

SCHUMANN
Beethoven Studies
Ghost Variations
Schubert Variations
Olivier Chauzu, Piano



Robert Schumann (1810–1856)

Piano Pieces

Beethoven-Etüden (Studies on a Theme by Beethoven), Anh.F25 (Autograph C, 1834–35) 10:17		23 Variations on a Nocturne of Chopin, Anh. F26 4:37	
1	Thema: Allegretto	1:03	
2	Variation 1: Un poco maestoso	1:18	
3	Variation 2	0:40	
4	Variation 3	0:50	
5	Variation 4: Molto moderato	1:31	
6	Variation 5	2:45	
7	Variation 6: Presto	0:53	
8	Variation 7	1:17	
Beethoven-Etüden: Four Studies from the First Autograph (A, 1831–32) 4:35		24 Maestoso 1:09	
9	Variation A6: Passionato	1:07	
10	Variation A7: Idee aus Beethoven	1:19	
11	Variation A10: Prestissimo	0:43	
12	Variation A11: Legato teneramente	1:26	
Beethoven-Etüden: Four Studies from the Second Autograph (B, c. 1833) 5:21		25 Variation 1: L'istesso tempo 1:15	
13	Variation B4	1:28	
14	Variation B5: Cantando	1:07	
15	Variation B7	0:59	
16	Variation B3	1:47	
Geistervariationen (Ghost Variations) in E flat major, Anh. F39 (Edited Wolf-Dieter Seiffert) 12:31		26 Ritornell 1: Più lento 0:29	
17	Thema: Leise, innig	2:01	
18	Variation 1	1:38	
19	Variation 2: Canonisch	1:58	
20	Variation 3: Etwas belebter	1:50	
21	Variation 4	2:17	
22	Variation 5	2:47	
		27 Variation 2 1:07	
		28 Ritornell 2 0:13	
		29 Variation 3: Burla 0:30	
		30 Ritornell 3 0:47	
		31 Variation 4 1:02	
		32 Ritornell 4 0:22	
		33 Variation 5 1:11	
		34 Thema: Franz Schubert's <i>Sehnsuchtwalzer</i> 1:00	
		Sonata in F minor, Op. 14	
		Three discarded movements:	
		35 Scherzo 3:10	
		36 Two Variations 2:15	
		37 Finale 5:12	
		38 Exercise (1830 version of Toccata), Anh. F11 4:59	
		39 Canon on Friedrich Heinrich Himmel's 'Alexis send ich dich' 1:02	
		40 Supplement to Fantasiestücke, Op. 12, WoO 28 1:31	
		41 Variations in G on an original theme, 'Mit Gott', Anh. F7 4:22	
		42 Arrangement of Georg Christoph Grosheim's <i>Titania Overture</i>, Anh. O4 6:52	

Robert Schumann is in many ways typical of the age in which he lived, combining in his music a number of the principal characteristics of Romanticism, as he did in his life. Born in Zwickau in 1810, the son of a bookseller, publisher and writer, he showed an early interest in literature and was to make a name for himself in later years as a writer and as editor of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, a journal launched in 1834. His father encouraged his

literary and musical interests and at one time thought of sending him to study with Weber, a proposal that was abandoned with the death of the latter, closely followed by the death of Schumann's father.

Schumann's career now followed a more conventional course. In 1828 he entered the University of Leipzig, where his attention to his studies was as intermittent as it was to be the following year at Heidelberg. He was eventually able

to persuade his mother and guardian that he should be allowed to study music under the well-known piano teacher Friedrich Wieck, whose own energies had been directed with some intensity towards the training of his daughter Clara, a pianist of prodigious early talent. Schumann's ambitions as a pianist, however, were frustrated by a weakness in the fingers, whatever its true cause, and his other musical studies had, at the very least, lacked application. Nevertheless in the 1830s he wrote a great deal of music for the piano, often in the form of shorter, genre pieces, with some extra-musical literary or autobiographical association. There was an affair with one of Wieck's pupils, later broken off, but by 1835 he had begun to turn his attention to Clara Wieck, nine years his junior. Wieck had good reason to object to the liaison. His daughter had a career before her as a concert performer and Schumann had shown signs of instability of character, whatever his abilities as a composer might be. Matters were taken to an extreme when Wieck resorted to litigation, in order to prevent what he saw as a disastrous marriage.

