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BEETHOVEN  
SONATAS 4-5

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# BEETHOVEN SONATAS 4–5

## Violin Sonata No.4 in A minor Op.23

- |   |     |                                   |      |
|---|-----|-----------------------------------|------|
| 1 | i   | Presto                            | 8'21 |
| 2 | ii  | Andante scherzoso, più allegretto | 8'02 |
| 3 | iii | Allegro Molto                     | 6'04 |

## Violin Sonata No.5 in F Major “Spring” Op.24

- |   |     |                               |       |
|---|-----|-------------------------------|-------|
| 4 | i   | Allegro                       | 10'07 |
| 5 | ii  | Adagio molto espressivo       | 4'56  |
| 6 | iii | Scherzo (Allegro molto)       | 1'20  |
| 7 | iv  | Rondo (Allegro ma non troppo) | 7'08  |

Total playing time: **46'07**

Producer: Michael Ponder  
Engineer: Phil Hardman  
Venue: St George's, Headstone  
Date recorded: 5th May 2025  
Liner Notes: Michael Freyan

Most of Beethoven's ten violin sonatas were composed within a time span of no more than six years (1797–1803), with the exception of the last one, Op.96, which he began in 1812, taking probably a further three years to revise to his satisfaction. This means the set as a whole represents a relatively young Beethoven, though his development from the early Op.12 sonatas to the “Kreutzer” Op.47 clearly demonstrates a formidable inner creative force. His cello sonatas, string quartets and symphonies are more evenly spaced throughout his life, but the violin sonatas lack nothing in invention, range of expression and feeling. As so often in Beethoven's early works the intensity of the slow movements stands out.

When Beethoven arrived in Vienna from Bonn in November 1792, he was still only 21 and had yet to build a reputation and a life. He began by giving concerts in the aristocratic salons of Vienna, with improvisations included in his programmes. Before embarking on the violin sonatas he composed Variations for piano and violin on Mozart's *Se vuol ballare* from *The Marriage of Figaro*, dedicated to his former pupil and friend, Eleonore von Breuning. He provided her with a little background to the work, and to his progress in Vienna, in a letter written exactly one year after he had left Bonn.

“Vienna, 2nd November 1793. The Variations are rather difficult to play, especially the trills in the *Coda*, but don't be alarmed, it is constructed so that you need play only the trills, leaving out the other notes, which are also in the violin part. I would never have written anything like that had I not

often noticed how some people in Vienna, after hearing me improvise one evening, would copy several peculiarities of my style the next day and proudly claim them as their own. Well, as I foresaw that their pieces would soon be published; I resolved to forestall these people. However, there was another reason, too; my desire to embarrass the top pianists here, some of whom are my sworn enemies. I wanted to take my revenge on them in this way, because I already knew that my variations would before long be set before the gentlemen and they would make a mess of them.”

Like Mozart, he was not only an outstanding pianist but also played the violin and viola. It seems more than probable he met Mozart in an earlier visit to Vienna in 1787, which was unfortunately cut short by the news that his mother was gravely ill, forcing a hasty return to Bonn.

All the violin sonatas bear dedications, the Op.12 to Salieri, who helped him after his arrival in Vienna, the others, apart from the *Kreutzer*, to aristocratic patrons on whom he depended for a living. Making a career as a freelance musician without a court or church appointment was never easy, not then and not now. Beethoven's increasing deafness would gradually deprive him of the opportunity to play concerts but, in compensation, his ever-growing reputation as a composer was able to provide him with an income. His letters reveal how much time and effort was invested in negotiating prices for his compositions and running his 'business'.

In the tradition of the time these are sonatas for piano with the addition of a violin, but no violinist would regard the violin part as in any way subsidiary or merely an accompaniment to the piano. Musical and technical challenges are shared equally and these seminal works remain at the heart of the repertoire of both violinists and pianists.

### **Violin Sonata No.4 in A minor Op.23**

- i Presto
- ii Andante scherzoso, più allegretto
- iii Allegro molto

Unlike the Op.12 and Op.30 sets, each containing three sonatas, Beethoven's Op.23 and Op.24 were published as individual sonatas. Although both were written in the years 1800/01 they are strongly contrasted works. The first movement of Op.23 is an agitated *Presto* in 6/8 time, which one might normally expect to see in a *Finale*, but the character of the music sits well in an opening movement. It is in sonata form, but rich in contrapuntal material and driven in tempo. With hardly time to catch his breath the brave listener then encounters a movement so charming, so delightful and so unexpectedly *scherzoso* it takes his breath away! For the second subject Beethoven adds a sprinkling of pure, tongue-in-cheek impudence. This is not a quality normally associated with his music, but if he set out to prove he can do it, he certainly succeeded. The *rondo Finale*

returns to 'business as usual'. The tempo is quick and the ideas come thick and fast. Episodes of varying length appear and there is room for some development in the *coda* before the music floats down for a soft landing.

