LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN: 33 VARIATIONS ON A WALTZ BY DIABELLI, OP. 120, A LECTURE RECITAL, TOGETHER WITH THREE RECITALS OF SELECTED WORKS OF J. S. BACH, L. VAN BEETHOVEN, R. SCHUMANN, F. CHOPIN, F. LISZT, S. PROKOFIEV, AND E. GRANADOS

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North Texas State University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Doctor of Musical Arts

By

Natalia da Roza, B. S., M. Mus.
Denton, Texas
December, 1972

The lecture recital was given December 5, 1971. A discussion of Beethoven's 33 Variations on a Waltz by Diabelli, Op. 120 included the circumstances under which the work was composed, analysis of the composition, and controversial opinions on the Variations. The piece was then performed by memory.

In addition to the lecture recital three other public recitals were performed. These consisted entirely of solo literature for the piano.

The first solo recital was on April 12, 1970, and included works of Bach, Beethoven, and Liszt. Part of the preparation included the writing of program notes of a historical and analytical nature.

The second solo recital, on January 31, 1971, consisted entirely of sonatas by Beethoven, Chopin, and Prokofiev.

The final solo program, on August 11, 1972, included works by Bach, Schumann, and Granados.

All four programs were recorded on magnetic tape and are filed, along with the written version of the lecture material, as a part of the dissertation.
Tape recordings of all performances submitted as dissertation requirements are on deposit in the North Texas State University Library.
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NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

presents

NATALIA DA ROZÁ

in a

GRADUATE PIANO RECITAL

Sunday, April 12, 1970        5:30 p.m.          Recital Hall

J. S. Bach ........................ Fantasia and Fugue in A Minor

Ludwig van Beethoven ...... 15 Variations in E-flat Major, Op. 35
on a theme from "Prometheus"

INTERMISSION

Franz Liszt ........................ Années de Pèlerinage II: Italie

6. Sonetto CXXIII del Petrarca

7. Après une lecture du Dante, Fantasia quasi Sonata

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Musical Arts
J.S. Bach (1685-1750). . . . . . Fantasia and Fugue in A Minor

The Fantasia and Fugue is an early work of Bach, composed during his stay at Weimar (1708-1717). The Fantasia is quite short, consisting only of ten measures of chords which are to be arpeggiated by the performer. The notation of this section in blocked chords is very much in keeping with the Baroque practice of indicating merely the harmonic skeleton of such movements. Bach was willing to conform to contemporary practice in this case, for this was not in keeping with his own personal practice. He almost always preferred to indicate all the notes he intended for the performer - and was in fact criticized for doing so.

The three-voiced Fugue is the longest that Bach ever wrote. The subject, in continuous sixteenth notes, initiates a completely uninterrupted moto perpetuo. This shows the direct influence of Buxtehude who had a special gift for rhapsodic effusion by way of active figuration and imitative counterpoint. This style is not generally characteristic of Bach, who usually preferred economical statements for his fugues. The fugal art here is rich in countersubject and episode; it has a fine and effective climax and affords opportunity for great variety of color. The conclusion is made exciting by a cadenza-like passage, developed out of the first figure of the subject, beginning low and spreading into the higher register. This, coupled with its moto perpetuo character, gives the Fugue a great affinity with the same composer's Organ Fugue in D Major.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827). . . 15 Variations in E-Flat Major, Op.35 on a theme from "Prometheus"

Beethoven used his "Prometheus" ballet theme in two of his other compositions, the Variations Op.35 and the Finale of the "Eroica" Symphony, Op.55. Because the Symphony was so popular the piano variations later came to be known as the "Eroica" Variations. Originally dedicated to Abbé Stadler, Beethoven changed the dedication to a Monsieur le Comte Maurice Lichnowsky whom he had met just before publication.

