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# Wilhelm Backhaus

## Beethoven Piano Sonatas 10-13

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No words of mine are needed to establish Backhaus among the great living pianists, nor to analyse his qualities. But it has not been possible for him always to convey his greatness through the exciting process of wax and needle. In the *Funeral March* Sonata, he does so almost to perfection, in my judgement. This is a recording memorable on many grounds; perhaps the most important ground, and the one to vibrate longest in the memory, is that he gives us true, clear Beethoven unadulterated by Backhaus. Here he is the genuine performer of idealism—the transmuting poet, the canal or pipe through which the dead pianist-composer's music comes to life as he meant and wrote it. The theme and variations of the first movement are kept moving along at a pace that allows feeling but not sentimentality. The pianistic points here are variety of tone colour, evenness, and an enviable *leggiero*. In the *slowly* the repeats are performed as marked, which is gratifying. The *Funeral March for the Hero's Death* is taken at the right speed—a difficult one to settle on, and rarely attained; the *forte* interruptions are imperative but never stident. Backhaus's innate sense of classical style has its full expression in the *finale*, which is played in a model combination of charm, manliness, and Beethovenish humour.

H.F. **The Gramophone**, June 1951 (Reviewing LX72512, *excerpt announcing Sonata No. 12*)

This disc shows Backhaus's great gifts in their most enjoyable light. He seems to revel in the "old-fashioned" Beethoven of Op. 22, and brings out delightfully the humour of the middle section of the *Minuet* in which the composer seems to laugh at the period in which he is moving. In the opening movement of the same sonata Backhaus reminds us, in the course of the recapitulation, of how delicately he can play when he wishes to do so... The piano tone is good, and altogether the disc takes a high place in the long list of Backhaus's Beethoven recordings.

A.R. **The Gramophone**, June 1954 (Reviewing LX72920, *excerpt announcing Sonata No. 11*)

### Transfer notes

As with other releases in this series I've taken great care to bring consistency to the tuning of Backhaus's piano where previously it was absent - the average pitches for each of these four sonatas as presented by Decca were A4 = 433.9, 442.5, 432.7 and 438.7 hertz respectively. Furthermore the 12th started low, before drifting gradually upwards, whilst the opposite effect was to be heard in the 13th. Owners of the Japanese Decca (London) CD reissue of the 13th will also be familiar with a 'sticky edit' pitch lurch of more than a tone in the *finale*, not present here, as well as several completely missing notes in the middle of first movement! Tonally I've continued to accept slightly higher than usual levels of tape hiss in order to bring out the full tone of Backhaus's piano, something which was considerably muted in the Decca incarnation. Once again it was no surprise to discover that the later recordings were of somewhat better audio quality than the earlier ones. A.R.

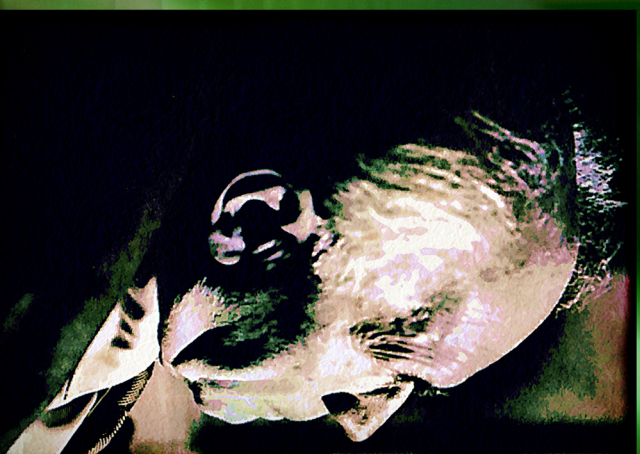
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# BACKHAUS

## Beethoven Edition

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## Volume 3

### Piano Sonatas 10-13

No. 10 in G major, Op. 14, No. 2  
No. 11 in B flat major, Op. 22  
No. 12 in A flat major, Op. 26  
"March Funèbre"  
No. 13 in E flat major, Op. 27, No. 1  
"Quasi una fantasia"

Decca Studio Recordings  
1950 - 1953

## Backhaus Beethoven Edition Volume 3

### BEETHOVEN Sonata No. 10 in G major, Op. 14, No. 2

- 1 1st mvt. - Allegro (4:51)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Andante (4:51)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Scherzo - Allegro assai (3:14)

### BEETHOVEN Sonata No. No. 11 in B flat major, Op. 22

- 4 1st mvt. - Allegro con brio (5:30)
- 5 2nd mvt. - Adagio con molt' espressione (7:03)
- 6 3rd mvt. - Menuetto (3:02)
- 7 4th mvt. - Rondo - Allegretto (5:39)

### BEETHOVEN Sonata No. 12 in A flat major, Op. 26 "March Funèbre"

- 8 1st mvt. - Andante con variazioni (7:18)
- 9 2nd mvt. - Scherzo - Allegro molto (2:56)
- 10 3rd mvt. - Marcia funebre sulla morte d'un eroe (5:25)
- 11 4th mvt. - Allegro (2:59)

### BEETHOVEN Sonata No. 13 in E flat major, Op. 27, No. 1 "Quasi una fantasia"

- 12 1st mvt. - Andante - Allegro - Andante (4:36)
- 13 2nd mvt. - Allegro molto e vivace (2:03)
- 14 3rd mvt. - Adagio con espressione (2:21)
- 15 4th mvt. - Allegro vivace (4:52)

**Wilhelm Backhaus piano**

XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Cover artwork based on a photograph of  
**Wilhelm Backhaus**

#### Sonata No. 10

Recorded April 1952  
Issued as Decca LXT 2931

#### Sonata No. 11

Recorded November 1953  
Issued as Decca LXT 2920

#### Sonata No. 12

Recorded June 1950  
Issued as Decca LXT 2532

#### Sonata No. 13

Recorded November 1952  
Issued as Decca LXT 2780

Recording producer: **Victor Olof**  
Recorded at **Victoria Hall, Geneva**

Total duration: 66:40

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