

NAXOS

DOHNÁNYI

Violin Concertos Nos. 1 and 2

Michael Ludwig, Violin
Royal Scottish National Orchestra
JoAnn Falletta



Ernö von
DOHNÁNYI
(1877-1960)

Violin Concertos Nos. 1 and 2

Violin Concerto No. 1 in D minor, Op. 27 **40:40**

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1 Molto moderato, maestoso e rubato | 12:32 |
| 2 Andante | 8:24 |
| 3 Molto vivace | 6:04 |
| 4 Tempo del primo pezzo, rubato | 13:41 |

Violin Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 43 **30:43**

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 5 Allegro molto maestoso | 11:23 |
| 6 Intermezzo: Allegro comodo e scherzando | 3:42 |
| 7 Adagio molto sostenuto | 9:18 |
| 8 Allegro risoluto e giocoso | 6:20 |

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The work of the Hungarian composer Ernő von Dohnányi has in recent years been unduly neglected, although at one time his *Variations on a Nursery Theme* for piano and orchestra, at least, formed a regular element in concert programmes. In part this neglect was due to political circumstances and in part to changing musical fashions in which the overt nationalism of a younger generation of Hungarian composers was favoured, rather than the German late Romanticism that characterized Dohnányi's work. While Bartók and Kodály had recourse to Hungarian folk-music as a source of inspiration, often expressed, in the case of the former, with a certain asstringency, Dohnányi belonged much more to the German tradition in which he had largely been trained.

Ernö von Dohnányi was born in 1877 in Pozsony (the modern Slovakian capital, Bratislava). His father, an amateur musician, taught in Pozsony at the Catholic Gymnasium, where Bartók's widowed mother was to be employed and where Dohnányi and Bartók were both pupils. Four years the latter's senior, Dohnányi had organ lessons and instruction in music theory from Karl Forstner, organist at the Catholic cathedral, and began to enjoy early and precocious success. In 1894, rather than study in Vienna, as might have been expected, he chose to become a student at the Budapest Music Academy. There he was a piano pupil of István Thomán, a former pupil of Liszt and principal piano teacher at the Academy, where his composition teacher was the German composer Hans Koessler, a cousin of Max Reger and admirer of Brahms. Bartók was to study under the same teachers, but Dohnányi, while sharing Bartók's later prowess as a pianist, was more strongly influenced by the German school of composition.

In 1897 Dohnányi prepared for his début as a pianist in Berlin by brief study with Eugen d'Albert. He went on to give concerts in Germany and Austria, with an

invitation to London from Hans Richter and a triumphant performance of Beethoven's *Fourth Piano Concerto*. Thereafter he embarked on concert tours throughout Europe, in Russia and in the United States, establishing himself as a virtuoso to equal Liszt. In 1895 he had published his *Piano Quintet in C minor, Op. 1*, a work that Brahms declared he could not have done better himself; in 1896 he won the Royal Millennium Prize for his *Symphony in F major and Zrínyi*, and in 1899 his *Piano Concerto, Op. 5*, won the Bösendorfer Prize in Vienna. In 1905 he was invited by Joachim to join the staff of the Berlin Musikhochschule, where he taught until 1915, when, with the Great War now under way, he returned to Hungary, teaching at the Budapest Music Academy, giving encouragement to a younger generation of Hungarian composers, and doing much to reform systems of musical instruction in the country. In 1918 he became Principal Conductor of the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra and President of the Philharmonic Society, holding the latter position until 1944. He was briefly director of the Hungarian National Music High School in the newly established republic after 1918, but was dismissed in favour of Hubay by the right-wing Horthy government that soon took power.

Dohnányi's career as a conductor and pianist continued in Hungary and abroad, particularly in the United States, where, from 1925 to 1927 he served as Principal Conductor of the New York State Symphony Orchestra. In 1928 he returned to Hungary to teach at the Royal Franz Liszt Music School, of which he was to become director from 1934 until his resignation, for political reasons, in 1944. In 1931 he was appointed Music Director of Hungarian Radio. After his resignation in 1944 Dohnányi moved to Austria, a step that brought later criticism from his opponents and affected his post-war concert career. While he had been strongly against the antisemitic policies introduced into

Hungary through German intervention, he had no sympathy with the left-wing forces that were to come to power in Hungary after the war. In 1948 he moved to England and then to Argentina, and finally to the United States, undertaking various teaching duties in the last two countries. He died in New York in 1960 during a recording session, at a time when his reputation was starting to recover from the political attacks that had been made on him in the aftermath of the war.

Dohnányi completed his *Violin Concerto No. 1 in D minor, Op. 27*, in 1915, and it was published in Berlin in 1920. The first movement opens with the orchestral statement of the first theme, before the entry of the soloist with a cadenza, leading to the introduction of more lyrical material. The development of the movement brings in a further theme and episodes of virtuoso display continue, including in the final bars of the coda with which the movement ends. The romantic first theme of the slow movement, with its suggestion of Brahms, is introduced by bassoons and lower strings, followed by the upper strings. The material is developed, as the soloist enters, eventually taking up the theme, now marked *Tempo I più andante ed appassionato*. The third movement, marked *Molto vivace*, has a central section in B major in which the soloist is at first accompanied by the harp and wind instruments. This is framed by the opening G minor section and its lilting double-stopped subsidiary element, both returning to complete the movement. The cadenza of the first movement, now further developed and extended, opens the fourth movement, *Tempo del primo pezzo, rubato*. This is followed by a theme, marked *Allegro non troppo*, and entrusted initially to the first violins and cellos. This leads to a series of variations, the theme's initial debt to Brahms denied in a shift from major to minor in a more overtly Hungarian passage marked *Adagio ma non troppo, rubato*. The concerto draws to a close with a short cadenza and the return of the main theme of the first movement, before

the major key is restored, with another cadenza leading to a final *Molto allegro*.

