Beethoven Explored

Peter Sheppard Skærved
Aaron Shorr

METIER

Volume 2

BEETHOVEN Explored — volume 2

Ludwig van Beethoven Sonata for piano and violin in A major Op.47, "Kreutzer"

1	*I*	*Adagio sostenuto - Presto*	14:33
2	*II*	*Andante con Variazioni*	15:17
3	*III*	*Presto*	9:29

Ludwig van Beethoven 6 Deutsce Tänze WoO 42

4	*I*		0:33
5	*II*		0:26
6	*III*		1:19
7	*IV*		0:27
8	*V*		0:31
9	*VI*		1:18

Joseph Mayseder Sonata in E flat major for violin and piano

10	*I*	*Allegro*	9:52
11	*II*	*Molto Adagio*	6:01
12	*III*	*Rondo Allegro*	7:51

Monday the 16th May (1803)...in the evening with Kuhnel and Tomasini in the Wieden Theatre. Lodoiska by Cherubini...there I met for the first time the mulatto (son of the 'Negro August' who served in the household of Prince Niklas (Prince Nicolaus Esterhazy-The 'Magnificent' - died 1790), first violinist of the Prince of Wales) and invited him for dinner tomorrow.

Tuesday 24 May....Concert of the violinist in the Augarten at 12 o'clock noon...it was not very full but a select audience.

(From the Diary of Josef Carl Rosenbaum)

No composer was ever more forcefully or rapidly established on the world stage than Beethoven. He achieved this feat, with apparently little effort, through the good fortune of being effectively composer-in-residence to one of the first ever multilateral peace conferences. The myth of 'Beethoven', perhaps even the whole focus of western art music since, simply would not have happened without the Congress of Vienna in 1814-15, in which representatives of the nations of Europe came together to resolve the territorial disputes left by the Napoleonic Wars. This immediate international status has decisively shaped our understanding of Beethoven and of the broad sweep of his work.

Beethoven's String Quartet Op 127 was premiered twice in Vienna in 1825. (The first performance, led by the great violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh (1776-1830), was not successful, so a second, led by the young Josef Böhm (1795-1876), was arranged.) Within weeks, the same work was to be heard as far away as St Petersburg, in the suite of Prince Nikolas Galitzin (1794-1866), whom Beethoven had met when the Prince had been ambassador to Vienna. The St Petersburg performance was given by Beethoven specialists (who were now spread all over Europe), including Bernhard Romberg, who had been with the young composer in the Electoral orchestra in Bonn.

Over the next decade in Paris the dominance of Beethoven's oeuvre and personal philosophy transformed the consciousness of the listening public. By 1830, there were Parisian ensembles and societies specializing in the performance of his music directed by luminaries such as François Habeneck (1781-1849), Pierre Baillot (1771-1842) and Jean-Pierre Maurin (1822-1894). In 1829 the young Hector Berlioz (1803-1869) heard the late quartets in one of these early French performances; he was already modelling himself, both publicly and psychologically, on the musical and emotional image of Beethoven.

From the moment that his music was recognised in the German-speaking countries, Beethoven had considerable importance for British music and music making. The presence in England of such figures as his most distinguished pupil, the brilliant pianist and composer Ferdinand Ries (1784-1838), the publisher J B Cramer (1771-1858), the pianist and composer Muzio Clementi (1752-1832), and the violinist-impresario J P Salomon

(1745-1815), ensured that the publication and performance of his music were of a high standard. The British saw him as somehow a composer without nationalist allegiance or identity. This perhaps had less to do with his musical philosophy and his message of human brotherhood, than with his dishevelled figure – as portrayed in sketches of the time – striding around Vienna, hands clamped behind his back, wide-eyed, distracted, dirty and ferocious, which echoed the popular notion of the eccentric genius to be found in the poets of the day, such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834).

The Manuscript catalogue at the British Library includes the following entry (catalogue number Add.71148) an intriguing reminder of Beethoven's often underestimated links with Britain, ranging from his arrangements of Scottish folksongs for the Scottish publisher and entrepreneur G S Thomson (1757-1851) to the commissioning of the Ninth Symphony by the Royal Philharmonic Society in London. It reads: 'Tuning fork said to have been given by Beethoven to G A P Bridgetower, with related documents, and a label in the hand of Gustav Holst.' Holst (1874-1934) actually in turn gave it to Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958), and his widow gave it to the library.

