



Prokofiev

Sonata op. 80

for violin & orchestra

Sebastian Bohren violin
Andrei Pushkarev percussion

GKO Georgisches
Kammerorchester
Ingolstadt

LIVE Recording

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Sonata op. 80

for violin, strings & percussion

Violin Sonata No. 1 in F Minor, op. 80	00:32:04
I. Andante assai	00:07:10
II. Allegro brusco	00:07:12
III. Andante	00:08:45
IV. Allegrissimo	00:08:57

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Prokofiev – Archive Pics / Alamy Stock Foto

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Sergei Prokofiev

(1891–1953)

On 23 October 1946, Sergei Prokofiev's ***Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1 in F Minor, op. 80*** was premiered by David Oistrakh and Lev Oborin. It took Prokofiev more than eight years to complete his work, the composition of which he began in 1938. Only two years earlier he had settled with his family back in the Soviet Union after leaving it in 1918 and living as a cosmopolitan in the United States and Western Europe for almost 20 years. His return took him amid the Great Terror, to a country completely subjected to the ideological doctrine of Socialist Realism. The fact that with the *Violin Sonata op. 80* Prokofiev writes an unusually dark work in this oppressive atmosphere has contributed to its tendency to be heard as a reflex to historical events.

Prokofiev's voluntary return is still controversially discussed today. Obviously, the prospect of prestige that he had already experienced during his earlier visits to his homeland, influential positions and the enjoyment of privileges were more important for this decision than homesickness or even material hardship. Meanwhile he

already knew in advance through his contacts to Soviet fellow musicians such as Nikolai Myaskovsky and the political hurdles bringing his own works to the stage, which he had experienced during his extensive travels in his homeland, about the aesthetic dictate within the framework of 'folk art'. But Prokofiev came to terms with the situation by believing in the social mission of art. It found its stylistic expression in a 'new simplicity', with traditional, melodious and understandable works. Nevertheless, immediately after his return he witnessed the repressive events in the country, when colleagues such as Bolshoi Theatre Director Vladimir Mutnykh or Natalya Sats, the patron of *Peter and the Wolf*, disappeared without a trace and Dmitri Shostakovich became an artistic persona non grata for many years as a result of the attacks on his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* in the infamous *Pravda* article *Muddle Instead of Music*. The unpredictability of the political leadership was ultimately also felt by Prokofiev: in the course of the anti-formalism campaign of 1948 his music was denounced as 'anti-democratic', and despite his partial rehabilitation the fear of conviction remained present until he died on 5 March 1953, the same day as Stalin.

In the *Violin Sonata op. 80*, these developments of that time seem to have been reflected in various ways. In its

epic breadth, the richness of melodies with Russian echoes and its highly expressive means of expression of the most varied moods, it blends into the tonal language that can be found for instance in vocal symphonic works such as *Alexander Nevsky* op. 78. Also, when Prokofiev had completed the first movement and sketched parts of the second and third movements within a few days in 1938, the Great Terror was in full swing. Other musical projects and the outbreak of the Second World War prevented him from working on the work until 1943, but he “found it difficult”, as he informed Myaskovsky, so that completion was delayed for another three years. Thus an enraptured and threatening tone pervades the sonata from the very first moment, when the archaic piano chords are joined by the ghostly trills of the violin. The meagre impression of this movement is confirmed in the rapid final passage ‘con sordino’ and his unmistakable instruction ‘freddo’, i.e. frosty, with Oistrakh’s well-known reminder of Prokofiev’s hint that the passage “should sound like wind blowing over a churchyard”. The following ‘brusque’ *Allegro* is characterized by “expressio-nistic rudeness”, as the cultural-political leadership accused it of, but which is replaced by the lyrical violin can-tilena of the second theme ‘eroico’. The third movement, an elegiac *Andante*, once again stands in sharp contrast, leaving the wildness of the previous far behind, before

the finale begins again with energetic motorism and constantly changing time signatures. With oppressive retrospections to the muted passage of the opening movement, Prokofiev gives his sonata cyclical coherence before gradually silencing it with the lyrical side theme of the finale.

