ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: "CHARACTERS" IN DIVERSE WORKS FOR PIANO, 1720-1944

Ham Chan, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2024

Dissertation directed by: Prof. Larissa Dedova, Department of Music

The main aim of this research project is to gain a thorough comprehension of piano music classified as "Character Pieces," as well as music that exhibits similar musical traits but is not officially categorized as such. In a narrative context, a character is typically defined as a person depicted within a story, either through description or direct speech.[1] In the realm of music, characters are often linked to the mood or atmosphere. Expanding on this, characters in music should assist performers and listeners in creating a musical scene through their individual imaginations.

The fundamental essence of "Character Pieces" can be distilled to compositions imbued with distinctive musical qualities. While there exists no unanimous consensus regarding the precise criteria for characterizing a piece as such, there is a general consensus that compositions bearing evocative titles such as Ballade, Fantasy, Nocturne, and Mazurka are commonly regarded as character pieces. In a more scholarly context, the Harvard Dictionary of Music aptly defines the

[1] Dennis Kennedy, "Character." *Oxford Reference*. Accessed November 6, 2023. https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110908092203998.

term “Character Piece” as a convenient designation encompassing a substantial body of short compositions from the 19th century, designed to express a definite mood or programmatic idea.[2] Most of these compositions are written in ternary form, a structure that proves especially suitable for depicting two contrasting moods, such as the dramatic section A and the lyrical section B.[3]

A notable feature of the genre is its freedom from a fixed naming convention, enabling compositions to encompass a wide array of titles. This stands in stark contrast to other genres such as Sonatas and Variations, which are inherently defined by predetermined names and structural elements. However, influences on “Character Pieces” in terms of structure and musicality can be found in some of these genres. Several of these works will also be highlighted in the program.

“Character pieces” can be viewed as a genre conceptualized by scholars to encompass the majority of piano music from the 19th century that may not adhere to conventional notions of “serious” music. Given the flexibility of this classification, the three planned recitals have been carefully curated to showcase music relate to this genre, spanning from works of Bach to Prokofiev composed between 1720 and 1944. Each recital will revolve around a central theme, with the initial installment titled “*Fantasies and Ballades*,” followed by “*Humanity*” in the second recital, and concluding with “*Literary Inspirations*” in the final recital.

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[2] Willi Apel, “Character Piece.” In *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 147. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000.

[3] Ibid., 148. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000.

“CHARACTERS” IN DIVERSE WORKS FOR PIANO, 1720-1944

by

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Table of Contents

Recital I

Thursday, March 4th, 2021.

5:00 p.m.

Gildenhorn Hall

Fantasies and Ballades

Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue in D minor, BWV 903 (1720)

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Sonata Op. 27 No.2 in C# minor "Quasi una fantasia" (1802)

I. Adagio sostenuto — Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

II. Allegretto

III. Presto agitato

-Intermission-

Ballade No. 1 in G minor, Op. 23 (1835) — Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

Ballade No. 2 in F major, Op. 38 (1839)

Ballade No. 3 in Ab major, Op. 47 (1841)

Ballade No. 4 in F minor, Op. 52 (1842)

Bach: Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue in D minor, BWV 903 (1720)

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), is known for his complex and highly polyphonic keyboard pieces. While his compositions are frequently performed on modern pianos that offer a broader range of dynamics and resonance, the majority of his keyboard works were originally meant for the harpsichord or clavichord, instruments that have constraints on sustaining sound and dynamics. As interpreters, it is crucial for us to consider the historical context and not exaggerate the advantages offered by modern instruments when performing this piece.

In the 18th century, a "fantasia" referred to a type of musical composition characterized by the unrestricted development of a series of musical idea, designed to give the impression of improvisation, often featuring the juxtaposition of contrasting passages.[4] The Fantasia in BWV 903 epitomizes the typical style of a fantasia from that period, distinguished by Bach's freedom in exploring and experimenting with various elements. It begins with a strikingly bold and expressive introduction. What sets this fantasia apart from others of its time is Bach's inclusion of improvisational arpeggios and the recitative second section. Bach granted performers significant freedom in choosing their arpeggio patterns and timing. Within this complex framework, Bach skillfully intertwines a range of emotions, ranging from melancholy to triumph.

Unlike the typical fugues composed by Bach, which often incorporate variations on the subject such as stretto, augmentation and diminution as the music unfolds, the subject in the fugue of

[4] David Schulenburg, "Fantasia." *Appendix E*. Accessed n.d. https://global.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780190936303/res/app3/.

BWV 903 remains consistent throughout the piece. In his treatise "The Art of Fugue," musicologist Joseph Kerman characterizes the subject as "veering dangerously towards the dominant…" which represents a departure from Bach's typical approach.[5] The chromatic subject initially emerges on its own, devoid of any harmonizations, before being joined by other voices. As the music unfolds, the energy intensifies, facilitated by the addition of more 16th notes. It culminates with octaves in the left hand at the conclusion, echoing the fantasia with an improvisational passage of 32nd notes before the final cadence.

Bach's *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue* has influenced composers such as Beethoven, Chopin, and Scriabin, who retained improvisational sections and contrasting characters in portions of their similar compositions.

Beethoven: Sonata Op. 27 No.2 in C# minor "Quasi una fantasia" (Moonlight) (1802)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) is often viewed as a composer who guided his contemporaries into the Romantic era through his innovative experiments with musical forms and harmonic practices. Among his works, the "*Moonlight" Sonata* became famous for the haunting, introspective qualities of its opening movement. Curiously, Beethoven did not originally title this piece "*Moonlight.*" The nickname is thought to have originated from music critic Ludwig Rellstab, who likened the opening movement to the shimmering of moonlight on Lake Lucerne. Although Beethoven never endorses this moniker, it has since become commonly

[5] Joseph Kerman, "Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue, BWV 903." In *Art of Fugue: Bach Fugues for Keyboard, 1715–1750*, 51-54. University of California Press, 2015.

associated with this sonata.[6] Despite its classification as a sonata, Beethoven himself describes it as "almost like a fantasy." Here, Beethoven notably experiments with the classical sonata structure by initiating the piece with a slow first movement and seamlessly connecting the second and third movements with an "attacca" directive. Interestingly, Beethoven employed a similar approach in his companion sonata, Op. 27 No. 1, which consists of four movements interconnected by "attacca" indications, all under the shared title "*Quasi und fantasia."* Beethoven's experimentation in both Op. 27 aided him in fully implementing a similar approach in his late piano sonatas, such as Op. 101, 109, and 110. This involved expanding the structure of a sonata while maintaining connections between movements, creating a structure reminiscent of a large fantasy within the framework of sonata forms.

