Dear Music Lover

Theme & Variations Piano Services began 2008 with a Steinway retrospective that charted the piano’s evolution from 1836 to the present day. The exhibition made its international debut in Sydney and will now continue to travel throughout Australia, Asia, Africa, North and South America, and Europe.

The world tour of these historic pianos illustrates how Steinway has been at the forefront of piano technology since its foundation in 1853: included in the exhibition is an important recreation of the first ever known Steinway, a piano dating from 1836 before the company was even founded.

Theme & Variations was charged with the care of these historical instruments, and they were a constant reminder of just how lucky we are to be living in an age where we no longer need to tune a concert instrument every 10 minutes, or to replace a piano after every transcendental etude that’s performed (Liszt is documented to have destroyed three pianos in one concert!).

So as you enjoy tonight’s performance by Jasminka Stancul, also take a moment to appreciate the beauty of the solo piano recital thanks to the amazing development of this instrument that is normally taken for granted.

ARA VARTOUKIAN
Director
SEASON 2008
INTERNATIONAL PIANISTS IN RECITAL
PRESENTED BY THEME & VARIATIONS

JASMINKA STANCUL
Monday 10 March | 8pm
City Recital Hall Angel Place

DOMENICO SCARLATTI (1685–1757)
Six Keyboard Sonatas
Allegro in C, Kk420
Allegro in G, Kk470
Allegro in E minor, Kk394
Allegro in E, Kk381
Vivo in G, Kk125
Allegro in D, Kk491

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)
Piano Sonata No.21 in C major, Op.53 (Waldstein)
Allegro con brio
Introduzione (Adagio molto) –
Rondo (Allegretto moderato)

INTERVAL

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–1856)
Variations on the name ABEGG, Op.1

Piano Sonata No.2 in G minor, Op.22
So rasch wie möglich (as fast as possible)
Andantino
Scherzo. Sehr rasch und markiert (very fast and marked)
Rondo. Presto

This concert will be recorded for broadcast across Australia on ABC Classic FM 92.9 on Wednesday 16 April at 1.05pm.

Pre-concert talk by Dr Robert Curry at 7.15pm in the First Floor Reception Room

Estimated timings:
27 minutes, 26 minutes, 20-minute interval, 9 minutes, 16 minutes
The performance will conclude at approximately 9.55pm

Artist biography on page 23
Brahms' Fifth Symphony

Although Brahms wrote only four symphonies, his luscious piano quartet as orchestrated by Arnold Schoenberg has taken its rightful place as his 'Fifth Symphony'. The illustrious Ralph Kirshbaum joins the Sydney Symphony for the exotic and profound Schelomo, a masterpiece of the cello repertoire.

Paul Daniel conductor
Walter Kirshbaum cello
Dvořák The Noon Witch
Bloch Schelomo
Brahms (orch. Schoenberg)
Piano Quartet in G minor
Sydney Opera House

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INTRODUCTION

Jasminka Stancul in Recital

This concert begins with a composer who is heard not nearly enough in piano recitals: Scarlatti. His brilliant and jewel-like sonatas have never been entirely neglected (a Scarlatti cult in 18th- and 19th-century England ensured that) but they have always required their special advocates. One of these was Clara Wieck, who boldly included such ‘novelties’ in her piano recitals. In the early 20th century Violet Gordon Woodhouse and Wanda Landowska ‘restored’ the sonatas to what was considered their rightful place in the harpsichord repertoire. The early music movement is partly responsible for the dearth of Scarlatti in modern recitals, but even so, the sonatas have found fervent advocates in pianists such as Maria Tipo. And tonight Jasminka Stancul, herself a student of Tipo, continues the tradition.

Clara Wieck may have played her part as a 19th-century advocate for Scarlatti; she also influenced the final shape of the Schumann sonata on this program. Its original finale, a Presto passionato, seemed to her to be excessive and too weighty in the context of an otherwise brilliant and concise sonata. And so her future husband wrote a new finale, shorter and more classical in character.

Schumann was no doubt eager to please his beloved, but Beethoven reacted less favourably to similar criticism. The friend who suggested that the original Andante slow movement of his Waldstein Sonata was too long was ‘taken to task most severely’. Beethoven did, however, decide to replace the Andante with something much shorter and more interesting.

