



Louise  
**FARRENC**  
(1804–1875)

# Symphony No. I

Overtures

Grand Variations on a Theme by  
Count Gallenberg

Jean Muller, Piano

Solistes Européens, Luxembourg  
Christoph König



## Louise Farrenc (1804–1875)

### Symphony No. 1 • Overtures, Opp. 23 & 24 • Grand Variations on a Theme by Count Gallenberg

Louise Farrenc (originally named Jeanne-Louise Dumont) was born in Paris on 31 May 1804 into a highly artistic family. Both her father, Jacques-Edme Dumont, and her brother, Auguste Dumont, were highly successful sculptors, as their predecessors had also been. She became renowned throughout France and beyond as a pianist, teacher and composer, having studied piano initially with Cécile Soria (who had herself studied with Clementi), and later with Ignaz Moscheles and Johann Nepomuk Hummel.

At the age of 15, she began to take composition lessons, apparently unofficially, with the professor of composition at the Paris Conservatoire, Anton Reicha (1770–1836), but on her marriage to her fellow student, the flautist Aristide Farrenc, two years later, gave up her studies in order to travel round France giving concerts with him. Tiring of this, they subsequently founded a publishing house, Éditions Farrenc, which became one of the best-known music publishers in France. They produced 23 volumes of music for piano and harpsichord covering a vast chronological span, entitled *Le Trésor des pianistes*, and Farrenc also published an important book dealing with performing early music. She also resumed her studies with Reicha, and began touring as a virtuouso concert pianist. In 1842 she was appointed as professor of piano at the Paris Conservatoire, a position she held until 1873. She died in Paris on 15 September 1875.

While Farrenc's work as a composer suffered undue neglect for a considerable time after her death, and while there is much still to be discovered about her life and music, in recent years her compositions have come once again to be recognised and performed. Initially, she wrote only for piano, but she subsequently expanded her range considerably to include chamber and orchestral music. Her *Nonet*, Op. 38, for wind and strings, brought her such recognition that she was able to demand that the Paris Conservatoire pay her the same as her male colleagues. She was twice awarded the Prix Chartier by the Académie des Beaux-Arts, in 1861 and 1869.

Farrenc wrote her *Symphony No. 1* in 1841, and two further symphonies in 1845 and 1847, and they can all be considered significant contributions to the symphonic literature of this period. In fact, the third was a huge success, its first performance at the Conservatoire in 1849 being talked about for years afterwards. Her husband was greatly supportive of her work, and endeavoured to have the symphonies performed in Germany. The *First Symphony* certainly strongly proclaims its ancestry in the German symphonic tradition, especially Beethoven, and in fact the very beginning of the *Andante sostenuto* which opens the energetic first movement brings him immediately to mind, but Farrenc was no mere imitator. This is music of tremendous accomplishment, with a clear sense of purpose, demonstrating not only a notable talent for orchestration but a very personal melodic style, most notably in the second movement, *Adagio cantabile*, and the third, the *Menuetto Moderato*. While the *Finale* is a fiery *Allegro* of which Beethoven would certainly have been proud, the lyrical quality of her work is more suggestive of Mendelssohn, or Schumann (who was, in fact, a great admirer of her piano music).

The *Overtures*, *No. 1 in E minor* and *No. 2 in E flat major*, were both written in 1834, and like the *First Symphony* of seven years later, they are works of tremendous drama. Indeed, one can only imagine what Farrenc might have achieved had she ever set herself to writing an opera, so clearly does the (unknown) narrative come through. (She did, in fact, have ambitions to write an opera, but they came to nothing; the closest thing surviving is a 'scène dramatique', *Le Prisonnier de guerre*.) While, once again, there is no lack of lyricism in these *Overtures*, both works are swept along by the composer's formidable sense of the power of drama, pitting different instrumental groups against each other and demonstrating a sure instinct for exploiting textural contrasts. If anything, the *Overture in E flat major* moves even further in this direction than that in *E minor*; the

rhythmic 'stutter' at the very beginning already brings hints of dark and momentous tragedy; its sudden movement away from *E flat* to *D major* in the central development section is as unexpected as it is effective. No less a figure than Berlioz was one of those who took note of her talent as an orchestrator in this work.

