

Mozart Sinfonia Concertante Violin Concertos 1 & 3

David Oistrakh Rudolf Barshai (*viola*)

Moscow Chamber Orchestra / Barshai
Moscow Philharmonic
Orchestra / Kondrashin



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Sinfonia Concertante in E-Flat Major, K364

1	Allegro maestoso	12:50
2	Andante	11:54
3	Presto	5:49

Violin Concerto No. 3 in G Major, K216

4	Allegro	8:44
5	Adagio	8:17
6	Rondeau. Allegro	6:15

Moscow Chamber Orchestra

Rudolf Barshai, conductor and (tracks 1-3) *viola*

Violin Concerto No.1 in B-Flat Major, K207

7	Allegro moderato	7:22
8	Adagio	7:49
9	Presto	6:02

Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra

Kiril Kondrashin, conductor

David Oistrakh, *violin*

Tracks 1-3 originally issued by **Artia**, 1960

Tracks 4-6 originally issued by **Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga (MK)**, 1960

Tracks 7-9 originally issued by **Artia**, 1959

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Cover image: **David Oistrakh with Rudolf Barshai** in the 1960's

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In 1756, the year of **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's** birth, his father Leopold was a violinist at the Court of the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg. Leopold published his *Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule* (*Treatise on the Fundamentals of Violin Playing*) which even today serves as a useful insight into the performing styles of the time. He gave young Mozart his first music lessons and was so impressed by his abilities that in 1762 he paraded his son before the Empress Maria Theresa at the Imperial Court in Vienna. The following year Leopold obtained a substantial leave of absence from his employer in Salzburg to take his wife and children on a three-year tour of Western Europe. Following that year they travelled again to Vienna, staying there until January 1769. Father and son then paid two visits to Italy, each lasting about six months. Upon their return there was a new Prince-Archbishop (Count Hieronymus von Colloredo) who had doubtless received complaints from disgruntled musicians about the amount of leave taken by Leopold over the years. However, being a musician himself, Colloredo, appreciated the extraordinary musical ability of Wolfgang and in 1772 he gave the teenaged genius a salaried post in the Court orchestra.

Although its score is dated 15 April 1775, study of the original manuscript and of Mozart's handwriting style ***Violin Concerto No.1 in B flat major, K207*** is generally believed to have been composed in 1773. As a new member of the Court orchestra in Salzburg, Mozart doubtless felt beholden to his employer to compose works for the orchestra. It also gave him the opportunity to display his own talent and to please his father/teacher. Several years later Mozart wrote to his father 'I play as if I was the greatest fiddler in the whole of Europe' to which Leopold replied 'You yourself don't know how well you play; if only you would do yourself credit and play energy, heart and mind, yes, just as if you were the first violinist in the whole of Europe.' The concerto is relatively straightforward in its scoring and is a charmingly typical example of the transitional period between Baroque and Classicism. The solo writing

reflects Mozart's awareness of the contemporary repertoire and also his father's teaching methods.

The ***Violin Concerto No. 3 in G major, K216*** is a popular favourite with audiences and was composed in September 1775. Although scored relatively modestly (two oboes who double as flutes, two horns and strings) in this concerto, Mozart demonstrates a maturity well beyond his years. It came hard on the heels of his opera *Il re pastore* which had premiered in Salzburg earlier in the year and Mozart, who recognized a good tune when he heard it (remember the insertion of Figaro's 'Non più andrai' into *Don Giovanni*), opened this concerto with the melody of Aminta's

'Aer tranquillo ed i sereni' from *Il re pastore*. As so often, Mozart's second movement resembles an operatic aria in which the violins and violas mute their strings above a pizzicato bass and the oboes are replaced by the softer-sounding flutes. In the final movement the oboes are back and the violin soloist plays a rustic tune, later discovered in a collection published in 1813 and annotated 'a la melodie de Strassbourger'. Mozart himself often referred to this piece afterwards as his 'Strassbourg concerto.'

