In the 1790s Beethoven's professional fortunes rested principally on piano music: he achieved success as a virtuoso in the musical salons of Vienna, while his wider reputation depended in large part on the publication of sonatas (and variations) for solo piano and on compositions for various chamber ensembles with keyboard. In the decades to come, despite his gradual loss of hearing, the decrease in his concertizing, and his growing (albeit intermittent) commitment to the symphony, the string quartet, and vocal-choral genres, Beethoven never abandoned the piano sonata. Thus his contributions as composer to the genre spanned his entire career, a career that witnessed a music culture in transition. His early works originated in the late Classical period; his later ones in the formative stages of Romanticism and the development of the canonic repertory and modern concert institutions.

Notwithstanding significant continuities (above all in the publication of sonatas for private use), these periods are marked by significant differences in aesthetic values and in sociocultural institutions that determined the broader context (as opposed to the more narrow one defined by the music of the genre) in which the sonatas were composed and received. These broader topics are my concern: I wish to provide a sketch of the "piano sonata culture" (with some consideration of the repertory) at the end of the eighteenth century and discuss the impact of Beethoven's sonatas on this culture. Finally I shall trace both continuities and changes that created a new context in which the sonatas were able to survive not only the end of his career as pianist and his death, but also the passing of the sonata as the principal keyboard genre and the end of the salon as the primary venue for the performance of piano music.
The piano sonata belonged to a larger repertory of keyboard music that also included, for piano alone, variation cycles, ronds, fantasies, dances, and other one-movement forms. Improvisation cannot really be thought of as a genre, but it was a crucial skill for a virtuoso to possess and exhibit. Keyboard genres also included various ensembles for piano and solo string or wind instruments, and concertos for piano and orchestra. Among the former, duo sonatas, notably works for piano and violin or piano and cello, were customarily defined (on title pages of editions and in reviews) as keyboard sonatas accompanied by a solo melody instrument, because the keyboard part was usually predominant. (This practice continued during Beethoven's career, although he greatly expanded the role of the solo melody instrument.)

Apart from the concerto, keyboard music was not usually written for performance in public concert halls for a general audience. With few exceptions, the only solo keyboard music heard at the academies of the late eighteenth century and the first thirty years of the nineteenth was improvised.1 Apparently only one piano sonata by Beethoven was played at a public concert during his lifetime; an obscure amateur pianist, Stainer von Felsburg, performed a sonata thought to be op.90 in February 1816.2 Until the development of the public recital after Beethoven's death, piano sonatas were largely heard in private surroundings; in Vienna Beethoven made his mark in the aristocratic salon, gave some of his patrons piano lessons, and dedicated sonatas (and works in other genres) to a select few. The cultivated bourgeoisie played the piano; Beethoven also had middle-class students, some of whom had aspirations to a career in music. Professional musicians played sonatas for their own amusement and edification, but professional pianists, who

1. There are scattered reports of public sonata performance in the eighteenth century: in 1777 Mozart wrote to his father about a concert he gave in Augsburg at which a symphony, a concerto for three pianos, and a solo piano sonata were performed. In 1786 Clementi put on a concert in London featuring, among other works, a Haydn symphony, concertos by Salomon, and one of his own sonatas.

2. According to Schindler, Felsburg played op.101 (see Schindler-MacArdle, p.423), after Beethoven "initiated him in the poetic elements of the work and the extraordinarily difficult first and third movements. The master named these two movements 'Impressions and Reveries'; they are to be played in a free tempo." But as MacArdle points out (p.340, n.146), op.101 was not composed until the summer of 1816. Schindler's claim that this performance was the only public one of a piano sonata in Beethoven's life appears, to the best of my knowledge, to be accurate. I wish to thank Patricia Elliot, curator of the Irn F Brilliant Center for Beethoven Studies, who searched several monographic studies as well as the center's database for references to public performance.
were seeking to secure their reputations as virtuoso-composers, as a rule performed only their own works until the middle of the nineteenth century; Beethoven's sonatas were performed in private recitals by his amateur and professional students. Of course, Beethoven also performed and conducted at public concerts; he played Mozart piano concertos several times, and these appearances did much to enhance his reputation.

For much of the eighteenth century, _sonata_ designated a multimovement work for solo instruments and diverse ensembles, and usually implied a higher status than other genres for these same media. The piano sonata stood above various one-movement genres such as rondos,\(^3\) or variations (notably the simple, or too virtuosic, variations on popular tunes from opera),\(^4\) let alone the dances or short works of a "characteristic" nature that, much to the distress of some critics, were beginning to catch on in the late eighteenth century. J. A. P. Schulz's article "Sonate" in J. G. Sulzer's _Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste_ (1774), an influential encyclopedia of the arts, set forth the specific functions and qualities of the sonata. His commentary, which does not focus on formal or stylistic matters, became the basis for an aesthetics of the sonata as it was developed over the next several decades in northern Germany, where such writing was concentrated. His thought surfaces in the writings of Schubart ( _Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tönkunst_ , 1785) and Türk ( _Klaviarschule_ , 1789).\(^5\) Heinrich Koch cites Schulz extensively in the articles on sonata and symphony, and elsewhere in his _Versuch einer Anleitung zu Composition, vol. 3_ (1793), and _Musikalisches Lexikon_ (1802).

Schulz begins by distinguishing the sonata from other, larger genres on the basis of two categories central to eighteenth-century musical thought: the aesthetics of feeling, and the rhetorical analogy, in which (all) music assumes the formal

---

3. See Malcolm S. Cole, "The Vogue of the Instrumental Rondo in the Late 18th Century," _JAMS_ 22 (1969), 423-55. North German critics such as Forkel sharply criticized the rondo for its trivial nature and saw in C. P. E. Bach's keyboard rondos of the _Kenner und Liebhaber_ publications the exceptions that proved the rule.

4. In a negative review of Beethoven's WoO 72, Eight Variations on the Romance "Une Fièvre Brulante" ( _AmZ_ 1 [1799], col. 367), the critic decried an "epidemic" of bad variations. On the status of the variation and Beethoven's efforts to elevate it, see my essay "The 'wirklich gantz neue Manier' and the Path to It: Beethoven's Variations for Piano, 1783-1802," _Beethoven Forum_ 3 (1994), 53-80.

properties and expressive power of speech. "There is no form of instrumental music," Schulz writes,

that is more capable of depicting wordless sentiments than the sonata. The symphony and overture have a somewhat more fixed character, while the form of a concerto seems suited more for providing a skilled performer the opportunity to be heard accompanied by many instruments than for the depiction of passions. Other than these (and dances that also have their own character), no form other than the sonata may assume any character and every expression. In a sonata, the composer might want to express through the music a monologue marked by sadness, misery, pain, or of tenderness, pleasure and joy; using a more animated kind of music, he might want to depict a passionate conversation between similar or complementary characters; or he might wish to depict emotions that are impassioned, stormy, or contrasting, or ones that are light, delicate, flowing, and delightful.\(^6\)

The identification of a sonata with a monologue or dialogue, poetic genres that readily map onto solo or duo sonatas, suggests a personal and subjective intimacy, utterances in the first person directly expressive of the speaker’s own feelings.\(^7\) Symphonies, overtures, and concertos, the antipode to sonata in Schulz’s binary world

