

Produced by Andrew Kazdin

Side 1

**GLENN GOULD
BEETHOVEN
BAGATELLES, Op. 33**

No. 1 in E-Flat Major—Andante grazioso, quasi allegretto
No. 2 in C Major—Scherzo (Allegro)
No. 3 in F Major—Allegretto
No. 4 in A Major—Andante
No. 5 in C Major—Allegro ma non troppo
No. 6 in D Major—Allegretto, quasi andante
No. 7 in A-Flat Major—Presto

Side 2

**GLENN GOULD
BEETHOVEN
BAGATELLES, Op. 126**

No. 1 in G Major—Andante con moto
No. 2 in G Minor—Allegro
No. 3 in E-Flat Major—Andante
No. 4 in B Minor—Presto
No. 5 in E-Flat Major—Quasi allegretto
No. 6 in E-Flat Major—Presto, Andante amabile e con moto

Engineering: Kent Warden, Fritz Dose Dorevsky
The selections are in the public domain.

"Bagatelle" is not the name of a musical form but, rather, is the title for small, light pieces, usually for keyboard. Although François Couperin had used *Les Bagatelles* as the title for one of his harpsichord pieces, the first use of the word as a generic description was by Beethoven, in his Op. 33 set. (The two later sets, Op. 119 and 126, were titled by the composer, in German, "Kleinigkeiten," which means about the same thing; the publisher called them *Bagatelles* anyway.)

Groupings of short pieces for keyboard were hardly new to music. Before Beethoven, however, such collections were nearly always either written in dance forms, or else as pictorial or descriptive pieces with specifically evocative titles. We will not go far afield if we attribute to Beethoven not only the first use of a title, *bagatelle* (later used by Dvořák, Alexander Tscherny, and very few others), but the beginnings of an ongoing compositional genre. Surely the improviser, momentary musician, lute player, capriccio, intermezzo and others of the Romantic composers are the descendants of Beethoven's *Bagatelles*.

The first two of Beethoven's three sets of *Bagatelles* (two other such pieces were published individually) are obviously groupings of small pieces written at various times and put together into a group for publication—ships from the composer's workshop. The composer doubtlessly arranged them into a deliberate sequence for performance, but they have no internal coherence. However, the last set, Op. 126, seems to have been composed as a connected sequence. Here we find meaningful key relationships between the pieces, a consistent style of composition, and that curious feeling of rele-

vance common to Beethoven's large-scale works in multiple movements that we can sense but not explain.

The seven *Bagatelles* of Op. 33 were brought together from several sources. Beethoven himself dated his manuscript "1782-1802." More than likely, some of the pieces were movements expelled from early sonatas for various reasons; evidence suggests that at least two of the pieces were overflow from the three sonatas of Op. 10, composed in 1796-98. The pieces all share a three-part form (A-B-A), but of varying complexity. In some, the A sections are repeated almost verbatim; in others, they undergo considerable variation.

The English musicologist Eric Blom suggests that "we may legitimately enough assume that the seven pieces were published in the chronological order of their composition." Certainly, the first of the pieces has characteristics of the earliest style, and the last, of the latest. However, even if the first piece might have been composed by a boy genius of twelve (Beethoven's age in 1796), it obviously had the revising attention of the mature artist.

No. 1, in E-Flat, Andante grazioso quasi Allegretto, is a very simple piece in slow triple meter. It sounds like a country dance in Beethoven's most youthful style, although the characteristics of some of the variations heard in repeats suggest later revision.

No. 2, in C, Allegro, is a humorous Scherzo in triple meter dealing in surprises, syncopation, and sharp contrasts. This piece was most likely intended as a sonata movement. The first reprise of the opening theme is subjected to particularly amusing variation and is then stretched into a coda—an especially funny touch.

No. 3, in F, Allegretto, again in triple meter, sounds like a simple dance. This might also have been a very early composition, although, again, some of the variation suggests later Beethoven.

No. 4, in A, Andante, is again a simply written piece, but somehow suggests greater maturity. This is the first piece of the set in dupe meter.

No. 5, in C, Allegro ma non troppo, in dupe meter, is a curious, quirky scherzo-like piece. Broken chords and arpeggios serve in place of real themes; it seems a study in music without melody. The piece has a giddy quality.

No. 6, in D, Allegretto quasi Andante, again in dupe meter, is a gentle and charming pastoral piece. This, too, was most likely intended as a sonata movement.

No. 7, in A-Flat, Presto, returns to triple meter. This strange piece Blom calls it "strikingly odd, almost freakish!" sounds like a sonata finale.

If the *Bagatelles* of Op. 33 live up to their title and reveal a light, almost trivial side of the composer, those of Op. 126 are "trifles" in size only. They were written in 1823-24, or at about the same time as the Ninth Symphony, "Diabelli" Variations and Missa Solemnis. If, in the last great works in sonata form, Beethoven attempts to capture elements of cosmic personal and universal, these last *Bagatelles* concentrate an in-

dividual experience. They certainly reflect the composer's characteristically intense but fleeting moods as we know them from accounts of his personal life.

