MOZART IN PARIS

Six Sonatas Op. 1

Gil Shaham violin
Orli Shaham piano

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By Prof. Elaine Sisman

Mozart's early career radiates like spokes of a wheel with Salzburg as its center. Recognizing his son's gifts immediately, the court violinist Leopold Mozart brought him up to think in international terms.

Grand tours punctuated his life from the age of eight, with months or even years spent abroad, becoming a source of contention at court when the benevolent Archbishop Schrattenbach died in 1771 and economy-minded Archbishop Colloredo wondered why he was paying two court musicians, father and son, who never seemed to be on the job but were spending months bouncing back and forth to Italy, Vienna, Munich, and the like.

Compared to the wheel of his early life, the years in Vienna beginning in 1781 gave him a flat plane for a decade, and it was the success and sheer intensity, number, and quality of masterworks emanating from his pen that relegated everything before to "early" Mozart, including the wonderful sonatas on this recording. Yet these sonatas show the composer at age twenty-two in the flush of inspiration, opus planning, and publication savvy – all, as was so often the case with him, in competition with another composer.

Thus, while Schrattenbach allowed the family to be absent for a total of nearly seven years in six trips between 1762 and 1771, Colloredo cracked the whip after three trips to Italy and Vienna between 1771 and 1775 totaling less than ten months. Wracked with dissatisfaction, Mozart and his father again petitioned to be allowed to travel to Mannheim and Paris in 1777. This time, Colloredo gave permission only to the younger Mozart. For the first and only time, then, Mozart traveled with his mother, who was unable to control him and who was to die, neglected, in Paris in July 1778. Tasting

SIX SONATES

Pour Clavecin Ou Forté Piano
Avec Accompagnement D'un Violon
Dedicés

A Son Altesse Serenissime Electorale
Madame L'Electrice Palatine
Par
Wolfgang Amadeo Mozart fils
Oeuvre Premier

A PARIS.
Chez le Sr Sieber, Editeur de Musique rue St Honoré à l'hôtel D'Aligre Ancien Grand Conseil
ou les bonnes plusieurs Nouveaux Ouvrages
A. P. D. R.

freedom, Mozart tarried at Augsburg, where he flirted with his cousin Maria Anna Thekla Mozart (the "Bäsle"), then overstayed his welcome at Mannheim, where the Bavarian elector still made his court. Unsuccessful in gaining a position, he fell in love more seriously, with the soprano Aloysia Weber, and even contemplated traveling with her to Italy as her accompanist. The effect on Leopold was predictable: incensed, he wrote "Off with you to Paris!"

When Mozart arrived in Paris on 23 March 1778, he carried with him the four sonatas for violin and piano he had just completed in Mannheim, to which he planned to add two in order to interest a publisher in the customary opus of six pieces, as he wrote to his father in February. He clearly already intended to dedicate the opus to the Electress of Bavaria, the wife of Carl Theodor. Which four had he finished (and had it really been four)? The answer to this question is not trivial, because it would show how he created an opus, what elements he thought might be lacking and needed filling in. Most scholars believe that the E minor (whose autograph reads "à Paris,") and the D major (the only one in three movements) were written in Paris; Wolfgang Plath, the pioneer of Mozart chronology based on handwriting, believes that a notational change begun in the second movement of the E minor and continued thereafter proves that the E minor was begun in Mannheim and concluded in Paris, and thus that the two that were written from scratch in Paris must have been the A major and D major, Nos. 5 and 6. Other critical questions arise: why choose the genre of violin sonatas as a kind of calling card in Mannheim and Paris? Why make an opus of six pieces? What makes these six pieces an opus? The answers to these questions, some factual, some speculative, offer a revealing snapshot of eighteenth-century musical life.

Why violin sonatas?

We often search through composers' words in vain, unable to find enough information on their motivation and intentions in writing a particular piece. How lucky, then, to have Mozart's letter from Munich on 6 October 1777 to give us the rationale behind his decision to write sonatas for keyboard and violin: "I enclose for my sister six duets for keyboard and violin by Schuster, which I have often played here. They aren't bad. If I stay on, I'll write six myself in same style [gusto], which is very popular here." Within this short passage we learn that Mozart played chamber music by other composers; that Mannheimers liked the so-called "accompanied sonatas" as well, because

Mozart continued to play them there (Mannheim, 8 November, at Wendling's: "I played three duets with violin accompaniment which I had never seen and the composer of which I had never even heard of"); that Mozart's impetus in writing the pieces was to compete with, improve upon, and gain by the popularity of pieces by another composer. The genre had many devotees in Mannheim and especially Paris: the first pieces Mozart had published as a child were sonatas for keyboard with violin, in Paris, (Op.1, two sonatas), London (Op.2, two sonatas), and The Hague (Op.3, six sonatas) at ages eight, nine, and ten, respectively; then, content to leave the violin as simple accompaniment to the keyboard, he put the genre away for over a decade.

