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ANALYTICAL PROGRAM NOTES

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ANALYTICAL PROGRAM NOTES

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JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

(1685 - 1750)

J.S. Bach was the most famous member of the large German musical family of Bachs, and the greatest genius of Baroque music. He was born in Eisenach, but at age ten went to Ohrdruf to live with an older brother after the death of both of his parents. He was trained as an organist and a violinist. Bach's creative life is generally divided into 5 periods: the early years, the Weimar years, the Cöthen years, the Leipzig years, and the last years. His first positions were as organist in Arnstadt (1703-1707) and in Mühlhausen (1707-1708). While at Arnstadt he made the famous pilgrimage on foot to Lübeck in 1705 to study with Buxtehude. Bach left his Mühlhausen post due to quarrels between Orthodox and Pietists sects. Since the Pietists opposed music in the church service, Bach sided with the Orthodox faction. He lived in Weimar from 1708 to 1717, serving first as court organist and later as concert master of the orchestra. This was the period of his great clavier and chamber compositions. He was employed at the court in Cöthen from 1717 to 1723 as capellmeister and director of chamber music. Here he completed the Orgelbüchlein, the Well-Tempered Clavier, the Inventions, and the Brandenburg Concertos. Bach served as cantor at the St. Thomas church in Leipzig from 1723 to 1750. There he was required to compose a cantata for every Sunday and feast day of the liturgical year. Only about 200 of these cantatas have been preserved, including Christ lag in Todesbanden (No. 4) and Ein feste Burg (No. 80). Other monumental choral

compositions from this period are the oratorios, the two Passions according to St. John and St. Matthew, the Magnificat, and the great Mass in B minor. The Clavierübung was published in its four parts in 1731, including the Partitas, the Italian Concerto, the French Overture, and the Goldberg Variations. The six trio sonatas for organ were published during this period, as well as the six Schübler chorales. Bach's more abstract works were composed in his last period, the final five years of his life. They include the Musical Offering and the Art of the Fugue.

J.S. Bach became a musical master due to his ability to fuse the French, Italian, and German national styles into one Bachian style. His music abounds with examples of the Baroque Doctrine of the Affections. Great as he was, Bach was not recognized as a genius until almost a century after his death when his music was rediscovered, due in part to the efforts of Robert Schumann and Felix Mendelssohn.

Tocatta in G Major

Bach composed seven keyboard toccatas, "toccata" being the name given since the seventeenth century to keyboard compositions in which the touch and execution of the performer is exhibited in the interlacing of running passages and full chords with sections in imitative style.¹ The Toccata in G major was composed during his first Weimar period. In the copy belonging to the Bach pupil Gerber, this toccata is called "Concerto seu Toccata" because it is the only one of the seven toccatas to be in three-movement

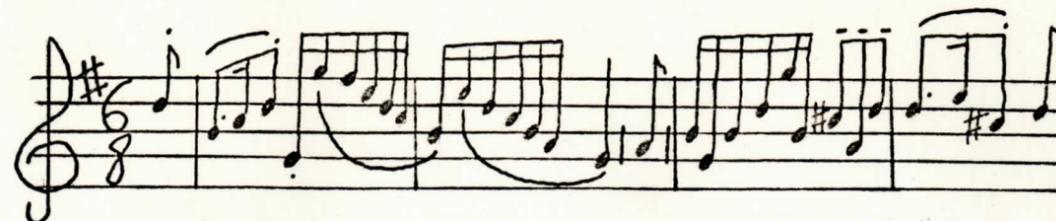
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concerto form.

The first movement is a brisk and rhythmic G major Allegro combining toccata-like passage work in alternation with full four part harmony. There are three main patterns: the descending single line of measures 1-3, followed by the descending chords of measures 3-5 which cadence into the contrapuntal section, measures 5-7.

