**ABSTRACT** 

Title of Dissertation: "UNITY THROUGH VARIETY:

EXPLORING THE CYCLIC PRINCIPLE IN SELECTED WORKS FOR PIANO"

Michael John Angelucci, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2017

Dissertation Directed By: Professor Bradford Gowen

School of Music

The term 'cyclic' is a fairly recent addition to the modern musical lexicon.

Coined by Vincent d'Indy in the early twentieth century, it is applied (often retroactively) to compositions exhibiting a recurring theme or structural device. Excluding genres that by design necessitate reiteration, such as sonata-allegro, rondo, and variation forms, this may involve any number of processes ranging from large-scale formal repetition to cyclic integration on a micro level. As a result, the concept of cyclicism is better understood within the context of a larger organizing principle, one that extends beyond the confines of a singular form or technique.

Among the more common procedures is **cyclic form**, which features the return of a primary theme in a later section or movement of a work. Originating with the Renaissance cyclic mass, the form fell largely out of fashion in the Baroque and Classical eras, residing outside the musical mainstream until the instrumental works of Beethoven.

In the nineteenth century, composers expanded the boundaries of cyclical construction by treating melodic material to an array of complex metamorphoses. Commonly referred to as **thematic transformation**, the "new" melody assumes an independent character apart from its parent theme, and may be assigned a programmatic or dramatic role (e.g., the *idée fixe* in Berlioz' *Symphonie fantastique*). A hybrid of these methods is the use of **reiterative motives** — melodic, harmonic, and/or rhythmic cells, often originating from the same source material — that provide thematic and structural cohesion. Together, these processes form a principle of cyclic unity found in a wide variety of genres and styles, a testament to its influence on the repertory both past and present.

Over the course of three recitals, this performance dissertation explored how the cyclic principle is applied in selected solo, chamber, and concerto works from Ludwig van Beethoven to John Corigliano. All three recitals were held in Gildenhorn Recital Hall, part of the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at the University of Maryland—College Park, MD. Live compact disc recordings of all three recitals are housed in the Digital Repository at the University of Maryland (DRUM).

# UNITY THROUGH VARIETY: EXPLORING THE CYCLIC PRINCIPLE IN SELECTED WORKS FOR PIANO

by

# Michael John Angelucci

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

2017

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2017

# DEDICATION

To my parents, John and Patricia Angelucci, for their unwavering love and support.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank all the members of my dissertation committee for their involvement and participation. Most especially, I want to acknowledge my teacher, Bradford Gowen, for his exceptional mentorship throughout the course of my studies here at the University of Maryland. The successful completion of this project would not have been possible without his wisdom and guidance. I consider myself extremely privileged to have worked with such an outstanding artist-teacher from whom I learned so much.

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# PROGRAM: Dissertation Recital #1

October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015, 8 o'clock PM Gildenhorn Recital Hall at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center University of Maryland—College Park, MD

Michael Angelucci, piano

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840 — 1893)

Dumka — Rustic Russian Scene, Op. 59

**Robert Schumann (1810 — 1856)** 

Papillons, Op. 2

Claude Debussy (1862 — 1918)

L'Isle joyeuse

—— INTERMISSION ——

## **Modest Mussorgsky (1839 — 1881)**

Pictures from an Exhibition

Promenade

1. Gnomus

Promenade

2. Il vecchio castello

Promenade

- 3. Les Tuileries (Dispute d'enfants après jeux)
- 4. Bydło

Promenade

- 5. Ballet of unhatched chicks
- 6. "Samuel" Goldenberg und "Schmuÿle"

Promenade

- 7. Limoges. Le marché (La grande nouvelle)
- 8. Catacombae (Sepulcrum romanum)

Cum mortuis in lingua mortua

- 9. Hut on hen's legs (Baba-Yaga)
- 10. The Great Gate of Kiev

## RECORDING TRACK LISTING: Dissertation Recital #1 — CD 1

## Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840 — 1893) Dumka — Rustic Russian Scene, Op. 59 [TRACK 1, CD 1] 8'49" **Robert Schumann (1810 — 1856)** Papillons, Op. 2 [TRACK 2, CD 1] 15'09" Claude Debussy (1862 — 1918) L'Isle joyeuse [TRACK 3, CD 1] 6'45" **Modest Mussorgsky (1839 — 1881)** Pictures from an Exhibition [TRACK 4, CD 1] Promenade 1'19" [TRACK 5, CD 1] Gnomus 2'44" [TRACK 6, CD 1] Promenade 0'47" [TRACK 7, CD 1] Il vecchio castello 4'09" [TRACK 8, CD 1] Promenade 0'26" [TRACK 9, CD 1] Les Tuileries (Dispute d'enfants après jeux) 0'56" [TRACK 10, CD 1] Bydło 3'00" [TRACK 11, CD 1] Promenade 0'42" [TRACK 12, CD 1] Ballet of unhatched chicks 1'09" [TRACK 13, CD 1] "Samuel" Goldenberg und "Schmuÿle" 2'36" [TRACK 14, CD 1] Promenade 1'17" [TRACK 15, CD 1] Limoges. Le marché (La grande nouvelle) 1'23" [TRACK 16, CD 1] Catacombae (Sepulcrum romanum) 2'07" [TRACK 17, CD 1] Cum mortuis in lingua mortua 2'08" [TRACK 18, CD 1] Hut on hen's legs (Baba-Yaga) 3'17" [TRACK 19, CD 1] The Great Gate of Kiev 5'12"

### Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840 — 1893)

Dumka — Rustic Russian Scene, Op. 59

By the 1880s, Tchaikovsky's reputation had approached celebrity status. Already well regarded in the West, a string of successful compositions and conducting engagements in Russia garnered Tchaikovsky the much-needed respect of his countrymen, which in turn provided the composer with greater access to influential social and professional strata. Yet the reclusive Tchaikovsky, prone to occasional bouts of drinking and depression, soon began to feel stifled by the increased scrutiny of his lifestyle. In January of 1885, he fled the hectic bustle of Moscow for Maidanovo, a small village in the Russian countryside near Klin. Writing to his long-time patroness Nadezhda von Meck, Tchaikovsky described the "solitude, peace, and freedom" he found in his new surroundings:

"I love our Russian countryside more than any other. It's a marvelous day; sunny, the snow is glistening like myriads of diamonds ... my window gives me a view right into the distance. It's wonderful and spacious, you can breathe properly in these immense horizons!"<sup>2</sup>

The change of scenery proved stimulating. Tchaikovsky was able to finish a number of important compositions, including his *Manfred* Symphony, the opera *Cherevichki*, and a significant work for solo piano, the *Dumka* — *Rustic Russian Scene*.

The *Dumka* arose out of a commission from the French publisher Felix Mackar, who sought to provide Parisian audiences with something of Russian flavor.<sup>3</sup>

Tchaikovsky dedicated it to the virtuoso pianist Antoine François Marmontel,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Alexandra Orlova, *Tchaikovsky: A Self-Portrait*, trans. R.M. Davison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 277.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ibid., 279.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> David Brown, *The Final Years, 1885-1893*, vol. 4 of *Tchaikovsky* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991), 409.

demonstrating his confidence in the work as a true concert piece. Certainly the splashy passagework and intensely emotive qualities require a sophisticated hand, recalling on some level Balakirev's *Islamey*, a work Tchaikovsky probably heard as early as 1869.<sup>4</sup> The unusual title comes out of literary tradition; *dumka* is the diminutive form for *duma*, a Ukranian folk ballad. In many ways, the *Dumka* is Tchaikovsky's personal 'ballade,' contrasting his enormous professional successes against a lifetime of personal conflicts from which he constantly sought refuge.

The *Dumka* opens with a stoic, somber melody in C minor (Ex. 1). After its initial rendering, this theme is immediately repeated in the tenor register against a wandering accompanimental figure in the right hand. The prevailing melancholy is then dispersed by way of an exuberant *con anima* section featuring a frolicking folk dance, evoking the 'rustic' atmosphere alluded to in the work's subtitle. Marked *giocoso*, this material is built around a simple harmonic and rhythmic motive that proceeds to undergo near continuous transformations (Ex. 2). A brilliant and virtuosic cadenza is followed by additional variations of the aforementioned motive, such as a cleverly disguised inversion within the bass line in measure ninety-eight (Ex. 3). However, the desolation of the introduction is not forgotten as the pensive opening resurfaces in the final pages, more resigned and despondent than before.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> David Brown, "Balakirev, Tchaikovsky and Nationalism," Music & Letters 42, no. 3 (July 1961): 229.



