AULICUS CLASSICS

ALC 0180

BEETHOVEN Sonatas Vol.6

COSTANTINO MASTROPRIMIANO

GRANDE SONATE
pour le Piano-Forte composée et dédiée
à Monsieur le Comte de Browne,
Brigadier au service de S. M. I. de toute la Russie,
par Louis van Beethoven. Opus XXII.

I. Allegro con brio	07:27
II. Adagio con molta espressione	06:50
III. Minuetto	03:38
IV. Rondò. Allegretto	06:49

GRANDE SONATE
pour le Clavecin ou Forte-Piano,
composée et dédiée à Son Altesse Monseigneur
le Prince Charles de Lichnowsky,
par Louis van Beethoven. Opus XXVI.

I. Tema con variazioni. Andante	07:55
II. Scherzo. Allegro molto	03:09
III. Marcia funebre sulla morte d'un eroe	06:03
IV. Allegro	03:14

Total Time: 45:08
Recording 2025 May 14 - 18 StudioiCarus Studio - Roma
Recording **Simone Sciumbata**
Recording Producer, Artistic Supervisor, Editing and Mastering **Rosella Clementi**
Publishing supervisor **Romano Di Bari**
Instrument Walter und Sohn ca. 1805. A copy (Gerard Tuinman - Utrecht)
of an instrument by Walter und Sohn, privately owned in Spain.
FF-c4. Two kneelevers for the dampers and the moderator
Tuning **Gerard Tuinman and Nicola Grazian**
Artwork **Chiara Gimmelli** | Cover art Nicolas Poussin - La Mort de Germanicus

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Sonatas Op. 22 and Op. 26 We are in Vienna at the dawn of a new century, as the Habsburg monarchy confronts France under First Consul Napoleon Bonaparte. Beethoven's Sonatas Op. 22 and Op. 26 took shape between 1800 and 1801, when French victories at Marengo and Hohenlinden brought Austria to the Peace of Lunéville. By then, the thirty-year-old Beethoven had established himself in Vienna, both financially and professionally. In a letter dated 29 June 1801 to his loyal friend Franz Gerhard Wegeler, he wrote: "For every work I have six or seven publishers, and even more if I wanted them; no one bargains with me any longer: I name my price, and they pay." Despite the war and its consequences, Vienna remained a remarkably fertile setting for musical life. Concerts, lessons and hours spent composing went hand in hand with a thriving instrument-making trade, giving composers and performers access to a range of sonic possibilities. Among the leading makers of the time was Anton Walter. In his *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben*, Carl Czerny recalls visiting Beethoven as a boy to play for him and seeing a Walter piano in the composer's room; he considered Walter the finest piano maker in the city. This recollection offers a starting point for exploring the instrumental world of these sonatas. For Beethoven, the piano was not simply a means of expressing musical ideas, but also a place for experiment, where gesture met sound and tested its possibilities. The attack and decay of each note, its articulation and resonance, and the interplay between voices and registers all become part of the compositional process. The 1795 Walter piano used for this recording offers a tangible point of reference for exploring this relationship. Close in date and construction to the instrument described by Czerny, it allows us to approach the sonatas through the possibilities of a piano from Beethoven's own time. The aim is not to recreate a lost sound, but to understand how the instrument's particular qualities help shape the music. Composed between 1800 and 1801 and both published in March 1802, Sonatas Op. 22 and Op. 26 show how differently Beethoven could shape a musical argument within the same instrumental world. Op. 22 unfolds across four expansive movements, opening with an Allegro con brio and ending with a *Rondo*. Op. 26 begins with a theme and variations and places a funeral march between the scherzo and finale. These works are not merely two stages in Beethoven's development; they offer two distinct conceptions of the sonata, explored within a short space of time. Dedicated to Count Johann Georg von Browne-Camus, Op. 22 combines the breadth and architecture of the *Grande Sonate* with varied, densely worked writing rich in keyboard effects. It asks the performer to keep reconsidering how best to approach the instrument. The historical piano invites us to hear this variety as a sequence of distinct gestures: surges, pauses, responses and shifts between registers. The brilliance of the Allegro con brio lies not only in the speed of its figurations, but also in the way each attack comes into focus before giving way to the next. In the *Adagio con molt'espressione*, the main line must be sustained independently of the accompaniment's rhythm, allowing it to unfold freely above the pulse that supports it. This depends on the shaping of the phrase and the balance between the parts that together form the musical discourse. In the *Minuet*, the elegance of the main section gives way to the agitation of the minor-key section, calling for a change in the handling of sound levels. In the final *Rondò*, the calm of the principal theme alternates with light, ever-changing figurations and interwoven voices, asking the performer to attend closely to the relationship between gesture and sound. This variety makes the relationship with the instrument a key to understanding Beethoven's compositional choices. By exploring the piano's possibilities in the light of the score, we can bring the connection between gesture and sound into focus—and perhaps give the music a shape and expressive character closer to what Beethoven had in mind.

