



Heinrich Wilhelm ERNST

COMPLETE WORKS, VOLUME SIX

ERLKÖNIG TRANSCRIPTION, OP. 26

SIX POLYPHONIC STUDIES

TWO GOETHE SETTINGS

THREE WALTZES

NOCTURNE

ROMANCE

Sherban Lupu, violin
Yvonne Redman, soprano
Ian Hobson, piano

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS

HEINRICH WILHELM ERNST: COMPLETE WORKS, VOLUME SIX

by Mark Rowe

Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst was one of the most important violin virtuosos of the nineteenth century. Born to Jewish parents in Brno on 8 June 1812, he began to learn the violin at the age of nine, and his progress was soon so rapid that he transferred to the Vienna Conservatoire in 1825. Here he studied under Jakob Böhm (for violin) and Ignaz Seyfried (for composition), but it was Paganini's Viennese concerts in 1828 which inspired the young virtuoso to set off on an ambitious solo tour of Germany in 1829–30 – sometimes entering into competition with Paganini himself – before heading for Paris in 1831. Remorseless practice ensured that by 1834 he was appearing in concerts with Liszt and Chopin, and his success became unequivocal when he triumphed over the now ailing Paganini in Marseilles in 1837.

During the next eleven years, Ernst completed spectacularly successful tours of France, the Austrian Empire, Germany, Poland, the Low Countries, Britain, Scandinavia and Russia, before the 1848 Revolution put a temporary end to professional musical activity across the continent. He spent a good deal of the next eight years in Britain – one of the few major European countries unaffected by revolution – but he still undertook a handful of extended foreign tours, and on one of these excursions, to France in 1852, he met the actress Amélie-Siona Lévy. By the time they married, two years later, Ernst's health – which had been delicate since his early twenties – was beginning to fail, and in 1858 he was forced to retire from the stage. Devoting himself to composition, he largely resided in Nice, but he lived for fourteen months in England, and was able to attend a well-received benefit concert, featuring some of his own new works, in London on 6 June 1864. He died in Nice on 8 October 1865, leaving his much younger wife to mourn his loss for nearly forty years.

Études pour le Violon à plusieurs parties. (Sechs mehrstimmige Studien für Violine. Gruss an Freunde und Kunstbrüder)

Along with the Violin Concerto, Op. 23 (1846),¹ Ernst's *Six Polyphonic Studies* (1864) are his most important compositions, and, like the Concerto, they represent the *ne plus ultra* of technical difficulty. Among Ernst's own work, they have their origin in the *Trio for One Violin* of 1837² and the transcription of Schubert's *Erlking* from 1842; and among his contemporaries, they are influenced by Paganini's *Caprices* (1820), Ole Bull's experiments in polyphony from the 1830s and '40s, and Wieniawski's *L'École Moderne* (1854). Primarily, however, in their number and polyphonic texture, they look back to Bach's six Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin (1720).³ But Ernst's *Studies* also look forward. Ysaÿe clearly based his six *Sonates pour violon seul* (1923) on the models Bach and Ernst provided, and from Ernst he took the idea of dedicating each study to a contemporary violinist whose technique and cultural background are reflected in the composition.

Overall, there can be little doubt that Ernst's *Studies* are the most significant composition for solo violin written between Paganini's *Caprices* and Ysaÿe's *Sonates*. But Ernst introduces an important compositional restriction which these other solo works do not share. Romanticism was a period when pieces in minor keys predominated, and yet Ernst decided to work against this grain by writing all his studies – including all five variations in the last one – in major keys. Perhaps he found this voluntarily imposed and surprising restriction a spur to his muse and ingenuity.

Although some of the material of the *Studies* dates back to 1844, they were written largely in the early 1860s, when Ernst was living in Nice, and spending some months

¹ Recorded on Volume Four of this series, Toccata Classics rocc 0189, along with the Violin Concertino in D major, Op. 12, and the String Quartet in B flat major, Op. 26.

² This is an unpublished transcription for solo violin, written in three parts, of the opening of the aria 'Tu vedrai' from Bellini's opera *Il Pirate*. Ernst wrote it out for the album of the artist J.-J.-B. Laurens and inscribed it 'à Monsieur Laurent [sic] par son dévoué, H. W. Ernst, 30 Avril 1837'. A recording of the Trio will be released on Volume Seven of this series, Toccata Classics rocc 0312.

³ Ernst's friend Ferdinand David had given some of the first modern concert performances of these works in 1840, and they gradually began to be taken up by other virtuosi: Joseph Joachim began to play them quite regularly from the 1850s onwards; and even Ernst performed the Chaconne – from the second Partita – in Paris in January 1856.

with Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton in England. Ernst had always been interested in the writing of studies – he had attempted to complete a set based on operatic motifs in the late 1830s – but his specific reason for undertaking the *Polyphonic Studies* is indicated by their subtitle – *Gruss an Freunde und Kunstbrüder* ('Greetings to Friends and Brothers in Art') – which, in several early editions, actually appears in large lettering as the main title. Ernst was now sick and isolated – the musical world was beginning to forget him – and writing a set of splendid studies, tailored to the taste and techniques of prominent virtuosi, was a wonderful way to ensure that they, their fingers and their audiences actively remembered him.