---


7. In privileging the rhetorical powers of the sonata, Schulz overlooks the keyboard fantasia, which had been given similar status by C. P. E. Bach in his Versuch über die wahre Art, das Klavier zu spielen of 1753: “A musician cannot move others unless he too is moved. He must of necessity feel all of the affects that he hopes to arouse in his audience, for the revealing of his own humor will stimulate a like humor in the listener. . . . It is principally in improvisations or fantasias that the keyboardist can best master the feelings of his audience” (cited from Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments, trans. and ed. William J. Mitchell [New York: Norton, 1947], p.152). The General Theory does contain an entry on the fantasia, and it is presumably written by Schulz. It lacks any consideration of such matters, focusing only on the improvised nature of the fantasy, and discussing a machine developed in England that purportedly could record the improvisation in notation. The author does refer the reader to the Versuch for help on the technical problems of improvisation (see pp.205–07 of the 2nd edn. from 1792).
of instrumental music, do not speak the same language. The larger, more public genres are suprapersonal and less capable of expressive nuance.\(^8\) The rhetoric of the symphony (the primary orchestral genre), which Schulz discusses in a separate article, is like that of the Pindaric ode, whose (third-person) epic sweep embodies the sublime, the splendid, and the grand.\(^9\)

In the quarter century after Schulz’s article on the sonata appeared, theorists developed his ideas, recognized the contributions of Mozart and Haydn, and, in order to ground the aesthetic distinction between genres in a technical discussion of their music, attempted to distinguish between sonata and symphonic styles.\(^10\) One of the most important writers in this regard was Koch, who emphasized differences in the nature of melodic lines, notably rhythm and the amount of melodic detail. The themes of a symphony “must distinguish themselves [from those of a sonata] through inner power and strength and must present more the feeling of a rushing forward passion than of fine degrees of detail”; symphonic drive necessitated fewer and weaker cadential punctuations.\(^11\) Koch and other writers on

\(^8\) In his article on the sonata, in the *Versuch einer Anleitung zu Composition* (3 vols. [Leipzig, 1782–1793; rpt. Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1969], vol. III, chap. 4, sec. 6), Koch defends the expressive potential of a “well-worked-out” concerto against Schulz; the solo instrument preserves its nature, but instead of speaking in a monologue it “expresses [its] feelings to the orchestra,” which responds, to form a “passionate dialogue.” C. P. E. Bach’s concertos “correspond to this idea, or better [are the source] from which this ideal is derived” (see Baker, *Heinrich Christoph Koch: Introductory Essay on Composition: The Mechanical Rules of Melody, Sections 3 and 4* [New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1983], p. 209).


\(^10\) See Michael Broyles, “The Two Instrumental Styles of Classicism,” *JAMS* 36 (1983), 210–42. Broyles acknowledges that the theorists he discusses were both hesitant and uncomfortable with their own explanations, “possibly because the styles transcended genre and were defined in terms of melodic expression, an elusive concept at best” (p. 211). Nevertheless, the consistency of their efforts suggests the importance of the distinction.

\(^11\) Ibid., p. 220. Broyles summarizes the distinctions: “Symphony style emphasizes supraperiod activity; gestures tend toward the larger units, creating a sense of melodic sweep through the binding or overlapping of cadences. Motivic activity within the period serves mainly to enhance the forward drive. In the sonata style, however, elaboration, nuance, and detail play a much greater role, and cadences are heard more as actual divisions between which the manipulation of motivic figures is centered. Rhythmic subtlety and variety as well as flexibility, all of which impart to the motion a more expressive and hence rhetorical tone, are more at home in the sonata” (p. 220).
the topic recognized, however, that these stylistic distinctions were not hard and fast and could cross genres. Sonatas by Emanuel Bach, Georg Benda, and Johann Schobert were characterized by Burney and Kollmann as symphonic, because they contained stylistic elements considered native to the symphony. Koch, the latest of the eighteenth-century writers to be discussed here, could not know many of Beethoven’s sonatas when he wrote his sonata commentaries. Had he made a study of them, he surely would have recognized, in a far heavier concentration than in the sonatas of Beethoven’s predecessors and contemporaries, elements he considered symphonic, plus others first appearing regularly in Beethoven’s, such as the four-movement prototype introduced in the op. 2 Sonatas. The large dimensions of individual movements, the increased exploitation of register, and the sheer weight of sonority and density of texture.

Schulz concludes his sonata article with remarks about the usefulness of the genre:

Sonatas are the most common and efficacious practice pieces for performers since there is such a quantity of both easy and difficult pieces for all instruments. They stand in the first rank of chamber repertoire behind vocal pieces. And because they can be played one to a part, they can be performed without too much difficulty by even the smallest chamber ensembles. A single musician can sometimes entertain a whole audience with a single harpsichord sonata better and more effectively than the largest concert can.

With these few sentences Schulz outlines the primary social functions of the sonata. If his ordering was not coincidental, one can infer that he attached utmost significance to the sonata as a genre for personal use, to be played by pianists of differing capabilities—hence “easy and difficult”—who purchase printed music. The view of the sonata as exercise reminds us of Domenico Scarlatti’s “Essercizi” and English sonatas published as “Lessons” and suggests a continuity with the didactic role assumed by much Baroque nonorgan keyboard music, e.g., J. S. Bach’s Inventions, Sinfonia, and Preludes and Fugues.

Sonatas are also useful because they provide the most convenient and economical means of musical entertainment. This function assumed ever greater importance in the early nineteenth century, when the diminishing fortunes of the great

12. Broyles, who compares sonatas by Beethoven and Bach in order to demonstrate the sonata qualities of the former as opposed to the symphonic character of the latter, argues that most of Mozart’s sonatas are symphonic as opposed to the pure sonata character that prevails in Haydn’s (ibid., p. 220).

princes reduced their ability to maintain entire orchestras and choruses; solo piano music, chamber ensembles, and song filled the vacuum. But the sonata was not only practical, it could entertain better than larger ensembles because of its greater potential to fulfill the highest goal of Schulz’s cultural aesthetics, that of touching the “heart and sentiments of any listener with taste and knowledge.” In Schulz’s lofty view of “musical entertainments,” the virtuoso-composer is able to communicate most directly with his audience through his sonatas. He needs help from no other musicians; his genre possesses the most refined expressive potentialities. But for this ideal to be realized, three conditions must be met. The listener must have “taste and knowledge,” the works must possess the requisite qualities, and they must receive expressive performances.  

Schulz envisioned an ideal musical world in which a performer had the privilege of playing for an audience that was ready to be moved by his music. Otherwise, the theory had no social basis. But there is ample documentary evidence suggesting that these conditions were by no means always fulfilled. E. T. A. Hoffmann paints an unflattering picture of the sonata audience (and their social prejudices) in his description of Privy Councilor Rüderlein’s musical salon, where Johannes Kreisler, the hero of the novel Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler’s Musical Sufferings, spends time. Kreisler is devoted to Rüderlein’s niece, Fräulein Amalie. Unfortunately, Amalie “refuses to sing at tea-parties, but she will sing for the most common people, such as simple musicians. . . . She carries her uncompromising attitude so far that sometimes she even lets Gottlieb [another member of the salon] accompany her on the violin, while she plays sonatas by Beethoven or Mozart on the piano,” music “of which no tea-connoisseur or whist-specialist can make head or tail.”

Hoffmann’s musical world, which can be safely assumed to be as real as the ideal one of Schulz, was one in which all music, all too often, was regarded as an accompaniment to social rituals: the artist was confronted with an audience that did not listen and hence could not follow, or could not follow and thus did not listen.

