

NAXOS

Joseph Martin
KRAUS

Violin Concerto
Olympie • Azire

Takako Nishizaki, Violin
New Zealand Symphony Orchestra • Uwe Grodd



Joseph Martin
KRAUS
(1756-1792)

Violin Concerto in C major, VB 151 30:11

- 1 I. Allegro moderato 15:26**
- 2 II. Adagio 8:08**
- 3 III. Rondo 6:36**

Olympie: Incidental Music, VB 33 20:58

- 4 Overture 7:05**
- 5 Marcia 0:52**
- 6 Entr'acte between Acts I and II 1:20**
- 7 Entr'acte between Acts II and III 2:15**
- 8 Entr'acte between Acts III and IV 4:21**
- 9 Entr'acte between Acts IV and V 3:01**
- 10 Postlude 2:04**

Azire: Ballet Music, VB 18 7:27

- 11 No. 22 1:32**
- 12 No. 23 1:27**
- 13 No. 26 1:38**
- 14 No. 25 1:35**
- 15 No. 24 1:14**

Joseph Martin Kraus (1756-1792)

Violin Concerto in C major • Incidental music for 'Olympie' • Ballet Divertissement from 'Azire'

Joseph Martin Kraus, one of the most talented and unusual composers of the eighteenth century, was born in the central German town of Miltenburg am Main, the son of a local state official. He received his earliest formal education in nearby Buchen and at the Jesuit Gymnasium and Music Seminar in Mannheim, where he studied German literature and music. Following additional schooling at the universities in Mainz and Erfurt, Kraus spent a year at home in Buchen in 1775-1776, while his father was undergoing indictment for misuse of office, a charge later dropped, before resuming his studies in law at Göttingen University. There he came under the influence of the remnants of the Göttinger Hainbund, a *Sturm und Drang* literary circle. In 1778 he published his treatise *Etwas von und über Musik*, which is one of the few actual theoretical works devoted to the adaptation of *Sturm und Drang* literary philosophy to music.

In 1778, with the encouragement of fellow student Carl Stridsberg, Kraus decided to dedicate his life to music and to seek employment in Sweden at the court of Gustav III. Although promised a position, he found it difficult to break into the cultural establishment of Stockholm, and for the next two years he faced dire economic circumstances as he attempted to gain acceptance. In 1780 he was elected as a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music and commissioned to compose a trial opera, *Proserpin*, the text of which had been drafted by the king himself and versified by poet Johan Kellgren. Its successful private performance at Ulriksdal in 1781 brought an appointment as deputy Kapellmästare and in 1782 a grand tour of Europe at Gustav's expense to observe the latest in musical and theatrical trends. This took him throughout Germany, Austria, Italy, England and France, where he met major figures of the period such as Gluck and Haydn, gaining their respect and admiration.

Kraus returned to Stockholm in 1787 and the following year was appointed Kapellmästare and

director of curriculum at the Royal Academy of Music. For the next several years he achieved a reputation in Stockholm for his disciplined conducting, his compositions, and his rigorous pedagogical standards. He was a participant in the Palmstedt literary circle and contributed much to the establishment of Stockholm as one of the leading cultural centres of Europe. Nine months after the assassination of Gustav III in 1792, Kraus himself died at the age of 36.

As a composer, Kraus can be seen as one of the most innovative of the eighteenth century. His earliest training brought him the Italian style of the Mannheim composers, the contrapuntal rigour of F. X. Richter and J. S. Bach, as well as the dramatic style of C. P. E. Bach, Gluck, and Grétry. A polymath, he was also a theorist, pedagogue and author (a book of poetry and a tragedy). His compositional style features the unexpected as well as the dramatic, and it is not surprising therefore to find many forward-looking stylistic devices that anticipate music of the next century. His talent for thematic development, his unusual forms, his colourful orchestration, and his penchant for a theatrical flair in his works caused Haydn to proclaim him one of only two 'geniuses' he knew (Mozart being the other one).

