



B E E T H O V E N F E S T B O N N

Bonn, 5 March 2010

## Schumann's Bicentenary at the Beethovenfest Bonn 2010

### Documentation of Robert Schumann's Versatility and Originality

"We can say with certainty that the music of the second half of this century will go down in the history of art as a period that later generations will call the 'Schumann Period'," wrote Tchaikovsky in 1871. "Schumann's music, which organically follows on from Beethoven's oeuvre and at the same time is clearly distinguished from it, opens up to us a whole world of new musical forms, it touches strings his great predecessors did not yet touch. In it we find the echo of the mysterious processes of our emotional lives, the doubts, depressions and searches for the ideal that move the hearts of people today. The story has not yet begun for Schumann."

In honour of the composer's bicentenary, the Beethovenfest Bonn 2010 will explore Robert Schumann's many facets, in order to contrast his diversity and progressive thinking as a composer and music writer with the cliché of the melancholic romantic. A representative selection of his works from the chamber music and symphonic fields as well as a great stage piece, the "Faust Scenes", will be performed at the festival by selected specialists of the repertoire. In order to show how revolutionary Schumann was for his time, the Beethovenfest will compare his compositions with those of his contemporaries. The musical avant-garde from the middle of the 20th century onwards discovered in Schumann's music utopian potential and used his oeuvre for their own compositions.

The pianist Susanne Kessel will therefore present eight pieces from Schumann's piano cycle "**Kreisleriana**" from 1838 and compare them with eight new compositions that reflect the balladesque and romantic character of the Schumann compositions from a 21st-century viewpoint. For "Kreisleriana 2010" Michael Denhoff, Sascha Dragicevic, Alvin Lucier, Alex Shapiro, Leon Milo, Moritz Eggert, Ivan Sokolov and Manfred Niehaus have each composed one new piece. The cycle was recorded on CD by Deutschlandfunk at the beginning of the year (14 Sept.). Six years before the "Kreisleriana" Schumann began working on his first **piano sonata in F sharp minor**, which occupied him for three years and is a reflection of his steadily growing feelings for Clara Wieck. Under the title "Bleich getragen denk ich dein" the pianist Stefan Litwin searches for hidden messages in this piano sonata, which he

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will also perform on piano. Excerpts from Jean Paul's "Flegeljahre" will also be presented by Litwin. Robert Schumann intensively studied Jean Paul's literary works; the "Flegeljahre" inspired him to his miniatures "Papillons" op. 2 (14 Sept).

Schumann was an exceptionally gifted song composer, writing 140 songs in his wedding year 1840 alone. The Beethovenfest Bonn 2010 is devoting three concerts to **Schumann's songs**. Accompanied by Burkhard Kehring, Christiane Karg und Lothar Odinius will sing Schumann's "Tragödie", a ballad based on a text by Heinrich Heine, the "Myrthen", a song cycle for voice and piano op. 25 and the Twelve Poems from Friedrich Rückert's "Liebesfrühling" op. 37 by Clara and Robert Schumann (12 Sept.). Schumann's song cycle "Liederkreis" based on words by Joseph von Eichendorff op. 39 will be performed by the baritone Dietrich Henschel accompanied by the pianist Michael Schäfer. In this concert too Schumann's work will be compared with a contemporary one. Henschel will sing five fragments from Hölderlin poems "...UND MÖCHTET IHR AN MICH DIE HÄNDE LEGEN..." by Peter Ruzicka, this year's "composer and artist in residence". The Nietzsche texts to which Ruzicka composed songs are equally fragmentary; since their world premiere in 1993 he has expanded them twice and now they include eight pieces. Hölderlin texts also underlie Hermann Reutter's "Drei Monologe des Empedokles", which Henschel and Schäfer will perform at the end of their Lieder recital (18 Sept.). Schumann invented the **Liederspiel**, the combination of songs for one or many voices unified by the same poetic subject to create a mini-opera without action. The singers Marlis Petersen, Anke Vondung, Werner Güra, Konrad Jarnot and the pianists Christoph Berner and Camillo Radicke will devote a "**Schumann-iade**" to this form. They will interpret Schumann's "Spanisches Liederspiel" op 74, the "Spanische Liebeslieder" op. 138 and the "Minnespiel" op. 101 and "Zigeunerleben" op 29/2. The singers and pianists involved in this project are almost the same ones who celebrated the Brahms-iade at the Petersberg at the Beethovenfest Bonn 2009 (8 Oct.).

Schumann only composed one opera, "Genoveva", which did not have any success initially. His second dramatic composition "... will, in my opinion, take its place amongst the greatest works in the world," according to Clara Schumann's estimation of the "**Scenes from Goethe's Faust**". However, the work for solos, choir and orchestra WoO 3, which Schumann spent almost a decade composing, is also rarely performed. In order to explain Schumann's compositional method and his way of dealing with his literary sources, a discussion concert with Helmuth Rilling will take place the evening before the "Faust Scenes" performance. It was Helmuth Rilling who put his stamp on this format in Europe (20 Sept.). In his performances he will be supported by the entire ensemble of the main concert: the Gächinger Kantorei, the Radio-Sinfonieorchester Stuttgart, the boys' choir collegium iuvenum Stuttgart as well as the soloists Letizia Scherrer as Gretchen, Christian Elsner as Ariel, the baritone Markus Eiche in the role of Faust and the bass Gerd Grochowski as Mephisto (20 and 21 Sept.).

