

BEETHOVEN
PATHETIQUE

Beethoven piano works
volume two

Ronald
Farren-Price

move

move

Ronald Farren-Price

BEETHOVEN PATHÉTIQUE

Beethoven piano works
volume two

Grande Sonata No 8 in C minor, Pathétique, Op 13 (1798-9)

- 1 Grave; Allegro di molto con brio 11'42"
- 2 Adagio cantabile 4'59"
- 3 Rondo: Allegro 4'56"

Sonata No. 10 in G major, Op 14 No. 2 (1798-9)

- 4 Allegro 7'46"
- 5 Andante 5'12"
- 6 Scherzo: Allegro assai 3'41"

7 Rondo in C, Op 51 No. 1 (1796-7)

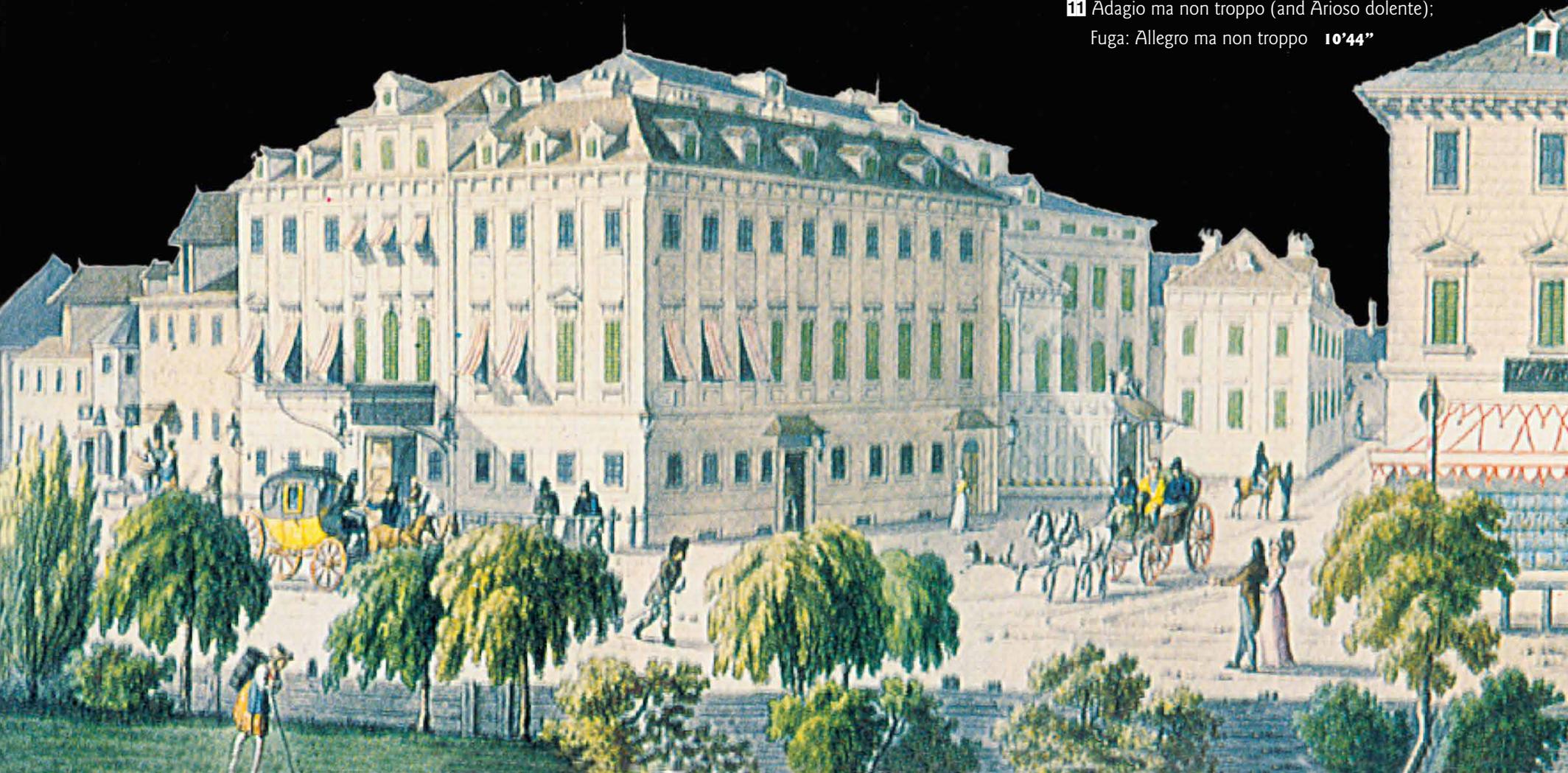
Moderato e grazioso 5'57"