The present release presents for the first time complete recordings of three instrumental compositions, the *Violin Concerto in C major*, the incidental music to the tragedy *Olympie* by Kellgren, and the final ballet divertissement from his first opera *Azire*, all in modern, critically-edited performing editions published by Artaria.

Although the focus of much research has been on Kraus the composer, very little has been written about his own musical abilities. It is known that he played keyboard instruments with a fair degree of proficiency but was no virtuoso. His training, however, was first and foremost as a violinist, beginning with his earliest years in Buchen. There he began to learn 'fiddling', as he put it in a letter to his parents, and by his early years in

Mannheim he was proficient enough not only to play with the Mannheim orchestra, but also to perform one of the solo parts of a *Sinfonia concertante* for two violins and orchestra he had composed. His brother Franz Kraus (1760-1790) also followed this path, becoming a professional violinist.

It is, therefore, not surprising that Kraus paid special attention to the violin during his two years at Göttingen University, where he clearly devoted much time to writing concertos. No less than four works were written before January 1778: concertos for violin and flute, a *Sinfonia concertante* for violin and viola, and a quadruple concertante for flute, violin, viola, and violoncello. Of these only the violin concerto survives. This was taken by Kraus to Vienna in 1783 and handed over to the copy house of Johann Traeg, who listed it as for sale in his catalogue the following year.

The *Violin Concerto in C major* is a monumental three-movement work, that has a format, structure and length more akin to large-scale virtuoso violinistic works by Cramer and Viotti than to the simpler, more direct Viennese/Italian styles found in violin concertos by Mozart, Carl Stamitz, Haydn, and others. As a result it is considerably longer and more orchestral in conception. This is apparent from the beginning of the huge first movement (over four hundred bars), where the first ritornello is a complete symphonic exposition over a hundred bars in length that returns virtually complete as a coda. Scored for the standard Classical orchestra of pairs of flutes and horns together with the strings, the accompaniment is a *primus inter pares* with the soloist, who alternates episodes of dazzling virtuoso display with lyrical moments. Kraus explores the possibilities of his instrument systematically, requiring both on and off string bowing, as well as techniques such as *bariolage*. The result is a virtuoso tour-de-force, which makes the cadenza (here provided by the present author) slightly anti-climatic. In contrast, the binary form second movement features the lyrical capabilities of the soloist. Scored for strings alone, the accompaniment recedes into the background almost immediately to allow for soaring lines and occasional

recitative-like moments. As with all of Kraus's music, the drama of the movement is found in sudden dynamic shifts, quick turns of harmony into unusual (and often darker) keys, and textural changes from unisons to four-part writing. The final movement is a minuet-like *Rondo*, which begins with the soloist above an orchestra reduced to violins and cello, a dainty, almost timid entrance of a light, vivacious dance tune. This graceful movement was, however, not the concerto's original finale; Kraus's biographer Fredrik Silverstolpe noted on the only surviving source that the composer originally had a much more fast-paced *Scherzo* in duple time, which was replaced with the current movement. No reason for this substitution was given, though it may be suggested that differences in taste and compositional maturity between 1777 and 1784 could lie at the bottom of it. Whether or not Kraus also made substantive changes to the remaining movements cannot be determined.

The complete incidental music for Johan Henrik Kellgren's tragedy *Olympie* has its origins in circumstances surrounding the Royal theatres during the last year of Gustav III's life. Kellgren, Kraus's librettist for his gargantuan opera *Aeneas i Cartago*, had been commissioned in 1790 by the king to write a play adapted from Voltaire's tragedy for production at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm. It was to be something more than a simple translation but less than a completely independent drama. The author realised the political advantages of this commission, noting that it was intended to serve as the signature rôle for Frederika Löf, an actress of great ability and beauty. It tells the story of Olympie, daughter of Alexander, who falls in love with King Cassander in Ephesus. She learns, however, that he is accused of murdering her mother Statira, and thus their mutual love is doomed to failure. She is also wooed by Antigonus, King of Syria, and the rivalry leads to insoluble confrontation wherein the only remedy is the mass suicide of the leading characters. Originally there was no expectation of any music in the work, but by the autumn before its première on 7th January 1792, it was clear that the anticipated first performance of *Aeneas* needed to be postponed yet again,

and Kraus was apparently commissioned to provide incidental music in compensation. It was a subject that suited his own rather moody, dramatic style perfectly.