Ex. 1: Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Dumka — Rustic Russian Scene, Op. 59 (mm. 1–4)



Ex. 2: Tchaikovsky, Dumka (mm. 64–65)



Ex. 3: Tchaikovsky, *Dumka* (m. 98)

Papillons, Op. 2

From a pianist's perspective, Robert Schumann is perhaps best remembered for his numerous cycles of miniatures, many of them brimming with hidden meanings attributed to various extra-musical stimuli. *Papillons* ("Butterflies") is the first of Schumann's published masterpieces connected with a literary source. The son of a prominent book merchant. Schumann developed a love for the written word at an early age. Among Schumann's favorite authors was Johann Paul Friedrich Richter, more commonly known by his pen name "Jean Paul." The literary spark for *Papillons* was the penultimate chapter of Jean Paul's novel Flegeljahre ("Adolescent Years"), a book Schumann described as "like the Bible in kind." Schumann drew inspiration from the masquerade scene, where recently reunited brothers Walt and Vult vie for the affections of Wina, the daughter of a prominent general. Schumann's choice of title is most significant. The butterfly — a creature that develops into something more elevated and beautiful — appears often in Jean Paul's works, typically representing the soul's attainment of heaven.<sup>6</sup> This symbol of metamorphosis had a profound impact on Schumann, who used Jean Paul as a muse to transform their shared ideals into musical reality.

*Papillons* is a set of twelve dance portraits, consisting mainly of waltzes intertwined with the occasional polonaise. Schumann began working on the cycle in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> John Daverio, *Robert Schumann: Herald of A "New Poetic Age"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 81.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Eric Jensen, "Explicating Jean Paul: Robert Schumann's Program for *Papillons*, Op. 2," *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 22, no. 2 (1998): 135.

1829, though certain movements incorporate material from earlier compositions.<sup>7</sup> As its title suggests, the music is whimsical and prone to unpredictable changes (not unlike the flight of butterflies). Rapid alterations in tempi, articulation, texture, and mood are commonplace. Several pieces consist of only a handful of measures. In this way, Schumann effectively mimics Jean Paul's aphoristic writing style, which tends to feature short, pithy statements of contradictory feeling and content.<sup>8</sup> In these pages we also witness the personification of Schumann's contrasting alter-egos: the poetic, gentle Eusebius and the tempestuous Florestan. The presence of these additional 'characters' further emphasize the juxtaposition of musical opposites in *Papillons*, while also reflecting the inherent duality of Schumann's volatile and complex personality.

In his personal copy of *Flegeljahre*, Schumann left notes in the margins indicating which movements of *Papillons* correspond to events from the masquerade. The second piece, for example, finds Walt stumbling accidentally into a crowded room, "figures following one another and zigzagging." The music follows in stride as the pianist zips through passages of rapid interlocking sixteenth-notes and a disorienting (and completely unprepared) modulation from D major into E-flat major. Schumann's fascination with a bizarre costume in the story — a giant boot "sliding around and dressed in itself" — is the focus of No. 3, complete with stunted octaves and a canonic passage metaphorically "dressing" the music in its own thematic material. The sixth movement depicts Vult

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Peter Ostwald, *Schumann: The Inner Voices of A Musical Genius* (Lebanon, NH: Northeastern University Press, 2010), 57.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Jensen, "Explicating Jean Paul," 133-134.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

mocking his brother's graceless struggles on the dance floor through off-beat accents and clumsy bass notes. Although many of Schumann's colleagues admired his originality, others were perplexed by the music's fragmentary nature. Friedrich Wieck, Schumann's long-time piano instructor (and eventual father-in-law), found *Papillons* odd and "American" sounding. In the music journal *Caecilia*, critic Gottfried Weber referred to the piece as "thought splinters." Schumann's personal diary reveals how a private performance in 1832 was poorly received by the guests, many of whom seemed "incapable of grasping the rapid alteration [of the pieces] ..." 13

Despite its impetuosity, *Papillons* is far from being structureless. Schumann employs a series of important cyclic procedures linking the disparate movements together. Among his more ingenious devices is a tonal transformation of the primary waltz theme, which incorporates all seven pitches of the musical alphabet (Ex. 4). Subsequent movements then proceed to use each pitch, or its enharmonic equivalent, as a key center, thus forming a tonic tether that connects back to this idea. The prevailing sense of tonal ambiguity is further offset by strategically placed movements in D major or minor, thereby reinforcing D as the cycle's overall key center. *Papillons* is also replete with references to earlier materials. The most significant instance occurs in the Finale, where the main waltz theme is merged together with the *Grossvatertanz* ("Grandfather's Dance"), a centuries-old folk tune traditionally played at the conclusion of German

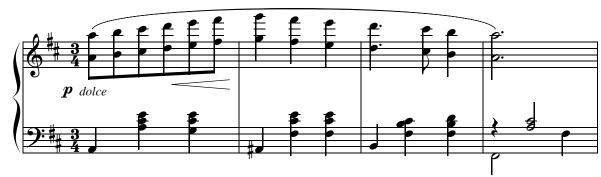
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Ostwald, Schumann: Inner Voices, 89.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Daverio, Robert Schumann, 88.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Peter Kaminsky, "Principles of Formal Structure in Schumann's Early Piano Cycles." *Music Theory Spectrum* 11, no. 2 (Autumn 1989): 209.

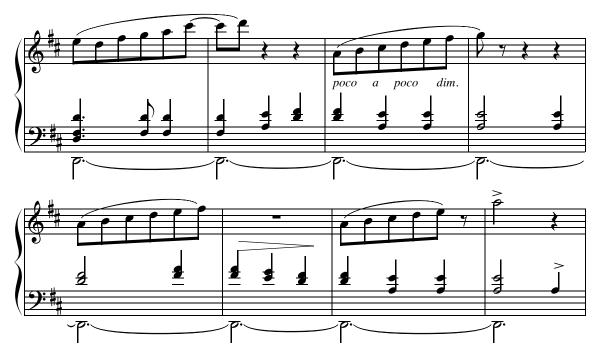
weddings (Ex. 5). Here Schumann employs one final musical transference: both themes, now intertwined, become increasingly fractured and distant, literally drawing down the activity one note at a time (Ex. 6). The approach of dawn is heralded by the gentle chiming of clock bells, prefacing a delicate coda that brings the whole affair to an intimate close.



Ex. 4: Robert Schumann, Papillons, Op. 2, No. 1 (mm. 1–4)



Ex. 5: Schumann, Papillons, No. 12 (mm. 1-4)



**Ex. 6**: Schumann, *Papillons*, No. 12 (mm. 51–58)

#### Claude Debussy (1862 — 1918)

L'Isle joyeuse

Claude Debussy's piano oeuvre belongs to a rich heritage of keyboard literature stretching all the way back to the French *clavecin* school. Like his predecessors, many of Debussy's works bear equally colorful titles alluding to their origins. *L'Isle joyeuse* ("The joyous island") is frequently associated with the painting *L'embarquement pour Cythère* by Antoine Watteau, an artist of the *fête galante* who Debussy greatly admired. However, Debussy's sojourn to the Isle of Jersey in June of 1904 may also have influenced the piece. It was here the composer carried on an illicit affair with Emma Bardac, the former mistress of Gabriel Fauré who eventually became Debussy's second wife (he was still married at the time). Debussy completed the work later that summer.

L'Isle joyeuse is among Debussy's most frequently played compositions. It is also his most virtuosic work for the piano, composed in a brilliant style akin to that of Liszt and Ravel. Debussy himself commented on the high degree of pianism it demands, noting that he lacked "enough fingers to play it." Unlike the typical display piece, the difficulties are not relegated simply to untangling knotty technical passages (though there are plenty), or tearing through the pages at breakneck speed. L'Isle joyeuse is a study of control, challenging the pianist to negotiate a wide palette of tonal, rhythmic, and textural complexities. "Air and lightness and grace," qualities attributed to Watteau's paintings by the art historian Michael Levey, are vital to a successful performance as evidenced by

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Claude Debussy, *L'Isle joyeuse*, facsimile edition with introduction by Denis Herlin (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2011), XIII.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1996), 106.

the preponderance of hushed dynamic markings, further underscored by Debussy's instructions of *léger et rythmé* ("light and rhythmic"). The simmering undercurrent of energy must be held in check until the exciting finale, which mirrors the brilliance and power of Debussy's iconic orchestral fantasy, *La Mer*.