Joseph Schuster, a composer from Dresden with a career in Italy as an opera composer, found the way to stimulate Mozart's creative juices with two simple expedients in his set of six divertimenti: he allowed the piano and violin to trade off material in sometimes novel ways, and he included some interesting movement types, not only characteristic movements like a Polacca, Angloise, and Siciliana, but also a recitative and a movement alternating slow and fast tempos. In short, he got Mozart thinking. The genre offered something for everyone, the female pianist and male violinist modeling graceful drawing-room conversation, the connoisseur and amateur listeners enjoying different aspects of the same piece. An influential work of the 1770s, Sulzer's General Theory of the Fine Arts, noted that chamber music could be more artful than music for the "public" because it was written for "connoisseurs and amateurs." This alerts us to the fact that amateurs themselves had a degree of cultivation beyond the general run of concert-goers, and that composers' audiences in the eighteenth century had three strands, not two: the more learned, the less learned, and the unlearned. Mozart and his father argued for years over the difficulty of his compositions for listeners. As a genre, the violin sonata was uniquely suited to Mozart because he played both piano and violin, and may well have enjoyed taking on different roles.

Mozart had evidently tried to find a publisher in Mannheim: on 11 January his mother wrote that he was "going to have them engraved by subscription," a good way for a composer to raise money privately first while generating word-of-mouth interest, but by 28 February these plans had fallen through. Paris was certainly the center of musical publishing; an almanac of 1783 lists 97 music publishers! Negotiations with Sieber

might have commenced before the last two sonatas were finished in Paris; the edition of the sonatas as *Œuvre Premier*, promised for September, came out in November 1778. He was able to present the Electress of Bavaria with a copy in January 1779; the electoral court had by then moved to Munich.

Why an opus of six pieces?

During the later 17th and early 18th centuries, collections with opus numbers most often contained groups of twelve pieces; sometimes these were published in two groups of six. At some point, six became the preferred number, though collections of twelve continued, and even sometimes twenty-four. These numbers had quite venerable meanings. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* had been divided into twenty-four books each, for the number of letters in the Greek alphabet. Classical Hebrew bibles are also divided into twenty-four books, because they count Ezra and Nehemiah as one book, each of the double books as one book (e.g. 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles), and all the minor prophets as one book. Twelve is a meaningful number because it embodies the zodiac, the months, the keys, and the modes (six authentic and six plagal, seen in early motet collections). Corelli and Vivaldi are the best-known examples of sets of twelve. In fact, Corelli's entire œuvre is contained in six opuses of twelve works each, the fifth of which are violin sonatas. Several of Vivaldi's collections were split into two groups of six. And six is easily broken down into threes: often an opus of six pieces was divided into two "books," just as an opus of 12 had been: Haydn's string quartets Op.54 and 55, as well as the quartets Op.71 and 74, were really opuses of six given two numbers.

Six is a highly meaningful number, the first perfect number: it is both the sum and the product of one, two, and three. It refers to the six days of Creation; man was created on the sixth day. In short, it refers to labor, to work, from which it is a short step to the meaning of "opus." Indeed, J. S. Bach published his keyboard partitas one per year, starting in 1726, planning to publish them together "when the work is complete." When he reached six in 1731, he published them as his Opus 1. On a more practical level, groups of three or six works might make a nicely contrasting afternoon's or evening's entertainment. Mozart took with him on the 1777 trip the six "difficult" sonatas he had written in Munich a few years earlier (K.279-284), and wrote from Augsburg in October 1777, "Here and at Munich I have played all my six sonatas by heart several times" and from Mannheim in November, "I played all

my six sonatas at Cannabich's." Cannabich, an important court composer and virtuoso violinist, was also celebrated in Paris, a fact that reflects the similarity of musical taste in Paris and Mannheim, both of which were known for their brilliant orchestras and their love of chamber music, unlike Salzburg. In fact, Mozart's Opus 1 is filled with passages that are orchestral, and suggest a broader canvas for his ideas.

