“The music’s moody outbursts and vivacity come fully alive in elegant readings that are attentive to quicksilver changes in dynamics and articulation... the Sonata No. 4 in A minor is darkly playful, their ‘Kreutzer’ Sonata brilliant and stormy.”

“Their trim, alert reading of op.24 arguably provides their most effective and expansive vehicle yet... It combines an appropriate sense of idiom with an abundance of vitality, sensitivity and insight, and furnishes Beethoven’s textures with a clarity rarely achieved.”
The Sonatas for Fortepiano and Violin of Beethoven, published together in 1803 as his Opus 30, provide a remarkable trilogy, a collection displaying incredible variety and sophistication. The wide compositional range of this set demonstrates Beethoven’s prowess in creating bucolic, even humorous moments, contrasted with deep intensity, pathos and the truly sublime. Beethoven continues to surprise us with his endless creativity, each sonata reaffirming our admiration.

Performing these works on our period instruments, those with which Beethoven himself would have been familiar, continues to offer us fresh perspective. The fortepiano’s range of colour lends itself to being arguably the ultimate chamber music instrument, its wealth of acoustic variation giving the music multiple dimensions. The period violin, imparting lower tension on its warm-sounding gut strings, and period bow make a most suitable companion. Recreating Beethoven’s sound-world of the early 1800s, along with our understanding of historical performance practice, awakens the music for us in a captivating way.

We have been enjoying the process of recording these works with our brilliant recording engineer and producer Jesse Lewis in Mechanics Hall in Worcester, Massachusetts. In Jesse’s words, “[Mechanic’s Hall] has the focus for Beethoven’s most intimate and sensitive moments, and space enough for his energetic and startling swells. We take a simple approach to capture an honest and alive sound presented by Susanna, Ian and Mechanics Hall... to capture things that only happen once, Ian and Susanna acting in real time with the hall.”

We are so grateful to Jesse and his team for their dedication in bringing our performance to life in realistic, vivid detail. Our appreciation also goes to the truly essential Tim Hamilton, who owns, maintains, moves, and, in all loving ways, cares for the McNulty fortepiano. We’d also like to thank our many supporters with special mention to David Snead and Ira Pedlikin of the Handel and Haydn Society, Teresa Neff and Charles Shadle at MIT, Kathy Weld, James and Christina Nicolson, Nicholas and Paula Gleysteen, and Mary Briggs and John Krzywicki. Our deepest thanks also goes to our families for their constant support, including our spouses, Amy Rawstron, Megumi Stohs Lewis, and George Ogata.

Susanna Ogata, Ian Watson, and Jesse Lewis
With the growth of amateur domestic music-making, works for keyboard and violin became increasingly popular during the last quarter of the 18th century. Publishers did a brisk and lucrative 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 six sonatas, K301-306, written in Mannheim and Paris in 1778. Defying the traditional publishers’ description, Beethoven followed suit in his own violin sonatas, nine of which were written in fairly quick succession between 1797 (the three sonatas Op. 12) and 1803, the year of the ‘Kreutzer’, Op. 47. The beautiful ‘stray’ G major Sonata, Op. 96, followed in 1812.

Shortly after completing the so-called ‘Pastoral’ Sonata, Op. 28, in autumn 1801, Beethoven informed the violinist Wenzel Krumpholz: “I am only partly satisfied with my works up to now. From today I will strike out on a new path.” The most obvious manifestations of that ‘new path’ are the ‘Eroica’ Symphony and the ‘Kreutzer’ and ‘Waldstein’ sonatas, composed after the despairing, ultimately cathartic document known as the ‘Heiligenstadt Testament’. Yet Beethoven was already true to his word in the two sets of sonatas he composed during 1802: the three violin sonatas, Op. 30, and the three piano sonatas, Op. 31. In particular, the minor-keyed centrepieces of each set, the ‘Tempest’ Sonata, Op. 31 No. 2, and the C minor Violin Sonata, Op. 30 No. 2, reveal the full dramatic power of Beethoven’s so-called middle-period.

