

Produced by Andrew Kazdin

GLENN GOULD BEETHOVEN SONATAS

Side 1

SONATA NO. 8 IN C MINOR, Op. 13, "Pathétique"

I—Grave; Allegro di molto e con brio (1:40)

II—Adagio cantabile (1:42)

III—Rondo: Allegro (1:44)

SONATA NO. 14 IN C SHARP MINOR,

Op. 27, No. 2, "Moonlight" (1:44)

I—Adagio sostenuto

II—Allegretto

III—Presto agitato

Side 2

SONATA NO. 23 IN F MINOR, Op. 57,

"Appassionata"

I—Allegro assai (1:47)

II—Andante con moto

III—Allegro ma non troppo; Presto (1:48)

The selections are in the public domain.

Of Beethoven's thirty-two piano sonatas, it is fair to say that, at most, a half-dozen have achieved that special public favor that is afforded by instant recognition. These, without exception, are the tagged sonatas—the *Pathétique*, *Moonlight*, *Appassionata* and, less fervently acclaimed, the *Pastorale*, *Waldstein* and *Les Adieux*. Yet, with the exception of the *Moonlight* (a daring experiment in organizational balance) and of *Les Adieux* (perhaps the most resourceful of those studies in motivic compression that effected the transition to his later style), none of these celebrated sonatas provided landmarks in Beethoven's creative evolution and two of the three contained in this album, the *Pathétique* and *Appassionata*, are more notable for the way in which they exemplify the attitudes held by Beethoven at the time of their composition than for their espousal of any particularly adventurous architectural ideas.

Among Beethoven's early piano works, the *Pathétique*, Op. 13, is perhaps the most symbolically inclined. Its first movement is prefaced by an imposing Grave statement of the sort that Beethoven employed as introduction to his First, Second, Fourth and Seventh Symphonies; and although it is somewhat tangentially related to the primary thematic issues of the subsequent *Allegro*, the Grave statement is indissolubly linked to the *Allegro* through the opulent texture of its euphonically balanced triads and the somewhat stage-struck character of its doom-fretting double-dotted rhythm. In the *Allegro* portion of the movement, Beethoven derives both dynamic and rhythmic propulsion from the persistent tympani-style tremolos with which the left hand rigorously chaperones that ill-advised flirtation with rubato that is the constant temptation of the right hand.

This quasi-orchestral approach to the keyboard reappeared in Beethoven's piano works from time to time, especially in those rather blustery essays of his middle period. But most of Beethoven's subsequent sonatas explored more intimate and indigenously pianistic sonorities. Indeed, the last two movements of the *Pathétique* already anticipate this aspect of his mature keyboard style. The second movement is a tranquil, modestly embellished *Adagio*, while the third movement, *Rondo*, with its angular, two-part counterpoint has always seemed to me to belong in some other work. It would provide a fitting finale to Beethoven's earlier C Minor Sonata, Op. 10, No. 1, but in relation to that autocratic first movement, this altogether amiable *Rondo* scarcely pulls its own weight.

By comparison, the Sonata, Op. 27, No. 2 (the so-called *Moonlight Sonata*), although comprised of three superficially disparate movements, is a masterpiece of intuitive organization. As opposed to the *Pathétique*, which recedes emotionally from the belligerence of its opening *Allegro* to the more modest claims of its concluding *Rondo*, the *Moonlight Sonata* escalates from first note to last. Beginning with the diffident charm of what is unquestionably Beethoven's best-loved and most abused melody, the ternary grace of the opening *Adagio* resolves into the tantalizingly ambivalent whiff of D-flat major that constitutes the second movement. This fragile and autumnal *Allegretto*, in turn, disappears within the flash flood that is the concluding *Presto*. Indeed, the *Presto* movement of this work seems to crystallize the sentiments of the other two and confirm an emotional relationship at once flexible and assured. Written in the form of a sonata-allegro, such as *Beethoven* would normally employ as a first movement, it is one of the most imaginatively structured and temperamentally versatile of all his finales. But, because of its cumulative zeal, the *Moonlight Sonata* is deservedly high on the all-time eighteenth-century hit parade.

Like the *Pathétique* and *Moonlight Sonatas*, the so-called *Appassionata Sonata*, Op. 57, is usually ranked with the most popular of Beethoven's keyboard works. But I confess the reasons for its popularity elude me: it is not, surely, one of the formative works in Beethoven's canon, nor is it one of those tense, argumentative middle-period essays that, like the Violin Concerto, get by through a combination of guts and one good tune.

