

Wilhelm Backhaus

Beethoven Piano Sonatas 22-26



While Backhaus's understanding of Beethoven is not, at this time of day, in any dispute, there is room to question whether these particular performances succeed in conveying it to the listener. They are dominated by a savage attack, and a refusal to play below an *mp-mpf* degree of volume; a refusal that may be the result of many years' experience of recording under less satisfactory technical conditions than to-day's—which are here not on their very best behaviour, but are nevertheless good, and of course greatly superior to those that may be in Backhaus's mind. . . The *Appassionata* stands up to the strain fairly well; and is, indeed, particularly in the last movement, an impressive display of technical powers of the most advanced kind.

M.M. The Gramophone, September 1952 (Reviewing LXT2715, *except opening Sonata No. 23*)

The classical, precise, authoritative Backhaus is presented here with uncommonly lifelike quality. He has his minor eccentricisms, but they are no more than a part of the person who is presenting a great master for our full attention. Backhaus's own intense conviction of the composer's mastery fully overcomes any doubts one might have about the music. In truth, not one of these three sonatas is of great magnitude—that in G major (Op. 79), Beethoven himself entitled "*sonate facile ou sonatine*,"... I like the brittle, giddy effect Backhaus creates for the opening movement of Op. 79; it has a kind of peasant air about it. The *andante* is taken well under walking pace, and I could bear the *minuet* finale more headlong. From this disc I had slight trouble with blast, which remained even if one turned the dynamics down. Backhaus's percussive style need not lead to this fault.

H.F. The Gramophone, October 1951 (Reviewing LXT2603, *except opening Sonata No. 23*)

Transfer notes

I have pointed out in previous technical notes that it has increasingly become my opinion that this series of Beethoven sonata recordings is one neglected - and, in its day, often disparaged - not primarily as a result of the playing by Backhaus of these works, but the by the raw deal he was served up by Decca's inadequate recordings. In this volume pitch is, for the most part, not the issue seen previously, the exception being the first movement of the *Appassionata*, which dips alarmingly to begin with before proceeding to waver and jump about throughout the movement, most probably the result of editing together various takes as much as poor general tape speed stability. This has, for the first time, been corrected.

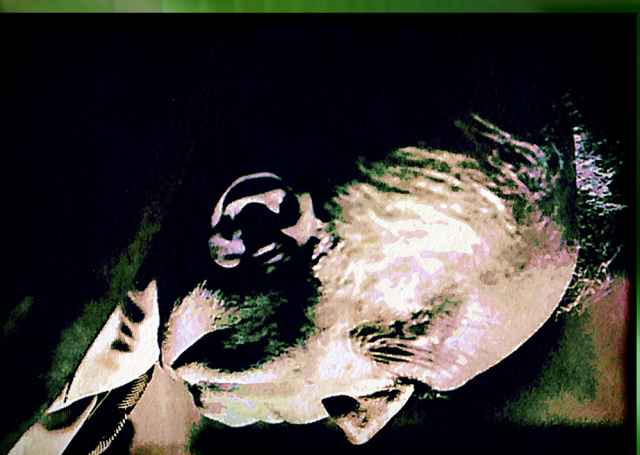
I would have to take issue with *The Gramophone* reviewer's suggestion that Backhaus refuses to play below *mp-mpf* throughout the work - but can well imagine that impression being given by poor reproduction of his playing. Much of this is now happily alleviated here, and these interpretations can be more clearly judged within the excellent sonata cycle they so clearly combine to produce.

A.R.

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Beethoven Edition



Volume 6

Piano Sonatas 23-26

- No. 23 in F minor, Op. 57
"Appassionata"
- No. 24 in F sharp major, Op. 78
"A Thérèse"
- No. 25 in G major, Op. 79
- No. 26 in E flat major, Op. 81a
"Les Adieux"

Decca Studio Recordings
1951 - 1953

Backhaus Beethoven Edition Volume 6

BEETHOVEN Sonata No. 23 in F minor, Op. 57 "Appassionata"

- 1 1st mvt. - Allegro assai (9:12)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Andante con moto (5:51)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Allegro ma non troppo - Presto (5:16)

BEETHOVEN Sonata No. 24 in F sharp major, Op. 78 "A Thérèse"

- 4 1st mvt. - Adagio cantabile - Allegro ma non troppo (6:33)
- 5 2nd mvt. - Allegro vivace (3:17)

BEETHOVEN Sonata No. 25 in G major, Op. 79

- 6 1st mvt - Presto alla tedesca (4:15)
- 7 2nd mvt - Andante (3:17)
- 8 3rd mvt - Vivace (1:54)

BEETHOVEN Sonata No. 26 in E flat major, Op. 81a "Les Adieux"

- 9 1st mvt - Adagio - Allegro (7:00)
- 10 2nd mvt - Andante espressivo (3:04)
- 11 3rd mvt - Vivacissimamente (6:02)

Wilhelm Backhaus piano

XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Cover artwork based on a photograph of
Wilhelm Backhaus

Sonata No. 23
Recorded April 1952
Issued as Decca LXT 2715

Sonata No. 24
Recorded April 1952
Issued as Decca LXT 2931

Sonata No. 25
Recorded March 1951
Issued as Decca LXT 2603

Sonata No. 26
Recorded November 1953
Issued as Decca LXT 2902

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

Total duration: **55:41**

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