There is no record of when Beethoven gave the tuning fork to the black virtuoso violinist, George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower (1779-1860). The object itself might seem insignificant: a small elegantly crafted fork, slighter than most modern equivalents, nestling on a blue velvet cushion in a walnut box. The simple functionality of the gift somehow adds to its romance.

A curious debut which aroused much interest was that of M. Bridge-Tower, a young Negro from the colonies, who played several concertos for the violin with a neatness, a facility, and execution and even a sensibility which are rarely met with at so tender an age (he is not yet ten years old). His talent, as genuine as it is precocious, provides one of the best answers that one can make to the philosophers who would deny to those of his nation and of his colour the faculty of distinguishing themselves in the arts.

(*Mercure de France* reviews Bridgetower's first appearance in a *Concert Spirituel* on 13th April 1789)

Bridgetower, a British national, was of mysterious African and Polish ancestry. His father was personal page to Prince Nikolaus Esterházy (1765-1833). He made his first appearance as a soloist on April 13th 1789 at a *Concert Spirituel* in Paris, billed as the son of an Abyssinian Prince. Typically for the time, as can be seen from the review above, his age was misrepresented, a humiliation which had also been visited upon the young Beethoven. With the revolution he came to England, where he studied with, amongst others, Mozart's student Thomas Attwood. On the 2nd June 1790, he gave a joint concert with the ten-year old Franz Clement, who later premiered Beethoven's violin concerto and led all the early performances of the *Eroica* Symphony Op 55, which Beethoven was

sketching out whilst writing the *Kreutzer* Sonata. In 1791, Mayseder played solos in Salomon's concert series; this, the year of Haydn's visit. They no doubt had much in common, as Bridgetower's father was in service in the Esterhazy court at Eisenstadt. Bridgetower came to royal notice in the same year, when he played a solo between the sections of Handel's *Messiah* at the Drury Lane Theatre. He soon found himself working as solo violinist for George, Prince of Wales, later George IV (1762-1830), at the Brighton Pavilion.

In 1802, Bridgetower managed to persuade the Prince that he should travel to mainland Europe to see his mother in Dresden and also to meet with musicians in Vienna. George, in the aftermath of his father's 'mad-business' was commencing the building work that would eventually transform the 'Marine Pavilion' into an Oriental palace. Evidently he felt that there was little point paying a musician to work in a building site, and was happy to provide his servant with such an opportunity to improve his skills. For Bridgetower, this 'sabbatical' may have been the only way he could see of freeing himself from his service to the Prince. He certainly never showed any intention of coming back, so George's liberality failed to bring any greater lustre to his music room in Brighton.

Bridgetower's trip had much in common with Beethoven's own journey to Vienna from Bonn in 1792. As Beethoven's patron in Bonn, Count von Waldstein (1762-1823) put it, Beethoven was sent to Vienna on a training visit 'to receive the spirit of Mozart from the hands of Haydn – and to bring it gloriously back to his employer's court. But, like Bridgetower, Beethoven never returned to his employer.

The short, tempestuous relationship between Bridgetower and Beethoven resulted in the composition of the Sonata for Piano with Violin Op 47, now called the *Kreutzer* Sonata. It was originally dedicated to Bridgetower, and the two premiered the work in the Augarten on the 24th May 1803. That much is clear from the dedication on the 'Forautograph' manuscript kept in the collection of the Beethovenhaus in Bonn. Little is known of the working relationship between the composer and the British violinist. It is likely that the cause of the meeting was the aforementioned Franz Clement, with whom Beethoven was sharing apartments in the Teater an der Wien at that time. The friendship ended almost as soon as it began, foundering, according to Bridgetower, because of a disagreement over a woman. Most likely their passionate temperaments were the cause of their parting. The 'Forautograph' is one of the few relics of the relationship, along with some perfunctory letters from Beethoven to Bridgetower, the tuning fork, and Bridgetower's own description of a rehearsal of the sonata. This last document makes it very clear that the two actually played from the 'Forautograph' manuscript in rehearsal. The manuscript breaks off half way through the first movement and is in Beethoven's sketchiest hand, as if written in

some haste. Perhaps Beethoven had to work up the sonata from his sketches for the first rehearsal. (This may be why he re-used the last movement of his earlier Sonata in A major, Op. 30 No. 1, as the finale for this work.)

