

Ever since its April 5, 1803 premiere in Vienna at the Theatre an der Wien, the *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor*, Op. 37 of **Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770-1827), has occupied a central place in the core repertoire of concert pianists throughout the world. It is a work of many contrasts, both powerful and delicate, extroverted and introverted, and in itself represents the first keyboard work of Beethoven to explore beyond the restrictions imposed by the five-octave, knee-pedaled Viennese fortepiano then in vogue. The concerto is also representational of Beethoven's second stylistic period--remote key relationships, pedal-tone modulations, the use of the orchestra as an equal partner in the conveyance of musical expression, and--as in the *Second Symphony*--an opening movement that ends with a tutti fermata.

Curiously, the concerto has had a history of being misdated. At the end of the nineteenth century and during the first decades of the twentieth, a number of respected musicologists incorrectly interpreted the date of the original manuscript to be 1800, placing the work alongside the *First Symphony*, Op. 21 in terms of musical composition. This was not questioned at the time, and the issue was essentially laid to rest and forgotten about, especially after the manuscript was sent out of Berlin to a monastery at Grüssow, near Waldenburg, in Silesia for safekeeping during World War II. Germany lost the war, of course and in 1945 all of the Sudetenland, including Silesia, was handed over to Poland. The sounds very noble, but was actually caused when Josef Stalin seized eastern Poland and its silver mines for himself, forcing the Polish citizens who had lived in that area to repatriate the reassigned land on the opposite end of the country. Thus in 1977, when the original manuscript score was rediscovered in the same monastery, the monastery was now in Krszeszow, near Walbrzych, in Poland. After its return to Berlin, a reexamination of the score conclusively showed the dating of the manuscript--in Beethoven's hand--to be 1803, not 1800. Oftentimes Beethoven's "3," as marked for his triplets, is slanted almost 90 degrees, and resembles a closed "m." Thus the concerto's true chronological opus number *is* indeed 37, with most of its composition having taken place on the heels of the *Second Symphony*, Op. 36.

It would be easy to say that the work is in the traditional three-movement classical format, but Beethoven was already starting to experiment within the framework. The first movement, recognizable as "imposing" Beethoven almost from the start, features an orchestral exposition that modulates twice and introduces the heartbeat motif that permeates much of the movement. When the piano enters, rather than present a new theme, it adds its own commentary to the main theme. The solo cadenza was composed by Beethoven in 1809; it resolves into the heartbeat motif and the piano continues to play through to the end of the movement.

The shock of the understated first chord of the beautiful *Largo* has been the topic of many conversations. The E major tonality of the movement is as far away as possible from the C

minor of the outer two movements. Beethoven's tonal reasoning for this is manifested twice: first, in the very start of the *Rondo*, when the third of the E major triad and its leading tone are transformed into the fifth and sixth tones of the new key and second, in a repeated pedal tone modulation back to E major. Yet, Beethoven is not finished with modulating. After a brief cadenza, the work finishes with a surprising C major coda in 6/8 time.