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MOZART

∞ Piano Concertos ∞
No. 12, K. 414 • No. 23, K. 488

Marianna Shirinyan
Odense Symphony Orchestra
Scott Yoo

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

(1756-1791)

Piano Concerto No. 12 in A major, K. 414 (26:33)

- 1) I. Allegro (10:17)
- 2) II. Andante (9:35)
- 3) III. Rondeau: Allegretto (6:38)

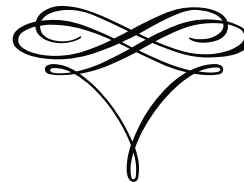
Piano Concerto No. 23 in A major, K. 488 (25:31)

- 4) I. Allegro (11:04)
- 5) II. Adagio (6:40)
- 6) III. Allegro assai (7:46)

Marianna Shirinyan, piano
Odense Symphony Orchestra
Scott Yoo, conductor

Søndergaard, Krzysztof Urbanski and Joshua Weilerstein. The Association of Danish Music Critics awarded Marianna Shirinyan their 2009 Annual Prize, and in 2010, she received Danish Radio's P2 Artist Prize for her contributions to the musical and artistic life of Denmark. In 2013 Marianna Shirinyan began a two-year period as Artist in Residence with the Odense Symphony Orchestra in Denmark. Marianna Shirinyan has been a Steinway Artist since 2013.

For further information about Marianna Shirinyan please visit
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Marianna Shirinyan



Since winning five prizes at the 2006 ARD International Music Competition in Munich, Marianna Shirinyan's career as a soloist and chamber musician has taken off. She is a frequent guest at a string of major international festivals, among them the Schleswig Holstein Music Festival, Bergen Festspillene, and the MDR Summer Music Festival. She has also won a reputation as one of the leading pianists of the new generation with solo appearances with orchestras including the Danish

National Symphony Orchestra, Oslo Philharmonic, Göteborg Symphony, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Potsdam Chamber Academy, and the Helsinki Philharmonic. Among the conductors she has played with are Zoltan Kocsis, Hans Graf, Jun Märkl, Antonello Manacorda, Thomas

Notes by Malcolm MacDonald

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 in many cases we do have Mozart's cadenzas, or sketchy skeletons of them, which he almost invariably (the concerto K 488 is a rare exception) 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*

the wind instruments, and leads to a more pensive second subject, also first given to the strings. When the piano enters, it explores both themes, transferring the second subject to the dominant. At the end of the exposition, the orchestra introduces yet another lyrical theme, which has not so far been heard. The piano decorates this new idea, and the ensuing development section is concerned almost entirely with this material, which did not figure in the exposition at all. It does, however, make its appearance in the recapitulation, just before Mozart's cadenza and the following brief coda.

The *Adagio* slow movement, in the relative (F sharp) minor, is thoughtful, even melancholic at first. The choice of key, and the liltingly pathetic rhythm of a siciliana, are alike rare phenomena in Mozart's music. The woodwind introduce a more hopeful theme, with the second clarinet – we see here why Mozart wanted two of them – providing a bucolic arpeggio accompaniment. The piano echoes this idea, but after the return of the main theme the movement ends with an unexpectedly spectral coda featuring pizzicato strings. This movement's darker thoughts are then decisively expelled by the start of the finale, a cheerful blend of sonata and rondo, of irrepressible invention and vivacity. Its bustling succession of episodes and subsidiary ideas give it something of the character of a carnival procession. There is no cadenza – there seems not to be room for one, so prodigal is the inventiveness – but in the big and sometimes grandiose coda there is more than one 'false' ending, before we come to the real one.