The version of the sonata for solo violin, string orchestra and percussion goes back to the initiative of Sebastian Bohren. It was created by Andrei Pushkarev, percussionist in Gidon Kremer’s ‘Kremerata Baltica’, an accomplished arranger whose arrangements can be found in the repertoire of numerous musicians. Pushkarev’s version follows the well-known orchestration of Shostakovich’s *Violin Sonata* op. 134 in the same instrumentation – albeit with vibraphone instead of xylophone – which he produced together with Michail Zinman in 2005 and which was also recorded by Sebastian Bohren in 2018.



Sebastian Bohren

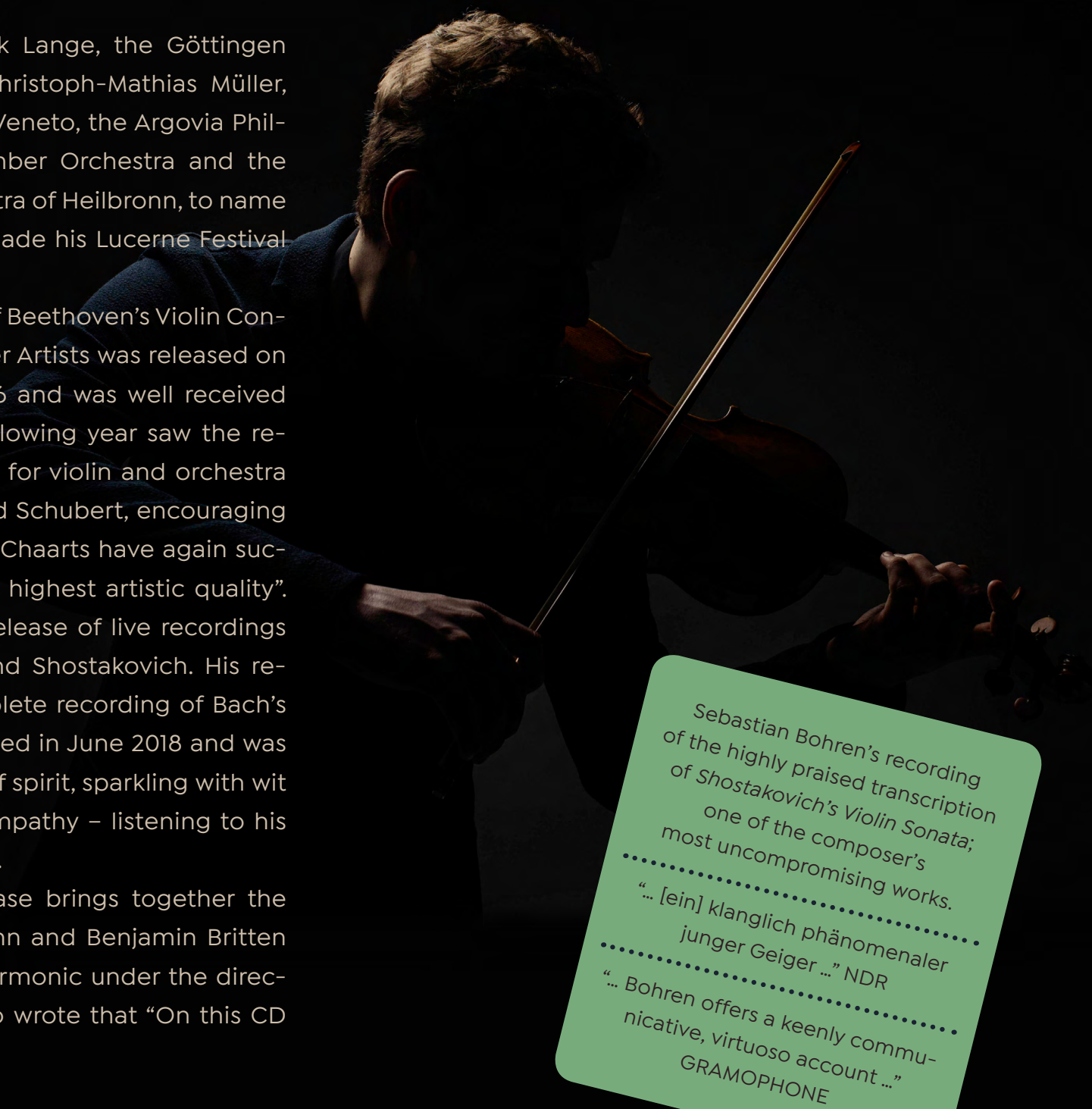
Described by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* as one of the most “serious and straightforward musicians of his generation”, the Swiss violinist Sebastian Bohren was born in Winterthur in 1987. Among his early teachers were Jens Lohmann at the Zurich Conservatory. Later teachers have included Robert Zimansky and Zakhar Bron at the Zurich University of the Arts, Igor Karsko at the Lucerne School of Music and Ingolf Turban at the Munich University of the Arts. Other seminal influences have been Ana Chumachenco, Heinrich Schiff and Hansheinz Schneeberger.

