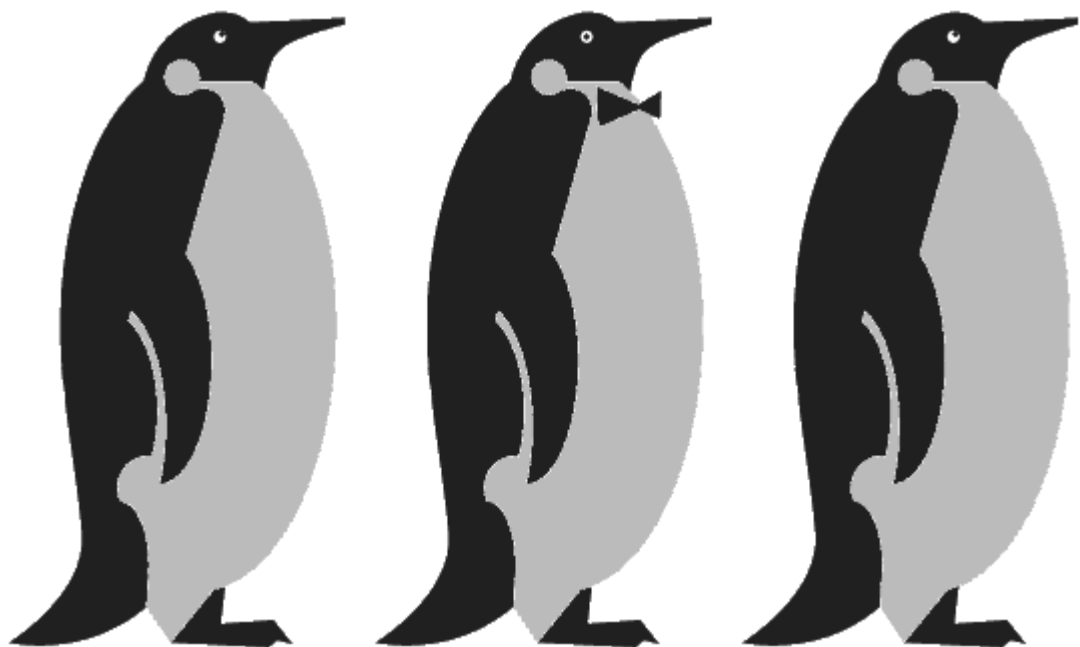


A piano recital by
Alexander Hanysz



Pilgrim Church
Sunday 10th August, 2014

Programme

Ballade in D minor, opus 10 no. 1

Brahms

Kreisleriana, opus 16

Schumann

1. Äußerst bewegt (extremely animated)
2. Sehr innig und nicht zu rasch (very inwardly and not too quickly)
3. Sehr aufgeregt (very agitated)
4. Sehr langsam (very slow)
5. Sehr lebhaft (very lively)
6. Sehr langsam (very slow)
7. Sehr rasch (very fast)
8. Schnell und spielend (fast and playful)

--- interval (approx 15 minutes) ---

Sonata in B minor, opus 1

Berg

Seven Fantasies, opus 116

Brahms

1. Capriccio in D minor
2. Intermezzo in A minor
3. Capriccio in G minor
4. Intermezzo in E
5. Intermezzo in E minor
6. Intermezzo in E
7. Capriccio in D minor

Piano pieces and poems

As a young child discovering classical music, I heard a lot about “the three Bs”—Bach, Beethoven and Brahms—three pillars of the classical music world. Later I discovered that classical music contained a lot more variety: Wikipedia currently has pages for around seven hundred “Bs”. For today's concert I have made a different selection of three Bs. Johannes Brahms (1833–1897) is still there, but he is joined by Alban Berg (1885–1935) and Robert (“Bob”) Schumann (1810–1856). I have chosen four works linked by a common thread of story-telling and fantasy.