Tellingly, the manuscript does not include any of the cadenza material in the first movement as we have it today. The American writer Alexander Wheelock Thayer (1817-1897), one of Beethoven's major nineteenth-century biographers, clarifies this point and tells us a great deal about the working relationship that Beethoven had with the violinist. He describes a moment where Bridgetower imitated Beethoven's improvised piano cadenza, playing it spectacularly, an octave higher, racing into the stratosphere of the violin's range. Beethoven stopped, shocked, and then shouted '*Noch Einmal, mein lieber Bursch!*' (Once again, my dear fellow!) this time holding the sustaining pedal of the piano down so that the violin was not left bare and unaccompanied as it flew up the C major arpeggio. This done, he leapt from the piano bench and embraced his colleague. Here we have a fantastic account of a player boldly stepping into the territory of the great composer -improviser, which for many people today, for Beethoven's colleagues and contemporaries, and even, to a degree, for Beethoven himself, was the privilege of his invention and imagination. Perhaps Bridgetower was the only collaborator whose extravagance of manner and gesture rivalled Beethoven's own; Carl Czerny (1791-1857), who was studying with Beethoven in 1803, recalled that Bridgetower's extrovert playing made him laugh out loud. Little is known of Bridgetower's subsequent career in Vienna, but after his return to England, he decided on further study. In June 1811, he took his bachelor's degree at Cambridge, and played in the inaugural season of the Philharmonic Society in 1813. He died in Peckham.

In common with all composers before the time of Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868) and Hector Berlioz, Beethoven's fame rested as much on his impact as a performer, as on his compositions. To separate the professional virtuoso and improviser from the composer, would have seemed perverse to Beethoven's contemporaries. Indeed, most of the laudatory accounts of Beethoven's playing, from his arrival in Vienna onwards, speak mainly of the impact of his extemporization, his extraordinary ability to evoke atmosphere and mood through improvisation, rather than his digital brilliance or subtlety or the merits of specific works. All players of the time – soloists, orchestra players or chamber specialists – elaborated existing works with cadenzas and ornamentation. This was the great age of the instrumental duel, fought 'to the death' between improvising soloists. Beethoven himself fought several such duels with pianists such as Abbé Joseph Gelinek (1758-1825), Joseph Wölffl (1772-1812) and Daniel Steibelt (1765-1823).

Beethoven's attitude to improvisation and ornamentation was revealingly inconsistent. He

often shocked and even angered his colleagues by inserting unexpected and unwonted cadenzas into his chamber music, such as the Quintet for Wind and Piano Op 16. But he also remonstrated with junior colleagues and pupils such as Carl Czerny (1791-1857) and Ferdinand Ries for taking precisely the same liberties that had brought him fame with the selfsame works. Looking at the first edition of the Sonata Op 47, one finds no violin cadenza where Bridgetower would have played it at the first performance. By the time the work was published their relationship had gone sour; Beethoven had changed the dedication to honour the French virtuoso and technical theorist Rodolph Kreutzer (1766-1831), who in fact never performed the sonata. He was later to be seen running from a performance of a Beethoven symphony with his hands over his ears.

Bridgetower shows us the great composer and his opinionated interpreter in collaboration and offers a tantalizing glimpse of the tempestuousness of Beethoven's creativity and compositional processes. Perhaps this was the only time that Beethoven worked with a string player whom he regarded as a peer, whether as a friend or artist. The original dedication on the sonata is both affectionate and mocking: '*Sonata mulattica. Composta per il Mulatto Brischdauer – gran pazzo e compositore mulattico.*' ('Mulatto Sonata. Composed for the Mulatto Brischdauer [sic] – great lunatic and mulatto composer.') The gift of the tuning fork seems equally ambiguous. It may have been a gift in the joshing spirit of their relationship: a helpful present, disguised as an insulting joke about violinists' intonation. Most likely, the two musicians were unable to agree on a standard pitch, which varied all across Europe and was invariably an issue when players from different countries sat down to work together. (It still is.) Perhaps they had an argument over the pitch of Beethoven's pianos, which we know, from the earliest accounts of his piano playing in Bonn onwards, he habitually mistreated and kept in wanton disrepair.

