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Pianist Rasa Vitkauskaitė Debut Concerto CD
Conductor Jonathan Cohler
Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra, Anima Musicae Chamber Orchestra

Boston, MA — Ongaku Records, Inc. released [*Rasa Vitkauskaitė plays Mozart & Beethoven Concertos*](#) (024-129), the debut concerto recording of internationally acclaimed multiple prize-winning Lithuanian pianist Rasa Vitkauskaitė who has been hailed for “artistry of poetic and observant sensitivity” (*Gramophone*) and “scintillating pianism” while being acknowledged as “a Beethoven interpreter of penetrating insight” (*Fanfare*). This impressive release features Rasa’s dazzling interpretations of two pillars of the piano repertoire: Mozart’s *Piano Concerto in D Minor, K. 466* and Beethoven’s *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Minor, Op. 37*. Rasa teams up with renowned conductor Jonathan Cohler, whose recent recording *Cohler plays and conducts Mozart* (Ongaku 024-128) has been dubbed “the standard for Mozart.” All the editions on this recording are by Cohler.

To round out this brilliant debut, the CD includes an extensively researched and insightful 28-page booklet authored by Rasa that explains the background behind these important works and how they shaped the history of the piano concerto.

Fanfare Magazine reviewer Huntley Dent writes,

“...these are large-scaled performances filled with musical passion... She plays the solo part as boldly as Rudolf Serkin, and he conducts with more dramatic force than George Szell in their Columbia Records account... Vitkauskaitė and Cohler deliver an ideal Mozart performance, abetted by beautiful playing from the Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra and up-to-date engineering that combines inner detail with overall impact. The full dynamic range of the piano is vividly conveyed, as is the dynamic range of Mozart’s score... [In the Beethoven] Cohler offers an orchestral part that is fully symphonic and beautifully shaped... Serkin again comes to mind in his Beethoven Third Concerto with Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic from the 1960s, a particular favorite of mine. This new reading rivals it for exuberance, high energy, charisma, and the heroic spirit of Beethoven’s middle period... The first-movement cadenza is thrilling in Vitkauskaitė’s hands... I had no expectations... that this new release would be quite as superb as it turned out to be.”

The CD features Ongaku Records’ trademark audiophile sound quality, which provides the listener with stunning detail, dynamic range, and accurate sound stage, and is an essential reference for anyone interested in these works.

Rasa Vitkauskaitė plays Mozart & Beethoven Concertos is available for sale, download and streaming at Ongaku Records, Amazon, iTunes, Apple Music, YouTube Music, Tidal, Napster, Spotify, and retailers worldwide.

Internationally acclaimed multiple prize-winning Lithuanian pianist **Rasa Vitkauskaitė** has been hailed for “artistry of poetic and observant sensitivity” (*Gramophone*) and dubbed as “a Beethoven interpreter of penetrating insight” (*Fanfare*). She is quickly establishing herself as one of the leading recording artists of her generation. Her latest CD including Mozart *Concerto No. 20 in D Minor* and Beethoven *Concerto No. 3 in C Minor* was praised as comparable to Rudolf Serkin and the New York Philharmonic. Rasa released her debut solo CD *Reflections* on Ongaku Records in 2014, featuring works by Beethoven, Ravel, Guastavino and Liebermann. *Fanfare* highlighted the release on its cover, praising her “scintillating pianism.” Her debut recording as soloist with orchestra performing Liszt/Weber *Polonaise brillante* recorded at the Hungarian National Radio was released as a digital single in 2016. Last season featured a solo recital on the prestigious Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concert Series in the Chicago Cultural Center that was broadcast live on WFMT radio and hundreds of affiliated stations nationwide. Next season will highlight Rasa’s recording of Mendelssohn *Double Concerto* with Tchaikovsky Gold Medal violinist Ilya Kaler.

