

University of British Columbia School of Music
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Doctoral Solo Recital at Barnett Hall
Thursday, April 18th, 2024
4:30 p.m.

Letizia Pent, Piano

Lieder ohne Worte, Op. 33

No. 1 in E-flat Major. Andante Espressivo

No. 4 in B minor. Agitato e con fuoco

Lieder ohne Worte, Op. 62

No. 5 in A minor “*Venetianisches Gondellied*”. Andante e con moto

Lieder ohne Worte, Op. 53

No. 3 in G minor. Presto Agitato

Lieder ohne Worte, Op. 85

No. 1 in F Major. Andante Espressivo

No. 4 in D Major. Andante Sostenuto

Felix Mendelssohn

(1809-1847)

10 Pieces from *Romeo and Juliet*, op. 75

X. *Romeo and Juliet before parting*

Sergei Prokofiev

(1891-1953)

INTERMISSION

Piano Sonata No. 3 in F minor, Op. 14, “Concerto without Orchestra”

I. Allegro

II. Scherzo. Molto comodo

III. Quasi variazioni. *Andantino de Clara Wieck*

IV. Prestissimo possibile

Robert Schumann

(1810-1856)

This recital is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Doctor of Musical Arts degree with a major in Piano Performance.

*We gratefully acknowledge that we are gathered together for this performance on the traditional,
ancestral, and unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people.*



Program Notes

Lieder ohne Worte is a collection of 48 miniature for solo piano, composed by Mendelssohn during different point of his life and collected in eight books, each comprehensive of 6 songs.

The first set of 6 songs Op. 19 was published in England in 1832 under the title “*Original melodies for the pianoforte*”; the following year it was released under *Lieder ohne Worte* in Germany. The works included Op. 30, Op. 38, Op. 53, Op. 62, and Op. 67 and two additional collections posthumously released after Mendelssohn’s death in 1847, Op. 102 and Op. 85. Each book presents a dedication to a woman and the sixth set, op. 62 was dedicated to his colleague and friend Clara Schumann.

Later publishers assigned titles such as “Consolation, Elegy, Agitation” to the songs, whereas Mendelssohn only bestowed titles on a select few compositions, such as the “Venetian gondolas”, as a reminiscence from the composer’s travels to Italy. Mendelssohn incorporated references to the gondolas in three of his lieder, namely op. 19 no. 6, op. 30 no. 6, and op. 62 no. 5. The composer was able to capture in a solely instrumental medium the lyricism and dimension of art song, and meanwhile generations of musicians searched for the programmatic meaning of these works, Mendelssohn insisted that the communicative power of music required no text to convey its meaning.

[...] if I happen to have certain words in mind for one or another of these songs, I will never want to tell them to anyone, because the same words never mean the same things to others. Only the song can say the same thing, can arouse the same feelings in one person as in another, a feeling that is not expressed, however, by the same words. People often complain that music is too uncertain in its meaning, that what they should be thinking as they hear it is unclear, whereas everyone understands words. With me, it is exactly the reverse, and not only in the context of an entire speech, but also with individual words. [...]

Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet, op. 75

In 1936, Soviet composer Sergei Prokofiev finished his ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, but faced challenges due to the political climate, that lead to the cancellation of plans for the ballet. To save his work, Prokofiev crafted suites from the score, including one for piano titled 10 Pieces from *Romeo and Juliet*. This suite, known as Op. 75, generated interest in the full ballet, which finally came to fruition in 1938.

Prokofiev took a different approach when creating a piano rendition of *Romeo and Juliet*, which was originally composed for piano before being orchestrated. The suites were not just reductions for orchestra but were envisioned as piano scenes tailored for virtuoso pianists. The musical style was relatively uncomplicated, akin to his 'Classical' *Symphony in D* (1917). Prokofiev's distinctive quirks were also evident, like sudden shifts to distant keys, slightly off-melody notes, and his characteristic harmonic wanderings within the musical phrases.

The ten scenes from the ballet encompass Folk Dance, Scene: The Street Awakens, Minuet: Arrival of the Guests, Juliet as a Young Girl, Masques, Montagues and Capulets, Friar Laurence, Mercutio, Dance of the Girls with Lilies, and *Romeo and Juliet* before parting. The latter reflects on *Romeo and Juliet* before being separated capturing their dreamy and romantic state, where Prokofiev extensively employs leitmotifs to elicit emotions and narrate a story. The scene opens with the morning birds chirping as the day starts, following *Romeo and Juliet's* last night together. *Romeo* must flee Verona after killing *Juliet's* cousin in a duel, and the two lover’s goodbye is depicted with a passionate tune that recalls the balcony encounter. After the vehement interlude, the scene shifts to a perpetual ostinato 4-note tune, echoing like the ticking of a clock. Here, *Juliet* succumbs to a slumber resembling death, caused by the potion provided by Friar Lawrence as part of their plan to reunite with *Romeo* and escape together. Lastly, ominous chords in B minor foreshadow the looming tragedy.

Program Notes

Sonata op. 14 in F minor

Schumann composed the sonata op. 14 in F minor during what he defined as the “darkest period of his life” in the summer of 1836, while struggling after being separated from his beloved Clara Weick.

The original manuscript titled Concert has five movements (*Allegro, Scherzo I, Variations, Scherzo II, Presto*). Schumann was persuaded by Viennese publisher Haslinger to remove the two *Scherzi* and publish it with the title “*Concert sans orchestre*”.

The piece is dedicated to Ignaz Moscheles, a pianist and composer, who remarked in a letter that it felt more like a “*Grosse Sonate*” than a concerto. In 1853, before Schumann's mental health declined, he revisited his third sonata, adding a Scherzo as the second movement and making changes to the other movements. The initial *Allegro Brillante* was replaced by a slightly slower *Allegro*; in the third movement, two of the variations were removed¹, while the last movement was revised from 6/16 to 2/4. This updated version was named “*Troisieme Grande Sonate*”, and it was first performed in 1862 in Vienna by Brahms, generating interest although not becoming widely performed.

At the core of the composition is Clara Wieck's motif, marked by a series of descending 5-notes, which opens the first movement, “Allegro,” and appears in various forms throughout the whole work; in the Scherzo theme in the form of a dotted rhythm, in the form of Themes and Variations in the *Andantino de Clara Weick* third movement, and in the off-beat last movement line.

Schumann contrasts Clara's theme with ascending and urgent motifs, creating an emotionally charged atmosphere where the lines between exposition, development, and resolution blur. The music keeps the listener off-balance with syncopation and phrasing patterns that shift the strong beats to weaker positions.

Schumann utilizes harmony and melody as the fundamental principles to manipulate meter and hypermeter. In doing so, the listener perceives the tension between the pursuit of a symmetrical and parallel structure and the destabilizing effects of compressing or stretching the phrases. This interplay generates a sense of urgency, accelerating the musical narrative and propelling the listener forward with a relentless momentum.

References

Schwarm, Betsy. 2013. “Songs Without Words | Romantic, Melodies, Piano.” Encyclopedia Britannica. October 4, 2013. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Songs-Without-Words>.

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Orchestra, Hamilton Philharmonic. 2015. “The Musically Inspiring Romeo and Juliet.” Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra. February 18, 2015. <https://www.hpo.org/the-musically-inspiring-romeo-and-juliet/>.

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¹ Today's performance will include the 2 variations (named by Henle Edition *a* and *b*) from 1836 autograph. The variations will be played in the order as originally conceived: Var. 1, Var *a*, Vr. 3, Var. 2, Var. *b*, Var. 4.