The background of the entire image is a vibrant blue watercolor wash. The color is a rich, slightly darker blue in the upper portion, gradually becoming lighter and more translucent towards the bottom, where it meets a white background. The texture of the watercolor is visible, with soft, irregular edges and subtle variations in tone.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS
mozart

THE PIANO
SONATAS

Robert Silverman

VOLUME I

Disc #1

Sonata No. 7 in C, K. 309 (284b)

Mannheim, 1777

Allegro con spirito

Andante un poco adagio

Rondo—Allegretto grazioso

Disc #1

Sonata No. 8 in D, K. 311 (284c)

Mannheim, 1777

Allegro con spirito

Andante con espressione

Rondo—Allegro

Disc #1

Sonata No. 9 in A minor, K. 310 (300d)

Paris, 1778

Allegro maestoso

Andante cantabile con espressione

Presto

Disc #2

Sonata No. 10 in C, K. 330 (300h)

Vienna, 1783

Allegro moderato

Andante cantabile

Allegretto

Disc #2

Sonata No. 11 in A, K. 331 (300i)

Vienna, 1783

Theme (andante grazioso) and variations

Menuetto

Alla Turca—Allegretto

Disc #2

Sonata No. 12 in F, K. 332 (300k)

Vienna, 1783

Allegro

Adagio

Allegretto grazioso

Disc #3

Sonata No. 13 in B-flat, K. 333 (315c)

Linz, 1783

Allegro

Andante cantabile

Allegro grazioso

Disc #3

Fantasy & Sonata No. 14 in C minor, K. 475/457

Vienna, 1785/1784

Fantasia

Allegro

Adagio

Rondo

VOLUME II

Disc #4

Sonata No. 15 in F, K. 533/494

Vienna, 1788/1786

Allegro

Andante

Rondo

Disc #4

Sonata No. 16 in C, K. 545

Vienna, 1788

Allegro

Andante

Rondo—Allegretto

Disc #5

Sonata No. 17 in B-flat, K. 570

Vienna, 1789

Allegro

Andante

Rondo—Allegretto

Disc #5

Sonata No. 18 in D, K. 576

Vienna, 1789

Allegro

Adagio

Allegretto

VOLUME III

Disc #6

Sonata No. 1 in C, K. 279 (189d)

Munich, 1775

Allegro

Andante

Allegro

Disc #6

Sonata No. 2 in F, K. 280 (189e)

Munich, 1775

Allegro assai

Adagio

Presto

Disc #6

Sonata No. 3 in B-flat, K. 281 (189f)

Munich, 1775

Allegro

Andante amoroso

Rondeau—Allegro

Disc #7

Sonata No. 4 in E-flat, K. 282 (189g)

Munich, 1775

Adagio

Menuetto I & II

Allegro

Disc #7

Sonata No. 5 in G, K. 283 (189h)

Munich, 1775

Allegro

Andante

Presto

Disc #7

Sonata No. 6 in D, K. 284 (205b) “Durnitz”

Munich, 1775

Allegro

Rondeau en Polonaise—Andante

Theme with variations

A note about the ordering of the sonatas in this album: The pitfalls of automatically dividing every composer's output into three distinct periods representing his early work, his period of maturity, and a final “philosophical” phase are too numerous to mention. However, Mozart's sonatas do indeed fit into a broad tri-partite scheme. In a discussion with Ray Kimber about the order in which the sonatas should appear, he suggested: “Why don't you take a cue from the Star Wars films? Do the central ones first since you argue that they're the most crucial ones, follow up with the last four as a sequel, and finally, let the first six be heard as a prequel?” Why not, indeed? RS



Bio

In a career spanning more than five decades, Robert Silverman has climbed every peak of serious pianism: lauded performances of the complete sonata cycles by Beethoven and Mozart; concerts in prestigious halls across the globe; orchestral appearances with many of the world's greatest conductors; and award-winning recordings distributed internationally.

Recognized as one of Canada's premiere pianists, Robert Silverman has reached a level of musical and technical authority that can only be accomplished after years of deep commitment to the instrument and its vast literature. Many aspects of Silverman's playing are frequently noted: a polished technique, an extraordinary range of tonal palette, an uncanny ability to sing his way into the heart of a phrase, and probing interpretations of the most complex works in the repertoire.

The distinguished pianist has performed in concert halls throughout North America, Europe, the Far East and Australia. Under the batons of such renowned conductors as Seiji Ozawa, John Eliot Gardiner, Gerard Schwarz, Neeme Järvi, and the late Kiril Kondrashin and Sergiu Comissiona, he has appeared with orchestras on three continents, including the Chicago Symphony, the Sydney Symphony, the BBC (London) Symphony, the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestras, and every major orchestra in Canada.

Robert Silverman's discography includes 25 CDs and a dozen LPs. His recording of Liszt's piano music received a Grand Prix du Disque from the Liszt Society of Budapest, while his widely-acclaimed 10-CD recording of all thirty-two Beethoven sonatas was short-listed for a Juno Award.

In 1998 Robert Silverman was named the first winner of the Paul de Hueck and Norman Walford Career Achievement Award for Keyboard Artistry, administered by the Ontario Arts Council Foundation, in recognition of "his high level of artistry, his moving interpretations of a wide range of music...and his commitment and contribution to music in Canada."

Robert Silverman resides in Vancouver where he was a faculty member at the University of British Columbia for thirty years, served a 5-year term as Director of the School of Music in the 1990s, and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters in 2004. He now devotes himself full-time to concertizing and recording. He is frequently heard on the CBC English and French radio network; a Steinway artist, he has recorded for EMI, Stereophile, Marquis Classics, OrpheumMasters and CBC Records. He also lectures on piano music for the Celebrity Cruise line.

Silverman enjoys an enormous following on the internet, where a generous selection of his recordings is accessible on YouTube and Garageband.

Mozart and the Piano

Robert Silverman

Mozart's piano sonatas are not commonly believed to be representative of his finest work. I disagree. Admittedly, they are not as central to his *oeuvre* as Beethoven's. Beethoven's sonatas provide a unique view into his development from work to work, whereas Mozart's offer snapshots of possibly the greatest musical talent of all time, taken from his teen-aged years until 1789, two years before his death.

We must not forget that even he had to undergo an extended learning curve. He started composing at the age of five, but with a few notable exceptions, the greatest of his works all bear a Köchel number¹ above 350, when he was in his early-to-mid twenties, and it was only during the last seven or eight years of his life that he turned out masterpieces one after another. In other words, even a prodigious talent like Mozart required a 15-year "apprenticeship" in order to begin hitting his stride.

A full third of his piano sonatas (those he performed on his tours, and referred to as the "difficult" ones) were written during that period. A glance at Köchel reveals that, far from being relatively weak, they are remarkably representative of his best efforts at the time of their composition. Nor is this observation confined to the earlier sonatas: it remained true until about 1785. Even the final four sonatas, composed at the pinnacle of his powers, are superb, if no longer at his cutting edge.

