



# ASCENT

MATTHEW  
LIPMAN  
*VIOLA*

HENRY  
KRAMER  
*PIANO*

**CEDILLE**  
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# ASCENT

MATTHEW LIPMAN *VIOLA*  
HENRY KRAMER *PIANO*

## **YORK BOWEN (1884–1961)**

1 Phantasy for Viola and Piano, Op. 54 (14:36)

## **CLARICE ASSAD (b. 1978)**

Metamorfose\* (11:56)

2 I. Crisálidas (5:07)

3 II. Dança das Borboletas (6:47)

## **ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–1856)**

Märchenbilder, Op. 113 (14:57)

4 I. Nicht Schnell (3:20)

5 II. Lebhaft (3:51)

6 III. Rasch (2:34)

7 IV. Langsam, mit melancholischem Ausdruck (5:01)

## **GARTH KNOX (b. 1956)**

8 Fuga libre (8:40)

## **DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–1975)**

9 Improptu for Viola and Piano, Op. 33\* (1:56)

## **FRANZ WAXMAN (1906–1967)**

10 Carmen Fantasie\*\* (12:00)

TT: (64:37)

\*World Premiere Recording

\*\*First recording on viola

# PERSONAL NOTE

## MATTHEW LIPMAN

This album was made as an homage to my mother, Robin Lipman (12/21/1949 – 7/17/2014). She was one of the most generous, selfless, and empathetic people I have known. She had the innate ability to make everyone around her feel comfortable and valued, and she could light up the room in any situation with her larger than life personality. She was my best friend.

The creative process behind the music started when I asked the wonderful Clarice Assad to compose a fantasy piece for viola and piano as a tribute to my mother. The resulting *Metamorfose* is a poignant commentary on the grief process (part I) and letting go (part II — Dance of the Butterflies). It seemed fitting, therefore, to pair this musical focal point with other music enraptured by flights of fantasy: the *Schumann Fairy Tale Pictures* and *Bowen Phantasy* as heart-on-sleeve fantasias with deft character changes, the Knox *Fuga Libre* as a piece that literally flies free, the Shostakovich *Impromptu* that was

composed impetuously in one sitting, and the virtuosic Waxman *Carmen Fantasie*, originally a college project of mine, that embraces its larger than life personality. I wanted to title this personally meaningful album *Ascent* not only to describe the music it contains, but to allude generally to the upward movement that happens throughout life and after.

There are many complex moving parts to making an album, and I am so grateful for everyone who has been involved and supportive, especially Henry, Jim, Judy, Patrick, Julia, and Jeanne.

# PROGRAM NOTES

Notes by Patrick Castillo

## YORK BOWEN: PHANTASY FOR VIOLA AND PIANO, OP. 54

Known as “the English Rachmaninov,” York Bowen (1884–1961) ranked among the most celebrated English pianists and composers of his generation. As with Rachmaninov, Bowen’s compositional style was an unapologetic vestige of the Romantic era (and, indeed, indebted particularly to the Russian tradition); also like his Russian contemporary, Bowen’s posthumous legacy suffered from the datedness of his language against the backdrop of 20<sup>th</sup>-century modernism. Yet no less than Camille Saint-Saëns regarded Bowen as “the most remarkable of the young British composers,” and many of his works (notably his Third Symphony and Fourth Piano Concerto) received frequent performances during his lifetime. But while Rachmaninov’s reputation has been rehabilitated, Bowen, half a century hence, has yet to be recognized as among the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century’s master composers.

Bowen, like Rachmaninov, was equally accomplished as a pianist and composer. He gave the British premiere of Mozart’s Concerto in F Major for Three Pianos, K. 242, and the world premiere of William Walton’s Sinfonia concertante, and made the first recording of Beethoven’s Fourth Piano Concerto. (He was, moreover, proficient in numerous orchestral instruments, particularly the viola and horn — a facility evident in the idiomatic writing throughout his instrumental scores.) Bowen performed his own compositions with leading virtuosos of the day, including violinists Fritz Kreisler and Joseph Szigeti, and formed a duo with Lionel Tertis, widely hailed as the “father of modern viola.” Tertis inspired Bowen’s two Viola Sonatas, in C minor, Op. 18, and F major, Op. 22, both composed in 1905, and Viola Concerto in C minor, Op. 25, composed in 1908.