In between these two sonatas – important and serious works, both of them – sits a piece of musical cleverness: Schumann’s variations on a theme that spells ‘abegg’. Note-spelling and ciphering is a popular pastime amongst musicians, but some composers are drawn to it more than others. Bach was one, Shostakovich, with his ‘DSCH’ motto, another. Schumann was so fond of the device that he may have invented the ‘Meta Abegg’ to whom the theme was supposed to belong. Not that it matters – as music the variations strike the perfect note.
The capital invested in a Steinway yields a twofold return. First, the unsurpassed quality and performance. Second, the proven appreciation of value.
ABOUT THE MUSIC

Domenico Scarlatti
Six Keyboard Sonatas

Allegro in C, Kk420
Allegro in G, Kk470
Allegro in E minor, Kk394
Allegro in E, Kk381
Vivo in G, Kk125
Allegro in D, Kk491

Sacheverell Sitwell, writing for Scarlatti’s 250th anniversary in 1935, began by admitting that practically nothing is known of the composer ‘except the mere dates of the main periods of his life’, that there was virtually no correspondence from him, and that the little information available is second-hand. Soon after, harpsichordist Ralph Kirkpatrick began his remarkable study of Scarlatti, drawing together nearly every available source of information in an attempt to conjure a vivid portrait underpinned by scrupulous documentation. But by the 300th anniversary in 1985, Malcolm Boyd was obliged to echo Sitwell with his observation: ‘it almost seems as if Domenico Scarlatti employed a cover-up agent to remove all traces of his career...and contemporary diarists and correspondents could hardly have been less informative if they had entered into a conspiracy of silence about him.’

We know of Beethoven’s deafness and stormy temper, we know of Schumann’s passion for the great pianist Clara Wieck and his later descent into insanity. We know of Mozart’s whimsicality and his fraught relationship with his father. But for Scarlatti there are only tantalising hints: a lawsuit to obtain independence from his father’s authority suggests that he may have wanted to marry without approval; he seems to have been ‘frequently ruined’ as a gambler. But if his life story included the personal dramas we associate with later composers, it’s unlikely we will ever know. Nor are we ever likely to know his thoughts on music and music-making.

What we do know for certain is that Scarlatti was a genius of the keyboard. He is often compared to Chopin: he is known almost exclusively for his keyboard works (although he composed operas and religious music too) and the internal evidence reveals that he was a virtuoso of high degree.

Keynotes

SCARLATTI
Born Naples, 1685
Died Madrid, 1757

Domenico Scarlatti was an original genius of the baroque era, best-known for his hundreds of keyboard sonatas. Italian born, he moved to Lisbon when he was in his late 30s and then settled in Madrid, spending the rest of his working life in the service of Maria Barbara, Portuguese princess and Spanish queen.

SONATAS

Scarlatti wrote about 555 keyboard sonatas (a memorable number, like Vivaldi’s 600 concertos). With the exception of the ‘Cat’s Fugue’ (Kk30), in which the composer’s cat supposedly picked out the theme by walking on the keyboard, they are without distinguishing titles or nicknames. The sonatas are single-movement works, following a two-part structure with each part repeated, and they provide a showcase for keyboard effects and virtuoso finger technique. At the same time they reveal a quirky originality of harmonic style.

KIRKPATRICK

Harpsichordist Ralph Kirkpatrick carried out the first major study of Scarlatti’s sonatas as well as writing a substantial biography in the 1940s. His numbering system for the sonatas is only one of several (Alessandro Longo had prepared an edition in 1906), but it is the most commonly used, with the abbreviation Kk.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1685</td>
<td>Domenico Scarlatti is born in Naples, the sixth child of composer Alessandro Scarlatti; the same year sees the birth of Handel and JS Bach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1703</td>
<td>Vivaldi joins the Ospedale della Pietà in Venice as a violin teacher.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1705</td>
<td>Carlo Maria Broschi is born in Andria, Italy; as the castrato Farinelli he will become one of the 18th-century's musical superstars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1708</td>
<td>Scarlatti goes to Venice to study music; there he meets Handel and soon after, in Rome, Cardinal Ottoboni arranges a ‘contest’ between the two musicians; Scarlatti enters the service of the exiled Polish Queen Maria Casimira.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1714</td>
<td>Scarlatti is appointed chapel master to the Portuguese ambassador and subsequently maestro of the Capella Giuliana in the Vatican, resigning in 1719.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.1720–22</td>
<td>At some point in this period Scarlatti arrives in Lisbon as maestro for the Portuguese royal chapel and music master to the royal family, including eight-year-old Maria Barbara.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1720s</td>
<td>After more than two decades' work, Bartolomeo Cristofori refines the piano to include the key mechanical principles still present in modern instruments; by the 1740s Maria Barbara owns five.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1722–44</td>
<td>Bach composes <em>The Well-Tempered Clavier</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1725</td>
<td>Domenico’s father Alessandro dies in Naples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1728</td>
<td>Scarlatti returns briefly to Italy to marry a Roman girl, Maria Catalina.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1729</td>
<td>Maria Barbara marries the Spanish Crown Prince Ferdinand and takes her teacher with her to the court in Madrid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1732</td>
<td>Joseph Haydn is born in Rohrau, Austria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1737</td>
<td>Farinelli retires from public concerts and arrives in Spain as chapel master for Philip V; among other things he is required to sing the same arias every day to cheer the king.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1738</td>
<td>Scarlatti is knighted and his keyboard collection, <em>Essercizi per Gravicembalo</em>, dedicated to the King of Portugal, is published in London, triggering a cult following for his music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1743</td>
<td>Luigi Boccherini born in Lucca, Italy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1746</td>
<td>Following the death of Philip V, Ferdinand VI and Maria Barbara ascend the Spanish throne.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1752–1757</td>
<td>Scarlatti’s keyboard music – some 13 volumes – is copied out and handsomely bound for the Queen’s use, together with two additional volumes that had been copied in the 1740s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1755</td>
<td>30,000 people die in the Lisbon earthquake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1756</td>
<td>Mozart is born in Salzburg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1757</td>
<td>Scarlatti dies in Madrid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1758</td>
<td>Maria Barbara dies, leaving her best harpsichords and all her music (including Scarlatti’s sonatas) to Farinelli; followed by the death of Ferdinand the following year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1761</td>
<td>Boccherini moves to Madrid to work for the brother of the new king, Charles III.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of course, there are stories and one of these relates to Scarlatti’s virtuosity. The report comes from Rome via Handel’s 18th-century biographer, John Mainwaring:

