

Carl Czerny: Piano Sonatas, Vol. 1 AllMusic Review by Patsy Morita - Rating 4*/5*

Martin Jones is known for recording the complete piano works of composers, however, **Carl Czerny** is one composer that it might take a pianist decades to find, let alone record, all of his works for the instrument. **Jones** has undertaken **Czerny**'s 11 sonatas in this series for Nimbus, with a few smaller pieces to fill out each volume. **Czerny** categorized his hundreds of piano pieces into serious works, brilliant pieces for concerts, easy pieces for students, and exercises. It is the latter for which he is remembered today, particularly the School of Velocity, Op. 299. This series should change that view and show that **Czerny** was not only a personal link between **Beethoven** (his teacher) and **Liszt** (his student), but also a compositional and stylistic link between the two. **Jones** starts squarely in the middle of the 11 with four "sonatas" that are hardly traditional in terms of their form. Nos. 8 and 9 were published as "Grandes Fantasies en forme de Sonate," and while their heroic sound is suggestive of **Beethoven**'s music, it also brings to mind **Schubert**'s Wanderer Fantasy. The Sonata No. 5, Op. 76, does not even have a single movement in the sonata-allegro form. These are at once expansions on **Beethoven**'s four-movement form and a foreshadowing of **Liszt**'s own break with traditional: his single-movement, multi-sectioned B minor Sonata. **Liszt**'s virtuosity is also evoked in the flashier and more dramatic moments of **Czerny**'s Allegros and Prestos. It makes you wonder just what more **Czerny** put into his "brilliant" pieces for concerts if these are some of his "serious" works. These sonatas also demonstrate that **Czerny** was well educated in music history and theory. The fugue finale of Sonata No. 9 and the chorale variations in Sonata No. 6 refer to forms of the Baroque. The scherzo of No. 8 is like a **Rossini** tidbit, and that of Sonata No. 5 is like a **Schubert** dance. The Nocturne, Op. 647, that fills out disc 1, is dated much later than the sonatas, but its somewhat dense texture relates it more to the sonatas than to a **Chopin** nocturne even though it's obviously **Czerny**'s attempt at something more lyrical and gracefully ornamented. With this first volume, **Jones** easily presents **Czerny** as much more well-rounded and important composer than anyone who's struggled with his etudes might ever suspect.

Complete Piano Sonatas, Volume 1 - ClassicalNet Review

- Piano Sonata #5 in E Major, Op. 76
- Piano Sonata #6 in D minor, Op. 124
- Piano Sonata #8 in E Flat Major, Op. 144
- Piano Sonata #9 in B minor, Op. 145

- Nocturne in E Flat Major, Op. 647

Martin Jones, piano

Nimbus NI5832/33 2CDs 151m DDD

With this first issue dedicated to the complete piano sonatas by Carl Czerny (1791-1857), Nimbus has initiated another project which will undoubtedly prove to be of inestimable value and immense interest. Beethoven's pupil, friend and protégé, Czerny was also a torchbearer at the master's funeral. He began teaching at the tender age of 15 and all throughout his life, he always found time to share his knowledge with others.

His output is prodigious, over 1000 pieces, and apart from all this creative energy he also found the time to perform. But despite these gigantic achievements his music remains sadly unknown and during the last 150 years, only a handful of so-called educational pieces have remained in the repertoire. Still, there is an abundance of music which is well worth investigating and as a virtuoso pianist. His substantial piano works, particularly the sonatas, give him a natural right to fame. Listening to the program on this double-album induced me to wonder how on earth such lovely music was consigned to almost complete oblivion. It is imbued with several qualities notably passion; drama, humour, joy, sadness and even moments of doubt and resignation. And all this humanity is framed by a mesmerizing virtuosity and richness of melody which is nothing short of revelatory.

Martin Jones' interpretations are thrilling and full of impressive "bravura" and which do true justice to Czerny's imaginative powers. Technically he is awesome and one is never in doubt as to his love of these works. The notes by Calum MacDonald are also a labour of love and make for essential reading. One looks forward to what is expected to be quite a memorable series.

