



The original fortepianos heard here form part of the Richard Burnett Collection of Early Keyboard Instruments at Waterdown House in Tunbridge Wells. Formerly part of the Fincocks Musical Museum until its closure in December 2015, this private collection comprises fourteen instruments, all maintained in playing condition. Emma Abbate and Julian Perkins extend their heartfelt thanks to Katrina and Richard Burnett and the Fincocks Charity for Musical Education for kindly supporting this project.

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Cover image: *Abend: Sonnenuntergang hinter der Dresdener Hofkirche* ('Evening: Sunset behind Dresden's Hofkirche'), Caspar David Friedrich, 1824

While Friedrich's paintings are often associated with Franz Schubert's music, he was a closer contemporary of Carl Maria von Weber. Furthermore, both Friedrich and Weber worked in Dresden and are now buried there (Weber was re-interred in the family burial plot eighteen years after his death). The open yet enigmatic quality of this painting, punctuated by two spires, seems to reflect the textures and tremulous Romanticism found in Weber's keyboard duets.

Recorded at Waterdown House, Tunbridge Wells, Kent on 13 - 15 May 2019

Fortepianos prepared and tuned by Edmund Pickering

Tuning: unequal circulating temperaments

Producer and sound engineer: Michael Ponder

Sound editor: Adaq Khan

Photos of performers: © Andrew Craggs

Photos of instruments: © Paul Lehane

Photo of performers playing the fortepiano: © Paul Lehane

Cover & booklet design: SL Chai



Carl Maria *von* Weber

Complete Keyboard Duets

Julian Perkins & Emma Abbate fortepiano

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Pieces by Carl Maria von Weber
Fortepiano by Conrad Graf, Vienna, 1826

With a1 pitched at 430Hz, this mahogany-veneered instrument has a compass of 6½ octaves from CC to f4. Its four pedals, operating from left to right, are *una/due corda* keyboard shift; bassoon; moderator; and sustain. The bassoon stop comprises a wooden batten fitted with leather-covered metal rods that buzz against the strings of notes CC to C2, as heard here at the end of track 17. By contrast, the moderator softens the tone by introducing cloth flags between the hammers and the strings throughout the compass.



Andante & 5 Variations by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Fortepiano by Michael Rosenberger, Vienna, c1795

This instrument is at pitch a1=420Hz and has a compass of 5½ octaves from FF to c4. It is veneered in cherry wood and has two knee levers: the left sustains the sound by raising and holding the dampers away from the strings, while the right operates the moderator.



'... Julian Perkins gives performances that reach to the heart of the music.'

International Record Review

'... Abbate breathes life into piano-writing that is frequently sparse but in which every shift of rhythm or colour speaks volumes.'

Gramophone

Carl Maria von Weber (1786–1826)

SIX PETITES PIÈCES FACILES, OP. 3

- 1 Sonatine *Moderato e con amore*
- 2 Romanze *Andantino, quasi Adagio*
- 3 Menuetto & Trio *Presto*
- 4 Andante con 3 Variazioni *Andante amoroso - Allegretto*
- 5 Marcia & Trio *Maestoso*
- 6 Rondo *Allegramente*

SIX PIÈCES, OP. 10A*

- 7 Moderato
- 8 Andantino con moto
- 9 Andante con 3 Variazioni
- 10 Mazurka *Vivace assai e marcato*
- 11 Adagio
- 12 Rondo *Allegro*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

13 **ANDANTE AND 5 VARIATIONS IN G MAJOR, K501**

Carl Maria von Weber

HUIT PIÈCES, OP. 60

- 14 Moderato
- 15 Allegro
- 16 Adagio
- 17 Allegro, tutto ben marcato
- 18 Alla Siciliana *Allegro*
- 19 Tema Variato *Andante* 6 variations on *Ich hab' mir Eines erwählet*
- 20 Marcia *Maestoso*
- 21 Rondo *Scherzando vivace*

Total playing time: 72'23

* Two sets of pieces by Weber were published as op. 10, the other being a later collection of six sonatas for violin and piano which dates from 1810.



