

**ROBERT SCHUMANN**  
**(1810-1856)**

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**FANTASIESTÜCKE, Op. 12**

① No.1 Des Abends	4:09
② No.2 Aufschwung	2:54
③ No.3 Warum?	3:01
④ No.5 In der Nacht	3:45
⑤ No.7 Traumes Wirren	2:06
⑥ No.8 Ende vom Lied	4:47

**HUMORESKE in B-flat Major, Op. 20**

⑦ Einfach - Sehr rasch und leicht - Wie im Anfang	5:31
⑧ Hastig - Nach und nach immer lebhafter und stärker - Adagio	4:05
⑨ Einfach und zart - Intermezzo - Innig	7:29
⑩ Sehr lebhaft - Mit einigem Pomp - Zum Beschluß	10:56

**NOVELLETEN, Op. 21**

⑪ No.1 in F Major	5:26
⑫ No.2 in D Major	5:44
⑬ No.8 in F-sharp Minor	11:02

**SVIATOSLAV RICHTER, piano**

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## A ROMANTIC AT HEART, A ROMANTIC AT THE KEYBOARD – RICHTER PLAYS SCHUMANN

An ambivalent eroticist with – some would say – his head in the clouds, full of wild and extravagant ideas; lord over the realms of word and music; analyst and dreamer, child and high-flyer – and a man of the keyboard from the outset: Robert Schumann. It comes as no surprise that a many-faceted artist as full of contradictions as Richter is should turn his attention to this most romantic of all Romantic composers – a composer who went to some lengths to try and understand himself, and split his own personality into two separate identities in the process: “Florestan” was Schumann’s name for the boisterous hot-head in him, while “Eusebius” represented the tender and contemplative side of his nature. Franz Liszt, Schumann’s junior by only a year, saw that his fellow composer had already departed for a different world long before he threw himself into the Rhine and was committed to a mental asylum of his own free will. The *virtuoso assoluto* of his time believed that Schumann had spent too much time communing with the spirits. And it’s certainly true that his belief in ghosts assumed concrete form in the

asylum at Endenich near Bonn: defending the occult practice of shuffling tables around, Schumann insisted that “the tables know everything”. Be that as it may, the pianist certainly needs more than nimble fingers to play Schumann’s music properly. More important than manual dexterity, the Schumann interpreter needs a soul capable of flight and depth of feeling. And in these areas, “Brother Medardus from Zwickau”, if I may take the liberty of adapting E.T.A. Hoffmann and referring thus to my fellow Saxon, is literally ‘in the best of hands’ with Sviatoslav Richter. I hope not to try the reader’s patience with a few observations on Richter and Romantic music.

## A LOOK AT THE COMPETITION

Richter’s fellow pianist and countryman Vladimir Horowitz was not on good terms with everyone. One reason, according to Richter, was that this immensely gifted artist only really began to work in earnest after his marriage: as a bachelor, he was apparently ‘a bit of a lad!’ Horowitz’s attitude to the piano repertoire, however, could equally well be a Richter quotation: “Basically, all music is romantic”. (An absolute and absolutely subjective utterance that recalls Leonard Bernstein’s sweeping statement that “All music is jazz”. And

in Bernstein's case, one only needed to watch him conducting or playing to believe him.)

Richter tells the following anecdote: he, his teacher Neuhaus and the ultra-conservative Goldenweiser (the Russian 'maker of pianists') listened together to the first record by Horowitz to appear on the market. (It should be mentioned here that Goldenweiser had a female pupil who Neuhaus said played like a cleaning woman!) So: the three musicians listened to the supple, velvety tones of the young Horowitz. Afterwards Goldenweiser got all indignant: "He plays like a whore!" To which Neuhaus retorted: "I'd rather hear a whore play than a cleaning woman!" It can safely be assumed that he spoke for his pupil Richter too ...

## **AMONGST COLLEAGUES, OR CRYING IS ALLOWED**

Artur Rubinstein told the following story to the woman he was later to marry, Nina Dorliac:

"Everyone was talking about Richter. Well, I thought, maybe I should listen to this Richter. So I went to one of his concerts. He didn't play badly at all: he was a good craftsman, everything was professionally done. But it really wasn't anything out of the ordinary. Then at some point I noticed my eyes growing moist: tears began rolling

down my cheeks, and my heart grew all constricted."

