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Publishing supervisor Romano Di Bari

Photo Donatello Di Petrucci

Cover Artwork Simone Malatesta

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Flipper srl Music Publishing | Circonvallazione Clodia 15 | 00195 Roma

Phone +39063722138 +39063722209 | Fax +390637516970 | Email info@aulicusclassics.com | www.aulicusclassics.com

BEETHOVEN

SONATA No.9 Op.47 "KREUTZER"

FRANCK

SONATA in A Major

FABRIZIO FALASCA *violin* **BRUNO CANINO** *piano*

Sonata No. 9 for piano and violin, known as the "Kreutzer Sonata", was written by Beethoven in Vienna in 1803, during a brief break from composing his Third Symphony, the "Eroica".

The sonata was originally written for the violinist George Bridgetower (1779-1860), born in Galicia to an Abyssinian prince who worked as a servant to the Esterházy, and a German or Polish mother. During the first play-through of the sonata, Bridgetower improvised a cadenza on the climax in C major (eighth bar of the first presto), and Beethoven, sitting at the piano, jumped up, exclaiming "Once again, my dear boy!"

Later, however, it appears that due to a disagreement over a girl, Beethoven broke off relations with Bridgetower and decided to dedicate the sonata to Rodolphe Kreutzer.

Even this dedication, however, was not very fortunate: in fact, the great Alsatian violinist Rodolphe Kreutzer (1776-1831) always showed a violent incomprehension of Beethoven's music: in Paris, during a performance of Beethoven's Second Symphony, Kreutzer left the room ostentatiously covering his ears, and always refused to perform the sonata dedicated to him, claiming that to him it seemed "incomprehensible in an outrageous manner".

The monumental and symphonic style of Sonata Op.47 manifests itself in all its grandeur as early as the broad and elaborate opening "Adagio sostenuto", begun by the unaccompanied violin with a double-stopped passage that, with its polyphonic nature, almost creates the illusion of a string orchestra.

The introduction closes with the repeated sobs of the violin (an ascending semitone interval) which lead directly into the impetuous "Presto".

Here, Beethoven's mastery of sonata form appears in all its strength, maturity and coherence: just think of the second theme, with its long notes, its semibreves; the contrast with the tumultuous and restless first theme could not be more pronounced and successful. This second idea takes us to an oasis of serene meditation, as if it were an ecclesiastical chant of the Renaissance: it is worth remembering that Beethoven was a great scholar and connoisseur (very unusual for his time) of the early Italian polyphonic school.

BRUNO CANINO

Biography

Born in Naples, Bruno Canino studied piano and composition at the Conservatorio Verdi in Milan where he taught piano for 24 years. Then, for 10 years, he gave a course in piano and chamber music at the Berne Conservatoire. He has performed both as a soloist and a chamber musician in all the principal concert venues of Europe, the United States, Australia, Japan and China. For over 50 years he has been regularly performing with Antonio Ballista, his piano duo partner. He has collaborated with many prominent string players, such as Itzhak Perlman, Lynn Harrell, Salvatore Accardo, Viktoria Mullova and Uto Ughi and has played with leading orchestras including the Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala, Milan, the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Rome, the Berlin Philharmonic, the New York Philharmonic, The Philadelphia Orchestra and the Orchestre National de France, and with distinguished conductors such as Claudio Abbado, Riccardo Chailly, Wolfgang Sawallisch and Pierre Boulez. Deeply interested in contemporary music, he has worked with many composers including Luciano Berio, Karlheinz Stockhausen, György Ligeti, Pierre Boulez, Bruno Maderna, Luigi Nono, Sylvano Bussotti and Mauricio Kagel often giving world première performances of their works. From 1999 to 2002, he was director of the Music Section of the Venice Biennale.

Bruno Canino's recordings include Bach's Goldberg Variations; Mendelssohn's compositions for cello and piano (with Lynn Harrell); works by Prokofiev, Ravel, and Stravinsky (with Viktoria Mullova for a disc that was awarded the Edison prize); piano compositions by Debussy (including the Preludes), Chabrier (the complete piano works), and Casella.

Bruno Canino gives regular masterclasses in piano and chamber music in Italy, Germany, Spain and Japan and is frequently invited to serve on the juries of important international piano competitions. He is the author of the book *Vademecum for a Chamber Pianist* (Passigli Editions, 1997). Next summer he is invited again at the Marlboro Chamber music Festival in Vermont, and he will visit three times Japan.