For several years Beethoven had suffered from a combination of chronic abdominal pains and worsening hearing. His physician apparently recommended that he spent the spring and summer of 1802 in rural seclusion to alleviate his encroaching deafness. In April Beethoven duly left Vienna to take lodgings in what was then the village of
Heiligenstadt, some two miles north of the city. He was to remain there until October. In his portfolio were the virtually finished Second Symphony and sketches for three violin sonatas. Working swiftly, Beethoven completed the sonatas, published as Op. 30, during May, and subsequently dedicated them to the young Tsar, Alexander I, who had instituted a programme of enlightened social reform in Russia – though Beethoven only received the full payment for his dedication after meeting the Tsar at the Congress of Vienna in 1815.

Beethoven had modelled several of his earlier works closely on Mozart, including the Piano and Wind Quintet, Op. 16, the First Piano Concerto and, most overtly, the A major String Quartet, Op. 18 No. 5. By 1802 he had outgrown any direct influence. Yet Mozart’s spirit, his gift for hinting at emotional depths beneath a smiling, ordered surface, is distantly sensed in the Sonata in A, Op. 30 No. 1. One of Beethoven’s best-kept secrets, this underrated sonata is a work of captivating lyrical charm and subtlety. The first movement is an idealised minuet, with the two instruments in gentle colloquy. Did Beethoven subconsciously recall the graceful opening theme, conceived in gliding three-part counterpoint, when he came to write the first of his late quartets, Op. 127? While the mood remains sunny, unruffled, the music constantly draws energy from the piano’s semiquaver figure in the opening bar. (Knowing their Beethoven, early listeners might have immediately sensed the latent dynamic potential of that apparently innocent rhythmic ‘cell’.) A decade later Beethoven would recapture and rarefy the movement’s serene conversational spirit in the G major Violin Sonata, Op. 96.

The lyricism deepens in the ineffably tender Adagio molto espressivo (a typical Beethoven marking), whose broad violin cantilena, exquisitely harmonised, is underpinned by a gentle rocking motion – a duality that Beethoven would further explore in the Adagios of his Fourth Symphony and the E minor ‘Razumovsky’ Quartet, Op. 59 No. 2. When the Op. 30 violin sonatas first appeared in print, this Adagio was singled out for praise in an otherwise lukewarm review in the Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung. For the finale Beethoven originally wrote a breakneck tarantella, before rejecting it as ‘too brilliant’ – and, we can guess, much too long – for the work. A year later the tarantella found its natural home in the flamboyant ‘Kreutzer’ Sonata, Op. 47. Beethoven’s replacement finale for Op. 30 No. 1 could not be more apt to the work’s spirit: a delightful set of six variations on a gentle pastoral tune that sounds like a folksong refined for the salon. The first and third variations feature animated sparring between the two instruments, while in the second the violin’s rippling quavers are counterpointed by hints of the theme in the piano bass. Variation Five, in A minor, opens with gravely Bachian two-part counterpoint, though it is characteristic of Beethoven to leave a chasm between the theme, deep in the piano bass, and the violin’s countermelody. The pastoral spirit returns in the final variation, in a lilting 6/8 time, enlivened by hints of opera buffa and a nonchalantly managed detour to the remoteness of E flat.

Most celebrated, and imposing, of the Op. 30 triptych is No. 2, in the quintessential Beethovenian key of C minor. Whereas Nos 1 and 3 are conceived for the salon, this grandly scaled C minor Sonata, in four rather than the usual three movements, is a symphony for two instruments. Its magnificent first movement has one of Beethoven’s trademark ‘pregnant’ openings, sounded softly in bare unison, that portends, and duly delivers, high drama. (Compare the opening of the C minor Piano Concerto, No. 3, begun two years earlier.) This initial theme generates music of dark grandeur, sometimes smouldering, sometimes explosive, as when the theme
storms in *fortissimo* at the recapitulation. The major-keyed second subject combines delicacy with a pronounced military strut – an echo here of the ‘Marseillaise’, and a reminder of the Napoleonic Wars that were raging throughout Europe. Sketches show how Beethoven, characteristically, evolved this ‘military’ theme from an altogether cruder sketch.