## **PEU À PEU, OR NOT EVERYTHING AT ONCE**

Richter was well aware how complex Schumann is: music and literature are fused in his works with fine observation of the human soul and intense emotions. To truly understand Schumann's music, one has to learn to listen first of all. Richter himself could relate to the Romantic artist's inner conflict: "There is always a kind of emotional pressure in Schumann's music." And in the depths of Siberia, where culture is all but an unknown quantity, Richter generally began his recitals with Haydn. "If I start with Schumann, the audience has no idea what's going on." As for Brahms: "He is much too much for them, they get all afraid – there are just too many notes."

## **IMPOSSIBLE!**

Whatever allowances he made for the valiant Siberians, Richter was unable to be so generous-spirited towards his fellow pianists. The Canadian Glenn Gould is a case in point. Richter rates Gould's playing highly, but there are two things he criticizes: in addition to Gould's failure to observe repeats, mentioned elsewhere in this edition, "he insists that he

cannot stand Schubert and Schumann!" Although here it's only fair to point out that Richter is also fond of making extreme and paradoxical statements. And the older he becomes, the more often he does so ...

## PICTURES – WORDS – MUSIC

An artist of multiple talent such as Richter cannot help but be fascinated by another of his kind like E.T.A. Hoffmann. Hoffmann, in whom Richter saw himself reflected to an extent, was a composer, conductor (i.e. interpreter), painter and man of letters. His tale "Fantasy pieces after the manner of Callot" combines literature and drawing on the imaginative level. (The French engraver Jacques Callot, c. 1594–1635, gained great fame with his bizarre and ironic etchings.) Schumann took Hoffmann's tale and set the whole thing for solo piano: the work appeared under the title *Fantasiestücke* in 1837 as the composer's op. 12. Schumann was prompted to write the pieces by his beloved Clara's long-awaited agreement to marry him, although he had to wait another three years for the wedding to take place. Thus the eight 'Fantasy pieces' are correspondingly intimate in mood, and were doubtless not intended to all be performed at one go. For this

reason, we have left out no. 4 *Grillen* and no. 6 *Fabel* in this recording.

*Des Abends* (In the evening) should be played "very tenderly", an airy, hovering piece that is followed by a down-to-earth, sturdy *Aufschwung* (Upswing), probably the best-known piece of the set. Elaborate polyphony characterizes *Warum?* (Why?), while *In der Nacht* (In the night) offers demonics worthy of Eichendorff. Schumann was later to associate this, the most important piece in the set, with the tragic story of the lovers Hero and Leander, also applying it to his own situation. The title *Traumes Wirren* (A confusing dream) might indeed cause confusion: it is not a nightmare, but a gossamer elfin game. *Das Ende vom Lied* (The end of the song) is sketched in true Callot fashion. With penstrokes at once clear and ambiguous, Schumann mixes the most various ingredients together, from wedding celebrations to the death knell.

## A BORROWED NAME

Strictly speaking, there is nothing 'novel' about the *Novelletten*, op. 21, nor indeed are they some kind of short story in musical form. Spring 1838 found Schumann the best of spirits: his beloved Clara Wieck had agreed to marry him at last! All of a sudden he felt so light, it was as if he "could grow

wings" and fly, and of course a composer has to exploit such outbursts of creative energy. As chance would have it, there was a singer by the name of Clara Novello at the time. Thus, having come to the conclusion that "Wiecketten really wasn't a usable title", Schumann simply borrowed the singer's fine-sounding name for a work that he naturally dedicated to his Clara.

The first of the eight *Novelletten* is in F major: it is a kind of strongly characterized march with two trios, the first cantabile, the second contrapuntal. The virtuoso gets his money's worth in the D major piece that follows ("Very fast indeed and with bravura"), with which Franz Liszt proved to the proud composer that "it is effective"; there is a tender contrasting trio section here in A. No.8 in F sharp minor brings the set to a close: it is by far the longest of the pieces, and its many-facetedness is akin to the complexity of the previous year's *Fantasiestücke*. Among the music that follows the "very lively" opening section are two trios, the second recalling the closing idea of the composer's *Symphonic Études*; then comes a striking chordal subject ("cheerful, not too fast") that holds together and rounds off the third part – this in turn contains a wealth of new motifs.