The composer-virtuoso must compose the right kind of sonata. It must not contain the “cacophony of arbitrarily connected tones . . . and bizarre and sudden changes in character” Schulz associates with Italian and “German-Italian” (i.e., South German and Austrian) sonatas. The paradigm for a good sonata is found in the sonatas of C. P. E. Bach, which suit the needs of both the Liebhaber and


the *Kenner*. Bach's sonatas show how character and expression can be brought to the sonata. "The majority of these are so eloquent that one almost believes to be hearing not a series of musical tones but a comprehensible speech, that moves and engages our imagination and emotions."\(^{16}\) Bach himself viewed his sonatas with critical dispassion; in his autobiography, he made no secret of the limitations imposed by the social and market conditions in which he composed his music and the function it was to fulfill:

Because I have had to compose most of my works for specific individuals and for the public, I have always been more restrained in them than in the few pieces that I have written merely for myself. At times I even have had to follow ridiculous instructions, although it could be that such not exactly pleasant conditions have led my talents to certain discoveries that I might not otherwise have come upon. . . . Among all my works, especially for keyboard, there are only a few trios, solos, and concertos that I have composed in complete freedom and for my particular use.\(^{17}\)

Schulz grudgingly acknowledges the popularity of Italianate sonatas (he gives no examples) with German compositional imitators as well as "insensitive amateurs" and "a few excitable fellows" among listeners. His attitude toward this repertory was shared by later eighteenth-century theorists, among them Forkel and Reichardt. Reichardt, for example, in his reactionary essay "Sonatas, Symphonies, Concertos and Other Pieces of Our New Music," echoed Schulz's concerns about sudden changes in affect because they destabilize formal and harmonic unity; moreover, only great composers such as Haydn or Bach are able to "express joy and sorrow equally well" and preserve musical coherence.\(^{18}\)

Another important concern of North German sonata theory involved virtuosity. Schulz did not address the issue explicitly, but his remarks about the concerto imply reservations about the aesthetic value of technical display. Koch articulates his own, similar view about its dangers in his article on the sonata in the *Anleitun*

---


17. Cited from Newman, *Sonata in the Classic Era*, p.422. See also Elaine Sisman on the piano music of Haydn, who "was not entirely unconstrained in composing his music for keyboard; tempered by the graceful amateur pianism of his dedicatees, students, and imagined public, and circumscribed by his publishers' requests" ("Haydn's Solo Keyboard Music," *Eighteenth-Century Keyboard Music*, ed. Robert Marshall [New York: Schirmer, 1994], p.270). Bach's genre of personal choice was, of course, the fantasy (see n.7).

and neatly summarizes the tensions between the various, conflicting sonata functions and their concomitant styles, while offering little hope for a rapprochement: "Noisy, overcomplicated sonatas are, to be sure, a necessity for those soloists who wish to display mere technical skill on the instrument, and not expression of feelings. But more thought should be given to the general usefulness of sonatas designed for the public. For not only amateurs but also many artists are concerned more about expressive pieces than about difficult works of this kind."19

Although Koch cites both Bach and Türk as exemplary composers (implying his own reservations about Italianate sonata style), one cannot overlook in his discussion a pessimism that Schulz and Reichardt shared. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, a review of three sonatas by Joseph Wöllfl, one of Beethoven's leading pianist-rivals in Vienna, comes to a negative conclusion about the basic health of the genre: "Good piano sonatas are written less often now than formerly, when the tendency of every musician who wanted public recognition as an active composer was to begin his career with piano pieces, especially solo sonata.... Now everyone who knows that 3/4 is a triad writes any old way, as the spirit moves him."20 The last phrase suggests an indifference to convention and a willfulness of spirit; sonatas by Beethoven, not Wöllfl, could easily have triggered this reaction.

II

As Maynard Solomon has observed, when Beethoven moved to Vienna there were no first-rank pianists in the capital city. Clementi and Cramer were in London, Wöllfl in Warsaw, and Hummel was only fifteen.21 Thus he had ample opportunity to establish himself in the world of the salon, in which he had the support of leading members of the Viennese aristocracy. Yet, soon enough challengers appeared, notably Wöllfl, whose formally arranged competition with Beethoven in 1799 was the most prominent of several in which Beethoven engaged. It was considered sufficiently noteworthy to receive mention in the AmZ; the author of the report awarded a tie, but conceded that majority opinion held for Wöllfl. After 1800 Hummel became a serious threat; he became, according to Carl Czerny, the clear favorite in the early 1800s: "It was quite natural... that the general public

20. AmZ 1 (1798), cols.236–37. This author did not negatively critique these sonatas because they were too virtuosic, although some of "Herr W's works in fact turn out to have exaggerated difficulties for those who perform them," because these are playable by "any pianist with at least some training."
preferred [Hummel] as a pianist... Hummel's partisans accused Beethoven of mistreating the piano, of lacking all cleanness and clarity, of creating nothing but confused noise the way he used the pedal and finally of writing willful, unnatural, unmelodic compositions.  

The ordering of this summary is revealing; only at the end are the works themselves the issue, and they appear, as it were, as direct products of his pianism, rather than the fruits of compositional reflection. The emphasis in contemporary reports and subsequent reminiscences of Beethoven's (and other composers') piano music (as opposed to reviews of published works) suggest that listeners cared more about the composer's pianism (in its technical and expressive dimensions) than the piece being played—or, at least, that a piece was viewed primarily in its relationship to the particular pianistic style of the composer-performer and less as a work to be considered autonomously. Schulz remarks that the sonata could fulfill its aesthetic potential only if it received "a highly expressive performance." This phrase recalls the significance attached by eighteenth-century musicians to the technical and expressive elements of performance, which gave birth to the many treatises on performance, and even suggests an identity between genre aesthetics

22. Tia DeNora, Beethoven and the Construction of Genius (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U California P., 1995), pp.132, 161; for a comprehensive discussion of the broader sociocultural dimensions of this series of duels, see pp.147–69.

23. Once again Schulz's North German bias emerges: "No German–Italian is in a position to deliver" such a performance (Baker and Christensen, Aesthetics, p.104). Schulz gives no example for a good performer; of course, in view of his adulation of C. P. E. Bach, the Hamburg composer comes to mind. Moreover, Bach's Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu Spielen (1753) was one of the most influential treatises of its kind, and the inclusion of the Probestücke as an appendix confirms this close link. According to Schindler (Schindler-MacArdle, p.379), Beethoven "intended to write a piano method (he first mentioned it in 1818) in order to protect his works from being badly played." Schindler cites Gerhard von Breuning (Wegeler-Ries, Nachtrag [1845], p.23), "I had a copy of the Pleyel Method of Piano Playing. He was dissatisfied with this as with all other methods. He once said to me as I sat by his bed, 'I wanted to write a textbook for piano students myself, but I never had the time. I would have written something very different.' Then he promised my father he would see about a text for me. Some time later he sent me the Clementi sonatas he had ordered for me, which were not available here. The following note accompanied the music: 'Dear Friend, at last I am able to break away from my negligence. I send herewith Clementi's School of Piano Playing for Gerhard. If he uses it in a way that I will show him, it will certainly produce good results'" (trans. Schindler-MacArdle, p.379). But compare this with Breuning's recollection of Beethoven's help in providing a manual for him in Memories of Beethoven: From the House of the Black-Robed Spaniards, trans. Henry Mins and Maynard Solomon, ed. Solomon (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), pp.75–76, in which there is no mention of Beethoven's interest in writing a method. Nor is there any indication from another source that Beethoven ever had the idea.
and performance. Moreover, the notion of the “artwork” was in its infancy in the late eighteenth century; pieces of music were not discussed primarily as self-contained essences, but rather as partaking of, or possessing, external properties such as function, style, and impact (Wirkung).

In the salon, where a composer not only performed his own sonatas but also improvised, the distinction between work and performance was much less clear than it is today. (The modern listener has far fewer chances to see and hear a performance of a piece by its composer than his counterpart in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries [and too often does not take advantage of such opportunities]. He selects among the profusion of live and recorded performances of the canonic repertory, for which reason the distinction between work/text and performance is taken for granted, and for the “serious” listener the former enjoys a status higher than the latter. After deciding to buy a recording of op. 111, he then chooses which recording to purchase.)