The *Grand Variations on a Theme by Count Gallenberg*, written immediately after the *Overture in E flat major*, are rather different in character. Certainly they are dramatic, but their real objective is to provide a showcase for the solo pianist's virtuosity. Count Gallenberg (Wenzel Robert von Gallenberg, 1783–1839) was an Austrian composer who specialised in ballet music, and who married Beethoven's pupil Countess Giulietta Guicciardi,

the dedicatee of the '*Moonlight*' *Sonata* of 1802. As is so often the case with sets of variations, there is nothing particularly remarkable about Gallenberg's original theme, but it is what Farrenc does with it that is interesting. Indeed, she wrote a large number of sets of variations, including works on themes by Rossini, Bellini, Weber, Donizetti and Onslow. She used the form as a vehicle for all the elegance and technical display of which she was capable – as one would expect of a work with the word 'Grand' in its title – but also once again discovered a rich seam of lyricism; in fact, this lyricism only increases as the variations reach their conclusion.

Ivan Moody

## Louise Farrenc (1804–1875): Symphonie n° 1

### Ouvertures, Opp. 23 & 24 • Grandes Variations sur un thème du comte Gallenberg

Louise Farrenc (nommée à l'origine Jeanne-Louise Dumont) naquit à Paris le 31 mai 1804 dans une famille particulièrement liée aux arts. Son père, Jacques-Edme Dumont, et son frère, Auguste Dumont, étaient tous deux des sculpteurs de renom, tout comme l'avaient été leurs prédecesseurs. Louise se fit connaître dans toute la France et au-delà comme pianiste, enseignante et compositeur, après avoir étudié le piano avec Cécile Soria (qui avait elle-même eu Clementi pour professeur), et par la suite avec Ignaz Moscheles et Johann Nepomuk Hummel.

À l'âge de 15 ans, elle commença à prendre des cours de composition, apparemment de manière officieuse, avec Anton Reicha (1770–1836), qui enseignait au Conservatoire de Paris, mais quand elle épousa son camarade d'études le flûtiste Aristide Farrenc deux ans plus tard, elle abandonna ses études afin de sillonna la France pour donner des concerts à ses côtés. Une fois lassés de cette existence nomade, ils fondèrent

une maison d'édition, les Éditions Farrenc, qui devint l'une des plus célèbres du pays. Ensemble, ils produisirent une anthologie en 23 volumes de musique pour piano et clavecin couvrant une large période chronologique et intitulée *Le Trésor des pianistes*, et Louise publia également un important traité sur l'interprétation de la musique ancienne. Elle reprit aussi ses leçons avec Reicha et commença à effectuer des tournées en tant que pianiste concertiste virtuose. En 1842, elle fut nommée professeur de piano au Conservatoire de Paris et conserva ce poste jusqu'en 1873. Elle s'éteignit à Paris le 15 septembre 1875.

Bien que le travail de compositrice de Louise Farrenc ait été injustement négligé pendant très longtemps après son décès, et même s'il y a encore beaucoup à découvrir concernant sa vie et sa musique, depuis quelques années, ses compositions sont de nouveau reconnues et exécutées. Au départ, elle écrivait uniquement pour le

piano, mais elle élargit ensuite son champ d'action de manière très conséquente pour inclure de la musique de chambre et des œuvres orchestrales. Son *Nonette*, Op. 38 pour cordes et vents lui valut un tel succès qu'elle se trouva en mesure d'exiger que le Conservatoire lui paie le même salaire qu'à ses collègues masculins, et elle se vit décerner deux fois le Prix Chartier par l'Académie des Beaux-Arts, d'abord en 1861 puis en 1869.

