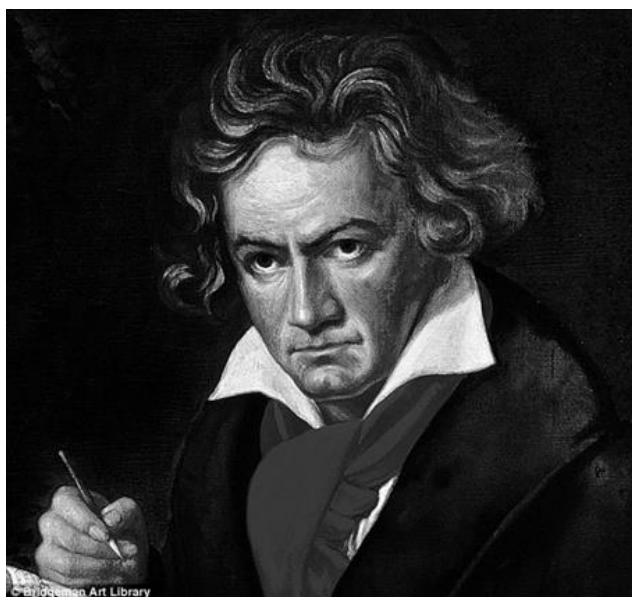


Chamber Music in Ballarat

ALL-BEETHOVEN

Duo-Recital

Susan Pierotti – violin
Brian Chapman – piano



5:00 pm, Saturday September 16th 2023
Humffray Room
Ballaarat Mechanics Institute
117-119 Sturt Street, Ballarat Central, VIC 3350

Program

Violin Sonata No.5 in F, Op.24 ("Spring Sonata")

Violin Sonata No.10 in G, Op.96

— **INTERVAL** —

Andante favori in F for solo Piano, WoO.57

Violin Sonata No.7 in C minor, Op.30 No.2

PROGRAM NOTES

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

1. *Violin Sonata No.5 in F, Op.24 ("Spring Sonata")*

Allegro Adagio molto espressivo Scherzo (Allegro molto) Rondo (Allegro ma non troppo)

The German nickname for Beethoven's *Op.24 Violin Sonata – Frühlingssonate* – has been universally accepted as aptly conveying the work's freshness, vitality, and amiable humour. Composed in 1801, the work was dedicated to Count Moritz von Fries.

The first movement begins with a sweet, lyrical theme in the violin which is immediately repeated by the piano. A gently dramatic bridge passage modulates to C major for the second subject consisting of repeated long notes in the violin and a descending arpeggio accompanied by repeated quavers in the piano. These latter develop their own melodic impact before the codetta brings the exposition to a close in a swirl of repeated scales.

Apart from a fragmentary reference to the semiquaver passage of the opening theme at its outset, the development section derives entirely from the second subject in a spirited exchange of thematic material between the two instruments concluding with trills in unison that gently relax to welcome back the main theme for the recapitulation.

The *Adagio* in B flat major is in the style of an operatic cavatina with a beautiful principal theme shared equally between the piano and the violin. After a more decorated repetition the music experiments with the semiquaver fragment from the opening theme of the first movement and closes quietly.

If brevity be the soul of wit, then the following *Scherzo* is a fine joke indeed! The main theme in F major, given first by the piano, has a stammering quality to its rhythm, an effect accentuated when the violin joins in out of step. Four bars of A major chords are interjected followed by a repeat of the first half of the main theme. The *Trio* section gets the two instruments synchronised at last in rhythmic unison in a rush of staccato quavers.

The main theme of the *Rondo* can be seen with hindsight to give melodic utterance to the rhythmic stutter of the *Scherzo*. The generously flowing melody is evenly shared and varied on its repeated appearances, interspersed with contrasting episodes.

2. *Violin Sonata No.10 in G, Op.96*

*Allegro moderato Adagio espressivo Scherzo (Allegro)
Poco Allegretto – Adagio – Allegro – Poco Adagio – Presto*

The *Sonata Op.96* was originally composed in 1812, probably revised in 1815 and finally published in 1816 with a dedication to Beethoven's friend, patron and piano student, Archduke Rudolph of Austria. The work was written for the French violinist Pierre Rode who premiered the work with the Archduke. The delay in reaching a definitive publication relates to the form and mood of the *finale* and is explained in a letter from Beethoven to the Archduke, "... I did not make great haste in the last movement for the sake of mere punctuality, the more because, in writing it, I had to consider the playing of Rode. In our finales we like rushing and resounding passages, but this does not please R and — this hinders me somewhat."

