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ONDINE

Ludwig van Beethoven

Piano Concertos No. 1 in C major, Op. 15 and No. 2 in B flat major, Op. 19

And in triumph onward rolling, names to countries gives he (Goethe, Mahomet's Song)

This recording – the first release of a complete cycle with the Finnish pianist and conductor Olli Mustonen, who plays two of his own cadenzas in Opus 15 – demonstrates the vitality of the piano concerto genre, which Beethoven preferred for various reasons. Synonymous with the composer, the five great individualities lie like continents in the sea of music, out of which they were catapulted, as it were, with volcanic force. But their geology also developed in phases of varying lengths. After Beethoven's turbulent beginning in Bonn with the little E flat major concerto of 1784, historical developments forced a stylistic reorientation. In place of Johann Christian Bach, Mozart became his model.

For Beethoven's contemporaries, his concertos, in which he, as a traveling virtuoso, "had to present himself to the world," came under the watchful eye of a public that had witnessed the much-publicized contest between Mozart and Clementi on December 24, 1781, in Vienna. Mozart was regarded more as an advocate of the harpsichord, whereas Clementi already favored the Hammerklavier. Beethoven was an exponent of the pianoforte, and he immediately made good use of this more modern instrument in view of its dynamic capabilities. Although he was not able to "sing" on it the way he imagined, as he complained to the piano maker Streicher in 1796, indications such as *dolce* and *con gran espressione* nevertheless increasingly occur, especially in his slow movements, until *cantabile* later explicitly appears. Both as a pianist and a composer, he welcomed every technical innovation in piano making. In posthumous competition with Mozart, the composition of a piano concerto was a provocative experiment not only in adopting the Mozartian concerto model but in transforming and surpassing it. Yet



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neither the most astounding virtuosity nor the protection of noble patrons such as Prince Lichnowsky and Prince Lobkowitz were able to aid the public piano soloist Beethoven and ensure the hoped-for long-lasting success indefinitely. His hearing loss, which he admitted in a letter to his Bonn friend Wegeler in June 1801, soon “put a spoke in his wheel.” During the sequence of the five great piano concertos, his increasing deafness is a particularly crucial factor in his compositional history, both an impediment and an incentive.

Although Beethoven played his little E flat major concerto (WoO 4) with its high-spirited gestures in the style of Johann Christian Bach at court in Bonn in 1784, the stylistic change from Rococo to Empire could be discerned in the altogether four versions of the **B flat major Concerto**, later numbered Opus 19. The final version of this work is a complete assimilation of Viennese Classicism with a deliberate turn to Mozart. Opus 19 also had its origins in an early Bonn version prior to 1790. This version consisted of three movements, of which little is known and from which only the first was substantially retained. The original finale (WoO 6) from the second and third versions, dating from 1793 and 1794/95, was maintained, but was discarded by Beethoven when he composed a new finale for the final version. Rejected, yet carefully preserved, this Rondo finale has survived as the oldest autograph score in his estate. One characteristic motif from this Rondo appears twice almost literally in the last version of the finale. In this closing stretta, Beethoven was provisionally satisfied with the stylistic connection with Mozart. On the other hand, he rejected Mozart’s idea of interpolating an Andante passage in the Allegro finale of his Piano Concerto, K. 482, which Beethoven initially emulated in WoO 6. The introduction of a slow section with a meter change in a fast finale seemed too precarious to him. Beethoven ruled out such experiments with conventional rondo form in his other concertos as well. Towards the end of this finale, however, he adopted a rhythmic variant from WoO 6 which is definitely of Mozartian caliber. The upbeat refrain character of the original rondo is reintroduced in the later refrain of the ultimate rondo theme – against its



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downbeat structure. A satirical Beethovenian twist, as though the transformation of Rococo grace into the Jacobinical willfulness of a self-determined individual must be abandoned. Nevertheless, after the constant changes and adjustments to all three movements of Opus 19, a homogeneous balance of characters was achieved in which Beethoven approximated the Mozartian model. And thus we find ourselves “only closer to it than we were at the start.” (Goethe, Ananké). The final version of the B flat major Concerto was performed for the first time in October 1798, at the opening of the concert season in Prague, to the surprise of Beethoven himself. After playing the first version of his C major Concerto in Prague’s Konvikt Hall, spurred on by this success, he quickly sketched the B flat major Concerto a few days later, in a quasi-eruptive score which was definitive for the orchestra but was only notated for the piano at prominent transition passages. The rest of the solo part remained improvised and was only written out in a separate part at the urging of the publisher Hoffmeister in April 1801. The confusing opus and work numbering as No. 1 (published in March 1801) and No. 2 (December 1801) are the result of this delay, since the inverted order of printing of the two concertos, not their style and development, determined the numbering.