The construction of Op.35 is distinctive in its three large sections. There is a contrapuntal Introduction consisting of the statement and three strophic variations on the bass of the "Prometheus" theme. The middle section consists of the theme and fifteen variations on it. Beethoven provides variety by shifting emphasis not only melodically and harmonically but also texturally by interspersing homophonic writing with polyphonic sections. The central position of the seventh variation is enhanced by its canon treatment, the same principle used in both the Introduction and the final variation.
The final double variations, the first in the tonic minor and the second in the original key - a rhapsodic adagio section followed by a coda - conclude the section.

The final section, not labelled a variation, is a three-voiced fugue whose subject is again the bass of the "Prometheus" theme, the second half of which is replaced by sixteenth notes to obtain rhythmic contrast. After some episodic material there is another fugal treatment, this time with the subject inverted. The climax is achieved when the subject is stated chordally. The coda which follows is an elaboration on the theme and builds in intensity to the end.

Beethoven wrote twenty sets of variations for the piano, the majority on favorite tunes from contemporary operas. Both the variation principle and the importance of contrapuntal textures in Beethoven's music reached their culmination in his late style, for example in the late piano sonatas Op.101, 106 and 110.

Franz Liszt (1811-1886) .................. Années de Pèlerinage II: Italie
6. Sonetto CXXIII del Petrarca
7. Après une lecture du Dante, Fantasia quasi Sonata

Liszt composed three sets of Années de Pèlerinage (Years of Pilgrimage): Première Année: "Suisse"; Deuxième Année: "Italie"; Troisième Année: "Venezia e Napoli" (sometimes called "Supplement to Italie"). In the second set Liszt's regard for the cultural and artistic heritage of Italy is reflected in the fact that all the pieces were inspired by either literary or artistic models. The contents of the set are: 1. Sposalizio; 2. II Penseroso; 3. Canzonetta da Salvator Rosa; 4. Sonetto XLVII del Petrarca; 5. Sonetto CIV del Petrarca; 6. Sonetto CXXXIII del Petrarca; 7. Après une lecture du Dante; Fantasia quasi Sonata. Although the collection appeared in 1858 it is not from the "Weimar" period (1848-1861), because each of the pieces had been published separately before then.

The three Petrarchan sonnets exist in several versions. Originally written in 1838-39 as songs for high tenor voice, they were transcribed for piano. In 1858 Liszt revised the piano version, reversing the order of the first two sonnets and publishing all three in the second set of Années de Pèlerinage. In 1865 these three sonnets appeared in still another song version, this time for lower voice. These pieces once again show Liszt's great skill in changing the performance media without changing the quality of a piece. Each sonnet is an excellent piano piece, and there is no hint in them that they were originally written for solo voice.

In "Sonetto CXXIII del Petrarca" the mood of the poem is successfully
Yes, I beheld on earth angelic grace,
And charms divine which mortals rarely see,
Such as both glad and pain the memory;
Vain, light, unreal, is all else I trace:
Tears I saw shower'd from those fine eyes apace,
Of which the sun oft-times might envious be;
Accents I heard sighed forth so movingly,
As to stay floods, or mountains to displace.

Love and good sense, firmness, with pity join'd
And wailful grief, a sweeter concert made
Than ever yet was pour'd on human ear;
And heaven unto the music so inclined,
That not a leaf was seen to stir the shade,
Such melody had fraught the winds, the atmosphere.

- tr. by Nott

The so-called Dante Sonata, a piece of great length and tempestuous character, is regarded as the finest of the series. Liszt did not, as in the sonnets, transcribe this from a song, but the approach is analogous: he used a poem for his inspiration, this time, Victor Hugo's "d'après une lecture de Dante." Hugo's poem actually provided only the initial inspiration for Liszt, for his response is more to Dante than to Hugo, particularly the "Inferno" section of the Divine Comedy, a copy of which Liszt supposedly had with him at all times. The first sketch of 1837, performed by Liszt in Vienna in 1839, was revised and given its present form in 1849.

