

NAXOS

Johann Nepomuk
HUMMEL
Fantasies
Madoka Inui, Piano



Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837)

Fantasies

Johann Nepomuk Hummel was born in 1778 in Pressburg, the modern Bratislava, where his father, Josef Hummel, served as conductor at the theatre and as a military bandmaster. In 1786 the family moved to Vienna and Josef Hummel took there the position of conductor at the Theater auf der Wieden, managed by Emanuel Schikaneder, librettist of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and the first Papageno in 1791. Like his father, Johann Nepomuk had originally learned the violin, but in Pressburg his destiny as a pianist became apparent. In Vienna, at the age of eight, he played for Mozart, who for two years generously gave him free lessons and lodged him in his house, finally advising the boy's father to take his son on a concert tour of Europe.

After four celebrated years of travel in Bohemia, North Germany, Denmark, Scotland and London, Hummel and his father returned to Vienna, the French Revolution having prevented them from going to France and Spain. In Vienna he took lessons from Georg Albrechtsberger in counterpoint, and in aesthetics, the philosophy of music and musical dramatic technique from Salieri. He had already taken lessons with Clementi and Haydn in London. The latter recommended him as his successor at the head of the Esterházy musical establishment in Eisenstadt, and in 1803 Hummel took the nominal position of concertmaster, while Haydn retained his title as director for life. His employment there came to an end in 1811, as he gave more time to composition and began to neglect his duties as director of the orchestra. Recently discovered documents reveal, besides, the dissatisfaction of the Prince at the endless financial demands of his concertmaster.

Hummel had already given up his career as a virtuoso and intended to establish himself as a composer and teacher in Vienna. There he met the Burgtheater singer Elisabeth Röckel, sister of the tenor who had sung Florestan in the second version of Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*. They married in 1813, with Salieri as

their witness, although Beethoven had also shown interest in her. The daughter of a hosier from the Palatinate, she had made her début as a singer in 1810 at the age of seventeen. In three years she had made her name at second class German opera houses, as Donna Anna in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in Bamberg, where the conductor E.T.A. Hoffmann, a married man, but susceptible to young women, was so captivated by her as to make her the principal character in his erotic-decadent novel *Don Juan*. After their marriage Elisabeth Hummel took over the management of her husband's career, persuading him to resume his activity as a virtuoso pianist.

In 1819, after two unfortunate years as director of the opera in Stuttgart, Hummel became Archducal Kapellmeister in Weimar, a position he retained until his death. There he finally joined the freemasons, as his teacher Mozart and Haydn had done, an influence on his thinking since childhood. His brother and friend in the famous Amalia Lodge was Goethe, who wrote with him the song *Zur Logenfeier* (For a Lodge Festival), '*Lasst fahren hin das Allzuflüchtige*' (Let the all too fleeting journey there).

Hummel was a leading figure of his time. Beethoven wrote his *Hammerklavier Sonata* as a reaction to Hummel's *Sonata in F sharp minor* and the *Fantasia, Op. 77*, was very likely a response to Hummel's *Fantasia, Op. 18*, included here. For the young Hummel was a figure larger than life. Schubert's *Trout Quintet* was commissioned on the model of Hummel's quintet for the same instruments. The *Wanderer Fantasy* is evidently influenced by Hummel's *Op. 18*. Liszt valued him highly and saw to the erection of a Hummel monument, standing today in front of the German embassy in Bratislava. Chopin, who found fault with Schubert, Schumann and even Beethoven, put Hummel next to Mozart. As a young man Schumann had wanted to study with Hummel. A first letter with enclosed compositions remained unanswered, the

second brought a refusal together with the recommendation that he moderate and give some order to his creative chaos. Schumann was in a fever of excitement at the appearance of Hummel's *Ausführlich theoretisch-praktische Anweisung zum Piano-forte Spiel* (Comprehensive Theoretical and Practical Instruction in Piano Playing), and was not alone. The three-volume work was a best-seller of the day.

Whatever the character of his other works, Hummel's main piano compositions were revolutionary and in fantasias he was the ruling world master. His facility in improvisation rested on his own unrivalled technique. His book on piano-playing is the key to his work, with 2,200 examples for all imaginable eventualities, with new fingerings and treatment of tone colours that influenced later music. At the heart of Hummel's creative world is the Fantasia, the "peak and keystone of virtuoso performance". But his vast output, concertos and sonatas, Masses, operas, chamber music, and songs, includes only six piano fantasias. At first in his book he gave only one general page to the subject, but after protests from dealers and critics he extended this in the second edition to three. Yet here too there is found no real guidance: one must first imprint the theme on one's memory and not depart from it again too early on is the very limited advice given. Hummel was not going to share his artistic capital with anyone.