As [Scarlatti] was an exquisite player on the harpsichord, the Cardinal [Ottoboni] was resolved to bring him and Handel together for a trial of skill. The issue of the trial has been differently reported. It has been said that some have the preference to Scarlatti. However, when they came to the Organ there was not the least pretence for doubting to which of them it belonged. Scarlatti himself declared the superiority of his antagonist, and owned ingenuously, that till he had heard him upon this instrument, he had no conception of its powers.

The story may be dubious, but the two composers did apparently enjoy a lifelong mutual respect. A year or two later, still in Italy, a young English composer and organist, Thomas Roseingrave, had a chance to witness Scarlatti’s skill at the keyboard. He told the historian Charles Burney that the performance so surpassed his own, that, ‘if he had been in sight of any instrument with which to have done the deed, he should have cut off his own fingers’. It was Roseingrave who provided the description of Scarlatti as ‘a grave young man dressed in black and in a black wig’.

At some point in the early 1720s – and the exact date is undocumented – Scarlatti moved from Rome, where he’d been chapel master for the Portuguese ambassador, to the royal court in Lisbon where he became music master for the royal family, including the young Maria Barbara. In 1729 she married the Crown Prince of Spain, and took Scarlatti with her to the court in Madrid. He arrived in the Iberian peninsular at the close of a golden age. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries Spain had been a leader in European music. But by the 18th century Spain was considered an exotic backwater, and her most famous composers and performers were to be foreigners: Scarlatti, Farinelli, Boccherini.

Spain’s relative isolation may have encouraged originality in Scarlatti’s music, just as Haydn claimed that the long stretches at Eszterháza forced him to be original. While in the service of Maria Barbara he composed more than five hundred sonatas for teaching and private performance. And in many ways the sonatas are alike: they almost always follow a neat two-part structure, with each part repeated, and in different ways they exploit the idioms of keyboard technique and the possibilities of the harpsichords and fortepianos in the royal collection.
But despite their superficial similarities – Sitwell went so far as to describe them as being ‘without landmark’ – the sonatas demonstrate limitless variety. Even when, as in tonight’s selection, all the sonatas but one are in major keys and every one of them is fast, the music encompasses a huge range of effect and expression.

But above all, Scarlatti’s originality lies in his unpredictable harmonies and eccentric musical gestures. Dr Burney, recalling his own youth in the mid-18th century, wrote that:

Scarlatti’s were not only the pieces with which every young performer displayed his powers of execution, but were the wonder and delight of every hearer who had a spark of enthusiasm in him, and could feel new and bold effects intrepidly produced by breach of almost all the old and established rules of composition.

The C major sonata (Kk420) begins with the keyboard imitating trumpet fanfares, the imperative character reinforced by full chords. The rhetoric continues with a dramatic and unexpected pause and a curious passage with pairs of detached notes. Scarlatti leaves no dynamic markings but the gestures of the music establish a context for heightened contrasts.

The G major Allegro (Kk470) is another later sonata and we are left to assume that Scarlatti’s royal pupil was well advanced in her technique – here the performer is called upon to play double trills in the one hand! This was considered an impossible or miraculous feat by Scarlatti’s older contemporaries such as François Couperin, and even Beethoven allowed for the possibility that the equally difficult trills in his Waldstein Sonata might lose something of ‘their usual speed’. But Scarlatti’s demands for digital independence are uncompromising and therein lies much of the brilliance in the music.

It is in the E minor sonata (Kk394) that Scarlatti’s disdain for the ‘old and established rules of composition’ emerges most clearly. It begins with an old-fashioned gesture: an imitation of fugal entries, although each voice is unaccompanied and the fugue is not developed. But the second half shocks with lightning bolt arpeggios, which one writer has described as ‘sheer Spielfreude’ – joy in playing. This is followed by what Kirkpatrick calls Scarlatti’s most celebrated passage of wrongdoing: a chain of parallel root-position chords yielding, against the rules of proper counterpoint, consecutive fifths.

