The rollicking coloratura of the F major’s Gloria in excelsis Deo can rarely have danced so infectiously.

A graceful elegance runs through this recording from The Sixteen, with Harry Christophers’ direction leaving Bach’s music feeling perfectly paced and richly detailed.

One can hear throughout how Haydn’s music had a strong influence on Beethoven... as fine a tonal sound as I have ever heard in a recording of period instruments.

The orchestra proves itself as expert in period style as it is musically spontaneous with some particularly lovely flute solos.
Beethoven stormed onto the musical stage in Vienna at the turn of the 19th century, his music and persona pushing the existing forms and instruments to their absolute limit. The ten sonatas of Ludwig van Beethoven written for ‘Fortepiano and Violin’ display the height of artistry in this form. The works are packed with drama, extreme tenderness, excitement, pathos, and wonderful examples of Beethoven’s metaphysical humour. Nine of the works were written in a five-year period: 1798–1803. Beethoven penned Op. 23 in 1801, a work filled with moments of ‘Sturm und Drang’ as well as moments of light and playfulness. Only two years later, after writing his pivotal Heiligenstadt Testament – both an outpouring of grief in the face of his growing deafness and a determination to persevere in his art despite this impediment – Beethoven had arrived at his monumental ninth violin sonata, ‘Kreutzer’, Op. 47. This work pushed the boundaries of the violin sonata further than any composition up to that point.

For violinists and pianists, these sonatas represent the ‘Holy Grail’. We feel strongly that we can come closer to Beethoven’s voice and vision by using instruments of the period, the sound of which Beethoven would undoubtedly recognise. By using the instruments for which the music was written, we feel able to gain fresh perspective and give clarity to Beethoven’s extraordinary musical vision. With this recording, our aim is far from merely polishing up relics in a museum, but to recreate the white-hot emotions and passion that these sonatas must have generated in their first performances.

We owe the deepest gratitude to our loyal supporters who have helped us realise our dream of recording these works on original instruments. In particular, Tim Hamilton generously allowed us to use his McNulty piano and applied extraordinary expertise in maintaining and tuning the instrument. Marie-Hélène Bernard, Ira Pedlikin, Dr. Mary Briggs, and John Krzywicki went the extra mile in the cause of our recording. Special thanks goes to our spouses, Amy Rawstron Watson and George Ogata, for their constant support. Jesse Lewis drew upon his masterful craftsmanship and resourcefulness to produce a recording with exquisite detail. Finally, to our Kickstarter supporters and individual donors: you believed in us, you rallied with us, you helped us. You made this recording a reality through our special partnership.

Susanna Ogata and Ian Watson
By the late 1790s, when he composed his first set of violin sonatas, Op. 12, Beethoven had established himself as Mozart’s successor in Vienna, dazzling the cognoscenti with his keyboard improvisations and a stream of brilliant compositions involving his own instrument. Thanks not least to Mozart, violin sonatas were a popular genre, whether in gilded aristocratic salons or middle-class drawing rooms. Publishers did a brisk trade in what were conventionally billed as ‘sonatas for fortepiano, with the accompaniment of violin’. Mozart, a born musical democrat, had promoted the violin to equal status in the sonatas he wrote from the late 1770s onwards. Beethoven followed suit in his Op. 12, finished early in 1798 and dedicated to the Imperial Kapellmeister Antonio Salieri. The dedication was judicious: next to Haydn, Salieri was the most illustrious musician in Vienna, and for several years would give Beethoven free tuition in the Italian vocal style.

The next two years were dominated by the Op. 18 quartets, the First Symphony and the Septet, culminating in Beethoven’s successful benefit concert at the Burgtheater in April 1800. That summer and autumn he worked on two more violin sonatas, Op. 23 and 24, originally advertised as a single opus, and dedicated to Beethoven’s friend and patron, Count Moritz von Fries (1777–1826). Like so many Viennese aristocrats of the day, Fries was a passionate amateur musician: an accomplished violinist, and host to regular soirées at his palace on the Josefsplatz. Two decades later Schubert would also benefit from his patronage. Fries commissioned the two violin sonatas for a generous fee (by 1800 Beethoven commanded top rates), and in return enjoyed exclusive use of them for six months before they appeared in print.

