

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN (1732-1809)

Piano Sonatas · Volume III

LEON McCAWLEY piano

Sonata No.34 in D major, Hob. XVI:33	[15:05]	Sonata No.38 in F major, Hob. XVI:23	[13:07]
1 Allegro	5:51	9 (Moderato)	4:59
2 Adagio	4:49	10 Adagio	5:07
3 Tempo di Menuet	4:24	11 Finale: Presto	3:00
Sonata No.32 in G minor, Hob. XVI:44	[10:17]	Sonata No.55 in B-flat major, Hob. XVI:41	[8:25]
4 Moderato	6:16	12 Allegro	5:37
5 Allegretto	4:00	13 Allegro di molto	2:47
Sonata No.31 in A-flat major, Hob. XVI:46	[18:45]	Sonata No.56 in D major, Hob. XVI:42	[12:39]
6 Allegro moderato	7:35	14 Andante con espressione	9:37
7 Adagio	8:21	15 Vivace assai	3:02
8 Finale: Presto	2:49		
		Total duration	78:20

TURNER SIMS Southampton

Recorded at Turner Sims, Southampton on November 23-24, 2019

Recording Producer: Siva Oke

Recording Engineer: Paul Arden-Taylor

Piano: Steinway 'D' Concert Grand

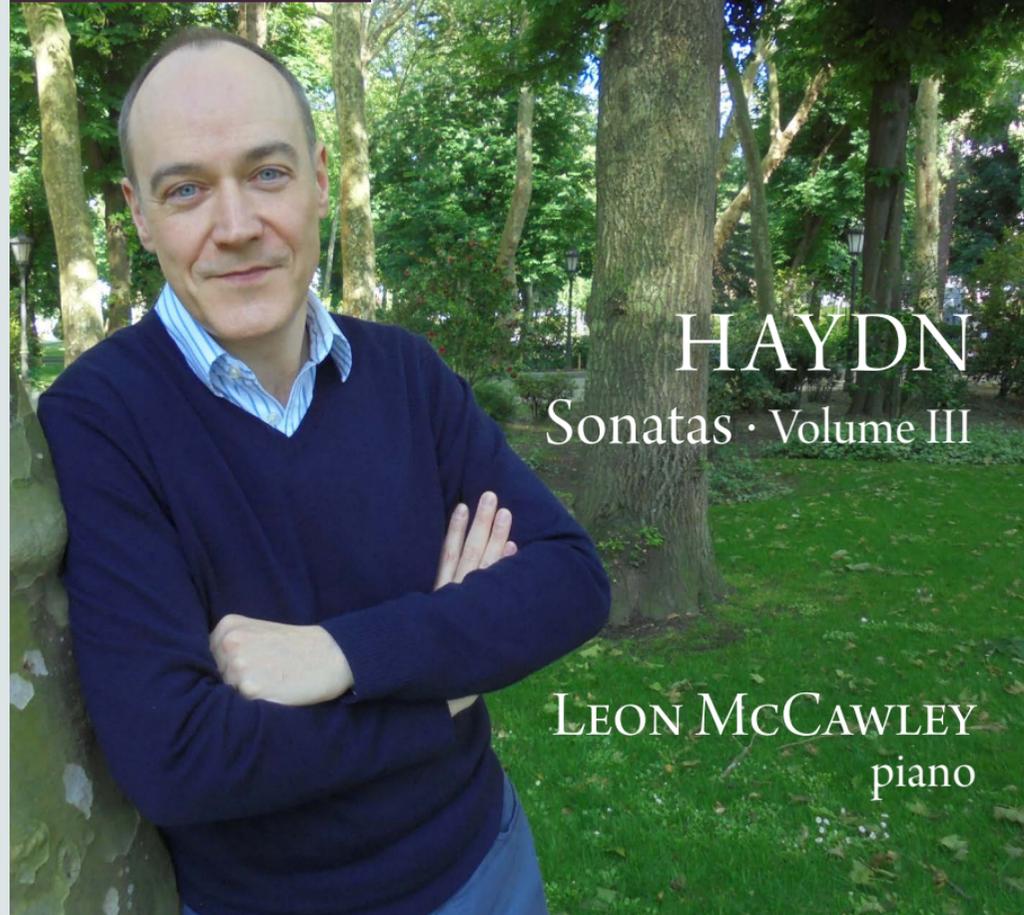
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HAYDN
Sonatas · Volume IIILEON McCAWLEY
piano

