

BETHHOVEN

THE HAMMERKLAVIER SONATA

LOUIS KENTNER

BETHHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 29 'Hammerklavier'
in B flat, Op. 106

1 1st mvt. - Allegro (10:24)

2 2nd mvt. - Scherzo - Assai vivace (2:57)

3 3rd mvt. - Adagio sostenuto (16:28)

4 4th mvt. - Introduzione - Fuga: Allegro risoluto (12:56)

Recorded in 1939

Issued as five UK Columbia 78: DX.912.916

Matrix numbers CAX.8492 - 8501

Takes 2, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1

5 USZT: Liebesträume No. 3 (4:48)

6 USZT: Gnomengrün (3:18)

Recorded on 3rd September, 1941,

at Abbey Road Studio 3, London

Issued as UK Columbia 78: DX.1038

Matrix numbers CAX.8928 1 - CAX.8927 1

Louis Kentner, piano

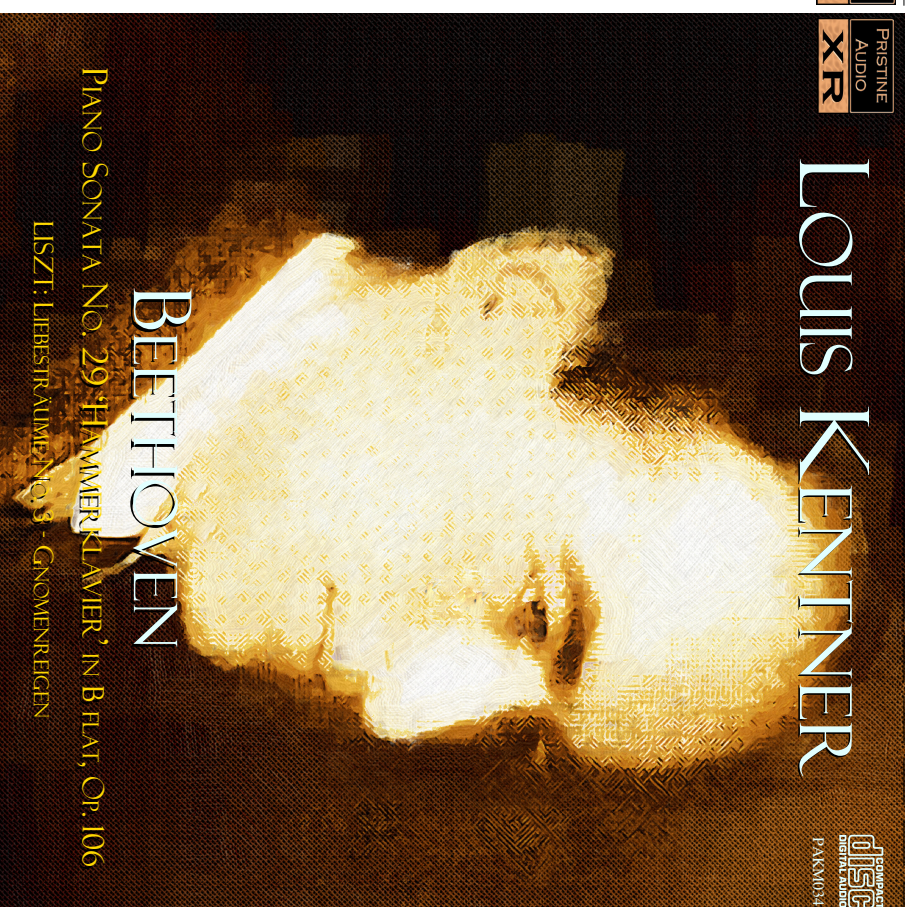
All transfers from original UK Columbia 78rpm discs from the Pristine Audio collection.

All transfers and XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, October 2009

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Louis Kentner

Total duration: 50:51 ©2009 Pristine Audio.

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Louis Kentner (19 July 1905 – 23 September 1987) was a Hungarian, later British, pianist who excelled in the works of Chopin and Liszt, as well as the Hungarian repertoire.

He was born Lajos Kentner in Karwin in Austrian Silesia (present-day Karviná, Czech Republic), to Hungarian parents. He received his education as a musician at the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest from 1911 to 1922, studying with Arnold Székely (piano), Hans Koessler and Zoltán Kodály (composition), and Leo Weiner (chamber music).

Kentner commenced his concert career at the age of 15. He was awarded 5th Prize at the 1932 International Frederick Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw; and he won a Liszt prize in Budapest. He moved to England permanently in 1935. He gave radio broadcasts of the complete sonatas of Beethoven and Schubert, the complete *Well-Tempered Clavier* (Bach), and the complete *Années de Pélerinage* (Liszt). He was President of the British Liszt Society for many years, until his death.

At the composer's request, he was the soloist at the Hungarian premiere of Bartók's *Piano Concerto No. 2*, in Budapest in 1933, under Otto Klemperer; and the first European performance of the *Concerto No. 3* (in London, under Sir Adrian Boult, 27 November 1946). He and Yehudi Menuhin (his wife's brother-in-law) gave the first performance of William Walton's *Violin Sonata*, at Zürich on 30 September 1949.

His playing was heard in Richard Addinsell's *Warsaw Concerto* from the soundtrack of the 1941 film *Dangerous Moonlight*. However, his hands were not shown, and he preferred to be uncredited as he did not think that being associated with film music would help his career. When the piece achieved worldwide popularity, however, he was happy to acknowledge his involvement.

He was a member of many music competition juries. He also composed, his output including orchestral works, chamber music, piano pieces and songs.

Technical notes

The sound quality of the remastered Beethoven *Hammerklavier* recording here came as something of a surprise to me. My initial response to the discs, upon replay, was that they were not only in excellent physical condition, but also that the recording appeared to be quite good for its era, if a little on the thin side. There was also a problem throughout most of the sides with swish, something which appears to afflict 78rpm discs at the recording stage, rather than being a product of a particular pressing; otherwise they were fine.

I set about the XR remastering using a later Wilhelm Kempff recording as a sonic reference and, upon completion of restoration, had a nice-sounding 'finished' product, though one which sounded a little muted and was perhaps still somewhat unconvincing in the bass. At this point in the restoration process I had just received copies of the Ashkenazy Beethoven Sonata recordings and, noting that for his recording of this piece, Ashkenazy's piano was perfectly in tune (and therefore ready for me to use), decided out of curiosity to quickly re-equalise the Kentner to the tonal "map" of Ashkenazy's piano.

The result was nothing short of astonishing. Suddenly the recording came to life in a way it simply hadn't previously - the piano tone was entirely convincing and immediately showed Kentner's interpretation in an entirely new light. Although there inevitably remain some artefacts of shellac surface noise and other hints as to the vintage of the recording, it's easy to forget whilst listening to this performance that it pre-dates the Second World War. Quite simply, this is the best sound quality I've heard from any piano recording of its era. For me this remastering truly represents a personal milestone.

Andrew Rose

NOTES FROM WIKIPEDIA AND BY ANDREW ROSE - FURTHER NOTES ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM