

Tessa Uys, Ben Schoeman *piano duo***Ludwig van BEETHOVEN** (1770-1827)**Symphony No.3 *Eroica*, in E flat major**

arr. Franz Xaver Scharwenka for one piano, four-hands\* [51:50]

- |   |  |       |
|---|--|-------|
| 1 | I Allegro con brio                               | 18:28 |
| 2 | II Marcia funebre. Adagio assai                  | 15:10 |
| 3 | III Scherzo. Allegro vivace – Trio               | 5:34  |
| 4 | IV Finale. Allegro molto – Poco andante – Presto | 12:36 |

**Robert SCHUMANN** (1810-56)**Six Studies in Canonic Form, Op.56**

arr. Claude Debussy for two pianos [16:27]

- |    |  |      |
|----|--|------|
| 5  | I Study in C major. Nicht zu schnell             | 1:58 |
| 6  | II Study in A minor. Mit innigem Ausdruck        | 3:25 |
| 7  | III Study in E major. Andantino – Etwas bewegter | 1:44 |
| 8  | IV Study in A flat major. Innig                  | 3:08 |
| 9  | V Study in B minor. Nicht zu schnell             | 2:14 |
| 10 | VI Study in B major. Adagio                      | 3:55 |

**Total duration: 68:26**

\*First recording

Recorded at The Menuhin Hall, Stoke d'Abernon, Surrey, on August 24-25, 2020

Recording Producer: Siva Oke Recording Engineer: Paul Arden-Taylor

Pianos: Steinway Model D &amp; Fazioli F278

Front cover image: Max Wulff, lithograph, 1912

Design: Andrew Giles Booklet Editor: Michael Quinn

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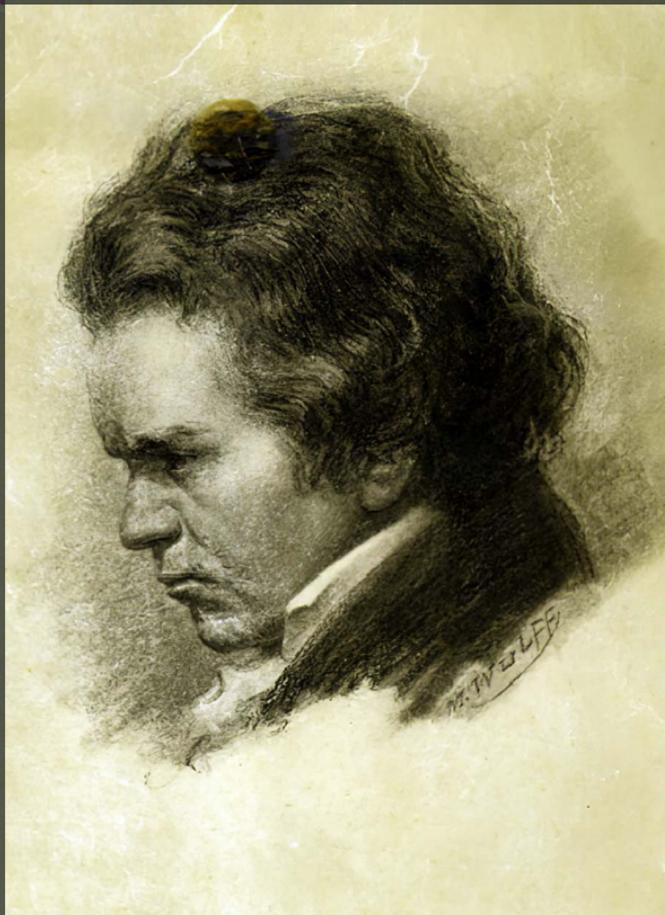
**Beethoven**  
Symphony No.3  
*Eroica*\*

arr.