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Carl Czerny: Piano Sonatas, Vol. 2 AllMusic Review by Patsy Morita - Rating 4*/5*

Martin Jones's second volume of the piano sonatas of [Carl Czerny](#) covers the beginning and end of [Czerny](#)'s work in the genre, and on the whole the music is more understated than what's in Jones's first volume. This one opens with [Czerny](#)'s last sonata, No. 11, which dates from 1843, more than 20 years later than the Sonata No. 1 (1820), which is also on the first disc here. The sonata has more lyrical ideas present than in the middle sonatas, but still has its Beethovenian moments and some drama. An interesting feature of the first movement is the frequent use of octaves in the right hand, and there is a definite 19th century, salon- or music box-appropriate flavor at times. That flavor is also found in the Character Etude, Op. 755/1, and in the almost [John Field](#)-like delicacy of the Chanson sans Paroles, Op. 795/1, both of which date from around the same time

as the Sonata No. 11. The Sonatas Nos. 1 and No. 2 have five movements each. The first four seem to follow a traditional sonata structure, with the fifth being a fugue tacked on as an afterword. No. 1 is definitely by **Czerny**, the student of **Beethoven**, while No. 2 is written more concisely and, in terms of expression, more conservatively. The Sonatina that follows is expectedly of smaller proportions and less theatrical than the sonatas. The Sonata No. 7, one of the "grande fantasies" like No. 8 and No. 9 (on **Vol. 1**), is also a more modest work, not as "grande" as its siblings. With less dense textures and fewer passages of brilliant pianism, the sonatas in this volume give the listener a chance to appreciate **Czerny** as a more rounded composer and enjoy the music without getting too caught up in rousing heroism or impressive virtuosic feats. So far, Jones has again made the case for another underrated composer, presenting these sonatas with appropriate flair and finesse.

Sonatas for Piano, Volume 2 - ClassicalNet Review

- Piano Sonata #1 in A Flat Major, Op. 7
- Piano Sonata #2 in A minor, Op. 13
- Piano Sonata #7 in E minor, Op. 143
- Piano Sonata #11 in D Flat Major, Op. 730
- Sonatine in A Major, Op. 167
- Character Etude in A Major, Op. 755 #1
- Chanson sans Paroles in A Flat Major, Op. 795 #1

Martin Jones, piano

Nimbus NI5863/64 2CDs 134m

When I reviewed Volume 1 of Carl Czerny's Piano sonatas (**Nimbus NIM5832**), I had nothing but unreserved praise for both Nimbus and pianist Martin Jones, a partnership responsible for bringing back to life the wonderful piano repertoire of a composer who in his heyday was extremely popular, but who since his death in 1857 aged 66 has been largely forgotten. A torchbearer at Beethoven's funeral, he was also the master's pupil, friend and protégé, and together with other composer-friends of Beethoven, notably Ferdinand Ries and Ignaz Moscheles, Czerny was one of those who carried the banner of the late-classical style into the early era of Romanticism, making a distinctive contribution to the development of keyboard playing in an age full of new aspirations and creativity. Despite teaching for as many as ten hours a day, Czerny managed to write over 1,000 works, and although much of this output remains unknown, there is plenty that is worth unearthing, such as the sonatas, which give him a definite claim to fame.

This second volume has some truly monumental pieces, such as the Op. 7 and Op. 730, which amply display the composer's fertile imagination and gift of melody. The programme also includes three miniature pieces, showcasing Czerny's natural ability to delight with a simple yet masterly palette. As in the first issue Martin

Jones interprets this virtuosic music with fiery brilliance and his sublime dexterity on the instrument shines forth with constant radiance. Notes and sonics are first-rate. I'm looking forward to the next helping.