But if performance and work had not yet emerged as distinct categories in Beethoven’s time, it follows that the visceral aspects of performance could overshadow the structural properties of the work. Beethoven’s advocates conceded that his playing was often rough but always inspired and sometimes spellbinding. There also seems to have been a consensus that his particular strength lay in improvisation, about which the usually sober Czerny effuses: “In whatever company he might chance to be, he knew how to produce such an effect upon every hearer that frequently not an eye remained dry, while many would break out into loud sobs; for there was something wonderful in his expression in addition to the beauty and originality of his ideas and his spirited style of rendering them.” Given the emphasis on performance, and the force of Beethoven’s musical and personal presence, one can imagine that even when he played a finished work, it receded behind the ceaseless flow of impressions—musical, psychological, and even physical—that issued from him. One can picture his audience listening to a work being created simultaneously with its playing, especially if it was played by memory, or if the listeners closed their eyes.24

24. Quotation cited from Thayer-Forbes, p. 185. Beethoven remarked to Johann Wenzel Tomasschek in 1814: “It has always been known that the greatest pianoforte players were also the greatest composers; but how did they play? Not like the pianists of to-day, who prance up and down the keyboard with passages which they have practised—putsch, putsch, putsch;—what does that mean? Nothing! When true pianoforte virtuosi played it was always something homogeneous, an entity, if written down it would appear as a well thought-out work. That is pianoforte playing; the other thing is nothing!” (Thayer-Forbes, p. 599). Tomasschek wrote this in his autobiography, Libussa (Prague: n.p., 1846), pp. 359ff.
This same emphasis usually obtains in reviews of performances of Beethoven’s sonatas by interpreting artists, in the nineteenth century and today. The interpreter transmits the same stream of impressions, albeit in less intimate surroundings. Nevertheless, the critic and the listener know that the player interprets and does not create. The work has an independent status. In the domain of late-eighteenth-century sonata culture where published sonatas were bought, played, and reviewed, the distinction between work and performance was equally clear; the identity of composer and performer was broken. Thus the work had a life clearly separate and distinct from its creator’s performance. The work represented a composer, yet was distinguishable from his playing.

Certain episodes from Beethoven’s life suggest that he strove to reinforce this breach between the sonata-as-work and the sonata-in-performance in order to shift emphasis to the former. Reports from as early as 1805 reveal that Beethoven was reluctant to perform finished works; he preferred to improvise only;25 his associates could play his pieces for an audience. Perhaps he was aware that his reputation depended more on improvisation. We also know that Beethoven sometimes insisted that his audience sit in another room while he played. Perhaps he did not want to be distracted by audience noise or indifference; the Hoffmannesque character of the salon was as familiar to Beethoven as that envisioned by Schulz and described by Czerny. The notorious incidents of his intemperate responses to his listeners’ bad manners are the most visible manifestation of his mixed feelings about performing, which preceded his first loss of hearing by a number of years. Franz Wegeler reports that in the years 1794–96 Beethoven “often came to me . . ., gloomy and out of sorts, complaining that they had made him play, even though his fingers ached and the blood under his nails burned.”26 And years later (1810), Beethoven asked, “Am I then nothing more than a music maker for yourself or the others?”27

A “music maker,” not a composer. By playing in another room, refusing to

25. Ferdinand Ries: “He played his own compositions very unwillingly. Once he was making serious preparations for a long trip which we were to make together, on which I was to arrange the concerts and play his concertos as well as other compositions. He wanted only to conduct and to improvise” (Wegeler-Ries, p.160). According to Thayer, these remarks would have been made around 1805 (Thayer-Forbes, p.367). At the Carnegie Hall symposium on the piano sonatas, I was asked if I knew of documentary evidence of a specific performance by Beethoven of a sonata. My research has not revealed any, but, although it is hard to imagine that he never did play a sonata in private (salon) performance, such a conclusion would support my argument about his wishing to create distance between his compositions and his performance.


play, and having others play in his stead, Beethoven created distance between himself and his music. Did he wish to remove his persona as virtuoso from the listeners’ experience of his works? Did he strive to create a situation in which his works, even in the private sphere of the salon, gained a certain degree of autonomy? A situation in which he was viewed primarily as composer, secondarily as virtuoso?

The maturing Beethoven cared deeply about his reputation in the broader musical culture external to the Viennese salons, a reputation he could maintain and enhance only through concert tours and the publication of his compositions. But his playing was local and ephemeral, and as his hearing deteriorated the latter remained the sole choice. His artistic legacy could be established only on the basis of published works whose value as aesthetic objects was perpetuated. Thus, whether intended or not, and if only through the accident of his deafness, Beethoven’s sonatas gained a life of their own (a life they shared with compositions in other genres that were not so closely tied to the composer-as-performer), and with it an aesthetic identity independent of the functional nexus of the salon. And, although Beethoven wished to be recognized as a master of all genres, instrumental and vocal, we should keep in mind that piano sonatas afforded the most efficient way for the greatest number of persons interested in his music to experience it directly. If his audience possessed the necessary technique, they could play sonatas by themselves. Finally, although I have been emphasizing Beethoven’s desire to put distance between his person and his works, it should be noted that the solo nature of the sonata reflected his immediate presence, echoed his most personal voice, more completely than genres requiring more players. The intimacy of the salon could thus be regained, but abstractly; the player becomes the ideal listener; while engaging Beethoven’s works, he experiences Beethoven’s artistic persona rather than his virtuoso person.

III

The piano sonata was, then, central not only to Beethoven’s artistic development but also to the establishment, within his lifetime, of his reputation as a composer of

28. An indication of this attitude is provided by Solomon, who in writing about op.106, the “Hammerklavier” Sonata, relates that “Beethoven is said to have told Artaria, who published the work in September 1819: Now there you have a sonata that will keep the pianists busy when it is played fifty years hence” (Beethoven [New York: Schirmer, 1977], p.300). Solomon’s source is Wilhelm von Lenz, Beethoven: Eine Kunst-Studie (Hamburg: Hoffman and Campe, 1860), V, 32.

29. Of course, piano transcriptions of chamber and orchestral music also allowed this, but could only approximate the experience of these works.
autonomous works. There are a few, widely scattered remarks that express Beethoven's ambivalence about his sonatas. In a letter written in 1809 to the publisher Breitkopf and Härtel, he remarks, “I don't like to spend much time composing sonatas for pianoforte solo, but I promise to let you have a few.”\(^{30}\) In the Mendelssohn sketchbook of 1805, he wrote, “Finale ever simpler—all the piano music too—God knows why my piano music still makes the poorest impression on me, especially when it is badly played.”\(^{31}\) But these are recordings of temporary moods rather than expressions of a basic attitude.

The sketchbook entry about simplicity betrays an awareness of the kind of pressure that surfaces in Bach's autobiographical remarks about his keyboard music. Yet Beethoven made few compromises. A letter written in January 1817 to the publisher Anton Steiner reveals an attitude quite to the contrary that seems much more representative. Beethoven wants Steiner to stop worrying about the demands posed by the Sonata in A, op.101. Beethoven writes that Steiner “will think that difficult is a relative term, e.g., what seems difficult to one person will seem easy to another, and that therefore the term has no precise meaning whatever. But... this term has a very precise meaning, for what is difficult is also beautiful, good, great and so forth. Hence everyone will realize that this is the most lavish praise that can be bestowed, since what is difficult makes one sweat.”\(^{32}\)

Beethoven composed some easy pieces for students and the buying public: some of the early variations and bagatelles, and rondos and dances. But apart from the two Sonatas of op.49, and perhaps the Sonatas, ops. 14 and 79 (which are, however, more ambitious than those of op.49), both the technical difficulties of his sonatas and the complexity of their musical ideas placed hitherto unimaginable demands on amateur pianists. The sonatas could fulfill pedagogical functions only for the highest strata of the piano-playing public and were anything but easy listening. (Hence, the successful sales record of Beethoven's piano music, indicated by publishers' requests and his ability to bargain, is cause for wonder. Was Beethoven's name more popular than his music?)

