

SOMMCD 0197-2

Céleste Series

BEETHOVEN

Violin Sonatas, Op.30 Nos.1 & 2; Op.47 'Kreutzer'; Op.96

plus companion pieces by

Philip Ashworth, David Matthews, Kurt Schwertsik and Matthew Taylor

Krysia Osostowicz violin Daniel Tong piano

CD 1

Kurt Schwertsik: *Unterwegs nach Heiligenstadt**

- 1 I Energico 2:36
2 II Tranquillo 6:03

Beethoven: *Sonata in A major*, Op.30 No.1

- 3 I Allegro 7:53
4 II Adagio molto espressivo 7:16
5 III Allegretto con Variazioni 8:26

Beethoven: *Sonata in A major*, Op.47 'Kreutzer'

- 6 I Adagio sostenuto – Presto 10:43
7 II Andante con Variazioni 14:07
8 III Presto 8:42

9 Matthew Taylor: *Tarantella Furiosa** 5:59

Total duration: 71:56

* First recordings

CD 2

1 Philip Ashworth: *Air** 4:37Beethoven: *Sonata in C minor*, Op.30 No.2

- 2 I Allegro con brio 7:45
3 II Adagio cantabile 8:53
4 III Scherzo: Allegro 3:35
5 IV Finale: Allegro 5:30

David Matthews: *Sonatina*, Op.128*

- 6 I Allegro moderato 2:05
7 II Adagio espressivo 2:28
8 III Scherzo: Allegro 1:06
9 IV Molto vivace 2:03

Beethoven: *Sonata in G major*, Op.96

- 10 I Allegro moderato 10:37
11 II Adagio espressivo 6:00
12 III Scherzo: Allegro 2:06
13 IV Poco allegretto 8:47

Total duration: 65:42

BEETHOVEN VIOLIN SONATAS plus companion pieces
by K Schwertsik · M Taylor · P Ashworth · D MatthewsDaniel Tong
pianoKrysia Osostowicz
violin

Recorded live at Cedars Hall, Wells, Somerset on February 23-24, May 29, November 13-14 & December 18, 2017

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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: Szegedy 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 second volume completes our cycle with the later Beethoven works and their new 'partners'. It includes his three most substantial sonatas and the enigmatic A major (Op.30 No.1) which, alongside the other two works in the set (the C

minor presented here and the G major on Volume I) was finished in the village of Heiligenstadt in 1802. The Op.47 *Kreutzer* followed less than a year later and the final sonata, Op.96 from 1812, on the threshold of Beethoven's late style, stands alone within the series. Through these four works we glimpse Beethoven's development at the fulcrum of his composing career, emerging into the drama and scope of his middle period, first with the breadth of the A-flat major slow movement of Op.30 No.2 and then confirming his "new path" with the symphonic proportion and fearsome virtuosity of Op.47, subtitled in the first edition "come d'un concerto" ('as if a concerto'). A glimpse of the future in the songful Op.30 No.1 comes to its fruition in Op.96, a work of sublime lyricism with kinship to the peerless *Archduke* Trio, Beethoven's next opus.



Kurt Schwertsik's *Unterwegs Nach Heiligenstadt* relates to Beethoven's Op.30 No.1 Sonata in fascinating manner, via the narrative surrounding the piece as much as the notes within the score. As we already know, the title refers to the village in which the Sonata was completed, but also where Beethoven wrote his *Heiligenstadt Testament*, an impassioned document in which he poured out his despair at the onset of deafness, declaring that were it not for his art he would have given up, even taken his own life, but that he has instead resolved to overcome all for his music. Against the backdrop of this personal trauma we have the almost naively lyrical A major Sonata, in which Schwertsik sees the embodiment of, and eventual triumph over, Beethoven's struggles. In this he concurs with Angus Watson's view that: "In its quiet way, this sublime sonata shows that Beethoven's belief in a personal destiny, his strength of character and the deep spirituality revealed in those words from the *Heiligenstadt Testament*, could overcome his despair". Schwertsik's searching,

sincerely touching two-movement work begins in angst but ends (via overtly romantic and lyrical passages that the one-time student of Stockhausen in the 1960s confided he hardly dared to write) in sublime C major.