Like other Beethoven works written more-or-less simultaneously, most famously the Fifth and ‘Pastoral’ Symphonies, the sonatas form a pair of opposites. While

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**Sonata for Fortepiano and Violin No. 4 in A minor Op. 23**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Presto</td>
<td>7.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Andante scherzoso, più allegretto</td>
<td>7.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Allegro molto</td>
<td>5.29</td>
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**Sonata for Fortepiano and Violin No. 9 in A major Op. 47 – ‘Kreutzer’**

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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Adagio sostenuto – Presto</td>
<td>14.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Andante con variazioni</td>
<td>14.49</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Finale (Presto)</td>
<td>8.56</td>
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Total Running Time 58.29
the well-loved Op. 24 Sonata, in the traditional pastoral key of F major, is lyrically relaxed (‘Spring’ Sonata was a nickname waiting to happen), the outer movements of Op. 23 in A minor are urgent, restless and pithy, liable to flashes of violence.

Both the Presto opening movement, in 6/8 time, and the finale trade in wiry three-part textures, with the violin often positioned in the middle, between the piano left and right hands. (Could Beethoven have been influenced here by the textures in Mozart’s A major Violin Sonata, K526?) More than in any of his Op. 12 sonatas, he often seems to treat the violin as a percussion instrument. The first movement, full of tense, waspish repartee between the instruments, works its opening motif with obsessive vehemence. Even the ‘second subject’, presented in sinuous imitation, cleaves to the minor key. Respite comes where you might least expect it, in the central development: first in a sustained chorale-like melody for violin, counterpointed with the initial motif in the piano bass, then with a cantabile version of the main theme that transmutes cussedness into pathos. Beethoven expands on this lyrical transformation in the coda. Just as the movement seems to be drifting to a gentle close, the opening motif explodes fortissimo: a last gasp before the movement ends in an enigmatic pp, its energy exhausted.

The rondo finale is equally troubled and turbulent. As in the Pathétique Sonata, Beethoven offsets its tense, minor-keyed rhetoric (much of it delivered in a smouldering piano) with a sustained chorale melody, in F major, whose falling contours echo the first movement’s germinal motif. The chorale returns in the coda in the distant key of B flat major, sounded first on the violin, then in the piano bass. Then, with a gentle twist of the knife, the tonality sinks back to A minor; and the soft closing bars, with their mysterious crescendo and decrescendo, are as bleak and disconsolate as those of the opening Presto.

Between these two highly charged movements, the A major Andante scherzoso piu Allegretto – Beethoven’s marking warns against too deliberate a tempo – offers necessary emotional balm. Like the Allegretto of the Eighth Symphony, this delightful music, in fully worked-out sonata form, combines the function of slow movement and scherzo. The paired quavers of the main theme are punctuated by whimsical silences, while the second group of themes is introduced by an airy fugato that seems to poke gentle fun at academic orthodoxy. In the development Beethoven tightens the contrapuntal weave, taking the fugato through a wide spectrum of keys and then combining it nonchalantly with the main theme’s paired quavers.

When they appeared in 1799, Beethoven’s Op. 12 violin sonatas had been derided by the reviewer of the influential Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung for their strangeness and difficulty (‘nothing natural…no song’) – an astonishing verdict to us. Three years later the same journal gave the Op. 23 and 24 sonatas a much more favourable review, praising them as “among the best B. has written, which is to say among the best things being written today. The composer’s original, fiery and bold spirit…increasingly rejects all kinds of excess, and makes an ever more agreeable impression, without losing any of his character” – an indication that even conservative-minded listeners were beginning to appreciate the originality of Beethoven’s so-called ‘first-period’ works.

Then came the crisis of encroaching deafness, and the famous ‘Heiligenstadt Testament’ of autumn 1802, in which Beethoven vowed to triumph over his affliction through his art. The following spring, just before embarking on the ‘Eroica’ Symphony, Beethoven was introduced by another of his loyal patrons, Prince
Karl Lichnowsky, to the celebrated visiting violinist George Bridgetower (1779-1860), son of a Polish mother and a father of African or West Indian origin who had been Prince Nikolaus Esterházy’s page in the establishment where Haydn was Kapellmeister. Bridgetower had made his debut in Paris at the age of ten, and later became a favourite in London, where in a nice symmetry he performed in at least one concert directed by Haydn.

Beethoven first heard Bridgetower at a recital in the lodgings of the violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh, whose quartet gave the premieres of most of Beethoven’s string quartets. Praising Bridgetower as “...a very able virtuoso and a complete master of his instrument”, the composer rapidly sketched and completed a violin sonata which the two men premiered at a benefit concert for the violinist in the Augarten, financed by Lichnowsky, on 24 May – two days later than originally scheduled. The concert was a famous triumph, though true to form, Beethoven had not given the copyists sufficient time to copy the whole work, leaving poor Bridgetower to read the slow movement from the unlovely scrawl of his manuscript.

