

111 Years of Deutsche Grammophon - CD 2

Beethoven - String Quartets Opp.59, No.1 "Rasumovsky" & 131



String Quartet in F, Op.59 No.1 - "Rasumovsky" 1 1. *Allegro* [10:04] 2 2. *Allegretto vivace e sempre scherzando* [8:34] 3 3. *Adagio molto e mesto* [12:09] 4 4. *Thème russe (Allegro)* [6:38]
String Quartet in C sharp minor, Op.131
5 1. *Adagio ma non troppo e molto espressivo* [6:59] 6 2. *Allegro molto vivace* [3:05] 7 3. *Allegro moderato* [0:56] 8 4. *Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile - Più mosso - Andante moderato e lusinghiero - Adagio - Allegretto - Adagio, ma non troppo e semplice – Allegretto* [14:17] 9 5. *Presto* [5:27] 10 6. *Adagio quasi un poco andante* [2:04] 11 7. *Allegro* [6:30]
Amadeus Quartet

Ludwig van Beethoven's String Quartet No. 7 in F major was published in 1808 as opus 59, No. 1. This work is the first of three quartets commissioned by prince Andreas Razumovsky, then the Russian ambassador to Vienna. This quartet is the first of Beethoven's middle period quartets and exhibits a marked departure in style from his earlier opus 18 quartets. The most apparent difference is that this quartet is over forty minutes long in a typical performance, whereas most of Beethoven's earlier quartets typically lasted only twenty-five to thirty minutes. Furthermore, this quartet notoriously requires a greatly expanded technical repertoire when compared against his op. 18 quartets. By 1806, Beethoven was undoubtedly a known quantity in many elite circles; however, his universal popularity as a composer had not been established. Scholars posit that the greater demands on technical ability not only served to widen the ever-increasing gap, as it were, between amateurs and professionals but to simultaneously propel Beethoven into the public image as a composer of "serious music." Other scholars claim that the delay of public performance due to Count Razumovsky being granted exclusive rights to these quartets for several years invalidates the theory of popular image promotion.

The String Quartet No. 14 in C♯ minor, Op. 131, by Ludwig van Beethoven was completed in 1826. (The number traditionally assigned to it is based on the order of its publication; it is actually his fifteenth quartet by order of composition.) About 40 minutes in length, it consists of seven movements to be played without a break. This work, which is dedicated to Baron Joseph von Stutterheim, was Beethoven's favourite from the late quartets. He is quoted as remarking to a friend that he would find "a new manner of part-writing and, thank God, less lack of imagination than before". The work was dedicated to von Stutterheim as a gesture of gratitude for taking his nephew, Karl, into the army after a failed suicide attempt in 1826. Together with the quartets Opp. 130 and 132, it goes beyond anything Beethoven had previously written. (Op. 131 is the conclusion of that trio of great works, written in the order 132, 130 with the Grosse Fuge ending, 131.) It is said that upon listening to a performance of this quartet, Schubert remarked, "After this, what is left for us to write?". Along with Op. 127, Robert Schumann called these quartets "the grandeur of which no words can express. They seem to me to stand...on the extreme boundary of all that has hitherto been attained by human art and imagination." The Op. 131 quartet is a monumental feat of integration. Beethoven composes the quartet in six distinct key areas, closing the quartet again in C♯ major. The Finale directly quotes the opening fugue theme in the first movement, prompting Joseph Kerman to note it as a "blatant functional reference to the theme of another movement: this never happens."

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