The incidental music consisted of a powerful *Sturm und Drang* overture, an off-stage march, four entr'actes and an epilogue, most relatively short. The overture is characterized by a solemn slow introduction of French grandeur, with jagged rhythms and dynamic contrasts, leading into a wild, dramatic *Allegro* in which the relentless ostinatos of the strings, the powerful minor key outbursts of the winds, and the use of dramatic musical elements such as syncopation and tremolo all lend the work a violent emotional quality. This is one of Kraus's signature pieces. The opening march by a small wind band off-stage heralds the arrival of Olympie in Ephesus; this reappears in the first interlude, whose sinister unisons foretell that the betrothal of King Cassander with the heroine has deep emotional undercurrents. The shift of the harmony between major and minor outlines this division, as does the use of *sforzandi*. The second interlude portrays a more majestic tone, with grand dotted rhythms, a stately feeling. A tender duet between the oboe and bassoon in the third interlude plaintively reflects Olympie's love and indecision between the two rulers, while in the fourth the rising melodic lines and definitive dynamic contrasts point towards a *dénouement* that borders on the tragic. The solemn epilogue begins with powerful, dramatic chords and melodic leaps, a depiction of the monumental tragedy of the suicides, which quickly diminish into a funereal coda. The bass line has a relentless C minor foundation above which the strings die away softly like vanishing mists.

The final work included here represents virtually the only portions that have survived from Kraus's early

1779 Swedish opera *Azire*. Upon his arrival in Sweden in 1778, he immediately set to work on an "original" drama to a text by his fellow Göttingen student, Carl Stridsberg. According to the judgement of Per Frigel some twenty years later, the entire work, featuring dark groves, steep cliffs and mountain strongholds, an army of trolls, and supernatural interventions, was 'wild and untamed', perhaps the perfect description of an actual *Sturm und Drang* opera. This powerful emotionally-charged drama cannot be found, however, in the five pieces of ballet music from the finale (nor in the final chorus which has not been included here). Instead, one is struck by the tuneful competence of Kraus as a composer for the dance. The rhythms are changeable, always clear and precise, and calculated to be more celebratory than dramatic. The first D major movement contains an almost peasant-like main theme, wherein one can picture the farmers of Scandinavia celebrating the return of spring. This is followed by a lilting *Andantino*, with two flutes giving an air of ethereal beauty. Two round dances, one a perpetual motion flurry, are more active, and the ballet ends with a light minuet. This is a picture of bucolic festivity, a light summer's diversion after the drama of the main events. Unfortunately, it is also diametrically opposed to the mood of the rest of the opera, judging by the surviving text (now in Uppsala University Library); this called for more powerful music which has unfortunately been lost; the ballets were apparently extracted from the opera for an unrelated purpose about 1810. They are fragments with a joyous mood, making it all the more a pity that Kraus's first dramatic work for the stage has been lost.

Bertil van Boer

Takako Nishizaki



As a child, the distinguished violinist Takako Nishizaki studied with her father, Shinji, co-founder of the Suzuki Method, and with Shinichi Suzuki himself. She was the first student to complete the now-famous Suzuki course and was awarded a teacher's diploma at the age of nine. She started performing in public at the age of five and before she was ten had already played for artists such as Isaac Stern and Sir Malcolm Sargent as well as the French author, Georges Duhamel, who wrote about this experience in his book about Japan. Subsequently she studied with Broadus Earle and Hideo Saito at Toho Conservatory in Tokyo. In 1964 she went to the United States and first studied with Broadus Earle at Yale and then with Joseph Fuchs at Juilliard. Other teachers at the time included Louis Persinger and Aldo Parisot. While at Juilliard, Takako Nishizaki was awarded the Fritz Kreisler Scholarship, established by the great violinist himself. Among her sponsors was Alice Tully. In 1967 she won Second Prize at the Leventritt International Competition, as runner-up to Itzhak

