

SOMMCD 0181-2

Céleste Series

BEETHOVEN

Violin Sonatas Op. 12 Nos. 1, 2 & 3; Opp. 23, 24 & Op. 30 No. 3

plus companion pieces by Jonathan Dove, Peter Ash, Elspeth Brooke
Judith Bingham, Huw Watkins, Jeremy Thurlow

Kryisia Osostowicz violin Daniel Tong piano

CD 1

1 Jonathan Dove *Ludwig Games** 4:13

Beethoven Sonata for Piano and Violin in D, Op. 12 No. 1

2 I Allegro con brio 9:03

3 II Tema con variazioni: Andante con moto 6:31

4 III Rondo: Allegro 4:48

5 Peter Ash *A Major Chase** 6:16

Beethoven Sonata for Piano and Violin in A, Op. 12 No. 2

6 I Allegro vivace 6:34

7 II Andante, più tosto allegretto 5:11

8 III Allegro piacevole 5:01

9 Elspeth Brooke *Swoop** 5:31

Beethoven Sonata for Piano and Violin in E flat,

Op. 12 No. 3

10 I Allegro con spirito 8:29

11 II Adagio con molta espressione 5:36

12 III Rondo: Allegro molto 4:32

*Premiere recordings Total duration: 72:01

CD 2

Beethoven Sonata for Piano and Violin in A, Op. 23

1 I Presto 7:24

2 II Andante scherzoso, più allegretto 8:59

3 III Allegro molto 5:30

4 Judith Bingham *The Neglected Child** 4:10

5 Huw Watkins *Spring** 4:35

Beethoven Sonata for Piano and Violin in F, Op. 24 (Spring)

6 I Allegro 10:15

7 II Adagio molto espressivo 5:25

8 III Scherzo: Allegro molto 1:13

9 IV Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo 6:52

10 Jeremy Thurlow *Mehlschöberl** 5:06

Beethoven Sonata for Piano and Violin in G, Op. 30 No. 3

11 I Allegro assai 6:26

12 II Tempo di minuetto, ma molto moderato e grazioso 7:13

13 III Allegro vivace 3:45

*Premiere recordings Total duration: 77:04

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BEETHOVEN VIOLIN SONATAS

plus
companion pieces
by

DOVE · ASH
BROOKE · BINGHAM
WATKINS · THURLOW



Kryisia Osostowicz violin

Daniel Tong piano

Beethoven Plus was conceived in 2014 as an ambitious project to provide Beethoven's 10 Violin Sonatas with newly-commissioned companion pieces. The first performances of all 10 new works (alongside the Violin Sonatas and several other Beethoven works) took place in a series of concerts at Kings Place in London during 2015. Krysia and Daniel have since presented the entire cycle in Cambridge, Oxford, Sheffield, Bristol and Aberdeen (as part of the Sound Festival) as well as many other venues around the UK. They were fortunate to work with all 10 composers prior to the London premieres. They have used this wonderful repertoire resource to work with students at the Birmingham Conservatoire, Sheffield, Oxford and St Andrews universities and the Bristol Pre-Conservatoire. The project continues and is the subject of Daniel's PhD at Birmingham City University.

Some thoughts on *Beethoven Plus*...

In 2013-14, Krysia Osostowicz and I were working with immense enjoyment on the full cycle of Beethoven's violin sonatas. These 10 pieces represent the most important body of work for violin and piano: music of infinite depth and variety which we instinctively knew we would want to live with as musicians for a long time. Many great artists have played and recorded this cycle over the years: Szigetzi and Arrau, Yehudi and Hephzibah Menuhin, Oistrakh and Oborin, Kremer and Argerich – legends all. New versions are constantly being added to the catalogue, but what, we wondered, could our own contribution be to this immortal music? It was Krysia who turned to me one day and said: "I've been thinking...". Thus began one of the most inspiring and rewarding projects that either of us has been involved in.

