

SAYAKA SHOJI VIOLIN; GIANLUCA CASCIOLI FORTEPIANO

SAT 27 JAN 2024
1.00PM



avex
RECITAL SERIES
2023/24
WIGMORE HALL

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WIGMORE HALL

**WOLFGANG AMADEUS
MOZART (1756 - 1791)**
SONATA FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO K454

**ROBERT SCHUMANN
(1810 - 1856)**
THREE ROMANCES OP.94

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
(1770 - 1827)**
SONATA FOR PIANO AND VIOLIN
NO.10 OP.96

**WOLFGANG AMADEUS
MOZART
(1756 - 1791)**

**SONATA FOR VIOLIN AND
PIANO K454**

1. LARGO / ALLEGRO
2. ANDANTE
3. ALLEGRETTO

Mozart's early violin sonatas, of which there are sixteen, were written before the age of ten. They are really keyboard sonatas with an optional violin part; some have an optional cello part as well. They are rarely played now, most players considering them to be primarily of historical interest. When Mozart returned to the form in his early 20s however, it's a very different matter. He wrote fifteen between 1778 and 1782 though not all were complete. And by 1784 we find him creating individual, large scale, serious sonatas with complex interplay between the two instruments. There are three that are widely regarded as his greatest – the 1784 sonata in B-flat, K454, that we hear today, the E-flat K481 of 1785 and the A major K526 that followed in 1787.

Mozart wrote the B-flat sonata for a visiting Italian violinist, Regina Strinasacchi. To his father, Mozart wrote - "We now have the famous Strinasacchi from Mantua here—a very good violinist. She has much taste and feeling in her playing. I am just now writing a sonata which we will play together in the theatre on Thursday at her benefit concert." The fact that the Emperor Joseph II was attending will have spurred Mozart on, and that Regina was young and pretty doubtless helped. But she must have been genuinely good; Mozart did not lavish praise unless it was deserved. He had so little time to

compose the work that at the concert he had written out only the violin part, and played the piano part from memory, with a blank sheet of paper in front of him. This might seem rather risky for an important concert in the presence of the Emperor, but the story is confirmed by the appearance of the autograph score, where the two parts have clearly been written at different times, using different inks.

The lento introduction gives a grandeur – and a faint echo of Handel – to the first movement, and also allows the main theme of the allegro, when it comes, to slip in quietly and unassumingly. The music is rich and varied; unusually Mozart bases the development section on new material, taking as his starting-point the staccato cadence-figure that rounded off the exposition.

The slow movement is an andante, though Mozart originally marked it adagio. In a calm E flat major, it is one of Mozart's finest slow movements, that clearly plays to Regina Strinasacchi's skills in expressive legato playing. It is notable for the harmonic daring of the development, where in a few bars the music moves from B-flat minor into a remote B minor, and then almost into C minor.

The finale is joyous. The violin introduces a sprightly Allegretto rondo theme, which eventually turns into a battle of showmanship - the piano finally overcoming the violinist's running triplet quavers with a bravura semiquaver conclusion.

**ROBERT SCHUMANN
(1810 - 1856)**

THREE ROMANCES OP.94

1. NICHT SCHNELL
2. EINFACH, INNIG
3. NICHT SCHNELL

These three romances were composed in December 1849, during the period Schumann was living in Dresden. It was a productive year, in which he turned to chamber music for wind instruments for the first time. Three Fantasy pieces for clarinet and piano, an Adagio and Allegro for french horn and piano, and these Romances for oboe and piano show the breadth of his interest. The romances were written in the second week of December, and he gave them to Clara as a Christmas present. She played them for family and friends two days after Christmas, albeit with the oboe part played on the violin by the leading violinist of Dresden, a certain Franz Schubert (no relation to his more famous namesake.) It is recorded that Clara played them with an oboist the following year, after the Schumanns had moved to Dusseldorf, but there is no evidence of a public performance. The first known public performance was in January 1863 in Leipzig Gewandhaus, by pianist

and composer Carl Reinecke, and Danish oboist Emilius Lund.

Schumann arranged publication by Simrock in 1850, and we presume that he was happy for it to be issued in a version for either oboe or violin. However Simrock seemed to think that the work could be played by a clarinet as well, for he wrote to ask if Schumann ...“would be in agreement if we were to print on the title page: for oboe and piano and on page three: for clarinet and piano...”. Schumann’s replied “If I had originally written the work for clarinet and piano it would have become a completely different piece. I regret not being able to comply with your wishes, but I can do no other”. Simrock ignored this reply and printed the music with parts for both violin and clarinet in addition to oboe. However Clara, when she collated a list of all Robert’s works after his death, specified only oboe or violin.