Louise Farrenc écrit sa *Symphonie n° 1* en 1842, et deux autres symphonies en 1845 et 1847, toutes trois pouvant être considérées comme d'importants apports au répertoire symphonique de la période. De fait, la troisième rencontra un immense succès, et on parla encore pendant des années de sa création au Conservatoire, donnée en 1849. Aristide l'appuya de son mieux dans son travail, et il entreprit de faire exécuter les symphonies de sa femme en Allemagne. La *Symphonie n° 1* puise manifestement ses sources dans la tradition symphonique germanique, Beethoven en particulier, et de fait, le tout début de l'*Andante sostenuto* qui ouvre l'énergique premier mouvement fait immédiatement penser à ce compositeur. Toutefois, Louise Farrenc n'était pas une simple imitatrice : elle signe des pages d'une stupéfiante maestria, pleine d'une détermination limpide, et fait preuve non seulement d'un remarquable talent pour l'orchestration, mais aussi d'un style mélodique très personnel, plus notamment dans le deuxième mouvement, *Adagio cantabile*, et le troisième, le *Menuetto Moderato*. Si le *Finale* est un fougueux *Allegro* que Beethoven n'aurait assurément pas renié, le lyrisme de l'ouvrage de Louise Farrenc évoque plutôt Mendelssohn, ou encore Schumann, qui était d'ailleurs un grand admirateur de sa musique pour piano.

Les *Ouvertures en mi mineur* et *mi bémol majeur* furent toutes deux écrites en 1834, et comme la *Symphonie n° 1* qui leur succéda huit ans plus tard, ce sont des morceaux tout à fait saillissants. On se plaît à imaginer ce dont Louise Farrenc eût été capable si elle s'était mis en tête d'écrire un opéra, tant la narration est menée avec clarté, même si on n'en connaît pas la trame. (Elle nourrissait effectivement l'ambition de composer un opéra, mais jamais elle ne la réalisa ; tout ce qui nous est

resté en la matière est une « scène dramatique », *Le Prisonnier de guerre*.) Ici encore, ces *Ouvertures* ne manquent pas de lyrisme, mais toutes deux sont propulsées par le formidable sens de la puissance dramatique de la compositrice, qui oppose différents groupes d'instruments les uns aux autres et fait preuve d'un instinct très sûr à l'heure de tirer parti des contrastes de textures. On pourrait même dire que l'*Ouverture en mi bémol* va encore plus loin dans cette direction que celle *en mi mineur* : le « bégaiement » rythmique du tout début augure de la sombre tragédie prête à frapper, et la soudaine modulation de mi bémol majeur vers le lointain ré majeur dans la section de développement centrale est aussi inattendue qu'efficace. Notons que Berlioz en personne fit partie de ceux qui remarquèrent le talent d'orchestratrice de Louise Farrenc dans cet ouvrage.

Les *Grandes Variations sur un thème du comte Gallenberg*, écrites immédiatement après l'*Ouverture en mi bémol*, ont un caractère assez différent. Certes elles sont dramatiques, mais leur véritable objectif est de fournir une vitrine à la virtuosité du pianiste soliste. Le comte Gallenberg (Wenzel Robert von Gallenberg, 1783–1839) était un compositeur autrichien spécialisé dans la musique de ballet, et il épousa la comtesse Giulietta Guicciardi, l'élève de Beethoven à qui est dédiée la *Sonate « Clair de lune »* de 1802. Comme souvent s'agissant de séries de variations, le thème de départ de Gallenberg n'a rien de remarquable, mais c'est ce qu'en fait Louise Farrenc qui est intéressant. En effet, elle écrit beaucoup de variations, y compris sur des thèmes de Rossini, Bellini, Weber, Donizetti et Onslow. Cette forme lui permettait de donner libre cours à l'élégance et aux prouesses techniques dont elle était capable. C'est évidemment le cas ici, comme on peut l'attendre d'une œuvre dont le titre comprend l'adjectif « Grandes », mais une fois encore, elle met au jour une riche veine de lyrisme, et celui-ci ne fait qu'augmenter à mesure que les variations progressent vers leur conclusion.

Ivan Moody

*Traduction française de David Ylla-Somers*

## Jean Muller

Photo: Kaupo Kikkas



Jean Muller first performed on stage at the age of seven. He studied at the Conservatoire Ville de Luxembourg, as well as in Brussels, Munich, Paris and Riga, receiving further advice from Leon Fleisher and János Starker among others. Muller has been awarded First Prizes at numerous international piano competitions. At age 19, he became laureate of the prestigious Tribune internationale des Jeunes Interprètes, and in 2004 he won the International Piano Competition François Poulenc by a unanimous vote of the jury, winning all the available prizes. Muller has performed the complete piano sonata cycles of Beethoven and Mozart, and his discography has garnered numerous accolades, such as a Gramophone magazine Critics' Choice and a *Pizzicato* Excellentia. Muller has appeared at prestigious venues around the world such as the Konzerthaus Berlin, Kings Place, London and Carnegie Hall, New York, and is also regularly invited to international festivals. He performs extensively with orchestras such as the Bayerische Staatsoper and the Orchestra Philharmonie Luxembourg, under conductors such as Zubin Mehta, Ludovic Morlot and Vasily Petrenko.  
[www.pianistjm.com](http://www.pianistjm.com)

