

ROMANTIC MUSIC
FOR PIANO FOUR-HANDS

ELIZABETH BUCCHERI
RICHARD BOLDREY

piano duettists

Cedille FOUNDATION

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Georges Onslow (1784–1853)

Sonata No. 1 in E Minor, Op. 7 for Piano Four-Hands (19:13)

- 1 I. Allegro espressivo (6:43) 3 III. Finale: Agitato (5:18)
2 II. Romanza (7:11)

Max Reger (1873–1916): from Six Burlesques, Op. 58

- 4 No. 4 Schnell und grotesk (2:26)
5 No. 5 Äusserst schnell und flüchtig (2:38)
6 No. 6 So lebhaft und übermütig als nur möglich (1:28)

7 **Richard Wagner** (1813–1883): Polonaise in D Major (4:27)

8 **Franz Liszt** (1811–1886): Grand Valse di Bravura, Op. 6 (7:21)

Edvard Grieg (1843–1907): from Norwegian Dances, Op. 35

- 9 No. 2 Allegretto tranquillo e grazioso (2:05)
10 No. 3 Allegro moderato alla Marcia (2:08)

Mily Balakirev (1837–1910): Suite for Piano Four-Hands (13:21)

- 11 Polonaise (4:39) 13 Scherzo (5:05)
12 Chansonette (3:35)

Georges Onslow: Sonata No.2 in F Minor, Op. 22 (22:06)

- 14 I. Allegro moderato e patetico (8:20)
15 II. Minuetto (Moderato) (5:46)
16 III. Largo — Allegro espressivo (7:59)

TT: (76:26)

ROMANTIC MUSIC FOR PIANO FOUR-HANDS

Notes by Janice Marciano

The nineteenth century gave rise to an abundance of music for piano four-hands that included not only transcriptions and adaptations ranging from the Brandenburg Concertos to Stravinsky's *Fireworks* but also a large and at times highly masterful original repertory for the medium. If its beginnings a century and a half earlier were tenuous, we can attribute that to the impracticality of having 2 performers play on a small keyboard of limited range. The insurgence of four-hand literature in the nineteenth century, as with solo keyboard repertory, parallels the development of the instrument itself, especially with regard to range.

The manner of notating *Primo* and *Secundo* parts also underwent a gradual evolution. At first the concept of right hand playing treble clef and left hand bass was retained in the pairing of two grand staves. To avoid crossing hands between the players, however, the actual notation was often confined either to the treble staff for the *Primo* or the

bass staff for the *Secundo* leaving the two middle staves empty. By the time of J.C. Bach, the *Secundo* part was now notated on two staves in bass clef and, soon after, the *Primo* was likewise notated in treble.

The technique of writing for four hands required thinking in terms of twenty fingers disposed over the entire keyboard rather than joining two solo parts. For example, early works show frequent doubling of material two octaves apart. This gradually gave way first to a more sonorous combination of thirds and sixths, and later to a varied disposition of material with, perhaps, melody for the top *Primo* line, a stable, supportive bass for the low *Secundo* line, and different accompanying figures for the two inner lines. Early attempts at imitation also opened up later possibilities of more sophisticated double counterpoint, frequent examples of which are heard in the works of Brahms and Dvořák.

The first extant piano duets are by two Englishmen, Nicholas Carleton and Thomas Tomkins, and date from the first half of the seventeenth century. It would take another

100 years, however — when we meet the four-hand Sonatas by J.C. Bach (the London Bach who strongly influenced Mozart) — for there to be any real activity in the composition of music for piano duet. The first published work for the duet medium appeared in 1777: the Sonata in F Major from *Duets for Two Performers upon one Instrument* by English composer Charles Burney, who in his *Travels* gives an account of the young Mozart performing together with his sister Nannerl.

From these modest gestures (among others) the concept of four-hand playing and its literature was off to a healthy start. In a brief survey of the years that follow three points stand out as significant artistic achievements, interpretatively and structurally, for piano duet: Mozart, Schubert, and Brahms/Dvořák. The directions set by these men spurred a rich variety of material by other composers of both major and minor stature.

As early as 1765, before the Sonatas of J.C. Bach, the 9-year-old Mozart had written a sonata for four-hands. His other works

include a fantasy composed for mechanical organ and transcribed for four hands, a set of variations, and, most important, four mature sonatas, including the masterpiece in F Major, K. 497.