FABRIZIO FALASCA

Biography

Fabrizio Falasca is considered as one of the most representative Italian violinists of his generation. Fabrizio performed as a soloist in theatres and music festivals throughout the world, such as Ravello Festival, San Carlo Theatre of Naples, Festival of the two worlds of Spoleto, Kassell Festival, Gulangyu Festival in China, Philharmonia chamber music series in UK, performing in concert halls like Salle Garnier of Montecarlo, Vahdat hall in Teheran, Royal Festival hall in London, Musikverein Brahms Saal in Vienna. He performed as soloist with orchestras such as the Philharmonia, Orchestra di Padova e del Veneto, Italian Chamber Orchestra, San Carlo Chamber Orchestra, Cascais and Oeiras Chamber Orchestra, Florida Philharmonic Orchestra, Teheran Symphony Orchestra. Fabrizio has cooperated with the San Carlo Orchestra in Naples, Santa Cecilia Orchestra in Rome, Maggio Musicale Orchestra in Florence, Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxemburg. He also led the Teatro Lirico di Cagliari Orchestra, the G. Verdi Philharmonic Orchestra in Salerno invited by D. Oren and the Tiroler Festspiele Orchestra in Erl in Austria, invited by G. Kuhn. In 2016, he won the Concertmaster position of the Tyroler Symphonie Orchester Innsbruck, and in the same year he joined the Philharmonia Orchestra in London as Assistant Concertmaster. He is in demand as a guest concertmaster with world class orchestras including the Philharmonia, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, BBC Philharmonic, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic. He regularly performs chamber music with his string quartet, the Philharmonia Chamber Players, and with musicians such as S. Accardo, F. Petracchi, D. Waskiewitz, A. Pomba-Baldi among others. He appeared on Radio broadcasting including RAI Radio and BBC Radio, and has recorded for CPO, Centaur Records, Amadeus and Brilliant classics. In 2010 he was awarded at the Vittorio Veneto Violin Competition and in 2013 was a prizewinner at the A. Postacchini International Violin Competition. Fabrizio studied with S. Accardo at the W. Stauffer Academy, with F. Cusano at the Fiesole Music School and D. Schwarzberg. After his studies in Italy he graduated with Master of Music at the Royal Academy of Music in London under S. Kim. His teachers includes M. Vengerov and L. Kavakos among others. He plays a violin J. Guarneri 1727 gifted from Barison's family.

Further proof of this first movement's perfect success as a piece that combines the extreme refinement of the dialogue between two instruments with the broad proportions of the symphonic style. We would like to mention a little-known fact: Tchaikovsky transcribed this first half of Op. 47 in a version for orchestra. The second movement is in the form of a theme and variations, in the serene and idyllic key of F major, the key of Symphony No. 6, the "Pastoral": whether coincidence, unconscious reminiscence or simple plagiarism. Particularly noteworthy is the brilliant second variation, based on a bow stroke that requires great agility of the right wrist, and which in the 19th century came to be called the "Tremolo". This variation was often considered almost a piece in its own right. The next variation, No. 3, is in F minor, the key of passion for Beethoven, and with its tormented chromaticism is a brilliant contrast to the virtuosic second variation, which also contains the highest note Beethoven ever wrote for the violin: the F natural over two octaves above the open "E" string. The piano part for the fourth variation already foreshadows the musical language of the last piano sonatas, Op. 109, 110 and 111, and the recitative that acts as a link to the coda is an omen of the great instrumental recitatives of the Ninth Symphony. Beethoven originally wrote the sonata's finale as the last movement of the Sonata for Piano and Violin Op. 30 No. 1, but the particular weight and great density of this part do not fit with the first two movements of this sonata, more contained and intimate in terms of musical form and atmosphere, so Beethoven transferred it to Op. 47, where it stands out as a worthy counterweight to the majestic proportions of the first two movements. We have very interesting preparatory sketches by Beethoven for this finale, of inestimable value in understanding how the great composer from Bonn started from raw material of disarming simplicity to build musical constructions of immense vastness. In 1885, César Franck offered the Sonata in A Major to the famous violinist and fellow Belgian Eugène Ysaÿe as a wedding gift, dedicating it to him: as soon as the great virtuoso received the manuscript copy, he became excited about the work's sublime quality, and so the very first performance took place privately, with Ysaÿe on the violin and Bordes-Pène on the piano. The first public performance took place on 31st December 1887 at the "Société Nationale" in Paris, again with Eugène Ysaÿe but this time together with his brother Théo; the sonata became one of the great Ysaÿe's signature pieces, making it known throughout Europe and spreading Franck's fame as a brilliant musician.

The sonata is divided into four movements (Allegretto moderato, Allegro, Recitativo-fantasia and Allegretto poco mosso) and is a perfect example of the cyclic structure that Franck employed with unequalled mastery, bringing the aesthetic and compositional canon to heights other musicians may have reached, but never surpassed. The sonata's first movement lends itself very well to illustrating the intent chromaticism of the harmonic route Franck pursued, and its supreme ability to reach those keys most distant from the starting point with great naturalness and elegance, by means of small shifts in the internal parts. The second movement, the "Allegro", also begins with a piano introduction: note Franck's mastery in bringing out the main theme through extremely tumultuous and intricate writing; performing it requires huge reaches and stretches from the pianist, as if the composer wanted the piano to reproduce the possibilities of an instrument, the organ in fact, also equipped with pedals.

It is however well known that Franck, as a virtuoso, was endowed with hands with a huge reach, up to a twelfth: we can observe this from the position of his left hand on the keys in the famous painting by J. Rongier, which portrays him at the Cavaillé-Coll organ at the Parisian church of Sainte-Clotilde.

The third movement, the "Recitativo-fantasia", testifies to Franck's boundless visionary ability as a brilliant improviser: we may recall that Liszt himself, after hearing him play preludes on the organ, embraced him with the words "I have heard Bach play". The most striking feature of this movement is that the episodes between the piano's severe harmonic passages are entrusted to the violin, which with extreme freedom, almost improvisational, is in a dialectic relationship with the keyboard instrument, creating moments now of lithe lyricism, now of close contrapuntal integration, and now of passionate intensity, always quoting the themes and fundamental episodes of the sonata that constitute the backbone of the cyclic form. The last movement opens with a melody whose simplicity, purity and natural grace make it truly miraculous that Franck succeeded in using it to construct one of the most rigorous contrapuntal artifices, that is to say a perfect canon.

Francesco Fiore



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FABRIZIO FALASCA violini - BRUNO CANNINO piano

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