Each Romance lasts about three minutes, and is an A-B-A form: an opening idea that returns after a contrasting central section. Tonally they all centre around A. The first, marked ‘not fast’, is in A minor and is wistful in feeling. Schumann asks for the second to be played ‘simply, intimately’. It is in A major, with the central section mostly in the relative minor. The final romance is mostly in A minor, and feels somewhat hesitant thanks to the frequent slowing ups. The central section is more simple, starting on the piano alone. A short coda moves delicately to A major for a peaceful close.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770 - 1827)

SONATA FOR PIANO AND VIOLIN NO. 10 OP.96

1. ALLEGRO MODERATO
2. ADAGIO ESPRESSIVO
3. SCHERZO (ALLEGRO)
4. POCO ALLEGRETTO

Of Beethoven’s ten violin sonatas, the first nine were written in the five years from 1798 – 1803. They progress from the relative simplicity of the first three Op.12 sonatas to the colossal and extraordinary Kreutzer sonata, performed by Beethoven and the original dedicatee George Bridgetower in 1803, and revised and published in 1805.

The tenth and last he was to write, which we hear today, came almost ten years later. Like the Kreutzer, and Mozart’s sonata we have already heard, it was written for a particular violinist, in this case Pierre Rode. Rode was a French virtuoso, four years younger than Beethoven and

a pupil of Viotti, whose concertos Rode was performing in Paris by the age of 16. One of the finest violinists of the era, Rode toured Europe extensively, from Madrid to Moscow, and arrived in Vienna in 1812. Here Rode gave the first performance of Beethoven’s new sonata at a private concert at the Lobkowitz palace in December that year. The pianist at this premiere was not Beethoven but his friend and pupil to whom he dedicated the work, Archduke Rudolph.

The Archduke was the youngest of twelve sons of the Grand Duke Leopold, who had succeeded Joseph II as Emperor in 1790. But Leopold only ruled two years before he died, passing the imperial throne to Rudolph’s oldest brother, Franz. Rudolph was musical and cultured, an excellent pianist, who when only 16 years old became Beethoven’s pupil. Their long and close relationship lasted for the rest of the composer’s life, and Rudolph was the dedicatee of more of Beethoven’s works than anyone else.

While Mozart had been very happy with his violinist, Regina Strinasacchi, Beethoven had certain reservations about the playing of Pierre Rode: “In our finales we like to have fairly noisy passages but Rode does not care for them – and so I have been rather hampered – However, everything ought to go off well on Tuesday”

The sonata opens with a 4-note motto with a trill on its first note, that sets a tone of gentleness. This little motto is passed between violin and piano frequently, and it sets a spirit of friendly interchange that permeates the whole movement. Towards the end the music wanders into a new region: the motto is heard very low down in the piano, and Beethoven writes sustained trills, so difficult to play yet characteristic of his late style. In the last few bars the motto is for the first time played on both instruments together, before an upward rush to the final chords.

The adagio is in E-flat, a major third lower and one of Beethoven’s favourite key relationships. It is very slow and profoundly calm. All is quiet, the haze of short notes like gossamer in a breeze. In the last bar the violin drops down another tone, to C-sharp, and leads directly into the scherzo. This is in G minor, still mostly quiet, but punctuated by stabbing accents. The central trio section is more lyrical, and carries an echo of the opening movement’s motto. Beethoven plays with it fugally, passing the tune from violin to piano right hand and then left hand. The short coda moves us back into the home key of G major.

The final movement is broadly a theme and variations, though not titled such. The theme is chirpy, almost frivolous, with a second strain that slides unexpectedly into B major. There are four variations of strikingly different character, and then a sudden slowing into adagio. With its very slow tempo and filigree decoration it carries a clear memory of the slow movement. After a brief return to the main theme, a faster section and a surprisingly dark fugal variation, the adagio briefly returns to tease us before the joyful close.

SAYAKA SHOJI

VIOLIN

"Shoji isn't merely a superb technician, she's a deeply engaging performer"
Gramophone Magazine

Sayaka Shoji has become internationally recognised for her unique artistic versatility and detailed approach to her chosen repertoire. Her remarkable insight into musical languages comes from her mix of European and Japanese backgrounds. Born in Tokyo, Shoji moved to Siena, Italy when she was three. She studied at Accademia Musicale Chigiana and Cologne's Musikhochschule and made her European debut with Lucerne Festival Strings and Rudolf Baumgartner at the Lucerne Festival and then at the Musikverein, Vienna at the age of fourteen.

Since winning first prize at the Paganini Competition in 1999, Sayaka Shoji has been supported by leading conductors such as Zubin Mehta, Lorin Maazel, Semyon Bychkov, Mariss Jansons and Yuri Temirkanov to name a few. She has also worked with renowned orchestras including Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, The Cleveland Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Berliner Philharmoniker, Los Angeles and New York philharmonics, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Wiener Symphoniker, The Mariinsky Orchestra and NHK Symphony Orchestra.

Recent highlights include five concerts for the opening of the 2022/23 season with Israel Philharmonic Orchestra/Shani, an Italian tour with Philharmonia Orchestra/Matias-Rouvali, and a collaboration with dancer/choreographer Saburo Teshigawara performing Bach and Bartok's solo works at the Philharmonie de Paris. She also had a return to NHK Symphony Orchestra/Nosedá, Brussels Philharmonic/Ono, and an extensive recital tour in Japan with Gianluca Cascioli.