8 Rondo in G, Op 51 No. 2 (1798)

Andante cantabile e grazioso; Allegretto; Tempo I 9'56"

Sonata No. 31 in A flat major, Op 110 (1821-22)

- 9 Moderato cantabile molto espressivo
(con amabilità) 6'49"
- 10 Allegro molto 2'36"
- 11 Adagio ma non troppo (and Arioso dolente);
Fuga: Allegro ma non troppo 10'44"



Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Beethoven was born in Bonn on 16 December 1770. When he died on 26 March 1827 at the age of 56 he left a legacy of music which continues to dominate concert programming today. Indeed, the music of Beethoven is ever present in the modern world and is as much turned to for the celebration of great events, such as the fall of the Berlin Wall when the Ninth Symphony seemed the only fitting music, as it is for an intimate sharing of sensibilities, such as a couple listening to the first movement of the *Moonlight* sonata. That his music lives so strongly today and for such widely differing purposes is proof beyond doubt that he was an extraordinary creative artist. It is also an extraordinary situation that his music does permeate modern life. This might be more fully appreciated by distancing Beethoven from his past by as many years as separate our present from Beethoven's time. Such an equivalent period of time would require us to imagine that music composed in the 1560s to the late 1590s would have continued as a living, even dominating, force in Beethoven's time. Those were the decades of Orlando de Lassus whose courtly and religious music had been completely forgotten by the time Beethoven was born.

Beethoven began as a highly skilled and idiosyncratic performer and became a composer through hard work. He was sheltered and supported by an aristocratic group and his position in Viennese musical culture can only be described as elitist. A secret police report of 1824 alludes to the narrow and aristocratic basis of both his support and appreciation.



The recital. . . did not serve to increase enthusiasm for the talent of this composer, who has his partisans and adversaries. In opposition to his admirers, the first rank of which is represented by Razumovsky, Apponyi, Kraft, etc., . . . who adore Beethoven, is formed an overwhelming majority of connoisseurs who refuse absolutely to listen to his works hereafter. When Beethoven came from Bonn to Vienna in 1792 he was a provincial musician of talent. He set about, through enormous hard work, and by making the right connections, to get on top of music. Initially, this was through mastery of

performance and the composition of works for the piano. By the end of the 1790s he started to gain mastery in other genres of composition. It was not until about 1803 that he started to develop his unique mastery of the orchestra as a medium for original music. An assessment of this progress might cautiously conclude that he did not quite master opera.

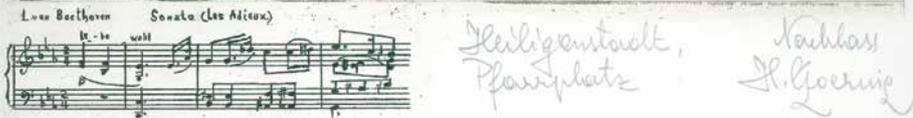
Compositions for the piano, through the sonata and many smaller characteristic pieces, was the first field of his mastery and originality. Beethoven invested a sense of great concentration in his piano works. He composed for a discerning and learned audience and made uncompromising demands on all around him, especially performers, a special feature of his music still felt (or feared!) by performers down to the present.

Through his playing Beethoven passed a conception of the performance of his works to a small circle of younger pianists around him, such as Carl Czerny. Czerny taught Liszt and Liszt became a great performer of Beethoven's piano music, specially of the *Hammerklavier* sonata and the fifth piano concerto. Liszt in turn taught many younger pianists and imbued in them that serious dedication to the interpretation of Beethoven's keyboard works which is still very much at the heart of Beethoven performances. One of these pupils was Martin Krause, who in turn taught the young Claudio Arrau. And so this tradition stretching back to Beethoven has come down to the present day. Claudio Arrau in turn taught Ronald Farren-Price.

