

## PROGRAM

*PAPILLONS, OPUS 2* ..... ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

*SONATA NO. 1 IN F# MINOR, OPUS 11* ..... R. SCHUMANN

*Un poco Adagio - Allegro vivace*

*Aria*

*Scherzo ed Intermezzo: Allegrissimo*

*Finale: Allegro un poco maestoso*

## INTERMISSION

*16 VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY ROBERT SCHUMANN  
IN F# MINOR, OPUS 9* ..... JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

*SONATA NO. 1 IN C MAJOR, OPUS 1* ..... J. BRAHMS

*Allegro*

*Andante (based on an old German Minnelied)*

*Scherzo: Allegro molto e con fuoco*

*Finale: Allegro con fuoco*

## Reflections on a Program

On the last day of September, 1853, a tired and disheveled young traveler by the name of Johannes Brahms, having been on a walking tour of the Rhine for several weeks, appeared on the doorstep of Robert and Clara Schumann in Düsseldorf. The Schumanns were out, and Brahms was invited back the following day. Playing his recently minted compositions for Schumann that morning, including the Sonata in C Major heard on tonight's program, the older composer's enthusiasm was so immediately palpable that Clara was quickly invited into the room. Such were the beginnings of a remarkable friendship and, indeed, mentorship. For the next month, Brahms lived with the Schumanns, ate, slept and drank music and poetry. Within a few weeks, an article appeared in Schumann's musical journal, *Die Neue Zeitschrift für Musik (New Music Periodical)*, entitled *Neue Bahnen (New Inroads)*, in which it was announced that a true successor to Mozart and Beethoven had finally arrived. Think for a moment what sort of pressure that would put on the shoulders of a twenty year old, no matter how gifted or ambitious. It must have frightened this modest young man half to death!! Within six months of Brahms's arrival in the Schumann household, Schumann would attempt suicide, and Brahms would move in and assume the role of titular head of the family, a necessity for Clara and the seven surviving Schumann children. In spite of his being nearly fourteen years younger than Clara, the two developed a deep lifelong affection that would end with Clara's death in 1896 and Brahms's death less than a year later of liver cancer (his cancer brought on and/or aggravated by a broken heart?).

Tonight's program provides a comparison of the early works of both composers, giving us the opportunity to showcase Schumann in his 200<sup>th</sup> year, in particular his musical and literary genius. The rest of the five-concert series will highlight the solo piano works of Johannes Brahms.

Robert Schumann's father, Augustus, was a bookseller and publisher in the town of Zwickau (near Dresden). From an early age, Schumann's interests were as much literary and musical. The fantasmagorical and often wildly imaginative stories and novels by E.T.A. Hoffmann and Jean Paul (Richter) became his bread and butter. Eschewing an education in law at the University of Heidelberg, he went instead in 1830, at the age of twenty, to study piano in Leipzig with the great pedagogue, Friedrich Wieck, living in Wieck's house and receiving lessons several times a week. During the course of the 1830s, which would become known as his 'piano decade', Schumann wrote nearly thirty major works for the instrument, became increasingly infatuated with Wieck's daugh-

ter, the gifted pianist Clara (nine years his junior), and over the strong objections of her father, eventually married her the day before her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday in September, 1840. In 1834, he founded the aforementioned musical journal, and indeed, his pithy, perspicacious and at times humorous remarks about music and musicians formed the basis for music criticism for much of the rest of that century and beyond.

*Papillons* (English: *Butterflies*), *Opus 2*, was composed in 1831, and is based on the last chapter of Jean Paul's seminal novel, *Flegeljahre* (this is difficult to translate – one might say: *The Years of Adolescent Philandering*). The novel's main protagonists are the twin brothers, Walt and Vult, the former a serious yet dreamy and poetic young man who has been left a local wealthy man's estate that has come with a weird series of stipulations before Walt can lay claim to the inheritance, the latter his footloose and fancy-free twin whose bold disposition is diametrically opposed in every way. Walt and Vult represent the dichotomy of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, or in Schumannesque terms, his alter egos Eusebius and Florestan. In this final scene of the novel, Walt enters a masked ball, where it appears the entire known universe has gathered, masked and clothed as a coachman. Eventually he finds Wina, with whom he is in love, also masked and wearing a nun's habit, and his twin Vult, representing Hope in female attire. Thereupon begins a voyage of self-discovery and philosophical reflection – life is but a stage – nothing is at it appears on the surface – clothed differently, one can, and does, *act* differently. The greatest disparities in life, enemies and friends, the young and the old, even heaven and hell, *all* can be woven and reconciled into one seamless tapestry. *Indeed, the poet perceives all matters of time and space alike.* Vult suggests that he and Walt switch costumes, then Vult and Wina dance a polonaise (#11), and for a moment, marriage even seems a possibility (#12). Yet, suddenly, the original waltz Walt heard earlier upon entering the ball is repeated, the clock strikes six, a new day is dawning, everyone disperses like butterflies, and...the lights go out! The lightheartedness with which Schumann treated *Papillons* masks the seriousness of the subjects at hand. To my way of thinking, this wonderful group of short pieces represents the fantasy world of the adult, having left his/her childhood behind. Given the disparate characters in this final scene of the novel, perhaps *Papillons* was a form of self-therapy for Schumann, interweaving his *animus* and *anima* into a consummate whole.