Whether positively or negatively inclined, critics of the sonatas during and

\(^{30}\) At this time Beethoven was working on the String Quartet, op.74, and had recently completed the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, the Mass in C, op.86, the “Emperor” Piano Concerto, op.73, the Violin Concerto, op.61, and several large chamber works. The last sonata he had composed was op.57 in 1804–05.

\(^{31}\) Mendelssohn 15, p.291. See N II, p.446; Nottebohm guesses that the citation was made in 1804, but see jtw, p.130, on the chronology of the sketchbook. The remark was made on a leaf containing work on the beginning of act II of Leonore.

\(^{32}\) Anderson, letter no.749, II, p.661.
well after Beethoven's lifetime stressed these technical and stylistic difficulties. An admirer of the Sonatas, op. 26 and 27, wrote in the AmZ (1802) that they could "enrich" only a "selected few cultivated musicians and accomplished pianists."\textsuperscript{33} Such reactions by his contemporaries are particularly illuminating because they represented Beethoven's audience, his potential ideal listener, and they approached Beethoven's music with expectations about the genre based on their knowledge of the current repertory and awareness of the sonata's role in musical life. For this reason, as is well known, most reviews in his early years in Vienna were primarily negative. (Largely negative critiques of Beethoven's music in the AmZ during the 1790s prompted Beethoven to complain to the publisher, after which positive responses to new works began to balance the negative ones that did not, however, disappear.) These reviews, which were rapidly increasing in number, became an important forum for a discussion of sonata (and other genre) aesthetics. Moreover, as Stefan Kunze has argued, in the several decades after 1790, discussions of Beethoven's and, to a lesser degree, Mozart's and Haydn's music were the context in which the independent artwork emerged as the primary object of music criticism.\textsuperscript{34} Positive reviews of a composer's music could do much to perpetuate it, to ensure its survival after its creator ceased to perform it, or its novelty in the market and the salon or hall had worn off.

A review of the "Appassionata" Sonata, op. 57, that appeared in the AmZ (1807) records the desperate and almost schizophrenic struggle of its author, whom I imagine contemplating this sonata with horrified fascination, as he tries to make up his mind. This review is one of the most revealing discussions of Beethoven's music written during his lifetime:

Everyone knows Beethoven's method of composing a major sonata; and in all of them, in his most multitudinous ways of presenting bizarre material, Beethoven generally adheres to the same method. In the first movement of this sonata he has once again released many evil spirits similar to those already familiar through their appearance in other major sonatas. But truly, this time it is worth the trouble of fighting to overcome not only the extreme difficulties of the piece but also the repugnance that one frequently feels over forced waywardness and eccentricity! We have already spoken so often of these vagaries of the master's fantasy that we have nothing new to add here.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{33} AmZ 4 (1802), col. 651.
\textsuperscript{35} AmZ (1807), cols. 433ff.
Most of this speaks for itself. One important implication, which runs like a subsidiary theme throughout the review, perhaps requires explication. That is the idea of the musical public’s increasing familiarity with Beethoven’s style, as ever more of his works appeared in print and were performed; and, by implication, the admission that increasing familiarity would lead to capitulations (and I deliberately invert the author’s meaning when he writes “overcome”) before the power of the music. The sonata overcomes the listener. With his sonata, the work, Beethoven has transcendence the salon and has established a relationship with a broader audience that will extend beyond the sphere of his playing—whose days he must know to be numbered—and beyond the limits of his own life. And he has forced adjustments to genre expectations.

IV

In a review of the Piano Trios, op.70, Hoffmann clarifies some of the claims made in his landmark review of the Fifth Symphony (AmZ, 12 [1810]) about Beethoven’s music, instrumental music on the whole, and keyboard music in particular, for he sees the trios as keyboard pieces first and foremost:

Some time ago the present writer reviewed one of Beethoven’s most important works, the profoundly great Fifth Symphony in C minor. In doing so he tried to express as fully as possible his feelings about the spirit and style of this highly gifted master. After a keen study of his works the reviewer made the statement in that article that Beethoven, more than any other, is a purely romantic composer, and that this is why his vocal music, which does not permit a mood of vague yearning but can only depict from the realm of the infinite those feelings capable of being formulated in words, is less successful, and why his instrumental music is not understood by the multitude. . . . The reviewer finds all these judgments increasingly substantiated with every new work by this composer that reaches his eyes and ears. These two splendid trios demonstrate once more how deeply in his heart Beethoven carries the romantic spirit of music, and with what sublime originality, what authority he infuses it into his works. Every true pianist must be overjoyed when a new work for this instrument appears from this composer, who is himself a virtuoso on the fortepiano and thus writes not only with a deep knowledge of what is performable and effective but also with a visible partiality for it.36

In Hoffmann's discussion of the Fifth Symphony, the symphony alone possessed the properties that open "the realm of the mighty and the immeasurable."\(^{37}\) The symphony, the highest of instrumental genres, projected aesthetic experience beyond the sphere of personal feeling—while not denying its validity—into the infinite, where the individual's emotions are aroused and further ennobled by his contemplation of the sublime.\(^{38}\) By 1813 "every new work" that Hoffmann studied—concertos, ensemble chamber music, keyboard music—convinced him further that Beethoven's instrumental music is a unity. Genre distinctions dissolve before the universality of Beethoven's music in Hoffmann's transcendental vision.

And yet, in an elegant bit of dialectics, Hoffmann also convincingly argued for the pianistic integrity of the trios. Beethoven's keyboard music measures up to the symphony only because Beethoven understands his instrument so well and exploits its greatest virtues.\(^{39}\) (He also cares, claimed Hoffmann, about its performability.) What did Hoffmann see in the piano? In 1807 he made some notes for a projected essay on piano sonatas that was, unfortunately, never completed. Among his jottings are included the following: "Perfection of the pianoforte.—Only beauty of harmony, not of tone."\(^{40}\) These ideas were developed in the review of the op.70 Trios:

37. From the review of the Fifth Symphony, see E. T. A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings, p.238.
38. Hoffmann's choice of symphony is in keeping with, and no doubt influenced by, the views of the first generation of Romantic writers, nonmusicians such as Tieck and Wackenroder, whose thoughts on music, as they emerged in the 1790s, appear to be inspired primarily by their experience of the pre-Beethovenian symphony.

39. We should remember that the pianoforte, the most common name for the keyboard on the title pages of Beethoven's early and middle-period sonatas (see Newman, Sonata in the Classic Era, p.510), was a relatively new instrument in the late eighteenth century. It produced a sound much different from the various forms of harpsichords and clavichords still in use, a sound not necessarily larger, especially in comparison to the biggest harpsichords, but of a striking new quality. It had capabilities, notably dynamic variability and pedal effects, lacking in the older instruments, and it also presented new opportunities and problems relative to pianistic technique that were much discussed in commentary about virtuosos' playing. Beethoven was very interested in the potentialities of the piano. His keyboard style—both compositional and performance—was predicated on the piano, and, in part because he was aware of its limitations, he was always looking for a better one, adjusting his music, for example the overall range, to the newest instrument that allowed him to do more. On Beethoven's interest in innovations in the piano, see DeNora, Beethoven and the Construction of Genius, pp.170–79.

