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Hummel

PIANO CONCERTOS

volume 2

Piano Concerto in A
Concerto for piano, violin and orchestra Op. 17

Alessandro Commellato *fortepiano*

Stefano Barneschi *violin*

La Galante · Milano Classica

Didier Talpain

JOHANN NEPOMUK HUMMEL 1778–1837

Concerto for piano and orchestra in A WoO 24a S.5

- | | | |
|---|---------------------|-------|
| 1 | I. Allegro moderato | 14'37 |
| 2 | II. Romanze: Adagio | 6'07 |
| 3 | III. Rondo | 9'01 |

Alessandro Commellato *fortepiano* Joseph Böhm, Vienna, 1825

Stefano Barneschi *violin* Giacinto Santagiuliana, 1830 (4–6)

Didier Talpain *conductor*

First recordings on period instruments

La Galante on period instruments (1–3)

Violins I Archimede De Martini, Simone Draetta, Artem Dzeganovskyi, Tatiani Romo Bocanegra

Violins II Gemma Longoni, Regina Yugovich, Pierfrancesco Pelà, Cristiana Franco, Debora Travaini

Violas Domenico Scicchitano, Marco Calderara, Leoluca De Miceli

Cellos Marcello Scandelli, Maria Calvo, Giacomo Biagi

Double Basses Davide Nava, Paolo Bogno

Flute Marcello Lucifora

Oboes Andrea Mion, Elisabeth Passot

Bassoon Alberto Guerra

Horns Ermes Pecchinini, Elisa Giovangrandi

Concerto for piano, violin and orchestra in G Op.17

- | | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 4 | I. Allegro con brio
cadenza: J.N. Hummel | 14'28 |
| 5 | II. Tema con Variazioni (Andante con moto) | 9'55 |
| 6 | III. Rondo
cadenza: A. Commellato | 8'20 |
| | | 62'31 |

Milano Classica on period instruments (4–6)

Violins I Eleonora Matsuno, Benedicta Manfredi, Jodi Livo, Cosetta Ponte, Steven Slade

Violins II Alessandro Vescovi, Sara Meloni, Silvana Pomarico, Arcimede di Martini

Violas Claudia Brancaccio, Leoluca De Miceli

Cellos Cosimo Carovani, Marlise Goidanich

Double Basses Carlo Segarro, Paolo Bogno

Flute Marco Brolli

Oboes Rei Ishizaka, Michele Favaro

Bassoons Leonardo Dosso, Luca Barchi

Horns Ermes Pecchinini, Benedetto Dall'Aglio

Johann Nepomuk Hummel, born in Pressburg (Bratislava) on 14 November 1778, was one of the most renowned and respected composer-pianists of his time, before falling into undeserved neglect, from which he is gradually emerging today.

He was born into a family of musicians: his father Joseph, the director of the Imperial School of Military Music in Pressburg, would be his first teacher. He made rapid progress, particularly at the keyboard, and the child prodigy soon caught the attention of none other than Mozart himself. Impressed by young Hummel's talent, Mozart offered to take him in as a lodger so as to give him lessons and instruction. This lasted from 1786 to 1788, the time when Mozart was composing one of his most famous operas, *Le nozze di Figaro*. Mozart's influence would long remain apparent in Hummel's music, most particularly in his first concertos for piano. Hummel had often played his teacher's works, and had even arranged some of his symphonies and concertos for chamber ensemble.

Then it was time – just as it had been for Mozart some 20 years earlier – to set off on tours and travels. Now it was Hummel's turn to cross Europe, from Germany to the Low Countries, from Denmark to England and Scotland. After five years on the road, he returned to Vienna for a new period of apprenticeship with practically every talented musician then living in the imperial capital. It is 1793, Mozart has been dead for two years, and the young Johann Nepomuk is now 15 years old. His teachers during these years were Albrechtsberger, Salieri and, of course, Joseph Haydn (1732–1809).

