



The Schumann
Collection, Vol. 2

Nicolas van Poucke

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Nicolas van Poucke *piano*

Robert Schumann

Gesänge der Frühe, Op.133

1	Im ruhigen Tempo	3:03
2	Belebt, nicht zu rasch	2:46
3	Lebhaft	3:20
4	Bewegt	3:19
5	Im Anfange ruhiges, im Verlauf bewegtes Tempo	3:32

Kreisleriana, Op.16

6	Äußerst bewegt	3:09
7	Sehr innig und nicht zu rasch	11:26
8	Sehr aufgereggt	5:30
9	Sehr langsam	4:10
10	Sehr lebhaft	4:06
11	Sehr langsam	4:51
12	Sehr rasch	2:26
13	Schnell und spielend	4:20

Disc 1 - total playing time 59m43s

Dauidsbündlertänze, Op.6

1	Lebhaft	1:48
2	Innig	1:47
3	Etwas hahnbüchen	1:35
4	Ungeduldig	0:57
5	Einfach	2:44
6	Sehr rasch und in sich hinein	2:01
7	Nicht schnell mit äußerst starker Empfindung	4:56
8	Frisch	1:07
9	Lebhaft	2:11
10	Balladenmäßig sehr rasch	1:58
11	Einfach	1:54
12	Mit Humor	0:45
13	Wild und lustig	3:49
14	Zart und singend	3:03
15	Frisch	2:26
16	Mit gutem Humor	2:01
17	Wie aus der Ferne	5:14
18	Nicht schnell	2:56

Geistervariationen, WoO 24

19	Theme - Leise, innig	1:53
20	Variation I	1:37
21	Variation II - Canonisch	1:48
22	Variation III - Etwas belebter	2:02
23	Variation IV	2:14
24	Variation V	3:47

Disc 2 - total playing time 56m35s

About the album

In 2020 I was approached by TRPTK to record an album. Due to the lockdown resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the world looked very different and live music performances had come to a halt. The idea of using the time in lockdown well, by recording an album while waiting to get back on stage as soon as the circumstances allowed, sounded great.

I chose to record three pieces of Robert Schumann which were already in my repertoire. At the end of the recording period the TRPTK team suggested we call the album "The Schumann Collection Volume I", implying there would be more to come; I agreed happily.

In the process of preparing for the recording I fully immersed myself in Schumann's musical universe and my obsession with this music took off. The agreement with TRPTK inspired me to continue my Schumann journey and resulted in this album containing pieces from both Schumann's early and late period.

Gesänge der Frühe, Op.133

Volume II of The Schumann Collection opens with the five Gesänge der Frühe Opus 133.

Schumann composed these pieces in 1853 and they were published in 1855. The final version of the Gesänge is inscribed as follows: "Der hohen Dichterin Bettina gewidmet", referring to Bettina Von Armin who Schumann met in 1853, however the manuscript bears the mysterious dedication "An Diotima".

It seems that Schumann refers to Diotima from Friedrich Hölderlin's Hyperion. In November 1853 Schumann sent a manuscript to his friend violinist Joseph Joachim. Joachim did not understand the title "An Diotima", and asked Schumann:

"The goddess to whom they [The Gesänge] are addressed has caused me to rack my brains somewhat. Diotima! Who is that? Even Johannes [Brahms] did not know and so we now have to turn to you."

Schumann seemed to have given Joachim a verbal explanation and perhaps mentioned Hölderlin's novel Hyperion to Joachim as being the source of inspiration for his Gesänge. Interestingly, not much later Joachim apparently thought of writing a "Hyperion" Symphony. The opening motive d-a-h(b)-e could even be read as "DiotimA HypErion", Schumann liked to leave hidden messages in his music as he did in Carnaval, Fantasy, Davidsbündlertänze and many other pieces.

Schumann described the Gesänge as follows: "They are musical pieces that describe feelings at the approach and growth of the morning, both more as expressions of feeling than painting."

Clara thought them to be "Very difficult to play and understand. They are governed by such a profoundly poetic mood, that not every player, even a talented one would be able to grasp them rightly."

Kreisleriana, Op.16

The second piece on this volume is the famous Kreisleriana Opus 16.

Schumann loved E.T.A. Hoffmann's works and these eight Kreisler-pieces are directly inspired by Hoffmann's Kreisleriana and the fictional figure of Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler.

