



audite

PROKOFIEV
Violin Concertos

Franziska Pietsch

Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin

Cristian Măcelaru

SERGEI PROKOFIEV

Violin Concerto No. 1 in D major, Op. 19

- I. *Andantino* 9:31
- II. *Scherzo: Vivacissimo* 4:00
- III. *Moderato – Allegro moderato* 8:25

Violin Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 63

- I. *Allegro moderato* 11:27
- II. *Andante assai – Allegretto* 10:10
- III. *Allegro, ben marcato* 6:31

The Scope of Exile

Sergei Prokofiev conducted the premiere of his *Classical Symphony* in St Petersburg on 21 April 1918, elegantly and powerfully turning his back on the provocative style of his wild years. Amongst the audience was Anatoly Lunacharsky, the Soviet People's Commissar of Education and Culture, a confidant of Lenin's who did not share the revolutionary leader's conservative views on art. After the concert, the composer brought it to the functionary's notice that he would like to travel abroad. The exchange between the two gained legendary status. "I have worked for a long time", Prokofiev began, "and now I would like to take some fresh air." – "Do you not think that we now have enough fresh air?" – "Yes, but I mean the real air of the seas and oceans." – "You are a revolutionary in music, and we are in life – we need to work together. But if you want to go to America, I won't put any obstacles in your way."

Just over two weeks later, the 26-year-old artist departed, travelling across Russia to Vladivostok on the Pacific coast, from there to Tokyo and then on to the USA: he arrived in New York in September. His luggage contained, amongst other things, a violin concerto which he had completed during the turmoil of the revolution, far away from the tumultuous goings-on. It was written around the same time as the *Symphonie classique*, with which it also shares its home key (D major), as well as its neoclassical stance which regards classical repertoire not so much as a binding model but more as a challenging counterpart. The planned premiere in November 1917 fell victim to the revolution, after which it proved difficult to find a soloist. Eventually, the first performance was given at the Opéra de Paris on 18 October 1923 by Marcel Darrieux. He was the leader of the orchestra with which Serge Koussevitzky, who had emigrated from Russia in 1920, presented a concert series in Paris, chiefly featuring works by Russian composers: he also conducted the premiere. Originally, Prokofiev had conceived his Violin Concerto in D – similarly to his First Piano Concerto – as a short Concertino in one movement. Later on he regretted having interrupted work on the piece after noting down the first theme in order to concentrate on other projects, in particular his opera *The Gambler*. Had he completed his concerto there and then, he would have added a small highlight to his oeuvre in the form of a shorter virtuoso piece. As it was, things took another course and the concerto ended up being a multi-movement work of classical proportions.

The layout in three movements appears to follow classical models. However, Prokofiev reversed the tempo relations. The centre of his opus 19 is not the slow movement but a rapid scherzo; the outer movements, traditionally the fast ones, are based on a calm metre. Restrained, "dreamily", the solo violin presents the singing first theme over a softly glimmering sonic base provided by the strings – impressionism is not far away. A crucial characteristic of the entire work is presented here with song-like simplicity and clarity: the soloist soars up to the top of the texture. Naturally, Prokofiev also guides it into sonorous depths, but it is striking how often and continuously it can be heard in the high, at times stratospheric, register. It rises above the orchestra and is perfectly supported by it. Nonetheless, it has to assert itself dynamically. For the premiere, Prokofiev had a player in mind who was able to elicit a bright radiance from his instrument's high register: Paul Kochanski, who taught at the St Petersburg Conservatoire between 1916 and 1918. He advised the composer in the finer points of crafting the solo part.

The three movements also each have a tripartite structure. This decision was once again inspired by classical examples: in the first movement, the lyrical opening idea and its gradual intensification towards a more virtuoso style is followed by a contrasting theme marked “narrante” [narrating] and accompanied by a rotating pattern. The tuneful, songlike element is thus contrasted and complemented by instrumental declamation. Prokofiev clearly delineates the central section by opening and closing it with slow passages. Characteristic motifs and figurations from both themes are processed here, blending into each other to the extent that the differences of their origins become blurred. At times, this seems like a development of virtuosic gestures where themes’ footprints are swallowed up by an active soundscape. The third section of the opening movement is exclusively reserved for the first theme which, by using bright colours and employing harp-emphasised accompaniment, Prokofiev transformed into a form of nature idyll.

