



GRAND
PIANO

FRANZ XAVER
MOZART

PIANO SONATA IN G MAJOR
VARIATIONS
RUSSIAN FANTASY AND A KRAKOWIAK

ROBERT MARKHAM

FRANZ XAVER MOZART (1791–1844)

**PIANO SONATA IN G MAJOR • VARIATIONS
RUSSIAN FANTASY AND A KRAKOWIAK**

ROBERT MARKHAM, *piano*

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Producer and Engineer: Michael Ponder

Editor: Adaq Khan

Piano: Steinway & Sons, Model D

Piano Technician: Peter Roscoe

Booklet Notes: Ben Hogwood

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| | PIANO SONATA IN G MAJOR, OP. 10 (1807) | 28:40 |
| 1 | I. Allegro moderato | 13:00 |
| 2 | II. Largo | 02:57 |
| 3 | III. Minuetto – Trio | 06:47 |
| 4 | IV. Rondo: Allegretto | 05:41 |
| 5 | FANTASY ON THE RUSSIAN SONG 'TCHEM TEBYA YA OGORTSHILA' AND A KRAKOWIAK, FXWM VII:30 (1815) | 15:03 |
| 6 | VARIATIONS ON A MINUET FROM THE FIRST FINALE OF W.A. MOZART'S <i>DON GIOVANNI</i> IN F MAJOR, OP. 2 (pub. 1805) | 09:36 |
| 7 | VARIATIONS ON A RUSSIAN THEME IN G MINOR, OP. 20 (pub. 1809) | 07:58 |

TOTAL TIME: 61:29

FRANZ XAVER MOZART (1791–1844)
PIANO SONATA IN G MAJOR • VARIATIONS
RUSSIAN FANTASY AND A KRAKOWIAK

The weight of expectation placed on the shoulders of Franz Xaver Mozart cannot be overestimated. A composer-pianist like his father, he was the youngest of six children born to Wolfgang Amadeus and Constanze in 1791, but his father passed away just four months later. Ten years later, Franz Xaver – now known as ‘Wolfgang Amadeus’ at his mother’s behest – was giving performances at Constanze’s salon. The Viennese press was eager to hear this young composer-pianist, who had studied with no less than Salieri, Hummel and Albrechtsberger.

His first compositions dated from 1802, writing in traditional Classical forms but soon – to his mother’s frustration – gravitating towards keyboard variations, an area in which Beethoven honed his compositional craft. Franz Xaver’s first official live appearance in Vienna was on 8 April 1805, where he played music by his father, thought to be the *Piano Concerto No. 25 in C major*, K. 503.

However, he did not stay in the Austrian capital, moving to take up a teaching post near Lemberg, in what was then Austrian Poland, now Lviv, Ukraine. Once there he immersed himself in more locally inspired musical forms, in particular the *Polonaise mélancolique*, explored in Robert Markham’s album of Franz Xaver Mozart’s *Polonaises* (Grand Piano, GP941).

This album begins with Franz Xaver Mozart’s largest work for solo piano, the *Piano Sonata in G major*, Op. 10. Completed in July 1807 when the composer had just turned sixteen, it was dedicated to the French diplomat and music connoisseur Count Antoine-François Andréossy and published in Germany by Johann Anton André, who had purchased the Mozart musical estate from Constanze.

The *Sonata* is an assured piece in four movements, aligning itself with the design of Beethoven’s sonatas, if not sharing their musical language. It is however written with a confident air that suggests Franz Xaver saw his future as a performer-composer, its technical demands held within a firm grasp of sonata form.

The distinctive flourish of its first theme matches the mood of Beethoven's short sonata *Op. 49, No. 2*, also in G major. Mozart maintains a bright mood throughout, deviating by some distance from the home key in a substantial development section. Here he explores variants of the main theme, before skilfully negotiating a way back to the 'home' key.

The solemn *Largo*, in B minor, is the emotional heart of the work, an early indication of the style Franz Xaver perfected in the *Polonaise mélancolique*. An intimate, freeform expression, its quieter asides contrast with the bustle of the first movement. After this brief pause for reflection the elegant *Minuetto* takes to the floor with a pure melody in the upper right-hand register. Twice the duration of the slow movement, its complementary *Trio* in E minor is a shadier section, but the light mood of the dance wins through on its return.

The finale retains the poise of the *Minuetto* but takes more opportunity for technical display. Once again Franz Xaver takes the theme to distant harmonic areas, but on his return to the home key the regal second theme is an affirmative statement, ensuring the sonata signs off in convincing fashion.

