

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-91)

PIANO SONATAS Volume 2

Sonata No.7 in C major, K309 · Sonata No.9 in A minor, K311

Sonata No.8 in D major, K310 · Rondo in A minor, K511

PETER DONOHOE piano

	<b>Sonata No.7 in C major, K309</b>	[18:09]
1	I Allegro con spirito	6:10
2	II Andante un poco adagio	5:50
3	III Rondeau – Allegretto grazioso	6:07
	<b>Sonata No.9 in D major, K311</b>	[15:17]
4	I Allegro con spirito	4:21
5	II Andante con espressione	4:58
6	III Rondeau (Allegro)	5:57
	<b>Sonata No.8 in A minor, K310</b>	[18:44]
7	I Allegro maestoso	5:45
8	II Andante cantabile con espressione	9:49
9	III Presto	3:09
10	<b>Rondo in A minor, K511</b>	8:50

**Total duration: 61:17**

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Producer: Siva Oke      Recording Engineer: Paul Arden-Taylor

Piano: C. Bechstein D282 Grand Piano

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(after). Location: Private Collection / Bridgeman Images

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MOZART

Piano  
Sonatas

Volume 2

Peter Donohoe  
*piano*



## MOZART'S Piano sonatas Volume 2

The three sonatas featured on this disc are all products of the ill-fated journey Mozart made to Paris in 1777. Dissatisfied with the proscriptive terms of his employment in the service of the Archbishop of Salzburg, requiring him, for example, to compose masses lasting no longer than 45 minutes (he was to get his revenge later with the massive even though incomplete 'Great' Mass in C minor, K427), he set off to the French capital, accompanied by his mother, with high hopes of securing a lucrative position there.

On the way they stopped off first at Munich – clearly hoping for an appointment closer to home, only to be told, with near-Biblical finality: “But my dear child, there is no vacancy” – then Augsburg, birthplace of his father Leopold, where Wolfgang entered into a bantering relationship with his cousin Maria Anna Thekla, their subsequent exchanges of letters displaying a lavatorial sense of humour typical, apparently, of Bavarians at the time before reaching journey's end at Mannheim.

Mannheim boasted a fine orchestra with whose musicians Mozart rapidly became intimate, and an enlightened Elector (Prince of the Holy Roman Empire with the right of participating in the election of the Holy Roman Emperor – albeit by this time the title had become a mere sinecure) Carl Theodor. Mozart remained there for three months, teaching, composing and becoming infatuated with the 16-year-old soprano Aloysia Weber. Letters from his father Leopold, impatient with his son's suspected prevarication and obvious dalliances, eventually ordered Mozart to press on towards the

great opportunities he was sure were available in Paris – “A place where good money can be made” – where Wolfgang and his mother eventually arrived on March 23, 1778.

All his (and his father's) aspirations came to nothing, and, as if to salt the wounds of professional disappointment, Mozart also had to endure the sorrow of his mother falling ill and dying in Paris on July 3. The way he handled the business of informing Leopold and sister Nannerl in a well thought-out sequence of letters of this loss reveals a maturity which some, whose only encounter with Mozart might be playwright Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus*, which depicted him as a genius savant with a penchant for vulgarity, could only marvel at.

On the long, tedious journey back to Salzburg in the hope of catching up with his newfound musician friends he stopped off again at Mannheim and Munich, where Carl Theodor, taking his famous orchestra intact with him, had now taken up residence as Elector of Bavaria. And it was in Munich that Mozart learned that Aloysia had cooled towards him, introducing the 22-year-old composer to the kind of emotional disappointment he had never previously known. But she was to remain a presence in his life, becoming his sister-in-law when Mozart married Constanze Weber (another brilliant soprano). Aloysia's eventual husband, the actor Max Lange, has provided posterity with the only authentic portrait (albeit unfinished) of Mozart.

Disappointed in both career aspirations and love, and bereft at the death of his mother, Mozart arrived back in Salzburg in mid-January 1779 after 16 months away. There, he accepted, one suspects reluctantly, the position of

Court Organist his father had petitioned for. It would be another three years before he could escape forever what he had long come to regard as a stifling provincial prison.

The three piano sonatas Mozart produced during the course of this ill-fated expedition reflect both the grandeur of the orchestral sounds he encountered in Mannheim and Paris, as well as his own disturbed emotions, churned up by his falling in love with Aloysia and her subsequent rejection, and by the loss of his beloved mother.

Mozart's tempo indications for his **Piano Sonata in C major, K309** are unusually detailed and prescriptive, their exactitude suggesting a pedagogic intent. And perhaps they reflect the character and abilities of Rosa Cannabich, the 15-year-old eldest child of the Mannheim concertmaster Christian Cannabich. She was a temporary pupil of Mozart's in Mannheim and first performed the Sonata, just a few days after its completion, on December 5, 1777.