The sonata opens with an *Adagio sostenuto.* Beethoven instructs the entire piece should be played with the greatest delicacy and without mutes. This likely reflects to the evolution of the fortepiano/piano in Austria, where pianos became more versatile with the addition of extra keys and pedals. Considering the instructions provided by Beethoven, a performer must play the entire movement with the damper pedal engaged throughout. However, adhering strictly to this directive on a modern piano could result in a muddy sound, as contemporary pianos have advanced significantly since Beethoven's time. Taking all these factors into account, an appropriate approach would be to utilize the soft pedal (which strikes fewer strings) and to frequently adjust the damper pedal to achieve an appropriate sonority that would suggest a calm mood.

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[6] Stuart Elliott, *Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata: Discover the 1801 Piano Masterpiece.* Classic FM. November 23, 2020. Accessed November 5, 2023. https://www.classicfm.com/composers/beethoven/music/moonlight-sonata-no-14-c-sharp-mi/

Following the tranquility of the first movement, the *Allegretto* introduces a contrasting mood. This central movement is a lively dance, in which Beethoven uses syncopation and rhythmic ambiguity to infuse it with a sense of humor. The movement concludes with an “attacca,” imploring performers to seamlessly link this movement to the finale.

The concluding movement, *Presto agitato*, erupts with unbridled passion and vigor. Beethoven's command of harmonic tension and dramatic intensity takes center stage in this section. The turbulent and tempestuous nature of this movement stands in stark contrast to what came before. It requires virtuosic technical prowess from the performer, as the music charges forward with relentless force. It is notable that the finale is composed in sonata form, whereas the first movement deviates from the norm, as it would typically be expected to follow a rondo structure in a sonata of 1802.

Viewing the three movements of Beethoven’s *Moonlight* Sonata as a cohesive whole can provide a better understanding of its structure. Typically, a classical sonata features a fast first movement, followed by a slow second movement, and concludes with a fast final movement. By reimagining the tempo and mood, the musical energy steadily builds from the initial note of the first movement to the concluding note of the finale.

Beethoven’s *Moonlight* Sonata represents an experimental endeavor for Beethoven, in which he explores the potential for blending a traditional sonata with the freer qualities of a fantasy.

Chopin: Four Ballades (1831-1842)

The Polish composer Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849) lefts compositions that are renowned for their emotional depth, demanding virtuosity and poetic expressiveness. Chopin's work often reflects his deep connection to Polish folk traditions, solidifying his status as one of the preeminent composers of the 19th century. Chopin's awareness towards Beethoven's work could be traced in some of his compositions such as the renowned *Sonata No.2 in B flat minor, Op.35 "Funeral March,"*features a funeral march and trio in the third movement, similar to Chopin's favorite Beethoven Sonata, often also titled as "*Funeral march,*" *No. 12 in A flat major, Op.26*. In his book, musicologist Lawrence Kramer highlights the connection, noting that while Chopin refuses to compose under the shadow of Beethoven, he acknowledges a shared world with Beethoven, recognizing their common humanity.[7]

A ballade, in the context of classical music, is a musical composition that is typically characterized by its lyrical and narrative qualities. While the term "ballade" is derived from the French word for "ballad," it does not necessarily imply a direct connection to a literary ballad. Instead, a musical ballade is often a self-contained, multi-sectional piece of instrumental music that conveys a story, mood, or emotional journey. Key characteristics of a musical ballade may include a narrative quality, emotional depth, multi-sectional structure, expressive melodies and technical demands. Prior to Chopin, there were no composers who had written substantial ballades in the manner that we understand them today. Chopin could be regarded as the father of

[7] Lawrence Kramer, "Influence." In *Interpreting Music*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.

the Romantic ballade, as his forms and structures inspired later ballades composed by Liszt and Brahms.

Composed in 1835, Chopin's *Ballade No.1* marked a significant development in his lyrical style. During this period, many character pieces were composed in through-composed way. However, the structure of *Ballade No. 1* incorporates frequent shifts in moods and characters. It commences with an inviting introduction, followed by a narrative segment perhaps reminiscent of a poet-singer accompanied by a lute. The narrative then turns into a dramatic and passionate phase in different registers, culminating in the first climactic moment. Subsequently, the music transitions to the expressive "*Meno Mosso*" section in E flat major, where Chopin creates a calm character through lyrical passages and a wave-like accompaniment. The character undergoes a passionate shift to A major, introducing a heroic quality with chords and octaves in both hands. This marks an uncommon tonal shift from the preceding section in E flat major. The composition continues to evolve, utilizing its core materials through transformation, variation, and paraphrasing, ultimately leading to a powerful and dramatic coda. The coda, marked as "*Presto con fuoco,*" features one of Chopin's most agitated endings with highs and lows in registers. As a performer, this section is felt replete with tension and pain in character, presenting a dramatic contrast to its initial narrative, *Largo*.

Robert Schumann, a renowned composer and music critic, reviewed Chopin's *Ballade no.2* and some of his other compositions in the "*New Zeitschrift für Musik*" (New Journal for Music) in 1841. In his review, Schumann mentioned that Chopin had stated that his Ballades were inspired

by poems written by his compatriot, Adam Mickiewicz.[8] Besides Schumann's assertion regarding the literary references in *Ballade No. 2*, many scholars, such as Herbert Weinstock and Arthur Hedley, have challenged the connection, primarily because Schumann's claims did not specify the exact poem that was quoted.[9][10] Nevertheless, it could be beneficial for interpreters to construct their own narrative or storyline when interpreting *Ballade No. 2*. Theatrically, the *Ballade No.2* stands out due to the dramatic contrast between its initial (peaceful) and secondary (brutal) characters, a feature more pronounced in comparison to Chopin's other Ballades.

The Second Ballade begins with a serene chorale-like scene in F major, a tonal choice often linked to pastoral or countryside-like music commonly found in the Classical era. The nearly repeating rhythmic patterns further contribute to the dreamy quality of this initial character. In stark contrast, the introduction of the secondary character in A minor, almost like a storm, creates a sudden shift in mood, evoking the tension and urgency. As the narrative unfolds, the harmonic language oscillates between F major and A minor. The conflicting characters finally merge before the coda, showcasing the opening melody in octaves in the left hand, ultimately reaching a poignant conclusion in A minor, with the dominant secondary character prevailing as the main focus. It is crucial to note that while the piece is titled as F major, a substantial portion of the music, including the concluding section, is in A minor. This unconventional approach to tonality

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[8] Jim Samson and John Rink, "Directional Tonality in Chopin." In *Chopin Studies*, 69-72. Cambridge University Press, 1988.

