A PERSPECTIVE OF

BEETHOVEN

PIANOFORTE

LEONID HAMBRO plays THE 32 VARIATIONS IN C MINOR and LATE BAGATELLES
Beethoven's early popularity was largely the result of his imaginative and expressive improvisations as a pianist. His performances were impetuous, liberally pedalled, and conducted with a complete disregard for the audience reaction. As a result, of course, he proved to be a captivating performer. In a word, the young Beethoven was a "trouper" in spite of himself. Yet these improvisations for which he was famous at 22 underlay the remarkable inventiveness which he later displayed in composing variations. At least 29 sets of variations were turned out by Beethoven, of which the C minor here recorded was representative of a fairly early period (published when he was 37; no opus number).

"It is said that in later years upon hearing the 32 Variations, the composer remarked in all seriousness, "Whose are those?" When told that they were his, he mumbled, "What an ass I was in those days!"

Beethoven was well known and not universally admired for his unbridled practical humor. Having described himself as "a disorderly creature," he proceeded to prove the statement at frequent intervals, spilling ink into the piano, cutting himself horribly while shaving, and absentmindedly forgetting that he was the owner of a horse until the bill came in for the feed. In addition to writing letters containing bad puns, he was fond of horse-play, freely throwing books, plates and housewares at the servants. To a lady who asked him for a lock of his hair he sent a wisp of goat's beard.

This humor was perhaps the only personal trait he carried over into his music, especially evident in the 4th Bagatelle. The Bagatelles represent very late Beethoven, composed in the same year that produced the monumental Missa Solemnis, the Ninth Symphony and his last Quartets (1823). He had already written his last two immortal piano sonatas.

Beethoven found composing a slow and painful process; every bar literally was written dozens of times, and a result the volume of his lifetime work bespeaks an application of almost inconceivable intensity. Even on his death bed he was excitedly making plans for finishing his 10th Symphony. There, with the great stream of his life's work at an end he said, "I feel as if I had written scarcely more than a few notes."

**THE 32 VARIATIONS IN C MINOR**
**SIX BAGATELLES Opus 126**
1. Andante con moto
2. Allegro
3. Andante
4. Presto
5. Quasi Allegretto
6. Presto

For waiters, Beethoven reserved a special affection, pouring a tour of stew over one who had served him badly, punishing another for the staleness of the eggs by throwing the whole batch at her one by one.

The recording situation used for this record was identical with 1038; PIANO — THE ROMANTIC FABRIC. Both used the same piano, concert hall, microphone placement and equipment.