

Mozart

K.279, K.280, K.284

Orli
Shaham

COMPLETE PIANO SONATAS VOL.4

Eighteenth-century calling cards

Orli Shaham and Peter Dahm Robertson

Mozart didn't start out a household name. As a young musician, he traveled widely and — like any good traveling salesman — needed samples to show off to prospective patrons. So, during a journey to Munich in 1774–1775, he wrote six “calling cards” to play at the homes of potential benefactors. Three of these calling cards — the sonatas K. 280, K. 279, and K. 284 — form this disc.

A calling card is meant to leave an impression: in Mozart's case, an impression of what he could do with ten fingers, a few keys, and a musical mind. (Just before the sonatas' publication, he wrote to his father that he was not hoping to profit financially — they would open doors in other ways.) Apparently he was pleased with the result — seeking patrons again on a tour to Mannheim and Paris several years later, he played the same sonatas.

What Mozart could do was in many ways the cutting edge of composition and keyboard technique. He was an early adopter of technology, writing for newly invented instruments and experimenting with any innovation that could be used to artistic effect. (In another letter to his father, he wrote excitedly about a knee-operated lever that allowed the pianist to dampen the tone of the

instrument.) Even on a standard keyboard, he never stopped exploring: How many different kinds of sounds — rich and plaintive, loud and soft, long and short, question and answer, excitement and heartbreak — can I make on this keyboard? Can I make a piece sound improvised? Can I draw people in with pauses (Sonata in F, K. 280)? Can I write a theme that isn't really a melody (Sonata in C, K. 279)? Why not try a final movement of variations, instead of a rondo (Sonata in D, K. 284, “Dürnitz”)?

Of course, the audience at these evenings would not have known any of this in advance. They might have expected a standard musician of the time, perhaps a pianist playing a piece with plenty of repetitions to show off all his skill with ornamentation. Instead, they got these calling cards: inventive, surprising, and unconventional, exploring both the literal range of the keyboard and the metaphorical range of the emotions it can conjure. (Centuries later, the musicologist Alfred Einstein would describe the pieces as “a microcosm of feeling and subtlety of form, but a very complicated one.”) The sonatas ask for attention, but so charmingly that giving it is not an imposition. As if the music is saying: “I'm Mozart, pleased to meet you! Who are you?”

Orli Shaham, piano

A consummate musician recognized for her grace and vitality, Orli Shaham has established an impressive international reputation as one of today's most gifted pianists. Hailed by critics on four continents, Ms. Shaham is in demand for her prodigious skills and admired for her interpretations of both standard and modern repertoire. *The New York Times* called her a "brilliant pianist," *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch* has praised her "wit, passion, delicacy," and the *Chicago Tribune* referred to her as "a first-rate Mozartean."

Orli Shaham's performance schedule brings her to concert halls from Carnegie Hall to the Sydney Opera House and most of the major venues in between for recitals, chamber music, and concerti. Ms. Shaham has performed with nearly every major American orchestra as well as many in Europe, Asia, and Australia and is a frequent guest at major summer festivals around the world. Since 2007, she has served as curator and performer in the Pacific Symphony's chamber music series in Costa Mesa, California.

Ms. Shaham's wide variety of repertoire is reflected in her discography, which includes volumes 1, 2, 3, and 4 of "Mozart: Complete Piano Sonatas" (volumes 5 and 6 will be released in 2024, concluding the cycle); "Mozart Concertos" (K.453 and K.491) with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra conducted by David

Robertson (CC18); "Brahms Inspired" (CC15); and "American Grace" (CC11), featuring Steven Mackey's piano concerto *Stumble to Grace* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and conducted by David Robertson. Other recordings include "Nigunim, Hebrew Melodies" (CC10), "Dvořák for Two," "The Prokofiev Album" (CC02), and "Mozart in Paris" (CC01), all with her brother, the violinist Gil Shaham; "Saint-Saëns *Carnival of the Animals*" with pianist Jon Kimura Parker and the San Diego Symphony; and "John Adams' *Grand Pianola Music*" with pianist Marc-André Hamelin and the San Francisco Symphony led by John Adams (SFS0063).

Driven by a passion to bring classical music to new audiences, Orli Shaham maintains an active parallel career as a respected broadcaster, music writer, and educator. On radio, she is Co-host and Creative for NPR's weekly program "From the Top," airing across the United States, and has hosted the nationally broadcast Dial-a-Musician and America's Music Festivals series. Ms. Shaham is on the piano and chamber music faculty at The Juilliard School.

Inspired by her enthusiasm for introducing young children to the pleasures of music, Ms. Shaham created and hosts Orli Shaham's Bach Yard, a series of classical concerts for young children, and the video series Bach Yard Playdates, both of which have devoted followings.

OrliShaham.com

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

Orli Shaham, piano

Piano Sonata in F Major, No. 2, K.280 **19:20**

- | | | | |
|---|-----|---------------|-------|
| 1 | i | Allegro assai | 06:41 |
| 2 | ii | Adagio | 08:06 |
| 3 | iii | Presto | 04:25 |

Piano Sonata in C Major, No. 1, K.279 **20:26**

- | | | | |
|---|-----|---------|-------|
| 4 | i | Allegro | 07:13 |
| 5 | ii | Andante | 08:04 |
| 6 | iii | Allegro | 05:03 |

Piano Sonata in D Major, No. 6, K.284, “Dürnitz” **30:13**

- | | | | |
|---|-----|-------------------------------|-------|
| 7 | i | Allegro | 08:03 |
| 8 | ii | Rondeau en Polonaise: Andante | 04:50 |
| 9 | iii | Tema con variazione | 17:14 |

Recorded on July 21, 2019; August 27, 2019; & Sept. 3, 2020 in Mechanics Hall, Worcester, MA

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Orli Shaham is a Steinway Artist.



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