

Meridian

HAYDN Piano Sonatas - Fou Ts'ong

CDE 84592/3-2

Meridian

A Natural Sound Recording

CDE 84592/3-2

CD1 60'11" CD2 64'30"



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# HAYDN

## PIANO SONATAS

Disc 1

**Sonata No.31, Hob XVI/46, A flat major**

- |                      |      |
|----------------------|------|
| [1] Allegro moderato | 9:24 |
| [2] Adagio           | 8:21 |
| [3] Finale: Presto   | 3:10 |

**Sonata No.33, Hob XVI/20, C minor**

- |                      |      |
|----------------------|------|
| [4] Moderato         | 9:29 |
| [5] Andante con moto | 5:37 |
| [6] Finale: Allegro  | 5:08 |

**Sonata No.60, Hob XVI/50, C major**

- |                   |      |
|-------------------|------|
| [7] Allegro       | 9:51 |
| [8] Adagio        | 6:22 |
| [9] Allegro molto | 2:53 |

Disc 2

**Sonata No.34, Hob.XVI/33, D major**

- |                     |      |
|---------------------|------|
| [1] Allegro         | 6:17 |
| [2] Adagio          | 5:19 |
| [3] Tempo di Menuet | 4:04 |

**Sonata No.47, Hob.XVI/32, B minor**

- |                      |      |
|----------------------|------|
| [4] Allegro moderato | 5:06 |
| [5] Menuet           | 3:05 |
| [6] Finale: Presto   | 3:36 |

**Sonata No.59, Hob XVI/51, E flat major**

- |                             |      |
|-----------------------------|------|
| [7] Allegro                 | 7:29 |
| [8] Adagio e cantabile      | 8:01 |
| [9] Finale: Tempo di Minuet | 4:14 |

**Variations F minor, Hob XVII/6**

- |              |       |
|--------------|-------|
| [10] Andante | 17:23 |
|--------------|-------|

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Sonata No.31, A flat major  
Sonata No.33, C minor  
Sonata No.60, C major  
Sonata No.34, D major  
Sonata No.47, B minor  
Sonata No.59, E flat major  
Variations F minor

Fou Ts'ong

2CDs



## HAYDN PIANO SONATAS

Haydn's 47 piano sonatas were composed over a period of some 30 years, starting in the mid-1760s. Despite much scholarly work exact dating has proved elusive in many cases. Some sonatas are lost, though known to us by the opening bars entered by Haydn in his own catalogue of his works (the Entwurf-Katalog). A manuscript of six 'lost' piano sonatas which came to light in 1993 can now be discounted as a modern forgery.

Haydn's innovative approach to the string quartet and symphony is paralleled in the piano sonatas. The form was not set in concrete, some sonatas comprising three movements, others only two, opening sometimes with a slow movement, and ending with a Tempo di Menuetto or even a theme and variations. The early examples were called 'divertimento' or 'partita'. All but the later sonatas are likely to have been performed on the harpsichord.

They display the full range of Haydn's creative genius. There is a freshness to the music and a constant flow of new ideas and musical development. The richness and variety of the piano writing, in the context of the lighter but characterful fortepiano of Haydn's day, explores the full range of eighteenth century instrumental colour. It should be remembered that the more powerful pianos of today have tended towards balancing and equalising the sound throughout the instrument. In Haydn's time there was more difference between the registers, with a bright, articulate treble, a clean middle register and power residing predominantly in the bass. Haydn's textures are finely judged in accordance with the varied timbres of the eighteenth century piano.

His patron, Prince Nikolaus Esterházy, encouraged Haydn to write for his favourite instrument, the baryton. Thus only a few piano sonatas were dedicated to him (not those in this recording). Haydn's dedicatees were frequently pupils or others whose friendship he valued, particularly of the fairer sex. But, as reported by his first biographer, G.A.Griesinger, Haydn regarded his years at the Esterházy court in a positive light. "I could, as head of an orchestra, make experiments, observe what created an impression, and what weakened it, thus improving, adding to, cutting away, and running risks. I was set apart from the world, there was nobody in my vicinity to confuse and annoy me in my course, and so I had to become original." What a fine apology for the exercise of genius! *The Gazetteer & New Daily Advertiser* took a different view of Haydn's situation, writing on 17th January 1785, "There is something very distressing to a liberal mind in the history of *Haydn*. This wonderful man, who is the Shakespeare of music, and the triumph of the age in which we live, is doomed to reside in the court of a miserable German Prince, who is at once incapable of rewarding him, and unworthy of the honour. *Haydn*, the simplest as well as the greatest of men, is resigned to his condition, and . . . is content to live immured in a place little better than a dungeon, subject to the domineering spirit of a petty Lord, and the clamorous temper of a scolding wife. Would it not be an achievement equal to a pilgrimage, for some aspiring youths to rescue him from his fortune and transplant him to Great Britain, the country for which his music seems to be made?" But it was fate, rather than "aspiring youths", that finally took matters in hand. On 28th September 1790 Prince Nikolaus Esterházy died. On hearing the news the enterprising London-based impresario Johann Peter Salomon, who was in Cologne at the time, went immediately to Vienna. Confronting Haydn, he declared, without further ceremony, "I am Salomon from London and have come to fetch you. Tomorrow we shall conclude

an agreement." That agreement included an obligation to write an opera, six symphonies and 20 other pieces. Haydn arrived in Dover on New Year's Day 1791, after a rough crossing which he himself described a little too vividly for comfort: "... towards the end, when the wind grew stronger and stronger, and I saw the raging high waves rushing at us, I became a little frightened, and a little indisposed, too. But I overcame it all and arrived safely on shore without, excuse me, vomiting."