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Winner of the Grand Prix at the Mendelssohn Cup Piano Competition in Italy, Rasa Vitkauskaitė has won top prizes at numerous prestigious international piano competitions including First Prizes at Les Rencontres Internationales des Jeunes Pianistes (Belgium), and the Rubinstein Piano Competition (Paris). Other awards include the Westmont Fellowship at the Montecito International Music Festival in Santa Barbara, California, and a Kathryn Wasserman Davis \$10,000 grant supporting a concert tour of Israel. Recent recital tours have taken Rasa to China, South Korea, Brazil, Argentina, Italy, Mexico, Spain, Portugal, Hungary, and across the United States.

An avid chamber musician, Rasa performs regularly with world-renowned clarinetist Jonathan Cohler, and has collaborated with violinists James Buswell, Irina Muresanu, cellist Julia Bruskin, and clarinetist Franklin Cohen, among many others. In 2016, she co-founded Chamber Music Boston, a premier classical chamber music ensemble featuring exciting performances in intimate settings by world-class artists. Rasa is the long-serving, critically acclaimed pianist of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Meiningen Trio.

In addition to her active performing career, Rasa teaches a large private studio in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and frequently leads masterclasses worldwide including most recently at Ohio University, University of Akron, National University of Rosario in Argentina, Carlos Gomes State Institute in Belém, Brazil, and Longy School of Music of Bard College, just to name a few.

For more information, visit <https://rasavitkauskaitė.com>.

Conductor and clarinetist **Jonathan Cohler** has been hailed as “the preeminent, most-recorded clarinet soloist of our time” (*Fanfare*). He has received numerous resounding accolades and has been compared to legendary conductors and instrumentalists alike: “he conducts with more dramatic force than George Szell” (*Fanfare*, Huntley Dent), “If he was also a composer, we’d be comparing him to Leonard Bernstein” (Michael Drapkin), and “one thinks of Dinu Lipatti” (*Fanfare*, James North). He has received the Outstanding Recording mark of the *American Record Guide*, *BBC Music Magazine*’s Best CDs of The Year, and many more awards. Mr. Cohler’s most recent CD Cohler plays and conducts Mozart—including *Symphony No. 35*, overtures to *Don Giovanni* and *The Magic Flute*, and the *Clarinet Concerto*, all in new editions by Cohler—was featured on the cover of *Fanfare* and called the new “standard for Mozart.” *MusicWeb International* lauded the performances as “superlative and Cohler proves to be as gifted a conductor as he is a soloist.”

Cohler’s Jordan Hall performance of Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* prompted the *Enterprise* to write, “It is a major tribute to conductor Jonathan Cohler and his charges that the presentation they gave was for all practical purposes flawless.” Reviewing Cohler’s performance of Mahler’s *Symphony No. 2*, at Jordan Hall, the *Boston Globe* called it “a rather remarkable performance,” noting that “This conductor [Cohler] had the knack...and it all added up.” The *Patriot Ledger* called his performance of Verdi’s *Requiem* “an outstanding achievement” with “pin-drop passages of hushed suspense, crashing chords, thundering drumbeats and superb singing by an excellently prepared chorus” and noted that “Cohler’s conducting found the heart of the music’s drama.” The *Boston Globe* also gave uncommon praise to Mr. Cohler’s performance of Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9*: Jonathan Cohler’s performance “could be fiery and feisty, compelling one’s assent,” and the *Globe* rated the concert as “more of an event than most Ninths are these days, no little thing.”

Mr. Cohler maintains a busy international schedule with performances that regularly take him around the world. He is Music Director of the Massachusetts Philharmonic Orchestra and is in demand as a guest conductor with orchestras such as the Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra, Anima Musicae Chamber Orchestra, and Simon Bolivar Orchestra. He assisted renowned conductor Benjamin Zander with the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra and the New England Conservatory Youth Philharmonic Orchestra for many years.

Mr. Cohler is Professor of Clarinet, Conducting, and Chamber Music at the Longy School of Music of Bard College in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and has been guest faculty at conservatories and universities around the world such as Mozarteum University in Salzburg, Eastman School of Music, Cleveland Institute of Music, and Harvard University to name a few. He records exclusively for Ongaku Records.

For more information, visit <https://jonathancohler.com>.