

LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER
October 14, 2001 5:00 p.m. on PBS
The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center
AN EVENING OF BEETHOVEN

Artist members and guests of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center continue the 25th anniversary season of Live From Lincoln Center telecasts with an all-Beethoven program on Sunday afternoon, October 14, from 5 to 7 PM. As are most of the Chamber Music Society concerts in New York City, this one will be played in Alice Tully Hall. Two early and comparative rarities—the B Flat Trio, Opus 11 for Clarinet, Cello and Piano and the C Major Quintet for Strings, Opus 29—frame one of music's most enduring masterpieces, the A Major Sonata for Violin and Piano, Opus 47, known as the "Kreutzer" Sonata.

In 1792 Beethoven decided to pull up stakes from his native Bonn and settle permanently in Vienna, a city where he had some years earlier spent happy days. Vienna was then the capitol of the musical world and it exerted a magnet-like pull on aspiring composers and performers. Still little-known at the time (he was in his mid-thirties) he had to find a way to make a mark in Vienna and make it quickly. Cannily he figured that his prowess as a pianist and improviser might be the best way to accomplish this; thus many of his earliest works were written as vehicles for himself to perform and "wow" the public. By the time of his Opus 11 Sonata for Clarinet, Cello and Piano of 1798 he had already written 7 Piano Sonatas, 2 Sonatas for Cello and Piano and a Sonata for Piano 4 Hands.

In the late 1790s a chamber work that incorporated the clarinet in its texture was still sufficiently exotic to excite keen audience interest. Was this the reason that Beethoven composed a sonata for the odd combination of clarinet, cello and piano? The nearest equivalent was Mozart's of about a dozen years earlier scored for clarinet, *viola* and piano. But then Mozart in his late years was enamored of the sound of the clarinet: one need only remember his Clarinet Quintet and Clarinet Concerto, as well as the meltingly beautiful clarinet solo in the Trio of the Symphony No. 39 or the clarinet obbligato in the aria "Parto, parto" from the opera "La Clemenza di Tito." In any case, Beethoven hedged his bets and noted on the score of his Trio that it could be played by either clarinet or violin! The last of the three movements is a set of variations on a theme Beethoven borrowed from an aria in an opera by his contemporary, Joseph Weigl. The opening words of the aria are: "Before I begin important work, I want something to eat." Was it that text that turned Beethoven on? Performing this sparkling Trio for us will be clarinetist David Shifrin, cellist Gary Hoffman and pianist André Watts.

The "Kreutzer" Sonata derives its nickname from the circumstances of its composition. Around 1803 Beethoven was toying with the idea of abandoning Vienna and relocating in Paris. One can only speculate what might have been the musical consequences of such a move. Be that as it may he set about composing

a real technical tour de force of a Sonata for Violin and Piano for the reigning violin virtuoso in Paris, Rodolphe Kreutzer. The title page of the published work says it all: here is a Sonata "in a style molto concertante almost like that of a concerto." Even so, Kreutzer never played and probably never even heard or saw the score of this tribute to his skill. That the Sonata quickly became a favorite with both violinists and audiences is attested to by the several arrangements for different instruments that appeared over the years, among them versions for piano 4 hands, string quintet and piano quartet. We'll hear it in its original form played by violinist Leila Josefowicz and pianist Andre Watts.

For the C Major String Quintet, Opus 29 of 1801 we again have a Mozart precedent: that composer's heroic work for the same instrumental combination and in the same key. Beethoven's Quintet is a big work with big things to say. Here is the emerging dramatist flexing his youthful compositional muscles. Perhaps most remarkable is the Scherzo, a rough and tumble affair that is the antecedent of the Scherzos in Beethoven's Symphonies 2 through 5. Playing this exciting work will be violinists Leila Josefowicz and Ani Kavafian; violists Paul Neubauer and Cynthia Phelps; and cellist Gary Hoffman.

I first encountered Leila Josefowicz about a dozen years ago in Los Angeles when she was an outstanding pupil of the renowned violin teacher Robert Lipset at the Colburn School. Since then she has matured into a brilliant and thoughtful solo and chamber music performer. Seating her next to Ani Kavafian, a universally admired and respected violinist, is an inspired move on the part of clarinetist David Shifrin, the Artistic Director of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Paul Neubauer is one of a very few viola players who have made a career as a soloist on that gorgeous but much maligned instrument. Prior to embarking on that career, Neubauer was the principal violist of the New York Philharmonic. His successor in that position was Cynthia Phelps. To have them both playing side by side in the Beethoven Quintet is a luxury indeed. And Gary Hoffman is one of the most distinguished cellists now before the public. He comes from a remarkable musical family that includes his father, Irwin, who at one time was Resident Conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

These, then, are the delights that await us on the next Live From Lincoln Center telecast on Sunday, October 14. I leave you once again with the suggestion that you check with your local station concerning the exact day and time of the telecast in your area. See you then!