Musically, the Dante Sonata represents Liszt's programmatic writing. As a piano piece it is comparable to some of his symphonic poems, particularly the Faust Symphony, where Liszt uses contrasting themes to reflect the conflict between the human and divine. In the case of the Dante Sonata, the slow modally-oriented progressions of Church music are pitted against the rapid chromatic progressions of the nineteenth century. The leading themes are developed in free rhapsodical style, and presented in wide dynamic variety and pianistic texture. The most obvious theme is the opening one whose octaves, descending in augmented fourths and diminished fifths, suggest the diabolus of medieval music. The most striking technical feature is the almost entire absence of "finger passages"; powerful and coloristic octaves and repeated chords abound.
NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
presents

NATALIA DA ROZA

in a

Graduate Piano Recital

Sunday, January 31, 1971
3:00 p.m.
Recital Hall

Sonata in D major, Op.28
Allegro
Andante
Allegro Vivace
Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo

Sonata No.2 in B-flat minor, Op.35
Grave - Doppio movimento
Scherzo
Marche funèbre (Lento)
Finale (Presto)

INTERMISSION

Sonata No.6 in A major, Op.82
Allegro moderato
Allegretto
Tempo di valzer lentissimo
Vivace

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presents  

NATALIA DA ROZA  
in a  
Graduate Piano Recital  

Friday, August 11, 1972  8:15 p.m.  Recital Hall  

Toccata in D Major ...................... J. S. Bach  

Phantasie, Op. 17 ....................... Robert Schumann  

INTERMISSION  

Goyescas: “Los Majos Enamorados” ..... Enrique Granados  
1. Los Requiebros  
2. Coloquio en la Reja  
3. El Fandango de Candil  

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Doctor of Musical Arts
NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

presents

Natalia da Roza, Pianist

in a

LECTURE RECITAL

Sunday, December 5, 1971  4:00 p.m.  MU165

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN...........33 Variations on a Waltz by Diabelli, op 120

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts
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BEETHOVEN: 33 VARIATIONS ON A WALTZ
BY DIABELLI, OP. 120

Antonio Diabelli was born in Salzburg in 1781, and received his musical training in Bavaria. He went to Vienna in 1803, and was employed as a proofreader at Steiner publishing house, where he worked until 1818, when he joined Pietro Cappi in Graben to establish the publishing house of Cappi and Diabelli. Besides having his own publishing firm, Diabelli was also a prolific composer. He died in 1858.

In 1819 Diabelli composed a Waltz and invited fifty-one eminent musicians in Austria to write a variation on it. His purpose was to collect these variations and publish them as a set.

There are altogether eighty-three variations on Diabelli's Waltz. Beethoven composed thirty-three, and fifty others composed one variation each. The better-known composers among these are Carl Czerny, Hummel, Kalkbrenner, Liszt (eleven years old at the time) and Schubert. Schubert's variation is the only one of these that is well known, and it is the best one of the fifty. These fifty variations were published as a set by Cappi and Diabelli in 1823.

When Beethoven was invited to submit a variation on Diabelli's theme, he did not wish to cooperate in such an endeavor. He had contributed to a collection some years ago, and the outcome was extremely unfavorable.

Around 1806 the Countess Rzewuska at one of her social gatherings improvised an aria at the piano, and the poet Carpani was inspired to
improvise a text for it. The poem, *In Questa Tomba*, is addressed by a broken-hearted lover from his grave to his repentant lady:

O let me rest in peace  
In the darkest night of death!  
Thou should'st have felt this sadness  
While yet I drew life's breath.

Vanish and let my shadow  
Sleep th'eternal sleep  
My ashes draw no warmth from  
The hot tears thou dost weep!

The Countess then submitted the poem as a text for a contest among both amateur and professional musicians, whose compositions would be collected and privately printed, the copies to be given to the contestants and other music lovers. The better-known composers who participated were Salieri, Cherubini, Czerny, and Beethoven. The collection was printed in 1808, and Beethoven's contribution is the only one that survives today.