The second movement combines two of Prokofiev’s favourite characters, once again producing a tripartite structure: a fast, effervescent scherzo, a slightly more robust variant of musical fairies, and a march. Two scenes appear to be edited together in a cinematic manner. Whilst in the first movement the challenge and effect of the solo part were mainly due to its stratospheric heights, the scherzo additionally demands extreme agility, exquisite styles of playing, rapid shifts between plucked and bowed passages, effective glissandi and harmonics. Compared to the first movement, the virtuoso element is even more apparent here.

Although the third movement presents its own material and new themes, it still manages to achieve a synthesis of the two previous movements. In form and tempo it largely corresponds to the opening movement; the first theme’s march-like character makes a reappearance, slightly slowed down, in the scherzo. As a result, the march is shifted into a different expressive sphere but remains distinctive as a musical species. Both the theme and the contrasting idea are intensified by varying repeats. The central section of the finale essentially develops the initial theme, giving more weight to the introductory bars. To conclude, Prokofiev re-introduces the opening theme of the first movement, rhythmically altered but in keeping with the idyllic image of nature, and combines it with material from the final piece. This synthesis encompasses a dramatic intensification, reinforced by the synergy of soloist and orchestra. Prokofiev’s First Violin Concerto proved to be a brilliant work, not only in its impact, but also in its compositional design.

The Symbol of Return: The Second Violin Concerto

From 1918, Prokofiev lived abroad, mostly in the USA and in Paris. However, both emotionally and intellectually, as “a true Russian” (in the words of his son Sviatoslav), he remained devoted to, and “nostalgic” for, his home country. In contrast to Sergei Rachmaninov, who never gave in to his nostalgia but remained in exile, never to see his home again, Prokofiev, the younger composer, at times discredited as an *enfant terrible*, did visit Russia several times, meeting old friends and giving concerts: he finally returned for good. In March 1936, he settled permanently in Moscow and on 15 May, two weeks after the premiere of *Peter and the Wolf*, his wife and two sons re-joined him. He remained in the Soviet Union, despite terror, humiliation and reprimands, until his death on 5 March 1953, which was also the day that Joseph Stalin, the tormentor of all artists, died.

Prokofiev's Second Violin Concerto, commissioned by wealthy friends of the French violinist Robert Soetens (1897-1997), contains both: the nostalgia for Russia, and the route leading back. The work represents a journey, both literally and metaphorically. The composer related that it "was written in the most diverse countries, reflecting my nomadic life as a performing artist. I composed the main theme of the first movement in Paris, the first theme of the second movement in Voronezh, the orchestration was completed in Baku, and it was premiered in Madrid in December 1935. Thereafter, an interesting tour with Soetens followed, taking us across Spain, Portugal, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia." Soetens had managed to secure exclusive performing rights for one year. Shortly after this period, the work was premiered in Moscow, Jascha Heifetz included it in his repertoire in 1937 and went on to record it on disc, David Oistrakh performed it several times, and even in Germany, following the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact (also known as the Nazi-Soviet Pact), it could be heard several times. In contrast to the First Violin Concerto, written twenty years previously, it is today considered to be one of the standard pieces of its genre.

The G minor Concerto passed through several conceptual stages before taking its final shape. A part of the thematic material was originally designed for a (single-movement) concert piece for violin and orchestra. Subsequently opting for a multi-movement format, Prokofiev wanted to call the work a "Concert Sonata for Violin and Orchestra", but then changed his mind in favour of the traditional title and form of a Concerto for Violin and Orchestra. The structure of the work is once again, and even more so than in the previous concerto, neoclassical. The opening movement is composed in almost textbook sonata form with two contrasting themes, featuring motivic similarities despite their opposing characters. Both are introduced by the soloist; the first is initially played by the soloist alone, as if a reminiscence of a song and, for the second one, the soloist is accompanied by the strings, the winds joining the dialogue a little later. Both themes, as they are introduced, are developed almost as a short set of variations. In the central section, the development, they are transformed in the typical way: the first theme changes from legato to staccato and appears in the low register, the second one is played at half speed, confirming its calmer character.

The second movement could be part of a serenade. It begins in the manner of a romance with a violin melody, accompanied by plucked strings and lightly touched clarinets, at times becoming faster and more cheerful. The vicinity to the ballet music to *Romeo and Juliet*, the next work the composer would complete, becomes apparent. In the finale, Prokofiev plays with different folk strains. The main theme is evocative of Spanish music, especially when accompanied by castanets: this may be in tribute to the country of the work's premiere. However, at the time all things Spanish were very fashionable in virtuoso violin works. Prokofiev, a composer with a great sense of theatre, does not only play with folk music, but also with conventions and expectations. He contrasts the Spanish atmosphere with cross-rhythms such as $\frac{5}{4}$ or $\frac{7}{4}$, which can often be found in Eastern European folk music.

