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Wilhelm Kempff

The Beethoven Piano Sonatas, Volume 1

Pristine
XR

"One side with a playing-time of less than eighteen minutes and the other with less than thirteen may seem pretty short measure for a twelve-inch disc costing more than two pounds, but Kempff's performances of these two little-played sonatas have a vivid, fresh-minted quality about them that might well resign one to short measure. Certainly he gives no short measure of musicianship. Each phrase is played with an intense concentration that makes it sound as if Kempff had just composed the sonata and were now running it through for the first time. It's true that there are one or two tiny smudges in the passage-work, but on the whole Kempff's phrasing is so crisp, his use of the sustaining pedal so discreet, that it makes Backhaus's performances, adequate as they were, sound positively sluggish in comparison. But if the fast movements, notably the two finales, are played with the utmost vivacity one has only to turn to the adagio molto of the C minor sonata, the only slow movement in these two works, to find a quiet, unhurried lyricism that betokens Kempff's complete absorption in the music. I am well aware that some of the previous records in Kempff's set of the Beethoven sonatas have been unsatisfactory-usually because his highly mannered approach has broken the continuity of the music - but to my mind his performances of these two early sonatas, both written about 1797, are among the best things he has done, and none the worse for being unpretentious.

The piano tone is good (so it should be with such an expenditure of record-space), but there is some pre-echo on the side containing the C minor sonata."

J.N., The Gramophone, August 1957

The majority of the recordings in Kempff's 1950s complete Beethoven sonatas series were made in 1951 in sessions which must by today's standards have seemed quite intensive: of the seven sonatas in this first volume, four were recorded on the same day, 19th December 1951. The recordings took place in the Beethovensaal in Hannover and were destined for release both on 12-inch long playing vinyl and 78rpm shellac. Although the recorded piano was more than adequate for its era it remained somewhat flat and hard to modern ears, something that these XR remasters have essentially cured, bringing to these fabulous performances an enhanced, natural tone that really sings, allowing the years to fall away and the original performances to be re-approached as if new.

Andrew Rose



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BEETHOVEN PIANO SONATAS VOLUME 1: NOS. 1-7
WILHELM KEMPF

wilhelm kempff

beethoven sonatas, volume 1

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BEETHOVEN PIANO SONATAS VOLUME 1: NOS. 1-7
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disc one

BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 1 in F minor, Op. 2, No. 1

1. 1st mvt. - Allegro (4:36)
2. 2nd mvt. - Adagio (4:44)
3. 3rd mvt. - Minuet. Allegretto - Trio (3:04)
4. 4th mvt. - Prestissimo (5:34)

Recorded 13 October & 22 December 1951

BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 2 in A major, Op. 2, No. 2

5. 1st mvt. - Allegro vivace (5:34)
6. 2nd mvt. - Largo appassionato (7:04)
7. 3rd mvt. - Scherzo. Allegretto - Trio (3:19)
8. 4th mvt. - Rondo. Grazioso (6:44)

Recorded 19 December 1951

BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 4 in E flat major, Op. 7

9. 1st mvt. - Allegro molto e con brio (8:45)
10. 2nd mvt. - Largo con gran espressione (7:51)
11. 3rd mvt. - Allegro - Trio (5:21)
12. 4th mvt. - Rondo. Poco Allegretto e grazioso (7:24)

Recorded 19 December 1951

Wilhelm Kempff, piano

XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Wilhelm Kempff
Recorded at Beethovensaal, Hannover

Total duration: **2hr 25:11**
CD1: 70:00 CD2: 75:11

disc two

BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 3 in C major, Op. 2, No. 3

1. 1st mvt. - Allegro con brio (7:44)
2. 2nd mvt. - Adagio (7:13)
3. 3rd mvt. - Scherzo. Allegro - Trio (2:48)
4. 4th mvt. - Allegro assai (5:27)

Recorded 13 October 1951

BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 5 in C minor, Op. 10, No. 1

5. 1st mvt. - Allegro molto e con brio (6:11)
6. 2nd mvt. - Adagio molto (7:48)
7. 3rd mvt. - Prestissimo (4:09)

Recorded 19 December 1951

BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 6 in F major, Op. 10, No. 2

8. 1st mvt. - Allegro (5:41)
9. 2nd mvt. - Allegretto (3:31)
10. 3rd mvt. - Presto (3:56)

Recorded 19 December 1951

BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 7 in D major, Op. 10, No. 3

11. 1st mvt. - Presto (5:03)
12. 2nd mvt. - Largo e mesto (8:47)
13. 3rd mvt. - Minuet. Allegro (2:52)
14. 4th mvt. - Rondo. Allegro (4:00)

Recorded 20 December 1951

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