



Wilhelm Kempff

The Beethoven Piano Sonatas, Volume 2



"Had Beethoven composed nothing other than the 32 piano sonatas, his genius would have been acknowledged. These works are at the summit of the piano repertoire, and many of them are still represented in the core repertoire on the concert stage today.

Beethoven intended them as studies, and there is a reference to a concert performance of just one of them during Beethoven's lifetime. Yet the finest pianists still are challenged to perform and/or record all of them as a cycle.

The Beethoven sonatas have become almost synonymous with the name of Artur Schnabel (1882-1951), a principal exponent of the German school of pianism (although he, like Gulda, was Austrian by birth). The performance style of pianists of this school (Backhaus, Serkin, and others) is said to be characterized by strict discipline, careful technique, and an intellectual approach to the music.

I would have agreed with this broad assessment of the pianism of the German Wilhelm Kempff (1895-1991), in particular. His recordings reflect immaculate technique, exquisite taste, and a certain emotional detachment. He is recognized as a master in particular of the piano works of Beethoven and Schubert.

He recorded the cycle of the Beethoven sonatas in 1951 at the Beethovensaal in Hanover. That recording, to my ears, sounded recessed, lacking in warmth, and affirmed the assessments I had read of Kempff's pianism.

A remastering of those recordings, recently released on the French label Pristine Audio, however, proves how a substandard recording can lead to a misleading assessment. Andrew Rose, the label's founder, has remastered Kempff's recorded performances using his XR technology, which adds resonance, warmth, and stereophonic sound without a hint of artificiality.

The first release of the cycle (Pristine Audio PAKM 082) includes Sonatas 1-7, and what a wonder it is. Kempff's deft, but tasteful use of the pedal is fully in evidence, as is a warm, singing tone to the piano. Technically, of course, they are beyond reproach, but the performances are fully engaging emotionally as well ... Judging by Volume One, this cycle by Kempff goes right to the top of the heap."

Tim Snider, WTJU 91.1FM , August 2020



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beethoven sonatas, volume 2

disc one

BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 8 in C minor, Op. 13, '*Pathétique*'

1. 1st mvt. - Grave - Allegro di molto e con brio (7:45)
2. 2nd mvt. - Adagio cantabile (4:04)
3. 3rd mvt. - Rondo. Allegro (4:45)

Recorded [1] 4 May 1956; [2] 17 January 1956; [3] 23 January 1953

BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 9 in E major, Op. 14, No. 1

4. 1st mvt. - Allegro (6:43)
5. 2nd mvt. - Allegretto (3:35)
6. 3rd mvt. - Rondo. Allegro comodo (3:49)

Recorded 20 December 1951

BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 10 in G major, Op. 14, No. 2

7. 1st mvt. - Allegro (7:31)
8. 2nd mvt. - Andante (5:27)
9. 3rd mvt. - Scherzo. Allegro assai (3:31)

Recorded 20 December 1951

BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 11 in B flat major, Op. 22

10. 1st mvt. - Allegro con brio (7:33)
11. 2nd mvt. - Adagio con molto espressione (7:38)
12. 3rd mvt. - Minuet - Trio (3:08)
13. 4th mvt. - Rondo. Allegretto (6:31)

Recorded 4 & 5 May 1956

Wilhelm Kempff, piano

XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Wilhelm Kempff

Recorded at Beethovensaal, Hannover

Total duration: 2hr 24:30 CD1: 72:02 CD2: 72:28

disc two

BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 12 in A flat major, Op. 26 '*Funeral March*'

1. 1st mvt. - Andante con variazioni (8:04)
2. 2nd mvt. - Scherzo. Allegro molto - Trio (2:59)
3. 3rd mvt. - Marcia funebre sulla morte d'un eroe. Maestoso andante (5:31)
4. 4th mvt. - Allegro (3:22)

Recorded 20 December 1951

BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 13 in E flat major, Op. 27, No. 1, '*Quasi una fantasia*'

5. 1st mvt. - Andante (4:47)
6. 2nd mvt. - Allegro molto e vivace (2:20)
7. 3rd mvt. - Adagio con espressione (3:00)
8. 4th mvt. - Allegro vivace (6:01)

Recorded 20 December 1951

BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 14 in C sharp minor, Op. 27, No. 2, '*Moonlight*'

9. 1st mvt. - Adagio sostenuto (6:18)
10. 2nd mvt. - Allegretto - Trio (2:20)
11. 3rd mvt. - Presto agitato (6:04)

Recorded 4 & 5 May 1956

BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 15 in D major, Op. 28 '*Pastoral*'

12. 1st mvt. - Allegro (7:29)
13. 2nd mvt. - Andante (6:39)
14. 3rd mvt. - Scherzo. Allegro vivace (2:29)
15. 4th mvt. - Rondo. Allegro ma non troppo (5:06)

Recorded 20 December 1951

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