

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-91)

PIANO SONATAS Volume 6

Sonata No.16 in C major, K.545

Sonata No.4 in E-flat major, K.282

Fantasia in C minor, K.475

Sonata No.14 in C minor, K.457

PETER DONOHOE piano

Sonata No.16 in C major, K.545 [10:10]		
1	I Allegro	3:18
2	II Andante	5:07
3	III Rondo. Allegretto	1:44
Sonata No.4 in E-flat major, K.282 [15:27]		
4	I Adagio	8:11
5	II Menuetto	4:02
6	III Allegro	3:12
7	Fantasia in C minor, K.475	12:08
Sonata No.14 in C minor, K.457 [22:02]		
8	I Allegro	8:38
9	II Adagio	8:09
10	III Molto allegro	5:14

Total duration: 60:04

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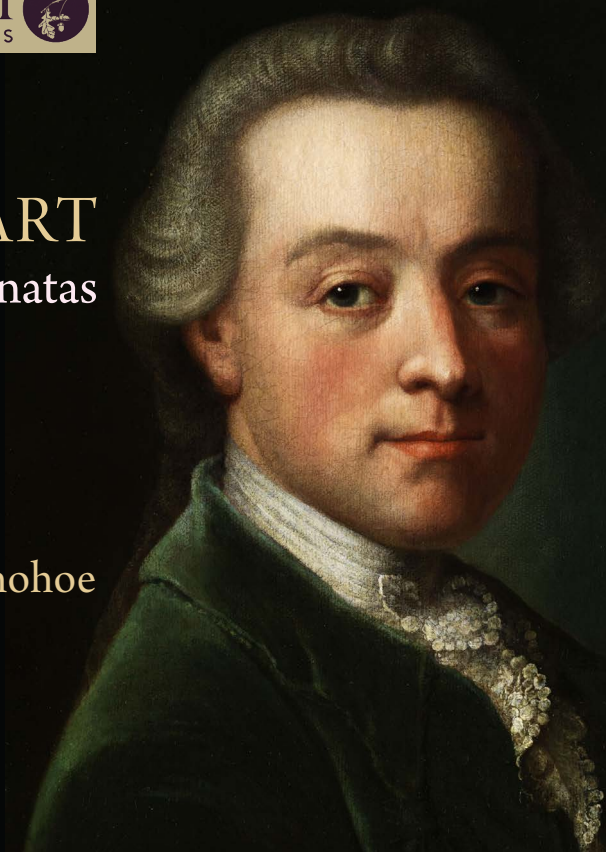
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MOZART

Piano Sonatas

Volume 6

Peter Donohoe
piano



MOZART'S Piano sonatas

Volume 6

The mighty catalogue of Mozart's compositions so meticulously compiled by Doktor Ritter Ludwig von Köchel sometimes juxtaposes works remarkably similar in effect and sharing thematic material – such as the noble Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola, K.364, and the Concerto for Two Pianos, K.365, both in E-flat major – or works that are totally different in atmosphere.

As an example of the latter kind of pairing, the rigorous, Handelian Adagio and Fugue in C minor, K.546 – the Fugue originally written for two pianos, now arranged for strings and prefaced by an imposing and exploratory Introduction – is immediately preceded in Köchel's catalogue by the superficially innocent **Piano Sonata No.16 in C major**, K.545. Along with the Symphony No.39 in E-flat, K.543, Mozart entered K.545 and K.546 in his own thematic catalogue on 26 June 1788, labelling the keyboard work “a little piano sonata for beginners”.

The irony of this description is overwhelming. Sounding deceptively simple to the listening ear, the opening movement even so probes the player's technique with a searching spotlight with scales demanding clarity and fluidity, sequences shared between both hands requiring equality of balance, and an absolute steadiness of pulse, too (in fact the entire sonata presents temptations to rush which must always be kept in check).