The *Appassionata*, in common with most of the works that Beethoven wrote in the first decade of the nineteenth century, is a study in thematic tenacity. His conceit at this period was to create mammoth structures from material that, in lesser hands, would scarcely have afforded a good sixteen-bar intro. The themes, as such, are usually of minimal interest but often of such primal urgency that one wonders why it took a Beethoven to think them up. And the elaboration of these motives is not contrapuntally continuous in the Baroque manner nor decorous in the Rococo style. It is, on the contrary, as determined, combative and resistant to concession as early eighteenth-

century music is placative, supportive and amenable to conciliation.

No one had ever before composed with so belligerent an attitude; in some respects, no one has done so since. When it works—when Beethoven's furious onslaughts find their mark—one feels that music's rhetorical demands have been transcended by an affirmation at once personal and universal. But, when they do not succeed, these compositions of his middle years are victimized by that same relentless motivic pursuit. And I think that in the *Appassionata Sonata*, his method does not work.

In the first movement, *Allegro*, the relation of first and second themes, both of them spawned by an arpeggiated triad figure, is somehow out of focus, with the subsidiary motives in the relative major key following hard upon the opening F Minor statement and without benefit of that inexorable tonal strategy that guides Beethoven's more carefully considered expositions. The development segment is similarly disorganized, offering sequential stereotypes in place of a grand, central fury—that unique amalgam of order and chaos that provides the *raison d'être* for Beethoven's successful developmental installations.

The second movement, *Andante*, is a set of four variations that derive from, but fail to expand, a sombre confluence of primary chords in the key of D-flat major. The finale, *Allegro*, like the last movement of the *Moonlight Sonata*, is essentially a sonata-allegro and, by virtue of the persistent use of a toccata-like accompanying motive, almost but not quite gets its pointillistically conceived horn calls and plucked contrabass effects off the printed page. At the conclusion of the recapitulation statements and prior to whipping up a frenzied stretto for the coda, Beethoven interpolates a curious eighteen-bar gallop that, with its souped-up tempo and simplistic rhythmic format, provides the compositional equivalent of those heroic gestures by which the experienced virtuoso gathers—even for the most ill-conceived interpretation—frenzied approval from the balconies.

For, at this period of his life, Beethoven was not only preoccupied with motivic frugality; he was also preoccupied with being Beethoven. And there is about the *Appassionata* an egoistic pomposity, a defiant "let's just see if I can't get away with using that once more" attitude that, on my own private Beethoven poll, places this sonata somewhere between the *King's* Overture and the *Battle of Victoria* Symphony.

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Engineering: Robert Waller, Milton Chertin
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Beethoven: Sonata No. 9 in C Minor, Op. 13, "Pathétique"; Sonata No. 9 in F Major, Op. 14, No. 1; Sonata No. 10 in G Major, Op. 14, No. 2 MS 6945
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Glenn Gould · Beethoven Sonatas · Moonlight · Appassionata · Pathétique



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Ludwig van Beethoven 1770–1827

Piano Sonata No. 8 in C minor op. 13 “Pathétique”

c-Moll · en *ut* mineur

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|---|--|------|
| 1 | I. Grave – Allegro di molto e con brio | 6:05 |
| 2 | II. Adagio cantabile | 4:46 |
| 3 | III. Rondo. Allegro | 3:45 |

Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp minor op. 27/2 “Moonlight”

»Mondscheinsonate« Cis-Dur · Sonate « au clair de lune » en *ut* dièse majeur

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|------|
| 4 | I. Adagio sostenuto – <i>attacca</i> | 4:11 |
| 5 | II. Allegretto – <i>attacca</i> | 1:39 |
| 6 | III. Presto agitato | 4:58 |

Piano Sonata No. 23 in F minor op. 57 “Appassionata”

f-Moll · en *fa* mineur

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|-------|
| 7 | I. Allegro assai | 15:01 |
| 8 | II. Andante con moto – <i>attacca</i> | 11:07 |
| 9 | III. Allegro, ma non troppo – Presto | 5:26 |

Total Time 57:15

Glenn Gould piano

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Producer Andrew Kazdin · Recording Engineers: Robert Waller & Milton Cherin

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