

Ferdinand RIES

Sonatas for Violin and Piano • 3

Eric Grossman, Violin • Susan Kagan, Piano



Ferdinand Ries (1784–1838) Sonatas for Violin and Piano • 3

Ferdinand Ries had the advantage of growing up in the same professional musical environment that nurtured Ludwig van Beethoven in his youth: Ferdinand's father, Franz Ries, was the principal violinist and conductor of the Electoral Court orchestra in Bonn, Germany (an important outpost of the Habsburg Empire). In addition to his duties in the Electoral Court, Franz Ries was a noted teacher, numbering the young Beethoven among his students. He not only taught Beethoven violin and viola, he took on the role of protective surrogate father to him. His son Ferdinand – despite an age difference of 14 years – became Beethoven's closest friend.

Ferdinand studied briefly in Munich and in 1803 went to Vienna, where Beethoven had settled. Beethoven gave Ries piano lessons but sent him to the noted theorist Johann Albrechtsberger (1736–1809) for composition lessons. In Vienna, Ries devoted himself to seeing to Beethoven's needs – copying parts, proof-reading, making transcriptions and arrangements, and after moving to London, negotiating with Beethoven's publishers. At the same time, Ries was able to pursue a successful career, both artistically and financially, as a touring virtuoso pianist. Eventually he settled in London, taught piano, married an Englishwoman and raised a family, and continued working actively on Beethoven's behalf.

Ries was a gifted and prolific composer in every instrumental genre, whose works, like those of many of his contemporaries, were largely overshadowed by Beethoven's overwhelming public presence. It is remarkable that despite Ries's close relationship with Beethoven, his own compositional style is fresh and original. Most of his music was published in his lifetime, and it became widely known to the music-loving public. He toured Europe, including Russia, as a virtuoso concert pianist, and after brief stays in Paris and Vienna, he made his home in London, eventually retiring to the Rhine area. In 1838 he collaborated with another Bonn friend, Franz Wegeler (1765–1848), in writing an early biography of Beethoven, *Biographische Notizen über Ludwig van Beethoven*, a valuable collection of reminiscences and

anecdotes about the composer.

Eighteen violin sonatas with opus numbers were published, many of them during Ries's Paris stay from 1807 to 1809. They are models of the Viennese Classical style established by Mozart. Most are in three movements: the first movement in traditional sonata-allegro form, the slow movement in ternary (ABA) form, and a *rondo* finale. The musical material provides equal interest for both instruments, with an emphasis on lyrical melodies. The approximate dates of composition are those given by the Australian scholar Cecil Hill in his annotated thematic catalogue of Ries's complete works (New South Wales, 1977).

Sonata in E flat major, Op. 18 (1810)

(Originally titled as 'Grande Sonate', *Oeuvre 18* in the Paris publication)

The opening gesture of the *Allegro* first movement is strong and energetic but is quickly contrasted with a lyrical passage – a characteristic of Ries's style that continues throughout the movement. The following slow movement, *Andantino*, in C major, is based on a simple, sedate theme that alternates between the violin and piano, with contrasting sections in new keys and of different character. The main theme of the third movement, *Rondeau*, is sedate in tempo, but also dance-like, with patterns of dotted rhythms.

Sonata in G minor, Op. 38, No. 3 (1811)

The tense opening of the *Allegro con spirito* first movement, with its abrupt repeated notes and loud chords, sets the mood of this minor-key sonata, although it soon lapses into a lyrical second theme of a dance-like character. The second movement, an expressive *Adagio*, is one of Ries's loveliest creations: a slow, simple melody is heard in the violin, then repeated in the piano – it is developed with a steady accompanying figure similar to the 'walking bass' featured in many Baroque compositions. In the intense and fiery *Allegro* finale, the texture is dominated by abrupt, percussive, short chords interrupting jagged phrases of melody. Towards the end of the movement, Ries creates a playful little game of

cat-and-mouse as the two instruments exchange fragments of the theme.

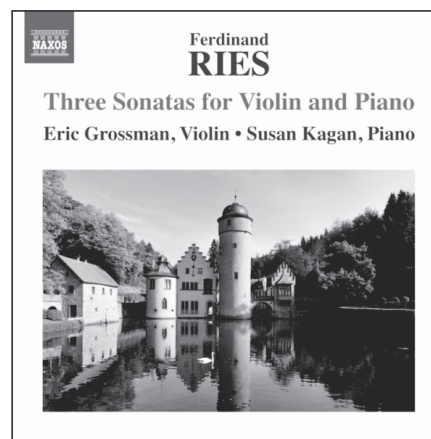
Sonata in D major, Op. 83 (1818)

Despite the late-sounding opus number, the *Sonata in D* was registered at Stationers' Hall (the London equivalent of a copyright office) in 1818. The brisk opening movement, *Allegro con brio*, starts with a strong theme, but quickly introduces a quiet second theme in F major, and a brisk

development. The brief second movement, *Andantino con moto*, in the metre and style of a *siciliano*, comes to a halt on a dominant chord, followed by a *Rondo* in the character of a *gavotte*. It features a rising four-note motif in a pronounced rhythm that refers clearly to the main theme of the finale of Beethoven's *Sonata for Cello and Piano, Op. 102, No. 1* (1815).