How I envy you your Scarlatti, if there are many such excellent specimens! What an ingenious fellow he is, with his arpeggio figures in the unexpected A major part, and the long modulation, which has no reference to the piece itself, and his sudden recollection of the subject and prompt return to it! Ah yes, a robust talent may take liberties which become preposterous in weaker hands.

ELISABETH VON HERZOGENBERG describes what is probably Kk394 in a letter to her friend, Brahms.
Scarlatti is a baroque composer – an exact contemporary of Bach and Handel – but his music also has something of the cul de sac waywardness of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and a strong sense of the *galant* style of the rococo. The latter shows up in his use of the classic Alberti bass figuration in the E major sonata (*Kk381*), but even then it is given a Scarlattian twist by appearing, contradictory to its *galant* associations, with a turn to the minor key.

The *Vivo* in G major (*Kk125*) introduces a catchy Spanish melody – a hint of ‘disreputable’ folk music providing syncopated spice in a royal sonata – and here, as elsewhere in the sonatas, there is a compelling dance-like quality. It’s a reminder that Maria Barbara, as the English ambassador reported, had an absolute ‘passion for the dance’. This was one of the few sonatas (73 in all) that were published in Scarlatti’s lifetime, but music such as this was enough to inspire an almost cult-like following in England that lasted into the 19th century.

The final sonata in tonight’s set, an *Allegro* in D major (*Kk491*) also reveals the influence of Spanish folk music and the Andalusian flamenco styles. It has been linked to specific dance forms, although the scholars can’t agree whether it is a seguidilla from Seville or a bolero from Majorca. Regardless, there is a breathtaking energy that comes from Scarlatti’s delight in breaking into rapid passagework, often without warning, and breaking off again, just as suddenly. Dr Burney’s observations are just as true today: this is intrepid music that displays a performer’s powers of execution while igniting the spark of enthusiasm that surely lurks in the heart of every music-lover.

YVONNE FRINDLE
SYDNEY SYMPHONY ©2008

(This was the kind of thing for which Debussy was to be criticised nearly 150 years later!)

...Scarlatti’s originality lies in his unpredictable harmonies and eccentric musical gestures.
Beethoven
Piano Sonata No.21 in C, Op.53 (Waldstein)

_Allegro con brio_
_Introduzione (Adagio molto) –_
_Rondo (Allegretto moderato)_

This is the first work that Beethoven wrote following the gift of his new Erard piano in 1803 and no manufacturer could wish for a more remarkable endorsement of their product. The sonata certainly exploits several features of the new piano – its extended range beyond the usual 5 octaves of the day, and foot operated pedals (rather than levers activated by the knee) used extensively in the last movement. (Beethoven's method of marking the pedal, pointed out with particular care on the first page of the manuscript, is now universally used). But there are also technical innovations which move far beyond the scope of Erard’s imagination. There is the hammering articulation and driving semiquavers of the first movement and, in the last movement, two new features which Beethoven felt needed special comment. First there are the peculiarly energised textures involving trills concealed in inner parts which he was also to exploit in his late sonatas. This was something sufficiently new that Beethoven felt the need to rally the faint-hearted with an easier alternative, and the encouraging comment ‘It is not at all important whether this trill loses here something of its usual speed.’

Second are the glissando octaves towards the very end, a technique which appears to have been easier on the Erard than on the heavier action of a modern piano. Czerny, however, in his guide to the Beethoven sonatas, curiously likens the passage to similar things in the work of his pupil, Liszt.

But it would be a mistake to see the innovations as purely pianistic. Harmonically the work explores key changes based on the interval of a third – C major to E major – rather than those using the Classical convention of the fifth, an innovation of Beethoven’s in the early years of the century which was almost to become the norm in his late works. The juxtaposition of C major and E major clearly fascinated Beethoven. He had used it in his earlier Piano Sonata in C (Op.2 No.3) as the defining contrast between the first and the second movements, and was to return to it in the Kyrie of the

**Keynotes**

_BEETHOVEN_  
_Born Bonn, 1770_  
_Died Vienna, 1827_

Between 1793 (Op.2) and 1822 (Op.111) Beethoven composed 32 piano sonatas. As a group they trace his career: the young composer learning from 18th-century models; the composer-virtuoso; then, as his increasing deafness forced him to give up performing in public, the ‘heroic’ period with such masterpieces as the _Appassionata_ and the _Waldstein_ sonatas; and finally the ‘years of crisis’ with such works as the _Hammerklavier_ and the three late sonatas.

