna early 1801. Beethoven strives in his variations to retain the original character of the opera and, like Pamina and Papageno, the cello and piano act as partners in a duet.

We shall never know whether Beethoven actually met Mozart during his first stay in Vienna in 1787, or whether he heard him play, or even took some lessons from him. It is however certain that the prince elector in Cologne, who came from Vienna, adored Mozart. This means that Beethoven would have been familiar with Mozart's operas from his work as a musician or from being in the audience at the opera house in Bonn, and that he would naturally have admired Mozart's ability to correlate lyrics and music.



Royal Theatre in Vienna