[9] Herbert Weinstock,"The Music." In *Chopin, the Man and His Music*, 244. New York: Da Capo Press, 1981.

[10] Arthur Hedley, "Polonaises, Mazurkas, Scherzos, Ballades." In *Chopin*, 186–89. New York: Collier, 1962.

was uncommon during that period. As interpreters, it is crucial for us to craft our own narratives in order to deliver a compelling performance.

Ballade No. 3 starts with a lyrical statement that doesn't immediately contribute to the piece's development but reappears towards the end in different mood. The recurring rhythmic middle sections illustrate Chopin's inventive approach to imitate the sound of waves. These sections resurface three times throughout the piece, each time within a distinct musical context, perhaps reminiscent of changing scenes in the poem that served as its inspiration, should the interpreter choose to follow that direction. As the composition unfolds, all the musical characters resurface, engage with one another, and culminate in the impassioned coda with the materials from the opening.

As the final Ballade composed by Chopin, *Ballade No. 4 in F minor, Op. 52*, was written during a period when Chopin was grappling with declining health and complexities in his relationship with George Sand. From an interpreter's perspective, while it may draw initial inspiration from external sources, the majority of the piece appears to reflect Chopin's personal journey and emotions.

The piece starts with a tranquil and bell-like melody, gradually approaching from a distant perspective, evoking a sense of gentleness but uncertainty. This melodic introduction sets the stage for the unfolding narrative, aided by a prolonged dominant harmony that adds an anticipatory quality on the musical character. The primary theme, serving as the core of the

narrative, firmly resides in the home key of F minor. However, it oscillates between F minor and its relative key Ab major, establishing a straightforward yet somewhat uncertain ambiance, as if reflecting emotional conflicts within one's mind. This theme undergoes further development, traversing in various key regions and undergoing shifts in texture, eventually culminating in the first climactic moment. Following this, it transits into the calm but disheartened second theme, now in the key of B flat major with similar rhythm used in the beginning of *Ballade no.2*. Subsequently, the development section appears relatively brief when juxtaposed with the extensive first theme section. As the piece unfolds, the first theme makes a canonic imitation, engaging in a complex interplay with the second theme during the recapitulation. This contrapuntal exchange intensifies dramatically, culminating in a brief moment of silence. This pause serves as a prelude to the onset of the sorrowful and agonizing coda, featuring challenging technical passages such as double-3rds. The character intensifies with acceleration towards the conclusion, ultimately settling firmly on the tonic key of F minor.

Chopin's Ballades serves as a prominent illustration of how composers during the Romantic era incorporated the notions of affect and musical character from the Baroque and Classical periods. They experimented with these techniques, enriching them with structural innovations, potential inspiration drawn from literary sources, and personal reflections, ultimately elevating the genre of character pieces to new artistic heights. As a performer, it is important to engage with Chopin's notations on the score while taking into account the overall structure and literary context.

Recital II

Wednesday, March 16th, 2022

8pm

Gildenhorn Hall

Humanity

Papillons, Op.2 (1831) — Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Kreisleriana, Op.16 (1838)

I. Äußerst bewegt

II. Sehr innig und nicht zu rasch

III. Sehr aufgeregt

IV. Sehr langsam

V. Sehr lebhaft

VI. Sehr langsam

VII. Sehr rasch

VIII. Schnell und spielend

-Intermission-

Sonata No.8 in Bb Major, Op.84 (1944) — Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

I. Andate dolce— Allegro moderato

II. Andante sognando

III. Vivace

The term "humanity" in literature undergoes a transformation originating from the Latin term "*humanitas,"* denoting human nature and benevolence. Throughout the annals of human civilization, music consistently assumes a significant role, serving as both a reflection and a product of humanity. In the context of Western music's evolution, the piano repertoire exhibits numerous traces of human essence. The Romantic Era's Expressionist movement further encouraged composers to immerse themselves subjectively in their compositions. During the Romantic era, composers began to incorporate expressionistic influences into their compositions through the use of descriptive titles and recurring musical characters. This practice not only enriched their own musical language but also served as a source of inspiration for later composers who continued to explore these expressive tendencies in their own unique ways. Tonight's program showcases contrasting examples of such practices, featuring two prominent composers: Robert Schumann and Sergei Prokofiev.

The first half of the program will feature two important suites by Robert Schumann, each displaying the influences of literature, people, and his imaginative musical characters and moods. Aspiring to become a concert pianist, Schumann suffered hand injuries early in his career, compelling him to cease performing. However, the insights he gained as a performer later facilitated the creation of numerous masterworks for the piano repertoire. Similar to Chopin, whose compositions were partially inspired by classical titans like Bach and Beethoven, Schumann, in his diary entries from 1831 to 1832, revered these legends as his musical idols.[11] In a letter to Clara in 1838, Schumann expressed, "I'm affected by everything that goes on in the

[11] Joan Chissell, "Introduction." In *Schumann: Piano Music*, 6. British Broadcasting Corporation, 1986.

world and think it all over in my own way, politics, literature, and people, and then I long to express my feelings and find an outlet for them in music."[12] This correspondence illustrates Schumann's keen interest in the events surrounding him. Through his compositions, we observe a shift in emotional and mental states from his earlier works to later ones, as he infuses his own personality and character into the music, creating distinct pieces that are intimately tied to him and appreciated by later composers like Prokofiev.

Joy. Humor. Wonder.

Papillons, Op.2 (1831) Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

At the age of twenty-one, Schumann created his celebrated piece, "*Papillons, Op. 2,*" a suite comprising twelve small pieces, predominantly dances, along with a brief introduction. In his earlier years, Schumann was unreserved in expressing his musical ideas to his friends in letters and in his personal diary. Consequently, we are able to discern his thoughts during the compositional process. He greatly admired the novelist Jean Paul, particularly his concept of a masked ball.

Papillons is often linked to Jean Paul's novel *Flegeljahre (The Awkward Age)*, in which the twins Walt and Vult assume various alter egos, constantly donning masks representing different personalities. Some might consider this as the beginning of the formation of Schumann's dual personality— "Florestan" and "Eusebius." In his letter to his mother on 17 April 1832,

[12] Joan Chissell, "Introduction." In *Schumann: Piano Music*, 7. British Broadcasting Corporation, 1986.

