



Adam Golka

SCHUMANN

Piano Sonata No. 1 in F sharp minor

An Anna II • Des Abends • Der schwere Abend • Abendlied

with **Lauren Eberwein** *soprano*

SCHUMANN: Piano Sonata No. 1 and other works

Schumann's reputation as a composer for the piano rests today mainly on works that are solely collections of short pieces, particularly *Carnaval, Op. 9, Papillons, Op. 2, Humoreske, Op. 20, Fantasiestücke, Op. 12, Etudes Symphoniques, Op. 13* and *Davidsbundlertanze, Op. 6*. Indeed, apart from the *Piano Concerto* and the three piano sonatas his entire output for solo piano falls into this category with the *Fantasie, Op. 17* being in effect, a three movement sonata.

It would appear that he worked on all three piano sonatas in 1835 when he was twenty-five. Interestingly, his friend and contemporary Chopin also wrote three works in this form. Chopin himself stated that his *B flat minor Sonata, Op. 35* was a collection of orphans brought together to form a sonata, the third movement of which was written in 1837. Both composers were working under the formidable shadow of Beethoven who had only died seven years before and whose later piano sonatas pushed the boundaries of form and structure. Prior to this Mendelssohn had written a piano sonata in E major in 1825, but an earlier one, in G minor from 1821, and another in B flat from 1827, were not published until after his death. Schumann probably based his form on Mendelssohn resulting in a four movement work following the model of the symphony and string quartet of the era.

Schumann titled his first published effort in this form as *Grosse Sonate* ('*Grand Sonata*') while the third, *Op. 14*, had the

subtitle *Concerto without Orchestra*. The *Second Sonata, Op. 22*, was published after the third hence the later opus number. At his wife's request he replaced the last movement of this with an easier alternative, and the original *Presto passionato* is sometimes performed alone or reinstated in its original place. Schumann commenced work on his *Grosse Sonate* at the age of twenty-four, while he was engaged to the 16-year old Ernestine von Fricken. He dropped her, because she turned out to be illegitimate and had no dowry, and took up with the 15-year old Clara Wieck.

Schumann chose the fairly unusual key of F sharp minor for his first sonata. There are few others from the nineteenth century in this key although the great *Adagio* from Beethoven's *Hammerklavier Sonata* comes to mind. However, a work that Schumann had tried to master himself when he had considered a career as pianist was the *Grosse Sonate in F sharp minor, Op. 81* by Hummel written in 1819 – a three movement work containing a *Largo con molt'espressione* and a third movement that has the character of Schumann's first movement *Allegro vivace*. Schumann's work opens with the uncommon tempo marking of *Un poco adagio*, not an easy marking to interpret, yet it alludes more to the character than the actual tempo. Schumann indicates that this opening is an introduction (*Introduzione*). It is a song without words, a strongly dotted, bold, darkly brooding dramatic melody over a triplet figure accompaniment. Perhaps Alexander Scriabin

had this in mind when he came to write his *Piano Sonata No. 3 in F sharp minor* more than sixty years later. The mood is of a declamatory improvisation, but at bar 22, Schumann introduces a quote from the second movement *Aria* – an unusual preview planted in the subconscious of the listener. The sense of restlessness continues into the following *Allegro vivace* which is based on an early *Fandango* Schumann wrote in 1832. The tonic-dominant left hand figure apparently was taken from a work by Clara Wieck, her *Scène fantastique: Le Ballet des Revenants* from the *4 Pièces caractéristiques, Op. 5* written in 1835.

In 1828 when Schumann was eighteen, he had set a poem, *An Anna*, by Justinus Kerner, but it was not published until 1893 when Brahms issued the collected edition of Schumann's works. It was this melody that Schumann used for the *Aria* movement of his *Sonata*, transposed from F major to A major. When Franz Liszt reviewed the *Sonata* for the *Gazette Musicale* in 1837, he wrote that it is 'one of the most beautiful pages we know, and in spite of its indication 'senza passione', it is in fact a song of great passion, expressed with a fullness and calm.' The mood is of a chaste calmness hence the indication *senza passione*. In 1884 when Anton Rubinstein gave his series of Historical Recitals in Vienna one whole mammoth programme was devoted to Schumann: the *Fantasia, Op. 17*, *Etudes Symphoniques, Op. 13*, *Carnaval, Op. 9*, *Kreisleriana, Op. 16* and the *F sharp minor Piano Sonata, Op. 11*. Critic Eduard Hanslick wrote that Rubinstein's interpretation of the *Aria* from the *Sonata* 'was ideally beautiful – an incomparably



Robert Schumann, 1839.
Lithograph by Josef Kriehuber



transfigured image’.

