

Sonata No.1 in C major, K279 · Sonata No.5 in G major, K283
 Minuet in D major, K355 · Allegro in G minor, K312
 Sonata No.12 in F major, K332
 PETER DONOHOE piano

	Sonata No.1 in C major, K279	[15:47]
1	I Allegro	6:22
2	II Andante	4:40
3	III Allegro	4:44
	Sonata No.5 in G major, K283	[17:30]
4	I Allegro	5:31
5	II Andante	6:16
6	III Presto	5:42
7	Minuet in D major, K355	2:22
8	Allegro in G minor, K312	6:29
	Sonata No.12 in F major, K332	[20:48]
9	I Allegro	9:29
10	II Adagio	4:38
11	III Allegro assai	6:40

Total duration: 63:18

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MOZART

Piano Sonatas

Volume 4

Peter Donohoe
piano



MOZART'S Piano sonatas

Volume 4

The modern-day listener's perception of the piano sonata as a musical artefact is surely coloured by Beethoven's 32 works in the medium, the so-called "New Testament" of the piano repertoire (the "Old Testament" consists of the 48 Preludes and Fugues of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*).

Though there would still be developments fine-tuning (if that expression may be used) the instrument, such as in strengthening the soundboard, extending the range of the keyboard, and consolidating the work of the pedals, the piano had more or less become a settled vehicle for expressing a composer's innermost thoughts.

Not so, pre-Beethoven. Both the form and the means of delivery were constantly in a state of flux. Most of Haydn's keyboard sonatas could be performed on a harpsichord, fortepiano (and in some cases even a chamber organ); it was only his latest ones which demanded the sonority and sustaining possibilities of the fledgling pianoforte, and the Sonata No.52 in E-flat is the prime example of this.

We can infer from the actual details of the scoring in Mozart's early sonatas how their articulation could be delivered on disparate instruments. But once he was let loose on Stein's piano workshop in Augsburg, he was like a child in a toyshop at Christmas.

"Let me start right off with Stein's Piano forte," Wolfgang wrote to his father Leopold from Augsburg (Leopold's birthplace) on October 17, 1777 en route

to Paris. In fact, Leopold had purchased a piano from Stein as early as 1762 (altogether Stein was to supply 700 instruments to musicians all over Europe).

"If I strike the key hard, I may keep my finger down on it, or lift it up, the sound stays the instant I produced it. No matter how I play the keys, the tone is always even... What distinguishes his instruments from all others is that they are built with an escapement, without which you cannot possibly have a Piano forte that will not have a clanging and vibrating after-effect..."

"His pianos really last. He guarantees that the soundboard will neither break nor crack. When he has finished a soundboard for a Clavier, he puts it outside and exposes it to the weather, to rain, snow, the heat of the sun, and all the Devils of Hell, so that it will crack; he then inserts a wedge and glues it in to make it all strong and firm..."

"He has three Piano fortes finished; I just played them again today."

So much for the medium that was gradually moving towards consolidation of form and function. There were changes occurring in the message, too.

Franz Xaver Niemetschek, whose 1798 *Life of Mozart* was the first biography of the composer, wrote of Mozart's eventual settling in Vienna in 1782: "At this period he wrote the most beautiful piano sonatas with and without accompaniment". This is a statement loaded with significance, implying that the piano was often supported by another instrument (in practice generally the violin). There are in fact a handful of sonatas by Mozart which could actually admit a violin into the texture, but the majority of his works in the medium are

so exclusively pianistic in their fabric that there just is no air or space for a violin to make any kind of viable contribution.

To return to Mozart's delight in discovering Stein's instruments, the sonatas he composed after encountering them are peppered with a plethora of dynamic indications keen to exploit the pianoforte's broader technical resources, and again seeming to preclude the necessity or indeed possibility of enlisting the accompaniment of another instrument.

The first two sonatas on this fourth volume of Peter Donohoe's survey were composed in 1774, three years before Mozart's visit to the Stein workshop. They formed part of a set which the composer ironically described as "six difficult sonatas" (a double bluff here: not at all difficult for him, difficult for the rest of us), and which he performed from memory several times in Augsburg and Mannheim where he broke his journey to Paris in 1777, chaperoned by his mother.

Commissioned to compose an opera (*La finta giardiniera*) for 1775 New Year festivities in Munich, the 18-year-old Mozart, trapped in what he perceived as the provincial tedium of small-town Salzburg, launched into its composition during the summer of 1774. He also created a calling-card for himself in the form of the above-mentioned six "difficult" sonatas.

The opening *Allegro* of **Piano Sonata No.1 in C major**, K279 has Scarlattian textures, with busy interaction between the hands, sweeping across the keyboard. Making a virtue of the now established convention of keeping

both subjects in the recapitulation in the tonic key, Mozart creates a poignant link between the first and second subjects, descending diminished sevenths anticipating significant moments in works of his later years.

Seductively perfumed with so many passages in thirds, and with a sensuous pulse in triplets, the F major *Andante* breathes the heady world of the serenades Mozart was currently writing for Salzburg society figures, and in fact looks forward to the garden setting of the final act of *Le nozze di Figaro*, written 13 years later.

With the *Allegro* finale, we return to C major and Scarlatti-style keyboard exploration, the left hand frequently leaping away from its bass clef comfort zone. There is also an element of Haydnesque skittishness here.

