



Focus on Piano Literature

Two Great Romantics: Mendelssohn and Schumann

Joseph Di Piazza, piano
Paul Stewart, piano
Vincent van Gelder, piano
Ināra Zandmane, piano
Fabián López, violin

Thursday, June 3, 2010
8:00 pm
Recital Hall, School of Music



**Music of Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
and Robert Schumann (1810-1856)**

"Suleika," Op. 34, No. 4 (1837/1840)
Song without Words, Op. 19b, No. 1 (1830)

Mendelssohn/Liszt
Mendelssohn

Song without Words, Op. 67, No. 2 (1845)
"Neue Liebe," ("New Love"), Op. 19a, No. 4 (1833/1840)

Mendelssohn
Mendelssohn/Liszt

"Widmung," ("Dedication"), Op. 25, No. 1 (1840/1846)
Symphonic Etudes, Op. 13 (1834-37)

Schumann/Liszt
Schumann

Theme
Five Supplemental Variations

Joseph Di Piazza, piano

Carnaval, Op. 9 (1834-35)
Chopin

Schumann

Fantasy Pieces, Op. 12 (1837)
Des Abends (Of an Evening)
Aufschwung (Soaring)
Warum? (Why?)
Grillen (Whims)

Schumann

Paul Stewart, piano

Intermission

Caprice in E minor, Op. 16, No. 2 ("Scherzo") (1829)
Song without Words, Op. 62, No. 5 ("Venetian Gondola Song") (1841)
Song without Words, Op. 67, No. 4 ("Spinning Song") (1845)
Song without Words, Op. 19b, No. 6 ("Venetian Gondola Song") (1830)

Mendelssohn

Scherzo from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (1843/1933) **Mendelssohn/Rachmaninoff**

Vincent van Gelder, piano

Sonata in D minor, Op. 121 (1851)
Ziemlich langsam; Lebhaft
Sehr lebhaft
Leise, einfach; Etwas bewegter; Tempo wie vorher
Bewegt

Schumann

Fabián López, violin
Ināra Zandmane, piano

Program Notes

Opening tonight's program are four Mendelssohn songs, two with words and two without words. Franz Liszt transcribed six Mendelssohn songs, far less than those of Felix's contemporaries such as Schubert (28) and Schumann (12). The text of Mendelssohn's **Suleika** is from Goethe's *Poems of West and East* (1814-19), a 12 volume collection of lyrical poems, and one of his late, great cycles of poetry. **Suleika** is one of several poems included in this cycle that were actually written by Goethe's lover, Marianne von Willemer. The poem depicts Suleika anxiously awaiting word from her lover during separation. She pleads with the West Wind to relay to him while concealing her agony that he is the love of her life. The song is a mournful romance in E minor that ends in E major--a symbol of the joyful feelings his presence will bring her. Liszt faithfully repeats Mendelssohn's melody while beautifully embellishing the left hand accompaniment. The E major ending lends itself to a fitting elision into the very first of the **Songs Without Words**, Op. 19b, which is a model for many that followed.

The F-sharp minor **Songs Without Words** is an example of Mendelssohn's creativity. A haunting melody is imaginatively accompanied by pizzicato-like staccatos. F-sharp minor segues into the major mode of that key and another song, **Neue Liebe** (New Love) transcribed by Liszt. The text, from a poem by Heine, is painted by galloping rhythms and heraldic horns.

*In the moonlit forest I watched the elves a-riding,
I heard their horns sound, I heard their bells ring.
Their white horses, with golden antlers, flew on,
Like white swans travelling through the air.
The Queen nodded at me and smiled, smiled as she
rode overhead; Was it because of my new love?
Or does it mean death? (a typical poetic twist at the end!)*

Schumann's **Widmung** (Dedication), also transcribed by Liszt, is a love song full of adoration and devotion. The text is by Friedrich Rückert, whose poetry many composers chose to set to music. **Widmung** is perhaps the most popular.

