

FANTASIES

STANISLAV KHRISTENKO
PIANO

SCHUMANN BRUCKNER ZEMLINSKY BRAHMS



STEINWAY & SONS

FANTASIES

STANISLAV KHRISTENKO

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–1856)

Fantasie in C major, Op.17

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| 1 | I. Durchaus phantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen | 13:10 |
| 2 | II. Massig. Durchaus energisch | 7:26 |
| 3 | III. Langsam getragen. Durchweg leise zu halten | 10:37 |

ANTON BRUCKNER (1824–1896)

- | | | |
|----------|---------------------|-------------|
| 4 | Fantasie in G major | 3:29 |
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ALEXANDER ZEMLINSKY (1871–1942)

Fantasien über Gedichte von Richard Dehmel, Op. 9

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| 5 | I. Stimme des Abends | 3:11 |
| 6 | II. Waldseligkeit | 3:42 |
| 7 | III. Liebe | 3:44 |
| 8 | IV. Käferlied | 1:29 |

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)

Fantasien, Op. 116

- | | | |
|-----------|---------------------------|-------------|
| 9 | I. Capriccio in D minor | 2:37 |
| 10 | II. Intermezzo in A minor | 4:45 |
| 11 | III. Capriccio in G minor | 4:04 |
| 12 | IV. Intermezzo In E major | 5:42 |
| 13 | V. Intermezzo in E minor | 4:05 |
| 14 | VI. Intermezzo in E major | 3:34 |
| 15 | VII. Capriccio in D minor | 2:44 |

Playing Time: **74:20**

REALIZING THE FANTASTICAL

‘FANTASIA’ IS AN INSTRUMENTAL FORM—with roots reaching back to the Renaissance—whose invention and flexible structure are fashioned by the composer’s own fantasy and imagination. Here pianist Stanislav Khristenko serves as dream interpreter to the fantasies of Brahms, Bruckner, Schumann and Zemlinsky.

While writing his **Fantasie in C Major, Op. 17**, Robert Schumann also wrote to Clara Wieck: “You can only understand the Fantasie,” he penned, “if you return to the unhappy summer of 1836 when we were separated.” The torrent of emotion and palpable longing that runs through his music supports the composer’s words to his sweetheart.

If Clara Wieck is the inspiration for the Fantasie, the work itself was conceived by Schumann as part of a fundraiser of sorts to erect a monument to Ludwig van Beethoven in the city of Bonn, Beethoven’s birthplace. The score is dedicated to Franz Liszt, who also took a leadership role in the monument project.

Within the freedom of the Fantasie, Schumann breaks some Sonata rules: he modulates directly to the subdominant; he interrupts the recapitulation; he employs similar themes in the outer movements. But Schumann’s rebellion is not undertaken in a spirit of mischief, but rather in aid of heightening the Fantasie’s emotional urgency. The Fantasie’s opening descending motive is known as the “Clara” theme; Schumann then quotes a song cycle by Beethoven, *An die ferne Geliebte (To the Distant Beloved)*. The second movement (in E-flat Major, Beethoven’s “heroic”

key), is an agitated march with dotted rhythms that spiral to frenzy, giving way to a kind of serenity and unmistakable warmth in the closing *Langsam getragen*—which includes the reappearance of the Clara theme.

Anton Bruckner's (1824–96) small-scale **Fantasie in G Major, WAB 118**, is a quiet morsel written in 1868 before the master penned the massive symphonies for which he would be remembered. Most of Bruckner's piano music was written for pedagogical use, but the soothing lyrical nature of the *Fantasie* makes it an easy pianist's appetizer or digestif.

Alexander Zemlinsky's (1871–1942) **Fantasien über Gedichte von Richard Dehmel** (*Fantasies on Poems by Richard Dehmel*), **Op. 9**, were the composer's last published piano pieces. Zemlinsky, born in Vienna, was championed by Brahms and gave lessons in counterpoint to Arnold Schoenberg—only three years his junior. Schoenberg would compose an instrumental masterwork with *Transfigured Night*, influenced by a Dehmel poem of the same title. While Zemlinsky would compose settings of Dehmel's poetry (*Fünf Lieder*, 1907) that spoke more in the language of expressionistic Schoenberg (and with a human voice!), his lovely *Fantasien* for solo piano, composed nine years earlier, find a quieter and unique bent—one which, while not entirely devoid of Brahmsian Romance and lyricism, leans more heavily toward a French *ça m'est égal* aesthetic.

