

STEREO

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# Yaltah Menuhin

PIANO RECITAL

MENDELSSOHN

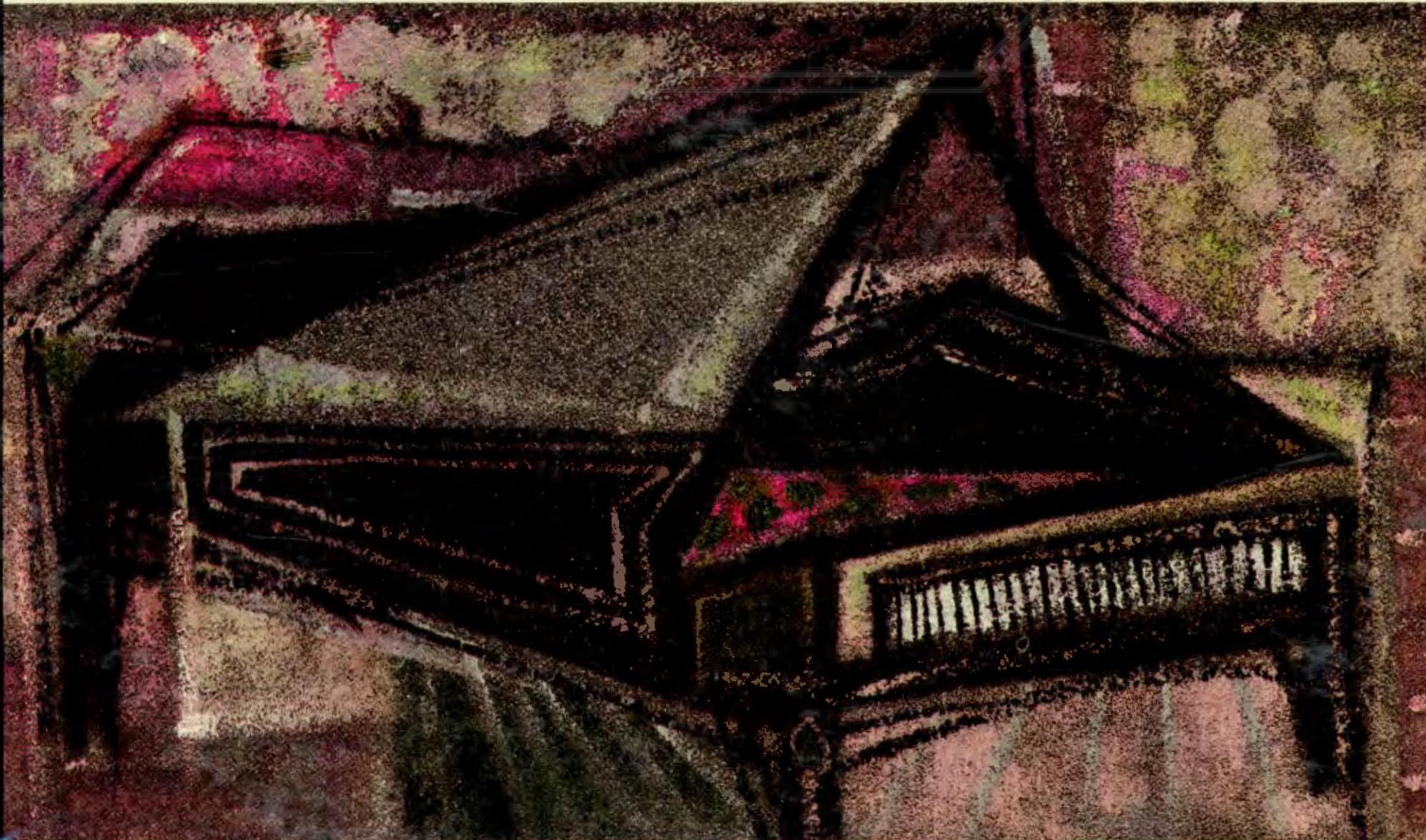
Variations Serieuses, Opus 54

LISZT

Two Etudes de Concert *Forrest Murmurs, Dance of the Gnomes*

BEETHOVEN

Sonata in B flat major, Opus 22





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Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy is a study in contrasts: although of the generation which flourished during the most intense period of the Romantic movement (he was born in 1809), he was traditionally oriented. It is enough to juxtapose his oratorio ELIJAH with his concertos, symphonies, Songs Without Words, or incidental music to A Midsummer Night's Dream, to see why Einstein terms him the "Romantic Classicist."

Mendelssohn was the man responsible for the world's reawakening to the music of Bach; in 1829, he performed the ST. MATTHEW PASSION, thereby inaugurating an interest in Bach's music that eventually led to the formation of the Bachgesellschaft.

