

A photograph of Alfredo Perl, a middle-aged man with light hair, wearing a dark tuxedo jacket, a white dress shirt, and a white bow tie. He is looking off to the right with a slight smile. The background is dark and textured.

audite

Vol. I

**BEETHOVEN**  
Complete Piano Works

**Alfredo Perl**

# BEETHOVEN

## Complete Piano Works

### Piano Sonata No. 1 in F Minor, Op. 2/1

- I. *Allegro* 4:01
- II. *Adagio* 4:56
- III. *Menuetto. Allegretto* 3:14
- IV. *Prestissimo* 4:44

### Piano Sonata No. 2 in A Major, Op. 2/2

- I. *Allegro vivace* 7:05
- II. *Largo appassionato* 6:03
- III. *Scherzo. Allegretto* 3:07
- IV. *Rondo. Grazioso* 6:54

### 24 Variations on "Venni amore", WoO 65

- Thema. Allegretto* 0:35
- Variationen 1-24* 22:17

### 13 Variations on "Es war einmal ein alter Mann", WoO 66

- Thema. Allegretto* 0:45
- Variationen 1-13* 12:31

### 6 Variations on a Swiss Song, WoO 64

- Thema. Andante con moto* 0:19
- Variationen 1-6* 2:05

### Piano Sonata No. 3 in C Major, Op. 2/3

- I. *Allegro con brio* 10:33
- II. *Adagio* 7:27
- III. *Scherzo. Allegro* 3:20
- IV. *Allegro assai* 5:23

### 12 Variations on "Menuet à la Viganò", WoO 68

- Thema. Allegretto* 0:47
- Variationen 1-12* 11:56

### 9 Variations on "Quant' è più bello", WoO 69

- Thema. Allegretto* 0:27
- Variationen 1-9* 5:17

### 6 Variations on "Nel cor più non mi sento", WoO 70

- Thema. Andantino* 0:42
- Variationen 1-6* 5:05

### 12 Variations on a Russian Dance from "Das Waldmädchen", WoO 71

- Thema. Allegretto* 0:40
- Variationen 1-12* 10:50

### 8 Variations on "Une fièvre brûlante", WoO 72

- Thema. Allegretto* 0:44
- Variationen 1-8* 6:39

### Alla ingharese quasi un Capriccio in G Major, Op. 129

### Piano Sonata No. 4 in E-Flat Major, Op. 7

- I. *Allegro molto e con brio* 8:06
- II. *Largo con gran espressione* 8:07
- III. *Allegro* 5:00
- IV. *Rondo. Poco allegretto e grazioso* 7:09

### Piano Sonata No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 10/1

- I. *Allegro molto e con brio* 5:39
- II. *Adagio molto* 7:37
- III. *Finale. Prestissimo* 4:17

### Piano Sonata No. 6 in F Major, Op. 10/2

- I. *Allegro* 8:36
- II. *Allegretto* 4:10
- III. *Presto* 3:44

### Rondo in C Major, Op. 51/1 5:55

### Allegretto in C Minor, WoO 53 3:46

# BEETHOVEN

## Complete Piano Works

### Piano Sonata No. 7 in D Major, Op. 10/3

- I. *Presto* 6:46
- II. *Largo e mesto* 9:06
- III. *Menuetto. Allegro* 2:54
- IV. *Rondo. Allegro* 3:55

### Piano Sonata No. 19 in G Minor, Op. 49/1

- I. *Andante* 4:13
- II. *Rondo. Allegro* 3:11

### Piano Sonata No. 20 G Major, Op. 49/2

- I. *Allegro, ma non troppo* 4:29
- II. *Tempo di Menuetto* 3:08

### Piano Sonata No. 8 in C Minor, Op. 13

- I. *Grave. Allegro di molto e con brio* 8:34
- II. *Adagio cantabile* 5:17
- III. *Rondo. Allegro* 4:41

### Piano Sonata No. 9 in E Major, Op. 14/1

- I. *Allegro* 6:34
- II. *Allegretto* 3:19
- III. *Rondo. Allegro comodo* 3:21

### Rondo in G Major, Op. 51/2

### 10 Variations on

“La stessa, la stessissima”, WoO 73

- Thema. Andante con moto* 0:44
- Variationen 1-10* 9:50

### 7 Variations on

“Kind, willst du ruhig schlafen”, WoO 75

- Thema. Allegretto* 1:01
- Variationen 1-7* 10:17

### 8 Variations on

“Tändeln und Scherzen”, WoO 76

- Thema. Andante quasi Allegretto* 0:33
- Variationen 1-8* 8:30

### Piano Sonata No. 10 in G Major, Op. 14/2

- I. *Allegro* 7:11
- II. *Andante* 4:44
- III. *Scherzo. Allegro assai* 3:28

### Piano Sonata No. 11 in B-Flat Major, Op. 22

- I. *Allegro con brio* 7:26
- II. *Adagio con molta espressione* 7:17
- III. *Menuetto* 3:26
- IV. *Rondo. Allegretto* 6:13