In a letter to his father, Mozart described her as "a very beautiful and well-mannered girl: she is very thoughtful and self-assured for her age, she is serious, doesn't talk too much, but when she speaks – she speaks with graciousness and friendliness".

He particularly praised her performance of the central *Andante un poco adagio* movement, which carries itself with a quasi-improvisatory nature, peppered with sudden dynamic contrasts and decorated with all kinds of figurations, bearing out, in part, what Mozart wrote to his father about Rosa's playing:

"Her right hand is very good, but her left, unfortunately, is completely ruined. If I were her regular teacher I would lock up all her music, cover the keys with a handkerchief and make her practise, first with the right hand and then with the left, nothing but passages, trills, mordents and so forth, very slowly at first, until each hand should be thoroughly trained".

This *Andante* is preceded by an opening *Allegro con spirito* movement which in many ways presages that of the great *Jupiter* Symphony (No.41 in C, K551) of 11 years later, not least being cast in the same key. They both begin with an assertive, easily memorable and terse motif, followed by a more yielding, gentle answering phrase, and this sonata's strong annunciatory phrase will lead us through remote keys, the striking motto-theme guiding us, just as the *Jupiter's* similar device does.

The Rondo finale begins innocently enough, with a folksy little main melody perhaps looking forward to the French audiences for which Mozart was hoping, but the textures soon become more demanding – triplets in both hands an octave apart, dense chromatic harmonies, pinpoint left-hand octaves, tricky passages in thirds – all the while based on the naive little ditty with which it opens. After such dexterous mayhem the movement ends with a whisper before creeping away, even more quietly, to its conclusion.

Again in the **Piano Sonata in A minor, K310**, for the first two movements at least, Mozart provides detailed tempo and performance indications. It's worth noting in passing that he rarely wrote substantial works in this key – which is, whether by accident or design, the relative minor of the previous sonata's

C major. Indeed, this sonata and the K457 C minor Piano Sonata are the only such works that employ a minor key at all.

Composed in Paris in the summer of 1778, immediately after the death of Mozart's mother, this is an intense work, the urgency of its *Allegro Maestoso* opening movement conveyed by the repeated driving, often dissonant chords in the left hand. One can imagine their percussive effect when played on the pianos of the time (whilst in Augsburg Mozart had visited the piano factory of Johann Andreas Stein, designer of the seminal, so-called "Viennese fortepiano", admiring the rapidity of response of his instruments, described in detail in a much-quoted letter home, and which clearly influenced his exploration of the instrument's articulative powers).

Though the main thrust of the movement is propelled by a simple, heroic, forward-projecting subject, there are also moments of mysterious chromaticism, and one striking incident immediately after the recapitulation when the left hand thunders out the main melody before dissonant chords swirl us in an irresistible maelstrom towards the conclusion.

For the *Andante cantabile con espressione* movement, Mozart once again turns to the perfumed air of a Salzburg evening to produce music which evokes the serenades he had composed for performance in the city in the past, and would do so again. It is strange that for someone so desperate to get away from a place he found so discomfiting, he so often writes music that suggests a nostalgia for it; perhaps on this occasion, in view of the very recent death of his mother, the sentiment may have stood as a kind of tribute to her.

Caressing thirds, florid melodic decorations and tripping figurations all add their charms, although a central episode, heavy with trills in both hands as well as angular sequences, goes out of its way to disturb the comfortable serenity.

Serenity is banished altogether as the turbulent, heads-down *Presto* finale launches itself. This is an unstoppable, busily obsessive *moto perpetuo* and even the temporary shift midway to a more grounded, Schubertian-sounding A major does nothing to quell the momentum. This is Mozart at his most grim, whether occasioned by his mother's death or by his resigned realisation that his music was unacceptable to the great European courts.

Written in Mannheim in early November 1777, the **Piano Sonata in D major, K311** is in many ways a reflection of K309. It is spacious, full of grand gestures and display, and aroused sniffy observations from Leopold Mozart that his son was writing in the "Mannheim manner" (in other words, with pronounced, fashion-led orchestral mannerisms of which Mozart *père* clearly disapproved). But Wolfgang was already a past master in tailoring his music to the style and taste of the particular musical environment he found himself inhabiting. His description of his *Paris* Symphony (No.31, K297) – "I made sure to include the *premier coup d'archet*, an arresting downbow on the strings" – fully admits his deliberate and pragmatic chameleonism. and should not be castigated for producing this big, spectacular Sonata, full of effect and colour.

The opening *Allegro con spirito* movement is both spacious and fluent, In its expansive fluidity, it explores the full range of the keyboard exuberantly with hands leaping between the registers and cheerfully crossing to produce

surprising but telling thematic detail. There are also some well-filled chords (again, one can imagine their effect on the pianos of the day, rendered in sounds of almost rattling percussiveness).

