

The background of the cover is a classical painting, likely by Rembrandt, depicting a man and a woman in a close, intimate embrace. The man is on the left, looking towards the right, and the woman is on the right, looking towards the left. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows, creating a sense of depth and emotion.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

VIOLIN SONATAS & RONDOS

KV 378, KV 454 & KV 250, KV 373

RUBEN KOSEMYAN, VIOLIN
NATALYA MNATSAKANYAN
& MARGARITA GRIGORYAN, PIANO

There is an iconic portrait of the Mozart family in which Wolfgang is seated at the keyboard, his sister Nannerl sings by his side, and their father Leopold plays the violin from behind his children. While Nannerl was certainly an excellent musician but probably not a star singer, and her attitude is likely to have been suggested by the painter's eye rather than by the musician's ear, Wolfgang and Leopold are represented with their favourite instruments. Leopold Mozart was in fact one of the greatest violinists of his era: in the absence of audio recordings, we gather much about his musical skill and wisdom from a treatise on violin playing he wrote at the time of Wolfgang's birth, and which possibly represents Leopold's most valuable legacy, appreciated by musicians and musicologists alike.

Unavoidably, such a musician and a pedagogue transmitted his knowledge, expertise and ability to his talented son. At six years of age, Wolfgang could already play the violin, and soon he joined his father and his colleagues in their private musical gatherings, in which new works were rehearsed and performed primarily for the pleasure of the musicians themselves. This was an opportunity for the child to familiarize himself with the Italian violin school, represented by composers such as Giuseppe Tartini and Pietro Antonio Locatelli, but also for learning the secrets of ensemble music-making. At the early age of thirteen, Wolfgang was admitted in the ranks of the Salzburg Archbishop's orchestra, demonstrating his proficiency and accomplishment as a violinist.

The following year, during a tour in Italy, Wolfgang had further opportunities to broaden his horizon as concerns the technique and musical resources of the violin. As recounted by Leopold to his wife, "In Florence we met a young Englishman, a pupil of the famous violinist Nardini. The lad, who plays very finely and is of Wolfgang's age and height, came to the house of the

learned poetess Signora Corilla... The two boys performed by turns throughout the evening amidst continual embracing. The other day the little Englishman, a most charming lad, had his violin brought to us and played all the afternoon, Wolfgang accompanying him, also on the violin. The following day we dined with M. Gavard... and the two children played by turns the whole afternoon, not like boys but like men!". The "child" of whom Leopold was speaking was Thomas Linley, in turn a child prodigy and the offspring of a musical family.

In spite of this all, Wolfgang gradually came to feel more at ease with the viola than with the violin, and with the keyboard rather than with the bowed string instruments. As his father put it, "You have no idea how well you play the violin. If only you would do yourself justice and play with boldness, spirit and fire, as if you were the greatest violinist in Europe!". But this prospect did not appeal to Wolfgang. His lack of interest in pursuing a career as a violinist, however, did not prevent him from writing fascinating Violin Concertos and beautiful Violin Sonatas, among which those recorded in this Da Vinci Classics album are two of the finest.

Chronologically, the first piece Mozart composed among those recorded here is the so-called *Haffner-Serenade* KV 250. It was written for the wedding of Marie Elisabeth Haffner, the daughter of the wealthy Salzburg burgomaster, with Franz Xaver Spath. Commissioned by the bride's brother, it is a festive composition, which, on the one hand, respects the nonchalant and relaxed mood of the *Divertimenti*, *Serenades* and *Cassations* typical of the era, but, on the other hand, reveals how seriously Mozart took even this seemingly minor genre. This is demonstrated not only by the size of the ensemble and by the richness of the orchestration, but, even more importantly, by the abundance of musical ideas and

moods, by the rich alternation of styles and by the presence of touching and lyrical moments.

Mozart, who was twenty years old at the time, probably played first violin on the occasion of the premiere, which took place at the eve of the wedding day (July 21st, 1776); unsurprisingly, therefore, the violin part is particularly brilliant and soloistic, allowing the young virtuoso to shine. Fritz Kreisler, one of the greatest violinists of the first half of the twentieth century, had therefore the fully justified idea of transcribing the central Rondo, a playful movement with a concertante scoring alternating solo and orchestra, as a piece for solo violin with piano accompaniment; it is in this version that the Rondeau is recorded in this album.

Three years later, in 1779, Mozart composed Violin Sonata KV 378, which would be published in 1783 bearing witness to the just pride with which its composer regarded it. A contemporary journal praised this collection as follows: "These sonatas are unique in their kind. Rich in new ideas and traces of their author's great musical genius. Very brilliant, and suited to the instrument. At the same time, the violin accompaniment is so ingeniously combined with the clavier part that both instruments are constantly kept in equal prominence; so that these sonatas call for as skilled a violinist as a clavier player". This was in fact the main novelty of Mozart's Sonatas: they realized, for the first time, a dialogue of peers, in which both instruments were considered as equals while bringing to light the specific qualities of each. This aspect shines forth since the very first bars of the first movement, whose splendid and lyrical first theme is gracefully given to both instruments in alternation, and both quietly accept to play the simple accompaniment when their turn is over. The second movement is an enchanting Aria, reminding later listeners of the garden scene in *Le nozze di Figaro*; it also

displays a noteworthy rhythmical complexity, which should however go unnoticed by the audience, in a smooth and caressing musical flow. The humorous and whirling Finale is capped by a breath-taking Coda in the buffo style, where the two musicians realize an impossible task: that of creating a wordless, instrumental tongue-twister.

