

CZERNY

Romantic Piano Fantasies on Sir Walter Scott's Novels

Pei-I Wang and Samuel Gingher,
Piano Duet

The background image is a scenic view of Edinburgh Castle, a large stone fortress situated on a rocky island in the middle of a loch. The castle is surrounded by green grass and has a stone bridge with three arches leading to it from the right. The sky is filled with dramatic, dark grey clouds, and the water in the foreground is calm, reflecting the sky and the castle. The overall atmosphere is romantic and historical.

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

Carl Czerny (1791–1857) Romantic Piano Fantasies on Sir Walter Scott's Novels

Carl Czerny was a Viennese composer, pedagogue and pianist of Czech extraction. His father, Wenzel, was a pianist, organist, oboist and singer who cobbled together an income through teaching, quilling harpsichords, repairing and tuning fortepianos and copying music. Wenzel had contacts with prominent musicians in Vienna, including Josef Gelinek, Josef Lipavský and Johann Baptist Vaňhal, who frequently visited Czerny's home to enjoy dinner and music.

Under his father's tutelage Czerny learned to play all of Mozart's piano pieces, including the concertos, and works by Clementi, Koželuch and Pleyel. He was especially fond of the fugues of Lipavský and Vaňhal. In 1801 he began studying with Beethoven, and during this time he became intimate with C.P.E. Bach's *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen* ('Essay on the true art of playing keyboard instruments'). Due to his exceptional memory Czerny rapidly learned all of Beethoven's compositions by heart and frequently performed them at the palace of Prince Lichnowsky, a patron of music who, according to one source, would call out the opus numbers he wished to hear. Czerny and Beethoven stayed in contact throughout their lives, and Beethoven chose Czerny to perform the premiere of his *Piano Concerto No. 1* in 1806 and the Vienna premiere of the 'Emperor' Concerto, in 1812.

Czerny decided against a performing career, however, and in his early teens he began teaching, a practice that evolved into a full-time occupation for the next 30 years. He taught many famous musicians, including Franz Liszt, who often attributed his own success to Czerny's instruction. Evenings were dedicated to composing. After laying the foundations by studying the scores of J.S. Bach, Scarlatti, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, in 1806 Czerny published his first piece: a set of variations for piano and violin, his *Op. 1*. He went on to write some 861 opus numbers and numerous unpublished compositions across almost all musical genres, although he did not resume publishing his works until 1818. From this substantial *oeuvre* it is his instructional works, notably his keyboard exercises, that

became his lasting legacy; his numerous other compositions have been largely forgotten.

The publication date for Czerny's four *Romantic Fantasies*, *Opp. 240–243* remains elusive, but one can pinpoint the year 1832 from gathered clues. The first of these is that *Waverley*, *Op. 240* and *Guy Mannering*, *Op. 241* first appeared in print in a review published in the French music paper the *Revue musicale* on 31 March 1832. Curiously there is no mention of the other two pieces in the set: *Ivanhoe*, *Op. 242* and *Rob Roy*, *Op. 243*. A subsequent review published on 9 April 1832 advertises the composer's pedagogical work: *50 Vierhändige Übungsstücke*, *Op. 239*, containing progressively challenging duets. Likewise, the *Bibliographie de la France Vol. 20*, published on 24 March 1832, lists *Opp. 240* and *241* only. Knowing Czerny's industrious output, and that his *Rondeau a la Barcarolle in A major*, *Op. 255* was published by Richault music publishers in 1832, one can surmise that his *Ivanhoe* and *Rob Roy* fantasies were also published in 1832, the year of Sir Walter Scott's death.

Czerny's four *Romantic Fantasies*, *Opp. 240–243*, named after Sir Walter's famous *Waverley* novels, are piano duets of epic proportions. Czerny was an avid reader and an obvious fan of Scott's writing, having already based his *Op. 83 Romance* for voice and piano on Scott's poem *The Lady of the Lake*, and his *Variations Brillantes*, *Op. 225* for piano four-hands on a Romance from Heinrich Marschner's opera *Der Templer und die Jüdin* – itself inspired by Scott's novel *Ivanhoe*. Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) was a Scottish poet and influential historical novelist whose time-travelling *Waverley* novels drew on the oral traditions of his homeland and on a variety of historical literary sources to transport readers across the centuries. In response, Czerny ingeniously developed popular Scottish melodies, employed the Lombard rhythm (or Scotch snap), and explored extreme modulations with elaborate harmonic progressions, sequences and transitions. The musical narrative stays fresh because of the frequently changing metre and tempo, and through the composer's exploration of numerous

genres such as scherzos, fugal passages, chorales, marches and adagios, to name a few.

Czerny's choice of fantasy form to represent the *Waverley* novels lends a programmatic quality to the music and an elasticity to the compositional style. The keyboard fantasy has deep roots in improvisation. In *A Systematic Introduction to Improvisation on the Pianoforte*, *Op. 200*, Czerny writes: 'If a well-written composition can be compared with a noble architectural edifice in which symmetry must predominate, then a fantasy well done is akin to a beautiful English garden, seemingly irregular, but full of surprising variety, and executed rationally, meaningfully, and according to plan.' In contrast to more stringent forms, the fantasy embodies a variety of diverse characteristics for the composer to explore, including flexibility of form, a singing style (linked to *bel canto* traditions) and thematic transformations.



