



Ludwig van Beethoven - 15 variations and fugue in E flat major Op. 35 for piano

For Beethoven, the form of variations for piano represented a laboratory in which to experiment and research new compositional solutions to be proposed again in wider and more complex contexts such as the sonata or the string quartet. The Fifteen Variations and Fugue in E flat major op. 35, created by Beethoven in 1802 and soon became familiar for that famous theme already used in the ballet *Le creature di Prometeo*, in a *Contraddanza* and used, after being enlarged and transcribed for orchestra, also in the Symphony n. 3 *Heroic*. In the Variations op. 35 Beethoven treats musical matter with extreme freedom and in a completely original way right from the start. For example, he chooses not to expose the theme immediately, letting the accompanying bass begin the work, welcoming first two, then three, then four voices in counterpoint until it blends with the actual theme only at the fourth variation. But Beethoven's research does not stop here and, variation after variation, amazes the listener with ever new melodic and rhythmic inventions: brilliant episodes, others of a contrapuntal character, still others of marked melodic intensity, up to the learned conclusion signed by a fugue.

Johannes Brahms - Three interludes Op. 117 for piano

Brahms' farewell from the piano, his favorite instrument and companion for a lifetime, is contained in the four collections of the *Klavierstücke* (op. 116, op. 117, op. 118 and op. 119), pieces of various kinds composed almost for delight during the last holidays spent in Bad Ischl between 1892 and 1893. As for other 19th century composers - Schubert, Mendelssohn and Schumann - for Brahms too the short piano page represented the privileged place for the most intimate confessions and abandonment to yearning. The op. 117 collects three Intermezzi articulated according to the tripartite structure of the Lied, with two symmetrical parts that enclose a contrasting central episode. Often generated by a single motif that is transformed through Brahms' wise use of variation, the Intermezzi op. 117 are united by an intensely poetic writing: sweet and soothing the first (inspired by an ancient Scottish lullaby), melancholy and poignant the second, elusive and restless the third and last of the collection.

Robert Schumann - Kreisleriana. Fantasien Op. 16 for piano

All of Schumann's early production is dedicated to the piano, the instrument chosen to welcome and preserve the expressive anxieties that burned in the young musician's chest. Among the compositions created in that period of exciting creative momentum, Schumann chose the *Kreisleriana* op. 16 to his favorite passages. The work, divided into eight piano fantasies, was inspired by the stories of Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann, an author particularly loved by Schumann. Hoffmann was in fact the creator of a typically romantic literary world, populated by bizarre and visionary characters. Among them was the choirmaster Johannes Kreisler, a disturbing and brilliant musician, the writer's alter ego. The attraction for that strange character was irresistible and immediate for Schumann who in a few days created *Kreisleriana*, a real musical self-portrait that has become a cornerstone of piano literature. From the first to the last piece, Schumann gave free rein to his sensitivity as a romantic artist perpetually struggling with himself by adopting a writing that is now exalted and desperate, now melancholy and mysterious.