

Violin Sonata op30 no.2

The seventh sonata of Beethoven is considered one of the most popular. It is the second of the three sonatas of the op.30 set which was written for Alexander I, the emperor of Russia in 1802. This sonata has, like the fifth sonata, 4 movements and is one of the two sonatas that is written in a minor key, C-minor. This key was often used by him for the more dramatic works. As William Kinderman wrote in his book "Beethoven": 'The C minor Violin Sonata op.30 no.2 is perhaps the most powerful of Beethoven's works in this key up to 1802.'

The piece is written in the middle period and contains all the affects one can think of, making it, characteristically, one of the most complete sonatas of the set.

The first movement starts with the piano, giving the first theme. This theme has the classic build of 8 bars, with bar 5 being the second part of the sentence. In bar 9 the melody of the violin gets accompanied and a continues line of sixteenth notes in the piano gives the motoric drive which is so characteristic of this movement. This movement is also one of the first movements that shows such a clear equality between the instruments. One of the key-factors in the interpretation is the interaction between the instruments. This is more apparent than the earlier sonatas and one can clearly see that the style which Beethoven adapted from the classical period is being extended. One can see this in bar 17 until the start of the second theme in bar 28. Beethoven combines in this part a couple of things. It seems that the violin has a type of accompaniment as the piano definitely has the upper role. But less is true, the difference between the first bar of the section and the second bar shows that there is more to it than 'just accompaniment'. If we look beyond, Beethoven doubles the violin and piano right hand with an octave for the next 3 bars, including the trill. Then the instruments play chords in equal dynamic on each beat separate.

The second theme which has the character of a march is introduced by the violin. It is accompanied by the piano which has mainly the accompaniment role though has to show the harmonic changes along the way. Keeping a strict tempo, which in general is essential in Beethoven's music, is of utmost importance in this part.

In the coda of the first movement, the violin has the main theme. The pianist has a counterpoint underneath as an accompaniment. It gives the dramatism that is so particular for this movement.

The second movement is written in an Adagio but should be taken to slow. It can be too stretched out and the Alla-Breve sign (some editions do not have the Alla-breve in their score marked) in this movement hints towards a moderate tempo. Max Rostal suggests in his book that one should take the tempo from the 32nd notes in the piano part. This movement is written in A-flat major to contrast the C-minor first movement. The movement is built upon a long, singing, legato theme and has a middle part in which long legato notes and staccato 16th notes are combined. when the first part comes back, Beethoven introduces 32nd notes to intensify and vary the music. One major contrast comes when the 128th notes are played in a loud FF. This first by the piano and after by both instruments.

The third movement is a scherzo and a trio form. It is written in a dancy character and contrasted with the more melodic trio. It is a great contrast to the fourth, and last, movement. We went from A flat major, in the second movement, to C major. It is important to notice the Sf written in this movement. Most of them are off the main first beat which makes the rhythmic feeling very playful.

The fourth movement which hints back towards the dramatism of the first movement has a shocking character, especially with the contrast of the second and third movements. It is written in the same line as the other movements with the use of themes between the violin and the piano. Often the piano starts and the violin repeats it afterwards. It builds and connects the instruments in such a way that they are equally important, something that, up to then, was not standard. The piece should not be taken 'as fast as possible' due to the coda in the end of the movement which wants it to be even faster. One has to take into consideration as well the technical demands of both instruments, in which the piano has an especially demanding role.