It is well known that Beethoven began to go deaf in his early thirties. The deafness increased to such an extent that it is unlikely he would have been able to hear his last works. It has always



Vienna



Grande Sonata No 8 in C minor, Pathétique, Op 13 (1798-9)

Of the thirty-two sonatas for piano by Beethoven, the *Pathétique* is undoubtedly one of his most popular works and the best known of the sonatas. Its evocative title given by the publisher was accepted by Beethoven and adds a romantic aura that has seduced generations of listeners. Throughout the three movements the twin poles of Beethoven's distinctive sound world are locked together, that of a sacred depth within each note, even in loud passages, and a profane violence in each note, even in quiet passages. In the first notes of the opening there is a

tension, an uneasiness, a sense of constrained energy, just as in the energy of the striking rondo there is a calm noble spirituality.

Beethoven was twenty-nine when he wrote this sonata. Europe was in a state of political and military unrest following the French Revolution, a tension perhaps like the Cold War tension of more recent times. Beethoven's music of violence and hope seems to have struck excitement among the Viennese younger generation that had a chance to hear his works. A knowledge of some of his

compositions spread quickly. Ignaz Moscheles (1794-1870) recalled that his teacher had warned him against playing Beethoven's hare brained compositions when in 1801 he tried to play the *Pathétique* when he was about seven years old and living in Prague. By that time the sonata was already famous. Moscheles was a precocious child and was attracted to it for the same reasons those older than himself were, because of its passion and emotion, its expression of the ancient and noble passion, *pathetikos*, pity or sadness through suffering. The response is a testament to the power of this piece and one that is still experienced today.

1 The Grave opening, which returns in abbreviated form at strategic points, is a reflection on *pathetikos* whereas the *Allegro di molto con brio* is the passion, the reliving of the emotional turmoil, leading to *pathetikos*. Whatever the sources for Beethoven's inspiration in the works of others, such as the powerful first subject of Mozart's Sonata in C minor, KV457, his individuality of expression is unchallenged in any comparison. The striding rising movement of the first subject against its pounding bass, the post-modern repetitions within the second subject, or the tempestuous closing of the exposition, and the tension of the development, all stand out as the unique voice of Beethoven, gripping in their emotional drive and high-minded in their unflinching seriousness.

2 The slow movement (*Adagio cantabile*) is suffused with that religiosity which became a hallmark of mature Beethoven. Indeed the notes of its opening were later re-used in that masterpiece of late-Beethoven, the chorale first subject in the slow movement of the Ninth Symphony. The

been a subject of wonder that he could create the new, unique and utterly personal sounds which infuse these later compositions. It is less well known that Beethoven suffered severe ill-health at different times of his adult life and especially in the last decade of his life. That someone could be so ill, and there is much independent evidence to negate any view that he was a malingerer or a hypochondriac, yet bring the concentration and independence of mind to go on creating so many lasting masterpieces is even more cause for wonder than that he was also deaf.



sonata movement suggests that it might unfold as a set of variations, but returns after what might seem as a first variation to the beautiful first subject. As it continues its form as a theme with contrasting episodes become clear, but its subtle effect comes from the expectation that it is a theme with variations.

3 The rondo has drawn a more varied response from critics than the other two movements. It combines grace with passion by developing and dovetailing a simple and beautifully tempered motif to present it in many guises.

Sonata No. 10 in G major, Op 14 No. 2 (1798-9)

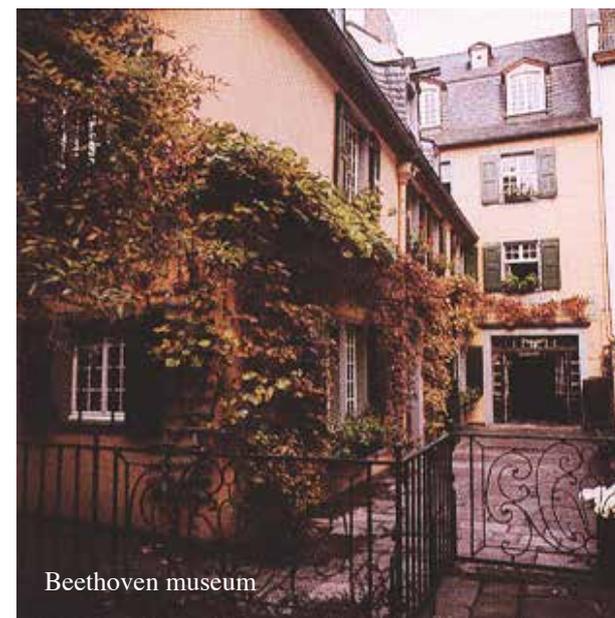
There are two sonatas in Opus 14 and both have been cherished and admired for generations and even during Beethoven's life they seem to have aroused special affection. In contrast to the massive sonatas of Beethoven's maturity, which usually hold the foreground of attention, the G major sonata may seem a modest conception. But its restricted scale and quirky but genial character is offset by its individuality and creative artistry.