Schumann's **Symphonic Etudes**, a set of variations, is based on a theme by Baron von Fricken. He was the father of Ernestine, the young piano student of Friedrich Wieck, whom Schumann was smitten by. The virtuoso work was originally titled **12 Davidsbündler Etudes**, naming it for his imaginary anti-Philistine organization. After Schumann's death there was a posthumous *Complete Works of Schumann* published. One of the editors, Johannes Brahms, presented five of the previously unpublished **Etudes**. The five supplemental etudes are worthy of performance. Whether all of them should be interspersed with the original twelve is up for debate. The fifth variation is another example of a beautiful, nostalgic postlude, such as the ones found in **Kinderszenen**, the **Arabeske**, and the song cycle **Dichterliebe**.

Joe Di Piazza

“Chopin” from Schumann's Opus 9

At age 21, Robert Schumann announced Chopin's arrival on the musical scene with the famous phrase, “Hats off, gentlemen, a genius.” The year was 1831 and the words were written in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*. Schumann's insightful essay introduced a relatively unknown composer to the musical world. The assessment was based on Chopin's Opus 2, a set of Variations on Mozart's “La ci darem la mano” from the opera Don Giovanni.

The composition “Chopin”, an exquisite, miniature nocturne, is from Robert Schumann's twenty-one piece romantic masterwork, *Carnaval*, Opus 9, 1834-35. *Carnaval* was the glorification of the Masked Ball. Schumann united the unreal, Arlequin and Pierrot with real acquaintances Clara, Ernestine, Paganini and Chopin. As we celebrate the 200th birthday of both Robert Schumann and Frédéric Chopin, this lovely musical moment is offered as a tribute to both composers.

Fantasiestücke (Fantasy Pieces) Opus 12

The contrasting character pieces of Opus 12 were composed in the spring of 1837. Schumann repeatedly stated that the programmatic titles were given to the compositions only after their completion. In these works, although not specifically referenced, we hear the duality of Schumann's personality. Eusebius is recognized in Des Abends and Warum, representing Schumann, the gentle dreamer. Florestan is present in Aufschwung and Grillen, depicting the passionate, impetuous side of Schumann's musical personality.

Des Abends (The Evening)

Schumann captures the stillness and tranquility of the evening hour by writing with simplicity and subtlety. In this quiet, tonal picture of dusk the meter is 2/8 but the ambiguity of mood is projected as 3/8 and 6/16 to the listener. The exquisite harmonic changes and the syncopation of the inner melodic lines make this one of Schumann's loveliest pieces.

Aufschwung (Soaring)

With a melodic idea that leaps four octaves using only octave C's, Schumann takes the listener to the height of his passion. The music swirls and undulates with impetuous, determined energy. The structure alternates between brash and virtuosic passages, as at the opening, and a more plaintive, searching melody. Cross rhythms create a feeling of restless agitation.

Warum? (Why?)

Warum is a short, rather straightforward character piece built on a single phrase. This melodic phrase achieves the sense of questioning by consistently ending up in the air. The gentle questioning ends with an inconclusive ending. As with all difficult questions, satisfying answers are elusive and unsettled.

Grillen (Whims)

Grillen portrays a whimsical, quirky and capricious waltz. Light-hearted humor is achieved with rhythmic syncopation and unexpected melodic shapes. The waltz is briefly interrupted by a serious, chorale-like interlude before the return to the opening.

Paul Stewart

The light, quicksilver “fairy music” that the teenaged Mendelssohn invented for his overture to Shakespeare's **A Midsummer Night's Dream** in 1826 became a signature style to which he returned often, for example in the E minor Caprice, which also shares its key with the overture. The famous “spinning song” applies this same manner to the depiction of a whirling wheel.

Another favorite style of Mendelssohn's, the Venetian gondola song, offers a more soothing experience. Its rocking triplet motion evokes the lapping of gentle waves, as the gondoliers glide across the water singing sweetly in thirds. The boat piece, or barcarolle, continued to fascinate composers well into the twentieth century.

At the height of his maturity, Mendelssohn returned to the subject of Shakespeare's comedy to compose further incidental music for the play, including the famous Wedding March and the present Scherzo, which Rachmaninoff transcribed for the piano with a wizardry equal to Mendelssohn's own.