Polyphonic Study No. 1, Rondino scherzo: Con spirito, in F major

This study [1] is dedicated to the Sudeten German violinist Ferdinand Laub (1832–74), who had played second violin in the professional premiere of Ernst's first string quartet in 1862. Laub was noted for his finger strength and immense technique, and this extended study was clearly designed to stretch and show off these aspects of his playing. The work is based on two strongly contrasting ideas. The first, a rustic jig-like theme, uses three- and four-part block chords, dotted-quaver rhythms and trills. This is rough Germanic music, perhaps suggesting the vigour and thick textures found in some of Schumann's string quartets. The second idea is effectively a duet: a smooth and amiable A flat melody in crotchets and quavers is underpinned by a running counterpoint in slurred semiquavers. From the technical point of view, this section is extremely demanding, because it is difficult to maintain the tone and phrasing of the melody while performing the cruel left-hand stretches and eccentric fingering required to sustain the underlying semiquavers.

The study is fundamentally in a loose ternary form (ABA plus coda) where the A section largely draws on the first idea and the B section on the second, but there are a number of structural subtleties that are well worth pointing out. For a piece 140 bars long and based only on two eight-bar melodies, it contains remarkably little straightforward repetition; and although the structure appears to be relatively free and improvisatory, it actually shows a good deal of thought, originality and formal flair.

In the opening A section, it is striking how Ernst alters the repetition of the theme so that the expected cadence in the home key of F major never arrives. The altered theme initially cadences in E and C, and then two new cadential figures with different ostinato basses (one with trills, the other with octaves) are introduced. The first figure arrives at another C major chord, but the second – completely unexpectedly – resolves into the A flat major of the second theme.

When Ernst repeats his A flat melody, he alters the second half so that the dotted rhythm characteristic of the first theme appears both above and below the running semiquavers. This combination naturally leads the listener to expect a return of the first theme, but again Ernst confounds expectations: what follows is actually an arpeggiated transition passage that leads into a restatement of the second theme an octave higher. The reprise of this melody ushers in an ingenious bridge passage where the semiquavers turn into double-stopped arpeggios. These arpeggios in their turn gradually acquire the dotted rhythm of the first theme, and then transform themselves into block chords and trills anticipating the restatement of the first section. This section duly arrives, but when the first theme comes to be repeated, Ernst again alters the second half so that the two cadential figures are transposed to anticipate a cadence in B flat and yet actually lead into a reprise of the second theme, this time in D flat. It is a tribute to Ernst's ingenuity that he manages to make such a complex combination of theme and counterpoint work at three different pitches on the violin.

The D flat version of the second theme begins the last section of the study, which acts as both a development section and a coda. Instead of simply allowing the second theme to repeat itself, Ernst encourages loud interjections from the dotted-quaver motif, forcing the key towards F major and bringing materials from the two main sections into contention. Although the dotted motif from the A section reasserts its dominance, the rapid semiquavers of the second theme are allotted a properly florid supporting role, and the two ideas rush together towards a triumphant *fortissimo* conclusion.

Polyphonic Study No. 2, Allegretto: Con grazia, in A major

In every way, the second study [2] presents a contrast to the first. Whereas the F major study was rather Germanic, this A major one has a lighter French or Viennese inflection. Appropriately, therefore, it is dedicated to French violinist Prosper Sainton (1813–90). Although not particularly associated with Ernst's music, he was a close friend and central figure in English musical life; and the same was true of his wife, who, as Charlotte Dolby, sang Schubert's *Der Erlkönig*, with Mendelssohn at the piano, immediately before Ernst gave the English premiere of his own solo transcription in London on 5 July 1844. The F major study is largely rhythmic and vigorous, often with emphatic chords on the first beat of the bar, but the A major study is characterised by rhythmic ambivalence: the tentative melody apparently cannot decide whether the emphasis should fall on the first or second beat of the bar, and it is supported by slightly fey spread chords played on the offbeat. Moreover, where the first study has two contrasting themes, and is conventionally stopped and bowed on the string throughout, the second is monothematic, and its lighter mood is pointed up by judicious use of *spiccato*, *pizzicato* and harmonics. From the player's point of view, the etude is a study in making hideous technical difficulties sound like frothy nothings; from the composer's, it is a study in making a richly varied piece from the most minimal material.

The initial melody has a certain insouciant charm – the repeated falling major second recalls Schubert's *Rosamunde* ballet music, and the lightly arpeggiated accompaniment hints at Mendelssohn's 'Spring Song' (*Songs without Words*, Op. 62, No. 6) – and it dates back to May 1852 at least, when Ernst wrote out a version in the autograph book of the conductor and composer Eduard Hecht, then living in Basel. This melody is followed by an episode employing some wonderfully po-faced quasi-canonic entries based on the opening bar of the tune. The canonic motif is worked hard and pushed through a number of sequences before the initial melody reappears in its original guise. When the theme is repeated, however, its emotional power is enhanced by widely spaced expressive leaps. A little cadential theme is then introduced on the G string (based on the canonic figure and thus ultimately on the initial melody) which jauntily carries the

listener through to the final bars – made appropriately piquant and whimsical by a flurry of harmonics and *pizzicati*.

Polyphonic Study No. 3, Terzetto: Allegro moderato e tranquillo, in E major

In April 1864 Ernst wrote to Joseph Joachim (1831–1907): ‘I don’t know if [your brother] wrote to you that I’ve published 6 Studies [...] and that the one I’ve dedicated to you is, in my opinion, also the best, with the name Tercet.’⁴ Insofar as posterity has taken any notice of the studies, it has concurred in Ernst’s opinion of the quality of this one: it is not only the best of the set but probably the finest piece Ernst ever wrote [3]. Some of his deep admiration for Joachim, and the inspiration he found in the younger man’s playing, can be seen in Ernst’s decision to dedicate the study to him.

