BAGATELLES AND BEETHOVEN'S THIRD PERIOD

By

VLADIMIR VALJAREVIC

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ABSTRACT

Beethoven's monumental contribution to the world of music has affected generations of musicians and music-lovers. He was one of the greatest masters of form, experimenting with possibilities unknown to music until his time. Beethoven developed vast musical structures through expansive symphonies and sonatas. Later in life, he also thrived on the intimacy of a quintessentially Romantic form – the miniature. He was one of the pioneers who sculpted and handed over the miniature to the Romantic composers of the latter part of the nineteenth century. This essay is a musical analysis on these miniatures, of Beethoven's Bagatelles Opp. 119 and 126, and of some of the general features of Beethoven's Late Period, particularly as they impinge on the Bagatelles.

CHAPTER I

BEETHOVEN'S THIRD PERIOD

Beethoven's life and work is often divided into three periods: Early, Middle, and Late. Such organization was proposed as early as 1828 by Johann Aloys Schlosser, reinforced in 1837 by François Joseph Fétis, and developed further by Wilhelm von Lentz in 1852[1]. The first period ends roughly around 1802, the second one in 1812, and the third spans the last period of his life, until 1827. This division has been questioned by many critics for its simplicity and straightforwardness, but it continues to survive and neatly structure what we know to be Beethoven's life and work. Each new period in this system is introduced with a major event or change affecting the composer's creative process and overall emotional state. The Romantic thought emerges in his Third Period and Beethoven describes this creative process in such spirit:

> You will ask me where I get my ideas. That I cannot tell you with certainty; they come unsummoned, directly, indirectly, I could seize them with my hands, out in the open air; in the woods; while walking; in the silence of the nights; early in the morning; incited by moods, which are translated by poet into words, by me into tones that sound, and roar and storm about me until I have set them down in notes.[2]

And through self-imposed suffering Beethoven remains faithful to the basic principles of the Romantic Movement, as expressed by Friedrich Kerst:

> The true artist has no pride; unhappily he realizes that art has no limitations, he feels darkly how far he is from the goal, and while, perhaps

[1] Schlosser, Fétis, and Lenz were Beethoven biographers. Johann Aloys Schlosser wrote Beethoven's first published biography in 1827, François Joseph Fétis in 1837, and Wilhelm von Lenz in 1855-1860.
[2] Quoted from Friedrich Kerst, *Beethoven: the man and the artist, as revealed in his own words* (New York: Dover Publications, 1964) 29.

> he is admired by the others, he grieves that he has not yet reached the point where the better genius shall shine before him like a distant star.[3]

The Third Period is the most complex. It expresses Beethoven's emotional struggles and constant health crises. To make things worse, Beethoven's financial situation was precarious, creating further anxiety and instability. During this period, he desperately tried to sell his compositions to various publishers in Austria and abroad, often creating misunderstandings due to his poor managerial skills. Additionally, relations with his immediate family were extremely strained, causing prolonged quarrels and numerous bitter and unhappy moments. The guardianship case over his nephew Karl took a great amount of energy and time, as did the constant love-hate relationship with Karl's mother and Beethoven's sister-in-law, Johanna van Beethoven. Many of his former patrons died, including princes Rudolph Kinsky, Karl Lichnowsky, Joseph Lobkowitz, Andrei Razumovsky, experienced financial ruin, or moved to another area. One of the few who remained, and who provided crucial care for Beethoven during these days, was Archduke Rudolph.

In social circles Beethoven was an imposing, impulsive, and eccentric presence, even more so towards the end of his life. Friedrich Rochlitz, German writer and Beethoven's acquaintance, gives the following account of Beethoven during their meeting in Baden in 1822:

> His talk and his actions were one long chain of eccentricities, some of them most peculiar. Yet they all radiated a truly childlike amiability, carelessness and confidence in all who approached him. Even his barking

[3] Ibid., 49.

> tirades, such as those against his Viennese contemporaries, were only explosions of his fanciful imagination and his momentary excitement. They were uttered without any haughtiness, without any feeling of bitterness or resentment, simply blustered out lightly and good humouredly…He often showed…that to the very person who had grievously injured him, or whom he had most violently denounced, he would be willing to give his last thaler, should that person need it.[4]

Beethoven's crippling deafness was also a tremendous blow to his personal and creative life. At this time, he was completely exiled into the world of silence, which created further misfortunes and misunderstandings with society. The great German soprano, Wilhelmine Schroder, leaves a stirring account of Beethoven's conducting in 1822 and a poignant picture of this immense struggle. According to Schroder, Beethoven had

> …a bewildered face and unearthly, inspired eyes, waving his batton back and forth with violent gestures . . . If he thought it should be *piano*, he crouched down almost under conductor's desk, and if he wanted *forte* he jumped up with the strangest gestures, uttering the most uncanny sounds.[5]

Beethoven was completely deaf by the time of this performance. During the same year, 1822, Rossini asked the Austrian court for financial help for Beethoven, but the universal reply was that there was no point in offering aid; they considered Beethoven not merely deaf, but a misanthrope, a recluse, and mentally unbalanced.

Yet these powerful struggles gave rise to some of the most important compositions of the Third Period: the Missa Solemnis, the Diabelli Variations, and the Ninth Symphony, along with the late piano sonatas, string quartets, and various miniatures including the Bagatelles.

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[4] Martin Cooper, *Beethoven; the last decade 1817-1827* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970) 47-48.
[5] Cooper, 49.

Style and Influences in Beethoven's Third Period

The intensity of his musical style during Beethoven's last period transcends the norm of early 19th century standards. Concurrently, Beethoven's music appears to be more introverted and dedicated to higher, humane ideals as he draws closer to his final years. Compositionally, many of the ideas employed combine older techniques used in innovative ways. In the Third Period, Beethoven often uses ancient modes, variation technique, various contrapuntal devices such as canon and fugue, and vocal idioms, particularly in his instrumental music, which allow supreme lyricism. His great towers of inspiration at this time were Handel and Cherubini. This music contains many ornaments, namely trills, while the rhythm sometimes resembles that of dance movements and dance music, which lend themselves to expressing strong feelings such as elation and excitement. In addition, sudden mood shifts, sharp dynamic contrasts, interval jumps, differentiation of texture and range, sforzandos, rhythmic agitation, employment of rhythmic freedom and instrumental recitative, chromaticism and dissonance, comparative brevity, all represent features of Beethoven's late style that establish a relationship with new, Romantic currents in 19th century. In the later part of my essay, I will address some of these characteristics of Beethoven's late style in relation to Bagatelles Opp. 119 and 126.

These new Romantic tendencies developed from the *Sturm und Drang* movement that originated in the later part of 18th century. *Sturm und Drang* as a stylistic literary concept swept Europe, using, among other features, crude language, sentimental

moments, emotion as an end in itself, the cult of nature, and simple pastoral poetry. Europe was not taken by surprise, as the seeds of this sensibility had been planted earlier. Some striking examples are found in the writings of French philosopher and encyclopedist, Denis Diderot (1713-1784), who beautifully describes the bond with nature in 1757:

> Who is it that mingles his voice with the torrent falling from the mountain-side? Who feels the sublime nature of a wilderness? Who listens to his heart in the silence of solitude? It is he. Our poet dwells on the banks of a lake. He casts his eyes over the waters and his genius takes flight. There he is gripped by that spirit, now tranquil, now violent, which lifts his soul or calms it at will . . . O nature, all that is good has its place in your breast! You are the fertile source of every truth!

Furthermore, he elaborates on the development of a creative, passionate, and subjective impulse in the artist:

> The poet can feel the moment when enthusiasm comes; it follows a period of meditation. He feels it first in a trembling which starts in his breast and spreads, voluptuously and rapidly, to the extremities of his body. Soon it is no longer a trembling but a strong, steady heat which sets him ablaze, makes him gasp, consumes him and lays him low; but which gives spirit and life to everything he touches. If this heat grew any stronger, phantoms would gather together before his eyes. His passion would almost develop into a fury. He would find relief only in pouring forth a torrent of ideas, all pushing, jostling and fighting to come out.[6]

The early forecasts of comparable sensibility can be found in the works of Geneva-born philosopher and writer, Jean Jacques Rousseau, and English poet, Edward Young, in his *Night Thoughts* (1742).

[6]Denis Diderot, *Selected Writings on Art and Literature* (London: Penguin Books, 1994) 18, 19.

The same dramatic impulse, introducing the Romantic ideal, existed in paintings of the period. German painter, Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840), created multiple scenes of melancholy, drama, despair, life and death situations, thus providing a fertile ground for subjectivity, suffering, individualism, and idealism - some of the most important trademarks of Romanticism. Friedrich's work certainly captures the features of *Sturm und Drang,* as Wieland Schmied, an Austrian art critic, observed:

> Friedrich's paintings resemble Ossian's poetry in numerous ways . . . especially in their profundity, their fervor, and their delicacy.

And:

> austere melancholy,' the 'simplicity of his motifs,' his 'honest submission to his feelings,' and 'the immediacy to nature' that allowed him [Friedrich] to perceive 'the simple with such grandeur, the trivial with such eloquence.[7]

Some other painters who indulged in portraying fear and terror on their canvas include Claude Joseph Vernet, Philip James de Loutherbourg, William Blake and Henry Fuseli. As Goethe noted, Fuseli's paintings "will give you all a good fright."[8] Eighteenth-century artists and intellectuals felt stifled by the canons and rules established by the Church and the State. Many found escape in turning to sensibility, which was the most compelling response to the prevalent rationalism of the times. They recognized the truth and simplicity of these emotions, which immediately reconnected them with nature. Nature in its various incarnations provided the ultimate source of expression. According to Paul Marks:

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[7] Wieland Schmied, *Caspar David Friedriech* (New York:Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1995) 11, 16.
[8] Heartz, Daniel, and Bruce Alan Brown. "Sturm und Drang." *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed 10 February 2005), http://grovemusic.com.

> The style of musical, philosophical and dramatic aesthetics in *Sturm und Drang* points toward Rousseau's philosophy of the unencumbered man, the return to the preternatural spirit of unfettered expression.[9]

Beethoven was born and brought up in an environment that prized subjectivism, individualism, and emotional expression. He often spent countless hours in nature, always with a sketchbook, in case he should experience a sudden outpour of musical ideas. Identifying with nature, he wrote:

> Soon autumn will be here. Then I wish to be like unto a fruitful tree which pours rich stores of fruit into our laps! But in the winter of existence, when I shall be gray and sated with life, I desire for myself the good fortune that my repose be as honorable and beneficent as the repose of nature in the winter time.[10]

The artist's relationship with nature grew even stronger during periods ridden by serious health problems, especially his debilitating deafness, which gradually alienated the grief-stricken composer from society. Additionally, he was exposed to precursors of the Romantic movement through educational affiliations during his teenage years. Specifically, Beethoven's most important teacher, Christian Gottlieb Neefe, was a proponent of *Affektenlehre* style. *Affektenlehre,* or doctrine of affections, became increasingly popular in North Germany during the second half of the 18th century, overlapping with both *Sturm und Drang* and *Empfindsamkeit* styles. These movements are related and promote strong, turbulent, and subjective expression, unknown to music-making until that time.

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[9] Paul Frederick Marks, "The rhetorical element in musical Sturm und Drang," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music 2/1* (June 1971) 54.
[10] Kerst, 18.

The Third Period presents Beethoven's rhetoric on a very personal level and through certain compositional features and techniques discussed earlier. The new intimacy is enhanced by the absence of flashy virtuosity that then allows contained passion and intensity. Referring to Beethoven's emotional outbursts, Martin Cooper describes Beethoven's use of sforzando as an effective means to shatter the temporary balance of expression:

> It is as though a speaker were suddenly to raise his voice or emphasize a point by striking the palm of one hand with the fist of the other.[11]

For many musicians, Beethoven's music from the Third Period remains puzzling to this day. His late works had a substantial impact only on his younger contemporaries long after his death, whereas the compositions from the Second Period were immediately and universally praised and accepted. The works from the Third Period continue to represent something private and problematic which developed as a result of many years of profound struggle.

Beethoven and Bagatelle

Among Beethoven's late works are the Bagatelles, Opp. 119 and 126. The Bagatelles reveal a Beethoven who was a true master of the miniature, and they convey in a nutshell some of the most complex features of his later style. Indeed, the synthetic properties of the bagatelles make them an ideal subject for a close exploration of Beethoven's mature style.

[11] Cooper, 433.

A bagatelle in a literal translation is *a trifle*. It is usually a short piece without a particular form. With Beethoven it gained in popularity, but as a keyboard musical genre designation, it first appeared in François Couperin's Tenth Order of 1717. Nineteenth-century bagatelle represents the Romantic genre of character piece. These miniatures, or character pieces, portray particular moods or scenes, thus creating short and lyrical compositions. They originated in late 18th century, concurrently with *Sturm und Drang* style and the first seeds of Romanticism, and their German and French counterparts are *Charakterstück* and *pièce caractéristique*.

Some of the earliest character pieces are G. C. Füger's *Charakteristische Klavierstücke* (1783 or 1784), Carl Friedrich Zelter's *La malade, pièce caractéristique* (1787), Johann Baptist Cramer's *Études caractéristiques*, Op. 70 (1825) and Ignaz Moscheles's *Charakteristische Studien,* Op. 95 (1836). The most popular Charakterstücke are Mendelssohn's *Pièces caractéristiques*, Op. 7 (1827) and Schumann's *Carnaval,* Op. 9 (1834-1835) and *Davidsbündlertänze*, Op. 6 (1837). It is also important to mention two Czech composers: Václav Tomášek (1774-1850) and his student, Jan Voříšek (1791-1825). They were inspired by miniature form and contributed greatly to it through usage of poetic expression in musical setting. Thus, "eclogues," "dithyrambs," and "rhapsodies," became common terms in musical vocabulary. These were some of the earliest miniatures with composition dates ranging from 1807 to 1840.

