



THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

BENEDETTO LUPO, piano

Wednesday, February 10, 1988

8:00 pm

Gartner Auditorium

Three Romances, Op. 28
Sehr markiert
Einfach
Sehr markiert—Intermezzo I: Presto—
Intermezzo II: Etwas langsamer—Wie vorher

Robert Schumann
1810-1856

Sonata No. 2 in G minor, Op. 22
So rasch wie möglich—Più presto—
Prestissimo
Andantino
Scherzo: Sehr rasch und markiert
Rondo: Presto—Prestissimo

Schumann

Intermission

Father Lorenzo
Masks
The Montagues and Capulets
Mercutio
Romeo bids Juliet farewell
from *Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet*, Op. 75

Sergei Prokofiev
1891-1953

Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor, Op. 36
Allegro agitato—Meno mosso—Tempo I—
Meno mosso—Non allegro—Lento—
Poco più mosso—Tempo I—Allegro
molto—Presto

Sergei Rachmaninov
1873-1943

Steinway piano

PROGRAM NOTES
by Judith Eckelmeyer

A great many words have been rendered on the nature of romanticism, which is often pigeonholed in the nineteenth century. At the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, descriptions and definitions were a tangle of invective ("...the romantic [is] sickly"--Goethe) and euphoric enthusiasm ("...the essence of Romantic art lies in the artistic object's being free, concrete, and the spiritual idea in its very essence--all this revealed to the inner rather than to the outer eye..."--Hegel; "...liberalism..."--Hugo; "...the last resort of the human heart..."--Charles Nodier). Regardless of the contradictory opinions of the phenomenon, we are "stuck" with the term and almost cemented into a nineteenth-century time frame for it.

However, romanticism in music, no less than in the other arts, is a phenomenon that precedes and endures beyond the nineteenth century. A principal feature by which "romanticism" might be attributed to a composer's style is expressivity, often perceived as a focus on melodism along with colorful harmonies and wide dynamic contrasts. As we shall see, these characteristics are not bound by century lines.

Schumann, Prokofiev, and Rachmaninov, whose lives and careers spanned more than a century, created musical works that share unusual commonalities of a romantic persuasion. In the sphere of piano genres, they all borrowed from the tradition of sonata and concerto writing, but they also established a body of character pieces in their highly evocative, unique styles. And in addition, they approached the process of composition to a great extent through the vehicle of melody, which they used not only as an expressive tool but as a unifying device as well.

Robert Schumann's immense output of intimate art songs indicates the extent to which melodism was a factor in his style. Having begun his career as a concert pianist, he not unexpectedly wrote many works for that instrument, works which contain a blend of the lyric art of the song writer with the virtuosic

properties of a fine keyboard artist. But in addition, Schumann was a journalist, a music critic. His literary bent influenced his musical style through the figures of E. T. A. Hoffman's Kreisler and Schumann's own personalities--Florestan, Eusebius, and Raro--who people several cycles of his piano works. He also incorporated literary devices into the structure of his melodies by translating letters of names or anagrams into pitches; the melodies thus created were often reused, perhaps cloaked in virtuosic fabric, transformed from one rhythm to another, from one movement to another, or from one work to another.

The *Three Romances* of 1839 are the product of Schumann's creative spurt so clearly evident in the 1838 cycles *Kreisleriana* and *Kinderszenen*, the revision of the second sonata, and the composition of a number of other single-movement character pieces for piano. The Romances are melodically oriented and very picturesque. The first, in B-flat minor, is an impassioned and glittering drama of almost Chopinesque etude quality. The second is marked "Einfach" (simple), and its melody dwells serenely within the gently rocking accompanying figures of both hands, above and below it. The third is a well-marked march, very chordal and regulated, which yields to other sections that are softer in rhythm but clearly derived melodically from the march.

The Sonata in G minor, Op. 22, was begun in 1833, well before Schumann's romantic involvement with Clara Wieck, although at a time when he was thinking about entering the world of journalism in partnership with her father. By 1835 the sonata was completed, but Schumann decided to alter the last movement in 1838, while he was deeply involved in writing for the piano. The sonata was published in 1839 with a dedication to Henriette Voigt, a close but evidently platonic friend. The work is in four highly contrasted movements. Astute listening reveals an interconnection of thematic materials within the first movement, in spite of the virtuosic environment, and

within the last. The second movement is clearly an exquisite "song" without words, while the third contains a transcribed *Lied*, "Im Herbst," which Schumann had composed in 1828 on a text of Justinus Kerner.

Sergei Prokofiev never formally emigrated from Russia, but he spent nearly twenty years in western Europe, particularly in Paris, after finishing his training at the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1914. Paris was the sphere of Diaghilev and Stravinsky, whose *Rite of Spring* had caused riots in 1912; by 1914, the specter of tonal breakdown had been heard in Schoenberg's *Erwartung* and *Pierrot Lunaire*. After a period of experimentation with severe dissonance and harsh sounds, Prokofiev returned home and modified his style to the conservative taste of post-revolutionary Russia, expanding his capability for character depiction and broad, arching melodies, which were especially useful to him in writing music for the ballet.

Romeo and Juliet, complete in 1935, was Prokofiev's first full-length ballet in three acts, very much in the narrative drama format of Tchaikovsky's major ballets. In spite of the fact that they had encouraged Prokofiev to write the work, the Kirov Theater management did not mount a production of the ballet, and the Bolshoi in Moscow later rejected it. Under these circumstances, Prokofiev adapted the ballet into two orchestra suites and a set of ten piano character pieces, all of which were published in 1936. The full ballet was performed for the first in time Brno, Czechoslovakia, in 1938, well after the adaptations had been heard in concert performances.

As with Schumann's work, Prokofiev's focus is on melodic detail in this music. Although these character sketches are intended for the dance, they are all memorably tuneful with unique harmonic and rhythmic subtleties. Yet here too, the listener will recognize that Prokofiev drew his melodic material largely from a single germ cell, which he transformed in mood and color to fit each character.

