

PITTSBURG STATE UNIVERSITY
Pittsburg, KS

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

Senior Recital

Kristin Humbar, piano

Tuesday, April 1, 2008
McCray Recital Hall
7:30 PM

PROGRAM

Fantasie, Op. 17.....Robert Schumann
I. Durchaus fantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen (1810-1856)
II. Mäßig. Durchaus energisch
III. Langsam getragen. Durchweg leise zu halten

Brief Intermission

Variations on "Ah vous dirai-je, maman!" K. 265/300e.....Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)
Pour le Piano.....Claude Debussy
I. Prélude (1862-1918)
II. Sarabande
III. Toccata

*This recital partially fulfills performance requirements for the senior year of the
Bachelor of Music Performance degree program for Ms. Humbar*

Program Notes

Fantasia, Op. 17:

Robert Schumann led a short, yet very dramatic life, complete with a passionate love story, mental illness and eventually attempted suicide. His goal was to be a concert pianist and so he took piano lessons from Friedrich Wieck, and in 1835 fell in love with Wieck's 15-year old daughter, Clara. She was already a talented pianist and was famous as being one of the best pianists of her day. When her father found out about their blossoming romance, he forbade them from communicating, even through letters, and he took Clara out of the country; thus, in the summer of 1836, Schumann was left in the depths of despair. Even after being parted, they still managed to find a way to get back together and eventually they fought a long and acrimonious legal battle against her father for her independence and they were married in 1840.

It was during their complete separation in June of 1836 that Schumann composed the first movement of the *Fantasia*, calling it *Ruines, Fantasia*. He wrote to Clara several years later that "the first movement is probably the most passionate thing I have ever written – a deep lament for you..." The other two movements arose from a plan to compose a large work to raise money for a monument to one of his heroes, Beethoven, which was to be built in Bonn. In the autumn of 1836 he composed the second and third movements and tried to find a publisher interested in a "*Grand Sonata for Beethoven*." He titled the movements at this time *Ruins, Trophies* and *Palms*, respectively. At this time, Schumann's search was unsuccessful and by the time he found a publisher in 1838, he had renamed and edited the piece. He now called it *Poems: Ruins, Triumphal Arch* and *Constellation*.

After the manuscript was finally at the publisher, Schumann sent them a letter with directions to change the title to *Fantasia, Op. 17*, to dedicate the work to Franz Liszt, and to add a motto from a poem by German Romantic poet Friederich Schlegel:

*Durch alle Töne tönst
Im bunten Erdentraum
Ein leiser Ton gezogen
Für den, der Heimlich lauschet.*

Among all the sounds
In the bright dream of earthly life
There is emitted a soft tone
For him who listens in secret.

In a letter to Clara, Schumann said, "Are not *you* really the 'tone' in the motto? I almost believe you are." He had a copy of the *Fantasia* sent to her as soon as it was published in spring of 1839. She sent him this reply on May 22: "Yesterday I received your wonderful Fantasy – today I am still half ill with rapture...I dreamed a beautiful dream during your Fantasy..."

The form of the *Fantasia* is another interesting thing about the piece. Music analysts are not agreed on whether Schumann intended it to be composed in Fantasy form or in a loose Sonata form. If it is a Sonata form then it's very unconventional.

The first movement can be regarded as a variant of sonata form: a large binary structure (exposition and recapitulation), the development consisting of episodes within the recapitulation. It can also be regarded as a sectional work which mixes two forms: sonata form and song form. The listener will undoubtedly perceive three sections, the first and the last will sound similar, and the middle section will bring in a new tempo and be in the parallel minor.

The second movement has been hesitantly described as rondo-like (or scherzo-like), it has also been called a sonata-rondo form. It has a definite ABA form which could be viewed as March I-Trio-March II. However, Schumann throws in his own twists and makes it difficult to assign this piece a set form.

The third movement is the slow movement. In the classical tradition, the final movement is a very odd place to have a slow movement. This movement has analysts even more reluctant to assign a label. Instead they assign very general labels, such as a 'dual' form. It has been described as being introspective, poetic, and has been labelled as the 'calm after the storm.'

Wialewski, a Schumann biographer, wrote this about the movements of the *Fantasie*: "Viewed individually – their sequence is obviously unconventional – all three movements appear at first to be somewhat akin to sonata form; only upon closer acquaintance does one realize that a characteristic element in the *Fantasie* is precisely the free mixture of different forms." This sums up Schumann's sympathy to the trend called 'New Romanticism,' which strived for originality, obscurity, and intellectuality. He loved the ambiguous and the eccentric and the *Fantasie* is a representation of this. Despite the unpredictable nature of the piece, or perhaps even because of it, Schumann's *Fantasie, Op. 17*, is one of the most enduringly popular examples of Romantic piano music.

Variations on "Ah vous dirai-je, Maman", K. 265/300e:

At the age of 25, Mozart composed this set of 12 variations on the French folk song "Ah! Vous dirai-je, Maman." There is no evidence that Mozart composed the tune himself. The first printed example of the folk melody appeared in 1761 with no lyrics. The earliest printed publication of the lyrics together with the melody appears in 1774. Mozart did not compose his variations until 1781. A rumor that Mozart was the composer of this melody may have been spread partly by the fact that it appeared as a correct answer in the original edition of *Trivial Pursuit*. In English, this familiar tune appears with *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*, *Baa, Baa Black Sheep*, and the *Alphabet Song*.

The first two variations are technical in nature and work with fast sixteenths for the right and left hands. Variations three and four are similar but work with triplets. Variation five introduces some chromatic notes. Variation six is a technical display for the left-hand and variation seven shows off the right hand through scale runs. In variation eight, Mozart switches to minor and explores the darker side of the melody. Variation nine takes us back to major and segues nicely into variation ten, which is lively and exciting. The last two variations, numbers eleven and twelve, are the only ones with original tempo markings: Adagio and Allegro, respectively. In the last variation, Mozart surprises by changing the meter to 3/4 time instead of 2/4 time.

Pour le piano:

At the time that Debussy wrote this piece (one of his earlier works), French composers were turning away from the highly charged emotional aura of German Romanticism and were looking back at the 18th century models for inspiration. This trend was called neoclassicism. *Pour le piano* contains both neoclassicism, and the well-known trend of impressionism. Impressionism uses harmony for color rather than for traditional chord progressions. Debussy fully exploits the coloristic range of the piano.

All three movements (Prelude, Sarabande, and Toccata) come from 18th century pieces. They are representative of what Debussy saw as a particular form than they are an exact replica of the older forms. Debussy attached the idea of these forms to his pieces; for example, in much the same way as a child that draws a stick figure attaches the meaning of a person to it. Each movement has similarities to the style that is drawn from, but yet remains almost a caricature of the original style.

The Prelude is very figurational and employs the whole-tone scale incessantly. It has several contrasting sections, some are percussive and some are more melodic and flowing. The Sarabande observes the rhythmic 3/4 pattern of the old dance style and the old rounded binary form but emphasizes the new harmonies, especially with the use of many parallel seventh-chords. The Toccata is a little more virtuosic than the Prelude. It explores the different shades of color that the piano is capable of achieving and is fast and brilliant.