Schumann asks her to have "*everyone read the final scene of Jean Paul's Flegeljahre… tell them that the Papillons actually transforms the masked ball into tone.*"[13] The assertion is especially evident in the initial movements, such as the "aurora-borealis sky full of crossing, zig-zag figures" depicted in No. 2 and the bare octave melody of No. 3, illustrating Jean Paul's description of "What most of all attracted him and his astonishment was a giant boot that was sliding around, dressed in itself."[14] The Finale of *Papillons* serves as a notable instance of how Schumann translates his envisioned masked ball into a tangible auditory experience. The "bell-like" A, chiming six times at different volume, serves as a symbolic conclusion to the ball.[15] In the final measures, Schumann further enhances this effect by instructing the performer to gradually release the tied chord note by note, creating a deliberate vanishing of sound, followed by a cadence imbued with a sense of humor.

While some may interpret Schumann's correspondence as evidence of a direct translation from Jean Paul's literary words to musical sound, Schumann himself never explicitly acknowledges such a connection. Scholar John Daverio suggests that "*Flegeljahre* stands in a relationship to *Papillons* at once reflective and catalytic," implying a complex interplay between the two works.[16] This viewpoint is especially pertinent, as *Papillons* notably deviates in its fragmented structure from Schumann's other compositions that are heavily influenced by literature. Unlike

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[13] John Daverio, "Music as Literature." In *Robert Schumann: Herald of a "New Poetic Age"*, 82-85. Oxford University Press, 1997.

[14] Joan Chissell, "The Early Years" In *Schumann: Piano Music*, 12. British Broadcasting Corporation, 1986.

[15] Ibid.

[16] John Daverio, "Music as Literature." In *Robert Schumann: Herald of a "New Poetic Age"*, 83. Oxford University Press, 1997.

works such as *Carnaval, Op. 9, Fantasiestücke, Op.12, Kinderszenen, Op. 15, Bunte Blätter, Op.99* and *Albumblätter, Op.124* that are accompanied by descriptive titles, *Papillons* lacks such descriptive labelings.

For interpreters and performers, this suggests that *Papillons* should be approached with a recognition of its diverse musical characters and emotional nuances within its various short sections. These musical vignettes can be seen as echoing the diverse personalities found in *Flegeljahre,* but interpreted through the lens of our own emotions and understanding.

The *Papillons* can be seen as the initial step in Schumann's exploration of character pieces, drawing influence from his surroundings. Brimming with joy and humor, the masked ball extends throughout the work, with each short piece resembling a scene in his mind. From Schumann's diary entry in 1831, he wrote, "The 'self-obliteration' of the *Papillons* may perhaps be open to criticism but is certainly not inartistic."[17] This demonstrates Schumann's full awareness of the potential implications of composing with such an approach. Fortunately, the reviews for *Papillons* were positive, motivating Schumann to continue this trend in his subsequent compositions.

Love. Madness. Serenity.

Kreisleriana, Op. 16 (1838) Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

[17] Joan Chissell, "The Early Years" In *Schumann: Piano Music*, 13. British Broadcasting Corporation, 1986.

Following the initial success of *Papillons*, Schumann continued to explore further possibilities in composition, seeking to translate the ideas in his mind into musical form. A significant work in this creative journey is *Carnaval, Op. 9*, where he titles each movement or short piece with descriptive names inspired by the people he knew, intertwined with his own imaginative touch. Although Schumann did not explicitly provide explanatory notes in the score to clarify the rationale behind each movement's title, he embedded certain musical elements within the compositions to support his intentions. For instance, Clara's portrait is subtly woven into the descending counter-melody (A flat, G, F, E flat, D) in *Chiarina*. Schumann himself referred to *Carnaval* as "a higher kind of Papillons."[18]

Carnaval Op.9 endures as a timeless favorite among Schumann's suites of character pieces, notable for the abundance of clues and references provided by Schumann compared to his other collections of character pieces. While Schumann persisted in composing within this trend, he began concealing his ideas in similar compositions by either omitting titles or assigning straightforward names such as *Waltz* and *Fantasie*. The lack of success of *Davidsbündlertänze, Op. 6* may be attributed, in part, to this trend. Similar to *Carnaval*, *Davidsbündlertänze* is a suite of character pieces. The initial edition of *Davidsbündlertänze* features the authors of the pieces as "Florestan" and "Eusebius." In Schumann's own words, he describes *Davidsbündlertänze* as a composition of "Florestan" and "Eusebius" channeled through his hand. However, this approach was not favored by publishers, leading Schumann to revise the composition and publish the

[18] Joan Chissell, "The Early Years" In *Schumann: Piano Music*, 22. British Broadcasting Corporation, 1986.

second edition years later, removing all traces of "Florestan" and "Eusebius" in *Davidsbündlertänze*, at least on the surface.

Composed in 1838 following *Davidsbündlertänze*, *Kreisleriana Op. 16* follows similar approaches to the other suites of character pieces, albeit without descriptive titles. If *Papillons Op.2* represents the brighter side of Schumann's personality, *Kreisleriana Op.16* delves into the other extreme of his character. Following *Papillons,* Schumann developed an obsession with music that drew inspiration from various literary sources. *Kreisleriana* is a seminal piano work by Schumann, heavily influenced by E.T.A. Hoffmann's writings. Unlike the *Papillons* where the literary connection is not as pronounced, *Kreisleriana* draws direct references from Hoffmann's writing. The very title of the piece originates from "Kreisler," an eccentric, untamed, and witty conductor found in one of Hoffmann's novels. In this novel, Kreisler is portrayed as a musical character, embodying both madness and serenity simultaneously. This characterization of Kreisler aligns with Schumann's own imaginative figures, "Florestan" and "Eusebius," residing within his mind. Consequently, *Kreisleriana* comprises numerous dramatic moments interspersed with moments of tranquility. Despite dedicating the work to Chopin, Schumann expressed in a letter to Clara Schumann, "You and one of your ideas play the main role in it, and I want to dedicate it to you – yes, to you and nobody else – and then you will smile so sweetly when you discover yourself in it."[19]

[19] Eric Frederick Jensen, "Courtship and Marriage." In *Schumann*, 124. Oxford University Press, 2012.

