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# Wilhelm Kempff

## The Beethoven Piano Sonatas, Volume 3

Pristine  
XR

The character of Kempff's *Appassionata* reading is made plain in the opening bars. He does not make a fuss about it, but plays them in a direct, simple and lyrical way. *Appassionata*, we should remember, was not Beethoven's title, but that of the publisher Cranz. Beethoven's reply, when asked what this work and the D minor Sonata, Op. 31, No.2, meant, was: "Read Shakespeare's *Tempest*" - and Marion Scott actually started a rather dubious hare by remarking that Beethoven might have linked in his mind *The Tempest* and the melody "On the banks of Allan Water" (which, some think, was deliberately adapted to form the second subject of the *Appassionata*) - because both were British! I don't want to venture into these fields, but only to suggest that the title *Appassionata*, and such commentaries as that of Parry ("Here the human soul asked mighty questions of its God, and had its reply"), have probably tempted some interpreters to welter too much in the music.

Kempff is in no danger of doing so. The surprises of the first movement are all the more exciting because they explode in an atmosphere which has not previously been charged with emotion - only with mystery and stillness. In the *Andante con moto* his playing of the theme and the variations takes us into a world of serene, ideal beauty, prophetic of the last sonatas. The Finale is taken more slowly than usual, and because there is no rush, the full intricate texture, the questioning and answering voices which so often flash past uncomprehended like scraps of an interesting conversation heard in a noisy train, can all be appreciated. The final *Presto* too is less fast than usual; and this is one of those not uncommon cases where greater energy is generated by the more deliberate and manageable tempo.

This is indeed a very fine performance, which can teach us a good deal about the sonata, and is complementary to the other fine performances (Gieseeking, Fischer, Solomon, Frugoni, Katchen, etc., etc.) which have been put on record. The recording is excellent.

A.P., The Gramophone, January 1957

The memorable photograph on the sleeve of Kempff registering *Weltschmerz* is curiously at variance with the performances on the disc. It seems to presage heavily dramatic renditions of the post-Liszt era, whereas Kempff's playing is light and comparatively undramatic. His unpretentious clarity would have struck our grandfathers as the negation of all Beethoven stood for. Kempff plays the *Waldstein* as though he were thinking in terms of a fortepiano contemporary with the music. He uses the sustaining pedal much less than most pianists; in the opening bars, for instance, the repeated quavers are detached and almost dainty. When he comes to the hymn-like contrasting tune, he resists the usual temptation to emphasise its lyricism by adopting a slower tempo; he takes it at exactly the same tempo, and this momentarily shocks the ear, and then justifies itself completely. The resisting of romantic temptations (in the musical sense) is part and parcel of Kempff's attitude to Beethoven. This first movement is perhaps less exciting than usual, but a good deal more convincing. I have never heard the little slow movement played with such grave beauty, and the tender opening to the finale is equally lovely. Once or twice in the technically difficult passages Kempff's fingers miss a note or two, but such tiny lapses add reality to the playing. This is not the conventional performance of the *Waldstein*; it is something much more interesting than that - an unconventional but convincing performance of real intellectual beauty.

R.F., The Gramophone, July 1958



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BEETHOVEN PIANO SONATAS VOLUME 3 - NOS. 16-24  
WILHELM KEMPPF

# wilhelm kempff

## beethoven sonatas, volume 3

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### disc one

#### BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 16 in G major, Op. 31, No. 1

1. 1st mvt. - Allegro vivace (4:52)
2. 2nd mvt. - Adagio grazioso (11:05)
3. 3rd mvt. - Rondo. Allegretto (6:36)

Recorded 21 December 1951

#### BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 17 in D minor, Op. 31, No. 2 'The Tempest'

4. 1st mvt. - Largo - Allegro (6:18)
5. 2nd mvt. - Adagio (7:21)
6. 3rd mvt. - Allegretto (7:17)

Recorded 21 December 1951

#### BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 18 in E-flat major, Op. 31, No. 3 'The Hunt'

7. 1st mvt. - Allegro (6:09)
8. 2nd mvt. - Scherzo. Allegretto vivace (5:09)
9. 3rd mvt. - Minuet. Moderato e grazioso - Trio (4:34)
10. 4th mvt. - Presto con fuoco (4:58)

Recorded 22 December 1951

#### BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 19 in G minor, Op. 49, No. 1 'Leichte Sonata'

11. 1st mvt. - Andante (4:10)
12. 2nd mvt. - Rondo. Allegro (3:55)

Recorded 25 September, 22 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 25:12 CD1: 72:24 CD2: 72:48

### disc two

#### BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 20 in G major, Op. 49, No. 2 'Leichte Sonata'

1. 1st mvt. - Allegro ma non troppo (4:39)
2. 2nd mvt. - Tempo di minuet (3:59)

Recorded 25 September 1951

#### BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 21 in C major, Op. 53 'Waldstein'

3. 1st mvt. - Allegro con brio (8:32)
4. 2nd mvt. - Introduzione. Adagio molto (3:31)
5. 3rd mvt. - Rondo. Allegretto moderato - Prestissimo (10:01)

Recorded 24 September 1951

#### BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 22 in F major, Op. 54

6. 1st mvt. - In tempo d'un menuetto (6:07)
7. 2nd mvt. - Allegretto - Più allegro (6:11)

Recorded 25 September 1951

#### BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 23 in F minor, Op. 57 'Appassionata'

8. 1st mvt. - Allegro assai (9:49)
9. 2nd mvt. - Andante con moto (6:14)
10. 3rd mvt. - Allegro ma non troppo - Presto (5:49)

Recorded 22 September 1951

#### BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 24 in F-sharp major, Op. 78 'A Thérèse'

11. 1st mvt. - Adagio cantabile - Allegro ma non troppo (5:03)
12. 2nd mvt. - Allegro vivace (2:55)

Recorded 22 September 1951

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