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TEAMWORK

The Team of
Pianists

Works
for piano
4 hands
and
6 hands

Max Cooke

Darryl
Coote

Robert
Chamberlain



DOLLY SUITE OP 56

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

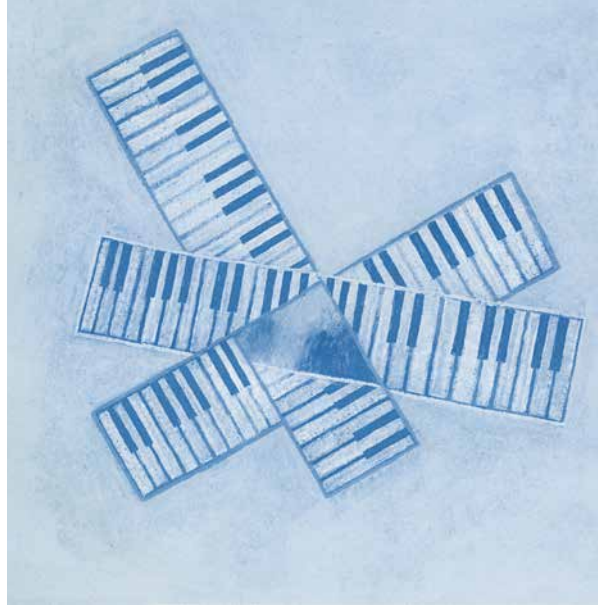
The Dolly Suite could be thought to refer to a puppet for the amusement of children, but this is not so. Dolly was in fact a child, Hélène Bardac, known to Fauré. The music displays typically French artistic restraint, sometimes appearing child-like in its simplicity. Yet there is an underlying sophistication, and there are moments expressing the deepest of inner feelings. The Suite contains six individual pieces, musically unrelated to one another, but all having some relevance to the life of Dolly, whose mother ultimately became the second wife of Claude Debussy.

The Suite begins with one of the most popular and attractive works: Berceuse. The lower part provides the gently rocking lilt of the lullaby, whilst above this float the long lines of one of Fauré's most beautiful melodies. Simplicity of idea here produces the deepest feelings of joy and confidence.

One could assume *Mi-a-ou* to be inspired by a kitten, especially since a *Kitty Valse* is to come later. The truth is that the title refers to the attempts of Dolly to pronounce the name of her brother 'Raoul'.

In the exotic chromatic harmonies of *Le Jardin de Dolly* one can imagine a shining sun bathing all in warmth and contentment, whilst the colours and perfumes of the garden are depicted through the subtle merging of melody with harmony. Composed in 1895 for Dolly's thirteenth birthday, this music evokes moods of sheer delight.

Kitty Valse is not about a kitty, but rather about a puppy named 'Ketty'. This matters little, since the antics of the puppy are just as lively and varied as those one could expect from a kitten. The writing is pianistically excellent, and fun to perform.



Fauré's experience as an organist and his experimentation with harmonies leave their mark in *Tendresse*, making it musically the most interesting of the pieces, but perhaps the least accessible on first hearing. The opening page, repeated after an intricate middle section, rests upon a moving bass line, which surely derives from organ sounds, and that kind of bass-oriented balance which often pertains to the organ. Here there seems to be strength of purpose, whereas in the middle section there is allusion to moods of great delicacy, but ever-changing and fleeting. A tiny fragment of tune is varied and moved from one voice to another, whilst unexpected harmonic progressions keep the senses alert until we reach the return and comfort of the original music from the first page.

The Suite concludes with a rollicking movement of Spanish inflexion, *Le Pas Espagnol*. There is much brilliance in the writing for both Primo and Secondo parts in what appears to be a dance, yet is perhaps too fast for dancing.

