

Beethoven

Pathétique Sonata 2nd Mvt



Bridget Mermikides arranges and transcribes for solo acoustic guitar, a phenomenal piano piece by the German genius Ludwig Van Beethoven.

ABILITY RATING

● ● ● ● ● Moderate/Advanced

INFO	WILL IMPROVE YOUR
KEY: A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Melody, bass and chords
TEMPO: 56 bpm	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Melodic interpretation
CD: Tracks 15-16	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Classical repertoire

IN THIS MONTH'S Classical guitar column, we return to the work of one of the most famous, celebrated and influential composers of all time: Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827). Although from our historical perspective it may seem that Beethoven is a mainstream figure in the Classical tradition, his impact was truly revolutionary. His groundbreaking ideas of structure, harmony, motif and texture in the pursuit of a greater expressive depth were highly controversial in his time, but ultimately formed the bridge between the Classical and Romantic eras in Western Art Music. He has left us an astonishing legacy of great works, much loved and admired by musicians, composers, critics and the general public for two centuries.

This month I have arranged the famous 2nd movement of Piano Sonata No.8 in C minor Opus 13 (also known as 'Sonata Pathétique'). The musical sophistication and expression in this work is staggering, particularly considering

that he was only in his twenties when it was composed. It was dedicated to his erstwhile friend, the musician and composer Karl Alois (also known as Prince Lichnowsky). Lichnowsky was a wealthy royal and long-time patron of Beethoven, but they ultimately fell out over a disagreement of money – Beethoven had refused to perform for some French aristocratic guests and, following the argument, destroyed a bust of the prince in anger!

This middle movement is given the title 'Adagio Cantabile' which indicates a slow tempo and 'singing' melody, and the serene and inspiring theme in the first eight bars is one of the most enduring and cherished moments in the classical piano repertoire.


Originally in Ab major, I've transposed it up a semitone to the guitar-friendly key of A major, which allows a more resonant sustain of the harmonies while playing the 'singing' upper melody.

Although this isn't a fast piece, to perform the beautiful melody with legato phrasing (a smooth connection between notes), while balancing it against the bass and chords will take plenty of work, so spend time with the tab captions, and break up the individual sections in your practice sessions rather than tackling them all at once.

This arrangement demonstrates how effectively the classical guitar can be at sustaining a melody, bass line and

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accompaniment simultaneously, making it a self-sufficient and wonderful style of playing to try to master. However, to make these musical elements project clearly it is important to pay close attention to detail and technique.

The main musical aim is to make the melody (upper notes with the sticks pointing upwards) stand out from the accompaniment (semi-quavers or 16th notes). It is crucial that the melody notes sustain for their full note values and are, when physically possible, never clipped short. This means finding fretting hand fingering that allows for the melody notes to be held down and sustained while the accompaniment notes are played slightly more softly underneath. In general, the character of this piece is that it should be played as smoothly and legato as possible in all the parts. 

TECHNIQUE FOCUS

TONE PRODUCTION

Tone production is all-important on the classical guitar and in order to project any volume we must work on the quality of sound we make. The strings are plucked with the use of the fingernails. These should have length just beyond the end of the fingertip and should be shaped to a slight curve filed and polished along the edge. The strings are plucked either rest stroke; where the finger rests on the next string after plucking, or free stroke where the finger plucks free of its adjacent string. The picking hand should never 'bounce' away from the strings when plucking, but should remain still and steady. The plucking movement comes from the finger and knuckle joints.



Ludwig Van Beethoven



TRACK RECORD For a beautiful interpretation of this piece, I recommend Finhin Collins' version on his album *Impromptu* (2005 RTE), while legendary pianist Alfred Brendel provides a moving performance on his epic 12-CD collection *Beethoven: Complete Piano Sonatas & Concertos* (2010 Decca), which includes other great solo piano works and all of Beethoven's piano concertos.