Xaver Scharwenka

**Schumann**  
Six Studies in  
Canon Form  
Op.56  
arr.  
DebussyTessa Uys  
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*piano duo*

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Discussing Beethoven 200 years after the composer's birth, in 1970 Robert Simpson wrote: "It is probably fair to say that no composer has shown so genuinely continuous, concentrated and far-reaching a development as Beethoven. He stands not only at the crossroads of two centuries, the 18th and 19th, but he marks a crucial stage in the growth of the humanities. He is, perhaps, the one great composer whose work is in human terms so comprehensive that in contemplating it we do not think in terms of its 'period flavour'".

Much as we may agree on Simpson's analysis, Beethoven could not do otherwise than reflect on the times in which he lived. The French Revolution occurred when he was in his teens, and Romanticism, in the form of *Sturm und Drang*, can already be found in the music of CPE Bach, Haydn, Mozart and many lesser composers. In the last year of his life, Beethoven was to write to Abbé Maximilian Stadler: "I have always counted myself amongst the greatest admirers of Mozart, and shall remain so until my last breath".

Mozart could have conceivably outlived Beethoven, and one wonders what music he would have composed after hearing Beethoven's symphonies – or had experienced Napoleon's Europe, in particular the French army occupation of Vienna in 1809. If in 1824 hearing Beethoven's *Choral* Symphony would have been an overwhelming experience for the 68-year-old Mozart, hearing the *Eroica* 20 years earlier would have been equally traumatic.

In June 1801, Beethoven wrote to Franz Wegeler: "hardly have I completed one composition than I have already begun another. At my present rate I often

produce three or four works at the same time". The thread of composition which led to his **Symphony No.3, *Eroica***, had begun in 1800-01 with a set of Contredanses for orchestra (WoO 14), the seventh of which contains the theme of the eventual symphony's finale. This theme became a considerable source of expressive invention for its composer, for it appears in Beethoven's only ballet – *The Creatures of Prometheus*, composed in that same winter of 1800-01, and also forms the basis of the Variations and Fugue for solo piano in E flat major, Op.35 (1802).

If any sequence of works demonstrates what Simpson termed "concentrated development" in Beethoven's output, the thread which led to the *Eroica*'s finale is probably the supreme example: the organic growth of conceptual creative thought demonstrated in this sequence is astonishing, for the theme of the symphony's finale is no 'set of variations' tagged on to the preceding three movements – it is demonstrable that this theme gave rise to the material of them – the notes of the tonic major triad, first displaced by a rogue C sharp.

For a composer whose output is consistently organic and whose structures are driven by growth, that growth ("hardly have I completed one work than I have already begun another") led to the longest first movement (in eventually the longest symphony) by anyone up to that time; growing inexorably from the arresting opening chords, and tonally displaced before the music's constant inner tension triumphantly reasserts the home key in the powerful coda, the sheer positivity of this onward-moving music becomes electrifying as the great coda is reached – the displacement vanquished.

After this, a funeral march: heroic and tragic, indeed, but with breadth and an inexorable tramp that Beethoven sustains magnificently. The mighty vitality of the Scherzo is reinforced by the simple addition of one other instrument – a third horn joining the other two. The composer’s concentration throughout the finale is astonishingly vital, even when it appears to relax.

As the composition of the new symphony continued between 1802 and 1804, Beethoven determined to dedicate the work to Napoleon, fully aware of the commanding newness of symphonic thought that his Symphony in E flat contained. What would Mozart have made of this outpouring of genius in the face of personal tragedy? What music would Beethoven have written had he not gone deaf? By 1803, Beethoven’s emerging republicanism and his growing support of Napoleon’s election as Consul would have been fired by the introduction of the Napoleonic Code in France – a root-and-branch reform, long overdue, of the country’s hitherto shambolic legal system.

The Symphony was finished by the Summer of 1804, but by then Napoleon himself had changed: in May of that year Beethoven’s pupil Ferdinand Ries told the composer that Napoleon had been crowned Emperor of France: angry at this, Beethoven withdrew the dedication, inscribing the work “to the memory of a great man”.

At that time, Beethoven had played the Symphony on the piano to Ries, who must have been staggered by what he heard – as were others. In August of that year, the full score now ready, Beethoven offered the Symphony to Breitkopf und Härtel, who, after protracted discussions, turned it down. Beethoven then

offered the work to Simrock in Bonn who also rejected it. It was finally published in 1806, after Beethoven had conducted the first public performance on April 7, 1805 following two semi-public performances in January and February. The British premiere was in London in 1807, and the Symphony was first heard in America three years later.