He had another obstacle to overcome: like Josef Haydn, he began writing piano sonatas at a time when both the mature classical language and the instrument itself were so new that, although many sonatas had already been published, and those by Bach's sons Carl Philip Emanuel and Johann Christian would serve as particularly useful models, no composer had thus far created a true solo piano masterpiece. Inevitably, the two greatest composers of the era had to figure

¹ Mozart's compositions are universally identified by means of a chronological catalog developed in the 19th-century by scholar Ludwig von Köchel. The K or K.V. (*Köchel Verzeichnis*) number is an indication of where a particular piece lies within the composer's entire output of 626 works. Although the original catalog was reasonably accurate for its time, recent research has uncovered many errors in the original catalog, and this has resulted in numerous revisions, including an important one made in 1937 by Mozart scholar Alfred (not Albert) Einstein. Those numbers are often placed in brackets beside the original.

out for themselves how to write for the piano, and they did so in diametrically opposed ways. Haydn experimented far more with the keyboard's possibilities—unusual pedal effects, placing the hands at the keyboard's extremities, etc.—but often did not achieve results comparable to the quality found in his ground-breaking quartets and symphonies. In contrast, Mozart, by treating the instrument conservatively and thinning out his textures, was more able to apply his masterful, recognizable hand to his piano music. Moreover, it is fascinating to witness how those achievements would subsequently make their way into his symphonic and chamber works, and even his operas.


The score of a Mozart sonata is often analogous to the tip of an iceberg. What is not written down is as important as the notes that are present. Whenever I hear or play a Mozart sonata, I always find myself filling in other, unwritten parts in my head. When teaching these pieces, I sit at a second piano, and play what I can of those “un-composed” parts, so that my students can comprehend the totality of the piece.²

There was another problem: the fortepiano itself. This transitional instrument for which Mozart wrote was changing from year to year throughout his lifetime. He had only known the inferior pianos that preceded his discovery of Stein's instrument, so of course he would have sung of its delights, as he did in a famous letter. Moreover, differences among products from various piano makers at any given moment were enormous.

It is undeniably enlightening to hear Mozart sonatas performed on instruments that he would have recognized, and there are—finally—some fortepianists around with enough chops and musicality to give us a fair picture of what artistic performances may have sounded like in the late 18th century. That said, demanding, as some polemicists still do, that one perform Mozart solely on the fortepiano is tantamount to insisting that one use a Commodore 64 to perform those tasks that home computers of twenty-five years ago could accomplish, and reserve the latest PC or Mac solely for video editing and internet browsing.

I am convinced he would have killed to have a modern piano at his disposal. Its tonal and dynamic ranges are so much wider, with far more possibilities for subtlety. Fortunately, many

² Interestingly, Grieg used to employ that practice with his own students (albeit in an ultra-romantic manner) and even published some of those accompaniments.



pianists today have no problem performing Mozart on a contemporary instrument. However, a major reconfiguring of technique is in order for any traditionally trained player wishing to seriously explore that repertoire. Such issues as expressivity, touch, inflection, and dynamics, even the basic hand position, require special thought and study. The late nineteenth century “competition” pianism so favored by today’s younger keyboard athletes and their coaches runs absolutely contrary to what is required for this music.

Mozart was consistently praised for his even technique and musical taste (not to mention his improvisatory powers and phenomenal memory). He complains in one of his letters about a pianist who lacked a cultivated *legato*, so he obviously considered that aspect of keyboard playing to be important. In another letter he praises those qualities in Rosa Cannabich, a pianist for whom he wrote his seventh sonata. Nonetheless, *legato* was a special effect for Mozart, not his standard *modus operandi*. This creates problems for today’s performer, for even during Mozart’s lifetime, his style of detached playing was fast becoming old-fashioned. Beethoven, who heard Mozart perform in 1787, later referred to his pianism as “finger-dancing,” although he also defended Mozart by saying “of course, he always had terrible pianos to deal with in those days.” (In other words, some of today’s proponents of authenticity make a fetish of performing Mozart solely on an instrument that Beethoven had already found outdated.)

Ultimately, the legitimate (and unanswerable) question remains: was Mozart’s detached style truly his ideal way of playing, or was it his way of dealing with the sluggish action of most pianos he came across in his career? In the well-documented contest between Mozart and Clementi in 1781, the outcome was decidedly mixed, and may even have been in Clementi’s favour. According to some reports, Mozart was the more tasteful player, but Clementi used his impressive virtuosity and pervasive legato touch to great effect. In any case, his style undeniably pointed to the direction pianism was headed in the near future. Mozart spoke disrespectfully of Clementi’s playing, and might not have thought much of Beethoven’s either, had he lived to hear it.

Although Mozart used performing directions relatively sparingly, enough of them exist to give us a fair idea of what he may or may not have approved. Those pervasive staccatos and inflective phrase-markings over two or three notes are an important element of the classical style, and must be observed. However, these were never intended by the composer as a substitute for larger-scale harmonic and melodic organization, which also must be delineated with clarity.

Observing only the former results in the musical equivalent of a bird picking erratically at its food; similarly, eliminating them and introducing long legato phrases lasting for measures results in a style that in the hands of a fine pianist may be quite beautiful, but is nonetheless seriously outmoded.

With a handful of exceptions, *forte* and *piano* are the sole dynamic markings Mozart employed; only a handful of fortissimi, *pianissimi*, or gradational markings can be found in all the sonatas. Furthermore, the openings of virtually all fifty-five movements are either marked piano, or alternately, there is no indication whatsoever, in which case the first subsequent marking is invariably a *piano*. In other words, a relatively loud opening is clearly implied where no indication is given, but how loud is loud? Does the delicate 4th sonata begin at the same dynamic level as the stormy 8th? Hardly. There is probably no other composer for whom *forte* and *piano* are as relative as for Mozart. The slavish observance of such markings or the lack of them, without regard to musical context is no key to authenticity in performance; more than minimal intelligence and insight are required to determine how loud and soft the music should be at any given time and how to effect the change from one to another.

Above all, when performing Mozart on any instrument the player must remember that Mozart was fundamentally an opera composer, even when he was not composing operas. Drama was in his blood. And what a gripping sense of drama he had! In the past 200 years we have come to know the operas of Donizetti, Verdi, Puccini, Wagner, Strauss, Berg, and so on, but none of that repertoire existed, or was even dreamt about when Mozart's stage works first appeared. His operas were not considered elegant, or charming. They were not intended to "go down easy," as opera director Peter Sellars has stated.

In order to perceive Mozart as he must have appeared to his contemporaries, you have to forget all music written since, from Beethoven onward. So it is with the sonatas: Each has its own story to tell. Dialogue, aria, and ensembles abound. His stage must at all times be populated with dynamic characters who interact with each other, often fiercely. His piano must sing; it must speak; it must shout at times. And if that were not enough of a task for the performer, it must also dance.

Sonatas 1 – 6 (1775)

Note: For those seeking more background on some of the topics that appear in the following paragraphs, I have written extensively on sonata form in the program notes accompanying my earlier album of the thirty-two Beethoven sonatas (now out of print). See <http://robertsilverman.ca/index.php?mpage=essays>. Needless to say, numerous authorities have also dealt with this all-important form. Charles Rosen and William Newman come easily to mind.