The Beethovenfest Bonn will compare Schumann's and Ruzicka's chamber musical compositions a second time. The Minguet Quartett, which recorded all of Ruzicka's string quartets two years ago, will perform his second and sixth string quartets; in the latter Ruzicka also makes use of a soprano, and this part will be performed by

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Mojca Erdmann. Between the pieces by Ruzicka the Minguet Quartett will first perform Schumann's **string quartet** in A major op. 41/3, to then go on to interpret together with the soprano his Six Songs for voice and piano op. 107 in the transcription for soprano and string quartet by Aribert Reimann (19 Sept.).

After Beethoven's ninth symphony Robert Schumann thought the "dimension and objective [of the genre] had been exhausted ". Nevertheless he composed **four symphonies** himself, the first of which, nicknamed the "Spring Symphony", he sketched in just four days in January 1841. His Symphony no. 3, the "Rhenish", was composed at the start of his Düsseldorf Period, when he was so happy because of his position as musical director and the social recognition of his family that during this time he composed almost a third of his entire body of works. It will be with this symphony that the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen under Paavo Järvi will open the Beethovenfest Bonn 2010. Beforehand there will be a performance of Schumann's overture to the dramatic poem "Manfred" by Lord Byron op. 115 (10 Sept.). On the following day Järvi will conduct the Kammerphilharmonie for a performance of Schumann's Symphony no. 2 and his cello concerto in A minor op. 129; Sol Gabetta will be the soloist (11 Sept). The cello concerto was composed in the same period in which Schumann also composed the third symphony.

The extent to which Beethoven's oeuvre also influenced Schumann in other genres will be demonstrated by the Beethovenfest Bonn 2010 in two cycles, a **piano trio cycle** and a **violin sonata cycle**. The genre of the piano trio was significantly developed by both Schumann and Beethoven. All of Beethoven's and Schumann's piano trios will be performed at this year's Beethovenfest Bonn in five concerts. The individuality of the genre demonstrated by both composers will be matched by the **individual instrumentations**. On the first evening of the piano trio cycle in the Rotunda of the Steigenberger Grandhotel Petersberg, three exceptional talents will come together as a trio: Patricia Kopachinskaya, Sol Gabetta and Henri Sigfridsson will perform Beethoven's piano trio op. 1/1 and Schumann's piano trio no. 1 op. 63 (12 Sept.). Kolja Blacher, Clemens Hagen and Kirill Gerstein will confront Beethoven's "Ghost Trio" op. 70/1 in the Kammermusiksaal of the Beethoven-Haus, before which they will perform his "Cockatoo Variations" on Wenzel Müller's song "Ich bin der Schneider Kakadu" op. 121a. Shostakovich's trio for violin, cello and piano no. 2 op. 67 demonstrates the revolutionary development of the genre after Beethoven and Schumann (14 Sept). The Tecchler Trio, founded in 2003, drew attention to itself in 2007 when it won 1st prize at the ARD Musikwettbewerb. It will perform Schumann's piano trio no. 3 op. 110 (19 Sept.) in the Schumannhaus, where the composer spent his final two years in the insane asylum in Bonn's Endenich district. The renowned Parnassus Trio will perform Beethoven's piano trios op. 1/2 and op. 1/3 during their concert in the Beethoven-Haus. The well-known soloists Isabelle Faust, Jean-Guihen Queyras and Alexander Melnikov will appear as a trio to complete the piano trio cycle in the Beethoven-Haus: Beethoven's piano trio op. 70/2 and op. 97, the "Archduke Trio", will frame Schumann's second piano trio op. 80 (8 Oct).

The Beethovenfest Bonn 2010 takes an alternative approach to the cyclical idea for the performances of **all of Beethoven's and Schumann's violin sonatas**: Beethoven's ten violin sonatas will be performed by a specialist for this repertoire, the violinist

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Renaud Capuçon, together with his piano accompanist Frank Braley. In this genre too, just like in the piano trios, the complexity of Beethoven's works increased over time and the genre standards became less and less significant. Progress was additionally stimulated by improvements in piano building technique. Commissioned by the Beethovenfest Bonn, Jörg Widmann has composed a sonata for violin and piano, in which he confronts Beethoven and the standard sonata form for the first time in one of his own compositions. Capuçon and Braley will perform Jörg Widmann's new works at each of their three violin sonata evenings in the Kammermusiksaal of the Beethoven-Haus (17, 18, 19 Sept.).

Robert Schumann composed three sonatas for violin and piano, the first two in 1851 at the start of his Düsseldorf years. The third violin sonata in A minor WoO 2 was published for the first time in 1956. Clara hid it from the public, seeing it as a clear sign of her husband's mental decline. The sonata was created as a joint project between Schumann, Albert Dietrich and Johannes Brahms, who each composed a movement: the intermezzo is by Dietrich and the finale by Brahms. The three composers wanted to surprise Joseph Joachim, to whom the sonata is dedicated. It is known as F-A-E, to correspond with Joachim's motto "Frei, Aber Einsam" ("free but lonely"). Schumann later replaced his friends' two movements by his own but was no longer able to publish the sonata himself. The three sonatas for violin and piano by Robert Schumann will be performed by Carolin Widmann and Dénes Várjon on one evening (5 Oct.). The two musicians have made an intense study of Schumann's violin sonatas, and in autumn 2008 recorded them on CD in a seminal interpretation.

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