The *Scherzo* is full of Schumann’s favourite dotted rhythmic figures (including rests) punctuated by an *Intermezzo in D major* marked *alla burla, ma pomposo* and ending with a comical recitative. Adam Golka, the pianist on this recording, has described his understanding and interpretation of this particular passage below. The final movement, a sonata-rondo, is more orchestral in its writing but typically Schumannesque with quick changes of mood and a conclusion brimming with exuberance. The work was completed in August 1835 and sent to Clara in May 1836 and published with the dedication ‘To Clara, from Florestan and Eusebius’, the two sides of Schumann’s personality.

As mentioned above, the song on which the slow movement of the *Sonata* was based was an early work which Schumann did not publish in his lifetime. It tells of Andreas, dying on the battlefield and sending his last greetings to his love, Anna.

Schumann wrote his *12 Klavierstücke für kleine und grosse Kinder, Op. 85* in 1849. These piano duets are of moderate difficulty but contain some sublime music as in *No. 12, Abenlied* (‘*Evening Song*’) arranged for piano solo by Adam Golka. Pianist and composer Joachim Raff made his own ‘concert-paraphrase’ in 1866 while Saint-Saëns made an arrangement for orchestra and a version for two hands in 1872. Later, Claude Debussy wrote a two-hand version of *No. 9, Am Springbrunnen*. Schumann’s 6

Gedichte und Requiem (‘*6 Songs and Requiem*’) were written in 1850 and are settings of poems by Nikolaus Lenau (1802-1850) who was also the inspiration for Liszt’s *Mephisto Waltz No. 1* and Richard Strauss’ *Don Juan*. The sixth from the set, *Der schwere Abend* (‘*The Oppressive Evening*’), joins *Des Abends* from *Fantasiestücke, Op. 12* here as three pieces inspired by evening.

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Recording Schumann

Schumann’s *Grosse Sonate in F sharp minor* is a work I studied on and off for three years before feeling that I could bring it to the concert stage. Its turbulence, languor, volatility, and repetitive ruthlessness are just some of the qualities that make it dangerously irresistible to me. It also is exhausting and confusing to play, leaving me with endless interpretive questions. Take the last movement: the *Finale* is a mysterious labyrinth of extreme emotions that both listener and performer can get lost in. Maybe Schumann himself was lost in it, which is possibly why the only means of escape he saw is the desperate and ecstatic surge with which the work ends.

For me this sonata inhabits the world of Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler from ETA Hoffman’s strange and grotesquely comical novel *The Life of Tomcat Murr*. The character Kreisler was the inspiration and namesake of Schumann’s great piano-cycle *Kreisleriana*, and one could certainly wonder if Schumann’s inspiration from Hoffman could have been present

in the *F sharp Sonata* as well.

Its emotional narrative undoubtedly takes place in the shadows of night. I like to think the setting could even be the haunted gardens of Sieghartsweiler, the novel's weird kingdom, where Kreisler is tormented by grueling apparitions and suffering from his deep longings for the young beauties of the court. The galloping rhythms of the *Allegro vivace* evoke a horseback pursuit.

The most puzzling moment of the *Sonata* is the *Intermezzo* of the *Scherzo*, marked *alla burla* – “like a farce”. In my imagination, the Kapellmeister stumbles upon the mad Prince Irenaeus playing with his collection of dolls (I highly recommend reading the novel), who in this case are dancing a dignified Polonaise. Kreisler is kind to respect the bizarre ritual for a few moments before dashing off back into the *Scherzo*'s otherwise fugitive state. It's the only way I have been able to justify this strange musical episode to myself.

The *Aria* movement is an echo (almost bar-by-bar) of Schumann's earlier song *An Anna II* – itself an enigma, which is why I felt it necessary to begin the album with this beautiful song. *An Anna II*, which already makes an appearance in the introduction of the *Sonata*, speaks of a wounded soldier who expresses his thanks to life in a morbid delirium. I haven't been able to figure out who Anna is, but perhaps this mystery Anna is waiting, in vain, for the homecoming of her soldier sweetheart. Part of my interpretation of this music came from

an insight I had reading *War and Peace* – there is a passage in which Prince Andrei experiences a new dimension of life after being wounded in battle, and somehow I find it connected in spirit to this song.