The sonata has three movements.

4 The work begins (*Allegro*) off the beat and in the manner of a prelude. It is not for several bars that the accent of the bars is correctly sensed and even then strong notes off the beat maintain the delicate distortion of emphasis. A striking second subject in thirds contrasts with the opening figuration and the exposition of ideas concludes with a rich and beautiful exchange between the right and left hands. It is traditional for this section to be repeated, after which the ideas are extended and developed with deft imagination. What seemed merely a prelude is expanded and manipulated throughout the development and is used to whimsically end the movement.

5 The second movement (*Andante*) is a set of variations, the first to appear in Beethoven's sonatas. The theme suggests a delicate operatic march and the image of old cronies gently swaying round the stage. There follows three variations with a coda. The variations however are of the most restrained kind. They suggest the purity of approach taken by Haydn in his famous variations in the Emperor quartet; but not quite, because Beethoven's variations on the rather wayward theme are more like a comic imitation of Haydn. Beethoven had a strange, even rude and ungracious, attitude towards Haydn, wanting to outdo the old man and rival him and parody him by musical excesses.

6 The last movement (*Scherzo: Allegro assai*) also suggests Haydn. It is in rondo form but marked *Scherzo*, and plays with rhythmic deception by having anapaestic and dactylic meters trip each other up. Far from being a continuous sweeping finale, this movement rather



perversely contrasts fragmentary rhythmic ideas with extended textural sequences. It plays with sounds and figures as a musical game.

7 Rondo in C, Op 51 No. 1 (1796-7)

8 Rondo in G, Op 51 No. 2 (1798)

At the beginning of his career as a published composer Beethoven gave only his significant sonata movement works an opus number and resisted attempts by his publishers to give other works such a distinction. Nevertheless, some earlier smaller works were later accepted into the select corpus and given opus numbers. This is the case with the two rondos now linked by sharing their opus number but written at different and earlier times. But in truth neither of these two works is in any way insignificant and the idea that these smaller works are lesser works is unconvincing. They might more appropriately be considered as refined masterly

compliments, each showing a distinctive character and a touching imagination. A feature of both works is the progressive development of their initial ideas each time they reappear, a compositional device which Beethoven probably developed from Haydn but which he made his own in the works of his late period.

7 The first Rondo is in a lyrical style that is both old-fashioned, in that it is reminiscent of Mozart, and prophetic, because it hints of that genre of ample lyricism Beethoven developed during his thirties and so eloquently expressed in the violin sonatas and the incomparable Archduke Trio. **8** The second Rondo has more elaborate figuration and greater contrast because of the *allegretto* section, and taken together the two are charming examples that prove Beethoven could not submit to a formula but sought variety through the subject matter dictating the form. The second Rondo was written about the time Beethoven wrote his First Symphony. It is dedicated to Countess Lichnowsky whose husband's orchestra was to give the premier of the *Eroica*, Beethoven's Third Symphony.

Sonata No. 31 in A flat major, Op 110 (1821-22)

As this sonata unfolds, the second last of Beethoven's 32 sonatas, its opening **9** must be counted as one of the most beautiful beginnings to any piece of music. It combines simplicity, intimacy, tenderness and a transparent gravity in a series of quite distinct and contrasting figures which nevertheless blend together like sentences in a letter. Many sections of the first and third

movements of the sonata are imbued with these delicate characteristics, separated by a vigorous scherzo **10**.