## Solistes Européens, Luxembourg

Christoph König, Principal Conductor and Music Director



Photo: Francis Zuidberg

The Solistes Européens, Luxembourg (SEL) comprises musicians from prestigious orchestras across Europe. The ensemble has been meeting regularly in Luxembourg for over 25 years, and also tours Europe on a regular basis. Each season the orchestra offers regular concerts at the Philharmonie Luxembourg. It has accompanied renowned soloists and performed at the United Nations, New York. The SEL has recorded over 120 albums released on Naxos, Rubicon, SEL Classics, Sony Classical and Chandos. It has a vast repertoire, and since 2012 has performed a work commissioned by the Ministry of Culture at its annual opening concert, featuring pieces by Ivan Boumans, Marco Pütz, Jeannot Sanavia, Luc Grethen, Tatiana Zelianko and Roland Wiltgen. It also organises concerts each season for young musicians. The orchestra is supported by the Ministry of Culture and the City of Luxembourg, as well as by numerous corporate sponsors. The orchestra is under the High Patronage of His Royal Highness Grand-Duc Henri. Its honorary president is Jacques Santer, and its music director and principal conductor is Christoph König.  
[www.sel.lu](http://www.sel.lu)

## **Christoph König**

Photo: Christian Wind



Christoph König has been principal conductor and music director of the Solistes Européens, Luxembourg since 2010. Celebrated for his clarity, precision and elegant approach, König is in high demand as a guest conductor all over the world. He has served as principal conductor of the Malmö Symphony Orchestra and principal guest conductor of the Orquestra Sinfónica do Porto Casa da Música and the Orquesta Filarmónica de Gran Canaria. König has also been affiliated with many of the leading opera houses of the world. His extensive discography includes releases on Hyperion and SEL Classics, and his recordings of Brahms' *Piano Concertos* with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra were praised in *BBC Music Magazine*. König was born in Dresden where he sang in the Dresdner Kreuzchor. He studied at the Hochschule für Musik Dresden and furthered his studies in masterclasses with Sergiu Celibidache and Sir Colin Davis, whose assistant he later became with the Sächsische Staatskapelle at the Semperoper Dresden. [www.christophkoenigconductor.com](http://www.christophkoenigconductor.com)

Louise Farrenc was renowned in her lifetime as a pianist, composer and teacher, but it is only recently that her compositions have emerged from many years of neglect. *Symphony No. 1 in C minor* – cast in the German tradition – is an exceptionally accomplished work, finely orchestrated, lyrical and fiery, and a substantial contribution to the canon. The *Grand Variations on a Theme by Count Gallenberg* is a showcase for virtuosic elegance, and the two overtures demonstrate real theatrical drama – *Overture No. 2* was admired by no less a figure than Hector Berlioz.



LE GOUVERNEMENT  
DU GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG  
Ministère de la Culture

Louise  
**FARRENC**  
(1804–1875)

**LUXEMBOURG**  
LET'S MAKE IT HAPPEN

<b>Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 32 (1841)</b>	<b>30:34</b>
1 I. Andante sostenuto – Allegro	10:49
2 II. Adagio cantabile	8:03
3 III. Menuetto: Moderato	4:32
4 IV. Finale: Allegro assai	7:06
<b>5 Overture No. 1 in E minor, Op. 23 (1834)</b>	<b>6:59</b>
<b>6 Overture No. 2 in E flat major, Op. 24 (1834)</b>	<b>7:06</b>
<b>7 Grandes Variations sur un thème du comte Gallenberg (‘Grand Variations on a Theme by Count Gallenberg’), Op. 25 (version for piano and orchestra) (c. 1838)*</b>	<b>13:37</b>

\*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING



PHILHARMONIE

Jean Muller, Piano 7

Solistes Européens, Luxembourg

Christoph König



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