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 16

[Bars 1-6] The main melody appears at the start. On beat 1 of bars 2 and 6 the melody note E has been indicated as an open string. To do this the first finger of the fretting hand needs to collapse its tip joint to barre across the middle two strings while keeping the first string open so the notes ring and sustain.

[Bars 17-27] This F# minor section is fairly clear to approach, though there is some tricky embellishment in bars 21 and 22. Take it slow at first and follow the fingering. There is a slight rit (ritardando or 'slow down') at bar 28 to take us back to the main melody again.

Adagio cantabile

♩ = 56

A E7/D A/C# E/G# E7/G# A E/G# F#m B7/A E

E9/D E7 A/C# F#7 Bm E7 1 E7/A A

2 E7/A A F#m/C# C#/E# F#m C#/E# F#m

B7sus4 B7 B#dim C#m F#m/A E/B B7

E B7 A/C# Am/C E B7sus4 B7 B7b9

E B G D A E

1,9

5,13

16

20

23

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 16

[Bars 37-47] This new section in A minor kicks immediately into triplets. These triplets give movement and a more dramatic feel to the music, especially when we go from F major to F# diminished harmony at bar 47 to 48. As we come out

of this section the triplets remain and continue into the last renditions of the main theme at bar 48, giving a lovely flowing quality. From here the fingering is the same but with added triplets which feature right to the last few phrases.



27

31

35

38

41

It shouldn't prove more difficult than what you've played earlier but do watch your fingerpicking hand: slow playing while watching your fingers should sort out any technical hiccups.

The image shows a musical score for the song "The Sound of Silence" by Simon & Garfunkel. It includes a guitar part (top staff) and a bass part (bottom staff). The guitar part is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The bass part is written in bass clef. The score is divided into three measures, each with a chord diagram above the guitar staff. The chords are A/C#, F#7, Bm, E7, E7/A, and A. The guitar part features a melodic line with triplets and a bass line with a steady eighth-note pattern. The bass part provides a harmonic foundation with a similar eighth-note pattern. The overall tempo is marked as "Moderato".

Chord Diagrams:

- A/C#:** Fret 2, A string (open), C# string (2nd fret), E string (2nd fret), G string (2nd fret).
- F#7:** Fret 2, A string (open), C# string (2nd fret), E string (2nd fret), G string (2nd fret).
- Bm:** Fret 2, A string (open), C# string (2nd fret), E string (2nd fret), G string (2nd fret).
- E7:** Fret 2, A string (open), C# string (2nd fret), E string (2nd fret), G string (2nd fret).
- E7/A:** Fret 2, A string (open), C# string (2nd fret), E string (2nd fret), G string (2nd fret).
- A:** Fret 2, A string (open), C# string (2nd fret), E string (2nd fret), G string (2nd fret).