No. 1, in G, Andante con moto, in triple meter, has an asymmetrical form which would have been totally out of place in Beethoven's earlier music. The composer's own directions to the performer, "cantabile e compiaciuto" [songful and complacent], serve as an accurate description of the piece.

No. 2, in G Minor, Allegro, in dupe meter, contrasts a rapidly rushing figure with a more flowing "answer" in three-part counterpoint. The "answer" is extended into a lyric central section, which is finally interrupted again by the rushing figure and a return to the opening. Simple description cannot begin to convey the complexity of emotion captured in this short piece which, were it not so plastic, would sound like a movement from one of the late string quartets.

No. 3, in E-Flat, Andante, in triple meter (cantabile e grazioso), is a miniature set of variations on a tiny theme. The remarkable coda uses the sustaining pedal to blend the tonic and dominant harmonies, an effect that seems to belong to least half a century ahead of its actual date.

No. 4, in B Minor, Presto, in dupe meter, begins gruffly, giving the impression of the composer stamping about in a bad mood. But a sudden modulation into B Major introduces a remarkable sense of serenity—finely textured, almost motionless music. As we might expect, the opening music returns and is repeated almost exactly (but not quite—Beethoven crossed out his repeat marking in the manuscript and wrote the whole section out again so that he might introduce a few minor variations). One more surprise is still in store—a sudden ending that modulates abruptly back to the major.

No. 5, in G, Quasi Allegretto, in triple meter, uses the simple A-B-A form for an unrefined, songlike piece.

No. 6, in E-Flat, Presto—Andante amabile e con moto, opens with a startling rush of noise in rapid dupe meter. After only six bars, this changes into a slow, flowing piece in triple meter in which we sense the Olympian detachment of Beethoven's late large-scale masterpieces. The American pianist and pedagogue Jacob Laubert points out that "this *Bagatelle* is an amazing exercise in structure, the whole piece (except for bars 25-32) being written in a strict sequence of three-measure phrases." As lateiner further notes, the composer also dealt with this problem in meter in the Gloria of the Missa Solemnis and in the Scherzo of the Ninth Symphony. The opening bars finally return to bring the music to a good-humored conclusion.

—Leslie Gerber

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Conductor: André Tardieu, John Nesch/Cover photo: Don Henning/Pixie/CNH/Cook
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Glenn Gould

Beethoven
Bagatelles
Op. 33 & Op. 126

M 33265



G0100032924273

Ludwig van Beethoven 1770–1827

7 Bagatelles op. 33

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|--|------|
| [1] No. 1 in E-flat major – Andante. Grazioso quasi allegretto
Es-Dur · en <i>mi</i> bémol majeur | 3:53 |
| [2] No. 2 in C major – Scherzo. Allegro – Trio
C-Dur · en <i>ut</i> majeur | 2:55 |
| [3] No. 3 in F major – Allegretto
F-Dur · en <i>fa</i> majeur | 1:27 |
| [4] No. 4 in A major – Andante
A-Dur · en <i>la</i> majeur | 3:21 |
| [5] No. 5 in C major – Allegro ma non troppo
C-Dur · en <i>ut</i> majeur | 2:34 |
| [6] No. 6 in D major – Allegretto, quasi Andante
(Con una certa espressione parlante)
D-Dur · en <i>ré</i> majeur | 3:39 |
| [7] No. 7 in A-flat major – Presto
As-Dur · en <i>la</i> bémol majeur | 1:55 |

6 Bagatelles op. 126

- | | |
|---|------|
| [8] No. 1 in G major – Andante con moto cantabile
e compiacevole – Molto tenuto non troppo presto
G-Dur · en <i>sol</i> majeur | 4:00 |
|---|------|

- | | |
|---|------|
| [9] No. 2 in G minor – Allegro
g-Moll · en <i>sol</i> mineur | 1:57 |
| [10] No. 3 in E-flat major – Andante. Cantabile e grazioso
Es-Dur · en <i>mi</i> bémol majeur | 3:51 |
| [11] No. 4 in B minor – Presto
h-Moll · en <i>si</i> mineur | 5:04 |
| [12] No. 5 in G major – Quasi Allegretto
G-Dur · en <i>sol</i> majeur | 2:16 |
| [13] No. 6 in E-flat major – Presto – Andante amabile e con moto
Es-Dur · en <i>mi</i> bémol majeur | 4:46 |

Total Time 41:52

Glenn Gould piano

Original LP: M 33265 · Released April 1, 1975

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Producer: Andrew Kazdin · Recording Engineers: Kent Warden & Frank Dean Dennowitz

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Puzzle: Cliff Condak · Liner Notes: Leslie Gerber

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LESLIE GERBER