

'Easy to take' sonatas mark Beethoven series

Beethoven's restless genius as a composer changed his music throughout his career. The evolution of the master's

art will be evident in the selections played Sunday in Sheldon Auditorium. Four sonatas from the

Beethoven Sonata Series will be performed. Like all the series' sonatas, the two works are for piano and accompanying instruments.

During the school year, "I expect to cover every one of the sonatas that Beethoven wrote for piano with anything else," said Cary Lewis, the pianist who leads the series.

The first piece Sunday is a sonata with cello. Lewis' wife Dorothy will accompany her husband on the cello in Op. 102, no. 1 in C major. Op. 102 was composed late in Beethoven's life, when he was in full maturity as a composer.

The complete command of his art that the older Beethoven possesses is evident in this piece. It has five movements, two of which are quite brief. Lewis called the musical statements "extremely concise," unified and controlled.

The cello sonata demands careful attention, Lewis said, but aside from that he said he expects it to be an easy listening program.

UNL French horn instructor David Kappy will join Lewis in the F major sonata of Op. 17. The work originally was written for the valveless hunting horn and bears a resemblance to hunting music of the early 19th century, Lewis said.

Nebraska Wesleyan string teacher Morris Collier will perform two violin and piano sonatas with Lewis. They are the A major, Op. 12 no. 2, and the G major, Op. 30 no. 3 sonatas.

Musicologist Douglas Townshend called the last movement of the G major work "the closest thing to a square dance Beethoven ever wrote."

Lewis currently heads the piano department at Nebraska Wesleyan University. He earned his bachelors degree from North Texas State College and received his doctorate from the famous Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. He then studied in Vienna two years on a Fulbright scholarship.

During the summer, he teaches at a music camp for young students at Interlochen, Mich.

Although all the sonatas in this Beethoven series include instruments in addition to the piano, they all were called piano sonatas when first introduced.

In early reviews of the pieces with violin, Lewis added, the violin was not even mentioned.

Each of the concerts will combine the more sophisticated of Beethoven's sonatas with the more accessible ones, Lewis said. The cello sonata in Sunday's performance, for example, requires concentration to be fully enjoyed by the audience, he explained. The other, earlier works are less demanding.

"Easy to take" is how the pianist described the flavor of the Beethoven Sonata Series.

There are six concerts in the series. The Sheldon presentations are all Sundays at 3 p.m. and are free. This Sunday's performance is the second in the series.

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