Beethoven appears to have found the genre of less interest. He did leave two sonatas, two sets of variations, and a set of marches, Op. 45, for piano duet. All but one of these works are confined to his early years of creativity (the Marches date from around the time of the *Eroica* Symphony) and generally reflect a lighter mood.

The largest output of four-hand literature comes from the prolific pen of Franz Schubert and includes overtures, dances, fantasies, rondos, variations, marches, sonatas, and other miscellaneous works. The Grand Duo in C, D. 812, so orchestral in nature, is thought to be an arrangement of an intended symphony. The Fantasy in F Minor, D. 940, is considered one of the pinnacles of the four-hand repertory. Walter Georgii, whose thorough study, *Klaviermusik*, may well be the definitive one-volume book on piano music, points to this (along with

Schubert's Wanderer Fantasy for solo piano) as the example of the true spirit of the Classic sonata captured by a Romantic figure.

Schumann's representative works are perhaps not among his best inspirations. Some of the material in the Polonaises, Op. 3, for duet, suggest that they were written as a study for the *Papillons*, Op. 2, for solo piano, both dating from his early years. The other four-hand pieces, *Pictures from the East*, *12 Four-hand Piano Pieces for Big & Small Children*, *Ballszenen*, and *Kinderball*, are products of Schumann's later years of illness which, though alive with inventive ideas, nevertheless reflect the decline that affected his composition.

The importance of sonata form as a structural element diminished by the mid 1800s. In the list of works by Schumann no sonatas for duet appear; the same is true for Brahms and Dvořák, both of whom concentrated their interests in dances. Dvořák, the Czech contemporary of Brahms, wrote several works for piano four-hands, in particular the two superb sets of Slavonic Dances and a group of highly poetic pieces entitled

Legends. Brahms's works include several sets of waltzes, originally written for four hands and later transcribed either for two hands (Op. 29) or for the addition of voices, as with the *Liebeslieder Waltzes*, Op. 52. His Hungarian Dances, perhaps more familiar in their orchestral version, were composed originally for four hands. Brahms also arranged the Schubert Waltzes for piano duet. This liberal attitude toward arrangements and rearrangements is in keeping with the social interest in informal music making common during the latter part of the 19th century.

Chopin's two works for duet, Mendelssohn's *Allegro Brillant*, which he performed with Clara Schumann, Weber's three sets of charming duet music, themes from which served as the basis for Hindemith's *Symphonic Metamorphoses* (1943), and the numerous duets of Reger give a fuller, though by no means complete, picture of the four-hand repertory.

While Balakirev, Grieg, Liszt, Onslow, Reger, and Wagner do not represent the major composers of this genre, each of their works brings interest and delight. Georges Onslow

is perhaps the least known of the composers presented here. An Englishman born in France, all of his nine known piano sonatas were composed before 1829. Two of these are for four hands: Op. 7 in E Minor and Op. 22 in F Minor. Typical of Onslow's style, the "Grand Sonata" in E Minor is a highly expressive work, unified and well developed with regard to harmonic and melodic structure.

"Like so many composers who have made a great name for themselves in their own country and not yet elsewhere, Reger is something of an acquired taste for foreigners who have the problem of seeking out a perspective that will show him in his best light. But he is an authentic composer whose music teems with ideas, harmonically, contrapuntally and pianistically."

— *The Piano Duet* by Ernest Lubin

Reger's four-hand works do show him at his best, the *Burlesques*, Op. 58 (1901) especially so. These virtuoso pieces, whose brevity tends to make one overlook their remarkable construction, are filled with interesting ideas imaginatively worked out. Reger exhib-

its some rare, typically Germanic humor in No. 6, where the familiar tune *Ach du lieber Augustin* plays a significant role, allowing the composer an opportunity for serious contrapuntal display in the lightest of contexts.

The Polonaise in D by Wagner is an interesting example of the great opera composer's early work. Composed in 1831, it offers little glimpse of the Wagner to come, looking back instead to the lightness and charm of Carl Maria von Weber.

Liszt wrote only one piece for piano four-hands, the *Fest-Polonaise*, on the occasion of the marriage of Princess Marie of Saxony. This exists in no other form. The *Grand Valse di Bravura*, Op. 6, on the other hand, was originally an early solo concert piece, and its four-hand arrangement leaves some doubt as to its origin. The waltz is Chopinesque in style, but its brilliant coda shifts rhythm, gaining dynamic intensity and momentum toward its close.