It would be typical of Beethoven to say thank you with such a backhanded compliment. He was always nastiest to his closest friends when trying to express affection. Perhaps Beethoven's knowledge of history might have provided a subtler agenda. It was the British inventor John Ford, one of Handel's assistants, who conceived the idea of the tuning fork in the second decade of the 18th century. If Beethoven knew this, his gift may also have been expressing his appreciation of the British contribution to musical technique and expression, from George Handel (1685-1759), Beethoven's stated favourite composer, and Ford, to Bridgetower and the Prince Regent.

Three years before the premiere of the *Kreutzer* Sonata, a young Viennese violinist, the son of an impoverished painter, gave a spectacular debut at the Augarten. Josef Mayseder (1789-1863) was just eleven years old, and a student of Anton Wranitzky (1761-1820). Like Beethoven, Wranitzky had studied composition with Haydn and Albrechtsburger; he

was now Prince Lobkowitz' *Kapellmeister*, and also the teacher of Ignaz Schuppanzigh (1776-1830), with whom Beethoven had begun a collaboration from the moment of arriving in Vienna in 1792. As well as premiering all of Beethoven's quartets, Schuppanzigh also premiered all of Beethoven's earlier sonatas for piano with violin, Op 12, Op 23, Op 24 and Op 30. Within a few years, Mayseder was doing distinguished service in Schuppanzigh's quartet. Ignaz von Mösel wrote:

Schuppanzigh, who understood so perfectly how to interpret Haydn's and Mozart's ideas, was perhaps even more qualified to perform Beethoven's compositions. The early flowering of Mayseder's talents first found recognition in that circle and it was there that he developed that union of taste and elegance which are the characteristics of his playing.

Beethoven held the gifted teenager in the highest esteem, referring to him as the 'genius boy'. In 1814 he wrote to him:

I hope that on this occasion too Herr von Mayseder will not refuse my request to support me with his fine talent. My desire for perfection in the performance of my works will excuse my having to trouble him. The performance is at 12 o'clock sharp…

In the same year, Mayseder led the first performance of a mass in F major by a young composer, the first commission received by a gifted 17-year-old young student of Antonio Salieri (1750-1825), Franz Schubert (1797-1828).

By the age of twenty years old, Mayseder was given the gold 'Salvatormedal' by the city of Vienna, and the freedom of the city five years later. In 1820, he was appointed the solo violinist to the imperial court. By the time of the Congress of Vienna, Mayseder had achieved huge popular acclaim as the composer of Polonaises, the craze of the moment, and for a while, his renown as a dance composer eclipsed his justifiable fame as a virtuoso. He was a pallbearer at Beethoven's funeral. In his transcription of Brahms' Hungarian Dances, Joseph Joachim even requested that one particular polonaise-like section be played *à la Mayseder*. His extraordinary *Grosse Sonata Konzertirend* dates from the time of the concert series that he gave with Giulani and Hummel, the *Dukaten Konzerte*, and was most likely written for him to play with Hummel, which probably goes a long way to explain its punishing piano writing.

Mayseder's *Grosse Sonata Konzertirend* was the first major duo work to respond to the challenge thrown down by Beethoven's Op 47, his *Sonata scritto in un stilo [brillante* -erased*] molto concertante, quasi come d' un concert* (the revised title on the rededicated sonata). Like Beethoven's work, both instruments are given free virtuoso rein, with competing runs, roulades and cadenzas. Unlike many of his contemporaneous virtuoso violin composers, Mayseder did not confine himself to the 'comfortable' keys; despite its

brilliance and velocity, the work reaches many remote keys, which are uncomfortable on the violin, revealing the composer as a player of quite unique gifts. The last movement is full of the Polonaise rhythms that made him so popular.

The great Italian 'cellist Alfredo Piatti (1822-1901) heard Mayseder play in old age at a private concert (he retired from public concert life in 1835).He wrote: 'I was surprised to hear him play with such pure intonation and so much fire.' However, upon hearing him at a private concert in Paris, Giacomo Meyerbeer was less impressed:

Called on Polessi...Attended the rehearsal of Herr Mayseder's concert. He draws beautiful sounds from his instrument and masters the greatest difficulties with ease; his playing is, however, a little monotonous. What amazed me most was a run of three octaves through broken thirds that 'in alt' (top octave) became chromatic. I cannot recall having ever heard the violin played like this. (Diary August 1812)

He might have been describing the violin writing in the sonata, where both instruments vie in Lisztian bravura. Indeed, when Anton Diabelli (1781-1858) published his collection of fifty composers' variations on a waltz of his in 1824, Mayseder's contribution followed on from Variation 41, written by '*Franz Liszt, Knabe von 11 Jahren, geboren in Ungarn*'. Liszt (1811-1886) toured performing Mayseder's chamber works, and most particularly his Piano Trio Op 50 at the beginning of his career. In 1826 he could be found playing one of Mayseder's ever-popular Polonaises in Paris with the sixteen year-old violinist Karl Ebner, a programme that he shared with the celebrated mezzo-soprano Maria Malibran.

