

Ludger Vollmer

Violin Concerto

Transformations

audite

The background of the cover is a photograph of a lake at sunset. The sky is a mix of purple, blue, and orange, with the sun low on the horizon. The water is dark blue with shimmering reflections of the sky and distant lights. In the foreground, a glowing, ethereal violin shape is superimposed over the water. The violin is composed of bright, white and blue light trails that form its body and f-hole. The ends of the violin, where the strings would be, are surrounded by a burst of golden sparks and light, giving it a magical, sparkling appearance. The overall mood is serene yet dynamic, reflecting the 'Transformations' theme of the concerto.

Gernot Süßmuth
Staatskapelle Weimar • Dominik Beykirch

LUDGER VOLLMER (*1961)

**Concerto for Violin
and Orchestra** (2020)

- I. Modus (Ruhig fließend) 8:33
- II. Hoquetus (Adagio, liberamente) 6:28
- III. Scherzo ritmica (Con brio) 5:01
- IV. Concerto grosso 10:11

**Transformations
for Solo Violin** (2004) 9:31

previously unreleased

Gernot Süßmuth violin
Staatskapelle Weimar
Dominik Beykirch conductor

Thüringer Bach Collegium ^(IV)



Ludger Vollmer:
Concerto for Violin, Lower Strings, Winds, and Percussion

A violin concerto is an architecture – albeit an architecture in time. And, like any architecture, a violin concerto first arises in a distant vision within the composer’s imagination before it materialises.

My violin concerto owes its origin to a personal friendship. Gernot Süßmuth, concertmaster of the Staatskapelle Weimar, wished for a work from me – and as his expressive tone and extraordinary technique have long impressed me, I immediately embraced this impulse. Soon, the Staatskapelle Weimar was ready to commission the work. Since I predominantly write operas – text-based music – I was eager to take this opportunity to make a statement about the nature and motivations of my musical universe through absolute, non-text-based music.

At the outset of the creative process there was a small, six-note melodic formula – a “nucleus” – which unfolded before me like the image of a seagull flying over the waters of Hamburg. From this seed grew a concerto for solo violin and large orchestra, deriving all its musical energy from this single figure. The compositional architecture of the work rests on three pillars: modal scales, as the ancient Greeks already understood them, carrying emotional significance; combined rhythms with a high dance-like energy, inspired by the Balkans and Africa; and finally, the ancient technique of centonisation, still alive today in Eastern and Gregorian traditions – the composition of melodic formulas which, unlike classical motifs, are not rhythmically fixed and therefore possess enormous flexibility. I have replaced the classical Central European techniques of counterpoint, harmony, and modulation with archaic and non-European approaches in order to create a personal, new, and powerful, yet comprehensible, musical language: counterpoint became heterophony, harmony transformed into mixture technique, and harmonic modulation gave way to melodic modulation.

My violin concerto is structured in the movements *Modus* – *Hoquetus* – *Scherzo ritmica* – *Concerto grosso*. With these thematic movement titles, I wish to draw attention to central ideas of my musical world – my way of storytelling through rhythmically melodic, formally structured composition.

I – Modus

The first movement bears the title *Modus*, because here the scale – the mode – takes centre stage, and the original formula appears for the first time. In this movement, I explore what modal, formally structured, rhythmically melodic composition means to me: music that draws its moods, energy, and development from changing modes, the shape and combination of melodic formulas, and contrasting, often driving rhythms. The fundamental note of each mode, however, is the “ison” – the drone-like “eternal tone” of the Greek tradition – which I rhythmise and turn into the energetically pulsating foundation of the movement.

II – Hoquetus

The *Hoquetus*, developed in the 13th century at the Notre-Dame School, is a fascinating monophonic technique in which one voice rests while the other sings. This technique, revisited repeatedly in the 20th and 21st centuries – including by György Ligeti – has long held a powerful attraction for me.

In my violin concerto, it merges with the technique of heterophony, widespread in many Eastern cultures: several voices perform the same melody, but slightly offset, rhythmically varied, and with individual colouring. This rich monophony gradually gives rise, over the course of the movement, to music that resembles a sparkling, polyphonic mosaic.

III – Scherzo ritmica

The Scherzo – from the Italian *scherzo* (joke) – is generally familiar as the third movement of the classical sonata form. In my concerto, rhythmic energy takes centre stage. I wanted to explore whether the solo violin alone could hold its own against a vast array of percussion, and in doing so, create a musical race.

