

VARIATIONS IN F MINOR JOSEPH HAYDN

Written in 1793 for Barbara Ployer, for whom Mozart wrote several of his piano concertos, this is undoubtedly one of Haydn's greatest works. Two separate themes, the first in f minor and the second in f major, are alternately treated to variations.

The extended coda begins like the first theme, but develops into an improvisatory fantasia.

FANTASIE OP17 ROBERT SCHUMANN

This work was begun in 1835 as a Grand Sonata with its three movements entitled Ruins, Trophies and Palms. The profits from the composition were intended to go to a projected Beethoven monument. However, when it was finally published in 1839 as Fantasie in C, it was dedicated to Franz Liszt.

Schumann wrote to a friend in 1839 that he thought the first movement was the finest thing he had written. But perhaps more revealingly, in 1838 he wrote to Clara Wieck, his bride-to-be "the first movement of the work is perhaps the most passionate of all I have composed - a deep yearning for you".

The score is headed with a quotation from the poet Schlegel:

Through all the tones of Earth's many-hued dream, one soft-drawn note may be heard by him who listens in secret.

INTERVAL

BENEDICTION DE DIEU DANS LA SOLITUDE FRANZ LISZT

In the 1840's Liszt worked for several years on a set of pieces called Poetic and Religious Harmonies inspired by the poetry of Lamartine. The greatest pianist of his age, Liszt was accorded "rock star" status and audiences clamoured to hear his virtuoso etudes and transcriptions, but this is a deeply felt and meditative piece.

The poem that inspired the Bénédiction begins
Whence comes, o God, this peace which inundates me?
Whence comes this faith which surrounds my heart?...
It seems that a century and a world have passed,
And that separated from them by an immense abyss,
A new man is born in me and starts anew.

SONATA IN A FLAT MAJOR OP110 LUDVIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Moderato cantabile molto espressivo

Allegro molto

Adagio ma non troppo - Allegro ma non troppo

Beethoven's thirty two piano sonatas stand alongside Bach's 48 Preludes and Fugues as the greatest works written for a keyboard. And the final three sonatas, Op109, 110 and 111 are the summation of the composer's output in this form.

The Sonata in A flat is characterised by the lyricism and thoughtfulness of the writing, the haunting beauty of the recitative and aria, and the nobility of the fugue which ends the work.