

# SHOSTAKOVICH

Cello Sonata • Impromptu • Viola Sonata

Paul Neubauer *viola*

Anne-Marie McDermott *piano*

Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–1975)

**Sonata for Cello and Piano, Op. 40** (1934) **[30:58]**

(Arranged for viola and piano)

- |            |                       |                |
|------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| <b>[1]</b> | I. Allegro non troppo | <b>[13:04]</b> |
| <b>[2]</b> | II. Allegro           | <b>[3:30]</b>  |
| <b>[3]</b> | III. Largo            | <b>[10:02]</b> |
| <b>[4]</b> | IV. Allegro           | <b>[4:21]</b>  |

**[5]** **Impromptu for Viola and Piano, Op. 33** (1931) **[1:51]**

**Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 147** (1975) **[36:16]**

- |            |                |                |
|------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>[6]</b> | I. Moderato    | <b>[10:47]</b> |
| <b>[7]</b> | II. Allegretto | <b>[7:09]</b>  |
| <b>[8]</b> | III. Adagio    | <b>[18:21]</b> |

**Total Timing:** **[69:12]**

**Paul Neubauer** *viola*  
**Anne-Marie McDermott** *piano*

On this recording Paul Neubauer plays the ex-Paul Doktor viola labelled Giovanni Grancino in Contrada,  
Largha di Milano al segno, Della Corona 1685

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## Dmitry SHOSTAKOVICH

### Cello Sonata (arr. for viola and piano) • Impromptu • Viola Sonata

The chamber output of Dmitri Shostakovich is undeniably dominated by the 15 *String Quartets* which pervade the latter part of his career. Yet the composer was equally to leave his mark on the piano trio, the piano quintet and the duo-sonata – those for cello, violin and viola ranking among his most vital creations while providing a representative cross-section of his creativity.

Much the earliest of these latter pieces is the *Cello Sonata* whose appearance likely seemed anomalous in an output that, over much of the preceding decade, had been devoted to music for the stage. Then in 1933 Shostakovich produced his *Piano Concerto No. 1* and *24 Preludes for Piano*, both works suggesting a desire to work within classical formal constraints. Written in August and September the following year for Viktor Kubatsky, who gave its première with the composer in Leningrad on 25 December 1934, the *Cello Sonata* continues this thinking as each of its four movements emulates Classical models in spirit, if not always to the letter. Such music was not to the liking of Soviet authorities at a time when abstraction was thought inimical to progressive social aims, for all that the piece was never formally censored as such.

The *Allegro non troppo* (marked *Moderato* in the 1st edition of the work) begins with a pensive yet tonally restless melody from the viola over a closely related piano accompaniment. It

soon builds to a brief climax, after which the second theme emerges, initially tranquil but increasingly intense such as gives full rein to the viola's more expressive quality. After a repeated-note codetta the exposition is pointedly repeated in full, then the development section commences with impulsive discussion of the initial theme (the viola initially playing in pizzicato), ominously underpinned by the repeated-note idea in the piano. The return of the second theme briefly restores a measure of calm but, instead of the expected reprise, the piano now begins a walking-bass motion over which the viola unfolds a halting version of the first theme to serve as an uncertain and not entirely conclusive coda.

The *Allegro* is among the earliest of Shostakovich's bracingly sardonic scherzos, though here without the element of bitterness often to the fore in his later works. The piano introduces the rhythmically forceful and likely folk-inflected main theme over a churning accompaniment on viola, with both instruments sharing its impetuous continuation. The trio, not designated as such, proves an arresting invention such as makes prominent use of viola glissandi, before a relatively straightforward reprise of the scherzo section is preceded by a notably succinct though brusque conclusion.

The *Largo* is a 'romance' that draws on a notable Russian lineage taking in Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov. The yearning



initial viola phrase gradually opens out into a restrained while expressive melody; one that proceeds as an unbroken and cumulative arc of intensity toward a central climax in which the opening theme is powerfully restated. This presently dies down into an affecting passage where the theme migrates to the piano while the cello maintains a ruminative counterpoint, before both instruments are brought together for the poignant coda.