Equal temperament, unequal talent HAYDN'S PIANO SONATAS

It is often forgotten that the adoption of equal temperament across Europe which began in the early decades of the 18th century consequently led to key relationships beginning to assume a new and hitherto little-appreciated aspect of musical composition. Haydn was the first great composer to explore this new compositional development to any significant degree, but equally he knew that technical mastery is but a means of acquiring a more profound artistic expression – not something to be admired in itself.

That Haydn grasped the significance of new key relationships is one aspect of the expressive nature we can hear in the six sonatas, composed over almost a 20-year period, on this recording. In them, as in every other aspect of his output, we can observe something of Haydn's creative range in what later generations have termed the 'classical' era – as though musical art conformed more to the calendar than to the individual creative imagination of composers. Nonetheless, to write a three-movement **Piano Sonata in D major** (No.34) with the slow movement in the relative minor, must have come as something of a shock to the more hidebound members of Haydn's public. Few, if any, sonatas with a comparable tonal scheme had appeared before.

The reason is that Haydn was experimenting with what, 200 years later, Hans Keller would term "the unity of contrasting themes" – nor is this 'unity' merely thematic. In Haydn's hands, it also becomes an overall harmonic factor, the

emotional, expressive effect of concentrating the experience within a singular harmonic field – 'contrast' is merely incidental to the underlying verdant tonality.

Perhaps the most significant feature of the work is that it is not at all technically difficult, attracting both the seriously gifted musician as well as the adept amateur. The work was intended (as were most of Haydn's contemporaneous solo keyboard works) either for harpsichord or the fortepiano. In either case, the overall harmonic subtleties are there more for the specialist, not least a tonal plan which – surprisingly – has the slow movement in the tonic minor – an unusual plan indeed.

The Sonata opens with a sturdy *Allegro* in D major in 2/4, somewhat florid in expression (this key in the 18th century almost implies as much), with Haydn using such relatively well-known devices as spread chords, scalic passages, runs, turns and other aspects of musical chiaroscuro to create a picture allied to the ducal courts of the day. In the second movement Haydn reveals a more individual character. It is in the unusual tonic minor – D minor, which, as a tonality itself, was often associated with drama and more personal expression. Here is Haydn's evolved approach to sonata form, contrasting first and second cantabile subjects – within a slow movement (!) – with dramatic pauses, almost as lacunae. Here, surely, is an undisclosed programme, made more manifest by the unique conjoining of an *Adagio* slow movement and a Minuet finale – not unique at that time – as the *Adagio* seems to fade from our consciousness before the Minuet's upbeat transports us back to the 'real' world, expressed formally by another Haydnesque device: the double-variation form, themes in D major and D minor, which Haydn had developed in many earlier works to a highly expressive degree.

The **Sonata in G minor** (No.32) from the early 1770s reveals other aspects of Haydn's genius. It appeared at about the same time as our preceding D major Sonata, but in terms of structure, it is unusual for being in two movements, although at that time the classical 'sonata style' was not settled to any degree – and was not to do so for some years in terms of structuralization. The years 1771-72 were notable for the publication of Haydn's String Quartets Opp. 17 and 20; this G minor work was one of Haydn's first solo keyboard works to which he gave the title 'Sonata'. The tempo indications for the movements – *Moderato* and *Allegretto* – clearly imply no hurried sequences of thought. The more intimate nature of this unique work may also be inferred by its key.

