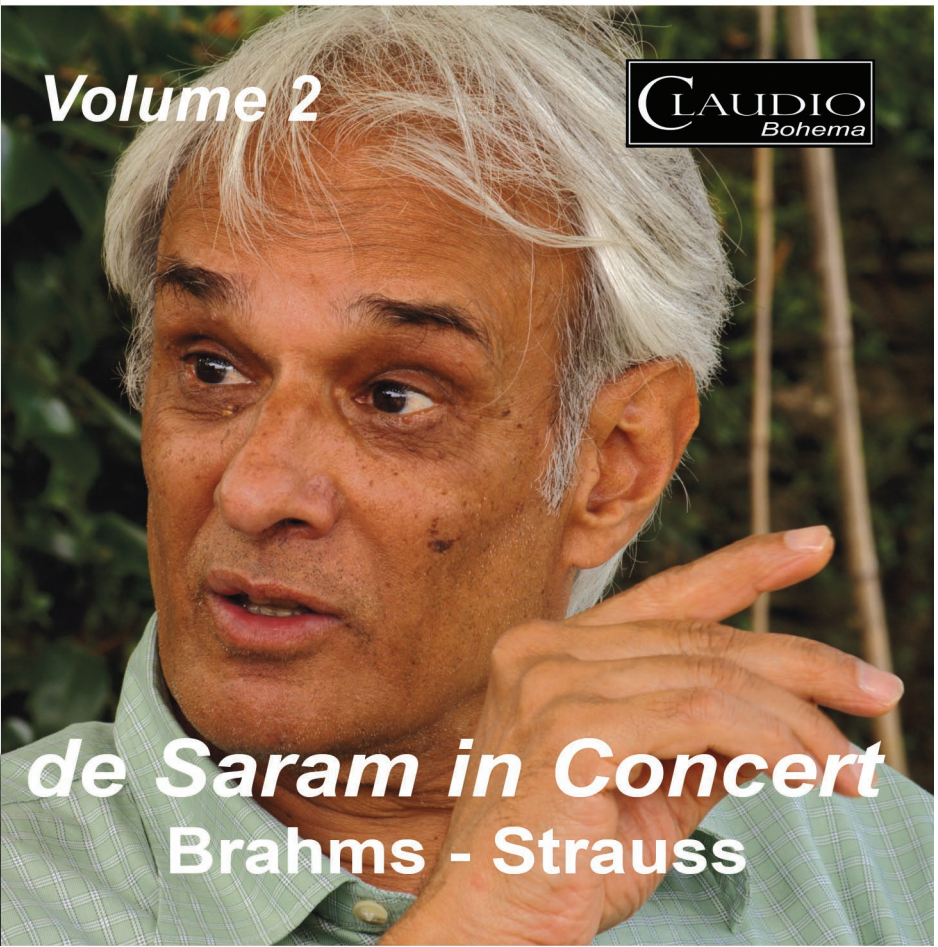


© Clive Barda



*Druvi de Saram - piano*

**Volume 2**



**de Saram in Concert**  
**Brahms - Strauss**



**Boccherini: Sonata in A.** There is a tradition, possibly from the 19th century, of playing the first two movements of this Sonata by Boccherini, without the final *Minuetto*. The two movements, *Adagio* and *Allegro*, make an excellent concert piece and show the sophisticated technique which Boccherini undoubtedly must have had as a cellist. The highly ornamental melodic line of the *Adagio* would be related to the Italian coloratura operatic style of the time, whereas the brilliant *Allegro* might give us a glimpse of Boccherini the virtuoso player.

**Brahms: Sonata Op. 99.** This Sonata for violoncello and piano, belongs to an astonishing group of five instrumental works which appeared, with consecutive opus number, in the last decade of Brahms' life. These five instrumental works are preceded and followed by vocal works. The five works I refer to are the 4th Symphony, op. 98; the Cello Sonata, op. 99; the Violin Sonata, op.100; the Trio op.101 and Brahms' last orchestral work, the Double Concerto, op. 102. I call them "astonishing" because they each, in their particular mediums, could be considered among the finest, even given Brahms' own very demanding standards.