**WALDSTEIN SONATA**

Composed towards the end of 1803, the _Waldstein_ brought new technical demands and a previously unknown grandeur of tone and scale to the piano sonata genre. It would have been even longer if Beethoven had retained his original slow movement. Instead he replaced it with a much shorter ‘introduction’ that leads directly into the finale.
Mass in C (1807). Yet despite the great originality of the outer movements, there are some ways in which the small *Introduzione* to the last movement, which Beethoven wrote between them, is the most forward looking of the three, pointing to the way in which, in late works like the *Hammerklavier* Sonata, Op.106 and the Ninth Symphony, Beethoven was able to meld formal composition with a spirit of improvisation. Beethoven’s sketches for this movement in the famous Eroica sketchbook now known as *Landsberg 6* (housed, since World War II in the Biblioteka Jagiellonska in Krakow) show that he first planned the original slow movement in E major as well, but then reverted to F, placing E major in the first movement (although the eventual *Introduzione* does move to F major in its second bar). The published slow movement was not the one originally played by Beethoven to his friends. Ferdinand Ries describes that there had originally been a ‘grand Andante’ as the slow movement but ‘a friend of Beethoven’s suggested to him that the sonata was too long, whereupon he was taken to task most severely. Calmer deliberation, however, soon convinced my teacher that the remark had some truth to it. He then published the grand Andante in F Major, in 3/8 time, on its own and later composed the interesting introduction to the rondo in its present form.’ The original slow movement today can be heard as the stand-alone piece, the *Andante favori* in F, WoO 57. Czerny claims the title *Andante favori* was Beethoven’s own after the work achieved some popularity and was reprinted.

It should also be noted in passing perhaps that the person immortalised by receiving the dedication of this work, Count Ferdinand Ernst von Waldstein (1762–1823) was praised in another contemporary memoir by Beethoven’s friend Wegeler as being the first of Beethoven’s several patrons who recognised his genius while in Bonn. Waldstein used his influence with the Elector of Bonn to have Beethoven sent to Vienna in 1792 to ‘receive Mozart’s spirit from Haydn’s hands’ as he famously wrote in Beethoven’s album and helped him with contacts after he had arrived.

©PETER McCALLUM
Robert Schumann
Variations on the name ABEGG, Op.1

Every composer (and every author, for that matter) can expect to be questioned on the source of their ideas or inspiration. Quite often there is no particular answer – the writer may have developed an idea while daydreaming over the washing-up, or the composer picked up a theme from somewhere completely unconsciously. Sometimes, though, creative people enjoy the intellectual challenge of working through a technique or device, either as a springboard to inspiration, or as a type of homage. Famous examples include J.S. Bach’s use of three sharps or flats in key signatures, most probably as a nod to the Trinity, and Mozart’s hidden Masonic symbolism in *The Magic Flute*.

Robert Schumann has provided endless possibilities for entertainment and study for musicologists in just this manner. A composer who adored reading and writing, he sometimes seems to have been trying to create a perfect synthesis of words and music for himself. He did this by assigning pitches to letters of the alphabet. Some of these are obvious, such as the letter ‘E’ which may simply correspond to the note E. Some are less clear to English speakers unfamiliar with German musical nomenclature: ‘S’ may be the pitch ‘Es’ meaning E flat; ‘H’ is German for the pitch B, while confusingly, ‘B’ in German refers to B flat! In this manner, Schumann could hide words in his music. Sometimes he might work through the alphabet beforehand, finding a pitch for each letter in the word; at other times, he would write more intuitively, assigning only obvious letters to their respective pitches, and filling in any ‘gap’ letters in some musically appropriate way.

Schumann’s Variations on the name Abegg at first glance seem straightforward, as each letter of the name corresponds neatly to a note: A, B flat, E, G. And yet, the stories surrounding this work are intriguing. The standard version suggests that Schumann met a young lady by the name of Miss Meta Abegg at a ball. She was a friend (or perhaps a fiancée) of a friend. The composer was delighted with both the lady and the musical possibilities inherent in her name, and composed this work as a tribute, playfully dedicating it to a ‘Countess Pauline’ von Abegg. One version of this tale suggests

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**Keynotes**

**SCHUMANN**

*Born Zwickau, 1810*

* Died Endenich, near Bonn, 1856*

Schumann was a child of Romanticism: not only are his creations vividly imaginative and deeply lyrical, but he was aligned with the literary concerns of the Romantic era. It is no accident that he was a critic as well as a musician. At first he aspired to be a writer; he then pursued music under the guise of a law degree, eventually studying piano with Friedrich Wieck in Leipzig. Wieck’s star pupil was his daughter Clara, and she and Robert fell in love, eventually marrying, despite Wieck’s objections. Along the way Schumann injured his hand – exactly how and how much is disputed – thwarting his performing hopes but leaving the way open for him to focus on composition.