A feature hidden in this sonata is the melodic links between its movements. The subject of the fugue in the third movement is suggested by the first notes of the beautiful opening to the sonata. The contour of the sad and wilting *Arioso dolente* in the last movement, before the fugue begins, is suggested by the shape of the simple theme which immediately follows the few notes of the opening chorale to the first movement. The delicate rippling arpeggios which are such a feature of the first movement are based on scale patterns which appear in many different guises in other thematic fragments throughout the sonata. While they might pass unnoticed they bring a unity of expression that elevates this sonata to the highest level of 'mind over matter'. The last movement, the conjunction of an *adagio* that becomes the *Arioso dolente* with a fugue, is an artistic and creative feat unique to this work. Counterpoint and fugue played an important part in Beethoven's development as a composer. In his youth he had been taught to play all the Bach 48 preludes and fugues and continued to play them throughout his life. **11** The last movement is presented in six sections, opening with the *Adagio* as a recitative, then the *Arioso dolente* (whose last notes prefigure the fugue subject), then the fugue, followed by a reworking of the *Arioso* and the fugue in inversion, that is, the sequence of notes is upside down, and finally, as the counterpoint becomes more complex by lengthening the fugue subject in some voices and shortening it in others. In the last section the subject is presented as a greatly foreshortened but decorative motif and

the music seems to increase its pace and reaches a climax when the fugue subject (and one must remember these are also the opening notes of the whole sonata) are pounded out in an almost hysterical frenzy. The sonata was written between August 1821 and early January 1822 when Beethoven was working on the *Missa Solemnis*. It was also a time when Beethoven suffered quite serious ill-health and it is extraordinary that under such physical distress he had the discipline and creative drive to realise the not only remarkable but also intensely personal and original works of this period, such as the *A flat* sonata.

Beethoven dedicated the *Diabelli Variations* to Antonie Brentano and had dedicated the *Sonata in E major*, which immediately preceded the *A flat* sonata, to her daughter, Maximiliane. It has been proposed by Maynard Solomon in his recent biography on Beethoven that Antonie Brentano was the 'Immortal Beloved', whose identity has perplexed everyone since Beethoven's death and that the undedicated *A flat* sonata was intended for her.

Program notes: © 2003 George Tibbits

Photograph of Ronald Farren-Price: Andrew Campbell

Portrait of Beethoven – page 3:
after oil painting Ferdinand Waldmüller

Front cover: Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer (1865-1953)
“Portrait of Beethoven” 26 x 18.5 cm pastel on paper

Painting – page 2: Theatre under Wien after J. Alt. (c1815)

Recordings: Martin Wright and Thomas Grubb

Editing: Vaughan McAlley

Recorded at Melba Hall, University of Melbourne

Piano: RFP Steinway D 507410
(except Op 14 No 2 Holtham Steinway D 550537)

