

COMPLETE PIANO SONATAS
VOLUME 9

BRILLIANT
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Lussek

SONATAS OP.14 NOS. 1-3

& SONATE POUR LE CLAVECIN

OÙ LE FORTE-PIANO IN G

Bart van Oort & Petra Somlai fortepiano



Johann Ladislaus Dussek 1760-1812

Sonata in C Op.14 No.1, C.71

with the Air Russe (1791) *

1. I. Allegro 6'05
2. II. Andante poco larghetto 2'41
3. III. *Air Russe*. Rondo: Allegretto non troppo (1790) 2'56

Sonata in G Op.14 No.2, C.72 (1791)**

4. Larghetto con espressione 8'08
5. Molto Allegro 6'25

Sonata in F Op.14 No.3, C.73 (1791)**

6. Allegro 10'20
7. Rondo: Allegretto 4'58

Sonate pour le Clavecin où le Forte-Piano in G, WoO, C.40 (1788)*

8. Larghetto col espressione 5'36
9. Allegro 9'05

Bart van Oort* & Petra Somlai** *fortepiano*

Fortepiano after Walter by Chris Maene (Ruisseledé, Belgium, 2010)

Eventful years

Late 1786, Johann Ladislaus Dussek left Berlin and travelled to Paris, where he performed at court and became a favourite of Marie Antoinette. According to the important 19th-century musicologist Fétis, Dussek received generous offers from Marie Antoinette who hoped to seduce him to stay in Paris. His years in Paris were briefly interrupted by a trip to Milan, where he “produced quite a sensation in spite of the fact that the Italians at this time had little appreciation for the beauties of instrumental music.” Groves Dictionary (1879) writes that “Dussek earned new laurels as a performer, both on the pianoforte and [keyed glass] harmonica; but the volatile Italians showed a preference for the inferior instrument, which was by no means flattering to the gifted Bohemian.” Early in 1788, Dussek returned to Paris.

In Paris, he published his first opus, three sonatas for piano with violin accompaniment (C. 5-7). This may come as no surprise, as accompanied sonatas were the repertory of the higher classes. Even the nine sonatas, Opus 9, 10 and 14, included in this ‘Complete Piano Sonatas’ project – ultimately pianistic, brilliant, soloistic pieces – have *ad libitum* violin parts which could be left out when no gentleman felt like accompanying the (often female) pianist during the long, afternoon social gatherings.

Indeed, the *ad libitum* violin parts indicated on the title page in some of the 33 piano sonatas presented in these ten albums are so unsubstantial against the brilliant and detailed piano parts that these sonatas can safely be called real piano sonatas. However, there are no less than 45 sonatas with a more substantial violin part, and even half of the 24 sonatinas – a term which was invented just before 1800 to indicate dilettante salon repertoire – are accompanied by a dismissible flute or violin part. (None of these works with a significant second part are included in this project.)

During his time in Paris and Milan, Dussek wrote no less than 20 violin sonatas, 9 piano trios and 6 piano variation sets – but only two piano sonatas: the spectacular and innovative Sonata in G (C.40) included in this album and Sonata No.3 of Op.5 (C.43). The Sonata in G from 1788 appeared in Volume 51 of a magazine called *Journal de Pièces de Clavecin par différens Auteurs* and therefore has no opus

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Cover: Whitehall, by William Marlow, ca. 1775 – Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B1976.7.132

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number. It is a technically challenging and musically forward-looking work and already bears some of the early 19th-century impressionism that would become particular to the piano music of English composers around 1800.

Dussek was beloved by contemporaries and colleagues. The Italian composer Giacomo Gotifredo Ferrari was in Paris at the time and wrote:

“Eranvi a quel tempo stabiliti sin da molti anni a Parigi tre celebri maestri di pianoforte: Hüllmandel, Küffner, ed Adam. Arrivarono poscia successivamente i rinomati pianisti: Dussek, detto le beau Dussek, il più amabile faceto del mondo, sempre allegro e gioioso, nè mai turbato da affari d’alcuna sorta. Era un gran suonatore, ed aveva un genio naturale ed insinuante per la composizione.”

Just before the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, Dussek fled to England. He was not popular with the revolutionary regime because of his connections with the aristocracy in Paris and, like many musicians of the time, took refuge in London. By June 1789, he was already performing in London and during this dramatic year composed his Sonatas Opp. 7, 8, 9 and 10 (C. 50-52 and 54-62): These are not salon pieces anymore but twelve grand works for the public stage inspired by the overwhelming musical scene in London, at that time the largest city in the world.

By 1790, Dussek was well-established as a piano teacher in London, and his lessons were so popular that only John Cramer could ask for a higher fee. The compositions by Dussek which can be dated from 1790 are a duo for harp and piano, Op.11 (C.63); six sonatas for piano and violin (C. 64-69); and the ‘Air Russe’, arranged as a rondo for piano (C.71-c). This rondo would become the third movement of the first sonata in C major of the Op.14 set.

