WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

(1756-1791)

THE PIANO CONCERTOS, VOL. 2

Piano Concerto No. 11 in F Major, K. 413 (21:25)

1 I Allegro (8:50)
2 II Larghetto (6:58)
3 III Tempo di menuetto (5:25)

Cadenzas by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Piano Concerto No. 20 in D Minor, K. 466 (28:57)

4 I Allegro (12:55)
5 II Romanze (8:19)
6 III Allegro assai (7:33)

1st movement cadenza by Ludwig van Beethoven
3rd movement cadenza by Christian Zacharias

Piano Concerto No. 21 in C major, K. 467 (27:30)

7 I Allegro maestoso (14:17)
8 II Andante (6:44)
9 III Allegro vivace assai (6:19)

Cadenzas by Dinu Lipatti

Vassily Primakov, piano
The Odense Symphony Orchestra
Simon Gaudenz, conductor

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MOZART: Piano Concertos K. 413, 466, 467

The concertos of Mozart so dominate our present-day mainstream concert repertoire, and have crowded out so completely the concertante works of his immediate contemporaries, that it's all too easy for us to think that they constitute some sort of norm. They must, we unconsciously assume, perfectly typify the generally-accepted Classical concerto form of the late 18th century, simply raised to the highest power of genius; the purest and most masterly representatives of a common genre.

Yet Mozart's personal adaptation and exploitation of the concerto genre was highly idiosyncratic. Yes, his concertos inhabit the tonal design that we call sonata form, which was the Classical era's greatest achievement in musical architecture. But they do so in a way that constantly draws upon his experience and ambitions in the genre of opera. It is in Mozart's concertos, and above all the piano concertos, that the concept of the concerto as a *drama* - practically a commonplace to all succeeding generations - first arises. The 'operatic' elements are not confined to the aria-like character of so many of his slow movements, the *buffo* antics and rejoicings of his finales, the contests, arguments, duets or dialogues between the soloist and the orchestra or a chosen group of instruments. They extend to the thematic material itself. Mozart's concertos typically begin with a very large-scale orchestral exposition that may introduce as many as seven salient themes, or even more. Not even Beethoven emulated Mozart in this, perhaps because the sheer profusion of themes might have militated against his instinct for close-knit motivic development. Yet Mozart's first movements are not (as those of his lesser contemporaries, working with fewer themes, frequently are) merely episodic. Rather every theme has its proper place and function in the workings of the sonata design, like a character in a drama: it may be used for a particular juncture, for a turn in the argument, to introduce a new emotional colouring, and so on.

This highly original approach to concerto form, in which theatrical impulses are seamlessly blended with the demands of working-out the material, manifested itself very early in Mozart's career, and became his established strategy whenever he worked with the genre. What developed over the years was the subtlety, richness and expressive profundity of that strategy, which found its finest flowering in the concertos of his last years.

A word about the cadenzas used for these works. When he performed them Mozart of course played his own cadenzas, sometimes no doubt improvising them on the spot. For some of the concertos no original written cadenzas exist, but for many of them we do have Mozart's cadenzas, or sketchy skeletons of them, which he almost wrote not in the score but on separate sheets. Though these are authentic, they are not necessarily the last word in suitability, or an accurate record of what Mozart actually played. The British scholar Sir Donald Tovey wrote about them: *'It is doubtful whether he would have regarded any of his written cadenzas to first movements as adequately representing his way of extemporizing'* though Tovey also said that each of the written-out cadenzas '*conveys at least one useful hint*'. A general acceptance of that situation has led many other composers and virtuosi, including the very greatest, to compose cadenzas for the Mozart piano concertos.

Writing to his father in Salzburg on 28 December 1782, Mozart described the set of three comparatively small-scale piano concertos (K. 413-415) that he had prepared for his proposed subscription concerts in January. *'These concertos are a happy medium between what is too easy and too difficult; they are very brilliant, pleasing to the ear, and natural without being vapid. There are passages here and there from which the connoisseurs alone can derive satisfaction; but these passages are written in such a way that the less learned cannot fail to be pleased, though without knowing why.'* At the time of the letter, two of those concertos remained to be finished, one of them being **Piano Concerto No. 11 in F major, K. 413**. On 15 January Mozart solicited subscriptions in the *Wiener Zeitung* for all three concertos, describing them as being with with optional wind parts, to allow performance if necessary only with the accompaniment of only a string quartet. The appeal was not very successful, and in April Mozart was offering the three concertos to the French publisher Sieber; now he claimed they could be performed with full orchestra (ie with oboes and horns), which he knew was the French preference, or alternatively just with four-part strings. Sieber must have declined the offer, however, for three years were to pass before the three concertos were finally printed in Vienna, by Artaria.

