



the firm 2009
concert five

*Music is moonlight in the gloomy night
of life.*

*Music is the only one of the fine arts in
which not only man, but all other
animals, have a common property,—
mice and elephants, spiders and birds.*

Jean Paul

Pilgrim Church provides wheelchair access via the rear
(northern) doors.

Toilets can be accessed through the door on the left of the
performance area.

The Firm

presents

Kristian Chong, piano

A Sort of Introduction

Luke Altmann

Traktat vom Licht II

Raymond Chapman Smith

Night Pieces

Peter Sculthorpe

Interval

Fantasie in C op.17

Robert Schumann

A Sort of Introduction (2009)

Luke Altmann

A Sort of Introduction was titled retrospectively after the first part of Robert Musil's epic novel, *The Man Without Qualities*, having decided that *The Piece Without Qualities*, although not lacking literal accuracy, was not appropriate analogously, firstly on the point of cultural significance, and secondly scale, the book being over a thousand pages long and the music only four.

Indeed, since even *A Sort of Introduction* accounts for the first eighty pages of Musil's work, I thought it better to post, as a suffix to the piece somewhat still widely limiting the ambitiousness of the literary reference, the title of the first chapter of the first part of the book: *Which, remarkably enough, does not get anyone anywhere* (being also four pages long, though admittedly more interesting).

In retrospect it may have been even less unsatisfactory to name the piece after only the first sentence of the first chapter of the first part: *There was a depression over the Atlantic*, but that that title might be somewhat too esoteric and demand a sort of introduction, lengthy and abstruse, not obviously warranted by the meandering incidental musical content it would be intended to explain, besides there being more poetic beauty and irony compressed into Musil's first seven words than I could ever hope to emulate in four pages, or even a thousand, if I had to drag poor Musil into association at all, which is an act of doubtful purpose beyond giving me something to name a piano piece after and write a programme note about.

Traktat vom Licht II (2008) Raymond Chapman Smith

1. Andante sostenuto
2. Allegro, ma non troppo
3. Presto
4. Andantino
5. Andante, molto espressivo
6. Vivace, ma non troppo
7. Adagio, ma non troppo
8. Allegretto, quasi andante
9. Allegretto
10. Allegro assai
11. Andante cantabile
12. Quasi allegretto
13. Andante amabile e con moto



The title is borrowed from a cycle of 26 poetic-scientific-metaphysical fragments by Novalis [Friedrich Philip, Freiherr von Hardenberg, (1772 - 1801)].

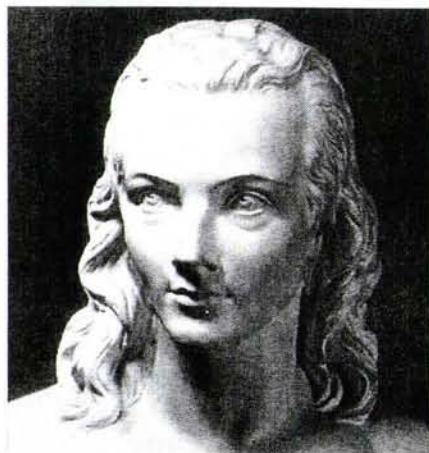
Novalis was a crucial voice in the formulation of the first phase of German Romanticism.

Light is the vehicle of the community – of the universe. Does not true reflection play the same part in the spiritual sphere?

All that is visible clings to the invisible. That which can be heard to that which cannot – that which can be felt to that which cannot. Perhaps the thinkable to the unthinkable.

The unity of the image, the form, of picturesque compositions rest on fixed relations, like the unity of musical harmony. Harmony and melody.

Sculpture, music and poetry relate to each other as do epic, lyric and drama. They are inseparable elements, which in each free art entity are bound together, and only as their own nature allows, in different relations.



Explanation of the visible with the illuminated – on the analogy of perceptible heat. So also with sounds. Perhaps too with thoughts.

Like ourselves, the stars float between illumination and darkening in turn – but even in the state of darkness we are granted, as they are, a consoling, hopeful glimmer of companion stars that are luminous and illuminated.

Novalis, Traktat vom Licht

“When I was at the Singerstrasse flat for the second time it was to collect an old volume of Spinoza which he had obtained for me at a more favourable price than normal, that is not through an official bookshop but through an illegal dealer, and as soon as I stepped into the Singerstrasse flat he made me sit down in the nearest chair, also a hideous Loos chair, and disappeared into his library, from where shortly afterwards he reappeared with a volume of Novalis maxims. I shall now read you Novalis maxims for an hour, he said to me, and, while I had to remain seated on the hideous Loos chair, he remained standing and for an actual hour read Novalis maxims to me. I have loved Novalis from the start, he said, when he had closed the book with the Novalis maxims after an hour, and I still love him today. Novalis is the poet whom I have loved all my life always in the same way and always with the same intensity, more than any other. As time went on the lot of them, more or less invariably, got on my nerves, profoundly disappointed me, revealed themselves as nonsensical or as pointless or, just as often, ultimately insignificant and useless, but there was none of this in the case of Novalis.”

Thomas Bernhard ‘Old Masters’.