Our idea was to commission 10 composers to write short companion pieces to – and inspired by – one of Beethoven's violin sonatas. The composers we approached responded with great enthusiasm to the idea, which we named *Beethoven Plus*. We were grateful to receive generous support for this project from funding bodies such as Arts Council England, the PRS, Hinrichsen and Holst Foundations and the Radcliffe and RVW Trusts. By the end of 2015 we had premiered the whole programme at Kings Place in London, and since then we have presented the full cycle of sonatas and companion pieces at many venues and festivals throughout the UK. This recording was taken from our series of recitals at the magnificent new Cedars Hall at Wells Cathedral School in Somerset.

Beethoven was always an icon. From his early successes as a pianist-composer in Vienna – where he enjoyed the patronage of various counts, princes and archdukes – through to the series of rugged, romanticised portraits and a stirring funeral oration by Franz Grillparzer, immortality was assured almost before the physical Beethoven had left this earth. The image of the Romantic hero, alone and suffering (through deafness) for his art, had been indelibly forged for the generations that followed. But how would our 21st-century composers respond to both the legend and the notes within the pages of their chosen Beethoven sonata? We are in no way disappointed: the new works form a fascinating collection in their own right, and in conjunction with Beethoven's sonatas they create a lively conversation across time and place between today's composers and the Master.

This first volume of *Beethoven Plus* presents Beethoven's first five sonatas and also includes the Third Sonata of the ensuing Op. 30 set, all written by the end of 1802

when Beethoven was 32-years-old. His first published set of sonatas for piano and violin, Op. 12 (1798), contains three sunny pieces in which Beethoven designated the violin as *obbligato* to distance these works from an inherited tradition in which the violin part had been an optional accompaniment to a solo piano sonata. Mozart had already done much to democratise the two instrumental roles in his own sonatas, by far the most famous works in the genre at this point, which Beethoven certainly knew intimately. There is plenty of evidence that he was keen to learn from Mozart's models whilst being anxious not to copy (or be seen to be copying) his famous predecessor.

The **Sonata in D, Op. 12 No. 1**, begins with a flourish that recalls Mozart's own sonata in E flat, K302, before embarking on an argument that could only be by Beethoven. The opening theme cements the equality of the two instruments by giving them distinct but inseparable music, underlined by a role reversal when the theme is repeated. Introducing a comic vein that is present to varying degrees in all three Op. 12 sonatas, the second theme is announced in almost accidental fashion, the remainder of the exposition playing with a continual thwarting of harmonic comfort and expectation that is reminiscent of improvisation. A tightly constructed development, based entirely on the first subject material, allows for a dynamic preparation of the dramatic *fortissimo* reprise that is Beethoven's stock in trade. The second movement variations are an early example of perfection and proportion, again outstripping the Mozartian model. The theme's charming contours are replicated and examined in four variations that take the listener on a surprisingly wide-ranging journey. It is notable, in terms of the equality afforded both instruments, that the *cantabile* variation is given to the piano and virtuoso antics

to the violin, before a violent storm in the minor key and a teasing, improvisatory return to the theme, hidden and syncopated in the middle parts. The galloping finale features humorous offbeat *sforzandi* and a glorious coda to finish.

Jonathan Dove's **Ludwig Games** is conceived as a glorious "upbeat" to Beethoven's First Sonata, whose motivic dynamism is perfectly suited to Jonathan's minimalist style. These four minutes of vibrancy and élan serve as an elongated version of what Beethoven himself does in the build-up to the recapitulation in his first movement, so that after *Ludwig Games* we are compelled to launch straight into the sonata without a break. We can't fail to be imbued with the infectious good nature of this piece.