In the upcoming season, Shoji will return to Israel for concerts with Israel Philharmonic Orchestra/Shani and they will collaborate again for the Japan tour. She will also make debut concerts with hr-Sinfonieorchester/Carydis, Hamburger Symphoniker/Sloane, BBC Symphony Orchestra/Wong and Orchestre de chambre de Genève/Waldman. In autumn, she will tour Japan with Modigliani Quartet and Benjamin Grosvenor for a unique chamber recital program which includes a play written and directed by Oriza Hiraza.

Alongside her usual concert activities, Shoji has created an experimental visual-music project, 'Synesthesia' in 2007, and exposed oil-paintings and video-art works. Her first video work (Shostakovich Prelude coll. with P.Frament) was chosen in a group exposition 'Au-delà de mes rêves' in 2014 among the most renowned artists such as Y.Kusama, S.Calle, R.Longo. Shoji has also collaborated with Tadao Ando, Hiroshi Sugimoto, and Saburo Teshigawara in numerous occasions.

A prolific recording artist, Shoji has released eleven albums on Deutsche Grammophon including Prokofiev, Sibelius and Beethoven violin concertos with St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Yuri Temirkanov, and previous recordings include a recital album with Menahem Presseler. In autumn 2022, she released a new album with longtime collaborator, Gianluca Cascioli which includes Mozart's violin sonatas, following her previous album of complete Beethoven Sonatas for Piano and Violin.

Shoji won the Mainichi Art Award in 2016, one of Japan's most prestigious awards, presented to those who have had a significant influence on the arts. In 2012, she was named one of The 100 Most Influential People for Japan in future by Nikkei Business.

Sayaka Shoji plays a Stradivarius 'Recamier' c. 1729 kindly loaned to her by Ueno Fine Chemicals Industry Ltd.

GIANLUCA CASCIOLI

FORTEPIANO

Gianluca Cascioli was born in Turin in 1979 and studied piano with Franco Scala (a pupil of Carlo Zecchi) at the Accademia Pianistica di Imola. Mr. Cascioli's career was launched with his victory at the 1994 Umberto Micheli International Piano Competition before a jury that included Luciano Berio, Elliott Carter, Maurizio Pollini, and Charles Rosen. He has since appeared in the major music centres of Europe, North America, and Japan.

Cascioli has performed with such prestigious ensembles as Berlin Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Camerata Salzburg, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Chicago Symphony, English Chamber Orchestra, London Philharmonic, Philharmonia Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Mahler Jugendorchester, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic, La Scala Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Wiener Symphoniker, Wiener Philharmoniker.

Conductors with whom he has collaborated include Claudio Abbado, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Myung-Whun Chung, Valery Gergiev, Daniel Harding, Riccardo Muti, Lorin Maazel, Zubin Metha, Yuri Temirkanov and Mstislav Rostropovich, among others. Cascioli has performed chamber music with Mstislav Rostropovich, Yuri Bashmet, Maxim Vengerov, Frank Peter Zimmermann, Alban Berg Quartett, Clemens Hagen, Sabine Meyer, among others.

Mr. Cascioli's first recording (one of his awards as winner of the Micheli Competition) was released in 1995. There followed a second recording (featuring works by Bach, Beethoven, Busoni, Scarlatti, Debussy, Prokofiev, Falla) and in September 1999, he recorded an album of several of Beethoven's variations for solo piano, all three of which were recorded for Deutsche Grammophon.

In 2002 he recorded Schumann's Phantasie for piano and orchestra (first version of the A minor Piano Concerto op. 54) with the Basel Symphony Orchestra with Mario Venzago conducting (label: Novalis). In 2005 he recorded Chopin's 4 Scherzi for Decca (476 702-9) and in 2006 Debussy's complete Preludes (Decca 476 5724). In Spring 2009 Decca released Beethoven's Piano Sonatas op 27 n°2, op 31 n°2 and Eroica Variations op.35 (Decca 4763208).

Cascioli's most recent releases for Deutsche Grammophon include Beethoven's Complete Violin Sonatas together with violinist Sayaka Shoji, Beethoven's Piano Sonatas op. 78, 81a, 106 (DGG 4815653), several XX century works from Russia-Ukraine-Estonia (DGG 4812809), Austria/Germany (DGG 4817315) and from Italy (DGG 4818978). In November 2021 Harmonia Mundi released a cd with Piano Concertos op. 58 and 61a by Beethoven, together with Ensemble Resonanz conducted by Riccardo Minasi. In 2022 Deutsche Grammophon published a new recording of 3 Violin Sonatas by Mozart performed on original instruments by Shoji and Cascioli.

Gianluca Cascioli studied composition at the Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi di Torino with Alessandro Ruo Rui and later with Alberto Colla. Cascioli's compositions have been performed in important venues such as the Musikhalle (Hamburg), Wigmore Hall (London), and Palau de la Musica (Barcelona). In 2018, the record company Universal released 2 digital albums with Cascioli's compositions.


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