It was not until 1840 that Schumann was eventually able to marry Clara, after her father's legal attempts to oppose the match had finally failed. The couple married in September, remaining first in Leipzig, although journeys took place for concert appearances by Clara, generally accompanied by her husband, whose position was of lesser distinction. In 1844 they moved to Dresden, where it seemed that Schumann might recover from the bouts of depression that he had suffered in the earlier days of marriage. Here again no official position seemed to offer itself and it was only in 1849 that the prospect of suitable employment arose, this time in Düsseldorf, where Schumann took up his position as director of music in 1850.

Mendelssohn had enjoyed an uneasy relationship with the Düsseldorf authorities, and Schumann, much less skilled in administration and conducting, proved even less able to cope with the difficulties that arose. The pressures on him led to a complete nervous breakdown in 1854 and he spent his final years in an asylum at Eendenich, dying there in 1856.

Schumann's *Beethoven Studies* survive in three sources. The first is a set of eleven studies written in 1831/32, the last and the ninth unfinished, entitled *Etuden*

in Form freier Variationen über ein Beethoven'sches Thema (Studies in the form of free variations on a theme of Beethoven). This work (autograph A) can be found in Robert Münster's Preface to his Henle edition and is contained in *Skizzenbuch IV*, the collection of various compositions by Schumann assembled by his widow. The second version, (autograph B), is a set of nine studies dedicated to Clara Wieck dating from about 1833, four of which are unfinished. The third (autograph C), under the title *Exercices*,¹ dates from 1834/35. These studies remained unpublished, except for one piece from the second version, included in *Albumblätter, Op. 124, No. 3* as *Leides Ahnung* (Feeling of Sorrow). The eponymous theme, taken from the second movement of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7*, is given first, for ease of comparison, in the G. Henle Verlag edition, taken from the 1816 piano arrangement of the symphony by Anton Diabelli. The studies that follow are not in the traditional form of variations and with varied figuration. In the Henle edition used here, seven studies are taken from autograph C, the seventh with suggestions of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* and a sudden intrusion of a fragment of the first movement of *Symphony No. 7*, followed by four studies from autograph A and four from autograph B.

On the night of 17th February 1854 Schumann, who had been showing increasing signs of mental instability, wrote a theme that he told his wife had been sung to him by angels. The following day he became agitated by the idea of demonic persecution. On the Sunday, 19th February, he suffered more delusions, but in the next days wrote some variations on the theme. Intermittently calmed by medical intervention, on Monday 27th February he left the house, heading for the Rhine, where he tried to drown himself, to be rescued by two men who brought him home. There he turned his attention to copying the variations, before a further outburst and the decision that his repeated request for hospital treatment should be accepted. Taken to a private asylum at Eendenich, on the outskirts of Bonn, he was to die there two and a half years later. He remained aware of the theme and variations, asking his wife to send him a copy of the work, which was only to be published in 1941². Known popularly as the *Ghost Variations*, the work, dedicated to Clara Schumann, begins with an E flat major

theme, followed by five variations, the second a canon and the third and fifth livelier in pace.

Schumann and Clara shared an interest in the work of Robert Schumann's close contemporary, Fryderyk Chopin, who appears as one of the characters in Schumann's *Carnaval*. In 1835 or 1836 Schumann began his *Variations on a Nocturne of Chopin*, based on the latter's *Nocturne in G minor, Op. 15, No. 3*. The projected work, which starts with the *Nocturne* on which it is based, proceeds to five variations, but remained unfinished and, until 1992, unpublished.

Even in adolescence Schumann had found a deep interest in what he could discover of Schubert's music, and was horrified when he learnt of the latter's death in 1828. In 1831/32–1834 he wrote *Scènes musicales sur un Thème connu, / Sehnsuchtwalzervariationen*, variations on Schubert's *Sehnsuchtwalzer* (Waltzes of Longing), which he dedicated to Henriette Voigt, whom he had met through his close friend, the young pianist and composer Ludwig Schunke³. The opening *Maestoso* is familiar as the *Préambule* that Schumann used to open his *Carnaval*. Reconstructed by Andreas Boyde from three surviving autographs in various stages of completion, the published work continues with four variations, each followed by a *Ritornell*, and a fifth variation, succeeded by Schubert's *Sehnsuchtwalzer, D 365, 2*.

Written in June 1836, Schumann's third piano sonata appeared first in the same year with its original five movements reduced to three and under the title *Concerto sans orchestre*, presumably at the wish of the publisher, Tobias Haslinger. The second of the two omitted scherzos was later included by Schumann, when the work took its final form in a revision of 1853, which brought other adjustments. Dedicated to Ignaz Moscheles, what finally became the *Dritte grosse Sonate* (Third Grand Sonata) had a new finale. The movements discarded for the first publication include the first of the two Scherzos, two of the

variations, the second a Scherzo marked *Prestissimo*, and a rapid and demanding *Finale*.

