

# Ludwig Van Beethoven

## Für Elise



In this issue's classical column, we are revisiting the work of the most famous composer of all time: Beethoven. **Bridget Mermikides** meets Elise.

### ABILITY RATING

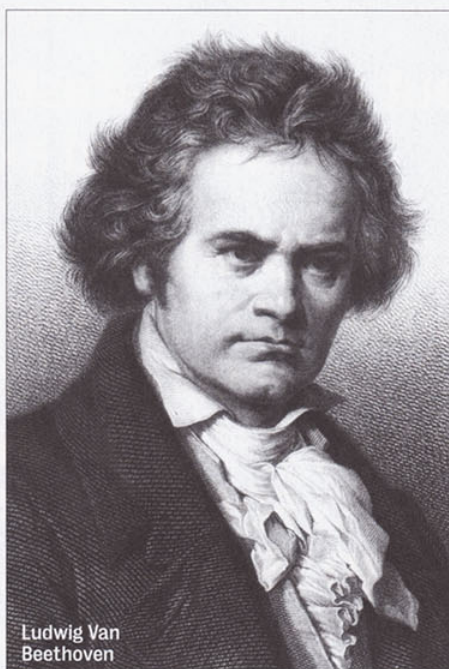


**Moderate**

INFO	WILL IMPROVE YOUR
<b>KEY:</b> A minor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Melody & accompaniment
<b>TEMPO:</b> 148 bpm	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fingerstyle technique
<b>CD:</b> TRACKS 17-18	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Classical repertoire

BEETHOVEN, along with Bach and Mozart, is at the top of any list of influential composers. Beethoven's particular importance is that he formed the important bridge between the Classical and Romantic eras in Western Art Music, taking the elements of Classical music and expanding their harmonic, textural and structural forms in pursuit of greater expressive depth. Please note that there are two meanings for 'Classical' in use for music; the specific term is for the period between around 1750 and 1830 of Western Art Music with Mozart, Haydn and (early, not late) Beethoven as its most famous practitioners. However most people use the term 'Classical Music' in a very loose way that seems to describe any music of any era or style that uses traditional orchestral or chamber instruments, that is generally performed by people in tuxedos and formal dress, is notated, might have a conductor, that is somehow representative of being 'cultured'... and perhaps goes on a bit too long! Although the general use of the term is convenient (this is a 'classical' guitar column after all), I would

**“Beethoven's impact on the development of Western music cannot be overestimated”**



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encourage you to realise that within this definition there are actually hundreds of years of conflicting, contrasting, wildly diverse and beautiful musical styles for you to learn and love. Beethoven's impact on the development of Western music in terms of rhythmic expression, harmonic concepts, motivic power and new structural forms cannot be underestimated.

One of Beethoven's best-known pieces is the solo piano work: Bagatelle no. 25 in A minor, popularly known as Für Elise. The date of the composition is not known, the original manuscript is lost and it was only published 41 years after his death. It is also unclear to whom it was dedicated. Some even suggest that the

letters of E-L-I-S-E describe, in the German notational system, the famous opening melody. These mysteries aside, what is clear is the far reaching popularity of this work to the present day. The piece is titled as a bagatelle – a piece of a light, mellow character – and it has the structure of a rondo – a musical form where a principal theme is repeated, alternating with contrasting themes. In this case ABACA, where the A sections will be familiar to all. Understanding forms like these can help with the performance, and memorisation of a piece.

The original key of A minor works well on guitar and I've adapted the 'guitaristically impossible' sections so that they are playable and reflect the musicality as effectively as possible. It's a perfect example of Beethoven's contribution to music, the classical formalities of structure are all in place but there is a great expression in the music for you to explore.

As ever, take your time with this (the tab captions will guide you through the trickier sections) and remember that careful and patient practice is the surest and fastest way to success. I hope you enjoy this great work, and see you next month! 

### TECHNIQUE FOCUS

#### FREE STROKE, REST STROKE

Two common picking techniques in classical guitar are free stroke and rest stroke. With rest stroke the picking finger plucks a string and then comes to rest against the adjacent one. With the thumb this is the next string down (towards the floor) and with fingers it's the next string up (towards the face). With free stroke the finger doesn't rest on an adjacent string after plucking, but floats free until it's required to pick again. Rest stroke is often favoured for single note playing, while free stroke is for polyphonic playing (chords and arpeggios).