After Beethoven, bagatelles often received descriptive titles and were grouped in sets. They were most often written for solo piano (even though Webern scored his for string quartet and Dvořák's Bagatelles, written for two violins, cello, and harmonium). Other bagatelles for solo piano of such nature include: Smetana's *Bagatelles and*

Impromptus (1844); Saint-Saëns's *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 3 (1856); Sibelius's *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 97; Bartok's *Fourteen Bagatelles*, Op. 6 (1904); Novák's *Bagatelles*, Op. 5; Krenek's *Four Bagatelles*, Op. 70; Tovey's *Bagatelles* (1900); Rawsthorne's *Bagatelles* (1938); Ferguson's *Five Bagatelles*, Op. 9 (1944).

Beethoven composed Eleven Bagatelles Op. 119 between 1820-1822. Reflecting on this opus, Lewis Lockwood observes:

> Some aspects of the Op. 119 show Beethoven thinking about how to order them effectively and establish a modest degree of unity in the set, but what appeals most about the collection is found not in the set as a whole but in the single pieces. These bagatelles show Beethoven's ability to convey a sense of completeness within the smallest boundaries.[12]

In 1823, Maurice Schlesinger published Bagatelles Op. 119 in Paris. The first six existed as sketches and were probably written during the last decade of 18th century, while Nos. 7-11 emerged in 1821 as a contribution to pedagogical method by Friedrich Starke, director of music for an Austrian regiment of infantry. Beethoven called the last five *Kleinigkeiten* (German for trifles) instead of French *bagatelles* or its direct German translation *Bagatellen*, thus remaining faithful to the spirit of German patriotism in music. Bagatelles Nos. 1-6 were previously named *Bagatellen*.

Bagatelles Op. 126 were composed in 1823-1824, with first publication in 1825. It is speculated that they are dedicated to Josephine Deym, one of Beethoven's passionate and intense personal affairs. However, it is very difficult to find any evidence supporting this theory. As Maynard Solomon notes:

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[12] Lewis Lockwood, *Beethoven: The Music and The Life* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 397.

> The Bagatelles, op. 126, are seen as Beethoven's 'Tombeau de Josephine,' after which his piano remained forever mute.[13]

Such inspiration along with the finality of these Bagatelles in Beethoven's opus brings forth some already familiar features of Romantic Movement. Should the speculation be correct, Beethoven, like Werther in Goethe's quintessential Romantic work *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, idolizes his heroine and descends into complete, dramatic silence. Werther's silence shocked in his act of suicide while Beethoven's piano "remained forever mute."

[13] Maynard Solomon, *Beethoven essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988) 164.

CHAPTER II

BAGATELLES OPP. 119 AND 126 AND STYLISTIC FEATURES OF BEETHOVEN'S THIRD PERIOD

Tonalities, Tempo, and Meter of Bagatelles Opp. 119 and 126

The key relations of Bagatelles Op. 119 are designed as follows:

G minor-C major-D major-A major-C minor-G major-C major-C major-A minor-A major-B flat major

The cycle is embraced by the relationship of relative major/minor, with first bagatelle starting in G minor and eleventh one ending in the key of B flat major. This journey from minor to its relative major takes us through eleven contrasting moods expressed in different keys. Aside from the apparent tonal connection between the first and the last bagatelle, there is no additional tonal pattern between the inner constituents of the cycle.

The key relationship for Bagatelles Op. 126, in their turn, is:

G major-G minor-E flat major-B minor-G major-E flat major

Beethoven was very careful in choosing tonalities for his compositions as each of them was intended to represent a different mood. Frequently he changed the keys of his pieces during the creative process until he was satisfied with the result, and he often carefully related the keys of multi-movement compositions. In the case of the Bagatelles Op. 126, he created a strong relation of thirds, thus connecting the whole work into a tightly knit structure. Once the key of the fourth bagatelle is substituted with its enharmonic equivalent, c flat, the connection is established and continues until the end of the set. As Paul Mies has explained, for Beethoven, E-flat major is associated with ceremonial

feelings, or else tenderness and grace, G major conveys a lighter mood, while B minor represents the "black" key.[14]

The tempo scheme of the bagatelles is as follows:

Op. 119 No. 1, G minor – **Allegro**
Op. 119 No. 2, C major – Andante con moto
Op. 119 No. 3, D major – à l'Allemande
Op. 119 No. 4, A major – Andante cantabile
Op. 119 No. 5, C minor – Risoluto
Op. 119 No. 6, G major – Andante – Allegretto
Op. 119 No. 7, C major – **Allegro ma non troppo**
Op. 119 No. 8, C major – Moderato cantabile
Op. 119 No. 9, A minor – **Vivace moderato**
Op. 119 No. 10, A major – Allegramente
Op. 119 No. 11, B flat major – Andante ma non troppo
Op. 126 No. 1, G major – Andante con moto
Op. 126 No. 2, G minor – **Allegro**
Op. 126 No. 3, E flat major – Andante
Op. 126 No. 4, B minor – **Presto**
Op. 126 No. 5, G major – Quasi Allegretto
Op. 126 No. 6, E flat major – Presto. Andante amabile e con moto

It is interesting to note that bagatelles in major are generally in slower tempos, whereas bagatelles in minor are faster and more energetic (as listed above, faster tempos are in bold type for easier recognition). The fastest musical segments are marked Presto, and written in cut time (Op. 126 No. 4, 2/2; the introduction of Op. 126 No. 6, common time). Beethoven also expressed agile movement through usage of 3/8 and 2/4 time (Op. 119 No. 3, 3/8; Op. 119 No. 9, 2/4; Op. 126 No. 2, 2/4). On the other end of the spectrum, his slowest musical segments are marked Andante, and are in 4/4 and, again, 3/8 time (Op. 119 No. 4, 4/4; Op. 119 No. 11; 4/4; Op. 126 No. 3, 3/8). He skillfully uses the same

[14] Paul Mies, *Beethoven's sketches; an analysis of his style based on a study of his sketch-books* (New York: Johnson Reprint Co., 1969) 174-182.

meter, 3/8, to create very different moods; in Op. 119 No. 3, a Baroque, cheerful dance Allemande, and in Op. 126 No. 3, a serene hymn.

Compositional Influences from the Past in the Bagatelles

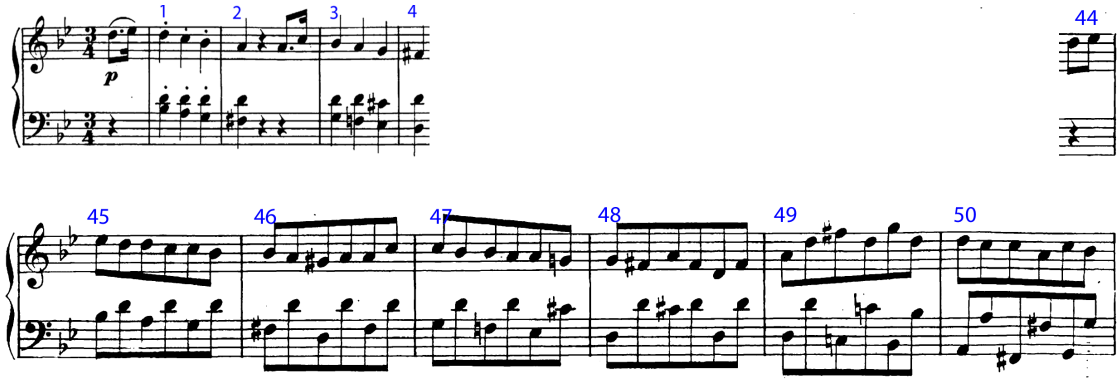
Beethoven's interest in early compositional techniques has been particularly prominent during the Late Period. As early as 1801, he referred to J. S. Bach as "the immortal god of harmony."[15] As an eleven-year-old prodigy, Beethoven studied Bach's *Well-Tempered Klavier* in depth and, in his later years, took a great interest in the fugal form. He was inspired by Bach's genius in contrapuntal writing, which he elevated to the level of profound, personal lyricism in the style of a Romantic tone poet. In addition, Beethoven showed great interest in Renaissance music and studied sixteenth-century treatises of various theorists, including Gioseffo Zarlino, and copied scores of such master composers as Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, Georg Mufatt, William Byrd, and Antonio Caldara. He was drawn to modal harmonies, which affected his late scores. Some of his early thoughts related to the Ninth Symphony describe a "pious song in a symphony in the old modes,"[16] and the slow movement of Quartet Op. 132 as "Holy Song of Thanksgiving by a Convalescent, in the Lydian mode."[17] Beethoven explored other features and techniques from earlier times in his Late Period, including variation technique, dance rhythms, and contrapuntal techniques. I would like to take a moment and trace these features in Bagatelles Opp. 119 and 126.

[15] Lockwood, 373.
[16] Ibid., 367.
[17] Ibid., 367.

Variation Technique

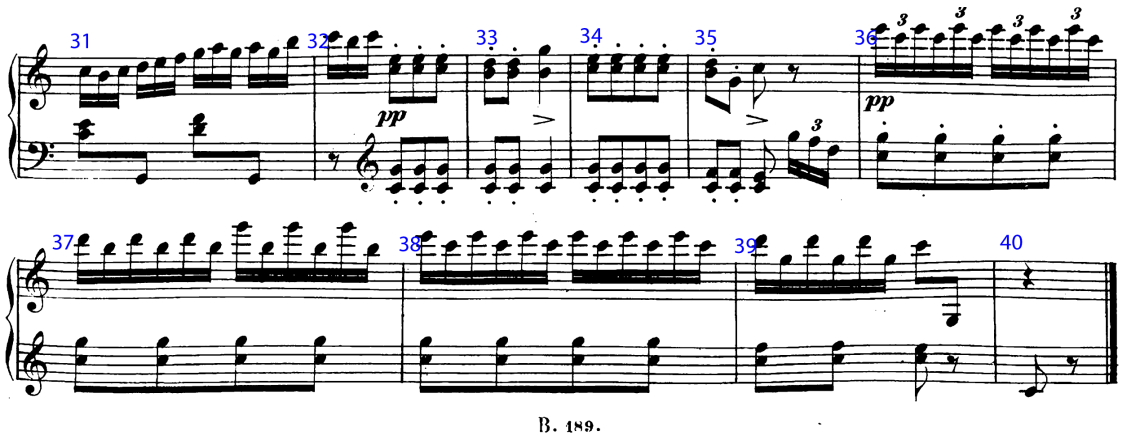
Variation technique is sprinkled throughout the two sets of bagatelles. Beethoven uses variations repeatedly to highlight expression while contemplating the same music material from a different angle.

In consequence, he reaches emotional highpoint in Bagatelle Op. 119 No. 1 by varying the initial theme (m. 1) in m. 44 (Example 2.1). Here, the two-note units create breathless quality and quiet agitation, which gradually swell to the climax in m. 63.



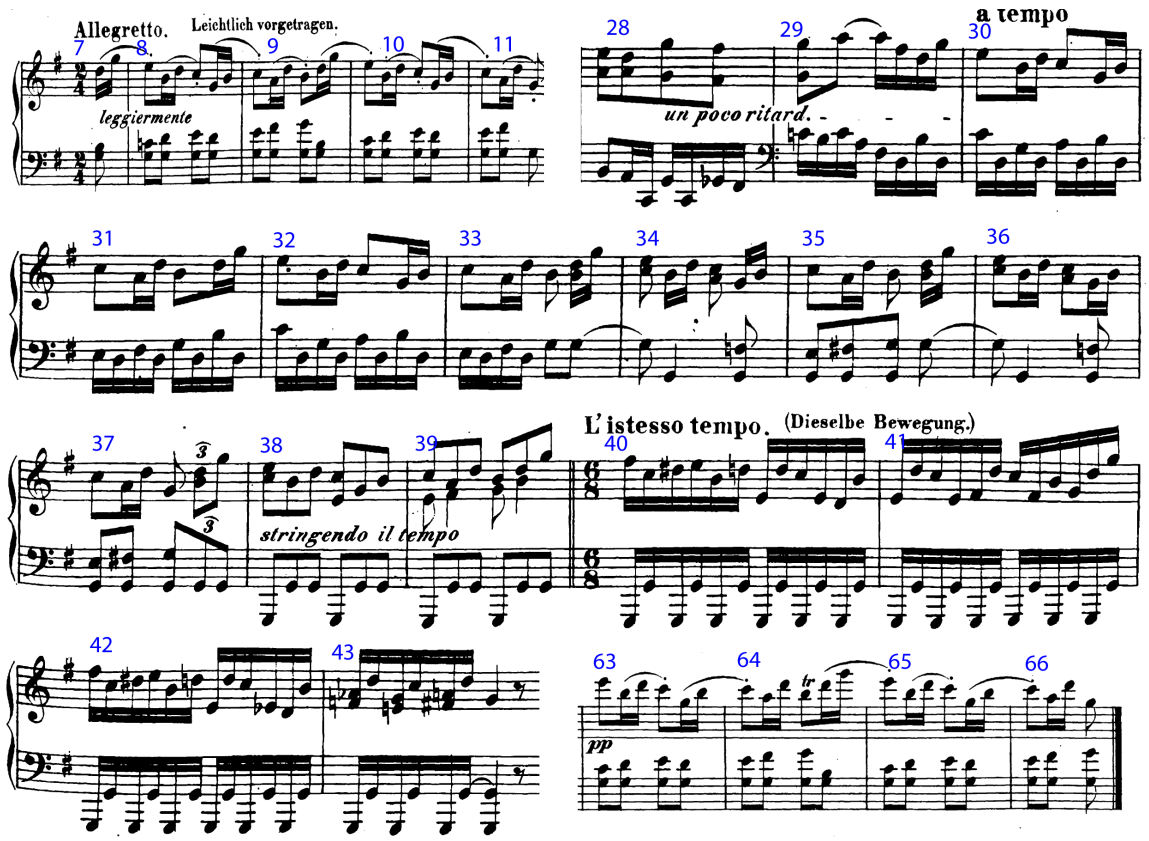
Example 2.1 Beethoven: *Eleven Bagatelles*, Op. 119 No. 1, mm. 1-4, 44-50

Similarly, Beethoven emphasizes tenderness of the softest, pianissimo phrase in the second bagatelle of this opus (mm. 32-35) by introducing its variation in a higher register, thus creating a music box effect (mm. 36-40, Example 2.2).