Alongside these, Bowen’s contributions to the viola literature include the Phantasy, Op. 54, composed in 1918 for a competition established by the amateur violinist and patron

Walter Willson Cobbett. The Cobbett competition, begun in 1905, invited “phantasies” — single-movement works comprising three or four sections of distinct rhythms and characters — for different instrumentations. Its winners over the years have included Frank Bridge (for his Phantasie Piano Trio of 1907), Herbert Howells, and John Ireland.

Bowen’s Phantasy obliges, condensing a three-movement sonata-like arc into one movement; at fifteen minutes, it is about half as long as each of his Viola Sonatas, but lacks nothing of those larger works’ textural variety and expressive dimension.

Following a ruminative introduction in which the opening section’s primary thematic material is introduced — uttered first by viola alone, *piano, dolce e poco espressivo*, then paced by soft, mysterious chords in the piano — the Phantasy quickly takes flight. The proceeding music bubbles with effervescent melody, dancing gleefully from the viola’s singing high range to its sonorous low register. As it unfolds, the Phantasy’s first section

juxtaposes the slow music of the introductory measures with its *Più allegro* transformation.

This music yields to the romantic *Poco adagio* middle section, in warm D-flat major. The viola, *pianississimo, con sordino*, croons a debonair melody, descendent from the work’s opening theme, and underpinned by a gently pulsating accompaniment in the piano. The Phantasy concludes with a well-caffeinated *Allegro vivo* section.

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## CLARICE ASSAD: METAMORFOSE

NOTE BY THE COMPOSER

When Matthew approached me to collaborate on a project, I immediately fell in love with him. There was something incredibly genuine about his personality, and I was mesmerized by his flawless virtuoso playing, besides being swept away by his musicality as a whole. He asked me if I could write a piece in memory of his mother; while I was beyond touched by the request, I also became really nervous at the thought that I might not do it justice, so I lived with this idea for a long time before writing down a single note. I wanted to learn more about him and their special relationship, and only time could afford me the opportunity to do this.

By the time I started writing *Metamorfose*, I had a good idea of the relationship between Matt and his mother: the sweet and bittersweet moments, the lingerings of pain still present in his voice when he

mentioned how much he missed her, and the long journey of recovery into the person he is today.

In my mind, the metaphor became clear in the beautiful and unexpectedly gruesome metamorphosis of a butterfly. When compared to the grieving process, in all its stages, it made so much sense to me. The story of emotional, physical loss and pain; the transition from something so excruciatingly difficult into the freedom that perhaps only acceptance can provide to so much of the suffering that takes place in the world.

So this is an homage to Matt and his mom, a musical portrait of two different people, in two different worlds and instances, bound by the passage of time and love. Thank you, Matt, from the bottom of my heart: for trusting me, and for the gorgeous rendition of the piece that you carefully elaborated with Henry Kramer.

## ROBERT SCHUMANN: *MÄRCHENBILDER*, OP. 113

When he was 18 years old, Robert Schumann (1810–1856) traveled to Leipzig to study with pianist Friedrich Wieck. He lodged in his teacher's home and developed a close friendship with Wieck's nine-year-old daughter, Clara, herself a gifted pianist. The friendship blossomed years later into Western classical music's most storied love affair. After a protracted legal battle with Clara's forbidding father, the two were married in 1840.