How do these sonatas make an opus?
To answer this question, we must take up each sonata in turn, then assess the strategy of their ordering, which must have come from Mozart. In the first movement of the G major (K.301), a spacious Allegro con spirito, every theme is stated successively in violin and piano, sometimes broken up by more orchestral-sounding material in which they play the melody simultaneously. (Alert listeners might notice a similarity to the Prague symphony at that point; Mozart also seems to have used this movement as source for his later piano concerto in G major, K.453.) In a signature trait, Mozart piles up closing themes, seemingly loath to end large sections. The finale is an artless, dance-like Allegro with a middle section in the tonic minor that features a siciliana rhythm, perhaps a point of contact with Schuster.

The E-flat major sonata (K.302) is even more strikingly orchestral, with an unusual first movement in triple time; its irregular first theme acts as an antidote to the square-cut theme of the G major (K.301). The rest of the movement is literally stuffed with sharply focused musical "topics": the celebrated Mannheim crescendo, passages of heightened sensibility (sighing figures and the like), the pulsing agitation of the so-called "Sturm und Drang" style (a cliché of symphonic writing used later to good effect in such pieces as the F major sonata K.332 and the opening scene of *The Magic Flute*). The Andante grazioso finale, a rondeau, continues the stream of references to other styles with a descending bass line that lends a quasi-Baroque stateliness as it is set against repeated notes or contrary motion in the upper line. It is heard in its purest form during the last refrain, and in its most Schubertian during the coda.
A brief purple patch of harmony in contrary motion has a striking echo in, of all pieces, the A major sonata (K.305) right before the closing theme.

The C major sonata (K.303) begins with the only true Adagio in the entire set, but it soon turns out to be the first theme group in a movement alternating tempos between Adagio and Molto allegro. Schuster did this

in his third sonata in G minor, but Mozart had already combined tempos in his string quartet K.171. He deepens the Adagio in K.303 with another descending bass and with vocal gestures, while the Molto allegro is not only faster but also accelerates rhythmically. A charming Tempo di Menuetto in sonata form manages all of its theme changes virtually without connectives, yet never sounds terse. Its coda ends in a whisper.

The E minor (K.304) emerges from that whisper, with a ghostly ascent in three-octave unison. The lengthy opening theme is remarkably similar to that of the G major in construction, if not in affect. The time signature is alla breve (cut time), an archaic formula that heralds the "learned" style. Even the parts of the movement that are up-to-date – the march, the concerto-like trill cadence, the Mannheim crescendo – give way to the contrapuntal: the strict canon closing the exposition, the knotted invertible counterpoint in the development. And the shocking accented chords that cloud the return of the main theme in the recapitulation make necessary a full, singing restatement in the coda, as well as a final phrase with the violin soaring thrillingly upward for the first time. The beautiful melody of the Tempo di Menuetto, marked sotto voce, has the descending bass line of the E-flat major sonata (K.302), now in its lamenting minor and chromatic forms. This sorrowing tone gives way to the dolce chords of the E major trio, but consolation is short-lived. Might this sonata reflect Mozart's actual grief over the death of his mother? Does it contain what Leopold objected to as his son's "artificial harmonic progressions, which are incomprehensible to most people," in a letter of 13 August 1778?

The E minor ends with a cascading arpeggio in triplets, and the A major (K.305) begins with a brightly arpeggiated "hunt" (chasse) topic; this is the only sonata that does not match its opening dynamics with the end of the previous sonata, so it makes amends by using the same musical idea. Featuring a Mannheim crescendo, the movement also fits in with its peers by playing with upward and downward motion, counterpoint, and many closing themes. The inverted arpeggio in E minor at the beginning of the development reminds us of the E minor sonata itself. The finale, a set of six variations on an Andante grazioso theme, is the longest movement in the sonatas. Variations turn the elements of the theme now this way, now that, clothing its melodic shape, rhythms, and timbres in new guises and elevating partnership to a principle of construction. The set comes

to a close with a characteristic minor-mode variation followed by an energetic Allegro in 3/8, with a last arpeggio to link it to the first movement.