Last year, I came across the *Abendlied* (“*Evening Song*”) from *12 Klavierstücke für kleine und große Kinder, Op. 85* (“*12 pieces for big and small children*”) for piano four-hands while sight-reading with a friend. It is a piece which stops all time, and it hit me hard when I first laid my hands on it. I performed it soon after and went on to experiment on how I could reduce the original three-hand writing of the composition to two-hands without losing the sense of contrast between its elements. I thought it makes a great compliment to my old friend *Des Abends* (“*Of an Evening*”), which also breathes Schumann's nostalgic dream world of D flat major.

Lauren Eberwein and I chose *Der schwere Abend* (“*The Oppressive Evening*”), as a dramatic contrast to the other two evening pieces, since the brooding nature of this song creates an interesting triptych when placed between the serenity of the two piano pieces. Lauren and I first met and collaborated at the Marlboro Festival. She is an artist who gives her all to what she does and it's an indescribable joy to make music with her.

It was a fascinating experience recording with the guidance of my buddies Michael Brown and Roman Rabinovich. We shared a venue and Hamburg Steinway D piano “Chantal,” owned and exquisitely prepared by our dear friend Tali Mahanor. We spent



long hours together last October, each recording our own album while constantly borrowing each other's ears for advice. Unless we were napping or fetching lunch, there were always two of us listening in the production room behind acclaimed recording engineer Leszek Wójcik. There is nothing quite like having a fresh perspective and insights from musicians you admire and people you love. We were tough on each other but we had lots of good laughs, too. I highly recommend checking out their recordings which I proudly co-produced.

Throughout this project, it was never far from my mind that Schumann was the favourite composer of my beloved late teacher, José Feghali. *Des Abends* is a piece I will never be able to dissociate from him. The first time I ever heard it played was by him, and no other performance has ever come close to my memory of his stunning interpretations. He never failed to give me absolute hell when I played it to him, and I obsessed about it endlessly as a teenager in hopes of gaining his approval. I picked this piece to play for his memorial service in January 2015.

This album is dedicated to José. He was the producer of my previous album, of Beethoven and Brahms, also released by First Hand Records [FHR33], and it was hard to record without him this time.

Adam Golka, 2017

Polish-American pianist **Adam Golka** was recently selected by Sir Andrés Schiff to perform recitals at the Klavier-Festival Ruhr in Germany, Tonhalle Zürich, as well as in Berlin and New York

(organised by the 92nd Street Y). Adam has been regularly on the concert stage since the age of sixteen, when he won first prize at the 2nd China Shanghai International Piano Competition. He has also received the Gilmore Young Artist Award and the Max I. Allen Classical Fellowship Award from the American Pianists Association.

With his extensive concerto repertoire, Golka has appeared as a soloist with dozens of orchestras, including the BBC Scottish, Atlanta, Houston, Dallas, Indianapolis, New Jersey, Milwaukee, Phoenix, San Diego, Fort Worth, Vancouver, Seattle, and Jacksonville symphonies, the Grand Teton Festival Orchestra, the National Arts Centre Orchestra of Ottawa, the Sinfonia Varsovia, the Shanghai Philharmonic, the Warsaw Philharmonic, and the Teresa Carreño Youth Orchestra of Venezuela. Adam made his Carnegie Hall Isaac Stern Auditorium Debut in 2010, performing Rachmaninov's *Third Concerto* with the New York Youth Symphony.

As a recitalist and chamber musician, he has performed at excellent venues such as the Konzerthaus Berlin's Kleiner Saal, Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall in New York (presented by the Musicians Emergency Fund), The Concertgebouw's Kleine Zaal, and Musashino Civic Cultural Hall in Tokyo, and at festivals such as Marlboro, Krzyżowa-Music, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Caramoor, Ravinia, Music@Menlo, Mostly Mozart, Minnesota Beethoven Festival, the Gilmore Keyboard Festival, the Ravinia Festival, the New York City International Keyboard Festival, the Newport Music Festival, and the Duszniki Chopin Festival.





His début disc, featuring the *First Sonata* of Brahms and the *Hammerklavier Sonata* of Beethoven, was released in 2014 by First Hand Records [FHR33].

As a child, Adam studied with his mother, Anna Golka, as well

as with Dariusz Pawlas. For most of his teenage years and as a young adult, Adam studied with the late José Feghali, whom he considers his most significant influence. Adam also spent four years at the Peabody Conservatory studying with Leon Fleisher. Since finishing his official studies, Adam has continued

his work with great musicians such as Alfred Brendel, Richard Goode, Mitsuko Uchida, Murray Perahia, Ferenc Rados, Rita Wagner, and András Schiff.