Almost certainly, Concerto No. 11 was performed by Mozart in Vienna on 11 January 1783, and he gave later performances in Salzburg. As in Piano Concerto No. 12, this is a small-scale piece, scored only for oboes, bassoons, horns and strings in which the wind instruments can be dispensed with altogether – except for the second movement, where Mozart seems later to have added the bassoons as *obbligato*. Of the three concertos K. 413-415, No. 11 is generally considered the most conservative: the fact that it ends with a minuet seems to take it back to the form as understood by J.C. Bach. It is almost like a miniature model of a 'typical' Mozart concerto, except that its faint air of archaism, its plethora of 3/4 time and its plain speaking (to the point of bluntness) make it no such thing. Rather it is a work stripped down to essentials: but those essentials, as ever with Mozart, are beguiling in themselves. Sir Donald Tovey alas never wrote one of his celebrated *Essays in Musical Analysis* about this work, but he did allude to it once in passing, with whimsical canine metaphor, saying that of the group of three concertos 'The smallest is [the] F major, and its character is somewhere between that of an Aberdeen terrier and a Dandie Dinmont; it does not happen to show fight, but its quiet sagacity is no sign of weakness'.

Only three Mozart piano concertos open with a first movement in 3/4 time: this is one of them. It starts with repeated chords from the whole orchestra, followed at once by a vigorous principal theme. The soloist enters with a new idea before taking up the first subject, which is then developed. The movement continues with a wealth of thematic invention – and the development section is large compared to the shortness of the exposition – up to the cadenza (happily, Mozart's cadenzas for this concerto have survived).

The *Larghetto* slow movement is in B flat major and is dominated by an elegant principal theme whose initial sense of artless melody turns bitter-sweet as the movement proceeds and the harmony is varied. Overall this is a beautifully poised movement, expressive of deeper emotions than first appears. The finale, as previously mentioned, is a minuet – or rather a rondo whose principal theme, announced at the outset by the orchestra, is in minuet style with two repeated halves. This insouciant movement combines the archaism of its principal idea with some up-to-the-minute modulations in the subsidiary episodes, and eventually brings the concerto to an end in a mood of good-humoured contentment.

In strong contrast to this unruffled display of early-classical manners, no Mozart piano concerto better bears out the idea of the concerto as a *dramatic* form than **Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor, K. 466** – and though the drama in question spans the gamut from tragedy to comedy, there is no doubt that in this work Mozart raised the genre to a new level of high seriousness. Here, not much more than two years after K. 413, he abandons the last pretence of writing music merely for entertainment, and delineates instead a rigorous, sometimes even sinister action. For the first time in a concerto Mozart makes use of trumpets and drums, in addition to his customary line-up of flute, pairs of oboes, bassoons, horns, and strings; in this concerto he keeps the violas divided to enrich the texture. Charles Rosen observes (in *The Classical Style*) that 'No concerto before K. 466 exploits so well the pathetic nature of the form – the contrast and struggle of one individual voice against many'. Mozart completed the work in Vienna on 11 February 1785 and premiered it the following day in the ballroom of the Mehlgrube Casino (in Vienna's First District, where the Hotel Ambassador now stands) in the first of his Lenten subscription concerts there. His father Leopold Mozart, Vice-Kapellmeister of Salzburg, was in the audience, having just arrived in Vienna: he sent Mozart's sister Nannerl a description of arriving at Mozart's lodgings to find the copyist still writing out the 'fine new concerto ... and your brother didn't even have time to play through the rondo because he had to oversee the copying operation'.

We know Mozart wrote cadenzas for K. 466, since they are mentioned in correspondence with his family, but they have not survived. The cadenzas used in this recording are by Beethoven (mvt. 1), who greatly admired this concerto and played it in public several times, and by the German pianist and conductor Christian Zacharias (mvt. 3). In fact the work has drawn several leading musicians to attempt to provide cadenzas for it, including Hummel, Brahms, Clara Schumann and Busoni. D minor is not a key that Mozart used often, but he reserved it for some of his most intense inspirations: the String Quartet K. 421, Don Giovanni's damnation, the *Requiem*. The very opening of the Concerto's first movement carries a powerful emotional charge, the mood of *Sturm und Drang* immediately apparent in the agitated, pulsing string syncopations that set up the basic momentum and the hollow, throbbing exclamations of the bass. The piano never has this theme to itself, though it provides plenty of commentary on it in the way of decoration, figuration, and expressive responses. The entry of the full orchestra, and the alternations of string and wind sound that play like lightning over a landscape, intensify the high seriousness of the enterprise. When the piano enters it is with a new theme of lyric pathos, but this is swiftly caught up in a recurrence of the dark opening music that evolves as a varied re-exposition for solo and orchestra and arrives at a second subject for the pianist in F major – one of the few brighter shafts of light in the music. A fairly short, restlessly modulating development pits the piano against the orchestra and leads to a full recapitulation, pausing expectantly for a cadenza. The grim, passionate coda fades away quietly in the sinister throbbing with which the movement began.

