



PRO MUSICA MUNDI

KEVIN KENNER & ENSEMBLE XIX



For the last 20 years, pianist Kevin Kenner has been exploring various approaches to the concert music of Fryderyk Chopin that reflect the musical world of the early 19th century and restore the values we know Chopin held about music and music performance. Following a series of fruitful discussions in Krakow with internationally acclaimed Baroque violinist Sirkka-Liisa Kaakinen, Kenner formed a new ensemble devoted to the performance of XIX century music on period instruments. The Ensemble XIX is composed of Krakow's finest musicians from the Sinfonietta Cracovia, Krakow Philharmonic Orchestra, and Capella Cracoviensis. Kenner's years of experience in the performance of Chopin's music coupled with the expertise of Kaakinen in 18th century performance practice has resulted in a new project in celebration of Chopin's 200th birthday consisting of performances and recordings of Chopin's works for piano and orchestra in the setting of the 19th century salon.

It is widely known that Chopin's concert works were adapted by himself in a variety of instrumental combinations to the several salons in which he played. Although it may be the view of some that such chamber versions of the concert works were compromises in order to allow his works to be performed in smaller venues, it is Kenner's view that the salon was the venue of choice for Chopin, most successfully conveying the intimacy and subtle delicacy of his musical approach which was often unappreciated in the larger concert halls and theatres. Unfortunately, none of Chopin's adapted versions have been discovered. Kevin Kenner has therefore reconstructed likely versions of these works based on the latest research available and fashioned them for his Ensemble XIX, consisting of piano and 10 string players (6 violins, 2 violas, 1 cello and 1 bass), a combination of instruments small enough to fit comfortably into a salon, yet large enough to retain virtually all voices of the full orchestral versions without resorting to reduction. The choice to perform on period instruments was also based upon the view that such instruments offer a tonal refinement and subtlety that correspond more closely to Chopin's own musical taste than the powerful and often overblown sonorities of modern instruments.



Part of the Ensemble's work for 2010 will include recording sessions in the main drawing room of Hatchlands Park, a beautiful 18th century mansion which houses the Cobbe Collection, one of the world's most significant assemblages of keyboard instruments, including two instruments (a Pleyel and a Broadwood) on which Chopin himself performed. In keeping with the spirit of an earlier age, recording producer Tony Harrison will be resurrecting the qualities of the "horn microphones" of the early 20th century through newly developed impedance-matching microphones. These microphones have the advantage of representing a more real instrumental colour in a small to medium-sized salon than the conventional modern microphone.

The Ensemble XIX intends to bring their interpretations to chamber halls throughout Europe where Chopin's music and eventually other 19th century composers' works may be experienced in all their beauty and freshness as it was upon their first hearing.



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Performers

Kevin Kenner – piano – The year 1990 was a milestone for Kevin Kenner whose artistry was recognised throughout the world by three major awards: top prize at the Int'l Chopin Competition in Warsaw, the Int'l Terrence Judd Award in London, and Third Prize at the Tchaikovsky Int'l Competition in Moscow. In the years leading up to those notable accomplishments, he won prizes at the Van Cliburn Int'l Competition (1989) and the Gina Bachauer Int'l Competition (1988).



Kevin Kenner's achievements have won him critical acclaim throughout the world. He has been praised as "one of the finest American pianists to come along in years" (Chicago Tribune), "...fulfilling a criterion which one only knows from great Chopinists such as Rubinstein, Benedetti-Michelangeli and Dinu Lipatti" (Schwaebische Zeitung, Germany). London's Independent describes one of Kenner's recitals as "...the best performance I have ever heard in the concert hall of all four of Chopin's Ballades". The Financial Times described Kenner as a "player of grace, subtle variety and strength, with a mature grasp of dramatic structure and proportion: in short, a grown-up musician nearing his peak." And the Washington Post proclaimed him "a major talent... an artist whose intellect, imagination and pianism speak powerfully and eloquently." Conductor Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, who recorded with pianist Artur Rubinstein, claimed Kenner's Chopin interpretations to be the most sensitive and beautiful he remembered.

Kenner has performed as soloist with world-class orchestras including the Hallé Orchestra, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Berlin Symphony Orchestra, the Warsaw Philharmonic, the Czech Philharmonic, the Belgian Radio and Television Philharmonic, the NHK Symphony of Japan, and in the US with the principal orchestras of San Francisco, San Diego, Salt Lake City, Kansas City, New Jersey, Rochester, Baltimore, St. Paul and many others. He has worked with renowned conductors, including Sir Charles Groves, Andrew Davis, Hans Vonk, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, Jerzy Maksymiuk, Kazimierz Kord, Jiri Belohlavek and Antoni Wit.

He has performed chamber music with illustrious string quartets such as the Belcea, Tokyo, Endellion, and Vogler. He has toured and recorded with the Piazzoforte ensemble performing special arrangements of Astor Piazzolla, Chopin, and Bach. He has performed two-piano arrangements of Piazzolla's works with legendary pianist Pablo Ziegler, who toured for many years with Piazzolla himself. He has been invited to adjudicate in some of the most celebrated international piano competitions in Asia, Europe and the US.

Kevin Kenner's recordings are distributed internationally and include many discs of Chopin works as well as recordings of Ravel, Schumann, Beethoven and Piazzolla, the latter having been awarded a "Fryderyk" in Poland as best CD of the year under the category Chamber Music. He has also established himself as a specialist in period instruments and his recent recording of Chopin solo piano works on an 1848 Pleyel for the National Chopin Institute of Poland received a 5 star "superb" rating by the French magazine Diapason.



Sirkka-Liisa Kaakinen – leader – Finnish baroque violinist, graduated from the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki under the direction of Yoshiko Arai, Jouko Heikkilä and Kaija Saarikettu. As a student she also performed in master classes with Ana Chumachenko and others. Following her studies at the Sibelius Academy she continued her work in baroque violin with Lucy van Dael and Monica Huggett in the Netherlands. Sirkka-Liisa Kaakinen works as a free lance musician with ensembles and orchestras in Finland and abroad. She has played with ensembles including the

Avanti!, Sixth Floor Orchestra, Orchestra of the XVIII Century, Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, Orchestre des Champs-Élysées, Nederlandse Bachvereniging, Concerto Copenhagen and the European Community Baroque Orchestra. In the summer of 1994 Sirkka-Liisa Kaakinen was appointed first violinist of Collegium Vocale and La Chapelle Royale. Currently works as a guest concertmaster in European orchestras.



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Ensemble XIX at the Collegium Maius, Krakow

Ensemble XIX

Violin I – Sirkka-Liisa Kaakinen, Paweł Wajrak, Maciej Lulek

Violin II – Piotr Marciak, Jadwiga Lis, Paweł Stawarski

Viola – Ryszard Sneka, Mariusz Grochowski

Cello – Konrad Górka;

Double bass – Grzegorz Frankowski

Programme Repertoire

Fryderyk Chopin (1810 – 1849)

- Piano Concerto op. 21 in F minor
 - Andante Spianato et Grande Polonaise brillante op. 22
 - Rondo à la Krakowiak in F major op. 14
 - Grandes Variations brillantes sur le Duo favori de Don Giovanni "La ci darem la mano," de Mozart op. 2
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Project Coordinators

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