



Juan Pérez Floristán

2015 Winner

XVIII Santander International Piano Competition

LISZT • BEETHOVEN • SCHUMANN



Juan Pérez Floristán: Piano Recital
Franz Liszt (1811–1886): Sonata in B minor
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827): An die ferne Geliebte (tr. Liszt)
Robert Schumann (1810–1856): Phantasie in C major, Op. 17

The figure of Ludwig van Beethoven held a dominant position among composers in the years that followed his death in Vienna in 1827. His nine symphonies had extended and expanded the form inherited from Mozart and Haydn, while in other forms he had made innovations that offered a challenge to future generations. Liszt found a new path in symphonic poems allying orchestral music with extra-musical associations, while his friend and later son-in-law, Richard Wagner, sought a future in music-drama. Robert Schumann shared their respect for Beethoven, but found the latter's successor in Johannes Brahms, in whom he foresaw the shape of things to come, rejecting the ostentation of Liszt and the aggressive presumptions of Wagner.

Born in Raiding in a Hungarian region of the Hapsburg Empire, Franz Liszt was the son of a steward to the Esterházy Princes, Haydn's employers. His early ability as a pianist led his father to take him to Vienna for lessons with Czerny, and, allegedly, a meeting with Beethoven at which the older musician's kiss was seen to baptise Liszt as his true successor. Whatever the accuracy of Liszt's account, fifty years later, of his meeting with Beethoven in Vienna, he continued always to hold him in the greatest respect, a reverence reflected in his activities in the cause of the Beethoven Monuments in Bonn and Vienna and festivals of Beethoven's music, in his inclusion of Beethoven's piano compositions in his recitals and his remarkable piano transcriptions.

Liszt's early career was largely as a pianist of phenomenal virtuosity, inspired by the demon violinist Paganini. Based first in Paris, he went on to travel throughout Europe, eventually disentangling himself in 1844 from his association with Countess Marie d'Agoult, a French society hostess and blue-stocking, his mistress and the mother of his three children. By 1847 he had embarked on a relationship with Princess Caroline zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, a Polish heiress, the estranged wife of a Russian prince, and settled in Weimar, where he served as Director of Music

Extraordinary, turning his attention to the composition of orchestral symphonic poems. 1860 and 1861 brought changes when Liszt decided to move to Rome, where he pursued his earlier religious interests. Here he took minor orders, dividing his time, in what he described as a three-pronged life, between Hungary, where he had established himself as a national hero, Weimar, where he returned to teach his many pupils, and Rome. Among particularly treasured possessions itemised in the will he made in 1860 were the death mask of Beethoven and his Broadwood piano, which after Liszt's death in 1886 was presented by Princess Carolyne and her daughter, Princess Hohenlohe, to the National Museum in Budapest.

Liszt's *Sonata in B minor* was published in 1854, at a time when he was busy in Weimar with the revision of his earlier symphonic poems. Unlike these last, the sonata has no literary or extra-musical programme, but is itself a remarkable summary of Liszt's own characteristics as a composer and performer. In a much enlarged structure of sonata form, it includes with its single, continuous movement, a remarkable formal innovation in itself, a slow movement and a rapid finale.

The sonata opens with a brief introduction, containing the first theme, a descending scale. There follows a more energetic and dramatic figure, with an accompanying secondary melody, forming the first subject proper of the sonata. A modulating passage leads to the second subject, in the form of a third theme, marked *Grandioso*. A third subject is added, derived from the second element of the second theme. The development of the sonata is in two parts. At first the three themes are treated in various ways before giving way to a fourth theme, which serves as a first subject for the slow movement, marked *Andante sostenuto*. The subsidiary element of the original second theme now appears as a second subject, the other themes returning in a middle section, before this part of the sonata comes to an end. As the music fades to the softest dynamic marking, the

development of the whole work resumes with a fugal treatment of part of the second theme, followed by a recapitulation and a coda in which earlier thematic material returns, the second and first themes, in that order, bringing the whole sonata to an end, a formal tour de force.

Liszt transcribed Beethoven's song-cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* ('To the Distant Beloved') in 1849, one of a number of similar song transcriptions. Beethoven had completed *An die ferne Geliebte* in 1816 and dedicated it to Prince Lobkowitz. The words of the six songs that form the work were by a young medical student, Alois Jeitteles, and were perhaps commissioned by the composer. They express a mood of longing and resignation, perhaps in part, at least, a reflection of Liszt's feelings as he made the transcription in 1849. The piano version makes still clearer the essential unity of the cycle, a *Liederkreis*, an effective and innovative guide and model for later composers in its circular form.

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. After fitful university studies 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 own 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, a liaison to which her father took strong exception. 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 remained first in Leipzig, although journeys took place for concert appearances by Clara, but in 1844 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 employment arose, this time in Düsseldorf, where Schumann took up his position as director of music in 1850. Here the pressures on him led to a complete nervous break-down in 1853 and final years spent in an asylum at Endenich, where he died in 1856.

