

SOMMCD 0602

Céleste Series

Sonata No.50 in D major, Hob. XVI:37 [10:28]

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------|
| 1 Allegro con brio | 4:22 |
| 2 Largo e sostenuto | 2:34 |
| 3 Finale: Presto ma non troppo | 3:31 |

Sonata No.54 in G major, Hob. XVI:40 [11:49]

- | | |
|------------------------|------|
| 4 Allegretto innocente | 8:42 |
| 5 Presto | 3:06 |

Sonata No.19 in E minor, Hob. XVI:47 [12:51]

- | | |
|---------------------------|------|
| 6 Adagio | 4:29 |
| 7 Allegro | 4:41 |
| 8 Finale: Tempo di Menuet | 3:39 |

Sonata No.47 in B minor, Hob. XVI:32 [11:00]

- | | |
|--------------------|------|
| 9 Allegro moderato | 4:37 |
| 10 Menuet | 3:17 |
| 11 Finale: Presto | 3:05 |

Sonata No.58 in C major, Hob. XVI:48 [11:19]

- | | |
|----------------------------|------|
| 12 Andante con espressione | 7:02 |
| 13 Rondo: Presto | 4:16 |

Sonata No.59 in E flat major, Hob. XVI:49 [19:35]

- | | |
|----------------------------|------|
| 14 Allegro | 6:53 |
| 15 Adagio e cantabile | 8:28 |
| 16 Finale: Tempo di Minuet | 4:13 |

Total duration 77:02

**TURNER
SIMS** Southampton

Recorded at Turner Sims, University of Southampton on November 17 & 18, 2018

Producer: Siva Oke Recording Engineer: Paul Arden-Taylor

Piano: Steinway 'D' Concert Grand

Front cover: Photograph © Anna Paik

Design: Andrew Giles Booklet Editor: Michael Quinn

DDD

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO

© & © 2019 SOMM RECORDINGS · THAMES DITTON · SURREY · ENGLAND
Made in the EU



HAYDN
Sonatas · Volume II

LEON McCAWLEY
piano

Every aspect of human experience: HAYDN'S PIANO SONATAS

Like all truly great composers, Haydn paid a price for his originality, and even today he is surrounded by a sea of controversy. For Schumann, Haydn amounted to little more than a familiar family member rather than a figure of deeper interest. And thus was started the popular myth of 'Papa' – or even 'Grand Papa' – Haydn. For the noted Austrian critic Eduard Hanslick, he was “so loveable you could kiss him”.

Turning to his 60 or so piano sonatas and their performance, it is hard to realise that pianists of the stature of Chopin, Liszt, Busoni, Rachmaninov, Eugen d'Albert and, perhaps more surprisingly, Artur Schnabel, did not include Haydn in their repertoires. Moving closer to our own times, Wilhelm Backhaus did not play him, Vladimir Horowitz very little. True, Sviatoslav Richter preferred Haydn to Mozart, and so did Glenn Gould, though for András Schiff – always happy to throw down the gauntlet – his performances of both composers were equally, in his own words, “bizarre and perverted”.

Enraged by what he sees as misunderstanding and neglect down the centuries, Schiff, together with Alfred Brendel, has kept Haydn at the heart of his immense repertoire claiming that a week of performing Haydn with friends at London's Wigmore Hall in 1988 was among the most delightful experiences of his life. Per contra, Stephen Kovacevich feels that Haydn dines with the aristocrats when he should be with the servants.

Reasons for such alternating praise and disparagement are not difficult to find. A love of wit and humour was central to Haydn but were adduced as a frivolous, lightweight alternative to more serious virtues. For the German writer and composer E.T.A. Hoffmann, Haydn's music reflected “a life of love and bliss, as if before the Fall”, a limiting and misleading view contradicted by Mozart, no less, who took Haydn's mastery and range in his stride, declaring: “There is no one who can do it all – to joke and to terrify, to evoke laughter and profound sentiment – and all equally well, except Joseph Haydn”.

It is well, too, to remember that Brahms admired Haydn and so did Wagner – “everything tells, everything is inspiration... above all the conciseness; everything has something to say, no more frills”. This from so radically a different composer.

It is of course, ironic that pioneering composers such as Haydn, happy to fly in the face of convention and pull a long nose, as it were, at conservatives, should be admonished for their spirit. Beethoven was hardly thanked for taking music into realms previously unknown, his work seen as a crude alternative to Mozart's elegancies. Schubert was for long considered a Viennese local, suitable only for cosy domestic evenings. Chopin was considered outrageous – “where Field sighs, Chopin groans, where Field smiles, Chopin grimaces; we implore Mr Chopin to return to nature”, the German poet and critic Ludwig Rellstab caustically commented – his co-Romantic Liszt a vulgar showman who went senile (if the dark-hued offerings of his later years were any guide).