By positioning this study in third place, Ernst again shows his concern with variety. The first study concentrates on block chords and two contrasting strands, and the second on theme and accompaniment, but the third is in three sinuous and very similar lines. And whereas the first study is vigorous and straightforward, and the second light and whimsical, the third is intense, complex and lyrical. The word ‘Terzetto’ originally referred to a work for three voices, and Ernst’s study retains some of the qualities one might expect in such a composition. Like the first, the *Polyphonic Study No. 3* is built around two themes, but whereas the melodies in the F major study are strongly contrasted, the melodies of the *Terzetto* – the running theme with which it opens, and a chorale-like theme which appears at bar 14 – are rather similar in character. In consequence, they lend themselves admirably to Ernst’s highly sophisticated treatment: probing semiquavers weave in and out of the melodies, picking up details and motifs first from one and then the other, adding subtle chromatic tints to their harmonies, and allowing the themes to meld and blend organically, both into each other and the larger fabric of a rich and satisfying composition.

Technically, the work is clearly inspired by Wieniawski’s ‘Étude’, No. 3 of *L’École moderne*, Op. 10, which also explores the problems of moving in parallel thirds and

⁴ Letter to Joseph Joachim, 11 April 1864, quoted in M. W. Rowe, *Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst: Virtuoso Violinist*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2008, p. 249.

sixths, and two-part similar-motion arpeggios. But Ernst's constant employment of more complex double-stopping – particularly massive sustained chords, and held against moving notes – is more demanding than anything in Wieniawski's composition; and the musical superiority of the *Terzetto* compounds these difficulties by requiring that they be subordinated to entirely expressive ends.

The mood of passion, lyricism and hushed quasi-religious awe invites comparison with Hermann Goetz's, slightly later, piano miniatures – especially 'Einsamkeit' and 'Bei dir!' from *Lose Blätter*, Op. 7 – but the closest relation of the work (and possibly its partial inspiration) is surely Schumann's 'May, sweet May', No. 13 of his *Album for the Young*, Op. 68. Ernst's *Terzetto* and Schumann's character piece share the key of E major; some of the miniaturised feel of Schumann's piece is achieved by placing nearly all of it within the violin's most natural range; and – more importantly – Ernst has learned from Schumann how to combine intense lyricism with a touch of divine discontent by keeping semiquavers moving above and below melodic motifs with longer note-values.

No greater work for solo violin was written in the nineteenth century.

Polyphonic Study No. 4, Allegro risoluto, in C major

With this glorious *moto perpetuo*, the left-hand fingers at last throw off their collaborative harness and enjoy the freedom of shooting up, down and across the fingerboard. There are still hints of counterpoint here – the constant arpeggios trace out moving chords – but the rigours of chromatic harmony, and playing several lines at once, are temporarily forgotten. Henri Vieuxtemps (1820–81), the dedicatee, was famous for the evenness of his tone, the way he produced each note with chiselled exactitude, and the number of notes he could fit into a single bow-stroke, and this study shows off all these qualities to excellent effect.

The piece begins [4] with a rushing arpeggio figure reminiscent of Chopin's C major *Étude*, Op. 10, No. 1, and the changes are rung on this idea for the next 28 bars. But after a pause, a more dramatic, minor-key motif makes its entrance. Hitherto, the dynamic range has been between *piano* and *forte*, but now Ernst presents violent contrasts

between *piano* semiquavers and colossal *fortissimo* chords. The freedom of the arpeggio idea, however, is not easily disavowed, and an arpeggiated major-key version of the dramatic motif – with complex bowing across bar-lines – soon proves to be the true second subject. A transition passage and a modulation to D flat lead to some cross-string work – rather Bach-like in effect – which gradually winds down towards, and deliciously postpones, a restatement of the opening arpeggios. A reprise of the second subject, a fourth higher than the original, follows the recapitulation, and this reprise leads to a transition passage and one of Ernst's synthesising codas – where the arpeggios of the opening, and the massive chords of the dramatic motif, are exultantly combined.

Polyphonic Study No. 5, Air de Ballet: Allegretto con giusto, in E flat major

Ernst had at least one serious change of mind about his fifth study [5] in the course of its composition. An early fragment from about 1862, jotted down in an autograph album, shows that he originally conceived it in full and syncopated chords. And although it is in some ways the slightest of the *Studies*, it remains the most elusive and difficult to pin down. 'Air de Ballet' might suggest the lightness of white-clad ballerinas, but the music – with its repeated two-bar motif, heavy-footed chords, strict rhythm and pauses – implies something altogether more rustic and faux-naïf.

Like the second study, the fifth is basically monothematic. It begins with the repetition of a naïve, questioning two-bar motif, which Ernst tries to expand and develop in various ways. But the motif refuses to cooperate, and after a pause it returns in exactly the form in which it began. Ernst therefore tries something more radical: the Gs and Cs are flattened, so they become F sharps and Bs, which allows an enharmonic modulation to B major, the key for the next eighteen bars. With the change of key comes forward movement and new inspiration, and a theme which kept returning to its starting point begins to expand and develop. This new inspiration continues to flow as Ernst modulates through four bars of C major to the original key of E flat: he now finds more variety in the quaver pattern, and his harmonic inflections become more piquant and imaginative.

Three *ff pizzicato* chords bring a reprise of the opening melody, but this time it is decorated by a simple trill. The melody, in its most confident guise, builds first to an *ff* cadenza-figure via a sequence of slurred octaves, and then to another even more exultant downward-plunging cadenza-figure played against the open A-string, and framed by mighty *pesante* chords. A cadential version of the opening motif – played softly and between long pauses – seems like a moment of reminiscence or intimate conversation, before four *ff* chords (the first three *pizzicato*) suggest that a happy conclusion has been reached.

The piece is dedicated to Josef Hellmesberger Snr (1828–93), probably as a thank-you present for leading the Viennese premiere of Ernst's B flat Quartet in April 1863. Appropriately enough, his son, Joseph ('Pepi') Hellmesberger Jr, became a celebrated composer of ballets – which allowed him to indulge his weakness for ballerinas.

Polyphonic Study No. 6, Variations de Concert sur l'air national irlandais 'The Last Rose of Summer' ('Die letzte Rose'), in G major

The final study is Ernst's best-known work (only in recent years has its popularity been challenged by the *Erlking* transcription): it is often played as an encore, and it even had occasional performances in the period between 1914 and the mid-1970s when virtuoso music was severely out of fashion. It was Ernst's last composition for the solo violin, and appropriately, therefore, looks backwards in a number of ways, summarising and transcending the kind of virtuosity he had made his own. It reverts to Ernst's favourite form from the 1830s and '40s (introduction, theme, four variations and finale); it is based on one of his unpublished (and now lost) works for violin and orchestra, the *Fantasy on Irish Airs* from 1844; it recalls Paganini's *Nel Cor* variations, one of the works with which the young Ernst first awed the general public; it recalls the last works in Paganini's *Caprices* and Wieniawski's *L'École moderne*, both of which are sets of variations; and it is dedicated to the Italian virtuoso Antonio Bazzini (1818–97), who had dedicated his best-known piece – *Le ronde des lutins*, Op. 25 – to Ernst in the late 1840s.

Ernst described the composition as being ‘with intention and foresight full of variety’,⁵ and it is remarkable how much contrast he is able to find in a work for solo violin, especially as he restricts his palette by picking a theme which is basically four repetitions of the same musical phrase, and avoiding minor keys in all the variations.

The work begins with an eighteen-bar introduction [6] which hints at several features of the tune it introduces (the three or four falling quavers that form the highlight of the first phrase, the little cadential turn) and foreshadows a number of the technical devices that will be met later in the piece (chromatic double-stopping, left-hand *pizzicati*). When the theme appears (*Andante non troppo*) [7], Ernst’s arrangement – although subtle and minimal – disguises the repetitiveness of the melody by supporting the four repetitions of the phrase with three different accompaniments. Indeed, he is so confident of his success in introducing variety that the *ritornello* passage that leads to the first variation is little more than a fifth repetition of the main melodic phrase, decorated with the kind of semiquavers which accompanied its third appearance.

The first variation (*piano dolce*) [8] emerges effortlessly from the semiquavers of the *ritornello*, and makes use of this note-value throughout. It is basically a study in *legato* thirds, sixths and octaves – often high up on the A and E strings – and is remarkable for the care and detail with which Ernst notates it. The second variation [9] is in gossamer arpeggios, a floating witchery of sound, which ends – after a long chromatic wind-down over a G pedal-point – with one of Ernst’s most ingenious interminglings of *pizzicato* and *arco*. The third variation, a study in double-stopped canonic writing [10], presents enormous technical challenges to the performer, including an unprecedented passage just before the end when Ernst demands that the melody be played in combined parallel tenths and octaves (Sibelius would remember this passage when he came to write his Violin Concerto). But it is the fourth variation, *Poco più vivo* [11], which always creates consternation in performance: in this section, the violinist is required to bow rapid and extended arpeggios while using spare fingers on his left hand to pluck the melody,

⁵ Letter to Joseph Joachim, 11 April 1864, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 249.

sometimes above and sometimes below the accompaniment; during the middle section, plucked notes are replaced by artificial harmonics.

Ernst discovered this use of *pizzicato* in the last study of Wieniawski's *L'École moderne* – in the final variation on Haydn's 'Emperor's Hymn' – but Ernst's reworking is much more effective. Such *pizzicato* is really too weak for a grand theme in a finale, and Wieniawski's arpeggios are so long, and his plucked notes so widely spread, that the melody loses coherence. As a result, the variation, at best, can provoke only abstract admiration. But Ernst's use of the device at a more rapid tempo maintains the forward momentum of the melody and gives the impression of two instruments playing simultaneously; these qualities – together with the fact that the subject matter is an inner variation on a wistful Irish theme – help create delight as well as astonishment.

The finale – effectively a fifth variation – is a true *summa* of violin technique [12]. Its opening features extended ascending scales on one string, and descending scales in double artificial harmonics, later spiced by rapid scales in harmonics or played over long held notes, and thick clusters of fast *pizzicato* chords. A coda in rapid high split tenths and whirling upward figures brings the piece to a brilliant and satisfying conclusion. And yet the final effect of the whole study is not of empty virtuosity; indeed, the brilliance somehow enhances an underlying melancholy, especially in view of the sick and rapidly fading Ernst in Nice, his *Glanzzeit* long behind him, and the final lines of the lyric Thomas Moore had set to the tune:

When true hearts lie withered
And fond ones are flown,
Oh! Who would inhabit
This bleak world alone?

Trois Valses non dansantes pour le Piano-forte

Travelling virtuosi were expected to write short musical pieces and fragments for the autograph books of their hosts, and so, to avoid having to compose at short notice while exhausted or overwhelmed by arrangements, the cannier virtuosi often had a number of short unpublished pieces up their sleeves that could be quickly jotted down. Ernst

probably composed these three little waltzes in the late 1830s, and frequently used them for this purpose. Schubert is clearly the major influence, and all of the waltzes have considerable distinction and charm. The first, in E major [13], is a reflective, autumnal piece which makes telling use of the tenor register of the piano. The second, in A flat minor [14], is probably the finest of the set. It shows considerable harmonic sophistication (most of the second half is notated in E major, and the piece makes much of Schubertian shifts from minor to major), and its powerful but restrained sonorities foreshadow Brahms. The last, in D flat major [15], clearly draws its inspiration from the piano accompaniment to Schubert's song *Auf dem Wasser zu Singen*, although its key, and some touches of sly chromaticism in the inner voices, ensure its outlook is altogether more unruffled.

Romanze: An Madam Clara Schumann

Ernst stayed with the Schumanns in Leipzig in May 1842, and Clara Schumann's autograph book clearly demanded something more distinctive than one of the violinist's standard waltzes. Ernst and his friend Stephen Heller had recently composed *Pensées fugitives*, a set of twelve pieces for violin and piano,⁶ which were shortly to be published, and Ernst decided to arrange the opening melody from the second of these, 'Souvenir', as a piano solo for Clara's *Stammbuch*. The duo version is in A major, with the melody played on the violin; the solo version [16] is in A flat, and the melody has been transferred to the inner fingers of the pianist's left hand, with the bass part simplified accordingly.

Nocturne Posthume in A flat major

This charming piece, Ernst's most extended work for solo piano [17], was written to help repair a friendship. One of his closest associates in England was James Davison (1813–85), the influential music critic of *The Musical World* and *The Times*, who was a notoriously lazy correspondent and consequently failed to answer the letters which Ernst and his wife sent from Nice; the normally equable Ernst was bitterly pained by Davison's five-year silence. But when Ernst returned to England for his second extended stay in the 1860s, he wrote this nocturne as a peace offering, and dedicated it to Davison's

⁶ The first six of these pieces are recorded on Ernst, Complete Works, Volume Two, Toccata Classics TOCC 0138, the next six on Ernst, Complete Works, Volume Three, Toccata Classics TOCC 0163.

wife, the celebrated piano virtuoso Arabella Goddard (1836–1922). Concert obligations prevented her from giving the first performance at Ernst's 1864 London benefit concert, and so it was premiered on that occasion by another of Ernst's friends, the pianist and conductor Charles Hallé (1819–95).

The piece is basically monothematic and in roughly ABAB form. It opens with an extended and lyrical melody, the expressive power of which is heightened by subtle chromatic touches (A naturals, G flats and F flats); its second half introduces a little dotted figure in the bass, and hints of canonic imitation. The E major B section, which begins in A flat minor, is a slightly agitated improvisation on motifs from the A section and introduces more decoration and octave writing. A winning, rather Chopinesque, chromatic wind-down introduces a straightforward repetition of the opening material and the second B section. Now in the home key of A flat, this second improvisation is shorter and sunnier than the first: it begins in the major, and its octave writing – together with spread wide chords – is easeful and expansive rather than agitated. All is not completely cloudless, however, since the short coda – which features the dotted bass motif – is coloured throughout by F flats, and its conclusion is unexpectedly declamatory.

Two Goethe Settings

Ernst's song *Lebet Wohl* ('Farewell') [18], which he wrote sometime before 1843, sets the following short lyric by Goethe:

Lebet wohl, geliebte Bäume,
Wachset in der Himmelsluft.
Tausend liebevolle Träume
Schlingen sich durch euren Duft.

*Farewell, beloved trees!
Grow in the heavenly air.
A thousand fond dreams
Mingle with your scent.*

Doch was steh' ich und verweile?
Wie so schwer, so bang ist's mir?
Ja, ich gehe! Ja, ich eile!
Aber ach mein Herz bleibt hier.

*But why do I stand and linger?
Why is my heart so heavy, so anxious?
Yes, I go! Yes, I hasten away!
But, ah, my heart remains here.*

The setting, in A major, is simple and straightforward, and at the same time dignified, restrained, memorable and utterly appropriate. Ernst's music brings to mind the light and scents of evening; parallel columns of vast unmoving trees, their branches intermingling overhead; an underlying melancholy; and a cathedral-like solemnity and silence.

Der Fischer ('The Fisherman'), written in the early 1830s [19], is the most ambitious of Ernst's half-dozen songs and sets a 1779 ballad by Goethe:

Das Wasser rauscht', das Wasser schwoll,
ein Fischer sass daran,
sah nach dem Angel ruhevoll,
kühl bis ans Herz hinan.
Und wie er sitzt und wie er lauscht,
teilt sich die Flut empor;
aus dem bewegten Wasser rauscht
ein feuchtes Weib hervor.

*The waters rush'd, the waters rose,
A fisherman sat by,
While on his line in calm repose
He cast his patient eye.
And as he sat, and hearken'd there,
The flood was cleft in twain,
And, lo! a dripping mermaid fair
Sprang from the troubled main.*

Sie sang zu ihm, sie sprach zu ihm:
Was lockst du meine Brut
mit Menschenwitz und Menschenlist
hinauf in Todesglut?
Ach wüsstest du, wie's Fischlein ist
so wohlrig auf dem Grund,
du stiegst herunter, wie du bist,
und würdest erst gesund.

*She sang to him, and spake the while:
'Why lurest thou my brood,
With human wit and human guile
From out their native flood?
Oh, couldst thou know how gladly dart
The fish across the sea,
Thou wouldst descend, e'en as thou art,
And truly happy be!*

Labt sich die liebe Sonne nicht,
der Mond sich nicht im Meer?
Kehrt wellenatmend ihr Gesicht
nicht doppelt schöner her?
Lockt dich der tiefe Himmel nicht,
das feuchtverklärte Blau?
Lockt dich dein eigen Angesicht
nicht her in ew'gen Tau?

Das Wasser rauscht, das Wasser schwoll,
netz't ihm den nackten Fuss;
sein Herz wuchs ihm so sehnsuchtsvoll,
wie bei der Liebsten Gruss.
Sie sprach zu ihm, sie sang zu ihm;
da war's um ihn geschehn:
Halb zog sie ihn, halb sank er hin
und ward nicht mehr gesehn.

*'Do not the sun and moon with grace
Their forms in ocean lave?
Shines not with twofold charms their face,
When rising from the wave?
The deep, deep heavens, then lure thee not, –
The moist yet radiant blue, –
Not thine own form, – to tempt thy lot
'Midst this eternal dew?'*

*The waters rush'd, the waters rose,
Wetting his naked feet;
As if his true love's words were those,
His heart with longing beat.
She sang to him, to him spake she,
His doom was fix'd, I ween;
Half drew she him, and half sank he,
And ne'er again was seen.*

Translation Edgar A. Bowring, 1853

Schubert had earlier given these words a charming strophic setting (D225, published in 1821 as Op. 5, No. 3), but Ernst clearly draws his inspiration from the dramatic and contrasting sections of the older composer's *Der Erlkönig* – indeed, at certain points towards the end of Ernst's song, one can hear the triplet octave Gs in the pianist's right hand which sound throughout Schubert's masterpiece. At the beginning of the work, Ernst's waters churn and eddy in a muddy and chromaticised C minor; dramatic contrary-motion semiquaver figures introduce the parting of the waters; a little 'ta-ta-tar, ta-ta-tar' motif in the bass indicates the mermaid's speech and song (a motif which makes discreet interjections throughout the piece, and has the last comment before the

final cadence); and, in the central section, a beguiling waltz-like melody in G major hints at the pleasures of life in the watery depths.

There are clear indications that Ernst, in his youth, was bisexual,⁷ and it is striking that the two Goethe ballads to which he devoted most attention, are about boys or men who are lured to their own destruction by sexual temptations.

Grand Caprice. Solo pour Violon sur Le Roi des Aulnes de F. Schubert, Op. 26

This stunning transcription for solo violin of Schubert's song *Der Erlkönig* [20], was probably initially motivated by Ernst's love of games and puzzles. One can imagine him trying over the first bars of the piano accompaniment on the combined G and D strings – his *Grand Caprice* retains the original key of the song, G minor – and thinking: 'Yes, that would work'; and then, when the singer enters, picking out the beginnings of the melody on the A and E string. It was probably just the whim of the moment. Perhaps it was only much later that he thought: 'Could I transcribe the whole piece? Could I translate the six elements in Schubert's song – the four characters impersonated by the singer, together with the two hands of the pianist – onto the four strings of the solo violin?'

This self-imposed challenge forced him to develop his already staggering technique still further. The sheer awkwardness of trying to convey three independent lines – none of which was conceived for a stringed instrument – on the basically monodic violin, required him to experiment with widely spread polyphonic textures; and his desire to convey the rich variety of Schubert's song, and all the colours conjured up by the singer and pianist, caused him to attempt unheard-of combinations of violin techniques: chords, *pizzicati*, tremolo and harmonics. The result was the first of Ernst's super-virtuoso works (the other two being the Concerto and the *Polyphonic Studies*), which push virtuosity beyond the point where Paganini had left it.

As so often with Ernst, transcending previous technical limitations allowed him to transcend previous expressive limitations. The other two great Romantic arrangements of the song – Liszt's 1838 transcription for solo piano, and Berlioz's 1860 orchestration

⁷ The evidence for these claims is assessed in Rowe, *op. cit.*, pp. 46–48.

of the accompaniment – fill out and enrich Schubert's work, but Ernst is forced to reduce and thin the textures of the original. When these characteristics are coupled with the unprecedented virtuosity of the arrangement, what is left is a work much bleaker, weirder, edgier and more intense than the Liszt and Berlioz versions. Ernst's transcription is emphatically not beautiful – as in some late Beethoven, the sense that the music is at war with the instrument is part of the intended aesthetic effect – but the loneliness and distress of the performer enhance the distress conveyed by the music. As the transcription approaches its climax, both the boy and the player seem to be screaming.

Schubert individuates the narrator, boy and father by setting them in the singer's middle, high and low registers respectively; and he sets the Erlking apart by changing the accompaniment and having him sing largely in the major. (In Schubert the major key is often even more heartbreaking than the minor because it suggests a *memory* of happiness; in this song, he subverts the normal character of the major key in another way by making it sinister, over-sweet and corrupt.) Ernst retains this layering, but he enhances the characterisation of each part by playing the father's part on the G string; making the boy's line go much higher than the original; and, in the Erlking's first episode, having him sing in weird, unearthly, artificial harmonics against a conventionally stopped – often double-stopped – *staccato* accompaniment on up to three other strings. The passage is so novel and demanding that, for the sake of clarity, Ernst sets it out on two staves.

The next episodes also tax Ernst's ingenuity: in the second, he writes a spectacularly difficult imitation of the original triplet accompaniment in the piano; and in the third, he underpins the melody – at the point when Goethe's Erlking says that the boy's beautiful form entices him – with a pulsating, expectant, fingered *tremolo*. Ernst's only straightforward additions to the song are where he substitutes short chromatic scales for a few of the bass notes of the piano; and where he increases the emotional impact of some of Schubert's chords by replacing them with more virtuoso leaping figurations.