The **Sonata in A major, Op.30 No.1** has received a curious reception in recent years. Schwertsik hears in it a certain similarity in triple-time lyrical/contrapuntal writing to the E-flat String Quartet (Op.127) and is not alone in finding premonitions in it of Beethoven's last period: Max Rostal writes that the second movement's ending "equals late Beethoven in its rapture". Nevertheless, the piece has been somewhat neglected on the concert platform, perhaps for its general eschewal of instrumental pyrotechnics. It is possible that it might have found more favour with violinists had Beethoven retained the original barnstorming *tarantella* finale. Certainly, it would then have consummated Schwertsik's narrative of triumph over adversity. In the event, Beethoven put the *tarantella* to one side (of which more later) thinking it too weighty for the sonata as a whole and replaced it with a set of variations, one of three such movements spread across the sonatas heard here. From the amiable theme to the good-humoured, inventive coda, these variations provide a subtle, somewhat understated conclusion to this probing and unusual sonata.

Beethoven's **Sonata in A major, Op.47** quickly gained the name by which it is almost always known, *Kreutzer*, for its dedication to the French violinist, composer and pedagogue Rodolphe Kreutzer. Via Tolstoy's novella *The Kreutzer Sonata* and Janáček's string quartet based on it, this accidental nickname was reinforced and loaded with overtones of violence and passion. Ironically, Beethoven hadn't intended to dedicate the work to Kreutzer, who rejected it as unfathomable and unplayable.

The story behind the original dedicatee, all but lost to musical history for generations, is equally interesting and crucial to an understanding of the Sonata's genesis.

In 1803, Beethoven had agreed to give a performance in Vienna with the young Polish-Caribbean violinist, George Bridgetower. Having decided to write a sonata for the occasion but being short of time, he retrieved the discarded *tarantella* finale from Op.30 No.1 as the starting point for the new work. Over several weeks collaborating, he and Bridgetower quickly became friends, the young violinist at the forefront of Beethoven's considerations as he put together the first two movements of the new sonata.

The first performance of this "concerto for two" was a huge success and one can sense in the score, particularly in the two newly composed movements, a sense of virtuosic jousting between two masters. In terms of proportion, this Ninth Sonata far outstretches any of the previous eight, conceived on something of the scale of the *Razumovsky* Quartets (Op.59) or *Waldstein* Sonata (Op.53). But fate was not kind to Bridgetower. After the joy of the premiere he and Beethoven quickly fell out, apparently over a woman, and the dedication and friendship were erased forever. The score was sent to Kreutzer in Paris and the potential for posterity to embrace the 'Bridgetower Sonata' was gone.

When Matthew Taylor was approached for this project he was immediately keen to write a partner piece to the *Kreutzer* Sonata and delivered his ***Tarantella Furiosa*** within only a few weeks. Several commissioned composers have written their works in order to run directly into the Beethoven sonata of their choice, and some are also ambivalent about ordering. Matthew's piece, written as a kind of 'encore' which asks

as much of our duo as the finale of the *Kreutzer* itself, can only come after Op.47. This whirlwind ride is always exhilarating to play, especially after the exertion of the sonata beforehand. The borrowings from Beethoven are audible and obvious, but here the *tarantella* is refracted through a multicoloured 21st-century prism full of fire and fury.

Air by Philip Ashworth plays as a counterpoint to its Beethovenian partner, the stormy C minor Sonata; the title referring to both the air through which sound waves travel – "the only thing between the players" – and the tuneful quality of the writing. Its lilting accompaniments and largely untroubled surface seem to fill the space between the notes in Beethoven's dramatic, even violent score to present its other face: a hidden story. Ashworth is interested in the way in which Beethoven creates a true duo where neither instrument is more prominent, but his violin and piano lines are somehow more compliant than those of their subject sonata. Ashworth's final E natural even directly contradicts Beethoven's C minor, as if to echo Beethoven's famous rhetorical query "Must it be so?"