Peter Ash shares much of his approach with Dove although their musical styles are quite different. In **A Major Chase**, Peter also interprets and builds on Beethoven's sonata, directing us to play both works in the same tempo with an irresistible momentum that takes us from his piece directly into Op. 12 No. 2. As with Dove, a clue is offered by the punning title, and Peter seizes on this most comic sonata in a humorous response that he describes as "Bartók meets *Tom and Jerry*". *A Major Chase* echoes Beethoven in various ways, updating his humour for a contemporary audience. Beethoven's bucolic revels become a virtuosic hoedown, extremes of register are expanded with notes that didn't even exist on Beethoven's early piano, bewildered pauses are given much play and made more extreme. There is even a fugue with an hilarious nine-bar subject to poke gentle fun at that most serious of forms, synonymous with Beethoven's most profound late music. Fiendishly tricky semiquavers (Jerry scurrying away from Tom, perhaps?) dance within Beethoven's 6/8 meter, imbuing the music with extra energy and impulse.

Beethoven's **Sonata in A, Op. 12 No. 2**, is comic from the outset, announcing its theme with roles reversed between the instruments: bowed slurs on the piano and an 'um-cha-cha' keyboard figuration given to the violin. In fact, this opening is hardly a theme at all, with passages of musical meandering defining both the first and second subjects. In between there are startled pauses, extreme contrasts of register and dynamic, and numerous musical witticisms, the greatest of all saved for the last bars of the entire sonata when the pianist ends alone with a solo flourish, quite as if he has gone wrong. As ever, Beethoven is the composer of contrasts: cocooned between these comic outer movements lies a slow movement of austere beauty in A minor.

Swoop by Elspeth Brooke is the most 'modern-sounding' of all our new partner pieces, but therein lies a significant point; modern music in 2015 (when the commissions were completed) does not sound like 'modern' music used to. Most of our new works are written in a tonal idiom of some kind, and this includes Elspeth's piece, which is far from atonal, despite its dissonance. In fact, the whole point of *Swoop* is to play with the key of E flat, approaching it from various angles and cadences. These include sliding quarter-tones on the violin and complex rhythms throughout: a driving opening, icy lyricism in the central section and an almost impressionistic ending.

Beethoven's **Sonata in E flat, Op. 12 No. 3**, is perhaps the most overtly virtuosic of the set for the piano (save for the *Kreutzer* Sonata) and unambiguously rooted in its home tonality. It reminds us that Beethoven was an extraordinary piano virtuoso, particularly during his first years in Vienna: the keyboard writing here has much in common with his Op. 37 C minor Piano Concerto. This sonata brims with

good humour, from the bubbling accompaniments of the first movement to the Haydnesque fizzing finale. There is no minor-key contrast in the slow movement either, but a broad aria in C major with only a brief stormy interlude within.

The next two violin sonatas that Beethoven produced, in 1801, were originally intended as a single opus, but eventually appeared with consecutive numbers. They could hardly be more different. The **Sonata in A minor, Op. 23**, is a terse, driving work, almost like a prototype *Kreutzer* Sonata with its *presto* first movement, but leaner and full of contrapuntal interplay. The climaxes are the most violent in any of Beethoven's early violin sonatas and the momentum in this *presto* is irresistible. The finale, too, drives forward at rapid tempo, though punctuated by dramatic pauses and a benevolent chorale. Between these is not a conventional slow movement but a wry scherzo that includes a pompous fugato and great play with the dramatic and humorous possibilities of silence.

The **Sonata in F, Op. 24**, became known as the *Spring* Sonata during the 19th century and is one of Beethoven's most popular and enduring pieces for any instrumental combination. The Sonata's broad lyricism seems to stand outside the dramatic intensity that we normally expect from Beethoven, but Lewis Lockwood has pointed out that lyrical beauty seems to have been a preoccupation for Beethoven during this period, citing the Piano Sonata in B flat (Op. 21) and String Quintet in C (Op. 29) as works in a similar melodious vein. Interestingly, these pieces are less often heard than their stormier counterparts. The first of Beethoven's violin sonatas to have four movements, the *Spring* Sonata has no lack of contrasting material but remains largely untroubled despite occasional darker undercurrents. It is in many respects

the absolute opposite of Op. 23, an example of Beethoven's constant exploration of opposing ideas.

