

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Entering the nineteenth century musical landscape in Europe, Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) was highly considered as the most important figure to represent the change from “classicism” to “romanticism.” As soon as he arrived in Vienna in 1795, Beethoven rapidly established himself as a virtuoso pianist admired by Viennese society, and break-through composer of the highest caliber without having specific patrons as the sponsor. Although his hearing gradually deteriorated overtimes (beginning in 1797), which resulted in him being a performer was gradually diminished, nevertheless, his imaginative powers as a composer grew greater and greater.

The piano works were the focus in Beethoven’s creative life, and they represented Beethoven’s creativity at all stage of his professional life. Unlike Haydn and Mozart, Beethoven did not lose interest in piano music; in fact, he devoted himself largely to writing the genres that would display his capabilities as a performing pianist, including piano sonatas, piano concerti, variations sets, and piano trio, as described by John Gillespie (late American musicologist),

“Beethoven’s keyboard works clearly display the outstanding characteristics of his gift for innovation. By following these works, we can penetrate to the beginnings of his genius and watch it unfold on the artistic as well as the human plane, for with Beethoven the work and the man are one. A high

point in music history occurs in his piano music: his contribution to the sonata.”¹

The 32 piano sonatas have always been staple repertoire in piano literature since each of them has its own character, uniqueness, and special features. These works represented the genre to its highest model since Beethoven transcended the architectural limits of musical logic and form that had not been written in the similar level by previous composers. From work to work within the sonatas, the music is filled with frequent and abrupt turns of character; many extreme changes occur from one movement to movement, and the differences between numbers are extreme, not only just between Opus number but also within opus number. Stewart Gordon (American musicologist) described Beethoven’s sonatas as follows,

“The sonatas represent perhaps more clearly than any other body of works the innovative processes that are at the core of Beethoven’s creativity. From the beginning works, Beethoven shows us many of directions he will explore, and one can follow his thinking about structure, key relationship, emotional content, and sonority through the sonatas.”²

The purpose of this research is to investigate further the sonatas, Op. 27 (composed in 1801), in which Beethoven provided the title as “*sonata quasi una fantasia*.” By labelling sonatas as such, Beethoven clearly differentiated these works from the formal structure of sonata genre, and the “rigidness” of classical form were no longer applied. F.E. Kirby (American musicologist) considered the

¹ John Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music: An Historical Survey of Music for Harpsichord and Piano* (New York: Dover Publications, 1972, 1965), 178.

² Stewart Gordon, *A History of Keyboard Literature* (Belmont: Thomas Learning, 1996), 144.

Op. 27 as the most innovative among sonatas of the early period (numbers written up to 1802),

“The fantasia character was by no means entirely new to the piano sonata, as is clear from Haydn’s, Mozart’s, and even some of Beethoven’s earlier essays in the genre. In the Sonatas of Op. 27, the fantasia aspect affects the disposition of each work as a whole.”³

While the application of “fantasia” in a sonata genre was not seen previously in the music history up to this work, however, there is one question regarding the work, which Beethoven did not express adherence to the fantasia quality as in the Renaissance/Baroque style; therefore, the term “fantasia” becomes interesting to re-evaluate whether it explains the common writing of fantasia in both sonatas, Op. 27, or it implies the new concept of “fantasia” within sonata genre entering nineteenth century, which became immediate impact to the romantic style and its composers.

In chapter five, the author comes to the conclusion that the concept of “fantasia” in Beethoven’s music (Op. 27 in this research) concerns with strong structural unity with creatively endless varieties, meaning that through the effective and economic materials, Beethoven successfully wrote music in the most logical and cohesive way that influence the entire landscape of nineteenth and early twentieth century. Note that the concept is not entirely new since previous composer (notably Haydn, Beethoven’s own teacher) already wrote in the similar manner;

³ F E. Kirby, *Music for Piano: A Short History* (Portland, Or.: Amadeus Press, 1995), 121.

however, Beethoven expanded these elements to such unprecedented degree obviously not seen previously and would be making such impact to next generations.

Qualitative study is used for this research, along with analytical study on important elements to write the conclusion, including the melodic/textural writing, the harmonic construction, and the structure of the music.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How does Beethoven redefine the term “fantasia” that is applied to Beethoven’s *Piano Sonatas*, Op. 27?
2. Are these works considered as a one-time experiment, since there are only two works by Beethoven written as “quasi una fantasia?” or the fantasia concept essentially permeates to the rest of Beethoven’s works?
3. How the fantasia concept in these works become crucial model for piano music of the nineteenth century (including his own later works) and early twentieth century?

1.3 Purposes of Research

1. To provide descriptive analysis of the musical elements and insights of how Beethoven redefined the term “fantasia” in both sonatas of Op. 27.
2. To provide scholarly insights that Op. 27 is not a one-time experiment as the rest of Beethoven’s piano sonatas (ultimately other genres as well) must have these fantasia elements.
3. The fantasia concept becomes an important innovation for his own later works and composers in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

1.4 Scopes of Research

1. The research topic is limited to Beethoven and his early piano sonatas (1795-1802).
2. The main analysis of Beethoven's *Piano Sonatas*, Op. 27 (Ludwig van Beethoven, *Klaviersonaten Band I*, ed. Bertha Antonia Wallner (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 1976), 234-62.) are based on melodic/textural writing, harmonic construction, structure of the music, and other unique features that describes the term fantasia.

1.5 Research Writing Structure

Chapter I, "Introduction" includes background of the scientific work; research questions; purposes of the research; scopes of research; and research writing structure.

Chapter II, "Theoretical Framework" includes theoretical explanations regarding the origin and development of fantasia until 1802, the origin and development of sonata until 1802, brief biography of Beethoven, overview of Beethoven's piano sonatas until 1802, and the explanation of musical elements.

Chapter III, "Methodology" includes methods and analysis procedures of this research, such as reconfirming background of research topic choice, research methodology, sources with similar topic, review for sources of research, data analysis, hypothetical conclusion, and research timetable.

Chapter IV, "Discussion" includes descriptive analysis on important elements to write the conclusion, including the melodic/textural writing, harmonic

construction, structure of the music, and the new fantasia concept written in the piano sonatas Op. 27.

Chapter V, “Conclusion” includes the result of this research as an evidence of how Beethoven’s *Piano Sonatas*, Op. 27 become a very important innovation as composers in the nineteenth century modelled on Beethoven’s works.

