

Beethoven - Complete Cello Sonatas & Variations on Themes from Die Zauberflöte (Casals Edition)



CD1 1. Sonata No. 1 in F Major, Op. 5, No. 1/I. Adagio sostenuto - Allegro-Adagio-Presto 19:02 2. Sonata No. 1 in F Major, Op. 5, No. 1/II. Rondo. Allegro vivace 7:22 3. Sonata No. 2 in G minor, Op. 5, No. 2/I. Adagio sostenuto e espressivo/Allegro molto più tosto presto 21:19 4. Sonata No. 2 in G minor, Op. 5, No. 2/II. Rondo. Allegro 10:02 5. Sonata No. 4 in C Major, Op. 102, No. 1/I. Andante - Allegro vivace 8:53 6. Sonata No. 4 in C Major, Op. 102, No. 1/II. Adagio - Allegro vivace 8:32 CD2 1. Sonata No. 3 in A Major, Op. 69/I. Allegro ma non troppo 13:29 2. Sonata No. 3 in A Major, Op. 69/II. Scherzo. Allegro molto 5:42 3. Sonata No. 3 in A Major, Op. 69/III. Adagio cantabile - Allegro vivace 9:30 4. Sonata No. 5 in D Major, Op. 102, No. 2/I. Allegro con brio 7:22 5. Sonata No. 5 in D Major, Op. 102, No. 2/II. Adagio con molto sentimento d'affetto 9:35 6. Sonata No. 5 in D Major, Op. 102, No. 2/III. Allegro - Allegro fugato 4:52 7. 7 Variations on Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen from Mozart's Die Zauberflöte, WoO.46 11:02 8. 12 Variations on Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen from Mozart's Die Zauberflöte, WoO.66 11:35 Pablo Casals – cello Rudolf Serkin – piano

Pablo Casals was once the greatest living cellist. His technique was formidable, his tone was magisterial, and his interpretations were sovereign. In the '20s and '30s, Casals was a charismatic virtuoso on the same level as Kreisler and Horowitz. Those days were over by the time he recorded Beethoven's works for cello and piano with the superb Rudolf Serkin in 1954. His formidable technique had irrevocably decayed: in the fast passages and movements, Casals could barely keep up and he dropped notes like a tree drops leaves in a late autumn rain. His magisterial tone has deteriorated: in the slow passages and movements, Casals groaned and growled like boughs and branches in a hard autumn wind. From a technical point of view, there's not much left of Casals' the charismatic virtuoso. All that was left were his interpretive abilities and, incredibly, they are almost enough. In the deep Adagio sostenuto ed espressivo opening of Op. 5/2 and in the profound Adagio con molto sentimento d'affetto of Op. 102/2, Casals' magnificent interpretations more than compensate for his technical flaws. And in his interpretations of Beethoven's two sets of Die Zauberflöte Variations, Op. 66, and WoO 46, Casals' affection for the music makes his performances sublime despite his obvious technical

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limitations. Although this should by no means be the only recording of Beethoven's cello works one hears, one should nevertheless hear these performances if only to hear how great a median Casals was even when he was no longer a virtuoso. Columbia's 1954 sound is antediluvian. --- James Leonard, Rovi

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