40. Cited in Newman, The Sonata since Beethoven (Chapel Hill: u North Carolina P, 1969), p.310. The entry continues: "Caprice must appear to prevail, and the more the highest artistry is thus concealed the more perfect [the sonata will be]. Greatness of the theorist Haydn.—Joy of the cultured man in the artistic, etc."
The fortepiano is and will remain an instrument more appropriate for harmony than for melody. . . . There is probably no instrument . . . that is able, like the piano, to embrace the realm of harmony with full-voiced chords and unfold its treasures to the connoisseur in the most wonderful forms and shapes. When the composer's imagination has struck upon a complete sound painting with rich groupings, brilliant highlights, and deep shadows, he is able to bring it into being at the piano so that it emerges from his inner world in shining colors. A full score [by which he means an orchestral score], that true musical book of charms preserving in its symbols all the miracles and mysteries of the most heterogeneous choirs of instruments, comes to life at the piano under the hands of a master; and a piece skillfully performed from a score, including all its voices, may be compared to a good copper engraving taken from a great painting.\textsuperscript{41}

Alone among the instruments, the piano can evoke the richness of the symphony, and, by extension, in its native genres produce its own world of “shining colors.”

For Hoffmann, “harmony” does not mean only functional harmony—progressions of chords on different degrees of the scale—although he is very sensitive to its expressive power, but also sonority in and of itself, whose “rich groupings, brilliant highlights, and deep shadows” are the musical embodiments of the “realm of the colossal and the immeasurable.”

The melodic idioms and the formal and harmonic organization of Beethoven's early sonatas are often viewed in terms of their debts to Mozart, Haydn, and Clementi. In my discussion of “symphonic” sonatas (pp. 5–6), I mentioned several elements that distinguish Beethoven's works from theirs. In light of Hoffmann's remarks, sonority might well be considered \textit{primus intra pares}. Full sonorities and complex textures are defining aspects of Beethoven's piano music, and in the sheer visceral experience of listening they rank high among the elements that most emphatically distinguish his sonatas from those of his predecessors and many of his contemporaries. The difference is especially noticeable in fast movements (Classical slow movements often had fuller textures than the outer ones), as suggested by a comparison of the first movement of Mozart's Piano Sonata in B\textsubscript{b}, K. 333 (1783), and the fourth movement, rondo finale, of Beethoven's op. 22 (1800). William Kinderman considers op. 22 “Mozartian,”\textsuperscript{42} and the similarities in the melodic

\textsuperscript{41} E. T. A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings, p. 302.

Example 1:
Example 1:
b. Beethoven, Sonata in B♭, op.22, movt.IV.
lines of the opening themes of these movements are similar enough to suggest a modeling—but one indicative of the utmost confidence.43

Both Mozart and Beethoven (ex. 1a and 1b) initially project descending lines from the structural pitches 5 to 1; at mm. 2 and 4 they close two-measure groups with half-cadences embellished by suspensions; they introduce sixteenth notes and then eighth notes at parallel places within phrases; they prepare their first structural cadences (m. 10 in K. 333, m. 8 in op. 22) by linear ascents on sixteenth notes into the upper octave. Yet Beethoven writes a two-part texture in the left hand (and in so doing creates a linear bass line), and, while “following” Mozart in varying the second statement of the theme, he is not content with Mozart’s registral changes and increased emphasis on sixteenth notes. He first doubles the melody at the octave and in m. 13 establishes a second voice in the right hand. The latter prepares the prevailing four-part texture of the transition to the second theme, which also contains five- and six-part sonorities (mm. 22–26). The second theme and the episodes are saturated with thick sonorities; the only substantial sections of “Classical” two-voice textures (mm. 40–46 and mm. 158–64) occur in retransitions to the second and final statements of first theme and seem designed to offset the thicker textures that precede and follow them.

The first movement and much of the finale of op. 22 are brilliant; the sonata on the whole is conceived on a large scale; it belongs to a group of works that are paradigms for a symphonic sonata style: the “Waldstein,” “Appassionata,” “Lebewohl,” and “Hammerklavier” Sonatas. But the preference for full sonorities may also be found in fast movements that are lyrical, for example, the finale of the Sonata in Eb, op. 7, or the first movements of op. 28, 78, 90, and 101, and their presence in these movements is the most compelling evidence of their overall importance for Beethoven’s piano style.

Beethoven’s preference for full sonorities affected, or at the very least cooperated with, virtually every element of his piano music: functional harmony, which could present finer shadings and inflections than ever before, harmonic rhythm, dynamics, and use of register. In describing Beethoven’s playing, Czerny marveled at the “strict legato of the full chords . . . which therefore formed a new kind of melody.”44 Even the size of the longer movements is justified to no small extent by

43. Beethoven thought highly of this sonata, writing to the publisher Hofmeister in 1801 “es hat sich gewaschen” (it turned out very well) (Anderson, letter no. 44).
the weight of sonority and the harmonic rhythms and lengths of phrase dependent on that weight. The “Waldstein” Sonata provides one of the clearest examples for this symbiosis, whereby sheer repetition is a crucial factor in the first group and the second group is a *locus classicus* of Czerny’s new kind of melody.

Hoffmann and Czerny are sensitive and eloquent witnesses to Beethoven’s new piano style, but it must be acknowledged that this aspect of his piano music was not very often recognized during his lifetime, even by those who heard him play. Robert Schumann, who did not have this privilege, heard in Beethoven’s sonatas (and in Schubert’s) a “fullness of texture” (*Stimmenfülle*), and a “harmonic differentiation” (*Harmonieverwechsel*) reminiscent of Hoffmann’s remarks in the op.70 review, which Schumann might well have known. For Schumann, these qualities constituted one of three essential types of piano style; the others are the “use of pedal,” exemplified by Field, and “volubility” in the music of Czerny and Herz. Beethoven’s sonatas were, in Schumann’s view, the model for all good sonatas, and fullness of texture, which he also described as “massiveness” [*Zusammenfassen der Massen*], was one of the primary characteristics of Schumann’s idea of a symphonic sonata, as discussed in several reviews. Thus, although he did not apply this terminology to Beethoven’s sonatas (his remarks about symphonic character came in reviews of works composed in the 1830s and 40s), the connection is clear and is reinforced by Schumann’s valorization of the sonata and the symphony as the highest genres in their respective ensembles, and his identification of the general form and style of the sonata since Beethoven with that of the symphony.


46 See Sterk, *Robert Schumann as Sonata Critic*, pp. 358–72. In remarks on sonatas by Schubert (op.120, Grand Duo) and Louis Lacombe (op.1, notably the scherzo), which Schumann found particularly symphonic (he went so far as to suggest that the Grand Duo was actually intended to be a symphony), Schumann also found references to, or modelings on, Beethoven’s symphonies that did not imitate specific themes, but rather are suggestive “of Beethoven in [their] musical style, the nature of [their] themes, the thematic treatment, the texture and . . . dynamic contrasts.” See p. 351 for a list of the sonatas by Beethoven mentioned in Schumann’s criticism.

47 We should note that neither Hoffmann nor Schumann, despite their interest in symphony-sonata connections, worked with the melodic criteria proposed by Koch in his differentiation between sonata and symphonic styles. Critics of Beethoven’s sonatas apparently were not interested in the aesthetic and stylistic distinctions between the genres that had provided the conceptual background for eighteenth-century discussions.
Schumann was not alone in his estimation of Beethoven’s sonatas. Despite their difficulties and the ups and downs of their reception, by the 1830s the sonatas had attained, in reviews of new works, in discussions of Beethoven’s music and of the sonata as genre, and in compositional and theoretical treatises, the paradigmatic status enjoyed by Bach’s sonatas a half century earlier. Marx,\(^{48}\) Czerny, and a host of other theorists constructed theories of sonata and sonata form around them; composers modeled their works on them, and they are seen as the highest (though not final) stage of a historical process begun by Bach.