The similarities between Schumann and Kreisler from Hoffmann's novel are indeed fascinating. Both individuals possess intense and unpredictable personalities, frequently shifting between somber and depressive states, and highly energetic and vibrant moods. Interestingly, these emotional fluctuations align with early indicators of depression and schizophrenia as recognized in the field of psychology, highlighting the intricate and multifaceted nature of their emotional journeys. Musically, both Schumann and the character Kreisler share a deep admiration for Bach, which is reflected in the presence of contrapuntal and prelude-like sections in *Kreisleriana*. For instance, one can observe the passionate fugal section and chorale-like conclusion in No.7, as well as the gigue-like rhythmic motif in No.8, which bear some influence of Bach's compositional techniques and styles.

The shift from *Papillons* to *Kreisleriana* provides insight into how Schumann channels his inner self by drawing inspiration from both Jean Paul and E.T.A. Hoffmann. While Schumann may have been somewhat reserved in revealing his darker aspects in *Papillons*, he exhibits no hesitation in doing so through *Kreisleriana*. Delving into Schumann's compositions involves identifying the inner characters of "Florestan" and "Eusebius," even when their presence may not be explicitly evident on the score. Interpreting Schumann's music often requires uncovering these characters by thoroughly analyzing the lines and structure, thereby enabling a more nuanced and authentic performance reflective of Schumann's expressive intentions.

Both Chopin and Schumann are prominent figures in the domain of Romantic expressionism, yet they adopt distinct approaches to crafting character pieces. Chopin employs a variety of musical

personas within his compositions through the use of lyricism and structure. In contrast, Schumann expresses his inner world through literary references and frequent shifts in mood, presenting fragmented pieces that constitute his musical collections. The juxtaposition underscores the depth and diversity that characterizes the musical expression of the Romantic era. Moreover, it serves as a prime illustration of character pieces that would go on to inspire later composers in their own creative endeavors.

Sorrow. Fear. Hope…?

Piano Sonata No.8 in B-Flat, Op. 84 (1944) Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

When considering Prokofiev's compositions, his piano sonatas and concertos often take precedence. Some of his earlier works, such as the *Ten Pieces, Op. 12, Sarcasms, Op. 17, and Visions fugitives, Op. 22*, are occasionally overlooked. Most of these works comprise sets of character pieces with descriptive titles like Gavotte, Mazurka, and Caprice. It is evident that Prokofiev held the tradition of character pieces found in Schumann's suites in high regard, incorporating his own personality and musicality into these compositions. A notable example of this approach is seen in his *Music for Children, Op. 65 (1935)*, which, akin to Schumann's *Kinderszenen, Op. 15*, consists of twelve pieces embodying the spirit of "Peter and the Wolf."[20] In his autobiography, Prokofiev identifies five elements that have pervaded his art to varying degrees during different periods: classicism, innovation, the motor element, the lyric element,

[20] James Friskin, and Irwin Freundlich. "The Twentieth Century Composers in Europe." In *Music for the Piano; A Handbook of Concert and Teaching Material from 1580 to 1952*, 233. New York: Dover Publications, 1973.

and the grotesqueness element.[21] Classicism likely refers to the traditional forms he employs in his compositions, while innovation pertains to his distinctive harmonic language. The motor, lyric, and grotesqueness elements encapsulate what could be described as the core musical characters in Prokofiev's work. These characters are prevalent in his short character pieces, manifesting individually before interacting and ultimately converging in the climactic moments. A notable exemplar of this can be found in his *Piano Sonata No. 8*.

Prokofiev's *Piano Sonata No. 8* is often regarded as the culmination of his "War Sonatas" and is seen as a poignant reflection of his life during wartime. World War II, a tragic historical event, had a profound impact on Prokofiev's life.[22] Although the war fought by the Soviet Army (the Great Patriotic War) took place from 1941 to 1945, Prokofiev began composing Sonata No. 8, along with Sonatas No. 6 and No. 7, as early as 1938. During this period, the hardships faced by people in Western Europe and the brutal purges occurring in Russia likely served as sources of inspiration for Prokofiev in crafting his "War Sonatas." The war significantly disrupted Prokofiev's life and artistic output, eventually leading to his deteriorating mental and physical health and ultimately resulting in his death in 1953.

In contrast to the other two "War Sonatas," which start with military-related motifs like brass calls and marching rhythms, *Sonata No. 8* opens with a simple, choral-like melody characterized by contrapuntal and spaced textures, an example of his lyrical character. This melodic theme

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[21] John Gillespie, "Germany, Austria, Italy, and the Slavic Countries" In *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music;*, 359. Belmont, Calif, Wadsworth Pub. Co. 1965, n.d.

[22] Boris Berman, "Prokofiev's Life and His Musical Language." In *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas: A Guide for the Listener and the Performer*, 17-18. Yale University Press, 2023.

subsequently traverses various "military scenes" across different registers under his motor character, culminating in a powerful climax at the end of the first movement. This expressive and lyrical section is somewhat unusual for Prokofiev and functions like a narrative, akin to a musical documentary based on Prokofiev's subjective experience in the war.

The second movement of Prokofiev's Piano *Sonata No. 8* unveils a melodious theme distinguished by unexpected dissonances and unconventional harmonic progressions, resulting in a surprising and distinctive sonority. The title *Andante Sognando*, translating to "dreamily in walking tempo," is an unusual marking not typically found in a sonata. Its inclusion can be interpreted as Prokofiev's specific intention to convey a particular mood in this movement. In addition to the dreamy mood suggested, the movement appears to embody a fusion of Prokofiev's lyrical and grotesque characters. Some scholars, like Levon Hakobian, suggest that this "minuet"showcases Prokofiev's reinterpretation of the classical genre, possibly influenced by his experience in composing his *Classical Symphony*.[23] Although the movement's structure, tempo, and accompaniment convey the qualities of a minuet, Prokofiev adds a distinctive twist. For instance, he establishes the dance-like ambiance but then omits the downbeats in the left-hand accompaniment. This deviation from the conventional minuet challenges fundamental elements usually linked to dance music. Some interpretations suggest that Prokofiev's unconventional approach may carry a layer of irony, possibly directed at the war that had a profound and detrimental impact on his life. Indeed, composers like Prokofiev and Shostakovich often challenged the audience's preconceived stereotypes associated with existing musical

[23] Levon Hakobian, "The War and the Early Post-War Years." In *Music of the Soviet Era: 1917-1991*, 162. Routledge, 2019.

characters to convey their inner emotions or convey specific messages. This approach recalls the "cantus firmus" technique, which was prevalent in the history of Western music from the Medieval Period. However, the key distinction lies in the fact that instead of using an existing melody, these composers used established musical character traits like accompaniments you would expect in a waltz, as a foundation upon which to build their compositions, adding layers of complexity and depth to their works.