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Carl CZERNY (1791-1857) - MusicWeb Review of Vol. 3

The Sonatas for Solo Piano - vol.3

Piano Sonata no.10 in B flat, op.268 (1831) [29:20]

Piano Sonata no.3 in F minor, op.57 (1824) [31:26]

Piano Sonata no.4 in G, op.65 (1824) [29:29]

Piano Sonatina in G, op.251 (c.1830) [14:45]

Rondino in E flat on an Original Theme, 'Les Jours Passés', op.42 (1823) [11:04]

Gran Capriccio in C minor, op.172 (c.1828) [13:40]

Andante and Allegro [6:37]

Romance, op.755 no.13 [2:46]

Capriccio à la Fuga, op.89 [4:59]

Martin Jones (piano)

rec. Wyastone, Monmouth, Wales, June 2010; June 2008 [op.172]; December 2009 [opp.57,65]. DDD

NIMBUS NI 5872/3 [75:23 + 68:56]

This is the third and final two-disc volume in Martin Jones and Nimbus's valuable Czerny survey. It is pretty much in every way an excellent survey of the piano sonatas of this scandalously neglected Czech-Austrian composer. Previous volumes have been warmly received - see reviews [here](#) and [here](#).

Note that Nimbus are not claiming the 'complete' piano sonatas - there are still two or three unpublished works awaiting discovery, as well as six sonatas for piano four hands, twenty-six more sonatinas for solo piano (a further one was recorded for volume 2), and eight sonatinas for piano four hands. And if it seems from that that Czerny was a Chopin-style piano specialist, well, he was indeed, but given that he wrote more than ten times the amount of music Chopin did, he was still able to find time for seven symphonies, six piano concertos and over 300 choral works. This Nimbus series is only the beginning.

It will, nevertheless, be a long haul before Czerny is remembered for anything other his massive contributions to piano pedagogy, eternalised in his published treatises and exercises, still familiar today to all piano teachers and pupils. But now, with Jones's completed recordings of the published sonatas, the idea no longer stands up that Czerny's genius stopped at teaching, a view promulgated to his discredit by Robert Schumann in the *Neue Zeitschrift Für Musik* and perpetuated in the 20th century by bigoted criticism basing its precepts on received wisdom or Czerny's countless learner pieces rather than on his major

works.

This CD is almost worth the asking price for Calum MacDonald's notes alone. Sixteen sides of detailed description of Czerny's music, so well written in non-technical, yet intelligent language, that the reader cannot wait to get the CD on and start listening for the myriad points of interest that MacDonald explains with obvious appreciation of Czerny's talents.

MacDonald's notes do such a fine job of describing the music in lay terms that there is no need to duplicate them in this review. But it is important to stress that all the music comes from Czerny's maturity and is of commensurately high quality. Despite - or perhaps because of - Czerny's phenomenal technique and encyclopaedic knowledge of the piano, his music does not rely on showy bravura for effect, but no pianist will get very far with the three substantial, significant Sonatas - or the majority of the other pieces, for that matter - without an abundance of virtuosic technique. Jones has shown repeatedly over a long career, and a massive discography, that he has that, and even though he is now into his eighth decade he shows no sign of faltering or slowing down. Indeed, the speed and agility of his fingers are tested repeatedly by Czerny, as in the two-handed crescendo-decrescendo tremolando towards the end of the Rondino in E flat, which has to be heard to be believed.

The three Sonatas are real finds, all quite original in different ways: exciting, intelligent, varied, unpretentious and some of the finest of their period. The B flat Sonata has a stunningly beautiful, intense slow movement that Calum MacDonald suggests might even "stand on its own in a recital programme", and a scherzo third that is "a kind of salon bonbon raised to an almost ridiculous state of virtuosity."

The hugely imaginative finale of the equally compelling F minor Sonata is worthy of Beethoven. Beethoven - Piano Sonata in F minor, op.57? Czerny did give consideration to the opus numbers he assigned to his works, so it is unlikely that the aping of Beethoven's so-called "Appassionata" is coincidental, particularly in light of the fact that Beethoven had been his teacher and was still his friend. The booklet notes have nothing to say on the subject, and in truth the work is nothing like Beethoven's, aside from its dark-hued tonality and general pianistic brilliance.