**ABEGG VARIATIONS**

The ‘Variations on the name ABEGG’ – composed when he was about 19 or 20 – was Schumann’s first published work, his Opus 1. The name ‘Abegg’ is usually supposed to have belonged to a female acquaintance, but Schumann may have simply been playing a musical game. The theme (A, B flat, E, G, G) is spelled out by the right hand at the very beginning. After three variations there is a lively ‘Finale alla Fantasia’.
Schumann was pretending to his friends that he was having an affair with a lady. Eric Sams, a musicologist who put forward a strong hypothesis in the 1960s for Schumann’s use of musical anagrams, doubts whether the girl existed at all. Is it not too neat, he asks, that ‘Meta’ can be re-arranged to read ‘Tema’, the Italian word for ‘theme’?

The most clever thing about Schumann’s use of musical letter-games is that knowledge of the technique is completely unnecessary for enjoyment of the results. Had he simply called this work ‘Variations on a Theme’ it would be just as delightful (although perhaps not as famous). The Variations open with a statement of the theme in a manner entirely appropriate to a 19th-century drawing room. In this early work – Schumann was only 20 at the time – there are hints of the composer who was later to develop such an original voice. The three variations incorporate the theme in both straightforward and imaginative ways, with the syncopated lyricism of the second variation being perhaps the most individual. A cantabile section leads to a brilliant finale in 6/8 time; the tonality takes a few unexpected twists and turns on its path to the striking conclusion.

KATHERINE KEMP
SYMPHONY AUSTRALIA ©1999
Having aspired to a career as a virtuoso pianist, and linked by love, then marriage, to one of the great pianists of the age, Robert Schumann was bound to tackle the piano sonata, which since Beethoven had become the touchstone of writing for the instrument. Schumann's inventive genius may have fallen more naturally into variations and strings of linked ‘fantasy’ pieces, but the seriousness with which he approached the sonata form certainly evoked some of his best ideas. The difficulty was to cast these ideas into convincing forms. The contrast of assertive, ‘masculine’ themes, and those of a more reflective nature – the two sides Schumann discerned in his own artistic personality: ‘Florestan’ and ‘Eusebius’ – corresponded well to one aspect of sonata form. (The First Sonata was dedicated ‘To Clara, from Florestan and Eusebius’.)

The problem for Schumann was that development of these themes was a mandatory...
requirement as well, and his themes were less well-suited to this.

With typical single-mindedness, Schumann experimented with the piano sonata form in a concentrated burst of activity, mainly in the years 1835 and 1836, the years in which he fell in love with Clara Wieck. The First Sonata, in F minor Op.11, was finished and dedicated to her in 1835. In the same year Schumann completed the Second Sonata in its original form, and also began the Third Sonata ‘Concerto without Orchestra’, finishing it the following year. The genesis of the Second Sonata, however, actually spans a much longer period. The second movement is based on a song, ‘Im Herbst’, written in 1828. The ideas for the first three movements were sketched in 1833, when Schumann began to think about the piano sonata form. After considering Clara’s criticisms of the original finale, Schumann discarded it and replaced it with a new movement, composed in 1838, when he was still tinkering with the first movement as well (the rejected movement was published after Schumann’s death as ‘Presto passionato’).

Listening Guide
Perhaps because of Schumann’s intensive work on this sonata, it became, of the three, the one which has been granted most approval, and also the most often performed. The three fast movements are especially notable for their concentration of ideas, and also for their demands on the finger technique of the executant. Probably the most famous thing about this sonata is that the coda of the first movement, a movement with the tempo indication ‘as fast as possible’, asks the pianist to play first ‘faster’, then ‘faster still’ (this is not quite absent-mindedness – it is a question of a faster pulse within the basic tempo). Opus 22 has been called ‘a sonata in semiquavers’. The challenge to the performer, once the tempo demands have been met, is of characterisation and bringing out contrasts. This is compounded by the repetitions of material ‘demanded’ by sonata form. Schumann’s material is already unified by the near-constant presence of a ‘Clara’ motto – a stepwise descending figure of four or five notes, a variant of which is heard in the sonata’s opening theme. Schumann described all his music at this time as ‘one single cry of my heart for you in which your theme appears in every ...

...the seriousness with which Schumann approached the sonata form certainly evoked some of his best ideas.
possible form’. This motto also works its way into both the chordal transition and the second subject. The extensive development is based largely on the opening of the main theme, treated in sequential repetition and canonically – to vary this Schumann introduces a new theme, and also anticipates the recapitulation with a full statement of the first subject. The recapitulation itself leads to a heightening of the tension in the coda, with the infamous calls for two further increases in speed.

‘Im Herbste’ (In Autumn), a setting of a poem by Kerner, was one of Schumann’s earliest songs, with bitter-sweet words. In the second movement of the sonata, Schumann emphasised its daydream character in a thorough-going recomposition, changing the metre, the key to C major, and giving the tempo direction Andantino. Getragen (sustained). The song’s original 2/4 time and the new 6/8 are distributed between the hands with great
rhythmic freedom. The second verse of the song is given an accompaniment of flowing semiquavers, and the song rhythm is pointed. In the brief development comes a climax, over long pedals on B flat, and with references to Clara’s motif. There is a calm, even ecstatic coda, where the two hands exchange a variant of the theme which has acquired an octave leap. To detractors of Schumann's sonatas, this movement will be an exception, and they will find in it his essential lyricism and the freedom of form, which for them is his true genius. In the context of the sonata, its admirers will retort, this movement is the contrasting island of mystery and limpidity which makes the almost febrile outer movements possible.