In England Haydn was held in the highest esteem. He engaged with London's rich musical life, absorbing the influence of Handel's oratorios and much else. Tickets for his concerts sold for "half-a-guinea each" on a typical concert bill; not exactly cheap, if you add on two centuries of inflation. According to the newspaper *The World* (10th February 1790) the price was designed to keep out "bad company"!

Returning to Vienna in 1795 after his second extended visit to London he brought back with him a Longman & Broderip 'Grand Forte Piano'. English pianos of the time differed significantly from the Viennese design. They often had further notes added in the treble above the usual top *f*'' (two-and-a-half octaves above middle *c*) and, instead of a damping mechanism to quieten the resonance of the strings they featured a *sopra una corda* device. This allowed the player to select one, two or three strings in all but the lowest register, thus varying both the strength and quality of sound. Haydn's Longman & Broderip was seen by Vincent Novello in 1829 when he visited the Abbé Stadler in Vienna. He reported "The Abbé then walked across the room and opened a Grand Piano Forte which he informed me was the instrument that belonged to Haydn. It was one of Longman and Broderip's, the compass from FF in the bass with the added keys up to C in alt [*c*''']. Haydn had brought it with him from England and had retained it till death, when it came into the possession of l'Abbé Stadler.

The latter told me he had often heard Haydn play upon it when he used to call to see him. I need not add that I sat down and played with peculiar pleasure."

The sonatas on this recording reveal the consistently high level of inspiration that characterised Haydn's piano writing over many years. Composed mostly during Mozart's lifetime comparison with his younger contemporary's sonatas is almost inevitable. Though significantly different in style and approach neither composer suffers in the comparison, which is a measure of the greatness and individuality of them both.

The dating of the sonatas appears to be not entirely in conformity with their numbering in the Hoboken catalogue. Of the three sonatas on **disc one** the Ab (Hob XVI 46) was composed in the late 1760s, the C minor (Hob XVI 20) in 1771 and the C major (Hob XVI 50) in London c1794-5.

1) The choice of home key of Ab is not seen in the first movement of any of the symphonies or quartets. The addition of yet a further flat in the slow movement, taking us to the remote territory of Db, inspires music of true profundity, only gently relieved by the *Presto* Finale.

2) In the first movement of the dark C minor sonata Haydn avoids a conventional 2nd subject melody but moves unerringly to the relative major, offering a selection of decorative motifs. The key of Ab is used again, but here it occurs in the slow movement, with long, syncopated passages to increase the tension. The serious mood of the first movement prevails throughout the Finale.

3) The C major sonata starts almost impudently, but the first movement also features serious counterpoint. After the delicate slow movement comes a brief Finale offering surprising harmonic twists and turns.



**Disc two** contains three further sonatas, in B minor (Hob XVI 32) 1776, in D major (Hob XVI 33) completed 1778 and in Eb major (Hob XVI 49) 1789-90. A bonus is included, the sonata (un piccolo divertimento; Variations) (Hob XVII 6), composed in 1793 between Haydn's two London visits and known today simply as Variations in F minor.

1) The formal first movement of the B minor sonata gives way to a Minuet basking in the sunshine of B major, though the sky darkens again in the Trio section, bringing a return to the minor. The Finale plays games with both notes and rests.

2) Haydn responds to the bright opening of the D major sonata with a true Adagio slow movement in the minor. The Finale is a subtle blend of minuet, rondo and variations.

3) The substantial first movement of the Eb sonata leads to a tender Adagio cantabile, with delicate decorations fully written out by Haydn. The last movement is in the form of a rondo based on a minuet, with an excursion to Eb minor introducing an exotic six flats.

4) The F minor Variations are a double set of variations, alternating between minor and major before escaping from strict discipline to launch into an extended, improvisatory coda.

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## **FOU TS'ONG**

Described by Time magazine as "The greatest Chinese musician alive today", Fou Ts'ong embarks on his journey of musical discovery with Haydn in this recording. Born in Shanghai in 1934, he came to the West by way of Poland where he studied for a number of years with Zbigniew Dzwrewicki in Warsaw in the 1950s. After winning the Mazurka prize at the 1954 Chopin competition, he started to concertise extensively in Eastern Europe. In 1959, he was invited to London to perform under the baton of Carl Maria Guilini and since then has made London his home. He has played worldwide and is now also devoted to teaching younger generation musicians.

Recordings with Meridian include solo works by Bach, Scarlatti, Mozart, Schubert, Chopin, Schumann, Debussy, and concertis by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Chopin.