In response to this pair of sonatas, Judith Bingham and Huw Watkins produced two contrasting companion pieces. The title of Judith's ***The Neglected Child*** arises from Lockwood's comment that Op. 23 is the least-often played of all of Beethoven's violin sonatas. This is certainly true when the A minor sonata is considered alongside its partner, the ever-popular *Spring*. Judith's mournful falling intervals mirror those in Beethoven's sonata, but in slow motion; and it is hard to avoid other more emotive connotations of her title during this short but intense and heartfelt music. Huw Watkins's ***Spring*** is a masterly miniature inspired by Beethoven's lyricism and radiant textures. In no way intimidated by being asked to write a piece to go alongside an iconic work, Huw has produced something equally beautiful and apparently simple – but in his own idiom.

The final pairing on this release is that of Beethoven's **Sonata in G, Op. 30 No. 3** (1802), with Jeremy Thurlow's ***Mehlschöberl***. This enigmatic title comes from a nickname that Beethoven, an infamous punster, was given by some of his friends: it is a kind of savoury pancake, served with a meaty broth and apparently a favourite of the great composer.

Jeremy is one of several composers to pick up on the wit and humour in these sonatas. Like Jonathan Dove and Peter Ash, he takes a couple of motivic cells from Beethoven's score and uses them as a starting point. *Mehlschöberl* is pitched at a similar tempo to Beethoven's opening movement and seizes upon a certain

oscillating figuration, cheeky and somewhat malevolent – Thurlow's favourite motif in the sonata – followed by a kind of 'Scotch snap' at the end of the phrase. The opening idea goes through a series of transformations, eventually reaching a tempestuous climax before returning to playful tranquillity and a seamless transition to Beethoven's G major Sonata.

This Sonata in G is one of Beethoven's most exuberant, from the swirling upward surge of the opening, through various rustic dances and extravagant shifts of key, to the barn dance of the flying finale, underpinned by pastoral drones. Between the two whirlwind outer movements, the central minuet is almost hypnotic in its gentle repetitions, an exercise in stillness and poise.

In the next volume of this series, the remaining Op. 30 sonatas will again show Beethoven's extraordinary ability to create complete contrasts within one set of works, followed by the barnstorming *Kreutzer* Sonata and the abstract, wonderfully enigmatic Op. 96 Sonata, which stands on the threshold of his late style.

Although the violin sonatas do not span Beethoven's whole life in the way that the piano sonatas, string quartets and symphonies do, nonetheless they offer a timeless canvas illustrating a vast range of human expression. Meanwhile, the new companion pieces locate this set of recordings within a specific time – these composers' responses to Beethoven coupled with our response as interpreters – leaving us with the thought that, in the end, all interpretation is work in progress.

Daniel Tong © 2018

Beethoven Plus composer biographies

Peter Ash was a horn player specialising in contemporary music before becoming a conductor. He has worked at the Salzburg Festival, led the premiere of Tobias Picker's *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (Los Angeles Opera) and worked with many other European orchestras and opera companies. He started to write operas, often with young audiences or performers in mind, in his mid-thirties. *Keepers of the Night* (Los Angeles Children's Chorus, 2007) was followed by *The Golden Ticket*, an opera based on Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Opera Theatre St Louis, 2010). Further performances followed at the Wexford Festival and then in Atlanta, Georgia, where Ash conducted. He has also written film music, song cycles and a string quartet. His most recent composition, *The Pelicantata* (a comic secular cantata based on Roald Dahl's *The Giraffe and the Pelly and Me*) was premiered in 2017. Ash resides in London, where he is Artistic Director of the London Schools Symphony Orchestra.

Judith Bingham was born in Nottingham and began composing as a child before studying at the Royal Academy of Music, London. Her awards include the BBC Young Composer award (1977), the Barlow Prize for a cappella music (2004) and three British Composer Awards (2004, 2006 and 2008).