Within a few years of their marriage, Robert Schumann's physical and mental health began steadily to deteriorate. He battled bouts of depression, insomnia, and, eventually, psychosis. In February 1854, Schumann's mental state reached its nadir: after weeks of unbearable psychotic episodes, he threw himself into the Rhine, but was saved by passing fishermen. Following his suicide attempt, fearing he would inadvertently harm his wife and

children, Schumann entered a mental asylum near Bonn. He never saw his children again, and Clara was not permitted to see her husband until the day before he died in 1856.

Just as the hallmarks of Schumann's life thus encapsulate the popular notion of Romanticism — the embattled artist as hero of his own mythos — so does the essence of his compositional output. And while correlating art and biography generally makes for tenuous scholarship, in the case of Schumann, one feels that the tenderest melodies must indeed be heard as love songs to Clara, his muse; that contrasting humors are a dialogue between his alter egos, the extroverted Florestan and the introspective Eusebius; and that the ecstatic highs, piercing aches, and inconsolable despair that mark his greatest creative triumphs represent experiences felt in the depths of his soul.

Schumann originally envisioned a literary career, and maintained a second profession as a critic throughout his compositional life. His *Märchenbilder* (Fairy Tale Pictures),

# PROGRAM NOTES

Op. 113, composed in 1851, reflect his literary bent. A set of four miniatures scored for viola and piano (with an arrangement for violin and piano as well), the *Märchenbilder* likewise capture an essential part of the Romantic zeitgeist: its penchant for the dreamlike and fanciful. Its individual movements bear no specific titles or programs. Although Schumann toyed with other titles for the set, such as *Märchengeschichten* and *Märchenlieder* ("Fairy Tale Stories" or "Fairy Tale Songs"), "Fairy Tale Pictures" ultimately won out, suggesting that Schumann considered these pieces evocative, rather than narrative, in character.

The first of the *Märchenbilder*, set ruminatively in D minor, is brooding and evocative, its keening melody finding perfect voice in the viola's dusky timbre. The character changes dramatically in the second movement, marked *Lebhaft* (lively). A galloping dotted rhythm lends the movement its vitality; double-stopped chords in the viola further infuse the music with a sonic fieriness.

The third movement begins with restless triplet figurations in the viola, accompanied by decisive chords in the piano. An elegant middle passage, although less agitated, sacrifices nothing of the previous music's ardor.

Schumann assigns the finale the expressive tempo marking *Langsam, mit melancholischem Ausdruck* (Slowly, with a melancholy expression). This deeply felt conclusion to the *Märchenbilder* features melodic writing of heart-stopping beauty, one of Schumann's greatest assets. Here again (the composer's alternate version for violin notwithstanding) the viola's shadowy hue seems the ideal medium for the music's quietly penetrating beauty.



## GARTH KNOX: *FUGA LIBRE*

As violist of the Paris-based Ensemble InterContemporain from 1983 to 1990, and subsequently of the Arditti Quartet from 1990 to 1997, Garth Knox (b. 1956) has built a reputation as one of his instrument's leading proponents in the realm of contemporary music. Knox has collaborated with many of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early-21<sup>st</sup> centuries' leading composers, including Pierre Boulez, György Kurtág, György Ligeti, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and others.

Knox is likewise an accomplished composer in his own right. He is the author of *Viola Spaces*, a series of études that explore extended instrumental techniques; and his *Fuga libre*, composed in 2008 for the Tokyo International Viola Competition, reflects his dual interests in early and contemporary musical expression. It begins with chromatic, pseudo-Bachian fragments (indeed, the very endeavour of creating fugal music for a solo string instrument inevitably evokes Bach's Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin and Suites for Solo Cello), but promptly transfigures this

material through modern techniques: sul ponticello, harmonic glissandi, and other coloristic effects. Amplifying this duality between old and new, Knox included his *Fuga libre* on his album *Saltarello* (ECM, 2012) alongside arrangements of music for viola d'amore by Purcell, Vivaldi, John Dowland, and Hildegard von Bingen.

## DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH: IMPROMPTU, OP. 33

The Impromptu for viola and piano, Op. 33, by Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975) dates from 1931. Previously lost, the work was discovered in 2017 in the Moscow State Archives among the effects of Vadim Borisovsky, violist of the Beethoven Quartet, with whom Shostakovich enjoyed a fruitful partnership throughout his career. The manuscript, dated May 2, 1931, bears a dedication to “Alexander Mikhailovich” — presumably Alexander Mikhailovich Ryvkin, violist of the Glazunov Quartet. Experts surmise that Shostakovich penned the Impromptu in one sitting.

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It joins Shostakovich's final work, the considerably more substantial Viola Sonata, Op. 147 (1975), as the composer's only works for viola and piano.

Although petite, spanning just two minutes, the Impromptu nevertheless bears Shostakovich's unmistakable voice, from the plaintive opening melody, which takes a sardonic turn in just the fourth measure, to the devilish spiccato strokes of the brief concluding Allegro section.

## FRANZ WAXMAN: *CARMEN FANTASIE*

In 1929, the German film composer Friedrich Holländer happened upon the 23-year-old Franz Waxman (1906–1967) playing piano in a Berlin nightclub to support himself through his musical studies. The following year, Holländer invited Waxman to arrange and conduct his score to *The Blue Angel*, the film that launched Marlene Dietrich to international celebrity.

Waxman found his calling in film music. In 1934, he immigrated to the United States and settled in Los Angeles, where he rose to prominence as one of the quintessential composers of Hollywood's Golden Age. His first original film score, for *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), established a new standard for the horror movie genre, and his oeuvre of 144 film scores, including *Captains Courageous* (1937), *The Philadelphia Story*, *Rebecca* (1940), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1941), *The Nun's Story* (1959), and *Taras Bulba* (1962), defined the sound of a

cinematic era. He received twelve Academy Award nominations and won twice, for *Sunset Boulevard* in 1950 and *A Place in the Sun* in 1951.

Waxman was also active as a composer of concert music. His oeuvre includes *Joshua*, an oratorio composed in 1959, and the song cycle *The Song of Terezin*, his final work, composed in 1965. At the time of his death in 1967, Waxman had begun sketching an opera on *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

His work of most enduring popularity, the *Carmen Fantasie*, unites these two facets of Waxman's musical profile. A virtuoso showpiece for violin and orchestra based on themes from Bizet's *Carmen*, the work was originally composed for the 1947 film *Humoreske* (which garnered one of Waxman's dozen Oscar nominations), starring John Garfield and Joan Crawford, respectively, as a struggling young violinist and his older, wealthy patroness, who become romantically entangled. Jascha Heifetz was meant to play on the soundtrack, but when Warner Brothers balked at his contractual requirements, the 26-year-

old Isaac Stern was engaged instead. (In the film, Stern's hands can be seen in close-up shots.)

Waxman later reworked the *Carmen Fantasie* into a virtuoso showpiece for Heifetz, whose recording stands as one of the most beloved documents of the great virtuoso's art. It also remains Waxman's most beloved concert work, rife with irresistible melodies, animated by stunning instrumental pyrotechnics, and frequently appears in arrangements for various instruments, as on the present recording, adapted for viola and piano — a particularly appropriate adaptation given that the main role in the opera is sung by an "alto" voice.

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Patrick Castillo is the founding composer and Director of Third Sound and Executive Director of the contemporary music ensemble Hotel Elefant.

# BIOGRAPHIES

## MATTHEW LIPMAN

One of the world's leading young violists, 26-year-old American Matthew Lipman has been hailed by *The New York Times* for his "rich tone and elegant phrasing" and by the *Chicago Tribune* for his "splendid technique and musical sensitivity." The recipient of a prestigious 2015 Avery Fisher Career Grant, he has appeared as soloist with the Minnesota, Illinois Philharmonic, Grand Rapids Symphony, Wisconsin Chamber, Juilliard, Ars Viva Symphony, and Montgomery Symphony orchestras; with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in Alice Tully Hall; and in recital in Lincoln Center's Rose Studio, the WQXR Greene Space in New York City, and at the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC.