Grieg's *Norwegian Dances*, Op. 35 (1881) take their motives, as do many of his folk-inspired works, from the collection *Mountain Melodies*

compiled by Ludvig Lineman. The dances are examples of the *halling* or fling dance. These delightful pieces, which sound more effective in their original four-hand keyboard setting than in the popular orchestral versions (by Hans Sitt), show Grieg at his finest: he evokes magical landscapes through colorful pianistic touches and harmonic turns of extraordinary piquancy.

Balakirev, one of the Russian “Mighty Five,” is known particularly for his *Islamey* for solo piano. His four-hand Suite of 1908 is in three movements — Polonaise, Chansonette sans paroles, and Scherzo — and is his only work for piano duet (other than an arrangement of 30 folk songs originally composed for voice and piano).

The second of Onslow’s two four-hand sonatas dates from around 1820. Like its companion, it represents a high point of the piano duet repertory, typically melodious, well-constructed, and perfectly conceived for the medium. Onslow shares with Mendelssohn that sense of effortless writing in which we never feel the slightest hesitancy or lack of forward direction. Georgii rates

Onslow highly and singles out this sonata’s second movement as “a pearl... forerunner of those movements that Brahms favored as substitute for minuet or scherzo in his chamber and symphonic works.” What a pity that such a beautiful piece has fallen into obscurity.

Currently on the faculty of the Emma Willard School in Troy, NY, and director of the Music in Central Valley chamber music series, Janice Marciano is active as a piano soloist and chamber musician in the greater New York metropolitan area.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

ELIZABETH BUCCHERI, a native of South Carolina, received her Bachelor of Science degree in Music from Winthrop University, and her Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees, and Performers’ Certificate in Piano, all from the Eastman School of Music. While attending Eastman, she served as pianist for the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra and also performed and toured with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra.

Ms. Buccheri’s varied career as coach and accompanist has included twenty-eight seasons as accompanist for the Chicago Symphony Chorus under the direction of the legendary Margaret Hillis; pianist/coach for the opera companies of the Brevard (N.C.) Music Festival and Rochester’s Opera Under the Stars; accompanist/coach for conductors Sir Georg Solti, Claudio Abbado, Daniel Barenboim, Pierre Boulez, Zubin Mehta, Sir Andrew Davis, and Christoph Eschenbach; and, since 1987, assistant conductor at Lyric Opera of Chicago. An experienced recitalist, she has appeared in concert with singers Nicole Cabell, Elizabeth Futral, Susan Gra-

ham, Thomas Hampson, Pamela Hinchman, Susanne Mentzer, Patrice Michaels, Sherrill Milnes, Samuel Ramey, and William Warfield; with the Shanghai and Vermeer String Quartets; and with violinists Midori and Gil Shaham. These concerts have taken her to all parts of the United States and many countries in Europe. Buccheri has recorded extensively on the Sony, CRI, Boston, Albany, and Cedille labels and was responsible for musical preparation on London Records’ issues of Schönberg’s *Moses und Aron*, Wagner’s *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, and Verdi’s *Otello*, all with Sir Georg Solti conducting the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Chorus, and soloists. For this work, Elizabeth Buccheri became the first American musician to receive the Solti Foundation Award. During the 2004 and 2005 concert seasons, she assisted Maestro Pierre Boulez, the Cleveland Orchestra, Chorus, and soloists with preparations for performances at Severance Hall, Cleveland and Carnegie Hall, New York.

Ms. Buccheri is the founder and former music director of Chamber Music at North Park, and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree by North Park University in

May 2004. She joined the faculty of the Aspen Music Festival in June 2005 where she prepares performances of vocal works for Music Director David Zinman. A dedicated teacher, Buccheri has given master classes at the Juilliard School, the Eastman School of Music, the Aspen Music Festival, Lawrence Conservatory, and the music academies of Lithuania and Latvia. In fall 2000, Buccheri joined the faculty of Northwestern University's School of Music where she supervises the collaborative piano program.