A member of the BBC Singers for many years, she was Composer in Association (2004-09) and has also written for the BBC Symphony Chorus, King's College Cambridge and many UK cathedrals. In 2007, she was made a Fellow of the Royal School of Church Music for distinguished service to church music.

Her output is marked by variety and includes a substantial body of organ pieces as well as for brass band, symphonic wind ensemble, chamber groups and solo instruments,

concertos for trumpet and bassoon and tuba, and several works for large orchestra. Recent works include *See and Keep Silent* (BBC Singers and Guy Johnston), and *Shadow Aspect* (Edinburgh Royal Choral Union).

Elsbeth Brooke is a London-based composer of acoustic and electro-acoustic music. She has received commissions from leading UK ensembles and soloists including the London Sinfonietta, Britten Sinfonia, BBC Singers and Oliver Coates. Her music has been performed at Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Sadler's Wells, Aldeburgh Festival, Lebanon's Al Bustan Festival and on BBC Radio 3.

A diverse range of collaborations include work with Rambert Dance Company, theatre makers Goody and Storey, and knitwear designer Brooke Roberts. Her vocal music includes large-scale pieces for the BBC Singers and Juice Vocal Ensemble. From 2008-10, a Jerwood Opera Writing Fellowship enabled her to write an opera based on Michael Donaghy's *The Commission*.

Elsbeth received the 2012 Arts Foundation Fellowship for opera composition and has held residencies with Aldeburgh Music and in Kalv and Gothenburg, Sweden. An experienced workshop leader and teacher, she has led school composition projects for Britten Sinfonia and Trinity Laban/Blackheath Halls Community Opera.

Winner of the 2008 Ivor Novello Award for classical music, **Jonathan Dove** explores what opera can be, and what audiences it can reach. He has written more than 25 operas of different shapes and sizes which are regularly performed all around the world, including the highly successful airport comedy *Flight*. Alongside chamber operas and operas for television, he has written operas for a family audience (*The*

Adventures of Pinocchio, The Enchanted Pig, Swanhunter) and works bringing together amateur and professional performers (*Tobias and the Angel, The Monster in the Maze*).

His instrumental works sometimes playfully re-use music of the past: a wind serenade, *Figures in the Garden*, a miniature fortepiano concerto *An Airmail Letter from Mozart* and a flute concerto, *The Magic Flute Dances*, are all based on Mozart; *Köthener Messe* is derived from Bach; *The Middleham Jewel* uses medieval sources. His orchestral works include *Gaia Theory* and his chamber music includes a string quartet and a piano quintet.

Jeremy Thurlow is a Fellow at Robinson College, University of Cambridge. His music – described as “seductive, innovative, full of freshness” by Henri Dutilleux – has been performed by the BBC Philharmonic, Rolf Hind, BBC Singers, Fitzwilliam String Quartet and Peter Sheppard Skærved among others, and won the George Butterworth Award for new composition. Recent work includes *Sea-cradling* for the Schubert Ensemble, *Memory is the seamstress* for the Kreutzer Quartet, *Blithe Wine*, a portrait of John Keats in the form of a bassoon concerto, *Light, dark, sea*, a meditation on changing relations between coast, sea and people, for soprano and chamber orchestra, *The Sleeping Lord*, commissioned by St John’s College Choir, and most recently two concertos: *Oracle*, for trumpet (SCO/University of St Andrews) and *Over height, over hollow* for flute (Symphonova Orchestra). Jeremy writes on 20th-century French music, notably Henri Dutilleux and Olivier Messiaen. He broadcasts on BBC Radio 3 and also performs as a pianist, especially in chamber music.

Born in Wales, **Huw Watkins** enjoys a dual career as composer and performer. His music has been performed throughout Europe and North America, while as a pianist he is in

great demand with orchestras and festivals including the London Sinfonietta, Britten Sinfonia, the BBC orchestras and Aldeburgh and Cheltenham Festivals. He has received commissions from the Nash Ensemble, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, Belcea Quartet, Hallé Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, BBC Symphony Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra and Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra.

