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10-22-2019

## Robert Weirich, Piano: Guest Artist Piano Recital

Robert Weirich

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One can only delight in the psychological astuteness Schumann embeds in the music. Each piece is a world unto itself, yet there is a noticeable plot line through the eighteen character pieces. Part of this comes as a result of key relationships: the principal keys, G Major and B Minor, are established in the first two pieces. Then, different routes are taken to the final pieces of both books, where we find C Major (Clara's key), the only times Schumann used this tonality in the cycle. To contemplate the composer, all of twenty-seven when he wrote this music, burning with such emotional awareness, is awe-inspiring.

It was Schumann who coined the oft-repeated phrase "heavenly length" when considering Schubert's late works, and for better or worse, it has stuck. The ear of the beholder will determine whether one hears divinity or perpetuity. It is long. It is also humbling—while its notes may be "easy," the message of those notes require a great deal of thought and commitment on the part of both performer and listener, which is perhaps why Claudio Arrau said that of all composers, Schubert was the most difficult to perform well.

In September 1828, Schubert completed his last three piano sonatas, in C Minor, A Major, and B-flat Major, all of which contain homages to Beethoven, who had died in 1827. Alfred Brendel has written of thematic links between the sonatas, and finds the central one, the A Major, the most original of the three. The opening six bars of the first movement is based on a chord progression that reappears in several disguises throughout the work, including in retrograde in the final six bars of the last movement. Most remarkable is the second movement in F sharp minor, marked Andantino. A hypnotically lulling theme recalls several of the Heine songs and Der Leiermann from Die Winterreise. We also see connections to the song Pilgerweise where similar music in F sharp minor explores the text "I am a pilgrim on the earth, and pass silently from house to house..." The eighth note accompaniment suggests the steady trudge of life as the melancholic melody haunts us with its simplicity. Then all hell breaks loose! The music undergoes in the movement's middle section a sort of nervous breakdown, unleashing not just turbulence and foreboding but also chaotic violence. The theme's return is devastating; one can almost hear Mahler in this music. Two more movements follow, and slowly equilibrium returns. Brendel calls the rondo finale a "big daydream of bliss," perhaps the only way to resolve the existential terror of the Andantino. The "thunderstorm development" finds its way back to the rondo theme, this time in a higher register and in the key of F-sharp major, resolving the minor key of the second movement. When the theme recapitulates in A major, we know that good has triumphed over evil, and it's just a matter of time before all ends well.

*--Robert Weirich*

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*We acknowledge with respect the Onondaga Nation,  
firekeepers of the Haudenosaunee, the indigenous people  
on whose ancestral lands Syracuse University now stands.*

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*In order to allow performers and audience members to have the best possible concert-going experience, please turn off all electronic devices and refrain from making extraneous noise, taking flash photographs, or moving about the auditorium during the performance. Thank you.*

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Setnor School of Music



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# ***Robert Weirich***

## ***Guest Artist Piano Recital***

**Setnor Auditorium**

**October 22 2019**

**8:00 PM**

**Syracuse University**

College of Visual and Performing Arts

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Syracuse University  
College of Visual and Performing Arts

IV. Rondo: Allegretto

Rondo in A Minor, K. 511

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
(1756-1791)

Davidsbündlertänze, Op. 6

Robert Schumann  
(1810-1856)

Heft I

1. Lebhaft (F. und E.)\*
2. Innig (E.)
3. Mit Humor (F.)
4. Ungeduldgig (F.)
5. Einfach (E.)
6. Sehr rasch (F.)
7. Nicht schnell (E.)
8. Frisch (F.)
9. Lebhaft (F.)

Heft II

10. Balladenmässig. Sehr rasch (F.)
11. Einfach (E.)
12. Mit Humor (F.)
13. Wild und lustig (F. und E.)
14. Zart und singend (E.)
15. Frisch (F. und E.)
16. Mit gutem Humor
17. Wie aus der Ferne (F. und E.)
18. Nicht schnell (E.)

*\*Please refer to program notes.*

~ *Intermission* ~

Sonata in A Major, D. 959

Franz Schubert  
(1797-1828)

- I. Allegro
- II. Andantino
- III. Scherzo: Allegro vivace

from the second edition are two markings in prose by Schumann before the last piece of each “book:” the ninth piece is headed with the statement “Here Florestan stopped and his lips trembled painfully,” and at the end of the piece we read “Superfluously Eusebius added the following, while great bliss radiated from his eyes.” *Continued on back.*

## PROGRAM NOTES

Ask musicians how they assemble a recital program and you will get many different answers. For some internal reason, this program simply insisted that I play it. In the past I always included a contemporary piece on my recitals, but today there is nothing more recent than 1837! Perhaps in my advancing years I am catching up to the American composer George Rochberg who said, “I have learned that there is no greater provincialism than that which denies the past, that there is no greater danger to the human spirit than to proclaim value only for its narrow slice of contemporaneity.”

The challenge for the performer, then, is to bring music of the past to life today, to make it matter. I would not have chosen these pieces, of course, if they did not matter to me.

The Mozart Rondo in A Minor has been in my mind for many years, although I learned it only recently. I still remember a performance by a fellow student when I was in college that blew me away. I couldn’t get over the chromaticism, the extreme inwardness of this piece by a composer I thought of at that time (erroneously, of course) as a very safe, predictable classicist.

Now that I have lived with it at the piano, I realize it is a risky piece with which to start a program. It is so exposed and intimate that a restless audience may disregard it, hearing it as inconsequential. Marked Andante in a six-eight meter, it is the last of Mozart’s piano works to draw on the “siciliano” rhythm, and shows some similarity to the slow movement of the “Prague” Symphony, finished only two months before and also marked Andante in six-eight. For those of you keeping track of such things, Andante is taken faster today than in previous generations (compare recordings by Claudio Abbado and Sir Thomas Beecham, for example). In this sense, then, I find myself Old School—I am not likely to play this Rondo too “going-ly.” The score also contains numerous dynamic indications, many of which are counter-intuitive to current performance practice. Mozart clearly composed this music with great care and attention to detail. The performer’s challenge is not to get lost in all of it.

Of all the great Romantic composers for piano, I am probably most drawn to Schumann. While I would be hard-pressed to name my favorite Schumann piece, these “Dances of the League of David” contend strongly. Schumann loved the music of Franz Schubert (indeed, he was one of the first to draw attention to late works like the Piano Trio in E-flat and the “Great” C Major Symphony). He undoubtedly knew Schubert’s collections of polonaises, Ländler and waltzes for piano, and in Papillons combined the concept of these chains of dances in three-four with the novels of Jean-Paul. Carnival continued the idea even further, and while Davidsbündlertänze does not openly indicate programmatic intentions, the first edition contained “signatures” by **F. or E.** following each piece, or as any Schumann lover would guess, Florestan (the out-going, confident side of the composer’s personality) and Eusebius (the gentle, poetic soul). Also missing