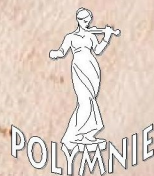


*Weber, Schubert, Schumann, Chopin,
Tchaïkovski, Scriabine, Grieg, Liszt*



Invitation à la danse

Georges Bériachvili, piano

Carl Maria von Weber
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Georges Bériachvili, piano

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Dancing is one of the main sources from which music draws its forms, its codes, its motions, its inspiration. The recital recorded on this CD is a presentation of the universe of imaginary dancing, dreamt up and metamorphosed by the great composers of the XIXth century. The programme conjures up a diversity of countries and environments through pieces of different format and atmosphere, from the most concise to the most expansive, from the most intimate to the most brilliant, from the most simple to the most elaborate: here are just a few strokes to sketch the outline of an inexhaustible theme.

Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826) *Invitation to the Dance* op. 65

Invitation to the Dance ("Aufforderung zum Tanze") is one of the most famous pieces by Weber. From a historical standpoint, this is the earliest concert waltz, the beginning of a beautiful lineage, in which Chopin's waltzes must be given pride of place. The piece was composed in 1819 and dedicated to the composer's wife, Caroline. Weber has imagined a whole scenario that depicts, measure by measure, a dramatic development of the introduction and the coda:

Bars 1-5: First appearance of the dances; 5-9: The lady's evasive reply; 9-13: His pressing invitation; 13-16: Her consent; 17-19: He begins conversation; 19-21: Her reply; 21-23: He speaks with greater warmth; 23-25: The sympathetic agreement; 25-27: Addresses her with regard to the dance; 27-29: Her answer; 29-35: They take their places and wait for the commencement of the dance.

The dance

Ending: his thanks, her reply, and their retirement.

In the XIXth century, the work was widely popularised by Berlioz's orchestral arrangement. It has also received numerous choreographic adaptations. Yet, the *Invitation to the Dance* is first and foremost a brilliant piano piece, in which virtuosity is wholly subservient to the poetic imagery, in praise of the vitality, ardour and elegance of the waltz.

Franz Schubert (1797-1828) *Hungarian Melody D. 817*

One day in the summer of 1824, Schubert is said to have heard a young maidservant singing a tune in Count Esterhazy's kitchen. The composer immediately noted down the melody and used it later in the last movement of his *Divertissement à la hongroise* op. 54 for four hands. However, on this theme, he also wrote another, shorter piece for two hands, *Hungarian Melody*, which was only rediscovered and published in 1928.

In Schubert's time, Hungarian and Gipsy music were not usually differentiated. Schubert, according to various testimonies, was very keen on that Hungarian/Gipsy style. Aren't the nostalgia and distant calls in this *Hungarian Melody* intimately in character with the nomadic and freewheeling life that Schubert himself used to lead?

Robert Schumann (1810-1856) *Papillons* op. 2

This work, published in early 1832, is the first piece by Schumann where his artistic character asserts itself in its full individuality. The composition is made of a sequence of twelve miniatures following a brief introduction. It draws its inspiration from the novel *Flegeljahre* ("The Awkward Age"), by Jean Paul, one of Schumann's favourite writers. The music is based on the plot of the final scene of the novel, a fancy-dress ball that brings together the twin brothers Walt and Vult—the one an ingenuous dreamer, the other impulsive and straightforward—both of them in love with the same young girl, Wina. Various dances and episodes take place. The young characters dance about and become ecstatic, trade masks, make confessions and rebel. The last piece features the *Grossvateranzug*, a German song from the XVIIth century, which was traditionally used to bring parties to a close. The clock in the tower rings six in the morning (a high A is sounded six times), the music drifts away...

Despite the fact that Schumann found it hard for the listener to follow the musical narrative without being aware of the plot, he decided not to leave any clues in the score. He later stated that he had "underlaid the text to the music, and not the reverse". The historians that have attempted to retrace the accurate story-line from the book have never fully agreed on the correspondences between text and music. On the other hand, a purely musical dramatic atmosphere ties together the pieces of *Papillons* by multiple threads. By exasperating contrasts, deepening musical characters, progressively expanding the pieces, repeating the motifs, these whimsical, nostalgic, gracious or impassioned pages are turned into a consistent work of art.