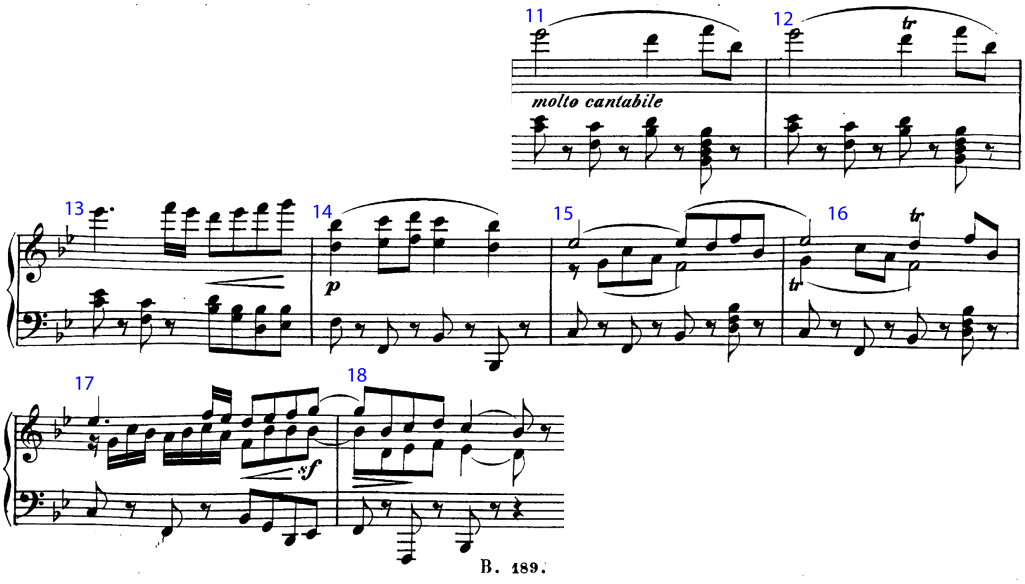
Example 2.2 Beethoven: *Eleven Bagatelles*, Op. 119 No. 2, mm. 31-40

The musical drama of Op. 119 No. 6 is built on variation technique (Example 2.3). After a witty exposition, starting in m. 7, the inception of the first variation segment is cushioned by Beethoven's *un poco ritard.* direction (m. 28), as if to prepare for all the excitement ahead. The expression gains momentum in the first variation component through the sixteenth-note activity in the left hand (mm. 30-33). The second variation segment (mm. 34-37) relaxes the pace in the lower register and thickens the texture in the right hand by expanding selected thematic notes into intervals of thirds. Inevitably, the musical growth continues in the third variation segment (mm. 37-43), by quickening the pace through rhythmic diminution. The theme undergoes a brief incarnation in triplets (m. 38), followed by two stirring changes in m. 40: the meter shifts to 6/8 and the note values develop from triplets to sixteenth-notes. Beethoven achieves a powerful compositional crescendo in bars 40-43, which culminates in a playful frenzy. He makes an end to this rollick by punctuating the second half of m. 43 with a tripled G and a general pause, as if to take a deep breath after all the activity. He concludes this bagatelle with a tender and jovial reminiscence of the theme in a higher register (mm. 63-66).



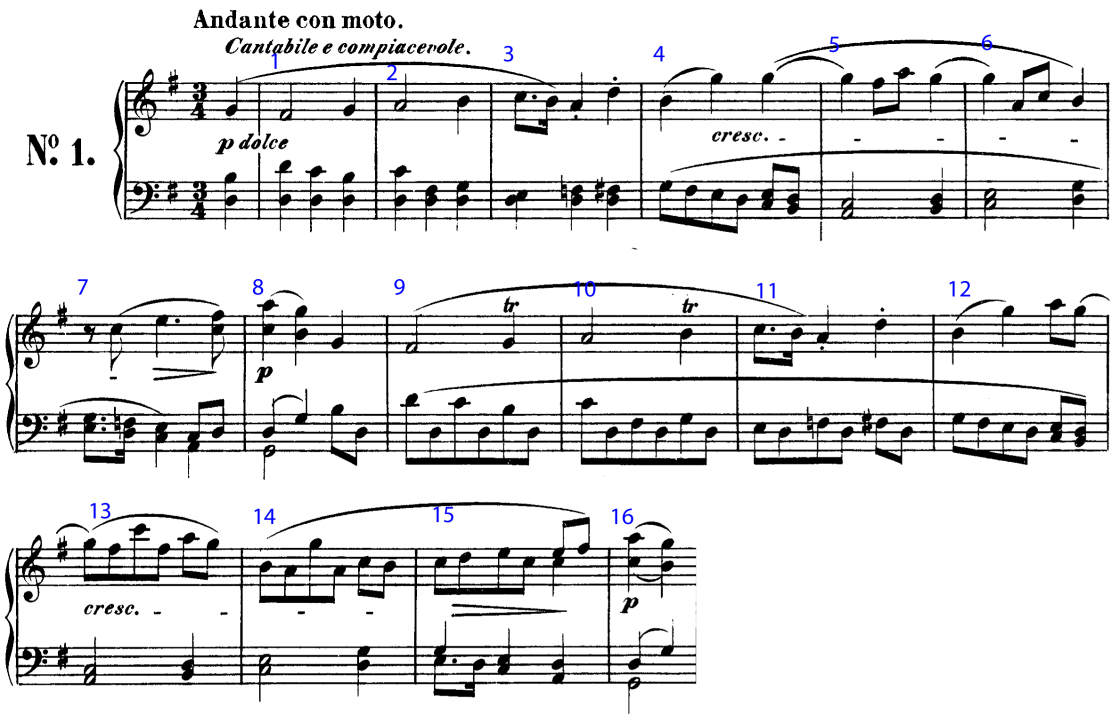
Example 2.3 Beethoven: *Eleven Bagatelles*, Op. 119 No. 6, mm. 7-11, 28-43, 63-66

In Bagatelle Op. 119 No. 11, Beethoven varies the most subtle and exquisite phrase, marked *pianissimo, molto cantabile* (mm. 11-14). In its varied guise (mm. 15-18), he lowers this musical idea from the celestial musical heights to the realm of earthly experience, so to speak, marked by lower register, fuller dynamics, and lively inner voices (Example 2.4).



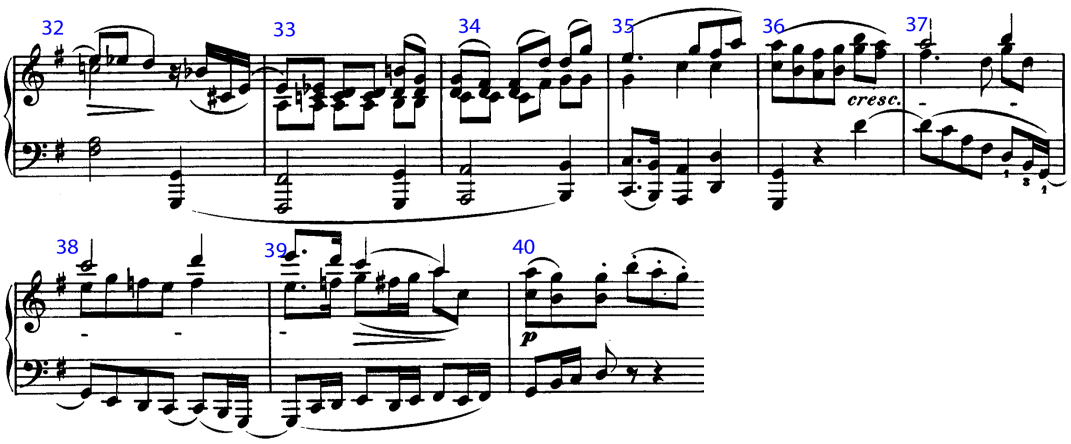
Example 2.4 Beethoven: *Eleven Bagatelles*, Op. 119 No. 11, mm. 11-18

The examples of variation technique continue in Bagatelles Op. 126. The first phrase in Op. 126 No. 1, gains musical thrust in its first variation, when the left hand shifts to faster note values while the trills occasionally punctuate and embellish the melody in the upper register (mm. 9-10, Example 2.5). Such musical thrust bears similarity to the treatment of the left hand in Bagatelle Op. 119 No. 6, in its first variation segment, m. 30, in relation to the theme in m. 7 (Example 2.3). In addition, the second half of the phrase of Op. 126 No. 1 experiences more extroverted melodic development (mm. 13-16, Example 2.5).



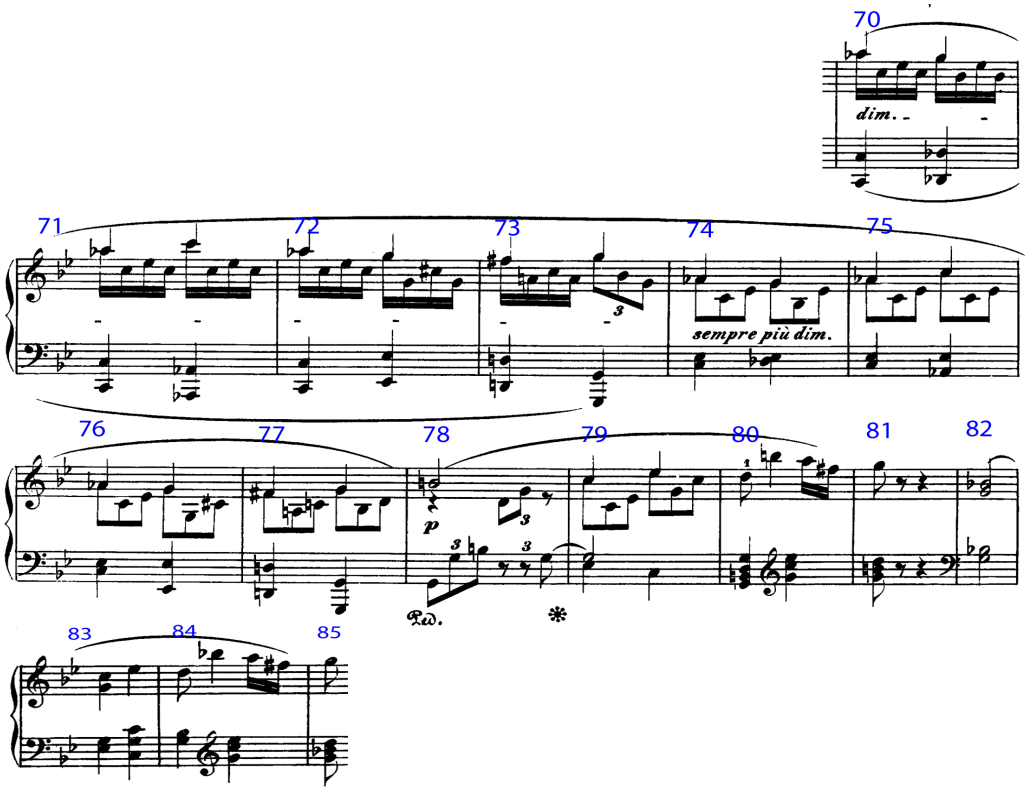
Example 2.5 Beethoven: *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 126 No. 1, mm. 1-16

Later on, the first part of the theme materializes in the lower register (mm. 32-35), almost disguised by intensified harmonic and melodic development in the right hand. After this thematic appearance, the continuation of the subject emerges in the extreme heights of the keyboard (mm. 36-39), supported by potent contrapuntal texture in which every voice has its independent role (Example 2.6). Due to Beethoven's skillful usage of variation technique, the theme of Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 1 travels through a rich spectrum of pianistic colors: midrange, low, and high, always accompanied by different supporting voices.



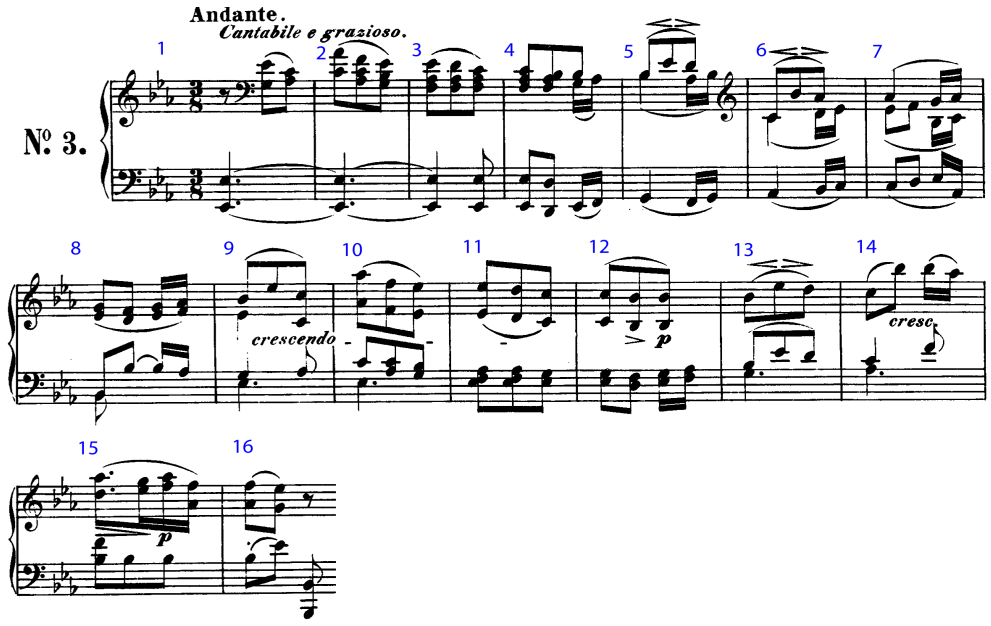
Example 2.6 Beethoven: *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 126 No. 1, mm. 32-40

While faring through the unsettling, closing measures of the second bagatelle in this opus, it is possible to take notice of several instances of variation technique (mm. 70-89, Example 2.7). Here, in his final musical remarks, Beethoven masterfully instills perturbed calm after a furious climax, which precedes this segment. He manages to do so by varying the last portion of the culminating phrase (mm. 70-73) through augmenting the rhythmic pattern and changing it from sixteenth-notes to triplets, in the middle voice (mm. 73-77). This is the logical reverse of Beethoven's intensification of musical pace achieved by quickening the rhythmic movement, as seen in Bagatelle Op. 119 No. 6 (mm. 30-43, Example 2.3) and Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 1 (mm. 1-13, left hand, Example 2.5). In addition, Beethoven changes the left hand (mm. 74-77) by reducing the intervals. In comparison to the left hand octaves from the first segment (mm. 70-73), these smaller intervals are less bombastic and more intimate, soulful, and expressive. Moving forward, Beethoven varies the next phrase (mm. 78-81) by calming down further the inner voices from previously established triplets to longer note values (half notes and quarters, mm. 82-85). In addition, he shifts from the hopeful major mode to the disquieting minor.