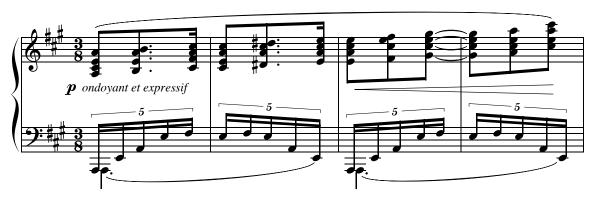
The inherent exuberance of L'Isle joyeuse is contained by a trio of related motives, providing a tightly-knit structure as they percolate throughout. The first subject emerges in the opening measures — a quiet, sustained trill reminiscent of bird calls over a distant shoreline (Ex. 7). This introduces an important pitch (D#) that is prominently featured throughout the piece. After a short cadenza, the trill gives way to a bright, dance-like melody in A Lydian. The aforementioned D# assumes an audible role, peppering the tune with a distinct air of modal exoticism (Ex 8). A rhapsodic lyrical theme, vaguely reminiscent of lydian and pentatonic scales, appears at the midpoint of the work. Marked *ondoyant* ("undulating"), this third motive is an evocation of the sea. The unequal groupings of five against three, coupled with stressed offbeats, creates a forward sensation of rolling waves as they pass from phrase to phrase (Ex. 9). Following a complex development that tosses these motives about in various rhythmic and harmonic transformations, a sustained build-up ushers in a climax of the lyrical theme as it bursts forth in full-throated ecstasy, achieving its long-awaited apotheosis. The trill motive returns in the final moments, solidifying a grand musical arch before a sweeping plunge back down the keyboard concludes the journey with an exultant splash.



Ex. 7: Claude Debussy, L'Isle joyeuse (m. 1)



Ex. 8: Debussy, L'Isle joyeuse (m. 9)



Ex. 9: Debussy, L'Isle joyeuse (mm. 67–70)

### **Modest Mussorgsky (1839 — 1881)**

Pictures from an Exhibition

Like many great works of art, the genesis for *Pictures from an Exhibition* arose out of tragedy. In 1873, the artist and architect Victor Hartmann died suddenly of an aneurism at age thirty-nine. His death deprived Modest Mussorgsky of a close friend as well as a valued artistic touchstone.<sup>17</sup> In a letter to the critic Vladimir Stasov, who also knew Hartmann well, Mussorgsky lamented their colleague's passing by paraphrasing from *King Lear*: "Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,' and creatures like Hartmann must die!" Desiring to honor Hartmann's memory, Stasov organized an exhibition featuring some four hundred of the artist's watercolors, designs, and sketches. The exhibit opened in February of 1874 at the Academy of Artists in St. Petersburg, where it ran for several weeks. Stasov publicized the event in the *St. Petersburg Gazette* as follows:

"... the lively, elegant sketches of a genre painter, the majority being of scenes, types, figures from everyday life, caught from the environment that swirled around him -- on the streets and in the churches, in the Paris catacombs and Polish monasteries, in Roman side-streets and villages around Limoges, carnival types à la Gavarni, workers in smocks and Catholic priests on donkeys with umbrellas under their arms, old French women at prayer, Jews smiling from beneath their skull-caps, Parisian rag-pickers ... country scenes with picturesque ruins, wonderful vistas including an urban panorama." 19

Precisely when Mussorgsky attended is unknown; however, the impetus to compose a musical tribute evidently seized him later that year. Writing to Stasov in mid-June, Mussorgsky excitedly described his new project: "Hartmann is boiling ... The sounds and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Michael Russ, Musorgsky: Pictures at an Exhibition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Alfred Frankenstein, "Victor Hartmann and Modeste [sic] Musorgsky," *The Musical Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (July 1939): 279.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> David Brown, Musorgsky: His Life and Works (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 230.

the idea hung in the air, and now I am gulping and overheating. I can hardly manage to scribble it down on paper."<sup>20</sup> In an extraordinary burst of creativity, Mussorgsky finished the colossal score in just twenty days. The latency of the work's completion belies its proper title: *Pictures 'from' an Exhibition* as opposed to 'at' an Exhibition, the latter resulting from a translation error that has proved difficult to correct.<sup>21</sup>

Despite its enormous popularity today, *Pictures* languished in obscurity for decades. It did not appear in print until 1886 (five years after Mussorgsky's death), and likely never received a complete performance during the composer's lifetime.<sup>22</sup> Pianists in Russia largely neglected the piece, perhaps owing as much to Mussorgsky's reputation for inconsistency as well as the score's often uncompromising pianism. As a result, *Pictures* remained a musical oddity even after several orchestrated versions, most notably that of Maurice Ravel in 1922, generated renewed interest. Unfortunately, these renditions further overshadowed the piano score. It was not until recordings by Benno Moiseiwitsch and Vladimir Horowitz in the 1940s, along with a landmark record by Sviatoslav Richter in 1958, that *Pictures* finally emerged from pianistic purgatory to be regarded as one of the great masterpieces of the virtuoso's repertoire.

Pictures from an Exhibition is a large-scale cycle inspired by selections from Hartmann's eclectic oeuvre. For source material Mussorgsky drew upon various drawings, craft pieces, costume designs, and architectural sketches, most of which were

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Caryl Emerson, *The Life of Musorgsky* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 123.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> David Fanning, notes to *Musorgsky: Pictures from an Exhibition; Prokofiev: Visions Fugitive and Sarcasms* (Hyperion Records CDA67896, Steven Osborne, piano, CD recording, 2013): 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Brown, Musorgsky, 231.

on display during the Hartmann exhibit in 1874.<sup>23</sup> Many of these items are now lost, leaving only their mention in the exhibition's catalogue, along with the music itself, as proof of their existence. The diversity of the material is a reflection of Hartmann's interest in Russian realism, notable for its focus on the everyday lives of the peasantry, as well as the artist's prolific travels abroad. Mussorgsky captures this international scope by adopting titles in French, Latin, Italian, Polish, a German/Yiddish hybrid — and of course, Russian. As the art pieces have no direct link to each other, Mussorgsky inserted a series of recurring musical interludes, titled 'Promenade,' that bind the cycle together in the absence of an overarching formal structure. According to Stasov, the Promenades depict Mussorgsky "... as he strolled through the exhibition, joyfully or sadly recalling the talented deceased artist ..." Each Promenade assumes a different character as it appears, creating a distinct emotional progression that parallels the musical portraits themselves.

The opening Promenade immediately establishes a Russian spirit through its folkloristic motif (Ex. 10):



Ex. 10: Modest Mussorgsky, Pictures from an Exhibition, Promenade I (mm. 1–2)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Frankenstein, "Modeste Musorgsky," 281.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Russ, *Musorgsky*, 35.

Marked *nel modo russico*, this noble and dignified theme is reminiscent of Russian choral music through its mixed meters and multi-voiced textures. At the Promenade's conclusion, we are confronted without warning by the first 'picture,' **Gnomus** ("Gnome"). According to Stasov, Hartmann's original item was a wooden nutcracker in the form of "a fantastic lame figure on crooked little legs ..."<sup>25</sup> The grotesquery of the music paints a terrifying image of the gnome shrieking and leaping about awkwardly. This is followed by a second, more serene Promenade transposed into A-flat major. Its companion movement, **Il vecchio castello** ("The old castle"), is cast in the parallel minor. A continuous drone accompaniment supports the plaintive, sorrowful melody of a medieval troubadour while the image of a castle languishes in the background.

A robust Promenade in B major prepares the next episode, for which Mussorgsky has left Italy for France. Les Tuileries, Dispute d'enfants après jeux ("The Tuileries, Quarrel of children after play") is based upon Hartmann's drawing of the Tuileries garden in Paris. The lighter atmosphere and high tessitura embody the incessant taunting of children as they repeatedly call out "Nyanya, Nyanya" (Russian for 'nanny').<sup>26</sup> Immediately thereafter, Bydlo ("Cattle") materializes with no intervening Promenade. The ponderous texture suggests a cart on huge wooden wheels pulled by oxen; however, no such image exists in the exhibition catalogue, leading to speculation about

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Russ, Musorgsky, 36.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Brown, Musorgsky, 237.

Mussorgsky's intent.<sup>27</sup> The composer remained cryptic in a letter to Stasov: "... the wagon is not inscribed in the music; that is purely between us."<sup>28</sup>

Following a brooding, introspective Promenade in D minor, the mood is lightened considerably through the comedic **Ballet of the unhatched chicks**, Mussorgsky's musical representation of Hartmann's costume design for the ballet *Trilbi*. The catalogue describes '... Canary-chicks, enclosed in eggs as in suits of armour [sic]. Instead of a head dress, canary heads, put on like helmets, down to the neck.'<sup>29</sup> High-pitched snaps and double-note trills portray the chicks breaking out of their shells, fluttering their feathers. Again without pause, we move into the next chapter, "Samuel" Goldenberg und "Schmuÿle," an amalgamation of two separate portraits Hartmann probably created in 1869 after visiting Sandomir in southern Poland. The images are caricatures from the town's Jewish quarter: Goldenberg, a man of wealth and stature; and Schmuÿle, a dejected and destitute individual. The Goldenberg theme emerges first, haughty and overbearing, followed by Schmuÿle's trembling pleas for help. The two themes are intertwined towards the end of the movement before Goldenberg stamps out his counterpart in fortissimo octaves.

