

MOZART

Piano Concertos Nos. 23 and 24
(arr. Ignaz Lachner)

Alon Goldstein, Piano
Fine Arts Quartet

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)
Piano Concertos Nos. 23, K.488 and 24, K.491
Arranged for piano, string quartet and double bass by Ignaz Lachner (1807–1895), 1881

The solo concerto had become, during the 18th century, an important vehicle for composer-performers, a form of music that had developed from the work of Johann Sebastian Bach, through his much-admired sons Carl Philipp Emanuel and Johann Christian, to provide a happy synthesis of solo and orchestral performance. Mozart wrote his first numbered piano concertos, arrangements derived from other composers, in 1767, undertaking further arrangements from Johann Christian Bach a few years later. His first attempt at writing a concerto, however, had been at the age of four or five, described by a friend of the family as a smudge of notes, although, his father claimed, very correctly composed. In Salzburg as an adolescent Mozart wrote half a dozen piano concertos, the last of these for two pianos in 1779 after his return from Paris, where he had hoped to find suitable employment. The remaining 17 piano concertos were written in Vienna, principally for his own use in the subscription concerts that he organised there during the last decade of his life.

The second half of the 18th century also brought considerable changes in keyboard instruments, as the harpsichord was gradually superseded by the fortepiano or pianoforte, with its hammer action, an instrument capable of dynamic nuances impossible on the older instrument, while the hammer-action clavichord from which the piano developed had too little carrying power for public performance. The instruments Mozart had in Vienna, by the best contemporary makers, had a lighter touch than the modern piano, with action and leather-padded hammers that made greater delicacy of articulation possible, among other differences. They seem well suited to Mozart's own style of playing, by comparison with which the later virtuosity of Beethoven seemed to some contemporaries rough and harsh.

It was in 1781 that Mozart at last broke away from his native Salzburg and from his and his father's employer, the Archbishop of Salzburg, to settle in precarious independence in Vienna. The change of status brought a

measure of freedom, but deprived him of the immediate advice of his father, who prudently retained his employment in Salzburg as Vice-Kapellmeister of the archiepiscopal musical establishment. In Vienna Mozart enjoyed initial success, establishing himself as a composer, performer and teacher, and providing, among a wealth of other compositions, a series of piano concertos.

The transcriptions of a number of Mozart's concertos for chamber performance reflect something of the composer's own approach to works that he thought might enjoy wider circulation in more modest form. In a letter to a Paris publisher J.G. Sieber on 26 April 1783 he suggests that three concertos, K.413, K.414 and K.415, the first he had written in Vienna, could be played with full orchestra, with oboes and horns, or a *quattro*, and the concertos were so advertised in the Vienna press. The following year, in a letter to his father he reveals his awareness of the commercial dangers of lack of copyright regulation, and suggests that the *Concerto in E flat, K.449* could be played in a similarly reduced form, better suited to the domestic circumstances of Salzburg.

Various subsequent transcriptions of Mozart's concertos were to be made during the 19th century by other composers, not least a dozen concertos arranged for piano and string quartet or quintet under the aegis of Sigmund Lebert (né Samuel Levi) in Stuttgart, with transcribers including two of the Lachner brothers, Ignaz and Vinzenz, and Immanuel Faisst. The present arrangements of K.488 and K.491 are by Ignaz Lachner (1807–1895) whose career as a conductor and composer had taken him from early days in Vienna to positions in Stuttgart, Munich, Hamburg, Stockholm and elsewhere.

Mozart completed his *Piano Concerto in A major, K.488*, on 2 March 1786. Like its predecessor in *E flat, K.482*, it was designed for use in a series of three subscription concerts that Mozart had arranged for part of the winter season at a time when he was busy with the composition of his first Italian opera for Vienna, *Le nozze*

di Figaro – the first if we discount the abortive *La finta semplice* of 1768. The commission was a distinct honour for a German composer, since the re-established Italian opera was dominated by Italian composers, who might be supposed to have had more skill in the art. Mozart mentions the concerto, among others, in a letter to Sebastian Winter, a former servant in Leopold Mozart's employ, who had entered the service of Prince von Fürstenberg in Donaueschingen as *friseur* some 20 years earlier, and now sought to acquire compositions by Mozart for his master. He adds, while seeking a permanent stipend from the Prince in return for whatever compositions he requires, that if clarinets are not available in Donaueschingen the clarinet parts of the *A major Concerto* may be played on violin and viola.

In the original work the strings open the concerto, echoed by the wind, and all lead forward to the string announcement of a second subject that has a hint, at least, of sadder things. This material is duly expanded by the soloist, but with less freedom than has often been the case in earlier concertos of this kind. The central development starts with a new theme, capped by the soloist and later varied and extended, before the recapitulation, with its cadenza by the composer. The slow movement of the concerto, in F sharp minor, opens with the soloist and the principal theme, one imbued with melancholy. A more cheerful theme is introduced later to be taken up by the solo piano, before the return of the main theme of the movement. The final *rondo* is prodigal in its invention and energy, largely dispelling the sorrows hinted at in the first movement and openly expressed in the second.