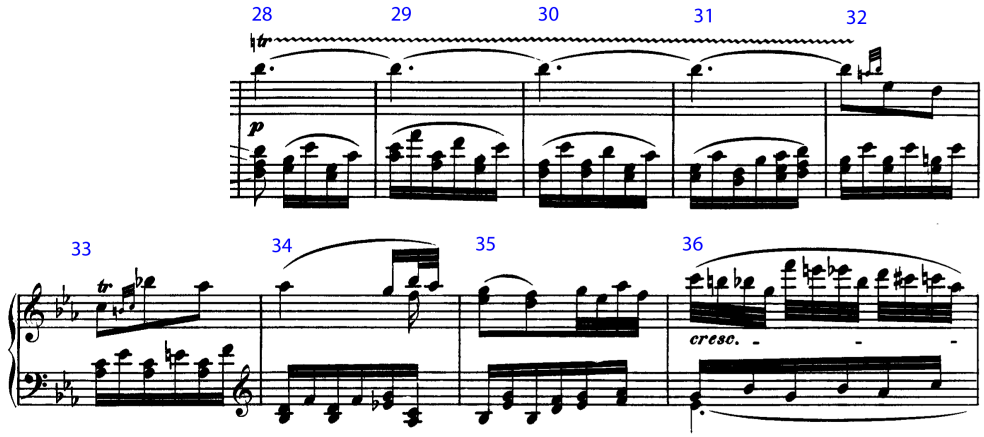
Example 2.7 Beethoven: *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 126 No. 2, mm. 70-85

Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 3 is also based on variation technique. The theme (mm. 1-8) is immediately varied and transferred to a higher register (mm. 9-16), which intensifies its expression through register change and dynamic reinforcement. In addition, the left hand becomes harmonically richer, supporting the doubled melody in the right hand (Example 2.8).



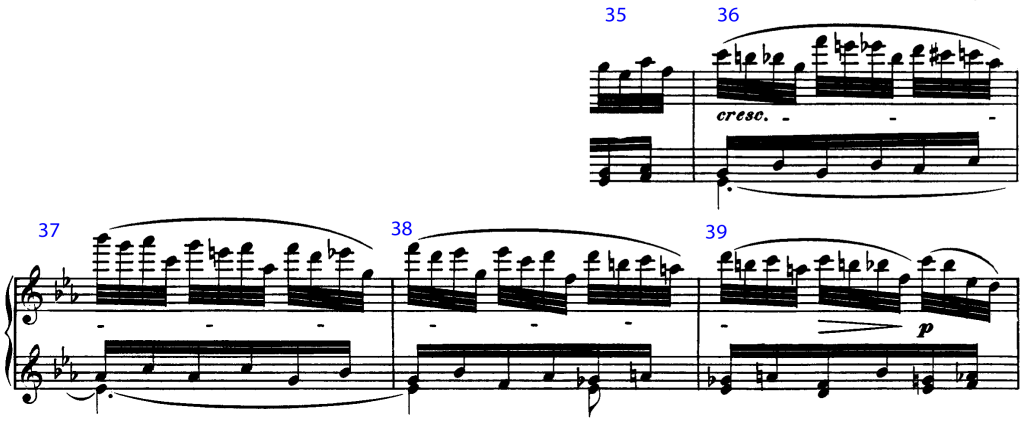
Example 2.8 Beethoven: *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 126 No. 3, mm. 1-16

The first variation starts in m. 28. In the opening part of the phrase, the theme is concealed by the movement of the thirds in the left hand, soon to shift to the obvious and pure continuation in the higher register of the right hand (m. 32), which concludes the segment (Example 2.9). Such treatment hearkens back to the thematic exploration of Op. 126 No. 1 and the exchange of registers in one of its variation segments (mm. 32-40, Example 2.6).



Example 2.9 Beethoven: *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 126 No. 3, mm. 28-36

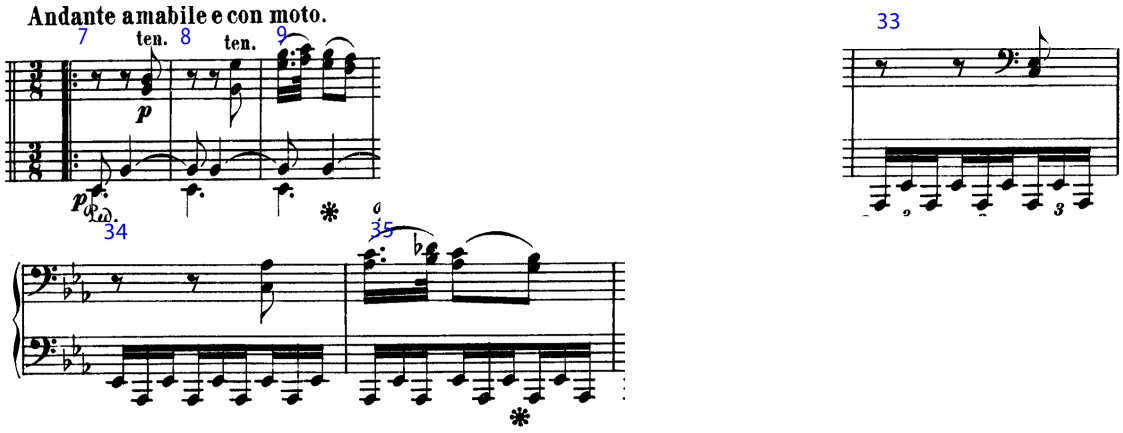
The second variation begins in m. 35 and continues to develop until the end of the third bagatelle. This time, the theme is hidden in the melodic figuration of the right hand, supported by the identical harmonic progressions in the left (Example 2.10).



Example 2.10 Beethoven: *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 126 No. 3, mm. 35-39

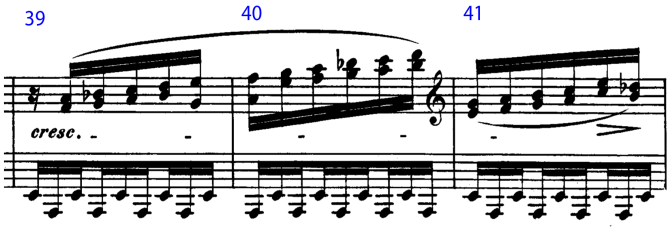
In these three aspects of the thematic material, Beethoven gradually emphasizes the ethereal quality through increasing vagueness of the subject in its each appearance, thus gently drifting from reality and objectivity to the world of dreams and subjectivity.

In the beginning of Op. 126 No. 6 (m. 7), the theme is varied in m. 33 through employment of ostinato figure in the left hand, change of tonality from E flat to A flat major, and transfer of the melodic material into lower register (Example 2.11).



Example 2.11 Beethoven: *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 126 No. 6, mm. 7-9, 33-35

In addition, the first phrase of this variation segment (m. 33) is further varied in its repetition (m. 39, Example 2.12).



Example 2.12 Beethoven: *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 126 No. 6, mm. 39-41

Dance Rhythms

Beethoven utilizes dance rhythms to format several of the bagatelles.

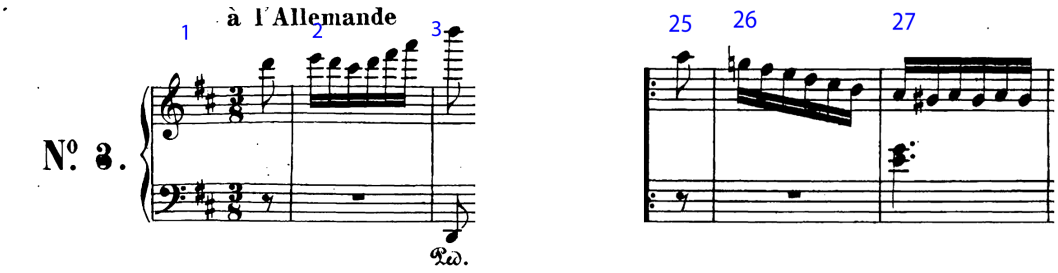
Op. 119 No. 3 à l'Allemande
Op. 119 No. 5 Jig
Op. 119 No. 6 Allemande – German Dance
Op. 119 No. 8 Minuet
Op. 119 No. 9 Waltz
Op. 126 No. 6 Landler

Clearly, he employs the dance rhythms more often in the earlier opus while his later bagatelles generally gravitate toward lyricism and abstract form and expression.

Bagatelle Op. 119 No. 3 is a charming allemande in 3/8 time. Beethoven himself inscribes the marking "à l'Allemande" at the head of the piece. Allemande was born in the 16th century as a dance in duple meter but by the end of the 18th century, there were examples in triple meter. Simon Guillaume in his *Almanach Danasant, ou Positions et attitudes de l'allemande* (Paris: 1786) "pictured it as a sentimental and tender dance in which the partners joined hands throughout while turning around each other in various ways."[18]

Such turning could be felt at the beginning of this bagatelle through a tender, whirling figure (mm. 1-3), which is repeated throughout the piece and in modified inversion (mm. 25-27, Example 2.13).

[18] Ellis Little, Meredith and Suzanne G. Cusick. "Allemande." *Oxford Music Online* (Accessed 22 December 2010), http://oxfordmusiconline.com.



Example 2.13 Beethoven: *Eleven Bagatelles*, Op. 119 No. 3, mm. 1-3, 25-27

The contrasting section (mm. 17-25) is further elaborated in the energetic, playful coda, which ends, tongue-in-cheek, with the initial twirling gesture in high register.

Bagatelle Op. 119 No. 5 is an Irish jig tune or "port," typically noted in 6/8 time. This is a characteristic example of regular structure in this genre, written in two eight-bar, repeated sections (mm. 1-8 and mm. 9-15). A coda closes the piece (mm. 16-26), which continues to reminisce on the final motive from the second section. The rhythmic propulsion of the dotted rhythms and the inherent liveliness of the jig, colored by the intensity of the C minor mode and paired with Beethoven's *risoluto* marking at the beginning of the piece, create a powerful statement.

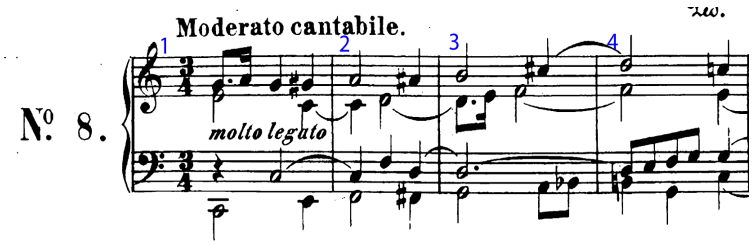
Bagatelle Op. 119 No. 6 could be viewed as a German Dance in duple meter and in moderate tempo, prefaced by an improvisatory introduction (mm. 1-7, Example 2.28). The dance-like motive of two sixteenth-notes followed by an eighth-note is the signature of this charming piece and provides the constant rhythmic bounce. The thematic simplicity and structure lead me to believe that this bagatelle is inspired by a form known as German Dance, which has a connection with 16th-century Allemande or Teutschertanz, a formal predecessor of Allemande from Op. 119 No. 3. It usually starts at a calmer

pace, culminating in a faster segment later on. Bagatelle Op. 119 No. 6 resembles such formal treatment.

I believe that the following sentence justly portrays the atmosphere of a minuet in Bagatelle Op. 119 No. 8:

> As an aristocratic social dance the minuet was dignified, graceful, relaxed and unaffected, unlike some modern re-creations in which exaggerated postures are used. The attention of both dancers and spectators was directed to the elegant and seemingly effortless performance of minuet step-units, […], and, secondarily, to the movement of the dancers in prescribed floor patterns.[19]

The elegance, grace, and calm are brought forth through Beethoven's articulation *molto legato* and tempo indication *Moderato cantabile* at the beginning of the piece. The string quartet writing, punctuated by syncopations and thoughtful voice leading, gives way to long, uninterrupted phrases, thus resembling Italian minuet style (Example 2.14).