Another sonata in this calling-card set of Mozart's, **Piano Sonata No.5 in G major**, K283 opens its initial *Allegro* with simple grace, but soon moves on and into more complex realms. The second subject seems determined to ignore the beats of the bar, and melts into chromatic harmonies which perhaps evoke yet another influence, that of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, gloomy second son of the great Johann Sebastian. The development section begins with a much pared-down reference to the first subject, but soon remembers its manners and restores it fully-fledged for the recapitulation.

In the key of C major, the *Andante* second movement begins with a rich left-hand accompaniment beneath a song-like right-hand melody, though the texture soon becomes more florid, and Mozart arrives at a second subject

which he had previously used as a countermelody in the slow movement of his A major Symphony No.29.

Mozart was never one to waste a good idea. The Concerto in E-flat for Two Pianos, K365, for example, is a goldmine of previous gems and a herald of some to follow.

The Presto finale, back in the home key, is a breathless contredanse, though with some step-tripping syncopations along the way, and again there is much evidence of Mozart's determined emancipation of the left hand (just as he did on behalf of the viola in his orchestral and chamber music).

Despite its mid-period Köchel number, the somewhat spectral **Minuet in D major**, K355 is a late work, written in 1789. It is in fact missing from the thematic catalogue of his own compositions Mozart had meticulously compiled, which seems to indicate he only regarded it as a sketch.

Certainly, it lacks the customary complementary Trio. Fragments of one were completed by the Abbé Maximilian Stadler (not to be confused with Anton Stadler, who inspired the three great works Mozart composed for clarinet), and there is also an isolated Trio unearthed some years ago in the archives of a Czech monastery which might fit the bill.

What music we do have here is mysterious and engrossing. Suave chromatic thirds seduce the ear, but then atonality threatens, with dissonances in the further progress of the music. One gets the sense of Mozart writing down a musing improvisation, and then breaking off.

With the **Allegro in G minor**, K312, again we have a work whose late date of composition belies its mid-period Köchel catalogue number, and again, there is no reference to it in Mozart's own catalogue.

In 1790, Mozart was beset not only by financial worries but also concerns over his wife Constanze's health. His letters to his friend and fellow Freemason Michael Puchberg at this time are barely-concealed requests for money loans. He was planning to publish some new piano sonatas in order to bring in an income, and this *Allegro* was in fact intended to be the opening of an "easy sonata" for Princess Friederike of Prussia, daughter of King Frederick, a cellist for whom Mozart composed the three *Prussian* String Quartets in the hopes of securing an appointment in Berlin.

For all its avowed facility, the music is searching in its explorations of tonality, reminding us not only of the Symphony No.40 of 1788, again in this G minor key which was such a special rarity for the composer, but also the C minor Piano Concerto (No.24, K491). Piano textures are actually austere, with many triple-octave passages reinforcing the starkness, leavened by toccata-like passage-work.

An interesting aside is the fact that the manuscript of this sketch was once owned by Felix Mendelssohn.

Composed towards the end of Mozart's disastrous sojourn in Paris, with his failure to secure a lucrative appointment and the death of his mother, the **Piano Sonata No.12 in F major**, K332, seems to express so many conflicting

complexities of emotion stirred by disappointment and loss. He had written home to his father and sister of his faith in God, who (to paraphrase the distraught composer) disposes of all things wisely, but he had also expressed elsewhere thoughts of spiritual despair.

The opening *Allegro* begins in conventional melody and accompaniment textures, but soon there is imitation between the hands, and a move into orchestral sonorities redolent of the noble harmonies of a horn ensemble. Mozart moves on into pulsating, beat-dislocating and dynamically pungent writing which he occasionally opens out into semiquaver figuration, and offers plentiful opportunities for spontaneous decoration over melodic repetitions.

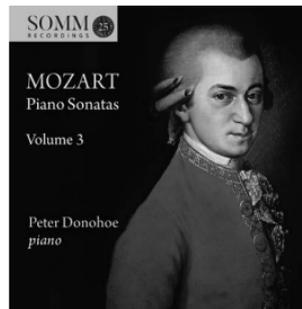
There follows an *Adagio* in B-flat major, a wonderfully affecting movement which has the same tender affect as the corresponding one in the G major Piano Concerto (No.17, K453). The writing for piano is richly cast, and there are some alternative readings between Mozart's manuscript and the published early editions. On this recording, Peter Donohoe follows the elaborations of those publications.

Back in F major, the *Allegro assai* finale goes on a breath-taking hunt (horn sonorities again) through various tonalities, figurations rippling and cascading. The development section introduces a consolatory new idea, followed by an almost impressionistic passage before the bustling recapitulation. Reinforcing the movement's bucolic subtext, the concluding bars anticipate the ending of Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony (which is in the same key).

An advertisement in the, even then, venerable, Austrian newspaper *Wiener Zeitung* of August 28, 1784 announced that "At Christoph Torricella's, art and music publisher... the following novelties are to be had: The 3 pianoforte Sonatas by the celebrated Herr A. W. (sic) Mozart... announced some time ago, of which the first two are for the pianoforte alone, and the last is accompanied by a violin obbligato, which he played at the theatre with Mlle Strinasachi to great applause".

That sonata was K332, almost impossible to imagine with an intrusive violin. But that is where we came in.

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MOZART: Piano Sonatas, Volume 3
SOMMCD 0613

"This is a recording full of joy...
the collection as a whole
deserves to be celebrated"

ClassicalMusicDaily

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, St Petersburg Philharmonia and all the major orchestras of Moscow.

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.