When his **Fantasia in E flat major, Op. 18**, was announced in 1805 in the Vienna press, Hummel was 27 and had been in the employ of Prince Esterházy for two years. Eight years his senior, Beethoven brought out his *Symphony No. 3* and *Appassionata Sonata*. The *Pastoral Symphony* and *Hammerklavier Sonata*, with which the first part of Hummel's *Op. 18* shows some association, date from 1808 and 1818 respectively. In 1805 Schubert was eight years old. Chopin and Schumann were born in 1810. The musicologist Helfried Edler identified in *Op. 18* the form of a grand sonata. The work is in three main sections, first the *Allegro con fuoco*, that develops from an introduction influenced by C. P. E. Bach to romantic storm music. Then an *Adagio*, suggesting the world of Chopin, and

the final *Allegro assai*, exciting and disruptive, pointing to the work as a companion to Schumann's *Kreisleriana* of 1838. The work also suggests Schubert, or is it the *Wanderer Fantasy* that rather suggests Hummel?

Only one year later, also while he was at Eisenstadt, came Hummel's **Rondo quasi una fantasia in E major, Op. 19**, a composition from quite another world, suggesting the musical language of Donizetti or Bellini, or the future work of Rossini. This may be attributed to the influence of Antonio Salieri, a composer, like Hummel, long undervalued, but today winning respect again, with whom Hummel had studied song-writing. The work is apparently dedicated to a young expert, a 'Madamigella Catrina Kozeluh' from the influential composer and publisher family in Vienna.

Fantasia: 'La contemplazione' in A flat major comes from the *Six Bagatelles, Op. 107*, from Hummel's years in Weimar, like the other works following here. Published in 1826 and dedicated to Princess Auguste of Weimar, it is the best known of the fantasias, recorded several times and serving as a successful example of Biedermeier tranquillity. Yet against that is the key of A flat major, identified by Daniel Christian Schubart with the grave, death, decay, judgement and eternity, and the ornamentation, bringing an uncomfortable tone to the idyll, a phenomenon noticeable also in *Op. 124*.

The **Fantasia in G minor, Op. 123**, brings a pleasant surprise. The title *Fantasia für das Pianoforte über beliebte Melodien von S. Neukomm und eigene Thema* (sic) (Fantasy for the Pianoforte on Favourite Melodies by S. Neukomm and an Original Theme) seems to promise nothing much, but the work is effective and invites further research. This concerns two lesser figures from the nineteenth century, the poet Barry Cornwall (1787-1874), originally Bryan Waller Procter, earned his living as a commissioner for the royal asylums. His *English Songs* are wildly late-romantic arrangements, mostly in fixed stereotypical forms, quite often unconsciously comic. The Salzburg composer Sigismund Ritter von Neukomm (1778-1858) was something of a musical globe-trotter, serving in St

Petersburg and Rio de Janeiro, spending most of his life in Paris and nearly ten years in England, where he set Cornwall's popular ballads by the dozen. Hummel made use of three of these, with an operatic introduction and a solemn march by himself. The first Cornwall poem is *The Hunter's Song*, with the words 'Rise, sleep no more! 'tis a noble morn', urging a young man to the hunt, ending in the death of the fox. The second song, *The Bloodhound*, suggests the world of the older, more cynical wanderer, as in Schubert's *Winterreise*, praising his last friend, the bloodhound Herod, after their adventures throughout the remoter parts of the world. The third song used is *The Roaming Mariners*, which opens 'When mariners chaunt their song on moonlight seas' (with the angry wives sitting at home alone). Some bars here recall Cornwall-Neukomm's *The Sea*, later used for the famous march *A Life on the Ocean Wave*.

The **Fantasia in C major on 'Non più andrai'**, **Op. 124**, was written in 1833. The aria from Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* finds Figaro making fun of the page Cherubino, sent away by his master, the Count, to serve in the army. In his book Hummel distinguishes between free fantasia and improvisation on a well-known theme. The *Fantasia* is an example of the second, in the form of a prelude on the famous melody.