The intensity returns with the extremely concentrated Scherzo, its theme in a wild Romantic-fantastic mode with extremely fast notes pointing the rhythm. In the episodes there is syncopation and in the second, lyricism as well.

The semiquavers return with a vengeance in the finale. Clara had complained that the original finale was too formidable a challenge even for her, and Schumann perhaps felt that its audacious and flighty character was not suitable to Clara’s character. The replacement of 1838 is called ‘Rondo’, although it is more accurately described as a sonata form in which the development is repeated after the recapitulation. Here the problems for the interpreter are most acute – to maintain interest and tension where the material reappears with little change. The moto perpetuo set by the striking main theme is interrupted only by the contrasting second – pure Eusebius, and derived from the Clara motto – the four note motif is repeated no less than seven times. The coda is appropriately marked ‘Quasi cadenza prestissimo’ – an accelerating rush to the finish. The sonata is for the virtuoso and composer to show what they can do – after Beethoven.

DAVID GARRETT ©2008

…the essential lyricism and freedom of form, which is Schumann’s true genius.
GLOSSARY

**CANON** – music in which a melody is presented by one ‘voice’ and then repeated by one or more other voices, each entering before the previous voice has finished. Childhood singing rounds (e.g. Frere Jacques or London’s Burning) are the most common form of canon.

**CANTABILE** – in a singing style.

**FLORESTAN AND EUSEBIUS** – two noms de plume used by Schumann in his early music criticism. They were members of the composer’s fantasy ‘secret association’, the League of David (Davidsbund). These two contrasting characters were used to express divergent critical views, but they also represented aspects of Schumann’s own temperament: fiery Florestan, impatient and idealistic, versus sober Eusebius, reflective and moderate.

**QUASI Cadenza** – in the manner of a cadenza, a virtuoso passage for a soloist.

**SCHERZO** – literally, a joke; generally referring to a movement in a fast, light triple time, with whimsical, startling or playful elements and a contrasting central section called a ‘trio’.

**Rondo** – a musical form in which a main idea (refrain) alternates with a series of musical episodes. Rondo form is a common structure for the finales of concertos and symphonies.

**Sonata Form** – this term was conceived in the 19th century to describe the harmonically based structure most Classical composers had adopted for the first movements of their sonatas and symphonies. It involves the **Exposition**, or presentation of themes and subjects: the first in the tonic or home key, the second in a contrasting key. The tension between the two keys is intensified in the **Development**, where the themes are manipulated and varied as the music moves further and further away from the ultimate goal of the home key. Tension is resolved in the **Recapitulation**, where both subjects are restated in the tonic. Sometimes a **Coda** (‘tail’) is added to enhance the sense of finality.

**Waldstein** – Count Ferdinand Ernst von Waldstein (1762–1823) was an accomplished amateur musician and one of Beethoven’s leading patrons in Bonn. One of Beethoven’s earliest commissions was for a ballet the count produced (the composer allowed the music to be passed off as Waldstein’s) and he later composed a set of variations for piano four hands based on a theme by Waldstein.

In much of the classical repertoire, movement titles are taken from the Italian words that indicate the tempo and mood. A selection of terms from this program is included here.

- Adagio molto – very slow
- Allegretto moderato – lively and moderately fast
- Allegro – fast
- Allegro con brio – fast, with life
- Andantino – a diminutive of andante (walking pace), this term can be interpreted as either a little slower than andante or, as is more common nowadays, a little faster
- Prestissimo – even faster than presto
- Presto – as fast as possible
- Presto passionato – as fast as possible, impassioned
- Vivo – lively

This glossary is intended only as a quick and easy guide, not as a set of comprehensive and absolute definitions. Most of these terms have many subtle shades of meaning which cannot be included for reasons of space.
MORE MUSIC

Selected Discography

SCARLATTI SONATAS
Maria Tipo (in whose masterclasses Jasmina Stancul participated in Switzerland) was a champion for the repertoire of her native Italy – making one of the earliest important recordings of Clementi’s keyboard works and also recording Scarlatti sonatas. Her collection of 18 sonatas includes all but one of those heard in this concert.
EMI CLASSICS 5 74968 2

The complete sonatas – and there are about 555 of them – were recorded in the 1980s by harpsichordist Scott Ross. This 34-disc set on Warner Classics is probably beyond the enthusiasm of most listeners, but a selection of 19 sonatas played by Scott Ross is available on ERATO (45423) and in a more recent release on ELATUS (2564600302).

