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Musicologist and piano virtuoso William Kinderman agrees, writing that Beethoven created something new. “The sonata has become a superbly integrated dramatic canvas on an imposing scale...raising the stakes for interpretation and distancing the music from established genre categories and conventions.”

The ‘Appassionata’ nickname seems particularly apt for the power and drama of this piece. Yet it typifies most nicknames for Beethoven works in that the designation wasn’t his. A publisher first supplied it posthumously, for an 1838 four-hand piano arrangement of this sonata. And while he employs the usual early 19th-century range of dynamics from pianissimo to fortissimo, he creates remarkably emotional effects by sometimes applying that extreme range in consecutive bars – as in the primary theme’s repetition in the opening Sonata form movement.

He reinforces that dramatic effect with fast-paced and extreme registral contrast, as that same repetition statement suddenly drops three octaves. As the fortepianos of Beethoven’s era provided different timbres in each register (unlike the more homogenous sounds of the modern piano), these quick registral contrasts must have sounded almost maniacal. Solomon writes that such shifts generate “sonorities never previously achieved.”

Like his teacher Haydn, Beethoven derives his lyrical secondary theme from the primary theme. He also places it in the conventional key of A-flat Major (for an F Minor work). However, the structural drama continues as he closes the exposition in A-flat Minor – a more remote modulation than any 18th-century work (including Haydn).

The chorale-like melody of the Theme and Variations movement provides an often gentle, major-mode repose after such explosive rhetoric. As the right-hand melody often moves by step, this Andante con moto is ‘very different from the wide-leaping arpeggios of the first-movements main themes” (Lockwood). The theme and the increasingly active four variations also reflect the slow movement structure of the Waldstein, as the middle movement again serves as a prolonged, dramatic introduction to the finale, to which Beethoven links it.

The high drama returns in the powerful finale, a non-stop perpetuum mobile in Sonata form. Once again structural question reign. You have to listen carefully, once the constant flurry of 16th notes begins, to determine which of them constitute the primary theme. This movement provides no exposition repeat, so the location of its ending loses definition in the blur of rapid figuration. However, Beethoven suggests a repetition of the development section and recap – very rare in the 19th century, before the long coda remains in the minor mode. He provides no major-mode resolution here, no ‘darkness into light.’ The great English musicologist and critic Donald Tovey wrote that “the Appassionata is Beethoven’s only work to maintain a tragic solemnity throughout all its movements.”

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Program notes by Ed Wight
Usually these collections of short movements involved dances (Bach’s French and English Suites) or short descriptive pieces (Couperin’s Ordres). Such suites or collections fell out of fashion in the Classic Era of the later 18th century. Haydn and Mozart didn’t write them, focusing on keyboard sonatas or variations instead.

But in a very different spirit, the idea of a ‘Fragment’ resurfaces in the 1790s. The poetic fragment “came into being with the early Romantic movement in Germany – a circle of young artists, philosophers, scientists and poets in Jena” (Charles Rosen). Friedrich Schlegel played the seminal role in his 1798 Athenaeum, with short poetic fragments that “nevertheless suggest distant perspectives” (Rosen). Composers quickly picked up this thread. Instead of multi-movement sonatas, short movements with titles of Rhapsody, Eclogue, and Impromptu began flooding the market by 1820. Carl Maizier published a set of Muzikalischen Bagatellen (‘musical trifles’) in 1797 that included dances and songs. “But Beethoven was the first to use the term ‘Bagatelle’ solely for short, detached piano pieces” (Lockwood).

In addition to a handful of short independent bagatelles (such as the popular ‘Rage over a lost penny’ of 1795 and Fur Elise of 1810), Beethoven also made three collections of them in Op. 33 (1802), Op. 119 (1822), and Op. 126 (1824). Independent pieces could be performed from Opp. 33 and 119, but he conceived Op. 126 as a cycle, calling these movements a Ciclus von Kleinigkeiten (‘cycle of trifles’) in his sketchbooks. These anticipated such celebrated cycles as the Impromptus (1827) and Moments musicaux (1828) of Schubert, and the revolutionary Papillons (1831), Carnaval (1835), Davidsbundlertanze (1837), and Kreisleriana (1838) of Schumann.

The eleven movements of Beethoven's Op. 119 were not conceived as such a cycle. He had published the last five of them earlier as part of the Wiener Piano-Forte Schule in 1821 by Friedrich Starke. He includes some dances: no. Minuet (no. 1), Allemande (no. 3, and “a frenetic little Waltz” (Paul Lewis). “Like decorative ornaments...these bagatelles show Beethoven's ability to convey a sense of completeness within the smallest boundaries” (Lockwood).

Small, but occasionally demanding nonetheless: the Allegro ma non troppo (no. 7) has the pianist play sustained trills and a separate melody line, all in the same hand. Yet hints of the Op. 126 cycle nonetheless appear, as “some aspects of Op. 119 show Beethoven thinking about how to order them effectively, and establish a modest degree of unity in the set” (Lockwood).

The shortest movement, the thirteen bars of no. 10, reflects the very essence of a musical fragment. Beethoven also extends this concept beyond the keyboard genre. In his string quartets, the 11-bar Allegro moderato and 28-bar Adagio movements of Op. 131 and the 66-bar Cavatina of Op. 130 demonstrates the wide-ranging influence of the Romantic era ‘Fragment.’