The *Allegro* that follows is, for Shostakovich, a relatively clear-cut finale as regards its form. It commences with a sprightly piano theme that is soon taken up by viola then twice extended with intensive passagework, in what become the episodes in a modified rondo design. Toward its centre is a contrasting section, one replete with that mordant wit which feels typical of the composer during this period. Before too long the movement heads into a final restatement of the main theme, and this is rounded off by an appropriately curt yet decisive closing gesture.

The next piece here is one of several shorter but attractive pieces that have come to light in recent years. Given the title *Impromptu*, it was completed (maybe written at a single sitting) on 2 May 1931 and dedicated to Alexander Ryvkin, violist of the Glazunov Quartet which was to give the première of Shostakovich's *First String Quartet* just over seven years later. Whether or not performed at the time, the miniature emerged among the papers of Vadim Borisovsky (one-time violist of the Beethoven Quartet, who had died in 1972).

Interestingly, the ‘Op. 33’ designation was subsequently assigned to the score for Sergey Yutkovich’s film *Counterplan*, released the previous November, whose title-song ‘We meet this morning’ soon became an international hit, though there is no discernible connection between it and the present piece.

Over a simple and unobtrusive piano accompaniment, the viola unfolds a melody (not unlike that in the central ‘Canzonetta’ of Tchaikovsky’s *Violin Concerto*) shot through with yearning and even regret, before suddenly becoming more animated and dance-like in its closing bars. Whether or not intended as a stand-alone item, this provides a viable encore in its own right.

Shostakovich’s other string sonatas both emerged in his final decade, the *Violin Sonata* being completed in October 1968 as a tribute to David Oistrakh on his 60th birthday. Also cast in three movements and with a similar duration, the *Viola Sonata* is otherwise a very different proposition. The composer worked on it during the spring and summer of 1975, his failing health delaying but not preventing its completion that July. The score is dedicated to Fyodor Druzhinin (then violist of the Beethoven Quartet, which had premièred all of Shostakovich’s string quartets except the first and last), who received the fair copy on August 6 – just three days before Shostakovich’s death. Its first performance was given privately at the composer’s apartment in Moscow on 25 September (which would have been Shostakovich’s 69th birthday), with its ‘official’ première at the Moscow Conservatoire on 1 October – Mikhail Muntyan being the pianist on both occasions. Warmly received, the

work soon found its way into the still-limited repertoire for this instrument and is today the most recorded of all such pieces.

Described by the composer as a ‘novella’, the opening *Moderato* begins with a speculative pizzicato idea on viola, piano providing a halting accompaniment that remains reticent even as the theme becomes more demonstrative. Towards its mid-point the motivic elements take on a more impassioned manner, building a considerable emotional rhetoric before gradually returning to the initial inwardness. A spectral viola descent brings a resumption of the halting dialogue, which even a sudden outburst cannot disrupt prior to the stark and tenuous ending.

The central *Allegretto* immediately strikes up with an animated and overtly folk-like theme – its material taken from the opera, after Gogol, *The Gambler* which Shostakovich abandoned in 1942. This duly contrasts with a more inward idea as features strummed chords and multi-stopping, presently emerging at a plangent unaccompanied phrase which itself makes way for a resumption of the earlier theme. As this continues, however, the expression gradually turns in on itself so that the closing bars appear but a distant recollection of what had gone before.

As long as the previous two movements combined, the final *Adagio* is consciously designed as both summation and leave-taking. Thus, its initial bars alternate between unaccompanied threnody and stoic exchange, before an undulating piano motion – itself explaining why (as the composer indicated

to Druzhinin) this movement was dedicated to the memory of Beethoven – sets off a sustained and increasingly intense dialogue. This unfolds over successive stages, during which the ‘Moonlight’ motif is heard in differing contexts while always maintaining its expressive focus. Quotations from Richard Strauss’s *Don Quixote* as well as the composer’s early *Suite for Two Pianos* can be heard, and there are supposedly allusions to all 15 of Shostakovich’s symphonies embedded within the texture, though the precise nature of several of these remains open to conjecture.