The **first movement** of this Sonata is particularly interesting in that virtually the whole development section is played "molto *p*" and "*pp*", with very short louder outbursts, and its centre is at the lowest dynamic and thematically most static point of the entire movement, where generally the point of greatest dynamic intensity or thematic activity is found, in movements of Sonata form. In contrast to this, the bulk of the exposition and recapitulation are energetic. The movement opens with a stormy but measured tremolo on the piano, against which the cello plays its dramatic, rhetorical, interrupted motifs which later get transformed in the development section into *pp* chordal material with the cello, providing a subdued tremolo background. The coda is a "*dolce grazioso*" transformation of the energetic second subject, but the movement ends with five bars using the opening material. In the **second movement**, the very distant F sharp major tonality (in relation to the F major of the first movement) has been foreshadowed, not only harmonically but also melodically in the opening of the development section of the first movement. Harmonically, F sharp minor is the central tonality in the very chromatic opening of this section, but more interestingly, the group of six notes (also very chromatic) which start the development proper in the middle of bar 9, after the tremolo in the piano has died away, takes its shape from an obscure inner part of this dying-away tremolo in the 7th and 8th bars. This melodic group of six notes is also used in augmentation in the left hand in the middle of



**Druvi de Saram** commenced his musical studies in Sri Lanka. Since living in England from the age of 16, he worked with such renowned musicians as Dame Myra Hess, Stephen Bishop-Kovacevich, Daniel Barenboim and Maria Curcio. He also studied for two years at the Moscow Conservatoire.

Druvi gave his London debut at the Wigmore Hall in 1975. He has toured extensively in Europe & Asia both as a soloist, including tours of China, India & Australia and as a duo with his cellist brother Rohan. Together, Rohan & Druvi have performed at leading London venues and at prestigious international festivals in the UK & Europe. They also toured the former Soviet Union several times.

As a chamber musician, Druvi has worked with the violinist Salvatore Accardo, the clarinetist Anthony Pay and with the Arditti Quartet. Collaborating with contemporary composers, Druvi has given first performances of works by Humphrey Searle, Roger Reynolds and John Mayer. He has broadcast frequently with his brother Rohan both for the BBC and for several European radio stations.


Druvi currently teaches at the Junior Academy of the Royal Academy of Music.

(Dip. Moscow Cons)




**Rohan de Saram** was born in Sheffield, UK, but spent the first ten years of his life in Sri Lanka where he started his cello studies with Martin Hohermann. Recognised as a child prodigy, at the age of 11 Rohan went with his father to Florence, where Gaspar Cassado was his teacher. In 1955 he won the Suggia Award in London, which enabled him to continue his studies with Pablo Casals in Puerto Rico and with Sir John Barbirolli in London.

As soloist, Rohan has played throughout Europe, Asia, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the former Soviet Union with the major orchestras & conductors of the world. His debut in USA was at Carnegie Hall with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra at the invitation of Dmitri Mitropoulos. At a recital in America, Piatagorsky presented him with a special cello bow which he uses for concerts. Also in America, when at short notice Piatagorsky was indisposed, Rohan was asked to deputise for him in the Walton Cello Concerto with the Seattle Symphony Orchestra.



His UK debut was at the Wigmore Hall in 1959. At this time he also had the opportunity of working with a number of composers among whom were Walton, Poulenc, Shostakovich and Kodaly with whom he studied the Solo Sonata, op.8. More recently he has worked, among many others, with Berio, who wrote his final Sequenza, no. XIV, for him; with Xenakis and Pousseur, both of whom wrote works for him; and Stockhausen, with whom he transcribed for solo cello a movement from the Suite for clarinet called “Amour”. Rohan was for many years a member of the Arditti Quartet, which in 1995 was awarded the Siemens prize for its services to contemporary music.

In 2004 Rohan was awarded an Hon. D. Litt. from the University of Peradeniya and, a year later, was awarded a Deshamanya, the national honour of Sri Lanka.



bar 11 as well as later. They also appear as part of the leading melodic line in the second movement, starting in the middle of bar 2 in the piano and then in bar 9 on the cello and in augmentation in bars 10 and 11. It is also interesting that the F minor middle section of this movement foreshadows the main tonality of the third movement, the middle trio section of which foreshadows the F major of the Finale.