Sergei Prokofiev wrote two violin concertos. They mark the beginning and the end of his exile, displaying points of contact to his home, his path leading away from it and his (inner) route back.

Habakuk Traber

Translation: *Viola Scheffel*



FRANZISKA PIETSCH

The violinist Franziska Pietsch, the “Anne-Sophie Mutter of East Germany”
(W Dulisch)

Stupendous stage presence, supreme musicianship and outstanding instrumental prowess; transformation of political repression to a personal musical success: the violinist Franziska Pietsch cuts her own path, away from the standard soloistic career.

From promising star of the GDR with a burgeoning solo career to boycott, via a new beginning, chamber music and leading orchestras back to being a soloist, now enriched by a transformed understanding of her own role: with this recording of the Prokofiev Violin Concertos, Franziska Pietsch has come full circle. Thanks to her intensive engagement with chamber music and her experience as a concert master, Franziska Pietsch’s performances as a soloist are not only world-class, but also characterised by an exceptional sense of chamber-like intimacy.

Born in East Berlin, she received her first violin lessons from her father at the age of five. She made her debut at the Komische Oper Berlin aged eleven, after which she regularly performed as a soloist alongside renowned orchestras of the Eastern Bloc. She entered the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler as a junior student, where she studied with Werner Scholz. As an emerging talent, she enjoyed special state support until her father escaped to the West in 1984. Two years of reprisals by the regime followed, heavily influencing Franziska Pietsch’s understanding of music: deprived of any possibility of playing concerts or taking lessons, her chosen path towards hope – against desperation, refusal, fear and despotism – led inwards. Music became the only language in which she was able to express herself freely and which gave her the necessary strength to withstand external circumstances, continuing to hope for freedom. These were the origins of the intensity and artistic depth which characterise Franziska Pietsch’s playing to the present day.

In 1986, Franziska Pietsch was able to enter West Germany. She continued her studies with Ulf Hoelscher (Karlsruhe) and Jens Ellermann (Hanover), and with Dorothy



DeLay at the Juilliard School in New York. Masterclasses with renowned musicians including Wanda Wilkomirska, Ruggiero Ricci and Herman Krebbers rounded off her musical training. Franziska Pietsch has won the Bach-Wettbewerb Leipzig, the Concours Maria Canals Barcelona, the International Kocian Violin Competition and the International Violin Competition Rodolfo Lipizer. As a soloist, she has appeared in many European countries as well as in America and Asia, performing under conductors such as Antoni Wit, Arpad Joó, Moshe Atzmon and Julia Jones. From 1998 until 2002 she was First Concertmaster of the Sinfonieorchester Wuppertal, and from 2006 until 2010 she was Deuxième Soliste of the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg.

The rupture in Franziska Pietsch's biography in 1984 not only led to spatial and temporal but also, and particularly, to internal shifts: although her talent was immediately recognised in the West and she was offered solo engagements, she initially opted against a continuation of her purely soloistic work. Her traumatic experiences in the GDR were too close for her to be able simply to resume the career for which she had been trained under that regime. Instead, she discovered chamber music, as well as orchestral work from the position of concert master: her training in the West had also prepared her for this route, providing her with a multi-faceted approach to music. Chamber music continues to be central to her career: for fifteen years, she was a member of the Trio Testore, until she parted with the ensemble in 2015 in order to be able to focus on other chamber music formations. She regularly gives recitals with her piano partner, and in 2014 she founded her own string trio, *Trio Lirico*, with whom she appears frequently.

Most recently, Franziska Pietsch has recorded eight albums in only six years for audite, including three solo recordings and her first solo recording with orchestra. Her audite series of the complete Grieg Violin Sonatas as well as the two Sonatas and *Cinq mélodies* by Prokofiev received nominations for the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik as well as the International Classical Music Award and were met with great critical acclaim internationally.

Franziska Pietsch plays a violin by Carlo Antonio Testore (Milan) of 1751.



CRISTIAN MĂCELARU

Newly appointed Music Director and Conductor of the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, Cristian Măcelaru has established himself as one of the fast-rising stars of the conducting world. With every concert he displays an exciting and highly regarded presence, thoughtful interpretations and energetic conviction on the podium. He launched his inaugural season at Cabrillo in August 2017 with premiere-filled programs of new works and fresh re-orchestrations by an esteemed group of composers.