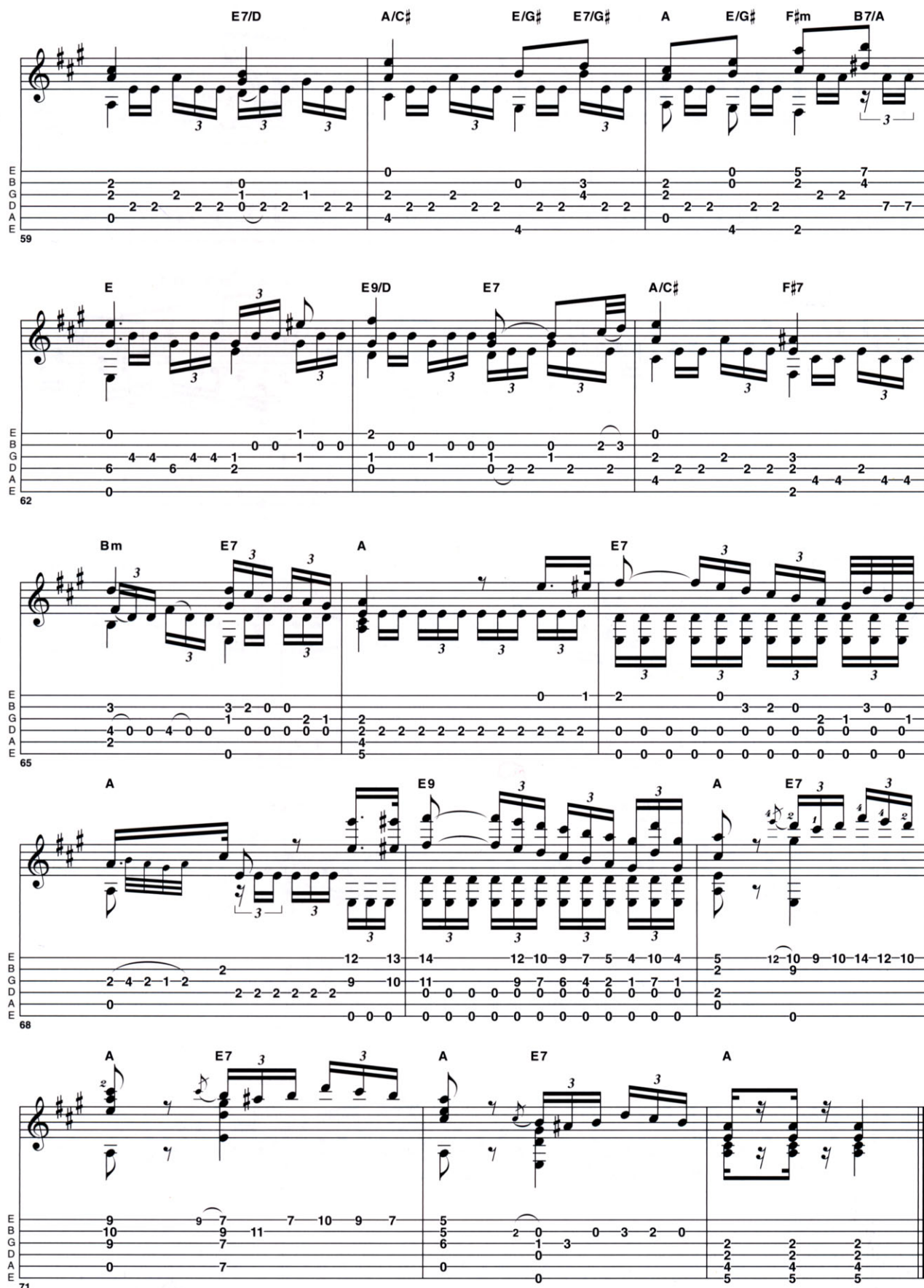
Tempo: Moderato

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 16

[Bars 66 to end] Being a Beethoven piece, we end with much bravado here, with strong V-I (E7-A) passages, first in two bar segments and then reduced to

one bar. There's a lot going on so watch how you pick the many three string chord phrases. Try 'pia' for bigger string spacings and 'pim' for shorter spacings.



The sheet music is divided into five systems, each with a treble clef staff and a four-string guitar staff (E, B, G, D). The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The music features various chord progressions and techniques, including triplets and slurs.

System 1 (Bars 59-61): Chords: E7/D, A/C#, E/G#, E7/G#, A, E/G#, F#m, B7/A. Techniques: Triplets of eighth notes.

System 2 (Bars 62-64): Chords: E, E9/D, E7, A/C#, F#7. Techniques: Triplets of eighth notes, slurs.

System 3 (Bars 65-67): Chords: Bm, E7, A, E7. Techniques: Triplets of eighth notes, slurs.

System 4 (Bars 68-70): Chords: A, E9, A, E7. Techniques: Triplets of eighth notes, slurs, arpeggios.

System 5 (Bars 71-73): Chords: A, E7, A, E7, A. Techniques: Triplets of eighth notes, slurs.