Unbelievable as it may seem, Mozart was a relative latecomer to piano sonata composition in 1775, when at the age of nineteen he set down his first six essays in that form. By then, he had already explored virtually every other genre: eight theater works, about as many masses, a dozen string quartets, and over fifty orchestral compositions.

Since the piano was his first instrument, one must wonder why. Simply, there was no need for the young Mozart to write out a solo sonata, for if called upon to perform one, he could easily do so extemporaneously. His previous sonata output was limited to a few that were composed during his childhood travels in Paris and London, but these were invariably for piano plus violin or flute, whose primary function would be to double the melody line. (There is evidence that he also composed four solo keyboard sonatas around this time, but these apparently have been lost.

The first six “official” sonatas date from 1775, while he was in Munich for premiere of his opera *La Finta Giardiniera*. He composed five in short order, and added a sixth a few weeks later. (These are referred to in the Mozart family correspondence as the “difficult” ones.) The numbering was by Mozart himself, and probably has more to do with the ordering of their keys than with chronology. He undoubtedly meant them to be published as a set of six—a fairly standard practice at the time—because there are far more performing indications here than in the later sonatas. (Like so many of his projects, this plan came to naught.)

Sonata No. 1 in C, K. 279

Munich, 1775

This work provides a fascinating glimpse into areas Mozart might have explored, but chose not to. The first movement is quirky, far less “smooth” than what one might expect from him. Already, though, touches of originality are in evidence in the manner he extends the second theme in the Recapitulation by a half-measure. (In general, Mozart’s recapitulations are far less verbatim transcriptions than Beethoven’s, and are usually longer than his expositions. His method of composing seems

to demand that the tonic key be reinforced toward the movement's end.) The second movement hints at the operatic Mozart to come, and provides ample room for embellishment on part of the venturesome performer. The finale is light and brilliant. Here, as in the closing movements of the second and fourth sonatas, Mozart is at his most Haydnesque: abrupt halts, surprise accents, and no hint of the darkness that underlies much of his music.

Sonata No. 2 in F, K. 280

Munich, 1775

Twelve measures into the lively opening movement, Mozart takes us on a harmonically and rhythmically confusing journey in which even the acute listener will almost certainly lose his orientation.

The second movement is one of the highlights of Mozart's entire output. Even at nineteen, his astonishing tragic sense was in evidence in a work that, in its slow Siciliano rhythm and melodic contours, forecasts the great F-sharp minor *Adagio* of the Concerto, K. 488. A playful Haydn-like finale closes this least heard of all Mozart's sonatas.

Sonata No. 3 in B flat major, K. 281

Munich, 1775

This is the first piano sonata whose every measure reflects the Mozart we know (or think we know). He is at the top of his game here. The flow of ideas is absolutely effortless; there are no wasted gestures, no humdrum (even for him) themes. In the lively first movement he presents a duality at the outset: trills and two punctuating chords. Repeating this idea immediately, he places the theme an octave lower. For Mozart, changing octaves on a piano is the equivalent of changing instruments in an orchestra. And orchestration is the key to this movement: color shifts such as this abound throughout.

The second movement is a touching duet that at one moment is more than slightly prescient of the "Elvira Madigan" movement of his 21st piano concerto. The Finale, essentially a solo setting of a concerto movement, is Mozart's first great rondo. He had yet to write a rondo of equal stature for any of his existing eight keyboard concerti; in this sense this is one of the seminal movements in his entire output; henceforth, the quality of his concerti would be markedly improved. Dialogues between piano and "orchestra" occur throughout, and there are even two cadenzas as well as opportunities for improvised lead-ins.

Sonata No. 4 in E flat, K. 282

Munich 1775

The practice of beginning a classical sonata with a slow movement is irregular for Mozart, but several other examples by Haydn and Beethoven do exist. Perhaps this practice hearkens back to the Baroque era where *Adagio* openings were almost *de rigueur*. This movement is also unusual in that the order of themes is reversed in the Recapitulation. Also, contrary to one's instincts, the opening is definitely to be played *forte*: Mozart always meant *forte* unless he wrote otherwise. Of course, in this case, he wanted to ensure that the melody, as performed on the fortepiano, with its naturally thin, weak sound, would be projected. The *forte* of the sort demanded by the opening of, say, Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* is hardly what Mozart would have had in mind. The second movement is a pair of Minuets, not Minuet and Trio as these movements are customarily entitled. (Why a different nomenclature was employed here I will never know). The Finale is another light movement *à la* Haydn.

Sonata No. 5 in G, K. 283

Munich, 1775

Many young children are assigned this deceptively simple work because the opening theme is relative easy to execute, but I have always felt sorry for them when they reach the closing movement, which requires amazing digital dexterity and flexibility. (A doctoral piano student of my acquaintance was so frustrated at being incapable of performing this sonata to his teacher's satisfaction—and perhaps his own—that he gave up the effort, and quit his teacher's studio.)

All three movements are in Sonata-allegro form. The two outer movements are separated by an *Andante* that is thoroughly innocent and simple (aside from one of the most vulgar sounds ever devised in m. 20). The final movement's energetic cheerfulness matches that of the opening movement's. Another curiosity here: a *Coda* that consists of two chords.

Sonata No. 6 in D, K. 284 "Durnitz"

Munich, 1775

This sonata—Mozart's lengthiest—is on a much grander scale than its predecessors. This leads to the conjecture that the other five were distillations of pieces he had earlier improvised and played for memory on many occasions. Commissioned by an amateur bassoonist whose name is often associated with this work, it was published in 1784. For the publication Mozart provided an alternate

Adagio variation in the final movement. Most pianists, including myself, prefer the second version; that is what is heard on this recording.

There also exists an incomplete early version of the first movement. It provides a rare glimpse of how Mozart may have worked. There are no sketches; nothing is crossed out in the manuscript. Apparently, he worked out everything in his head and just wrote it down. About halfway through, he realized that it was not proceeding well. So, rather than revise what he'd already produced, he simply started over, re-ordered the best parts a little, discarded the weaker sections, and produced the movement in its final form. QED.

The robust first movement is so orchestral sounding that it might well have been a keyboard transcription of a planned symphonic movement. The *Andante* is entitled *Rondeau en Polonaise*, in spite of the fact that we normally do not associate polonaises or rondos with slow movements, although both do exist. The final movement a (very) lengthy set of variations, whose first printed edition is also marked *Andante*. The twelve variations exploit the theme's various musical, as well as the instrument's technical possibilities. There is a humorous glitch in the theme—virtually an entire measure of silence. In the hands of a lesser composer, the joke would wear thin over a dozen variations, plus repeats, but with Mozart at the helm, we wait with anticipation to see what tricks he will play each time this passage recurs, and he never disappoints. Present are four “thumbprints” that he generally applied to his variation sets: a central variation in the minor key, another featuring imitative counterpoint, a penultimate florid *adagio*, and a quick final one in a new time signature.

