

GIOCONDA DEVITO



audite

Deutschlandradio Kultur



live in Berlin, 1954*
Berlin, 1951

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61

I. Allegro ma non troppo 25:37

II. Larghetto 10:44

III. Rondo 9:40

RIAS-Symphonie-Orchester

Georg Ludwig Jochum, conductor

recording: 03-10-1954 (live) / Hochschule für Musik, Berlin

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Violin Sonata in A major, Op. 100

I. Allegro amabile 8:07

II. Andante tranquillo 7:15

III. Allegretto grazioso (quasi Andante) 5:31

Michael Raucheisen, piano

recording: 07-10-1951 / RIAS Funkhaus, Berlin – Studio 7

TOMASO ANTONIO VITALI (1663-1745)

Chaconne in G minor 12:55

recording: 07-10-1951 / RIAS Funkhaus, Berlin – Studio 7

A Romantic with Heart and Soul Gioconda de Vito (1907-1994)

In the middle of the twentieth century, the world of the violin was still dominated by male virtuosos: women as soloists in front of an orchestra were the exception. But times changed, inexorably. More and more female violinists conquered the international concert stages. Alongside Erica Morini, Guila Bustabo, Ginette Neveu, Johanna Martzy, Camilla Wicks and Ida Haendel, Gioconda de Vito also belonged to that echelon of charismatic women artists crucial in advancing and shaping this development. Born into a musical family of wine growers in the South Italian town of Martina Franca on 26 July 1907, she showed an early interest in the mandolin, before expressing the wish to learn the violin. Initially, she played untaught, her extraordinary talent immediately causing a stir. After only six months, she was able to play Bériot's Ninth Violin Concerto, whereupon her uncle Francesco, a professional violinist, began giving her formal lessons. At the age of eleven, she was sent to the Pesaro Conservatory where Rémy Principe, one of Italy's most renowned violinists and violin teachers, became her mentor. After only two years, she obtained her final diploma. De Vito continued her intensive work, perfecting her technique and broadening her repertoire. At the tender age of sixteen, she made her debut with orchestra, performing the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto under Mario Rossi. In 1924, at seventeen, the highly talented violinist became a professor at the Conservatory of Bari: most of her students were even younger than she was. De Vito taught at Bari for ten years whilst pursuing a career as a soloist throughout Italy. In 1932, she won the first International Violin Competition in Vienna, thus attracting attention abroad. Members of the illustrious jury included the conductors Serge Koussevitzky and Clemens Krauss, as well as violinists Jan Kubelík, Arnold Rosé and Jenő Hubay. It was her Bach playing which particularly impressed the jurors and which relegated her fellow competitors into second and third places. The 1930s saw a promising flowering of her career which also included her first recordings. In 1934, she made her debut in Paris where the reviews declared her technique to be stupendous and her virtuosity spirited. De Vito also continued her teaching, accepting professorships in Palermo as well as at the renowned Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome. Her debut with the Berlin Philharmonic, performing Viotti's A minor Violin Concerto in October 1938, marked a pinnacle in her career whose further development was considerably impeded by the Second World War: her debut in America, which had already been planned, could not be realised.

After the war, London became the base for a new beginning. On 29 April 1948, she made her celebrated British debut with the Brahms Violin Concerto at the Royal Albert Hall; Victor de Sabata conducted the London Philharmonic Orchestra. According to The Times, the "intensity of imagination, coupled with the strong, clear tone and faultless technique [...] proved her to be a violinist

of the front rank.” Not long after that, de Vito made her first record at London’s Abbey Road Studios for “His Master’s Voice”, where she came across David Bicknell, head of the HMV division of EMI Records, whom she was to marry shortly afterwards. With Bicknell as her producer, de Vito recorded a number of works at Abbey Road and Kingsway Hall, working exclusively for EMI until 1959. These recordings included Tomaso Antonio Vitali’s famous Chaconne in G minor in an orchestral arrangement by Ottorino Respighi; two versions of Bach’s E major Violin Concerto; the Bach Double Violin Concerto (alongside Yehudi Menuhin); and the Bach Partita in D minor, BWV 1004. Her discography also features two recordings of the Mozart Violin Concerto K216; the Violin Sonatas Nos 7 and 8 (the “Kreutzer”) by Beethoven; the A major Violin Sonata by César Franck (alongside the pianist Tito Aperia); the Brahms Violin Concerto and Double Concerto for Violin and Cello, which were personal favourites. Further recordings included the Mendelssohn Concerto, the Concerto No 22 by Giovanni Battista Viotti as well as chamber music by Handel, Purcell, Viotti and Spohr. Made in the space of just over a decade, these recordings document de Vito’s playing in all its facets, and also its development during that time. For most recordings she played an instrument made by Antonio Stradivari, the “Tuscan” of 1723, which was loaned to her by the Italian government. Her London debut garnered further euphoric reviews, including one written by Neville Cardus for the Manchester Guardian. He had heard the young violinist together with the BBC Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Rafael Kubelík, performing Mozart’s G major Violin Concerto. He made no secret of his enthusiasm: “Gioconda de Vito’s playing was of a kind we do not expect to hear often in a lifetime. Every note was perfectly intoned and of individual life [...] the slow movement with its long notes which are the ordinary violinist’s terror and despair was quite heavenly.”