As a soloist Sebastian Bohren has appeared with numerous orchestras at home and abroad, including the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra under James Gaffigan, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic under Andrew Litton, the Basel Symphony Orchestra under Ivor Bolton, the Orchester Musikkollegium Winterthur under Douglas Boyd, the Basel Chamber Orchestra under Heinz Holliger, the CHAARTS Chamber Artists under Gábor Takács-Nagy, the St Petersburg Staatskapelle under Elim Chan, the Zurich Chamber Orchestra under Muhai Tang, the

Zurich Camerata under Patrick Lange, the Göttingen Symphony Orchestra under Christoph-Mathias Müller, the Orchestra di Padova e del Veneto, the Argovia Philharmonic, the Georgian Chamber Orchestra and the Württemberg Chamber Orchestra of Heilbronn, to name only the most important. He made his Lucerne Festival debut in 2018.

Sebastian Bohren's recording of Beethoven's Violin Concerto with the Chaarts Chamber Artists was released on the RCA Red Seal label in 2016 and was well received by the specialist press. The following year saw the release of his recording of works for violin and orchestra by Mendelssohn, Hartmann and Schubert, encouraging NDR to write that "Bohren and Chaarts have again succeeded in making a CD of the highest artistic quality". That same year also saw the release of live recordings of works by Vasks, Kancheli and Shostakovich. His recording of Part One of a complete recording of Bach's Sonatas and Partitas was released in June 2018 and was described by Concerti as "full of spirit, sparkling with wit and filled with warmth and sympathy – listening to his playing is a source of sheer joy".

Sebastian Bohren's latest release brings together the violin concertos of Mendelssohn and Benjamin Britten with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic under the direction of Andrew Litton. Pizzicato wrote that "On this CD



Sebastian Bohren's recording
of the highly praised transcription
of Shostakovich's *Violin Sonata*;
one of the composer's
most uncompromising works.
.....
"... [ein] klanglich phänomenaler
junger Geiger ..." NDR
.....
"... Bohren offers a keenly commu-
nicative, virtuoso account ..."
GRAMOPHONE

Bohren has dipped Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in liquid gold. We hear notes shaped with great maturity and filled with the most sensual beauty." WDR wrote: "His interpretation of Benjamin Britten's Violin Concerto is a real pleasure to listen to – arguably his most successful interpretation to date."

Bohren is a member of the Stradivari Quartet. Among the venues where the group has performed in 2018/19 are the Chamber Hall of the Berlin Philharmonie, the Chamber Hall of the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, the National Center for the Performing arts in Beijing and Shanghai Symphony Hall. They have also toured Japan and Korea. Other highlights of recent seasons have included performances at Victoria Hall in Singapore, at the Rheingau Music Festival, the Bad Kissingen Summer Festival and the 2019 Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival. Sebastian Bohren additionally pursues his passion for chamber music with other artists, including Roby Lakatos, Dmitry Sitkovetsky, Thomas Demenga, Christian Poltera, Antoine Tamestit and Benjamin Schmid.

Sebastian Bohren was born in Winterthur in 1987. He plays a violin made by Giovanni Battista Guadagnini in Parma in 1776 and on loan to him from a private benefactor in Switzerland.