Since 2014, Adam Golka has enjoyed being Artist-in-Residence at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Soprano, **Lauren Eberwein**, is known for her ‘soulful and engrossing depth of tone’ (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*). She is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music and was an Emerging Artist with Opera Philadelphia. She is currently a member of The Canadian Opera Company’s Ensemble Studio; Lauren is the recipient of a 2016 Sullivan Foundation Career Development Grant.

An avid chamber musician, Lauren is a proud member of Philadelphia based Gamut Bach Ensemble, and is a Junior Fellow at the Marlboro Music Festival. Lauren and Adam Golka met at the Marlboro Music festival, and have been joyously collaborating ever since.

Last season Lauren made her Carnegie Hall debut, singing Handel’s *Israel in Egypt* with the New York Choral Society. She also made her Canadian Opera Company début, singing the role of Wellgunde in Wagner’s *Götterdämmerung*, and was presented in recital by The Musician’s Emergency Fund, at Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center, singing songs of Liszt with pianists Adam Golka and Orion Weiss. This season Lauren performs the roles of Gianetta in *L’elisir d’amore* and Countess Ceprano

in *Rigoletto* with the Canadian Opera Company.

Her previous operatic credits include Olivia in *Cold in Mountain*; Mère Marie in *Dialogues des Carmelites*; Clairon in *Capriccio*; Der Komponist in *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Opera Philadelphia); Dido in *Dido and Aeneas*; Der Trommler in *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* (Curtis Opera Theatre).



Lauren Eberwein

1 An Anna II ('To Anna II')

[4:26]

(Justinus Andreas Christian Kerner, 1786-1862)

*Nicht im Tale der süßen Heimat,
Beim Gemurmel der Silberquelle –
Bleich getragen aus dem Schlachtfeld
Denk' ich dein, du süßes Leben!*

*Not in the valley of my sweet homeland,
by the murmur of the silver brook –
Carried bleached from the battlefield
I think of you, my sweet life!*

*All die Freunde sind gefallen,
Sollt' ich weilen hier der eine?
Nein! schon naht der bleiche Bote,
Der mich leitet zur süßen Heimat.*

*All my friends have fallen,
Shall I remain here alone?
No! The pale messenger,
leads me to my sweet homeland.*

*Flecht ins Haar den Kranz der Hochzeit,
Halt bereit die Brautgewande
Und die vollen, duft'gen Schalen:
Denn wir kehren alle wieder
In das Tal der süßen Heimat.*

*Braid into your hair the wedding wreath,
Ready the wedding dress,
and the full, fragrant shells:
for we all return
to the valley of the sweet homeland.*

8 6 Gedichte und Requiem ('6 Poems and Requiem'), Op. 90:

[2:58]

No. 6, Der schwere Abend ('The Oppressive Evening')

(Nikolaus Lenau, 1802-1850)

*Die dunklen Wolken hingen
Herab so bang und schwer,
Wir beide traurig gingen
Im Garten hin und her.*

*The dark clouds hung
Down so harsh and heavy,
We both went sadly
In the garden back and forth.*

*Not in the valley of my sweet homeland,
by the murmur of the silver brook –
Carried bleached from the battlefield
I think of you, my sweet life!*

*So heiß und stumm, so trübe
Und sternlos war die Nacht,
So ganz wie unsre Liebe
Zu Tränen nur gemacht.*

*All my friends have fallen,
Shall I remain here alone?
No! The pale messenger,
leads me to my sweet homeland.*

*Und als ich mußte scheiden
Und gute Nacht dir bot,
Wünscht' ich bekümmert beiden
Im Herzen uns den Tod.*

*Braid into your hair the wedding wreath,
Ready the wedding dress,
and the full, fragrant shells:
for we all return
to the valley of the sweet homeland.*

Photos:

Album cover by Juergen Frank

Lauren Eberwein by Andrew Bogard

Page 6 by Geert Maciejewski

Page 8-9 video stills from the recording session

Page 14 by Shao-Ting Sun

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FHR thanks Peter Bromley, Adam Golka and Jonathan Summers



Tali Mahanor, Leszek Wójcik, Roman Rabinovich, Adam Golka, Lauren Eberwein and Michael Brown, taken during the recording session

Also on FHR



BRAHMS *Piano Sonata No. 1, Op. 1*
BEETHOVEN *Piano Sonata No. 29, Op. 106, 'Hammerklavier'*
[FHR33]