CONRAD GRAF
k.k. Hof-Forsepfiano-Macher
in Wien

Carl Maria von Weber: the making of a master

Many aspects of the life of Carl Maria von Weber resonate with the popular archetype of a Romantic composer. He was a child genius, hot-housed by his ambitious father, Franz Anton, who believed him to be a second Mozart. There was, in fact, a family connection through Mozart's marriage to Constanze, daughter of Franz Anton's half-brother. His first pieces were published when he was twelve, and he wrote his first opera at fourteen. He was physically frail, and died from that dreadful and quintessentially Romantic disease, tuberculosis, before his fortieth birthday. He was also something of a wanderer: born in the state of Lübeck, he studied as a child in Salzburg (with Michael Haydn) and in Munich, and as a teenager in Vienna with the renowned pedagogue George Joseph Vogler. After securing a series of posts in Breslau, Württemberg (as secretary to Duke Ludwig), Prague and Berlin, he was appointed in 1817 as Director of Dresden Opera. In Württemberg he had been accused, along with his father, of embezzling his patron's funds, and thrown into prison and banished. He was actually innocent. His father was not.

The Dresden appointment coincided with his marriage to the soprano Caroline Brandt, who had sung the title role in his opera *Silvana* at its premiere in Berlin in 1812. In his new post, he was charged specifically with the task of creating a genuinely German opera in a field where Italian and French versions of the form were dominant. The result was his most important work, *Der Freischütz*, whose first performance, in Berlin in 1821, propelled him to celebrity status. Two significant operas were to follow: the rather less successful *Euryanthe* (Vienna, 1823), in which he developed the principle of *leitmotif*, later to be further evolved by Wagner, and *Oberon*, composed, in the face of his ever-increasing weakness, for London's Royal Opera and first performed there in April 1826, just two months before his death.

But opera was not the only genre in which this musical polymath excelled. As well as a composer and conductor, he was also a pianist, guitarist, administrator and, from a precocious age, a writer and critic. His musical works include symphonies, concertos, chamber music, choral works, songs, piano music and incidental music. And despite being widely considered as the first important Romantic composer, much of Weber's output – like that of the equally legendary Romantic, Franz Schubert – remains closely allied to a Classical aesthetic.

The three suites on this disc are written in the well-established genre of 'piano four hands', or duets to be played on a single keyboard. Because each suite comes from different periods in Weber's working life, they chart something of his evolution from brash teenager to assured master, from creator of charming, naive trifles to composer of the subtlest soundscapes. What is striking within each suite, however, is the contrast which Weber achieves from piece to piece. Every piece possesses a distinctive character. Performance on fortepianos of the period, as here, presents those characters most vividly, offering both a variety of colour and a textural clarity impossible on the more homogeneous-sounding instruments of our own day, as well as some surprising special effects. Assiduous score-followers should also note that Julian Perkins and Emma Abbate add ornamentation and embellishment where material is repeated. Such spontaneity seems to accord with the spirit of this music.

Each of the *Six petites pièces faciles*, op. 3, first published by Gombart in Augsburg in 1803, bears a descriptive title as well as a tempo marking. The first piece is a charmingly straightforward *Sonatine* in C major, with a second

idea in G and deft modulatory passages briefly hinting, Schubert-like, at C minor. Fast accompanimental figurations in the second part provide textural variety. This is followed by a lovely slow, triple-time *Romanze*, again with minor mode inflections and an unexpected Haydn-like loud outburst in the second part. The third piece is an un-modulating, fast *Menuetto*, whose *Trio* section is harmonically rooted to the tonic and dominant chords of its key of B flat. Then comes an *Andante con variazioni*. The first of its three variations is a simple embellishment on its innocent-sounding theme, the right hand of the *primo* part offering semiquaver decoration. The second variation assigns the lion's share of the work to the syncopated *secondo* part, while the third is a gently jaunty galop, the tempo now slightly quicker than hitherto. A military-style *Marcia* evoking bugles and drums comes next, with a gentler central section in the relative minor key, and Weber ends with a cheeky-sounding *Rondo*.

The *Six pièces* of op. 10a, published by Gombart in or around 1810, are already much more structurally and harmonically sophisticated, showing evidence of a rapidly maturing composer. A more equal spread of responsibilities between the two players is also evident, and themes often migrate between the two. The first piece, marked *Moderato*, has an idea based on a repeated monotone. Cast in E flat, it constantly threatens modulations and changes between major and minor modes, and encompasses a stormy mini-development where tonal stability is broken down, as if anticipating Schubert's famous *Impromptus*. Then comes a lilting C minor *Andantino con moto* with a flowing central section in C major. (This piece, and op. 60 nos. 4 and 7, were used by Hindemith as models for his 1943 orchestral *Symphonic*

Metamorphosis of Themes by Carl Maria von Weber.) A tender G major theme opens the *Andante con variazioni*, the first variation a liquid decoration of it, the second (as played – printed editions give it as the last) a miniature dotted-rhythmed funeral march with a minor-key excursion, and the last a jaunty *vivace*. Next comes a *Mazurka*, with that dance's hallmarks of accented second beats and "Scotch snaps" at the beginnings of phrases and some arresting abrupt key changes. The fifth piece is an expressive A flat major *Adagio*, the subtlest piece by far of the set, ranging harmonically wide, while to end the sequence Weber offers us an easygoing, good-natured, triple-time *Rondo*.