Andrei Pushkarev

Andrei Pushkarev was born in 1974 in Kiev in the family of musicians. He began his musical education as a pianist. At the age of six he entered the Kiev Lysenko Specialized Music School and soon started to study percussion instruments. 1992 he became a student of National Musical Academy of Ukraine, prof. Alexander Blinov. Among other Prizes, he received a First Prize as solo vibraphonist in the newly established competition "New Names of Ukraine", at which also performed his own musical compositions.

In 1996 Pushkarev became the main timpanist in the Kiev Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1999 he joined Kremerata Baltica chamber orchestra (artistic leader Gidon Kremer), still maintains solo-vibraphone and principal percussion positions. He had participated in concerts around the world. He as well had participated in numerous recordings as a member of the ensemble on labels such as Nonesuch, Deutsche Grammophon, ECM etc.

As a soloist he can be heard on the CD release "After Mozart" which in 2001 received a Grammy Award in the U.S. and as well the Echo Award in Germany in 2002.

Since this time he has been working on various arrangements for symphonic and string orchestra; has been touring with Gidon Kremer and Kremerata Baltica, performing in numerous concert halls all around the world. His arrangements were performed in the Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Centre in New York, Albert Hall and Wigmore Hall in London, in the Musikverein and Konzerthaus in Vienna, Berlin Philharmonic, Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Suntory Hall in Tokyo, etc. by such musicians like Gidon Kremer, Yo Yo Ma, Martha Argerich, Daniil Trifonov, Vadim Repin, Julian Rachlin, Mischa Maisky, Nicolas Altstaedt, Michel Portal, Mario Brunello, Gabor Boldoski, Didier Lockwood and many others. In 2006 he toured as a part of Gidon Kremer's trio project "From Bach to Piazzolla" together with Lithuanian pianist Andrius Zlabys in Europe, South America, USA and Canada performing his own compositions and arrangements. Other projects included a tour and CD recording together with Gidon Kremer and Argentinean bandoneonist Dino Saluzzi. "Themes from the Songbook" – music from cinema and theater by Georgian composer Giya Kancheli with arrangements by Dino Saluzzi and Andrei Pushkarev. In October 2010 this CD was released by ECM Records.



Sergei Prokofjew

(1891–1953)

Am 23. Oktober 1946 wurde Sergej Prokofjews **Sonate für Violine und Klavier Nr. 1 f-Moll op. 80** durch David Oistrach und Lew Oborin zur Uraufführung gebracht. Über acht Jahre benötigte Prokofjew für die Vollendung seines Werks, mit dessen Komposition er bereits 1938 begann. Erst zwei Jahre zuvor hatte er sich mit seiner Familie wieder in der Sowjetunion niedergelassen, nachdem er sie 1918 verlassen hatte und fast 20 Jahre als Kosmopolit in den Vereinigten Staaten und Westeuropa lebte. Seine Rückkehr führte ihn inmitten des Großen Terrors, in ein Land, das vollständig der ideologischen Doktrin des Sozialistischen Realismus unterworfen war. Dass Prokofjew in dieser beklemmenden Atmosphäre mit der *Violinsonate op. 80* ein Werk von ungewohnt düsterer Prägung schreibt, hat dazu beigetragen, sie zumeist als Reflex auf die historischen Ereignissen zu hören.

Prokofjews freiwillige Rückkehr wird bis heute kontrovers diskutiert. Offenbar waren die Aussicht auf Prestige, das er bereits bei seinen früheren Besuchen in die Heimat erfahren durfte, einflussreiche Ämter und der Genuss von Privilegien eher ausschlaggebend für diese Ent-