Waverley, *Op. 240*, named after the first novel in the series, published 1841, is characterised by rich thematic development. Dora Jordan's famous Scottish folksong *Bluebells of Scotland* can be heard through various passagework, contrasting with original thematic material and sections of modulation. *Guy Mannering*, *Op. 241* mirrors that novel's narrow plot line which often leaves the reader in suspense, unaware of what is to come. A rhythmic

motif that appears at one climactic point eerily resembles the 'knocking-door' fate motif at the opening of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*. *Ivanhoe*, *Op. 242* sonically mirrors Scott's novel of the same name by exploring the cultural divide in 12th-century England, which along with bloodshed and famine brought cathedrals, castles and chivalry to British culture. While subtitled 'a romance', the impact of Scott's *Ivanhoe* has been tremendous at shaping popular perception of medieval England. Czerny skillfully depicts the battles and love scenes, and the heart of the piece features an original theme on King Richard the Lionheart, indicated in the score in German text.

Like *Waverley*, Czerny's fourth and final fantasy, *Rob Roy*, *Op. 243*, invokes Scotland through the use of Lombard rhythms and traditional folk songs, such as *Logie O' Buchan*. Czerny himself categorised his compositions into four groups: studies and exercises, easy pieces for students, brilliant concert pieces, and serious music. While clearly falling into the 'brilliant' category, his *Fantasies* share many elements with his 'serious' music: the exploration of sophisticated forms, the mature harmonic language, and the dualism of structure and unpredictability. While not directly intended as serious works, the *Fantasies* are orchestral in nature and complex in structure, bearing similarities to Czerny's piano sonatas.

Czerny's *Fantasies* present many ensemble challenges for performers, including virtuosic parallel passages between parts and perilous hand-crossings which lead to territory disputes and require collaborative problem solving. Highly virtuosic, these pieces hurl demanding passagework at both players, with rapid ornamentation, repeated notes, speedy scales and blitzing arpeggios. Fermatas scattered throughout each of them offer brief yet exciting opportunities for the performers to improvise transitional cadenzas between sections, a historical performance practice once commonplace. In short, these fantasies are a paragon of Czerny's analogy to an English garden: full of variety and beauty, organised yet unpredictable.

Samuel Gingher

Samuel Gingher

Pianist Samuel Gingher has performed at festivals in Europe and the United States and received First Prize at the 2010 Brevard Music Festival Piano Competition and the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts' Debut Artist Award. He teaches at Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois, where his research interests include historical piano improvisation pedagogy (with a particular interest in Czerny) and the discovery and performance of unknown masterworks. He studied at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the University of North Carolina at Chapel-Hill. With Benjamin Hayek and Sun-Young Shin he recorded a disc of Czerny piano trios (Naxos 8.573848, released 2018).

Pei-I Wang

Pei-I Wang is a faculty member at Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois. She has been a featured soloist with several orchestras, such as the Illinois Symphony Chamber Orchestra, the Millikin-Decatur Symphony Orchestra, and the Taiwan National Symphony Orchestra. Wang has received awards in many competitions, including the Liszt-Garrison International Piano Competition, the Mauro Paolo Monopoli Prize Asian Auditions, and the 21st Century Piano Commission Competition, among others. As a keen advocate of contemporary music, she has performed at several new music festivals. She studied piano under the tutelage of Drs Ian Hobson, Rolf-Peter Wille and Daming Zhu, and accompanying under Dennis Helmrich.



Carl Czerny's instructional exercises may be his lasting legacy but there remain numerous largely forgotten pieces that reveal important elements of his compositional range. The four *Romantic Fantasies* named after Sir Walter Scott's famous *Waverley* novels are piano duets of epic breadth. In them Czerny ingeniously develops popular Scottish melodies, including the use of the 'Scotch snap', to generate a vivid programmatic quality that explores numerous genres. Scherzos, fugal passages, chorales and marches are all featured, and raise the music – full of beauty, virtuosity and unpredictability – to orchestral proportions.

**Carl
CZERNY**
(1791–1857)

- | | | |
|----------|--|--------------|
| 1 | Romantic Fantasy No. 1 on Sir Walter Scott's
<i>Waverley</i>, Op. 240 (1832) | 20:17 |
| 2 | Romantic Fantasy No. 2 on Sir Walter Scott's
<i>Guy Mannering</i>, Op. 241 (1832) | 19:14 |
| 3 | Romantic Fantasy No. 3 on Sir Walter Scott's
<i>Ivanhoe</i>, Op. 242 (1832) | 21:34 |
| 4 | Romantic Fantasy No. 4 on Sir Walter Scott's
<i>Rob Roy</i>, Op. 243 (1832) | 18:55 |

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

Pei-I Wang, Piano – Primo 1 2, Secondo 3 4
Samuel Gingher, Piano – Primo 3 4, Secondo 1 2

Recorded: 22–23 December 2019 at Foellinger Great Hall, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts,
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA • Producer: Samuel Gingher
Engineers: Kevin Bourassa, Samuel Gingher • Editor: Samuel Gingher • Booklet notes: Samuel Gingher
A Hamburg Steinway Concert Grand piano was used for this recording • Piano technician: John Minor
Cover photo: Eilean Donan Castle, Scotland (© Jankupe / Dreamstime.com)



8.579099

DDD

Playing Time
79:59



Made in Germany
www.naxos.com

© & © 2021 Naxos Rights (Europe) Ltd
Booklet notes in English