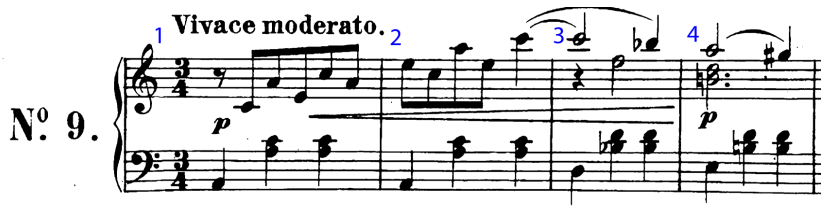


Example 2.14 Beethoven: *Eleven Bagatelles*, Op. 119 No. 8, mm. 1-4

Minuet's grandchild, the waltz, is represented in the next Bagatelle Op. 119 No. 9. It is interesting that in its first edition the tempo marking of this waltz was *Vivace assai ed un poco sentimentale,* later changed to *Vivace moderato*. I see Bagatelles Op. 119

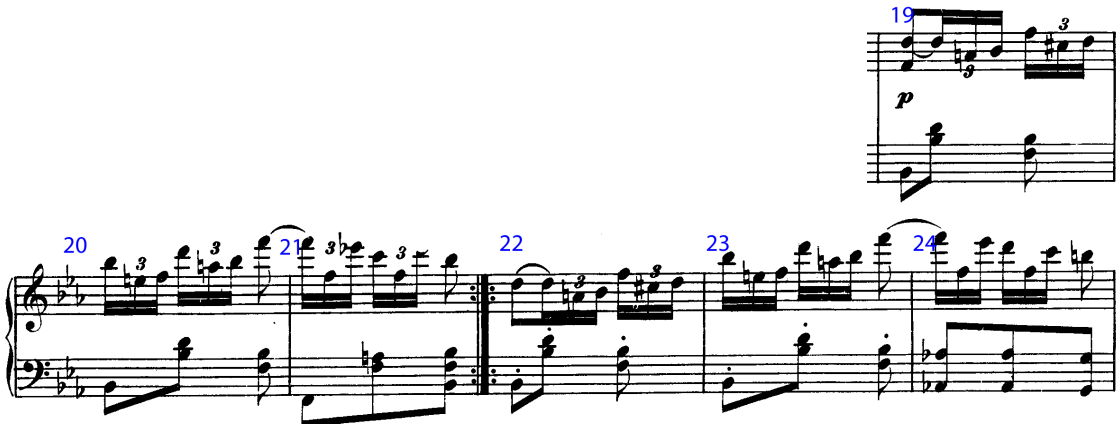
[19] Ellis Little, Meredith. "Minuet." *Oxford Music Online* (Accessed 22 December 2010), http://oxfordmusiconline.com.

Nos. 8 and 9 as a pair. Minuet and waltz are closely related as are the keys of these two bagatelles, C major and A minor. In addition, both pieces are exactly twenty measures in length. To my belief, the initial tempo marking would provide a smoother connection between the two, firmly bound constituents of Op. 119. The calmness of "*assai*" (in Beethoven's interpretation) and tenderness of "*sentimentale*" from the original tempo indication continue the legacy of previously discussed traits of a minuet. The waltz gesture in Bagatelle No. 9 is perpetuated with a help of a typical accompanimental waltz figure in the left hand (Example 2.15).



Example 2.15 Beethoven: *Eleven Bagatelles*, Op. 119 No. 9, mm. 1-4

Waltz's relative, the Landler, is represented in Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 6 (mm. 19-32, Example 2.16, and mm. 51-55). Landler is an Austrian folk dance in ¾ time and its closeness with waltz is evident in the treatment of the left hand. Here, the bass repeats the figure devised from a single low note followed by two intervals or chords, creating a typical waltz pattern (m. 19, Example 2.16). Its dreamy quality in soft dynamics creates atmosphere of reminiscence and tenderness.

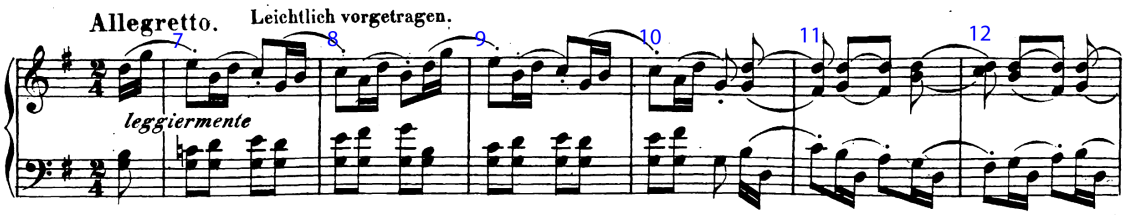


Example 2.16 Beethoven: *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 126 No. 6, mm. 19-24

Contrapuntal Techniques

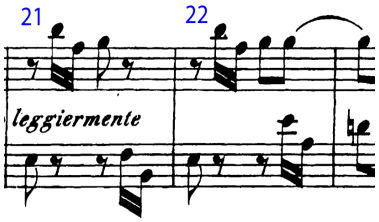
Beethoven often utilized contrapuntal techniques in his late compositions. Two prominent representatives of such style of writing are Bagatelles Op. 119 No. 6 and Op. 126 No. 4.

In Op. 119 No. 6, the right hand theme (m. 7) is freely inverted in the left hand few measures later (m. 11, Example 2.17):



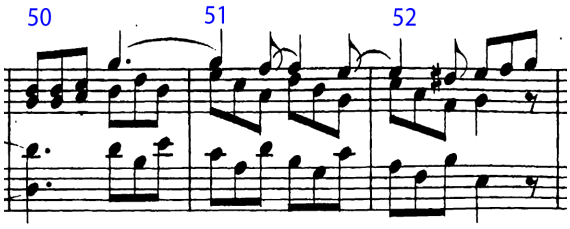
Example 2.17 Beethoven: *Eleven Bagatelles*, Op. 119 No. 6, mm. 7-12

The example of playful imitation is apparent in m. 21 – m. 22, between right and left hands (Example 2.18):



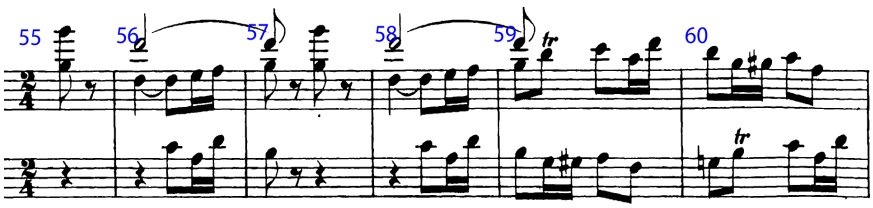
Example 2.18 Beethoven: *Eleven Bagatelles*, Op. 119 No. 6, mm. 21-22

M. 50 – m. 52 spotlights suspensions in the top voice while middle and bottom are locked in a vigorous stretto, comprised of broken triad, descending patterns (Example 2.19):



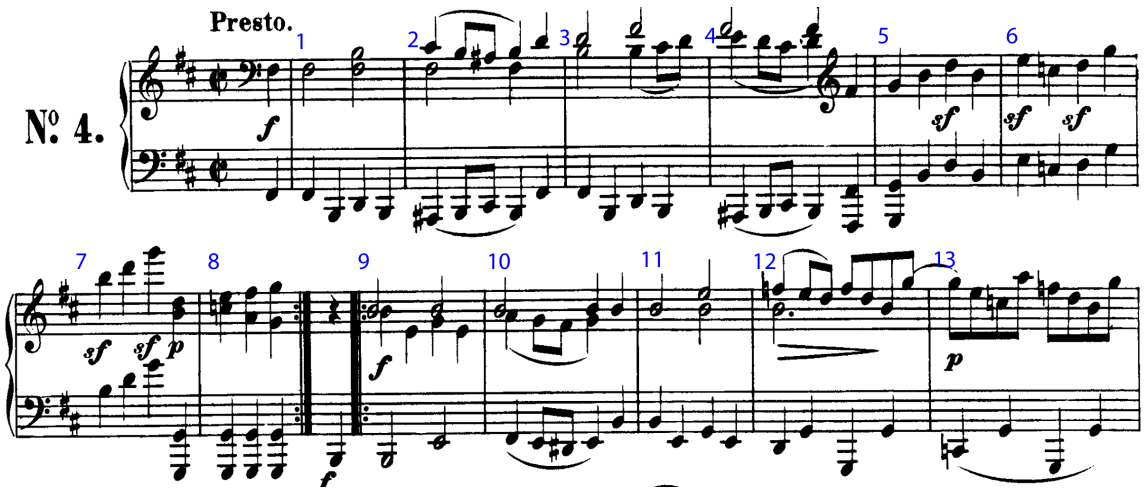
Example 2.19 Beethoven: *Eleven Bagatelles*, Op. 119 No. 6, mm. 50-52

M. 58 features an instance of a lively canon (Example 2.20). Beethoven uses inversion, imitation, stretto, and canon to further accentuate the high-spirited nature of this bagatelle.



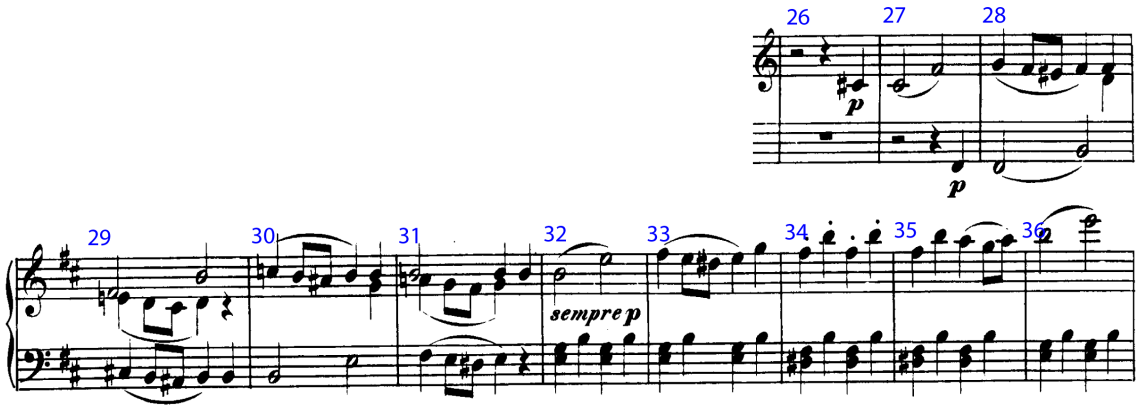
Example 2.20 Beethoven: *Eleven Bagatelles*, Op. 119 No. 6, mm. 55-60

Op. 126 No. 4 is written in ABA form. A section is treated contrapuntally while B segment resembles a barcarolle. I will concentrate on the A section for the purposes of this analysis (Example 2.21). The main motive spans two measures (mm. 1-2) and the roles of its three independent voices are always portrayed in the same fashion, in every new appearance of the initial idea. However, the distribution of the roles varies: at first (mm. 1-2), the subject is in the top voice, the countersubject in the bass, and the counterpoint rests in the middle. In later appearances, the roles remain intact but arranged differently among the three voices (mm. 3-4; mm. 9-10). The first eight-measure section is divided between strict contrapuntal sequence (mm. 1-4) and a segment, unfolding mainly in unison (mm. 5-8). The response in unison constitutes a great contrast to the independent, contrapuntal treatment of voices in the beginning. It condenses the energy further, peppered by sudden, typically Bethovenian, "sf" markings on every second beat (mm. 5-7). Together, they create forceful statement that becomes the signature of the A section of this bagatelle.



Example 2.21 Beethoven: *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 126 No. 4, mm. 1-13

Beethoven utilizes canonic treatment of the subject (mm. 27-31) between hands in preparation for the climactic representation of the theme in its most developed form (mm. 32-35, Example 2.22).



Example 2.22 Beethoven: *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 126 No. 4, mm. 26-36

Nuances of *Sturm und Drang* in Opp. 119 and 126

> Life's flame burned in Beethoven so vehemently, his mental travails were so intense and strenuous, that the passions of a decade in anyone else's life seem compressed more nearly into one year in his life. He was never calm or objective, for he reacted violently to everything, both embracing and hating life, and he could not remain indifferent toward anyone, nor forbear expressing his strong feelings.[20]

With such powerful description, Beethoven's personality was inadvertently portrayed as representative of the unpredictable and turbulent *Sturm und Drang* currents of the 18th century, which led into the subjectivity and self-searching of the Romantic period. As discussed in Chapter I, Beethoven was brought up amidst new tendencies: *Affektenlehre,* and its more contemporary relatives*, Sturm und Drang* and *Empfindsamkeit* styles. The level of intimacy between *Sturm und Drang* and *Empfindsamkeit* varies. The former may be characterized as extroverted and blunt, while the latter is more tender and introverted. However, both styles are similar in that they are based on the baroque doctrine of affections (*Affektenlehre*), and break away from formalism, predictability, and objectivism of the past. In music, *Sturm und Drang* style originated in opera seria's obbligato recitative, where a singer reached new heights of emotional excitement and gave the recitative quasi symphonic features. Before long, composers adapted these ideas to instrumental music, which in turn responded with a rich, new language. It is often believed that Haydn was one of the first composers to use the features of *Sturm und Drang* style in music.

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[20] Paul Henry Lang. "Introduction [To Special Issue Celebrating the Bicentennial of the Birth of Beethoven]," *The Musical Quarterly, Vol. 56, No. 4, Special Issue Celebrating the Bicentennial of the Birth of Beethoven* (October 1970) 507.

Max Rudolf writes about *Sturm und Drang* style in music:

> We are told about an increase in the use of minor keys, of sharp dynamic contrasts and other abrupt changes, of interval jumps, rhythmic thrust, and departure from traditional formal patterns, and of a trend toward freedom of rhythm, such as "recitatives" in instrumental music.[21]

Elaborating further on *Sturm und Drang* in music, Leonard Ratner observed:

> The specific features of this style are rhythmic agitation, chromaticism, dissonance, minor mode, compact texture, and the expressive qualities which the name itself so well describes.[22]

According to Paul Marks, other features include:

> Thematic delineation, and periodicity, achieved through distinct rhythm, differentiation of texture and range, dynamics, instrumentation, comparative brevity, cadential formulae--or a sudden contrast within or between any of the above.[23]

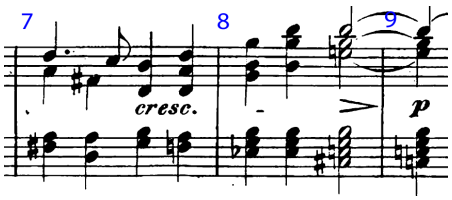
The constant evolution of this fresh language provided composers with an unlimited source of expressive possibilities. I believe that it is possible to trace some of these features, as stated by Max Rudolf, Leonard Ratner, and Paul Marks, in Beethoven's Bagatelles Opp. 119 and 126.

