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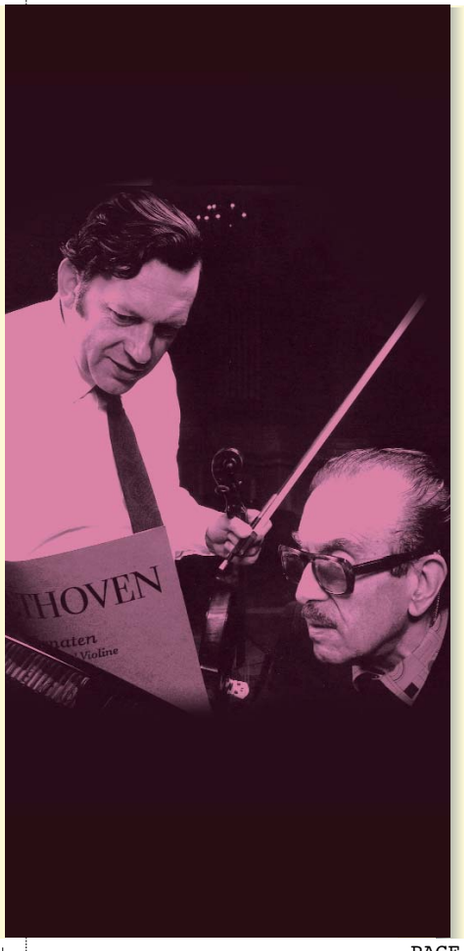

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ELOQUENCE

# BEETHOVEN

## Sonatas for Violin & Piano
## Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 & 8

Arthur Grumiaux
Claudio Arrau

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The Op. 30 No. 2, the darkest in the set, is in C minor – a key that was of some significance to Beethoven and in which is written not only the 'Pathétique' Sonata but also the Fifth Symphony and the Coriolan Overture. An Allegro con brio contrasts the main theme with a second theme in E major, followed by a bittersweet Adagio cantabile in A flat major and a C major Scherzo. The C minor finale features curious repeated-note motifs and a wild Presto coda – still in the minor key but triumphant nonetheless.

The G major Sonata, Op. 30 No. 3, is cast in three movements: Beethoven plays with our expectations of sonata form with a D minor second subject in the opening Allegro assai and the E flat minuet develops a cantabile theme before a sparkling Allegro vivace returns to the key of G major.

**William Yeoman**

**Recordings:** Grote Zaal, Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, March 1975 (Nos. 1 & 5), April 1976 (Nos. 2 & 4), May 1976 (Nos. 7 & 8)

**Eloquence series manager:** Cyrus Meher-Homji

**Cover photograph:** Arthur Grumiaux and Claudio Arrau at the recording sessions for the Beethoven Violin Sonatas (photo: Decca)

**Art direction:** Chilu Tong www.chilu.com

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Beethoven's three Op. 12 violin sonatas (written 1797-98 and dedicated to Antonio Salieri, one of his teachers at the time) are not as accomplished as his contemporaneous piano sonatas (the expansive Piano Sonata No. 4 was published in 1797, a year that also saw another of Beethoven's teachers, Haydn, compose *The Creation*; 1799, the year the Op. 12 Violin Sonatas were published, also saw Beethoven composed the 'Pathétique' Sonata). Nevertheless, there's a natural exuberance and tendency towards complexity in the writing that points the way forward, as well as absolute equality between the instruments – a lesson Beethoven probably learned from close study of Mozart's examples in the genre.

Both the Sonata No. 1 in D major and the Sonata No. 2 in A major have opening Allegros in sonata form; the former moves on to a theme and variations and a lively Rondo in 6/8, while the latter features a beautiful Andante in ternary form and a closing Rondo in triple time.

Beethoven composed and published both Sonata No. 4 (Op. 23) and Sonata No. 5 (Op. 24) in 1801 (when the Op.18 string quartets were also published), with a dedication to one of his long-time patrons, the banker Count Moritz von Fries. The Op. 23 sonata again has a tendency towards complexity, its numerous contrapuntal passages increasing the tension already created by the A minor home key. The dramatic Presto's main theme is offset by a more amiable second theme, while any tension arising from fugal treatment is itself offset by the sunny A major key of the Andante scherzoso. A central F major episode provides an island of relief amid the stormy A minor of the final Allegro molto.