**TRACK RECORD** For his piano music try Vladimir Ashkenazy's Piano Concerto & 6 Bagatelles, a 3-CD recording that includes Für Elise alongside other great solo piano works and all his piano concertos. Herbert Von Karajan's recording of the nine Symphonies (a 5-CD box-set) and the Quartetto Italiano Complete String Quartets (a 10-CD box-set) are both fantastic and worthwhile investments for any music lover.



PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 18

**[General]** The main theme is quite straightforward. For the first four bars there is some suggested fingering for the plucking hand under the tab. This is recommended as it works well and occurs several times throughout the piece.

**[Bar 17]** When we modulate to C major, the melody can be emphasised slightly with rest strokes. The notes in question have the sticks going up in the notation.

**[Bars 20-22]** The last E note of bar 20 is played at the 7th fret, fifth string to take the hand further up the neck in preparation for the high E in bar 21. The D# notes in bar 22 are played on the third string but this is only a suggestion and moving back to the second string would also be fine here. As you go through, make sure you think about bringing expression and dynamics to the piece.

♩ = 148 N.C.

5, 13 16

C G G7 Am E5 N.C.

17, 31

Am E Am

22, 36 27, 41

N.C. Am E 1 Am 2 A5 C7

## PLAYING TIPS

## CD TRACK 18

[Bars 45-46] The next section in F major at bar 45 is the most difficult. A few tips are as follows: at bar 46 use your first finger to barre across two strings for the F and Bb whilst playing the open E melody note, and use your second finger for the

D (second melody note). Now without losing contact with your first finger on the string, rotate the hand around to create a four-string barre on beat three of the same bar (Bb to A melody notes), which remains in place for bar 47.



The sheet music is presented in a system of five staves, each representing a guitar string (E, B, G, D, A from top to bottom). The notation includes treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb), and various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines. Chord names are written above the staff: F, Bb/F, F, Am/E, Dm, Gsus4, G7/F, C, G7/F, C/E, G/D, C, G, C, G7/F, C/E, G/D, C, G, E/G#, N.C., Am, E, Am. Fingering numbers (1-4) are placed below the notes. A series of letters (a, p, i, m, i, a, m) is written below the first staff, indicating specific playing techniques. The measures are numbered 45, 49, 53, 56, and 60.



## PLAYING TIPS

## CD TRACK 18

[Bars 47-51] Use the fourth finger on the last C note of bar 47 as this becomes the 'guide' finger to the Bb next bar and keeps the first and third fingers available for the two Fs. At bar 50 there are a couple of technical points to note: it is a handy device to use a two-string 'hinge' barre when landing on the Dm. This means that the first finger becomes flat momentarily, still in contact with the second string,

and can be 'unhinged' on bar 51 for the C note again. This makes for a smoother melodic line with no finger hopping. The other point in bar 50 is to mute the sixth string. This should be done with the picking hand's thumb after plucking the D bass note (as the harmony changes) by hopping back and muting the sixth string in one single motion.

N.C. Am E Am

64

C G Am E5

68

N.C. Am E

72

Am N.C. Am E

76

Am Gdim/A Dm/A Ddim/A

80

## PLAYING TIPS

## CD TRACK 18

[Bars 52 & 53, previous page] These are the trickiest in the piece, requiring some quick finger work. The plucking hand fingering is indicated and should be followed precisely. Bar 52 consists primarily of alternation between thumb

and second finger. In bar 53 there is a very quick fourth finger shift to the high C followed by half barre at the 5th fret then an open first string to get you back to open position. Practise slowly at first to get the mechanics right, then speed up.

Am Dm/A D/A Am/E E7

84

Am Gdim/A Dm/A

88

Bb Eb/Bb Bb E7/B

92

Am/C E7/D Am

96

p p i m a i m

N.C.

100



PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 18

[Bars 56 to end] The section up to bar 79 is the same Rondo theme that appeared earlier. At bar 80 is a new section consisting of chugging repeated bass notes with dramatic sounding chords above, and this is technically uncomplicated. At bar 98 there are triplet arpeggios with indicated plucking hand instructions

followed by a chromatically descending scale leading to the final rendition of the main Rondo theme. I hope you enjoy learning this very famous piece and remember: the quality of your attention to technical detail will determine the overall standard of your playing.

Am E Am N.C.

104

Am E Am C

108

G G7 Am E N.C.

112

Am E

116

Am N.C. Am E Am

120