The **Sonata in A-flat major** (No.31), composed a year or so earlier than the two-movement G minor, has three movements – on the face of it, a 'normal' structure for such a work, although the key, of course, would have appeared as a striking departure. The first movement, *Allegro moderato*, is an extraordinary achievement: original and virtually unique in piano literature. The overall time-span of the work makes it one of the largest in Haydn's sonata output, with a sense of spaciousness underlying the brilliant technical writing – perhaps only this key could express such scale, used to express a consistent mood which, underlying, suggests approaching pacification. Yet the pulse remains swift, the surface activity brilliant and compellingly chiaroscuro-like; the seemingly short sentences conjoined by the inevitable tonal pacification.

In the second movement, the texture unfolds from a relatively lengthy theme in the left hand alone, as if looking back to a Bach-like meditation in terms of

textural development – but it does not remain in historical mode. Joined by counter-melodies in the right hand, we are almost convinced that this, too, is a sonata-style movement. Herein lies the heart of this unique work's length – Haydn is expanding that of which Bach would certainly have approved, plus harmonic side-slips and a melodic development to bring us fully up-to-date and to look into the emerging future: a leap over Mozart to an early Beethoven contemplative, extended *Adagio*. Astonishingly original music, and not just for its time.

The *Presto* finale brings us back to societal music, not so as to cast aside the brilliance and subtleties of this amazing movement's construction: only a *Presto* finale could follow the profundity of the *Adagio* – as quicksilver, its temporal life may be comparatively short but its aesthetic balance is that of a master, who bids us a civilised, brief adieu at the close.

The **Sonata in F major** (No.38) comes from a set of six published in the first half of 1774. All are known to have been composed during the previous year. This publication was a significant event in Haydn's life, for it was the first time his music had been printed with his permission. The Sonatas are dedicated to Prince Nicholas Esterházy, and may have been intended for his long-term employer to play himself – they are not technically demanding and are very effective whilst being much more than music of display. There is no doubt, however, that the F major Sonata has its brilliant moments, but such is Haydn's genius that underlying the surface glitter, there is genuine expression. It has been suggested, with some conviction, that Haydn is here not so much showing

the influence of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's keyboard works as reflecting the growing freer style of expression that became more prevalent in the decades following the deaths of Johann Sebastian Bach and Handel.

Despite the self-evident brilliance of the writing, with its scales and arpeggios and falling and rising short phrases, there is an underlying sense of deeper emotion as the music occasionally drops into the minor mode before returning to the optimism of the major tonality. Haydn's slow movement retains the overall key, in the minor, a summer-like Siciliano *Adagio*, flowing (of course), seeming to reflect the urbane wistfulness of an evening's setting sun, soon to fade.

The *Presto* finale carries all before it, with a nod perhaps to the more earthy members of the Prince's court – a trifle unbuttoned, less 'formal' in many ways but full of that wonderful combination of inner life and directly human expression that is the essence of Haydn.

With the **Sonatas in B-flat major** (No.55) and **D major** (No.56), of 1784, we move into the decade before Haydn's visits to London, a decade in which his output of solo keyboard music sharply declined, whilst his concentration upon the string quartet and the symphony increased. These two Sonatas come from a group of three (each being in two movements only), dedicated to Princess Maria Josepha Hermengilde Esterházy, the then newly-married wife of his employer's son.

If the Princess could play these works, she was an accomplished musician, for although the movements of No.55 (each marked *Allegro*) play for around

10 minutes, the technical and indeed interpretative demands are not for the amateur pianist. In this regard, it is instructive to compare Haydn's later command of a two-movement structure with that of the earlier G minor Sonata. Here, Haydn uses the medium as a canvass for a compositional style which has attracted him more during the ensuing years – contrasts between major and minor modes in the same key within the same movement and pulse. This is by no means to be considered solely as compositional devices – which, in technical terms, they are – but as means of expressive development as the 18th century draws to its close, and the creative artist is moved more by emotion than by fulfilling the commissions of his masters.