Perlman, and in 1969 First Prize in the Juilliard Concerto Competition, performing Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* with Nobuko Imai. Her success at the Leventritt International Competition launched her concert career, initially only in the United States but subsequently internationally. She has collaborated and recorded with pianists Andrés Schiff, Jenő Jandó, Wolf Harden, Alexander Zakin, Michael Ponti and Kun-Woo Paik among others, and performed in chamber music ensembles with Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zukerman, Nobuko Imai, Ko Iwasaki, and Maria Kliegel. She has served on the juries of major international violin competitions including the Fritz Kreisler (Vienna), Michael Hill (New Zealand) and Hannover competitions.

Including her recordings of Chinese music, Takako Nishizaki has recorded more than a hundred CDs to date. For RCA she recorded the complete *Sonatas* of Grieg and a CD with short pieces by Fritz Kreisler and for Telefunken, Camerata and Marco Polo ten discs with works by Kreisler. For Marco Polo, she has also recorded a large number of rare violin concertos by Anton Rubinstein, Louis Spohr, César Cui, Charles de Bériot, Respighi and Joseph Joachim. Her Naxos recordings include Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, the complete works for violin and orchestra by Mozart, Beethoven, Bach and Tchaikovsky, as well as the concertos of Brahms, Bruch and Mendelssohn. The Vivaldi, Bach, Brahms/Bruch and Tchaikovsky/Mendelssohn recordings were awarded Platinum Discs for sales in excess of 100,000 copies each world-wide. Other recordings for Naxos include the complete sonatas for violin and piano of Mozart and of Beethoven, as well as the sonatas of Grieg and Franck and concertos by Saint-Georges and Vaňhal. In this recording, Takako Nishizaki plays her 1732 Guarneri del Gesù violin, previously owned by Fritz Kreisler.

New Zealand Symphony Orchestra

The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1946, is the country's leading professional orchestra. It has an establishment of ninety players and performs over a hundred concerts annually. Touring within New Zealand looms large in the orchestra's activities. All its main symphonic programmes are presented in Auckland and Wellington, and as well as this, the orchestra visits some thirty New Zealand towns and cities annually. In 2005 the NZSO undertook a highly successful tour that included performances at the BBC Proms, the Concertgebouw, Snape Maltings and the World Expo at Aichi in Japan. James Judd was appointed Music Director in 1999, to be succeeded from 2008 by Pietari Inkinen, with James Judd as Music Director Emeritus. Other conductors who have worked with the NZSO during his tenure include Alexander Lazarev, Dimitri Sitkovetsky, David Atherton, Yan Pascal Tortelier and Edo de Waart. Soloists who have worked with the orchestra recently include Lynn Harrell, Lang Lang, Hilary Hahn, Vadim Repin, Steven Isserlis, Jonathan Lemalu and Dame Kiri Te Kanawa. The NZSO has an extensive catalogue of CD recordings. As part of a commitment to promote and encourage music by New Zealand composers, the NZSO records at least one CD of New Zealand music annually. The orchestra has a strong relationship with Naxos, recording repertoire as diverse as Elgar (three discs), Ferdinand Ries, Beethoven, Bernstein, Copland, Lilburn, Sculthorpe, Frank Bridge, Akutagawa, Mendelssohn, Honegger, Liszt, and Vaughan Williams. Over half a million of these CDs have been sold internationally in the last decade and they have received critical acclaim. NZSO discs (Hummel, Elgar and Bernstein) were chosen for the Editor's Choice section of *The Gramophone* in 2004, and Lilburn's *Orchestral Works* in 2006.