### **Violin Sonata No.5 in F Major "Spring" Op.24**

- i Allegro
- ii Adagio molto espressivo
- iii Scherzo (Allegro molto)
- iv Rondo (Allegro ma non troppo)

How this sonata acquired the nickname 'Spring' seems lost in the mists of history, but most would agree that, although the culprit was not Beethoven, it faithfully reflects the gentle, fresh breeze emanating from its opening theme. 'Named' music is often particularly popular and this sonata is probably the most frequently performed of them all. There is much contrasting music in the course of the first movement, especially in the development section with its agitated triplets, and it is a relief to arrive safely back on home ground at the recapitulation.

The fine-spun, unhurried melody of the slow movement, heard first in the piano and subsequently in the violin, heralds a movement of deep beauty, it is sufficiently spacious to permit delicate, filigree ornamentation. The *Scherzo* which follows must surely be one of Beethoven's shortest and most

pithy. Here and there the violin breaks ranks and is heard in hot pursuit of the piano after missing a beat, but it all works out for the best in the best of all possible worlds, Beethoven's world!

The fourth movement, combining elements of sonata and *rondo* form, recaptures some of the lyricism of the opening movement. A dramatic development section leads to a surprise recapitulation in the wrong key of D major, but Beethoven has his hand on the gear lever and skilfully returns the music to the home key. As so often in Beethoven, the *coda* is treated as an extension of the development section and an opportunity to introduce further ideas. This time, however, Beethoven is impatient to be finished and the work is peremptorily dismissed.

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**Julian Leaper** violin

Julian won a Junior Exhibition Scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music where he studied Violin with Emanuel Hurwitz and Piano as joint first study with Hamish Milne. He was awarded several prizes for solo performance and chamber music including the prestigious Gerard Heller award for which he won first prize for String Quartet playing.

In 1982 he continued his studies with Alberto Lysy at the Yehudi Menuhin Academy Gstaad and Tomatada Soh and Kenneth Sillitoe in London.

He made his London debut performing a programme of British music at the Purcell Room. He has since performed as leader and soloist with many British orchestras including the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, City of London Sinfonia, and the New

London Orchestra. He has worked regularly with all the major chamber orchestras including the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields, English Chamber Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, London Mozart Players and the Orchestra of St John's Smith Square.

His solo and concerto performances include the complete Brandenburg concertos at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Vivaldi's Four Seasons at the Purcell Room, Mozart D major Violin concerto at St John's Smith Square, Beethoven Triple concerto and Vaughan Williams *The Lark Ascending* together with a number of other solo performances at venues across the UK.

Julian was leader of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Orchestra and has led a number of West End shows including *Show Boat*, *The King and I*, *Sinatra* and *Wicked*.

He has recorded many sound tracks for Film and TV including *Harry Potter*, *Lord of the Rings*, *James Bond*, *Mission Impossible*, *Wicked*, and has recorded the solo violin tracks for Ridley Scott's *Tristan and Isolde* and TV blockbusters such as *Upstairs Downstairs*, *Cranford*, *Call The Midwife* and *Downton Abbey*.

Julian was leader of the internationally acclaimed Maggini String Quartet for 12 years, until 2023.

Julian plays on a J B Vuillaume Violin made in 1860.

## John Lenehan piano

With more than 80 albums to his credit, reflecting an enormous variety of genres and styles, John Lenehan ranks as one of the most versatile pianists on the classical scene today. His breadth of repertoire has led to his popularity on Spotify with a quarter of a million monthly listeners worldwide. Praised by the *New York Times* for his “great flair and virtuosity” and the (London) *Times* – “a masterly recital”, John Lenehan has also collaborated with some of the leading instrumentalists of our time.

As soloist he has appeared with LSO, RPO and LPO amongst many other orchestras and his many recordings include piano recitals and concertos as well as duo sonatas, chamber music and jazz. A four-disc survey of John Ireland’s piano music received great critical acclaim including a Gramophone award, and other solo recordings include three discs for Sony Classical of minimalist piano works and a disc of Erik Satie (for Classic FM). Most recently he has recorded albums with the Rossetti Ensemble as well as concertos by Mozart (K.467) and Beethoven (Emperor) with the National Symphony Orchestra.

John Lenehan also composes, with works published by Faber, Novello, and Schotts. His *Fantasy on Tchaikovsky’s Nutcracker* has recently been recorded by the Budapest Symphony Orchestra. He has written and arranged for a long list of soloists and orchestras including Emma Johnson, Nigel Kennedy, Tasmin Little, Nicola Benedetti, Leonidas Kavakos and Yuja Wang, the BBC

Concert Orchestra, RPO and the Hong Kong Philharmonic. In 2021 his work was heard in the Bastille Day celebrations in Paris (Orchestre de Paris) and the last night of the proms (BBCSO). A collaboration during lockdown with Dame Joanna Lumley and the Philharmonia created a reading of “The Night before Xmas” with incidental music. John Lenehan’s most recent composition is a piano concerto “The Legend of Maritime Silk Road” premiered in China in 2023. The work has had several subsequent performances including one in St. Petersburg in 2024. John’s interest in the combination of music and film has been long-standing. As director of “Sounds for Silents” he has written and arranged more than 20 film scores, which were performed throughout the UK in Festivals such as Aldeburgh, Cheltenham, Brighton, and Harrogate as well as in Italy, Germany, Norway, and Australia. He continues to present film and music programmes, reviving the art of the improvising pianist – the most recent including a tribute to the roaring twenties.