In the 1950s, de Vito’s career reached its peak. Now living in England, her adopted homeland, the Italian artist had risen to the position of being Europe’s leading female violinist. She gave several performances at the Edinburgh Festival (including with Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli and Enrico Mainardi in the Beethoven Triple Concerto under Furtwängler) and toured as far afield as Moscow and Leningrad, Australia, India and Israel, where she played the Beethoven Concerto in Jerusalem and the Brahms Concerto in Tel Aviv. However, de Vito was never to appear in America. Her late collaboration with the pianist Edwin Fischer, documented in recordings of Beethoven’s “Kreutzer” Sonata and Brahms’ Violin Sonatas Nos 1 and 3, is noteworthy. De Vito had particularly fond memories of her performance with Wilhelm Furtwängler, whom she adored. In 1953, with Furtwängler at the piano, she played the G major Violin Sonata by Brahms at Castel Gandolfo at the request of Pope Pius XII. In 1957 de Vito, who was deeply religious, performed the Mendelssohn Concerto in the Vatican and confided in the Pope that she was planning to retire from the concert stage in the near future. During a long conversation, Pius XII, who loved classical music and played the violin himself, managed to

persuade her otherwise. According to him, it was too early for her to stop performing and she needed to continue to nurture her “God-given talent”. De Vito heeded the pontiff’s advice and prolonged her career, but only for a short while. In the music world, during these years she was held in the highest esteem: David Oistrakh’s invitation asking her to join the jury of the first Tchaikovsky Violin Competition in Moscow in 1958 emphatically confirmed this. However, Gioconda de Vito, motivated by an elevated artistic ethos, remained true to herself. She had promised herself to leave the stage before her playing diminished in quality. In November 1961, the violinist gave her last concert in Basel, before retiring completely into private life. She died in Rome in 1994 at the age of eighty-seven.

De Vito’s repertoire was not particularly extensive: her favourites were Bach, Beethoven and Brahms. She kept contemporary music at arm’s length, even avoiding “classics” of modernism such as the concertos of Berg, Stravinsky or Bartók. Even the Violin Concerto by Jean Sibelius was missing from her repertoire. De Vito occasionally played works by Alfredo Casella and Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, as well as the Concerto by Ildebrando Pizzetti which she had premiered in 1944.

Gioconda de Vito epitomised the type of romantic violinist who exuded her sumptuous tone in a yearning, sometimes ponderous manner. A characteristic trademark of her playing was a clear vibrato, becoming increasingly broad in later years. De Vito never sought superficial violinistic brilliance – her repertoire includes no showpieces which are merely concerned with effect. The violinist felt a special affinity with the music of Brahms, always shining especially in the Double Concerto for Violin and Cello and in the Violin Concerto. Audite’s catalogue already includes a striking recording of the Brahms Violin Concerto with the RIAS Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Ferenc Fricsay, made in 1951 at the Berlin Jesus-Christus-Kirche (CD 95.585). The live recording on this disc of the Beethoven Violin Concerto made with the RIAS Symphony Orchestra under Georg Ludwig Jochum at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik on 3 October 1954 is of particular documentary value. In contrast to the Brahms Concerto which she had already recorded in 1941 with Paul van Kempen for Deutsche Grammophon, no commercial studio recording of this concerto with de Vito exists. Alongside Vitali’s Chaconne and the A major Violin Sonata by Brahms, this CD conveys a rounded image of Gioconda de Vito’s art of the violin, which was always rooted in romantic sensibility.