Indeed, the VARIATIONS SERIEUSES, Opus 54 (1841), are conservative (classic) by nineteenth century standards, when variation technique had become almost entirely free. Mendelssohn's set, however, is of the category called "melodico-harmonic": meaning the simultaneous retention of the melodic subject and harmonic scheme throughout the 17 variations. The main technique used is that of changing configurations for each variation. The variety of treatment is, nonetheless, quite broad—the fugal treatment of the theme's head in Variation X and the augmentation of the theme in the bass in Variation XIII being examples of this variety. The last variation is the longest, and has the character of a finale, a small design within itself, culminating in a presto coda.

Franz Liszt was born in 1811. From an early age, he showed remarkable gifts as a composer and performer. Beethoven was supposed to have heard the child prodigy perform in 1823, afterwards recognizing the boy's gifts with the words: "God bless you, you wonderful child!" Although never really liking the career of virtuoso pianist, Liszt nevertheless became one of the most colorful figures of the Romantic period—in fact, one of its idols; his piano music, exemplified by the KONZERT ETUDEN, well illustrates the pianistic virtuoso. In addition, the programmatic titles given to these ETUDEN are quite in keeping with the nineteenth century's assimilation of literature into art and music.

The KONZERT ETUDEN were composed in 1862 or 1863. The first, FOREST MURMURS, has an almost constant stream of triplets throughout the piece, which from the very beginning set the atmosphere, both programmatic and musical. In the second measure, the theme has its first statement, slowly descending, only to rise again—a voice from the forest, as it were. This theme and the running triplets form the musical basis of this ETUDE. The theme is taken through many distant keys, thus fulfilling its own inherent chromaticism.

The DANCE OF THE GNOMES presents a different kind of pianistic virtuosity than the FOREST MURMURS: while the latter is based on rippling lyricism, the former has a percussive texture and motoric rhythm, as one would expect from Liszt's programmatic intent.

The Sonata, Opus 22 (1800), falls into Beethoven's early period. It has the classical proportions so typical of this period, with themes clearly articulating tonalities, clear-cut development sections utilizing sequences of motives through various keys, regular rhythms and formal schemes.

But within this framework, certain flashes of the Titan of the future years is discernible: the off-beat sforsandos, the Minore section of the third movement,

the restlessness of the aria-like second movement, and the tightly constructed Rondo fourth movement. These subtle elements point the way towards the future.

The first movement is a straightforward "sonata allegro" design. The second movement is an aria-like theme with accompaniment, in an ABA design; the B section is developmental. It is interesting to note the harmonic scheme of this movement. The A section moves from E<sub>b</sub> to B<sub>b</sub>; the B section begins in G major. This progression by thirds becomes increasingly important in Beethoven's middle period. The third movement is a Menuet and Minore, the latter being an archaic substitute for the customary Trio. The fourth movement is an exceedingly tightly constructed Rondo, somewhat akin to sonata-rondo form, in that both themes return in the tonic and the middle section begins with a thematic statement in the tonic; most importantly, the entire movement has a three part design—ABA'. The Coda brings an embellished return of the main theme, and the Sonata reaches a forceful conclusion after an extended cadence.

Ed Applebaum

*YALTAH MENUHIN* comes from a background thoroughly imbued with music. Sister of Yehudi Menuhin, one of the world greatest concert violinists, she is the youngest member of this distinguished musical family. Although born in America, Miss Menuhin received her early pianistic training in Paris and Rome. She later returned to the United States to develop her youthful genius with study under Carl Friedberg, Adolph Baller and Beveridge Webster. During the past ten years she has concertized extensively throughout the world both as recitalist and as soloist with orchestra. Recent orchestral appearances include engagements with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, the St. Louis Symphony, the Memphis Symphony, and a series of concerts in various cities of England with the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra. One of Yaltah Menuhin's most unusual orchestral appearances was at the Bath Festival in England, where she and her sister Hephzibah played Mozart's Concerto in E flat major for Two Pianos with their brother Yehudi conducting.

Also active in chamber music, Miss Menuhin, while living on the West Coast, was a member of a trio which concertized throughout that area. She also appeared at the Pacific Music Festival, founded by Leopold Stokowski, as a chamber musician.

Yaltah Menuhin has received praise all over the world, such as: "Yaltah Menuhin, who comes from a distinguished musical family, proved herself touched with the same order of genius that marks her famous brother Yehudi and her equally famous sister Hephzibah" (St. Louis). She is noted for her ensemble playing: "Brilliant achievement and immense potentialities...Miss Menuhin's work at the piano is sensitive to her partner's lead." (San Francisco). "She took her various roles in just the right way required. She understood the value of each of these contributions to the partnership and set them forth with sensitivity and skill" (New York Times). Her solo recitals, also, have been warmly applauded by the critics, one of whom said: "Miss Menuhin is an extraordinarily gifted pianist with fleet and accurate fingers that produce a broad and firm tone and a rare sense of musical values and style" (Los Angeles).