Because it appears within a discussion comparable to (and critical of) Schulz’s, one of the most interesting expressions of this attitude can be found in the comprehensive article “Sonate” in Ferdinand Hand’s *Aesthetik der Tönkunst* (1841). Although Hand mentions several times duo sonatas and trios and devotes the last section to the string quartet, his emphasis lies squarely on the keyboard sonata. Hand accepts Schulz’s premise that the essence of the sonata, its “material” (*Stoff*), consists in its “representation of feelings” (*Gefühle*), a term Hand uses, although he prefers the word *Seelenzustände* (conditions of the soul), because it has deeper and more ideal (favorite words for Hand) implications. But he rejects the analogy to the monologue, “because this also applies to other forms of instrumental music;” which also are capable of expressing emotions, and he consistently avoids the comparisons to rhetoric that informed eighteenth-century theory. Hand emphasizes the “characteristic” element of the sonata, through which the “natural” succession of feelings that an individual experiences are represented. These feelings are, despite their contrasting characters, “related” to each other, so that they may be considered as the development of a first and basic emotion (*Grundgefühl*). Therefore, the “essential elements” of the sonata reside in “the characteristic” and in the “natural association” of characters and the feelings they portray.\(^{49}\)

Hand uses such terms as pain, joy, and passion to identify characters and describes the movements of a sonata and the design of a single movement in terms of a succession of these characters. (This does not imply that Hand advocates programmatic sonatas or characteristic titles; he endorses the titles and the contents of


the "Lebewohl" Sonata, yet is generally skeptical about such pieces and regrets their increasing frequency.) His emphasis on the natural association and succession of feelings is a clear defense of the contrast-rich style that Schulz and Reichardt (both of whom are cited) had criticized in Italianate sonatas. While Schulz cautiously accepted change in affect, Reichardt vigorously opposed it; for Hand, it was a *sine qua non*. Hand makes "the characteristic," a concept common in the music criticism of the early nineteenth century, into the defining element of beauty in "the new instrumental music." This music "developed principally on the basis of the sonata, of which there are true and excellent works of art, especially for piano. They reveal the essence of music and how music is particularly dependent on characteristic beauty." Hence, although Hand limits his comparison of the (keyboard) sonata with the symphony or other genres to their formal features, he distinguishes the sonata by ascribing to it the highest aesthetic potential, while conceding that many sonatas, particularly recent ones, lack the requisite characteristicness to fulfill this potential. It follows that he assigns to the sonata the highest and most representative position in Beethoven's *œuvre*. It is the piano sonata in which Beethoven reveals "his inner life to its fullest extent"; the sonatas represent the "perfection of his art," for which reason "he can be judged on the whole by them."51

Hand is virtually indifferent to the various functions that eighteenth-century writers had emphasized: pedagogy and private edification, performance in the salon, career-building for young musicians. His sonata aesthetics focuses on a single object, the autonomous work in all its purity, independent of social constraints and responsibilities. Only once does Hand acknowledge the performer, only twice the listener, and both exist in no particular place or time; they enter into a relationship with the work alone. The article contains a historical sketch of the sonata that is reminiscent of Hoffmann's summary of the development of the symphony in

50. See Thomas Grey, "Metaphorical Modes in Nineteenth-Century Criticism: Image, Narrative and Idea," in *Music and Text: Critical Inquiries*, ed. Steven Paul Scher (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), pp.93–117. On the characteristic and Beethoven's sonatas, see also Elaine R. Sisman, "After the Heroic Style: *Fantasia* and the 'Characteristic' Sonatas of 1809," this volume, pp. 67–96. For Hand it is important that the characters be abstract and nonprogrammatic. Hence he rejects titles like "Retour à Paris, Adieux de Londres," but sees as "completely sufficient" Beethoven's "Les adieux, l'absence et le retour," for it is not specific and fixed but rather suggestive and general. He approvingly refers to Beethoven's supposed description of the two opposing characters—"pleading" and "resisting" (*bittend und widerstrebend*) that are musically represented without indication in the title or score in the first movement of the sonata op.14, no.1. For Hand, the presence of characteristic content is sufficient.

his review of op.67. Historical thinking of this kind did not inform eighteenth-century genre theory, but it became pronounced in an intellectual climate defined in large degree by Hegel.\textsuperscript{52} (The article is also shot through with the jargon of idealistic philosophy; the reader familiar with Marx's Beethoven criticism will recognize close correspondences.) C. P. E. Bach, the composer to whom "the free play of tones [i.e., instrumental music] owes its first . . . development," created "admirable examples of formal beauty . . . and was also familiar with the characteristic elements." Haydn and Clementi took up Bach's lead, "but Haydn penetrated more deeply into the essence of the sonata and emphasized the characteristic. . . . Meaningfulness (Bedeutsamkeit) became the predominant principle. . . . Mozart achieved a purity and definitiveness in sonata style, so that this form of art could generally be regarded as complete and standardized for all time."\textsuperscript{53}

Nevertheless, "It was reserved for Beethoven to animate the sonata with an ideal spirit." Hand describes the essence of Beethoven's sonatas in terms of its "richness" of stylistic material (which he discusses in detail) and "profundity," both of which are imbued with an ideal spirit. As the creations of a "soul" in which resided "not an image of the world, but rather its [ideal] model" (nicht ein Abbild der Welt, sondern ein Vorbild derselben—did Hand read Schopenhauer?), the sonatas offer the listener an inexhaustible source of nourishment for the soul and "reveal the higher and purely spiritual meaning of mortal existence." Possessing such attributes, the sonatas "belong to the most difficult challenges of performance, for which technical dexterity (Fingerfertigkeit) is not sufficient." But the difficulties in Beethoven's music have nothing in common with the "surface" virtuosity of Clementi and Steibelt, for which reason his music "was first understood when the time of superficial criticism had passed." "After [Beethoven]," Hand concedes, Weber, Ries, and Mendelssohn "have accomplished some honorable things," but the implication is clear: Beethoven's sonatas embody the highest stage the sonata can reach.\textsuperscript{54}

It is striking how quickly a positive consensus about Beethoven's sonatas developed after his death—apart from some critics' continuing opposition to the late sonatas. The problem of technical difficulty was solved by arguing, like Hand, that

\textsuperscript{52} Another prominent (but disappointingly superficial) discussion of the sonata genre has a historical basis: Gustav Schilling, "Sonate," \textit{Encyclopädie der gesammten musikalischen Wissenschaften oder Universal-Lexikon der Tonkunst}, vol.6 (Stuttgart: Franz Heinrich Köhler), pp.418–20, in this Schilling borrows heavily from Schulz.

\textsuperscript{53} Hand, "Sonate," pp.382–86.

\textsuperscript{54} Hand, "Sonate," pp.383–86.
the technical demands at all times served deep musical ideas; virtuosity alone was never a primary goal or stylistic determinant. Indeed, critics such as Schumann saw in Beethoven’s sonatas a stylistic bulwark against the empty virtuosity of a new post-Classical breed of piano virtuosos.

There are a number of factors contributing to the canonization of Beethoven’s sonatas. One was the simple fact of their increasing familiarity; they continued to be published, sold, and played. Yet the change in view did not depend on an upsurge in public performance of the sonatas during Beethoven’s lifetime; although reports from the last decade of his life about the disappearance of his music in Vienna are exaggerated, it is certainly true that his music reached a peak of popularity during the Congress of Vienna in 1814 and then gradually declined.

After Beethoven’s death, Romantic piano styles, which drew on elements of his pianism, became established. Critics and players gradually adjusted to the musical style and technical difficulties. In this regard, the increasing professionalization of musical journalism—most of Beethoven’s critics during his lifetime were musical amateurs—and the development of music as an academic field in universities and conservatories certainly aided Beethoven’s cause. Moreover, the posthumous reception of the sonatas coincided with the historicism evident in Hand’s article that saw a Classical style in the music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. This view was reinforced by skepticism (of the sort we have already witnessed in the eighteenth century) about the contemporary status of the genre, with regard to the quality of the pieces being composed and the public’s attitude toward the genre. Schumann, for example, despite his advocacy of the genre, recognized in 1839 that young composers write sonatas primarily to win critical attention and as exercises in form, not, however, “out of strong inner compulsion,” and gloomily concluded that the sonata is “smiled at condescendingly in France and, even in Germany, scarcely tolerated.”