Kreisler is in Hoffmann's words "tossed back and forth by his inner visions and dreams as though on an eternally stormy sea... Singing had an almost fatal effect upon him, since his imagination became overstimulated and his mind withdrew into a realm where nobody could follow him without danger. On the other hand,

he was often content to play the piano for hours, elaborating the most curious themes with elegantly contrapuntal devices and imitations and highly ingenious passage-work."

He is a tragicomical character, a true romantic genius; brilliant but misunderstood; an absent-minded artist who is permanently in conflict with the outside world and suffers from the gap between ideal and reality. Kreisler's affection for Bach's Goldberg Variations, Beethoven's instrumental music (which you can clearly hear in Schumann's Kreisleriana) and his disdain for the popular music of the time are central themes.

Kreisler had to entertain at his employer's tea parties and also is exasperated by an impossible attraction to his employer's niece. His feelings and musical passions are ignored by the philistines, and his fate is mysterious — he simply disappears (as you can hear in the last piece).

Schumann identified with Kreisler, and on the one hand the Kreisleriana is a musical portrait of Kreisler and his world, and on the other it could be seen as a self portrait, where Schumann's yearning for Clara is central while interwoven with the fantastical world of Hoffmann's Kreisler.

Schumann's letter to Clara gives us a glimpse into his emotional state while he was writing Kreisleriana: "I'm overflowing with music and beautiful melodies now — imagine, since my last letter I've finished another whole notebook of new pieces. I intend to call it Kreisleriana. You and one of your ideas play the main role in it, and I want to dedicate it to you — yes, to you and nobody else — and then you will smile so sweetly when you discover yourself in it."

Dauidsbündlertänze, Op.6

The Davidsbündlertänze opus 6, are possibly the most personal and touching of all of Schumann's works. Robert writes to Clara: "Have you not received the

'Davids-tänze?' (one copy is in silver print). I sent them to you last Saturday week. You might patronize them a little, do you hear? They are my particular property. But my Clara will understand all that is contained in the dances, for they are dedicated to her, and that more emphatically than any of my other things. The whole story is a Polterabend, and now you can imagine it all from the beginning. If ever I was happy at the piano it was when I was composing those."

A Polterabend is a German wedding custom in which on the night before the wedding, porcelain is broken by the guests as a way of bringing good luck to the upcoming marriage; a custom also known by the adage: "Shards bring luck". It was fitting for Schumann to choose this subject for this piece since it would be his engagement present for Clara.

The Davidsbünd was Schumann's imaginary society of young artists rebelling against the Philistines who represented the musical establishment of the day and who favored all that was conservative, mediocre and tasteless against what was new or of lasting value in art. The members of the Davidsbünd were those in Schumann's intimate circle, such as Clara, her father, Friedrich Wieck, Mendelssohn and Stephan Heller. The two most prominent fictional members were Florestan and Eusebius, two fictional characters he had chosen to represent the contrasting sides of his own nature: Florestan, the impetuous and flamboyant extrovert, and Eusebius, the reflective and poetic introvert.

In the first published edition of the Davidsbündlertänze Florestan and Eusebius are credited as the composers, and the name Robert Schumann does not appear. The nineteen Davidsbündlertänze are signed either as F or E or F and E. The dances are not sketches of the various members of the society but a musical offering to Clara from Florestan and Eusebius.

Florestan and Eusebius, start the piece with the opening of Clara's Mazurka from her Soirées Musicales Opus 6 (it is no coincidence the Davidsbündlertänze have the same opus number!) and use motives from this theme to unify all the dances. They express their love to Clara, spell out her name, linger on characteristic turns

from Clara's music, dance, fantasize, dream (and even quote Beethoven in one of my favorite movements, No. 5 from Band II), until the clock strikes midnight, when we hear twelve low C's to end the Polterabend.

It is interesting to point out that it is certainly no coincidence that both parts (the nineteen dances are divided in two parts) of the Davidsbündertänze end with a dance in the key of C major, the C of Clara.

Geistervariationen, WoO 24

Contrary to the Davidsbündertänze and Kreisleriana which were perhaps written in Schumann's happiest days, the Geistervariationen were composed in his darkest hours.

As it is well known Schumann had a mental breakdown at the end of his life and imagined himself to be surrounded by ghosts who played music to him, some of it wonderful, some of it hideous. In the night of 17/18 February of 1854 he claimed to hear the angelic voice of Schubert offering him a solemn chorale-like theme in E-flat major, which he wrote down on the spot. Interestingly enough Schumann had already used this theme earlier in the second movement of his Violin Concerto and in his String Quartet Op. 41 no. 2. A few days later he composed a set of variations on the chorale theme. In the midst of this process he left his home to first throw his wedding ring and then himself in the Rhine. He was rescued and survived this suicide attempt. One day later, back home, he completed the final variation and would not write any more music.