Ernst first performed his transcription in Leipzig in 1842, and amazed the London critics with it two years later:

The admirable manner in which the characteristic accompaniment, of twelve quavers in a bar, was sustained throughout, created the utmost surprise: and the effect of the Erl King, rendered by harmonics, to a distinct arpeggio accompaniment, added delight to astonishment. In short, the whole affair was accomplished without a blemish [...]. Perhaps this may, without exaggeration, be pronounced the most complete and difficult feat that was ever performed on the violin.⁸

Mark W. Rowe is an Honorary Researcher in Philosophy at the University of East Anglia. His biography, Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst: Virtuoso Violinist, appeared from Ashgate, Aldershot, in 2008.

Sherban Lupu, born in 1952, studied at the Bucharest Conservatoire with George Manoliu. While still a student, he concertised throughout eastern Europe and performed on Romanian radio and television. He left Romania to study at the Guildhall School of Music in London with Yfrah Neaman and took lessons and master-classes with Yehudi Menuhin, Nathan Milstein and Henryk Szering, as well as with Norbert Brainin of the Amadeus String Quartet and with Sándor Végh. He won prizes in numerous competitions, such as the Vienna International, the Jacques Thibaud in Paris and the Carl Flesch in London. Subsequently he moved to the United States to study with Dorothy DeLay and, at Indiana University, with Josef Gingold and receive chamber-music coaching from Menahem Pressler. Until recently Sherban Lupu was professor of violin at the University of Illinois.



Appearing frequently as soloist in Europe and the United States, Lupu has performed the complete cycle of Beethoven sonatas with Menahem Pressler, but he specialises in the music of his native Romania and eastern Europe, as well in as the virtuoso Romantic repertoire. He has made solo appearances in the world's major concert halls, among them the Kennedy Center, Royal Festival Hall and Carnegie Hall, and at the Gstaad and Aldeburgh Festivals. His

⁸ *The Musical World*, 11 July 1844, p. 228.

recordings include works by Bartók, Bloch, Enescu, Ernst, Ginastera, Stravinsky, Wieniawski and Ysaÿe, for the Arabesque, ASV, Capstone, Continuum, Electrecord and Zephyr labels, and his recording of the Bach solo Sonatas and Partitas appeared on Electrecord. He has also recorded for the BBC. In collaboration with the composer Cornel Țăranu, Lupu finished and reconstructed the *Caprice roumain* for violin and orchestra by Enescu. That work, which he performed in a special concert at the World Exhibition 2000 in Hannover, has been released on an Electrecord CD.

Much in demand as a pedagogue, Sherban Lupu is a frequent member of international juries, has given numerous master-classes and taught in the Czech Republic, England, Germany, Holland, Italy, Poland – where in July 2004 he received from the Ministry of Culture the Award for Outstanding Teaching – and in Romania.

In 2000 Sherban Lupu received a lifetime achievement award from the Romanian Cultural Foundation for his efforts to promote Romanian culture and music internationally, and in May 2002 he was given the prestigious Arnold Beckman Award from the Research Board of the University of Illinois towards the recording of the complete works for violin and piano by Béla Bartók. In November that year he was awarded the title of Doctor *honoris causa* by the Academy of Music G. Dima in Cluj (Romania) and in January 2004 the President of Romania conferred upon him the title of Commander of the National Order of Merit and Service for his worldwide musical and cultural activities. Since 2002 he has been Artistic Director of the International Festival 'The Musical Citadel of Braşov', Romania. In 2007 he received another Arnold Beckman Award from the Research Board of the University of Illinois and was awarded a doctorate *honoris causa* by the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iaşi, Romania.

In September 2005, together with the Romanian Cultural Institute, Sherban Lupu published six volumes of previously unknown works for violin by George Enescu – all of them discovered, edited and arranged by Lupu himself – and since December of the same year he has been the Artistic Director of the George Enescu Society of the United States. For the academic year 2009–10 he was a Fulbright Senior Lecturer and also a recipient of the College of Fine and Applied Arts Creative Research Award at the University of Illinois.

For *Toccata Classics* he has recorded, with Ian Hobson, the first five volumes in this Ernst series (TOCC 0118, 0138, 0163, 0189 and 0310), the first volume in another series, *The Unknown Enescu* (TOCC 0047) and *Byzantium after Byzantium* (TOCC 0131), a cycle containing a sonata for solo violin, a sonata for violin and piano and a violin concerto, all written for him by his compatriot Theodor Grigoriu (1926–2014).

The soprano **Yvonne Gonzales Redman** has won acclaim both nationally and internationally for her strong vocal performances and engaging stage presence. A native of Houston, Texas, she is a winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and the Houston Grand Opera Eleanor McCollum Award. A presence at the Metropolitan Opera for eighteen consecutive seasons, she has a long and varied list of performances, including nearly 200 stage performances and 26 live radio and television broadcasts. Highlights include Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* conducted by James Levine, Giannetta in *L'elisir d'amore* with Luciano Pavarotti for his 30th Met Performance Anniversary Gala, Jovenot in Mirella Freni's last production of *Adriana Lecouvreur* and Kundry in *Parsifal* with Plácido Domingo.



Other appearances include Strauss' *Die Frau ohne Schatten* and *Die ägyptische Helena*, Wolf-Ferrari's *Sly*, Prokofiev's *The Gambler* and Julie Taymor's production of *Die Zauberflöte*. On the Metropolitan Opera radio and televised broadcasts, she has been heard in *Jenůfa*, *Madama Butterfly*, *The Merry Widow*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Peter Grimes*, *Rigoletto* and *Il tabarro*, with additional roles in *Boris Godunov*, *Carmen*, *Death in Venice*, *Die Fledermaus*, Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles*, *Parsifal* and *Das Rheingold*.