Well known as a pianist, vocal coach, conductor, professor, and author, **RICHARD BOLDREY** has been a professional keyboard artist since his student days at the Chicago Musical College during the 1960s. While in school, he began a long tenure as a pianist for the Chicago Symphony Chorus, culminating in his becoming Assistant Conductor of the Chorus from 1972 to 1977. In 1964, he was pianist, organist, timpanist, and assistant conductor for the Robert Shaw Chorale on tours of the United States and South America. He has been a member of several chamber groups, including the Delft Trio, which performed at Carnegie Hall. In

1977, he soloed with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in three Bach Concertos under the baton of Carlo Maria Giulini. He was harpsichordist and organist with Chicago's acclaimed Music of the Baroque orchestra from 1977 to 1985. He has accompanied numerous singers in recital, including such world-renowned artists as Robert Merrill, June Anderson, and Grace Bumbry. He has accompanied violinists and cellists on tours of Europe, Central America, and South America. Locally, Mr. Boldrey currently serves as Music Director for Kol Zimrah (the Jewish Community Singers of Greater Chicago), and as Choir Director at Lakeside Congregation in Highland Park, Illinois.

Mr. Boldrey has been involved in the opera world for nearly thirty years, having reestablished the Opera Workshop program at North Park College in 1976. He was a member of the Lyric Opera of Chicago staff from 1981 to 1987 and again from 1993 to 2003, serving as pianist, backstage organist, coach, and Assistant Conductor. He was Assistant Conductor of Opera Midwest in Evanston, Illinois, from 1979 to 1981, and served as Maestro and assistant to Carlo Bergonzi at

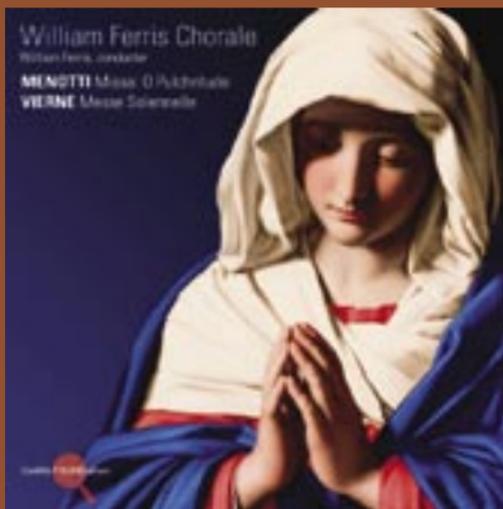
the Bel Canto Festival in Busseto, Italy, from 1983 through 1985. He co-directed the Bold Lion Center for the Performing Arts in Boulder, Colorado, from 1987 to 1992, was head of the Opera Department at the University of Illinois from 1989 to 1990, Music Director of the Colorado Lyric Theatre Festival in Boulder from 1989 to 1992, and Music Director of the Opera Department at the University of Colorado from 1990 to 1993. Mr. Boldrey also served as Music Director of Opera Southwest in Albuquerque, New Mexico, from 1991 to 1995, and was on the staff of the Voice and Opera Department at the University of Iowa from 1997 to 1999. He conducted several operas for L'Opera Piccola in Chicago from 2002 to 2007.

Mr. Boldrey was Music Editor of *Singers' Edition*, a multi-volume opera anthology published by Pst...Inc., which also published Mr. Boldrey's *Guide to Operatic Roles and Arias* and *Guide to Operatic Duets*. He has been a Professor at Northwestern University since 1995, where he coaches singers, teaches foreign language diction courses, and presents specialized courses in Recitative, Styles and Performance Practices, and the Vocal

Fach System. He has also been involved in Biblical studies for most of his life. His writings in this area include a textbook for New Testament Greek and several monographs, including *St. Paul: Chauvinist or Feminist?*

The **BUCCHERI / BOLDREY PIANO DUET** was formed at North Park University in Chicago during the early 1970s, when both were faculty members. Their many sold-out concerts at North Park launched the team into wider performance as they appeared regularly on "Live from WFMT" broadcasts and Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concerts in downtown Chicago. The team performed often in the greater midwest area and also in the American southeast. About the first original LP of *Romantic Music for Two Pianos* (containing the first Onslow Sonata and the works by Balakirev, Liszt, and Wagner) *Fanfare* magazine wrote, "This record is a winner.... Boldrey and Buccheri don't just play the notes. They enjoy the music, and convey that enjoyment tangibly.... This is one of those sleepers... every time you feel like some unalloyed enjoyment, you'll consider pulling this disc down and playing it."

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