This marks the midpoint of *Pictures*. Here Mussorgsky begins anew with a restatement of the initial Promenade, enhanced with octaves and other subtle alterations. What follows is one of the most famously difficult movements of the cycle: **Limoges. Le** 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Michael Russ suggests the "cattle" are really the Polish people, reflecting the negative stereotypes commonplace in Russo-Polish relations of the period. See Russ, *Musorgsky*, 40.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Frankenstein, "Modeste Musorgsky," 282.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Russ, Musorgsky, 41.

marché, La grande nouvelle ("Limoges. The Market, Great News"). The relentless repetition and offbeat accents effectively portray the clatter of a bustling marketplace, which Stasov said reminded him of "old women quarreling." The frenetic pace is brought to an abrupt halt with Catacombae, Sepulcrum romanum ("Catacombe, A Roman sepulcher"), which plunges the listener into a chilling underworld. Cum mortuis in lingua mortua ("With the dead in a dead language") is an outgrowth of Catacombae, and is the only Promenade to bear a title. Mussorgsky wrote in the manuscript, "The creative genius of the late Hartmann leads me to the skulls and invokes them; the skulls begin to glow." Quiet tremolos and an ominous descending bass line bathe the music in a ghostly aura before yielding to an ethereal coda in B major.

The **Hut on hen's legs (Baba-Yaga)** is a tale from Russian folk lore. According to legend, Baba-Yaga is a witch who lives in the woods and preys upon children. Her hut rests on a pair of hen's legs that enable her to rotate around to face each victim. After using the hut's stone mortar to crush and devour her prey, Baba-Yaga scurries away on the hen's legs, covering her tracks with a large thistle broom. For this movement, Mussorgsky drew upon Hartmann's sketch of an ornate mechanical clock, in which Baba-Yaga's stone mortar and hen's legs are clearly visible above the pedestal. The ferocious octave passages throughout effectively mimic the pounding of the mortar against the regular pulse of the clock, a testament to Mussorgsky's penchant for merging fantasy and reality.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Russ, Musorgsky, 44.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Ibid., 46.

A scampering codetta of hennish activity drives headlong into the crowning movement of the cycle, **The Great Gate of Kiev**. Mussorgsky's inspiration stems from Hartmann's plans for a grand entrance to the city intended for a national competition honoring Czar Alexander II. Though the competition was called off, the design nevertheless earned Hartmann considerable recognition. Mussorgsky's realization goes a step further, eclipsing the grandeur of the art itself. The main motif, which is related musically to the Promenade material, is heard three times, building in intensity and texture each time it resurfaces. Strains of an Orthodox baptismal hymn, "As you are baptized in Christ," appear intermittently, referencing the significance of the church bells in Hartmann's sketch. The Promenade theme is recalled heroically in the final pages, adorned now in powerful bell-like gestures that propel the cycle to a majestic close.

# PROGRAM: Dissertation Recital #2

May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016, 8 o'clock PM Gildenhorn Recital Hall at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center University of Maryland—College Park, MD

Michael Angelucci, piano

Assisted by: Christopher Koelzer, piano

## John Corigliano (1938 —)

Fantasia on an Ostinato (1985)

## Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 — 1827)

Piano Sonata in E-Flat Major, Op. 27, No. 1, "Quasi una fantasia"

- 1. Andante Allegro Andante —
- 2. Allegro molto e vivace —
- 3. Adagio con espressione —
- 4. Allegro vivace Adagio Presto

—— INTERMISSION ——

### **Robert Schumann (1810 —1856)**

Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 54

- 1. Allegro affetuoso
- 2. Intermezzo: Andantino grazioso —
- 3. Allegro vivace

Christopher Koelzer, orchestral reduction

# RECORDING TRACK LISTING Dissertation Recital #2:

# John Corigliano (1938 —) Fantasia on an Ostinato (1985) [TRACK 1, CD 2] 11'33" Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 — 1827) Piano Sonata in E-Flat Major, Op. 27, No. 1, "Quasi una fantasia" [TRACK 2, CD 2] 1. Andante — Allegro — Andante — 5'03" [TRACK 3, CD 2] 2. Allegro molto e vivace — 2'01" [TRACK 4, CD 2] 3. Adagio con espressione — 2'57" [TRACK 5, CD 2] 4. Allegro vivace — Adagio — Presto 5'54" **Robert Schumann (1810 — 1856)** Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 54 [TRACK 6, CD 2] 1. Allegro affetuoso 14'57" [TRACK 7, CD 2] 2. Intermezzo: Andantino grazioso — 4'45" [TRACK 8, CD 2] 3. Allegro vivace 11'27"

### John Corigliano (1938 —)

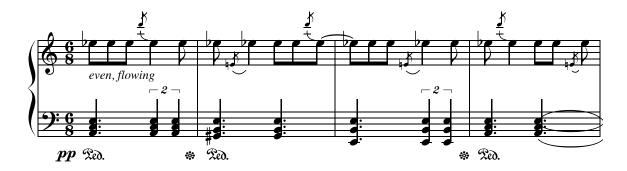
Fantasia on an Ostinato (1985)

American composer John Corigliano is among the most celebrated and widely regarded voices in classical music today. His impressive catalogue includes over one hundred works spanning virtually every genre. Corigliano's music is routinely performed and recorded by leading artists, ensembles, and orchestras, and has garnered an impressive array of accolades including a Pulitzer Prize, three Grammy Awards, an Academy Oscar Award, and the prestigious Grawemeyer Award. A native New Yorker, Corigliano is a graduate of Columbia University and the Manhattan School of Music. He currently teaches composition at the Juilliard School and is a Distinguished Professor of Music at Lehman College, where a scholarship program for music students exists in his name.

The Fantasia on an Ostinato is one of Corigliano's three original works for solo piano.<sup>32</sup> Composed in 1985, it was commissioned as the required piece for the seventh Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. While Corigliano is known for incorporating a fair amount of stylistic diversity into his compositions, the Fantasia drifts toward a singular technique — the phenomenon known as minimalism, whereby a piece is constructed around a finite supply of musical material. For this particular work, Corigliano drew upon the famous ostinato from the slow movement of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. This passage typifies attributes commonly associated with minimalism through its use of consonant harmonies, a gradual transformation of motivic cells, and a static rhythmic pattern capable of producing an hypnotic, trance-like effect.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> John Corigliano, official website, <a href="http://www.johncorigliano.com">http://www.johncorigliano.com</a> (accessed April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016).

The Fantasia is organized in a distinct binary form, with each section devoted to specific features of Beethoven's motif. The first part examines the ostinato's relentless rhythm from every conceivable vantage point. At times Corigliano duplicates the pulse precisely, though it appears more often through a collage of augmentation, diminution, and other variations. The A section also reinforces an underlying tonic-dominant relationship, temporarily resolving (as Beethoven does) in C major. The second half of the piece explores the ostinato's chromatic undertones through a descending chain of interlocking patterns. Attractive and atmospheric, these groupings are given an unspecified number of repetitions in the score, allowing the pianist to determine the shape, duration, and to some extent, the character of the B section. These patterns gradually become more ornate until aggregating in a violent climax. As the sound dissipates, Corigliano inserts a near-literal quote of Beethoven's theme in the bass, accompanied by a mere wisp of dissonance from the previous textural cacophony (Ex. 11). A brief coda recalls the misty rumination of the opening measures, concluding the Fantasia in the same manner it began.



**Ex. 11**: John Corigliano, *Fantasia on an Ostinato* (mm. 123–126)

#### Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 — 1827)

Piano Sonata in E-flat Major, Op. 27, No. 1, "Quasi una fantasia"

The piano sonatas of Beethoven form one of the most significant canon of works in the entire keyboard repertory. No two are alike, encompassing an astonishing depth of creativity and expressive power. Beginning with the trend-setting Op. 2 sonatas, to the heroic "Waldstein" and "Appassionata," to the earth-shattering "Hammerklavier" and ethereal transcendence of Op. 111, these works are a testament to Beethoven's boundless invention, often stretching the capabilities of instruments and players alike. Excluding Haydn and Mozart, who certainly produced their share of finished models, the keyboard sonata had been largely relegated to the realm of *Hausmusik*, intended as entertainment in the aristocratic salons which accounted for much of the musical activity across Europe.<sup>33</sup> Beethoven's sonatas were a revelation, displaying technical and artistic complexities few players at the time could attain. Under his mighty pen, the genre was fully emancipated from its dilettante roots to ascend towards the concert hall, a venue more suitable for the splendid virtuosity so many of these works afford.