London music life was full of famous musical visitors and competing concert organizations that fought for the service of the most brilliant performers. Dussek appeared in no less than ten concerts during the 1791 season, each time performing his own compositions. According to Dussek’s biographer Howard Allen Craw, ‘the earliest evidence of Dussek’s activities in 1791 is found in his appearance at the first concert of Salomon’s subscription series. The appearance of Joseph Haydn was a

special attraction for these twelve Friday evening performances.’ For Salomon’s tenth concert on May 20, Miss Corri (Dussek’s future wife) sang two arias and Dussek played ‘a piano sonata’. This piano sonata may well have been one of the Op.14 Sonatas, the only solo sonatas to be published in 1791.

In the summer of 1791, Dussek made a concert tour of Scotland with his future father-in-law – the Italian composer, impresario, music publisher and voice teacher – Domenico Corri. During his absence from London, Dussek loaned his Broadwood piano to Joseph Haydn, who was spending the summer at Lisson Grove. That Haydn and Dussek were already friends becomes clear from a letter by Haydn to Dussek’s father, himself an organist, a few months later. This letter details Dussek’s prominence in this exciting and competitive London music life and speaks for itself when it comes to revalidating Dussek’s compositions.

Wertheater Freund!

Ich danke Ihnen von Herzen, dass Die sich in dem letztern Schreiben an Ihren Hrn. Sohn auch zugleich meiner erinnern wollten; ich verdopple dafür mein Gegenkompliment, und schätze mich glücklich, Sie zu versichern, dass Sie den rechtschaffensten, gesittetsten, und in der Tonkunst den vortrefflichsten Mann zum Sohne haben. Ich liebe denselben eben so, wie Sie, weil er es ganz verdient. Geben Sie ihm dann den täglichen väterlichen Segen, so wird er stets glücklich seyn, welches ich Ihm wegen seinen grossen Talenten herzlich wünsche.

Ich bin mit aller Hochachtung ihr aufrichtigster Freund,

Joseph Haydn
London den 26. Februar 1792

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Editing: Blake and Abigail Proehl



Bart van Oort studied piano and fortepiano at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague, and with Malcolm Bilson at Cornell University (USA), receiving a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Historical Performance Practice in 1993. In 1986 he won the first prize and the Audience prize at the International

Fortepiano Competition in Bruges, Belgium. Bart van Oort teaches fortepiano and is a lecturer in Historical Performance Practice at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague and a guest teacher at the Norwegian Academy in Oslo, Norway. He travels around the world to perform, teach and lecture. Since 1997 Van Oort has made more than fifty recordings of chamber music and solo repertoire, including the prize-winning 4-CD box set *The Art of the Nocturne in the Nineteenth Century*, the *Complete Haydn Piano Trios* (10 albums) with his ensemble the Van Swieten Society, with Malcolm Bilson and five other fortepianists the *Complete Beethoven Piano Sonatas* and, with four other fortepianists, the *Complete Haydn Piano Sonatas*. In 2006 Bart van Oort completed a ten-year, 14-album recording project, the *Complete Works for Piano solo and Piano four-hands of Mozart*. With The Van Swieten Society various cds were recorded around Beethoven; Carl Maria Von Weber; Mendelssohn; and Schubert. Recent releases include Mozart Piano Concertos K466 and 467; J.C. Bach Sonatas Op.5 and Op.17; Beethoven Symphonies 3 and 5 in chamber music arrangements by Hummel and Ries; Hummel chamber music works with flute and cello; French Nocturnes (*The Art of the Nocturne in the Nineteenth Century*, Vol 5). To appear: Ferdinand Ries and contemporaries; Schubert Songs; Russian Nocturnes (*The Art of the Nocturne* Vol 6); Ferdinand Ries Violin Sonatas; Dussek Sonatas; Songs by Female Composers.

Petra Somlai was born in Hungary where she graduated in conducting and piano performance at the Béla Bartók Conservatory (Budapest) and completed her modern piano degree at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music (Budapest) in 2007. During these years the focus of her interest gradually turned to the authentic interpretation on period instruments. She studied fortepiano and harpsichord with David Ward (England), and later under the direction of Fabio Bonizzoni, Menno van Delft, and Bart van Oort at the Sweelinck Conservatory at Amsterdam and the Royal Conservatory at The Hague where she graduated *summa cum laude* in 2011. In 2010 Petra Somlai won first prize and the audience award at the International Fortepiano Competition in Bruges (Belgium). In the same year she received the National Junior Prima Prémium Award of Hungary as outstanding young artist. She performs at major international early music festivals such as the Brugge Musica Antiqua Festival; Utrecht Early Music Festival; Haydn Festival Eszterháza; Beethoven Festival Bonn, Budapest Beethoven Festival; Bach Festival Dordrecht; Klara Festival Brussels; AMUZ Festival Antwerp; and Musikfestspiele Potsdam Sanssouci; and has given concerts all over Europe and in the USA, Mexico, and Japan. Since 2012 she has performed often as a conducting soloist with various orchestras. Petra Somlai was assistant professor of Early Keyboards on the faculty of University of North Texas from 2013-2015. Since 2018 she has recorded several solo and chamber music albums. Currently she is professor of fortepiano at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague.