



Carl CZERNY

PIANO MUSIC, VOLUME ONE

INTRODUCTION & VARIATIONS BRILLANTES SUR L'AIR SUISSE
ALLES LIEBT/TOUT AIME, OP. 428

IMPROMPTU BRILLANT SUR UN THÈME NATIONAL SUISSE, OP. 429

IMPROMPTU SENTIMENTAL SUR LE THÈME 'O NUME BENEFICO'
DE L'OPERA LA GAZZA LADRA, DE ROSSINI, OP. 523

FANTASIE SUR DES MÉLODIES DE BEETHOVEN, OP. 752

ÉLÉGANTINE OU RONDEAU BRILLANT, OP. 136, NO. 1

Jingshu Zhao

FIRST RECORDINGS

CARL CZERNY: PIANO MUSIC, VOLUME ONE

by Martin Eastick

For pianists of all ages and abilities, the name Carl Czerny usually evokes memories of endless studies and exercises, which form a mandatory part of the daily practice routine, its relentless monotony apparently necessary to obtain the technical proficiency required for further pianistic aspirations. Czerny did indeed write a prodigious quantity of didactic music, covering a huge range of technical issues, but it was far from being his sole contribution to the musical world: he also wrote much music that deserves to be listened to in its own right. Indeed, Czerny's importance in the general development of piano music within the western musical tradition cannot be overestimated, and as a composer he should be regarded as a major figure in the later Classical and early Romantic eras, deserving serious further study and investigation.

A quick consideration of his Op. 740, *The Art of Finger Dexterity*, one of his most widely used sets of studies, logically suggests that there must be at least another 739 opus numbers. Not long after Czerny's death in 1857, his English publisher, Robert Cocks & Co., issued a so-called 'Complete List of Works', which lists all opus numbers up to Op. 798, as well as a brief summary of unpublished works and a further summary of countless arrangements of works by other composers.¹ The entry for Czerny in Franz Pazdirek's *Universal-Handbuch der Musikliteratur*² goes further – up to and including Op. 861. In addition, it must be noted that many of Czerny's opus numbers each contain multiple works: for example, Op. 247, *Souvenir Théâtral – Collection périodique de fantaisies élégantes sur les motifs les plus favoris*

¹ A reprint of this list is included in Carl Czerny, *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben. Herausgegeben und mit Anmerkungen versehen von Walter Kolneder, Sammlung Musikwissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen*, Band 46, Verlag Valentin Koerner, Baden-Baden, 1968.

² Verlag des 'Universal-Handbuch der Musikliteratur', Vienna, 1904–10.

des nouveaux opéras, consists of ‘upward of 50 pieces, each arranged as a *solo* and as a *duet*’, according to Cocks’ list. In the event, only one-tenth (approximately) of Czerny’s output is concerned solely with pedagogy, thereby leaving an enormous quantity of music written with other purposes in mind.

Czerny may not have been the most prolific composer of all time (Telemann’s cantatas alone reached 1,700 in number, never mind everything else he wrote), but his voluminous output certainly begs the question as to what might be the artistic validity of such extreme productivity. Would not composing in such quantity dilute any *quality* of invention? And then there is the oft-repeated mention of Czerny’s ‘method’ of composition, as supposedly witnessed by the pianist-composer John Field, famous for his nocturnes, who in 1835 stayed with Czerny in Vienna on his way to Moscow and observed that Czerny entrusted the ‘composition’ of his music to a number of assistants – all good musicians – who created fantasies on the latest opera themes using predetermined formulae contained in various books of instruction that Czerny himself had previously compiled for this very purpose. This account of an *atelier Czerny* may be rather fanciful, and is perhaps tinged with a hint of jealousy on Field’s part, but Czerny was known for composing at enormous speed, and it seems entirely likely that there is some truth in the accounts of him writing several works at the same time, literally moving from one desk to the next as the ink was drying on each piece.

Czerny’s music generally falls into one of three main categories. First, and most abundant, are the piano works, both solo and for duet; there are also a fair number of scores for piano and orchestra, and chamber works that include the piano. Many of these pieces were primarily intended for virtuoso display; in the world of Metternich’s Biedermeier Vienna, following the Congress of 1815, they were in constant demand from publishers and public alike. Here are found the fantasies, the sets of variations, rondos and impromptus by the hundred, mostly on the popular operatic themes of the day. Scattered amongst these made-to-measure creations, by contrast, are a number of impressive sonatas, including also some fine specimens for piano duet, a genre in which Czerny consistently excelled. Second, as Czerny had, even by 1815, established himself as a reputable and sought-after teacher, it is not surprising that he soon felt the

pressure to turn his attention to producing pedagogical works – the myriads of studies and exercises which were to bring him the reputation that lasts to this day. Third, Czerny did feel the urge to compose music of a more serious nature, although he knew that, in direct contrast to the rest of his *œuvre*, music of this sort would never have commercial viability and so would for the most part remain unpublished. But even as a composer of music that would have limited commercial appeal, he was assiduously prolific, composing string quartets and quintets (possibly as many as thirty), many choral works, large and small, including at least eleven Masses, all with orchestral accompaniment, at least seven symphonies (two were given opus numbers and published as Opp. 780 and 781), several overtures and many Lieder.

Fortunately, Czerny's large music library, including his many manuscripts, was preserved after his death and donated to the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde ('The Society of the Friends of Music') in Vienna. In recent years this immense repository has enabled scholars and musicologists to begin the task of a thorough re-evaluation of this hitherto unknown but important aspect of Czerny's creative activity – and, one hopes, to dispel many of the outmoded and misguided popular preconceptions that endure, damaging his reputation as a serious composer in his own right.

It would be fair to say that, although he lived in an age complicated by political uncertainty, Czerny led a fairly conservative and relatively uneventful existence, living in Vienna all his life, apart from three visits abroad – to Leipzig in 1836 and Paris in 1837, before moving on to London, where he played piano duets with the newly crowned Queen Victoria; and finally to Milan in 1846, possibly to negotiate with the publisher Ricordi, who had agreed to publish some of his shorter choral works.

He was born in the year of Mozart's death, 1791, on 21 February, his family being Bohemian immigrants, of which there was a steady influx to Vienna in the late eighteenth century. His father, Wenzel Czerny (the name translates simply as 'Black'), was a musician of modest means, who nevertheless gave his son a thorough musical upbringing, enough for the nine-year-old to make his first public appearance in an outdoor performance of Mozart's Piano Concerto in C minor, K491. In 1801 an introduction to Beethoven was arranged, at the instigation of Wenzel Krumpholz, a Czech violinist in the Court

Theatre Orchestra, to whom Czerny returned the favour in 1806 when his Op. 1, a set of variations for violin and piano on a theme by Krumpholtz, was published. Beethoven was impressed enough with Czerny's performance of his Sonata in C minor, Op. 13 (the 'Pathétique'), and agreed to take him on as his pupil. Although Beethoven formally taught Czerny only until 1802, they maintained a close friendship until Beethoven's death in 1827. In 1805 Beethoven issued a testimonial in Czerny's favour – presumably intending to serve as a suitable reference for a potential career as a travelling virtuoso, which, however, never materialised, probably because of the political turmoil in Europe at that time, resulting from the ongoing Napoleonic conflicts.

Even at this rather early age, then, Czerny started to earn a reputation as a teacher, with Beethoven entrusting his nephew Carl to him for piano lessons in 1815. By this time he was teaching twelve hours a day, a regime he continued relentlessly until 1836, when he decided to concentrate solely on composition. As a performer, he played virtually all of Beethoven's piano works, all from memory, usually at the Sunday recitals he arranged at his home almost every week between 1816 and 1823, but also including the first public performance of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1 in 1806, at the composer's request, followed in 1812 by the first performance in Vienna of the Fifth Concerto.

Czerny, of course, had many pupils, the most famous being the young Franz Liszt, who was taken as a nine-year-old by his father to study with Czerny. Liszt acknowledged his indebtedness to Czerny's teaching throughout his life; he dedicated his *12 Études d'exécution transcendante*, s139, of 1852 to Czerny, including this inscription in the published first edition: 'À Charles Czerny, en témoignage de reconnaissance de respectueuse amitié, son élève, F. Liszt' ('in grateful testimony of a respectful friendship, his pupil F. Liszt'). He also acknowledged Czerny as composer, even as late as 1856, praising his monumental Piano Sonata in A flat, Op. 7, a work Liszt performed. A list of Czerny's other pupils is a veritable who's who of pianist-composers and teachers, many of whom were to establish themselves as household names as the Romantic movement took hold during the first half of the nineteenth century: Döhler, Heller, Kullak, Leschetizky, Jaëll and Thalberg, to name only a handful. Kullak and Leschetizky especially, along

with Liszt, of course, became well-known teachers in their own right, each passing on Beethoven's legacy – through Czerny – a tradition which continues to the present day.

Of the five works included on this recording, the only original work – that is, the only one that does not derive its thematic material from other sources – is the *Élégantine, ou Rondeau Brillant*, Op. 136 [11]. In fact, Czerny's Op. 136 consists of three separate pieces, of which this is the first, the others contributing to a rather odd and miscellaneous collection in that the second, a *Rondeau Polonaise*, is for piano, four hands, and the third, a *Rondo Concertant*, is for cello and piano. All three were published separately in 1827, under the collective title *Hommage aux Dames, Répertoire des nouvelles Compositions brillantes*. In this Rondo, in the key of C major and a brisk $\frac{2}{4}$ time, Czerny typically encapsulates Biedermeier sentiment. Dispensing with the customary slow introduction, he launches immediately into a jaunty *Allegro vivo*, characterised by snappy flourishes and dotted rhythms above a *staccatissimo* accompaniment. A slightly more restrained, more *legato* second subject follows briefly before Czerny introduces his trademark passagework, often using the higher registers of the keyboard, and his predilection for frequent and abrupt modulations, some of only four bars in length, is soon in evidence. A further, contrasting, third subject is then heard, *dolce espress. e cantando*, which relaxes the mood somewhat, before taking off again with more brilliance and eventually leading to a brief coda by way of repetition of the first two subjects. A review in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in January 1828 indicated that, although there was much to commend about the work, there was also too much by way of brief modulations; the reviewer was critical also about excessive use of what he felt was unnecessary passagework. A contrary opinion might argue that the various contrasting sections do not overstay their welcome and are well proportioned in view of the modest length and scope of the piece.

Although Rossini's opera *La gazza ladra* was first performed in 1817, Czerny's *Impromptu sentimental* on the theme 'O Nume benefico', Op. 523 [10], did not appear until 1839. By the time this work was written, Czerny had gradually moved away from the set

formula of theme and variations (sometimes with introduction), which appears much less in his later opus numbers. Instead, he favoured using such titles as ‘Impromptu’ or, more commonly, ‘Fantaisie’, which gave him more opportunity to develop his material in different ways, rather than having to adhere to a more formal theme-and-variation structure – although he could incorporate a set of variations within such a larger unit if he so wished. A similar trend can be observed in the works of his close contemporaries Friedrich Kalkbrenner (1785–1849) and Henri Herz (1803–88). After a brief eight-bar introduction, Czerny quotes the theme, a trio which appears towards the end of Act 1 of Rossini’s opera. He gradually starts to embellish this material with improvisatory passagework, before introducing a second theme, *Andante grazioso*, which is given similar treatment. It is, in fact, that of a melody, ‘Ecco cessato il vento’, which precedes the finale of Act 2, but its origin is not indicated in Czerny’s work, either within the title or in the score itself. This section in turn reintroduces the original aria, although in a slightly truncated and rhythmically varied guise, leading to a short *tranquillo* coda.

The two works featured here with the opus numbers 428 and 429 were probably conceived at the same time, both being brought out in 1838 as successive instalments of a short-lived series entitled ‘Schweizerische Alpenklänge’/‘L’Echo des Alpes Suisses’ by the obscure Swiss publisher Ernst (Erneste) Knop of Basle, who was also a minor composer and folksong collector. The *Introduction & Variations brillantes*, Op. 428, is based on the Swiss air ‘Alles liebt’/‘Tout aime’, to a text by the German writer and art-historian Wilhelm Gottlieb Becker. A short introduction [1] gives Czerny an opportunity to improvise and decorate elements of the theme, before it is presented in its complete form [2]. Separating the theme and the first variation [3] is a short *ritornello* in the form of a rather stylised *ranz des vaches* or *Kuhreihen* – a Swiss melody, usually quite rustically simple and traditionally played on the Alphorn to call the scattered cows in from hillside pastures; a well-known use of such a tune appears in Rossini’s *William Tell* Overture. This *ritornello* reappears, in varied form, between successive variations until the fifth, *Andante sostenuto* [7], which again being more improvisatory in nature, leads directly into the finale [8].

The second of these two Swiss-inspired works, the *Impromptu brilliant*, Op. 429 [9], is on a Swiss national theme, *Der Heerdenreihen*, by Ferdinand Fürchtgott Huber (1791–1863), a well-known composer and arranger of folksongs. Here Czerny opens with another *ranz des vaches* motif and, having forsaken the more formal variation structure, he is able to develop the thematic material with less constraint, interspersing the reappearances of the more tranquil main theme with several extended passages for virtuoso display, and concludes with a short *Presto* coda.

It seems fitting to conclude with a homage to Beethoven in the form of Czerny's Op. 752 [12]. The first edition, by the Viennese publisher Haslinger (1844),³ gives the title as *Fantasie über ein bisher unbekanntes Lied von Ludwig van Beethoven* ('Fantasy on a hitherto unknown song of Ludwig van Beethoven'), whereas the title page of the first French edition, issued the following year by Simon Richault, reads *Fantaisie sur des Mélodies de Beethoven*, the plural implying that the work references several Beethoven themes, which is misleading. The Beethoven theme on which this *Fantaisie* is based – a short song entitled *Gedenke mein!* – was composed in 1804 or 1805, but published for the first time, by Haslinger, only in 1844, and so it seems highly likely that Czerny's work was published simultaneously, perhaps even commissioned, to promote Haslinger's discovery. This *Fantaisie* is a veritable pianistic *tour de force* – Czerny's grand gesture to his former teacher. It probably also signals the limit of Czerny's assimilation of the new order of pianism, as represented by his pupil Liszt and other emerging talents. Nevertheless, it is some way removed from the Czerny of the 1820s. The solemn chorale-like theme is stated exactly as Beethoven wrote it, but only after a lengthy introduction, which gradually intensifies in pianistic excitement before receding and falling silent on the cadence. The following 'variations' are not numbered as such, but are initially clearly defined. First, the existing tempo is maintained with a *legatissimo* restatement of the theme, coloured by added chromaticism from more complex inner parts. The theme is then boldly transferred to the left hand, while the accompaniment is provided by the right with scurrying arpeggios and scale passages. Another contrasting section is then

³ The founder of the company, Tobias Haslinger (1787–1842), was close to Beethoven. Tobias' son, Carl (1816–68), who took over the firm, had been a pupil of Czerny and was a noted composer and pianist in his own right.

heard, *tranquillo*, though it sequentially builds up to a *fortissimo* climax before dying away, leading to a sedate *Andante espressivo*, now in duple time, which progressively becomes more improvisatory. The following *Molto allegro* gradually changes the mood to one of agitation. There now follows an *Allegretto vivace*, where a short fugal section quickly builds up tension as the texture thickens, with the introduction of extended octave passages alternating between the left and right hand. The music now ebbs and flows as Czerny intersperses new and old material in sequence, and then, after a pause to gather breath, presents Beethoven's original as originally stated – in all its simplicity. A brief coda, *Molto allegro*, now brings the work to a thunderously affirmative conclusion.

Martin Eastick was born in Croydon in 1957 and studied piano from age six. Although continuing with his studies, he decided against a musical career, instead devoting his spare time to researching neglected nineteenth-century music and collecting scores, mainly of piano music by forgotten composers of the Romantic era. He has presented many lecture-recitals introducing forgotten repertoire as well as, more recently, assisting in a number of recordings, often providing performing material from his now substantial private collection.

Jingshu Zhao, one of a number of outstanding young pianists to emerge from China, was born in 1991 in Wuhan. Her talent first became evident when she started to play the piano at the age of three. She graduated from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, where she studied with Keng Zhou and Baili Fang, and then continued working for her Masters degree at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where she studied with Jon Nakamatsu and Mack McCray, and for her Doctor of Musical Arts degree in piano performance with Joseph Banowetz at the University of North Texas.

As a concert pianist, she has performed extensively in both the People's Republic of China and the United States. In addition, in 2010–11 she won a number of prizes in national competitions in China: the Four Hands Group Gold Award in the Helen Cup Piano Competition (Shanghai, 2010), the Outstanding Performance Award and Perth Performance Pianist in the solo group of the Chang Jiang Cup piano competition (Shanghai, 2010), silver medal in the second Deutscher Irmler-Klavierwettbewerb (Shanghai, 2011) and first prize in the piano four-hands group of the Shanghai Division of the Chang Jiang Piano Cup national college piano competition (Shanghai, 2011). She was invited to record for Baili Fang's instructional DVD series on the Bach *Inventions*, published by the Shanghai Conservatory Press (2011).





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CARL CZERNY Piano Music, Volume One

L'Écho des Alpes Suisses, Livre 2

No. 1, Introduction & Variations brillantes sur l'air suisse *Alles liebt/Tout aime*,

Op. 428 (publ. 1838)

17:40

[1] Introduzione: *Andante sostenuto* –

2:52

[2] Thema: *Allegretto* –

2:09

[3] Var. 1: *Vivo e brillante* –

1:20

[4] Var. 2 –

2:03

[5] Var. 3: *Vivo e brillante* –

1:27

[6] Var. 4: *Molto agitato* –

2:02

[7] Var. 5: *Andante sostenuto* –

2:43

[8] Finale: *Allegro vivace*

3:04

[9] No. 2, Impromptu brillants sur un thème national Suisse, Op. 429 (publ. 1838)

13:43

[10] Impromptu sentimental sur le thème 'O nume benefico' de l'opéra *La Gazza ladra*, de Rossini, Op. 523 (publ. 1839)

8:58

[11] Hommage aux Dames, Op. 136: No. 1, Élégantine ou Rondeau brillant (publ. 1827)

7:42

[12] Fantaisie sur des Mélodies de Beethoven, Op. 752 (publ. 1844)

17:40

Jingshu Zhao, piano

FIRST RECORDINGS