

***Trio, Op. 38 (1799)***

**Ludwig van Beethoven/Verdehr Trio**

One of the first works of Beethoven to achieve wide popularity was his *Septet in E-flat Major, Op. 20*, composed for violin, clarinet, horn, bassoon, viola, cello, and bass. Composed in Vienna in 1799, it received its first performance in 1800 in the presence of Empress Maria Theresa to whom he later dedicated the work. At a later time, Beethoven himself re-arranged the work for clarinet, cello, and piano calling it *Opus 38*. The Verdehr Trio has, in turn, re-arranged the work for violin, clarinet, and piano using the original violin and clarinet parts from the *Septet* and the piano part from Beethoven's trio version with some changes and additions based on the score of the *Septet*. Since the violin and clarinet are the two most dominant instruments in the *Septet*, it is felt that this is an eminently practical and logical version with which, it is hoped, Beethoven himself might approve.

The work is in six movements. The first is a long sonata form with a majestic slow introduction. The second, a lovely A-B-A slow movement, is followed by a fully developed minuet with trio which is familiar to pianists as a movement from one of the piano sonatas. The fourth movement, a set of variations, shows Beethoven's early skill at this form and is followed by a brisk, happy scherzo, bubbling with Beethoven's youthful humor. The final movement, beginning with a slow introduction almost funereal in character, gives way to a spritely *Presto* which brings the work to a brilliant and virtuosic close.

German composer Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) bridged the period between the classic and romantic eras in music and is considered one of the greatest composers of all time. He is renowned for his symphonies, concertos, vocal works, and his great variety of chamber music for many combinations. Notable in particular are the sixteen string quartets and the piano sonatas which clearly illustrate the different periods of his compositions as well as the development of his style over the course of his life.