[21] Max Rudolf, "Storm and Stress in Music," *Bach: The Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute 25* (1994) 14.
[22] Leonard Ratner, *Music: The Listener's Art* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966) 210.
[23] Marks, 62.

- Sharp Dynamic Contrasts

In Bagatelles Opp. 119 and 126, sharp dynamic contrasts are attained through various compositional tools, including crescendos followed by sudden diminuendos, abrupt changes of dynamics from loud to soft, quick swells of sound, crescendos resulting in subito piano dynamics, and significant dynamic contrasts between sections within one piece.

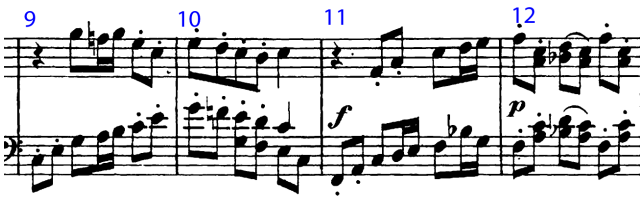
In Op. 119 No. 11, a sharp dynamic contrast is created through a crescendo that leads to a very quick, abrupt diminuendo (mm. 7-9, Example 2.23).



Example 2.23 Beethoven: *Eleven Bagatelles*, Op. 119 No. 11, mm. 7-9

The same effect is used in Bagatelles Op. 126 Nos. 1 (mm. 4-8, mm. 13-16, Example 2.5; mm. 26-29; mm. 36-40, Example 2.6), 3 (mm. 9-12, mm. 14-15, Example 2.8; mm. 21-24; mm. 36-39, Example 2.10) 4 (mm. 60-68, Example 2.26) and 6 (mm. 27-29; mm. 39-41, Example 2.12; mm. 45-47, mm. 48-50).

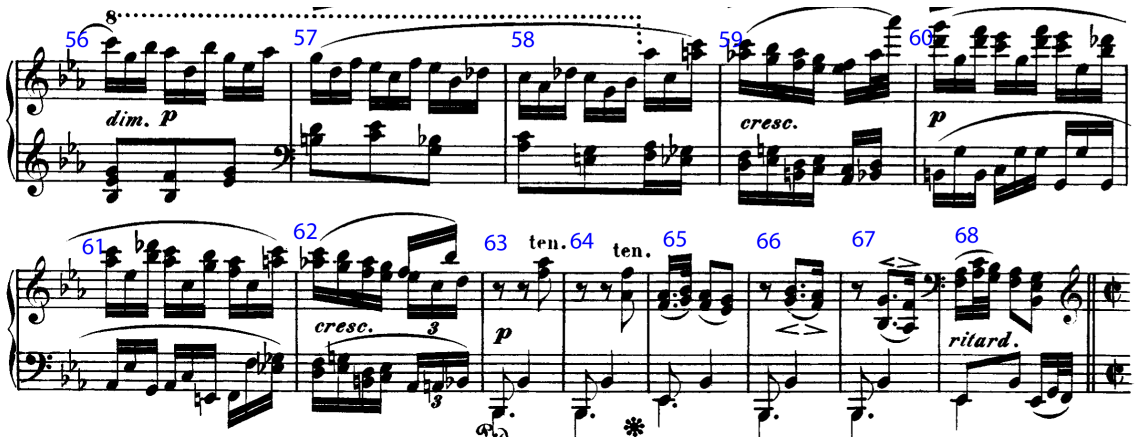
In Op. 119 No. 7 (mm. 9-12), sudden forte outburst in m. 11 interrupts *piano scherzando* quality, which is reestablished in m. 12 (Example 2.24).



Example 2.24 Beethoven: *Eleven Bagatelles*, Op. 119 No. 7, mm. 9-12

The most delicate pianissimo phrase in Op. 119 No. 2 (m. 32-35) is prefaced by energetic, jovial triplet passages in forte dynamics (mm. 28-32), which represent the high point of A1 section in this bagatelle. Comparably, Op. 126 No. 2 contrasts the initial, robust forte idea with a lyrical piano section (mm. 1-4 in contrast to mm. 5-8, mm. 8-12 in contrast to mm. 12-16, mm. 16-18 in contrast to mm. 18-26).

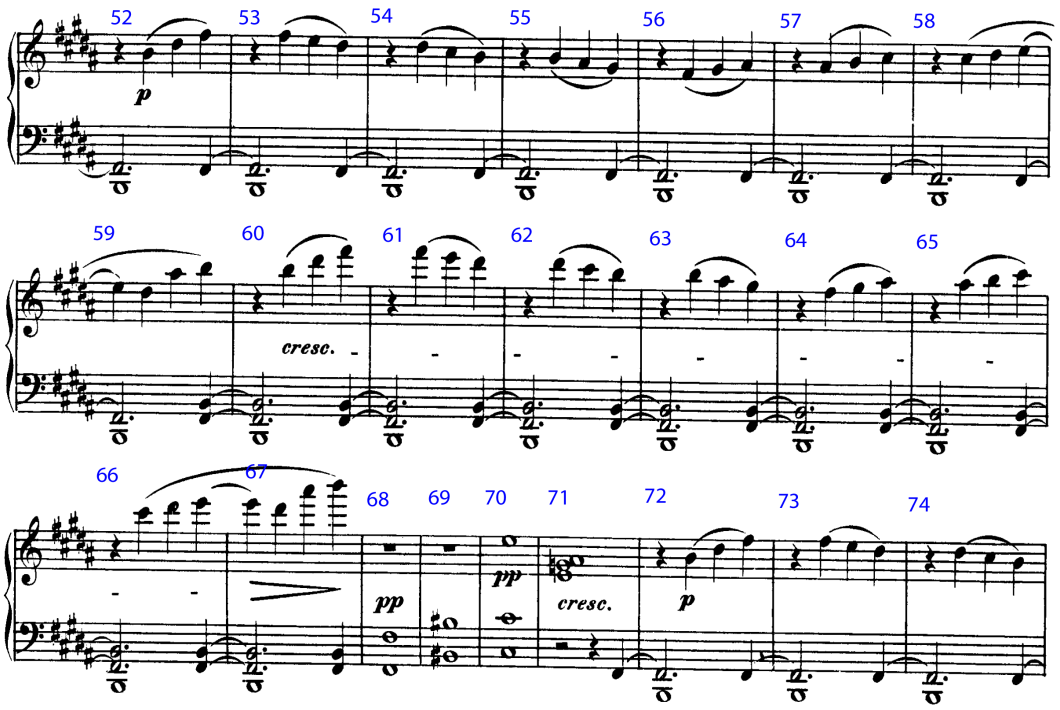
Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 3 ushers sharp dynamic contrasts through quick swells of sound (m. 5, m. 6, m. 13, Example 2.8) and crescendos resulting in subito piano dynamics (mm. 27-28). Beethoven features similar crescendos in Op. 119 No. 1 (mm. 54-58), Op. 119 No. 8 (mm. 15-17), Op. 119 No. 9 (mm. 1-4, Example 2.15; mm. 13-16), Op. 119 No. 11 (mm. 13-14, Example 2.4), Op. 126 No. 4 (mm. 71-72, Example 2.26), Op. 126 No. 6 (mm. 59-60, mm. 62-63, Example 2.25).



Example 2.25 Beethoven: *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 126 No. 6, mm. 56-68

Quick swells of sound are also evident in Op. 119 No. 1 (mm. 21-22, mm. 29-30), Op. 119 No. 6 (m. 3, Example 2.28), Op. 119 No. 11 (mm. 17-18, Example 2.4; mm. 21-22), and Op. 126 No. 6 (mm. 17-18, m. 36, m. 37; m. 66, m. 67, Example 2.25).

Dynamics play an important role in the Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 4. Its B section remains in the realm of piano, with several excursions into pianissimos and crescendos with unspecified final gradation (Example 2.26).

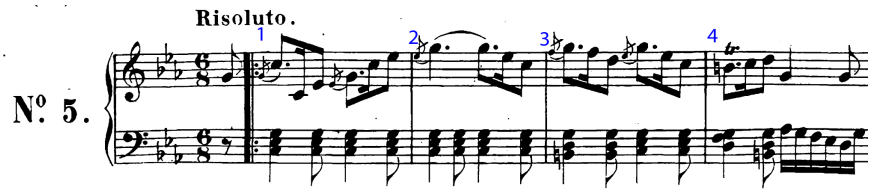


Example 2.26 Beethoven: *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 126 No. 4, mm. 52-74

This greatly differs from the dynamic forte outbursts of the A section (Example 2.21). In contrast, the B section of Bagatelle Op. 119 No. 3 establishes robust forte atmosphere, which varies from the delicacy of the piano A section, thus achieving a similar contrast between its formal segments. In Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 6, Beethoven achieved great contrast between its sections. The introverted bagatelle proper is framed by jocular forte outbursts typical of Beethovenian humor (mm. 1-6 and mm. 69-74).

- Large Interval Jumps

The expressiveness in Bagatelle Op. 119 No. 5 is achieved through interval jumps in its melodic material (Example 2.27).

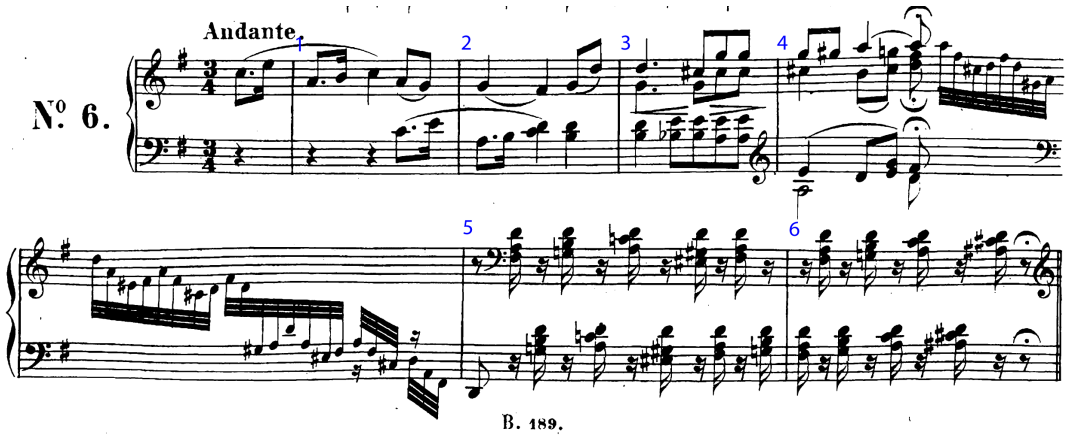


Example 2.27 Beethoven: *Eleven Bagatelles*, Op. 119 No. 5, mm. 1-4

An analogous case of intervallic melody appears in Op. 119 No. 9 (Example 2.15), where broken chords dominate the texture. A few additional selected moments of suggestive interval jumps include m. 43 in Op. 126 No. 1, where an extreme leap introduces a new color and articulation, and mm. 59-61 in Op. 126 No. 2, which displays intensity of emotions through register displacement. In the sixth bagatelle from Op. 126, interval jumps and changing of registers are utilized particularly in the Landler portion of the piece, where the melody freely "dances" through various registers of the keyboard (mm. 19-32, Example 2.16). In the opening *Presto,* a large interval leap in the right hands (m. 2, Example 2.33) throws the melody into the extreme register, from where it gradually descends back to the initial octave.

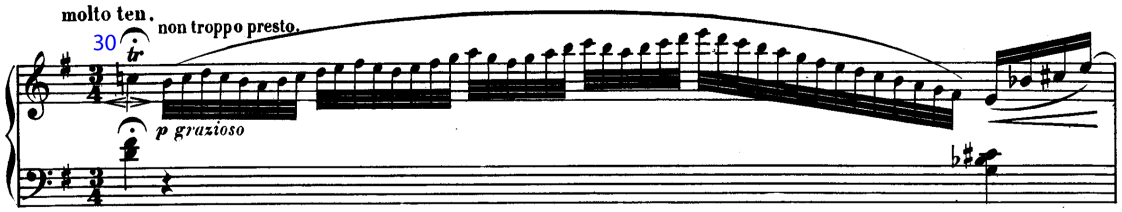
- Freedom of Rhythm-Recitatives, Rhythmic Thrust, Rhythmic Agitation, Distinct Rhythm

The rhythmic freedom and the narrative quality, characteristic of *Sturm und Drang*, are represented in the recitative section in Bagatelle Op. 119 No. 6 (mm. 4-7, Example 2.28).