If the first two movements represent Prokofiev's personal expressions, the contrasting third movement embodies the harsh reality that confronts him. It incorporates numerous military references, employing extreme dynamics, brutal dissonances, and frequent shifts in registers. The movement concludes with an explosive coda featuring the sound of bells and recalling fragments. The musical plan of this movement bears a resemblance to the finales of his Sonata No. 6 and Sonata No. 7. These similarities in structure and style provides evidence that these compositions share a common timeframe in Prokofiev's creative output.

While piano sonatas are typically classified as a major musical genre with more rigid structural requirements, Prokofiev's *Piano Sonata No. 8* illustrates how later composers integrated their own personal experiences writing character pieces. This integration includes the use of pre-existing musical character traits, personal introspection, and descriptive titles within the framework of this 'classical' music genre. Additionally, it serves as a significant musical illustration of the evolution of the character piece genre. This genre transitioned from the classical structures established by luminaries such as Bach and Beethoven, later modified and

reinterpreted by Chopin and Schumann, and ultimately returned to older frameworks by composers like Prokofiev.

The juxtaposition of Prokofiev's use of a distinctive, uninvolved, almost mechanical character, and a contrasting simple, warm, and expressive figure resonates intriguingly with Schumann's portrayal of "Florestan" and "Eusebius." As a performer, it is essential to recognize and emphasize these musical characters while maintaining a unified structural interpretation. This nuanced approach ensures a comprehensive and evocative performance, highlighting the complex emotional interplay woven into the fabric of the music.

Recital III

Sunday, April 23rd, 2023

5pm

Gildenhorn Hall

Literary Inspirations

Impromptu in B Flat Major, D. 935, No.3 (1827) — Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Années de pèlerinage, Book I, S. 160 (1855) — Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

II. *Au lac de Wallenstadt*

IV. *Vallée de Obermann*

-Intermission-

Embryons desséchés (1913) — Erik Satie (1866-1925)

I. d'Holothurie

II. d'Edriophthalma

III. de Podophthalma

Gaspard de la nuit, M.55 (1908) — Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

I. Ondine

II. Le Gibet

III. Scarbo

In the two previous recitals, we observed instances of how Chopin composed sectional works with a narrative quality, and how Schumann incorporated core ideas from E.T.A. Hoffmann and Jean Paul's novels, transforming literary concepts into musical expressions. The third recital, titled "Literary Inspirations," will showcase works that draw deeply from literary references but in a slightly different manner compared to Chopin and Schumann.

Schubert: Impromptus in B Flat Major, D. 935, No.3

"Impromptu" is a genre of small-scale instrumental music that typically features a simple musical idea presented in an expressive and lyrical style. The theme may be elaborated through decoration, alteration, and improvisation, resulting in a piece with a variety of colors and shapes. While Impromptus were not considered an important genre until Franz Schubert composed eight Impromptus in two sets, all completed by 1827.

The Impromptu *No.3 in B-flat Major, D.935* is structured as a straightforward theme and five variations. Schubert occasionally incorporated theme and variations sections in his compositions, as seen in the fourth movement of his celebrated *Piano Quintet in A major, D. 667*, where he employed a theme from his lied "*Die Forelle*" and developed it into variations. Scholar Jeffrey Perry characterizes these variation movements as distinct from Beethoven's, as they do not transform the original theme into new thematic material.[24] Instead, in the I*mpromptus in B-flat major*, Schubert emphasizes melodic decoration and changes in mood, tonality and character.

[24] Jeffrey Perry, "The Wanderer's Many Returns: Schubert's Variations Reconsidered." *The Journal of Musicology* 19, no. 2 (2002): 380.

Why did Schubert choose the title "Impromptus" instead of "Theme and Variations"? Brian Newbould believes that Schubert's choice of "Impromptu", "might have signified a piece he had improvised at the keyboard, and played again from memory a few times… without the need to write it down."[25] He bolsters his arguments by scrutinizing the manuscripts of the Impromptus in contrast to other significant works by Schubert. In this examination, he highlights the absence of any signs of corrections or revisions in the manuscripts of the *Impromptus*, which diverges from Schubert's well-documented habit of often revising his musical manuscripts. This holds particularly true in the *Impromptus in B Flat Major*, where Schubert repurposes a theme that he originally used in the musical play "*Rosamunde*" for orchestra and singers. Schubert was so fond of the theme that he later incorporated it into his *String Quartet in A minor, D.804*, the variations in this Impromptu make use of such techniques as dotted and syncopated rhythms in Variation 1 and transitions in keys into new keys Variations 3 and 4.

Schubert's *Impromptu in B-flat Major* is an excellent example of the creative freedom Impromptus offer to composers. As a performer, it is crucial not to overindulge in the liberties implied by this genre, as structurally it remains a meticulously planned theme and variations.

Liszt: Années de pèlerinage S.160

"*Années de Pèlerinage*" is a suite composed by Franz Liszt between 1848-1854 during his concert tour across Europe. Several pieces were initially composed and published in his "*Album d'un Voyageur.*" Subsequently, Liszt revised and rearranged them into "*Première Année: Suisse"*

[25] Brian.Newbould, "34 Productivity, Improvisation, Process and Genre." In *Schubert's Workshop*, Routledge, 2023.

("First Year: Switzerland"), a collection of nine pieces with associations to Switzerland. In contrast to Schumann and Chopin, Liszt openly acknowledges his inspirations from selected poems. He goes a step further by incorporating specific paragraphs from these poems directly into these works.

II. Au lac de Wallenstadt

Lake Wallenstadt is one of the largest lakes in Switzerland. During his travels, Liszt would often frequent the area surrounding the lake. It is noteworthy that in this collection, Liszt incorporates works inspired by the poet Lord Byron's epic poem, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* such as *Au lac de Wallenstadt, Orage, Vallée d'Obermann, Eglogue and Les cloches de Genève: Nocturne*.[26] Liszt incorporated carefully chosen paragraphs from Byron's "*Pilgrimage"* that aligned with the moods and characters of the compositions, placing them ahead of the actual musical content. For example, in *Au lac de Wallenstadt*, Liszt includes the following paragraphs:

"…….Thy contrasted lake, With the wild world I dwell in, is a thing, Which warns me, with its stillness, to forsake Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring."

