

Brahms

Sonata No.3 op.5
Händel Variations op.24

Jouni

Somero

piano



"It is really moving to see him sitting at the piano with his interesting young face which becomes transfigured when he plays, his beautiful hands which overcome the greatest difficulties with perfect ease (his things are very difficult) and in addition, these remarkable compositions"

When **Clara Schumann** (1819-96) wrote these words in her journal at the beginning of October 1853, Brahms had been staying with the Schumanns in Düsseldorf for about two weeks.

The third Sonata in F minor was probably completed during October because Clara Schumann mentions his playing of this work as well. It was to be his last piano sonata.

This Sonata is on the grand scale in every respect: it is technically formidable, its emotional range is enormous, it is formally adventurous and is so thoroughly imprinted with stylistic, harmonic and rhythmic characteristics that one has come to identify as "Brahmsian" that it could have been written by no one else.

The Händel Variations op.24 were written in 1861 when Brahms was 28 and were first performed by Clara Schumann.

The theme is taken from three "lessons" for the harpsichord which Händel wrote for the children of his Royal patron, the Prince of Wales. Typically baroque curlicues and ornaments somehow belie its basically severe and classical form and, as in the even more remarkable case of Beethoven's Diabelli Variations op.120, small and even trivial beginnings lead to a profusion of ideas, each flowing continuously out of the other with masterful and feline ease.

The fugue, once described as "the most effective ever written" is prefaced by a lengthy build-up of mounting tension and excitement (variations 23-25) and concludes, with heaven-storming and exultant bravura, a work of tireless imaginative fertility and majestic resource.

Jouni Somero (b. 1963) is one of the most active Finnish musicians on the scene today. So far he has given over 3,100 concerts all over the world, including Australia, Japan, Ukraine, Spain, Suisse, France, Germany, Sweden, Estonia, Kosovo, Russia, Brazil, Canada and Finland. He began studying the organ when he was eight years old but switched to the piano at the age of 12, studying the latter in Switzerland and at the Music Academy in Cologne under Professor Herbert Drechsel. Under the legendary Hungarian pianist Georges Cziffra he gained a deeper insight into the music of Liszt. Michael Ponti, the American virtuoso, has also acted as Somero's musical advisor. From 1981 to 1989 Somero lived in Germany, working as an assistant at the Music Academy of Düsseldorf and in other capacities. Since 1990 he has pursued his career solely as a concert pianist. He was awarded a diploma at the International Music Competition in Rio de Janeiro.

Jouni Somero's recording career began in 1989 (with Liszt's 12 Transcendental Etudes), since when he has made over 100 discs for different labels (Naxos, BMG, MILS, Jubal, FC-Records etc.). These include Bach's Das Wohltemperierte Klavier and Die Kunst der Fuge, Liszt's Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses, Liszt's transcriptions of Beethoven's symphonies 1 and 5, Rebikov's Piano Works, Henselt's Concert Etudes Op. 2, Schubert's Wanderer Fantasy, Sonata B and Impromptu op.90, Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition, Rachmaninov's Piano Works (Vol.1-4), An Anthology of Finnish Piano Music (Vol. 1-5) and the world premiere recording of several piano works by Felix Blumenfeld, Benjamin Godard, Hans Seeling and Hugo Reinhold. He also recorded the complete piano music of Sergei Bortkiewicz (Vol.1-9) Pjotr Tchaikovsky (Vol.1-6), Toivo Kuula and Erkki Salmenhaara.

Somero's wide repertoire includes all the solo piano works of Rachmaninov, Tchaikovsky, Bortkiewicz, Salmenhaara and Kuula as well as seldom heard music by such composers as Alkan, Godard, Arensky, Godowsky, Henselt, Thalberg, Cui, Glinka, Blumenfeld, Rebikov, Reinhold, Seeling, Rubinstein and Gottschalk. Somero has also made many piano arrangements of orchestral, operatic and pop music.

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