

DAVID CHESKY

THE

VENETIAN

CONCERTOS

METRONOME

CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

VENETIAN CONCERTO NO. 3

MOVEMENT I — 6:08

MOVEMENT II - 5:06

MOVEMENT III — 4:13

VENETIAN CONCERTO NO. 1

MOVEMENT I — 6:19

MOVEMENT II — 6:20

MOVEMENT III — 4:51

VENETIAN CONCERTO NO. 2

MOVEMENT I — 6:36

MOVEMENT II — 6:13

MOVEMENT III — 4:21

VENETIAN CONCERTO NO. 4

MOVEMENT I — 5:38

MOVEMENT II — 6:05

MOVEMENT III — 4:09

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David Chesky's *Venetian Concertos* take the spirit and architecture of the Baroque concerto grosso and push them decisively into the 21st century.

At the heart of these works is **counterpoint**.

In an era when much contemporary music has moved increasingly toward texture, atmosphere, repetition, and the exploration of sound itself, Chesky returns to one of Western music's oldest and most demanding disciplines: the art of independent musical lines.

The Venetian Concertos can be heard as studies in modern counterpoint. Rather than a principal melody supported by accompaniment, multiple voices move against, around, and through one another. Lines collide, separate, answer each other, and converge, thus creating a musical architecture that is continually in motion.

Yet this is not counterpoint as an exercise in historical style. The harmonic language is thoroughly contemporary. Chesky combines the structural discipline and linear independence of Baroque counterpoint with modern chromatic harmony strongly influenced by jazz and bebop.

There is also something distinctly jazz-like in the conception of the musical line itself. Voices move with the speed, angularity, rhythmic displacement, and technical virtuosity associated with modern jazz improvisation. Several lines may unfold

simultaneously, each retaining its own identity while interacting with everything around it. The effect can be dense and complex, yet also exhilarating: music that is rigorously organized while possessing an almost spontaneous energy.

In this sense, the *Venetian Concertos* explore what counterpoint might mean in the 21st century. Chesky does not attempt to recreate the Baroque. Instead, he takes one of the fundamental ideas of that tradition—multiple independent voices in constant conversation—and filters it through the harmonic, rhythmic, and technical language of today.

Where much contemporary music invites the listener into a world of sound, color, and texture, these concertos invite us into a world of lines—many individual musical thoughts occurring at once.

The original 2016 recording of the *Venetian Concertos* attracted attention for precisely this unusual combination of Baroque form, dense chromatic counterpoint, rhythmic invention, and sudden passages of lyricism. Critic Robert Cummings described Chesky as taking the Baroque form “into the 21st century” through imaginative rhythmic and harmonic transformation, calling the resulting musical world “almost otherworldly.” Raul da Gama, writing about the music’s remarkable technical demands, praised its “athleticism, velocity and finesse.”

For this new recording, Chesky has completely rescored and reimagined the works as contemporary concerti grossi.

The most immediately noticeable change is the solo voice. The flute soloist of the original version has been replaced by solo violin, creating a different relationship between soloist and ensemble and drawing the music even closer to the lineage of

the Baroque concerto grosso.

The orchestra itself has been radically reduced. Instead of the larger forces of the original recording, the new version employs a chamber string ensemble of four first violins, four second violins, four violas, two cellos, and double bass, together with solo violin. This reduction is not simply a matter of scale. It changes the way the music can be heard.

With fewer musicians, the contrapuntal architecture becomes more transparent. Individual voices emerge with greater definition; the listener can follow lines as they enter, cross, collide, disappear, and reappear elsewhere in the ensemble. Details that might once have existed inside a larger orchestral mass are now exposed.

Chesky has also relaxed some of the tempos, not to diminish the music's energy, but to allow its extraordinary density to speak with greater clarity. Even at these adjusted tempos, the writing remains intensely fast and technically demanding. The difference is that there is now more space for the inner voices to breathe—and for the listener to hear what they are doing.

The chamber setting also places enormous responsibility on every musician. **There are no anonymous orchestral voices.** Each player functions almost as a soloist, requiring the technique and independence of a virtuoso combined with the discipline, precision, and awareness of a chamber musician.

The solo violin stands at the center of this conversation, but it does not simply present melody over accompaniment. It becomes another independent contrapuntal voice—sometimes leading, sometimes answering, sometimes disappearing into the ensemble—while the musical lines continually intersect around it.

The demands on the musicians are formidable. Long, intricate passages move at great speed, intersecting and reacting to one another with the rhythmic intensity and technical complexity of modern jazz improvisation. Virtuosity here is not merely decorative. It is embedded in the construction of the music itself: each player must maintain an independent line while remaining acutely aware of the complex web of voices surrounding it. The young virtuoso musicians of the Metronome Chamber Orchestra bring the precision, energy, speed, and flexibility this music demands.

What emerges is neither neo-Baroque music nor an attempt to recreate the past.

These are four contemporary concertos built upon an ancient architectural principle: independent musical voices engaged in continuous conversation.

The Venetian Concertos look backward only far enough to find a structure upon which to build something new.

INSTRUMENTATION

Solo Violin

4 First Violins

4 Second Violins

4 Violas

2 Cellos

1 Double Bass

ALL COMPOSITIONS BY DAVID CHESKY, ASCAP

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