The overall character of this *Sonata* is very far removed from the heroic, impassioned style that characterises many works of Beethoven's 'middle period'; a more serene, elegiac mood is established at the outset with a first movement that invites the nickname "*Pastoral*" for the work as a whole. Some have even suggested that *Op.96* is the 'real' "*Spring*" *Sonata*, an idea which perhaps is unjustly disrespectful toward the charming *Op.24 Violin Sonata in F*!

The opening *Allegro moderato* begins with the solo violin announcing a short bird-like call, immediately answered by the piano and then repeated by the violin. After this exchange is repeated in reverse order the two instruments follow each other through waves of ascending and descending arpeggios and then pass through a rhythmically spirited bridge passage, followed by becalmed scale passages that lead to a more jaunty second theme. Another rhythmically energetic bridge passage ensues and is again becalmed into contrary motion scales that resolve into a short serene third theme. After this exposition is repeated the development is initially focussed on fragments of the third theme followed by the contrary motion scales in triplets which then consolidate into more dramatic exchanges between the instruments, alternating loud and soft, and culminating in a quiet resolution in repeated trills that usher in the recapitulation. The movement concludes with a brief *coda* constructed from the main theme's bird-calls and the waves of arpeggios.

The *Adagio* in E flat major begins with an eight-bar pure song given to the piano, with its closing phrase repeatedly shared between the two instruments before the violin embarks on a second theme. An extended *crescendo* passage leads to an ornamental *cadenza* for the violin after which the piano returns to accompany the violin's rendition of the first song theme. The repeat of the second theme is initially given by the piano, before its more ornamental conclusion is generously shared between the two instruments, leading to a quiet close.

The *Scherzo* is a lively minuet in G minor, delicate in texture though punctuated with frequent accents on the third beat. The accents are discarded for the gentle *Trio* section in E flat major with a smoothly waltzing lilt. The return to the G minor *Scherzo* is followed by a terse *coda* in G major, which concludes with an unexpected *crescendo* to a loud final chord.

The *finale* presents a set of variations on a cheerful original theme in that comprises four eight-bar sections having the structure A-A-B-B, with the repeats of each section being either identical or somewhat varied as we progress through the variations. The basic key structure of the theme and most of the variations is G major throughout, except for a brief modulation to B major for the first four bars of section B.

Var.I comprises a series of chromatically sliding and swelling four-note phrases while Var.II breaks out into vigorously rhythmic triplets. Var.III presents a quietly syncopated variant of the theme in both instruments accompanied by the piano's left hand in wandering semiquavers; this variation concludes with a strong *crescendo* to introduce Var.IV with its lively syncopated exchange of chords between the instruments and contrasted with quieter scale passages. These conclude quietly and slow down for Var.V (*Adagio*) with its two interpolated *cadenzas* for the piano and modulates unexpectedly to bring back the main theme in the original *tempo* but in the wrong key of E flat major; this 'false return' lasts only seven bars before becoming 'lost' in B flat major. After an uncertain pause and a brief search for the 'right' key culminating in another pause, the *Allegro* version (Var.VI) explodes in G major and seems to be heading straight towards a climactic conclusion with a spirited *coda* before being cut off in full flight and immediately followed by a creepy *pianissimo* fugal variation (Var.VII) that commences in G minor and proceeds chromatically while seeming to knock stealthily on the door of 12-tone music before making a sudden *crescendo* to present the original theme back in its original key but now in the faster *Allegro tempo* (Var.VIII) and with the repeats omitted and culminating *coda* featuring *fortissimo* scales in contrary motion. Yet again, the promise of a triumphant conclusion is tantalisingly withheld by the interposition of a teasingly protracted *Poco Adagio* before closure is finally achieved through a sudden eight-bar *Presto*.

3. *Andante favori in F major for solo piano, WoO.57*

This piece was originally composed between 1803 and 1804 as the slow movement of the "*Waldstein*" *Sonata in C major, Op.53*, but was withdrawn and replaced by the composer following a friend's criticism that it was too long for its context. Nonetheless, Beethoven continued to perform the movement in society as a standalone piece because of its popularity, leading him to publish it with the surviving title but with no *opus* number (i.e., hence its modern listing as *Werk ohne Opuszahl 57*). It is in *Rondo* form and is marked *Andante grazioso con moto*. In the context of the present recital, it shares the key, grace and charm of the "*Spring*" *Sonata*. This *Andante* was famously and beautifully used in an imaginatively contrived scene in the BBC TV production of *Pride and Prejudice* in which the piece is played on the fortepiano by Darcy's sister Georgiana.

4. *Violin Sonata No.7 in C minor, Op.30 No.2*

Allegro con brio Adagio cantabile Scherzo (Allegro) Finale (Allegro)

The three *Sonatas Op.30* were composed in 1802 and published the following year in Vienna with a dedication to the Emperor Alexander I of Russia. The second work of this set stands out among Beethoven's complete output of violin sonatas as representing most fully those moods of the composer that are aptly described by the term 'heaven-storming'. Conflict, anger, and defiance in adversity are the dominant themes of the first and last movements, both of which are cast in the key of C minor.