Not long after he would be institutionalized in Endenich where he died two years later, on July 29th 1856.

Nicolas van Poucke



Nicolas van Poucke

Nicolas van Poucke is an Amsterdam based concert pianist. He has performed worldwide, from Cuba to South Korea and all over Europe; in halls like the Concertgebouw, Philharmonie Berlin and the Royal Festival Hall in London.

In 2020 TRPTK released "The Schumann Collection Volume I" which was met with raving reviews. "There aren't many pianists who manage to approach this musically and psychologically complex world with so much self-evidence" wrote Het Parool and The Volkskrant wrote: "Eager, sizzling and astonishing was Robert Schumann's Carnival by pianist Nicolas van Poucke. As if he had stepped into the shoes of Schumann's imaginary friends and alter egos, both musically depicted in the work, the dreamy Eusebius and the spirited Florestan; Van Poucke was both."

Bas van Putten wrote in The Groene Amsterdammer: "He plays them gruffly as young Schumann was, with the allure of an erratic, fearless temperament. You hear the rhythmic suppleness and the splashing brilliance of the big boys. Well done. A raging fire rages here that you should not cowardly put out. Here the power of the imagination demands maximum exuberance, maximum intimacy, maximum mobility and maximum stillness. Van Poucke has the technique and the eagerness to do it."

TRPTK

Our goal is to create immersive experiences through sound. By creating an acoustic hologram, we try to give you the illusion of being at the world's most beautiful concert halls and churches – all without ever leaving your listening room.

No costs or efforts are spared to seize that magical moment in which music is being created, and bring it home to you in the highest quality possible. Why? Simply because this is how music is supposed to be experienced: fresh and alive, not canned and with a stale aftertaste of conservation. To us, music is life, and should be lived to the fullest in an authentic and uncompromising way. Through these recordings, we bring you closer to the music than you've ever imagined. The devil is in the details, and the ability to catch those makes all the difference between good quality and excellent quality. Listening to our recordings, you're able to perceive every breath, every bowing, every movement with astonishing clarity. Not only do you hear the music, you hear the music as it's being created. This adds a human dimension to your listening experience, connecting you instantly and instinctively with artists from all over the world.

The basis for all our recordings is our Optimised Omnidirectional Array (OOA) of microphones, which I developed for my Master's Degree in Audio Engineering in 2013. The aim of OOA is to create a truly accurate image of the soundstage, while retaining uncoloured transparency in the tonal characteristics of the recording. This means, in musical terms, that every little detail of the original performance and its acoustic surroundings is accurately recorded, and perfectly reproduced.

We choose our artists not just by their ability to amaze us. We're eager to collaborate with musicians and composers who walk that fine line between renewing genres and connecting to audiences. Together with them, we can achieve our goal of creating daring recordings that stay loyal to the idea of always aiming for the highest quality possible. Because at TRPTK, we bring you not just the sound, but the core of music.

Brendon Heinst founder, recording and mastering engineer at TRPTK

Equipment used on this recording

Microphones

Josephson C617 w/ Gefell MK221 capsules

DPA d:dicate 4006A

Microphone preamplifiers

Grace Design m801mk2

AD/DA conversion

Merging Technologies Hapi

Merging Technologies Anubis

Grimm Audio CC2 master clock

Monitoring

KEF Blade Two

KEF LS50 Meta

Hegel H30

Hegel C55

Cabling

Purecable Optimus custom microphone cables

Furutech custom microphone cables

Furutech custom loudspeaker cables

Furutech custom power cables

Tuning

JCAT Optimo 3 Duo

JCAT M12 Switch Gold

JCAT NET Card XE

Computer Audio Design GC3

Furutech NCF Boosters



Credits

Recording & mastering engineer: Brendon Heinst

Editor: Hans Erblich

Piano technician: Charles Rademaker

Liner notes: Nicolas van Poucke

Cover photography: Maarten Kools

Artwork: Brendon Heinst

Recording dates: October 18th to 20th 2022

Recording location: Studio 1, Muziekcentrum van de Omroep, Hilversum (NL)

Recording format: 11.2MHz 1bit in 5.1.4-channel immersive