

RICE UNIVERSITY

the
Shepherd
School
of Music



MERYL ETTELSON, *piano*

SSM
80.4.216
ETP

Wednesday, April 16, 1980

8:00 p.m. in Hamman Hall

PROGRAM

Sonata in A Major, Op. 2, No. 2

Allegro vivace

Largo appassionato

Scherzo: Allegretto

Rondo: Grazioso

Ludwig van Beethoven

(1770-1827)

Fantasy in C Major, Op. 17

Durchaus fantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen.

Massig. Durchaus energisch.

Langsam getragen. Durchweg leise zu haeten.

Robert Schumann

(1810-1856)

Intermission

Photographing and sound recording are prohibited. We further request that audible paging devices not be used during performance. Paging arrangements may be made with the ushers.

Gaspard de la Nuit
Ondine
Le Gibet
Scarbo

Maurice Ravel
(1875-1937)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- Sunday, April 20* Undergraduate Composers' Forum, 8:00 p.m., Hamman Hall, free.
- Monday, April 21* Shepherd Sinfonia, 8:00 p.m., Hamman Hall, free.
- Tuesday, April 22* Campanile Orchestra, 8:00 p.m., Hamman Hall, free.
- Wednesday, April 23* Rice Chorale performs Mozart's Requiem, 8:00 p.m., Rice Memorial Chapel, free.
and
- Thursday, April 24*
- Sunday, April 27* Ali Forough, violin; Carolyn McCracken-Forough, piano, 8:00 p.m., Hamman Hall, free.

Lighting design by David Pendarvis
7980-28

PROGRAM NOTES

Sonata in A major, Opus 2, No.2

Beethoven

Moods of serenity, tenderness, gaiety and humor characterize Beethoven's second sonata, written in 1795. The dedication to Haydn indicates the modelling after classic traditions, but the touch of Beethoven is evident throughout. It shows vividly in the dramatic use of dynamics, the surprising key relationships, the use of a scherzo instead of a minuet, and the breadth of the fourth movement.

Fantasy in C major, Opus 17

Schumann

Originally entitled a Grand Sonata, the Fantasy was intended as a tribute to a Beethoven Memorial organized by Liszt. At that time the titles, Ruins, Triumphal Arch, and Starry Crown were attached to the movements, referring to events in Beethoven's life. With the failure of the Memorial, Schumann removed the titles. The work was published as a Fantasy, with a dedication to Liszt.

The Fantasy is considered to be Schumann's greatest work in large form for piano solo. The first movement is in modified sonata form. It contains an Interlude (development) entitled Im Legendenton (In the character of a legend). The second movement, a March, contains some of the most difficult keyboard music Schumann ever wrote. The last movement is a poetical Adagio. It is cast in two halves, each culminating in fortissimo climaxes.

The Fantasy was written during the painful period in Schumann's life before his marriage to Clara Wieck. At that time the opposition of Clara's father to the union made it nearly impossible for the lovers to see each other. In a letter to Clara, Robert wrote: "I have finished a fantasia in three movements that I sketched in all but the detail in June 1836. The first movement is, I think, the most passionate thing I have ever composed - a deep lament for you."

The work is preceded by a motto:

Durch alle töne tönst
Im bunten Erdentraum
Ein leiser Ton gezogen
Für den der heimlich lauschet.

Through all the tones that vibrate
About earth's mingled dream
One whispered note is sounding
For ears attent to hear.

In another letter to Clara Robert sheds some light on the meaning of the motto: "Tell me what occurs to you when you hear the first movement of the Fantasy. Doesn't it stir many memories: The melody



is my favorite. Are you not the "note" in the motto? I almost believe you are."

The quoted excerpt is from Beethoven's An die ferne Geliebte (To the Distant Beloved). The words are "Accept, then, these melodies that I sang for you, my love." A descending five-note motive (also contained within the quote) had a special meaning for the two lovers. It occurs in other music written by Robert and Clara as well as in the impassioned opening themes of the first movement and in various guises in the third movement.

The performance indications for each movement can be translated as follows:

- I. To be performed throughout with fantasy and passion
- II. Moderately, with energy throughout
- III. Slowly sustained, always piano

Gaspard de la Nuit

Ravel

Gaspard de la Nuit (Creatures of the Night) was composed in 1908. These three Poems for Piano were inspired by the texts of Louis Bertrand (1807-1842) a French Romantic in whose work the element of the supernatural is important.

The first piece, Ondine, takes its place alongside Jeux d'eau and the "water" music pieces of Debussy. Its iridescent harmonies, cascades of arpeggios, and haunting melodies ("murmur of a sad voice singing") make an imaginative picture in sound.

Le Gibet is constructed around an internal pedal - a persistent B flat that suggests the tolling of a bell - around which successive waves of harmony and only melodies circulate. Bertrand sums up the picture as follows: "it is the bell which sounds from the walls of a town on the horizon and a corpse hanging from a gibbet, reddened as the setting sun." Ravel's dirge makes a fantastic and original tone painting.

Scarbo is a diabolical scherzo, full of contrasts, incisive rhythms, and sweeping gestures. The nightmare figure, Scarbo, is a dwarf or goblin whose mere presence (or absence) is frightening.

Following are summaries of the translations:

Ondine

(I thought I heard music enchanting my sleep, and near me the murmur of a tender and sad voice singing.) Ch. Brugnot

Listen! Listen! It is I, it is Ondine who sprinkles drops of water on your window-pane, lit by the mournful rays of the moon; and here, in a flowing robe, is the lady of the chateau, who gazes from her balcony at the beautiful star-studded night and the sleeping lake.

Each wave is a water-spirit (Ondine) swimming in the current, each current is a path that winds toward my palace, and my palace is built of water at the bottom of the lake, the triangle of fire, earth and air.

Listen, Listen. My father dips the croaking water with a branch of green alder, and my sisters caress with their arms of foam the fresh islands of grasses, of water lilies, and of irises, or laugh at the decrepit and bearded willows which angle with rod and line.

Her song murmured she beseeched me to receive her ring on my finger, to be the husband of a water - spirit and to visit her palace with her, to be the king of the lakes.

And as I answered her that I loved a mortal, sulky and vexed, she cried some tears, uttered a burst of laughter, and vanished in a shower that glistened on my blue window-panes.

Le Gibet

(What do I see stirring round this gibbet? Faust) Ah! What is that sound I hear? Is it the night wind howling, or the sighing of the corpse hanging from yonder gibbet?

Is it a cricket singing in the moss and barren ivy in which the gallows stand?

Is it a fly sounding its hungint-horn for those deaf ears?

Would it be some blundering beetle trailing a hair plucked from that bald head?

Or would it be some spider weaving a length of muslin as a cravat for that strangled neck?

... It is the sound of a bell tolling from the walls of a town far away on the horizon, and a corpse hanging from a gibbet reddened by the rays of the setting sun.

Scarbo

(He looked under the bed, up the chimney and in the cupboard - nobody there. He could not understand how he had got in or from where he had escaped.)

How many times have I seen and heard Scarbo when, at midnight, the moon is shining in the sky like a piece of silver on an azure banner sprinkled with golden bees.

How many times have I heard him laughing in the shadow of my alcove or scratching at the silk curtains round my bed! How often have I seen him descend from the ceiling, pirouette on one foot, and roll across the floor like a bobbin from a witch's distaff. And if I expected him then to disappear, the little dwarf would grow taller and taller and stand towering between me and the moon like a cathedral spire, with a golden bell jingling at the tip of his pointed cap! But soon his body would turn blue and translucent like the wax in a candle, and his face grow pale - then suddenly he would vanish.