Intro:
Henri Vieuxtemps (1820-1881) was a Belgian violinist, violist and composer. The viola sonata op.36 was written in 1860, and it was his second work for the viola. Likely written for his own use, it was premiered by Vieuxtemps himself with pianist Arabella Goddard at St James's Hall in London, on 21 January 1861. The sonata comprises three contrasting movements: Maestoso - Allegro, Barcarolle, and Finale: Scherzando.

1st movement - Maestoso – Allegro
The sonata opens with Maestoso in B-flat major, a recitative-like passage that is lyrical, soulful and reflective, like recalling a distant memory. This gives way to Allegro, where the viola takes over with light, bouncing spiccato passages which contrasts sharply with the opening. The movement is a showpiece built on showcasing the soloist's virtuoso a playful dialogue between viola and piano.

2nd movement - Barcarolla
*Barcarolla/Bacarolle* refers to a traditional folk song sung by Venetian gondoliers. In Operas, this stylistic genre is more commonly for Barcarolla's to be sung by 2 Mezzo-sopranos. Their vocal range fits that of the viola. Written in a compound 6/8 time, and in a more relaxed tempo, the lilting melody imitates a rocking pattern of the gondola going with the sea current. In the boat, the violist sings the melancholic song of the gondoliers. .

3rd movement - Finale Scherzando
Playful and witty, the finale begins with the piano presenting the main motif, which the viola then takes up in a flurry of descending, ornamented sequences. The motif returns in varied guises, so the audience feels a sense of familiarity but is always met with an unexpected twist, which suits the cheeky character of a scherzando.