

Vassilis Varvaresos PIANO Noé Inui VIOLIN

NAVIS CLASSICS



THE FIRST  
SCHUMANN AND STRAUSS  
THE LAST  
ROMANTIC





## DUO NOÉ INUI / VASSILIS VARVARESOS

When violinist Noé Inui and pianist Vassilis Varvaresos met in 2012 for their first joint rehearsal it was instantly clear to them that their duo would become a long-term co-operation. It is as if they speak the same language, united as they are during their concerts; a quality which is visible and noticeable even in the back row of any concert hall. As a duo they have performed in prime venues in the USA, Japan, Germany, France, Greece, Belgium and the Netherlands.

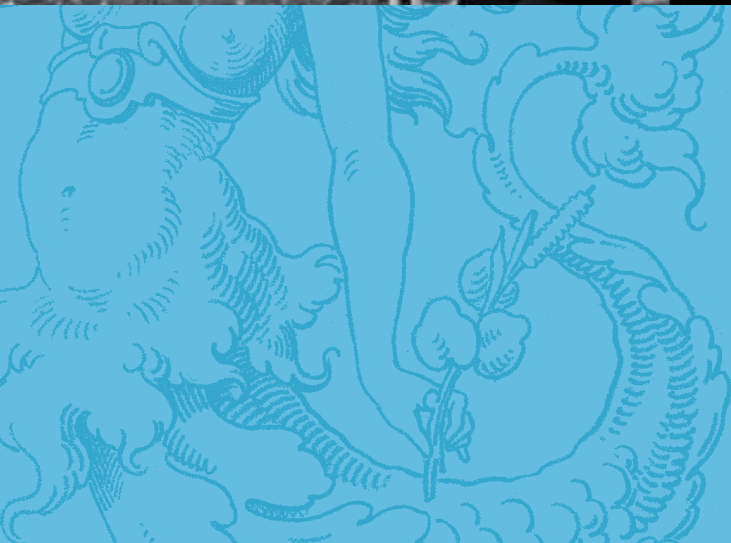
Greek/Japanese violinist **Noé Inui** (1985) has been a prize winner at various international competitions, such as Young Concert Artists New York (1<sup>st</sup> prize) and the Sibelius Competition, Helsinki (Young Talents' Award). In 2012 he was awarded the top prize (Prix Julius Baer, Prix d'Excellence) of the Verbier Festival Academy.

As a soloist Noé performs frequently with orchestras in Germany, Spain, Greece and Japan. As a chamber musician he has

played in many European countries as well as in the USA and Japan. He has shared the stage with artists including Martha Argerich and Leonidas Kavakos. Based in Germany, this multilingual violinist (he speaks five languages fluently) was involved in several international recording projects. [www.noeinui.com](http://www.noeinui.com)

Greek pianist **Vassilis Varvaresos** (1983) was in 1998 the youngest ever winner of Young Concert Artists New York. This achievement has been followed by various international prizes, his most recent being 3<sup>rd</sup> prize at the Enescu Competition in Bucharest in September 2014. He has performed in many major venues in the USA such as the Morgan Library, the Alice Tully Hall at the Lincoln Center, and the Kennedy Center in Washington.

In March 2012 after his first solo recital in Carnegie Hall he was invited by President Obama to perform at the White House. This 'Most Promising Young Greek Artist' also plays as soloist with orchestras as well as in chamber-music recitals and recording projects. [www.varvaresos.com](http://www.varvaresos.com)





**RICHARD STRAUSS** (1864-1949)  
SONATA IN E-FLAT MAJOR OP. 18 (1887)

**ROBERT SCHUMANN** (1810-1856)  
SONATA NO. 2 FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO  
IN D MINOR OP. 121 (1851)

Comparing and contrasting two monumental violin sonatas by great composers from entirely separate generations can be a fascinating exercise, but in this case only yields incidental relationships. Richard Strauss's *Sonata in E-flat major Op. 18* can be considered a youthful work but, given the extra impetus of inspiration gained from new-found love in his future wife the singer Pauline de Ahna, this is also an uncompromisingly demanding piece which saw the composer at the top of his game at this point in his development. Robert Schumann's *Second Violin Sonata* emerged after frustration in his failure to establish himself as a conductor in Düsseldorf but during a period of ongoing compositional productivity before his final illness took hold. Written almost immediately after the *First Violin Sonata* it can be seen as the big brother to its predecessor; taking the genre further, the trained muscles now set for even more ambitious musical exploration.

**DOMINY CLEMENTS IN CONVERSATION  
WITH NOÉ INUI**

Noé, you clearly struck a very strong musical bond with Vassilis right from the outset. Of course there is much to say in general about your synergy as a duo and that heady feeling of being able to move in the same direction both instinctively and intellectually while performing. Are there any impressions you took away from the recording sessions for this CD that you would like to share with the listener?

This was our first CD recording and it has been an 'easy' process working together, and in this we include Daan van Aalst as our sound engineer. This confirms to us that we have to keep up this collaboration with such a wonderful team – it's only the beginning!

What guided you towards choosing the two works on this recording?

There are so many masterpieces in the violin-piano duo repertoire. The Strauss sonata was in our programme when we toured in the US for the first time together. The pleasure we had playing this piece on stage brought to us the idea of making a CD, and this then took us to Schumann's second sonata. We tried to find a piece which could stand alongside the orchestral dimensions of Strauss's sonata.

The choices for any musician recording such music today inevitably include an awareness of the legacy of others, such as Jascha Heifetz and Alfred Wallenstein in their 1954 performance of the Strauss sonata, or the young Yehudi and Hephzibah Menuhin who recorded the Schumann in 1934. Much as these composers acknowledged their musical forebears in these works, do you as a violinist see yourself as part of long-standing performance traditions, or is this something you seek to avoid?

