



Wilhelm Kempff

Beethoven Piano Concertos Volume 3



This third volume of Beethoven Piano Concertos, coming after our series of the complete Sonatas, completes our set of Beethoven recordings made by Wilhelm Kempff in the early 1950s for DGG. Ken Meltzer, reviewing the first of the Concertos volumes, gives as good a description as any as to what has been achieved in these remasters:

"[In the 1992 DG Dokumente reissue] the orchestra is accorded an overly resonant setting. Louder passages take on a somewhat compressed and harsh quality. The piano's upper register has a rather tinny quality as well. And, not at all surprising for a recording of this vintage, tape hiss is evident throughout. None of these flaws, for want of a better word, bar enjoyment of these magnificent recordings, but they pose challenges to the listener. There is certainly room (or at least, a wish) for improvement.

And, as in the case of the mono Kempff Beethoven sonata cycle, that is precisely what Andrew Rose and Pristine Audio have achieved, and in impressive fashion. The orchestral acoustic is still resonant, but it now has a warmth and glow throughout the dynamic range not present in the Dokumente reissue. Likewise, the sonority of the piano now takes on a uniform quality and beauty. And the tape hiss is significantly reduced, to the point that I doubt anyone listening on speakers (as opposed to headphones) will notice it. And all of this is achieved without any loss of detail ... I'll repeat what I wrote after hearing Volume 1 of Pristine Audio's release of the Kempff mono Beethoven sonata recordings: "If Pristine Audio can maintain this level throughout the remainder of the cycle, it will be a tremendous and important achievement, indeed." Recommended with the greatest enthusiasm."

(*Fanfare* magazine, July-August 2021)

With this final volume I had more than enough time left over on the disc to turn the clock back to the mid-1930s, and offer you the same orchestra and soloist performing the same work, though with a different conductor, one I'd never heard of before, and to be honest one I'd be glad not to hear of again...

The biographies of German conductor and composer Peter Raabe tend to be very slender documents. We learn that he wrote the first complete chronology of the works of Liszt. We learn that he "graduated from 3 schools: the Higher Musical School in Berlin; and the universities of Munich; and Jena. In 1894–98 Raabe worked in Königsberg and Zwickau. In 1899–1903 he worked in the Dutch Opera-House (Amsterdam). In 1907–1920, Raabe was the 1st Court Conductor in Weimar. Raabe performed in the United Kingdom, Belgium, and the Netherlands, among other locations." (*Wikipedia*)

And then we discover that in 1935 "he became head of the Reichsmusikkammer and the Deutscher Tonkünstlerverein; in these offices he was called upon to perform administrative tasks for the Nazi regime, including the racial restrictions of musicians." Put simply, he appears to have been an enthusiastic Nazi who carried through the requirements of the regime right until the end of the war. Happily for him, perhaps, he died a month before it all ended. Happily for us he's now but a footnote in the history of recorded music, thanks to the present recording, offered here for historical interest with regard to soloist and orchestra, but not the conductor.

Andrew Rose



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BEETHOVEN PIANO CONCERTOS VOL. 3 - NO. 5 (1953 & 1936)
KEMPF, BERLIN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA, KEMPF, RAABE

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beethoven piano concertos volume 3

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BEETHOVEN Piano Concerto No. 5 in E flat major, Op. 73, 'Emperor' - rec. 1953

1. 1st mvt. - Allegro (20:53)
2. 2nd mvt. - Adagio un poco moto (7:53)
3. 3rd mvt. - Rondo. Allegro (10:58)

BEETHOVEN Piano Concerto No. 5 in E flat major, Op. 73, 'Emperor' - rec. 1936*

4. 1st mvt. - Allegro (20:19)
5. 2nd mvt. - Adagio un poco moto (7:39)
6. 3rd mvt. - Rondo. Allegro (10:06)

Wilhelm Kempff, piano

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra
conducted by Paul van Kempen
*conducted by Peter Raabe

XR Remastered by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Wilhelm Kempff

Cadenzas by Wilhelm Kempff

Studio recordings: Jesus-Christus-Kirche, Berlin, May 1953 & *Polydor Studios, Berlin, June 1936

Total duration: 77:48

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