



ROMANTIC
PIANO

CIPRIANI POTTER

Piano Works

Enigma Variations • Piano Sonata in E minor
Introduction and Rondo giocoso • Three Toccatas

Luke Jones



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Cipriani Potter (1792–1871)

(Philip) Cipriani (Hambly) [Hambley] Potter was born in London on 3 October 1792, and died in the same city on 26 September 1871.

Cipriani was born into the well-known Potter family, which had musical links going back to his grandfather Richard Potter, a prominent flute maker. The family firm in London was taken over by Cipriani's uncle William Henry Potter in 1806. Cipriani's father, Richard Huddleston Potter, married Charlotte Baumgarten, daughter of the bassoonist Samuel Christian Baumgarten, in 1783. Richard Huddleston Potter taught the piano, was organist at St Bride's, Fleet Street, and was a flautist in many events such as the regular London Handel Festivals. He was among the founding members of the Philharmonic Society, played the viola in its orchestra and was its treasurer in 1818 and 1819.

Carrying the lifelong nickname 'Cip' or 'Little Chip', because of his small stature, the young Potter made the most of his family's advantages, reading widely, excelling in mathematics and speaking four languages. Inevitably he studied music, first with his father and subsequently with Thomas Attwood and William Crotch. From 1805 to 1810 his teacher was Joseph Woelfl, an eminent Austrian pianist who had recently moved to London. Woelfl had been a pupil of Mozart, a rival of Beethoven and was familiar with the latest trends in the vibrant musical scenes of Vienna and Paris. He taught Potter to understand the elements of the current Classical musical form, and from the near past the advanced counterpoint of Bach's *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier*. Potter later acknowledged his great debt to Woelfl's sophisticated musical outlook.

Potter was admitted to membership of the Philharmonic Society in 1815 and was commissioned to write an overture (in E minor) for the society. He also made his debut as a pianist at the Philharmonic Concerts in another commission, his *Sextet for Piano, Flute and Strings, Op. 11* on 29 April 1816. It seems his playing was more enthusiastically received than his compositions, causing him to further refine his composing skills by travelling to Vienna, probably inspired by the possibility of lessons with Beethoven whose music he admired.

However, such a prospect was daunting as the now deaf composer was deemed mad by some of Potter's acquaintances. It was only after encouragement from Johann Andreas Streicher, the prominent Viennese piano maker, that Potter summoned up sufficient courage to approach the great man, and thankfully was well received. In a letter of May 1818 to his one-time pupil and secretary Ferdinand Ries, Beethoven wrote 'Botter [sic] has visited me a few times, he seems to be a good fellow and has talent for composition'. Nevertheless, the desired lessons with Beethoven did not materialise and Potter had to content himself with Beethoven's occasional advice about his scores while taking regular lessons in counterpoint from Emanuel Aloys Förster instead. Following further time spent in other Austrian and German cities Potter visited Italy, developing a liking for Italian operas, particularly those of Rossini.

Returning to England in 1819, Potter threw himself into the London musical scene, which according to composer and academic Sir George Macfarren in 1884 'was not, as it is now, the centre of all that is to be heard in music'. Indeed, Potter's great admiration for the German traditions of Beethoven, Mozart and Bach would have set him apart from the lighter Italian operas then all the fashion in London society, reflecting the frivolous excesses of George IV's court. In many ways the fruits of his labours only became apparent in his much later years when England had more fully embraced the serious German approach to music following the example of Albert, the Prince Consort.

Potter's schedule of conducting, piano performance and composing shows his preference for instrumental music and he produced very few vocal compositions. As a soloist he introduced many Mozart piano concertos to the English public, complete with an embellished solo part following Mozart's own example, as well as performing the English premieres of Beethoven's *Third* and *Fourth Piano Concertos*. Until 1844 he appeared regularly as conductor of the Philharmonic Concerts for which he insisted on a complete symphony orchestra rather than the truncated ensembles that were frequently encountered. To the credit of English audiences, Potter's pioneering work was generally well received and must have taxed ears more accustomed to light Italian arias. Indeed, it has been observed that Potter was perhaps zealous in his promotion of new German music to the detriment of his own compositions. Furthermore, the passage of time was not kind to his nine symphonies, written and performed between 1819 and 1834, despite their energy, rhythmic drive and constructional coherence. Wagner, on conducting Potter's *Symphony No. 10 in G minor* (Potter adopted an eccentric numbering system) in 1855 referred to him as an 'amiable, elderly contrapuntist'.

