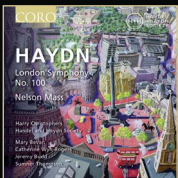


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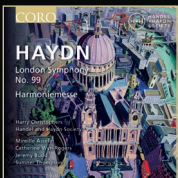
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BBC RADIO 3 RECORD REVIEW

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MOZART

Violin Concertos Volume I

Aisslinn Nosky *violin*
Max Mandel *viola*

Handel and Haydn Society

Exploring Mozart's 3rd and 4th Violin Concertos and the Sinfonia Concertante for Violin, Viola and Orchestra has been a highlight of my tenure as concertmaster of the Handel and Haydn Society. I believe Mozart's music shines best through performance and so it is particularly gratifying to be able to share the spontaneity of these three performances as they were recorded live at Symphony Hall in Boston.

While preparing these concertos, I returned again and again to the idea of Mozart himself playing the solo violin part. He was an accomplished violinist, and I believe he must have enjoyed portraying different characters through an instrument he knew so well. In the 1770s Mozart was a teenager and in his first position in the court of Salzburg when he wrote the 3rd and 4th Violin Concertos. After many years of touring Europe under his father's watchful eye, he was beginning to forge his own way in the world. By the time he wrote the Sinfonia Concertante, his musical voice had developed further, and the addition of the viola doubled his opportunity to express the fullness of the human experience already present in the violin concertos.

In imagining Mozart playing the violin concertos, I am struck not only by the depth of profound emotion they contain, but also by their inherent humour, a welcome inspiration in writing my own cadenzas. While we know very little about the circumstances under which Mozart wrote the Sinfonia Concertante, we are lucky to have Mozart's own cadenzas for this piece. Another aspect I love about Mozart's writing is its conversational nature, so it was especially fitting and a true joy to create musical dialogue with one of my oldest and dearest friends, violist Max Mandel.

Aisslinn Nosky

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–91)

Violin Concerto No. 3 in G major, K216

①	Allegro	9.34
②	Adagio	7.34
③	Rondeau: Allegro	6.27

Violin Concerto No. 4 in D major, K218

④	Allegro	8.00
⑤	Andante cantabile	6.20
⑥	Rondeau: Andante grazioso	6.51

Sinfonia Concertante in E flat major for violin and viola, K364

⑦	Allegro maestoso	12.53
⑧	Andante	9.06
⑨	Presto	5.55

Total running time 72.42

**This recording has been made possible through
the generous support of the following:**

Peacewoods Charitable Fund

Peter G. Manson and Peter A. Durfee

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART(1756–91)

Violin Concerto No. 3 in G major, K216

Violin Concerto No. 4 in D major, K218

Sinfonia Concertante in E flat major for violin and viola, K364

Although the prevailing image of Mozart as a performer is that of a pianist, the part played by the violin in his early development as a musician was an equally important one. How, indeed, could it be otherwise when his father and teacher, Leopold, was the author of *Violinschule*, one of the 18th century's most influential and trenchant treatises on violin technique? Accounts of the child-prodigy's triumphs around Europe suggest that, at that stage at least, he was equally proficient on violin and keyboard, and right into the mid-1770s his letters home to his family contained reports of public appearances

as a violinist. 'I played Vanhal's Violin Concerto in B flat, which was unanimously applauded; he wrote from Augsburg in 1777. 'In the evening at supper I played my Strasbourg Concerto, which went like oil. Everyone praised my beautiful, pure tone.'

Despite these peripatetic successes, it was Salzburg that was the real spiritual home of Mozart's violin music. It was there – where violin concerto movements were as likely to be heard as outdoor entertainment music or as an embellishment to a church service as in a concert hall – that he first played a

concerto at the age of seven, later toiled in the court orchestra, and as a teenager composed five violin concertos, the first in 1773 and the rest in 1775. They may not probe the depths of the piano concertos he would later write in Vienna, but it is true to say that they all reveal some degree of Mozartian inspiration, often of the most ravishing kind. With their accent on lyricism and eloquent personal expressiveness rather than technical brilliance – 'you know I am no lover of difficulties', he once wrote to his father after hearing another violinist play a particularly demanding concerto – they marked a new stage in the artistic development of a composer with whom such qualities were to become associated above all.

