



From the Heart

Rising-star violinist Stephen Waarts marks recording debut with beguiling programme of Schumann and Bartók for Rubicon Classics label

'Waarts, playing commandingly from memory, balanced passages that evolve in the halting dance idiom of the chaconne with rhapsodic stretches that in this gripping account seemed somberly ruminative,' *The New York Times*, review of Bartók's Sonata for Solo Violin.

Heartfelt conviction and deep artistic faith inspired Stephen Waarts to choose the programme for his solo debut disc. The 22-year-old Dutch-American violinist, a prize-winning finalist at the 2015 Queen Elisabeth Competition, was determined to record works by his two favourite composers. His new album for Rubicon Classics, made in company with pianist Gabriele Carcano, is scheduled for release in November 2018. It presents the unusual yet compelling coupling of Schumann's Violin Sonata No.1 in A minor Op.105 and *Three Romances* Op.94 with Bartók's Violin Sonata No.1 and Bartók and Joseph Szigeti's arrangements for violin and piano of *Hungarian Folk Tunes*.

Critical comparisons with the young Menuhin, appreciative reviews from senior journalists and a recent run of high-profile debut dates underline Stephen Waarts' rising-star status. *The New York Times* wrote of his 'gripping account' of Bartók's sonata, commending his 'technically accomplished and musically insightful' artistry, while the *Washington Post* praised his 'uncommon, preternatural sense of tonal colour and lyrical beauty on the instrument'. The violinist's new recording represents the latest milestone in the career of one of today's most eloquent and distinctive emerging talents.

"Schumann and Bartók are two of my favourite composers," notes Stephen Waarts. "My first instinct was to go with this programme. Rubicon's director, Matthew Cosgrove, understood just how close these composers are to my heart. I believe they have much more in common than appears at first sight and that their music reveals things about both men when heard in the same programme."

Waarts' passion for Bartók took hold during his mid-teens and has since deepened with performances of almost all his works for solo violin. The Hungarian composer, he observes, combines a great sense of logic with earthy folk influences and exquisite lyrical melodies. "Bartók is so rewarding, because there's always so much to explore. His First Violin Sonata is one of the most complex pieces I've ever encountered and is such a challenge, but that leads to so many discoveries with every performance."

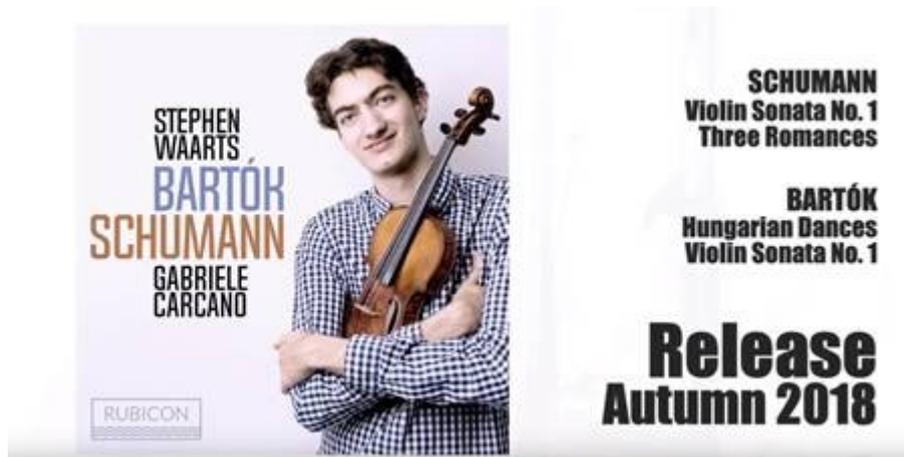
The violinist's teenage explorations of Bartók's music coincided with his studies in mathematics and success in nationwide maths competitions in the United States. His Dutch parents are both scientists, with maths playing a large part in his mother's research, while his siblings are now studying science. "Sometimes that knowledge can be helpful, simply because there are connections between music and mathematics," notes Waarts. "There's definitely part of the brain, used for analytical thinking, that's very useful for performing Bartók. It takes some sort of intelligence to be a classical musician, which is where I find what I learned about mathematics is so useful now."