The *Sonata in f sharp minor, Opus 11*, was begun in 1833, a year after Schumann's realization that he was destined to be a composer, following

his failure to strengthen the second, third and fourth fingers of his right hand (and his subsequent dystonia) through the use of a mechanical device. This was about the time that the twenty-three-year-old Schumann's feelings for the fourteen-year-old Clara also began to awaken. The work, in fact, is dedicated to Clara with the inscription '*by Florestan and Eusebius*'. Nowhere on the title page does Schumann's name appear. The sonata's opening statement, with its sense of longing, the zesty *fandango* of the ensuing *Allegro*, with alternating passionate outbursts and intimate reflections – the short but intensely moving slow movement – the spritely *Scherzo* with two *Intermezzi*, one mildly manic, the other pompous in a humorous vein – and the wonderful *Finale*, a mixture of pomp, pride, fantasy, and again, great intimacy – all of these elements underline Schumann's assertion later in life that Clara had been the sole source for the sonata's inspiration. Indeed, such a wealth of feeling must have proved nearly impossible for a young man of twenty-three to conceal, feelings which found a natural outlet in this sonata.

The theme for the *16 Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann, Opus 9*, was taken by Brahms from one of the *Albumblätter* of Schumann's *Opus 99 Bunte Blätter*. He composed it in May of 1854, a few months after Schumann's suicide attempt. As the theme had previously been used by Clara for a set of variations as well, and as Brahms had only recently become a part of the Schumann household, it is conceivable that he was looking for a way to get closer to the distraught Clara, in addition to showing his veneration for the ailing older composer. This supposition is supported by the addition, in August of that year, of two final variations, numbers 10 and 11. Number 10 is in D Major, the only variation in a key remote from the original f sharp minor, the lyricism of its canon with the inversion of the canon in the bass reminiscent of a tender love duet. In the closing bars, Brahms incorporates a theme in the left hand that Clara had written as a twelve-year-old. On a few occasions throughout these variations, one senses the tenderness with which Brahms might have read a story to the young Schumann children before turning out the light at bedtime. The last variation, and its coda, must be seen as presaging Schumann's death two years later. In effect, the work's final bars lay Schumann to rest.

The provenance of the *C Major Sonata* was quite another matter. Brahms lived, as did other young aspiring composers of the day, under the shadow of Beethoven, where all large-scale works, in particular, were unconsciously compared to the *Ninth Symphony* of the great master. Combine this with a powerful, virile young spirit whose abilities at the

piano were astounding to all who heard him, and you have a sonata that was probably meant to be a symphony! Having written the sonata in his nineteenth year, and having been thrust into the limelight at the tender age of twenty, it's no wonder that Brahms was afraid to write a symphony until the age of forty-three! In fact, all of Brahms's three piano sonatas were written by the age of twenty, and it is quite instructive that Brahms, once he started writing symphonies, only wrote shorter solo pieces for his beloved instrument (the second piano concerto and later chamber music works stand in stark contrast to this). The rhythm of the work's opening is reminiscent of Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* sonata, but the bold opening quickly retreats into a contrapuntal play followed by a short, intimate second theme. Boldness, and symphonic grandeur reappear in the *development* of the first movement, as well as in the *coda*. The second movement is based on an old German folksong for tenor and male chorus (the words of the chorus in parentheses): *Stealthfully the moon rises (Blue, blue little flower). A small silver cloud passes by (Blue, blue little flower) (The roses in the valley, the young maiden in the room, o most beautiful Rosa!)*. It is a short set of variations with a quote from Beethoven's Fifth thrown in for good measure. A boisterous *Scherzo*, with its heartfelt *Trio* (this tune, as the folksong, conceivably inspired by Brahms's incursions into the beer halls of the day), goes *attacca* into a *Finale* of great exuberance, with its punctuated rhythms, a transformation in dance form of the opening theme of the first movement. Two episodes break the gaiety – the first lyrical and longing, the second redolent of the men's chorus of the second movement (one can easily imagine this section composed in such a manner).

The *Sonata in C Major, Opus 1*, proved an auspicious beginning. Although composed *after* the second sonata, Opus 2, Brahms became convinced of its merits and, following much soul searching and the prodding of close friends, chose to have it published first. Schumann had paved the way to the great music publisher, Breitkopf und Härtel, and a life in music was launched in a manner unlike anyone else, either before or since.

[Program notes © Craig Sheppard, 2010.]

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Tonight's program is being recorded by Dmitriy Lipay for future release on Romeo Records. The program is also being filmed for DVD by Professor Fumio Ohuchi.

Tonight's piano technician is Susan Cady.