The rhythms of the European tradition are mostly regular and clearly metrically structured. In contrast, the combined rhythms of the Balkans, with their irregular shifting of duple and triple groups, often generate an ecstatic, dance-like drive.

In the *Scherzo ritmica*, such combined rhythms are juxtaposed with classical patterns. The ABA' form of the movement leads, in the central section, into a sound world of metal instruments – metal chimes, hanging cymbals, large tam-tam, and tuned gong – whose floating, almost meditative melodies provide a contrast to the virtuosic rhythmic passages of the outer sections.

IV – Concerto grosso

The final movement embraces one of the most powerful forms in the history of music. The *concerto grosso* emerged from the Venetian polychoral tradition of the 16th century and, in the 17th and 18th centuries, evolved into a competitive interplay between a small group (*concertino*) and a larger ensemble (*concerto grosso*), from which the modern instrumental concerto gradually developed.

In my *Concerto grosso*, a concertino of three recorders, harpsichord, and cello faces the full orchestra. Moving between them – commenting, joining in, bridging, and sometimes contemplatively *a cappella* – is the solo violin. The original meaning of concerto, *con certare* (to compete), becomes the guiding principle here: a musical dialogue culminating in a virtuosic solo cadenza, with which the soloist crowns the concerto.

Transformations for Solo Violin

The virtuosic composition *Transformations* for solo violin explores the inner vision of the human soul and of human biography alike, telling of change and farewell as integral parts of our lives. I composed it during a difficult period of my life for the violinist and friend Gernot Süßmuth, who gave the world premiere in 2004 at the Deutsches Nationaltheater Weimar.

The listener is guided, beginning with a melodic formula presented at the outset, through several musical spaces in cyclical, passacaglia-like stages. Virtuosic high plateaus, valleys of meditation and journeys through iridescent fever-dreams meet the listener, analysing, mirroring, disassembling and totally transforming the tonal material by means of quasi-polyphonic, microtonal techniques of reflection, variation and transformation.

When the melody (as a metaphor for our soul) reappears at the end, we realise that every note, every experience along this musical parcours was part of itself.

Ludger Vollmer

Translation: *audite*



GERNOT SÜSSMUTH

Gernot Süßmuth began his musical career at an early age and appeared as a soloist with orchestra while still a child. This was followed by numerous prizes at children's and youth competitions.

At the age of sixteen he was admitted to the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler Berlin, where he completed his violin studies with a soloist's diploma. Engagements as concertmaster with leading orchestras, including the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, soon followed.

He is currently – in the tradition of Johann Sebastian Bach, who held the post at the Weimar court from 1708 to 1717 – First Concertmaster of the Staatskapelle Weimar and a sought-after chamber musician. From 1983 to 2000 he was a member of the Petersen Quartet, with which he appeared on the world's major concert stages and released numerous CDs. At the turn of the millennium he co-founded the Aperto Piano Quartet together with his former quartet colleague Hans-Jakob Eschenburg.

Until 2010, Gernot Süßmuth was Artistic Director of the European Union Chamber Orchestra, touring extensively as conductor and soloist throughout Germany, Central and South America, and Great Britain. He is also Artistic Director and General Manager of the WestfalenClassics Festival, as well as founder and director of the Thüringer Bach Collegium. With this ensemble he has appeared at the Bachfest Leipzig, the Elbphilharmonie, the Cologne Philharmonie and at numerous festivals in Germany and abroad, and has released several critically acclaimed CD recordings.

For many years Gernot Süßmuth has been devoted to teaching young musicians at the conservatoires in Berlin and Weimar. In 2004 he was appointed Honorary Professor at the Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt in Weimar.



DOMINIK BEYKIRCH

The German conductor Dominik Beykirch has shaped the artistic profile of the Deutsches Nationaltheater (DNT) and the Staatskapelle Weimar since the 2015/16 season, most recently as Music Director. From the 2025/26 season onwards, he is appearing as a freelance conductor at numerous opera houses and concert venues. With Paul Dessau's monumental opera *Lanzelot* (aud 23448), revived for the first time in more than forty years, he celebrated great success (including "Rediscovery of the Year" and German Record Critics' Award) and was nominated by *Opernwelt* as "Conductor of the Year" and for the International Opera Awards.