Schumann's violin writing, observes Stephen Waarts, can be even more complex to play than Bartók's yet it, too, repays generous rewards to the performer. "It gives so much back," he comments. "That's the sign of every great composer. There's something so human about Schumann's music and what it reveals about the composer's inner-self. The works I've chosen for the album are late pieces – the *Three Romances* from 1849 and the First Violin Sonata from 1851. The sonata is filled with drama, an inner turmoil that surges strongly in the first movement, always searching for something that remains just beyond reach. I look forward to returning to the piece many times and discovering how my relationship to it changes over the years."

<https://stephenwaarts.com/>

<https://www.harrisonparrott.com/artists/stephen-waarts>

[Facebook](#) – [Instagram](#)



[Click to see the preview video](#)

For press enquiries, please contact:

Valerie Barber PR
Suite 2

9a St John's Wood High Street
London NW8 7NG

Tel: +44 (0)20 7586 8560

jacqueline@vbpr.co.uk / www.vbpr.co.uk

We at Valerie Barber PR are committed to protecting your personal information and so we are letting you know that we are storing your email address, work telephone numbers and work postal address on our database so that we can keep you up to date with news on our clients. You can ask us to stop using your information at any time by emailing us at info@vbpr.co.uk. You may also request access to the personal data we have about you, request that any incorrect personal data we have about you be rectified, or request that we erase your personal data. If you have any questions about how we care for and use your personal information please let us know us at info@vbpr.co.uk.

Rubicon Classics, UK release 30 November 2018

Stephen Waarts violin | **Gabriele Carcano** piano

Schumann Violin Sonata No. 1

Schumann *Three Romances* Op. 94

Bartok/Szigeti *7 Hungarian Folk Tunes*

Bartok Violin Sonata No. 1

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Born in Fremont, California in 1996, Stephen Waarts was raised in San Francisco's Bay Area. He and his twin brother began playing violin at the age of five, thanks to their elementary school's Suzuki music programme. "I remember being really into it," he recalls. "It made me fall in love with the violin." Further lessons led to studies with renowned pedagogue Li Lin at the San Francisco Conservatory. "He gave me a great technical grounding. I really benefitted from the months of exercises I did with him when I was eight." Young Stephen stayed with Li Lin for seven years while taking occasional lessons from Alexander Barantschik, concertmaster of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra.

In 2011 Waarts enrolled at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia where his principal teacher was Aaron Rosand. Two years later he won first prize at the 2013 Young Concert Artists International Auditions, securing three years of management representation and professional mentoring as a result. "This was when I began performing concerts regularly across the United States and gaining invaluable experience. It came at just the right time for me and was great preparation for the concerts I'm doing now."

Stephen Waarts, also a pianist, has absorbed a wide range of influences and ideas from his many teachers. "I believe that has been a real strength," he notes. "Li Lin focused on technique, Sasha Barantschik encouraged me to play long lines and Aaron Rosand has a special talent for bringing out the best in young players. I also played for many other people at Curtis, for instance, Ida Kavafian and Joseph Silverstein, concertmaster of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Curtis gave me a great education to draw from." Alfred Brendel is among those who have supported and encouraged Waarts during his student years and as an emerging soloist.

Following his graduation from the Curtis Institute in 2016, Stephen Waarts moved to Germany to study at the Kronberg Academy with Mihaela Martin. He has also received advice and coaching from the many outstanding musicians who lead study programmes at the Kronberg Academy, Sir Andrés Schiff and Tabea Zimmermann among them. He will collaborate with Andrés Schiff again during the pianist's 2018-19 residency at the Berlin Konzerthaus and work with Tabea Zimmermann at the Beethoven-Haus in Bonn. "It's a very exciting time for me right now and I hope that people will sense that when they listen to this recording of Schumann and Bartók."

For his debut appearance at the 2017 Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival, Stephen Waarts was awarded the annual event's soloist prize and returned there for its official presentation in September 2018.