



CHOPIN
ELIASSON
SCHUMANN

PERSONAE
BETH LEVIN PIANO

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FINE MUSIC

BETH LEVIN PIANO

DAVIDSBÜNDLERTÄNZE, OP. 6 ROBERT SCHUMANN

1	I. Lebhaft.	1:46
2	II. Innig.	2:00
3	III. Mit Humor.	1:44
4	IV. Ungeduldig.	0:57
5	V. Einfach.	2:22
6	VI. Sehr rasch.	2:04
7	VII. Nicht schnell.	3:26
8	VIII. Frisch.	1:09
9	IX. Lebhaft.	1:19
10	X. Balladenmäßig - Sehr rasch.	1:40
11	XI. Einfach.	2:27
12	XII. Mit Humor.	0:44
13	XIII. Wild und lustig.	2:54
14	XIV. Zart und singend.	2:26
15	XV. Frisch.	2:26
16	XVI. Mit gutem Humor.	1:20
17	XVII. Wie aus der Ferne.	4:22
18	XVIII. Nicht schnell.	1:52

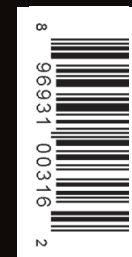
19 DISEGNO 2 FOR PIANO ANDERS ELIASSON. 5:07

SONATA NO. 2 IN B-FLAT MINOR, OP. 35 FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN

20	I. Grave – Doppio movimento.	6:05
21	II. Scherzo.	6:39
22	III. Marche funèbre: Lento.	10:55
23	IV. Finale: Presto.	1:46



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Photographer Tess Steinkolk



Beth Levin's artistry invokes an uncanny sense of hearing for the first time works long thought familiar, as though the pianist herself were discovering a piece in the playing of it. Such a style of refreshment and renewal can be traced back to Levin's unique artistic lineage. As a child prodigy, she made her debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra at age 12. She was subsequently taught and guided by legendary pianists such as Rudolf Serkin, Leonard Shure, Dorothy Taubman, and Paul Badura-Skoda (who praised her as "a pianist of rare qualities and the highest professional caliber"). Her deep well of experience allows Levin to reach back through the golden age of the Romantic composers and connect to the sources of the great pianistic traditions, to Bach, to Mozart, to Beethoven.

Levin has appeared as a concerto soloist with numerous symphony orchestras, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Boston Pops Orchestra, the Boston Civic Symphony, and the Seattle Symphony Orchestra.

Levin has worked with noted conductors such as Arthur Fiedler, Tonu Kalam, Milton Katims, Joseph Silverstein, and Benjamin Zander. Chamber music festival collaborations have brought her to the Marlboro Festival, Casals Festival, Harvard, the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, the Ankara Music Festival, and the Blue Hill Festival, collaborating with groups such as the Gramercy Trio (founding member), the Audubon Quartet, the Vermeer Quartet, and the Trio Borealis, with which she has toured extensively.

Among Levin's recordings are live performances of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* (Centaur Records, 2008), and Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* (Centaur Records, 2011). Her interpretation of the *Diabelli Variations* has been described as "consistently fascinating" (Steve Smith, *NY Times*) and simply "stunning" (Robert Levine, *Stereophile Magazine*). Of Levin's *Goldberg Variations*, Peter Burwasser of *Fanfare Magazine* stated that she plays "as if she is in love with the notes...with always the sense that she is exploring Bach's genius." Her performances have been broadcast on National Public Radio, WGBH (Boston), WFMT (Chicago) and WNYC, WNYE, and WQXR (New York).