"Golka's well-oiled fingers navigate Beethoven's first-movement provocations fluently, with amazingly even trills to boot..." (Gramophone)

"Golka plays with a fine sense of line and a good legato... this is a distinguished debut CD..." (Fanfare)

Robert SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

- | | | |
|---|---|----------------|
| 1 | An Anna II * | [3:13] |
| | Piano Sonata No. 1 in F sharp minor, Op. 11, 'Grosse Sonate' | [37:01] |
| 2 | Ia. Introduzione: Un poco adagio | [2:50] |
| 3 | Ib. Introduzione: Allegro vivace – Più lento | [11:41] |
| 4 | II. Aria | [3:38] |
| 5 | III. Scherzo: Allegrissimo – Intermezzo: Lento | [5:41] |
| 6 | IV. Finale: Allegro un poco maestoso – Più allegro | [13:05] |
| 7 | Fantasiestücke, Op. 12, No. 1, Des Abends: Sehr innig und spielend | [4:34] |
| 8 | 6 Gedichte und Requiem, Op. 90, No. 6, Der schwere Abend * | [2:54] |
| 9 | 12 Klavierstücke, Op. 85, No. 12, Abendlied (arr. Adam Golka) | [3:49] |

Total Timing: **[51:34]**

Adam Golka *piano*
*with Lauren Eberwein soprano **

Recorded at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York City, USA, 24-30 October 2016

Produced by Roman Rabinovich and Michael Brown

Engineered by Leszek Wójcik assisted by Noriko Okabe and Shao-Ting Sun

Edited by Leszek Wójcik • Mastering and artwork by David Murphy

24bit, 88.2kHz hi-resolution recording and mastering

Piano: Steinway Model D, Chantal, CD 187, serial #594337

Piano tuned and voiced by Tali Mahanor

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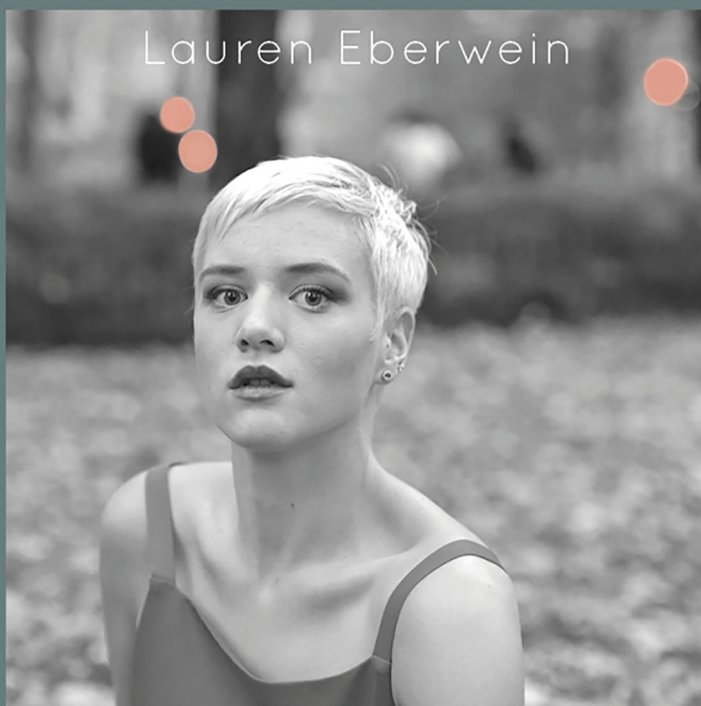
SCHUMANN

FHR62
STEREO • DDD
TOTAL TIMING 55:38

Adam Golka *piano*
with Lauren Eberwein *soprano* *

Robert SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

- | | | |
|---|--|---------|
| 1 | An Anna II * | [3:13] |
| 2 | 6 Piano Sonata No. 1 in F sharp minor, Op. 11, 'Grosse Sonate' | [40:40] |
| 7 | Fantasiestücke, Op. 12, No. 1, Des Abends: Sehr innig und spielend | [4:35] |
| 8 | 6 Gedichte und Requiem, Op. 90, No. 6, Der schwere Abend * | [2:58] |
| 9 | 12 Klavierstücke, Op. 85, No. 12, Abendlied (arr. Adam Golka) | [3:48] |



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Album cover photo taken by Juergen Frank

Photos of Lauren Eberwein by Andrew Bogard

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