## HUMOUR FROM VIENNA

1839 saw Robert Schumann visit Vienna for the first time, and the following piano works are connected with his stay in the city: the *Arabesque in C*, op. 18, the *Blumenstück in D flat*, op. 19, the *Humoreske in B flat*, op. 20 and the *Faschingsschwank aus Wien* (Viennese Carnival Pranks), op. 26.

The simple title *Humoreske* conceals a work in several parts, whose structure is really very strange indeed. It has an ambitious concept on the same level as the composer's *Kreisleriana*, but lacks the inner unity of the latter work. But Schumann was obviously not attempting to achieve this effect anyway. His idea of humour was many-faceted and full of contradictions; or, to put it another way, it was simply 'Romantic'. How else are we supposed to understand Schumann when we read that he sat composing at the piano, "laughing one minute and crying the next"? Thus we find not one mood at a time, but a whole range of moods. And we are confronted not so much with a musical form as with a poetic one, the individual parts of which can be defined quite differently on the basis of the numerous instructions in the score.

Everything begins *Einfach* (Simple), then a scherzo section follows, with the marking *Sehr rasch und leicht* (Very fast and light). The 'movement' marked

## **ROMANTIKER DES HERZENS UND DER TASTEN: ODER SCHUMANN UNTER RICHTERS HÄNDEN**

Ambivalenter Erotiker mit Hang zu Versponnen- bis Verstiegenheit, souveräner Gebieter über Worte und Klänge, Analytiker und Träumer, Kind und Überflieger sowie von Anfang an Tastenmensch - das war und bleibt Robert SCHUMANN. Was Wunder, daß sich ein Vielseit und Rätselwesen wie Richter ausgerechnet diesem Romantiker unter den Romantikern zuwendet, der sich sogar selbst zu begreifen versuchte und dabei zu einem originellen Splitting seiner Persönlichkeit gelangte: nämlich in „Florestan“ für das brausköpfige Temperamentsbündel und „Eusebius“ für den samtweichen Sinnenden. Der ein Jahr jüngere Franz Liszt hat es erkannt, daß Schumann schon lange vor seinem Sprung in den Rhein und der selbstverlangten Einlieferung in die geschlossene Anstalt Endenich bei Bonn nicht mehr von dieser Welt war. Er habe zuviel Umgang mit den Geistern gepflogen, vermutete der Virtuoso assoluto seines Zeitalters. Freilich, in Endenich steigerte sich Schumanns Gespensterglauben ins Faktische: „Die Tische wissen alles“, plädierte er für die okkulte Praxis des Tischerückens. Um Schumann richtig zu spie-

len, braucht es jedenfalls nicht nur flinke Finger. Noch wichtiger sind eine flugfähige Seele und ein abgründiges Herz. Und diesbezüglich ist der „Bruder Medardus aus Zwickau“, wenn man als Sachse seinen großen Landsmann einmal frei nach E. T. A. Hoffmann so bezeichnen darf, bei Sviatoslav Richter bestens aufgehoben.

## **BLICK ZUR KONKURRENZ**

Vladimir Horowitz hatte nicht nur Freunde. Das lag wohl auch daran, daß der Hyperbegabte - wie Richter zu bedenken gibt - erst nach seiner Heirat richtig zu arbeiten angefangen und vorher ein recht lockeres Leben geführt hatte. Doch seine Einstellung zum Repertoire könnte auch von dem Jüngeren stammen: „Im Grunde genommen ist alle Musik romantisch“ (Ein Leonard Bernstein ging in seiner eigenen totalen Subjektivität noch weiter: „Jede Musik ist Jazz“. Und man brauchte ihm nur zuzuschauen, wie er dirigierte, wie er spielte, um ihm zu glauben.)

Richter erzählt, wie er und Neuhaus sowie der stockkonservative Goldenweiser (der russische „Pianistenmacher“) die erste Platte anhörten, die von Horowitz auf dem Markt war. Vorausgeschickt sei, daß Goldenweiser eine Studentin hatte, von der Neuhaus meinte, sie spiele wie eine Putzfrau. Also hörten