Beethoven composed his two Op. 27 sonatas between 1800-01. While the latter of the pair, the ever-popular "Moonlight," is unquestionably the more famous, the E-Flat Sonata is no less engaging and every bit as innovative and well-defined. Both sonatas are subtitled "quasi una fantasia," signifying an alignment with a more unpredictable style. Of these two works, however, it is the E-flat Sonata that assumes a far more 'fantastical' departure in form: all four movements are linked together without pause, each one a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Charles Rosen, *Beethoven's Piano Sonatas: A Short Companion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002): 6.

fully-formed entity that is nevertheless incongruous apart from the greater whole.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, not one movement follows a straightforward sonata-allegro design, demonstrating Beethoven's eagerness to demolish preexisting norms (which, ironically, he helped codify in his earlier works). As the German music critic Paul Bekker aptly points out, Beethoven allowed his instinct for improvisation to guide him, casting aside formulaic models that necessitated "a certain sequence of thought."<sup>35</sup>

From the outset, the E-flat Sonata establishes itself as something entirely new. The opening movement is most unusual; in place of the standard Allegro, Beethoven begins with a leisurely Andante in ABA form. A repetitive three-chord motive, accompanied by straightforward ascending and descending scales, remains almost exclusively confined to tonic and dominant harmonies. In effect, the music doesn't really *go* anywhere. Beethoven appears content to revel in the dreamy ambiance rather than cultivate a specific thematic or motivic idea. When a sudden pivot to C major occurs, it is a delightful surprise for the ear. This slight of key foreshadows the rustic trio that soon follows, spilling over with brilliant scales and arpeggiated figures. A return of the opening texture and a brief codetta bring about a peaceful resolution.

The second movement, by contrast, is a swift and mercurial scherzo. The mood has darkened significantly. Now in C minor, Beethoven returns to his signature motivic obsessiveness through a sequence of contrary ascending and descending arpeggios, replete with unprepared *szforzandi* that leap out unexpectedly. The trio is a bright

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Rosen, Beethoven's Piano Sonatas, 153.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Maynard Solomon, *Beethoven* (second rev. ed., New York: Schirmer Trade Books, 2001): 139.

horseman's gallop in A-flat major accentuated by syncopations and trills in the right hand. A reprise of the A section soon morphs into a tricky sequence half-a-beat out of phase, relentlessly driving the momentum towards a concluding fanfare in C major.

After a sustained fermata, we again segue *attaca* into the next episode, once more retaining the key area from the previous movement's central section. The A-flat major Adagio is the emotional heart of this work, redolent with the warm, thickly-textured sonorities characteristic of Beethoven's keyboard style. A florid, decorative cadenza leads directly into the finale — a hybrid sonata-rondo featuring a central fugato section. Essentially a *moto perpetuo*, this is the most elaborate and challenging movement for which Beethoven reserves the bulk of the dramatic (and thematic) development.<sup>36</sup> After a thrilling climax, the energy is displaced by the reemergence of the Adagio now in the home key of E-flat major, representing one of the earliest examples of pure cyclic form to be found in Beethoven's piano music. A second cadenza and Presto coda wrap up this work in dazzling fashion.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Solomon, Beethoven, 138.

Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 54

Like most aspiring pianist-composers in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, Robert Schumann sought early in his career to conquer the all-important piano concerto. His foray into the genre began while the burgeoning composer was still in his teens. Schumann's diaries reference proposed concerti in E minor (1827) and E-flat major (1828), though neither project gained any traction.<sup>37</sup> He made more significant headway with a concerto in F major (1831), completing the opening Allegro before it too was abandoned. These youthful experiments attempted to mimic the glittery concerti of Ries, Hummel, Kalkbrenner, Herz, Moscheles, Field, Pixis, and others — flashy virtuoso showpieces designed for mass appeal (just the sort of works Schumann routinely panned in his published critiques).<sup>38</sup> Ultimately, Schumann rejected these models in search of a "New Way" that could bring the symphony, concerto, and sonata together into one idealized whole.<sup>39</sup> Fifteen years would pass before Schumann achieved this goal, but when he did the result was long-lasting: the Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 54 remains a perennial favorite with concertgoers, forever secure in its beloved status in the repertory.

While considered a standard work today, there is very little about this remarkable music that is conventional. In fact, it did not originate as a concerto at all; but rather, as a single-movement *Phantasie* for piano and orchestra, one of several important

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Robert Schumann, *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, A Minor, Op. 54*, edited with forward by Michael Musgrave (Frankfurt: Peters Edition, 2009): iv.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Claudia Macdonald, *Robert Schumann and the Piano Concerto* (New York: Routledge, 2005): 13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Ibid., 212.

compositions Schumann produced during his 'Symphonic Year' of 1841.<sup>40</sup> Although the solo part is formidable, the passagework is never superfluous or excessive, with many of the usual bravura moments tempered by an overarching sense of lyricism. In stark contrast with typical concerti of the day, Schumann crafts a thoughtfully balanced dialogue between soloist and orchestra, thereby requiring the pianist to assume dual roles as both soloist and symphonist. Clara Schumann, who gave the *Phantasie* a trial performance in Leipzig with the *Gewandhaus* orchestra in August of 1841, happily noted how orchestra and piano were "interwoven to the highest degree [so that] one can't imagine one without the other."41 The *Phantasie* also explores new possibilities in regards to form. The inclusion of a central Andante section and a march-like coda, both of which appear in a new meter and tempo, create the sensation of three individual movements compressed into a single movement.<sup>42</sup> Eduard Hanslick made note of this when he heard Clara play the work in 1858, calling the fast-slow-fast progression of the *Phantasie* a "miniature representation of a complete concerto." These innovations greatly advanced the narrative for the post-Classical piano concerto, affording future generations new ideas (and new problems) to grapple with in their own compositions.

However one may evaluate Schumann's approach, this much is clear: the *Phantasie* is a work steeped in the Romantic epoch, a sumptuous marriage of hearts both fiery and poetic. The dramatic introduction — a short orchestral burst followed by

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> John Daverio, *Robert Schumann: Herald of A "New Poetic Age"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): 236.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Ibid., 236-237.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Macdonald, Schumann, 229.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Ibid.

fistfuls of descending chords from the pianist — is a stroke of genius (Grieg, Rachmaninov, and others adopted similar opening salvos in their own concerti).

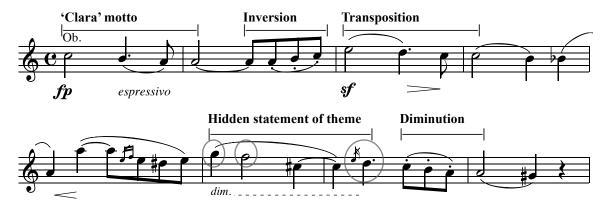
Immediately thereafter, a plaintive tune in the winds is reiterated and extemporized by the piano (Ex. 12). The first four notes of this theme, a descending scale of C—B—A—A, is an example of the so-called 'Clara motto,' revealing Schumann's fondness for encoding names in his compositions.<sup>44</sup> On a structural level, 'Clara' is the thematic glue that binds the *Phantasie* together, rippling throughout in a series of musically diverse guises. As demonstrated in Example 12, the theme itself is prone to considerable motivic metamorphosis. Schumann artfully massages fragments of the main subject into secondary themes, each with its own distinct character and personality. Whether in transitional areas (Ex. 13), the impassioned development (Ex. 14), or the aforementioned Andante with its famously Chopinesque meme (Ex. 15), these episodes are exploited fully before being capped off with a ravishing cadenza and a fleet-fingered, powerful coda (Ex. 16).

Though Schumann was quite pleased with the end result, he was unsuccessful in finding a publisher willing to put the *Phantasie* into print. Breitkopf and Härtel, usually eager to promote Schumann's music, passed it over fearing the piece would be a tough sell for the general public.<sup>45</sup> As a result, the *Phantasie* lay fallow for nearly four years until Schumann (at Clara's urging) added two additional movements, an Intermezzo and Rondo, to round out the work in the usual three-movement schema. The last two

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Eric Sams, "The Schumann Ciphers," *The Musical Times* 107, no. 1479 (May 1966): 393.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Robert Schumann, Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, iv.

movements are interconnected, a common practice of the period where stand alone rondos were concerned. According to the delicate middle movement is a true character portrait. Schumann composed the central episode specifically with Clara's musicianship in mind, requiring a tone that "sinks into the heart and speaks to the soul." In the short but structurally important codetta, distant horn calls reprising the principal motive from the first movement are wistfully answered by the piano (a brilliant ploy Schumann added later on). A headlong rush in the strings propels directly into the finale which is itself an inverted transformation of 'Clara,' now bedecked in the radiant sunniness of A major (Ex. 17). The movement, though noble and dignified, never becomes heavy, buoyed throughout by ever-changing sequences of running eighth notes that culminate in a jubilant, exhilarated waltz.



Ex. 12: Robert Schumann, Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 54, Mvt. I (mm. 4–11)

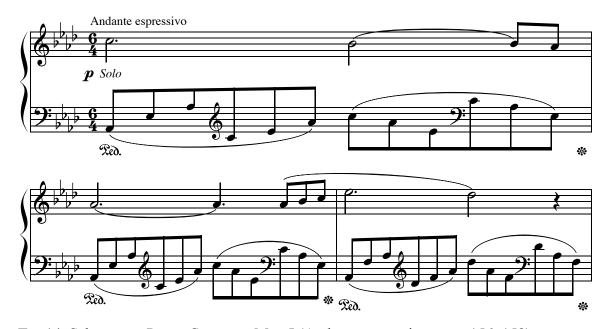
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Daverio, Schumann, 312.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Stephen Roe, "The Autograph Manuscript of Schumann's Piano Concerto," *The Musical Times* 131, no. 1764 (Feb 1990): 79.