During this chronologically complex genesis of the B flat major Concerto, Beethoven had already started on a successor – the **Concerto in C major**. The history of this work, which evolved in two versions, had overlapped that of the B flat major Concerto since 1795; the première of the first version of this Opus 15 is documented on March 29, 1795, at Haydn’s academy of the Musicians Society at the Hofburgtheater. Cadenza sketches for Opus 15 appear during Beethoven’s Berlin journey from March to June 1796. He presented the final version on April 2, 1800, also at the Hofburg. The two versions of this concerto demonstrate his rapidly acquired mastery. A cadenza sketch with timpani for the Third Piano Concerto, Op. 37, from the Berlin trip documents further, almost tempestuous, composition plans. In general, one can say that Beethoven conceived his five opus-numbered piano concertos without major interruptions, similar to Mozart



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in this genre, although there was less continuity in putting them down on paper. In Opus 15, Beethoven follows Mozart's example even down to the key. The young Carl Czerny played Mozart's C major Piano Concerto, K. 503, which dated from December 1786, for Beethoven in 1801. Although Beethoven himself attaches particular importance to the second movement Largo of his C major Concerto, like Mozart, he centers the outer movements around a gravitational focus. This emotional high point is balanced by a monumental opening in the principal orchestral theme of the first movement, contrasted with a solo entrance which, in the final version, is derived from J. S. Bach's Partita in B flat major, abridged in three steps. In bars 5–8 of this solo, the left hand quotes the famous Mozart device, and the immediate continuation is drawn from Mozart's *Idomeneo*, of which Beethoven owned a piano score. This overlapping of quotations illustrates, not for the first time, his erudite rhetoric, which does not escape the notice of the *cognoscente* in the audience. He, in particular, must be won over by a virtuoso composer for whom the continuation of tradition and the future of dignity in art means everything. Thus, the idea of taking the liberty of interpolating an Adagio for two measures just before the end of the Allegro rondo and then closing with an *éclat triomphal* also refers congenially back to Mozart.

In this connection, Beethoven proves to be a composer concerned with his later maxim on the "Kunstvereinigung" [artistic unification] with J. S. Bach and Haendel, which he sent to Archduke Rudolph in 1819. The rhetorical use of musical quotations is only a very small part of what Beethoven understands as the overall concept of his art. Whenever we take particular pleasure in his piano concertos today, we are able to be part of this music with its rhetorical appeal and its fascination, to rediscover in it the emotions and ideas that have been aroused in us. Beethoven seems destined for identification with our own imaginations in a wondrous, one could almost say transfigured, way.

Hans-Werner Küthen

Translation: Phyllis Anderson



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Olli Mustonen

Olli Mustonen has established himself as one of the most exciting pianists of his time. Born in Helsinki, he began his studies in piano, harpsichord and composition at the age of five. His first piano teacher was Ralf Gothóni and he subsequently studied piano with Eero Heinonen and composition with Einojuhani Rautavaara.

Mustonen has worked with many of the world's leading orchestras, including the Berlin Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Boston Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, London Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic and the Royal Concertgebouw; and with conductors including Ashkenazy, Barenboim, Berglund, Boulez, Chung, Dutoit, Eschenbach, Harnoncourt, Masur, Salonen, Saraste, Tennstedt, and Vegh. In recital, he frequently plays in the world's music capitals including London, Vienna, Paris, Tokyo and Berlin, appears at leading festivals such as Ravinia and the Hollywood Bowl, and enjoys significant chamber collaborations with partners including Steven Isserlis, Pekka Kuusisto and Joshua Bell. As a conductor, Mustonen has appeared at various venues in Europe and works regularly with major Finnish symphony orchestras. He is also the founding artistic director of the Helsinki Festival Orchestra (2001). In autumn 2003, he took up the post of conductor of the Tapiola Sinfonietta. Olli Mustonen is known, too, as a composer. A CD containing his works was released in 2001 by Ondine to critical acclaim.

Olli Mustonen's recording catalogue is typically broad-ranging and distinctive. He has a long-term recording agreement with Ondine as a pianist and conductor.



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Tapiola Sinfonietta

Based in Espoo, the Tapiola Sinfonietta is one of the top professional orchestras in Finland; its popularity has been swiftly on the rise ever since it was founded in 1987. The Tapiola Sinfonietta is structured as a typical Viennese Classical orchestra, with 41 musicians. The orchestra's distinct sound and its interesting choice of repertoire are its long-established trump cards. The nucleus of the orchestra's repertoire consists of music composed by Mozart and his contemporaries. Alongside the classics, the orchestra performs lesser-known works. Its repertoire includes both older music and works by contemporary composers, which the orchestra is keen to premiere. The Tapiola Sinfonietta also actively promotes Finnish music at home and abroad.



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THE 2xHD MASTERING PROCESS



This album was mastered using our 2xHD proprietary system. In order to achieve the most accurate reproduction of the original recording we tailor our process specifically for each project, using a selection from our pool of state-of-the-art audiophile components and connectors. The process begins with a transfer to analog from the original DSD master, using cutting edge D/A converters. The analog signal is then sent through a hi-end tube pre-amplifier before being recorded directly in DXD using the dCS905 A/D and the dCS Vivaldi Clock. All connections used in the process are made of OCC silver cable.

DSD and 192kHz/24Bit versions are separately generated, directly from the analog signal.

2xHD was created by producer/studio owner André Perry and audiophile sound engineer René Laflamme.

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