SONATA in F MINOR, OP. 57 "APPASSIONATA" (1805)

The Waldstein and Appassionata sonatas comprise Beethoven's two biggest piano sonatas of his middle ('heroic') period. They also became the first "that could not have been played by merely competent amateurs...the technical level of the piano sonata was elevated to that of the concerto" (Lockwood).
Program Notes

SONATA in C MINOR, OP. 13 “PATHETIQUE” (1798)

Beethoven's music offered a remarkable new challenge for audiences to consider. Before this, audiences usually listened to music for aural pleasure and enjoyment. However, a music critic reviewing the *Eroica Symphony* wrote “one must not always wish only to be entertained.” Instead, some of Beethoven's works now invited a “degree of mental and emotional engagement few previous pieces of music had demanded...an irresistible sense of high purpose and power” (musicologist Richard Taruskin). Tonight's sonata provides an early example of this.

While most nicknames to his pieces are spurious, Beethoven himself titled tonight's work *Grande Sonate Pathétique*. Beethoven scholar Elaine Sieman writes that “The vast popularity of Beethoven's *Sonate Pathétique*, virtually from the moment of its publication in 1799, is traceable in part to its title.” In the late 18th century, the concept of *pathos* implied “strong, even tragic emotions” and Beethoven's title challenged his audiences to share in this powerfully dramatic experience.

“The most dynamically propulsive of Beethoven's sonatas thus far” (biographer Maynard Solomon) helps generate such emotions. The *Pathétique* features Beethoven's first slow introduction in a sonata, one of the grandest he ever wrote. He later integrated it into the *Sonata* form first movement, bringing it back twice: to open the development section as well as the coda. Thus it also constituted the first time in any work that he returned to the introduction later in the movement. The powerful syncopations of the opening theme finally yield to a long transition section whose active figuration covers all ranges of the fortepiano keyboard. And Beethoven is relentless in depicting the strong emotions of pathos. He avoids the gentle lyricism of the traditional secondary theme in major - for another dramatic and unexpected minor-mode theme, this time in E-flat Minor.

Beethoven's capacity to create serene and majestic themes often gets overlooked. But the following *Adagio cantabile* movement, in *Rondo* form, supplies just such a primary theme. Set in A-flat Major, it provides the lyrical and heartfelt centerpiece of the sonata. Beethoven heightens the effect of that theme by setting the other episodes of the Rondo in minor keys. He again turns to Rondo form for the *Allegro* finale. He derives the primary theme (refrain) from the secondary theme of the first movement, thus heralding the revolutionary penchant for cyclic integration in his later works. He also maintains the mood of that opening movement as well. Instead of the traditional turn to the concluding brightness and triumph of the major mode, Beethoven closes with a furious coda in C Minor - maintaining the *pathos* until the very end.

SONATA in C MAJOR, OP. 53 “WALDSTEIN” (1804)

Biographer Maynard Solomon writes that beginning in the late 1790s, it seems that Beethoven “determined to achieve a mastery of the Viennese high-Classic style in each of its major instrumental genres. He met that challenge by 1802 in the Piano Trio (Op. 1), String Trio (Op. 9), String Quartet (Op. 18), String Quintet (Op. 29), Piano Concerto (Op. 37), Violin Sonata (Opp. 23, 24 & 30), the Symphony (Opp. 21 & 36), and the Piano Sonata (Opp 26, 27, 28 & 31).” Then comes the dilemma, according to Solomon: “the choice of endless repetitions of his conquests - or casting out in an uncharted direction.” The first signs of impending deafness (thoughts of suicide in the unsent letter known as the ‘Heiligenstadt Testament’ of 1802) provided an additional spur. Whatever the source, a revolutionary new passion soon poured forth in the longest symphony anyone had written to that point (*Eroica* in 1803), the longest string quartet (Op. 59 no. 1 F Major, 1805), and a new structure for the 4th and 5th piano concertos (1804 & 1809). Similarly, with the new virtuoso style of the *Waldstein and Appassionata* sonatas from 1804-05, “Beethoven moved irrevocably beyond the boundaries of the high-Classic era” in the piano sonata genre as well - “creating sonorities and textures never previously achieved” (Solomon).

Beethoven began work on the *Waldstein* in December 1803 “and represents his first return to the piano sonata after his full breakthrough to the ‘heroic’ style of orchestral music” (biographer Lewis Lockwood). Charles Rosen concurs: “No previous sonata by Beethoven had a first movement with so powerful and so unremitting a drive.” The Sonata form movement opens *pianissimo*, with what seems an ominous, repetitive-pitch accompaniment in the bass. But Beethoven rarely wastes any gesture, and retrospectively this turns out to be part of the primary theme once a new right-hand motive concludes almost three octaves higher in bar 4. For this theme's repetition, Beethoven rewrites this opening bass pattern as a tremolo. Along with the multi-octave jumps, octave *glissandi* and 40-bar trills in the finale, such effects provide the Waldstein with “a sound unlike any other work of Beethoven” (Rosen).

He provides a moment of repose from the relentless 16th-note passagework with a lyrical, chorale-like secondary theme. But even here, his Romantic era spirit never rests. By setting such a prominent new theme in E Major, he presents it in a remote key (for a C Major movement) that no 18th-century composer would have touched.

The brief 28-bar *Adagio* movement that follows is not complete. He labels it *Introduzione*, and it leads directly to the finale. Beethoven wrote it as a replacement for his original slow movement, an *Andante favori*, WoO 57 that now stands alone. Apparently he felt that this dark *Adagio*, opening in the same low register as the first movement and with similar harmonic progressions, offered a better contrast to the quick surrounding movements. He then turns to the *Allegretto moderato* Rondo finale, opening with a theme in gentle, singing style. Don't be fooled for a minute. The grand, inevitable power soon appears, capped off by a *Prestissimo* coda.

BAGATELLES, OP. 119 (1822)

Beethoven's prominent role in important Romantic Era innovations for orchestral and chamber music remain well documented. But his similar transformative role for the 19th-century keyboard - collections of piano miniatures or character pieces - is often overlooked. Collections of short keyboard movements, combined into suites, flourished in the Baroque Era.