Slightly later, in 1781, Mozart was still in the employment of Archbishop Colloredo, in Salzburg, but was eagerly waiting for the opportunity to leave the job and his natal city in favour of Vienna. Curiously, the Rondo KV 373 was commissioned by Colloredo, but premiered precisely in Vienna, where the Archbishop was spending some time with his court, including Mozart. The Salzburg orchestra prided itself of the presence of an Italian violin virtuoso, Antonio Brunetti, who had become Hofmusikdirektor and first violin in 1776, probably to the chagrin of Mozart. Even though both Wolfgang and his father shared a feeling of antipathy for Brunetti, the Rondo written by Wolfgang for his colleague shows no trace of such a sentiment; indeed, it is one of the most fascinating of his works for violin and orchestra. The formal aspects of this piece are among its most intriguing features: the tonal wanderings allow the violin to explore a variety of musical situations, including a very pathetic section in C minor, one of the keys Mozart reserved for tragedy, frequently with operatic overtones. The coda is very original in turn, with its echo effects which the original version for violin and orchestra realizes with refined timbral solutions. This does not prevent the transcription recorded here from achieving a brilliant and convincing musical result: it was realized by Paul Klengel, another great violinist who was Kreisler's senior by some twenty years, and is recorded here in an arrangement realized by the solo violinist Ruben Kosemyan himself.



Another Italian violinist, this time appreciated by both Wolfgang and Leopold, is the dedicatee and first performer of Mozart's other major Violin Sonata in B-flat, KV 454, composed in 1784. Writing to Leopold from Vienna, Wolfgang stated: "We now have here the famous Regina Strinasacchi from Mantua, a very good violinist. She has a great deal of taste and feeling in her playing. I am this moment composing a sonata which we are going to play together on Thursday at her concert in the theater". That concert has become legend, since Mozart seemingly did not have time (or did not bother) to write down the keyboard part, and played from a score which was largely blank. (This part of the legend is actually supported by analysis of the autograph manuscript). Seemingly, the Emperor noticed the bizarre fact that the pianist's part was mostly white, and requested Mozart to send him the manuscript – a request which the musician was obviously unable to fulfil.

Though this may be more mythical than historical,

undoubtedly this Sonata reveals how the dialogue with a gifted violinist could inspire Mozart, as had happened with Linley many years earlier. The presence of Strinasacchi, with her mellow and yet powerful tone, her strong personality and her undeniable virtuosity, combined with Mozart's pleasure in playing with her, resulted in the composition of an extraordinary work. Opening on a solemn slow section, as in an operatic scene, the Sonata includes a brilliant, concertante Allegro, and a profound, serious and touching Andante; its depth is contrasted by the joyful and serene Finale, full of brilliancy and of fantasy.

In its own way, each of the pieces in this Da Vinci Classics album reveals Mozart's capability to highlight the violin's expressive potential as well as its virtuoso qualities; similar to the human voice, in Mozart's hands the violin becomes a true icon for the complexity and richness of human feelings and of human nature.

Liner Notes by Chiara Bertoglio

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
(B SALZBURG, 27 JAN 1756; D VIENNA, 5 DEC 1791)

VIOLIN SONATAS & RONDOS

- SONATA IN B-FLAT MAJOR No. 32 KV 454, FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO**
- [01] LARGO, ALLEGRO 6:41
[02] ANDANTE 5:53
[03] ALLEGRETTO 6:01
COMPOSED IN 1784
- [04] **RONDO IN G MAJOR, FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO*** 5:15
FROM "SERENADE IN D MAJOR No. 7 KV 250 (248B) HAFFNER"
ARRANGED BY FRITZ KREISLER (1875 - 1962)
- SONATA IN B-FLAT MAJOR No. 27 KV 378, FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO**
- [05] ALLEGRO MODERATO 7:59
[06] ANDANTINO SOSTENUTO E CANTABILE 4:09
[07] RONDO 3:19
COMPOSED IN 1779
- [08] **RONDO IN C MAJOR KV 373, FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO** 4:58
ARRANGED BY PAUL KLENGEL (1854-1935) AND RUBEN KOSEMYAN



RUBEN KOSEMYAN

VIOLINS: LEOPOLD WIDHALM (1795) AND NICOLA I GAGLIANO
BOW: MARC LABERTE

NATALYA MNATSAKANYAN
& **MARGARITA GRIGORYAN***
PIANO BLÜTNER

WOLFGANG AMADEUS
MOZART
(1756 - 1791)

VIOLIN SONATAS
& RONDOS

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VIOLIN

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SONATA IN B-FLAT MAJOR No. 32 KV 454, FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO

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