

Cinq Fantaisies



*Mozart Beethoven
Schumann Chopin
Scriabine*

Georges Bériachvili, piano

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|---|---|---|--------|
| 1 | Mozart (1756-1791) | <i>Fantaisie en ré mineur K. 397</i> | 06m34s |
| 2 | Beethoven (1770-1827) | <i>Fantaisie en sol mineur / si Majeur op. 77</i> | 09m40s |
| | Schumann (1810-1856) | <i>Fantaisie en do Majeur op. 17</i> | |
| 3 | <i>Durchaus phantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen</i> | | 12m49s |
| 4 | <i>Massig. Durchaus energisch</i> | | 07m21s |
| 5 | <i>Langsam getragen. Durchweg leise zu halten</i> | | 10m42s |
| 6 | Chopin (1810-1849) | <i>Fantaisie en fa mineur op. 49</i> | 12m35s |
| 7 | Scriabine (1872-1915) | <i>Fantaisie en si mineur op. 28</i> | 09m32s |

durée totale
70 mn



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Piano Steinway D

En couverture, sculpture de Roland Kandel

This CD is a studio recording of a recital I gave several times in 2012, a programme which has become part of my permanent repertoire since then. It brings together five masterpieces of the "great era" of piano music from Viennese classicism to the end of the romantic period. In spite of their diversity, these compositions share the basic features of the Fantasy for solo instrument : freedom in the development of ideas, creative research, quasi-improvised moments, immediacy of musical expression. Drifting away from the functional musical genres of the time, they all tend towards the vital core of the human soul. Through the creations of the European musical genius, I meant this recital to tell of the ineradicable aspiration of humankind towards the infinite, towards what lies beyond our human condition, towards spiritual uplifting.

The *Fantasy in D minor K. 397* is the third of Mozart's four piano Fantasies. It was probably written in 1782 and has inherited the pattern of Carl Philip Emmanuel Bach's Fantasies, but at the same time, with its throbbing drama, its keenness of individual expression, it heralds in the music of the romantic century.

The piece consists of two contrasting parts, following a dark and meditative introduction. The first part, *Adagio*, in both its themes - the former despondent and ethereal, the latter anxious and breathless - entrusts us with authentic gems of Mozartian inspiration. After the cloudy atmosphere of this first section, the second part, a graceful *Allegretto*, brings a more relaxed and luminous mood.

The *Fantasy in D minor* has not reached us in a state of completion. The last eight bars of the *Allegretto* were most probably added by August Eberhard Müller (1767-1817), an admirer of Mozart and disciple of Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach, one of Johann Sebastian's sons.

The *Fantasy op. 77* (1809), undeservedly rare in concert programmes, is one of a kind among Beethoven's pieces. According to the testimony of Carl Czerny, it gives us a genuine idea of what the master's famous improvisations must have sounded like, improvisations that won him as great a fame as his written works. After the fashion of Mozart's *Fantasy*, Beethoven's consists of two parts. The first part, properly improvisational, sets to music the wanderings of a deep and impassioned reflection. The free development of musical ideas combines two different lines of evolution. On the one hand, in the slow passages we can witness the tentative search for a theme (the stubbornly repeated notes...) and on the other hand, there is a rising

tension in the brisk passages, getting ever more restless and reaching a climax in the deeply moving musical squall of the last page.

The beginning of the second part, when the long-sought theme at last emerges, sounds like a liberation. Six variations that follow a theme full of subdued bliss then lead the way towards jubilation, all of which develops a frequently recurring "scenario" in Beethoven's works : from despondency to triumphant joy.

Schumann's *Fantasy in C major op. 17* (1836, revised in 1839), a work emblematic of German romanticism, is considered as one of the most important contributions of this composer as well as one of the highlights of his first creative period. This vast composition, which lasts about thirty minutes, consists of three movements. The first one was initially designed as a separate piece, entitled *Ruins*. Brimming over with passion, it bears the mark of Schumann's heartbroken separation from Clara Wieck, his wife-to-be. The prohibition of any relationship, imposed by Clara's father, was experienced by Schumann as an existential challenge. "I am stricken to the very roots of my life", Schumann wrote to Clara (in a letter dated 18 September 1837). "This is only a long cry of love to you", Schumann wrote in another letter. And yet his music takes on a more universal purport, going straight to the roots of human life. Is this, among others, the meaning of Fr. Schlegel's quatrain, which Schumann used as an epigraph ?

*Resounding through all the notes
In the earth's colorful dream
There sounds a faint long-drawn note
For the one who listens in secret.*

The second and third movements were added by Schumann somewhat later, at the time of the fund-raising for the Beethoven monument in Bonn. The *Fantasy* contains several allusions to his music : the first movement features a phrase from the song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* (op. 98), the third movement uses themes probably inspired by the *Arietta* of his last sonata or by *Adagio* of the *Fifth Concerto*.

