



# BEETHOVEN

## PIANO SONATAS

Moonlight | Tempest | Waldstein

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**Piano Sonata No. 14 in C sharp minor, Op. 27 No. 2 “Moonlight” 15:39**

1. I. Adagio sostenuto 6:08
2. II. Allegretto 2:14
3. III. Presto agitato 7:17

**Piano Sonata No. 17 in D minor, Op. 31 No. 2 “Tempest” 22:45**

4. I. Largo - Allegro - Largo - Allegro - Largo - Allegro 8:18
5. II. Adagio 7:58
6. III. Allegretto 6:29

**Piano Sonata No. 21 in C major, Op. 53 “Waldstein” 25:35**

7. I. Allegro con brio 10:51
8. II. Introduzione: Adagio molto 4:03
9. III. Rondo: Allegretto - Prestissimo 10:41

**10. Bagatelle in C minor, Op. 119 No. 5 1:10**

**TOTAL TIME: 65:11**

The 32 opus-numbered piano sonatas of Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) constitute the most important and best loved body of music ever composed for the piano. Famously, Hans von Bülow calls them the “New Testament” for pianists - the Old Testament, Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*, having been composed for the harpsichord or other pre-piano keyboard instruments. Beethoven himself was a colossus both as pianist and improviser, so the piano was his most natural means of expression, for all that he became a master of the orchestra and the string quartet. And sonata form (or forms if we include variations, minuets or scherzos with trios, and rondos), having been brought to maturity by Haydn, Clementi and Mozart, were ready for Beethoven to inhabit as his natural, unforced means of self-expression.

So, with the famous *Moonlight* Sonata, Beethoven already felt free at the age of 30 to go “off-piste” and compose a sonata that opens with a free-flowing, dream-like fantasy, *pianissimo* throughout, which has become perhaps the most famous piece of piano music ever written. He follows this with two more conventional movements: a graceful minuet with a more vigorous, bucolic trio, and a finale in regular sonata form. But this finale is as revolutionary as the first movement in its explosion of primal energy and elevated sense of tragedy, all the themes being in the minor key with the development section touching a major key for a mere four bars.

The title, or nickname, was not Beethoven’s but arose many years after his death when the poet and critic Ludwig Rellstab compared the opening movement to the moonlight over Lake Lucerne. In any case it works only for the first movement. But the name stuck and it’s certainly here to stay!

It is in the nature of popular works of art to acquire nicknames as “handles” for the memory. Thus the *Tempest* was also not Beethoven’s name for the D minor Sonata, Op. 31 No. 2. The name arose only from a conversation reported by Beethoven’s secretary Anton Schindler: when he asked Beethoven the meaning of this sonata and the F minor sonata, Op. 57 (the *Appassionata*), Beethoven answered “Just read Shakespeare’s ‘Tempest’”. So the nickname could just as well apply to the *Appassionata*! Nevertheless, the name has a certain relevance to the musical material of the D minor Sonata - a key rarely used by Beethoven and in only one other major work, the 9th Symphony, though there is also the tempestuous and ghostly slow movement of the *Ghost* Piano Trio, Op. 70 No. 1.

Formally the first movement continues and develops Beethoven’s innovation in the *Pathétique* Sonata of opening with a very slow section that recurs at key moments in the structure. In the *Tempest*, however, it is much more varied and subtly interwoven into the *Allegro* material. In particular, there are the two famous *recitatives*, lonely, wandering, *pianissimo* passages in the right hand marked by Beethoven to be played with the pedal down - an effect of eerie ghostliness.

The slow movement, in the major submediant key of B flat, is like a solemn processional, a movement of great dignity, yet also with moments of great melodic beauty. The finale, a perpetual motion movement in running semiquavers, is said to have been suggested to Beethoven by the galloping movement of a horse outside his window. It too has its stormy moments, but ends in quiet pathos - in fact all three movements end *piano* or *pianissimo*. The sonata carries no dedication: perhaps, in his effort to find completely new modes of expression, it felt too personal for Beethoven to want to dedicate it to a patron or favourite pupil, as was his custom.

The equally famous *Waldstein* was also not so named by Beethoven, who called it merely the *Grand Sonata in C*. Here, however, the name is for the dedicatee, Count Ferdinand Ernst von Waldstein, apparently the first person to fully appreciate Beethoven's genius. (He certainly earned himself a handsome present). The French call the sonata *L'Aurore (The Dawn)*, from the magical *pianissimo* emergence of the *Rondo* finale from the darkness of its preceding Introduction - a much more meaningful nickname.

By now (1803/4, still aged only 33) Beethoven has reached his full maturity, mastery and inspiration. The first movement has an unstoppable energy and drive. Formally, it is noticeable for the second subject being in the mediant key of E major, rather than in the dominant, an innovation first tried out in the experimental G major Sonata, Op. 31 No. 1. Following this, Beethoven originally composed a lengthy, beautiful (if somewhat conventional) slow movement, an elaborate minuet-style piece. He was soon persuaded that this was too long for the already long outer movements, and replaced it with a short but very slow and harmonically rich *Introduzione* that leads straight into the great *Rondo* finale. Meanwhile, he published the original slow movement separately where, as the *Andante favori*, it became one of the most popular works in his lighter style.

The *Rondo* itself opens *pianissimo* with the pedal marked to be held down - a source of much argument over the years, but a magical, misty, dawn-like effect, a true tone poem. Later themes and episodes have more vigorous expression, all woven into a seamless flow of inspiration. After a build-up of breathless intensity, the music pauses on a dominant 7th and gives way to the prestissimo code with its [in]famous octave glissandi, very difficult to execute on a modern piano with its deeper keys and heavier touch, but in any case only one of the many pianistic innovations in this master-sonata.

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Over a span of almost five decades, **Julian Jacobson** has earned a reputation as a pianist of penetrating insight and rare sensitivity over a broad range of repertoire. Initially acclaimed as a fine chamber music and duo pianist working with many leading soloists and ensembles, from the 1990s he concentrated more on the core solo repertoire. He gave his first cycles of the complete Beethoven sonatas in 1995-6 and has now given the cycle some ten times: three of these were “marathon” performances when he played the entire cycle from memory in a single day. He has also performed complete cycles of the Beethoven Violin Sonatas, Cello Sonatas and Variations. Currently, he serves as the Chairman of the Beethoven Piano Society of Europe, which organises concert series, competitions, masterclasses and lectures on all aspects of the piano in Beethoven’s oeuvre.

Jacobson studied at the Royal College of Music under John Barstow, at Queen’s College Oxford, and with Louis Kentner. He was also a founder-member of the National Youth Jazz Orchestra and jazz, which he still sometimes performs, has remained a vitalising influence. He has also performed the Sprechstimme role of Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire* four times. He gave the UK premiere of Ligeti’s now famous *Etudes Book 1* at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in 1987. He has toured in over 40 countries on five continents, in recent years making regular visits to China where he is Guest Professor at Xiamen University. Formerly Head of Keyboard Studies at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, he currently teaches at the Royal College of Music, London, and Birmingham Conservatoire.

He has composed five TV and film scores including *To The Lighthouse* and *We Think The World Of You*, as well as instrumental pieces and songs. More recently, his virtuoso transcriptions for piano four hands of Gershwin’s *An American In Paris* and *Second Rhapsody*, for his piano duo with Mariko Brown, have won widespread acclaim. His music is published by Schott/Bardic Edition.