These three patterns progress through various keys; from the beginning G major (measures 1-7), to the dominant D major (measures 7-17), to the parallel E minor (measures 19-27), and to the parallel minor of the dominant, B minor (measures 29-39). A contrasting section (measures 39-47) touches upon B minor, E major, A minor, D major, G major, E minor, and C major in a style alternating two notes in the left hand with an answering six-note phrase in the right. The dynamics are altered between the two hands until the section moves into the climactic G major forte section, measures 49-53, which is a repetition of the beginning. The coda, measures 53 to the end, moves upward on the keyboard and then downward to bring the movement to a quiet and somewhat sudden closing.

The middle Adagio in E minor is touching in its simplicity and expressiveness. It is written in a four part choral style. Its melancholy atmosphere is enhanced by the leap of a diminished seventh downward near the end (measures 22-23), surely the most dissonant and despairing interval Bach could have chosen.

Movement III, Allegro e presto, is a rapid three-voiced fugue, again in G major. The subject begins on the upbeat, a stylistic characteristic of Bach.



It enters in the second voice in measure 3, and in the third voice in measure 7. Throughout the fugue the keys of G major, A major, D major, E minor, and B minor are represented. A contrasting two-voiced middle section (measures 48-56) consists mainly of episodic material. The climax occurs in measures 66-74 which build to the highest dynamic level by measure 69 and then taper off, returning to the original G major material in measure 73. The phrases of the sequences in measures 81-84 and 89-91 are an echo of the episodic material exploited in the middle section, derived originally from the melodic contours of the subject itself. A peak before the end is reached in measures 91-93. The fugue closes by reducing the voices one by one in descending order until the remaining bass voice dies away on a G major scale. The ending is similar in its inconclusiveness to the ending of the first Allegro movement.

FRANZ LISZT
(1811 - 1886)

During his lifetime Franz Liszt became the personification of the Romantic Age. He functioned as a virtuoso, composer, teacher, lover, Abbé, and traveller. He is the famous creator of the Romantic symphonic poem with his orchestral composition Les Preludes. He has been called the greatest piano virtuoso of the nineteenth century. Born in Raiding, Hungary, Liszt began studying piano at age six and played his first public concert at age nine. His musical education was financed by several Hungarian aristocrats. His family moved to Vienna in 1821, where Liszt began studies with Czerny and Salieri. He went to Paris in 1823 and remained there for twelve years as the idol of elegant society. Here began his famous affair with the Countess d'Agoult (the authoress Daniel Stern), who abandoned her husband and three children to journey to Geneva, Switzerland with Liszt. They had three children of their own, one the famous Cosima, later to become the wife of Wagner. In 1836 Liszt and the Countess moved to Rome, where Liszt composed some of his finest piano works, including the three volumes of the Années de Pelerinage, the Transcendental Etudes, and the Paganini Etudes. Liszt retired as a virtuoso pianist in 1847. His second famous mistress was the Princess Carolyne Wittgenstein. She and Liszt lived together in Weimar from 1848 till 1859. These years were his most productive compositional period, including such works as the Faust Symphony, the Dante Symphony, and the fifteen Hungarian Rhapsodies. In 1865 Liszt received minor orders and became Abbé

Liszt. This change of lifestyle is reflected in his compositions of the period, the St. Francis Legends for piano and the Legend of St. Elizabeth, an oratorio. After 1880 Liszt functioned chiefly as a teacher.

The Années de Pelerinage (Years of Travel) consist of three volumes. The first, Suisse (Swiss), was mostly composed in 1835-1836; the second, Italie (Italy), was chiefly created in 1838-1839; and the third, on varied subjects, was written much later, between 1867 and 1877.