Debussy's impressionism, and what is aptly called the Debussyian revolution, was venomously received (“We have nursed a viper in our bosom”, the Paris

Conservatoire complained). For Stravinsky, Ravel was “un petit Swiss horloge” while Fauré was forever “the master of charms”, the unrest and mystical leanings of his later works considered – when they were considered at all – wilfully obscure.

Great composers make their mark in history because they go against the current. And it is surely important to place Haydn in the widest context, to see him above all, as a richly inclusive composer, happy to mirror every aspect of human experience. That this should include humour, a delight in teasing his listeners and defying their expectations, has become more acceptable in our own times. The Russian pianist Yevgeny Sudbin asks “Is laughter the best medicine?” before providing his own answer: “I certainly hope so, and would not hesitate to prescribe a healthy dose of Haydn twice daily”. Well may Brendel also inquire whether music always has to be serious. If humour in Shakespeare’s plays enriches rather than detracts, why not in music? To quote Jean-Paul Sartre, “humour is the sublime in reverse” and Haydn’s humour is a far cry from “the cheerfulness of a simple pious nature delighting in his God” noted by the composer August Wilhelm Ambros.

Haydn can never be reduced to a composer of ‘comic trifles’ any more than Virginia Woolf can be accused of “iridescent trifling” (the poet Yvor Winters). He is the composer of surprises and although German-born could be compared with the literary critic Dame Helen Gardner’s description of the English poet George Herbert as “the composer of our inner weather, our unpredictable English weather”.

And so it is that we come full circle as Leon McCawley joins contemporary pianists such as Paul Lewis, Marc-André Hamelin and Jean-Efflam Bavouzet – alerted by the championing of Alfred Brendel and András Schiff – in celebrating Haydn’s endless innovation, richness and variety and, most importantly, his humanity.

A scintillating curtain-raiser, **Sonata No.50 in D major**, composed in 1780, opens *Allegro con brio*, shifting from the home key to B minor, its octave leap ornamented with glittering grace notes, mordants and double-note enrichment. Haydn, like Schubert, was no virtuoso performer, but he understood the appeal of keyboard brilliance to a special degree and everything here, in Liszt’s definition of virtuosity, “breathes the breath of life”. The development proceeds in a wild spirit of adventure, all sparkling passage work and arpeggios before a return to the principle idea. This makes the gravitas of the following *Largo e sostenuto*, an archaic, deeply expressive Sarabande, its part-writing a clear memory of Bach, doubly moving before a finale as lightly tripping as any in Haydn.

After such legerdemain, the opening of **Sonata No.54 in G major** (published in 1794) falls like balm on the ear. A gentle knocking motive that haunts and tugs at the imagination, the opening *Allegretto innocente* is sufficiently resourceful to make you query the use of the qualifying adjective. As always, Haydn is a composer of ambiguities, teasing you out of thought and keeping you forever on the *qui vive*. Characteristically, he follows the opening set of double variations on a pastoral theme of “apparent naivety” (Monika Mollering) with no less apparent sophistication. A joyous Presto, which I can only describe as the most

open-hearted virtuosity, finds the gently tapping opening to the first movement now transformed into a rapid figure of great urgency.

The **Sonata No.19 in E minor** (1765) was only identified in the 20th century, an example of how the fortunes of Haydn's sonatas have varied over the years. Opening with a plaintive Siciliano, there are striking contrasts of lyricism and drama. Essentially a transition work between the sonatas of Haydn's youth and his mature years, here he both preserves and expands the minuet in innovative and expansive style. This is the only Haydn sonata cast in the sequence slow-fast-minuet. The end is inconclusive and if the bright contredanse theme of the *Allegro* is more conspicuously familiar Haydn, the concluding minuet, in condensed sonata form, surprises us with its lack of a central trio.

A greater contrast with all that has gone before could hardly be provided than by the **Sonata No.47 in B minor**. Composed between 1774 and 1776, it inhabits a dark, even menacing, world that gives the lie to the long-held view that Haydn was a prankster, the joker in the pack. It is therefore surprising to find the musicologist Wolfgang Fuhrmann feeling that at first it strikes one as relatively lightweight. Any impression of amiability is banished in an opening resolute in minor-key tread that must have startled the customary expectations of Haydn's contemporaries.