It was the latter composer who was instrumental in bringing about a new phase in Hummel's musical life. Haydn, the most famous and admired musician in all Europe at this time, was still kapellmeister to the Esterházy family, whose two palaces at Eisenstadt and Eszterháza (today Fertőd), each situated some 70 kilometres from Bratislava, were musical centres of the first order. With his strength failing, he backed his pupil Hummel's candidacy for the post of konzertmeister to Prince Nikolaus Esterházy. Hummel would fulfil this prestigious role for seven years (1804–11), during which he composed intensively: religious music, cantatas, operas (some for Eisenstadt, others, such as *Mathilde von Guise* of 1810, for Viennese theatres) as well as piano music and other pieces.

It would seem, however, that his (too?) frequent stays in Vienna had the result of upsetting his employer, who terminated his contract in 1811. Hummel then settled in the Habsburg capital, where he led the life of an independent artist, dividing his time between composition, giving lessons and concerts, at which audiences marvelled at his incredible virtuosity. One notable occasion was being applauded as conductor and pianist by the highest-ranking diplomats who were attending the famous Congress of Vienna of 1815 and who, in between two rounds of negotiations that were

destined to redraw the map of post-Napoleonic Europe, were assiduous visitors to the ballrooms and concert halls. It was also at this time that Hummel frequently crossed paths with Beethoven, with whom he would always have a rather complicated relationship, one of friendship as well as rivalry. It is true that, aside from their supporters forever pitting them against each other, there was a lot that set them apart. Without going into the eternal question of 'talent versus genius', it must be acknowledged that there was little in common between the sensitive, *bon vivant* virtuoso who was entirely at home in salons and worldly circles and the Promethean titan known for his powerful playing and prickly character.

Perhaps a little tired of this life, Hummel accepted the post of kapellmeister in the service of the Duke of Württemberg at Stuttgart (1816–19), where he doesn't appear to have been particularly happy, after which he was offered the same role at Weimar by the Grand Duke of Saxony. He would remain there from 1819 until the end of his life in 1837, not without undertaking numerous triumphant tours across the whole of Europe as a virtuoso pianist, such absences from the Grand Ducal court (three months per year) having been provided for in his contract! Among other cities, he was seen in St Petersburg and Warsaw (where he would have a lasting influence on Chopin) and particularly in London and Paris, which were the most important musical centres in Europe in the 1830s. Back in Weimar, he would form a friendship with his famous contemporary Goethe and give (expensive) lessons to a whole new generation of pianists, while continuing to write in all genres (except symphonies and religious music), and he would also be one of the first to be actively involved in protecting the copyright of artists and musicians. Even if, in his later years, up-and-coming pianists (such as Liszt) had begun to supplant him in the public imagination, his death would be the occasion for numerous tributes. He left two sons, one of whom, Karl, would grow up to become a renowned painter.

Hummel's music for piano and orchestra

Studying Hummel's career and artistic development by way of his output for piano and orchestra is a fascinating exercise, not only as he wrote pieces of this kind throughout his life but also, as an accomplished virtuoso, he composed them for his own use as a concert artist. This body of work comprises ten concertos (four youthful works and six 'grown-up' concertos, in C major Op.34a, A minor Op.85, B minor Op.89, E major Op.110, A flat major Op.113 and F major Op.post.1), to which may be added four Rondos (Opp. 56, 98, 117 and 127), a grand Fantasia Op.116 on themes from Weber's *Oberon* and three sets of variations (Opp. 6, 97 and 115).

The two concertos featured on this CD belong to the four works dating from the composer's youth (alongside another concerto in A major WoO 24 S.4 – his first work in the genre – likewise unpublished, the manuscript of which is housed in the British Library in London, and the Concertino in G major Op.73, which Hummel himself reworked around 1815 from his Mandolin Concerto of 1799).

