

MOZART Violin Sonatas: in G, K 301; **in B \flat** , K 10; **in E \flat** , K 481; **in G**, K 379; **in F**, K 30; **in C**, K 14; **in e**, K 304 • Alina Ibragimova (vn); Cédric Tiberghien (pn) • HYPERION 68091 (2 CDs: 103:57) - Vol. 1

MOZART Violin Sonatas: in E \flat , K 380; **in B \flat** , K 454; **in A**, K 526. **6 Variations on a French Folk Song**, K 360 • Jacques Israelievitch (vn); Christina Petrowska Quilico (pn) • FLEUR DE SON 58034 (71:12)

In their collection of seven sonatas by Mozart, violinist Alina Ibragimova and pianist Cédric Tiberghien prove themselves as insightful as they've been in music as diverse as that by Ravel and Schubert. In the first movement of the G-Major Sonata, K 301, for example, they create excitement by means of sharp dynamic contrasts, yet they make them, especially perhaps in the second movement's episode, sound genial rather than edgy. In fact, on the whole, they preserve the walking-on-eggs manner once exemplified by Szymon Goldberg in his readings of Mozart's concertos and sonatas. Those who admire Arthur Grumiaux's performances of Mozart should rejoice to find his manner preserved by Ibragimova, but Tiberghien gives her support equal to the best Grumiaux enjoyed. The duo continues their program with the buoyant, facile sonata in B \flat , a bit of juvenilia that they make wittily convincing in the first movement, ingratiatingly lyrical in the second (in which Ibragimova plays a subordinate accompanying role), and cocky in the finale. The first disc closes with the much later sonata in E \flat major, in which the two instrumentalists play more equal roles from the beginning of the first movement, though Tiberghien plays commandingly when he takes the lead—more so than did many accompanists of golden-age violinists and clearly to the benefit of the music. At times in the slow movement, Ibragimova's tone on her Anselmo Bellosio violin from about 1775 glows in the duo's mesmerizing performance, while Tiberghien sounds positively brilliant in the finale's virtuosic variations.

The second disc's program opens with the G-Major Sonata, K 379. The duo represents the introduction as a probing musico-Platonic dialogue that, by deepening its expressivity, virtually transforms the character of the *Alllegro* that follows—so much so that the elevation of Mozart's variations to a much higher level make the theme of the second movement's variations sounds almost trivial when it first appears. On numerous occasions, not only in several variations in this movement but throughout the entire recital, Tiberghien's keen ear for voicing chords creates substantial interest in itself, adding depth to his sharply conceived

musical characterizations. The duo explores the piquancy of the first movement of the early Sonata in F Major and channels the energy of the first movement of the Sonata in C Major, another early work. They make the most of the subtle dynamic contrasts inherent in the latter's second movement (like the first, an *Allegro*), while the final Menuetto seems to be at its wittiest as the violin accompanies the piano pizzicato. The program ends, as it began, with a sonata from the six, K 301 to K 306, this time the Sonata in E Minor, K 304. Anne-Sophie Mutter may not have been alone in making more than she should have dared of the sonata's E-Minor tonality. Like Grumiaux, Ibragimova steers clear of those shoals without sacrificing any of the work's tragically sorrowful *Affekt*, which reveals itself naturally and unexaggeratedly as the performance unfolds. The second movement, *Tempo di Menuetto*, also sounds plaintive but unmannered in Ibragimova's and Tiberghien's rendition. As a compilation of Mozart's sonatas, this one by Hyperion would be hard to beat; with its clear yet hardly dry recorded sound, it deserves an urgent recommendation.