WALDSTEIN SONATA
Wilhelm Kempff’s stereo recordings of the Pathétique, Moonlight, Appassionata, and Waldstein sonatas from 1964 and 1965 are available in DG’s The Originals series.
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 447404

Stephen Kovacevich’s recording of the Waldstein is now only available in his complete set of Beethoven sonatas (9 CDs).
EMI CLASSICS 62700

ROBERT SCHUMANN
Both the ABEGG Variations and the Sonata Op.22 can be heard on Vladimir Ashkenazy’s 7-CD survey of Schumann’s piano music, which also includes the Symphonic Etudes and the Sonata in F sharp minor, Op.11.
DECCA 470915

JASMINKA STANCUL
Jasminka Stancul’s recordings include two Beethoven concertos (Nos.1 and 5) recorded last year with Gustav Kuhn and the Haydn Orchestra of Bozen and Trent and available on the Austrian label col legno (www.col-legno.com).
COL LEGNO WWE 1CD 60010

She has also recorded several discs of chamber music by Brahms and Schubert with the Vienna String Quartet, available on Camerata Records.

Broadcast Diary

MARCH–APRIL

31 March, 1pm
THE GOLDEN SPINNING WHEEL (2002)
Mark Elder conductor
Dvořák

1 April, 6.30pm
EXOTICA
Matthew Coorey conductor
Scott Kinmont euphonium
Rameau, Bracegirdle, Ravel, Bartók

11 April, 1pm
WALTON VIOLIN CONCERTO (2007)
Hugh Wolff conductor
Michael Dauth violin

14 April, 7pm
BRAHMS’ “FIFTH SYMPHONY”
Paul Daniel conductor
Ralph Kirshbaum cello
Dvořák, Bloch, Brahms orch. Schoenberg

16 April, 1.05pm
JASMINKA STANCUL IN RECITAL
See this program for details

19 April, 12.05
SHOSTAKOVICH 8
Steven Sloane conductor
Tabea Zimmermann viola
Lentz, Shostakovich

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

Jasminka Stancul piano

Jasminka Stancul was born in Serbia and is now an Austrian citizen. She studied in her home country as well as at the Music Conservatory in Vienna with Noel Flores. The Swiss Government subsequently awarded her a two-year scholarship, allowing her to study in Maria Tipo’s masterclass in Geneva.

Since winning the first prize at the International Beethoven Piano Competition in Vienna in 1989, Jasminka Stancul has performed with orchestras throughout Europe. These include the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Mozarteum Orchestra, Camerata Salzburg and the Bruckner Orchestra Linz, and, outside Austria, the Prague and Berlin Symphony Orchestras; Slovenian, Warsaw, Zagreb and Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestras; the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, the Gulbenkian Orchestra, and the philharmonic orchestras of Luxembourg and Liège. Outside Europe she has appeared with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and with the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra.

Her festival appearances include the Ruhr Piano Festival, Schleswig-Holstein and Rheingau Music Festival, Maggio Musicale (Florence), Settimane Musicale di Stresa, Viennese and Carinthian summer music festivals, Radio France Montpellier, and festivals in Toulouse, Besançon and Bratislava.

In 2005 she made her recital debut in the Brahms Hall of the Vienna Musikverein. She also collaborates with the Vienna String Quartet (an ensemble of the Vienna Philharmonic), regularly touring Japan. Since December 2006 she has performed with the Vienna Brahms Trio, including performances with the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland and at the Palacio de Festivales de Cantabria Santander. She has also played chamber music with violinist Christian Altenburger and cellists Boris Pergamenschikov and David Geringas.

Recent highlights have included Mozart’s Piano Concerto K271 (Jeunehomme) in Linz, Salzburg and Vienna, and in the 2006 anniversary year she frequently performed Mozart throughout Europe, including appearances with the St Petersburg Philharmonic and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra.

Her recordings have included all-Beethoven concerts, Schubert trios and the Trout Quintet with Ensemble Wien, as well as recordings for German and Austrian radio.

This is Jasminka Stancul’s Australian concerto and recital debut.
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<thead>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
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Critical to the success of the Sydney Symphony has been the leadership given by its former Chief Conductors including: Sir Eugene Goossens, Nicolai Malko, Dean Dixon, Willem van Otterloo, Louis Frémaux, Sir Charles Mackerras, Stuart Challender and Edo de Waart. Also contributing to the outstanding success of the Orchestra have been collaborations with legendary figures such as George Szell, Sir Thomas Beecham, Otto Klemperer and Igor Stravinsky.

Maestro Gianluigi Gelmetti, whose appointment followed a ten-year relationship with the Orchestra as Guest Conductor, is now in his fifth and final year as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Sydney Symphony, a position he holds in tandem with that of Music Director at Rome Opera. Maestro Gelmetti’s particularly strong rapport with French and German repertoire is complemented by his innovative programming in the Shock of the New concerts.

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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