Although Mozart's First and Second violin concertos were separated by two years, once he had got started again

in the summer of 1775 he produced three more before the end of the year. Surprisingly, the biggest artistic advance in inspiration and identity occurs not between the First and the Second, but in the three months between the Second and Third, completed on 12 September. Suddenly, in the Third, we are hearing Mozart as we know him from the great piano concertos of the 1780s – elegant, witty, beguilingly changeable, and at 19 years old already capable of writing music of profound and surpassing beauty. Mozart's first two violin concertos are rarely heard today, yet the Third is not only the most popular of the five, it is also one of the best-loved of all his concertos.

It is not uncommon to draw parallels between Mozart's concerto slow movements and his opera arias – both, after all, involve writing for soloist

with orchestra – but it is rarer to speak so in connection with his quicker movements. The first movement of the Third concerto finds Mozart actually borrowing material from one genre to feed the other, the opening orchestral section being based on that of an aria from his recent opera *Il re pastore* (The Shepherd King). There Aminta had sung of his love for the shepherd's lot, unaware that he himself is of royal blood, and the mixture of nobility and carefree contentment that implies could not be a more apt way of characterising the concerto movement as well.

It is the slow movement, however, which has won this concerto a place in people's hearts. 'An adagio that seems to have fallen straight from heaven' is how the 20th-century Mozart scholar Alfred Einstein described it, and indeed this is a movement that exhibits to

an outstanding degree the god-given talent for serene melodic perfection that was Mozart's alone. The nocturnal sound-world, too, is new to the violin concertos, with the orchestral strings muted and the oboes giving way to softer-toned flutes.

The *Rondeau* finale demonstrates another feature that was to colour many of Mozart's later concertos, namely a greater independence given to the wind section – they even have the work's final say. More noticeable, however, is the element of knowing skittishness it introduces, nowhere more so than when the third appearance of the cheerful main theme is interrupted by a gavotte and a rustic drone-tune. Scholarship has revealed the latter to be a popular song of the day known as 'The Strasbourger', and that this concerto is therefore the one which Mozart

performed 'like oil'. The music-lovers of Augsburg were fortunate indeed!

The Fourth concerto, completed in October, breathes freely the air of confidence Mozart had acquired in the Third. Compared to its predecessor it is a less dreamy work, bolder and cleaner. The first movement is lean and muscular, yet at the same time maintains an elegant clarity and grace. And where the Third had revelled in delicate dialogue between soloist and orchestra, the Fourth allows the violin to indulge in a more continuous flow of melody, with the orchestra providing a supportive role. As ever in his concertos, Mozart also shows skill and imagination in the ordering and handling of his various themes; the little fanfare with which it opens, for instance, returns to inaugurate the first solo, its reappearance in a higher register

transforming it into a lyrical statement. After that it is not heard again.

The radiant *Andante cantabile* extends the dominance of the soloist, for after the orchestra's opening statement, it is the violin that carries the song-like melody almost without interruption. This is violin-writing of the most serenely classical kind, making use both of the instrument's clear higher register and of the soulful richness of its lower strings. The finale is a *rondeau* in which Mozart delights in keeping the listener guessing by constantly hopping between two different musics – the poised *Andante grazioso* with which it opens, and the tripping *Allegro* which interrupts its every appearance. And if there is a hint of pastoral dance about the latter, there is no mistaking the folk-music inspiration for the episode which occurs about halfway through

the movement, when an exaggeratedly powdered French-style gavotte turns up, followed by a more rustic tune with bagpipe-like drones from the soloist. It would be a mistake, however, to imagine Mozart empathising too strongly with the lot of country folk; this is a rural world whose origins lie more in the make-believe of French ballet than in the realities of the Austrian countryside. Even so, it has a pleasantly calming atmosphere of its own, and helps to lead the concerto towards a conclusion charmingly free of bombast.

Mozart's period of devotion to the violin concerto was short. The promise shown by his teenage concertos was not followed up, and the great concertos of his maturer years in Vienna were either for piano or for his new love, the clarinet. After passing the age of 20 his only significant return to the violin as

a solo instrument was in the shape of the Sinfonia Concertante for violin and viola, composed when he was a slightly older and wiser man of 24.

The Sinfonia Concertante, then, stands outside the cycle of violin concertos, not just chronologically but in terms of quality and emotional depth as well. We do not know why or for whom it was written, and there is no record of any performance – though it is worth noting that as Mozart got older he was increasingly fond of playing the viola. Neither is the date of composition entirely certain, though it probably dates from some time in the summer or autumn of 1779, a period when Mozart was particularly interested in concertos for more than one soloist, no doubt as a result of his recent visits to Paris and Mannheim, where such works were popular and where he himself had

composed a Concerto for flute and harp and at least begun one for flute, oboe, horn and bassoon, and another for violin and piano.

