

MUSICMAP NOTES

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Beethoven's Seven Variations on Mozart's "Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen" for Piano & Cello, WoO 46 – 1802

Composed in 1801, and published the next year without an opus number, this makes a companion to Beethoven's earlier variations for cello and piano on "*Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen*," also from *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*). Reflecting its origins as a soprano/baritone duet, Beethoven will preserve through the variations a duet feeling between the R.H. and cello.

Theme – Andante, 6/8, E-flat major (same key as original duet)

Part I: 8 bars (4+4). R.H. sings antecedent, taking the part of Pamina in the original octave, and with a brief decoration borrowed from the duet's second verse. The cello has a harmony line original to Beethoven, while the L.H. reproduces Mozart's spare orchestral accompaniment. For the consequent the cello takes over, as does Papageno here, but up in the soprano's octave. This exploits the instrument's highest range, with Beethoven adding a slight ornamentation with a trill. As in the original, the R.H. and cello then combine for...

Part II: 6 bars (2+2+2). Cello imitations during the first two bars are added by Beethoven (Papageno's harmony line was simpler). The second two bars present a new melodic idea ending in a deceptive cadence, and then the last two bars repeat this idea with a crescendo to *f*, bringing us to a closed cadence and the end of the theme. Final 2+2 are closer to original duet with voices moving in synch, plus the increase in dynamics reflects Mozart as well. Throughout Part II, however, Beethoven does add more original animation to the accompaniment.

Variation I

Part I: Beethoven now starts the pattern of alternating the leading soloist by giving the antecedent to the cello, thus the R.H. will have the consequent. Melody presented with catchy new staccato rhythm, with the cello back in its normal range. Extra animation from the active L.H. bass line mimics the melody. The consequent is a piano solo until just before the end, with the melody now in octaves. This puts the upper notes higher than the original soprano line.

Part II: As with most of the subsequent variations, Part II combines the soloists more freely. Same rhythmic character continues as R.H. and cello share melody back and forth.

Variation II

Part I: Following the pattern of alternation established in Var. I, antecedent is piano solo, with a more florid, flowing transformation of the theme. The L.H. moves to treble range for a brief counter-melody. In the consequent, the cello repeats this down 2 octaves. Some high R.H. ornamentation near the end as the cello hews closer to the original theme.

Part II: Usual pattern of more close interaction and sharing of material. 2+2+2 of theme still audible through imitations and continuing 32nd notes.

Variation III

Part I: Cello antecedent – catchy new take on theme with distinctive legato rhythm. The piano presents similar material in the consequent, up 2 octaves, with very discreet cello contributions.

Part II: As expected, solo voices now combine, making creative use of this variation's distinctive features.

Variation IV – E-flat Minor (parallel minor)

Change in mode. (Although Beethoven gives no indication of a tempo change, the recording takes a considerably slower pace.)

Part I: Antecedent is a piano solo with a poignant and poetic transformation of the theme, floridly ornamented in the style of an operatic aria. A simple, steady pulse of accompaniment adds to the operatic effect. The consequent has the cello down in the rich, low register of the instrument – less florid and more darkly lyrical. Active R.H. ornaments above.

Part II: Unusually, cello maintains “vocal” lead almost throughout, continuing the effect of an idealized bass aria.

Variation V – E-flat Major, Si prenda il tempo più un poco piu vivace

Back to major mode – strong contrast. Beethoven now directs that the tempo be a little more vivace. Variation characterized by faster staccato triplets.

Part I: Departs significantly from established pattern. Piano lead through all 8 bars, while cello participates with lively, ongoing response. Now a marked contrast between the first and second half of the antecedent. That contrast is maintained through the consequent. The first 2 bars emphasize strident, separate chords, while the following 2 bars have more flowing triplet lines.

Part II: Restores the established pattern of more equal sharing by the soloists, giving the cello the chance to start off. The first 2 bars then return to quickly traded imitations. The deceptive cadence of the second 2 bars is emphasized now by a *tenuto* and piano solo. Finally the cello rejoins in its upper register for a rousing finish.

Variation VI – Adagio, 4/4

Beethoven here observes the common practice of making the penultimate variation an adagio “aria” (though, in this case, a duet).

Part I: Solo piano antecedent. Time almost seems to stand still as R.H. spins out a gracefully ornamented, operatic line. Elaborate embellishments incorporate 64th-note runs, trills, turns and grace notes. L.H. provides simple, steady rocking bass line as fitting vocal accompaniment. Cumulative effect almost seems to evoke Baroque opera. Following the typical pattern, the cello has the lead for the consequent. Down an octave, it reproduces most of the R.H. material, then rises to a high cadenza in new ending part. Piano provides a fuller version of rocking accompaniment with both hands in bass below the cello.

Part II: Well-established pattern of freer, more rapid interplay between soloists provides idealized operatic duet. R.H. leads off expected back-and-forth imitations in the first 2 bars. Same florid vocal style, but rocking bass accompaniment dropped in favor of more minimal material that focuses attention on voices above.

Variation VII – Allegro, ma non troppo, 6/8

Final variation accelerates tempo to *allegro ma non troppo* for dramatic contrast coming out of *adagio*. Theme whips by at this speed, as lively setup to coda.

Part I: Antecedent starts again with piano solo, a break from the established pattern (only fair, however, as cello will have preeminence in the upcoming coda). Melody of original theme easier to recognize, but decorated with new lilting, rhythmic presentation of repeated 2-note slurs followed by a rest. L.H. has staccato version of same rhythmic pattern, but staggered from the melody for exciting interplay. In the consequent, the cello sings the melody down an octave in the same style, while the piano accompanies with new two-hand staggered arpeggios.

Part II: Incorporates patterns established in Part I with the expected freer interplay. Almost minimalistic at this speed.

Coda:

Still at *allegro* tempo, launches without a break from the final variation. After faithfully adhering to the phrase structure of the theme, Beethoven uses the coda to cut loose with a freer fantasia.

Part I: Cello statement, 8 bars (4+4), parallel period. Bold new theme in C minor (relative minor), lustily sung by cello. Animated R.H. 16th-note figures provide exciting accompaniment. Piano has lead for counter-statement, R.H. up 2 octaves. Cello's first use of pizzicato in piece adds interest. Fine dramatic/heroic effect.

A brief transitional passage then modulates back to major using freer material traded by the soloists. Playful tease at end heralds...

Part II: Embedded in this free-form coda is actually an uncredited 8th variation of the theme, with faithfully-reproduced phrase structure, etc. For the antecedent, the cello gives us a brief, sped-up reminiscence of the actual theme, up in the higher register as at the beginning. For the

consequent, the R.H. decorates the melody in 16th notes over a cello counter-melody. Theme's Part II has the expected closer interplay and sharing of material.

Part III: New codetta to the theme follows immediately on the variation. Phrases traded by soloists - 16th note accompaniment continues.

Part IV: Momentum quiets and slows as Beethoven makes gentle, good-natured play with the opening notes of the theme. This provides a final, graceful bow for both soloists.