If the pieces of op. 10a represent a significant advance on those of op. 3, the *Huit pièces*, op. 60, published in Berlin in 1820, show a composer approaching the height of his powers. These works inhabit an altogether more sophisticated, subtler musical world than their predecessors. The greater irregularity of phrase lengths, the variations in the statement and response sequences, the textures and colours, the structures, all have advanced to the point where in some places at least comparison with the profundity of Mozart, or indeed with that of the mature Schubert, does not seem unreasonable. The opening piece is a rich-textured, tenderly lyrical D major *Moderato*, its overriding gentle beauty containing darker excursions to the realms of G minor. Then there is a forthright, substantial *Allegro*, which proves to be nothing less than a sonata movement, full of dazzling figuration and much rhythmic and, in its development, harmonic variety. The third piece is an *Adagio* in ABA form whose middle section, dramatized by the use of loud triplet figurations, again takes us on unexpected harmonic and tonal excursions. Then comes an *Allegro, tutto ben marcato* in C major, an exuberant

polka though with one calmer section in A major. The suite's halfway point is crossed with a gentle *Alla Siciliana* whose central section is once more marked by harmonic adventure, while the sixth piece, *Tema Variato*, is a skilfully condensed – and technically tricky – set of six variations on the theme of Weber's 1817 song *Ich hab' mir Eines erwählet*, op. 54 no. 3. A funereal, ominous G minor *Marcia* in ABA form follows, the second half of its A section beginning abruptly on the remote chord of D flat and wandering widely before we return to the home key, but its B section, in G major, offering at least some respite. Finally, and appropriately, all clouds are dispelled by the playful, triple-time *Rondo*.

Mozart's *Adagio and 5 Variations* was written in the year of Weber's birth. Mozart's own thematic catalogue gives a precise date of 4 November, 1786. Some believe that the piece was intended as a replacement for the original second movement of the incomplete duet sonata K357, which shares its key of G major. Whatever the case, it is a beautifully wrought work, the binary theme – apparently original – simple in outline but harmonically rich. The first three variations give a sense of gradual acceleration with their use of triplets and progressively smaller note values, but with variation four Mozart temporarily arrests this impetus, opting for a slower, expressively chromatic variation in the minor mode. The final variation, however, takes up the pace again, with some intricate passagework leading to a coda that unexpectedly opens on an E flat major chord and thence to a final restatement of the theme in the home key.

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Kindred Spirits

Music can be an intimate business: everybody seems to know everybody! So I was amused to learn that Mozart and Weber were related to each other through marriage (Mozart's wife Constanze was half-niece to Weber's father). Although they wouldn't have known each other, this connection seems particularly apt because, alongside the wit, brilliance and charm that permeate the music of both composers, each was fundamentally influential in the creation of German opera.

Yet it is this very achievement that distorts our knowledge of Weber. While Mozart's music transcends genres, Weber's reputation still rests primarily with his opera *Der Freischütz*. Rather in the way that Carl Orff is known almost exclusively for *Carmina Burana*, people often associate Weber's music with the supernatural eeriness of the Wolf's Glen in *Der Freischütz*, three operatic overtures and little else.



So imagine our delight when Emma and I were bequeathed a well-loved copy of Weber's keyboard duets by our friend, the composer Stephen Dodgson. In short, we discovered Weber's life beyond opera. The simplicity of his op. 3 shows a teenager whose lyrical genius is already evident in miniature, while the pathos of op. 10, no. 5 betrays a sensitivity equal to his younger contemporary, Franz Schubert. We even wondered whether Weber went to the gym, as each set discloses variations that are increasingly athletic. Perhaps the most characterful movement for us is op. 60, no. 4, where spicy rhythms offset a proud theme that has earned it the tasty nickname *À la zingara*.

The heady mix of Mozartian sophistication and *bel canto* beauty in Weber's three sets of keyboard duets shows a composer of extraordinary breadth and versatility. Small wonder that Paul Hindemith was to use several of these operatic vignettes in his celebrated *Symphonic Metamorphosis of Themes by Carl Maria von Weber*. Like Domenico Scarlatti's keyboard sonatas, the music's concision should not fool us into thinking that the works themselves are insubstantial. As Weber stated: 'Trifles make up existence, and give the observer the measure by which to try us.'