The **Sonata in C minor, Op.30 No.2** belongs to a family of works in this particular key that are particularly volatile, often starting with a thematic cell or motto in octaves. Within Beethoven's output one may cite, amongst many, a Piano Trio (Op.1 No.3), Piano Concerto (Op.37) and Symphony (Op.67), but this trope was already alive with Mozart (think of the piano Fantasy and Sonata, K457/475, or his C minor Piano Concerto, K491) and continued by Schubert, Mendelssohn and others. One could read this as the most autobiographical of Beethoven's works completed in Heiligenstadt, but this Sonata also dates from the period when he was most enamoured with Napoleon Bonaparte and has more than a whiff of French revolutionary fervour in the popular, march-like themes in the second subject of the first movement, and the *Scherzo*.

The bombastic chords of the opening *Allegro*, the scalic outbursts in the *Adagio* and the drum-like figurations of the *Scherzo* and finale also contribute to the somewhat martial feeling of the Sonata as a whole. In between times the expansive slow movement presents a transcendent, heartfelt song in the comforting submediant key, before the dashing finale embarks with a terse, seven-bar theme and concludes with a scintillating coda that leaves players and audience alike equally breathless.

David Matthews' ingenious **Sonatina** mirrors, in miniature, much of Beethoven's construction in his last Violin and Piano Sonata, Op.96. Cramped into seven minutes or so are four tiny movements, all but the last of which share Beethoven's tempo markings, key structure and basic formal outline. Perhaps Matthews sensed that even he couldn't fit a full set of variations into two minutes, so his finale is the only moment at which he departs from a direct mapping of Beethoven's scheme. To compensate, he ties his sprightly *molto vivace* thematically to the rest of his Sonatina and makes considerable use of the trill that is so prominent in Beethoven's (and his own) first movement. Matthews' writing for piano and violin is always idiomatic if challenging (for instance in the harmonics of the trio section of the *Scherzo* movement or in the pianistic agility required in the last). The slow movement in glowing E flat is, as it is for Beethoven, the jewel in the centre of the work.

Composed in 1812, Beethoven's **Op.96 Sonata in G major** somewhat harks back to Heiligenstadt a decade earlier. Failing hearing cruelly meant that Beethoven's public performing career would soon come to an end and a diary entry that year reads "everything that is called life should be sacrificed to the sublime and be a sanctuary of art". Beethoven entrusted the first performance to the work's dedicatee, Archduke Rudolph, a fine pianist and close friend. The 1812 biography recalls the birth of the

Kreutzer Sonata, as Op.96 was also written with a famous violinist in mind, this time not a brilliant young virtuoso but a master rather past his prime.

Pierre Rode was one of the foremost violinists of the time, having studied with Giovanni Battista Viotti and worked alongside Kreutzer in establishing the violin method for the Paris Conservatoire, but several years at court in Russia seem to have taken a considerable toll. When Rode returned to Vienna in 1812, Archduke Rudolph warned Beethoven that the violinist's playing was considerably weaker and that the new sonata should be tailored accordingly to avoid embarrassment. What emerged was a profoundly lyrical masterpiece with that quality of deeply felt abstraction characterising so many of Beethoven's later works. The hymn-like slow movement gives way to a terse *Scherzo*, and the finale is perhaps where most concession to Rode's waning power is apparent.

Beethoven had written to the Archduke complaining that he would have to forego the "rushing passages" normally favoured in final movements. Instead, he delivered a set of variations on a charming *poco allegretto* theme that transcended any of his other movements in this form for violin and piano (despite the many beauties of Op.12 No.1, Op.30 No.1 and Op.47). The development is seamless until a rhapsodic slow variation in the work's secondary key of burnished E-flat major – played at something like a quarter of the speed of the theme and almost acting as a second slow movement – whose tonality it shares. After this Beethoven cannot resist just a little rushing in an exuberant coda which includes a chromatic fugato, flying scales and even a comical fake move towards a slow ending before the final dash to the close.

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Beethoven Plus composer biographies

David Matthews was born in London in 1943 and started composing at the age of 16. He was mainly self-taught, though he studied privately with Anthony Milner and was greatly helped by Nicholas Maw and Peter Sculthorpe. He also learned much from being an assistant to Benjamin Britten in the late 1960s. His large output includes nine symphonies, five symphonic poems, seven concertos, 14 string quartets and many chamber and vocal works. A large number of his works are available on CD. Many of his pieces are inspired by the natural world, by paintings and literary texts, and by collaborations with instrumentalist friends. He has composed six pieces for the BBC Philharmonic, including his Seventh and Eighth Symphonies, and 10 for the Nash Ensemble. He has also written books on Tippett and Britten, and has worked extensively as an arranger.