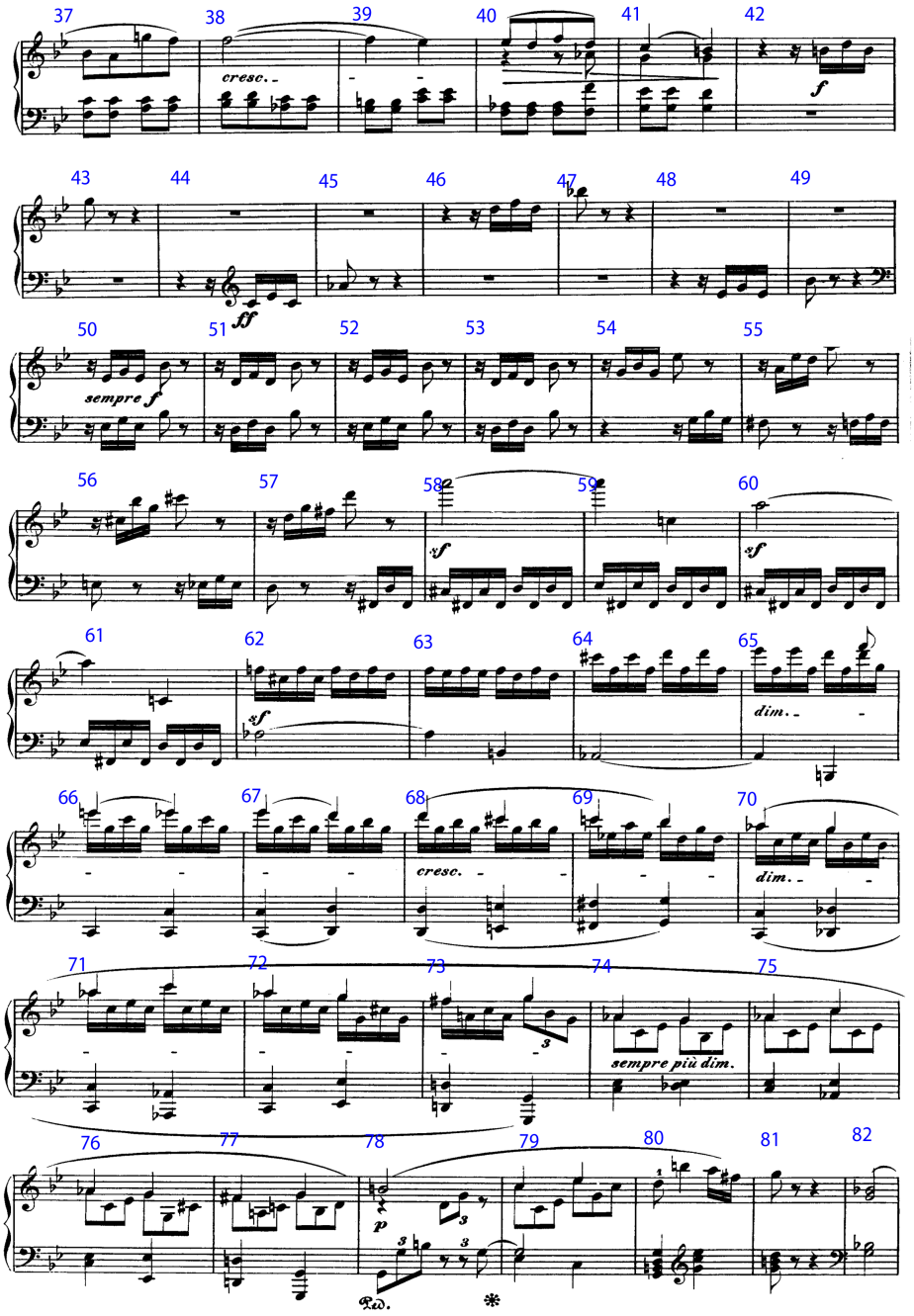
Example 2.28 Beethoven: *Eleven Bagatelles*, Op. 119 No. 6, mm. 1-6

The flexibility, ambiguity, and the descriptive character of this introduction skillfully prepare the dance movement in the bagatelle proper (m. 7, Example 2.3). In Op. 126 No. 3, the recitative comprised of broken chords (mm. 24-27) prepares the return of the theme through gentle undulations of sound. Instrumental recitative comes into view in m. 30 in Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 1. Beethoven adds markings *molto tenuto* for the trill and *non troppo presto* for the ensuing passage. In so doing, he emphasizes the feeling of rhythmic freedom, spaciousness, and improvisation (Example 2.29).



Example 2.29 Beethoven: *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 126 No. 1, m. 30

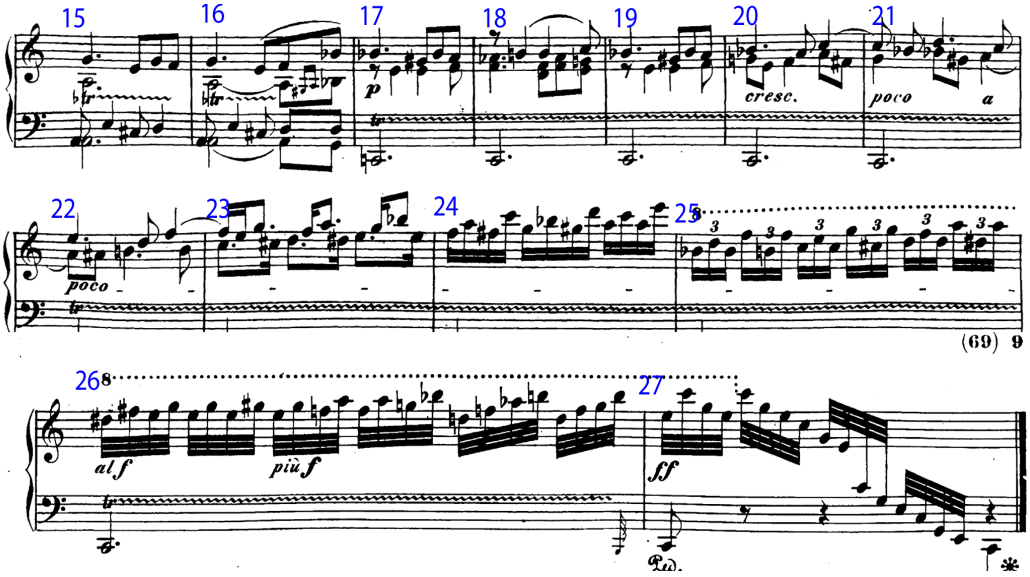
Rhythmic thrust and rhythmic agitation take place in Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 2, mm. 42-81 (Example 2.30). The downbeat is the most important rhythmic moment during first eight measures. From mm. 50-53, the focus shifts to the second beat and creates great instability and agitation. Mm. 54-58 combines the two elements, condensing the whole texture through rhythmic interplay and relating the two conflicting rhythmic ideas until they clash in measure 58, accompanied by typical Beethovenian "sf." A steady stream of sixteenth-notes, varied by crescendos or decrescendos, continues until measure 73. From here on, the rhythmic thrust weakens and relaxes into triplets (mm. 73-81) and finally settles in m. 82.



Example 2.30 Beethoven: *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 126 No. 2, mm. 37-82

In Op. 126 No. 1, the rhythmic thrust combined with rhythmic agitation develops in mm. 21-30, preparing the appearance of the previously discussed recitative. Rhythmic agitation is conveyed by time signature change in m. 21 and by condensing the rhythm

from eighth-notes, to triplets, and to sixteenth-notes. Similar rhythmic agitation emerges in Op. 126 No. 3, which builds a rhythmic crescendo from slower, mainly eighth-note movement (mm. 1-24, Example 2.8), to steady sixteenth-note pace (mm. 26-35, Example 2.9), and to thirty-second note patterns (mm. 35-48, Example 2.10). Another marvelous example of rhythmic thrust occurs in Bagatelle Op. 119 No. 7 (mm. 17-27). Here, the diminution of the motive in the right hand, coupled with the continued crescendo and the bubbling excitement of the trill in the left hand, creates a feeling of a musical outburst in m. 27 (Example 2.31).



Example 2.31 Beethoven: *Eleven Bagatelles*, Op. 119 No. 7, mm. 15-27

In Op. 126 No. 4, the rhythm becomes more agitated in mm. 13-20, through the employment of continuous syncopations in the right hand melody. This rhythmic device allows the music to "swing" and gives it a dance feeling. The B section (mm. 52-105, Example 2.26) takes the musical imagery to world of reverie, providing the most

profound, innocent response to the shattering emotions of the opening A section (Example 2.21). In it, the lullaby-like rhythm features interruptions in the melodic line on the first beat, while the left-hand provides syncopations between second half of the second beat and the downbeat of the following measure (mm. 52-53, Example 2.26). The syncopation coupled with the silenced first beat in the right hand allows the bass B to resonate, confirming the tonality and stability, which is absent in the A section. Comparable "swing," achieved through employment of syncopation, is evident in Op. 126 No. 6, occurring at the end of a measure. In so doing, it increases rhythmic unrest and enhances the expression of the section (mm. 20-21, Example 2.16; mm. 26-32).

General pauses create eerie excitement and distinct rhythmic patterns. Beethoven utilizes silences as an arresting tool to establish musical expression in the bagatelles.

The general pause in m. 6 of Op. 119 No. 6 (Example 2.28), allows the harmonies to clear before the initiation of the dance rhythm. In Op. 126 No. 2, silences generate tremendous animation followed by rhythmic sixteenth-note outbursts, thus creating distinct rhythmic patterns (mm. 42-50, Example 2.30). General pauses have a comparable role in Op. 126 No. 4, mm. 21-22, and mm. 25-26, where they bring a total halt of motion after two percussive, tripled f-sharps. While these general pauses bring anxiety and trepidation, its parallel in the B section (m. 101) asserts peace and repose. The A section has a more dissonant and rhythmically jagged character in comparison to the dreamy B section.

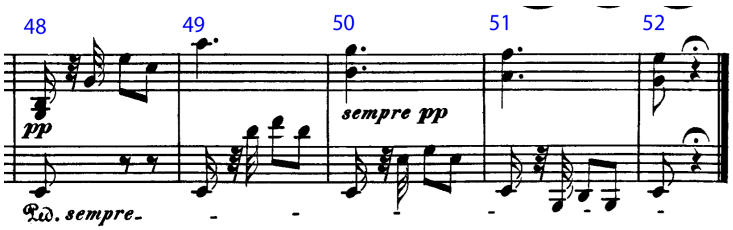
- Differentiation of Texture and Range

Beethoven was never pleased with instruments he used and found them flimsy, weak, and harp-like. He treated piano like an orchestra, exerting enormous amount of power and intensity, and many of them were not able to sustain such emotional and physical force. Piano makers made pianos especially for him in desire to suit his musical needs, as was the case with the Broadwood piano he received in 1817, with six-octave range and two pedals. This was a bigger, more durable, and louder instrument. While constantly pushing the instrument of his time to its structural limits, Beethoven composed pieces that showcased innovative textures through characteristic usage of unusual sounds (sf, very soft, or loud), pedal, extreme registers (high or low), or atypical voicing (juxtaposing high and low ranges, scant texture, polyphonic treatment). In Bagatelles Opp. 119 and 126, there are numerous examples of extreme ranges and unusual textures.

Beethoven often juxtaposes extreme registers, thus creating special color and texture in utilizing vast keyboard ranges. Such examples are clearly seen in Op. 119 No. 3 (mm. 1-9), Op. 119 No. 7 (mm. 17-27, Example 2.31), Op. 119 No. 11 (mm. 11-14, Example 2.4), Op. 126 No. 1 (mm. 43-46). He explores the sounds of higher registers, in both hands, in Op. 126 No. 3 (mm. 35-45, Example 2.10) and in Op. 126 No. 5 (mm. 33-42). Here, the unity of texture is achieved through exchange of thirds: the texture of the left hand in the A section becomes the texture of the right hand in the B segment.

The texture is further innovated by the unique usage of pedal, as in Op. 126 No. 3, where its continued employment allows the sounds to freely intermingle while the

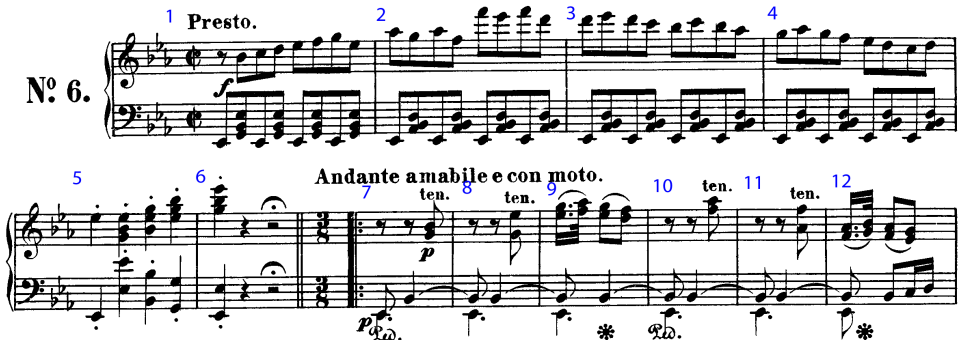
expression reaches its calm, transcending into the world of dreams (mm. 48-52, Example 2.32).



Example 2.32 Beethoven: *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 126 No. 3, mm. 48-52

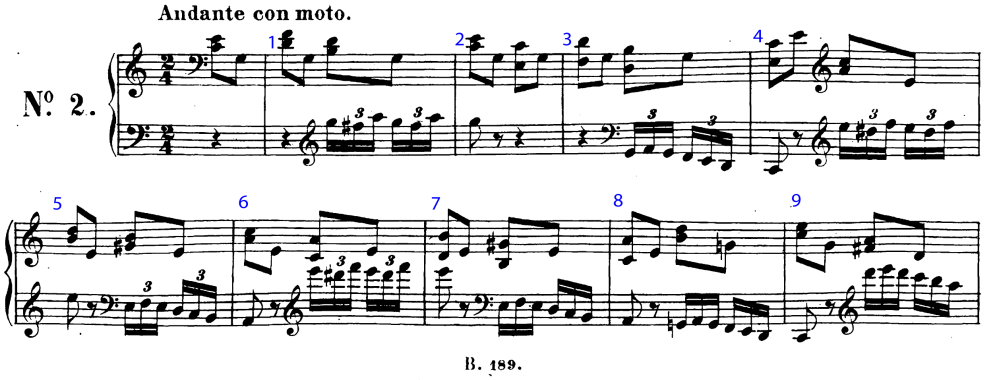
Similar effect is achieved through employment of pedal in Op. 126 No. 6 (mm. 7-9, mm. 10-12, Example 2.33; mm. 33-35).