Towards mid-point, the viola embarks upon a strenuous cadenza-like passage which seems to distil the prevailing music to its essence, though this climactic stage eventually subsides back into the previous introspection. The movement continues on its fatalistic course, all the while gaining in that inwardness which is its hallmark and which inevitably comes to the fore at the close. For all that the listener has been prepared, it is still a surprise when the music seems not so much to end as merely to stop – perhaps continuing out of earshot and beyond into eternity.

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It was an immense privilege to record these works of Dmitri Shostakovich alongside Anne-Marie McDermott at the breathtaking Tippet Rise Arts Center in Montana, USA. The natural beauty and serene atmosphere of Tippet Rise made the experience truly magical. We are deeply grateful to producer Monte Nichols for his invaluable collaboration and musical integrity, as well as to Peter and Cathy Halstead and the entire Tippet Rise staff for their warm hospitality and care throughout our visit.

We begin with one of Shostakovich's earliest chamber works, the *Cello Sonata*, originally premiered by cellist Viktor Kubatsky with the composer at the piano. Kubatsky later transcribed the cello part for the viola with Shostakovich's approval. His version, along with subsequent transcriptions by Evgeny Strakov and Annette Bartholdy, adapted certain passages to suit the viola. For this recording, I chose to remain as faithful as possible to the original cello version, raising some passages by an octave to accommodate the viola's range.

This is followed by Shostakovich's *Impromptu*, a brief but captivating piece discovered in 2017.

The album concludes with Shostakovich's *Viola Sonata*, which stands as one of the cornerstones of the viola repertoire. Not only is it his final composition, but it's also one of his most profound. In this work, Shostakovich seems to bid a poignant farewell, weaving in quotations from his earlier pieces and even paying tribute to Beethoven in the final movement.

The *Viola Sonata* had its US première in December 1976, performed by my former and esteemed colleague, Walter Trampler, with pianist Richard Goode at Alice Tully Hall in New York. I had the honour of giving the US première of the *Impromptu* in May 2018, with pianist Wu Han, also at Alice Tully Hall. Both performances were presented by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

**Paul Neubauer**

## Paul Neubauer

Violist Paul Neubauer's exceptional musicality and effortless playing led *The New York Times* to call him 'a master musician'. At the age of 21, Neubauer was appointed principal violist of the New York Philharmonic, a position he held for six years. He has appeared as a soloist with over 100 orchestras, including the New York, Los Angeles, and Helsinki Philharmonics; the Chicago, National, St. Louis, Detroit, Dallas, San Francisco, and Bournemouth Symphonies; and the Mariinsky, Santa Cecilia, English Chamber, and Beethovenhalle Orchestras. He has also premiered viola concertos by Béla Bartók (revised version of the *Viola Concerto*), Reinhold Glière, Gordon Jacob, Henri Lazarof, Robert Suter, Joel Phillip Friedman, Aaron Jay Kernis, Detlev Müller-Siemens, David Ott, Krzysztof Penderecki, Tobias Picker, and Joan Tower. He performs with SPA, a trio with soprano Susanna Phillips and pianist Anne-Marie McDermott, offering a wide range of repertoire, including salon-style songs. Among his numerous awards are First Prize in the Mae M. Whitaker International Competition, the D'Angelo International Competition, and the Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition. He was also the first violist chosen to receive an Avery Fisher Career Grant. Neubauer has been featured on CBS's *Sunday Morning*, *A Prairie Home Companion*, and in *The Strad*, *Strings*, and *People* magazines. A two-time Grammy nominee, he has recorded for numerous labels, including Decca, Deutsche Grammophon, RCA Red Seal, and Sony Classical. Neubauer appears with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and serves as the artistic director of the Mostly Music series in New



Jersey. He is also a faculty member at The Juilliard School and Mannes College.

[paulneubauer.com](http://paulneubauer.com)



## Anne-Marie McDermott

Pianist Anne-Marie McDermott has played concertos, recitals, and chamber music in hundreds of cities throughout the world. In addition to performing, she also serves as artistic director of the Bravo! Vail Music as well as Curator for Chamber Music for the Mainly Mozart Festival in San Diego. She is also the Artistic Director of two chamber music festivals: one at the McKnight Performing Arts Center in Oklahoma; the other in Ocean Reef, Florida.

