

At the Piano

The series “At the Piano” is intended for all those who have some experience playing the piano and would now like to play easier original works by famous composers. Students, teachers and those returning to the piano will encounter a wealth of well-known works.

Contents

Each volume in the series is devoted exclusively to one composer. This is because each composer has his own style and thus places his own very personal demands on his piano works – not only from the point of view of technique but also as regards musical interpretation.

Technique

All of the pieces have been arranged in progressive level of difficulty. They enable you to practise very different pianistic skills, including runs, breaking chords, arpeggios, parallel thirds, trills, playing chords and polyphonic playing. Thus most of the pieces also prepare you for more demanding pieces by the composer in question. We have endeavoured to keep variety in mind when compiling the pieces: slower ones follow faster ones, dances come after studies, variations after sonata movements, etc.

Urtext

All of the pieces have been edited according to the strictest Urtext principles, as have all Urtext editions by G. Henle Publishers. In short, this means that the musical text is unaltered and presents the composer’s intentions. Additions that are essential – even great composers occasionally make mistakes – have been given in parentheses. And as we do not wish to dispense with the

aid of fingerings, we clearly differentiate between the ones we have added (in normal writing) and those that are original (in italics). Composers in the Baroque, Classical and even Early Romantic periods were extremely sparing with indications regarding articulation, phrasing, dynamics and tempo. This was because in those days they could assume that experienced players already knew how something was to be played. This might not always be immediately clear to musicians today. Nevertheless, in our Urtext editions we deliberately do without “well-intentioned” additions and questionable alterations, as are often to be found in other editions. Those who use our editions are free of such patronisation; they can be sure of the authenticity of the musical text and make the most of the ensuing flexibility for their own stylistically confident interpretation.

Guide

This cannot, of course, be done without any help at all. The series “At the Piano” provides an introduction to dealing with Urtext editions as well as a first pedagogical guide on how to get to grips with original works of an easy and medium level of difficulty from a technical and musical point of view. To this end, each piece is preceded by some information on practising it, on its history and on understanding the musical text. In so doing we would like to provide players with a foundation upon which they can develop their own approach to the work, their own personal interpretation and above all, enjoy making music. Pianists who are enthusiastic and prepared to put in a little effort – no matter whether young or old, starting to play or returning to the instrument – will then be able to play their Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms or even Liszt with conviction.

Playing Beethoven

It almost seems superfluous to comment on the importance of Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) as a composer and a musician. His fame is so great and he enjoys such universal recognition and admiration all over the globe. Performances of his Ninth Symphony have become a kind of ritual on all manner of sacred and secular occasions. An innovator in many areas, Beethoven predominately also revolutionised piano music, introducing a legato manner of playing, increasing technical demands on the pianist and thus also playing a decisive role in the development of the piano.



Compared with Mozart, Mendelssohn or Liszt, Beethoven was certainly not a child prodigy. Yet his special musical gifts made themselves apparent from a very early age and his father had him give his first public performance as a pianist at the age of seven. Soon his reputation as a pianist was so great that he was invited to play for Prince William of Orange-Nassau in The Hague, together with the then widely renowned violin virtuoso Carl Stamitz, in 1783. It was around this time that his first compositions were also published, all of which were for the piano: variations on a march, three sonatas and a rondo. Beethoven was later to compose ground-breaking works for these three great Classical forms. Yet he also further developed the type of the little piano piece that was not as bound by form (see nos. 1 and 3), and a series of little dance pieces has also been handed down.

When Beethoven went to Vienna at the end of 1792, he first made waves as a pianist. Abbé Joseph Gelinek, who was a famous pianist at the time, is said to have remarked after a competition with him: “Ah he is no man, he is the devil, he plays me and all others into the ground. And how he improvises!” Soon Beethoven had first works published in Vienna and gave them opus numbers, which was a sign throughout his life that he particularly valued a work. Amongst the first fourteen opus numbers were 20 works for or with piano, including ten piano sonatas and another one for piano four-hands. They cover a period of around four years; the Sonatas op. 2 were composed in 1794/95, the Sonatas op. 14 (see no. 9) in 1798. In the same period, he also

wrote the Variations WoO 69 (no. 6) as well as the two Easy Piano Sonatas op. 49 (no. 4), although the latter were only published many years later.

In the five years after he had written the two Piano Sonatas op. 14, Beethoven composed a total of ten new sonatas, one directly after the other, as well as five works with variations and ten individual pieces for piano. The most important works amongst these include the “Moonlight Sonata” op. 27 no. 2 (see no. 5) as well as the Sonata in A♭ major op. 26 with the famous funeral march (see no. 7).

At all events, the piano remained at the centre of his oeuvre. It was only after he had written the late Piano Sonatas op. 109–111 in the years 1820–22 that Beethoven turned to other genres and then only wrote a few smaller works for piano, the last of which were the *Bagatellen* op. 126 (see no. 8) and a few little dance pieces (no. 2).



Beethoven was the first composer to give his works consecutive opus numbers, which for the most part, although not always, also more or less corresponded to the order in which he had written them. However, he also left behind around 200 compositions that were not given an opus number – partly because they remained unpublished during his lifetime, partly because he did not consider them worthy of receiving one. In the *Thematisch-Bibliographisches Verzeichnis* (catalogue) of Beethoven’s works, which was published in 1955 after having been compiled by Georg Kinsky and concluded by Hans Halm, these pieces are categorised as “Works without opus numbers” (WoO) and given consecutive numbers. (A revised and substantially expanded new edition of the catalogue of works was published in 2014.)

What is particularly impressive with Beethoven’s piano works is their incredible diversity and complexity of expression – they not only convey impassioned, dramatic and weighty emotions, with which Beethoven is all too often associated, but also cheerfulness, the joy of playing, lyrical tenderness and depth of feeling. Admittedly, high artistic aspirations are at the core of them all, which can even be felt in the easy ones.