Philip Ashworth is a young British composer with an emerging international profile. A Royal College of Music graduate, he is the recipient of several scholarships including a Constant and Kit Lambert Award, a Drapers Company Award, an RCM Director's Award and an award from the PRS Foundation for new music. He has had premieres across the United Kingdom, Europe and Russia. In addition to his orchestral works, Philip has a passion for vocal music, and opera in particular. His opera *Bare*, to a libretto by Natasha Collie, was performed at the Edinburgh Festival, The Sage Gateshead, the Rose Theatre, Kingston and other venues across the UK. In 2015, *Error!* (a retelling of Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*) was commissioned by International Opera Theatre and received its premiere in Citta della Pieve, Italy.

During the 2016/17 season, Philip was a member of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra's Composers' Hub Scheme. Since 2017, he has been Head of Music at the Connaught House School, London.

London-born **Matthew Taylor** won a Music Scholarship to Queen's College, Cambridge in 1983, where he studied with Robin Holloway and conducted the university orchestras. In 1986, he was awarded the Conducting Scholarship to Guildhall School of Music and, after further studies as a post graduate at the Royal Academy of Music, gained the Dip RAM, their highest award. He also studied with Leonard Bernstein and conducted with him at the 1987 Schleswig-Holstein Festival. He subsequently received special encouragement from Robert Simpson.

His widely performed Symphony No.1 (1985) led to several important commissions. But it is in his deployment of large-scale processes that his music makes its most significant statements, demonstrating a natural feel for pace and growth, command of thematic development, symphonic thought and the expressive force of structure combining to give his scores life-force and durability. His works have been championed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, the Allegri and Dante Quartets, Emily Beynon, Emma Johnson, John McCabe, Martyn Brabbins, George Hurst, Richard Watkins and Raphael Wallfisch. His music has been recorded by Toccata Classics, Dutton Epoch, NMC and ASV and played in Germany, Italy, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Russia, America and the Baltic States. His most recent symphony, No.5, was given its first performance by English Symphony Orchestra at Cadogan Hall, London in June 2019.

One of Austria's leading composers, **Kurt Schwertsik** studied composition with Joseph Marx and Karl Schiske (and later with Karlheinz Stockhausen) and horn at the Vienna Academy of Music. The influence of John Cage and other American composers, together with Schwertsik's friendship with Cornelius Cardew, led to his rejection of serialism and reorientation towards tonality as a means of musical communication. A featured composer at the 1987 Almeida Festival, London and 1990 Brisbane Musica Nova Festival, he was honoured in his home city with a retrospective of his music at Wien Modern in 1992. His music was included in the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Southbank Centre's Alternative Vienna Festival in 1995.

His most significant compositions include the fantasy opera *Fanferlieschen Schönefüßchen* (Stuttgart Opera, 1983), the cycle of five orchestral works *Irdische Klänge*, heard for the first time in its complete form at Wien Modern in 1992, and four ballets with choreographer Johann Kresnik: *Macbeth*, *Frida Kahlo*, *Nietzsche* and *Gastmahl der Liebe*. In 2008-09, he scored Jochen Ulrich's ballet *Kafka America* for Landestheater Linz.

An active song composer, he has composed concertos for violin, alphorn, guitar, double bass, timpani and flute, and the orchestral works *Divertimento Macchiato* for trumpeter Håkan Hardenberger (2007) and *Nachtmusiken* for the BBC Philharmonic (2009).

Recordings of his music have appeared on the EMI, Largo, ABC Classics, ORF and Chandos labels.

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.

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



BEETHOVEN PLUS Volume I

SOMMCD 0181-2

“Osostowicz and Tong’s interpretative style [is] patient, affectionate, warmly conversational, sensitive to harmonic detail... I think I may have sighed with pleasure.”

Andrew Farach-Colton
Gramophone

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