The Sonatina in G might as well be called a Sonata too - it may be diminutive, but several of Beethoven's masterpieces are as short, and the Sonatina has everything one would expect from a sonata in one concise package. Curiously perhaps, the Gran Capriccio also has the feeling of a sonata, albeit now in three movements. The title is a little misleading, in any case: this full-blooded Romantic work teems with passion and pathos.

Jones's marvellous recital is brought to a fittingly lustrous conclusion with the Sonata in G, yet another showcase for Czerny's seemingly boundless imagination. It overflows in every movement with feeling and breathtaking originality, right down to the amazing light-hearted virtuosity of the finale.

The CD booklet itself is a paragon of clarity and information. One tiny point: in both the track-listing and the notes, the subtitle of the Rondino in E flat is given an additional and ungrammatical 'e' in 'Les Jours Passées', which should be 'Les Jours Passés' ('The Olden Days'). The error may well have been Czerny's or his publishers', but the extra 'e' is still bad French.

Sound quality and general production values are very high. This is a superb addition to Martin Jones's marvellous one-man attempt to record everything unjustly neglected by other pianists.

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Additional Reviews Vol. 3 by Mark Tanner & Jonathan Woolf

Jones is just the man for the Job; his appetite for consuming major tranches of the repertory is quite astonishing, as a brief survey of his discography confirms, and I have enjoyed his spotless playing - both in concertos and recitals - on many occasions over the years. It is to Nimbus's credit that, in collaboration with Jones, some less well-trodden highways and byways continue to be explored, often taking in the entire output of the composer in question. Those who have encountered Jones's other Nimbus recordings will be accustomed to the sense of live performance he manages to convey, both in the playing itself and by means of the vibrant acoustic. What emerges is vivid, wholesome music making that never places the playing higher up the food chain than the music itself.

I thoroughly enjoyed these performances for their impeccable rhythmic attack, utterly reliable crispness of touch and unerring sense of drive.

I found the overall recording to be a tremendous feat of pianism of which both pianist and production team should be proud. With it, Jones notches up yet another conspicuous victory, showing Czerny to be a vastly underrated, deeply motivated musician whose piano music needs to be given a very long second look.

Mark Tanner, International Record Review

Fresh from my enjoyment of volumes 1 ([NI 5832](#)) and 2 ([NI 5863](#)) in this series, I find that there's no cessation in the latest release. As before, Martin Jones and the Nimbus team has elected to intersperse youthful and later works the better to construct artful programmes. And, as before, it takes two CDs per release at least to begin to do justice to Czerny's prodigious output.

We start with the Tenth Sonata, completed in 1831. It opens boldly, dramatically, and virtuosically, qualities that are the sine qua non of Czerny performances too, as mediated by the ever brilliant Martin Jones. The slow movement, by contrast, is vested with great poetic distinction, a song adorned with bewitching ornaments and real depth. But Czerny doesn't slumber too long in the world of poesy, as his Scherzo is almost militantly saucy, and the finale's left hand figures generate an almost toccata-like ethos. The Rondino seems to hint at Haydn's Emperor Quartet, whilst also advancing the claims of a limpid treble sonority and refined legerdemain. The Sonatine includes a deliciously lilting finale reflecting the generosity of his music making as much as elsewhere we are confronted with its exceptional digital demands. This first disc ends with the Gran Capriccio of c.1828, a much more turbulent affair, not least in bass staccati, relieved by the arrival, in the central slow movement, of a noble hymnal procession.

There are some Beethovenian elements in the opening of the Fourth Sonata, and the slow movement is rich in chromatic and lyric interest. The finale meanwhile is playful, and effortlessly projected by Jones, who seems quite as adept in this repertoire as he had in the previous two volumes. Nimbus's sound has considerable warmth. The notes by Calum MacDonald are not only extensive but very engagingly written, and seal another outstanding release in this series.

Jonathan Woolf , Musicweb-international.com