The fantasy without opus number **Recollections of Paganini**, in C major, appeared in 1832. Hummel, among other things, makes use of Paganini's *Caprice No. 9* and of the *Rondo* from his *Violin Concerto in B minor, La campanella*, popularised further, nineteen years later, by Liszt. Paganini made his debut in Vienna in 1828, since when his melodies had become common currency. Hummel's fantasy, however, comes from his tour of England in 1831 and is dedicated to the Hon. Mrs Thomas Bladen Capel, the wife of a hero of Trafalgar, for her own use. The work also makes use of Paganini's *Caprice No. 11*, the *Minuet* from *Guitar Quartet No. 7*, and the *Rondos* from the first two *Violin Concertos*.

The London journey of 1831 marked the climax of Hummel's fame. A further tour in 1833 was less successful, suggesting that he had outlived his reputation, now a figure from the past. Schumann's two literary personae, Eusebius and Florestan, were divided over him between admiration and disdain. In his last years Hummel suffered from dropsy. He died on 17th October 1837 in Weimar, outlived for 46 years by his wife.

Heinz Sichrovsky

*English version translated
and abridged by Keith Anderson*

Madoka Inui

Born in the Japanese city of Kobe, Madoka Inui had her first training as a pianist in Tokyo, followed by study at the Vienna Conservatory with Dianko Iliev and Roland Batik, and graduation with distinction. She triumphed in the Città di Stresa International Piano Competition, making her début as a soloist in Austria, Japan, and Spain. Since 1997 she has been very active in chamber music, particularly with members of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. She has appeared in concerts and recordings for ORF, and in literary-musical projects, with Gert Voss, Ignaz Kirchner, Helmuth Lohner, and Otto Schenk, among others. She has collaborated in literary-musical matinées with Salman Rushdie, Umberto Eco, Antonio Lobo Antunes, Paulo Coelho, Donna Leon, Robert Menasse, and Gerhard Roth. Her recordings include the *Cello Sonatas* of Brahms and Richard Strauss with Franz Bartolomey, and for Naxos *The Art of the Clarinet* with Peter Schmidl (8.557232), *The Art of the Vienna Horn* with Wolfgang Tomböck (8.557471), *The Art of the Viola* with Heinrich Koll (8.557606), and *The Art of the Cello* with Franz Bartolomey (8.557708). Madoka Inui plays a Bösendorfer Imperial Concert Grand.

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Johann Nepomuk Hummel was considered one of Europe's finest pianist-composers and improvisers, much admired by his contemporaries including Beethoven and Liszt. His piano compositions were revolutionary and his book on piano-playing contains no fewer than 2,200 examples for all imaginable eventualities, with new fingerings and treatment of tone colours that were to influence later music. The *Fantasia, Op. 18* is nothing less than a grand sonata, which anticipates the works of Chopin, Schumann and Schubert, while the *Rondo quasi una fantasia in E major, Op. 19* suggests the musical language of Donizetti or Bellini, as well as late Rossini. The *Fantasia Op. 123* here receives its world première recording.

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HUMMEL**
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ORF

Fantasies

Fantasia in G minor, Op. 123*	12:16	10	Rondo quasi una fantasia in E major, Op. 19	8:24
1 Introduzione	1:12	11	'La contemplazione' in A flat major from Six Bagatelles, Op. 107	9:01
2 The Hunter's Song	2:21		Fantasia 'Recollections of Paganini'	9:48
3 Marcia	2:56	12	Caprice	3:23
4 The Bloodhound	2:45	13	Quartetto	3:05
5 The Roaming Mariners	3:03	14	Rondo	1:40
Fantasia in E flat major, Op. 18	23:24	15	Campanella	1:40
6 Lento - Allegro con fuoco	8:06	16	Fantasia in C major on 'Non più andrai', Op. 124	5:44
7 Larghetto e cantabile	8:37			
8 Allegro assai	4:26			
9 Presto	2:14			

Madoka Inui, Piano

***World première recording**

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Producer: Alfred Treiber, ORF • Recording supervisor: Matthias Fletzberger

Sound engineer: Wolfgang Fahrner • Editor: Otmar Bergsmann

Tuning: Gerald Stremnitzer (Bösendorfer) • Booklet notes: Heinz Sichrovsky

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