Sonatas 7 - 9 (1777-78)

In the mid-18th century, the city of Mannheim enjoyed a rich musical life and could boast of hosting Europe's finest orchestra. Resident composers turned out well-crafted works that took advantage of the court orchestra's virtuosity and dynamic energy. Mozart was 21 when he and his mother sojourned there for several months in yet another fruitless effort to secure Wolfgang a European court position, and he was mightily impressed with the Mannheim style of music making.

Then it was onto Paris. Again, the same dreary story: high hopes, local musicians and authorities making a fuss over him, public success, universal praise for his immense gifts, but in the end, niente. As Baron Friedrich Melchior Grimm wrote Leopold from the French capital:

“He [Wolfgang] is too sincere, not active enough, too susceptible to illusions, too little aware of the means of achieving success. Here, in order to succeed, one must be artful, enterprising and bold; for the sake of his fortunes, I wish he had half as much talent and twice as much of the qualities I have described... You see, my dear sir, in a country where mediocre and detestable musicians have made immense fortunes, your son could not manage at all.”

Niente.

A little more than two years had passed since Mozart had composed the *Durnitz* Sonata. During this hiatus he produced about sixty compositions, and being Mozart, the quality of his output benefited from the activity. The four sonatas dating from this brief period are fully mature works that give lie to the conventional wisdom that Mozart's sonatas are minor pieces. On the contrary, they are as harmonically rich, structurally strong, and as melodically inspired as anything he had composed to date. Furthermore, the variety of moods these twelve movements convey—from the tragic to the joyful, from the profound to the simple—must have left his listeners shaking their heads in wonderment.

Sonata No. 7 in C, K. 309

Mannheim, 1777

The outer movements of this sonata are probably written-down revisions of a piece that he had improvised in public (or so he claimed) a few days earlier. The sonata was composed for the daughter of Christian Cannabich, one of Mannheim's most important composers. Mozart praised Rosa's playing, saying that she performed “with the utmost expression. Her legatos flowed like oil.” (This comment should provide pause for thought for those who believe Mozart should be performed in a clipped, dry, “objective” fashion.)

The first movement begins with bold, orchestral statement, followed immediately by a light, lyrical passage: here is the first example in a sonata where Mozart gives himself two strongly contrasting themes to work with at the outset. Contrasts indeed abound in this confident, classy movement.

A seemingly insignificant event is worth noting: Mozart uses a two-measure figuration—a slow trill between C# and a D for the left hand—to introduce the second theme. The bass note then progresses down to a C-natural, and finally to a B, which becomes the bass note that accompanies the new theme in G major. Interestingly, Mozart makes *exactly* the same transition at *exactly* the same place in two later sonatas that also are in C major (K. 330 and 545). Moreover, in no other piano sonata does this

pattern occur. I have often wondered why. Perhaps he liked the feel of his hand on these particular notes, or perhaps—since he did associate keys with specific colors—he kept in his mind a repertory of formulas to draw upon for different keys, and felt this to be specifically a C-major gesture.

Beethoven undoubtedly knew this sonata well. The second movement—supposedly a portrayal of Rosa—possesses a sense of vastness, with “significant” pauses of the sort we would again encounter in the younger composer’s third and fourth sonatas. The final movement, an *Allegretto grazioso* rondo is unusual in the canon of Mozart sonatas; there are only two. Most of Mozart’s and Haydn’s rondo finales are quick and light. Composing a more leisurely sort of rondo with a frequently occurring main theme has its pitfalls. Beethoven tried several times to emulate this model, as in the final movements of his sonatas Opp. 2/2, 7, 22 and 31/1. But to these ears at least, he never surpassed Mozart’s effort in this little-known work.

Sonata No. 8 in D, K. 311

Mannheim, 1777 (probably)

Unlike the previous sonata, the history of K. 311’s creation is virtually unknown. However, after careful examining Mozart’s handwriting and employing modern ink and paper analysis, scholars are now fairly sure of the date and place of composition. The new dating has unearthed an important inaccuracy in the Köchel catalog: K. 311 predates K. 310.

The theme of the opening movement is clearly related to that which opens the Sonata, also in D, K. 284. However, whereas the earlier sonata evokes an orchestra, this one sparkles with characteristic keyboard ebullience. (This thematic similarity could be an example of Mozart’s response to an inner repertoire of “D-major ideas.”) This movement also provides another example of the composer’s flexible approach to his Recapitulations. In this case the two main themes are in reverse order.

In the glorious second movement, a highlight of his entire oeuvre is the aching, extended second theme that Mozart manages to stretch like a silk strand to its breaking point, supported by harmonies that look forward to Schumann.

The third movement is a brilliant rondo, with its uninhibited gaiety that is interrupted by an anxious middle theme that Mozart discards after only one hearing, as if to say, “Enough of this darkness. Let there be light.” And the light returns.

Sonata No. 9 in A minor, K. 310

Paris, 1778

This extraordinary work is one of only two piano sonatas that Mozart composed in a minor key. Pianist Alfred Brendel has astutely observed that with no other composer can we find such a vast divergence in character between music in the minor and major modes. One has only to compare the drama, intensity, and tragic sense of the outer movements of this work (and the slow movement of K. 280) to every other movement of the nine sonatas already discussed, in order to confirm the validity of this assertion.

The exact circumstances surrounding the composition of this piece are unknown (although we know the present location of the manuscript – New York's Pierpont Morgan Library). Mozart, more than any of his colleagues, is a composer whose music seems disconnected from external events of his life. However, in the case of this sonata, the first instrumental work in a minor key he had composed in five years, it is virtually impossible to avoid making such a connection. Not only was the trip itself professionally frustrating, but his mother, who had not merely accompanied him on this tour (Leopold had been refused further time off by his employer), but was also her twenty-one-year-old son's roommate(!), took sick suddenly, and died in Paris.¹

The first movement, with its strong, forward thrust from the first note to the last, is one of his most angst-ridden utterances. There are very few dynamic markings, but paradoxically, this is one of a handful of piano pieces where he calls for *fortissimo* and *pianissimo*. The orchestral second movement—also in Sonata-allegro form—begins as a hauntingly beautiful elegy, but in the Development, serious conflict again assumes the foreground. The final movement is nervous and light, with an overlay of pathos that is only briefly relieved by a gentler, central *musette*.

Sonatas 10 - 14 (1783-84)

After a break of about five years, Mozart again returned to piano sonata production. Originally, it was believed that the sonatas, K. 330 – 332 were written, like K. 310, during the 1778 Paris visit, but

¹ This interpretation could be nothing more than a case of applying current earthbound sensibilities to the mind of a genius living 250 years ago. Now-forgotten Parisian composers of the era had a penchant for writing in the minor mode, and Mozart's sonata may have simply represented an effort on his part to "beat the home team" in their own stadium. (Another politically astute move on Wolfie's part! That'll show the bastards!)

scholars are now quite certain they were composed in 1783, either in Vienna, where he had resided since 1781, or in Salzburg during a visit home that year to introduce his new wife to his family. The fourteenth sonata in C minor dates from about a year later, in the fall of 1784.