The development section begins with a sequential, contrapuntal exploration of the material which had just concluded the exposition, the opening material of which we will not hear again until it ushers in the very end of the movement.

Apparently simple in effect, its songlike refrain returning each time with added decoration, the *Andante* in fact subtly exploits the resources of the instrument and, indeed, the pianist: the left-hand voices important thematic material, often expressed in thirds, at other times providing wide-spread, guitar-like accompanying arpeggios under right-hand octaves. Once again there are some dense, occasionally dissonant chords to hint at subterranean currents.

There is much skittish humour in the concluding Rondeau, a blend of 'hunting' finale and tripping contredanse which evokes Haydn (with whose music Mozart was already familiar but whom he had yet to meet). There are slapstick silences and, about two-thirds through the movement, a long-held, eight-note dominant seventh chord heralding a braggadocio free-time cadenza before the high jinks resume.

Another example of Mozart's rare choice of the desolate A minor key is the **K511 Rondo**. Composed in March 1787, it may well be an expression of the composer's despair at returning to an increasingly unreceptive (and money-

consuming) Vienna after the rapturous reception of his opera *Le nozze di Figaro* in Prague. Some commentators have described it as a teaching piece, written in the manner of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, but it seems, palpably, too deep for mere pedagogy.

Its siciliano rhythm links it with another desolate movement by Mozart, the F-sharp minor *Andante* of the Piano Concerto No.23 in A major, K488 (normally the slow movement of an A major concerto would be cast in D major). But where that movement sings a sad song of resigned simplicity, this Rondo, unfettered by the obligations of orchestral constraints, builds in chromatic intensity and melodic urgency, to emerge as one of the most profound movements ever penned by the composer.

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**MOZART:** Piano Sonatas, Volume 1  
SOMMCD 0191

"It was high time someone blew the cobwebs off this still under-appreciated repertoire, and Donohoe is clearly the person to do it."

BBC Music Magazine  
Recording of the Month

## PETER DONOHOE

"I cannot imagine a living pianist capable of improving on Donohoe's outstanding artistry"

Robert Matthew-Walker, *Musical Opinion*

Peter Donohoe was born in Manchester, England in 1953. He studied at Chetham's School of Music, graduated from Leeds University and went on to study at the Royal Northern College of Music with Derek Wyndham and in Paris with Olivier Messiaen and Yvonne Loriod. He is acclaimed as one of the foremost pianists of our time for his musicianship, stylistic versatility and commanding technique.

As soloist he has appeared with most major orchestras in almost every country: UK, Germany, USA, Canada, Scandinavia, Russia, Japan, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Australia and South America; for example London Symphony, Berlin Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Dresden Staatskapelle and Philharmonic, Vienna Symphony, Czech Philharmonic, Concertgebouw, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland, NHK Symphony, Orquesta Sinfónica Simón Bolívar, Buenos Aires Philharmonic, New Zealand Symphony, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Russian National and St Petersburg Philharmonia.

In demand as a jury member for international piano competitions, he has adjudicated at the International Tchaikovsky (Moscow, 2011 and 2015), Busoni International (Bolzano, Italy, 2012), the Queen Elisabeth (Brussels, 2016), Georges Enescu (Bucharest, 2016), Hong Kong International Piano (2016), Harbin (2017), Artur Rubinstein Piano Master (2017), Lev Vlassenko Piano (2017) and Ricardo Viñes

International, Spain, along with many national competitions in the UK and abroad. Recent discs include Stravinsky's Music for Solo Piano and Piano and Orchestra (Hong Kong Philharmonic), the complete Sonatas of Scriabin and the complete Sonatas of Prokofiev in three volumes for SOMM Recordings; Shostakovich's Piano Concertos and Sonatas (Orchestra of the Swan) and 24 Preludes and Fugues for Signum Records.

For Dutton Vocalion he recorded Cyril Scott's Piano Concerto (BBC Concert Orchestra) and Malcolm Arnold's *Fantasy on a Theme of John Field* (Royal Scottish National Orchestra), both conducted by Martin Yates.

He played with the Berliner Philharmoniker in Simon Rattle's opening concerts as Music Director. He made his twenty-second appearance at the BBC Proms in 2012 and has appeared at many festivals, including six consecutive visits to the Edinburgh Festival and the Ruhr and Schleswig-Holstein Festivals in Germany.

Peter Donohoe performs numerous recitals internationally and has established long-standing relationships with several chamber groups and two-piano partners.

He has worked with many of the world's greatest conductors: Christoph Eschenbach, Neeme Järvi, Lorin Maazel, Kurt Masur, Andrew Davis and Yevgeny Svetlanov. More recently he has appeared with many of the next generation of excellent conductors: for example, Gustavo Dudamel, Robin Ticciati and Daniel Harding.

An honorary doctor of music at seven UK universities, he was awarded a CBE for services to classical music in 2010.