Concerto for piano and orchestra in A WoO 24a S.5 (c.1795–1800)

(orchestra: flute, 2 oboes, bassoon, 2 horns and strings)

This work, chronologically the composer's second concerto for piano, languished in obscurity for a long time. Indeed, it was only rediscovered in the 1960s among the papers of Maria Hummel – a direct descendant of the composer who was living in Florence at that time – and today it is part of the collection of the Goethe-Museum in Düsseldorf (Anton and Katharina Kippenberg Foundation). Its title page bears the inscription *Gran Concerto/per il Piano-forte/composto/dall/Giov. Nep. Hummel*, with the mention 'not to be published' (*sic*). It is this manuscript that has formed the basis for the new material used for this recording.

Stylistically, in this piece, Hummel is very close to works by his teacher Mozart. Some of the tuttis in the first movement even seem to echo the famous Concerto for Clarinet K622, written in the same radiant key of A major. But what we are dealing with here is the exuberant work of a composer barely 20 years of age, whose writing – a distinctive feature of this concerto – makes extensive use of the upper register of the keyboard, right from the soloist's first entry 'on tiptoes' (one of the 'highest' entries in the entire literature for piano and orchestra). This work is one of the very first concertos to be written in the 'brilliant' style, a genre that Hummel himself and others (Ries, Czerny, Kalkbrenner, Moscheles, *etc.*) would make very popular in the period 1810–30. Using the structure of sonata form with two themes, this long first movement is notable for the sophisticated counterpoint that Hummel deploys in the orchestral accompaniments to the solo episodes.

The second movement takes the form of a short and very poetic Romanze in E major. In the piano-writing for the right hand the melody is embellished by highly florid ornamentation (in the 'decorativo-cantabile' style), an approach that Hummel would often revisit in his later compositions for piano and which Chopin – who had a great admiration for him and who played several of his works as well as having his pupils play them¹ – would carry to its highest level.

¹ In a letter to the pianist Anna Caroline de Belleville-Oury from 1842, Chopin says, '...the Masters we all recognise, all the great composers like Mozart, Beethoven and Hummel'.

The Rondo finale, whose every couplet is another opportunity for the soloist to shine, is a lilting 'sonata rondo' in 6/8 time which could be described as a 'sunny' counterpart to the finale of Mozart's Concerto K482, written in the more 'heroic' key of E flat major. As in the first movement, the woodwinds (flute, oboes, bassoon) are very active here – although Hummel doesn't treat them as soloists in the way Mozart does in his mature piano concertos – and the strings participate fully in the elaboration of the thematic material. Notable is the way the central, dramatic episode in F sharp minor makes use of the characteristic rhythm that forms the basis of the whole of the first movement of Symphony No.7 by Beethoven, Hummel's friend and rival.

Concerto for piano, violin and orchestra in G Op.17 (c.1805)

(orchestra: flute, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 2 horns and strings)

The combination of keyboard, violin and orchestra hasn't been that frequently taken up by composers. Apart from the specific case of the two triple concertos by J.S. Bach – the Brandenburg Concerto No.5 (BWV1050) and Triple Concerto (BWV1044) are both scored for harpsichord, violin, flute, strings and continuo – examples are Vivaldi's five concertos for violin, organ, strings and continuo (RV 541, 542, 554, 766 and 767), Joseph Haydn's Concerto for harpsichord, violin and strings (Hob.XVIII:6) and his brother Michael's Concerto for organ, viola and strings (MH41), Mozart's Concerto for violin, piano and orchestra (K Anh.56/315f, begun in Mannheim in 1778 and sadly left incomplete), Viotti's Piano Concerto with obbligato violin (W1a.3), Mendelssohn's youthful Concerto for piano, violin and strings and, closer to our time, Martinů's Concerto for violin, piano and orchestra of 1953 (H342).

Published in 1805 by Traeg of Vienna, Hummel's concerto is also very close to Mozartian models from around 1780–90. The opening theme of the first movement, with its *piano* dynamic, dotted rhythms and discreet echoes from the woodwinds, is reminiscent of the start of Mozart's Concerto K453, written in the same key of G major. This sparkling movement – whose demanding, high and extremely virtuosic writing for the violin is not unlike that found in the concertos of the Chevalier de Saint-Georges (1745–1799) – exploits all the possibilities of the combination of piano, violin and orchestra, with the soloists by turns appearing on their own or together with the orchestra. The highly elaborate cadenza is by the composer himself.

