

GIL SULLIVAN



HUNNIA RECORDS

HIDDEN VOICES, MOZART PIANO SONATAS, VOLUME VI

Gil Sullivan

Steinway & Sons Model D Concert Grand Piano, Hamburg



MOZART'S PIANO MUSIC IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Mozart was not an innovator after the likes of Monteverdi, Beethoven or Wagner, partially due to music patrons and aristocratic hierarchies of the 18th Century not allowing composers freedom to engage in wilful personal expression. The era of the fully 'freelance' composer was a generation hence. Instead, composers were either in the employ of a church parish/diocese, or wealthy aristocrats/nobles, both of whom expected their composer-servants to conceive music within certain boundaries and styles, providing serviceable but pleasing material for specific occasions/ceremonies. Rarely were these compositions performed more than once or twice in a composer's lifetime, while outbursts of individualism were viewed askance by most employers. Very few examples of truly *freelance composers* existed before Mozart, who in fact came as close to freelance as any composer could before the French Revolution of 1789.

Innovation therefore was also expected to be held at bay by composers, writers and artists in general, though we are in no doubt Mozart was composing at the very cutting edge of his time. His increasing use of chromatic harmonies and inner voicings, leading us into territories no other composer was capable of, including Haydn, audiences found eccentric, even mystifying. He often explores very dark places, occasionally for a few moments, sometimes for long periods, and in a few instances, entire works, and these chromatic harmonies appeared far more frequently in his later works. One need not look for anything *before*, nor for a decade or more *after*, his Rondo in A minor (K511), or his Adagio in B minor (K540), to find more darkly introspective, melancholic, wrenching chromaticism! Even Mozart's father complained of "excessive demands made on his listeners". Conductor Nikolaus Harnoncourt says "Mozart was told he should write "easier" music with a less complicated elaboration of the individual voices – that it was difficult to follow and understand his music; that he should not go so far in his harmonies (hard, dissonant tensions), etc. Despite universal admiration for his genius (few critics doubted Mozart was the greatest composer of his time), these opinions reveal a certain dismay at the unsettling effects of his tonal language: could and should music convey such things?"

Finally, every harmony in *all* music (not just Mozart's) should have its own colour, more so in music of this period. Since about 1850, the universally accepted tuning (equal temperament) of instruments around the globe is now uniform and consistent. Not so in centuries of yore! Over the past millennia, many systems of tuning instruments were chanced, most of which would be an abomination to modern ears. However, in bygone centuries, audiences were positively acquiescent with this "out-of-tuneness", whilst most significantly, composers intentionally exploited modulations into these remote, 'out-of-tune' keys, knowingly building or releasing tension. All these 'out-of-tune' harmonies *unavoidably* had their own colour, and – as mentioned - deliberately chosen by composers for their colour and effect on the music. This aspect is one I have attempted to solicit and recreate from the modern piano, where we can change the relationships of one harmony against another. For myself, every note in Mozart is music, not just the tunes in the right hand!

I firmly believe Mozart can still have a reborn effect upon us. Performers should not be slaves to the printed page, staring at them with stale, traditional eyes, numb to its inner voices and endless chromatic subtleties. Nor should we forget Mozart's genius not only as a composer, but as an improviser, and knowing full well this reputation, playing a repeated phrase or whole sections exactly the same both times should therefore be a cardinal sin! It's time to look at this music completely afresh, with more imagination, a renewed, more sensitive ear for colour, and with a freedom for expression that as performers we all seem so afraid of these days. I.e., to break the mold (mould!) and inveigle those "**Hidden Voices**"!

Gil Sullivan

Volume VI

01	Piano Sonata No. 5 in G Major, K283: I. Allegro	04:47
02	Piano Sonata No. 5 in G Major, K283: II. Andante	05:36
03	Piano Sonata No. 5 in G Major, K283: III. Presto	04:24
04	Piano Sonata No. 17 in F Major, K547a: I. Allegro	06:41
05	Piano Sonata No. 17 in F Major, K547a: II. Allegretto	02:36
06	Piano Sonata No. 17 in F Major, K547a: III. 6 Variations on an Allegretto	07:59
07	Piano Sonata No. 6 in D Major, K284, "Dürnitz": I. Allegro	05:51
08	Piano Sonata No. 6 in D Major, K284, "Dürnitz": II. Rondeau en polonaise - Andante	04:45
09	Piano Sonata No. 6 in D Major, K284, "Dürnitz": III. Tema con variazione - Andante	20:48
Total time:		63:27

Recording setup

Mics for piano: 2x Neumann M-149, 2x Neumann U87, 2x Schoeps MK2

Sound engineer: Sándor Árok

Recorded audio format: Native DSD256 (Pyramix, Merging Hapi)

Recorded at **ProVibe Park Studio**, 04-07 November, 2024

Piano technician: **Balázs Tóth**

Recording engineer: **Sándor Árok**

Balance engineers: **Sándor Árok, Kevin Roper**

Mastering engineer: **Tom Caulfield**

Recorded audio format: **Native DSD256** (Pyramix, Merging Hapi)

Photo: **Jun Pang**

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