Violinist Jacques Israelievitch and pianist Christina Petrowska Quilico completed their recordings of Mozart's sonatas for violin and piano shortly before Israelievitch's death. The first volume presents three substantial sonatas and a set of variations. The program opens with an exuberant reading of the Sonata in E \flat , K 380, one that emphasizes the first movement's crunchy textures and casts a bright light on the finale's sparkling passages. In their reading of the Sonata in B \flat , K 454, Israelievitch gives a plaintive account of the slow movement with Quilico providing close emotional support, though some listeners may find that the tone Israelievitch draws from his violin sounds more like a complaint than a plaintive sigh. They bring taut strength and bold energy to the finale. The Variations, K 360, provides an interlude between the sonatas. Israelievitch and Quilico's performance makes it clear that the work doesn't represent any diminution of the seriousness of purpose that the set's sonatas evince (the French air bears the title *Hélas, j'ai perdu mon amant*). The reverberant recorded sound adds weight to the instruments' tone and increases their rhetorical impact. Israelievitch and Quilico almost make the sun rise over the major variation, and they impart strongly contrasted emotional power to the variation that follows.

The A-Major Sonata, K 526, another of Mozart's most prepossessing works in the genre, receives a performance from Israelievitch and Quilico commensurate with its complexity and profundity. They power the first movement with abundant energy that should carry listeners along. Some, while recognizing Israelievitch's authority, may find his manner, if not also his tone, somehow too tightly stretched to probe the most introspective passages. Both performers play the finale with sweeping panache.

For those who have followed Israelievitch's multifaceted career, these valedictory recordings should prove irresistible. Others may turn to collections such as Alina Ibragimova's with Cédric Tiberghien for even more insight and even deeper stylistic penetration, coupled with an arguably tighter musical bond between the

performers. Recommended, therefore, most strongly to Israelievitch's followers.
Robert Maxham

This article originally appeared in Issue 40:2 (Nov/Dec 2016) of *Fanfare Magazine*.

MOZART Violin Sonatas: in F, K 376; in B \flat , K 15; in A, K 402; in C, K 6; in D, K 29; in G, K 9; in D, K 7; in A, K 305 • Alina Ibragimova (vn); Cédric Tiberghien (pn) • HYPERION 68092 (2 CDs: 99:08) - Vol. 2

Hard on the heels of their release on Hyperion 68092 of Alina Ibragimova and Cédric Tiberghien playing Mozart's Violin Sonatas, K 301, K 10, K 481, K 379, K 30, K 14, and K 304, comes a second two-disc set, combining more of the composer's juvenilia and mature works in the genre. The delight they offer in the Sonata, K 376, comes not only from Ibragimova's careful voicing of chords in the first movement's opening and her thickly flowing cantabile in the *Andante*, but no less from Ibragimova's subtle yet sharply pointed interaction with a cheeky-sounding Tiberghien in the finale. The two-movement Sonata, K 15, may be the last of an early set of six, but it still came early in the composer's output. Yet Ibragimova and Tiberghien invest its first movement with a weight and sinuousness that suggest greater maturity, and they power the finale with spiky energy. The Sonata, K 402, written, according to Misha Donat's informative notes, after Mozart became acquainted with the works of Bach and Handel, provides a more meditative foil to the sonata that precedes it on the program. Donat points out the similarity of the first movement's theme to the famous Minuet from *Don Giovanni*, but though the melodic and rhythmic motives may be similar, the duo continues the composer's translation of them into an utterance that's darkly haunting. The second movement's fugue follows this somber exploration almost seamlessly in their performance. The duo's rhythmic buoyancy lifts the first movement of the Sonata, K 6, above the level of the uninspired. They're intriguingly pert in the *Andante*, and appropriately energetic in the minuets and finale.

The second CD begins with the two-movement Sonata, K 29; and Ibragimova and Tiberghien give a breezy account of its first movement. The Sonata, K 9, contains moments of chromatic inflection surrounded by plentiful and often effective note-spinning; the duo finds and reveals hidden felicities to the listener, communicating their own sense of delight. They give the slow movement a droll twist and generally find in its sudden gestures an expressive variety that may surprise those who don't expect such things in these early works. They swaddle the finale's patterning in timbral and dynamic nuances. The Sonata, K 7, brings an unexpectedly sweet and expressive reading of the slow movement.