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849) *Mazurka in A minor op. 17 no. 4*

This piece, composed in 1833, is one of the most intimate and one of the most remarkable of the sixty-odd mazurkas written by Chopin. In a manner yet rare for the young composer, it is both supremely fragile and abysmally sad. Beyond its deceitful simplicity is concealed a huge wealth of musical characters. The main theme seamlessly welds together motifs that convey laments and dreams, passion and resignation, moaning and revolt... Dancing is reduced to a few restless rhythms, as well as the central episode—the dream of a rural idyll.

Tarantella in A-flat major op. 43

Chopin's *Tarantella*, published in 1841, is one of the very few forays of our composer outside the scope of his favourite dances (mazurkas, waltzes, polonaises) and also beyond the field of his usual style. This Italian folk dance, popularised by Rossini, probably did not provide Chopin with enough space to deploy his lyricism, his exquisite sensibility or his heroic pathos. The result is a kind of study in virtuosity, dense, imaginative and individual, written in almost too sophisticated style. We can here quote a witty review by Schumann: "This is in Chopin's most extravagant manner; we see before us the dancer, whirling as if possessed, until our senses seem to reel. To be sure, nobody could call this music lovely, but we willingly forgive the master for his wild fantasy."

Pyotr Tchaikovsky *Sentimental Waltz op. 51 no. 6*

The waltz was a dance particularly dear to the heart of Tchaikovsky. His ballets, operas, romances, symphonies and other instrumental works are interspersed with waltzes brimming with melodic inspiration. The *Sentimental Waltz*, included in the six-piece collection op. 51 (1882), is one of his most dreamlike and intimate pages.

Russian Dance op. 40 no. 10

The *Russian Dance* was composed in 1877, as a supplementary piece to the 3rd act of *Swan Lake*. The piano version was later included in the collection *12 Pieces of Medium Difficulty* op. 40, on which the composer worked during year 1878. The first part of the piece is sweet and graceful in a typically Russian manner. There follows in the second part a frantic dance whose boldness is every bit as much in the national character.

Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915) *Mazurka in C-sharp minor op. 3 No. 6*

The *Ten Mazurkas* op. 3, composed between 1888 and 1890, belong to the works from Scriabin's early youth, when he was strongly influenced by Chopin. However, the individual character of the composer is already impetuously asserting itself. The sixth piece in the collection is a striking example of this. Highly original, it brings to mind the image of an almost otherworldly dance, a kind of apparition, at times fragile and fleeting, at times melancholy.

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907) *Grandmother's Minuet op. 68 no. 2*

The *Grandmother's minuet* (1898) is taken from the ninth of ten books of Grieg's *Lyric Pieces*. The 66 *Lyric Pieces* make up a kind of diary of the composer, which he dutifully kept nearly all along his career. This minuet—a dance long since relegated to the past—charms us by its good-natured humour, its simplicity and its fleeting nordic coolness.

Franz Liszt (1811-1886) *Spanish Rhapsody S. 254*

The *Spanish Rhapsody* was composed by Liszt in 1863. The composer, at the height of his artistic skills, here combines his transcendental virtuosity with most elaborate writing and musical form. The composition of this dramatic piece recalls that of his concertos and symphonic poems, in which the four movements of the symphonic cycle are condensed into a single movement. The work starts with an awe-inspiring introduction in which the arpeggios, like fireworks, cover the whole span of the keyboard. Then the composer strings together three sections, each one beginning with a theme followed by a cycle of variations. The first and second themes are none other than the *Folia* (or “Faronel's Ground”) and the *Aragonese Jota*, very famous Spanish dances that we can find in the works of numerous composers. The third, more melodic theme, forms the central episode, a brief respite before the ample finale that will take up again and develop all three themes in a dazzling swirl of music. The climax is reached at the emphatic return of the *Folia* that leads on to a thundering coda.

Georges Bériachvili

English translation by Pierre Bourhis

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