Ex. 13: Schumann, Piano Concerto, Mvt. I (Transition, mm. 59–60)



Ex. 14: Schumann, Piano Concerto, Mvt. I (Andante espressivo, mm. 156-158)



Ex. 15: Schumann, Piano Concerto, Mvt. I (Development, mm. 205–209)



Ex. 16: Schumann, Piano Concerto, Mvt. I (Coda, mm. 458–461)



Ex. 17: Schumann, Piano Concerto, Mvt. III (mm. 1–4)

# PROGRAM: Dissertation Recital #3

December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016, 8 o'clock PM Gildenhorn Recital Hall at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center University of Maryland—College Park, MD

Michael Angelucci, piano

Assisted by: Dr. Jennifer Lee, violin

Johannes Brahms (1833 — 1897)

Rhapsody in B Minor, Op. 79, No. 1

**Sergei Prokofiev (1891 — 1953)** 

Selections from Romeo and Juliet: Ten Pieces for Piano, Op. 75

No. 2. Street Scene

No. 4. The Young Juliet

No. 6. The Montagues and Capulets

No. 10. Romeo Bids Juliet Farewell

Franz Liszt (1811 — 1886)

Vallée d'Obermann, S. 160 (from Années de pèlerinage, "Suisse")

—— INTERMISSION ——

César Franck (1822 —1890)

Sonata in A Major for Violin and Piano

- 1. Allegretto ben moderato
- 2. Allegro
- 3. Recitativo Fantasia: Moderato
- 4. Allegretto poco mosso

Dr. Jennifer Lee, violin

## RECORDING TRACK LISTING: Dissertation Recital #3

| Johannes Brahms (1833 — 1897)   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Rhapsody in B Minor, Op. 79, No. 1 [TRACK 1, CD 3]  | 9'48"                            |
| Sergei Prokofiev (1891 — 1953)  |                                  |
| Selections from Romeo and Juliet: Ten Pieces for Piano, Op. 75  [TRACK 2, CD 3] No. 2: Street Scene  [TRACK 3, CD 3] No. 4: The Young Juliet  [TRACK 4, CD 3] No. 6: The Montagues and Capulets  [TRACK 5, CD 3] No. 10: Romeo Bids Juliet Farewell | 1'38"<br>3'45"<br>3'43"<br>8'26" |
| Franz Liszt (1811 — 1886)   |                                  |
| Vallée d'Obermann, S. 160<br>[TRACK 6, CD 3]  | 13'26"                           |
| César Franck (1822 —1890)   |                                  |
| Sonata in A Major for Violin and Piano [TRACK 7, CD 3] 1. Allegretto ben moderato [TRACK 8, CD 3] 2. Allegro [TRACK 9, CD 3] 3. Recitativo — Fantasia [TRACK 10, CD 3] 4. Allegretto poco mosso   | 6'00"<br>8'14"<br>7'20"<br>7'05" |

Rhapsody in B Minor, Op. 79, No. 1

Although Johannes Brahms is most often approached through the prism of his storied compositional career, it is worth remembering that he, like Beethoven, earned a name for himself first as a traveling virtuoso. The Schumann's were quick to recognize his unique talents at the keyboard. Upon hearing Brahms perform in 1853, Clara observed in her diary "... his beautiful hands which overcome the greatest difficulties with perfect ease (his things are very difficult), and in addition these remarkable compositions." Robert, in his customarily flowery parlance, provided a more colorful vision of the emerging composer-pianist:

"Sitting at the piano, he began to disclose wonderful regions to us. We were drawn into ever more enchanting spheres. Besides, he is a player of genius who can make of the piano an orchestra of lamenting and loudly jubilant voices. There were sonatas, veiled symphonies rather; songs, the poetry of which would be understood even without words, although a profound vocal melody runs through them all: single piano pieces, some of them demonic in spirit while graceful in form. Again sonatas for piano, string quartets, every work so different from the others that it seems to stream from a separate source." 50

These eyewitness accounts reveal not only the caliber of pianist Brahms was — clearly, he possessed considerable gifts to have so enraptured the Schumanns — but also the genres that interested him. His contributions to the solo repertory fit neatly into the following categories: three large-scale sonatas, all composed before Brahms reached his twenty-first birthday; several works in variation form, which preoccupied the middle period of his keyboard writing; and numerous character pieces renowned for their

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Denis Matthews, *Brahms Piano Music* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1978): 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Michael Musgrave, A Brahms Reader (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000): 121.

sublime craftsmanship and beauty. It is the latter group that perhaps receives the greatest attention from pianists, and is where the two Rhapsodies, Op. 79 reside.

Brahms composed the Rhapsodies in the summer of 1879 while on holiday in Pörtschach. This was one of the composer's favorite retreats, an inviting locale where "melodies flew thick," stimulating some of his most enduring creations. While the majority of Brahms' character pieces are bundled together in sets, the Rhapsodies are stand-alone works on a grander scale (only the Scherzo, Op. 4 is comparable in length). They are dedicated to Elisabeth von Herzogenberg, an erstwhile pupil with whom Brahms cultivated a lifelong friendship. Elisabeth was a talented and knowledgeable composer in her own right, someone Brahms frequently turned to for counsel. It is she who suggested the title *Rhapsodien*, rejecting Brahms' usual moniker of '*Klavierstücke*' as too "non-committal." No doubt this was a visceral reaction to the music. One cannot help but be swept away by the bold impetuosity and restless momentum that make the Rhapsodies such attractive quantities on concert programs.

Set in the stormy key of B minor, the first Rhapsody follows a straightforward ABA design. Its arresting opening establishes not only the *agitato* character, but also introduces two key motives within the first phrase — a triplet sixteenth figure and a descending pattern of three eighth notes (Ex. 18). These ideas are explored throughout the A section in a mélange of ever-changing key areas. In between we find a quiet passage in D minor (Ex. 19). Though this brief cell has all the trappings of a lyrical

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Jan Swafford, *Johannes Brahms: A Biography* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999): 455.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Musgrave, A Brahms Reader, 196.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Matthews, *Brahms Piano Music*, 53.

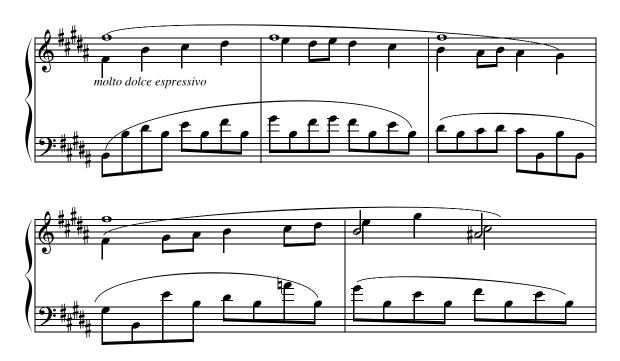
theme, it is stifled by a second, more forceful development that brings about the climax of the A section in the much delayed tonic. A short transitional figure then picks up this thread, dovetailing into a luminous trio where it is allowed to flourish fully in the parallel major (Ex. 20). Transformed through Brahms' signature five-bar phrasing, the theme is accompanied by a delicate countermelody and the gentle chiming of drones. The repeat of the A section is literal, and is followed by a coda that again returns to the lyrical subject, now shrouded in the nebulous regions of the bass. The bleak mood is further punctuated with a series of recurring C-naturals, blotting out any sense of resolution before a sustained B major tonicization materializes in the final measures, closing out these turbulent pages with a whisper.