But the effects of his travels ran deeper than that: the Paris sojourn had been intended as a new start for him, an opportunity to forge a career in a city with a teeming concert life and where musicians were respected as independent professionals rather than court servants. In the end, however, he failed to make the wished-for impact on the French capital and, worse than that, his mother, who had accompanied him there, died. These misfortunes, together with his humbling return home to the service of the Archbishop of Salzburg in 1779, all seem to have contributed to a new maturity and seriousness in his music, and nowhere is that better shown than in the Sinfonia Concertante,

arguably his finest instrumental composition before his move from Salzburg to Vienna in 1781.

The first movement is a masterly mixture of noble strength and tender lyricism, the orchestra providing most of the former and the dialoguing soloists most of the latter; their emergence playing in octaves at the end of the opening orchestral section is a typically Mozartian marvel, as are the movement's frequent turns to the minor. The C minor *Andante* is again pure Mozart; elegiac and richly beautiful, it is perhaps the single most profound movement he had yet composed, and a hint of the expressive power he would unleash in the great operas of the 1780s. The work ends, however, with a cheerful, suavely dancing and generously tuneful rondo.

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Handel and Haydn Society Orchestra

Violin Concerto No. 3 in G major, K216

VIOLIN I	VIOLA	FLUTE
Aisslinn Nosky *	Max Mandel §	Christopher Krueger §
<i>Concertmaster Chair</i>	<i>Chair funded in memory</i>	Wendy Rolfe
<i>funded by Rhoda & Paul Joss</i>	<i>of Estah & Robert Yens</i>	
Susanna Ogata	Jenny Stirling	OBOE
Jane Starkman	Anne Black	Debra Nagy §
Fiona Hughes	Emily Rideout	<i>Chair funded in part by</i>
Guiomar Turgeon		<i>Dr. Michael Fisher Sandler</i>
Maureen Murchie	CELLO	Stephen Bard
Jeremy Rhizor	Guy Fishman §	
	<i>Nancy & Richard Lubin Chair</i>	BASSOON
VIOLIN II	Sarah Freiberg	Dominic Teresi §
Christina Day Martinson §	Colleen McGary-Smith	
<i>Dr. Lee Bradley III Chair</i>	Michael Unterman	HORN
Adriane Post		Todd Williams §
Katherine Winterstein	BASS	<i>Grace & John Neises Chair</i>
Krista Buckland Reisner	Robert Nairn §	Elisabeth Axtell
Jesse Irons	<i>Amelia Peabody Chair</i>	
Tatiana Daubek	Anthony Manzo	
Julie Leven		

* = concertmaster
§ = principal

Handel and Haydn Society Orchestra

Violin Concerto No. 4 in D major, K218

VIOLIN I	VIOLA	OBOE
Aisslinn Nosky *	Patrick Jordan §	Debra Nagy §
<i>Concertmaster Chair</i>	<i>Chair funded in memory</i>	<i>Chair funded in part by</i>
<i>funded by Rhoda & Paul Joss</i>	<i>of Estah & Robert Yens</i>	<i>Dr. Michael Fisher Sandler</i>
Guiomar Turgeon	Jenny Stirling	Curtis Foster
Fiona Hughes	Anne Black	
Jane Starkman	Joy Grimes	HORN
Valerie Gordon		Todd Williams §
Abigail Karr	CELLO	<i>Grace & John Neises Chair</i>
Francis Liu	Guy Fishman §	Elisabeth Axtell
	<i>Nancy & Richard Lubin Chair</i>	
VIOLIN II	Sarah Freiberg	
Adriane Post §	Colleen McGary-Smith	
<i>Dr. Lee Bradley III Chair</i>	Shirley Hunt	
Maureen Murchie		
Jesse Irons	BASS	
Chloe Fedor	Heather Miller Lardin §	
Jessica Park	<i>Amelia Peabody Chair</i>	
Rebecca Nelson	Sue Yelanjian	
Krista Buckland Reisner		

* = concertmaster
§ = principal

Handel and Haydn Society Orchestra

Sinfonia Concertante in E flat major for violin and viola, K364

VIOLIN I

Aisslinn Nosky *
Concertmaster Chair
funded by Rhoda & Paul Joss
Susanna Ogata
Adriane Post
Julie Leven
Jane Starkman
Abigail Karr
Valerie Gordon
Lena Wong