Thankfully for Haydn, his employer Prince Nikolaus Esterházy (Princess Maria's father-in-law and a musician himself) knew full well the standard of Haydn's musicianship, and gave him (certainly at this stage of Haydn's employment) virtually a free rein with regard to the music he could write. And so, in these three works, Haydn's two-movement form and tonal expression are far freer, and consequently consistently deeper in expression, than the nature of Mozart's relatively less adventurous if contemporaneous keyboard works. We can certainly experience the truth of that assertion in the range of tonal side-steps that inhabits the two movements of both sonatas, with Haydn's thematic developmental-variation technique even today causing surprise for its profoundly original subtleties – all placed at the service of interest and delight as we experience the lasting fruits of Haydn's original genius.

Robert Matthew-Walker © 2020

LEON MCCAWLEY



Photograph © Clive Barda

British pianist Leon McCawley won both First Prize in the International Beethoven Piano Competition in Vienna and Second Prize in the Leeds International Piano Competition in 1993.

Notable recitals in past seasons include the London Piano Series at Wigmore Hall (where he is a regular performer), International Piano Series at London's Southbank Centre, New York's Lincoln Center, Hong Kong Arts Festival and the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC. McCawley performs frequently with many of the top British orchestras and made his sixth appearance at the BBC Proms in August 2019 performing John Ireland's Piano Concerto in a special concert to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Sir Henry Wood's birth.

Further afield he has performed with Dallas Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra and St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestra among others.

McCawley's wide-ranging discography has received many accolades including two Editor's Choice awards in *Gramophone*, a *Gramophone* Critic's Choice for his recording of Barber's Piano Music (SOMM) and two *Diapason d'Or* for his boxed set of Mozart's Complete Piano Sonatas (AVIE) and Haydn's Sonatas and Variations (SOMM).

Leon studied at Chetham's School of Music, Manchester with Heather Slade-Lipkin and at the Curtis Institute of Music with Eleanor Sokoloff. He also worked with Nina Milkina in London.

Leon is a professor of piano at London's Royal College of Music and is married to the painter, Anna Hyunsook Paik.

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HAYDN Piano Sonatas Volume 2

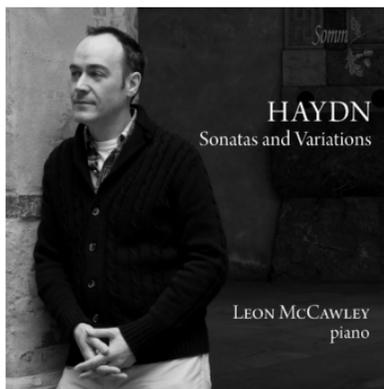
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“Light of touch, stylistically assured and brimfull of intelligence and wit”

Gramophone

“The sparkle of McCawley’s touch is instantly apparent... this collection should stand high on any list”

BBC Music Magazine



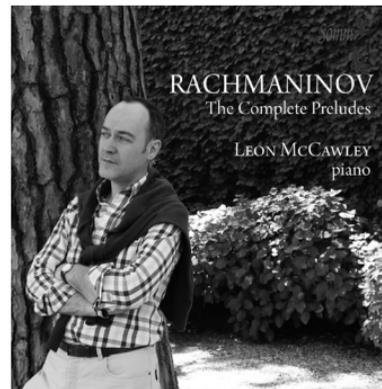
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“What a range in his interpretation and how many layers of gradation! McCawley ties these together in a special quality of inflexions which make their point with great intelligibility and sensitivity”

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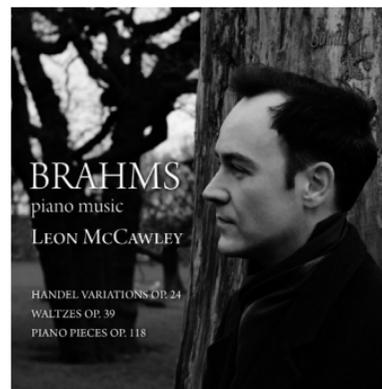


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