Schumann's *Phantasie in C major, Op. 17*, originally bore the title *Obolen auf Beethovens Monument: Ruinen, Trophäen, Palmen: grosse Sonate für das Pianoforte für Beethovens Denkmal, von Florestan und Eusebius* (Small Contribution to Beethoven's Monument: Ruins, Trophies, Palms: Grand Sonata for the Pianoforte for Beethoven's Memorial, by Florestan and Eusebius). This was modified in a briefer title, *Ruine, Siegesbogen und Sternbild* (Ruin, Triumphal Arch and Constellation).

The matter of the proposed Beethoven monument in Bonn was one that interested a number of musicians. A statue was eventually erected in 1845, largely as the result of the generosity of Franz Liszt, who provided the greater part of the money needed, while reserving to himself the choice of artist. Schumann, who in the end dedicated his *Phantasie* to Liszt, suggested that a hundred copies of his Grand Sonata, as it was first envisaged, should be sold for the benefit of the fund. This does not seem to have happened, and in any case, before its publication in 1839, the work, after rejection by various publishers, underwent some revision. Liszt replied enthusiastically to the dedication to him, while offering his assistance to Schumann in his proposed relationship with Clara Wieck, in answer to Schumann's implied revelation of the state of his affections.

Whatever changes may have been made, the *Phantasie*

remains something of a sonata. It is in three movements, prefaced by four lines from Friedrich Schlegel:

*Durch alle Töne tönet
in bunten Erdentraum
ein leiser Ton gezogen
für den, der heimlich lauschet.
(Through all the notes that sound
in the varied dream of earth,
a gentle sound there is
for the one who listens secretly.)*

The first movement, marked *Durchaus phantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen* (In a fantastic and passionate

manner throughout), contains fragments of Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte*, a possible allusion to Schumann's then temporary parting from Clara, but is dominated by a supremely lyrical melody, while a second melody is to be played *im Legenden-Ton* (As a legend). This secondary section serves, in fact, as a development. The triumphal march of the second movement, to be played with energy, makes its own technical demands, and is followed by a meditative final section, allowing Eusebius, the more thoughtful side of Schumann's assumed character as a critic, to cap the exertions of the more ebullient element, Florestan.

Keith Anderson

Juan Pérez Floristán in conversation with Luca Chiantore can be read at www.naxos.com/notes/573792



Juan Pérez Floristán

Winner of the First and the Audience Prizes at the Paloma O'Shea Santander International Piano Competition and the First Prize of the Steinway Competition in Berlin (2015), as well as the Honorary Prize Juventudes Musicales in Madrid, Juan Pérez-Floristán is establishing a stellar career among the new generation of European musicians. He has debuted in Madrid, Paris, Berlin, Hamburg, Warsaw, Moscow, St Petersburg and Malmö, and played with orchestras such as the St Petersburg Philharmonic, Malmö Symphony, Radio Televisión Española, Seville Royal Symphony, and the Gran Canaria Philharmonic, Malaga and Cordoba Symphonies under the batons of maestros Pablo González, Marc Soustrot, Adrian Leaper, Christian Arming, Pedro Halffter, and Salvador Brotons, among others. Juan Pérez-Floristán is also a committed chamber musician performing with his ensemble, the VibrArt Trio, in addition to participating in prestigious chamber music festivals. He studied for ten years with his mother, María Floristán, and then with Galina Eguiazarova for four years while at the Reina Sofía School of Music in Madrid. Thanks to the support of Elisabeth Leonskaja, Floristán was invited to the festival Ruhr Klavier in Germany, where he performed as a Stipendiat in 2012. He has also been greatly supported by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, key for his career and development. Juan Pérez-Floristán currently studies in Berlin with Eldar Nebolsin.

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Photo: Antonio del Junco

Even after his death in 1827 Beethoven continued to dominate European music and was held in great respect by composers such as Liszt and Schumann. The latter's 'greatest work in large form for piano solo,' the sonata-like *Phantasie* was originally intended as a contribution to Beethoven's monument in Bonn. This is reflected in its use of fragments from *An die ferne Geliebte*, Liszt's transcription of which preserves the song's mood of longing and resignation. Liszt's innovative *Sonata in B minor* is a remarkable summary of his characteristics as a composer and a performer. In 2015 Spanish pianist Juan Pérez Floristán won the First and the Audience Prizes at the Santander International Piano Competition and the First Prize at the Steinway Competition, Berlin.

JUAN PÉREZ FLORISTÁN

Piano Recital

- Franz LISZT (1811–1886)**
- 1 **Sonata in B minor, S178/R21** **31:38**
Lento assai – Allegro energico – Andante sostenuto –
Allegro energico – Andante sostenuto – Lento assai
- Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)**
- 2 **An die ferne Geliebte, (tr. Liszt, S469/R124)** **14:50**
- Robert SCHUMANN (1810–1856)**
- Phantasie in C major, Op. 17** **34:16**
- 3 **Durchaus phantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen** **13:54**
- 4 **Mäßig. Durchaus energisch** **7:59**
- 5 **Langsam getragen (durchweg leise zu halten)** **12:22**

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Playing Time
81:01



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