Au lac de Wallenstadt

Au lac de Wallenstadt (At the lake of Wallenstadt) is included in the first (Swiss) book. The Swiss subjects portrayed were observed during Liszt's 1835-1836 visit to Switzerland with the Countess d'Agoult. The short lyrical work may be compared to a Romantic art song in the manner of Schubert or Schumann. The simple melody is heard above a persistent arpeggiated left-hand accompaniment figure suggesting the rippling waters of the lake. Appended to the score are the following lines:

...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.³
Lord Byron, "Childe Harold"

Au lac de Wallenstadt is composed in the basic tonality of A-flat major. The first 20 measures present the basic thematic material in two similar phrases. Measures 20-35 give to the hearer a repeated, but varied, presentation of the theme with octaves. The tonality

of these first 35 bars stays clearly in the key of A-flat major. The central portion of the piece (measures 36-61) is really a development of the basic thematic material. Quite foreign keys are explored (e.g. C# minor and B major). The harmonic tension is accompanied by an increase in dynamics. In measure 60 there is a dominant cadence to the original key of A-flat. Measures 62-102 present a rhythmic and melodic variation of the basic theme. The tonality remains close to the original A-flat, with some parallel minor used in measures 79-85. Measures 103-112 comprise the coda, with arpeggiated figures presented over a tonic pedal point.

Sonetto 104 del Petrarca

To Liszt, one of the chief functions of instrumental music was to convey a poetic impression or experience.⁴ All the works in Book II of the Années de Pèlerinage were inspired by literary or artistic models. His three Sonnets After Petrarch were composed during the late 1830's during his and the Countess d'Agoult's sojourn in Italy. He selected three sonnets (Nos. 47, 104, and 123) by the fourteenth century Italian poet Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374) to originally compose songs to and later rewrite as piano pieces in 1846. The Sonetto 104 del Petrarca is generally considered to be the finest of the three.⁵ The sonnet on which the piece is based is subtitled "Love's Inconsistency" and is from the series entitled "To Laura in Life". Laura was a married woman whom Petrarch loved hopelessly from afar from the time he met her. The sonnet is as follows:

Warfare I cannot wage, yet know not peace;
I fear, I hope, I burn, I freeze again;
Mount to the skies, then bow to earth my face;
Grasp the whole world, yet nothing can obtain.

His prisoner Love nor frees, nor will detain;
In toils he holds me not, nor will release;
He slays me not, nor yet will he unchain;
Nor joy allows, nor lets my sorrow cease.

Sightless I see my fair; though mute, I mourn;
I scorn existence, and yet court its stay;
Detest myself, and for another burn;

By grief I'm nurtured; and, though tearful, gay;
Death I despise, and life alike I hate:
Such, lady, dost thou make my wayward state.⁶

Francesco Petrarch, Sonetto 104

The music is not meant to be programmatic, literally expressing the content of the poem, but rather strives to express the emotions experienced by the reader.⁷ The piece is fragmented. The abrupt beginning is four agitated and chromatic measures based on a three-note motive played in starkly open octaves. The material moves into the main key of the piece, E major, in the Adagio beginning measure 5. These measures, 1-6, serve as a prelude leading to a halting recitative section, measures 6-20. The melody is present in these measures, but receives an entirely different passionate treatment in the next section (cantabile con passione), where it swells and falls with Romantic fervor. A reflective state is reached beginning in measure 55, and the piece eventually sinks into a poignant lament by measure 70. Many of Liszt's characteristic virtuosic pianistic devices are employed: octaves, doubled notes, arpeggios, melody transpositions to the bass, crossing of hands, double trills; and sweeping runs abound. The highly-charged emotional quality of the music parallels the agitated words of the poem.

JOHANNES BRAHMS

(1833 - 1897)

One of the greatest masters of music, Johannes Brahms, was born in Hamburg. His early teachers were his father, Otto Cossel, and Eduard Marxsen. A child pianist, he presented his first public concert in Hamburg at age fourteen. Besides playing in local taverns, the young Brahms toured Germany with the Hungarian violinist Remenyi. He was heard by Joseph Joachim who sent him to Liszt and Schumann. Thus began his close friendship with Robert and Clara Schumann. Schumann aided the young pianist's career by saluting him as the coming genius of the age. After conducting in Vienna and travelling in Germany, Brahms made Vienna his home in 1878. By then his fame had been realized and he received many honors from the university there. As a composer, Brahms was more a master of conventional forms than an innovator of new ones.⁸ His music proved that the classic forms were far from exhausted. He enriched the genre of chamber music more than any composer after Beethoven. He reached the highest achievement of his vocal writing with his German Requiem in 1868. In 1876, at the age of 43, he began composing symphonies. No. 1 in C minor was called "The Tenth" by Hans von Bülow, placing Brahms in a direct line from Beethoven, who composed nine symphonies.⁹ His songs are equal to those of the great representatives of German lieder, Schubert and Schumann. Although never a popular virtuoso, Brahms was a master of the keyboard. He composed both large-scale piano works such as sonatas and variations and typically short pieces such as capriccios,

intermezzos, rhapsodies, and ballades.

Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann, Op. 9

The art of variation writing goes back as far as the writing of music. The most successful at the art have been Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms. There are two categories of variations: those which vary the melody, and those which extract some structural feature from the theme and devise variations with it as a basis. A sense of the theme, not just the melody itself, should unify all the segments into a satisfactory whole. The Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann, Op. 9 by Brahms belongs to the second category of variation types. Brahms composed altogether six sets of variations using themes by Schumann, himself, Hungarian music, Handel, and Paganini (two books). While not as brilliant and technically demanding as the later Handel and Paganini sets, the Schumann variations are nonetheless poetical and beautiful. They were composed in 1854 when Brahms was 21. The previous summer he had made the acquaintance of Robert and Clara Schumann, and the variations express the intimate friendship which developed. Originally titled Little Variations on a Theme of His, dedicated to Her, Op. 9 was composed as an act of homage to the beloved pair. The short (24 measure) theme in F# minor is from the first Albumblatt (Op. 99, No. 4) from Schumann's collected Bunte Blätter. The melody has a dignified character enhanced by its repetitious nature. It is in ternary (ABA) form with the melody line subdivided into six phrases, four of which are identical for the first six

notes. Thus from the beginning we know that the method of providing variety in the variations will be based more on the harmony than the melody. Yet this is not the strict format of the variations; they tend more towards a freedom of design. Variation I uses the melody as a cantus firmus with a uniformly dotted accompanying figure (). Variation II explores the characteristic dotted rhythm of the middle section of the theme and glides without a break into Variation III, where the melody is heard alternating from treble to bass. The accompanying figure employs triplets (). Variation IV draws attention further away from the melody by varying it considerably. It loses some of its stately dignity and becomes almost vocal in quality. The accompanying figure of two sixteenth notes is carried over to become the focal point of Variation V. In Variation VI the melody receives an entirely new treatment and flows securely amidst sweeping arpeggios. After the climactic character of Variations V and VI, No. VII comes as a complete surprise. The mood shifts to one of great subtlety, emphasizing the resolutions of the theme. In Variation VIII the theme is treated with infinite sadness. The accompanying figures of repeated octaves actually form a canon at the octave. Variation IX is a free rewriting of Schumann's second Albumblatt (Op. 99, No. 5) from the same Bunte Blätter.¹⁰ The melody again is sandwiched between arpeggios, as in Variation VI. Variation X presents a contrast of mood to the pessimistic No. VIII. Its simple and optimistic treatment of the melody has accompanying upward arpeggios. The melody is actually the bass line of the theme. In the manuscript Brahms calls this variation "Roses and Heliotropes have