Ex. 18: Johannes Brahms, Rhapsody in B Minor, Op. 79, No. 1 (mm. 1–3)



**Ex. 19**: Brahms, *Rhapsody No. 1* (mm. 30–33)



Ex. 20: Brahms, *Rhapsody No. 1* (Trio, mm. 94–98)

Selections from Romeo and Juliet: Ten Pieces for Piano, Op. 75

Sergei Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, widely considered his best stage work, almost never saw the light of day. Just as the two star-crossed lovers in Shakespeare's tragedy are beset by plots and intrigues, so too would Prokofiev face all manner of obstacles in getting his dream production into the public forum. The project first landed on Prokofiev's doorstep in 1934 by way of a commission from the Leningrad State Theater of Opera and Ballet.<sup>54</sup> Prokofiev, eager to work on a large-scale drama of suitable gravitas, quickly settled on Shakespeare's epic as the subject. No sooner had this been decided, however, when the theater's artistic manager was forced out in an administrative shake-up, scuttling the venture before the composer could put a single note to paper.<sup>55</sup> It was then picked up by the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow some months later. This time Prokofiev completed a fair amount of the score only to learn it would be shelved again, ostensibly due to objections from the censors over the ballet's lack of socialist realism. <sup>56</sup> Negotiations with the Leningrad Ballet School and other venues fared no better, and prospects for a fully-staged production remained stymied. Even when Romeo and Juliet finally received its Russian debut at the Kirov in 1940, things did not go easily. The contentious rehearsals were marred by shouting matches between Prokofiev and the Kirov's principal choreographer, Leonid Lavrovsky, who harangued

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Karen Bennett, "Star-Cross'd Lovers: Shakespeare and Prokofiev's 'Pas de Deux' in *Romeo and Juliet*," *Cambridge Quarterly 32*, no. 4 (2003): 312.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Anthony Weinstein, "Sergei Prokofiev: Lyricism, the Return and Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet, Op. 75" (D.M. diss., Indiana University, 2015): 28.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Bennet, "Star-Cross'd Lovers," 312.

the composer incessantly for changes. Meanwhile, the dancers balked at the score's extroverted harmonic and rhythmic contours, labeling the music undanceable and threatening to strike.<sup>57</sup> Galina Ulanova, the legendary ballerina who virtually defined the role of Juliet, famously remarked, "Never was a tale of greater woe than Prokofiev's music for *Romeo*."<sup>58</sup>

In the end, the premiere was a resounding success and the ballet quickly became a classic. This in no small measure rests on the strength of the music. Recognizing he had a real crowd-pleaser at his fingertips, Prokofiev arranged three orchestral suites and a cycle of piano pieces from the ballet score, utilizing what he described as "the parts best suited for transcription." As with the orchestral versions, the Ten Pieces for Piano, Op. 75 were intended for concert programming, and are assembled in such a way as to create a well-balanced musical sequence rather than attempting to follow a precise narrative. Several of the movements are actually a collage of different scenes, often with reworked transitions to link the episodes together. Considering these were among the last significant pieces Prokofiev composed for himself as soloist, it is fitting they should encapsulate his pianism so brilliantly, requiring from the player an impressive virtuosity of touch, technique, and tonal control.

The following selections represent not only a cross-section of the storyline, but also bring to the fore important cyclical relationships inherent throughout the score. The Street Scene (No. 2) is a casual vignette of party-goers ambling home from an evening

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Weinstein, "Sergei Prokofiev," 30.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Ibid., 33.

masquerade, their mostly lighthearted conversation interrupted by the occasional harsh word. The semitone clash of the final chord mirrors a touch of hooliganism as someone throws an orange through a window. Framed in the innocent key of C major, The Young Juliet (No. 4) portrays the bubbly teenager's excited gossiping through a flurry of rapid scales and chattering chords. Juliet's naiveté is dispelled by a more expansive melody in the same key, its pensive character suggesting her capacity for greater emotional maturity and awareness (Ex. 21). This same theme, restated in E minor and transposed into a lower register, returns to settle the movement in an aura of introspection (Ex. 22).

Transformations such as these are indicative of Prokofiev's use of leitmotif to highlight the changing interactions of the story's central characters. 60

The Montagues and Capulets (No. 6), also known as "The Dance of the Knights," is one of Prokofiev's most famous tunes. Imposing and imperious, it depicts the ongoing blood feud between the rival families as they assume relative positions on the dance floor. A muted interlude finds Juliet dancing stoically with her betrothed, Count Paris, before the two are swallowed up once more by the fray. The final essay, Romeo Bids Juliet Farewell (No. 10), is the longest and most expansive of the cycle. Three important scenes are represented here: Romeo and Juliet awake after spending the evening together; their subsequent parting; and Juliet's death. As the movement begins, the warmth of B-flat major casts a dreamy spell over the two lovers basking in their contentment.

Romeo's departure, a declamatory but shapely theme in C major, steadily builds into a soaring, impassioned soliloguy that becomes the emotional highpoint of the cycle. This

<sup>60</sup> Bennet, "Star-Cross'd Lovers," 314.

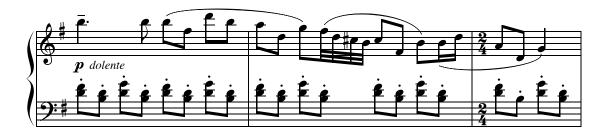
leads directly into the final tableau: Juliet, having ingested the poison, begins to die. The desolate, funereal quality is amplified by the eerie heartbeat of the left-hand accompaniment, which is merged briefly with a cyclic recall of Juliet's mature music from movement No. 4 (Ex. 23). This motif gradually becomes more faint until three bell-like tones signify her moment of death — the ultimate transformation.



Ex. 21: Sergei Prokofiev, Romeo and Juliet: Ten Pieces, Op. 75 (No. 4, mm. 43–47)



Ex. 22: Prokofiev, Romeo and Juliet (No. 4, mm. 80–81)



Ex. 23: Prokofiev, Romeo and Juliet (No. 10, mm. 79–81)

### Franz Liszt (1811 — 1886)

Vallée d'Obermann, S. 160 (from Années de pèlerinage, "Suisse")

In 2011, the classical music world celebrated the 200th anniversary of Franz Liszt's birth year with a bountiful feast of concerts, recordings, and scholarly musings. Not surprisingly, Liszt's extensive keyboard catalogue, widely regarded as his most significant achievement, remained front and center throughout the festivities. Though not wanting for masterpieces, Liszt's oeuvre is regrettably burdened with a disproportionate number of tawdry showpieces, a black mark that continues to plague his reputation as a serious artistic voice. Concert pianist Stephen Hough sums it up as follows: "There is enough wheat in Liszt's work to secure his place as one of the great composers, but enough chaff to risk distracting us from that recognition."61 Separating the petty from the profound can be a challenge for even the most avid Liszt enthusiast — after all, he wrote a *lot* of music — but likewise affords many opportunities for wonderment and discovery. The poetic cycle *Années de pèlerinage* ("Years of Pilgrimage"), for example, contains some of the composer's most original creations, a summation of his inimitable Romantic spirit as well as a harbinger of important developments yet to come.

Années de pèlerinage is a mega-compilation of twenty-six compositions separated into three distinct volumes. The earliest pieces date back to the mid-1830s where they first appeared as part of the *Album d'un voyageur*, an early collection Liszt later withdrew from publication. Liszt compiled the first volume of *Années de pèlerinage* from 1848 to 1854, incorporating seven revised works from the *Album* along with two

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> Stephen Hough, "The Hot Liszt," *TheGuardian.com*, Classical Music, December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010, <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/music/2010/dec/27/liszt-200th-anniversary">https://www.theguardian.com/music/2010/dec/27/liszt-200th-anniversary</a> (accessed September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016).

<sup>62</sup> Humphrey Searle, *The Music of Liszt*, rev. ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 2012): 23.

new compositions.<sup>63</sup> Where the second and third volumes are reflections of artwork and religious themes, the *Suisse* book explores mankind's relationship with nature. *Vallée d'Obermann* ("Obermann's Valley") is the sixth piece in the set, and like many of Liszt's masterpieces, it underwent substantial revisions before arriving at its current form.<sup>64</sup> Inspired by Étienne de Senancour's semi-autobiographical novel *Obermann*, the work is an exploration of the title character's solitary wanderings through the Swiss Alps. Embedded in the manuscript are quotes emphasizing the philosophical heft behind the music ("What do I want? what am I? what may I demand of nature?").<sup>65</sup> As Andrew Fowler explains, "The composer/pianist becomes Obermann, and through the piano, which acts as conduit, the hero experiences the overwhelming, unpenetrable forces of Nature."<sup>66</sup> The work's epic sweep is undeniable; without question, *Vallée d'Obermann* is among the more significant contributions from the entire cycle, a superlative tone poem representing one of Liszt's finest achievements in transformational architecture.

Vallée d'Obermann begins with a halting downward scale that establishes the principal material for the entire piece (Ex. 24). The hesitant nature of this theme, accentuated by frequent pauses and chromatic undertones, creates a searching, unresolved atmosphere that persists throughout a lengthy preamble, ultimately concluding with a tortured descent into the doldrums. Liszt initiates a dramatic shift in tone in measure

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Ben Arnold, "Piano Music: 1835-1861," in *The Liszt Companion*, ed. by Ben Arnold (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002): 78.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> Andrew Fowler, "Motive and Program in Liszt's *Vallée d'Obermann*," *Journal of the American Liszt Society* 29 (1991): 5.

<sup>65</sup> Arnold, "Piano Music: 1835-1861," 79.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> Fowler, "Motive and Program," 11.