The opening *Allegro* movement is a treasure-trove for theorists, beginning with an effortless modulation to the dominant after only 12 bars, preparing the way for the second subject. And this is, in fact, an inversion of the first subject;

some musicologists finding here a reference to the aria ‘Dalla sua pace’ that Mozart composed for Don Ottavio as an insertion into the Vienna production of *Don Giovanni* following the opera's sensational premiere in Prague in October 1787. A no-nonsense codetta concludes this part of the movement before the concentrated development section leads us through a vertiginous range of keys until we arrive at the recapitulation.

Here Mozart anticipates the sonata-form procedures of Schubert, by returning to his opening subject not in the tonic C major but in the subdominant F major, making the modulation back at last to the home key for the recapitulation of the second subject notionally plain sailing.

Most slow movements in Mozart's piano sonatas are cast in the subdominant key, but not that of this present sonata (despite what *The Cambridge Mozart Encyclopedia* tells us). Unlike the composer's three other C major sonatas, which do have their middle movements in F major, K.545 chooses G major, the dominant key, for its *Andante*. This is perhaps because the Alberti bass pattern (left-hand broken chords outlining triads) which underlies almost every bar of this movement lies more fluently under the hand in G major rather than F. The whole movement is a flowing extension of a gently lyrical melody very different in its treatment from its gavotte-like cousin in the finale of Mozart's Concerto for Flute and Harp (K.299) of a decade earlier, and demands total synchronicity between both hands, so often moving as one as the music unfolds.

The gavotte provides the template for K.545's concluding *Rondo: Allegretto*, crisp thirds conversing between the hands (though at one point in the brief A minor

episode they are inverted into sixths) before the movement ends with a burst of the exhilaration surely felt by the beginner (and even the more experienced performer) arriving at the finishing line after negotiating all these hurdles.

Composed during the autumn of 1774 in preparation for his visit to Munich in January 1775 for the premiere of his opera *La finta giardiniera*, the **Piano Sonata No.4 in E-flat major**, K.282, is one of several sonatas Mozart hoped to present to the Bavarian cognoscenti. He in fact played all six of this group of sonatas to Christian Cannabich, Kapellmeister at Mannheim, during the first week of November 1774. Commentators have cited its reliance upon Haydn role models, but this is scarcely likely, given Haydn's remote location in his Esterházy employment at that time and the absence of much of his music in print. Far more probable is the influence of Johann Sebastian Bach's second son, Carl Philipp Emanuel, a rococo/galant bridge between Baroque and Classical approaches, as exemplified in this sonata.

It begins with a ruminative first movement. Totally different from any expected opening, it is an arresting display. Perfumed with poignant suspensions and florid ornamentations, it shifts expressively between dynamics with an underlying chromaticism which will colour even the more clear-cut ensuing movements.

These lean exuberantly towards the new Classical style, with clean melodic lines and an emphasis upon forward-moving harmonic rhythm. The second movement *Andante* is effectively a minuet and trio, the minuet proudly displaying its metric roots whilst flirting with chromaticism, the trio more searching both in rhythmic and harmonic explorations.

A skittish world away from the introspective opening movement, the *Rondo: Allegretto* finale bubbles with extrovert high spirits, though chromatic leavening is seldom far from the localising centre of the spectrum.

The climax of this whole sequence of recordings featuring all of Mozart's piano sonatas comes with the awesome pairing of the C minor **Fantasia**, K.475, and **Piano Sonata No.14 in C minor**, K.457. The Sonata came first (October 17), to which Mozart added the Fantasia, composed six months or so later as an absorbing antidote to the many vocal trifles he was producing at that time, including the charming little song, *Das Veilchen*. The Masonic Funeral Music (K.477, also in C minor) and the G minor Piano Quartet (No.1, K.478) were immediately to follow.

Heavy with a lowering atmosphere, the Fantasia is obviously improvisatory in its structure, and was, perhaps, an influence on Beethoven's *Choral Fantasia*, in which the piano soloist explores so many harmonic and thematic byways. Interestingly, Mozart puts no accidentals in the key-signature, an acknowledgement that there will need to be so many in the score as this turbulent music unfolds, and perhaps aware that every time he performs the piece it will be different.