In the United States Yvonne Redman has also appeared on the stage of Houston Grand Opera – where she performed in the world premiere of Daniel Catán's *Florencia en el Amazonas* – and at Opera Illinois, Los Angeles Opera, Minnesota Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Seattle Opera and Wolf Trap Opera. Internationally she has sung Mimi in *La bohème* at the Bregenz Festival in Austria, and at the Festival Lyrique Internationale de Belle-Île-en-Mer in France she sang Micaela in *Carmen* and Giulietta in *Les contes d'Hoffman*. She has shared the stage with some of the world's most important operatic voices, including Renée Fleming, Angela Gheorghiu, Susan Graham, Denise Graves, Karita Mattila, Federica von Stade, Teresa Stratas, Waltraud Meier, Sandra Radvanovsky, Dawn Upshaw and Carol Vaness, and Roberto Alagna, Plácido Domingo, Paul Groves, Nathan Gunn, Jerry Hadley, Ben Heppner, Thomas Hampson, Dmitri Hvorostovsky, René Pape, Luciano Pavarotti, Samuel Ramey and Bryn Terfel.

On the concert stage Yvonne Gonzales Redman has appeared with the Alexandria Symphony, National Repertoire Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, New York

Philharmonic, Orchestra of St Luke's, Oregon Symphony San Antonio Symphony, and at the Vatican with the Orchestra St Cecilia in Leonard Bernstein's *Mass*, which is also recorded on DVD. She has collaborated with many of the world's major conductors, among them Roberto Abbado, Yves Abel, Marco Armiliato, Richard Bonyngue, Richard Bradshaw, James Conlon, Valery Gergiev, Vladimir Jurowski, James Levine, Jacques Lacombe, Sir Charles Mackerras, John Mauceri, Kirill Petrenko, Leonard Slatkin, Patrick Summers, Christian Thielemann and Emmanuel Villaume.

As professor of voice at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Yvonne Gonzalez Redman maintains a large studio of advanced singers. She frequently presents master-classes and has adjudicated numerous classical vocal competitions. She has presented papers at several national and international voice conferences, including the International Congress of Voice Teachers in Stockholm, Sweden. Her presentations cover topics on performance anxiety, classical and musical-theatre pedagogy, and musicians and hearing. With grant assistance from the Strategic Research Initiative Program at the College of Fine and Applied Arts, she is investigating the acoustic environment and physical effects upon teachers of voice in their workplace. At Illinois she has had the pleasure of working with Ian Hobson on many projects, with the orchestra Sinfonia da Camera, and on recordings of music by the late American composer George Walker. She can also be heard as soprano soloist on the live recording of Dominick DiOrio's *Gathering*, written in honour of the 150th anniversary of the University of Illinois and premiered in February 2018.

Ian Hobson, pianist and conductor, enjoys an international reputation, both for his performances of the Romantic repertoire and of neglected piano music old and new, and for his assured conducting from both the piano and the podium, renewing interest in the music of such lesser-known masters as Ignaz Moscheles and Johann Hummel. He is also an effective advocate of works written expressly for him by contemporary composers, among them John Gardner, Benjamin Lees, David Liptak, Alan Ridout and Roberto Sierra.

As guest soloist, Ian Hobson has appeared with the world's major orchestras; those in the United States include the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Philadelphia Orchestra, the symphony orchestras of Baltimore, Florida, Houston, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh and St Louis, the American Symphony Orchestra and the Orquesta Sinfónica de Puerto Rico. Elsewhere, he has been heard with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Hallé Orchestra in

the UK, and the ORF-Vienna, Orchester der Beethovenhalle, Moscow Chopin Orchestra, Israeli Sinfonietta and New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

Born in Wolverhampton in 1952 and one of the youngest-ever graduates of the Royal Academy of Music, Ian Hobson subsequently pursued advanced studies at both Cambridge University and Yale University. He began his international career in 1981 when he won First Prize at the Leeds International Piano Competition, having previously earned silver medals at both the Arthur Rubinstein and Vienna Beethoven competitions. A professor in the Center for Advanced Study at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign), Ian Hobson received the endowed chair of Swanlund Professor of Music in 2000 and is now the Swanlund Emeritus Professor.



He is in increasing demand as a conductor, particularly for performances in which he doubles as a pianist. He made his debut in this capacity in 1996 with the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, and has since appeared with the English Chamber Orchestra, the Fort Worth Chamber Orchestra, the Sinfonia Varsovia (at Carnegie Hall), the Pomeranian Philharmonic and the Kibbutz Chamber Orchestra of Israel, among others. He also performs extensively as pianist-conductor with Sinfonia da Camera, a group he formed in 1984 and which quickly gained international recognition through its recordings.

To date he has amassed a discography of some sixty releases, mostly on the Zephyr label, including the complete piano sonatas of Beethoven and Schumann, a complete edition of Brahms' piano variations and the complete piano works by Chopin. With the violinist Sherban Lupu he is recording, as pianist and conductor, the complete works of Ernst for Toccata Classics, for which label he has also recorded piano music by Edward and Kate Loder (TOCC 0322 and 0321) and Harold Truscott (TOCC 0252). He has also released three albums in a pioneering series of recordings of the early orchestral works by Martinů, also for Toccata Classics (TOCC 0156, 0249 and 0414); a first of the orchestral music of Moritz Moszkowski, in which he conducts the Sinfonia Varsovia, is in preparation (TOCC 0523).
www.ianhobson.net



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