

Produced by Andrew Kazdin

M 32349

BETHOVEN:
PIANO SONATAS, Op. 31 (Complete)
GLENN GOULD, Piano

Side 1

SONATA IN G MAJOR, Op. 31, No. 1

I—Allegro vivace/II—Adagio grazioso/

III—Rondo: Allegretto

SONATA IN D MINOR, Op. 31, No. 2,

"Tempest" (Beginning)

I—Largo; Allegro

Side 2

SONATA IN D MINOR, Op. 31, No. 2,

"Tempest" (Conclusion)

II—Adagio/III—Allegretto

SONATA IN E FLAT MAJOR, Op. 31, No. 3

I—Allegro/II—Scherzo: Allegretto vivace/

III—Menuetto: Moderato e grazioso/

IV—Presto con fuoco

The selections are in the public domain.

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Throughout his life, Beethoven retained a great fondness for the piano. This predilection manifested itself not only in the quality and quantity of the piano music—70 of some 140 opus numbers denote piano solo or chamber works with piano—but also in an extremely fastidious attitude toward the instruments he personally owned. (One of his most treasured possessions was the instrument presented to him in 1818 by John Broadwood and Sons, a London firm of piano manufacturers. So happy was Beethoven with this gift that, for a while, he did not wish it even to be tuned, fearing that it might be damaged during the process. That it badly needed tuning may be surmised from the fact that it had been sent by ship from London to Trieste and thence to Beethoven in Vienna by an arduous mule-cart route.)

It is, of course, not Beethoven's attitude in such matters but the music itself that is most telling, especially the music of the variations and sonatas. The latter are the most extensive and consistent record we have of Beethoven's treatment of a single genre. The famous "Thirty-two"—the first

written in 1795, the last in 1822—were also one of the most important documents we have of his creative development. All that is missing from them, really, is the ultimate refinement of the "late" style that is to be found in the final quartets.

It has often been said of the three sonatas of Op. 31 that, with them, Beethoven arrived fully and firmly within his "middle" period. Indeed, we have the composer's word that, from here on, he intended to follow a "new path." And so he did, but not without many a backward glance and not without many an astonishing prefiguration of things to come. The point is that "early," "middle" and "late" Beethoven are harmless but not particularly helpful terms. They say more about our need to impose structure than they do about Beethoven's music. The sonatas are a marvel of diversity and invention, yet they trace a creative journey that is full of pauses and backward steps as well as amazing surges. Taken as a whole, they reveal what a complex, label-defying process was Beethoven's development.

Beethoven wrote Op. 31 during the years 1801-02, which makes these sonatas very nearly contemporary with the Heiligenstadt Testament, one of the most despairing documents ever penned by an artist. (Addressed to his two brothers, the "Testament" was the despondent cry of a genius who knew that his increasing deafness was making him an exile from his fellow men.) The fact is useful only as it underlines the general uselessness of attempts to relate an artist's every creative utterance to his state of mind at the time of the utterance. Only in the second sonata of the series is there anything that might be thought to reflect the feelings expressed in the Testament.

Nos. 1 and 2, the Sonatas in G Major and D Minor, were the first to be published. They appeared in 1803 as the fifth "suite" of the *Repertoire des Clavecinistes*, an anthology put out by Niggeli of Zurich. No. 3, in E-Flat Major, appeared the following year, along with Op. 13, as the eleventh "suite" of the same anthology. A composer himself, Niggeli took the liberty of inserting four measures (following measure 298) into the coda of the G Major Sonata's opening movement. Presumably this was done to improve the symmetry of the passage, for the interpolation formed a sequential answer to the preceding measures. Unfortunately, Niggeli's contribution did nothing except to banalize Beethoven's intent. Needless to say, Beethoven took umbrage and not long afterwards had a *très correcte* edition brought out by Simrock of Bonn.

In connection with this same sonata, a master

lesson that appeared in print 100 years after Beethoven's death provides an interesting footnote to the history of musical taste. In the March 1927 issue of *Etude* magazine, a professor of composition at a distinguished British conservatory allowed that not only had Niggeli been wise but also that he would have been even wiser to delete the measures to which he had provided an answer.

This same professor had an interesting explanation of the rhythmic character of the sonata's opening statement: It was Beethoven's antidote to the tendency of some pianists of the time to "break hands," that is, to play a chord in the left hand slightly before concurrent notes in the right hand. What he seemed to be suggesting was that the tied sixteenth note of the theme should be eliminated. So much for the wisdom of some master teachers.

The second sonata, in D Minor, is commonly known as the "Tempest" Sonata, having acquired this nickname through a remark by Beethoven to Anton Schindler, his early biographer. In response to a question as to the meaning of the work, the composer referred Schindler to Shakespeare's "The Tempest." Quite naturally, the remark led some commentators to detect, in mind-boggling detail, a phrase-by-phrase correlation with the characters, speeches and episodes of the play. Less well known is the fact that Sonatas 1 and 3 of Op. 31 have also been identified with other plays of Shakespeare. Acting on the fact that Beethoven once thought to supply programs to all the piano sonatas, musicologist Arnold Schering presumed to identify the literary source of each of the "Thirty-two." For the curious, Op. 31, No. 1, is "The Taming of the Shrew" and No. 3 is "As You Like It."

—Harry Neville

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Glenn Gould
Beethoven
Piano Sonatas,
Op. 31, Complete
No. 1 in G
No. 2 in D Minor, "Tempest"
No. 3 in E-Flat



G0100032925715

Ludwig van Beethoven 1770–1827

Piano Sonata No. 16 in G major op. 31/1

G-Dur · en *sol* majeur

- | | | |
|---|------------------------|------|
| 1 | I. Allegro vivace | 4:18 |
| 2 | II. Adagio grazioso | 8:51 |
| 3 | III. Rondo. Allegretto | 6:51 |

Piano Sonata No. 17 in D minor op. 31/2 “The Tempest”

»Sturmsonate« d-Moll · en *ré* mineur « La Tempête »

- | | | |
|---|--------------------|------|
| 4 | I. Largo – Allegro | 7:16 |
| 5 | II. Adagio | 8:52 |
| 6 | III. Allegretto | 4:33 |

Piano Sonata No. 18 in E-flat major op. 31/3

Es-Dur · en *mi* bémol majeur

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|------|
| 7 | I. Allegro | 5:38 |
| 8 | II. Scherzo. Allegretto vivace | 3:31 |
| 9 | III. Menuetto. Moderato e grazioso | 4:23 |
| 10 | IV. Presto con fuoco | 3:46 |

Total Time 58:21

Glenn Gould piano

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