He recently completed his tenure with the Philadelphia Orchestra as Conductor-in-Residence, a title he held for three seasons until August 2017. Prior to that, he was Associate Conductor for two seasons and previously Assistant Conductor for one season from September 2011. He made his Philadelphia Orchestra subscription debut in April 2013 and continues a close relationship with the orchestra.

Măcelaru regularly conducts top orchestras in North America including the Chicago Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, and the symphony orchestras in St. Louis, Detroit, Dallas, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Seattle, Cincinnati, Milwaukee, San Diego, Toronto and Vancouver. In summer 2017, he made his debut with the Cleveland Orchestra and returned to the Grand Teton and Interlochen Festivals. Internationally, recent and upcoming highlights include leading the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Bayerische Staatsoper, Weimar Staatskapelle, WDR Sinfonieorchester, Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Hallé Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra,



Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Royal Flemish Philharmonic, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Swedish Radio Symphony, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Gothenburg Symphony, and New Japan Philharmonic.

A keen opera conductor, in 2010, he made his operatic debut with the Houston Grand Opera in *Madama Butterfly* and conducted the U.S. premiere of Colin Matthews's *Turning Point* with the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra; in June 2015 he led the Cincinnati Opera in highly acclaimed performances of *Il Trovatore*, in 2019, he returns to the Houston Grand Opera with *Don Giovanni*.

Măcelaru came to public attention in February 2012 when he conducted the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as a replacement for Pierre Boulez in performances met with critical acclaim. Winner of the 2014 Solti Conducting Award, he previously received the Sir Georg Solti Emerging Conductor Award in 2012, a prestigious honour only awarded once before in the Foundation's history. Măcelaru participated in the conducting programmes of the Tanglewood Music Center and the Aspen Music Festival, studying under David Zinman, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, Oliver Knussen and Stefan Asbury. His main studies were with Larry Rachleff at Rice University, where he received master's degrees in conducting and violin performance. He completed undergraduate studies in violin performance at the University of Miami. An accomplished violinist from an early age, Măcelaru was the youngest concertmaster in the history of the Miami Symphony Orchestra and made his Carnegie Hall debut with that orchestra at the age of nineteen. He also played in the first violin section of the Houston Symphony for two seasons.

Cristian Măcelaru resides with his family in Philadelphia.



DEUTSCHES SYMPHONIE-ORCHESTER BERLIN

For 70 years the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin (DSO Berlin) has distinguished itself as one of Germany's leading orchestras. The number of renowned music directors, the scope and variety of its work, and its particular emphasis on modern and contemporary music, makes the ensemble unique. Founded as the RIAS Symphony Orchestra in 1946, it was renamed the Radio Symphony Orchestra Berlin in 1956 and has borne its current name since 1993.

As the first music director, Ferenc Fricsay defined the standards in terms of repertoire, acoustic ideal and media presence. In 1964, the young Lorin Maazel assumed artistic responsibility. In 1982, he was followed by Riccardo Chailly and in 1989 by Vladimir Askenazy. Kent Nagano was appointed music director in 2000. Since his departure in 2006, he has been associated with the orchestra as an honorary conductor. From 2007 to 2010, as the successor to Nagano, Ingo Metzmacher set decisive accents in the concert life of the capital with progressive programmes and consistent commitment to the music of the 20th and 21st centuries. Since September 2012, the North Ossetian Tugan Sokhiev has been music director of the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin; his successor Robin Ticciati will take on the position starting with the season of 2017-18.

Apart from its concerts in Berlin, the DSO is also present in many guest appearances in international music life. The orchestra has held performances in the major concert halls of Europe, North and South America, the Near, Middle and Far East. The DSO is also in demand worldwide with many award-winning CD recordings. In 2011, it was awarded a Grammy Award for the best opera recording for the production of Kaija Saariaho's ›L'amour de loin‹ conducted by Kent Nagano.

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trailer on 

recording: March 13 - 16, 2017

recording location: Jesus-Christus-Kirche, Berlin-Dahlem

recording format: pcm, 96 kHz / 24bit

recording & executive producer: Dipl.-Tonmeister Ludger Böckenhoff

engineer & editing: Dipl.-Tonmeister Simon Böckenhoff

engineer: Dipl.-Tonmeister Aki Matusch

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Cristian Măcelaru: Sorin Popa

Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin: Frank Eidel



ein Ensemble der



music publisher: Hawkes & Son (London) Ltd.

design: AB-Design, Detmold

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