

PLAYER

Solo violinist **Anne Akiko Meyers** has dramatically expanded the modern violin repertoire with significant new commissions. She has given the first performance of major new works by many of today's leading composers, and is scheduled to premiere new concertos written for her by Arturo Márquez, 'Blue Electra,' written by Michael Daugherty about Amelia Earhart, and new cadenzas, described below, by John Corigliano for the Beethoven Violin Concerto.

Title of Work Being Studied New cadenzas to Beethoven's Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61

Composer John Corigliano

Date Composed 2021

Name of Edition Studied Own copy; an edition with the Corigliano cadenzas will be published by G. Schirmer.

SHEER PERFECTION

John Corigliano's new cadenzas to the Beethoven Violin Concerto complete the masterpiece

By *Anne Akiko Meyers*

The Beethoven Concerto is a monumental work and one of my favorites to perform. I grew up listening to it from the time I was born. My mother read that music is a magical elixir that helps a baby's brain develop, and so began my journey with the Beethoven Violin Concerto, with David Oistrakh performing it.

I've performed the Kreisler cadenzas many times and asked Mason Bates to rewrite them back in 2007. I'm always open and curious to mixing it up and asking questions. What take do today's composers have on the Mt. Everest of concertos? Why was everyone so wedded to the Kreisler cadenzas? Over the

Anne Akiko Meyers



years I have looked at many, including the Schnittke, and wondered how today's leading composers would rewrite them, from their perspective.

John Corigliano is a magnificent composer and possibly the Beethoven of today. I wondered what he would see in them and what new language he would set to the concerto. He composed the gorgeous "Lullaby for Natalie" for the birth of my first daughter back in 2010, and with its beautifully crafted storytelling, I thought it would be fascinating to have him write new cadenzas for the Beethoven Violin Concerto.

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”

The first major hurdle was getting John to agree to write them, but I knew it would be worth the effort! His father was the concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic for more than two decades and he performed the Beethoven Concerto with them. As a result, John was incredibly intimate with it. He understands the violin deeply, as evidenced in his *Red Violin* concerto, which is a masterpiece I have performed frequently. John has a profound love of Beethoven's compositions, including, of course, the concerto. He was grateful for the opportunity and almost sounded relieved to get his cadenzas on paper and out of his head!

They are sheer perfection.

I see them becoming the gold-standard version, as they are powerful and virtuosic,

with *Red Violin* overtones in them. John studied the piano version that Beethoven composed, and was inspired by the timpani included in the first movement. Playing these cadenzas feels like looking through a Beethoven prism, with colors and themes sliding around and glistening in some alternate dimension. They are respectful of Beethoven from an authentically contemporary viewpoint.

I am ecstatic about the new cadenzas and cannot wait to premiere them. It feels like they complete Beethoven's masterpiece, which somehow was always missing that special something in the cadenzas for me.

Technically, they are very challenging. Learning the notes definitely takes time and hard work—interpretation comes later. Studying the score and listening to the piano version are helpful, especially to hear the

timpani woven into the cadenzas that Beethoven wrote. This imparts some insight into the structure and feel of John's cadenzas and helps with interpretation.

There are so many elements that need to be studied in order to help clarify the many layers of intricacy. It's time-consuming yet empowering. I got frazzled many times (if walls could talk . . .) but patience is critical when learning something demanding and new. Slowly stringing things together (no pun intended) and being nice to yourself in the process is helpful!

Every piece of music I learn, read through, or perform helps me become a better player. I feel like every note is a challenge but also an opportunity to decode and impart the music's soul. I worship and kneel before a composer's ability to create music that helps us transcend to another dimension.



WHAT ANNE AKIKO MEYERS PLAYS

"I perform on the 'ex-Vieuxtemps' Guarneri del Gesù, dated 1741, and the 'ex-Rosand' Tourte bow.

"V is very happy with the Larsen Solo 'Il Cannone' strings. I'm obsessed with my case, which is a custom-made beauty by Howard Wiseman. It carries four bows and also has space for a shoulder rest, rosin, and cleaning cloths. It seems to do everything—even make martinis!"