

WIGMORE HALL

Friday 14 July 2023
7.30pm

Mozart Piano Sonata Cycle

Mao Fujita piano

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Wiener Sonatina No. 1 in C K439b (pub. 1805)

*I. Allegro brillante • II. Menuetto. Allegretto •
III. Adagio • IV. Allegro*

Piano Sonata in F K280 (1775)

I. Allegro assai • II. Adagio • III. Presto

Piano Sonata in F K332 (1781-3)

I. Allegro • II. Adagio • III. Allegro assai

Interval

Piano Sonata in C K309 (1777)

*I. Allegro con spirito • II. Andante un poco
adagio • III. Rondeau. Allegretto grazioso*

Piano Sonata in D K576 (1789)

I. Allegro • II. Adagio • III. Allegretto

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As an aperitif to this final concert in his Mozart cycle, Mao Fujita plays one of the six so-called *Wiener Sonatinen* published by the Viennese firm of Artaria in 1805. In the decades after his death Mozart was big business for publishers, especially in keyboard transcriptions of works written for other media. Each of the Viennese sonatines is an arrangement, by an unknown hand, of movements from a set of divertimenti for three basset horns which Mozart composed between 1783 and 1785. Brief and slight as they are, the four movements of **Wiener Sonatina No. 1 in C** are delightful music, with that Mozartian knack of avoiding the banal or obvious.

Mozart began his career as the most precocious of musical mimics. By his late teens he combined an astonishing gift for assimilating assorted influences with an increasingly distinctive personal style. His distant models in his earliest surviving keyboard sonatas, K279-284, composed in 1774-5, were the *galant* sonatas of Johann Christian Bach and the Habsburg court composer Georg Christoph Wagenseil. Mozart had evidently also seen Haydn's recent set of sonatas, Nos 21-26. Indeed, he took the F minor *Adagio*, in siciliano rhythm, of Haydn's F major Sonata No. 23 as the model for the *Adagio* of his own **Sonata in F K280**. It is revealing, though, that whereas Haydn's *Adagio* lives from dreamy figuration and expressive harmony, Mozart's is founded on elegiac melody of a distinctly vocal cast.

Mozart frames this beautiful *Adagio* with two movements that use the contemporary Italianate *lingua franca* with wit and scintillating virtuosity. In the opening *Allegro* the second theme opposes a striding bass arpeggio with chattering treble figuration – more than a whiff of *opera buffa* here – while the finale is a 3/8 romp that similarly delights in sudden changes of texture and register.

The favourite **Sonata in F K332** is one of four sonatas composed in Vienna between 1781 and 1783. Even by Mozartian standards, its triple-time first movement contains a lavish array of material. Typically, the textures often suggest other sound worlds: oboes and horns in the minuet-like response to the opening theme, a gurgling clarinet in the triplets that accompany the embellished repeat of the second theme. Mozart offsets this lyricism with a quasi-orchestral outburst in D minor, and, later, a tense, syncopated passage whose rapid alternations of *forte* and *piano* momentarily blur the metre.

The *Adagio*, in B flat major, transmutes the suave idiom of Johann Christian Bach into Mozartian poetry. The delicately sculpted main theme is immediately repeated in B flat minor, with a hint of wistfulness, and expressively ornamented on its later appearance. Beginning with a toccata-like flourish, the 6/8 finale matches the opening *Allegro's* melodic abundance. As in the first two movements, too, the music turns readily from major to the minor both in the exposition and in the development, where the toccata figuration erupts dramatically in C minor.

En route to Paris in autumn 1777 Mozart and his mother spent two weeks in Augsburg, where he played his sonatas K279-284 on the Stein fortepiano and had a

flirtatious relationship with his cousin Maria Anna Thekla. In a letter to his father after his last concert in Augsburg, Wolfgang reported euphorically that '...suddenly a magnificent sonata in C major popped right out of my head with a Rondeau at the end. There was a huge uproar and tremendous applause...' It seems virtually certain that the improvised sonata became the **Sonata in C K309**, written out in Mannheim shortly afterwards, with a new slow movement.

Mozart again seems to be thinking orchestrally at the opening of the *Allegro con spirito*, with its contrast between a unison *tutti* fanfare and a soft *galant* response evoking strings. While the mood of the exposition is essentially amiable, the development works the main theme dramatically through a sequence of minor keys.

Mozart suggested that the *Andante* was a 'portrait' of Rosa Cannabich, the teenaged daughter of the Mannheim Kapellmeister Christian Cannabich. He recorded his 'indescribable pleasure' when she played it 'with the utmost expression'. Essentially this touchingly intimate music is an exercise in expressive ornamentation, with the main theme elaborately embellished on each reappearance.

The demure opening of the rondo finale contrasts with a flamboyant series of fanfares beneath orchestral-style tremolos that veer between major and minor. Mozart further dramatises this arresting idea later in the movement. The ending is both poetic and witty, with the opening theme fading away in a lower register.

Mozart's last sonata of all, the **Sonata in D K576**, originated in the trip to Berlin and Potsdam he made to boost his flagging fortunes (vainly, as it turned out) in the spring of 1789. The Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm II apparently commissioned Mozart to write six 'easy' sonatas for his daughter, Princess Friederike. In the event he completed only this one sonata, in a style anything but 'easy'.

In a fusion of the 'learned' and 'popular' styles, the D major Sonata marries surface conviviality with lightly worn contrapuntal craft. Evoking hunting horns, the rollicking opening theme lends itself readily to canonic imitation: a hint Mozart takes almost immediately, and pursues further when the horn call introduces the second group of themes. The development works the horn call in wiry canonic textures and then glides back to the recapitulation in a beautiful chromatic passage based on the exposition's final cadence.

The *Adagio* contrasts a richly ornamented melody in A major with a forlorn, though equally florid, central episode in F sharp minor. One subtlety is the way the coda alludes to the episode's rhythm and texture, but not its precise melodic outline. Like the first movement, the rondo finale develops its popular-style tunes in athletic polyphonic textures, now with an added virtuosity. Far from capping an 'easy' sonata for Princess Friederike, this finale is perhaps the most technically demanding keyboard movement Mozart ever wrote. Did the princess ever play it?

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