Mozart was now in far better circumstances, enjoying his early rush of success in Vienna as pianist and teacher, and of course, as a composer who turned out masterpieces on a regular basis. In other words, by 1783 his compositions for other media had become as fine as the ones he had been writing for solo piano since 1777. As a consequence, the difference in quality between the previous four sonatas and these five is not huge; the hand of the master is evident from first note to last. Still, one might argue that in Sonatas 12 – 14 he achieved an artistic level even richer than that of its predecessors, and just perhaps – *pace* – even its successors.

Sonata No. 10 in C, K. 330

Salzburg or Vienna, 1783

This is one of the more intimate sonatas, as elegant as any Mozart wrote without reaching for the heavens or descending too deeply into darker regions. As the first movement is an *Allegro moderato* in 2/4, the score looks frighteningly “black.” Finding the correct tempo is difficult as a result: some pianists take it at an extraordinary clip, following their cue from all the 32nd notes. Others play it quite slowly, because of the moderato tempo qualifier. (Being Canadian-born, I choose the middle road, so as to allow the faster notes to move along briskly, without the entire movement sounding rushed.)

The second movement is in a three-part form; a soft *Sturm und Drang* Trio, reminiscent of the intense style he had first heard in Mannheim in the 1770s, interrupts the lyrical opening. Although the repeat of the opening section is written out *verbatim*, in what is generally understood to be the practice of the era, I embellish the music the second time around.² When this sonata was published, Mozart added a four-measure coda to the original, presumably as a way of reconciling the two opposing moods.

The third movement is another finale cast in Sonata-allegro form, with dynamic contrasts that hint of changes in orchestral texture.

² I recall several revered pianists in my youth who, when asked why they did not embellish repeats or add improvised cadences and lead-ins, would respond smilingly with a condescending Zentral-Europäische accent: “Yes, I am very aware that some younger pianists have adopted this practice, but excuse me, I cannot. This is Mozart, you understand: MOH-zahrt: *The Greatest* musical genius of all time! Who am I to tamper with his music as it has been handed down to us? I envy these pianists their audacity; perhaps they know something that I do not, but I simply cannot do this. I can only do my best with the notes the Master left us. I hope it is enough.”

Sonata No. 11 in A, K. 331

Salzburg or Vienna, 1783

This sonata features two of Mozart's most famous movements: the opening set of variations and the so-called "Turkish" Rondo. Mozart had previously included a set of variations in his *Dornitz* Sonata, but this is the only instance where he begins a piano sonata in that manner. This set is far more concise, with only half the number of variations. There is no loss of variety, however: Mozart frequently took advantage of repetitions within the lilting theme to vary his material internally whenever possible, and the result is an arguably superior, more disciplined effort. Three of those "thumbprints" described earlier are present—a central variation in the minor key, a florid *adagio*, and a quick final variation in a new time signature. In the hauntingly beautiful fourth variation, by making extensive use of crossed arms, he elicits sonorities that must have sounded as though only a three-handed pianist could create them.

There is no slow movement per se: the second movement is a Minuet and Trio. The minuet's theme is identical to that which opens the first movement of the Sonata, K. 309, although it is cast in a different rhythm. The Trio also provides the three-handed illusion heard in the first movement.

Although the Ottoman Empire had represented the Hapsburg family's equivalent of the Axis of Evil, a century after the Turks had been driven from Vienna's gates in 1683, they were no longer a serious threat to Europe. (That did not stop the ruling family from embarking upon a meaningless, economically disastrous, and inconclusive war with the Turks in the 1780s.) It was now fully acceptable to make fun of the Turkish military, with their strange uniforms and **LOUD** Janissary music.³ Composers imitated this music to such an extent that some pianos of the period even had mechanical attachments that could mimic the bass drums and cymbals so beloved of the Janissaries. Mozart had composed his highly successful opera *The Abduction from the Seraglio* in 1782, and can hardly be blamed for hoping that the third movement of this sonata, entitled *Rondo à la Turca* would capitalize on the opera's popularity, and attract prospective purchasers.

Customarily, composers begin a rondo with the theme that will return most frequently, but in this instance, familiar as the opening melody is, it is the "Turkish" theme that follows that has a legitimate claim to being the movement's principal melody.

³ The Janissary corps were made up of Christian-born young men from throughout the Turkish Empire, who had been forcibly removed from their families as children by the Ottomans, and brought up as Muslims in the Royal court. They wore uniforms, were paid in cash as regular soldiers, and marched to distinctive music, similar to a modern marching band.

Sonata No. 12 in F, K. 332

Salzburg or Vienna, 1783

The opening movement is full of surprises. It begins with a deceptively innocent phrase that is immediately answered by a tune that any first-year orchestration student could correctly assign to the woodwinds. That phrase is repeated, and then its two-note cadence is reiterated yet a couple of more times. One may almost ask: "Why is Mozart finishing the piece so soon after beginning it?" There is method to his madness, however: suddenly the bass rudely grabs that two-note rhythm and begins an energized D minor passage. This in turn leads to the second theme that Verdi may well have had at the back of his mind when he composed *La donna e mobile*.

Most listeners might justifiably assume that, after that theme has been heard a couple of times, Mozart will find a suitable closing tune that brings the Exposition to its conclusion. But he has other plans: the music suddenly becomes threatening, even sinister. The two hands alternate with each other for eleven measures in a pungent rhythmic sequence, going through a melody-less chord progression that finally leads back to C major. This unexpected detour has upset the Exposition's balance to such an extent that after the new key is again established, Mozart requires two further "closing themes" plus a reference to the alternating-hands passage in order to conclude the section to his (and our) satisfaction. The ability of a great composer to understand and fulfill the implications and demands of what he has already written is wonderfully evinced here.

It is the new thematic material that the composer puts through even more of its paces in the Development. Having done so, though, he guides the movement through the Recapitulation fairly predictably. There have already been enough surprises for five sonatas.

The melodic, soulful *Adagio* is one of Mozart's most breathtaking slow movements. For the published edition he provided a highly ornamented version of the theme at its second occurrence, and it is that setting I perform. The Finale is Mozart's most brilliant, virtuosic piece for solo piano, so it is perhaps surprising that, rather than finish with an even great burst of virtuosity, it fades out slowly at the conclusion.

Sonata No. 13 in B flat, K. 333

Linz, then Vienna 1783-4

According to scholar Alan Tyson's analysis of the handwriting and paper stock on this manuscript, Mozart was apparently at work on this piece while composing the Symphony No. 36, (the "Linz.")

He had recently taken his new wife Constanze to meet his family – no need to mention how THAT went – and these works were composed during a stopover in that city on their return journey.

If I were forced against my will to pick a favorite Mozart sonata it would have to be K. 333—a class act from the first note to the last, with elegant melodies, sure-footed harmonies, and wonderful variety of lyricism and brilliance. The opening theme is borrowed from a sonata composed by Mozart's London friend, J.C. Bach. Contrary to what textbooks indicate, the sonata's second theme has a far more "masculine" character than the first. More interestingly, both are derived from the identical motif. Still, for all his thematic parsimoniousness at the outset, Mozart is particularly generous with his melodic gifts in this sonata.