The *Fantasy on a Russian Song and a Krakowiak* allowed Franz Xaver Mozart to simultaneously pay homage to the Russian and Polish communities in his new surroundings. Composed in 1815, it is his most virtuosic solo piano work, becoming a critical part of his central European tour between 1818 and 1820. The Russian song is 'Tchem tebya ya ogortshila' ('What have I done to anger you?'), part of a collection by Mikhail Tchulkov, published in the early 1770s. It forms the basis of a set of five variations, followed by the Krakowiak melody, taken from a collection of Russian and Polish folk melodies assembled by Anton Wilhelm von Zuccalmaglio.

An expansive introduction prepares us for the plaintive melody of the Russian song, on which Mozart writes a series of increasingly elaborate and demonstrative variations. Such was the success of this first half that he wrote a standalone version for piano and orchestra. The variations end in A flat major and usher in the light-hearted Krakowiak theme, marked *Allegro scherzando*, which dances attractively. Gradually the right hand acquires more freedom, the music instinctively traversing a number of far-off keys before returning to a series of trills, crowning an exuberant final staging of the dance.

There is an irony in the choice that both Franz Xaver and Fryderyk Chopin made for their *Op. 2* compositions, publishing variations on themes from W.A. Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Chopin chose the aria 'Là ci darem la mano' on which to write his theme and variations for piano and orchestra in 1827... while Franz Xaver chose the famous *Minuetto* from the first finale of the opera, 22 years earlier. This was performed along with the concerto in his first public concert in 1805.

He writes seven variations on his father's theme, with a *moto perpetuo* second and a third of increasingly florid right-hand figurations. The sixth variation turns to F minor, its contemplative tone in keeping with a Beethoven slow movement, before the final variation ends in a playful mood.

The *Variations on a Russian Theme, Op. 20* were published in Hamburg, during Franz Xaver's central European tour, and contain the theme with seven variations in G minor on an unidentified Russian song. They were thought to have been lost but were rediscovered under the name of Franz Xaver's father in the Austrian National Library. There is a greater sense of freedom and mischief in this set, with Franz Xaver looking to add very individual characters to each variation. There is a noticeable addition of grace notes and trills to the right-hand part on several occasions, preserving the Slavic character of the theme while enhancing its ornamentation. The third variation is a strident and humorous march, complemented by a softly voiced trio section in G major, marked as a fourth variation and functioning as a slow, elegant dance. The minor-key antics return, though the sixth variation finds a touching simplicity in its second half before the final *Allegretto* takes the profile of a polonaise, looking to end softly but given two strident chords as its final words.

Ben Hogwood

ROBERT MARKHAM



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Acclaimed as a performer of 'astonishing lucidity and coherence' (*Musical Opinion*) and 'true musicianship' (*International Piano*), British pianist Robert Markham was a finalist at the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. While still a teenager, he won the piano class of the BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition, and went on to give a highly acclaimed debut recital at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall in New York. Markham's concert activity spans three continents, and he has appeared at London's Wigmore Hall, Birmingham's Symphony Hall and New York's Alice Tully Hall. He has performed at the Felicja Blumental International Music Festival in Israel, the Oficina de Música in Brazil and Three Choirs Festival in the UK. Markham regularly appears as a concerto soloist in the UK and abroad, and has performed with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, London Mozart Players and Israel Chamber Orchestra. He regularly collaborates, as a chamber musician, with members of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Markham studied with Heather Slade-Lipkin at Chetham's School of Music and Oxana Yablonskaya at The Juilliard School, from where he holds a Doctorate. He currently serves as senior tutor in solo and collaborative piano at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire where, as a staff researcher, he has conducted research into the life and works of Franz Xaver Mozart.



Franz Xaver Mozart (1846). Lithograph by Johann Stadler (1804–1859)

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PIANO SONATA IN G MAJOR • VARIATIONS RUSSIAN FANTASY AND A KRAKOWIAK

Franz Xaver Mozart, who studied with Salieri and Hummel, was a composer-pianist like his father, Wolfgang Amadeus, but inevitably laboured under the weight of huge expectation. This album contains his largest work for solo piano, the *Piano Sonata in G major* – an assured, distinctive piece that balances dance with drive. His most virtuosic work is the exuberant *Fantasy on a Russian Song and a Krakowiak*, while his mischievous *Variations on a Russian Theme* and the variations on his father's *Don Giovanni* illustrate Franz Xaver's great gifts for elaboration and playfulness. Robert Markham, who has conducted research into the life and music of Franz Xaver Mozart, has been hailed as a performer of 'astonishing lucidity and coherence' by *Musical Opinion*.



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