Beethoven varies textures abruptly to emphasize the dramatic idiom. In Op. 126 No. 2, the texture changes quickly by shifting registers, mm. 1-8. This alteration is further enhanced by its rhythmic and melodic abruptness. In Op. 119 No. 1, the staccato articulation and the agitation from the opening measures (mm. 1-16) are contrasted by the choral-like texture and longer phrases in B section (mm. 17-36). In the like manner, the new texture in B section of Op. 126 No. 4 (Example 2.26) contrasts the A portion (Example 2.21) of this bagatelle through rhythmic security provided by the left hand ostinato figure and unhurried development of melody in the right hand. In Op. 126 No. 6, the fiery opening is marked *Presto* and bursts with energy (mm. 1-6, Example 2.33). The texture changes in *Andante amabile e con moto* section, which begins with a soulful, soft aria (mm. 7-19, Example 2.33), and then again, by mutating into light and elegant Landler (mm. 19-32, Example 2.16).



Example 2.33 Beethoven: *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 126 No. 6, mm. 1-12

Bagatelle Op. 119 No. 2 explores various ranges through continuous displacement of the initial motive (Example 2.34) between high and low, while the right hand remains stationary in the middle register. In this way, the playful, teasing character of this piece is successfully underlined.

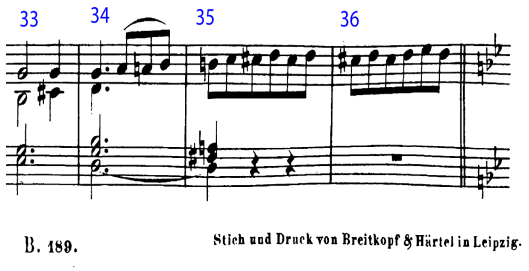


Example 2.34 Beethoven: *Eleven Bagatelles*, Op. 119 No. 2, mm. 1-9

- Chromaticism, Dissonance, Minor Mode

Chromaticism and dissonance generate tonal instability and musical expressivity and are well suited to the language of *Sturm und Drang.* I would like to point out a few salient examples of these characteristics.

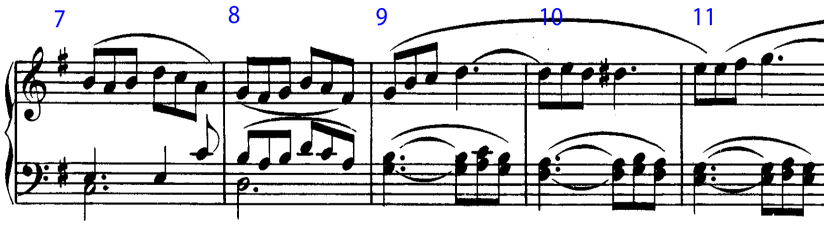
Op. 119 No. 1 features an expressive dissonance in m. 33, followed by a chromatic scale, which brings back the key of G minor and the return of A section (Example 2.35).



Example 2.35 Beethoven: *Eleven Bagatelles*, Op. 119 No. 1, mm. 33-36

Op. 119 No. 5 is peppered with dissonant chords (m. 6, 9, 11, 14) that further intensify the eloquence of this piece. The compositional development and the excitement in Op. 119 no. 7 (mm. 17-27, Example 2.31) are aided by frequent employment of diminished harmonies throughout this segment. Recurring passing dissonances in Op. 119 No. 8 create suspense and gentle inflection (Example 2.14). In Op. 119 No. 11, the diminished chord in m. 8 (Example 2.23) represents the turning point, separating the earthly from the heavenly in this bagatelle. In the first bagatelle of Op. 126, the passage from mm. 21-30 brings emphasized presence of dissonance and chromaticism in melody along with

rhythmic impetus, giving way to a recitative in m. 30. It then pauses on a distinctly chromatic chord in mm. 31-32, preparing the return of the subject. Op. 126 No. 2 features distinct musical texture in mm. 58-78 (Example 2.30), where dissonances and chromaticism support the turbulent expression. The descending chromatic scale is carved by the top voice in the right hand, mm. 66-69 (Example 2.30), marking the high point of this statement. In Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 5, the most striking example of featured chromatic dissonance is the unexpected turn from "d" to "d sharp" in the right hand in m. 10, thus creating notable melodic tension, which resolves in m. 11 (Example 2.36).



Example 2.36 Beethoven: *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 126 No. 5, mm. 7-11

Its expression becomes increasingly more chromatic in Op. 126 No. 6 by employing lower neighbor notes in the triplet figure during the Landler portion of the bagatelle (m. 19, Example 2.16). This repetitive, discreet dissonance imbues music with lightness, ease and elegance.

Bagatelles Op. 119 No. 1 and Op. 126 No. 2 are written in G minor, a popular key for expressing "stormy" feelings. Op. 126 No. 4 is also written in a minor mode. The key of B minor was an intriguing choice for Beethoven as he rarely composed pieces

employing this tonality. He often referred to it as a "black key," as stated earlier. Beethoven used it only on a couple of occasions in his entire opus.

> About B minor we are hardly in a position to prove anything, as his only two important movements are that wonderful Scherzo, the fourth of his six Bagatelles, Op. 126 . . . and the *Agnus Dei* of the Mass in D, which one must admit to be a cry *de profundis*.[24]

Its parallel key, B major, infuses the B section of the fourth bagatelle with tenderness, tranquility, and optimism. Further, Bagatelles Op. 119 Nos. 5 and 9 are written in minor mode, C and A respectively.

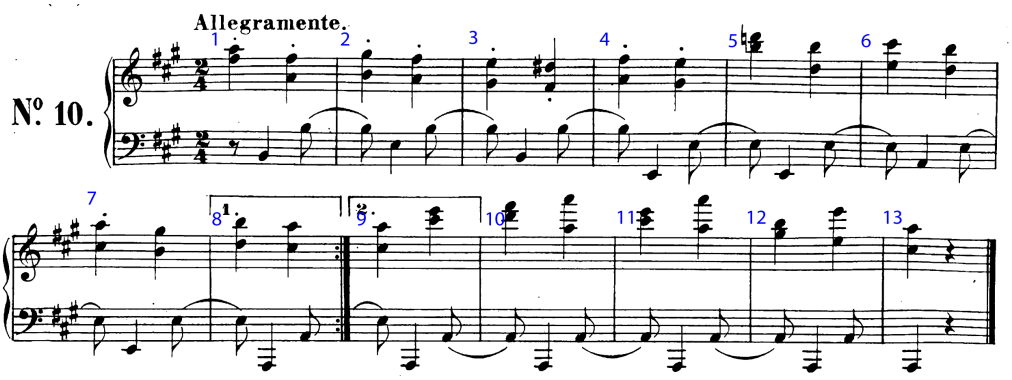
- Departure from Traditional Formal Patterns, Brevity

Bagatelles are short in length:

Op. 119 No. 1, G minor – 74 measures
Op. 119 No. 2, C major – 40 measures
Op. 119 No. 3, D major – 56 measures
Op. 119 No. 4, A major – 16 measures
Op. 119 No. 5, C minor – 26 measures
Op. 119 No. 6, G major – 66 measures
Op. 119 No. 7, C major – 27 measures
Op. 119 No. 8, C major – 20 measures
Op. 119 No. 9, A minor – 20 measures
Op. 119 No. 10, A major – 13 measures
Op. 119 No. 11, B flat major – 22 measures
Op. 126 No. 1, G major – 47 measures
Op. 126 No. 2, G minor – 90 measures
Op. 126 No. 3, E flat major – 52 measures
Op. 126 No. 4, B minor – 216 measures
Op. 126 No. 5, G major – 42 measures
Op. 126 No. 6, E flat major – 74 measures

[24] Donald Tovey, *Beethoven* (London: Oxford University Press, 1945) 8.

The shortest one occupies only 13 measures (Example 2.37) while longer examples do not exceed 100 measures.



Example 2.37 Beethoven: *Eleven Bagatelles*, Op. 119 No. 10, mm. 1-13

The exception is Op. 126 No. 4 with its 216 measures. Timewise, the longest bagatelle is Op. 126 No. 6, spanning approximately four minutes, while the shortest one is Op. 119 No. 10 with fifteen seconds in length. Beethoven's Bagatelles welcome the quintessential Romantic form – the miniature. Their form is represented by various patterns, including AA1, AB, ABA, AABA. Some of the Bagatelles are more faithful in their adherence to a certain formal model, albeit with frequent alterations, such as Op. 119 No. 1 (ABA1), Op. 119 No. 2 (AA1 with coda), Op. 119 No. 3 (ABA with coda), Op. 119 No. 4 (AABA), Op. 119 No. 5 (AB with coda), Op. 119 No. 8 (AB), Op. 119 No. 9 (AABA), Op. 119 No. 10 (AA1), Op. 126 No. 1 (AABA with coda), Op. 126 No. 3 (AA1), Op. 126 No. 4 (ABAB), Op. 126 No. 5 (ABA), Op. 126 No. 6 (AA1 with introduction and coda). It is also possible to detect modified forms and freer, fantasy-like patterns in Op. 119 No. 6, Op. 119 No. 7, Op. 119 No. 11, Op. 126 No. 2.

Common Features of Beethoven's Late Style as seen in the Bagatelles

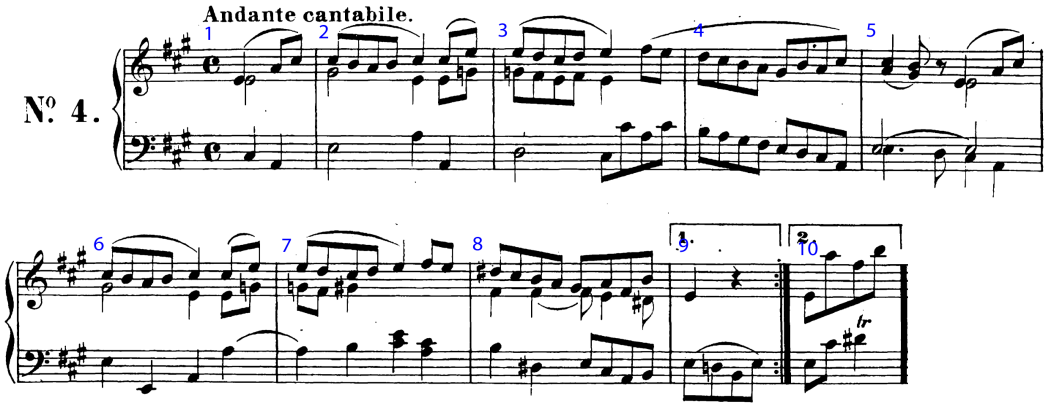
The most prominent features of Beethoven's late style are the use of ornaments, sforzato markings, vocal idiom, lyrical approach and absence of flashy virtuosity.

Ornaments are ever so present in Beethoven's late music. Such practice may be a reflection on earlier compositional styles and their characteristics, which Beethoven further develops to reinforce the lyricism of his Late Style.

In Bagatelle Op. 119 No. 5, Beethoven gives additional strength to melodic material by prefacing selected thematic notes with grace notes (mm. 1-8, Example 2.27). In addition, he mobilizes the expressive quality of trills (m. 4, Example 2.27; m. 8, 10, 12) and slides (m. 9, 11, 20). In Op. 119 No. 7, the trills represent the essential structural component. They are extended throughout the piece (mm. 1-4; mm. 15-26, Example Example 2.31), occupying sixteen of twenty-seven measures. The most emphatic one, the "c" trill in the bass (mm. 17-26, Example 2.31), underpins the development of the final rhythmic and dynamic crescendo. Similar, supportive role is given to the prolonged trill in Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 3 (mm. 28-32, Example 2.9), which appears in the top voice while the left hand develops the melody.

Abrupt sforzatos, including sudden forte dynamics emphasizing single notes, are typical Beethovenian feature that appear throughout the Bagatelles. They emphasize and give inflections in Op. 119 No. 4 (mm. 9-11), Op. 119 No. 5 (mm. 22-24), Op. 119 No. 11 (m. 17, Example 2.4), Op. 126 No. 2 (m. 17; 58, 60, 62, Example 2.30), Op. 126 No. 4 (mm. 5-7, Example 2.21; mm. 46-50).

During his final years, Beethoven developed lyricism that is distinctive and profound. It is intimately connected with the vocal idiom and spotlights his artistic narrative. Beethoven blends his personal rhetoric with long, cantabile phrases, welcoming Romantic subjectivity, vulnerability, and idealism. The most striking examples of such treatment are Op. 119 No. 4, which unfolds like a Romantic album leaf, (Example 2.38) choral-like Op. 119 No. 11, and intimate Op. 126 No. 1 (Example 2.5).



Example 2.38 Beethoven: *Eleven Bagatelles*, Op. 119 No. 4, mm. 1-10

Also, in this category is Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 3 (Example 2.8) that evolves in a hymn-like manner, foreshadowing Brahms, while the B section of Op. 126 No. 4 (Example 2.26) and Op. 126 No. 5 sing in the rhythm of a Venetian folk song – the barcarolle. The soulful nature of Beethoven's late lyricism eliminates employment of flashy virtuosity, which is alien to these two opuses of bagatelles. In them, any trace of virtuosity is in service of a larger, musical idea, and never represents a mere end in itself.

CONCLUSION

While Beethoven was already influenced by new, Romantic trends, his musical language stayed rooted in the traditions of the past. His expression was colored by local currents while it truly always remained his own--uniquely Beethovenian. I would like to close this essay with a quote by Robert Schumann who beautifully summarized Beethoven's mission, as a person and an artist: "Beethoven strives ever for the rapturous, from star to star he flew, free from this earth!"[25]

[25] Robert Schumann, *Schumann on Music* ed. by Henry Pleasants (New York: Dover Publications, 1965) 61

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