The *Andante* is one of his most profound slow movements. Cast in Sonata-allegro form, it begins with a soulful theme, but the Development section darkens somewhat, with some harsh harmonic content following the double bar that must have had music theory teachers (if they existed then) rushing to their textbooks.

The third movement is the most concerto-like of his sonata rondos, complete with piano-orchestra dialogues, brilliant runs and a bona fide cadenza, preceded by a traditional orchestral lead-in. For some perspective on the mastery he achieved here, one has only to examine the finales of thirteen piano concerti he had written to date. With the exception of the extraordinary K. 271, none is as rich. This is the rondo that would set the standard for the later concerti.⁴

Toward the middle of the finale, an intense G minor theme, strong enough to be the principal subject of an entire movement, is tossed into the works for just a few seconds, before giving way to yet another theme that is reminiscent of a sonata by Haydn. It is perhaps sections like this that led fellow composer and admirer Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf to write perceptively:

"Mozart is undoubtedly one of the greatest of original geniuses, and I have never known any other composer to possess such an amazing wealth of ideas. I wish he were not so spendthrift with them. He does not give the listener time to catch his breath, for no sooner is one inclined to reflect upon a beautiful inspiration than another appears, even more splendid, which drives away the first, and this continues on and on, so that in the end one is unable to retain any of these beauties in the memory."

⁴ Note that the previous B-flat sonata also has a concluding rondo containing strong concerto elements—perhaps another occasion where a particular key elicited a reflex response from Mozart. It would not be surprising, since B-flat was his favored piano concerto key.

Fantasie & Sonata No 14 in C Minor, K. 475/457

Vienna 1785/4

It is not known whether Mozart intended these works to be performed together, especially because the *Fantasie* was written a year after the Sonata. The fact that they were published together means little in Mozart's case because unlike Beethoven, Chopin, or Brahms, whose opus numbers usually reflects their chronological order, little of Mozart's music was published during his lifetime, and what was issued has nothing to do with the order of composition.

The Sonata was composed in 1784, but was only published a year later, together with the 1785 *Fantasie*. Interestingly, the autographs of both works only surfaced in 1990. Previously, musicians had solely the early editions to rely upon. Differences between the sources are quite minor, and disappointingly so, for no new light is shed on any relationship between the two pieces. One may point to a rising C minor arpeggio chord as representing a thematic link between the two, but many pianists, including myself, play both pieces at a single sitting simply because they work so well together.

The *Fantasie* – surely one of Mozart's greatest works – provides an idea of how he may have extemporized at the keyboard. Nonetheless, for all its improvisatory feel, it is a tightly cohesive composition, with an utterly fascinating key scheme: We start ominously in C minor, but stay there for only two measures before embarking upon a journey that at first appears to be headed toward C minor's "legitimate" dominant G. However, we have indeed quit C minor: G turns out to be only a brief stopping point toward a heavenly passage in D major. This is followed by brilliant tremolos that hint at a new tonic even higher up in the ladder of fifths to A. It is only a ruse, however: further modulations slide down the snake to a brief theme in F major, then even further into flat-key territory to a second full-blown section in B-flat. This key, with its signature of two flats, nicely counterbalances the first stopping point of D major, with its two sharps. In other words, the second section is a harmonic mirror of the first.

After that display of *legerdemain*, more modulation via brilliant keyboard work finally returns to the original theme in C minor, a full 163 measures after leaving it. Mozart now revisits much of his opening material, but this time, the home key of C minor wraps its cloak around all the themes, so that the *Fantasie* concludes with the tonic key so firmly established in our minds that it seems impossible to believe that we have strayed so far, for so long...

The Sonata, with its rising C minor “Mannheim Rocket” theme in the first movement, was an obvious influence on Beethoven’s Sonata, Op. 10/1, also in that key. Less obvious is the extent to which the middle A-flat major section of the *Andante* provided more than mere inspiration for the *Pathétique*’s slow movement, also in that key. The outer movements are unusual in two ways: they feature moderately extensive codas and call for crossed hands in passages where execution and musical intent could easily be delineated in a normal performing stance. These characteristics point to the possibility that Mozart conceived of these pieces as public concert works, not *hausmusik* or teaching material.

Sonatas 15 - 18 (1788-89)

If one defines the oft-used word “canon” as a collection of works generally considered to be representative, as well as the best of a particular form, and in which one can detect a coherent development (not necessarily *improvement*) from work to work, there indeed exists a canon of Mozart’s piano sonatas. However, that canon concludes with the Sonata No. 14. The following four are, in a sense, post-canonic.

By 1788, Mozart was fully at the peak of his artistry, creating one masterwork after another. The “Prague” Symphony No. 38, *Figaro*, *Giovanni*, the six quartets dedicated to Haydn, the two piano quartets, and the piano concertos Nos. 20 through 25, were now all behind him, as they had not been when he wrote the preceding C minor sonata. Moreover, considering what was to come—*Così, Die Zauberflöte*, the final three symphonies, the last piano concerto, the two great clarinet works, and the Requiem—even the most unapologetic admirer of his solo piano music must admit that the sonatas do not represent his very best work in 1788 as they had in 1784, and that henceforth, piano sonatas would no longer be in the forefront of his artistry as they previously had been. Nevertheless, the final sonatas are hardly minor works: they exemplify a great composer at the height of his mastery and maturity.

Sonata in 15 in F, K533/494

Vienna, 1788/1786

Following a 4-year gap in sonata production, there appeared the most curious work in Mozart’s entire keyboard *oeuvre*. The first two movements of this sonata sound less like Mozart than anything else emanating from his pen, while the final movement is a revision of an innocent rondo that he had published two years earlier. Although Mozart himself termed this work a sonata, the two components

seem more incongruous than the previous C Minor *Fantasia* and Sonata. Perhaps he did feel that two such maverick creations required the counterfoil of a traditional conclusion. (Alternately, he may simply have needed the money, or perhaps his publisher was becoming impatient, so he sent along what he had at hand.)

The first movement reflects the composer's renewed fascination with imitative counterpoint, thanks to an acquaintanceship with one of the world's earliest Baroque enthusiasts, Baron Gottfried van Swieten, a Dutch diplomat, who had recently introduced Mozart to his impressive library of Bach and Handel scores. Throughout his life, whenever Mozart encountered concepts that were new and fascinating to him, he tried to incorporate the essence of those ideas into his music. This was no exception; he composed several works employing imitative counterpoint and even tried his hand at Baroque-style suites, preludes and fugues, etc. Those early essays could often sound self-conscious, and many were left incomplete, but there invariably arrived a stage when he fully assimilated those characteristics into his own style. In such a manner was his music perennially enriched and renewed, while retaining its distinctive effortless, "Mozartian" manner.

This movement finds Mozart well on the road to that order of mastery. The opening theme begins with a solo statement in the right hand, while the second theme appears as a single line in the left. Mozart's themes here are far more motivic and less "melodic" than usual, and his handling of this material is unusually argumentative. Toward the end, Mozart combines the two themes, one in each hand. This movement, together with the *Andante* that follows, point to paths Mozart may have explored more fully, had he lived long enough to do so.