The Sonata, K 305, which Donat identifies as Beethoven's favorite and perhaps a

model for his own first two violin sonatas, emerges in the first movement with a wakening zest. They give a flinty account of the triple-note patterns in that movement and draw connections between the slow movement's variations and those in Beethoven's First Sonata. But nowhere does the duo descend into dry, academic tracing of interconnections—everything's as visceral as insightful—another instance of the vitality of Ibragimova's and Tiberghien's partnership. Those who have been entertained and instructed by the duo's first set of discs should be equally so by these. Urgently recommended. **Robert Maxham**

This article originally appeared in Issue 40:4 (Mar/Apr 2017) of *Fanfare Magazine*.

MOZART Violin Sonatas: in B \flat , K 454; in G, K 27; in C, K 296; in F, K 547; in B \flat , K 31; in D, K 306 • Alina Ibragimova (vn); Cédric Tiberghien (pn) • HYPERION 8143 (2 CDs: 104:22) - Vol. 3

Violinist Alina Ibragimova and pianist Cédric Tiberghien sandwich one of Mozart's early violin sonatas between two more mature works in each of the two discs of their third collection of the composer's violin sonatas. The first disc opens with the Sonata in B \flat Major, K 454, in a performance that generally flows with natural grace and, in the first movement, with sunny highlights that contrast with subtle dynamic shifts. That subtlety continues in the slow movement, with Ibragimova providing continuously interesting yet unobtrusive accompaniment when Tiberghien presents the principal melodic material, while bringing great ardor when her part assumes prominence. They also combine brilliance and subtlety in the finale, though brilliance predominates. The program continues with the Sonata in G Major, K 27; after an affecting reading of its first movement, the duo mixes piquancy and charm in the finale. The Sonata in C Major, K 296, a more mature work (Nathan Milstein, who didn't record all Mozart's sonatas, did play this one) comes next. Ibragimova almost nonchalantly throws away the first movement's rhythmic accompanying figure; and her way of doing so may make some listeners wonder why not all violinists thought of it. Tiberghien sounds particularly brilliant in this movement's sparkling passagework but also particularly expressive in its more commanding rhetorical gestures. After a quietly moving reading of the second movement, they give a vibrant and cogent account of the finale. The second disc's program begins with the Sonata in F Major, K 547, a work that, many may feel, despite the late date of its composition, doesn't reach the level of complexity of the sonatas written soon before it. Still, the duo makes a strong case for the almost impudent figures in the first movement, brings life to the strong emotional storms that rage through the second, and invests the finale's theme and variations with elegant dignity. The Sonata in B \flat Major, K 31, chatters gaily in their reading of its first movement; but they once again find continuous interest in the

finale's theme and variations. Whatever the merits of the earlier Sonata, K 31, the Sonata in D Major, K 306, the last and most concerto-like of the set that comprises it, dwarfs it in the expressive demands it makes on the violinist. Ibragimova and Tiberghien give a boffo account of its imposing first movement and a teasing one of the finale's thematic material, followed by rhythmically tantalizing twists in its passagework.

Ibragimova plays a violin made by Anselmo Bellosio in the late 1700s, and if that name doesn't carry its own weight, it should suffice for listeners that she seems capable of drawing from it an ever-changing tonal kaleidoscope. Those who revere Arthur Grumiaux's way with these sonatas should rejoice that Ibragimova brings a similar elegant simplicity to them (with even perhaps slightly greater wealth of subtle nuance)—and she's only reached her early 30s, so there should be years of winning performances to come. Already she and Tiberghien have risen to become a highly prepossessing violin and piano duo—and not just by comparison to those active today. Urgently recommended. **Robert Maxham**

This article originally appeared in Issue 41:1 (Sept/Oct 2017) of *Fanfare Magazine*.