The impact of the work was remarkable: public orchestral concerts at the time were relatively few and far between, and demand had grown for arrangements of orchestral works to be made in order that the music could be performed in people’s homes by much smaller instrumental forces. In 1807, Ries was to publish a valuable transcription of the Symphony for piano quartet (piano, violin, viola, cello), and that same year a version for piano duet was published by Kühnel in Vienna. During the following decades – certainly after Beethoven’s death – the demand for transcriptions of orchestral works for domestic instruments increased considerably to the point where almost every significant orchestral work could be obtained in transcriptions, making the music available to any household that possessed a piano.

Another of Beethoven’s more significant pupils was Carl Czerny (1791-1857): today remembered chiefly for his voluminous piano studies and as the teacher of Franz Liszt, in 1836 Czerny published a transcription of the *Eroica* for piano duet. Amongst Czerny’s select pupils was Franz Kullak (1818-82), who also became one of the most praised European teachers of the piano, in turn numbering Moritz Moszkowski, Julius Reubke, Nikolai Rubinstein and Xaver Scharwenka (1850-1924) amongst his pupils.

Scharwenka was a composer of no mean stature; in 1905-07, he published transcriptions of each of the nine Beethoven Symphonies for piano duet, which were widely admired in the decades before gramophone recordings would make 'music in the home' less demanding of the performance skills of members of the household. Such transcriptions as Scharwenka and his contemporaries made would, over the next half century, fall into disuse, but those he did of the Beethoven Symphonies possess significant qualities which are often overlooked today.

There is a defining line from Scharwenka back to Beethoven himself: the thread Beethoven-Czerny-Kullak-Scharwenka cannot be gainsaid, a school of musical pianism and understanding coincidental to the development of the instrument itself – for the piano Czerny knew was not truly comparable with the modern instrument. In making transcriptions of orchestral music for four hands at one keyboard, rather than two pianos, such practicality was welcomed – for very few households had *two* pianos in the home, and Scharwenka's transcriptions take into account the voicing and range of the developed keyboard in a way with which neither Czerny's instrument in 1834, nor Beethoven's 30 years earlier, could have coped.

As a youthful piano student, Beethoven had learned JS Bach's 48 Preludes and Fugues in some depth, the impact on him remaining throughout his life. At the time of the Op.35 *Eroica* Variations for piano, in 1801-02, Beethoven wrote to the publishers Hofmeister: "The fact that you propose to publish the works of Sebastian Bach does good to my heart... Set me down as a subscriber".

It was not until two years after Beethoven's death that Bach's music began to be revived generally and appreciated more fully. Following Mendelssohn's centenary performance of the *St Matthew Passion* in 1829 and his appointment as director of the Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig six years later, he was to meet other enthusiasts for Bach, including Robert Schumann, who had moved to Leipzig in 1830.

Schumann's boyhood piano teacher was Johann Gottfried Kuntsch, organist at the Marienkirche in Zwickau, Schumann's birthplace, who had introduced Robert to Bach's music. Schumann later claimed that Bach had been the most influential of all composers whose music he admired. In turn, he had introduced Clara Wieck, the 12-year-old daughter of his piano teacher, to Bach's music.

Schumann and Clara were to marry in 1840 and have eight children, but in 1845 Robert began exhibiting signs of the depressive condition which claimed his life in 1856. To aid his recovery, the family moved to Dresden, where Clara suggested to Robert that a fresh study of Bach's music, made somewhat easier by the acquisition of a new pedal-piano – a 'normal' instrument but with the addition of a bass pedal-board as on an organ (a valuable aid for organists to practice at home) – might reawaken his interest in original composition.

Her suggestion bore fruit: as Schuman gradually recovered, Clara's therapy brought to her husband's mind his childhood studies with Johann Kuntsch, the practical results of which were no fewer than three works incorporating the pedal-piano: **Six Studies in Canon Form** (Op.56), Four Sketches (Op.58), and Six Fugues on B-A-C-H (Op.60).