The second movement, a powerful triumphal march, is one of a number of Schumann's

triumphal marches (the finales of the *Carnaval* op. 9, of the *Symphonic Studies* op. 13...) connected with the idea of the *Davidsbund*, a fictitious society invented by the composer, which fought for progress in art.

On the contrary, the third movement, a poignant song of consolation and hope, is the unchallenged reign of Eusebius, a dreamy and inward-looking character from Schumann's imaginary universe, twin brother to the hot-headed Florestan whose spirit gave impetus to the fiery moments of the first movement.

Chopin completed his *Fantasy in F minor op. 49* towards the end of 1841. After the sonatas in B-flat minor and in B minor, this is probably his most complex and sophisticated work. Its highly individual form features a long prologue and a main part that includes a slow section in the middle. The piece displays quite a broad assortment of musical ideas and emotions, ranging from brooding agitation to flights of lyricism, from contemplation to heroic vigour. Prologue, main part and central section all seem to be built with different materials. However, they are connected by a number of subtle linking motifs that tie them all into an indissoluble entity. Chopin here displays a mastery of composition rarely achieved in the history of music.

Chopin's *Fantasy* is akin to his Ballades, but, unlike the latter, it does not tell a story without words. It is rather a depiction of the inner life of a romantic hero, a noble soul wandering from the abyss to the heights of human existence. The two conclusive chords sound like an "Amen!" that celebrates the hero's destiny.

Scriabin's *Fantasy in B minor op. 28* (1900) is definitely one of the most beautiful achievements of his creative life. This majestic composition, in extremely dense pianistic writing, epitomizes the cardinal points of his work : the enthusiasm, the dreams, the ecstatic soaring, the greatness of mankind's creative drive. Much the same as in several other creations of this composer, one can here perceive a Nietzschean resonance (Scriabin had even started working on an operatic adaptation of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, which he gave up later on).

The *Fantasy in B minor* is the only piece in this recording that closely follows the classical pattern of the sonata form, with a highly developed coda. The piece rests on three themes whose evolution makes the structure both dynamic and organic. The most striking developments are the transformations of the second theme : from the embodiment of a sublime dream in its

first appearance, it turns into an awe-inspiring hymn at the re-entry, and finally resurfaces *pianissimo* in the coda, changed into an inspirational flight that will lead to the vehement return of the first theme, showering with arpeggios the whole range of the keyboard.

Like the other four composers in this programme, Scriabin represents a landmark not only in the history of music but also in the history of mankind. In a way, he can even be said to go further than the others, building a monument to the most daring flights of fancy of the human mind.

Georges Bériachvili

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Excerpts from an interview with the crew of the Festival du Château de Martigny (Saône-et-Loire, Burgundy) on the occasion of a recital given on August 8th 2013.

Interviewer : Pierre Lavaud.

What were the major steps of your training ?

- My career has followed a very tortuous path. I am essentially self-taught. I started studying the piano at the normal age or so (about seven I believe), but this only lasted three or four years. I then rebelled and gave it up. I was about fourteen when I had a sudden urge to take it up again. After falling such a long way behind, it was a winding road to make it up, so that I only "officially" reintegrated the musical career at the age of twenty-three, when I joined the National Conservatory of Tbilisi in the theory and musicology class, after graduating as an engineer in organic chemistry. All the while, I had been studying the piano most ardently and taking classes with many piano teachers, but it still took me a long time to complete my training and get started on a regular career as a concert pianist.

Do you have a master ?

- I don't. And yet one of my teachers has played a crucial role in my training, from a mainly technical standpoint. I am referring to Etheri Djakeli, a representative of the Marie Jaëll school. Our appointments were few and far between and I cannot be considered as one of her "real" pupils in the sense of a Jaëll school descendant. What she helped me achieve is mostly a very precise awareness of the pianistic apparatus in keeping with the sound and expression results of the playing.



How do you currently manage your work schedule ?

- Actually, it is difficult to manage. I share my time between the piano, theoretical research and teaching, and I sometimes work far more than recommended by occupational medicine. However, as I love all these activities, it can't be deleterious, quite the reverse possibly. I spend on average three or four hours a day at the piano.

How do you choose your concert programmes ?

- The consistency of the programme is to me a key element. (...) this does not necessarily mean thematic, chronological or stylistic consistency. I invite my audience to share with me a musical trip that must needs have a kind of dramatic composition. And this does not mean a mere sightseeing tour, but a trip that pertains to the sacred. I would like it to be striking... And if I manage to achieve that ambition, would it be only partially, then my performance is a success and I am very happy.

Georges Bériachvili was awarded the Prix de Musique Simone and Cino del Duca in 2012, a musical prize given by the Beaux-Arts Academy of the Institut de France.

English translation : Pierre Bourhis