

Impromptu in B flat Major Op 142 No 3

Schubert

Although Schubert did not invent the Impromptu form, he is perhaps the most famous exponent of it. The 8 Impromptus written in the last year of his life were one of the first forms by a major composer to successfully break away from the dominance of the piano repertoire by Sonata form. The scope of emotion, lyricism and sonority in all the impromptus is vast despite their relatively simple structure, being mostly in ternary form.

The Impromptu in B flat is a theme and variations and is one of the more virtuosic of the 8 Impromptus. Schubert was clearly fond of this theme as he used it in the entr'acte from the incidental music for the play Rosamunde and the String quartet in A minor D804. The variations themselves are relatively straightforward and are light-hearted in nature, but a central minor variation beautifully contrasts the lighter mood of the other variations with a sombre and at times anguished atmosphere. In letters to friends Schubert said that when he tried to write of love it turns to sorrow and when he writes of sorrow, he can't help but turn to love. Perhaps an example of this is in the subtle transition from the Bb minor variation to the only other variation not in B flat major (Gb Major). The warmth Gb major is a welcome relief from the sorrowful Bb minor harmony of the previous variation.

Dauidsbundlertanze Op 6 (selections)

R. Schumann

Lebhaft (lively)

Innig (Intimate, Heartfelt)

Ungeduldig (Impatient)

Einfach (Simply)

Mit Humour (with Humour)

Wild und Lustig (Wild and boisterous)

Zart und singend (Tender and Singing)

Frisch (Fresh)

Robert Schumann was one of the most fascinating composers of the Romantic generation. He was also a respected critic and essayist who - during a time that saw many lesser salon pieces being churned out by long since forgotten composers - longed for the return to serious musical forms such as sonatas, string quartets and symphonies. However Schumann also embodied the romantic ideals of the time with music that was deeply personal driven by his own fantasies, love, art and literature.

Completed by Oct 1837 the Davidbundlertanze, or Dances of the League of David are a group of dances composed for a fictional league of musical friends/colleagues both real and imagined, alive and dead, who represented Schumann's deepest thoughts and compositional ideals. The dances not only reflect Schumann's two personalities Eusebius and Florestan, Eusebius being the introverted dreamer and Florestan the exuberant and more lively of the two, but also his inner most feelings. The irony in the Davidbundlertanze is the fact that so many of them appear anything but dance-like due to the distortions inflicts on them, some more subtle than others. The opening piece starts with a quote from a mazurka by Clara Schumann and he immediately offers us a dance which distorts the listeners sense of pulse and phrasing. Many of the pieces create this typically Schumannesque character with off-beat accents, hands out of phase and irregular phrase lengths.

The changes in mood and character between each of the pieces is abrupt and although this is perhaps one of the reasons they are not as accessible for audiences as some of his other works, they are a unique insight into the mind of the younger Schumann.

5 Preludes from Books 1 and 2

C. Debussy

Bruyères: *Calme*

La fille aux cheveux de lin: *Très calme et doucement expressif*

Ondine: *Scherzando*

La puerta del Vino: *Mouvement de Habanera*

Feux d'artifice: *Modérément animé*

Debussy's two books of preludes completed in 1907-1910 (book 1) and 1910-1913 (book 2) are miracles of pianistic writing. What is most astonishing is that his musical language seemed to come from another planet fully formed and perfected right from his earliest years. His preludes represent his mature musical language embracing many different compositional styles and influences. Some are fleeting and descriptive in nature while others are more spiritual. Each piece however is perfection and although his writing appears free and impressionistic (a term he loathed) it was the result of the most meticulous care and precision.

"...There is nothing blurred in Debussy's art. His music is finely wrought and highly chiseled. Not since Mozart was every note of a score so interdependent and carefully weighted as in this music" Otto Deri.

Interval

Goodnight Kiwi *from Landscape Preludes*

Victoria Kelly

The following is the composer's own description of this landscape prelude

Everyone of my generation remembers the 'Goodnight Kiwi' - the animation that used to signal the end of television for the night in the days when we only had two channels to choose from.

I remember the rare occasions I was allowed to stay up late enough to see the Goodnight Kiwi carry out his nightly duties. It was always way past my bedtime and therefore overwhelmingly exciting. But I always felt very melancholy afterwards. I would lie awake for hours thinking about the kiwi shutting down the power and climbing up to sleep in the sky. It seemed so final.

As I was composing this piece in 2004, my mother was approaching the end of a long illness and she and I were going through a process of looking through photographs, telling the stories that accompanied them and wondering what lay ahead. It made me remember long summers, lawn-mowers, barbeques, pohutukawa trees at the beach and a time in life that wasn't weighed down with responsibilities or fears for the future. This piece is an emotional landscape that tries to evoke that feeling of nostalgia, presenting childhood memories into which the future begins to creep.

I imagined my mother was setting off on the same journey as the kiwi... wandering through the building, shutting down the power and then climbing up to sleep in the sky. I wrote this piece for her.

- Victoria Kelly

Prelude in B minor Op 32 No 10

S. Rachmaninoff

According to Rachmaninoff, the inspiration for his great B minor prelude came from Arnold Böcklin's painting, *Die Heimkehr* (The Homecoming). The painting depicts a man returning home and is overcome with a flood of memories and emotions. This clearly resonated with Rachmaninoff who was in self-imposed exile from his native Russia. This work is a lament, an inward expression of his grief in knowing he will never return to his homeland. Like many of Rachmaninoff's works, the piece is filled with a sense of melancholy lyricism and carries a deep personal connection to his own life.

Sonata No 23 Op 57 in F minor "Appassionata"

Beethoven

Allegro Assai

Andante con moto

Allegro ma non troppo - Presto

Composed in 1805-1806 the sonata Op 57 comes from Beethoven's so-called Middle period and is one of his most turbulent and tragic piano sonatas. One of the most remarkable aspects of this sonata is Beethoven's economy of form and material. As the pianist and musicologist Charles Rosen has written, "it is as if only the simplest and most unyielding of frames could contain such power".

Many of Beethoven's works can be described as having a sense of triumph over adversity but the *Appassionata's* sense of struggle never really finds resolution. After a sinister opening quietly announces the struggle about to unfold, the first movement gives us a violence and tragedy rarely seen in Beethoven's piano sonatas up to this point. The second movement, a set of variations offers relief from the drama of the first movement. It brings us from darkness to light only to be interrupted by the 3rd movement, a sort of restrained *moto perpetuo*. However, it is not until the presto coda of the last movement that the sonata finally breaks free ending in one of his most destructive and passionate outbursts.

Chris Greenslade

Chris Greenslade was a student of leading pianist Bruce Greenfield and went on to complete his honours degree in performance with Richard Mapp at the Wellington Conservatorium of Music. As well as receiving the NGCNZ Scholarship while at the conservatorium, he was a prize-winner in various competitions and conducted and presented research into the education of musically gifted children. Chris continued his post-graduate studies at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester with Mark Ray, received the RNCM Julius Scholarship and studied chamber music with Dr Christopher Rowland formerly of the Fitzwilliam quartet. As well as regularly appearing in recitals and accompanying in New Zealand, Chris is a sought after teacher. He has been a regional coach for Chamber Music New Zealand's secondary schools chamber music competition and his piano students have regularly had success in both regional and national competitions. Including, winner of the North Shore concerto competition and semi-finalists in every Wallace National Junior Piano Competition since its inception.

As well as teaching piano at Vision College and St Paul's Collegiate Hamilton where he is also the accompanist for the mixed choir, Chris is a keen supporter of music in the community and works with Conductive Education Waikato providing music appreciation classes for children with special needs.