In 1830 Schumann made his first version of what was to be his *Toccata, Op. 7*, dedicated to Schunke and published in 1834 by Hofmeister. The original work had Schumann's title of *Exercice pour le pianoforte*. In 1832/33 he wrote his *Canon on 'An Alexis send ich dich'*, on a simple song by Friedrich Heinrich Himmel.

Eight pieces were included in Schumann's 1837 *Fantasiestücke*, the title probably drawn from that of E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Fantasiestücke in Caillots Manier* (Fantasy Pieces in the style of Caillot). The *Supplement* to the work is a piece omitted from the collection, which was dedicated to the Scottish pianist Roberta Ann Laidlaw.

The *Variations in G on an original theme, 'Mit Gott'*, appear among Schumann's earlier papers, dated to 1831/32. The work remained unpublished and incomplete in the composer's lifetime. His piano transcription of the *Overture to the Singspiel of 1792, Titania oder Liebe durch Zauberei* (Titania or Love through Sorcery) by Georg Christoph Grosheim has been dated to about 1822. It suggests, at the very least, considerable ambition and competence in a schoolboy.

Keith Anderson

¹ For full details see: Robert Schumann: *Exercices (Beethoven-Etüden)*, ed. Robert Münster, G. Henle Verlag, Munich, 1976/2004.

² For full details see: Robert Schumann: *Thema mit Variationen (Geistervariationen)*, ed. Wolf-Dieter Seiffert, G. Henle Verlag, Munich, 1995.

³ For full details see: Robert Schumann: *Variationen über ein Thema von Schubert (Sehnsuchtwalzervariationen)*, edited and reconstructed Andreas Boyde, Friedrich Hofmeister Musikverlag, Hofheim, Leipzig, 2000.

Olivier Chauzu

Olivier Chauzu trained at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris, where he obtained First Prize for Piano followed by First Prize in Chamber Music, studying under Gabriel Tacchino, Théodore Paraschivesko, Jean-Claude Pennetier and György Sebök. He was also a pupil of Leon Fleisher, Vitaly Margoulis and Dimitri Bashkirov before further studies at the Banff School of Fine Arts in Alberta, Canada. A prizewinner at the 1989 Barcelona Maria Canals international competition, he went on to be awarded the Prix Claude Debussy in the Yvonne Lefébure competition in Saint-Germain-en-Laye the following year. His recording of Isaac Albéniz's *Iberia* for the Calliope label received a Diapason d'or in the category of outstanding recording by a new artist. His recordings of Paul Dukas' complete piano works, selected piano pieces by Schumann, and Beethoven's final sonatas also received critical acclaim. His album of Samazeuilh's complete piano works [Grand Piano GP669] was awarded a Choc Classica. Chauzu is noted for his eclectic repertoire, which includes piano works from all periods of musical history, from Bach and Scarlatti to 20th-century composers such as Mompou and Stockhausen. He has toured the world, playing with orchestras including the Calgary Philharmonic, Mexico Philharmonic, Bratislava Symphony, the Ontario Philharmonic, and many French orchestras.

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Photos by Jean-Baptiste Millot



Some of Robert Schumann's rarest piano music can be heard in this disc, which ranges from his precocious *Titania Overture* arrangement to the *Ghost Variations*, the theme of which, he told his wife Clara, had been sung to him by angels. His *Beethoven Studies* survive in three sources, whilst his admiration for his contemporaries Schubert and Chopin is shown by two works containing a series of variations. The 1836 *Third Sonata* is included in the pre-1853 revision and also included is the original version of what became his very popular *Toccata, Op. 7*.

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(1810–1856)

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23	Variations on a Nocturne of Chopin, Anh. F26	4:37
24–34	Sehnsuchtwalzervariationen (Variations on a Theme by Schubert), Anh. F24	9:05
35–37	Sonata in F minor, Op. 14: Three discarded movements	10:37
38	Exercice (1830 version of <i>Toccata, Op. 7</i>), Anh. F11	4:59
39	Canon on F. H. Himmel's <i>Alexis send ich dich</i>	1:02
40	Supplement to <i>Fantasiestücke, Op. 12, WoO 28</i>	1:31
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Full track details will be found on page 2 of the booklet

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