MOZART Violin Sonatas: in F, K 377; in B \flat , K 8; in C, K 303; in C, K 403 (completed by Stadler); **in F, K 13; in C, K 28; in E \flat , K 26; in B \flat , K 378. Variations on *Hélas, j'ai perdu mon amant* • Alina Ibragimova (vn); Cédric Tiberghien (pn) • HYPERION 68164 (2 CDs: 119:17) - Vol. 4**

Alina Ibragimova's and Cédric Tiberghien's fourth set of Mozart's violin sonatas (I've waxed a bit more than enthusiastic in reviewing the earlier three) includes some the earliest but also some the more mature works. The program opens with one of the latter, the Sonata in F Major, K 377, in a performance that's intoxicatingly energetic and blindingly bright in the first movement. As usual, Tiberghien and Ibragimova pay careful attention to balances between the two instruments, not only in a general sense, but within every measure, and that care provides one of the principal joys (but by no means the only one) that the set offers. The slow movement, a theme and variations that is somewhat longer than the outer movements, brings the duo into a close collaboration that reveals, through their studied attention to dynamic nuances (not only within variations but between them), an especially rich vein of expressivity. There follows the earliest of the sonatas, in C Major, K 8, which Misha Donat's notes identify as a very light reworking of an even earlier piano sonata. The piano may be the dominant instrument throughout the work, but Ibragimova creates a great deal more than minimal interest in the violin part with her rhythmic vivacity in the first movement and piquancy in the third, a pair of minuets. Ibragimova and Tiberghien effectively characterize each of the variations in the set usually referred to as *Hélas, j'ai*

perdu mon amant, with Ibragimova's flowing cantilena in the Fourth an effective contrast to Tiberghien's rippling passages and the duo's stormy passage through the final one. The two-movement Sonata in C Major, K 303, brings the first disc to a close. Many listeners should respond to Ibragimova's and Tiberghien's abruptly changing tempos in the first movement and effective contrasts in registers in the second.

The Sonata in C major, K 403 (completed by Maximilian Stadler), opens the second disc. Ibragimova and Tiberghien play the first movement with cocky insouciance and plumb the depths of the minor key passages in the second. There follow three early sonatas, in F Major, K 13; in C Major, K 28; and in E^b Major, K 26. The duo, serenely profound in the slow movement of the Sonata, K 13, answer each other cogently in the first movement of the two-movement Sonata, K 28, and bring vibrant energy to the opening movement of K 26. Those who remember—and revere—Arthur Grumiaux's reading of the sonata, K 478, with Clara Haskil may find Ibragimova and Tiberghien less unremittingly cheerful in its first movement, but their greater sweetness and abundant nuance (including occasionally sharper articulation) place their reading on an almost equal footing, no mean accomplishment. They take a brisk tempo in the middle section of the slow movement, one that lends it a refreshing sense of urgency; they also play the finale briskly, especially the section in triplets.

The combination of the familiar and the relatively unfamiliar, the large and the small, and the early and the late—as well as several interpretive surprises—should enhance the enjoyment of this collection for listeners who think they can almost anticipate the duo's manner. As revelatory at least as the early volumes, this one also deserves an urgent recommendation. **Robert Maxham**

This article originally appeared in Issue 41:3 (Jan/Feb 2018) of *Fanfare Magazine*.

MOZART Violin Sonatas: in E^b, K 380; in A, K 12; in G, K 11; in B^b, K 570; in E^b, K 302; in A, K 526. Variations on *La bergère Célimène* • Alina Ibragimova (vn); Cédric Tiberghien (pn) • HYPERION 68175 (2 CDs: 120:48) - Vol. 5

