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BEETHOVEN
SONATAS 6-8

JULIAN LEAPER
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|quartz|



BEETHOVEN SONATAS 6 – 8

Sonata No.6 in A Major Op.30, No.1

1	i	Allegro	8'30
2	ii	Adagio moto espressivo	6'30
3	iii	Allegretto con Variazioni	9'10

Sonata No.7 in C minor Op.30, No.2

4	i	Allegro con brio	8'58
5	ii	Adagio cantabile	9'14
6	iii	Scherzo, allegro	4'39
7	iv	Allegro	5'42

Sonata No.8 in G Major Op.30, No.3 “Champagnersonate”

8	i	Allegro assai	7'20
9	ii	Tempo di Minuetto	8'33
10	iii	Allegro Vivace	4'01

Total playing time: **72'58**

Recorded at St George's Church, Harrow, 15-17 September 2025
Producer/engineer: Michael Ponder
Editor: Phil Hardman

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.

Sonata No.6 in A Major Op.30 No.1

- i Allegro
- ii Adagio molto espressivo
- iii Allegretto con Variazioni

In the first of the Op.30 sonatas we observe a tightening and refining of Beethoven's compositional technique. The mood of the first movement appears relaxed, but the flow is frequently interrupted by interventions seeking to dispel complacency. Key relationships are vital in all classical music and the subdominant D, chosen as the key of the slow movement, brings the removal of a sharp and consequent softening of the environment. Beethoven allows a truly expansive melody to play out, relying on the dotted rhythm accompaniment to remind us that, in music as in life, a disturbing background should not be ignored. A remarkable modulation to Bb is the gateway to a middle section and a moment of stillness. Dotted rhythms give way to triplet figurations, which continue well into the return.

The last movement was intended to be a brilliant *Presto*, but Beethoven seems to have decided it was inappropriate for this sonata and replaced it with a gentle theme and six wide-ranging variations of clearly-defined character. One imagines his improvisations might have been like this, but regrettably we shall never know.

Variations 5 and 6, taken together, form a kind of *coda*, in which Beethoven, no longer handcuffed to the theme, makes a dash for freedom. The original last movement eventually found a new home as the *Finale* of the *Kreutzer* Sonata Op.47.

Sonata No.7 in C minor Op.30, No.2

- i Allegro con brio
- ii Adagio cantabile
- iii Scherzo (Allegro)
- iv Finale (Allegro) - Presto

This sonata is undoubtedly the most powerful of the Op.30 set. It shares not only a key but the sense of fate of the later 5th Symphony. The opening, given to the piano, is ominous in its quiet, minimalist character and heart-stopping silences. The entry of the violin is accompanied by background rumblings in the piano, giving a hint of volcanic eruptions to come, which the innocence of the second subject will be unable to prevent. Both subjects prove ideal material for development, which Beethoven exploits to the full. The recapitulation brings no let-up in the drama, leading to an unremittingly tempestuous *coda*.

The profound slow movement brings tension at the other end of the spectrum, arising not from physical energy but simply through its extreme beauty. In the middle section slow-moving minims are effectively juxtaposed against *staccato* semiquavers. The return of the main theme introduces an enhanced accompaniment in the piano, comprising feather-light scales. The speedy *Scherzo* provides little opportunity for reflection and one has to remain alert to avoid being pinched by the many offbeat *sforzando* accents, which have a long reach even into the Trio.

The *Finale* picks up elements of the first movement, with ominous silences in the opening leading to music of relentless forward propulsion. Even in the

second subject the unstoppable energy is not compromised, but Beethoven keeps one more surprise in reserve – an increase in tempo. The high drama of the *coda* is directed to be performed *Presto* and, assisted by the flow of adrenalin in performer and listener alike, the impossible becomes possible.

Sonata No.8 in G Major Op.30, No.3 “Champagnersonate”

- i Allegro assai
- ii Tempo di Minuetto (ma molto moderato e grazioso)
- iii Allegro vivace

Beethoven never repeats himself and the third sonata of the set offers a much lighter side to his musical personality. The first movement is effervescent and, despite having switched to the minor in the second subject, Beethoven generously pours a second glass of the ‘bubbly’!

The contrast with the next movement, marked *Tempo di Minuetto*, is extreme. Its smooth, long lines in both melody and bass are not the qualities associated with a typical minuet composed for dancing, but this was of course never Beethoven’s intention. The main subject dominates almost throughout the movement, conveying an atmosphere of stability and calm.

From the start of the *Finale*, it is plain that Beethoven is impatient to get moving again, though not in the harmony, where the bass remains pivoted alternately on a tonic and dominant pedal point. The structure is a *rondo*, incorporating a developmental middle episode and further explorations in the *coda*.



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.