For all her devotion to the Romantic canon, Levin remains committed to the performance of the music of our time, interpreting composers such as Henryk Gorecki, Scott Wheeler, Roger Stubblefield, Frank Warren, Mohammed Farouz, and Michael Rose, among many others. Her closest collaborators have been the composers David Del Tredici and Andrew Rudin, both of whom have written works for her.

www.bethlevinpiano.com

DAVIDSBÜNDLERTÄNZE, OP. 6 BY ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

The daringly original early piano works of Robert Schumann were greatly influenced by his relationship with Clara Wieck. On September 5, 1839 Schumann wrote to his former teacher Heinrich Dorn: “Certainly some of my music contains some of the struggles Clara has cost me, and it certainly can be understood by you as such. She was practically my sole motivation for writing the Concerto, the Sonata, the *Davidsbündlertänze*, the *Kreisleriana*, and the *Novelletes*.” Into these works Schumann poured his passionate love, anxieties, longings, visions, dreams, and fantasies. For Schumann, the intimate character piece provided fertile creative ground for his experimental ideas and emotions. The composer noted that no work gave him greater pleasure in the act of creation than the *Davidsbündlertänze* (“Dances of the League of David”) of 1837. In many ways this score is his most personal work, a self-portrait of his mood swings and split personality. In 1838 Schumann told Clara that the Dances contained “many wedding thoughts,” going on to state that “the story is an entire Polterabend (German wedding eve party, during which old crockery is smashed to bring good luck).” The score’s title refers to Schumann’s fictitious League of David, a brotherhood of artists that did battle with the Philistines of contemporary music and art. In addition to the composer, his beloved Clara and other creative artists, the League of David included two of Schumann’s imaginary alter egos: Florestan and Eusebius. The title page of the manuscript states that the Dances were dedicated to Walther von Goethe (the poet’s grandson) by “Florestan and Eusebius.” Eusebius embodied the composer’s sensitive, softly lyrical side, while Florestan represented his intense, rhythmically complex persona. In the score’s first edition, Schumann credits the composition of nos. 2, 5, 7, and 14 to Eusebius, while he indicates that Florestan wrote nos. 3, 4, 6, 10, and 12. He would later excise these fantasy designations.

The music ranges widely in its emotional extremes. Many of Schumann’s contemporaries considered the work’s sudden changes of mood and unconventional approach to tonality and rhythm so original that it verged on madness. Late in his life and career, the master choreographer George Balanchine created a dark, brooding ballet to *Davidsbündlertänze*. The music’s dance rhythms are subtle, comprising an intimate concert ballet. This score is one of Schumann’s most personal, intense creations. The music is marked by romantic ardor and creative generosity of spirit from first bar to last.

DISEGNO 2 FOR PIANO BY ANDERS ELIASSON (1947-2013)

Anders Eliasson (1947-2013) was one of the great composers of our time. Born in the Swedish province, he started as a jazz trumpeter and became leader of his own band when he was 12 years old. Then he studied the music of Johann Sebastian Bach for many years. As a student with Ingvar Lidholm he experienced the whole range of modern composition, only to find his own way after many years of desperate search. In his unique style which is characterized by constant seemingly self-organized mobility of harmony, motivic

inter-relation and rhythmic life as well as by the complete absence of any kind of schematic developments, the influences of Bach, jazz and the legacy of Western music culture are transcended into a singular personal style of unpredictable organic unity in a living harmonic universe beyond gravity. *Disegno 2 for piano* was written in 1973 and in its relatively sparse texture and free use of motivically related fields of tension provides us with a well accessible insight into his unique musical reality even on a first hearing.

SONATA NO.2 IN B-FLAT MINOR, OP. 35 BY FREDERIC CHOPIN (1810-1849)

Chopin composed his *Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35* ("Funeral March") mainly in 1839 at Nohant, near Chateauroux in France, although the funeral march third movement had been composed as early as 1837. The sonata consists of four movements: "I. Grave; Doppio movimento II. Scherzo III. Marche funèbre: Lento IV. Finale: Presto," The first movement features a stormy opening theme and a gently lyrical second theme. The second contains a calmer, more relaxed melodic theme. The third movement begins and ends with the celebrated funeral march in B-flat minor which gives the sonata its nickname, but has a calm interlude in D-flat major. The finale gives us a whirlwind of unison notes with unremitting, unvarying tempo and dynamics: not a single rest or chord until the final bars, and no variation in volume. James Huneker, in his introduction to the American version of Mikuli edition of the Sonatas, quotes Chopin as saying, "The left hand unison with the right hand are gossiping after the March." Others have remarked that the fourth movement is "wind howling around the gravestones."

- Gill Reavill

All tracks recorded July 27, 2015 at Peter Karl Studios in NYC

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