In a characteristic burst of ‘unbuttoned’ humour, Beethoven dubbed the work “sonata mulattica composta per il mulatto Brischdauer, gran pazzo e compositore mulattico” (“mulatto sonata, composed for the mulatto Bridgetower, great lunatic and mulatto composer”), and intended to dedicate it to the violinist. Bridgetower later recalled that he and the composer were “constant companions” during his stay in Vienna before they fell out after “some silly quarrel about a girl”. When the sonata appeared in 1805 as Op. 47, it bore a dedication not to its rightful dedicatee but to the French virtuoso Rodolphe Kreutzer (1766-1831), whom Beethoven had first met in Vienna in 1798. Ironically, the violinist refused to play it. Never a great fan of Beethoven’s music, he was reported (by Berlioz) as finding the sonata “outrageously unintelligible”, a reaction broadly shared by a critic of the Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung: “…One would have to be in the grip of a kind of aesthetic and artistic terrorism…not to find in this work clear renewed proof of the fact that for some time now this composer has been indulging in whims, above all striving to be absolutely different from other people”.

In that first printed edition the work was headed “Sonata for piano and violin obbligato, written in a distinctly concertante style, like a concerto” – a description branded “eccentric, presumptuous and ostentatious” by the Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung critic. Although Beethoven had expanded the genre’s range in his three Op. 30 sonatas of 1802, the ‘Kreutzer’, as it has always been known, is the longest and most flamboyantly assertive violin sonata composed by anyone up to that point: an essentially ‘public’ work, counterpart to the ‘Waldstein’ and ‘Appassionata’ sonatas and the ‘Razumovsky’ quartets.

Beethoven establishes the absolute parity of the two instruments at the start of the first movement’s slow introduction, opening with the violin alone in sonorous double- and triple-stopping, and continuing, with a drift from A major to A minor, by the piano. A nagging two-note figure, rising by semitone, proves to be the seed of the main Presto which, against expectations (in a movement that opens in A major) begins, as it will end, in A minor. This is music of hectic brilliance, with the players vying with each other in almost demoniac virtuosity. In Tolstoy’s novella published in 1890 (which in turn inspired Janáček’s First String Quartet) it even drove the protagonist Pozdnyshev to stab his wife in a jealous rage. Only in the second theme, another of Beethoven’s quasi-chorale melodies, brings momentary repose.
In the development Beethoven, typically, fuses virtuosity with trenchant thematic argument on fragments of the main theme, especially its germinal two-note motif.

For his slow movement Beethoven writes a set of four variations, plus an expansive coda, on relaxed, tripping F major theme that begins with an inversion (falling from F to E) of the first movement’s ubiquitous two-note figure. One of Beethoven’s friends recalled that Beethoven played this tender theme with “such chaste expression” at the premiere that it had to be encored twice. Virtuoso display is again to the fore, now skittishly ornamental rather than demonic, in variations one, two and four. In extreme contrast, the third variation turns from F major to F minor for a melancholy meditation on the theme’s essence.

The Finale, re-establishing A major for the first time since the sonata’s opening bars, is a coruscating 6/8 tarantella that Beethoven had originally conceived for the Sonata Op. 30 No. 1 before rejecting it as out of character with that predominantly gracious work. There is wit, albeit of a frenetic sort, in this music, with violin and piano now colluding rather than colliding head-on, as they often had in the first movement. The opening theme, presented in two-part counterpoint, makes a prominent feature of the rising semitone that had fertilised the first movement, suggesting that Beethoven planned the whole sonata ‘backwards’ from this tiny motif. At the very end of the exposition an almost exaggeratedly decorous new theme provides a brief moment of stillness before it is swept away in the manic whirl of the dance.

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For this project, Ian Watson is performing on a fortepiano that was built by Paul McNulty in 2000. This fortepiano is modelled after the Walter and Sohn pianos of the early 1800s. Anton Walter (1752-1826) is considered to be the foremost maker of Viennese style fortepianos of his time. His improvements to the Viennese fortepiano action remained a standard for many years. He built about 700 instruments, which were praised for their quality by Mozart, who bought a Walter in 1782, and by Beethoven, who played on one as well.

Anton Walter was born near Stuttgart in 1752 and became active in Vienna in 1778. When his stepson joined the company in 1800, the firm name was changed from “Anton Walter” to “Anton Walter und Sohn”. This instrument has the increased compass of five and a half octaves which came into use around 1800.