The slow movement, to which Mozart gave the title Romance, is in rondo form: the exquisite principal theme, announced first by the soloist, recurs to frame intervening episodes. It is one of Mozart's purest inspirations, and has an elegant air, like a love song or serenade. (In all the tune appears 14 times, with different ornamentations.) Though the movement's main key of B flat major provides a welcome, almost placid contrast to the first movement, there is pathos in the fine-spun melodic line of the first episode, and a dramatic turn to G minor (relative minor of B flat) in the stormy and strenuous second episode with its eruptive piano triplets, which shows that the passions of the first movement still exert an influence. The movement, however, contrives to end peacefully.

As was the norm, the trumpets and drums are absent from this movement; but they return for the final rondo, which is opened by the soloist in the original key of D minor with a dashing but angular and rather feverish main theme. The material of this finale – unlike any previous Mozart concerto finale – are closely related to those of the first movement. In form it is a different kind of rondo, vigorous and decisive, full of activity which this time gradually takes us out of the sombre shades of D minor. A lilting F major theme is one of the principal agents of this change. After an eventful development this idea re-emerges on the woodwind and after the cadenza it leads the coda in a cheerful D major. Though there is plenty of orchestral power in the final pages, with oscillations still between major and minor, it is this theme – which finally acquires a humorous cadential tag in *opera buffa* style – that triumphs, as if indulgently dismissing all the sound and fury that has gone before.

If Concerto No. 20 is the most theatrical of Mozart's Piano Concerti, its successor **Piano Concerto No. 21 in C major, K. 467** is one of the most lyrical. This essential quality earned it special prominence in the 1960s, when the slow movement was used as music to Bo Widerberg's popular film *Elvira Madigan;* in fact for a time it was common to see the work billed in performance and on record as the *'Elvira Madigan' Concerto*, which would no doubt have puzzled its composer. K. 467 was indeed composed right after K. 466, in February-March 1785, and completed on 9 March. Mozart premiered it the next day at the fifth of his Lenten Mehlgrube concerts, and again the next day at Vienna's Burgtheater. On the latter occasion he played on his new fortepiano with an added pedal-board. Leopold Mozart, who was still staying with his son, feared that the harmonies in the slow movement and the work's rhythmic complexities would be too daring for the public, but instead he was able to note with satisfaction that the work was received with rapturous applause, many of the audience being in tears.

Again, no original cadenzas survive; those used in this recording are by the great Romanian pianist-composer Dinu Lipatti (1917-1950), who himself showed something of the promise of a 20th-century Mozart. The work is scored for the same forces as the D minor Concerto and, once again, the violas are divided throughout, adding richness to the string sound. Mozart often treats C major not so much as a festive key as a neutral one, serving as the basis for an unusual freedom of modulation, as is the case here. The Concerto starts off with a march tune of delightful aplomb, begun by the strings and then answered, in full military regalia, by the wind; the ceremonial air is by no means over-serious, however, and it initiates a vivid and virile exposition, with several contrasting ideas, including another little march-tune and a singularly sweet violin tune. The soloist enters almost unexpectedly with introductory phrases and a brief cadenza leading to a long-held trill under which the original march-figure can be heard in the strings. It then gives out a new melody of its own.

A sudden pathetic turn to G minor brings a brief foretaste of the opening of Mozart's great 40th Symphony in that key, but the major mode is restored for a pleasingly pearly *cantabile* tune for the piano (Mozart had used this previously in his Horn Concerto No. 3). The vigorous development is not devoid of darker moments, but they are moments only, like small clouds passing across the face of the sun. It concerns itself not with the principal themes but with subsidiary material, and includes a new, rather melancholy E minor theme for the piano, begun by three repeated notes. The expansive recapitulation reinstates all the principal ideas in splendour before the cadenza and coda.

The exquisite F major slow movement is the part of the concerto that was used in *Elvira Madigan*. It has some unique features, especially the texture of the opening music, with the famous theme in muted violins and violas against continuous throbbing triplets in cellos and basses, and with subtle, shifting harmonies in the wind. When the piano enters it puts the tune into triplets and the throbbing basses go into 4/4. The expressive cross-rhythms and beautiful modulations contribute the rhapsodic, dream-like quality of the music, which in essence is like a rapt operatic cavatina. More elements come into play in the central section, and when the opening theme is restated it is in A flat, over pizzicato strings. Though this movement has become an almost hackneyed concert favourite it is in fact an utterance of profound beauty and continuous imaginative invention.