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## CRAIG SHEPPARD

CRAIG SHEPPARD is Professor of Piano at the School of Music since 1993. With colleague, Robin McCabe, he founded the highly successful UW Piano Institute this past summer, following a recital at the Minnesota Beethoven Festival in which the reviewer stated: "With Yo-Yo Ma and Sheppard, the festival is off to a sensational start." 2008 and 2009 saw the inclusion of clips from Sheppard's cycle of Beethoven sonatas in the exhibition, *Schulz's Beethoven: Schroeder's Muse*, mounted at both the Charles Schulz Museum in Santa Rosa, CA, and San José State University. In May, 2008, Sheppard gave solo recitals and master classes in four major cities in The Peoples' Republic of China - Beijing, Shanghai, Xiamen and Shenzhen. In March, 2008, he appeared for the second time in the Hunter Council Chambers of Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand, performing Book II of Bach's Well Tempered Clavier, a work he recorded subsequently in Seattle's Meany Theater in April, 2008 (released on Romeo Records in November, 2008).

Craig Sheppard has made eight trips to the Far East since June 2002—five to Japan, and one each to China, Korea and Taiwan—giving lectures, master classes and concerts in major venues and universities. On May 18th, 2004, he wound up a seven-concert series in Seattle's Meany Theater that was dedicated to the 32 Beethoven Piano Sonatas, a popular series that met with great critical acclaim. In April, 1999, he gave his long-awaited recital debut at the Berlin Philharmonic, also to great critical acclaim. In 1999, he was presented by the Seattle Symphony in a highly acclaimed series of lecture/recitals at the Benaroya Hall. He appeared with the Seattle Symphony in 1998 in their inaugural season at Benaroya, and was also previously featured with the orchestra in the opening concerts of the 1996-97 season at the Opera House, along with the violinist Midori. Sheppard is invited frequently to perform at summer venues such as the Seattle Chamber Music Festival, and taught and performed for a number of summers at the Heifetz International Music Institute in Wolfeboro, New Hampshire.

Craig Sheppard was born and raised in Philadelphia. Following initial studies with Dr. Lois Hedner and Susan Starr, he attended the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia as a student of Eleanor Sokoloff, and earned both his Bachelors and Masters degrees at the Juilliard School in New York, studying with Sascha Gorodnitzki. In addition to working privately with Claude Frank and Lillian Kallir during summers at Tanglewood, Sheppard studied subsequently with Ilona Kabos, Peter Feuchtwanger, and Sir Clifford Curzon in London, and also worked with Rudolf Serkin and Pablo Casals at the Marlboro Festival.

Following a highly successful New York debut at the Metropolitan Museum in 1972, Sheppard won the silver medal later that year at the Leeds International Pianoforte Competition in England. Moving to London in 1973, he quickly established himself through recording and frequent appearances on BBC radio and television as one of the preeminent pianists of his generation, giving cycles

of Bach's Klavierübung and the complete solo works of Brahms in London and other musical centers. During the twenty years he lived in England, he also taught at Lancaster University, the Yehudi Menuhin School, and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, in addition to giving master classes at both Oxford and Cambridge universities.

Sheppard has performed with all the major orchestras in Great Britain, as well as those of Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Atlanta, Dallas, Seattle, Buffalo and Rochester, among others in the United States, and with such conductors as Sir Georg Solti, Sir Charles Mackerras, James Levine, Leonard Slatkin, Michael Tilson Thomas, Sir Andrew Davis, Sir John Pritchard, Lord Yehudi Menuhin, Erich Leinsdorf, Kurt Sanderling, Neeme Järvi, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Hans Vonk, Aaron Copland, David Zinman, Gerard Schwarz and Peter Erös.

Since 2005, Sheppard's recordings have appeared on the Roméo label. His recital of the last three Schubert sonatas, performed in Meany Theater in May of 2010, will be available in January, 2011. He has also recorded over the years on the EMI (Classics for Pleasure), Polygram (Philips), Sony, Chandos and Cirrus labels. Five CDs, all of live performances—including his Berlin performance of the Goldberg Variations, Beethoven's Diabelli Variations plus the Scriabin Fifth Sonata, Chopin and Scriabin Préludes, five Scarlatti Sonatas coupled with the Opus 39 Etudes Tableaux of Rachmaninoff, and a Schumann disc including the complete Novelettes of Opus 21—are available on the label AT (Annette Tangermann)/Berlin, at-label@gmx.de.

Sheppard has appeared on many national and international piano competition juries, and his students are laureates of numerous national and international competitions. A voracious reader, he is well known for his broad academic interests, particularly foreign languages.

For more information, go to [www.craigsheppard.net](http://www.craigsheppard.net)

MOSTLY BRAHMS continues:

February 9, 2011: Four Ballades, Opus 10  
Eight Klavierstücke, Opus 76  
Three Intermezzi, Opus 117  
Sonata #2 in F# minor, Opus 2

April 28, 2011: Variations on an Original Theme, Opus 21, #1  
Variations on a Hungarian Theme, Opus 21, #2  
Waltzes, Opus 39

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