As a guest conductor, Beykirch has already worked with numerous renowned orchestras such as the symphony orchestras of the HR, MDR, WDR and SWR, the Staatskapelle Dresden, the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, the Dresden Philharmonic and the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra. Alongside soloists such as Nemanja Radulović, Cameron Carpenter and Harriet Krijgh, he also enjoys a close artistic collaboration with Frank Dupree. For their highly acclaimed recording of Nikolai Kapustin's Fifth Piano Concerto (International Classical Music Award, Diapason d'Or) Beykirch was nominated for "Conductor of the Year" at the OPUS KLASSIK Awards.

Dominik Beykirch completed his musical studies at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music Weimar in the conducting classes of Nicolás Pasquet, Gunter Kahlert and Martin Hoff. Further artistic inspiration he received from Bernard Haitink, Jukka-Pekka Saraste and Ton Koopman, as well as through his scholarship in the Forum Dirigieren of the Deutscher Musikrat. He now shares his expertise through masterclasses and as a lecturer at the University of Music and Theatre »Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy« in Leipzig.



LUDGER VOLLMER

“Ludger Vollmer is considered one of the most frequently performed contemporary opera composers in the German-speaking world.” (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung)

Ludger Vollmer has become internationally known primarily as an opera composer. His full-length operas have been performed in cities including Vienna (State Opera), Bremen, Istanbul, Stuttgart, Cologne, Karlsruhe, Darmstadt, Duisburg, Nordhausen, Regensburg, Hagen, Freiburg im Breisgau, Weimar, Hamburg and Chemnitz.

His oeuvre, which encompasses works across all musical genres, has been performed on every continent and has received several awards. His opera *Rummelplatz*, based on the novel by Werner Bräunig with a libretto by Jenny Erpenbeck, premiered during the 2025 Cultural Capital Year in Chemnitz and was honoured in 2026 with the *OPER! Awards*, Germany’s only international opera prize.

Ludger Vollmer is published by Schott Music GmbH. Since 2020 he has served as President of the Landesmusikrat Hamburg and since 2021 as Chair of the Hamburg regional association of the Deutscher Komponist:innenverband. He is also a member of the Freie Akademie der Künste Hamburg and lives there.

STAATSKAPELLE WEIMAR



The Staatskapelle Weimar, founded in 1491, is the oldest orchestra in Germany and among the most tradition-steeped ensembles in the world. Nationally and internationally, it enjoys a fundamental cultural significance as a guarantor of quality in the dialogue between tradition and modernity.

Its history is associated with some of the world's best known musicians, including Johann Sebastian Bach, Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Franz Liszt and Richard Strauss. Established as premier musical institution of 'Classical Weimar' and part of the Hoftheater from 1791 onwards, the Hofkapelle Weimar continued to attract attention due to the achievements of Liszt and Strauss, who improved its quality and reputation during the 19th century. The orchestra was the first to perform numerous contemporary orchestral works, such as Liszt's *Faust Symphony*, his symphonic poems including *Les Préludes*, and Strauss's *Death and Transfiguration*, as well as operas like Wagner's *Lohengrin*, Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, and Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila*.

Both in its extensive concert activities and opera productions at the Deutsches Nationaltheater Weimar, Thuringia's only A-level orchestra has worked to cultivate its great tradition in combination with innovative aspects. World-class soloists and conductors perform regularly with the Staatskapelle Weimar. In past years, the ensemble has made guest appearances in Japan, Israel, Spain, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, Great Britain and in the United States, as well as in numerous major concert halls throughout Germany and at renowned festivals. From the 2024/25 season onwards, Ivan Repušić is Chief Conductor of the Staatskapelle Weimar.

audite



*For the generous support of the project,
we extend our heartfelt thanks to
Fürstin Katharina v. Wrede, Fürst Carl Friedrich v. Wrede
and Annemarie Süßmuth.*

recording:

May 22–23, 2024
February 17, 2025 (Transformations)

recording location:

Rehearsal Hall of the Staatskapelle Weimar

recording producer / editing:

Dipl.-Tonmeister Joachim Müller

executive producer:

Dipl.-Tonmeister Ludger Böckenhoff

recording format:

pcm, 96 kHz, 24 bit

photos:

Gernot Süßmuth: Alexandra Münch
Dominik Beykirch: Nikolaj Lund
Ludger Vollmer: Christiane Weber
Staatskapelle Weimar: Candy Welz

music publisher:

Schott Music GmbH & Co. KG, Mainz

cover:

Parts of the cover were designed using AI.
The following excerpt from the composer's
text was used as the prompt:
"[...] a 'nucleus' – which unfolded before me like
the image of a seagull flying over the waters of Hamburg"

art direction and design:

AB•Design



audite