Night Pieces (1971)

Peter Sculthorpe

Snow
Moon
Flowers
Night
Stars

"Night Pieces for piano, is based upon a Japanese concept known as setsugekka. This concerns the entwining of relationships between snow, flowers and the moon. The transforming qualities of the moon, for instance, may make flowers of snow, and snow of flowers. Even the moon itself may be viewed as a huge snowflake, or as a great white peony rose... On the surface, Snow, Moon and Flowers appears to be quite gentle. It should, however, be played with precision and strength".



Fantasie in C op. 17 (1837)

Robert Schumann

1. Durchaus fantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen – im Legenden Ton – Tempo primo
2. Mäßig. Durchaus energisch – Etwas langsamer – Viel bewegter
3. Langsam getragen. Durchweg leise zu halten – Etwas bewegte

Schumann's Fantasie began life in the summer of 1836 in the form of a single movement composed as a lament at being forcibly parted from his beloved Clara Wieck. At sixteen, nine years Schumann's junior, Clara was already a celebrated prodigy and well on her way to becoming one of the great pianists of the age. Her ambitious father, discovering a secret tryst between the pair, had her return Schumann's letters, banned the composer from entering the Wieck household, vilified and slandered him and may even have threatened to shoot him. The remaining two movements of the Fantasie were the direct result of Schumann's desire to help Liszt in his efforts to fund a monument to Beethoven in Bonn. His fervent enthusiasm for the Beethoven appeal appears to have temporarily overridden his melancholy as he collected the three movements, now known as 'Ruins', 'Trophies' and 'Palms', under the title, 'Sonata for Beethoven'. His plans included instructions to the publisher Kistner on how monies might be raised for the monument through sales of the work, and even concerned details such as the colour of the binding and design of the title page. Kistner was not

the only publisher who did not return Schumann's enthusiasm and it was only after numerous other titles for the 'Sonata' and its movements came and went that Breitkopf & Härtel eventually published the work as *Fantasie*, Op.17 in 1839, over two years after its completion.

The opening movement, as Schumann wrote to Clara, was the product of "excessive melancholy" and "the most passionate thing I have ever composed – a deep lament for you". Its early title, 'Ruins', tells its own story, but was later replaced by a preface by Friedrich Schlegel:

Durch alle Töne tönet

Im bunten Erdentraum

Ein leiser Ton gezogen

Für den, der Heimlich lauschet.

(Through all the sounds that sound / In the many-coloured dream of earth / A soft sound comes forth / For the one who listens in secret).

The "soft sound" has been interpreted as Schumann's undying love for Clara or indeed as representing Clara herself. Schumann was a great lover of musical puzzles, ciphers and number symbolism and thus his output abounds in quotations, acknowledged and unacknowledged, and any number of coded references to Clara, friends and fellow composers. Who knows how many of these are now lost to time? A quotation that revels in the dual nature of the *Fantasie*'s inspiration - Clara and Beethoven - appears in numerous guises in the first movement. Taken from the final song of Beethoven's cycle, *An die ferne Geliebte* (To the Distant Beloved), the

text of the original encourages the distant beloved to reduce the distance by singing the same songs as her lover.

Despite the depth of emotion directed at her in the opening movement, it was the second movement that Clara held dearest. The ghost of Beethoven is evident in the trills and dotted rhythms of its bold, triumphal march. Clara wrote of hearing an "entire orchestra" in it and encouraged Schumann more than once to orchestrate the march as an independent piece. The coda, a *bête noire* to concert pianists even today, hurtles the movement to a thrilling end. The finale is the work's slow movement; a serene, rapturous meditation which builds to a radiant climax and calmly resigned close - one of Schumann's most sublime moments.

Although now a venerable warhorse of the concert platform, neither the composer nor the grateful dedicatee, Liszt, considered the *Fantasie* suitable for public consumption, considering its home to be in rarefied private circles where it might receive suitable appreciation. Liszt, though a keen advocate, never performed it in public though he thought enough of it to dedicate his own masterpiece, the Piano Sonata in B minor, to Schumann in return, and never removed the *Fantasie* from his teaching repertoire. Even Clara Schumann didn't perform the work in public until 1866, ten years after her husband's death.

There is nothing novel about quotations in music, or in the use of another composer's tune as the basis of a composition. What is radically new in the *Fantasie* op.17 is the mode of integration, the way Schumann makes Beethoven's melody sound as if it were derived from its new context, as if Schumann's music could expand to produce a scrap of Beethoven. The Romantic Fragment acknowledges what is alien to it and incorporates it. The

phrase of Beethoven is made to seem like an involuntary memory, not consciously recalled but inevitably produced by the music we have just heard. A memory becomes a fragment when it is both alien and intimate, when we are aware that it is as much a sign of the present as of the past.

*A fragment should be like a little work of art,
complete in itself and separated from the rest of the
universe like a hedgehog.*

Friedrich Schlegel.

You are warmly invited to join us
after the concert for
complimentary drinks and a
selection of Tortes by Gabriele.

Next concert:

8pm Monday, 30 November 2009

The Langbein String Quartet ,

Leigh Harrold, piano

Harly Gray, double bass

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