The first of the Op.56 studies, marked *Nicht zu schnell* (Not too fast), is a two-voiced composition, quite strict and cleverly laid out for the keyboard and pedal bass. The second canon, *Mit innigem Ausdruck* (With tender expression), is also in two voices, a bar apart at the same octave, a simple enough procedure but surprisingly effective above a significant bass line. The *Andantino* appears after an unusual opening, the canon more concentrated and more deeply expressive. The final *Adagio* is more contrapuntal, bringing the set to an impressive conclusion – worlds away from Romantic expression. The Op.56 Studies bear a dedication to his first teacher Johann Kuntsch, who at that time had but little time left to live. He must have been touched at Schumann's genuine gesture.

The pedal-piano did not truly 'catch on', although it was relatively frequently encountered in some homes. But Schumann's works were too good to be forgotten: it was Georges Bizet who first transcribed Schumann's Op.56 for piano duet in 1871, but a later French master, Claude Debussy, who had played Bizet's edition with his duo partner, pianist and composer Raoul Pugno in the late 1880s and early 1890s, made a new version in 1891, accommodating Schumann's pedal writing more suitably for two standard pianos. Debussy's own little-known mastery of counterpoint must have been fired by Schumann's similar love of Bach's examples, in rescuing this fine music from the obscurity of the pedal-piano repertoire.

Robert Matthew-Walker  
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Photograph: Zach Gerard

### **Tessa Uys and Ben Schoeman** piano duo

In 2010, Tessa Uys and Ben Schoeman established a duo partnership after being invited to give a two-piano recital at the Royal Over-Seas League in London. Ever since, they have performed regularly at music societies, festivals and for the BBC. They embarked on their journey with the Nine Beethoven Symphonies transcribed for piano four-hands by Franz Xaver Scharwenka in 2015. They are currently recording the complete Beethoven/Scharwenka Symphonies for SOMM Recordings.

Tessa Uys and Ben Schoeman gratefully acknowledge the generous financial support of **Graham and Ruth Fennell**.

## Tessa Uys

Born in Cape Town, Tessa Uys was first taught by her mother, Helga Bassel, herself a noted concert pianist. At 16, she won a Royal Schools Associated Board Scholarship and continued her studies at the Royal Academy in London where she studied with Gordon Green. In her final year she was awarded the MacFarren Medal. Further studies in London with Maria Curcio, and in Siena with Guido Agosti followed. Shortly after this Tessa Uys won the Royal Over-Seas League Competition and was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music.

During the past decades, Tessa Uys has established for herself an impressive reputation, both as concert performer, and as a broadcasting artiste, performing at many concert venues throughout the world. She has performed at Wigmore Hall, the Southbank, Barbican and St John's Smith Square, and has played under such distinguished conductors as Sir Neville Marriner, Walter Susskind, Louis Frémaux and Nicholas Kraemer.

[impulse-music.co.uk/tessauys/](http://impulse-music.co.uk/tessauys/)



Photograph: Margit Schmidt

## Ben Schoeman

Ben Schoeman was born in South Africa. He studied piano with Joseph Stanford at the University of Pretoria and then received post-graduate tuition from Boris Petrushansky, Louis Lortie, Michel Dalberto, Ronan O'Hora and Eliso Virsaladze in Imola, London and Florence. In 2016, he obtained a doctorate from City University of London and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He won the First Prize in the 11th UNISA International Piano Competition, the Gold Medal in the Royal Over-Seas League Competition, the contemporary music prize at the Cleveland International Piano Competition, and the Huberte Rupert Prize from the South African Academy for Science and Art. He has performed at the Wigmore, Barbican and Queen Elizabeth Halls in London, Carnegie Hall in New York, the Konzerthaus in Berlin, the Gulbenkian Auditorium in Lisbon and the Enescu Festival in Bucharest. Ben Schoeman is a Steinway Artist and a senior lecturer in piano and musicology at the University of Pretoria.

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