The second of the two piano concertos that Mozart wrote in a minor key, the *Concerto in C minor, K.491*, was

completed on 24 March 1786. On 7 April, Mozart gave his last concert in the Burgtheater, the third of a series, including in the programme the new concerto. At the beginning of May, his new opera *Le nozze di Figaro* was performed for the first time, while the previous month had brought a new one-act Singspiel, *Der Schauspieldirektor*, performed at the palace of Schönbrunn on 7 February together with the successful Salieri Italian comedy *Prima la musica e poi le parole*.

The *C minor Concerto* was originally scored for clarinets and oboes, as well as flute, pairs of bassoons, horns, trumpets and drums, and strings. The work opens with an ominous theme, the inspiration for Beethoven's later *C minor Piano Concerto*, the chief substance of the orchestral exposition. The pianist introduces a new strain, before joining the orchestral statement of the principal theme, which is now developed. The movement continues in a mood that is seldom broken, even by the tranquillity of a second theme, later to be tragically transformed. The second movement, marked *Larghetto* on the autograph in a hand other than the composer's, is in the key of E flat major and intervening episodes are framed by the principal melody, declared at the outset by the soloist. The music moves soon to the sadder key of C minor, brightened by the serenity of a later episode, before the final return of the opening. The final movement is in the form of a set of variations, the first transformation entrusted to the soloist, followed by the other instruments. The eighth and final variation, introduced by the soloist, leads to the final section of the work, the minor key maintained to the very end.

Keith Anderson

Mozart Rearranged

Rearranging music was very common in the 18th and 19th centuries, whether for performance purposes or as a compositional exercise. Composers, such as Bach, would arrange music of other composers as well as their own. Franz Liszt arranged the Beethoven symphonies or scenes from Wagner operas to be played by just one piano. The two piano concertos by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart featured on this recording were arranged by Ignaz Lachner for piano and string quartet with double bass, most likely for the simple pleasure of domestic use. People wanted the opportunity to play these beloved works without the need of a full orchestra. Mozart himself similarly arranged four of his earlier concertos – *Nos. 11 to 14* – the first ones he wrote when he moved to Vienna in 1782. The full orchestration of these concertos is rather modest and as a result, a piano and string quintet version is quite amiable and actually sounds quite natural. His late piano concertos, however, are much more complex, elaborate and rich orchestrally. To incorporate the wind parts into the strings, as Lachner did, is trickier and riskier, because of the danger of losing certain orchestral colours as well as sounding forced when playing material which is written idiomatically for winds on strings.

Great music transcends time and place. It survives for centuries well beyond the life of its creators, and it can be interpreted magnificently by a musician regardless of his or her origins. Can *great music* also transcend the particular instruments it was originally composed for? I have often wondered about why some music yields itself more easily for rearrangement than others. I have heard Bach's music reimagined in other instrumentations and the results were often quite convincing. Having said that, I have never heard Chopin's music being played other than in its original form – solely on the piano – that had any degree of success. Where does Mozart stand then? His music is primarily vocal, so even if the instrumentation includes winds and strings, it often tries to imitate the human voice.

Mozart's piano concertos are like miniature operas. The pianist who is responsible for multiple characters – Don Giovanni or Figaro, Susanna or Donna Anna, the Count, or even Antonio the gardener – is conversing with the strings or the woodwinds, each of whom represents a character in the story. When playing with a full orchestra, the pianist's dialogue with the woodwinds is done while sitting at some distance from one another while they are all looking at the conductor. Having such a close arrangement as we had making this recording, makes the storytelling, the conversation between the characters / instruments much more intimate and intense.

Listening to familiar music in a different way than we have grown accustomed to might also shed new light, new perspective on things we might have forgotten or to which we did not pay attention. This new arrangement might give us new answers to old questions. The different colours, the close proximity, the added transparency, might reveal something new in the music which we have not heard before. In such arrangements as these, when a full orchestra is reduced to simply five string instruments, we hear many details more clearly. The different relationships, the different tensions, can tell a different story. I believe that when an arrangement is done with integrity, humility and imagination, the result may be delightful, bringing new insights into a well-digested score. Such are the arrangements on this recording.

The piano part in these arrangements remains absolutely the same as in the original version. Lachner practically incorporated, as much as possible, the wind parts into the strings. At times, my distinguished colleagues and I made some minor modifications to Lachner's version, where we thought it to be more in keeping with Mozart's intensions. We hope you will enjoy the recording.

