

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Sonata No. 23 in F Minor (“Appassionata”), Op. 57

Edited by Stewart Gordon

Foreword

About This Edition

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’s student Carl Czerny (1791–1857) reported that the composer considered the Op. 57 his “greatest sonata, up to the period when he composed the Op. 106.”¹ Beethoven began writing the work in the summer of 1804 and probably continued for about two years, a period during which he was engaged in writing a number of significant works including the opera *Fidelio*; Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 58; the “Rasumovsky” Quartets, Op. 59; the Symphony No. 4, Op. 60; and the Concerto for Violin, Op. 61. The Op. 57 is dedicated to the Count Franz Brunsvik (1777–1849), a close friend of Beethoven, an excellent cellist, and whose wife Sidonie Justh (1801–1866) was a fine pianist.

The autograph of the Op. 57 is extant, it having been a gift in 1807 from the composer to the pianist Marie Kiene Bigot de Morogues (1786–1920), who with her husband moved to Paris in 1809. Marie gave the autograph to the Paris Conservatoire de Musique in 1889. Thought to be one of three piano sonatas offered to the publisher Breitkopf & Härtel in a letter dated April 18, 1805, the Op. 57 was actually published in Vienna, Austria, by Bureau d’Arts et d’Industrie in February 1807. The work was also published in a four-hand version in 1838 under the title *Sonata appassionata*. This seems to be the origin for the designation “Appassionata,” which became the work’s famous nickname.

Thus, the primary sources for this edition are both the autograph manuscript and the first edition. 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.


¹ Carl Czerny, *On the Proper Performance of All of Beethoven’s Works for the Piano*, edited by Paul Badura-Skoda (Vienna: Universal Editions, 1970), p. 58.

Dedicated to the Count Franz Brunsvik

Sonata No. 23 in F Minor

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
Op. 57

Allegro assai


(a) Slurring for this figure is sporadic in both the autograph and the first edition. When it appears, it is represented as . In addition, slurs over the group of three sixteenth notes are often missing.

(b) The motivic figure in measure 3 appears throughout this movement, the trill sometimes being preceded by a small grace note, at other times not. Fortunately, the autograph and the first edition correspond as to the notation of these figures. The presence or absence of the grace note has led to a variety of interpretations. Of the referenced editors, Bülow, Casella, Martiensen, Schenker, Schnabel, Tovey, and Taylor provide either notes or realizations that represent his individual point of view, and the views often conflict. In those measures where the lower grace note is present there is a fair amount of agreement with starting the first note on the beat. Only Martiensen wrote it as a grace note before the beat. Moreover, Martiensen, Schnabel, and Taylor show realizations in which the last three sixteenth notes in the measure are to be played in time rather than incorporated into the trill as after-notes (*nachschlag*), and Taylor writes a note stressing such rhythmic accuracy. The following examples are representative of these realizations:

measure 3, beat 7:  or: 

This concept can be applied to measures 3, 7, 9, 23, 69, 144, and 146. For measures without a grace note before the trill, see footnote (c).

(c) The trills in the following measures are presented in both the autograph and the first edition without a grace note before the trill: 11, 21, 71, 73, 76, 138, 142, 156, 158, 160, and 162. A summary of the realizations of the referenced editors who address these trills through comments and/or fingering follows: Arrau, Bülow, Hauschild, Köhler, and Wallner begin these trills on the beat with the upper accessory:

measure 11, beat 7:  measure 21, beat 7: 

This editor agrees with this group. Martiensen and Schenker recommend beginning on the upper note before the beat. Schnabel, although acknowledging the performance practice of using the upper note, prefers to add a lower grace note, thus rendering all of the trills in this movement like the one in measure 3 (see footnote (b)). Casella, Tovey, and Taylor believe that one may add a lower grace note to measure 11 inasmuch as its counterpart in the recapitulation shows one (measure 146), although the LH is quite different. Tovey points to the fact that in most cases the lower grace note is omitted where the RH is written in double (or triple) notes (measures 21, 71, 73, 76, 138, 142, 156, and 162). The exceptions are measures 11, and measures 160 and 162. Tovey recommends that all measures except measure 11 be played with trills starting on the upper note. Taylor draws the conclusion that in the absence of a grace note, all trills should start on the main note; then he waffles by adding that one might well add a lower grace note to any of the trills in this movement. Casella adds his own pattern of either upper or lower grace notes throughout the movement, noting that all grace notes should start on the beat.

Andante con moto

p e dolce

sfp

9

rinf.

cresc.

15

21

1. 2.

27

p cresc.

f

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is for a piano piece in 2/4 time with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). It consists of five systems of music. The first system (measures 1-8) begins with a piano (*p*) and dolce marking. The second system (measures 9-14) includes a *rinf.* (ritardando) and *cresc.* (crescendo) marking. The third system (measures 15-20) features a piano (*p*) marking. The fourth system (measures 21-26) shows two first endings. The fifth system (measures 27-30) includes a piano crescendo (*p cresc.*) and a fortissimo (*f*) marking. Fingering numbers (1-5) and articulation marks (accents, slurs) are present throughout the score.

Allegro ma non troppo

Musical notation for measures 1-7. Treble clef, 2/4 time, key signature of three flats. Dynamics: *ff*, *p*. Fingerings: 4, 1, 4, 5, 3, 4. Includes a 'Rev.' marking and an asterisk.

Musical notation for measures 8-12. Treble clef, 2/4 time, key signature of three flats. Dynamics: *cresc.* Fingerings: 4, 3, 3, 5, 3, 4.

Musical notation for measures 13-17. Bass clef, 2/4 time, key signature of three flats. Dynamics: *f*. Fingerings: 4, 3, 1, 2, 1, 3, 4, 3, 1, 2.

Musical notation for measures 18-22. Bass clef, 2/4 time, key signature of three flats. Dynamics: *dim.*, *pp*. Fingerings: 3, (1 4 3), (5 4 3), 4.

Musical notation for measures 23-27. Bass clef, 2/4 time, key signature of three flats. Fingerings: (1 4 3), (4 5 4), 1 3, 2 5, 2, 2 3, 2 1, 2.