Violinist Alina Ibragimova and her recital partner, pianist Cédric Tiberghien, mix, as they have in the past, Mozart's juvenilia with his latest works. The continuation of their set of Mozart's violin sonatas opens with the Sonata in E^b Major, K 380. Ibragimova again plays her Anselmo Bellosio violin from about 1775, drawing from its timbres suggestive not only of authoritative command but also—for example, in the bright subsidiary figuration—silvery brilliance. The engineers have reflected in the balance of the violin and piano the close partnership of the duo—some might argue even more faithfully than the relationship of the two instruments in the score

itself. Ibragimova and Tiberghien impart an especially plaintive lyricism to the slow movement and balance it with sparkling *joie de vivre* in the finale. They follow this more extended work with two short, early ones, the Sonata in A Major, K 12, to which they bring a great deal of subtlety to the first movement's dialogue between the violin and piano, despite the early date of its composition. They also bring strength of musical personality to the Sonata in G Major, K 11, contrasting its haunting melodic sections with ones of effervescent high spirits. The Sonata in B \flat Major, K 570, originally appeared as a solo piano sonata; and Misha Donat discusses in his notes the additional violin part, not mentioned in the composer's manuscript and unlikely to be authentic, concluding that at least its publication testifies to the continuing popularity of the accompanied sonata. If it's not authentic Mozart, it's not bad either; its violin part is interesting and gratifying if not original.

The second volume opens with the Sonata in E \flat Major. Ibragimova, more frequently than in other works on the program, draws a commanding tone from the lower registers of her violin, here in both movements. Tiberghien matches her authority, alternating dark clouds and sunshine with striking—and, at times, surprising—effectiveness. The second work on the disc, Mozart's 12 variations on the chanson *La bergère Célimène*, conveniently appears in 12 separate tracks. Mozart's set, written "probably for" his student Countess Maria Karolina Rumbeke according to Donat's notes, traverses a wide range of musical affects, strongly characterized and dramatically contrasted by Ibragimova and Tiberghien. They accommodate the slight pause in the theme to each variation, making especially pregnant use of it, perhaps, in the Eighth. The program ends with the monumental Sonata in A Major, K 526, a work that some could perhaps claim to stand beside Beethoven's 10 and Brahms's three works as landmarks in the genre—at least the high seriousness the duo's performance could convince some listeners of the plausibility of that ambitious comparison. They mix an at times almost histrionic urgency with an elegant fleetness in the first movement. They don't linger in the opening of the second, but cloak its opening section with a mysteriousness enhanced by Ibragimova's instrument's wide dynamic range—some of the passages sound subtly ethereal—as well as by Tiberghien's exquisitely subtle variations in tempo. After two such movements, the duo's finale may strike some as relatively straightforward, yet it's marked alternately by steely force and urgent lyricism.

The appearance of each volume of the duo's set of Mozart's violin sonatas, recorded in Wyastone Estate Concert Hall in the first three days of February 2016, provides an opportunity to celebrate anew Ibragimova's and Tiberghien's creative insights and close partnership. It is as urgently recommended as the preceding volumes—and, as with them, this one, because of its mix of periods and clever arrangement of their contents, can be listened to as a sort of recital in itself, and an extremely satisfying one at that. **Robert Maxham**

This article originally appeared in Issue 42:1 (Sept/Oct 2018) of *Fanfare Magazine*.

Ibragimova and Tiberghien: Mozart Violin Sonatas CD review – beautifully calibrated - The Guardian - Erica Jeal

Ibragimova/Tiberghien (Hyperion)

Blossoming tone ... Alina Ibragimova. Photograph: BBC

Erica Jeal

Thu 26 May 2016 11.00 EDT

The cover says Violin Sonatas, but the tracklist says Sonatas for Keyboard and Violin – and as this is Mozart, both descriptions apply. The balance between pianist Cédric Tiberghien and violinist Alina Ibragimova on this recording is as beautifully calibrated as always in this long-standing partnership, but here, unusually, it is Tiberghien's poised, lyrical piano playing that is, more often than not, to the fore. This double CD takes in seven works in non-chronological order, from the eight-year-old Mozart's Sonata in B flat, K10 – originally published as a keyboard piece with optional violin – and the E flat major K481, written just before his 30th birthday. Each work gets a subtly different approach. Highlights include Ibragimova's tone as she blossoms into the major-key slow theme in the adagio of K481, and Tiberghien's echoey, bell-like episode in the Sonata, K14; but there is something to raise a smile in every single movement.