bloomed".¹¹ Measure 30 begins with the theme of Clara Wieck from the Schumann Impromptus, Op. 5.¹² The short and repetitious Variation XI serves to set the stage for the animated Variation XII, which observes the theme from an entirely new and humorous staccato viewpoint. Variation XIII is a paraphrase of the theme in rapid sixteenth notes. We are aware of just how far the original material has been transformed in Variation XIV, yet its kinship with the theme is not obscure. The upper two voices present a canon in seconds accompanied by an arpeggiated bass. Variation XV emphasizes the theme by giving it predominance as a solo voice with flowing accompaniment. A canon at the sixth exists between the soprano and bass voices. This variation continues without pause into the final Variation XVI. The mood is one of calm and the music stark and somewhat severe. Only the essentials are presented: the original bass line in octaves with resolutions (reminiscent of Variation VIII) above. The dignity of the theme is again experienced. By using contrapuntal devices such as canon throughout the variations on a theme by the great Romantic Robert Schumann, Brahms proved that the classical devices and forms of the past were far from exhausted. Brahms sent the variations to the invalid Schumann while he was in Endinich. The following lines are extracts from the letter of appreciation Schumann returned:

"My dearest friend,

"What very great pleasure you have given me with your Variations. My Clara has already written to tell me how delighted she was with them. That you have studied counterpoint deeply is apparent in all the Variations. How tender. How original in its masterly expression, how ingenious every one of them.

How I should like to hear you or Clara play them. And then, the wonderful variety. The 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th with its retrogression in the second part. Then the 9th, how beautiful in form; the 10th, how full of art, how tender; how individual and delicate the 11th, and how ingeniously the 12th joins it. Then the 13th with its sweet metaphysical tones, and next the Andante, with its witty and artistic canon in seconds, and the 15th in GbM, and the 16th beautifully and blessedly ending in F#M. How sincerely my Clara and I have to thank you for your dedication.

"Your admiring friend,
"Robert"13

DMITRI KABALEVSKY

(1904 -)

Dmitri Borisovich Kabalevsky was born in Leningrad. By the age of six he played the piano by ear. He studied piano with Scriabin and Goldenweiser at the Scriabin Music School in Moscow from 1918 till 1925. Beginning in 1929 he studied at the Moscow Conservatory, where he later became a professor of composition in 1932. Kabalevsky's main musical influences came from Moussorgsky, Borodin, Tchaikovsky, and Scriabin. His music is marked by its clear tonality and energetic rhythms. Kabalevsky's compositional output includes works for piano, operas, cantatas, ballets, string quartets, and symphonies. Mainly recognized as a composer of piano pieces for children, his piano sonatas and preludes exist as more mature works.

24 Preludes, Op. 38

The 24 Preludes of Op. 38 were composed in 1946. They exploit all the keys of the tempered system in the manner of the Bach Well-Tempered Clavier or the Hindemith Ludus Tonalis. They vary in pianistic style from easy to very difficult and aim at exhibiting all the technical resources of the piano. Varying in mood, their only unifying element is the Russian folk song material generally used as a thematic basis for each prelude.

Prelude No. III

Prelude No. III (Vivace leggiero) begins pianissimo with sixteenth note runs in the right hand. The left hand enters with the folk-like theme which is presented both legato and staccato throughout the piece. There are three voices: one presenting the theme, one a staccato accompaniment, and the other the sweeping chromatic runs heard throughout. The melody centers around G major and is originally presented by the middle voice, then by the top voice, next by the middle voice but with a modal sound, and finally back to its original middle voice rendition. The climax is reached in measure 39. The breathless ending is dynamically subdued, yet effective due to its use of an unexpected evasion chord before the final G major.

Prelude No. VIII

Prelude No. VIII (Andante non troppo. Semplice e cantando) has a lyrical and melancholy character. It begins with a unique ascending bass line interspersed with descending chords in the middle voice. The bass style is unified throughout the piece. The melody has a vocal quality and a folk-like character enhanced by its uneven rhythm. The tonality throughout is F# minor with the pure form of the scale pointed out by an E-natural grace note in measure 9. There is a brief switch to F# major in measure 15. Measures 20-23 comprise an agitated chromatic section, ending with

a right hand lead back to the beginning. The ending section presents an interesting arrangement of the two upper voices in which the melody and countermelody are played simultaneously by the right hand. The piece ends very quietly on a minor third.