London's Royal Academy of Music was founded in 1822, one of the earliest of Europe's modern music conservatories, and Potter was invited to join the staff, first as a piano teacher and later as director of its orchestral training as well. In 1832 he was made principal, taking over from William Crotch, and held that position until 1859. As a teacher, Potter's qualities of open mindedness, good humour and generosity were greatly appreciated by such pupils as George Macfarren, William Sterndale Bennett, Joseph Barnby and Charles Lucas (who succeeded him as principal), and his sweep of musical understanding from Bach to Schumann and Brahms was impressive. His work at the Academy gradually encroached on his composing, however, and little was written after 1837. In the longer term, his accommodating temperament hindered him from effectively challenging the Academy's dictatorial founder, John Fane, Lord Burghersh (later 11th Earl of Westmorland) in efforts to place the institution in a stronger financial position.

Potter's last public performance was as one of the two piano accompanists in the British premiere of Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem*. He died in September of that year and was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery.

Considering Potter's relatively short stay in Europe from 1818 to 1819 and his already developed admiration for Mozart and Beethoven, it is unsurprising that the piano music he composed following his European travels showed further indebtedness to Beethoven's early style without displaying any deep rift with what Potter had written previously. There is more a sense of continuum, building on foundations laid in his lessons from Woelfl early on. Throughout, Potter's benign, warm-heartedness and sense of fun often seem to overshadow loftier Beethovenian sentiments.

Piano Sonata in E minor, Op. 4

This is one of two piano sonatas published in Leipzig by Breitkopf und Härtel, and their dates match Potter's European travels.

I. Allegro con brio

Potter contrasts minor and major, dramatic and lyrical, triplets and duplets, block chords and *cantabile* lines in this extensive sonata form movement that mirrors late Mozart and early Beethoven. A dramatic first subject with dotted rhythms and triplet passagework including frequent key changes leads to the more settled second subject in B major featuring duplet quavers. Renewed triplet quavers announce the development section in emotional fashion. This section shows Potter at his most inventive, with a wide array of treatments meted out to both subjects, including exchanging their moods from time to time. The recapitulation returns both subjects in E minor and E major respectively, followed by a substantial dramatic coda in E minor that ensures the movement ends turbulently.

II. Andante con moto

This gentle, almost slight, movement is in simple ternary (A–B–A) form, using A minor for the outer two sections and A major for the middle portion. Its language is Mozartian with Beethovenian touches from time to time involving occasional adventurous chordal progressions and key changes.

III. Tempo di Menuetto – Trio

While the *Menuetto*, with its persuasively memorable theme in C major, represents the acme of Mozartian charm and grace, the darkly hued, scampering *Trio* section in A minor contains all the hallmarks of Beethoven's heavier hand. The repeated *Menuetto* sections and the *Trio* are both in binary (A–B) form with repeats, allowing Potter to make quite expansive, weightier pronouncements in the *Trio* and a sunnier commentary in his most genial manner during the *Menuettos*.

IV. Finale: Allegro molto

Potter achieves something akin to Beethovenian humour in this fast-paced movement. He introduces three contrasted ideas in rapid succession, the first quixotic and rhythmical in E minor, the second chorale-like in E major, and the third with fast arpeggiated quavers modulating to G major. The whole process is then repeated, moving from G back to E minor again. The quixotic and chorale-like themes then recur, but end with indecision including many changes of key and seemingly by chance finding the tonic E again. They then appear in more settled form with the chorale-like theme triumphantly embellished by quaver accompaniment. A quiet coda muses on the chorale-like theme in various keys before quite suddenly making up its mind with an emphatic E major cadence.

Introduction and Rondo giocoso, Op. 20

Sonata-rondo form is used for this extensive canvas, a structure favoured by Beethoven, particularly in his finale movements. Following a *moderato assai* introduction Potter embarks on the A–B–A–C–A–B–A structure with a typically bubbling light-hearted semi-quaver driven rondo subject (A) followed by the second subject (B) that modulates to B major and contains some slower material. The first subject (A) returns in B major before modulating back to E major, after which the slower middle episode (C) in A major briefly decreases energy levels with *con delicatezza* writing. Sections A, B and A then restore the movement's impetus, closing off this infectiously vivacious music.

