


**EDINBURGH
INTERNATIONAL
FESTIVAL**

PATRICIA KOPATCHINSKAJA & JOONAS AHONEN

—

9 Aug 12pm & 2.30pm

OLD COLLEGE QUAD

The performance lasts approx. 1hr with no interval.

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Patricia Kopatchinskaja Violin
Joonas Ahonen Piano

Beethoven

**Violin Sonata No 7
in C minor Op 30 No 2**

- 1 Allegro con brio
- 2 Adagio cantabile
- 3 Scherzo: Allegro
- 4 Finale: Allegro

Schoenberg

**Phantasy for violin
and piano Op 47**

Beethoven

**Violin Sonata No 9
in A major Op 47 'Kreutzer'**

- 1 Adagio sostenuto – Presto
- 2 Andante von variazioni
- 3 Finale: Presto

PROGRAMME NOTES

Beethoven wrote almost all of his ten violin sonatas early in his life: a set of three in 1797–8, six more (including the two sonatas in today's programme) in 1803, and only his final violin sonata (Op 96 in G) in 1812, at the age of 42. Though we might more immediately think of him as a pianist, Beethoven was also intimately familiar with the violin: he took violin lessons as a young man in Bonn, and later studied with the eminent Ignaz Schuppanzigh in Vienna. In the first nine of the sonatas, at least, there's a sense of the young composer straining against the conventions of 18th-century music, and looking determinedly ahead to the more pioneering, heroic, dramatic style that would characterise his later music. In their original scores, for example, they're described as 'sonatas for pianoforte with the accompaniment of violin', a reversal of how we might perceive the relationship between their two players today. Beethoven set about rebalancing that relationship to one very much of equals, while also taking advantage of construction developments in both instruments to make increasingly ambitious technical demands on both of them.

The Violin Sonata No 7 in C minor is conceived on a grand scale, with four rather than the customary three movements, and – as we might expect from the key Beethoven associated with all things dramatic, tragic and turbulent – music of tremendous power and ambition, even alongside the limpid beauty of its slow movement and the dashing wit of its scherzo.

The Violin Sonata No 9 in A, however, surpasses No 7 in scale and grandeur: the frequent three- or four-note chords that Beethoven demands his violinist play across their strings, for example, feel like a composer pushing an instrument to its limits. He originally wrote the Sonata for his friend and colleague George Bridgetower, a British violinist of African descent, who gave the work its premiere in 1803 with Beethoven at the keyboard. Beethoven later fell out with the violinist, however, and dedicated the Sonata instead to distinguished French player Rodolphe Kreutzer – who never performed it since it had already been premiered, and dismissed it as ‘unintelligible’.

Between the two Beethoven sonatas comes Schoenberg’s final instrumental work, written in 1949, just two years before the composer’s death. The Phantasy is described explicitly as being ‘for violin with piano accompaniment’, and indeed, Schoenberg completed its complex, rhapsodic violin

part in detail before even beginning the piano accompaniment. It's a dense, rigorously argued work that seems to condense a whole sonata into a single movement of less than ten minutes. Speaking about himself, Schoenberg said: 'I will not show you that my music is beautiful. You know it is not; I know it is not.' His Phantasy might not be beautiful in a traditional sense, but it's nonetheless compelling, austere and endlessly inventive.

David Kettle

David Kettle is a music and arts writer based in Edinburgh, who contributes regularly to the *Scotsman* and the *Daily Telegraph*. He has also written for publications including *BBC Music Magazine*, *The Times*, *The Strad* and *Classical Music*, and for organisations including the BBC Proms, Glyndebourne and Scottish Opera.

PATRICIA KOPATCHINSKAJA

Whether performing a violin concerto by Tchaikovsky, Ligeti or Schoenberg, or presenting an original staged project deconstructing Beethoven, Ustvolskaya or Cage, Patricia Kopatchinskaja brings an inimitable sense of theatrics to her music.

Her 2019/20 season highlights included a tour of the US with cellist Jay Campbell, the world premiere of Márton Illés's violin concerto *Vont-tér* with the WDR Sinfonieorchester, and the world premiere of a new commission by Francisco Coll with the Luxembourg Philharmonic Orchestra and Gustavo Gimeno. Her 2020/21 season highlights included residencies with Frankfurt Alter Oper, SWR Symphony Orchestra, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence and Bamberg Symphony. She is also one of three new Associate Artists at the Southbank Centre until the end of the 2021/22 season.

Kopatchinskaja regularly appears with artists such as Polina Leschenko and Reto Bieri. Her other projects explore music staged through contemporary contexts, such as *Dies irae*, a deconstruction of the

traditional concert experience inspired by the growing climate crisis. Her Vivaldi project with Il Giardino Armonico was released on CD in summer 2020, and her recording of Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* was listed as one of *Gramophone* magazine's essential albums in April 2021.

Kopatchinskaja held the position of Artistic Partner of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra from 2014 until 2018, and is also a humanitarian ambassador for Terre des Hommes, the leading Swiss child relief agency. She was awarded the Swiss Grand Award for Music by the Federal Office of Culture for Switzerland in 2017 and has held positions as Artist in Residence at various festivals. In 2018 she won a Grammy award in the best chamber and small ensemble performance category for *Death and the Maiden* with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra (Alpha) and was nominated in 2014 in the best classical instrumental solo category (Naïve).

JOONAS AHONEN

Finnish pianist Joonas Ahonen's musical interests take him from performing late 18th-century music on fortepiano to giving premiere performances of the music of our times. He is a member of Klangforum Wien, one of the world's leading contemporary music ensembles, and also of the Rödberg Fortepiano Trio. He has performed as a soloist with the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra and Ictus. His recordings of Ligeti's Piano Concerto and Ives's Piano Sonata No 2 'Concord' have received critical acclaim in the music press.

Ahonen's recent performances include the world premiere of Rebecca Saunders's *To an Utterance – Study* for solo piano at Berlin's Philharmonie; his debut with the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra conducted by Pablo Heras-Casado; Philipp Maintz's Piano Concerto with the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Marin Alsop; duo appearances with violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja at the Wiener Konzerthaus, Gstaad Menuhin Festival and Milan's La Scala; and a solo recital at Teodor Currentzis' Diaghilev Festival in Perm.

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