Colloredo, despite Mozart's irritatingly cocky attitude towards himself and his courtiers, nevertheless saw the benefit in allowing his young genius, as an employee of the Salzburg Court, to visit to other centres of musical excellence and their Courts. Accordingly, Mozart was permitted to travel to Munich, Mannheim and Paris between 1777 and 1779 where he heard three fine orchestras highlighting their own players' proficiency. One type of work in vogue in Mannheim and Paris was the *Sinfonia Concertante*, which as its name suggests is a combination of symphony and concerto. Upon his return to Salzburg, Mozart composed the ***Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola in E-flat major, K364***. Besides being an excellent violinist, Mozart was an accomplished viola player – indeed it became his instrument of choice, and in order to show the viola

in its best light he gave instruction for the violist to tune the instrument a semitone higher. By tightening its strings, a more brilliant tone was produced, giving the viola added resonance and ensuring greater parity with the violin soloist. Additionally, Mozart divided the orchestral string parts in such a way as to provide a richer tone. This was especially effective in the poignant middle movement. This movement, noted for its pathos, might well be Mozart's reaction to the death of his beloved mother during their stay in Paris.

David Oistrakh (1908-74) was born in the Ukrainian city of Odessa and commenced his studies at the age of five, making his public debut the following year. Initially he studied both violin and viola and between 1923 and 1926 he was a pupil at the Odessa Conservatory. In 1927 Oistrakh played Glazunov's concerto in Kiev under the composer's direction and the next year he played Tchaikovsky's concerto with Nikolay Malko in Leningrad. From 1934 Oistrakh taught at the Moscow Conservatory (over the years his pupils included Oleg Kagan and Gidon Kremer) and in 1937 he won the inaugural Ysaÿe (Queen Elisabeth) Competition held in Brussels. During the Second World War Oistrakh gave concerts close to the front line and was awarded the Stalin Prize in 1942. In addition, he formed a trio with Lev Oborin and Sviatoslav Knushevitzky, the three

continuing to perform and record together regularly until 1963. Oistrakh was one of a select group of artists permitted to tour outside the Eastern bloc with appearances in Helsinki (1949), Florence (1951), France (1953), London (1954) and the USA (1955) and invitations to return were extended. David Oistrakh also developed a successful conducting career, often appearing alongside his son Igor (born 1931) as conductor or viola player. Sadly, he suffered his first heart attack in 1964 and consequently made fewer appearances thereafter. Oistrakh passed away whilst on tour in Amsterdam in 1974.

Rudolf Barshai (1924-2010) studied violin with Lev Zeitlin and

viola with Berisovsky at the Moscow Conservatoire, graduating in 1948. He was a founder member of the Moscow Philharmonic Quartet (renamed Borodin Quartet) and later joined the Tchaikovsky Quartet. The Borodin Quartet often played the string quartets of Shostakovich in rehearsal for the composer, although he chose the more prestigious Beethoven Quartet to perform the premieres. Having also studied conducting in Leningrad with Ilya Musin, Barshai formed the Moscow Chamber Orchestra in 1955 and in 1969 he premiered Shostakovich's *Fourteenth Symphony*, having assisted in instrumentation and other artistic matters. He later arranged the *Fourth* and *Eighth String Quartets* for chamber orchestra, these being known as the *Chamber Symphonies*. Barshai emigrated first to Israel in 1976 and then to Britain where from 1982 to 1988 he was principal conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and later guest conductor of the Orchestre National de France. Although he took up permanent residency in Switzerland, he often returned to give concerts in Russia.

Kiril Kondrashin (1914-81), who was born into a musical family, studied conducting at the Moscow Conservatory under Boris Khaikin between 1931 and 1936. Upon graduation he was appointed Music Director of the Maly Opera in Leningrad (St Petersburg) and then until 1956 he held a similar post with the Bolshoy Theatre, Moscow. He accompanied prize-winner Van Cliburn at the 1958 International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow and subsequently toured the USA, the first Soviet conductor to do so since the start of the Cold War. That year he also made his first appearance in Great Britain. He was appointed Artistic Director of the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, holding that post until 1975. In 1978 whilst conducting in Holland, he caused a stir by defecting to the West and was immediately offered a post as guest conductor of the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam, remaining with them until his death in 1981.

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