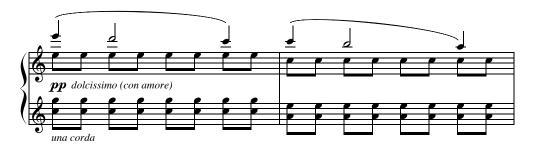
seventy-five, introducing an angelic song in C major crafted from the first three notes of the parent motive (Ex. 25). Marked *dolcissimo* and transported into the uppermost register of the piano, this all-important subject serves as the hero's lone beacon of hope. A dramatic and operatic recitative ensues shortly thereafter, heralded by virtuosic tremolos and fierce octaves, before a pastoral restatement of the C major theme emerges in the newly tonicized key of E major, now supported by gentle undulations of triplets (Ex. 26). From here, the emotional trajectory becomes increasingly ascendent. Additional thematic metamorphoses, such as an alluring inversion of the main subject in the recapitulation (Ex. 27), build towards a thrilling climax described by Humphrey Searle as "a real paean of joy." However, the euphoria is cut short in the final moments by a return of the opening, bringing the inherent pathos of the work full circle (Ex 28). An epitaph from Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, also prefaced in the score, echoes this tragic conclusion: "But as it is, I live and die unheard / With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword."68



Ex. 24: Franz Liszt, Vallée d'Obermann, S. 160 (mm. 1–2)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Searle, The Music of Liszt, 27.

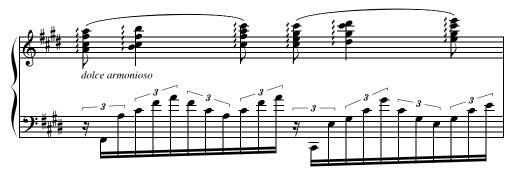
<sup>68</sup> Arnold, "Piano Music: 1835-1861," 79.



Ex. 25: Liszt, Vallée d'Obermann (mm. 75–76)



Ex. 26: Liszt, Vallée d'Obermann (m. 170)



Ex. 27: Liszt, Vallée d'Obermann (m. 180)



Ex. 28: Liszt, Vallée d'Obermann (mm. 215–216)

#### César Franck (1822 — 1890)

Sonata in A Major for Violin and Piano

Chamber music in France received scant attention throughout much of the nineteenth century. French audiences were far more interested in opera and large-scale theatrical works, leaving composers few opportunities to promote other genres.<sup>69</sup> Camille Saint-Saëns, in decrying the public's lack of enthusiasm for instrumental forms, once grumbled that a Frenchman's only recourse was to "give a concert himself and invite his friends."<sup>70</sup> In the end, that is precisely what he did, banding together with other prominent composers to form the *Société Nationale de Musique* in 1871. César Franck, one of the organization's longest serving contributors, premiered three of his most important chamber works on *Société* programs: the F minor Piano Quintet, the D major String Quartet, and the Violin Sonata. Though all are shining examples in their respective forms, the Violin Sonata has far and away enjoyed the greatest acclaim. Franck composed the Sonata in 1886 as a wedding gift for the famed Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe, who gave the premiere with pianist Marie Bordes-Pène in December of that year. 71 According to one concert-goer, Franck was so enamored with their interpretation that he "... was literally drinking his music and did not know how to express his satisfaction to the performers, especially to Ysaÿe."<sup>72</sup> The Sonata became a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> Mark A. Radice, *Chamber Music: An Essential History* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2012): 171.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> Lorenz Amadeus Gamma, "The Sonata by César Franck: A Critical Edition for Violinists" (D.M.A. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2005, in ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global, <a href="http://search.proquest.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/pqdtglobal/docview/305033568/3BF99C30A17F42A9PQ/1?accountid=14696">http://search.proquest.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/pqdtglobal/docview/305033568/3BF99C30A17F42A9PQ/1?accountid=14696</a>, accessed August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015): 5.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

staple of Ysaÿe's concert repertoire thereafter, and his many subsequent performances did much to cement its position as one of the most oft-performed duos of all time.

A familiar hallmark of Franck's style is his frequent use of cyclical procedures. Franck became well versed in the concept through his studies with Anton Reicha at the Paris Conservatoire. Reicha, who had been a close friend of Beethoven, exposed Franck to the German master's approach towards motivic unity and large-scale cyclic design. Such methods were later expanded via the transformational techniques of Schubert, Liszt, and Wagner — three composers whose music Franck studied at length. Franck evolved these processes even further through his use of what Vincent d'Indy called a "germinating cell," whereby a composition's principle themes arise out of the same basic melodic unit. The resulting nexus of thematic interrelationships explains the unbroken train of musical thought often present in Franck's music, a testament to his remarkable ability to weave form, structure, and emotional content into a completely unified and integrated entity.

Not surprisingly, the Violin Sonata is replete with this manner of total cyclicism that defines so many of Franck's masterpieces. In the idyllic opening movement, the violin introduces an arcing melody centered around a dominant 9<sup>th</sup> chord, from which the germ cell of a falling third is readily identifiable (Ex. 29). The second bar of this tune spawns an ancillary subject used in tandem with the principal idea (Ex. 30). A third theme, rendered exclusively by the pianist, functions as a transitional figure between

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> Radice, Chamber Music, 171.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Gamma, "The Sonata by César Franck," 21.

sections (Ex. 31). All three ideas are bandied about in a carefully nuanced dialogue, unfolding without hurry in a relaxed sonatina format.

Where the first movement explores its materials in bucolic calm, the fiery Allegro bursts forth with impassioned verve. Its main topic is an elaboration of the preceding movement's secondary motif (Ex. 32), couched in pianistic display before being fleshed out more acutely by the violinist. Additional themes also appear, such as a transitional figure in measure forty-four (Ex. 33) and a much-needed lyrical subject four bars later (Ex. 34). These motives are reminiscent of Examples 29 and 30, further linked by the fact that the violinist alone exerts control over them. The obsessive *fortspinnung* of material continues unabated through a lengthy development and recapitulation to drive headlong into an electrifying coda. Taken collectively, these two movements amount to a through-composed, continuous affair — a restrained introduction, 'Allegretto,' in the dominant (A major), which leads directly into a fully formed sonata-allegro movement, 'Allegro,' in the tonic (D minor, ultimately resolving in the parallel major). It is only when the final chord of the Allegro is struck that any real sense of finality is achieved.

A respite from the preceding drama would seem to be in order here. Instead of the customarily lighthearted scherzo or minuet, however, we encounter the *Recitativo—Fantasia*, an intensely profound homage to the counterpoint of J.S. Bach and the *espressivo* style of François Couperin. Franck's allegiance to the Baroque is unmistakable; aside from the title, the placement of this movement sets up a sequence of slow—fast—slow—fast tempi resembling the old fashioned *sonata da chiesa*.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Radice, "Chamber Music," 176.

Chromatic and highly improvisatory, the first section is a summary of prior materials. Following an agitated climax, the *Fantasia* emerges in the form of a nostalgic and hauntingly beautiful theme in F-sharp minor (Ex. 35). A second melody born out of this idea grows into a fervent crescendo before dying away in the final measures (Ex. 36). Both subjects take on greater significance in the finale: a jovial rondo where piano and violin trade places in canonic fashion (yet another nod to the past). Though the central melody appears original, its shared contour with the germinating theme from the opening movement — a rising interval followed by a descending line of five notes — inextricably links the two ideas together (Ex. 37). As we have seen throughout the piece, Franck makes a point of revisiting several motifs in various transformations (Exs. 38 and 39). These occurrences, together with two climactic recalls from the *Fantasia*, brilliantly pull together all of the Sonata's thematic arguments into one cogent thesis. The imitative nature of the part writing motivates another exciting coda to conclude the work in Franck's signature blaze of triumphant glory.



Ex. 29: César Franck, Violin Sonata in A Major, Mvt. I (mm. 5–6)



Ex. 30: Franck, Violin Sonata, Mvt. I (mm. 19–20)



Ex. 31: Franck, Violin Sonata, Mvt. I (mm. 31-33)



Ex. 32: Franck, Violin Sonata, Mvt. II (mm. 14–15)



Ex. 33: Franck, Violin Sonata, Mvt. II (mm. 44–45)



Ex. 34: Franck, Violin Sonata, Mvt. II (mm. 48-51)



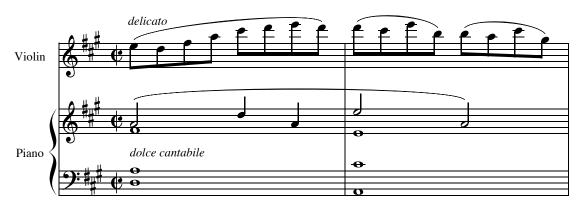
Ex. 35: Franck, Violin Sonata, Mvt. III (mm. 59-62)



Ex. 36: Franck, Violin Sonata, Mvt. III (mm. 71–72)



Ex. 37: Franck, Violin Sonata, Mvt. IV (mm. 1–3)



Ex. 38: Franck, Violin Sonata, Mvt. IV (mm. 38–39)



Ex. 39: Franck, Violin Sonata, Mvt. IV (mm. 99-100)

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|   | Musorgsky: His   | Life and Works  | Oxford: Oxford | University Press, 20  | 006  |
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