VIOLIN II

Fiona Hughes §
Dr. Lee Bradley III Chair
Guiomar Turgeon
Francis Liu
Krista Buckland Reisner
Maureen Murchie
Karen Dekker

VIOLA

Karina Schmitz §
Chair funded in memory
of Estah & Robert Yens
Jenny Stirling
Emily Rideout
Anne Black

CELLO

Guy Fishman §
Nancy & Richard Lubin Chair
Sarah Freiberg
Colleen McGary-Smith
Shirley Hunt

BASS

Robert Nairn §
Amelia Peabody Chair
Erik Higgins

OBOE

Debra Nagy §
Chair funded in part by
Dr. Michael Fisher Sandler
Priscilla Herreid

HORN

Todd Williams §
Grace & John Neises Chair
Elisabeth Axtell

* = concertmaster

§ = principal



Photograph: Lara Silberklang

The Handel and Haydn Society (H+H) is internationally acclaimed for its performances of baroque and classical music. Based in Boston, H+H's Period Instrument Orchestra and Chorus delight more than 50,000 listeners each year with a nine-concert subscription

series at Symphony Hall and other leading venues in addition to a robust program of intimate events in museums, schools, and community centres. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Harry Christophers, the ensemble embraces historically informed performance,

bringing classical music to life with the same immediacy it had the day it was written. Through the Karen S. and George D. Levy Education Program, H+H also provides engaging, accessible, and broadly inclusive music education to over 10,000 children each year through in-school music instruction and a Vocal Arts Program that includes six youth choruses.

Founded in Boston in 1815, H+H is the oldest continuously-performing arts organisation in the United States, and is unique among American ensembles for its longevity, capacity for reinvention, and distinguished history of premieres. H+H began as a choral society founded by middle-class Bostonians who aspired to improve the quality of singing in their growing American city. They named the organisation after two composers – Handel and Haydn – to represent both the old music of the 18th century and what was then the new music of

the 19th century. In the first decades of its existence, H+H gave the US premieres of Handel's *Messiah* (1818), Haydn's *The Creation* (1819), Verdi's *Requiem* (1878), and Bach's *St Matthew Passion* (1879). Between 2014 and 2016, H+H celebrated its Bicentennial with two seasons of special concerts and initiatives to mark two centuries of music making. Since its founding, H+H has given more than 2,000 performances before a total audience exceeding 2.8 million.

In addition to its subscription series, tours, and broadcast performances, H+H reaches a worldwide audience through ambitious recordings including the critically acclaimed Haydn *The Creation*, the best-selling *Joy to the World: An American Christmas*, and Handel *Messiah*, recorded live at Symphony Hall under Christophers' direction.

Aisslinn Nosky *violin*

Canadian violinist Aisslinn Nosky was appointed Concertmaster of the Handel and Haydn Society in 2011. With a reputation for being one of the most dynamic and versatile violinists of her generation, Nosky is in great demand internationally as a director, soloist and chamber music collaborator. She has appeared with Holland Baroque, the Utah Symphony, the Staunton Music Festival, the Calgary Philharmonic, La Jolla Summerfest, and Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra. Aisslinn is also a member of I FURIOSI Baroque Ensemble. For over 15 years this innovative Canadian ensemble has presented its own edgy and inventive concert series in Toronto and toured Europe and North America turning new audiences on to baroque music. With the Eybler Quartet, Nosky explores repertoire from the first century of the string quartet literature on period instruments. From 2005-2016, Aisslinn



was a member of Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and toured and appeared as soloist with this internationally renowned ensemble.

Max Mandel *viola*



Violist Max Mandel enjoys a varied and acclaimed career as a chamber musician, soloist, orchestral musician, and speaker. He is Principal Viola of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and a member of the trailblazing new music ensemble FLUX Quartet. He has appeared as guest principal viola with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, the Academy of Ancient Music, and the

Handel and Haydn Society, amongst others. Other group affiliations include the Smithsonian Chamber Players, Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, and the Silk Road Ensemble. This recording is part of an ongoing musical relationship with violinist Aisslinn Nosky that started with their student group, the Metro String Quartet, over 25 years ago. Born and raised in Toronto, Canada, he divides his time between New York and London.

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Violin Concerto No. 3 in G major, K216

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Violin Concerto No. 4 in G major, K218

RECORDED LIVE AT: Symphony Hall, Boston, USA, 24 & 26 January 2020

Sinfonia Concertante in E flat major for violin and viola, K364

RECORDED LIVE AT: Symphony Hall, Boston, USA, 26 & 28 January 2018

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