Alon Goldstein



Alon Goldstein

Alon Goldstein is one of the most original and sensitive pianists of his generation, admired for his musical intelligence and dynamic personality. He has played with the orchestras of Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Radio France, London and Israel, under such conductors as Zubin Mehta, Herbert Blomstedt, Vladimir Jurowski, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos and Leon Fleisher. He has performed at Carnegie Hall, in Beijing (Forbidden City), Moscow (Kremlin), Los Angeles (Hollywood Bowl), Lima (Philharmonic society), London, Paris, Madrid, Zaragoza, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, as well as the Gilmore, Santa Fe, Tanglewood, Ravinia, Marlboro, Seattle, Verbier, Prussia Cove and Jerusalem music festivals. Over the past several years he has taught at the Ravinia Festival, New York's IKIF, 'Piano Texas' Fort Worth, and the 'Tal Hai' masterclasses, Israel. His engagements have included a 17-concert Latin American tour with the Israel Chamber Orchestra under Yoav Talmi, performing at the Teatro Colón, the Palacio de Bellas Artes and the Teatro Nacional. Alon Goldstein's recordings include the Mendelssohn *Piano Concertos* and, with his Tempest Trio, Dvořák's *Trios* for Naxos [8.573279].



Alexander Bickard

A Long Island native, the double-bass-player Alexander Bickard is equally at home in orchestral, chamber, and solo playing. A substitute bassist with orchestras such as the New York Philharmonic and New World Symphony, he has also been a member of the New Haven Symphony Orchestra since the age of 20. His chamber music collaborators have included the Ariel and Fine Arts Quartets as well as the International Sejong Soloists, with performances spanning three continents. At 19 he won the Juilliard double bass concerto competition, resulting in his solo debut at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall. His festival appearances include the Tanglewood, Ravinia, Pacific and Castleton festivals. Alexander Bickard is a proud recipient of the Kovner Fellowship at The Juilliard School. Earning his bachelor's degree with Eugene Levinson, he is working for his master's degree with Timothy Cobb.

Fine Arts Quartet

The Fine Arts Quartet ranks among the most distinguished ensembles in chamber music today, with an illustrious history of performing success and an extensive legacy of over 200 recorded works. Founded in Chicago in 1946, the Quartet is one of the elite few to have recorded and toured internationally for well over a half-century. Violinists Ralph Evans and Efim Boico (who have been playing together for over 35 years), violist Juan-Miguel Hernandez, and cellist Robert Cohen have performed together worldwide. Many of the Quartet's latest releases have been selected for inclusion on GRAMMY® Awards entry lists in the categories Best Classical Album and/or Best Chamber Music Performance and have received multiple awards and distinctions, among them: a *Gramophone* Award and 'recording of legendary status' (*Gramophone Classical Music Guide*), Key Recording/Top Recommendation (*Penguin Guide to Recorded Classical Music*), Editor's Choice (*Gramophone*), Critic's Choice (*American Record Guide*), *BBC Music Magazine* Choice, Recording of the Year (3 times) (*MusicWeb International*), and a GRAMMY® Award for producer Steven Epstein (Fauré *Quintets* with Cristina Ortiz). The Quartet also received the CMA/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming, given jointly by Chamber Music America and the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers.

For more information on the Fine Arts Quartet, including a complete discography, please visit: fineartsquartet.com



From left to right: **Ralph Evans, Efim Boico, Robert Cohen and Juan-Miguel Hernandez**

Mozart himself saw the advantages of creating more accessible versions of his concertos in reduced instrumentation. Ignaz Lachner followed common 19th-century practice by leaving the piano parts of these concertos intact and making splendid transcriptions of the orchestra parts using only a string quartet with added bass. *K. 488* and *K. 491* are two of Mozart's greatest and most popular piano concertos. These chamber versions throw an intense and intimate new light on familiar music.

**Wolfgang Amadeus
MOZART**
(1756–1791)

Piano Concertos Nos. 23 and 24

**Orchestra parts transcribed 1881 for string quartet and double bass
by Ignaz Lachner (1807–1895)**

- Piano Concerto No. 23 in A major, K.488 (1786) 26:56**
- 1 I. Allegro (cadenza by Mozart) 11:20**
 - 2 II. Adagio 7:13**
 - 3 III. Allegro assai 8:19**
- Piano Concerto No. 24 in C minor, K.491 (1786) 31:26**
- 4 I. Allegro (cadenza by Alon Goldstein) 14:22**
 - 5 II. Larghetto 7:55**
 - 6 III. Allegretto (cadenza by Alon Goldstein) 9:04**

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

Alon Goldstein, Piano
Fine Arts Quartet

Ralph Evans, Violin I • Efim Boico, Violin II
Juan-Miguel Hernandez, Viola • Robert Cohen, Cello
with Alexander Bickard, Double Bass

Recorded: 23–25 May 2017 at The American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York City, USA
Producer, engineer and editor: Steven Epstein • Booklet notes: Keith Anderson, Alon Goldstein
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