If Mozart had written nothing other than the ethereal, introspective slow movement, he probably would still be remembered as a major composer. In my opinion this is his most original, uncompromising piece. The Development in particular finds him experimenting with chords more harshly dissonant than any composer would write until that famous moment in Mahler's Tenth Symphony. Yet, Mozart chooses his context so well that unless one listens for the roughness, it goes by unnoticed.

For the finale, Mozart provided a slightly expanded version of a delightful "music-box" rondo he had already published in 1786. Probably in order to make it a better fit for the sonata, he inserted a serious, contrapuntal, 27-measure cadenza toward the conclusion. The theme is written in the piano's upper register, but following the cadenza, the theme is heard a final time with both hands situated deep in the piano's bass region.

Sonata No. 16 in C, K. 545

Vienna, 1788

This work in C Major, expressly written for less advanced pianists, is one of the two most famous piano sonatas in existence. It probably owes its popularity to the fact that so many children are mistakenly assigned it. Short, direct, and unaffected, it is an exemplary crystallization of Mozart's simpler style at its purest.

Paradoxically, it, like that other classical warhorse, Beethoven's *Moonlight*, is atypical for a classical sonata: in the opening movement, the Recapitulation occurs not in the expected C major tonic key, but in the subdominant F major. This highly significant event provides support for an argument that the dividing line between the Development and Recapitulation in Sonata-allegro form (that portion of the movement following the double bar) is often so unclear that one may well question whether any real division between the two sections exists.

If Mozart had composed only as far as midway through the Development, and then assigned the movement's completion to a student, she may well have arranged a return to the Recapitulation in the tonic key of C major, and repeated the Exposition verbatim for twelve measures until the point where the second theme returns. Instead, Mozart "sneaks in" the Recapitulation in the subdominant F, then rewrites and extends his material for sixteen measures so as to end exactly at the same place that his student would have arrived, and in the identical manner. Mozart's way is so much more subtle, satisfying and elegant.

The slow movement is aria-like, with two episodes that are both related to the opening theme. The brief finale is also a rondo whose main theme Mozart may have discovered by rolling his right hand inward on the keyboard and imitating that action in the left.

Sonata No. 17 in B flat, K. 570

Vienna, 1789

This sonata was first published in 1796 as a sonata for violin and piano, in which the violin is clearly subsidiary to the keyboard. However, Mozart had listed this work in his own thematic catalogue as "a sonata for piano alone," and it is now believed that the violin part is inauthentic. Although less ambitious than his other Vienna period sonatas, K. 570 is no less accomplished. Somewhat unusually (for him), the first movement employs the same theme—essentially, a broken B flat major chord—at

the outset of both portions of the Exposition. Although he keeps his textures quite thin, he does manage to use some of that imitative counterpoint that fascinated him in the latter part of his life.

The *Adagio* is in the form of a rondo. One of the episodes, in C minor, could easily be set for wind ensemble from start to finish. The final movement is a good-humored *Allegretto* rondo whose opening theme conjures up, for me at least, an image of Maurice Chevalier strolling down a Paris boulevard with a bevy of not-so “leetle gerls” on each arm. This theme is virtually a re-write of the final variation of the Sonata in A, K. 331.

Sonata No. 18 in D Major, K. 576

Vienna 1789

In 1789, Frederick Wilhelm II, King of Prussia commissioned Mozart to compose a dozen works: six quartets and an equal number of “easy” sonatas. Working stiff that Mozart may have been, this is a commission he did not fulfill: he only completed three of the quartets, plus the Sonata in D.

The opening *Allegro* begins with a “hunt” theme with both hands in unison, but for much of the remainder of the movement, one hand seems constantly to chase the other around the entire keyboard—perhaps a deliberate musical pun on the cognate meanings of *hunt* and *chase*. It is interesting to compare this movement to the opening movement of K. 533. Both feature widespread imitation between the hands, but here we are back on much more familiar “Mozart” territory. His technique seems more intuitive, less self-conscious.

The slow movement is one of Mozart’s heartfelt romances, at least in its outer portions. They bookend an active, uneasy central section in the unusual key of F# minor: on its own, it could almost pass for a complete *Sonatina*⁵ movement. The Finale is a masterful rondo, yet another that is a virtual transcription of a piano concerto movement. And like most concerto finales, “easy” is hardly the most appropriate word to describe its technical demands.

⁵ A *Sonatina* can be a miniature sonata, but some writers also refer to the *Sonatina* form as an Abbreviated Sonata-allegro form lacking a Development section. That is the sense in which that word is employed here.



Coda (1791 - present)

Mozart did not live to compose another piano sonata. There probably has never been a music lover who has not contemplated what wonders may have been created if Mozart had been granted the opportunity to acquaint himself with Haydn's late works, as well as the earlier ones of Beethoven and Schubert, and to interact with all three composers, as he surely would have done. One can only dream, while remaining forever grateful for the miracles we do have...

Recording Silverman in Utah with the IsoMike system

by Gorm Damborg, August 2007



"Holy pachyderm, Robin: it's Dumbo floating over the stage"

"Gosh Batman, you really are showing your age; that's a beige Nemo, the clownfish"

Well, whichever of Disney's characters you prefer, there is nothing cartoonish about the sounds captured by Ray Kimber's IsoMike recording system. We were all gathered in early August 2007 on the Austad Stage at Weber State University in Ogden, Utah, a lovely hall that seats nearly two thousand, for the purpose of capturing Robert Silverman's take on the 18 Mozart Piano Sonatas. And of course Dumbo, er, Nemo, I mean, the IsoMike system was hovering above us all at about twelve feet and roughly twenty feet away from the Steinway Grand. But I am getting ahead of myself.

It started some months ago when Bob called to see if I would join him and his wife Ellen for the slated recording session in Utah. I had previously been peripherally involved with his recording of the Brahms in Santa Barbara and the sessions in Albuquerque, both for Stereophile magazine, so the answer was a fairly swift yes. Having known them both for over thirty years, and always sharing a passion for music reproduction (yes Bob is one of those rare musicians who is also a true audiophile), I knew it would be a most pleasant adventure, and with any luck as in previous years, I might even turn out to be useful in the process. I was not disappointed.



Bob on Austad Stage

In fact, a most delightful surprise (and proof that there are sometimes only a few degrees of separation in this world, not six) came at the Vancouver Airport: there, sitting behind me at the boarding gate was Graemme Brown also heading for Utah as the chief Engineer for the project. I had met Graemme some time ago through Tony Reif (he of the Songlines Label fame) when they had been guests in my music room to review some new equipment and one of Tony's latest SACD projects. At that time I was not aware that Graemme was an expert at the art of DSD Mastering; and as time would reveal, he is actually a genuine (if modest) renaissance man. This was definitely going to be an interesting trip.

We were all met at the Salt Lake City Airport by Ray Kimber who drove us to his hometown of Ogden which, we could all too often hear, is also home to a US Air force base. It also did not take long to discover that Ray is an incredibly generous man who loves music, its capture and reproduction, and whose

intelligence is gently revealed at ever turn. Over dinner we met the recording crew which included Aaron Hubbard, Nathan Call, CJ Johnson; earnest and intelligent young men all.

