

# LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

## Sonata No. 21 in C Major (“Waldstein”), Op. 53

(Grande Sonate)

Edited by Stewart Gordon

---

### About This Edition

#### Foreword

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) is often regarded as a link between the balance and clarity of Classicism and the emotional intensity and freedom of Romanticism. In

his 32 piano sonatas, he experimented constantly with structure and content. These works span a period of almost 30 years of Beethoven’s mature creative life. He used the sonatas as a workshop in which to try out innovations, many of his compositional techniques appearing in the sonatas first and then later in chamber or symphonic works.

Beethoven completed the Op. 53 between May and November of 1803. Sketches of the Op. 53 show that the composer was working on the sonata along with the Symphony No. 3, Op. 55 (“Eroica”), and the opera *Fidelio*, Op. 70, especially the overture to it known as *Leonore Overture No. 2*. Sketches for the Op. 53 are particularly interesting for studying the process through which the composer transformed initial thematic fragments into final versions.

Count Ferdinand Ernest Gabriel von Waldstein (1762–1823) had been a patron of Beethoven from the time both of them resided in Bonn, the Count having been dispatched there from Vienna on a diplomatic mission. It was probably through the influence of the Count that the Elector of Bonn, Maximilian Franz (1756–1801), sponsored Beethoven to go to Vienna to study with Haydn. At the time of Beethoven’s departure for Vienna, Waldstein wrote in the composer’s autograph book, “*May you receive the spirit of Mozart through the hands of Haydn.*”

An autograph for the Op. 53 is extant, but there is speculation as to whether or not it was the basis used for the first edition, due to the number of differences between the two sources. Perhaps the engraver’s carelessness can account for the differences; on the other hand, scholars have speculated that if, indeed, the engraver of the first edition was working from another manuscript, it may have represented the composer’s final editing of the sonata.

Thus, the primary sources for this edition are both the autograph manuscript and the first edition published in Vienna, Austria, by Bureau d’Arts et d’Industrie in 1805. Additionally, a number of other esteemed editions were referenced (see “Sources Consulted for This Edition” on page 3) when decisions have had to be

made due to lack of clarity or inconsistency in the early sources, or when realization of ornamentation was open to question.

Recommended solutions to problems are suggested in footnotes in this edition. If, however, a problem is such that it is open to several solutions, other editors’ conclusions are also often included. In this way students and their teachers are not only offered choices in individual cases but, more importantly, gain an awareness of the editorial and performance problems that attend studying and playing this music.

The insurmountable problems that arise in trying to distinguish between the staccato dot and the wedge in these works have led this editor to join ranks with most others in using but one marking (dot) for both symbols.

Like almost all other editors, I have chosen not to indicate pedaling markings in the sonatas except those left by the composer. The matter of pedaling, especially as might be applicable to music of this era, must be based on innumerable choices that result from stylistic awareness and careful listening, these possibilities changing as different instruments or performance venues are encountered.

Both autographs and first editions contain inconsistencies. First editions especially are prone to many discrepancies, such as differences in articulation in parallel passages in expositions and recapitulations of movements in sonata-allegro form, or the many cases of an isolated note in passagework without the articulation shown for all its neighbors. Even those editors whose philosophy is to be as faithful to the composer as possible subscribe to the practice of correcting these small discrepancies without taking note of such through the addition of parentheses. This edition also subscribes to that practice to avoid cluttering the performer’s pages with what would turn out to be a myriad of parenthetical changes. By the same token, this editor has proceeded with an attitude of caution and inquiry, so that such changes have been made only in the most obvious cases of error or omission. If, in the opinion of the editor, there seemed to be the slightest chance that such inconsistencies could represent conscious variation or musical intent on the part of the composer, the issue has been highlighted, either by the use of parentheses that show editorial additions or footnotes that outline discrepancies and discuss possible musical intent on the part of the composer.

Fingering in parentheses indicates alternative fingering. When a single fingering number attends a chord or two vertical notes, the number indicates the uppermost

Dedicated to the Count Ferdinand von Waldstein

# Sonata No. 21 in C Major

(Grande Sonate)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Op. 53

**Allegro con brio**

pp 3 1

4

3 1

5

5

pp 3 1

3 1

4

9

cresc.

f sf

3

12

decresc.

pp

3 1

3 1

4 1

a

b

(a) Both the autograph and the first edition show all grace notes in this movement as small sixteenth notes (♩). Of the referenced editors, Arrau, Hauschild, Krebs, Schenker, Taylor, and Wallner keep the original notation. D'Albert, Bülow, Casella, Köhler, Martienssen, Schnabel, and Tovey show ♯ instead. Taylor recommends playing the notes on the beat, rapidly, but not as crushed notes (*acciaccatura*).

(b) Bülow suggests the fermata should equal an extra whole note, counted in time. Casella objects to the “squareness” of this recommendation, suggesting instead an extra dotted half note (♩.) or whole note tied to a quarter (♩—♩).

**Rondo**  
**Allegretto moderato**

- (a) The autograph shows only *allegretto*. The *moderato* appears in the first edition.
- (b) The pedaling throughout this movement comes from both the autograph and the first edition. Beethoven's interest in pedal effects has been evidenced before in the piano sonatas. That Beethoven wanted a coloristic sonority with some degree of blurring seems certain. However, achieving whatever effect the composer wanted on today's instruments that are more resonant is problematic for many. Of the referenced editors, Köhler and Bülow change the original pedaling to achieve harmonic clarity. Schenker, Taylor, and Tovey write notes suggesting unspecified patterns of "half-pedaling" (i.e., half-damping), Taylor and Tovey indicating that using the sostenuto (middle) pedal when it is available might be helpful. Casella and Schnabel in notes extol the originality of the composer's sonic conception and insist that the performer follow the original pedaling. The remaining editors simply reproduce the original pedaling without comment. This editors sides with those who attempt to follow Beethoven's markings exactly, which is possible on most pianos with careful attention to touch, balance, and exact pedal releases.