Later in Beethoven's life, Mayseder was one of the friends who were concerned at Beethoven's living conditions. He wrote to a friend, Schloesser:

This is not the first time that Beethoven's friends have taken his clothes during the night and laid down new ones in their place; he has not the least suspicion of what has happened and puts on whatever lies before him with entire unconcern.

In Beethoven's conversation books for the spring of 1825, there is a record of a conversation between two of his friends as to the relative merits of Mayseder and Joseph Böhm, before the second 'premiere' of the Op 127 E Flat Major quartet (after Schuppanzigh's disastrous first attempt).

Karl: Mayseder plays more brilliantly, Böhm more expressively.

Holz: I believe that Mayseder would play it better – he conducts the other three while Böhm lets it (the quartet) play itself.

The violin used for this recording is one of the most renowned instruments produced by Antonio Stradivari. The earliest labelled instrument by this maker dates from 1666; this violin, the so called 'Habeneck', was made by the master in 1734, when he was 90 years old. In the first half of the 19th century, it was the violin played by the great French virtuoso and condutor, Francois-Antoine Habeneck (1781). Habeneck was a student of Viotti's pupil, Baillot, and was initially supported by the Empress Josephine. He was responsible for pioneering early performances of the Beethoven symphonies, and directed, from this violin, the premiere performances of Rossini's *William Tell*, Meyerbeer's *Les Hugenots* and Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*. In the latter years of the 20th century, the violin was most notably the instrument of the great English virtuoso, Ralph Holmes, who died tragically young in 1984, shortly after recording what is generally regarded as the definitive recording of the Delius concerto on this instrument. The 'Habeneck' Stradivarius, is part of the Yorkgate Collection of the Royal Academy of Music, London.

Peter Sheppard Skærved is the dedicatee of well over 200 works for violin, from a wide range of composers – from Hans Werner Henze and David Matthews, to Jörg Widmann and Sadie Harrison. He has appeared as concerto artist, chamber recitalist and given hundreds of unaccompanied recitals in over 30 countries. He has one of the broadest discographies of any violinist, stretching from pioneering recordings of Michael Haydn Concerti, through to the first recording of the original version of George Rochberg's concerto, recorded under the composer's supervision in Germany. Peter is the leader of the Kreutzer Quartet, violinist of Ensemble Triolog, Munich, and the long-term duo partner of the American pianist Aaron Shorr. He is Research Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music.

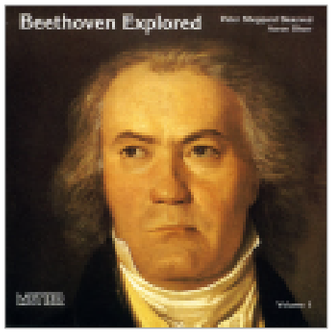
Since settling in the United Kingdom in 1984, **Aaron Shorr** has gained an increasing reputation for his diverse and highly acclaimed concerts. He studied at the Manhattan School of Music in New York and the Royal Academy of Music in London, his teachers having included Alexander Kelly, Solomon Mikowsky, André Watts and Joseph Seiger. He has since toured throughout the world performing concertos, solo recitals and chamber music.

Aaron's European festival performances have included the Menuhin Festival in Gstaad, the Munich Biennale, the Montepulciano festival in Italy, the Pescara Festival in Italy, the Breda Festival in Holland, the Mitte Europa Festival in Germany, and the Ludlow, Brighton, Chelmsford, Huddersfield, Malvern and Little Missendon Festivals in Great Britain.

Aaron's recordings include a CD of rarely heard Schubert, a disc of violin and piano music by Caesar Cui with Peter Sheppard Skaerved, and solo and duo performances of music by Sadie Harrison (METIER MSV CD92053).

