

# **Between Fire and Silence**

David Munk-Nielsen · Piano





## Personal Notes by David Munk-Nielsen

The idea behind ***Between Fire and Silence*** comes from my love of Romantic piano music and its strong sense of storytelling. I have always been drawn to the wide contrasts specifically in this repertoire, from the quiet and intimate to the passionate and almost explosive, hence the title of the CD. These pieces have followed me for years; I keep returning to them because they speak so personally to me, while naturally complementing each other to form a coherent and musically varied whole.

Schumann's *Kinderszenen* and *Fantasie* explore emotions that resonate with us all, longing, hope, vulnerability, and exaltation. That is why music feels like a universal language: it connects us beyond words, culture and time. Sibelius' piano music entered my life during my study years in Finland, where I also learned the language and musical tradition. This personal connection has strongly shaped my interpretation and strengthened my wish to bring these beautiful and often overlooked pieces to audiences outside of Finland.

My hope is that this album feels like a complete musical journey, rich in contrast and emotion, while also presenting some real gems of Finnish piano music. In recording it, I aimed not only for studio perfection but for a sense of life, spontaneity, and the energy of a live performance.

## About the Music and Composers



With *Kinderszenen*, Op. 15, **Robert Schumann** (1810–1856) reflects on childhood in a series of intimate and poetic miniatures. The cycle consists of thirteen short movements, among them the perhaps most well-known of the set, *Träumerei*, whose lyrical and innocent character has made it one of Schumann's most beloved pieces. Each movement reveals tender and sincere emotions, concluding with the final piece, *Der Dichter spricht*, where the voice of the poet seems to look back quietly on the memories that have passed. Schumann was a composer of extraordinary sensitivity, greatly inspired by literature, philosophy, and his own rich inner life. His music reflects the duality of his artistic personality, the passionate, fiery Florestan and the introvert, poetic Eusebius, balancing emotional directness with structural clarity to create works that are both profoundly personal and universally human. *Kinderszenen* exemplifies this, offering quiet introspection that contrasts with the monumental gestures found in his other works.

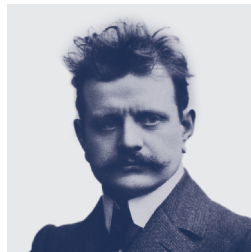
Robert Schumann circa 1839, around the time of composing his *Fantasie*, Op. 17.

Composed just a year later, Schumann's *Fantasie*, Op. 17, stands as one of the greatest monuments of Romantic piano literature, overflowing with longing, passion and dramatic intensity. At the time, Schumann was deeply in love with Clara Wieck, who would later become his wife, but her father had forbidden them to see each other. Separated in reality, the only way they could truly be together was in spirit. Music became the space where he could reach her, a highly personal language through which he expressed his love, frustration and hope.

The score itself includes a poem by Friedrich Schlegel:

*“Durch alle Töne tönet  
Im bunten Erdentraum  
Ein leiser Ton gezogen  
Für den, der heimlich lauschet.”*

These lines reflect the work's search for an inner voice, a tone that can only be heard in attentive silence, perhaps carrying a private message to Clara. The *Fantasie* captures the essence of the Romantic spirit: intensely personal, emotionally unrestrained, and driven by the belief that music can express what words cannot.



**Jean Sibelius** (1865–1957) is best known as Finland's national composer and for his symphonies and orchestral works, which played a significant role in shaping the country's cultural identity at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Alongside his major orchestral works, he composed numerous piano pieces, mostly on a smaller scale. Written throughout his career, these works reveal a more intimate side of his artistry: refined, and rich in subtle color. Though rarely performed outside Finland, they offer a unique insight into his compositional language, where simplicity often carries profound expressive weight.

Within this program, Sibelius' piano music, alongside Schumann's *Kinderszenen*, creates a contemplative balance to the drama of the *Fantasie*. Together, the works on this album form a dialogue between intensity and reflection, between fire and silence.

Jean Sibelius circa 1890, around the time he composed his Op. 24 piano pieces.

## About the Artist

David Munk-Nielsen is a Danish concert pianist, graduated from the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki and the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen. He is recognized as one of the leading young concert pianists in the Nordic countries, having won several international piano competitions and performed as a soloist with orchestras including Copenhagen Phil, the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and at numerous international festivals.

David's playing is defined by clarity of structure, a rich and colourful tonal palette, and expressive presence, combining technical mastery with a strong sense of musical storytelling, always striving to make the music as alive and present as possible. *Between Fire and Silence* marks his debut recording and a significant milestone in his international career, presenting a program that showcases his interpretive insight, profound musical sensitivity, and commitment to bringing both well-known and lesser-known piano repertoire to a wider audience. Through this recording, David continues to build on his reputation as a thoughtful and compelling interpreter of Romantic and Nordic piano music.





Recording producer, edit, mix and master: Emil Houmøller Mortensen  
Cover notes: David Munk-Nielsen  
Biography: OUR Recordings  
Executive producer: Lars Hannibal  
Photos: Nikolaj Lund  
Artwork: Toke Bjørneboe

Recorded at the Royal Danish Academy of Music Concert Hall, November 22–24, 2025.

#### Technical specifications

AD/DA Converter: Merging Technologies: Horus, Hapi MKii & Anubis  
Microphone Preamps: Merging Technologies: Horus  
Microphones: Schoeps MK21 wide cardioid (close AB) DPA4006 Omni + APE balls (Room / Ambience)  
External effect: Bricasti M7 rumklang, Software: Pyramix 15, Resolution: 192kHz/24bit

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to my family for their support, encouragement, and understanding throughout the years.

Special thanks also go to my dear professor Erik T. Tawaststjerna at the *Sibelius Academy* for his inspiration and guidance over many years, as well as to my professor at the *Royal Danish Academy of Music*, Marianna Shirinyan, for her dedication, insight, and artistic support.

I am also deeply grateful to Lars Hannibal, CEO of OUR Recordings, and to sound engineer Emil Houmøller Mortensen, without whom the making of this recording would not have been possible.



AAGE OG JOHANNE  
LOUIS-HANSENS FOND



DET KONGELIGE DANSKE  
MUSIKKONSERVATORIUM



SOLIST  
FORENINGEN



SOLIST  
DANSK SOLISTFORBUND

## **Robert Schumann: Kinderszenen, Op. 15**

1	I. Von fremden Ländern und Menschen .....	1:42
2	II. Kuriose Geschichte .....	1:09
3	III. Hasche-Mann .....	0:34
4	IV. Bittendes Kind. ....	1:01
5	V. Glückes genug .....	0:41
6	VI. Wichtige Begebenheit .....	0:58
7	VII. Träumerei .....	2:54
8	VIII. Am Kamin. ....	1:01
9	IX. Ritter vom Steckenpferd .....	0:41
10	X. Fast zu ernst .....	1:46
11	XI. Fürchtenmachen. ....	2:01
12	XII. Kind im Einschlummern .....	2:10
13	XIII. Der Dichter spricht. ....	2:24

## **Jean Sibelius: 10 Pieces, Op. 24**

14	1. Impromptu. ....	3:46
15	8. Nocturno. ....	3:25
16	9. Romance. ....	3:27

## **Jean Sibelius: 6 Impromptus, Op. 5**

17	Impromptu no. 5. ....	3:26
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## **Robert Schumann: Fantasie in C Major, Op. 17**

18	Durchaus fantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen .....	13:19
19	Mäßig. Durchaus energisch .....	7:59
20	Langsam getragen. Durchweg leise zu halten. ....	11:06
	Total. ....	65:30