Publication was initially withheld by the composer sensing that the striking modulations and generally dour nature of this sonata would not bode well with the traditional tastes of the time. Again, in the development the insistent dotted

rhythm is elaborated in a gesture of startling modernity. The following minuet may be graceful and conciliatory in comparison but it is clouded by a trio of a darker nature before a reassuring return to the opening. Optimism is however short-lived and the wind-swept finale takes us into the worlds of other no less desolate utterances, to the finale of Mozart's A minor Sonata (K.310) and even to the anarchic finale of Chopin's *Funeral March* Sonata (Op.35). Repeated notes come at the listener with an unstoppable force and propulsion and the end is savage and abrupt. Here, with a vengeance is the realm of *Sturm und Drang*.

As in the works composed during 1789, the **Sonata in C major (No.58)** heralds a new approach, a radical re-thinking of the past. The opening *Andante con espressione* proceeds in fits and starts, part of an irregular structure that asks more questions than it answers. The manner is operatic and declamatory and the tantalising shifts of mood and uncertain progression must have sorely tried Haydn's first listeners. There is a startling resolution before all uncertainty is swept aside in the concluding Rondo: Presto complete with a central development in the minor key (almost as if Haydn apologises for his former gaiety) at the heart of music of, once again, an open-hearted virtuosity and a challenge for even the most nimble-fingered pianist.

The exceptionally wide-ranging **Sonata No.59 in E flat major** (1790) opens with a question-and-answer motive ripe for development and is immediately followed by a second melody progressing in ascending steps. A surprising interruption comes with a sinister three-quaver anacrusis calling to mind Beethoven's Symphony No.5 and even more so his *Appassionata* Sonata (Op.57).

The development abounds in drama before returning us to the three-quaver motive and an airy reminder of the opening idea culminating in a rapid flourish or cadenza.

For Haydn, his central *Adagio cantabile* contained “many significant things which I shall explain to you in detail when the time comes. It is rather difficult but full of feeling”. The “you” he mentions was the work’s secret unofficial dedicatee, Maria Anna von Genzinger, wife of the Esterhazy’s family doctor and a keen amateur pianist with whom it has been suggested Haydn was in love. At all events Haydn played this “difficult” sonata to Prince Esterhazy and the official dedicatee and received a golden snuff-box from his royal patron as a reward for his efforts.

The finale is a classic example of that ambiguity of which Haydn was a true master. For Monica Mullering, “its peculiarly airy charm” recalls certain rondos of Mozart and, more particularly, Schubert, its mood both gay and plaintive. Such alchemy is very much part of what the pianist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet has rightly called “the boundless treasures of this sublime music”.

Bryce Morrison © 2019



LEON McCAWLEY



Photograph © Clive Barca

British pianist Leon McCawley won both First Prize in the International Beethoven Piano Competition in Vienna and Second Prize in the Leeds International Piano Competition in 1993.

Notable recitals in past seasons include the London Piano Series at Wigmore Hall (where he is a regular performer), International Piano Series at London’s

Southbank Centre, New York's Lincoln Center, Hong Kong Arts Festival and the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC. McCawley performs frequently with many of the top British orchestras and made his sixth appearance at the BBC Proms in August 2019 performing John Ireland's Piano Concerto in a special concert to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Sir Henry Wood's birth.

Further afield he has performed with Dallas Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra and St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestra among others.

McCawley's wide-ranging discography has received many accolades including two Editor's Choice awards in *Gramophone*, a *Gramophone* Critic's Choice for his recording of Barber's Piano Music (SOMM) and two *Diapason d'Or* for his boxed set of Mozart's Complete Piano Sonatas (AVIE) and Haydn's Sonatas and Variations (SOMM).

Leon studied at Chetham's School of Music, Manchester with Heather Slade-Lipkin and at the Curtis Institute of Music with Eleanor Sokoloff. He also worked with Nina Milkina in London.

Leon is a professor of piano at London's Royal College of Music and is married to the painter, Anna Hyunsook Paik.

www.leonmccawley.com

 @leonmccawley

HAYDN Piano Sonatas SOMMCD 0162

"What a range in his interpretation and how many layers of gradation! McCawley ties these together in a special quality of inflexions which make their point with great intelligibility and sensitivity."

Diapason d'Or – Diapason, July 2017

RACHMANINOV Preludes Opp.23 & 32 SOMMCD 0143

"Leon McCawley is a real poet of the keyboard in these performances that are alive to Rachmaninov's wonderful melodic invention."

The Classical Reviewer, March 2015

BRAHMS Piano Music SOMMCD 0116

"Leon McCawley's beautifully recorded Brahms recital strikes exactly the right balance between the monumental, intimate and light-hearted aspects of the composer's piano output."

BBC Music Magazine, October 2012

BARBER The Solo Piano Music SOMMCD 0108

"McCawley delivers everything magnificently. This is now the CD to get of Barber's piano music."

Gramophone, November 2011