Uwe Grodd

Uwe Grodd, German conductor and flautist, based in New Zealand, has performed and recorded internationally for over 25 years. He has won considerable success with his recordings and performances of works for piano and orchestra by Ferdinand Ries. A Naxos Recording Artist, he won First Prize, in 2000, for the 'Best 18th Century Orchestral Recording' at the Cannes Classical Awards with his CD of Symphonies by J B Vaňhal with the Nicolaus Esterhazy Sinfonia from Hungary (8.554341). This was immediately followed by a recording with the Capella Istropolitana from Slovakia with symphonies by Ignaz Pleyel (8.554696). In 2002 the CD was one of three finalists in the category 'Best 18th and 19th Century Orchestral Recording' at Cannes. His world première recording of the *Missa Solemnis* by J N Hummel (8.557193), with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and TOWER Voices New Zealand, was voted 'Editor's Choice' by *The Gramophone* magazine in May 2004. Other recordings include symphonies by Cannabich and Dittersdorf, two Masses by Vaňhal and, as a flautist, flute sonatas by Kuhlau and the Vaňhal Flute Quartets (Naxos 8.570234). In 1993 Uwe Grodd was appointed Musical Director of the Manukau City Symphony Orchestra and from 1998 until 2002 he was Artistic Director of the International Music Festival New Zealand. An avid supporter of contemporary music of all genres, he has given many first performances including the première season of the multi-media opera *Galileo*, with music by John Rimmer and libretto by Witi Ihimaera.

Uwe Grodd is Associate Professor in Conducting and Flute at the University of Auckland. As a graduate of Mainz University, Germany, he studied with teachers of international repute, including André Jaunet, Manfred Schreier, Robert Aitken and Sergio Celibidache.

The orchestral parts and scores of the following works are available from:

www.artaria.com

Sources

The sources upon which the editions used in this recording have been made are:

Violin Concerto in C (VB 151)

Edited by Bertil van Boer

- Artaria Editions AE450

Uppsala, Universitetsbiblioteket: Caps 32

Incidental Music to Olympie (VB 33)

Edited by Bertil van Boer

- Artaria Editions AE368

Uppsala, Universitetsbiblioteket: Caps 33

Ballet Music from Azire (VB 18)

Edited by Bertil van Boer

- Artaria Editions AE451

Uppsala, Universitetsbiblioteket:

Caps 57: 3a, 24





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Joseph Martin Kraus was one of the most gifted and unusual composers of the eighteenth century, whose talent for thematic development, colourful orchestration and theatrical flair caused Haydn to proclaim him one of only two 'geniuses' he knew (Mozart being the other one). It is known that Kraus played keyboard instruments with a fair degree of proficiency, but his training was first and foremost as a violinist. His *Violin Concerto in C major* is a monumental three-movement work that is similar in format, structure and length to large-scale virtuoso works by Cramer and Viotti. The incidental music for Johan Henrik Kellgren's tragedy *Olympie* consists of a powerful *Sturm und Drang* overture, an off-stage march, four entr'actes and an epilogue. The final work included here represents virtually the only portions that have survived from Kraus's early 1779 Swedish opera *Azire*. They are fragments with a joyous mood, making it all the more a pity that Kraus's first dramatic work for the stage has been lost.


**Joseph Martin
KRAUS**

(1756-1792)

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|--------------|--|--------------|
| 1-3 | Violin Concerto in C major, VB 151* | 30:11 |
| | with cadenzas by Bertil van Boer | |
| 4-10 | Olympie: Incidental Music, VB 33 | 20:58 |
| 11-15 | Azire: Ballet Music, VB 18 | 7:27 |

WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDINGS

 * **Takako Nishizaki, Violin**
New Zealand Symphony Orchestra • Uwe Grodd

A detailed track list can be found on page 2 of the booklet

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 Cover picture: *View of Stockholm from the Fersen Terrace with the Palace Makalos*
 by Elias Martin (1739-1818) (© Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, Sweden / Bridgeman Art Library)