*Ascent* is Matthew Lipman's debut solo album. The *Telegraph* praised Lipman as "gifted with poise and a warmth of timbre" for his recording of Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante with violinist Rachel Barton Pine, the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, and Sir Neville Marriner (Ave), which topped the *Billboard* charts. He was the only violist

featured on WFMT Chicago's list of "30 Under 30" of the world's top classical musicians and has been profiled by *The Strad* and *BBC Music* magazines. Mr. Lipman performs internationally as a chamber musician with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and regularly at the Music@Menlo, Marlboro, Ravinia, Bridgehampton, Seattle, Cleveland, and White Nights festivals. A top prizewinner of the Primrose, Tertis, Washington, Johansen, and Stulberg International Viola Competitions, Lipman received his bachelor's and master's degrees as an inaugural Kovner fellow from The Juilliard School as a student of Heidi Castleman, and was further mentored by Tabea Zimmermann at the Kronberg Academy. A native of Chicago, Lipman is on faculty at Stony Brook University and performs on a fine 1700 Matteo Goffriller viola loaned through the generous support of the Rachel Barton Pine Foundation.

[www.matthew-lipman.com](http://www.matthew-lipman.com)

# HENRY KRAMER

Winner of the Second Prize at the 2016 Queen Elisabeth Competition and of the 2015 William Petschek Recital Debut Award from The Juilliard School, pianist Henry Kramer is establishing himself as one of the most exciting American musicians of his generation. His performances have been praised as "triumphant" and "thrilling" (*The New York Times*), and "technically effortless" (*La Presse*, Montreal). A Maine native, Mr. Kramer has also earned top prizes in the 2015 Honens International Piano Competition, 2011 Montreal International Music Competition, and 6<sup>th</sup> China Shanghai International Piano Competition. He was a laureate of the 2017 American Pianist Association Awards, a prizewinner in the 8<sup>th</sup> National Chopin Competition in Miami, and received the 2014 Harvard Musical Association Arthur Foote Award. He is also a winner of Astral's 2014 National Auditions.

Mr. Kramer has been invited to play with orchestras across the globe including the National Belgian Orchestra, Brussels Philharmonic,



*Photo: Kaupo Kikkas*

Calgary Philharmonic, Shanghai Philharmonic, Bilkent Symphony Orchestra in Ankara, Turkey, the Portland (Maine) Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre Métropolitain du Montreal, and the Yale Philharmonia. He has soloed under the batons of preeminent conductors Marin Alsop,

Jan Pascal Tortelier, and Stéphane Dénève. Mr. Kramer has been a guest performer in recitals at Portland Piano International (Oregon), The Cliburn Foundation, and the National Chopin Foundation in Miami and prominent venues such as Carnegie's Zankel and Weill Halls, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Queen Elizabeth Hall in Antwerp (Belgium), and BOZAR in Brussels. Deeply committed to the chamber music repertoire, he has been featured in performances at Lincoln Center and participated in the Steans Institute at the Ravinia Festival, La Jolla Music Society Summerfest, Music@Menlo's International Program, and the Verbier Festival Academy, where he was awarded the Tabor Prize in piano.

Mr. Kramer holds both a Master's and Bachelor's degree from The Juilliard School and an Artist Diploma from the Yale School of Music, where he received the Charles S. Miller Prize for the most outstanding first-year pianist. He currently holds the L. Rex Whiddon Distinguished Chair in Piano at Columbus State University Schwob School of Music in Georgia. His musical mentors have included Julian Martin, Robert McDonald, and Boris Berman. His first commercial recording, dedicated to Liszt oratorio transcriptions, was recently released on the NAXOS label.

[www.henrykramerpiano.com](http://www.henrykramerpiano.com)

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