The first Ballade is one of the few instrumental pieces by Brahms that is based on a specific story: in this case, Herder's translation of the traditional Scottish ballad “Edward”. The poem describes a mother asking her son why his sword is dripping with blood. After giving some evasive answers, he reveals that he has killed his father and intends to sail away across the sea.

Brahms was often typecast as a traditionalist: many of his pieces had abstract titles such as *Sonata* or *Symphony*, giving few clues as to their inner meaning. At a time when many other composers were writing works with poetic names, Brahms often looked distinctly old-fashioned; the drama of the Ballade

gives a hint of the rich imagination that lay just behind his conservative exterior.

Schumann on the other hand could never be mistaken for a traditionalist. As well as composing, he was a founder of and prolific writer for the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (New Journal of Music), promoting the new Romantic style of the early 19th century. His *Kreisleriana* is based on a character from the novels of E.T.A. Hoffmann. Johannes Kreisler is a Kapellmeister (musical director) and misunderstood genius. Each of the eight musical episodes depicts some aspect of Kreisler's life, work or imagination.

Berg's single-movement piano sonata, published in 1910, could be seen as either the end of an era or the beginning of a revolution. The style of the piano writing is dense, often with several strands of melody woven together, taking ideas of Brahms and pushing them to the limit. The chromatic harmonies point the way forward to the “twelve-tone” style of Schoenberg and others (or, alternatively, towards jazz). Although the sonata was published as abstract music, the emotional language and dramatic pacing are strongly reminiscent of Wagner's operas (although on a smaller scale), and we can imagine this music describing the passions and struggles of some larger-than-life characters.

Brahms's *Seven Fantasies* were written towards the end of his life: in fact, as part of his “come-back” after he had announced his retirement from composing. As with so much of his music, the titles of the individual pieces tell us little. But this was the only time in Brahms's long career that he used the word “Fantasy”—his other collections of piano music had such exciting descriptions as “Eight piano pieces opus 76” and “Six piano pieces opus 118”—so the name of the opus 116 collection suggests that he had something special in mind.

In general, the Romantic period in music was a reaction against the balance and restraint of Classical composers such as Mozart. It was a time when many artists treated emotion and drama as taking priority over form and structure, and where music, rather than being purely abstract, often referred to the natural (or supernatural) world. But the great composers are those who resist stereotypes, and it is fascinating to see how each of the works on today's program, in their own way, combines the wildness of the Romantic style with Classical ideals.

If you would like to be included on the mailing list to receive details of future concerts, please email your details to concerts@hanysz.net. Next year's concert may include music of Debussy, Szymanowski and Adelaide's own John Polglase. Then again, it may not. Let me know if you're keen to find out!

Alexander Hanysz enjoys a diverse career embracing many facets of the pianist's art—soloist, accompanist for singers and instrumentalists, chamber musician, repetiteur and orchestral pianist. He has performed throughout Australia, and recorded for ABC Classic FM and for MBS radio in several states. He has also appeared as soloist and chamber musician in the UK.

In Adelaide, Alexander has collaborated in concert with artists such as Thomas Edmonds, Elizabeth Campbell and Nicholas Milton, and was a repetiteur for Wagner's *Ring* cycle in 2004. He has a keen interest in contemporary music: he gave the South Australian premiere of John Adams' piano concerto with the Adelaide Art Orchestra, and has given world premieres of new works by Australian composers. His two piano arrangement of Carl Vine's piano concerto was published by Faber Music. Alexander is also one of the few Australian pianists to have performed Bach's complete *Well-Tempered Clavier*.

Alexander graduated with honours from the Flinders Street School of Music, and has participated in masterclasses with Jeremy Menuhin, Roy Howat, Michael Kieran Harvey and Leslie Howard. An Adelaide University medallist, his numerous prizes also include the Edith Leigh Piano Prize (Cambridge), the Geoffrey Parsons Award at the Barossa International Festival, and the Adelaide Eisteddfod concerto prize. He has twice appeared as a finalist in the Australian National Piano Award.

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