Norbert Hornig

Translation: Viola Scheffel



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| Ableitung / Referat Musik/Arndt | Schallaufnahme | | Ausstelldatum 29.9.54 | Auftrag Nr. 104 - 326 | | |
|---|----------------|-------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Titel und Mitwirkende: 2. RIAS-Abonnementskonzert Carl Amadeus Hartmann: 6. Symphonie L.v. Beethoven: Violinkonzert D-dur Rudi Stephan: Musik für Orchester Rias-Symphonie-Orchester Gioconda de Vito, Violine Regie / Dirigent: Gg. L. Jochum | | | | | | |
| für Sendung am: | | | vorgesehene Sendezeit in Minuten: | | | |
| Mikro-Ort: Hochschule für Musik | | | Überspielung nach: | | | |
| Art | Datum | von | bis | Kontr. R. Tontr. | erledigt Technik | Bandcharge |
| Probe ohne Technik | | | | | | |
| Probe mit Technik | 2.10.54 | 15.00 | 18.00 | Hochschule | | Generalprobe |
| Original-Sendung | | | | | | |
| 1. Aufnahme | | | | | | |
| 2. Aufnahme | | | | | | |
| 3. Aufnahme | | | | | | |
| 4. Aufnahme / Mitschnitt | 3.10.54 | 11.00 | 13.00 | Hochschule | | |
| Außen-Aufnahme | | | | | | |

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|---|-----|--------------|-------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| Aufgen - Aufnahme | | | | | |
| Umschnitt / zus. Schnitt | | | | | |
| Überspielung | | | | | |
| Wiedergabe | | | | | |
| Zur Aufnahme - Umschnitt - Überspielung - Wiedergabe wird benötigt: (Band bzw. Platten Nr. angeben) | | | | | |
| Ska | | | | | |
| Termin begonnen | 0.0 | Uhr, beendet | | Uhr | |
| | | | sendefertig | | |
| Bandempfang | | Min.: | 140 | Ton-Techn.: | Datum: 5.10.54 |
| Aufgenommene Bandzahl: | 5 | Min.: | 100 | Aufn. Leiter: | Angeli |
| Verschnitt | | Min.: | | Gesamtzahl der Bänder: | III 1 |
| Rest | | Min.: | 40 | Gesamtdauer: | 45 Min. 53 Sek. |
| Aufn. Leiter | | Ton-Technik | | Bemerkungen: | |



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| Abteilung / Referat Musik/Bangner | | Schallaufnahme | | Ausstelldatum 6.10.51 | Auftrag Nr. 56 - 433 | |
|--|---------|-----------------------|-------|---|-------------------------|------------|
| Titel und Mitwirkende: Sonate für Violine und Klavier A-Dur opus 100 v. Brahms Chaconne v. Vitali Gioconda de Vito - Violine Michael Raucheisen - Klavier - | | | | | | |
| für Sendung am: | | | | vorgesehene Sendezeit in Minuten: 50 | | |
| Mikro-Ort: Studio 7 | | | | Überspielung nach: | | |
| Art | Datum | von | bis | Kontr. R. Tontr. | erledigt Technik | Bandcharge |
| Probe ohne Technik | | | | | | |
| Probe mit Technik | | | | | | |
| Original-Sendung | | | | | | |
| 1. Aufnahme | 7.10.51 | 17.00 | 20.00 | Kontr. 7 | M Pw/3 | |
| 2. Aufnahme | | | | | | |
| 3. Aufnahme | | | | | | |
| 4. Aufnahme / Mitschnitt | | | | | | |
| Außen-Aufnahme | | | | | | |

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| Aufgen-Aufnahme | | | | | | |
| Umschnitt / z. is. Schnitt | | | | | | |
| Überspielung | | | | | | |
| Wiedergabe | | | | | | |
| Zur Aufnahme - Umschnitt - Überspielung - Wiedergabe wird benötigt: (Band bzw. Platten Nr. angeben) | | | | | | |
| Termin begonnen <u>17⁰⁰</u> Uhr, beendet _____ Uhr | | | | sendefertig R | | |
| Bandempfang | Min.: | <u>60</u> | | Ton-Techn.: | <u>Fröhlich</u> Datum: <u>10.10.57</u> | |
| Aufgenommene Bandzahl: <u>2 1/2</u> | Min.: | <u>34</u> | | Aufn. Leiter: | <u>Schumann</u> | |
| Verschnitt | Min.: | | | Gesamtzahl der Bänder: | <u>2</u> | |
| Rest | Min.: | <u>26</u> | | Gesamtdauer: | <u>33</u> Min. <u>08</u> Sek. | |
| <u>Schumann</u> Aufn. Leiter | | | | Bemerkungen: | | |
| | | | <u>Fröhlich</u> Ton-Technik | | | |

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recording: studio recording, mono (Brahms + Vitali)
live recording, mono (Beethoven)
recording producer: Salomon (1951), Martin Fouqué (1954)
recording engineer: Peter Burkowitz (1951)

HD-DOWNLOADS

available at audite.de

Deutschlandradio Kultur

Eine Aufnahme von RIAS Berlin
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