scheidung, als Heimweh oder gar materielle Not. Indessen wusste er bereits im Vorfeld durch seine Kontakte zu sowjetischen Musikerkollegen wie Nikolai Mjaskowski und den politischen Hürden, eigene Werke während seiner ausgedehnten Heimatreisen zur Aufführung zu bringen, um das ästhetische Diktat im Rahmen der ‘Volkskunst’. Doch Prokofjew arrangierte sich mit der Situation im Glauben an den gesellschaftlichen Auftrag der Kunst. In einer ‘neuen Einfachheit’, mit traditionsbewussten, melodienreichen und verständlichen Werken fand es seinen stilistischen Niederschlag. Gleichwohl wurde er unmittelbar nach der Rückkehr Zeuge über die repressiven Vorgänge im Land, als in seinem Umfeld Kollegen wie der Direktor des Bolschoi-Theaters Wladimir Mutnich oder Natalija Saz, Auftraggeberin von *Peter und der Wolf*, spurlos verschwanden und Dmitri Schostakowitsch infolge der Angriffe auf seine Oper *Lady Macbeth von Mzensk* im berühmt-berüchtigten *Prawda*-Artikel *Chaos statt Musik* für viele Jahre zur künstlerischen Persona non grata avancierte. Die Unberechenbarkeit der Politführung bekam letzten Endes auch Prokofjew zu spüren: Im Zuge der Anti-Formalismuskampagne von 1948 wurde seine Musik als ‘volksfremd’ denunziert, und trotz seiner partiellen Rehabilitation blieb die Angst vor einer Verurteilung stets präsent, bis er am 5. März 1953, am selben Tag wie Stalin, verstarb.

In der *Violinsonate op. 80* scheinen sich diese Entwicklungen jener Zeit verschiedentlich niedergeschlagen zu haben. In ihrer epischen Breite, dem Melodienreichtum mit russischen Anklängen und ihren hochexpressiven Ausdrucksmitteln unterschiedlichster Stimmung fügt sie sich in jene Klangsprache, der man etwa in den vokalsymphonischen Werken wie *Alexander Newski op. 78* begegnet. Als Prokofjew 1938 binnen weniger Tage den ersten Satz abgeschlossen sowie Teile des zweiten und dritten skizziert hatte, war zudem der Große Terror im vollen Gange. Andere musikalische Projekte und der Ausbruch des Zweiten Weltkriegs verhinderten bis 1943 die Arbeit an dem Werk, welche ihm jedoch in Folge “schwer fiel”, wie er Mjaskowski wissen ließ, so dass sich die Fertigstellung drei weitere Jahre hinauszögerte. So durchzieht ein entrückt-bedrohlicher Ton die Sonate vom ersten Moment an, wenn sich zu den archaischen Klavierakkorden die gespenstischen Triller der Geige gesellen. Der karge Eindruck dieses Satzes erhärtet sich in der raschen Schlusspassage ‘con sordino’ und seiner unmissverständlichen Anweisung ‘freddo’, also frostig, mit der bekannten Erinnerung Oistrachs an den Hinweis von Prokofjew, dass die Stelle “wie über einen Kirchhof streichender Wind klingen solle”. Das folgende ‘brüske’ *Allegro* kennzeichnen “expressionistische Schroffheiten”, so lautete der Vorwurf von Seiten der kulturpolitischen

Führung, die jedoch von der lyrischen Geigenkantilene des zweiten Themas ‘eroico’ abgelöst werden. Der dritte Satz, eine elegisches *Andante*, steht erneut im scharfen Kontrast und lässt die Wildheit des Vorangegangenen weit hinter sich, bevor das Finale wieder mit energischer Motorik und ständig wechselndem Zeitmaß einsetzt. Mit beklemmenden Rückblicken auf die gedämpfte Passage des Kopfsatzes verleiht Prokofjew seiner Sonate zyklische Geschlossenheit, bevor er sie mit dem lyrischen Seitenthema des Finales allmählich verstummen lässt.

Die Fassung der Sonate für Solovioline, Streichorchester und Schlagwerk geht auf die Initiative Sebastian Bohrens zurück. Eingerichtet hat sie mit Andrei Pushkarev, Perkussionist in Gidon Kremers ‘Kremerata Baltica’, ein versierter Arrangeur, dessen Bearbeitungen im Repertoire zahlreicher Musiker zu finden sind. Pushkarevs Fassung schließt an die bekannte Orchestrierung von Schostakowitschs *Violinsonate op. 134* in gleicher Besetzung – allerdings mit Vibraphon statt Xylophon – an, die er 2005 gemeinsam mit Michail Zinman angefertigt hat und die unter anderem auch von Sebastian Bohren im Jahr 2018 eingespielt wurde.

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