Three Toccatas, Op. 9

These works, sharing the same opus number, spanned the period 1816 to 1825, which included Potter's 1818–19 studies in Europe. The first was published in London, the second in Leipzig and the third in Cologne. While they all embrace the Baroque toccata principle of continuous fast florid notes, the first is more emphatically Bachian, with a feeling for horizontal counterpoint including some part writing. By the time the third was written the construction had become distinctly Classical with an emphasis on theme and accompaniment. In all three cases Potter uses binary (A–B) form, with a modulation to the dominant key before the halfway point. However, he allows slower more restful material to infuse that dominant modulation in the Classical manner of a second subject. In the case of *Toccata No. 3* the fast toccata notes continue unabated in the accompaniment and it is only the theme that is more restful.

Variations and Fantasia on a Favourite Irish Air in the Style of Five Eminent Artists, Op. 5 'Enigma Variations'

Introduction – Theme – Variation 1 – Variation 2 – Variation 3 – Variation 4 – Variation 5 – Fantasia

Nicholas Temperley suggests that Potter was aiming for 'temporary curiosity' rather than 'unfathomable mystery' and that, unlike Elgar, he responded to a written enquiry in November 1825 by providing the imagined composer of each variation plus further details. Potter says that 'The *Introduction* is intended for Moscheles, it is rather studied [containing] certain chromatic intervals peculiar to him'. He goes on to indicate that, after the *Theme*, Variation 1 *All'Fantasia* alludes to Ferdinand Ries, Variation 2 *Il Brillante* is in the style of Friedrich Kalkbrenner, Variation 3 *Il Sensibile* is Johann Baptist Cramer, Variation 4 *All'Italiana* is Gioachino Rossini and Variation 5 *L'Originale* is Ignaz Moscheles. He indicates that the final *Fantasia* references these pianists but in a different order – Ries, Cramer, Rossini, Kalkbrenner and Moscheles.

Rodney Smith

Luke Jones

Photo: Abhishek Kodaganallur Pichumani



Luke Jones was born in Wrexham, North Wales, and began playing the piano at five, making his recital debut at ten. His performing career has taken him across Britain, Europe and Japan, including appearances at The Bridgewater Hall, Manchester; Symphony Hall, Birmingham; St David's Hall, Cardiff; Salle Cortot, Paris; Philharmonie Luxembourg; Wiener Saal, Salzburg; and the Palau de la Música Catalana, Barcelona. He has performed as a concerto soloist with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Manchester Camerata and Orchestra of the Swan. He holds the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) Gold Medal, and competition prizes include Second Prize and the Mompou Prize at the Maria Canals International Piano Competition; First Prize at both The Bromsgrove International Musicians' Competition and the Chopin-Roma International Piano Competition; and Second Prize at the Dudley International Piano Competition. Jones studied under Murray McLachlan at Chetham's School of Music, Carlo Grante at the Conservatorio di Musica in Campobasso, and Dina Parakhina at the RNCM. He is currently a Kawai Artist.

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Even though Cipriani Potter's desire for lessons with Beethoven did not materialise, he benefitted from the great composer's advice and showed in his own music a thorough understanding of German models. As an admired soloist he also introduced piano concertos by Mozart and Beethoven to Britain. Potter's *Sonata in E minor* shows these influences alongside some inventive flourishes and dramatic turbulence, whereas the three expertly written *Toccatas* reveal the influence of Bach. *Enigma Variations* was written in the style of five named contemporary composers, an example of witty, ingenious and warm-hearted composition. Luke Jones' recording of the *Fantasia in G major on Mayr's 'Chi dice mal d'amore'* is available for streaming and download on a digital single 9.70391.

Cipriani
POTTER
(1792–1871)

	Piano Sonata in E minor, Op. 4 (pub. 1818)	22:24
❶	I. Allegro con brio	10:01
❷	II. Andante con moto	3:20
❸	III. Tempo di Menuetto – Trio	3:27
❹	IV. Finale: Allegro molto	5:36
❺	Introduction and Rondo giocoso, Op. 20 (c. 1826)	9:34
❻	Toccata in G major, Op. 9, No. 1 (pub. c. 1816)	7:45
❼	Toccata in B flat major, Op. 9, No. 2 (pub. 1818)	8:21
❽	Toccata in E major, Op. 9, No. 3 (comp. before 1825)	4:46
❾	Variations and Fantasia on a Favourite Irish Air in the Style of Five Eminent Artists, Op. 5 'Enigma Variations' (pub. c. 1825)	16:09

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

Luke Jones, Piano

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