### 6 Variations on an Original Theme, WoO 77

- Thema. Andante quasi allegretto* 1:01
- Variationen 1-6* 6:06

audite



## Alfredo Perl plays the complete piano works of Ludwig van Beethoven (Vol. I)

With his decision in December 1792 to settle permanently in Vienna, Ludwig van Beethoven ushered in a new biographical and artistic phase which also proved to be an extremely momentous period in music history. This involved not only the development of the classical style after Mozart's death, but also – and perhaps primarily – the transition of the musical idiom to romanticism, even paving the way towards musical modernism. The degree to which Beethoven shaped this process becomes apparent, even almost two centuries after his death, by the almost continuous, enormous resonance which his music encounters around the globe amongst performers, listeners, composers, scholars, as well as in popular culture. Despite the creation of myths and political-ideological appropriation, the provocative power of Beethoven's music has remained unbroken since its first performances more than two centuries ago. And it is no exaggeration to say that Beethoven's works, unlike those of Mozart, Haydn, Handel and Bach, which were so important for his own development, have retained an incomparable aesthetic and social relevance.

Beethoven's piano music, alongside his symphonies and string quartets, has played a decisive role in this unprecedented impact. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, his sonatas and the so-called *Diabelli Variations* have formed part of the iron canon of every pianist of distinction, which is impressively reflected in concert programmes and record catalogues. Of course, there are favourites such as the *Pathétique*, Op. 13, the sonatas Op. 27 No. 2 and Op. 57, which have respectively become famous under the titles (not hailing from the composer himself) of *Moonlight Sonata* and *Appassionata*, as well as the last three sonatas Opp. 109-111, not to mention the sonata Op. 106 (*Hammerklavier*), which still challenges players today. The number of cyclical performances and recordings of the complete sonatas, i.e. the 32 sonatas marked with opus numbers, from Op. 2 (1793-1795) through to Op. 111 (1821-1822), has also increased steadily and become multitudinous. A number of pianists have both firmly established the entire corpus in their concert repertoire and also recorded it, in some cases several times.

Since Artur Schnabel's first complete recording of the sonatas, made in 1932-1935, and Alfred Brendel's encyclopaedic series of Beethoven's piano works for two hands, recorded between 1958 and 1964, which nevertheless reveals deliberate gaps, Beethoven interpretation has been evolving consistently and has become increasingly individualised. On the one hand, this is due to the lasting influence of playing traditions and interpretational views, as is exemplified by Schnabel, who shaped many pianists around the globe either by teaching them himself, or by his son, Karl Ulrich, or his pupils, Maria Curcio and Leon Fleisher, passing on his method. On the other hand, since Brendel's commendable project, the artistic substance of the piano music beyond the sonatas and the well-established sets of variations (Op. 34, Op. 35, WoO 80 and Op. 120) has come into sharper focus. There are 16 further sets of variations and around 80 individual pieces, some of which appeared separately, others in collections – as for instance the three series of bagatelles Opp. 33, 119 and 126 – or remained unpublished.

Characteristic of Beethoven's creative process is his tendency to draw upon his huge stock of musical ideas, some of which dated back quite a while. Two of these individual pieces achieved the greatest popularity, namely the *Capriccio "alla ingharese"*, Op. 129 (1794-1795), which Anton Diabelli called "Rage Over a Lost Penny", and the piano piece *Für Elise*, WoO 59 (~1808). But it is precisely these works that impressively demonstrate Beethoven's principle of shining different lights on the simplest themes and melodies – a principle that, in a certain way, also characterises the complex metamorphoses in the large-scale works.

The significance of the instruments which Beethoven himself played in public until around 1815 and for which he composed his works is also assessed differently nowadays: the enormous advances in the construction and sound of instruments during this period were directly reflected in the compositional peculiarities and pianistic requirements of the works. This applies in particular to the range of the keyboard, which grew from five to seven octaves between 1790 and 1820; the stability of the frame, which allowed greater string tension and brilliance of tone; and the replacement of knee pedals by foot pedals. Beethoven constantly adapted his writing to these innovations and was in close contact

with leading piano makers of the time, such as Mr and Mrs Streicher in Vienna or John Broadwood & Sons in London. He was aware that he was making hitherto unknown demands on the abilities of the pianists as well as on the receptivity of the listeners: Beethoven was convinced that technical virtuosity – which he called the “onerous” part – and a wealth of musical ideas were directly linked to one another. The *Hammerklavier Sonata*, Op. 106, was therefore long considered unplayable until Franz Liszt performed it publicly at the Salon Érard in Paris in the mid-1830s. For historically sympathetic performances of Beethoven’s piano music on a modern concert grand, it is important to keep in mind not only the limitations but also the qualities of the historical instruments.