During an after dinner stroll in downtown Ogden we came across Two Bit Street (25th Street) which was once infamously known as the most dangerous street in America, with many saloons connected by underground tunnels so the clientele could avoid the pitfalls of the street above. With the state of Utah now being mostly Mormon, there was obviously little danger lurking on this stretch, but we were informed that a "membership" to an establishment was required before imbibing; at a modest four dollars (good for 3 weeks, plus guests) it simply proved the ingenuity of entrepreneurs circumnavigating draconian liquor laws.

With 18 Sonatas to record and only six days to do it, everyone got started early on Monday. Nemo needed to be hoisted in place, the Steinway needed final tuning, digital gear and computers needed interconnecting and Bob needed to acquaint himself with the piano and the hall.



Ellen and Graemme at the controls

The IsoMike system may be a work in progress, but its success at capturing a musical journey while revealing the tiniest subtleties of the recording location is now well documented. The recent recording of the Fry Street Quartet in this same hall, with Graemme Brown at the helm, has been garnering raves on the net (See SA-CD.net).

What Ray Kimber has shown is that a four microphone system, with each channel separated by his absorbent Dumboesque ears, is capable of producing stunning

results. Of course each recording session may have different instrumentation and I must confess to some concerns initially about the amount of hall “reverb” that I heard sitting in row six during much of the recording. My fear was that the initial piano notes would be swimming in a sea of hall echo - a fear that was totally unfounded.

Graemme and Ray both clearly know their trade (and equipment) as was amply demonstrated on day three, when we listened to the playback at Ray’s facility (actually his loading dock for his 30 thousand square foot Music/Video Cable warehouse).

If you like large electrostatic speakers then this should be your Nirvana: four 9 foot high by 6 foot wide Sound Lab Prostatt 922’s produced a vivid re-enactment of Bob playing the Steinway, and to my happy surprise it was both articulate and immediate, almost as if the microphones were only a few feet from the piano. I liked the sound in 2 channel stereo very much but the palpable feeling of being in the hall was only realized in four channel, especially at moments when Bob would ask Ellen (who was doing a yeowoman’s job of keeping track of every note) a question; it was eerily like sitting in the hall during the actual recording.

The art of recording requires not just exceptional musicianship, engineering and equipment, but it also requires considerable planning to avoid spoiling the process, especially when done outside the controlled atmosphere of a studio. Beyond the logistics of booking the hall there were many other considerations to contend with: air conditioning systems, students in the corridors, Air Force jets, and, as we found in both the Santa Barbara and the Albuquerque recording sessions, squeaky piano stools and noisy keyboards.



The team: Lamar, Ray, Gavin, CJ, Gorm, Nathan, Ellen, Bob, Graemme & Aaron
And of course the IsoMike, Steinway Grand, and EMM DSD equipment & Austad hall

Have you ever peeked under a \$100K plus piano? Unlike its glossy surface, the underside has numerous rough blocks of wood held in place with old fashioned screws, all of which can wiggle and move just enough to squeak and squawk at the precise moment some sublime arpeggio is supposed to fade into the next. And have you ever noticed that almost all concert hall stools have a way of producing an array of noises, as if to compliment the piano's contributions? With flashlight in hand there we were,

Lamar (a wonderful piano tuner who can really play the keyboard; can you say Rach - 3) and I, under the Steinway looking for Mr. Squeaky. After taming those demons it was back to the old trick of placing an absorbent cover over the entire piano stool -in this case, the soft piano cover.

With the immediate noises under control, that left the US Air force to tame. Somehow we all knew that asking them to stop flying their massive C5A Transports and F22 Raptor jets each afternoon would fall on, uh, deaf ears. A few extra takes here and a few there, and somehow, with Bob's amazing fingers, Ellen's eagle eyes and Graemme's computer/EMM Lab skills, a number of Mozart's sonatas were recorded each day.

In short order a minor routine was established: after breakfast the crew would test the equipment and ensure suitable amounts of recording storage availability; Ellen & I would (with the generous use of Ray's car) tour the local countryside; Bob would practice on the Steinway and by early afternoon more Mozart would be captured in surround sound, all well into the evening. Occasionally the Air Force would let us all know that they were out and about, and sessions would break or new takes would be needed.



Ogden countryside



Kimber Kable facility

As a life long audiophile (I built my first “system” over 45 years ago) I have no time for those who suggest that Hi-End audio cables are just overpriced wire. So it was with some pleasure and wonderment that I toured Ray Kimber’s massive cable building facility: room after room of specialized testing equipment, assembly stations, numerous racks of exotic parts, and even cryogenic cooling tanks. This ain’t no Mom and Pop cable - making joint, but a very sophisticated large scale operation clearly able to service not only his own customers but other cable manufacturers as well.

Sadly, my sojourn in Utah had to end before the final sessions were done. There were many other aspects of the project and areas of the Ogden countryside that I would have liked to explore: I would have loved to try one of Rays six (yes I counted them – 8) Rune motorcycles; it would have been useful to listen to the playback on some of the many other monitor speakers that were at Ray’s disposal; and I could never tire of listening to the music of Mozart as played by my amazingly talented friend, Robert Silverman.

Upon my return to Vancouver I learned more of Graemme Brown’s skills (he did some incredible mastering of Chick Corea as recently shown on HD Net) and I am eager to hear the final product from Ogden, once all the editing has been completed. I love the music and I am honoured to have been a part of the whole process. Thanks especially to Ray Kimber for his endless generosity.

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Tascam DV-RA1000 — www.tascam.com

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Microphones:

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Magnepan 20.1 — www.magnepan.com

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Sound Lab ProStat 922 — www.soundlab-speakers.com

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Cables:

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Disc 1

Sonata 7	Sonata 8	Sonata 9
1. 9:16	4. 7:10	7. 9:06
2. 6:41	5. 6:05	8. 9:36
3. 7:36	6. 6:38	9. 3:45

Disc 2

Sonata 10	Sonata 11	Sonata 12
1. 6:49	4. 14:12	7. 10:15
2. 6:54	5. 6:54	8. 4:53
3. 6:14	6. 3:52	9. 7:52

Disc 3

Sonata 13	Fantasy & Sonata 14
1. 7:53	4. 13:28
2. 11:59	5. 9:21
3. 7:07	6. 8:42
	7. 6:17

Disc 4

Sonata 15
1. 11:50
2. 14:31
3. 7:55

Disc 5

Sonata 16
4. 4:57
5. 5:21
6. 1:54

Disc 5

Sonata 17	Sonata 18
1. 6:40	4. 5:22
2. 8:09	5. 4:59
3. 4:59	6. 4:56

Disc 6

Sonata 1	Sonata 2	Sonata 3
1. 5:37	4. 7:38	7. 7:32
2. 9:24	5. 6:31	8. 7:56
3. 5:06	6. 4:57	9. 5:08

Disc 7

Sonata 4	Sonata 5	Sonata 6
1. 7:52	4. 6:11	7. 8:12
2. 4:24	5. 6:13	8. 5:07
3. 3:33	6. 6:52	9. 18:25