The notable aspect of this piece lies in Liszt's innovative crafting of the left-hand accompaniment. By combining repeating triplets and eighth notes, along with the use of the damper pedal and a serene melody, he produces a rippling effect in the sound, mimicking the peaceful afternoon waters of Lake Wallenstadt. Liszt's impressionistic approach had a notable

[26] Ben Arnold, "III. Keyboard Music." In *The Liszt Companion*, 78. Greenwood Press, 2002.

influence on later French Impressionist composers such as Debussy and Ravel, who drew upon similar techniques when creating music associated with water. A prime example of this influence is evident in Liszt's "*Les Jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este"* (The Fountain) from *Années de pèlerinage III, S.163*, which served as an inspiration for Ravel's "*Jeux d'eau.*"

Despite the clear literary reference to Lord Byron's poem in Liszt's work, his partner Marie d'Agoult asserts that it was actually at Lake Wallenstadt where "Franz composed a melancholic piece for me, imitating the sighing of the waves and the rhythm of the oars. I have never been able to listen to it without shedding tears."[27] While the exact sequence of events regarding whether Liszt was inspired by the poem before or after his arrival at Lake Wallenstadt remains unclear, *Au lac de Wallenstadt* is a work for which Liszt authorized publication of the literary reference in the score.

VI. Vallée d'Obermann

Liszt's "*Vallée d'Obermann"* is a programmatic work influenced by Étienne Pivert de Senancour's novel *"Obermann"* from 1804. It recounts the story of Obermann in Switzerland. Liszt draws upon portions of the literary work in the introduction of the piece[28]:

"What do I want? What am I? What may I demand of nature?...."

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[27] Ben Arnold, "III. Keyboard Music." In *The Liszt Companion*, 79. Greenwood Press, 2002.

[28] Kenneth Hamilton, "From Dante's Inferno to Obermann's Valley." In Doran, Robert, ed. *Liszt and Virtuosity*, 61-62. University of Rochester Press, 2020.

The primary focus of "*Vallée d'Obermann"* is Obermann's contemplation of nature and his own existence. The piece begins with a simple, melancholic descending melody that later serves as the primary motivic idea that is developed throughout. Liszt skillfully employs rests and timing to create an introspective mood in the opening bars. The same descending melody is then developed in the C major section, where the pure sonority creates a striking contrast to the dark introduction. In my perception, this segment resonates with a heavenly quality due to Liszt's choice of register and harmonic language. The identical material is subsequently transformed into a storm-like passage, marked by tremolo and fortississimo indications on the score. The music undulates, creating a sensation akin to the mountains described in the poem of *Obermann*. It then transitions back to a serene section in E major, concluding brilliantly in the same key, which contrasts with its initial key of E minor. Following this, the music diverges into two contrasting moods, a symbolism that some scholars interpret as representative of heaven and hell.[29]

As in *Au lac de Wallenstadt*, Liszt also includes a quotation from Lord Byron:

" Could I embody and unbosom now
That which is most within me,—could I wreak
My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
Soul—heart—mind—passions—feelings--strong or weak—
All that I would have sought, and all I seek,

[29] Peter Roberts, "The Romantic Image." In *Reading Franz Liszt: Revealing the Poetry Behind the Piano Music*, 89-91. Leonard Corporation, Hal, 2022.

Bear, know, feel—and yet breathe—into one word,

And that one word were Lightning, I would speak;

But as it is, I live and die unheard,

With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword."

From the performer's perspective, it can significantly enhance one's interpretation to translate some of the language and emotion that Liszt referenced into his musical compositions. For instance, the opening of *Vallée d'Obermann* harmoniously resonates with the melodic lines employed by Liszt, effectively capturing the inner turmoil of a character through the power of sound.

Satie: Embryons desséchés (1913)

Erik Satie is a French composer renowned for his unconventional approach to bridging the gap between "serious" music and music accessible to the general public. One of his most well-known works is his early composition *Trois Gymnopédies* (1888), which continues to enjoy widespread popularity among the general public. His later pieces can be challenging to grasp initially, as they often involve printed instructions for the performers that seem contradictory to established conventions. His innovative ideas and satirical quality in his later works deeply influenced "Les Six," including Auric, Tailleferre, Durey, Poulenc, Milhaud, and Honegger.[30]

[30] Friskin, James, and Irwin Freundlich. "The Twentieth Century Composers in Europe." Essay. In *Music for the Piano; A Handbook of Concert and Teaching Material from 1580 to 1952*, 237. New York: Dover Publications, 1973.

Despite receiving classical training as a pianist, Satie struggled at the Paris Conservatory, primarily due to his unusual behavior. Following his "graduation," he went on to perform as a pianist in various musical productions and salon concerts in Paris. Exposure to a diverse range of music allowed Satie to explore blending traditional classical idioms with his unique approach. The three-movement work, *Embryons desséchés*, initially suggests an impressionistic style similar to Debussy's works. However, Satie's composition obliquely references other music and literature, employing his trademark sarcasm, jokes, and idiosyncratic lyricism.

The initial movement of *Embryons desséchés*, *d'Holothurie*, according to Satie, takes inspiration from a sea cucumber observed in the Bay of Saint-Malo. It references Loïsa Puget's salon tune, *Mon rocher de Saint-Malo (My rock of Saint-Malo)*.[31] Satie incorporates the motif as the second subject of *d'Holothurie*, along with sarcastic instructions to performers like "*It was a very pretty rock! How sticky!"* to poke fun at it.

Satie claims the second movement, *d'Edriphthalma*, is based on a crustacean with immobile eyes. Satie references Chopin's popular funeral march from his second Piano Sonata, but misattributes it to "a famous mazurka by Schubert," who never wrote any mazurkas.[32] Satie transposes the romantic Db major key to C major, adds small ornaments to Chopin's melody and changes the accompaniment, possibly to make it sound more like Schubert's style.

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[31] "Embryons Desséchés." Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopedias. Accessed November 9, 2023. https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/493640.

[32] Robert Orledge, "Parody, Pastiche, Quotation and the Question of Influences." In *Satie the Composer*, 33. Cambridge University Press, 2008.

The third movement, *de Podophthalma*, takes its name from a ten-legged crustacean, which is now referred to as a decapoda. It begins with a hunting mood in F major that is interrupted by a quotation from Fiametta's "*Orang-utang Song*" harmonized with accidentals.[33] The piece ends on an unexpected cadence that is absurdly prolonged, satirizing a signature technique in some of Beethoven's compositions.

