

Violin sonata op.18

One of the major romantic violin sonatas, that can be seen in the same line as for example Franck's violin sonata. It is a young work that Richard Strauss wrote for his wife in 1887-1888. It was written for his future wife Paulina de Ahna and it is often said that one clearly can see the overwhelming feeling of love that he had for her.

This piece is composed rather dense with the melody and very specific figures or rhythms that come back rather often. It is especially demanding for the piano, combining many different types of techniques.

The first movement of this sonata is written in an extended sonata form, without the repeats that were more common in the earlier sonata form. It has two main melodies, with the first being the more extrovert. This melody makes a clear distinction in rhythm between the sixteenth accent and the triplet. The second melody gets developed in a very expressive melody. Both melodies are the core of the whole movement that constantly work together to create all the characters of the piece. These characters, calm, expressive, loud, happy and dark, make this piece a very versatile and complete movement with much grandeur. The treatment of harmony, modulation and intervals like minor seconds in chords are very typical for the late nineteenth century German composing-style.

The second movement is a song like movement with a gorgeous melody that reminds us of the set of 8 songs, Op.10. Strauss wrote it as *Andante cantabile*. It is often called 'Improvisation'. The piece is written in an ABA structure with the B section being the more dramatic part and with more virtuosity, especially in the piano-part. The second A part is a variation of the first A-part which is full of embellishments and is constantly conversing between the instruments. The sound-effect that is derived from that adds to the very intimate affect in this movement. The movement ends with a gorgeous stretched conclusion which gives a peaceful affect after the abundance of notes in the variation part.

The third movement, which is as well the closing movement called 'Finale' starts with an *Andante*, which was not common to do as a start of the last movement, although both Brahms and Schumann did the same with their first and fourth Symphonies. The *Andante* is a very big contrast in character with the second movement. It is a solo-introduction for the piano and uses the low register of the instrument for both hands. It introduces the first theme of the *Allegro*-movement using the same type of rhythms as in the first movement. The *Allegro* as well gets introduced by the piano and with the violin playing scales, tied by two notes, up. The second theme is played by the violin and does not get played by the piano. With the third theme, that is also introduced by the violin, it does get repeated by the piano during which the violin accompanies with broken chords as the piano did when the violin played it. The *allegro* with it's melodies gets a contrast from the three *scherzando* sections. These parts are, technically, especially difficult for the piano. This contrasts brings a very passionate affect to the piece. After this part, we return with the first theme and the second theme. Where Strauss did compose it only for the violin before, now the piano does get included with the melody. The end of the movement concludes with a coda that is derived from the thematic material of the first theme of this movement.

Even though the last movement can seem rather fragmented it is constructed in a very dense way with constantly reoccurring fragments and rhythmic patterns.