The Op. 24 Sonata, which bears the nickname 'Spring' on account of its sunny opening theme, begins with a gorgeous Allegro before yielding to an Adagio molto espressivo in the subdominant key of B flat. The following Scherzo features playful syncopations together with fast flowing, detached quavers in the trio; a final, playful Rondo elaborates each successive appearance of the main theme.

Tsar Alexander I of Russia was the dedicatee of Beethoven's Op. 30 set of violin sonatas. Written in 1802, these works seem, like the Second Symphony which was also written at this time, to exude optimism – despite the fact that this was the year of the 'Heiligenstadt Testament', wherein Beethoven laments his increasing deafness.

## LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

**CD 1** **60'21**

**Sonata No. 1 in D major for Violin and Piano, Op. 12 No. 1**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I | Allegro con brio | 9'23 |
| 2 | II | Tema con variazioni (Andante con moto) | 7'20 |
| 3 | III | Rondo (Allegro) | 5'00 |

**Sonata No. 2 in A major for Violin and Piano, Op. 12 No. 2**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | I | Allegro vivace | 6'34 |
| 5 | II | Andante, più tosto allegretto | 5'04 |
| 6 | III | Allegro piacevole | 4'59 |

**Sonata No. 4 in A minor for Violin and Piano, Op. 23**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | I | Presto | 7'46 |
| 8 | II | Andante scherzoso, più allegretto | 7'52 |
| 9 | III | Allegro molto | 5'36 |

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**CD 2** **66'45**

**Sonata No. 5 in F major for Violin and Piano, Op. 24 'Spring'**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I | Allegro | 10'12 |
| 2 | II | Adagio molto espressivo | 5'18 |
| 3 | III | Scherzo (Allegro molto) – | 1'10 |
| 4 | IV | Rondo (Allegro ma non troppo) | 6'27 |

**Sonata No. 7 in C minor for Violin and Piano, Op. 30 No. 2**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | I | Allegro con brio | 7'41 |
| 6 | II | Adagio cantabile | 8'57 |
| 7 | III | Scherzo (Allegro) | 3'13 |
| 8 | IV | Finale (Allegro) | 5'09 |

**Sonata No. 8 in G major for Violin and Piano, Op. 30 No. 3**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | I | Allegro assai | 6'29 |
| 10 | II | Tempo di menuetto, ma molto moderato e grazioso | 7'51 |
| 11 | III | Allegro vivace | 3'29 |

**Arthur Grumiaux,** violin
**Claudio Arrau,** piano

Total timing: 127'06

Ludwig van Beethoven was born in Bonn on 16 December 1770. He received his first music lessons from his father Johann at the age of five before making his debut as a prodigy of the keyboard three years later in Cologne. He left school at eleven (not unusual for the time), eventually becoming assistant harpsichordist and second organist at the Elector's court. After an ill-fated initial visit to Vienna in 1787 (he had to return to Bonn following his mother's death), where he is purported to have met, and played for, Mozart, Beethoven moved to the capital permanently in 1792, initially studying with Haydn (from whom, he ungraciously said in later life, he learned nothing).

Beethoven made his public debut in Vienna with his Op.19 Piano Concerto in 1795 (the first to be written, the second to be published). The subsequent years saw some success as both a composer and virtuoso pianist before he began to notice the deafness which was to curtail his career as a pianist and force him to devote all his energies to composing, which he did for the remainder of his life while struggling continually with depression and ill-health. He died in 1827.

Johann van Beethoven, like his father before him, found employment as a singer at the electoral chapel in Bonn. But he also gave private tuition in piano and violin to supplement his income, and his son Ludwig was thus acquainted with the violin as well as the piano from a very young age. Ludwig received further tuition on both the viola and violin from Franz Rovantini, after which time he was employed as a court musician in the capacity of both organist and viola-player. After having left the relatively provincial Bonn for Vienna, Beethoven took further instruction on the violin from Ignaz Schuppanzigh and Wenzel Krumpholz, a member of the Vienna court orchestra.

So although Beethoven was to become known in Vienna primarily for his astonishing pianistic skills, his string playing was well developed enough for him to write for the violin with great fluency and understanding – despite the ever-present desire to transcend instrumental limitations. Of the ten violin sonatas, the six recorded here were all written in or before 1802, and although they therefore belong to Beethoven's 'Early' period, the latter four of these six can be seen as reaching towards the more highly developed aesthetics of the 'Middle' period (1803-1812).

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