

**Ludwig Van Beethoven(1770-1827)**  
**Cello Sonata no.3 in A Major, Op.69(1808)**

- I. **Allegro ma non tanto**
- II. **Scherzo Allegro molto**
- III. **Adagio cantabile - Allegro vivace**

Beethoven wrote a total of 5 cello sonatas. The first two sonatas, opus 5, were written in his early period and the last two, opus 102 are written in his final years. The Sonata no.3 in A Major opus 69 was written during the middle period of Beethoven's life, more commonly known as the "heroic period", where most of his works from this period expresses heroes and their struggles. While Beethoven was writing this particular sonata, he was already gradually going deaf.

Sonata Op.69 was composed during 1807-1808 and was dedicated to Baron Ignaz Von Gleichenstein(1778-1828), who was an important friend of Beethoven for many years. This sonata was dedicated to him for a few reasons. The first obvious reason is that Baron was a cellist himself and also a skilled businessman who helped Beethoven settle his pension from rich patrons in this particular year. However when Beethoven wrote the score for him he attached a note saying "Inter lacrymas et luctus" which translates to "Amid tears and sorrows". Ironically, most of the sonata itself sounds very different from what the description indicates. This description might be indicating an emotional state of Beethoven's feelings to his friend who is with him through "thick and thin" as it does not seem like an appropriate description of such a solemn and heroic work.

Beethoven created a remarkably egalitarian relationship between cello and piano – the Sonata no. 3 is a showpiece for both instruments, not one accompanying the other. Lewis Lockwood calls it "the foundation for the nineteenth-century cello sonata repertoire as it later inspired works by Mendelssohn, Brahms, and others."

The A Major Sonata consists of the traditional 3 movement form but is very unique in that it does not have a slow movement; the Adagio introduction to the finale is the only slow tempo in the entire piece.

The first movement, marked “Allegro ma non tanto”, is in sonata form. Rather than beginning with a bold gesture from the piano or the duo, Beethoven opens the piece with a triumphant solo cello theme on a piano color before the piano joins in and engages in an exchange of motifs and cadenzas. The effect of doing this is that it brings the piece to life by sounding very improvised with varying embellishments of the thematic materials between the cello and piano.

The second movement is a very manic and rhythmic scherzo movement in A minor. The movement is  $\frac{3}{4}$  meter but counted in one, with the emphasis mainly on the 3rd beat in the main theme. Beethoven concealed the usually strong downbeat by placing the emphasis on the 3rd beat, this makes the introduction very unsettled and uptight as it feels as if both the cello and piano are always playing the split seconds to fill up the gaps, which makes it sound very intense. The second main theme is where the cello plays double stops over two-note pedal points in the piano followed by a change in emphasis of the strong beat to the 2nd beat. The movement then repeats itself for 3 times before concluding.

The heart of the sonata lies in the 3rd movement, “Adagio cantabile - Allegro vivace” Beginning with an expressive Adagio, the cello sings a lyrical melody accompanied by the piano. This sets the stage for Allegro vivace which comes later where the music escalates and showcases Beethoven’s innovative harmonic language and rhythmic drive. The cello and piano engage in a whirlwind of exuberance and virtuosic display, trading brilliant passages and thematic fragments and builds up to a thrilling climax.

Beethoven’s Cello Sonata no.3 in A Major, Op.69 stands as a testament to the composer’s genius, exploring the full range of human emotions through its expressive melodies, innovative harmonies, and dynamic contrasts. It remains a cherished gem in the chamber music repertoire, captivating audiences with its timeless beauty and emotional depth.