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MOZART

Piano Sonata No. 6

Vijay Venkatesh, Piano



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

Piano Sonata No. 6

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart occupies a singular position in the history of Western music, his output exemplifying both prodigious mastery and enduring creative ingenuity. Bridging the late Baroque and Classical periods, he synthesised the formal rigours of his predecessors with the evolving stylistic currents of the 18th century. His *oeuvre* embodies an unmatched facility for orchestration, harmonic exploration, and thematic development, alongside an exceptional ability to fuse structural clarity with deeply affecting sentiment. From his early piano concertos to his final symphonic masterpieces, Mozart's repertoire is both expansive and diverse, spanning virtually every genre of the time, while preserving an unmistakable compositional imprint.

His operatic works are paradigm-shifting in their integration of dramatic narrative and musical structure, advancing a fluid, psychologically complex portrayal of character and atmosphere. Mozart's symphonic efforts, specifically those from the final decade of his life, denote a significant evolution in orchestral language. The depth of his contrapuntal technique and ethereal sense of equilibrium and proportion became a touchstone for later composers. This distinctive architectural confidence provided a vehicle, not just for scholarly erudition, but for artistic statements of philosophical insight – a legacy that wrought the trajectory of Western orchestral music well into the 19th century.

Few musicians have shaped the evolution of piano writing as profoundly as Mozart. Treasured for their unwavering hermeneutic richness, his sonatas and concertos uncover adeptness of form and texture, aligning technical brilliance with lyrical sensitivity. Mozart elevated the piano from a largely domestic instrument to a powerful means of solo and ensemble articulation. His text often features sophisticated melodic lines, sensitively animated ornamentation, and modest dynamic range, all of which challenge performers to bring out the intellectual lucidity and dramatic complexity embedded in the music.

Mozart's *Piano Sonata No. 6 in D major* indexes a pivotal moment in his early keyboard writing. Composed during his transition from Salzburg to Vienna, the piece displays a bold synthesis of poignant lyricism and stylistic flair. The epithet '*Dürnitz-Sonate*' derives from its dedication to Baron Thaddäus Wolfgang von Dürnitz (1756–1807), an amateur bassoonist and keyboard player, a member of the Salzburg aristocracy and a patron of Mozart's early career. Unlike many of Mozart's earlier sonatas, *K. 284* exhibits a more dramatic and spirited character demanding agility, precise articulation and sensitive control from the pianist.

The opening *Allegro* unfolds with a bright, poised thematic landscape, introduced by a declarative passage in octaves that signals both grandeur and virtuosic intent. Here, Mozart demonstrates a confident command of sonata form, presenting a cheerful principal theme in D major, balanced by more lyrical secondary material. The movement features polished phrasing and deft interplay between the hands, combining playful invention with passages of considerable technical difficulty. Its clear exposition, development and recapitulation display Mozart's mastery of Classical sonata architecture, enriched by emotional depth and dynamic contrast.

Shifting to A major, the second movement, *Rondeau en polonaise*, references Mozart's ability to infuse Classical forms with vernacular colour. The elegant melody, inflected with Polish dance rhythms, reveals his interest in popular idioms, while maintaining formal clarity. This alluring *Andante* achieves a refined balance between repetition and variation, enriching the overall texture without sacrificing precision or flow.

The final movement, *Thema con 12 variazioni*, exemplifies Mozart's inventiveness and pianistic imagination. The autograph manuscript incorporates modest ornamentation, leading musicologists to believe that Mozart embellished the piece freely in performance. Significantly, the first edition – published ten years after composition, and the only one of the six Munich piano sonatas to appear in print during his lifetime – features a richly ornamented version likely reflecting Mozart's own interpretive style.

The twelve variations explore a broad spectrum of moods, textures and techniques: the first introduces triplets in the right hand, the second mirrors them in the left; later variations showcase crossing of hands, shifts into the parallel minor key (D minor in the seventh variation), and increasingly decorative passages. The tenth variation's staggered octaves lead to an embellished *adagio* section, before the final variation concludes the movement with dazzling panache.

K. 284 encapsulates Mozart's maturing keyboard style, combining virtuosic verve with structural exactness and expressive warmth. It invites performers and listeners alike to experience the charm and finesse of Mozart's youthful genius, poised on the threshold of his most prolific and innovative years. This sonata remains a vital chapter in Mozart's keyboard repertoire, offering a vivid glimpse into the composer's artistic trajectory and the timeless appeal of Classical elegance.

Emer Nestor

Vijay Venkatesh



Pianist Vijay Venkatesh has won Gold Medals in the San Jose, Seattle, Zimmerli and Waring International Piano Competitions. He has been honoured as a Davidson Fellow at the Library of Congress, was Grand Prize Winner of the LA Music Center's Spotlight Awards and has featured on *Performance Today*[®] with host Fred Child, *What Makes It Great?* with host Robert Kapilow and NPR's *From the Top*. Venkatesh has performed with the Seattle, Vienna, Sarasota, Pasadena and Cincinnati symphonies under James Conlon, Carlos Miguel Prieto, Jeffrey Kahane and Ludovic Morlot. He has appeared in Chicago's Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concerts, Naples's Grand Piano Series, and at the Aspen, Brevard, Banff, Highlands Cashiers, Music in the Mountains, Newport, Redlands Bowl and Vienna music festivals. After winning the Parnassus Society Prize, he appeared in recital at the Soka Performing Arts Center. Venkatesh actively tours as the Vieness Piano Duo with his wife, pianist Eva Schaumkell. He holds degrees from the Colburn School, USC Thornton School of Music and Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, studying with Fabio Bidini, Norman Krieger, Jeffrey Kahane and Murray Perahia.

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Few musicians shaped the evolution of keyboard writing as profoundly as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. His sonatas and concertos aligned technical brilliance with lyrical sensitivity to elevate the piano from largely domestic use to a powerful vehicle for solo and ensemble musicianship. Composed in 1775, Mozart's *'Dürnitz-Sonate'* displays a bold synthesis of poignant lyricism and stylistic flair that demands precise articulation and sensitive control from the pianist. Vijay Venkatesh's extensive selection of Mozart keyboard fragments and rarities can be heard on 8.574422.

Wolfgang Amadeus
MOZART
(1756–1791)

Piano Sonata No. 6 in D major, K. 284

'Dürnitz-Sonate' (1775)

26:53

1 I. Allegro

5:13

2 II. Rondeau en polonaise: Andante

5:14

**3 III. Thema [con 12 variazioni]: Andante – Var. I–X –
Var. XI: Adagio cantabile – Var. XII: Allegro**

16:23

Vijay Venkatesh, Piano

Recorded: 20–22 April 2021 at Zipper Hall, Colburn School, Los Angeles, USA

Producer, engineer and editor: Fabio Bidini • Booklet notes: Emer Nestor

Publisher: Bärenreiter Verlag

Cover: W.A. Mozart after a painting by Moritz Rödiger (1844–1918)

(North Wind Picture Archives / Alamy Stock Photo)

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