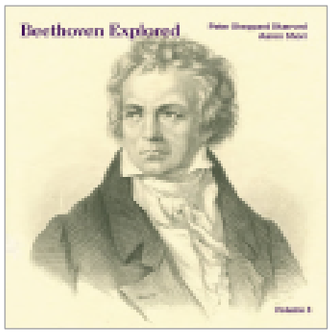
In 1992, he was appointed Professor of Piano at the Royal Academy of Music.

The Beethoven Explored Series: re-appraising Beethoven's works in their musical and cultural context



volume 1 msvcd 2003 digital 72003

Beethoven	Sonata for Piano with Violin in G major, Op. 96
Beethoven	Rondeau in G major, WoO 41
Beethoven	Variations in F major on 'Se Vuol Ballare' (Mozart), WoO 40
Rudolph	Variations in F major on a Menuetto by Prince Ferdinand

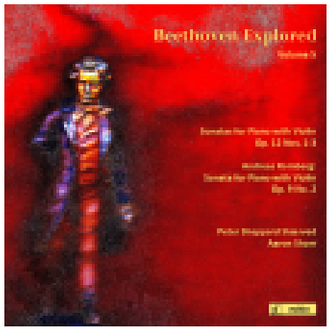


volume 3 msvcd 2005 digital 72005

Beethoven	Sonatas for Piano with Violin, Op. 30: No. 1in A major, No. 2 in C minor, No. 3 in G major
Clement	Variations on Grétry's opera "Barbe Blue" for solo violin

Volume 4 msvcd 2006 digital 72006

Beethoven	Sonata for Piano with Violin in A minor, Op. 23
Beethoven	Sonata for Piano with Violin in F major, Op. 24
Ries	Violin Sonata in C minor, Op. 38



volume 5 msvcd 2007 digital 72007

Beethoven	Sonatas for Piano with Violin, Op. 12: No. 1 in D major, No. 2 in A major, No. 3 in E flat major
Romberg	Sonata for Piano with Violin in C minor, Op. 38

métier

volume 6 msvcd 2008 digital 72008

Beethoven Symphony No. 3 in E flat major, Op. 55
in arrangement for piano quartet by unknown hand
(possibly Beethoven himself) *

Aaron Shorr (piano); Peter Sheppard Skaerved (violin)
Dov Scheindlin (viola); Neil Heyde (cello)

* this is not the later transcription by Ferdinand Ries but an arrangement published at the same time as the orchestral score. First recording.

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Beethoven Explored

Life&Times Volume 2

performed by **Peter Sheppard Skærved** violin

and **Aaron Shorr** piano

1-3	**Ludwig van Beethoven**	**Sonata in A major Op.47, "Kreutzer"**
4-9	**Ludwig van Beethoven**	**6 Deutsche Tänze WoO 42**
10-12	**Joseph Mayseder**	**Sonata in E flat major**

for detailed track listing see accompanying booklet

"A thoughtful 'Beethoven's Violin Sonatas' concept, with performances to match. ...The playing is articulated with beautiful clarity, (enhanced by a notably clean recording); it's a well-lit musical landscape in which all kinds of harmonic and textural details achieve prominence."

Gramophone, October 2003 on Volume One of this 'Beethoven Explored' series

Peter Sheppard Skaerved and Aaron Shorr have won international acclaim for their research and explorations of composers from all periods. Recent projects have included complete concert cycles of the violin and piano music by Henze and Rochberg at the Hanover Expo and the Venice Biennale. Latterly, their work on Beethoven's sonatas, folksongs, canons, chamber transcriptions and unfinished works, together with similar music by his contemporaries, has led to major concert series and tours as far afield as Bosnia and Turkey, to lectures and much written commentary on the music. The culmination of this work was a ten-concert series at St John's Smith Square, London in 2001 to 2002.

This series of recordings, together with the whole 'Beethoven Explored' project, was made possible by support from the Royal Academy of Music in London and the British Council. It is released in partnership with Haus Publications' 'Life and Times' Biography Series, for whom Peter Sheppard Skærved and Aaron Shorr are both Music Editors.

This recording was made at St John's Smith Square, London on 25 October 1999 (tracks 4-9), 24 January 2000 (tracks 1 & 2), and 25 January 2000 (tracks 3 & 10-12)
Recording Producer / Balance Engineer / Digital Editor / Booklet design and layout: David Lefeber
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