Finally, the D major (K.306) sums up the set. The first group ends with a forte unison passage (almost identical to the one in the E minor), followed by echoes of the finales of the G major and C major; the recapitulation is a kind of mirror bringing back the first theme only at the end, reminding us of the end of the E minor's first movement. Also evident is the Parisian location: French trills in the first movement and shared virtuosity – a double cadenza! – in the finale. In the beautiful Andantino cantabile, a long trill is part of the main theme itself, with a series of deceptive cadences increasing expressiveness at the end of the second theme. The finale is in two tempos just like the first movement of the C major, but here the time signature changes the character too, from the Allegretto in 2/4 to the Allegro in 6/8. After the second Allegro and cadenza, the coda links up with the meter and arpeggios of the A Major (K.305). The hunt topic thus returns, prepared by the echoing horn fifths of the first theme.

How, then, is the set constructed? It is plausible to see two sets of three: first G, E-flat, C, then E minor, A, D. The keys divide nicely, the first set descending by thirds, the second set ascending by fourths. The finales of the first in each set (G, E minor) are parallel: each ends with a triple-time ternary movement. Each set ends with a sonata (C, D) featuring a two-tempo sonata-form movement without development. In addition, the second three are longer, more intense and complex, and more "topical." It is tempting to see in this hypothetical division an increasing sophistication as Mozart imagined the more cosmopolitan Parisian palate. The eerie E minor with its ombra, learned style, and lament, the cheerful hunting A major, and the brilliant, concerto-like D major with its indoor French trills and outdoor echoes of the hunt make up a highly variegated trio of works that intensify the charms of the first three. Although speculative, this reading places Mozart in two musically knowledgeable locales, and suggests that Mozart truly intended his mature *Œuvre Premier* to be the Parisian statement he had sought. Thus his leaving Paris in September 1778 with his work still chez Sieber is even more poignant.

Gil Shaham, violin

Gil Shaham is internationally recognized as one of today's most virtuosic and engaging artists.

He is sought after throughout the world for concerto appearances with celebrated orchestras and conductors, as well as for recital and ensemble appearances on the great concert stages and at the most prestigious festivals.

In addition to his many orchestral engagements, Mr. Shaham regularly tours in recital with pianist Akira Eguchi. He enjoys bringing together friends and colleagues in chamber music, and also has the good fortune to enjoy musical collaboration with his family, including his wife, violinist Adele Anthony, his sister Orli Shaham and his brother-in-law, conductor David Robertson. Among his more than two dozen concerto and solo CDs are a number of international best-sellers. These recordings have earned prestigious awards including multiple Grammys, a Grand Prix du Disque, a Diapason d'or and Gramophone Editor's Choice.

Mr. Shaham was born in Illinois in 1971, and later moved to Israel where at the age of seven he began violin studies at the Rubin Academy of Music. In 1981 he returned to the USA and began studies with Dorothy DeLay and Jens Ellerman at Aspen. In 1982, after taking first prize in Israel's Claremont Competition, he became a scholarship student at Juilliard, where he also worked with Hyo Kang. He has also studied at Columbia University.

Gil Shaham was awarded the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant in 1990. He plays the 1699 'Countess Polignac' Stradivarius, and lives in New York City with his wife and their two children.

Orli Shaham, piano

Orli Shaham is an established pianist with an impressive international reputation as one of today's most gifted pianists.

Amongst her numerous acclaimed appearances, she has performed with the Cleveland and Philadelphia Orchestras, the Saint Louis, Chicago, Detroit, San Francisco, National, Houston, Montreal and Atlanta Symphonies, Los Angeles and Florida Philharmonics, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Orchestra della Toscana, the Jerusalem, Sydney, La Scala, and Bilbao Symphony Orchestras, and the Orchestre National de Lyon. Ms. Shaham has worked with such eminent conductors as Sir Neville Marriner, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Sir Roger Norrington, David Robertson, Robert Spano, Christopher Hogwood and Leonard Slatkin and toured extensively with her brother, Gil.

Orli has given recitals in New York and Washington, DC., Munich and Frankfurt, and has toured Japan; other international recital engagements have taken her to cities throughout Italy, Spain, France, and Germany with additional festival appearances at Ravinia, Caramoor, Grand Teton, Verbier, Spoleto and Aspen.

Orli Shaham has taught music literature at Columbia University, contributed articles to Piano Today, Symphony and Playbill magazines, and collaborated with Classical Public Radio Network to create the morning show feature Dial-a-Musician.