1786. At this time he was already busy composing his first Italian opera for Vienna, *Le nozze di Figaro* (which he finished on 29 April), and it has often been noted that there is a good-humoured emotional kinship between the opera and the concerto. (We should also remember, however, that in this period he also wrote the tragic C minor Piano Concerto, K 491, in which any *Figaro*-like characteristics are difficult to detect. K 488 was intended for performance in a series of three subscription concerts that Mozart had arranged for Viennese winter season. In a letter of 30 September that year to Sebastian Winter – once a servant in Mozart’s father’s house, and now purchasing examples of Mozart’s compositions for his current master, the Prince von Fürstenberg in Donaueschingen – Mozart included information about K 488, noting that it required two clarinets and if these were not available the parts must be arranged for violin and viola. (On the other hand Mozart here dispenses with oboes, trumpets, and drums.) The work seems to have given him a more than usual amount of trouble to get right, for a fragment of a first attempt at the slow movement survives, and no less than three rejected false starts at the finale. On the other hand the cadenza – most unusually – has been written into the autograph full score, though in Tovey’s judgement this is ‘a more than usually perfunctory and inadequate one’.

The first movement, for all its blithe bravura writing, is predominantly lyrical and gentle, and approaches nearer to the received idea of a ‘classical’ concerto form with two main subjects than most of Mozart’s do. It begins on the strings, echoed by

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 (Brahms, for example) to compose cadenzas for the Mozart piano concertos.

Writing to his father in Salzburg on 28 December 1782, he 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, but one – **Piano Concerto No. 12 in A major, K. 414** – was already complete.

On 15 January Mozart solicited subscriptions in the *Wiener Zeitung* for the three concertos, describing them as being 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 to offer, how-

ever, for three years were to pass before the three concertos were issued in Vienna, by Artaria.

As noted above, K. 414 is actually the earliest of the three, completed in the autumn of 1782. (An independent work, the Rondo in A major for piano and orchestra, K. 386, is thought to have started life as the finale for K. 414, only to be replaced by the finale we know.) We do not know the date of the premiere, though some scholars think it must have been as part of a Vienna concert given on 3 November that year by Mozart and his pupil Josephine von Auernhammer. He is also known to have played the work in Salzburg. Two sets of cadenzas survive for this concerto; the second set is thought to date from 1785, around the time of its publication. (Tovey, for once, found these cadenzas admirable.) Apparently Mozart was particularly fond of the work and used it to teach his favourite pupils.

He was already at the height of his powers by the time he wrote this concerto, and his mastery of the genre is immediately apparent. Tovey indeed declared it one of the most ‘Mozartian’ of all Mozart’s works – ‘*it almost seems as if [he] had concentrated the most personal features of a dozen compositions on this single work*’ – and he absolved the two sets of cadenzas, though they are short, from his usual stricture of being too ‘perfunctory’. The first movement opens with the principal theme, which is characterized by the descending ‘Scotch snap’ rhythm of its second bar. There follow a number of contrasting ideas including a cheerful second subject in march-rhythm. Overall, however, this is a dignified movement; but

its sheer wealth of invention is worthy of remark. The soloist repeats and develops all the different themes (save one) in its own exposition, and then the ‘development’ section as such concerns itself with completely new material. (Charles Rosen has suggested this is because the various themes of the exposition are too complex, and too complete, to require further development.) In the recapitulation the music returns to the material of the exposition, and this time the piano takes up the flowing theme that it had not glanced before.

The slow movement, in D major, opens with a grave falling and rising theme which the piano takes up in full majestic harmonization. This theme is actually borrowed from J. C. Bach, who had died in London in January 1782 – perhaps in tribute, for Mozart had been very fond of the elder composer. This opening establishes the dominant mood of ruminative solemnity.

The finale is a lively rondo: the ebullient principal theme appears first on the violins, but does not get taken up by the soloist until most of the other themes have been heard. This is a movement rich in witty dialogue, which makes a sparkling conclusion to an exceptionally beguiling work.

Mozart’s next concerto in A major dates from four years later, and is generally ranked among his greatest works in the genre. According to his own catalogue of his works he completed the **Piano Concerto No. 23 in A major, K. 488**, on 2 March