The second movement presents a set of six variations on a very simple, almost entirely stepwise theme in C major. The two soloists play alternately rather than together, exploring ever busier rhythmic patterns and accompanied by wind interjections, solo then in pairs (oboes then bassoons then horns), stating the original theme beneath cascades of notes from the piano and the violin. A coda in dotted rhythms and heroic tones leads to a truly serene conclusion.

The third movement is a classic Rondo in which a very dancelike refrain alternates with a number of couplets. A central episode in G minor offers a striking contrast with the rest of the movement, which is suffused with the atmosphere of the *opere buffe* by Cimarosa and the *farse* of the youthful Rossini. The cadenza, composed by Alessandro Commellato, is both a contemporary homage to Hummel and a humorous opportunity to showcase the piano's 'janissary' (or Turkish percussion) stop, activated by a special pedal often found on Viennese instruments from around 1800–1840, such as the 1825 Böhm instrument used on this recording.

Didier Talpain

Translation: Robert Sargant



A pupil of Carlo Vidusso, Pier Narciso Masi, Sergio Fiorentino and Evgeny Malinin, **Alessandro Commellato** studied at the Conservatory in Milan and won competitions in Dortmund (Schubert), Porto, Rome (Rendano) and Stresa.

As a soloist he has performed with the Teatro alla Scala of Milan, Teatro la Fenice of Venice, St Petersburg Philharmonic, Prague Philharmonic, Zagreb Radio Symphony Orchestra, Odessa Philharmonic, Moldovan National Chamber Orchestra, Krasnodar Premier Chamber Orchestra, Omsk Philharmonic, Bacau Philharmonic, Solamente Naturali Bratislava, Giuseppe Verdi Symphony Orchestra of Milan, Sinfonica Toscanini, Milano Classica and toured in the USA, Japan and Australia.

He has premiered contemporary music in Salzburg (Mozarteum), Madrid (Auditorio Nacional), Melbourne, New York (The Americas Society), Milan (Musica nel nostro tempo) and at the Autunno Musicale festival (Como) and the Venice Biennale.

Commellato performed in the world premiere of *Chéri* at the Teatro alla Scala and *Autour de Chopin* at the Grand Theatre in Warsaw. He was also soloist in Adriano Guarnieri's *Medea*, premiered at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice.

He is regularly invited to play at festivals in Lausanne, Lugano, Verbier, Innsbruck, Lockenhaus, Bremen, Helsinki, Bratislava, Aix-en-Provence, Mulhouse, the Notturmi in Villa (Milan), Accademia del Fortepiano (Florence), the Urbino Early Music Festival, GOG, Amici della Musica (Palermo) and in Barga, Varallo Sesia. His current projects focus on Beethoven, Hummel, Chopin, Thalberg and Stanchinsky. As a chamber player he performs with (among others) the Atalanta Fugiens Ensemble, Le Musiche Berlin and Solamente Naturali.

In Cremona he has collaborated with Bruno Giuranna and Salvatore Accardo. He has recorded Rossini's *Péchés de vieillesse* for Paragon per Amadeus and music by Hummel (concertos and septets), Ries (cello sonatas, with Gaetano Nasillo) and Beethoven (complete early variations) for Brilliant Classics.

Commellato is currently professor of piano at the Conservatory 'Guido Cantelli' in Novara.



Stefano Barneschi studied at the Civica Scuola di Musica in Milan with Carlo De Martini, graduating in 1991; in the same year he became concertmaster of Il Giardino Armonico, an Italian early music ensemble that specialises in playing on period instruments, with whom he has performed at important festivals and in the finest national and international concert seasons alongside artists like Isabelle Faust, Viktoria Mullova, Giuliano Carmignola, Christophe Coin, Giovanni Sollima, Cecilia Bartoli and Anna Prohaska.