Dohnányi's *Violin Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 43*, was written in 1949 and published in 1956 in a version for violin and piano. It is dedicated to the American violinist Frances Magnes, who gave the recorded first performance in April 1951 with the Florida State Symphony Orchestra. The work dates from the period during which Dohnányi was teaching at Florida State University, Tallahassee. After the opening exchange of chords the soloist offers a cadenza. The principal theme, marked *Molto espressivo, Tempo fermo*, leads to a lyrical secondary theme and an *Allegro con brio* of contrapuntal intricacy. A version of the initial cadenza ushers in the recapitulation and the movement ends in a gentle mood of lyrical nostalgia. The second movement, an *Intermezzo*, marked *Allegro comodo e scherzando*, is in the form of a rondo with occasional Hungarian colouring and brassy comment. To this the hymn-like theme of the slow movement, marked *Allegro molto sostenuto*, offers a distinct contrast. There is a reminiscence of the main theme of the first movement, heard from the trumpet, intervening in the violin cadenza, which continues, before the conclusion, with its recall of the two elements of the opening of the whole work, now in reverse order, the cadenza now followed by the exchange of chords between soloist and orchestra.

The last movement follows without a break, *Allegro risoluto e giocoso*, fulfilling the expectations of the initial direction of tempo and mood. The movement culminates in a cadenza based on the main theme of the *Allegro*, conventionally introduced and accompanied by the horn, leading to a conclusion in which thematic strands are interwoven.

Keith Anderson

Michael Ludwig



Hailed by *The Strad* magazine for his “effortless, envy-provoking technique... sweet tone, brilliant expression, and grand style”, Michael Ludwig enjoys a multi-faceted career as a soloist, recording artist, and chamber musician. He has performed on four continents, including appearances with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Boston Pops, the Buffalo Philharmonic, and the Shanghai Philharmonic, collaborating with such conductors as Sir Georg Solti, JoAnn Falletta, Joseph Silverstein, and John Williams. His career has taken him to engagements in Portugal, Lithuania, Japan, Mexico, the Czech Republic and throughout the United States, as well as bringing commissions for concertos by Daron Hagen and Behzad Ranjbaran. His growing discography includes the Corigliano *Violin Concerto* and the *Piano Trio* of Marcel Tyberg. As a chamber musician, he has shared the stage with numerous acclaimed artists, such as Christoph Eschenbach, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Yefim Bronfman, Sarah Chang, and Jean-Yves Thibaudet.

Website: www.MichaelLudwig.org

Photo: Mark Dellas

JoAnn Falletta



JoAnn Falletta has been hailed by *The New York Times* as “one of the finest conductors of her generation”. Recipient of the Seaver/National Endowment for the Arts Conductors Award, winner of the Stokowski Competition, and the Toscanini, Ditson and Bruno Walter conducting awards, she has also received nine awards from the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP). A champion of American music, she has presented over four hundred works by American composers including over eighty world premières. She currently serves as music director of both the Buffalo Philharmonic and the Virginia Symphony and guest conducts many of the world’s great symphony orchestras, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Dallas Symphony, Rotterdam Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and the National Symphony. For Naxos she has recorded works by Kenneth Fuchs, Charles Griffes, Aaron Copland, John Corigliano, Romeo Cascarino, Ottorino Respighi, Ernö von Dohnányi and Frederick Converse.

Website: www.joannfalletta.com

Photo: Mark Dellas

Royal Scottish National Orchestra

Formed in 1891 as the Scottish Orchestra, and subsequently known as the Scottish National Orchestra before being granted the title Royal at its centenary celebrations in 1991, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra is one of Europe's leading ensembles. Distinguished conductors who have contributed to the success of the orchestra include Sir John Barbiroli, Karl Ranzl, Hans Swarowsky, Walter Susskind, Sir Alexander Gibson, Bryden Thomson, Neeme Järvi, now Conductor Laureate, and Walter Weller who is now Conductor Emeritus. Alexander Lazarev, who served as Principal Conductor from 1997 to 2005, was recently appointed Conductor Emeritus. Stéphane Denève was appointed Music Director in 2005. Denève's first recording with the RSNO, Albert Roussel's *Symphony No. 3* and the complete ballet suite *Bacchus et Ariane* (Naxos 8.570245) was released in May 2007, and in November received the *Diapason d'Or de l'Année* for Symphonic Music. The orchestra made an important contribution to the authoritative Naxos series of Bruckner Symphonies under the late Georg Tintner, and recorded a complete cycle of the orchestral works of Samuel Barber under former Principal Guest Conductor Marin Alsop. The orchestra performs a busy schedule of concerts across Scotland with annual appearances at the Edinburgh International Festival and regular performances in the BBC Promenade Concerts in London.



Photo: Peter Devlin



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Best known for his *Variations on a Nursery Theme* for piano and orchestra, the Hungarian composer Ernő von Dohnányi also wrote two published Symphonies, two Piano Concertos and two Violin Concertos, all of which have been undeservedly neglected. The rarely heard *Violin Concerto No. 1*, notable for its Brahmsian slow movement, combines virtuosity and lyricism. Written in the mould of the great Romantic violin concerto, and with an unmistakably Hungarian flavour, the superbly orchestrated and remarkably inventive *Violin Concerto No. 2* (1949-50) is worthy of being ranked alongside the Concertos by Barber and Korngold.

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