

The music

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart *Rondo in D major K485*
Sonata in F major K533/494
Twelve Variations K265

INTERVAL

Robert Schumann *Sonata no1 in F# minor op11*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) *Rondo in D major K485 (1786)*

The *D major Rondo*, written in 1786 at the same time as *Figaro*, is not really a rondo at all but a regular sonata movement based on a single theme. The theme is sprightly and moves around in different keys – predominantly upbeat; sometimes briefly in the minor – with the composer in highly playful mood. It’s deservedly one of Mozart’s most popular piano pieces.

Mozart *Sonata in F major K533/494 (1786/88)*

1 Allegro ~ 2 Andante ~ 3 Rondo: Allegretto

The sonata was published in 1790 but had been written earlier in two parts – the *Rondo* as a stand-alone piece in 1786 (*K494*) followed 18 months later by the other two movements. Before its publication as an integrated sonata, Mozart revised and extended the *Rondo*, among other things adding an elaborate cadenza.

The *Allegro’s* opening melody begins simply but is soon developed through counterpoint and intricate passagework, the composer seeming to take great delight in passing the material between right and left hands. Excursions are made into some unexpected harmonic areas and minor key passages briefly turn serious, but the movement ends in a straightforward, matter-of-fact way.

The other-worldly and hauntingly beautiful *Andante* is the emotional core of the piece. While venturing further into harmonic dissonance, the movement still maintains an underlying breadth and serenity. Almost a fantasy at times, not quite knowing where it’s going, by the end its feet have been placed gently back on the ground again.

After the deep introspection of the preceding movement, the *Rondo* risks appearing naïve. The material is simple – even

when moving into the minor – and remains so until a dramatic and concerto-like contrapuntal cadenza bursts out of nowhere and a trill leads into the original coda, concluding quietly in the lower register.

Mozart *Twelve Variations on ‘Ah, vous dirai-je maman’ K265 (1781/82)*

A relatively early work, the *K265 Variations* nevertheless display Mozart’s full technical artistry. The simple tune (better known to us as *Twinkle twinkle little star*) goes through all manner of ornamentation and changes to rhythm and harmony while remaining recognizably itself. Nearing the end, the 11th variation is spare – a slow minuet – and an effective contrast to the final virtuosic variation which closes the work with a flourish.

Robert Schumann (1810-1856) *Sonata no1 in F# minor op11 (1833-35)*

1 Introduzione: un poco adagio – Allegro vivace ~
2 Aria ~ 3 Scherzo e Intermezzo: Allegroissimo – Lento ~
4 Allegro un poco maestoso

In 1835 when Schumann’s first piano sonata was published, it had the rubric ‘Published anonymously, dedicated to Clara by Florestan and Eusebius’. Clara Wieck was 16 at the time and it would be five more years (on the day before her 21st birthday) before she and Robert were married. Nevertheless, he was thinking of her throughout the work’s composition. As he told Clara later, it was “a solitary outcry for you from my heart...in which your theme appears in every possible shape.”

The general public would of course have had no idea who Florestan and Eusebius were. Perhaps at that stage even Clara was unaware that they were the two contradictory aspects of his character to whom Schumann was fond of attributing his music – Florestan the man of action and Eusebius the melancholy dreamer.

The **first movement** *Introduzione* begins vigorously, calling on our attention and immediately introducing a sequence of falling fifths – the theme of Clara which “appears in every possible shape”. After this forceful beginning, a romantic flowing melody emerges which will turn out to be the theme of the second movement.

After a pause, the first movement proper (*Allegro vivace*) is a prime example of Florestan and Eusebius, not fighting it out on this occasion but making space for each other. Florestan

revels in the exciting Fandango rhythms previously used both by Robert in a composition of that name in 1831 and also by Clara in one of her own pieces – the two of them again united by the music – while Eusebius dreams on, also at times in falling fifths.