Haydn's *Piano Sonatas* for release on Bridge Records. In She is currently working on recording the complete Mozart



*Concertos* with the Odense Symphony in Denmark and all of recent years, McDermott premièred and recorded a new concerto by Poul Ruders with the Vancouver Symphony, and premièred a new concerto by Chris Rogerson, commissioned for her by Bravo! Vail in honour of her 10th anniversary. She has performed with leading orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Dallas, Columbus, Seattle Symphony, National, and Houston Symphonies. Her recordings include the complete Prokofiev *Piano Sonatas*, Bach's *English Suites Nos. 2 and 3* and *Partitas Nos. 1 and 2* ('Editor's Choice', Gramophone), Gershwin's complete works for piano and orchestra with the Dallas Symphony ('Editor's Choice', Gramophone), and, most recently, the Haydn *Piano Sonatas* and *Concertos* with the Odense Philharmonic in Denmark.

McDermott studied at the Manhattan School of Music, has been awarded the Mortimer Levitt Career Development Award for Women and an Avery Fisher Career Grant, and won the Young Concert Artists auditions. She lives in New York City with her husband, Michael, and her Maltese dog, Lola.

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Recorded at The Olivier Music Barn, Tippet Rise Art Center, Fishtail, Montana, USA,  
September 10–12, 2018

Produced by **Paul Neubauer, Anne-Marie McDermott** and **Monte Nickles**

Executive Producer: **Tippet Rise Art Center**

Engineered, edited and mastered by **Monte Nickles**, assisted by **Jim Ruberto**

DXD 32bit 384kHz high resolution recording and mastering

A surround sound mix with Dolby Atmos of this recording is also available on streaming services, mixed by **Monte Nickles**

Piano: Steinway Model D, Vera (2015) • Piano Technician: **Mike Toia**

Photos/images:

Album cover photo by **Tristan Cook**

Page 4: Dmitri Shostakovich, Mozhayskoye Shosse, Moscow, March 1, 1949, by **Viktor Drombrovsky** © Olga Dobrovskaya

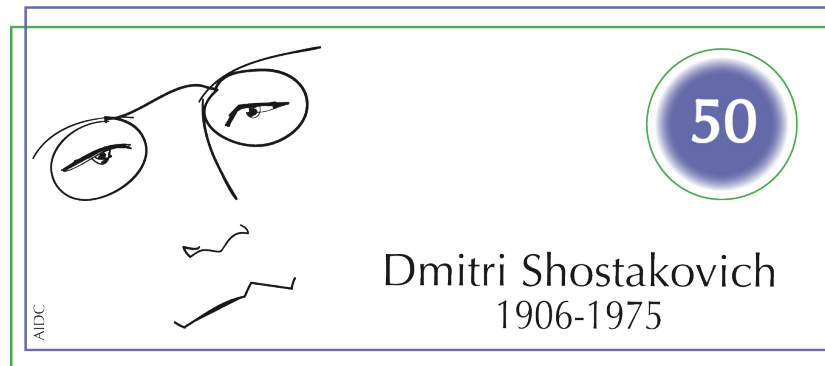
Page 8: Paul Neubauer by **Rosalie O'Connor**

Page 9: Paul Neubauer and Anne-Maire McDermott by **Robin Herrod**, courtesy of The McKnight Center

Page 10: Anne-Maire McDermott by **Matteo Trisolini**

Page 12: Dmitri Shostakovich, Ivanova, Russia, 1943 by **Nina Vassilyevna Shostakovich**

FHR thanks Peter Bromley, Irina Shostakovich and Emmanuel Utwiller





John A. A. A.

Also on FHR



**Béla BARTÓK (1881–1945)**

**Concerto for Viola and Orchestra, Sz. 120, BB 128 (1945)**

(revised 1995 by Nelson Dellamaggiore and Peter Bartók; edited by Paul Neubauer)

**44 Duos for Two Violins, Sz. 98, BB 104 (1931) (excerpts)**

(Arranged by Peter Bartók for two violas, and viola and cello)