The **third movement** seems to me a close relative of the “Allegro appassionato” large-scale Brahmsian scherzo of the B flat 2<sup>nd</sup> Piano Concerto. This movement in the Sonata also has the indication “*Allegro passionato*”, and the light-weight finale of the Sonata also brings to mind the similarly gossamer textures of the Concerto finale, although the short *marcato* and syncopated transition theme of strongly Hungarian flavour, in the Sonata finale, provides contrast in the two outer sections of an A/B/A form. The middle section is a passionate B flat minor transformation derived from the opening theme of the movement. Sometimes, the close resemblance of the opening of this transformation to the well-known theme from “i pagliacci” of Leon Cavallo is mentioned. However, in this case the thematic derivation is clear. The return of the “A” section is not in the main key of the movement (F major) but in G flat major, which is enharmonically identical to the F sharp major of the slow movement, as well as being related to the development section of the first movement. The coda of the finale brings back the *marcato*, syncopated material we had earlier but this time only on the piano (*f* chords) with the cello accompanying with arpeggio figures. Sixteen bars from the end, the main theme comes in yet another guise, this time in pizzicato.

**Dillon: “Eos”.** “Eos” was the name given by the ancient Greeks to the goddess of the dawn. The Romans called her Aurora. The idea or picture evoked by James Dillon’s piece for solo cello is possibly of a much more ancient time than the comparatively modern ancient Greeks. After the very quiet introductory section, which during a rehearsal James compared to an *alaap* or introductory improvisation in Indian music, comprises only the barest hint of some of the future material and uses sounds such as “variable finger pressure” on certain double stops as well as using harmonics with unpredictable pitch. The next section starts with the direction “like a faintly etched line”, and is a crescendo and diminuendo, from *ppp* to *fff* and back to *ppp* over fifteen bars. This section is given more tangible form by the use of reiterated motifs: chromatic glissandi on the lower string and rapid eighth notes figures with microtonal intonation. In the next section, the extreme dynamic swells take place within each bar with few exceptions. The texture for most of

the piece is a two-stringed texture when it is not simply on a single string. The number of chords with triple or quadruple stopping could be easily counted on one hand.

As the piece progresses to its middle point, these swells remain very prominent, even if not always compressed, and seem to be like a groundswell underlying a somewhat unpredictable and sometimes capricious surface. However, in the middle of the piece, this ever-present dynamic undulation is joined by asymmetrically recurring patterns of rhythms and pitches which last for approximately sixty bars, the first and last time in the piece where there has been a constant, if somewhat asymmetrical, pulse which makes this clearly the central section of the piece. A return of the capricious material prepares the way to the end of the piece, although there is a brief return to the dance-like pulse of the central section.

The piece ends with an eight-fold repeat of a single bar consisting of two tremolo chords, with a crescendo and diminuendo within each bar plus a crescendo and diminuendo over the eight bars, i.e. reaching the steepest crescendo and diminuendo on the fourth bar of the eight bar phrase before dying away.

**Strauss: Sonata in F major opus 6.** Even though Strauss' Sonata for cello and piano, opus 6, is among his earliest works written at the age of 18 or 19, it shows a complete mastery of the classical Sonata style as well as foreshadowing characteristics of his early tone poems such as "Till Eulenspiegel" and "Don Juan"; the sombre D minor opening of the slow second movement brings to mind "Tod und Verklarung". The middle section of this second movement, as well as the first and second subjects of the first movement, show Strauss' very prominent gift as a lyricist, as shown by his great Lieder and operatic output, throughout his long life. To me personally, the eminently "orchestratable" writing for the piano in this Sonata again foreshadows his future as a composer whose main "instrument", apart from the human voice, was to be the orchestra.

© 2013 Rohan de Saram.

## Concert review from the Strad: January 2000

*(Reproduced by kind permission of the Strad magazine)*

Rohan de Saram (cello), Druvi de Saram (piano)

Wigmore Hall, 17<sup>th</sup> October 1999

Rohan de Saram's commitment to modern music has given his admirers few chances to hear him in conventional cello repertoire in recent years. No wonder there was a real buzz among the capacity audience, including a number of Sri Lankans supporting their leading chamber music duo.

This recital marked the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the great cellist's debut. He cast off the years with a colossal performance of the Kodály Solo Sonata which will stay with me as long as I live. The interpretation went far beyond virtuosity into that exalted sphere where only the most timeless music-making resonates.

His bowing in the second movement was of an indescribable eloquence.

Younger brother Druvi de Saram was, as ever a fine foil... always putting the music before any personal display...

After the interval we had the Debussy Sonata\* which seemed to catch every facet of this strange piece; then came a surprise – a performance of the Strauss Sonata\* which did not ramble but held the attention from first note to last. Fittingly, the duo's first encore was the lovely arrangement of Granados's Goyescas *intermezzo* made by Rohan's teacher Gaspar Cassadó.

©Tully Potter

**\*de Saram in Concert** - Vol. 1 (Claudio CB6004-2) will include the Kodály and Rachmaninov