

Exploring Beethoven's "Tempest" Sonata:
Music on the Verge of the Future

Lois Shapiro, pianist

BEETHOVEN'S LIFE

- Heiligenstadt Testament (1802 ... year of despair)
- "A New Path" (1801-2)

BROADER CULTURAL CONTEXT

- A fascination with the irrational; interest in the "SUBLIME";
Organicism; the "Self"
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Piano Sonata #13, D minor, Op.31 #2

("The Tempest") 1801-2

*"In Op. 31 ... we hear music that leaps out onto a limb, and then
finds ways to live there." —Scott Burnham*

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A brief comparison with Op. 22 (1800)

NEW BIG IDEAS:

1. *Processual nature of form, and its effect on "drama."*
2. *New concept of "theme," as "thematic configuration."*
3. *The infusion of the "operatic."*

*"... music that would like to become speech, in order to finally be heard
and understood." —A.B. Marx*

Beethoven's Op. 31 #2 *from the "Inside Out"*

Largo; Allegro

Adagio

Allegretto

QUESTIONS FOR GUIDED LISTENING

- 1.** Think of this piece, compared to the many earlier sonatas of Beethoven with which you are familiar. Do you notice structural differences? Do these differences engender any discernible dramatic effects?
- 2.** What words come to mind to describe the various moods the music conveys? What musical elements trigger your descriptive words?
- 3.** What are some differences amongst the individual movements in mood, and what musical elements convey these differences? Do you hear operatic elements in this instrumental piece? What function might they serve?
- 4.** Listen for syncopations and their effects on the feeling of momentum in the outer movements.
- 5.** In the 3rd movement, listen to the relationship between the harmonic mooring and metric stability. What qualities do they reinforce in each other?