Andrew Willis

Schumann: Violin Sonata in D minor, Op.121

It was the fall of 1851. Robert Schumann had just started his second season in charge of the Düsseldorf orchestra and chorus. The first season seemed to be promising, with dinners hosted in his honor and concerts approved by audience and critics. Unfortunately, the second year dampened everyone's expectations. Schumann was irritated by the poor preparation and attendance of both chorus and orchestra musicians and had fierce disagreements with the administration of Allgemeiner Musikverein regarding the choice of repertoire and soloists. The administration did not change its point of view and questioned Schumann's conducting abilities in

return. The conflict would eventually lead to his resignation in 1853. Somewhat disappointed in the official duties, Schumann enjoyed composing as much as ever and did it with undiminished inspiration – the Second Violin Sonata was completed within a few days, 28 October – 2 November 1851, and dedicated to Ferdinand David, the violinist who first performed and advised Mendelssohn on his Violin Concerto. The work was titled ***Zweite grosse Sonate für Violine und Pianoforte***, putting the “violin” before the “piano” that was rather unconventional.

Known by most pianists as the master of a miniature cycle, Schumann did not shy away from large form works, and this sonata is a proof that he could manage big structures as well. The four-movement piece is united by using recurring themes and overriding passionate energy. Schumann’s use of thematic development presents itself at the very beginning of the work – the slow, chordal introduction and the sweeping main subject are in reality the same theme exploring the differences between the vertical harmonic presentation and the horizontal melodic line. Frequent harmony shifts and abundance of syncopations create an uneasy impression, and there is a section in the development when for number of measures violin and piano are trading lines that are consistently off-beat.

The second movement is in a rondo form. The driven, energetic refrain is offset by two eerie, poignant episodes, a late style version of Florestan and Eusebius. The last refrain unexpectedly starts in C Major before shifting down to the original B minor key and getting progressively softer. There is a new material in coda that is the main theme of the third movement. What were full, triumphant chords at the end of the second movement, is violin pizzicato melody echoed by sparse piano texture in the beginning of third. The effect is so different that it takes couple (or more!) measures to realize that it is indeed the same material. The main theme from the second movement comes back several times in the third movement as well, each time interrupted by a gentle slow melody and gradually losing its intensity until it is just a whisper at the end of the movement. Relentless motion in both violin and piano parts in fourth movement concludes this grand and profound work.

Ināra Zandmane

Performer Biographies

Joseph Di Piazza earned the BM from De Paul University, and the MM and DMA degrees from the University of Wisconsin, where he also received a prestigious NDEA Fellowship. He has performed throughout the United States and Europe as recitalist, chamber player, and soloist with symphony orchestras and has participated in festivals at Interlochen, Eastern Music Festival, Chicago Spring Arts Festival, the University of Illinois, Methodist College, Woodstock Guild Series, and the Beethoven Festival in New York. In addition to numerous University Guest Artist Series, Di Piazza has performed on series at the Chicago Art Institute, Orchestra Hall, Cincinnati Art Museum, and the Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Performing and Cultural Arts. He was also invited to give a recital on the Horowitz Steinway, which was touring the United States.

Paul Stewart is currently Chair of the Keyboard Division at UNCG. He earned the BM and the BMEd degrees from Indiana University, the MM degree from the University of Illinois, and the DM degree from Florida State University. His teachers have included Walter Bricht, Ray Dudley, Howard Karp, and Leonard Mastrogiamomo. Stewart has served as NCMTA State President and Local State Convention Chairman. At the National Level of MTNA, he has served as Southern Division President, American Music Program Chair, and National Convention Chair. He is currently a member of the MTNA Board of Directors and National MTNA President. As a winner of the Bryan Competition, Stewart was the featured piano soloist with the North Carolina Symphony on four occasions. In June 2000, he premiered “Jupiter’s Moons,” a multi-movement work for solo piano by Judith Lang Zaimont. He is an active solo performer and has given numerous regional and national concerts and piano pedagogy sessions featuring American Ragtime music.

Vincent van Gelder, piano, studied at the Latvian Academy of Music, in Riga and earned the BM and MM degrees at the Conservatory of Hogeschool Enschede, Netherlands. He also holds the MM from Southern Illinois University and the DMA from the University of Missouri at Kansas City.

He has performed in the Netherlands, Germany, Latvia, and throughout the US and is the winner of several competitions, including the 1999 St. Louis Artist Presentation Society Auditions and the 2007 Artist International competition in New York, through which he presented his Carnegie Hall debut in May 2008. In Greensboro he founded the Moore Music Recital Series. Mr. van Gelder’s recordings are available on the VINAR label.