Violin

Susanna Ogata performs on a Joseph Klotz violin built in 1772. Joseph was from a family of ‘Klotz’ instrument makers from Mittenwald, Germany, who were, and continue to be, highly regarded for their craftsmanship. Mozart most likely performed on an instrument built by a member of the Klotz family. The bow she is using is an original, unlabeled Pre-Tourte style model, most likely from France in the early 1800s.
Ian Watson fortepiano

Ian Watson has been described by the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung as “a conductor of formidable ability” and by The Times in London as a keyboard performer with “virtuosic panache and brilliantly articulated playing” and “a world-class soloist”. He was appointed Resident Conductor of Boston’s Handel and Haydn Society in September 2014.

Ian has appeared as soloist or conductor with the London Symphony, London Philharmonic and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras, Scottish Chamber, English Chamber, Polish Chamber, Irish Chamber and Stuttgart Chamber Orchestras, Bremen Philharmonic, Rhein-Main Symphony Orchestra, Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Handel and Haydn Society, English Baroque Soloists, and The Sixteen amongst many others. He has also been featured on numerous recordings and film soundtracks including Amadeus, Polanski’s Death and the Maiden, Restoration, Cry the Beloved Country, Voices from a Locked Room, and the BBC’s David Copperfield.

In 2012/13, Ian directed the North American premiere of the new edition of Bach’s St Mark Passion with the Bach Society Houston, and took part in a recording of Bach’s four Lutheran Masses in London for CORO with Harry Christophers and The Sixteen (COR16115 & COR16120). He made a critically-acclaimed debut directing Baroque Band in Chicago and was immediately invited to return.

2014 saw the start of a major project with violinist Susanna Ogata, to record the complete Beethoven’s Violin Sonatas, as well as performances of the Triple Concerto and Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony with Arcadia Players – all on period-instruments.

Born in England in the Buckinghamshire village of Wooburn Common, Ian won a scholarship at age 14 to the Junior School of the Royal Academy of Music in London, later winning all the prizes for organ performance including the coveted Recital Diploma.

Susanna Ogata violin

Susanna Ogata enjoys an active performance schedule in greater New England and beyond. She has been praised for “totally convincing, spontaneous and free-flowing playing” (The Berkshire Review) and her musical “sensitivity and fire” (Boston Musical Intelligencer). Dedicated to exploring music on historical instruments, Susanna has participated in concerts presented by the Bach Ensemble led by Joshua Rifkin, Arcadia Players, Ensemble Florilège, Newton Baroque, L’Académie, Boston Baroque, Sarasa, Foundling, Musicians of the Old Post Road, Blue Hill Bach, Genesee Early Music Society, SoHIP concert series, and
Boston Early Music Festival. She is a founding member of several period instrument chamber ensembles: Boston Classical Trio, Copley String Quartet, and Coriolan String Quartet. She has appeared as soloist with the Handel and Haydn Society, Arcadia Players, Bach Ensemble, Blue Hill Bach, Foundling, Eastman Musica Nova Ensemble, Boston Virtuosi, and the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Symphony Orchestra. Susanna has recorded for Nonesuch and Telarc and has been featured on WGBH radio broadcasts.

A tenured member of the Handel and Haydn Society, she was appointed as Assistant Concertmaster of the orchestra in 2014. In the same year, she embarked on a project to record all ten violin sonatas of Beethoven on historical instruments with Ian Watson, fortepianist.

Susanna received her Bachelor and Master degrees from the Eastman School of Music where she studied violin performance with, and served as, teaching assistant for Charles Castleman. She earned her Artist Diploma at the Longy School of Music where she studied with Laura Bossert and Baroque violin with Dana Maiben, and where she served on the violin faculty.

We are grateful to all our donors.

In particular, we would like to recognise the following individuals:

- Dr. Mary Briggs and John Krzywicket
- Tom Harvey and Manny Correia
- Barbara and John Cortesio
- Tom and Jillian Darling
- Nick and Paula Gleysteen
- Yoshihiro and Mariko Hirata
- Paul Lazay and Kathleen Huber
- Ronald Ouellet
- Emily Schabacker
- Kathy Weld
- John Bradley
- Michiyo Ogata
- Todd Estabrook
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- Michael J. Cortesio Sr. and Family
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- Jeanne Ammon
- Charlie Anderson
AN IMMERSIVE MUSIC PROJECT

Producer and Engineer: Jesse Lewis
Assistant Engineer: Connor Smith
Mastering Engineer: Kyle Pyke
Recorded at: Mechanics Hall, Worcester, MA, USA, 7-9 June 2014
Cover Image: Abstract Painting, 1986 (CR 610-1), Oil on canvas
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