At a later printing of this collection there was added a large engraving showing a ludicrous illustration of the poem, with music written for the picture. Many composers were enraged by this and decided never again to allow themselves to be so debased. It was the memory of this that prompted Beethoven's initial refusal of Diabelli's invitation. He later expressed the desire to compose a set of variations on the Waltz, and Diabelli offered him eighty Ducats for six or seven variations. Beethoven started to compose, and when he was done in 1823, he had thirty-three variations. They were published by Cappi and Diabelli in June, 1823.
Beethoven did not like Diabelli's theme; he called it a "cobbler's patch." Yet this set of variations is among his best. Several writers have commented on the similarity between Diabelli's theme and Beethoven's method of constructing some of his own themes. It is binary in form, with the movement from tonic to dominant harmony in the first section and dominant to tonic in the second.

Fig. 1—Diabelli's Waltz

\(^1\)William Yeomans, Philip Barford, Harold Truscott, for example.
The overall harmonic plan is similar to that of Beethoven's own in the "Eroica" Variations, Op. 35:

Fig. 2—Ludwig van Beethoven: "Eroica" Variations, Op. 35: Theme.
The Variation theme in his *String Quartet*, Op. 131 also has this plan:

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Fig. 3—Ludwig van Beethoven: *String Quartet*, Op. 131: 4th Movement: Theme.
The opening of Diabelli's theme also bears striking resemblance to the opening of the second movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata, Op. 111.

![Figure 4: Ludwig van Beethoven: Sonata, Op. 111: 2nd Movement: mm. 1-3.](image)

and to the opening of the Scherzo of an early work without opus number, published posthumously in 1830, the Piano Trio in E-flat major:

![Figure 5: Ludwig van Beethoven: Piano Trio in E-flat major: Scherzo: opening.](image)

The above comparisons do prompt an affirmative answer to Harold Truscott's question in his article on the "Diabelli" Variations: "Was Beethoven aware that in writing these variations he was, in fact, writing them on a theme of his own?" He was, of course, speaking in the wide sense of theme-concept.

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It is possible, then, to consider that Beethoven's criticism of Diabelli's theme was not quite objective. The intrinsic value of the theme has been commended by several, as exemplified in Harold Truscott's statement:

It is not necessary for a variation theme to have a fine melody, and it is often the business of the variation to build that. It is necessary for the variation theme to have a "fine, sturdy and easily grasped structure," and this it has; it has also much that is vigorously pleasing and, like Beethoven himself at times, irregularly symmetrical.3

In his book on Beethoven, Tovey considers the theme as one which "sets the composer free to build recognizable variations in every conceivable way."4 Apart from the variety within the Beethoven set, the variations done by the other fifty composers show that they found the theme a surprisingly plastic object: some cast their variations in the form of studies; others used the theme as the starting-point of a fantasia-capriccio movement; and within the set there is even a canon and a Polacca.

Many listeners have found the "Diabelli" Variations of Beethoven difficult to comprehend, possibly because it is such a long work, and because the variety of variations is so great that unity seems to be lacking. Most sets of variations are short, and the listener subconsciously conditions himself to this form in a way that is different from his approach to any other form. The theme is constantly sought

3Ibid., p. 140.

4Donald Francis Tovey, Beethoven (New York, 1945), p. 127.
and usually found, thus providing him with the sense of a sectional but unified work. With regard to the "Diabelli" Variations Tovey recommends that

The listener who wishes to understand Beethoven's variations had better begin at once by relieving his conscience of all responsibility for tracing the melody. Moreover, he need not worry about his capacity to trace the harmony. Nor, indeed, is there any single musical category which will suffice as the basis of the "Diabelli" Variations. Nothing short of the whole theme will answer the purpose. Each variation will single out one or more aspects of this whole, and the listener may enjoy all resemblances that attract his attention. All further effort on his part is mistaken, and if there seems to be no definable resemblance between the variation and the theme, the listener is entitled to welcome the variety as a complete change.\(^5\)

Upon listening to such a large number of variations on a short theme, it becomes easy for the mind to wander and thus for the listener to tire early. This is the inevitable result if the listener endows each variation with its separate entity and fails to hear the composition as one long work consisting of interrelated parts. Several methods which can be used to comprehend the work as a whole will be presented, and the listener is free to choose according to his preference.