The **second movement** *Aria* is much briefer but supremely affecting – to Liszt it was “one of the most beautiful pages we know”. Marked *senza passione, ma espressivo*, it’s a quietly rapt few minutes. In Angela’s own words “like a vision that is far away...not quite tangible”.

The **Scherzo** couldn’t be more of a contrast. In Angela’s words again, “quite crazy”. It’s marked *allegroissimo* from the start and the first trio goes even faster. The second trio is in the shape of a burlesque polonaise and turmoil descends towards the end, the scherzo itself returning at the wrong pitch, before changing abruptly into the correct one. We remember that ‘scherzo’ also means ‘joke’.

The **final movement** is looser and more unstructured. It recaps the themes, rhythms and moods that have gone before, with the composer’s fictitious dual personalities competing for attention – Florestan powerful and domineering, Eusebius delicate and tender. The coda allows the performer free rein. It’s dramatic and arresting, ending this most underrated sonata triumphantly.

Notes by Dick Ware

The artist

Angela Hewitt *piano*

“Ms Hewitt is one of those rare musicians who seem to get something into their heads and hearts and find it at their fingertips instantaneously.” (*Bernard Holland, New York Times*)

One of the world’s leading concert pianists, **Angela Hewitt** appears in recital and as soloist with major orchestras throughout Europe, the Americas, Australia, and Asia. Her interpretations of the music of JS Bach have established her as one of the composer’s foremost interpreters of our time.

Born in 1958 into a musical family, Angela began her piano studies aged three, and it was her triumph in the 1985 Toronto International Bach Piano Competition, held in memory of Glenn Gould, that truly launched her international career.

Her subsequent award-winning cycle for *Hyperion* of all the major keyboard works of Bach has been described as “one of the record glories of our age” (*Sunday Times*). Her extensive discography includes solo recordings of the complete Beethoven Sonatas, plus works by Scarlatti, Handel, Couperin, Rameau, Haydn, Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, Fauré, Debussy, Chabrier, Ravel, Granados and Messiaen. She is now recording the complete Mozart Piano Sonatas.

Along with performing a vast amount of the standard repertoire, Angela has also commissioned new works including two piano concertos, one from Dominic Muldowney and the other from Canadian-Finnish composer Matthew Whittall. In 2010 she commissioned seven composers from around the world to write short pieces inspired by Bach which were published (along with several of her own Bach transcriptions) as ‘Angela Hewitt’s Bach Book’. Angela’s writings on music include all the liner notes for her CD recordings as well as book reviews for the *Times Literary Supplement*.

In 2006 Angela was awarded an OBE by Queen Elizabeth in her 80th birthday honours and, 16 years later, was invited to be the sole live performer in the two hours of music broadcast on *BBC Radio 3* immediately following the Queen’s funeral last September.

In 2015 Angela was promoted to a Companion of the Order of Canada – her country’s highest honour – and in 2018 received the Governor General’s Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2020 she was awarded both the City of Leipzig Bach Medal (the first woman in its 17-year history to receive the award), and the Wigmore Hall Gold Medal in recognition of some 80 performances over the past 35 years at that venue.

She is a member of the Royal Society of Canada, has seven honorary doctorates, and is a Visiting Fellow of Peterhouse College, Cambridge.

“The Canadian pianist is one of the reliably mesmerising musicians of the day. You sit entranced.... It would have been more accurate to say I was floating just below the ceiling.” (*Paul Driver, Sunday Times*)

angelahewitt.com

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The 2024 Little Missenden Festival will run from Friday 4th to Sunday 13th October.

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- Phone: 01494 958148 between 11am and 8pm

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- Email: contact@little-missenden.org

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Committee: Angela Bishop, Polly Buston, Martin Cunningham, John Glasson, Beth Neill, Liz Wager, Dick Wells, Rachel Wilcox

Programme Notes

ANGELA HEWITT

Mozart and Schumann



8pm, Friday October 6th, 2023
Little Missenden Church

63rd Little Missenden Festival