Susan Kagan

Also available



Sonata in F major, Op. 8, No. 1
Sonata in C minor, Op. 8, No. 2
Sonata in F minor, Op. 19
8.573193



Sonata in B flat major, Op. 16, No. 2
Sonata in E minor, Op. 38, No. 1
Sonata in A minor, Op. 38, No. 2
8.573717



Eric Grossman

Eric Grossman is a versatile performer hailed for his flawless technique, superb musicianship, and commitment to a wide range of repertoire. A graduate of The Juilliard School where he studied with Dorothy DeLay, Grossman has performed across the US, Europe, Korea, Japan and Cuba in recital and as soloist under such conductors as Zubin Mehta, Stanisław Skrowaczewski and Michael Gielen. Grossman has recorded Lowell Liebermann's *Violin Sonata* with the composer, Ravel's *Tzigane* for a PBS documentary of the dancer Suzanne Farrell, and won the Cubadisco award for his recording of the two *Violin Concertos* by Jorge López Marín. As a chamber musician, Grossman has collaborated with David Soyer, Seymour Lipkin and Philip Myers. He played a recital at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on the museum's 'golden period' Stradivarius. Highlights of his 2018–19 season include recitals at the Detroit Institute of Art and Carnegie Hall.

Photo: Genelli Studio



Susan Kagan

Susan Kagan is a pianist, author and educator. She is a graduate of Columbia University (B.S. *cum laude*, 1951), has an MA from Hunter College, CUNY (1975), and holds a PhD from the Graduate Center of CUNY (1983). She recently retired from the faculty of Hunter College, where she taught music history. In 1995 she founded the New York Chapter of the American Beethoven Society. She is the author of *Archduke Rudolph, Beethoven's Patron, Pupil, and Friend* (Pendragon, 1988), and was a critic for *Fanfare* magazine. Kagan is on the Advisory Board of the American Beethoven Society. She has recorded extensively, including a partnership with Josef Suk, two sets of Mozart piano concertos, piano music of Beethoven, Archduke Rudolf and Beethoven's first teacher Christian Gottlob Neefe 9 (Grand Piano 615–16), as well as the complete sonatas and sonatinas for solo piano and piano duet of Ferdinand Ries on Naxos, and most recently two volumes of violin sonatas by Ries with Eric Grossman (Naxos 8.573193).

Photo: Peter Schaaf

Ferdinand Ries grew up in the same musical environment that nurtured Beethoven, both counting Ferdinand's father Franz as one of their teachers and the two of them becoming the closest of friends. Ries was a gifted and prolific composer in every instrumental genre. His *Violin Sonatas* are based on the Viennese Classical style established by Mozart but with a freshness and originality that includes movements such as the *Adagio* of the *Sonata, Op. 38, No. 3*, one of Ries's loveliest creations. The *Sonatas Op. 38, Nos. 1 & 2* can be heard on the 2nd volume of this edition (8.573717), 'unreservedly recommended' by *Fanfare* magazine.

**Ferdinand
RIES**
(1784–1838)

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| Sonata in E flat major, Op. 18 (1810) | 29:34 |
| ❶ I. Allegro | 12:53 |
| ❷ II. Andantino | 7:33 |
| ❸ III. Rondeau: Allegretto moderato | 9:03 |
| Sonata in G minor, Op. 38, No. 3 (1811) | 17:34 |
| ❹ I. Allegro con spirito | 8:36 |
| ❺ II. Adagio | 4:12 |
| ❻ III. Allegro | 4:40 |
| Sonata in D major, Op. 83 (1818) | 20:17 |
| ❼ I. Allegro con brio | 9:48 |
| ❽ II. Andantino con moto | 4:33 |
| ❾ III. Rondo: Allegro vivace | 5:51 |



WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDINGS
Eric Grossman, Violin • Susan Kagan, Piano



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Producer and engineer: Ryan Streber • Editors: Ryan Streber and Hansdale Hsu
Booklet notes: Susan Kagan • Cover photo: Castle of Satzvey, Germany (© Lev Levin / Dreamstime.com)



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DDD

Playing Time
67:47



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Booklet notes in English