The "Diabelli" Variations can be understood as a composition whose sections become progressively more complex as it develops. This can be seen in Beethoven's use of rhythm and counterpoint.

By the gradually increasing subdivision of the beat, a strong forward motion is set up from one variation to another, with a rhythmically slower variation inserted where too much momentum has been gained

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 125.
at that point in the piece. This technic is very effective, as it relates groups of variations to each other, thus giving the work broader dimensions.

The use of imitation is scattered throughout the Variations, and by contrapuntal writing of growing complexity the work reaches its climax toward the end. Of the thirty-three variations, four are canonic. Variation III has a two-voice canon at the octave, three beats apart, from measure 5 to measure 8.

![Fig. 6--Variation III, mm. 5-8](image)

The beginning of the second section of this variation is not canonic, but points of imitation are used in all four voices to maintain the contrapuntal interest of the variation.

![Fig. 7--Variation III, mm. 17-21](image)
The beginnings of both sections of Variation VI are canons alternately two and three octaves apart. In the first section the canon is initiated by the treble,

![Fig. 8--Variation VI, mm. 1-4](image)

and in the second section it is initiated by the bass.

![Fig. 9--Variation VI, mm. 17-21](image)

Altogether there are nine measures of canonic writing in this variation. Once again the voices are three beats apart.

Both sections of Variation XIX start with canons at the octave, and the order of entry is the same as in Variation VI. However, we do see a progression here as the voices are only one beat apart, and altogether there are sixteen measures of canonic writing.
There are only six measures of canonic writing at the beginning of Variation XX, and this is probably due to the addition of a free inner part which increases dissonance and chromaticism.

Like Variation III, the second section is not canonic but has points of imitation.

Variation XXIV is a four-voice Fughetta, with the subject of the first section inverted to become the subject of the second section.
The thirty-second variation, a double fugue, is the climax of the composition from the point of view of contrapuntal writing. Both subjects feature highlights from the theme: the first subject has the descending leap of a fourth followed by repeated notes, and the second subject, in longer note values, recalls the sequential progression of minor seconds.
The double figure has two sections, to correspond with the binary form of the Waltz. The second section can be considered a variation of the first: the first subject becomes less busy by the elimination of the many repeated notes, and the second subject is embellished, and busier than the first.

The Variations is also divided into large sections through changes of keys and tempi. The theme and most of the variations are in C major; Variation IX is in C minor; Variation XX is in C major, but it contains much dissonance and chromaticism; Variations XXIX through XXXI are in
C minor, and they lead to the climactic Fugue in E-flat major, after which Variation XXXIII and the Coda return to C major. Thus the entire work is divided into sections of about ten variations each.

From the standpoint of tempo the Variations bears close resemblance to the three movements of a sonata. The first twenty-eight variations correspond to a first movement, and they are followed by three slow variations—the "second movement." The lively double fugue followed by the Minuet and Coda correspond to a third movement.

The diversity of possible approaches to the "Diabelli" Variations as shown, justifies Hans von Bölow's statement in his edition of the work:

> In this gigantic composition the Editor recognizes the microcosm as it were, of Beethoven's genius in its entirety; or, indeed, an image of the entire realm of music in epitome. All evolutions of musical thought and tonal fantasy—from the sublimest imagination to the most reckless humour—in an incomparable wealth of form and expression, are most eloquently manifested in this work. As an object of study, and as a musical pabulum for the mentality of whole generations, it is practically inexhaustible.6

Apart from discussion of the entire composition, some writers have expressed interesting and relevant observations about certain sections of the Variations. Karl Geiringer calls the three slow movements in C minor a prelude to the double fugue.7 Hans von Bölow, in his edition of the Variations, has the following to say of the last three variations:

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6Ludwig van Beethoven, Thirty-three Variations on a Waltz by Diabelli, Op. 120, edited by Hans von Bölow (New York, 1898), p. 73.