Dedicated to Prince Carl Lichnowsky, Op. 26 immediately overturns expectations with its opening theme and variations. Instead of beginning with a conventional Allegro, the music presents an idea and then explores its transformation. Each variation gives Beethoven a different way to test the instrument and follow his imagination: the figuration changes, as do the distribution of the parts and the relationships between them. After the *Scherzo, the Funeral March on the Death of a Hero* introduces a different experience of time and sound. Op. 26 is the first of Beethoven's sonatas to include explicit instructions for raising the dampers. In the March, operating the knee lever produces a distinctive effect: repeated attacks build the resonance, changing the texture and density of the sound. After the rhetorical tension of the third movement, the finale—an *Allegro* in the form of a *Rondò*—gradually releases the dramatic pressure. Flowing groups of four sixteenth notes, punctuated by moments of contrast, carry the music towards its close, where it fades to *pianissimo (pp)*, surrounded by a halo of resonance created by the senza *sordini* mechanism. The two sonatas thus reveal a shift in what Beethoven considered necessary to specify in the score. He begins to prescribe particular effects, giving the exploration of the instrument's resonance a more defined expressive role in shaping the musical discourse. Hearing these works on the 1795 Walter piano brings these questions to the heart of interpretation. The aim is not to recreate a sound that can never be repeated, but to explore the relationship between the score, physical gesture and the material instrument. In performance, to articulate or connect notes, to let a sound ring or cut it short, means more than simply playing what is written. It also means considering how our choices, through the sounds they produce, shape the musical text as it unfolds in time. The recording was made on a fortepiano dating from around 1805, built by Gerard Tuinman as a copy of an instrument by Walter & Sohn. It has a compass of FF–c^4 and two knee levers, one operating the dampers and the other the moderator.

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Costantino Mastroprimiano is one of the leading experts in historical piano performance internationally. After his studies in piano and chamber music with Michele Marvulli, Guido Agosti and Riccardo Brengola, devoted himself to the Fortepiano (historical piano). His vast discography features compositions by Chopin, Alkan, Burgmüller, Staehle, Moscheles, Ries, Hummel, Beethoven, Kraus, and in particular the complete piano sonatas by Muzio Clementi and by Hummel for Brilliant Classics. He is currently recording all Beethoven piano sonatas for Aulics Classics. He is frequently invited to give concerts (Accademia Filarmonica Romana, I Concerti della Normale, Società del Quartetto di Milano, Accademia Cristofori di Firenze, Micat in Vertice, etc.) and abroad (Les Nuits de Septembre – Liège, Noites de Queluz, Mozarteum di Salzburg, Salle Cortot, Musikfestspiele Potsdam Sans Souci, Haydn Geburtshaus Rohrau, la Grange aux Pianos, Ignaz Pleyel Zentrum, PBA Charleroi, etc.). He regularly teaches masterclasses in Italy, Europe, the US and Russia (APM Saluzzo, Ecole Normale de Paris, Koninklijk Conservatorium Den Haag, Universität – Mozarteum Salzburg, Conservatorio di Stato P. I. Čajkovskij, CSM di Malaga, Sam Houston State University – Texas). He teaches Historical Piano in the Conservatory of music in Perugia (Italy).