Since the late nineteenth century, the interpretation of Beethoven’s piano music has been increasingly characterised by the goal of presenting the structural and intellectual richness of this music. Claudio Arrau (whose teacher, Martin Krause, had studied with Liszt), Wilhelm Backhaus and Artur Schnabel stood for such objectivisation, while pianists such as Edwin Fischer, Myra Hess and Yves Nat emphasised the subjective-poetic core of Beethoven’s music; Wilhelm Kempff and Solomon mediated between the two directions. Beethoven’s complex creative process, reflected in a bewildering variety of sources and sketches, and the resulting musical text, to which the composer increasingly appended programmatic-poetic verbal additions after 1800, create a specific sense of tension between fidelity to the text and fidelity to the work. This means that the interpreter has to find a way between strict adherence to the printed musical text and an almost hermeneutic exegesis of the sub- or paratexts. But here, too, certain cases can throw up dilemmas: after Mälzel publicly introduced the metronome in 1815, Beethoven started adding exact tempo indications to some of his major works, which, however – as in the case of Op. 106 – are sometimes considered unrealisable and have triggered an intense discussion about the connection between tempo and character in Beethoven’s music. (Franz Liszt, familiar with these problems first-hand through Beethoven’s pupil and friend Carl Czerny, once remarked laconically that a musician could not “wash his hands of the matter like Pontius Pilate”). Hans von Bülow therefore already felt compelled to produce his own edition of the sonatas and *Diabelli Variations*, complete with detailed commentaries, and Schnabel and Arrau also presented their own editions of the sonatas. For his recording of the sonatas, Alfredo Perl uses the new edition by the British Beethoven scholar Jonathan Del Mar, who has already published the complete Beethoven symphonies.

The piano works with which Beethoven made his debut as a pianist and composer in Vienna set a new standard, which can be described as revolutionary in view of the political events of 1789. Alfredo Perl’s first box set features the piano works composed in 1791-1800 and underlines this aspiration in the two genres that were to be central to Beethoven’s entire compositional career, namely the variation and the sonata. The variations on the arietta “Venni Amore” by the Mainz court *Kapellmeister* Vincenzo Righini, which Beethoven had composed while still in Bonn and which he dedicated to his former patroness, the pianist and singer Anna Maria Hortense Countess von Hatzfeld, and had published in Mainz by Schott, represented an impressive calling card of his musical and pianistic demands. The external dimensions, encompassing as many as 24 variations, the manual and technical demands involving a flowing playing style and neat jumps, but above all the treatment of the theme with both economy and variety surpassed the contemporary style by far, even if Beethoven at that point did not yet achieve the level of sublimation of Mozart’s and Haydn’s late piano variations. He performed his variations in public in the summer of 1791 at the Mergentheim residence of the prince-elector of Bonn, causing embarrassment to his competitor Franz Xaver Sterkel, who had claimed that Beethoven would surely have to capitulate pianistically if faced with the challenges of his own work. By 1799, no fewer than eight further sets of variations on the themes of popular *Singspiele*, operas and ballet scores by contemporary composers (von Dittersdorf, Haibel, Paisiello twice, Grétry, Wranitzky, Salieri, Süßmayr and Winter) as well as on a Swiss folk song were to follow, whose originality and innovation are unmistakable. If one were to name a common characteristic of all these works, it would be Beethoven’s ability to create, with very diverse models – stretching from a naïve folk song melody to elaborate themes – a coherent arc of suspense complete with effective, increasingly intensifying and at times noticeably extended finales. In so doing, Beethoven laid the foundation for his characteristic combination of purposefulness and surprising dramaturgical turns (the technique of the so-called “imprévu”, which Haydn had already used and which Berlioz would later take to extremes), which he then transferred to his treatment of the sonata, increasingly enriching it with contrapuntal techniques.

This is true even of Beethoven's first piano sonata to be assigned an opus number, which is conceived in the key of F minor and which at the same time forms the prelude to a set of three sonatas, modelled on the Opus 1 piano trios – with two works each in major keys and one in a minor key – with which Beethoven made his rousing Viennese debut. Published three years after the *Righini Variations*, but probably conceived at the same time, the Piano Sonata in F minor, Op. 2 No. 1, fuses the achievements of the expressively charged, often improvisatory *Sturm und Drang* language, which was largely influenced by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, with the thematic economy and formal stringency of Haydn's sonatas. This is followed, however, by the subsequent sonatas in A major and C major, two works that differ greatly from one another and also from the first sonata. In the first phase of Beethoven's piano music, up to the Sonata in B flat major, Op. 22 (1800), this radical individualisation of the musical language is also reflected in the variability of the overall form, i.e. the conception, sequence and even number of the respective movements. This is in contrast to Beethoven's preference of certain key constellations as an element creating continuities and connections: for example, we find a deliberate juxtaposition of minor and major on the same scale (F minor versus F major in Op. 2 No. 1), and the slow movement of Op. 2 No. 3 is in the mediant key of E major instead of the traditional dominant or subdominant key (as in Op. 2 No. 2).