We should like to style the number [Variation XXXI], thoughtful and tender alike, a renascence of the Bach Adagio, as the succeeding double fugue is one of the Handel Allegro. Conjoining to these the final Variation, which might be considered as a new birth, so to speak, of the Haydn-Mozart Minuet, we possess, in these three Variations, a compendium of the whole history of music.⁸

In Variation XXII Beethoven pays homage to Mozart: it is labelled MOLTO ALLEGRO, ALLA "NOTTE E GIORNO FATIGAR" DI MOZART. The rhythm of the bass of the Diabelli theme is altered, and the variation becomes Leporello's aria in the opening of Don Giovanni:

![Musical notation](image)

Fig. 16—Variation XXII, mm. 1-4

Hans von Bülow has this to say about the variation:

Until Wagner's "Meistersinger," the whole art of music can exhibit no similar clever specimen of drastic humor. One is tempted to imagine that the great master had a premonition of the "Parisian" style of Meyerbeer, and took the notion to write a sparkling epigram on the history of opera from Mozart to Meyerbeer. Here Don Giovanni (or Leporello) becomes Robert le Diable (or Bertram).⁹

Beethoven's "Diabelli" Variations, together with his Six Variations on an Original Theme, Op. 34, "Eroica" Variations, Op. 35, and Thirty-two

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⁸Ludwig van Beethoven, op. cit., p. 80.

⁹Ibid., p. 69.
Variations on an Original Theme in C minor (known as Op. 191), represent an important innovation in the history of the keyboard variation after the Baroque period. Until these works were composed, the variation form was treated largely as a popular, galant form: themes were taken from popular songs and arias of the time, and the variations were written-out improvisations. Beethoven gave the form the status of a serious major composition, putting it on an equal footing with sonata form.

Critical opinions about the Variations are mixed, and they are of significant interest to performers who inevitably find themselves in the position of defending its place in their repertory.

In an article on the "Diabelli" Variations, William Yeomans states that

in spite of its pianistic qualities, it may be fairly asked of the "Diabelli" whether it is akin to the "Art of Fugue" which, although playable on the keyboard, hardly reaches its fullness in any medium.\(^\text{10}\)

Some writers, basing their argument on the premise that the piano is an inadequate instrument for the full expression of the Variations, have objected to the performance of the work at all. Paul Bekker, for instance, calls the Variations a counterpart to the Hammerklavier Sonata, Op. 106, and suggests that neither composition be played. He accuses Beethoven of writing music not technically, but musically, unplayable.

Here it is the quintessence of humor which laughingly disregards the insufficiencies of imperfect mechanism and soars above the world of actuality. Both . . . are written for an instrument which never existed and never will exist. . . . We see instrumental music carried to the point of actual perfection, and carried beyond it by the urge to the immaterial; physical sound is rejected and an experiment is made with tone-abstractions which can only be grasped intellectually.11

Robert Haven Schauffler, in his book on Beethoven, states that "in writing these variations the deaf master was Utopian and intended them for a theoretical virtuoso playing a theoretical piano."12

From the above examples it can be seen that the Variations has been unfavorably judged in two different ways, namely, the questionable existence of the pianist for whom it was written, as well as the piano for which it was written. These criticisms overlook two important historical facts.

