

# Diabelli Variations, Op. 120

## Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

**Wednesday Lunchtime Concerts** *providing lunchtime music in the heart of the city since 1974*

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## Welcome

It is wonderful that you have come. Thank you.

We want your experience today to be the best that it can be and would appreciate you taking a moment to read the following before the concert commences.

**Keep safe** by locating the exit nearest to your seat.

In the event of an earthquake, our recommendation is to **Drop, Cover and Hold**.

**Bon appetit!** You are welcome to have your lunch during the performance. Switching your cell phone to **silent** is important to the performers and other members of the audience.

Your support by way of a **donation** and telling others about the concerts would be fantastic and very much appreciated. It does make a difference.

If you wish to photograph or video today's concert, please ask for permission from the performer(s) before the concert begins. This is important.

We invite you now to sit back, relax and **enjoy** the concert.

**Our Mission** is to create a lively, open Christian faith community, to act for a just and peaceful world, and to be catalysts for discovery, compassion and celebration in the capital.

These lunchtime concerts are **advertised** through Radio New Zealand Concert's Live Diary at around 8.10 am on the day of the concert, and listed on St Andrew's website.

To be placed on the email **circulation list** for concert information, please email Marjan on [marjan@marjan.co.nz](mailto:marjan@marjan.co.nz). Also join our facebook group Friends of St Andrew's on The Terrace Lunchtime Concerts, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/315497448862287/>.

Check out the noticeboards in the foyer each time you come.

# Programme

## Diabelli Variations, Op. 120

### Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

In 1819 renowned music publisher Anton Diabelli invited many established composers (Schubert, Czerny, Hummel and 11-year-old Franz Liszt were among them) to write one variation each on a waltz of his authorship, with the goal of publishing them in a compendium. Beethoven's response was to write a set of 33 variations! However it took him several years to complete his endeavour. Thus, while the album with the contributions of the other composers was published at the end of the same year, Beethoven didn't finish his work until 1824.

There are several theories concerning the choice of the number 33 for the amount of variations. According to one account, when Beethoven heard that there were going to be 32 contributions, he replied that he was going to write 33 more variations all by himself... It has also been suggested that he wanted to supersede his 32 Variations in C Minor, or perhaps Johann Sebastian Bach's Goldberg Variations (two appearances of the theme and 30 variations).

The Diabelli Variations propose a singular approach to the variation form. Throughout the 18th century, composers' common practice was to ornate the original melody while keeping it reasonably recognisable. Beethoven, instead, takes part of the theme (the first three notes of the right hand, or the jumps in the bass notes, for example), and elaborates each variation independently, keeping the original harmonic outline only. It is very suggestive that in the German title he uses the word "Veränderungen" rather than "Variationen" to describe the nature of the pieces; the word "Veränderungen" can be translated both as variations or as "transformations".

Perhaps one way to understand the form of the whole work is separating the set in two parts. The first part starts with Diabelli's almost athematic waltz (according to one biographer Beethoven may have described it as a "cobbler's patch"), surprisingly followed by a solemn march, four more variations that keep a waltz-like style, the first contrapuntal variation (Var. 6), two more waltz-like variations, the first variation in minor mode (var IX), another set in 3/4 time signature, the first slow and meditative piece (Var. 14), and finally three exhilarating fast etudes.

The second part features more lyrical pieces, contrapuntal experiments and virtuosic explosions. As an aftermath of the turmoiling var. 17, the following pieces feature a charming game of questions and answers contrasting low and high ranges of the keyboard, a canon, a somber chorale in the low range of the piano, and a march alternating with a waltz. In variation 22, Beethoven pays homage to Mozart by quoting an aria from his opera Don Giovanni. Variations 23 to 28 reach the peak of virtuosic display, with the intermission of a contrapuntal Fughetta. Variations 29 to 31 feature the meditative and transcendental Beethoven, before leading to the final Fugue. To conclude, a Minuet enlarges the harmonic scheme of the theme, inserting an episode that deviates from the straightforward original form.

The Diabelli Variations is unique in Beethoven's output in that it is monumental as a whole, yet it is a sequence of very condensed ideas. There is humour, philosophical pondering, vigorous rhythm and intellectual speculation. With the right set of mind, the listener will be overwhelmingly transfixed by a gaze inside these microscopic samples of the different aspects of Beethoven's world.

## Biography:

**Ya-Ting Liou**, Taiwanese-born pianist, has presented concerts as soloist and chamber musician in New Zealand and abroad, with music critics citing her "secure and impressive technique" and her "ability for expressive and moving playing". Her performance highlights include appearances at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and venues in Italy, Canada, Argentina, and Taiwan.

She has participated in the Music Academy of the West, Kneisel Chamber Music Festival, and has been invited to perform at the Liszt-Garrison Festival (USA), the Music Penn Alps (USA), and the Hsin-Ying Arts Festival (Taiwan).

Ya-Ting received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the Peabody Institute of Music and D.M.A. degree in piano performance from the University of Missouri - Kansas City in the United States. Her teachers include Marian Hahn, Ellen Mack, and Robert Weirich. She has participated in piano master classes with Jerome Lowenthal, Leon Fleisher, Leslie Howard, Peter Serkin, Stephen Hough, and Peter Frankl.

*Programme content provided by artist*

# Contact us



e | [wednesday@standrews.org.nz](mailto:wednesday@standrews.org.nz)    p | 04-472-9211    w | [www.standrews.org.nz](http://www.standrews.org.nz)

## Coming Up

**15<sup>th</sup> October (tomorrow) - Vibrant Violas** : NZSM viola students

**21<sup>st</sup> October - Virtuoso Strings**

**NZSM string students and brilliant young players from Porirua's Virtuoso Strings**

**28<sup>th</sup> October - Schubert: Sonata in A Major, D. 959**

- Ingrid Schoenfield, piano

**1<sup>st</sup> November - Music for guitar and piano –**

Michael Stoop, guitar, Sunny Cheng, piano

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