Finding a long-standing tradition is difficult to define in this case. Nowadays most of the world's leading conservatoires are a patchwork of imported and local ways of teaching. The older recordings you mention were being performed by players who were still filled with their own national identity. Globalisation in the world of teaching was just beginning in their times.

Technically speaking I think that the skill of musicians today is higher than ever, but it is still the taste of the interpretation that will make the difference and maybe remain as some kind of 'tradition'.

We had the biggest pleasure in working on two fantastic works, and this has brought us very close as musicians and human beings as well. I think this is and will remain forever the essence of musical collaboration at a higher level.

Looking first at Schumann's remarkable first movement, at first hearing it seems concerto-like in the orchestral grandeur of the piano part, yet the violin's expressive depth is sought in the lower registers. This contrasts with the wider and more extrovert range in the Strauss sonata. Noé's answer when asked about his attitude to how he approaches such technical challenges is brief and to the point:

I just do it.



Composed during Schumann's uneasy period working in Düsseldorf, much of this sonata has a restless, highly-strung feel to go along with all that energetic virtuosity, and yet the sweetness of that melody in the third movement is like a dream. The *Sonata Op. 121* is also a second attempt following on from his *Op. 105*, Schumann apparently having said, "I did not like the first violin sonata; so I then wrote a second one, which is hopefully better." It is rarely if ever possible to know what was in the mind of the composer as he worked, but how much of your interpretation do you invest in looking at biographical or catalogue context in a work such as this?

One can be inspired by knowing more about these pieces, their compositional process or even some anecdotal stories about them. Besides the fact that I live in Düsseldorf (which made my interest in the Schumann sonata even greater), it was nice to read about and learn many details on both composers around the time they composed these pieces. So yes, it is an important step to read more about the background to the music one plays, but it will not make your sound more beautiful or increase your ability to perform a sonata form with good taste. In terms of interpretation I definitely feel some different things with this knowledge, but I think this is a very subjective issue.

Richard Strauss's youthful *Sonata Op. 18* is in part a key to the composer in embryo, foreshadowing many future masterpieces, and in part the composer as apprentice, with Schumann numbering amongst those he would have seen as his masters and including a respectful gaze back as far as Beethoven. 36 years separate the two sonatas but both have piano parts with 'orchestral' qualities. Do you see this span as a short bridge between the two composers, or a generational chasm which demands a very different stylistic approach?

I think the 36 years that separates both compositions is one point, but the 54 years separating these composer's births is more important. They are from different times and their sonic footprint on music history is very specific for both.

The fact that both wrote a violin sonata (Schumann as a late work, Strauss as a youthful? work) with an orchestral dimension is due to their need to get the biggest possible range out of the music. I wouldn't therefore mention a "very different stylistic approach" but an informed approach through all of the orchestral works we know from both of these composers.

Strauss's second movement, 'Improvisation', unites the qualities of salon music lushness with harmonies which sometimes go far beyond schmaltzy entertainment, also introducing operetta-like melodrama. The 'Finale' opens with *Don Juan* heroism and is full of swift changes in character. Would you still be seeking abstract expression here or, as I suspect, do you think of these movements in terms of some kind of narrative?

The more I become involved in the music of the past (and especially barock) the more I think the narrative aspect of music should play a bigger role in any interpretation. We live in times of "melodised" melody. In my opinion we nowadays are too much focused on constant beauty, which is not always what art is meant to be.

If Schumann and Strauss were here today, what would you ask them about these works?

There are maybe two or three spots I would have liked to change with their permission. These days we consider finalised works are meant to be unchangeable. Many letters and notes from important players of the 19th century show us that these people talked to and advised composers on how best to achieve their ideal. Today's players are much more conventional and accept any piece of music as finalised. Beside the musical aspect I would be of course interested to just have a normal conversation with these tremendous talents from the history of music: just to have a drink together!





Made possible with the kind support of  
Stichting Young Notables  
www.tuinconcert.nl  
Multifoon Hifi

Recording Producer and Editing  
Daan van Aalst

Recording Venue and dates

February 2-4 2015, Westvest 90, Schiedam

Piano Technician

Matthijs Jongepier

Artwork

Ad van der Kouwe, Manifesta

Photography

Yannis Gutmann

Booklet text

Dominy Clements

Special thanks to

Compris Artist Management

**compris**  
ARTIST MANAGEMENT

More information about Navis Classics,  
our high resolution downloads and future  
releases can be found on

[www.navisclassics.com](http://www.navisclassics.com)

Noé Inui VIOLIN  
Vassilis Varvaresos PIANO

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810-1856)  
SONATA NO. 2 FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO  
IN D MINOR OP. 121 (1851)

- |   |                                      |       |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | I. <i>Ziemlich langsam – Lebhaft</i> | 12.55 |
| 2 | II. <i>Sehr lebhaft</i>              | 4.24  |
| 3 | III. <i>Leise, einfach</i>           | 6.04  |
| 4 | IV. <i>Bewegt</i>                    | 9.26  |

RICHARD STRAUSS (1864-1949)  
SONATA IN E-FLAT MAJOR OP. 18 (1887)

- |   |   |       |
|---|---|-------|
| 5 | <i>Allegro, ma non troppo</i>           | 11.55 |
| 6 | <i>Improvisation: Andante cantabile</i> | 9.07  |
| 7 | <i>Finale: Andante – Allegro</i>        | 9.11  |

total time: 63.05