Johannes Brahms' (1833–97) late miniatures (Op. 116–19) are compact, romantic character pieces of great originality and imagination. The **Fantasien, Op. 116**, written in 1892, demonstrate Brahms' ability to spin pieces out of small motives and ideas; the technique came from

Beethoven, but the music is entirely forward-looking Brahms, wrought with compression and complexity that points toward the Second Viennese School. Lionel Salter elegantly summed up the remarkable nature of Op. 116: “Their brevity only serves to heighten the intensity of their feeling. It is as if the composer, at the end of his life, had compressed the essence of his musical and emotional thoughts into these miniatures.”

The seven *Fantasien* are comprised of three fast (Capriccio) movements and four slow (Intermezzo) ones. The opening Capriccio in D minor brings its message home in direct language in three brutally juxtaposed segments. The Intermezzo in A minor, with a gentle rainfall in the right hand, provides a melodic and meditative contrast—underpinned by a slow build and release of harmonic tension. The Capriccio in G minor features more tension: falling thirds and dissonant diminished seventh chords that yield to a warm and exultant march. The intimate first E Major Intermezzo (No. 4) is poetic and tranquil with a rich bass supporting a nostalgic treble melody. The E minor Intermezzo features hypnotic cradle-rocking two-note slurs that gently hold sway over the piece—though a melody miraculously winds its way through. The second E Major Intermezzo (No. 6) weaves a stately chromatic theme through varied accompaniments. The final D minor Capriccio (No. 7) begins raucously and fights through a driven middle section, with arpeggios surrounding a bold theme, then builds to an athletic and vociferous climax.

—Ben Finane

Ben Finane is Editor in Chief of the American print quarterly *Listen: Life with Classical Music*.



STANISLAV KHRISTENKO

Stanislav Kristenko's performances have captivated audiences since his first solo recital at the age of eleven. A “poet of piano,” and “an architect of grand style” (*Le Soir*), Mr. Kristenko has been praised in the media around the globe. Spanish *El Pais* wrote of his “precise technique, powerful sound and fingers of steel.” The *Washington Post* said “it was clear that Kristenko knows how to spin a story; his pacing was mature and unhurried, the dynamic range wide, and his fingers exhibited power and sensitivity.” *Cleveland Plain Dealer* described his performance as “shimmering filigree and phrases of exquisite tenderness, in which every note mattered.”

Mr. Kristenko has appeared as a soloist with the National Symphony Orchestra of Belgium, the Cleveland Orchestra, Phoenix Symphony, Hong Kong Chamber Orchestra, Berliner Musikfreunde Orchestra, Takamatsu Symphony Orchestra and Moscow Conservatory Orchestra, among others. His performance highlights include solo recitals at Carnegie Hall, Vienna Konzerthaus, L'Auditori de Barcelona; and performances with orchestra in Grosser Hall of Berlin Philharmonie, Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, Severance Hall in Cleveland, Moscow Conservatory Great Hall, and Hong Kong City Hall.

Mr. Kristenko has won top prizes at some of the most prestigious international piano competitions. In 2013 alone he won First Prize at the 2013 Cleveland International Piano Competition, First Prize at the 2013 Maria Canals International Music Competition, and was named Fourth Laureate at the 2013 Queen Elisabeth Competition.

Born in Ukraine, Mr. Kristenko is a graduate of the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory and the Cleveland Institute of Music.

Fantasies was recorded January 20–22, 2014 at Sono Luminus Studios in Boyce, Virginia.

Producer: Dan Merceruio

Engineer: Daniel Shores

Equipment: Metric Halo ULN-8, DPA 4006 microphones

Executive Producers: Eric Feidner, Jon Feidner

Art Direction: Jackie Fugere

Design: Oberlander Group

Cover photo: Dario Acosta

Piano: Steinway Model D # 590904 (New York)

Piano Technician: John Veitch



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