The main theme of the final rondo, picking up on various chromatic embellishments and sideslips in the other two movements, starts with a rising fragment of chromatic scale and has a hurried but breezy character that goes with its expression-mark *Allegro vivace assai*. Stated first by the orchestra and then picked up – after the briefest of cadenzas – ebulliently by the piano, it announces a relaxation of mood that persists throughout the movement. Its first six notes prove to be a motivic powerhouse impelling the music onwards, though the episodes provide equally carefree alternatives, such as the coruscating second theme in the piano and the dapper third theme in the woodwind; there is also an elegant fourth theme shared between piano and orchestra. The development takes these various ideas off into far-flung keys with brilliant scale and arpeggio decorations from the soloist. There is a build-up to a last cadenza, and after it a joyous and brilliant coda.

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Since the release of his recording of the Chopin Piano Concertos in 2008 (BRIDGE 9278), **Vassily Primakov** has been hailed as a pianist of world class importance. *Gramophone* wrote that "Primakov's empathy with Chopin's spirit could hardly be more complete," and the *American Record Guide* stated: "In every piece his touch is perfect. Since Gilels, how many pianists have the right touch? In Chopin, no one currently playing and recording sounds as good as this! This is a great Chopin pianist." *Music Web-International* called Primakov's Chopin Concertos CD "one of the great Chopin recordings of recent times. These are performances of extraordinary power and beauty." In 1999, as a teen-aged prizewinner of the Cleveland International Piano Competition, Primakov was praised by Donald Rosenberg of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*: "Every poignant phrase took ethereal wing. Elsewhere the music soared with all of the turbulence and poetic vibrancy it possesses. We will be hearing much from this remarkable musician."

Vassily Primakov was born in Moscow in 1979. His first piano studies were with his mother, Marina Primakova. He entered Moscow's Central Special Music School at the age of eleven as a pupil of Vera Gornostaeva. At seventeen, after a summer at the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, he came to New York to pursue studies at the Juilliard School with the noted pianist, Jerome Lowenthal. At Juilliard, Mr. Primakov won the William Petschek Piano Recital Award, which presented his debut recital at Alice Tully Hall. While a student at Juilliard, aided by a Susan W. Rose Career Grant, he won both the Silver Medal and the Audience Prize in the 2002 Gina Bachauer International Artists Piano Competition. Later that year Primakov won First Prize in the 2002 Young Concert Artists (YCA) International Auditions, an award which presented him in solo and concerto performances throughout the USA. In 2007 he was named the Classical Recording Foundation's "Young Artist of the Year." In 2009 his Chopin Mazurka disc (BRIDGE 9289) was named "Best of the Year" by National Public Radio.

In 2009 **Simon Gaudenz** won the "Deutscher Dirigentenpreis", which carries with it the highest award of any European conducting competition. In great demand internationally, Gaudenz is frequently invited to conduct leading orchestras, including the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, the Orchestre National de France, the

Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra, the National Philharmonic of Russia, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, the Sinfonieorchester Basel, the Philharmonic Orchestras of Monte Carlo, Lyon, Luxembourg and Strasbourg, the Konzerthausorchester Berlin, the Düsseldorf, Nürnberg, Bremen and Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestras, the Beethoven Orchestra in Bonn, and the Tyrolean Symphony Orchestra.

He has been Music Director and Chief Conductor at the Collegium Musicum in Basel since 2004, before which he spent four years as Music Director at Basel's Camerata Variabile. He has also currently Principal Guest Conductor of Denmark's Odense Symphony Orchestra.

Simon Gaudenz studied the clarinet, composition and conducting in Lucerne, Graz, Freiburg and Salzburg. He regards his work with Leon Fleisher, Kurt Masur, David Zinman and Eliahu Inbal as influential in his career. Gaudenz's interest in historical performance practice was encouraged by Reinhard Goebel and Arnold Östman.

The **Odense Symphony Orchestra** was formally established in 1946, but its roots go back to 1800. The orchestra gives approximately 100 concerts per season, most of them in the acoustically superb Carl Nielsen Hall-the hall where the present recording was made. The Odense Symphony frequently tours abroad, including tours to the USA, China, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Holland, the Baltic countries, Russia, Spain and Sweden. The Odense Symphony's ongoing recording series for Bridge Records includes music by:

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