After the first movement’s tumultuous coda, the *Adagio cantabile* offers much-needed emotional balm. Beethoven originally planned this movement in G major before opting for A flat, a key in which the violin loses some of its natural brightness: perfect for the assuaging tenderness of the long-drawn opening theme, each half of which is proposed by the piano and repeated by the violin, with an added richness of texture and harmony. The prevailing serenity is gently ruffled by a poignant violin solo in A flat minor, and later challenged by sweeping *fortissimo* scales that evoke the first movement’s martial spirit.

Defying expectations, as ever, Beethoven follows this *Adagio* with a *Scherzo* in C major that cheerfully cocks a snook at 18th-century elegance. Its disruptive offbeat accents become still more insistent in the trio, fashioned as a jaunty canon between violin and keyboard bass. According to the (often unreliable) memoirs of Beethoven’s factotum Anton Schindler, the composer wanted to delete this piquant movement from the sonata “because of incompatibility with the nature of the work as a whole”. We can be grateful that he didn’t.

C minor reasserts itself with a vengeance in the *Finale*, a sonata-rondo whose unstable main theme juxtaposes ominous bass rumbles with snatches of lyrical pathos. As in the opening movement, the mood temporarily brightens with a swaggering Hungarian-style march, though with its tootling keyboard descant this one suggests an element of parody. When the rondo theme returns, the lyrical fragment flowers, with Mozartian grace, in an unclouded C major. But this respite proves short-lived. Darkening abruptly from major to minor, the central episode develops both elements of the main theme in combative counterpoint. In the torrential *Presto* coda the violin hammers out a new stomping march tune that turns out to be a blunt version of the work’s opening theme. With this rounding-off of the whole structure, the sonata ends, as it began, in a stark, uncompromising C minor.

If the A major Sonata is a lyric and the C minor a stormy epic, the outer movements of the G major, Op. 30 No. 3, suggest an inspired *jeu d’esprit*. Launched by a flurry of scales and a whoop of glee from the violin, the opening *Allegro assai*, in 6/8 time, shares the mischievous, *scherzando* spirit of the A major Violin Sonata Op. 12 No. 2. Violin and piano remain in close, conspiratorial collusion throughout. Contrasting ideas include a mock-vehement outburst in D minor, a skittish little rustic tune over a drone bass (shades here of the recent ‘Pastoral’ Sonata) and a closing theme disrupted by offbeat accents and chuckling trills. In the central development the trills pivot the music to a far-flung C sharp minor, at the furthest extreme from G major. Beethoven then steers the music deftly back to the home key courtesy of a comic-mysterious dialogue on the initial ‘wriggling’ motif, with the subterranean keyboard answered by the violin four octaves higher.

The lyrically beguiling *Tempo di menuetto*, in the warm key of E flat major, is first cousin to the *Menuetto* in the near-contemporary Piano Sonata in E flat, Op. 31 No. 3. Both are surrogate slow movements that put a Romantic gloss on the leisured elegance of the *ancien régime* minuet. Beethoven’s sketches reveal how the two main themes – the
first luxuriantly expansive, the second, spiced by offbeat sforzandi, unfolding with an almost Brahmsian depth of sonority – only gradually attained their final eloquence. In the coda the opening melody is fragmented between the instruments, ending with a repeated little cadential figure that evokes the ethereal close of the Act One Quintet in *Die Zauberflöte*.

If Beethoven here alludes distantly to his favourite Mozart opera, the spirit of his one-time teacher Haydn, and in particular the famous ‘Gipsy Rondo’, lies behind the rollicking *Finale*. The Hungarian *puszta* is immediately conjured in the ‘exotic’ sharpened fourths (i.e. C sharps) of the piano’s *moto perpetuo* figuration, the repeated scraps of folk-like melody (which Beethoven ensures you won’t forget) and the pervasive bagpipe drones. Amid the bucolic merriment there are surprises and subtleties aplenty, including fleeting shards of lyricism, bouts of imitative counterpoint and excursions into remote keys. Towards the end, after a mock-heroic pause, Beethoven dips from G to E flat (the key of the *Tempo di menuetto*) and draws an unsuspected delicacy from the rustic theme, before the sonata ends in a riotous stompfest.