Fabián López is a native of Málaga, Spain. Upon graduation from the *Conservatorio Superior de Música de Málaga* at age 18, he received a scholarship from the Hispanic-American Joint Committee/Fullbright Commission to continue his studies in the U.S. His principal teachers have been: Nicolae Duca, Jaroslav Copak, Laura Klugherz, Kevork Mardirossian, and Camilla Wicks.

Fabián is a full of life performer playing recitals, chamber music, and appearing as soloist with orchestras such as the *Real Orquesta Sinfonica de Sevilla*, *Orquesta Ciudad de Córdoba*, Chamber Orchestra of Andalucía, *Orquesta Filarmónica de Málaga*, *Orquesta Ciudad de Almería*, *“Manuel de Falla”* Chamber Orchestra, etc. In the pedagogical terrain he is an active and dedicated teacher, maintaining a studio of talented and committed students. He has given courses and master classes for the Youth Orchestra of Andalucía (O.J.A.), *Conservatorio Superior de Granada*, Cartagena Conservatory, UNC Chapel Hill, Louisiana State University, Ball State University, Puerto Rico Music Conservatory, Hebert Springs Chamber Music Festival, International Violin Symposium in UNC Chapel Hill, the Chamber Strings Summer Music Workshop in Pennsylvania, etc and has been a jury member at the I International Violin Competition *“Violines por la Paz”*, Auditions for Violin Professors in Spanish National Conservatories, ASTA, MTNA, etc. Fabián taught at the Royal Conservatory of Music *“Manuel de Falla”* of Cádiz, Spain (1999-2004) and was a member of the *“Manuel de Falla”* String Quartet (2000-2003). He started teaching at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro in 2007. In North Carolina he has appeared as guest concertmaster with the Asheville and Greensboro Symphony Orchestras.

During his studies at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Fabián had the opportunity of playing a concert with the Guarnerius del Gesù that belonged to J. Heifetz. He is the lucky owner of a violin made by Ioan Guillami, 1756, which is called “little strad” among good friends. He is a graduate from Baylor University (M.M.), studying with Bruce Berg, and The University of Michigan (D.M.A.), studying with Andrew Jennings. Fabian’s love for etudes and infinite curiosity of the trades from the great masters of the past and present, leads him to be the author of a violin etude anthology *“Master the Violin Etudes”* made possible by a New Faculty Grant from UNCG.

Born in the capital of Latvia, Riga, **Ināra Zandmane** started to play piano at the age of six. Ms. Zandmane holds BM and MM from Latvian Academy of Music, MM in piano performance from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, and DMA in piano performance from the University of Missouri at Kansas City. She has been the staff accompanist at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro since 2003, performing up to fifty recitals per year. Ms. Zandmane is frequently invited to serve as an official accompanist at national competitions and conferences, among them the North American Saxophone Alliance conference and the MTNA National competition since 2004. Ms. Zandmane has been presented in solo recitals in St. Paul, Kansas City, Cleveland, St. Louis, and New York, as well as in many Republics of former Soviet Union. In April 2000, she was invited to perform at the Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto. Ināra Zandmane has appeared as a soloist with the Latvian National Orchestra, Liepaja Symphony, Latvian Academy of Music Student Orchestra, SIU Symphony, and UMKC Conservatory Symphony and Chamber orchestras. She has performed with various chamber ensembles at the International Chamber Music Festivals in Riga, Vilnius, Tallinn, Helsinki (Finland), and Norrtelje (Sweden). Ms. Zandmane has collaborated with such musicians as Martin Storey, Paul Coletti, Branford Marsalis, Michel Debost, Kelly Burke, Steven Stusek, and Susan Fancher. For a few last years, Ināra Zandmane has worked together with Latvian composer Peteris Vasks. She has given Latvian premieres of his two latest piano pieces, Landscapes of the Burnt-out Earth and The Spring Music, and recorded the first of them on the Conifer Classics label. Solo recordings include the piano works by Maurice Ravel, recorded together with her husband, Vincent van Gelder, and the complete Sonatas for piano by Alexander Scriabin. She also can be heard on various chamber music CDs.