There is abundant exploration of keyboard resonances here, declaiming right hand echoed by sturdy left-hand bass lines during the portentous, dramatic introduction before a seemingly reassuring interlude in the distant key of D major. The solace does not last long, menacing bass octaves unleashing a stormy passage beginning in A minor and passing through a maelstrom of keys before a virtuosic cadenza settles us into a temporary haven of B-flat major.

But the tempest returns, taking us into the stormy depths of the lowest reaches of the piano until the only recourse is to return to the gloomy rhetoric with which this remarkable improvisation had begun, and now ending with an emphatic flourish.

The Sonata itself begins imperiously, and as the exposition unfolds it exploits the full range of the piano (well, not quite – Mozart never strained at the instrument's highest notes in the way Beethoven was later to). There is plenty of cross-hand activity as the movement progresses. And there is much keyboard exploration in the *Adagio's* comforting key of E-flat major as it caresses with cascades of thirds and tumbling filigree somersaulting down and over.

Back in C minor, the concluding *Molto Allegro* begins with cross-rhythms disguising the barlines, much in the manner of the third movement of Mozart's later G minor Symphony No.40, K.550, was to do. Lines here are urgently transparent, and again, most of the compass of the keyboard is covered. A pensive, hesitant little interlude precedes a coda of high drama, full of arresting chords and sudden pauses and descents into the piano's stygian depths. We already seem to be anticipating the similar atmosphere of the C minor Piano Concerto No.24, K.491.

Some sensationalist commentators have chosen to find in this passionate music evidence of an unrequited love felt by Mozart for his teenaged pupil Therese von Trattner, married to an elderly printer, the Mozarts' landlord and host of regular subscription concerts in the communal hall of their condominium. Given that Mozart had only recently succeeded in introducing his beloved new wife

Constanze to his curmudgeonly father Leopold and purse-lipped sister Nannerl back home in Salzburg, it is very difficult to give any credence to such a theory.

Mozart brought both the Sonata and the Fantasia together for publication by Artaria on 26 April 1786. Among his many performances of the Fantasia (one wonders whether each one was identical, or spontaneously extemporised) was one given in Leipzig's Gewandhaus on 12 May 1789, when he also performed the Piano Concertos in B-flat (No.18, K.456) and C major (No.25, K.503).

In surveying the panorama of all Mozart's sonatas and fantasias for piano in Peter Donohoe's six-volume compendium, it has become strikingly clear that there were many keys the composer pointedly avoided. And not only in these two genres, but in every other one. It would be difficult to find offerings in, for example, E major (though there is the wonderful E minor Violin Sonata, K.304), B major, D-flat/C-sharp, or even A-flat major, the subdominant of E flat, one of Mozart's two favourite keys (the tritonally-opposed A major is the other).

But what has also become clear is the awareness of the business-like pragmatism Mozart brought to his composition of these many-sided works: pleasing the public and producing bespoke material acutely tailored to so many performers' miscellaneous abilities, all the while exploring the capabilities of an instrument then undergoing significant technological changes. These were all Mozart's concerns.

Behind all these considerations, however, were matters more intimate to the composer himself. If we seek an insight into his psyche, it can most nearly be

found in the C minor Fantasia, which encapsulates so much over so short a span, and which puts the pragmatic resourcefulness of the sonatas themselves into such telling perspective.

Mozart almost always composed pragmatically, whether to commission, for educational purposes, or to publicise himself as a performer (among the exceptions are his three great final Symphonies, Nos.39 (K.543), 40 (K.550) and 41 (K.551)). His corpus of piano sonatas accommodates all three categories, and as such constitute a microcosm of what motivated the impulses behind his creative output as a composer.

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PETER DONOHUE

"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



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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, including 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.



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