55. See Newman, The Sonata since Beethoven, pp.37–40, for a review of pessimistic as well as optimistic opinion in the 1830s and thereafter.

56. These citations appeared in the Neue Zeitschrift für Musik, articles “Sonaten für das Klavier” (26 April 1839) and “Sonaten für Pianoforte” (10 December 1839). See Sterk, Robert Schumann as Sonata Critic, pp.21–22; my translations are revisions of her own. Sterk discusses Schumann’s views about the genre in detail on pp.9–36. Schumann criticizes sonata composers who continue in Mozartean mold (Hummel) and praises composers who travel on Beethoven’s path—Schubert, Weber. Beethoven’s style itself took Mozart as its point of departure. In Neue Zeitschrift für Musik, 22 January 1841, “Neue Sonaten für das Pianoforte,” Schumann constructs a “class of sonatas about which it is most difficult to speak; these are those correctly composed, sincere, well-intentioned sonatas, like those that the Mozart–Haydn school evoked by the hundreds and of which examples even now turn up here and
Finally, in seeming defiance of changes in taste, or with the goal of reforming it, Beethoven’s piano sonatas were gradually adopted by piano virtuosos for public performance. In 1836 Franz Liszt played the “Hammerklavier” Sonata, in a recital in Paris. Liszt, Clara Schumann, and Ignaz Moscheles were the most important early champions of the Beethoven sonatas in the public arena; Hans von Bülow and Anton Rubinstein joined them after 1850. But this process was slow and not without obstacles or controversy. When the pianist Charles Hallé played the Piano Sonata, op.31, no.3, in London in 1848, he was told sonatas “were not works to be played in public.” As late as 1873, Anton Rubinstein had doubts about the wisdom of including sonatas in his recitals, and five years later von Bülow was criticized for an all-Beethoven recital in London.\(^{57}\)

Any number of reasons could have motivated such attitudes, and surely pragmatic considerations were as strong a factor as artistic ones. Yet reservations about the sonata’s place in the concert hall were also founded on the aesthetic proprieties of the genre. Writing in the 1850s, A. B. Marx, whom one would expect to advocate any increase in exposure of Beethoven’s music, approached the problem in terms of the old eighteenth-century distinctions between sonata and symphony. Marx compared the “infinitely deeper musical contents that Beethoven entrusted the singular, subjective piano” to the “general circumstances and concerns that fall to the chorus of the symphony.” He also voiced concerns about their “transplantation . . . into the concert hall . . . Most of them are too heartfelt and internal, too dependent on the intellectual and emotional concentration [of the virtuoso], and the [listener’s] undisturbed submersion in their ideal nature.”\(^{58}\) Their place was in the private room or the salon; they did not inhabit the world of the symphony.

Do sonatas in the concert hall lose their generic qualities and functions? After all, Schulz’s sonata aesthetics, as described here, was a tightly constructed complex in which genre-specific musical properties were inextricably tied to performance and reception. Although he does not address the question of venue, his remarks about intimacy and directness have implications of this kind, particularly when one recalls the eighteenth-century distinctions between chamber, church, and theater styles, there.” But, he asks, “Has Beethoven lived in vain? Whoever can read no longer lingers over spelling; whoever understands Shakespeare is Robinson [Crusoe]. In short the sonata style of 1790 is not that of 1840; the demands upon form and content have increased everywhere.”

\(^{57}\) Cited in Newman, The Sonata since Beethoven, p.55.

and the historical identification of the symphony with the latter two. Michael Broyles cites a French contemporary of Schulz, J. J. O. de Meude-Monpas, on the correlation between genre, style, and venue. Meude-Monpas wrote on the symphony (one needs only to make the requisite substitutions for sonata):

Generally the genre of the symphony is appropriate to places where grand effects appear to be necessary: in opera, a spectacle that can only be maintained by the effects and the “marvelous” genre, and in churches, as for example the chapel of the king. But in a chamber, it is a monstrosity; the paintings of the Dome des Invalides seen up close. And a pretty tune in a symphony resembles a victim immolated by a number of sacrificial priests. 59

But if Beethoven’s piano sonatas possessed symphonic qualities in their structure and style, and in their aesthetic dimensions, then they could, indeed should, be performed where symphonies were heard. In large rooms for a multitude, where listeners gathered not principally to socialize but rather to hear serious music. The question of performance locale did not enter Hoffmann’s discussion, but I believe it makes sense to think that his views on Beethoven’s piano music were shared by those pianists who dared to introduce the sonatas into their public recitals or fashion their own sonatas on Beethovenian principles. They recognized the length, sweep, and power of Beethoven’s sonatas and knew that their richness of sonority, especially when played on the ever larger, ever louder modern piano, could fill a hall. Doubtless they also wished to introduce this music to a larger segment of the expanding musical public, most of whom lacked the technical expertise to play the sonatas.

Schumann had little use for most sonatas before Beethoven’s (Mozart’s and Haydn’s are the exceptions) and described them as composed in a “Perückenstil” (bewigged style), in a clever epithet that makes no secret of their association with the aristocratic culture of the salon. 60 Equally clear is his oversimplified, indeed primitive, view that casually identifies social function and aesthetic value. But we can sympathize with it, in light of Schumann’s ideas about symphonic elements in piano sonatas, his notions of progress in music, and the impatient dynamism characterizing a bourgeois music culture that no longer wished to imitate an aristocratic past but was establishing its own institutions and aesthetic criteria. Beethoven was its hero and the concert hall was the performance venue of choice.

60. See Sterk, Robert Schumann as Sonata Critic, pp.374–79.
The admission of Beethoven's sonatas into the concert hall had fundamental historical consequences. It insured their survival (and that of the more important variation cycles and bagatelles) and gradually introduced them to a much broader audience of nonmusicians than ever before. It also created the preconditions for the later entry of the sonatas of Mozart and of Haydn into the modern repertory. (The acceptance of Bach's keyboard music into the concert hall, which also had its origins in the 1830s, might well have been bolstered by this process, and German cultural nationalism certainly motivated both, but Bach's music was historical in a way Beethoven's never became and hence owes its entry to quite different impulses.) Nevertheless, it removed (and alienated) the sonatas from their native environment, the salon.

Not surprisingly, the largest and most dramatic sonatas—the sonatas most like symphonies—enjoyed the greatest prestige and the most public performances in the mid-nineteenth century. A virtual cult of the "Hammerklavier" Sonata developed, marked by Liszt's performance in Paris and compositional imitations by Mendelssohn and other pianists as late as Brahms. Yet the "Moonlight" Sonata retained the status it had always enjoyed, thanks not only to its name and its dreamy and technically undemanding first movement, but also for its intimacy and directness—it is anything but symphonic. With every private playing and every public performance—even in the grandest of concert halls—the "Moonlight" Sonata reanimates the spirit of Schulz's sonata aesthetics. How is this possible? Through the autonomy of the work and the properties of the genre it embodies, properties that even the most symphonic of sonatas do not sacrifice. They overcome the historical alienation of the sonata from the salon and perpetuate the direct experience of the music by its original listener. And the pianist, whether amateur or professional, can buy the music and play it, just as Beethoven wanted.

61. According to Newman (The Sonata since Beethoven, p. 13), the following sonatas were the most often played in the decades after Beethoven's death: "Pathétique," op. 13, "Moonlight," op. 27, no. 2, "Tempest," op. 31, no. 2, "Appassionata," op. 57, "Waldstein," op. 53, and "Hammerklavier," op. 106.