Alina Ibragimova, Cédric Tiberghien: Mozart Violin Sonatas, vol.5

22 JUNE 2018

The Strad Issue: June 2018

Description: Another outstanding Mozart release from this partnership

Musicians: Alina Ibragimova (violin) Cédric Tiberghien (piano)

Works: MOZART Violin sonatas: in G major K11, in A major K12, in E flat major K302, in E flat major K380, in A major K526, in B flat major K570; Variations in G major on 'La bergère Célimène' K359

Catalogue Number: HYPERION CDA68175 (2 CDS)

The first of this two-disc set opens with the E flat major Sonata K380 played with delightful delicacy. The triplets in the first movement's second subject skip along insouciantly. The slow movement is mostly gentle, apart from the quirky outburst

in the second half, and the Rondo bursts forth on a surge of energy. From here the CD turns backwards to eight-year-old Mozart, first with K12 and then K11, both played with unaffected charm. There is an air of mystery in the opening Andante of K11, and again in the rather mournful minuet sitting in the middle of the otherwise perky second-movement Allegro. The disc ends with K570 in B flat major, originally for piano and arranged by an unknown hand. Tiberghien is typically clean and limpid, his phrasing at once subtle and straightforward. K302 in E flat major starts the second disc, opening with quite a vigorous descending arpeggio and continuing in colourful style with strong dynamic contrasts. Ibragimova's vibrato is always sparing and used as much to point notes as to warm them. The melody of the second movement is a case in point, simple and exquisite. The open-hearted performance of the Variations on 'La bergère Célimène' is a fine example of art concealing art. Finally comes K526 in A major. The first movement features the most dramatic playing of the set. Ibragimova strokes the melodies of the second movement with feather-light bowing, and the presto is a joyful romp. The sound is balanced and warm, with just the right amount of resonance.

TIM HOMFRAY

Mozart: Violin Sonatas Nos. 12, 16, 17, 23, 32, 36 - Review by James Manheim
AllMusic Review Rating: 4 1/2*/5*

This double-CD group of **Mozart** violin-and-piano sonatas can stand on its own, and the title merely reads **Mozart Violin Sonatas**. It is, however, the third installment in a consistently fine **Mozart** cycle from pianist **Cédric Tiberghien** and violinist **Alina Ibragimova**. Deeper in the graphics the sonatas are denoted as being "for keyboard and violin," and indeed it is the keyboard that plays the dominant role even as the ways in which **Mozart** shakes up this configuration is part of the interest. The balance shifts from time to time, and the two players are so alert to the shifts that it seems as though you're following **Mozart**'s own thinking. The corpus of **Mozart** works for this combination includes a good deal of juvenilia, and **Tiberghien** and **Ibragimova** hit on a strong programming idea: the youthful works are placed between the mature pieces on each disc, serving as intermezzi. They're more interesting than most of the other productions of the child **Mozart**, with unmistakable hints of the characteristic melancholy. The sensitivity of the players in the works of the adult **Mozart** is the mark of true Mozartians. Sample the finale of the Violin Sonata in D major, K. 306, with its unusual tempo shifts and piano cadenza, for a taste of how these players bring out the best in the music. The sprightly Parisian Violin Sonata in C major, K. 296, a real counterpart to the Concerto for flute, harp, and orchestra in C major, K. 299, also shows the players' sympathy for **Mozart**. Hyperion contributes ideal chamber-sized sound from the Wyastone Estate Concert Hall; the players use modern

instruments, but the sound is flattened down so that **Tiberghien**'s piano sounds almost like a fortepiano. The end result is a **Mozart** violin album that will be a strong attraction not only for those following the **Tiberghien/Ibragimova** series, but for anyone in search of a deeply enjoyable **Mozart** sonata album.

**Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756-1791) - MusicWeb Review of Vol. 4
*Sonatas for keyboard and violin – Volume 4***

Sonata in F major K377 (1781) [21:16]

Sonata in B flat major K8 (1759) [10:07]

Variations in G minor on 'Hélas, j'ai perdu mon amant' K360 (1781) [10:52]

Sonata in C major K303 (1782) [12:02]

Sonata in C major K403 (completed by Maximilian Stadler) [16:55]

Sonata in F major K13 (1764) [13:03]

Sonata in C major K28 (1766) [6:12]

Sonata in E flat major K26 (1766) [8:40]

Sonata in B flat major K378 (c.1779) [20:07]

Alina Ibragimova (violin)

Cédric Tiberghien (piano)

rec. 2015, Wyastone Concert Hall, Monmouth

HYPERION CDA68164 [54:19 + 64:58]

This is a series of Mozart's violin sonatas that has grown on me the more I've listened to it, and has become another one of those sets that, by hook or by crook, I have become determined to acquire complete. Previous volumes have been reviewed positively on these pages: volume 1 ([review](#)), volume 2 ([review](#)), and volume 3 ([review](#)) all building on the formula of the Mozart 'recital', with early and later sonatas placed adjacent, or at least mixed to create a programme whose attractions go further than mere chronological order.

The equal partnership between violin and piano is set out nicely in the *Sonata in F major K377*, the recorded balance giving the keyboard plenty of weight, and allowing the violin to blend as much as possible when it takes on the accompaniment role. The light touch of both musicians make the final movement a sequence of delightful phrases, Mozart's subtle surprises sounding as fresh as ever. The move from such sophistication makes the *Sonata in B flat major K8* sound relatively naïve in places, though for a seven or eight-year old we can certainly make a few allowances. Youthful charm is overtaken by minor-key melancholy in the *Variations in G minor on 'Hélas, j'ai perdu mon amant' K360*, a piece that to my ears always seems to anticipate Schubert in ways both tangible, and no doubt in an association of comparable moods. The unusual slow opening of *Sonata in C major K303* is an ideal follow-on from the galloping final variation of the previous work, its quirky changes of tempo of this and the final minuet

negotiated nicely and with lively wit by these musicians.

C major continues with the *Sonata K403*, though the character of each piece could hardly be more different. Dedicated to Mozart's new wife Constanze Weber, this later piece is all elegance and poise, its deceptive transparency leading to the published title of 'Sonata facile'. Composer and music historian Maximilian Stadler's completion of the finale is stylistically seamless. The *Sonata in F major K13* was part of a set commissioned by Queen Charlotte while the Mozarts were in London, and is another precocious masterpiece with a lovely minor-key central movement. Enthusiastic energy radiates from both movements of the little *Sonata in C major K28*, something it shares with the *Sonata in E flat major K26*, a piece allowed the luxury of three movements and with another surprisingly expressive middle movement. Mozart's ability to create entire worlds from very few notes never fails to work its magic, and this is also true of the very fine *Sonata in B flat major K378*, the origins of which are shrouded in mystery. Even where the lines are fast and lively the essence is often little more than a two-part invention, those extra touches invariably creating something inimitable and vastly precious.

Excellent performances such as these stand on their own merits, but comparisons must be made. Hänssler Classic has recently brought out a set with Dmitry Sitkovetsky and pianist Konstantin Lifschitz which has many positive qualities. The recording in this case is a little less natural sounding but perfectly acceptable, a heavier use of pedal in the piano and more accented rhythms in the finale of *K378* pointing to a different, arguably more modern kind of engagement with the music. I'm always happy to return to Anne-Sophie Mutter and Lambert Orkis's set on Deutsche Grammophon ([review](#)), but after Ibragimova you have to re-attune your musical tastebuds to Mutter's more vibrato-laden sound. There is a warmth of empathy and intelligence of interpretation that goes beyond likes or dislikes of vibrato in this case however, and I still find myself drawn in and almost hypnotised by this set. Ibragimova and Tiberghien are more neutral but second to none in terms of subtlety of colour and touch, and as close as anyone I can name to the actual spirit of Mozart. For this I commend them heartily, while acknowledging that there are as many ways to play great music as there are great musicians.

Dominy Clements