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**We are grateful to all our donors.**

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

- Mary Briggs and John Krzywicki
- Kathy Weld
- Emily F. Schabacker
- Yoshihiro and Mariko Hirata
- Michiyoh Ogata
- Ronald Ouellet
- Margaret E. Thomas and Gilbert Pemberton
- Barbara and John Cortesio
- Jackie Lenth and Andy Falender
- Nicholas and Paula Gleysteen
- Don and Gina Halsted
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- Stanley and Jody Smith
- Charlie and Lea Anderson
- Michelle, Richard and Christine Binzel

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Stanley and Jody Smith
Charlie and Lea Anderson
Michelle, Richard and Christine Binzel
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.

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

Multi-talented Ian Watson has been described by The Times in London as a “world-class soloist” and a keyboard performer of “virtuosic panache” and by the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung as “a conductor of formidable ability.” He is currently Artistic Director of Arcadia Players Period-Instrument Orchestra, Music Director of the Connecticut Early Music Festival, and was appointed Associate Conductor of Boston’s Handel and Haydn Society in September 2016.

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. He completed his studies with Flor Peeters in Belgium. In 1993, in recognition of his services to music, he was honoured with an Associateship of the Royal Academy of Music. Ian’s first major appointment was as Organist at St Margaret’s, Westminster Abbey, at the age of 19, a position he held for ten years. He also served as Music Director of the historic Christopher Wren church, St James’s Piccadilly.

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

Since moving to the USA, Ian has immersed himself in the great musical culture of the City of Boston, working notably with the Boston Symphony and the Handel and Haydn Society amongst many others. He has directed the Handel and Haydn Society on many occasions and was appointed Associate Conductor in 2016. In honour of their 200th anniversary in 2015, Ian conducted an outdoor performance of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony in Boston’s Copley Square. The audience was estimated at 6,000 people. In 2016, Ian was honoured to be appointed Artistic Director of the Connecticut Early Music Festival.

Susanna Ogata | violin

Susanna Ogata enjoys an active performance schedule in greater New England and beyond. She has been praised for “expressive melting between notes”, her sound described as “warm and rich of tone” (Fanfare Magazine), “totally convincing, spontaneous and free-flowing playing” (The Berkshire Review), and “playing of electrifying energy, awesome technical command and rollicking dialogue” (Arts Fuse Magazine) where her concert appearance was distinguished as “Best Solo Performance of 2016”.
Dedicated to exploring music on historical instruments, Susanna has participated and soloed with the Handel and Haydn Society, where she serves as Assistant Concertmaster, as well as with Arcadia Players, Bach Ensemble, Sarasa, Boston Early Music Festival, and Blue Hill Bach Festival. She is an active chamber musician and founding member of The Boston Classical Trio and Coriolan String Quartet. Solo appearances include performances of Vivaldi’s Four Seasons and Beethoven’s Violin Concerto.

Susanna has embarked with fortepianist Ian Watson on “The Beethoven Project” to survey and record the complete Sonatas for Fortepiano and Violin of Beethoven on period instruments. They have received accolades for their recordings in such publications as Fanfare Magazine, BBC Music Magazine, The Strad, Limelight Magazine and Early Music Review. A recent review in The New York Times praised them for “elegant readings that are attentive to quicksilver changes in dynamics and articulation. Their performance of the Sonata No. 4 in A minor is darkly playful, their ‘Kreutzer’ Sonata brilliant and stormy.” They have recently commenced a two-year residency at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Susanna’s teachers have included Charles Castleman and Laura Bossert and Dana Maiben with whom she studied Baroque violin. She also worked extensively with Malcolm Bilson and Paul O’Dette while completing her undergraduate and graduate studies at the Eastman School of Music.

For further information about recordings on CORO email: coro@thesixteen.com