Highlights include his acclaimed Violin Concerto (premiered at the BBC Proms by Alina Ibragimova and the BBCSO), Piano Concerto (BBC NOW), London Concerto premiered to mark the London Symphony Orchestra’s centenary, Double Concerto (BBC Proms) and *In My Craft or Sullen Art* for tenor and string quartet premiered at Wigmore Hall by Mark Padmore and the Petersen Quartet. He is regularly featured on BBC Radio 3 and was named Composer-in-Association with BBC NOW in 2015.

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Beethoven Plus performer biographies

Born in London of Polish descent, **Kryisia Osostowicz** studied at the Yehudi Menuhin School, Cambridge University and at the Salzburg Mozarteum with the great Hungarian violinist Sándor Végh. She has given concerto and recital performances throughout Europe and made many solo and chamber music recordings (for Hyperion, Chandos, Dutton, Naxos and SOMM Recordings), winning awards in England, France and Germany. *Gramophone* magazine has praised her “performances of flawless integrity”.

In the 1980s, Kryisia was co-founder of the pioneering piano quartet Domus which toured the world with its own portable concert hall, a geodesic dome. She subsequently founded the Dante String Quartet, which is recognised as one of Britain’s finest ensembles, appearing at major festivals and concert series and receiving the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Chamber Music. Kryisia has also collaborated with artists such as Ferenc Rados, Radu Lupu, Ernst Kovacic, Steven Isserlis and Thomas Adès.

Innovative programming has always held an interest for Kryisia. As artist-in-residence at King’s College Cambridge with the Dante Quartet, she curated a concert series combining chamber music with poetry readings, and since then has devised other projects also involving composers, writers and actors, reaching new audiences by bringing familiar music to life in unexpected ways.

Much in demand as a teacher of violin and chamber music, Kryisia teaches at London’s Guildhall School of Music and Drama and has also given masterclasses in France, Italy, Spain, Poland and Japan. She is artistic director of the thriving Dante Summer Festival in the Tamar Valley, Cornwall.

www.dantefestival.org

Daniel Tong was born in Cornwall and studied in London. His musical life is spent performing as soloist and chamber musician, writing and teaching. Outside the UK he has recently performed in France, Belgium and Portugal. In 2012, he recorded his first solo CD of works by Schubert for Quartz, *Gramophone* magazine describing him as “an extraordinarily sympathetic Schubertian”.

Daniel’s London Bridge Trio have recorded two CDs of works by Frank Bridge for Dutton (one of which was shortlisted for the *Gramophone* Chamber Music Award) as well as Schumann, Fauré and, most recently, Dvořák to a double five-star review in *BBC Music* magazine. The trio have broadcast many times on BBC Radio 3, given performances at Wigmore Hall, St John’s, Smith Square and Kings Place in London and at the Queen’s Hall in Edinburgh.

Recorded live in Cedars Hall, Wells, Somerset, the first volume of *Beethoven Plus* marks his debut with SOMM Recordings.

Praised by *The Guardian* for his “masterly pianism”, Daniel has collaborated with the Elias, Navarra, Heath, Callino, Dante and Allegri quartets as well as singers Raphaela Papadakis, Mary Bevan, Stephan Loges and Paul Agnew. He has a regular duo with baritone Ivan Ludlow. Each year Daniel plays with an array of wonderful individual artists, often at his own chamber festivals in Winchester and the Wye Valley. Other recent CD releases have included the Brahms Cello Sonatas (on period instruments) with Robin Michael for Resonus Classics and works by David Matthews and Fauré with violinist Sara Trickey for Deux-Elles.

Daniel is Head of Piano in Chamber Music at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire where he has instigated the Birmingham International Piano Chamber Music Festival, its inaugural season taking place in November 2018.

www.danieltong.com