The main theme of the first movement is announced quietly by the piano with a sense of foreboding. After the violin repeats the theme the two instruments build up tension that results in an angry exchange of chords preceding the entry of the second subject in E flat major. This latter is a march-like theme with a military snap and a faint suggestion of flippancy. This is followed by some vigorous passagework that builds to an exultant climax still in the major key. This opening movement is unique among those of Beethoven's ten *Violin Sonatas* in that the exposition is not repeated. The development proceeds immediately with a dramatic working out of all the material from the exposition culminating in a recapitulation that brings back the main theme in C minor in a *fortissimo* unison for both instruments. Although the second subject begins this time in C major the exultant sequel is darkened by being kept in C minor.

The *Adagio* presents a beautiful song that dominates most of the movement, being often repeated with much elaboration and generously shared between the two instruments. There is an intervening episode containing long lines decorated by a staccato accompaniment and a later episode where violent scale passages threaten to destroy the movement's tranquillity, but the ending resolves in a quiet close.

The *Scherzo* and accompanying *Trio* are both in C major and provide light relief from the darker colour of the rest of the work. The jocular mood is heightened by the effective use of off-beat *sforzandi*. In the *Trio* the instruments follow each other in close canon in a melody with a smoother line.

The *Finale* is in *Rondo* form with a principal subject composed of two four-bar fragments: the first is an obstinately repeated *staccato* figure that always commences softly with a rapid *crescendo* to *fortissimo*, while the second is a more lyrical theme in C minor. If the first fragment conjures a picture of Beethoven shaking his fist at the universe, then the second fragment might be viewed as a sublimation of his coming to terms with his circumstances. In the central episode the latter recurs in the key of C major and is followed by a strong fugal treatment in C minor. Although this *Sonata* dates from Beethoven's early period, this working out of conflict in the form of a fugue foreshadows a manner that was to become a major trait of the composer's late style. The present *Finale* concludes defiantly in the minor key and is to be compared with similar closes in the final movements of the '*Moonlight*' and '*Appassionata*' *Piano Sonatas*. However, while these other two works convey an unrelenting tragic struggle, the present work is lightened by happier and more optimistic episodes.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Susan Pierotti began learning the violin at the age of six with Stella Nemet and continued her studies with her daughter Mary Nemet at the Victorian College of the Arts and in London with Emanuel Hurwitz where she played with the London Sinfonietta, the London Mozart Players and the Capicchioni Ensemble. Since then, Susan has enjoyed a career experience spanning symphony orchestras, opera, ballet, chamber music, teaching, theatre, film, recordings, live broadcasts, radio, television, reviewing and adjudicating. Susan has been closely involved in commissioning, performing and recording contemporary music for over two decades. She worked with the Elision Ensemble since its inception in 1986, touring with them world-wide. She currently plays with Arcko Ensemble. Susan has worked extensively with several Australian orchestras and joined Orchestra Victoria in 1990 where she was the 1st Violin Section Leader for 17 years. She was appointed concertmaster of Zelman Memorial Symphony Orchestra in December 2016. She is also a qualified editor and proof-reader and is the editor for *Stringendo*, the magazine of the Australian Strings Association. She has just completed a history of the association, and has self-published two books, *Manuscript to Market* and *Losing My Parents*.



English-born pianist **Brian Chapman** studied in Brisbane with Nora Baird from 1952, and in Melbourne from 1954 with Lindsay Biggins, J.A. Steele and Roy Shepherd. Early achievements included the diplomas AMusA (1958) and LMusA (1965), and Victorian State finalist in the ABC's Instrumental and Vocal Competition (now Young Performers' Award) in 1966 and 1968 (equal State winner). His television appearances have included nine episodes of Channel 10's "Showcase" (1968-1970). Brian has performed widely in Melbourne, interstate and overseas, including the United States, Mexico, Germany and China. He has made over 100 ABC studio recordings and broadcasts and presented many recitals with prominent Australian and international musicians. He has released several CD recordings, including a 2-CD album of Schubert's *Winterreise* with baritone Nathan Lay singing both in the original German and in Brian's new English translation. Brian has also organised major musical events including Monash University's 1983 Brahms Chamber Music Festival and 1997 Schubert/Brahms Festival. Brian teaches piano privately and was honorary accompanist with both the West Gippsland Chorale (2001-2009) and the Latrobe Chorale (2017-2019). His musical activities have been complemented by an academic career as a physiologist and educational software developer, including appointments at Monash University's Department of Physiology (1973-1989), QED Research Unit (1994-1997) and Gippsland Medical School (2008-2014).