Beethoven was a virtuoso pianist as well as a composer, but as he realized that he was losing his hearing the separation of the creative from the interpretative artist took place. The first references to his deafness are found in letters written by him in 1801. On June 29, to his childhood friend, Franz Gerhard Wegeler, he writes:

I have given a few concerts. But that jealous demon, my wretched health, has put a nasty spoke in my wheel; and it amounts to this, that for the last three years my hearing has become weaker and weaker. . . . If I had any other profession I might be able to deal with my infirmity, but in my profession it is a terrible handicap.13

And in July of the same year, to Karl Amenda:

Let me tell you my most prized possession, my hearing, has greatly deteriorated. . . . I am cut off from everything that is dear and precious to me. . . . Meanwhile I have been composing a good deal. **14**

With the resultant separation of the composer from the interpreter a new era was begun, not only in Beethoven's life, but in the history of music. Music for the solo instrument ceased to be a medium for display of the composer's personal virtuosity. Beethoven was the first to compose for solo instruments without a practical personal end in view, and solely because an instrument interested him as a means of communicating his inspirations. He put forth the work on its own merits, without reference to any particular performance or to the personality of any particular interpreter. **15**

The year 1808 marks the official close of Beethoven's career as a virtuoso, and from then on he was writing for an "ideal" pianist in the sense that in his imagination someone could play the way he did, as he always believed himself to be his best interpreter. It is only very much into our own century that we find composers writing music that is not meant to be played, and certainly Beethoven did not have that attitude.

The second criticism mentioned was that Beethoven wrote the Variations for an instrument that does not exist. William Yeomans makes a valid point in saying that

Pianos of Beethoven's day may have produced a certain amount that approximated to his notion of how the work should sound, yet it must be allowed that by

**14**Ibid., pp. 63-64.

**15**Paul Bekker, *op. cit.*, p. 81.
the time the finer developments in the pianoforte were coming into being, Beethoven was deaf and nearing his end.\textsuperscript{16}

Beethoven was constantly looking for a better piano, and was impatient to have one that would correspond with his tone-ideal. He rejected the Viennese piano, with its lightness, delicacy, and transparency of tone. Shortly before 1809 (note that he had already ended his career as a pianist), he became associated with Andreas Streicher in Vienna, and suggested to him that he build a piano which would be able to produce a more sustained tone and which would have a more delicate touch and repetition. Streicher worked on Beethoven's ideas and in 1809 presented him with a piano which was more to his liking. However, he was still looking for a better-sounding instrument: he wanted more than the light brilliance that the Streicher piano had to offer. In 1818 he received a grand piano from Broadwood which corresponded more to his tone-ideal, with its greater resonance and capacity for more color. Yet, in spite of these improvements, Beethoven was never satisfied with the piano, because he still felt that its tone should be more sustained and its action could be faster.

The Variations was indeed written for a piano which did not exist in Beethoven's lifetime, and it is true that he was quite deaf when he wrote it. However, the stronger pianos of today with the faster action can cope with his demands, and although we cannot prove that Beethoven would be totally satisfied with their quality, we can safely assume

\textsuperscript{16}William Yeomans, op. cit., p. 12.
from what we know of his expectations that today's pianos are adequate to the task. Consequently, it is a mistake to say that the Variations (or the Hammerklavier) should not be played, on the grounds that Beethoven wrote them for an instrument that existed only in his ear.

Again quoting Yeomans,

> In keyboard literature, the "Diabelli" Variations belong to a category of works that sum up the possibilities of the instrument of its day yet point forward to the future. Just as Bull's "Walsingham" Variations show the highest point of virginal technique, and the Bach "Goldberg" that of the harpsichord, the "Diabelli" set sounds the uttermost reaches of true pianoforte technique in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.17

Deafness cannot be used as an explanation for what some erroneously consider to be misconceptions of pianistic color in the Variations. Beethoven composed this work while writing the Missa Solemnis, and the Ninth Symphony followed the Variations. Both of these compositions are monumental works in any era of music, and are graphic proof that Beethoven knew exactly what he wanted. When he composed he wrote without misjudgment.

17Ibid., p. 13.
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