The Sonatas Op. 2, the subsequent "Grande Sonate" in E flat major, Op. 7 (in which the C major slow movement also presents a third relationship), the Sonata in D major, Op. 10 No. 3 and the Sonata Op. 22 are each conceived in four movements with an opening movement in sonata form (two or three sections featuring thematic and tonal contrasts and their development), a slow movement usually in tripartite song form or as a set of variations, a minuet or scherzo, and a finale in the form of a rondo or a sonata-rondo. However, the first two sonatas of Op. 10 (in C minor and F major, respectively) have three movements each, with the scherzo omitted in the former and the slow movement in the latter; for the C minor Sonata, Beethoven originally composed a minuet-like Allegretto, which was posthumously published in 1888 as WoO 53.

The scherzo or minuet is also omitted in the ensuing *Pathétique*. Instead, this is the first of Beethoven's sonatas to feature a slow introduction, which is recapitulated at the beginning of the development section and in the coda as a formal, but above all poetic, innovation. In the two Sonatas Op. 14, the three-movement form is realised differently yet again: the E major sonata also has no slow movement, while the opening and closing movements are so closely related to each other through the motifs with rising fourths that the idea of material and substance shared across movements and even across works, pre-eminent in his late work, already emerges here. In the G major sonata, the middle movement is an andante conceived as a set of variations; here, for the first time, the variation and sonata principles are united under one roof. Finally, the two short sonatas, in G minor and G major, Op. 49, are each cast in two movements; however, they introduce budding pianists to Beethoven's fundamental methods, especially with the principle of thematic contrast and the juxtaposition of the two tonal genders, minor and major. Beethoven did not intend the works written in 1796-1797 to be published, but his brother and business partner Kaspar arranged for them to be printed in 1805, and their success proved him right.

The variety of technical and expressive means of the sonatas written in the first Viennese decade serves the overwhelming dramatic creative power. And yet individual pieces such as the two Op. 51 rondos reveal a completely different side of Beethoven at the same time, namely a feeling for the serene, almost static aura of pure sound, already reminiscent of Schubert.

Wolfgang Rathert

Translation: Viola Scheffel

audite



Born in Santiago, Chile, in 1965, Alfredo Perl first studied with Carlos Botto in his hometown and later with Günter Ludwig in Cologne and Maria Curcio in London. Since his first performance at the age of nine, Perl has gone on to give numerous concerts all over the world, won major competitions and become one of the leading pianists of his generation.

Frequent performances in renowned concert halls such as Queen Elizabeth Hall and Barbican Centre London, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Munich Herkulesaal, Großer Musikvereinssaal and Konzerthaus Vienna, Tokyo Opera City, Teatro Colón Buenos Aires, Sydney Opera House, Konzerthaus and Philharmonie Berlin, Semperoper Dresden, Gewandhaus Leipzig, Alte Oper Frankfurt and the Tonhalle Düsseldorf bear witness to Perl's artistic format. He is also a welcome guest at renowned festivals such as the Bath International Music Festival, the Schwetzingen Festival, the Rheingau Musik Festival, the Beethovenfest Bonn, Kissinger Sommer and the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival.

A remarkably versatile artist, Alfredo Perl has played with many renowned orchestras, including the London Symphony and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Tokyo Symphony Orchestra as well as Melbourne and Sydney Symphony Orchestras.

In 1997, Perl made his debut at the BBC Promenade Concerts at the Royal Albert Hall in London and also performed the complete Beethoven piano sonatas in London (Wigmore Hall), Santiago de Chile and Moscow. At the same time, his first recording of the 32 sonatas, alongside the *Diabelli Variations*, was released, which he has now re-recorded for this project. In addition to his highly acclaimed Beethoven recordings, Alfredo Perl's extensive discography includes piano works by Schubert, Schumann and Liszt, as well as the complete Ravel piano music. He recorded Chopin's 24 Préludes on DVD for BBC Television.

Alfredo Perl is piano professor at the Hochschule für Musik Detmold and was artistic director of the Detmold Chamber Orchestra until 2022, alongside whom he was awarded an Echo Klassik prize in 2015.

## ALFREDO PERL PIANO



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