

KNOW YOUR COMPOSERS

PIANO SONATA NO 21 IN C MAJOR

Opus 53 *Waldstein*

Allegro con brio

Introduzione (Adagio molto) -

Rondo (Allegretto moderato) -

Prestissimo

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

(1770 - 1827)

The work runs for about eighteen minutes

Beethoven's association with Ferdinand Ernst Gabriel Count Waldstein, goes back to the composer's days in Bonn, where they were both connected to the Electoral court. It may well have been Waldstein's connections in Vienna that gave Beethoven the opportunity to go to the Austrian capital in 1792 to study with Haydn: "With the help of assiduous labour," goes Waldstein's famous farewell note, "you shall receive Mozart's spirit from Haydn's hands." A little over a decade later, Beethoven repaid the Count with the dedication of one of his greatest piano sonatas. His compositional skills had risen rapidly since he had arrived in Vienna and by the early years of the 19th century he was breaking new ground with every work. In 1803 he wrote in the *Eroica* his most daring symphony to date, and the *Waldstein* Sonata followed later the same year. As well as pursuing the example of the Symphony in terms of greater scale, it marked a new era in Beethoven's pianistic writing following his acquisition of a new Erard piano with its extended range.

Count Ferdinand Ernst Gabriel von Waldstein (1762 - 1823) was the young Beethoven's first great patron in Bonn. The youngest son of one of Vienna's most aristocratic families, he was dispatched to Bonn, since he already knew the Elector, Maximilian Franz, and had a great interest in the arts. The young Ludwig van Beethoven was quickly brought to his attention and he took him under his wing. It was certain-

ly through his intervention that the Elector released Beethoven for six months from the court orchestra to go to Vienna in 1878 to meet Mozart, and again through him that Beethoven was allowed to go there for a second - and final - time in 1792. In 1791 Beethoven composed the music for a ballet Count Waldstein was producing, *Ritterballet* (WoO 1), and allowed the Count to pass it off as his own. Beethoven will certainly have used this as a bargaining tool in his persistence to return to Vienna. Count Waldstein had a chequered life, and ultimately an unhappy one, after Beethoven left Bonn. He believed passionately in Austria's ability - and duty - to defeat Napoleon Bonaparte's Revolutionary Army. He frequently travelled to Vienna in fruitless attempts to persuade the Emperor to declare war, but the Emperor dismissed Waldstein from Imperial service and banished him from Vienna. Waldstein tried to raise his own army to fight the French - bankrupting himself in the process. In 1805 he was reported to be back in Vienna, but in disguise to escape his creditors. In this year Beethoven - no doubt hearing of his misfortune - dedicated the Opus 53 Piano Sonata to him. Unfortunately Count Waldstein ended his life penniless in a home for the destitute outside Vienna. By a quirk of fate, on the day he died a letter arrived informing him of the death of his elder brother - and that he had inherited the family fortune.

Despite the unexpected nature of much of the Sonata's content, the three movement structure is classically conventional with a lively, dramatic Allegro con brio, a mysterious, moody Adagio and a spacious, dynamically exciting Rondo leading to a exultant conclusion. As a result of his introduction to a new piano built by Sebastien Erard, Beethoven makes use of the full range of the keyboard. From the outset the

sonata exploits the contrast between extremes of highs and lows. A rapid tremolo of a C major chord rumbles in the bass, almost imperceptibly, before the work bursts into light and it is this light which is to illuminate the work throughout.

VALSA DA DOR

HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS

(1887 - 1959)

The work runs for about five minutes

Heitor Villa-Lobos was born in Rio de Janeiro on 5 March, 1887. Learning music from his father - a widely-read and highly-cultured amateur of music - Villa Lobos by the age of thirteen had turned himself into a professional musician. He earned his living at first as a cafe musician, playing the cello. In 1905 Villa-Lobos made the first of his many trips to Brazil's north-eastern states, to collect folk music. The composer was not averse to spinning a web of mystery around these adventures, and his tales of cannibal tribes may have to be taken with a pinch of salt! Later, he studied at the National Institute of Music in Rio de Janeiro, though his compositional style never conformed to any academic norms. His music always remained personal and idiosyncratic. As Villa-Lobos himself said many years later: "My music is natural, like a waterfall. ...one foot in the academy and you are changed for the worst!" After another trip to the Amazonian interior in 1912 in search of new music, Villa-Lobos returned to Rio de Janeiro. There, on 13 November, 1915, he turned expectations upside down with a concert of his new music. By 1923, he had attracted enough official favour to win a government grant to study in Paris. Returning in 1930, he was made Director of Music Education in Rio de Janeiro, marking the start of a second career as a leading music teacher for