Other Move recordings by Ronald Farren-Price

Reflections

With tenderness, with fire

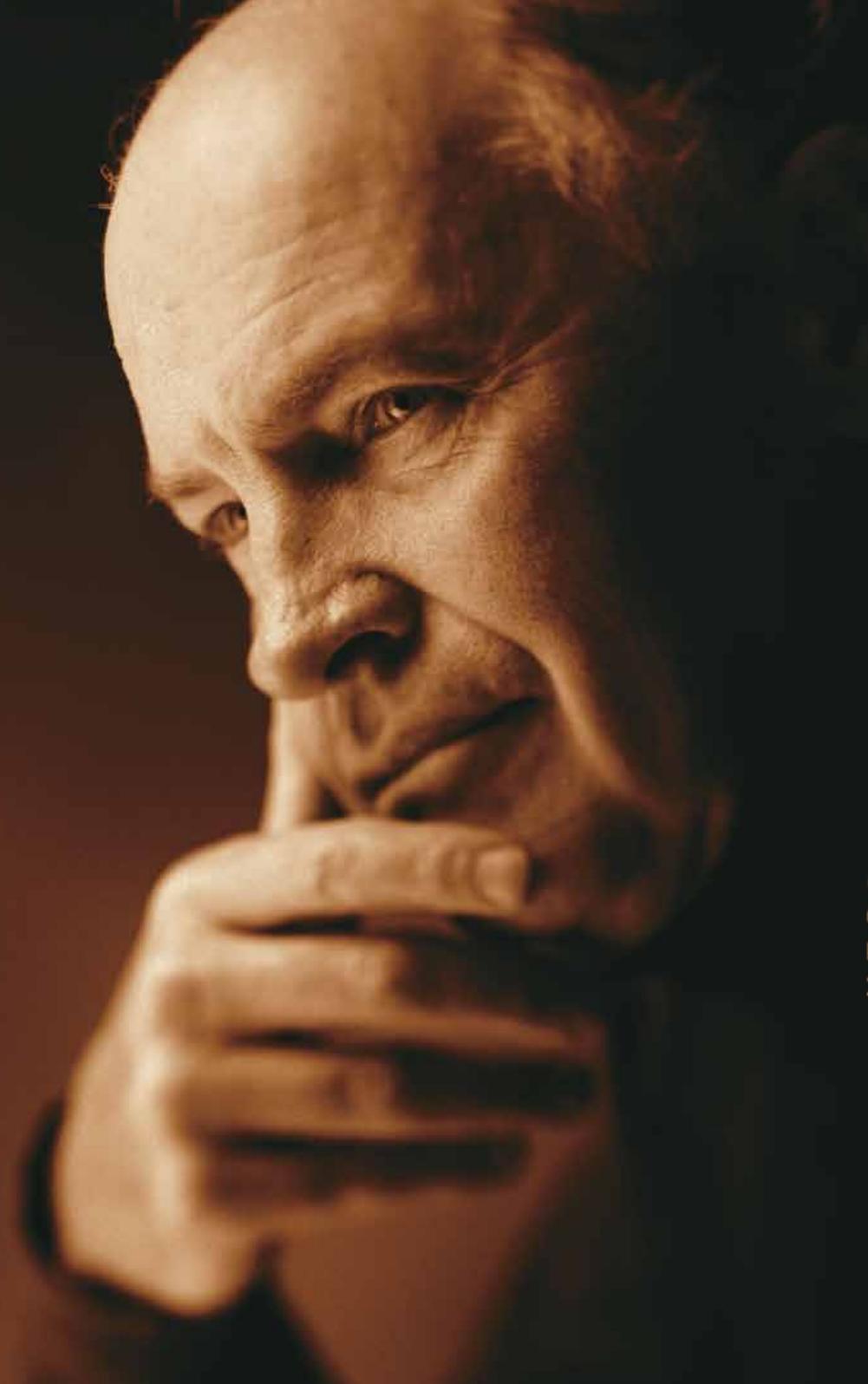
Chopin

Beethoven Moonlight

*Full details of these and all other Move CDs
available on Move’s website*

move.com.au

© 2004 Move Records
Melbourne
Australia



Ronald Farren-Price

Ronald Farren-Price is a household musical name throughout Australia as a great Australian pianist. After his youth in Brisbane and study at The University of Melbourne, his international career began with his recognition by the legendary pianist Claudio Arrau under whose guidance his distinctive style of playing matured. It is a style where clarity of articulation, depth of expression and firmness of touch are paramount, where a bold nobility is brought to each performance.

In addition to performing throughout Australia, Ronald Farren-Price is into his fifth decade of giving concerts overseas. He has appeared both in recital and as concerto soloist in the major concert halls of some forty countries. Among his noted appearances in Britain, Europe and the United States are those at Queen Elizabeth Hall London, Carnegie Recital Hall New York, Tchaikovsky Hall Moscow, Philharmonic Hall Leningrad (now St Petersburg), Musikhalle Hamburg and Brahmsaal Vienna. In South America, where he toured for the first time in 1989, he gave recital and concerto performances in Buenos Aires, Caracas and Valencia. He has also been a pioneer in bringing Australian performance to China, being invited since his first visit in 1986 to give recitals and master classes in Beijing and other cities; and to South-East Asia, including Vietnam where he played in the

Hanoi Opera House.

His most notable success, indeed a unique success as an Australian instrumentalist, has been his 12 tours of the former USSR, spanning several decades. This is a feat which reveals his remarkable popularity in Russia. He has played in the finest musical centres of the USSR and in Leningrad he was called the Australian Richter, a supreme compliment.

As well as his career as a concert pianist, Ronald Farren-Price is a renowned teacher. For many years he was Head of Keyboard in the Faculty of Music at The University of Melbourne and was for a time Dean and an Associate Professor. He continues to teach as a Principal Fellow in the faculty following his retirement from the full-time staff in 1997. During recent years he has travelled in Asia and New Zealand, performing, examining and giving master classes. His most recent appointment was for a short time as Acting Director of the National Academy of Music where his presence stimulated the finest younger Australian musicians.

Throughout his long concert and recording career Ronald Farren-Price has been a dedicated interpreter of Beethoven's piano music.