Erik Satie's bold and unconventional approach to classical music allowed him to poke fun at classical legends, his contemporaries, and even his audiences. His *Embryons desséchés* can be seen as a mini comedy without words. Satie's humorous character was not always appreciated in his time, but it had a lasting impact on later composers such as Poulenc and Shostakovich. As a performer, one must contribute to Satie's musical vision by infusing our own imagination and interpretation into his compositions. This can lead to a multitude of possibilities in sound, capturing the unique essence of Satie's music.

Ravel: Gaspard de la nuit, M.55 (1908)

Maurice Ravel is frequently compared to Debussy in discussions about French Impressionism. Although they were both active during the same period, their compositional approaches differ significantly. While Debussy is viewed as a rule breaker, Ravel is often seen as a traditionalist,

[33] "Embryons Desséchés." Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopedias. Accessed November 9, 2023. https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/493640.

carrying on the legacy of Fauré and Saint-Saëns. Interestingly, Ravel crossed paths with Satie during his time in Paris and was intrigued by Satie's bold experiments in composition.[34]

Gaspard de la nuit is a three-movement suite inspired by Aloysius Bertrand's eponymous poem collection, first published in 1842. Bertrand was a French Romantic poet who introduced prose poetry into French literature.[35] From Bertrand's poems, Ravel selected *"Ondine", "Le Gibet"*, and *"Scarbo,"* converting the texts into musical scenes.

In Bertrand's poem, *Ondine* is the tale of Gaspard and the water-princess Undine. Gaspard becomes enamored with Undine's charms, but is unable to follow her into the water as he is already married. When he rebuffs her advances, Undine disappears, leaving behind only tears and laughter before vanishing like a fleeting dream.[36] Ravel's composition emerges softly, with a rapid, undulating figure that transitions seamlessly into different tonalities, creating a sense of unrest. The seductive melodic line, possessing a lyrical quality reminiscent of a narrative, persists almost continuously throughout the piece. Through the use of varies pianistic techniques, Ravel masterfully captures the mood of swirling water, with its twinkling splashes and powerful currents. Contrasted to the tranquil accompaniment in Liszt's "*Au lac de Wallenstadt*," the water-inspired accompaniment in *"Ondine"* represents more turbulent and unsettled waters, aided by irregular and repeating accompaniments.

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[34] John Gillespie, "Debussy and Ravel" Essay. In *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music;*, 338. Belmont, Calif, Wadsworth Pub. Co. 1965, n.d.

[35] Stuart Friebert and David Young, eds. *Models of the Universe: An Anthology of the Prose Poem*,17. Oberlin College Press, 1995.

[36] Siglind Bruhn, "Apparitions and Visitations." In *Images and Ideas in Modern French Piano Music: The Extra-Musical Subtext in Piano Works by Ravel, Debussy, and Messiaen*, 181. Pendragon Press, 2010.

If one were to characterize *Ondine* as a tragic love story, *Le Gibet* would be a representation of the passing of life force from a dying man, imbued with a sense of pathos and despair. "Le Gibet" in French can be translated as "the gallows," which historically was a device used for the hanging of criminals, but is now banned. Ravel's composition is presented in three distinct layers: the first being the objective viewer (the melody) who is present in the scene, the second layer depicting the surroundings (harmonies) and the third and final layer featuring the distant but unmistakable sound of a bell obsessively tolling in the background. The recurring sound of the bell, created through the repetition of B-flats in various variations and registers, functions as a potent symbol throughout *Le Gibet*, persisting until the very end. It serves as an auditory reference to the city in the poem and embodies the last hope of the hanged man. The music begins with the sound of the bell tolling, and when it finally fades into silence, all hope is lost, leaving nothing but despair in its wake.

Ravel's "*Scarbo*" serves to depict the character of Scarbo as described in Bertrand's literary work. It conjures the image of a grotesque imp or demon, a portrayal that could have been lifted directly from the *Tales of Hoffmann*.[37] The characterization in *Scarbo* is largely symbolic; for instance, the initial leap could be interpreted as the demon's appearance, while the rapid, repeating notes might represent the Scarbo knocking on a door. Ravel's use of advanced piano techniques such as rapid arpeggios, trills, and repeated notes depicts Scarbo's mischievous and elusive nature, while the piece's frenetic and unsettled atmosphere reflects the chaotic and

[37] John Gillespie, "Debussy and Ravel" Essay. In *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music;*, 341. Belmont, Calif, Wadsworth Pub. Co. 1965, n.d.

unpredictable character of Scarbo as he appears in the nightmare of a young boy. Ravel's piano writing in "*Scarbo*" successfully captures the essence of the literary character, creating a vivid musical portrayal of Bertrand's frightening figure.

It is noteworthy that both Ravel and Bertrand were influenced by Symbolism, a late 19th-century movement that opposed traditional realism. As a performer, understanding Ravel's *Gaspard de la Nuit* as a series of grouped gestures rather than isolated technical elements is essential. The individual notes are not intended to be distinctly clear on their own; rather, the significance lies in the mood or character formed by sequences of notes. Thoughtful pedal application can effectively enhance specific sections, generating an echoing effect that aligns with the vivid descriptions present in Aloysius Bertrand's poem.

Summary

While characters in music are often associated with the genre of character pieces, it is important to recognize that characters in music should also be considered when performing non-character pieces such as sonatas and theme and variations. The genre of character pieces, along with the music related to this genre, is incredibly diverse and encompasses a wide array of musical expressions. It can indeed be challenging to fully capture the significance of the multitude of pieces that have contributed to this captivating genre within the constraints of just three recitals.

The first recital <<*Fantasies and Ballades*>> showcased how earlier composers such as Bach and Beethoven employed the concept of musical characters within the confines of the instrumental limitations and artistic freedoms of their time. Furthermore, it highlighted the profound influence of Chopin, who emerged as one of the foremost proponents of the genre, notably with the creation of his structurally complex character pieces, the Ballades. The second recital <<*Humanity*>> highlighted how composers such as Schumann and Prokofiev adeptly integrated the concept of incorporating two or more contrasting musical characters, drawing inspiration from literature and their personal reflections, into their compositions. The third recital <<*Literary Inspirations*>> demonstrates how composers utilize influences from literature, translating them into musical expressions that reflect their unique identities and perspectives.

As a performer, it is of course crucial to adhere to the notations left by the composers on the score. However, it is also important to recognize that these notations may not fully encapsulate all the ideas that were in the composer's mind. Through these three recitals, I have developed a

heightened sensitivity to the inner messages conveyed by the composers, enabling me to incorporate these insights into my interpretations.

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