



ELISSA MILLERKAY
Pianist

I grew up in Toronto, Canada. Throughout my life, I've enjoyed studying a variety of subjects, including music, philosophy, and science. I studied biochemistry at the University of Toronto for a few years before deciding to switch gears and pursue a career in music. I earned a bachelor degree in piano performance from Oberlin College, where I studied piano with Peter Takács, a renowned concert pianist and fellow Beethoven enthusiast. I earned a Masters degree in piano performance from Mannes College, where I studied with Victor Rosenbaum, and a PhD from New York University, where I studied with Martin Canin. My dissertation examined the performance history of Beethoven's piano sonatas in Victorian London.

I've performed in cities through Canada and the United States. As a concerto soloist, I've played with the Mississauga Symphony, the Oakville Symphony, the Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Orchestra, the York Symphony, and the Greater Toronto Philharmonic. I've given recitals at venues including Steinway Hall, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, and Bohemian National Hall in New York City; the Beethoven Club in Memphis; Markham Theater in Markham, Ontario; and the Goethe Institute in Bangkok, Thailand. I hope to perform more in Southeast Asia in the coming years!

I've won some awards, including First Prize at the International Beethoven Piano Sonata Competition in Memphis, TN in 2009 and the Ben Steinberg Musical Legacy Award, a scholarship given annually to an outstanding young Canadian Musician, in 2006. I am currently a full-time lecturer at the Princess Galyani Vadhana Institute of Music where I teach piano and musicology.



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Musique
de la Vie
et de la Terre

IMAGES AND IMAGININGS

ROBERT SCHUMANN

CARNAVAL, OP. 9 AND KINDERSZENEN, OP. 15



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Wednesday
April 4th 2018, 7 pm

Sangita Vadhana Hall,
Princess Galyani Vadhana
Institute of Music



Robert Schumann (1810 - 1856)

CARNAVAL

In 1834, Schumann was a 24-year-old up and coming composer. Although he would go on to marry Clara Wieck, he was at the time secretly engaged to a young woman named Ernestine von Fricken. Schumann's imagination was sparked when he realized that the name of Ernestine's hometown, Asch, was comprised entirely of musical letters: A, E-flat, C, B (In German, S = E-flat and H = B). Moreover, he noticed that these letters were the only musical letters in his name.

From these four notes, Schumann spun out a fantasy world—a masked ball bursting with passion. Among the guests are several of Schumann's colleagues and friends, as well as masked mystery guests dressed up as characters from the *commedia dell'arte*. The movements are as follows:

Préambule. An opening fanfare followed by a whirlwind overview.

Pierrot. A clumsy, sad clown (*commedia dell'arte*).

Arlequin. An agile, mischievous clown (*commedia dell'arte*).

Valse noble. A stately waltz.

Eusebius. A character representing Schumann's sensitive and introspective side.

Florestan. A character representing Schumann's passionate and outgoing side.

Coquette. A giggling female clown.

Replique. The reply. It sounds to me as if a young suitor is charming Coquette.

Sphinxes. A mythical creature with the head of a human and the body of a lion. Keeper of riddles.

Papillons. Butterflies.

A.S.C.H S.C.H.A. A dance of musical letters.

Chiarina. An Italian form of "Clara." Clara Wieck was the daughter of Schumann's piano teacher and an accomplished concert pianist. She would eventually become Schumann's wife over the objections of her father.

Chopin. The great composer, and Schumann's friend.

Estrella. Schumann's fiancé at the time.

Reconnaissance. A scene of recognition. It sounds to me like two masked lovers singing a duet.

Pantalon et Colombine. Pantalon, a rich and greedy old clown; Colombine, his young and pretty servant (*commedia dell'arte*).

Valse allemande. A courtly dance.

Paganini. The great violin virtuoso.

Aveu. A secret.

Promenade. A German dance.

Pause—Marche des "Davidsbündler" contre les Philistines. Introduction and finale. The Davidsbündler (League of David) was a name that Schumann gave to an imagined group of musicians and artists that were musical innovators. He named Eusebius, Florestan, Chopin and Paganini as members. Schumann's "Philistines" were conservative critics and composers that wrote and championed music he found conservative or trite.

Interestingly, Schumann felt that Carnival was not well suited to public performance. As he put it, "the musical moods alternate too quickly to be followed by an entire audience, which does not wish to be startled every other minute." If only Schumann could have anticipated Youtube! Carnival, with its constantly shifting moods, is perhaps the perfect Romantic piano piece for our times.

KINDERSZENEN

Schumann wrote Kinderszenen, "Scenes from Childhood," in early 1838, four years after Carnival was completed. Schumann was now engaged to the young piano virtuoso Clara Wieck and enjoying burst of creativity. "While away the time until Friday in dreams, work, happiness and composition," he noted in his diary in early February. Schumann sent the manuscript for Kinderszenen to the publisher Breitkopf and Hartel in March, 1838. However, for unknown reasons, it took about a year for the work to appear in print. When Schumann finally gave his fiancé a copy of the first edition in March of 1839, she was deeply moved. "I simply can't put them out of my mind, they are so simple, so heart-warming, so very 'you'."

Kinderszenen contains thirteen short pieces, each of which evokes a particular scene or mood from childhood. While Carnival is lush and virtuosic, Kinderszenen is highly economical. A single chord often creates great drama and every note is important. Although the music is about childhood, Kinderszenen is not music for children. As Schumann once wrote, "They are reminiscences by a grown-up for grown-ups."

The movements of Kinderszenen are as follows:

Von fremden Ländern und Menschen. Of Foreign Lands and Peoples.

Kuriose Geschichte. A Curious Story.

Hasche-Mann. Blind Man's Bluff, a game called "Tag" in North America

Bittendes Kind. Pleading Child.

Glückes genug. Happy Enough.

Wichtige Begebenheit. An Important Event.

Träumerei. Dreaming.

Am Kamin. At the Fireside.

Ritter vom Steckenpferd. Knight of the Hobbyhorse.

Fast zu ernst. Almost Too Serious.

Fürchtenmachen. Frightening

Kind im Einschlummern. Child Falling Asleep.

Der Dichter spricht. The Poet Speaks.

For the performance this evening, I am fortunate to have the assistance of eight children who live near PGVIM. These young artists have created drawings to complement the individual pieces of Kinderszenen. Their artwork will be displayed as I perform, and short clips from interviews with the children will be interspersed between some of the pieces.