He has previously been guest concertmaster of other period instrument ensembles such as La Scintilla, Orquesta Barroca de Sevilla, L'Accademia Giocosa, Diego Fasolis' I Barocchisti, Il Pomo d'Oro, Luca Pianca's Ensemble Claudiana and Lorenzo Ghielmi's La Divina Armonia, with whom he has recorded Haydn's Violin Concerto in G. He has also played in the chamber ensemble La Gaia Scienza, with whom he has recorded Schubert's Fortepiano Trios, Schumann's Piano Quartet Op.47 and Piano Quintet Op.44 and the Piano Quartet Op.60 and Piano Quintet Op.34 by Brahms.

He regularly performs with the Kammerorchester Basel and has recorded, among others, for Teldec, Decca, Naïve, Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, Winter & Winter, Passacaille and Amadeus.



Didier Talpain conducted his first concert at the age of 18. After studying flute and bassoon, he went on to study conducting at the École Normale de Musique (graduating with highest honours) and the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris (with Gianfranco Rivoli). He won the Yehudi Menuhin Foundation award and a prize for interpretation at the International Conducting Competition 'Boris Perrenoud' in Vienna. He then spent several years as conductor of the Orchestre de Chambre de Champagne, the Orchestre Ars Instrumentalis and the Orchestre Paris Rive Droite.

He specialises in two areas in particular: period instrument performances of music from the years 1760–1830, and the French

operatic repertoire, which he champions at venues across Europe and further afield in countries such as Kazakhstan and Jordan. He is also an expert on the music of the sons of J.S. Bach and that of Johann Nepomuk Hummel, whose complete piano concertos are currently being recorded under his baton.

As a conductor he has recorded around 25 albums for BNL, Dynamic, Brilliant Classics and Ediciones Singulares. These include opera recordings like Hummel's *Mathilde de Guise*, Bizet's *Le Docteur Miracle* and *Don Procopio*, J.C. Bach's *Amadis de Gaule*, Catel's *Les Bayadères*, highlights from Meyerbeer's French operas and concert arias by Beethoven, Mozart and J.C. Bach. His CDs have been consistently well received by audiences and critics alike: the album *Patrie!*, which features rare duets from French Romantic operas, was nominated for the prestigious International Classical Music Awards in 2013; *Le Monde de la musique* praised his interpretation of C.P.E. Bach's Symphonies for strings Wq182 as 'the best version on the market', while a critic reviewing the Beethoven recordings described 'a sense of drama that Harnoncourt himself would not have disowned' (*Répertoire*).

Since 2007 he has regularly collaborated and recorded with Slovak early music ensemble Solamente Naturali, making appearances at the Bratislava Opera and Bratislava International Music Festival (BHS), as well as at the Prague and Saint-Étienne Opera Houses.

Guest conductor of the Moldovan National Chamber Orchestra between 2005–2010, he was also co-artistic director of 'Les Nuits pianistiques de Moldavie – Mer Noire', a festival based in Chişinău devoted to works for piano and orchestra, many of which he conducted himself.

A dedicated champion of French opera, he conducted a series of productions in Bulgaria between 2011–2016: Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable* (Sofia National Opera), Rossini's *Le Comte Ory* (Opera Varna), Bizet's *Les Pêcheurs de perles* (Plovdiv Festival and Sofia National Opera), Offenbach's *La Belle Hélène* (National Music Theatre, Sofia), Adam's *Le Postillon de Lonjumeau* (State Opera Stara Zagora), Catel's *Les Bayadères* and Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila* (Sofia National Opera).

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Piano tuning and maintenance: Alessandro Levanti

Recording and editing: Fabio Framba (1–3) and Claudio Vandelli (4–6)

Cover & back inlay picture: *Empress Elisabeth of Austria as bride on horseback in Pospenhofen, 1853*, painted from nature by Carl Theodor von Piloty (1826–1886), horse painted by Franz Adam (1815–1886)

Booklet photos: Andrea Sacchi KS (p.8); Sofia Sguerri (p.9); Frédéric Bonnetain (p.10)

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