Prelude No. XX

Prelude No. XX (Andantino semplice) begins in a subdued and hesitating style, with the melody seeming to slip in from nowhere. Again the folk quality of the melody is pointed up by the free quality of the rhythm. The placement of the melody within the measures is such that it often begins on the upbeat with phrase endings on the off-beats. The left hand begins alone on the upbeat in the introductory three and a half measures. There is a contrast of the staccato left hand with the legato right hand which begins on the last beat of measure 4. The tonality is C minor. An eerie quality is produced at the beginning by the resolution of the D major seventh chords to C minor instead of G major. The left hand pattern of second inversion chords is established by the descending series in measures 9-12. An interesting effect is produced in measures 13-20 by the right hand grace notes leaping downward, resulting in a surprising tonality switch from B major to C minor. This pattern is in contrast to the left hand upward stepwise grace notes of C# to D, D to E-flat, and B-natural to C. Measures 16-20 contain the original melody sandwiched between the two grace

note patterns. Imitation occurs as the right hand melody of measures 20-24 begins in the left hand of measure 24 an octave lower. Also the left hand of measures 20-23 is repeated an octave higher by the right hand in measures 28-30. The middle voice is a fragment of the melody, enriched by G-flat, a tritone from C. Measures 27-35 are the climactic section; here the melody is fragmented and chromatic. In the upward left hand sequence of measures 34-35 the main feature is the inversion of thirds to sixths. The dynamic level increases until the diminuendo and ritard of measures 35-37. Here the right hand has a B-flat pedal point against a chromatic left hand. With the tempo of measure 39 there is a return to the original melody with right hand embellishments. The left hand chords have changed to the B minor and C minor sequence, and the sostenuto pedal is required to sustain a C octave pedal point. The chromatic spatterings of the middle voice lend a modal feeling. The coda, measures 48-53, presents a different character by the absence of the flowing eighth notes. The tonality is temporarily destroyed in measures 48 and 49 by the simultaneous use of two chords, but is restored at the end.

Prelude No. VI

Prelude No. VI (Allegro molto) creates a mood of urgency by its consistently running triplets, with the quarter-note melody interspersed among them. The doubling of the arpeggiated triplets presents the main technical problem of the piece. The tonality is B minor. The climax, measures 23-25, is a complete break of

character with very effective fortissimo chords moving downward and ending on B major. After the climax the melody is presented in D major and in its simplest setting with both hands in octaves. There are frequent meter changes in the piece with ^{6 4 3}4, 4, and 4 represented. At the end the tonality fluctuates between B major and B minor, but comes to rest on B minor.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Rudolf Steglich, Preface to Toccaten, by J.S. Bach (Munich: G.Henle Verlag, 1962), p. 4.
- ² Ibid., Notes, p. 93.
- ³ George Gordon Noel (Lord) Byron, Selected Poetry, ed. Leslie A. Marchand (New York: Modern Library, 1951), p. 453.
- ⁴ Alice Levine Mitchell, Liner notes to Liszt: Années de Pelerinage: Première Année-Suisse. Sergio Fiorentino, piano. Dover 97257-7.
- ⁵ Humphrey Searle, The Music of Liszt (New York: Dover Pub. Inc., 1966), p. 32.
- ⁶ Francesco Petrarca, The Sonnets, Triumphs and Other Poems of Petrarch, trans. various hands (New York: Hurst and Co., n.d.), p. 220.
- ⁷ (Author not recognized), Liner notes to Franz Liszt. Claudio Arrau, piano. Philips SAL 3783.
- ⁸ Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians, 4th ed., s.v. "Johannes Brahms."
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Karl Geiringer, Brahms: His Life and Work (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1936), p. 210.
- ¹¹ Ibid., p. 211.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Ibid.

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