Orli Shaham was recognized early for her prodigious talents. A recipient of the Gilmore Young Artist Award and Avery Fisher Career Grant, she was a student of Luisa Yoffe, Nancy Stessin, and Herbert Stessin. Orli Shaham obtained degrees at the Juilliard School, the Horace Mann School in Riverdale, New York, and Columbia. She is married to conductor David Robertson and has two stepsons, Peter and Jonathan.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

(1756 -1791)

Sonata for violin and piano in G major, K.301 **13:07**

1. Allegro con spirito 8:00
2. Allegro 5:07

Sonata for violin and piano in E flat major, K.302 **11:25**

3. Allegro 5:12
4. Rondeau: Andante grazioso 6:13

Sonata for violin and piano in C major, K.303 **9:34**

5. Adagio – Molto allegro 5:17
6. Tempo di menuetto 4:17

Sonata for violin and piano in E minor, K.304 **12:34**

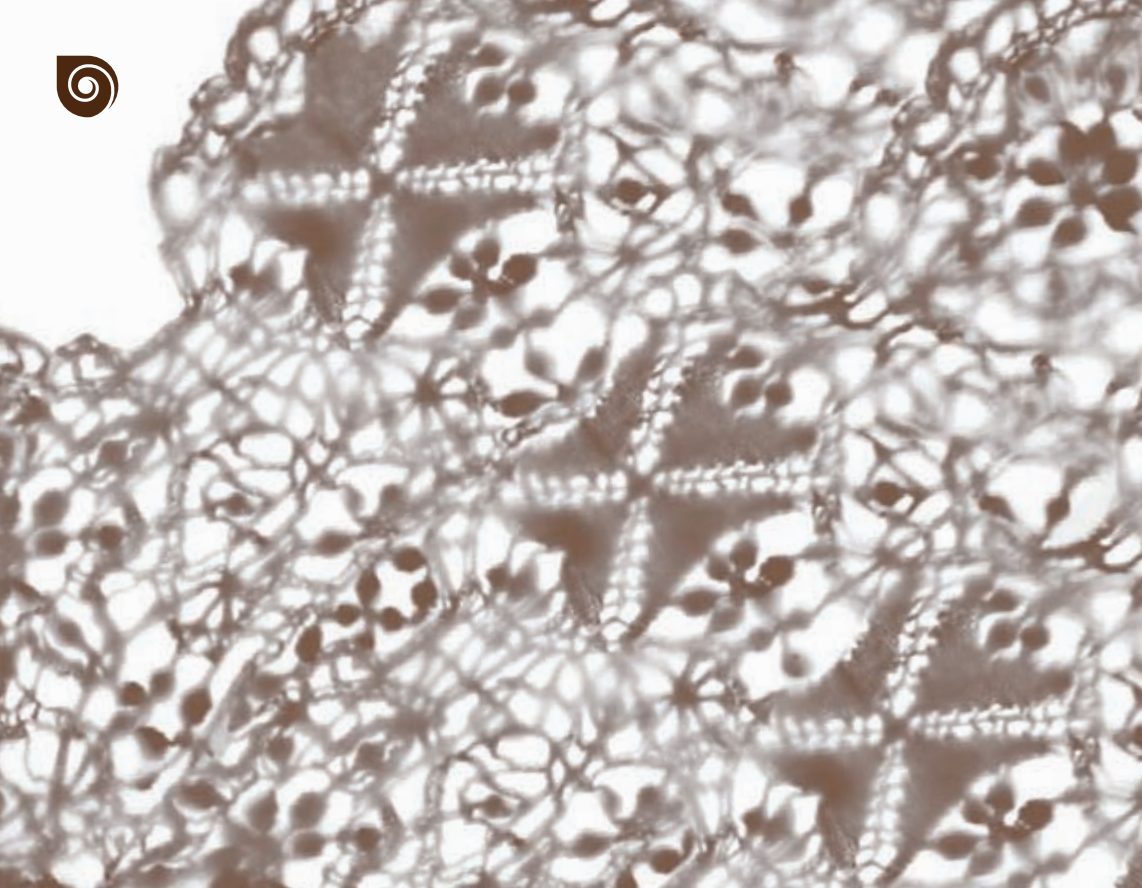
7. Allegro 6:54
8. Tempo di menuetto 5:40

Sonata for violin and piano in A major, K.305 **12:00**

9. Allegro di molto 4:41
10. Theme and Variations: Andante grazioso 7:19

Sonata for violin and piano in D major, K.306 **19:55**

11. Allegro con spirito 7:18
12. Andantino cantabile 5:40
13. Allegretto 6:57



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Gil Shaham, violin
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