© Julian Perkins



Julian Perkins and Emma Abbate have given duet recitals at many prestigious venues including the Royal Opera House, St George's Bristol, St John's Smith Square, Hatchlands Park, the Russell Collection in Edinburgh and for the Mozart Society of America in Boston. They have recorded Mozart's complete sonatas for keyboard duet on period instruments on two discs for Resonus Classics, and have each been awarded Associateship of the Royal Academy of Music in recognition of their 'significant contribution' thus far to the music profession. Praised as 'exemplary' by *Early Music Reviews*, their playing has been described by *MozartCircle Reviews* as being '... within that glorious tradition of a few great Mozart interpreters such as Edwin Fischer and Alicia de Larrocha.'

Julian Perkins (fortepiano – *primo*)

Described as ‘exuberantly stylish’ by the *Sunday Times*, **Julian Perkins** is Artistic Director of Cambridge Handel Opera and Founder Director of Sounds Baroque. He has appeared at the Salzburg Festival, Edinburgh International Festival and BBC Proms, and performed concertos with ensembles including Royal Northern Sinfonia, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Orchestra of The Sixteen and Florilegium. In addition to performing as the solo harpsichordist for productions at the Royal Opera House, Welsh National Opera and Northern Ireland Opera, he has featured on the BBC *Early Music Show* and played at venues such as London’s Wigmore Hall, New York’s Lincoln Center and Sydney Opera House. An avid recitalist, Julian has broken new ground at over a dozen international festivals in giving solo concerts on the clavichord. His various recordings have been described as ‘monumental’ (*American Record Guide*), ‘a virtuoso showcase’ (*The Guardian*) and ‘exemplary’ (*MusicWeb International*).

With Sounds Baroque, Julian has directed performances with Simon Callow, Peter Capaldi, Rebecca Evans, Dame Emma Kirkby, Mark Padmore, Christopher Purves, Timothy West and David Wilson-Johnson. He has also directed the Academy of Ancient Music, conducted eighteen Baroque projects with Southbank Sinfonia, and conducted opera productions for organisations including the Buxton International Festival, Cambridge Handel Opera, Guildhall School of Music & Drama, Kings Place, Netherlands Opera Academy, New Chamber Opera, New Kent Opera and Snape Maltings.

Julian read music at King’s College, Cambridge, before pursuing advanced studies at the Schola Cantorum, Basle and the Royal Academy of Music, London. He is a visiting coach at the Royal Opera House, and regularly gives masterclasses at the National Opera Studio, music colleges and universities both in the UK and abroad.

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Emma Abbate (fortepiano – *secondo*)

The Neapolitan pianist **Emma Abbate** enjoys a demanding career as a piano accompanist and chamber musician. Described as ‘an amazingly talented pianist’ by the leading Italian magazine *Musica*, she has performed in duo recitals for international festivals and concert societies in Salzburg (Schlosskonzerte Mirabell), Lisbon, Naples, Ischia and Poland, and at many prestigious UK venues such as the Wigmore Hall, Southbank Centre and Aldeburgh Festival, in addition to broadcasts on BBC Radio 3.

Emma is releasing a series of recordings devoted to twentieth-century Italian vocal chamber music, the latest of which is *Sera d’inverno: Songs by Ildebrando Pizzetti* with the critically acclaimed mezzo-soprano Hanna Hipp for Resonus Classics. The disc has been highly praised by *Gramophone* and was ‘Editor’s Choice’ in the June 2018 issue of the leading Australian magazine *Limelight*. Emma has previously recorded the world-première disc of Shakespeare Sonnets by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco with the BBC New Generation Artist Ashley Riches. A keen advocate of contemporary music, she has also released two discs devoted to works by Stephen Dodgson for Toccata Classics: world-première recordings of his cello and piano music with Evva Mizerska, and his piano quintets with the Tippett Quartet. The latter disc was named a *Musicweb International Recording Of The Year 2017*.

Based in London, Emma is a professor at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, a staff coach at the Royal Opera House and has taught at the Verbier Festival Academy. Following her graduation from the S. Pietro a Majella Conservatoire in Naples and an Advanced Diploma from the S. Cecilia Conservatoire in Rome, Emma studied in London with Yonty Solomon. She completed her studies with Geoffrey Pratley as a scholar at the Royal Academy of Music, and was also awarded an Italian Literature and Culture degree *cum laude* from the Federico II University in Naples.

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