MC

ANDANTE AND VARIATIONS

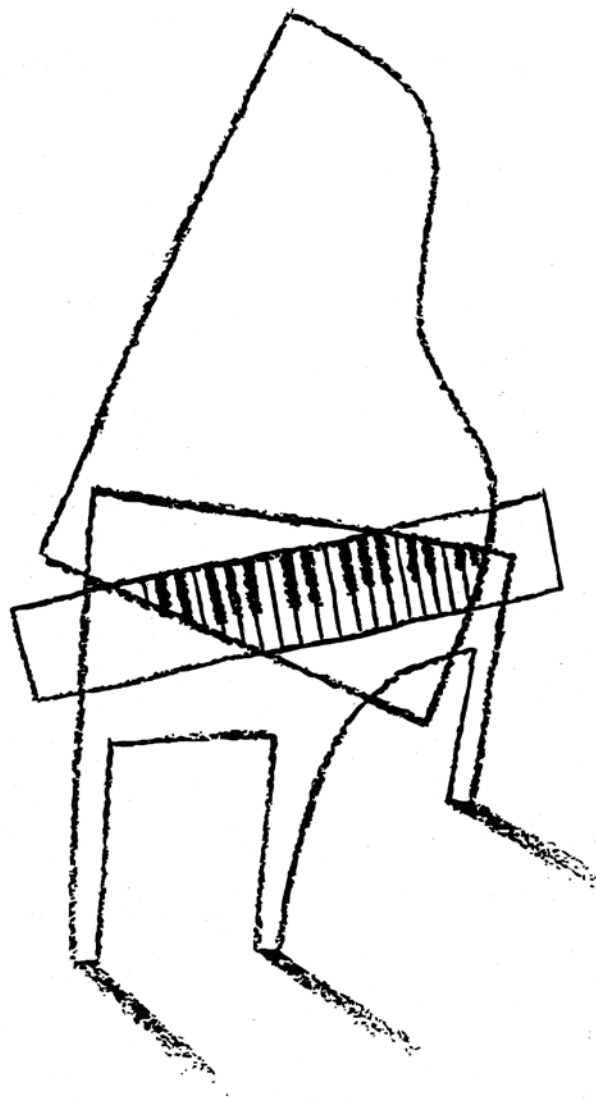
IN B flat Op 83a

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-1847)

The principle of taking a given idea and then modifying it in subsequent repetitions has been used throughout the history of music. It provides the means for the composer to develop or improvise on something already known to the listener. The variations can be based on melodic, harmonic, rhythmic or even just tonal elements of the original, and in Mendelssohn's case, perhaps on all of these. By his time, larger works in variation form did not resemble a chain of repetitions of a theme, but rather the continuous development of an idea with an overall structural sense, leading logically to points of climax or to others of great beauty and serenity.

One of Mendelssohn's finest and best known solo-piano works is titled *Variations Serieuses*, and the similarities between this work and the *Andante and Variations* are striking. As a conservative composer, Mendelssohn followed Mozart and Beethoven, but his music is romantically evocative, and pianistically he expands upon the styles of his predecessors. To what extent new techniques are inspired by musical needs, and to what extent technique suggests ideas to a composer is an interesting question. If we compare the two works mentioned above, we find pianistic devices used in both, having similar roles in the structural outline of the two works.

The theme of the *Variations Serieuses* resembles a chorale in which small fragments in quaver movement join to make four-bar, then eight-bar segments, and ultimately a sixteen-bar theme. In the *Andante and Variations* the theme is similar, but consists of twenty-four bars. The first variation introduces



semiquaver ornamentation weaving around the theme, enlivening it and commenting upon it. From here excitement is built up with the introduction of triplet semiquavers, chords and an increase in activity. These triplets yield to rapid demi-semiquavers appearing firstly in the Secondo and then in the Primo (Var 3 & 4) and they subsequently overflow into

cascades of broken octaves (Var 5) which complete the build-up of tension in the first half of the work. Parallels can be found too in the central moments of serenity approached in the Variations Serieuses through a key change from D minor to D major, and in the Andante through a change from B flat major to G minor (Var 6) and then back to B flat major (Var 7). The eighth variation introduces more turbulence, coming to a climax with a drum roll simulated by a tremolo bass, also to be found in the earlier work. Here there is a brief return of the main subject, and then a bouncing gigue-like Finale ends the work. MC

FANTASIE IN F MINOR OP 103, D-940 Franz Peter Schubert (1797-1828)

Arguably the finest of Schubert's many piano duets, the Fantasia in F minor was composed between January and April 1828, and dedicated to Countess Carolina Esterhazy. The first performance was given by Schubert himself, together with Franz Paul Lachner, at the home of the Viennese dramatist Eduard von Bauernfeld, on the 9th of May, 1828.

Like other works composed in this last year of Schubert's life, the Fantasia is remarkable for its refined elegance, and for its unique, creative imagination. In its compositional structure, Schubert moved away from classic models, towards the fusion of several movements into one: the work is an early nineteenth century embodiment of the cyclic ideal, also to be found in Schubert's own Wanderer Fantasia for solo piano, and Liszt's Sonata in B minor. Thus the formal structure is ambiguous in that it is, at one and the same time, four movements and one movement.

Although there are no definite breaks between the four sections, they are none-the-less clearly delineated:

1. The tragic dotted-note theme of the opening Allegro molto moderato is centred around the dominant and tonic notes of the home key. An emphatic, energetic triplet section then serves as a bridge, before the opening theme returns, first in D flat minor, then in F minor. This opening paragraph is concluded with a peaceful section in F major: a typical device of Schubert, to shift between the major and minor sides of the same tonal centre.

2. Defiant chords of the Largo shatter this peace suddenly, with a dramatic shift up a semitone into F sharp minor. Characterized by strong dotted rhythms, this second section also contains a moment of apparent repose in the sublime F sharp major theme, although this is only a fleeting moment of false security, the Largo ending with the strong dotted rhythms.

3. The fiery spirit of Hungarian gypsy violinists asserts itself in the vital Scherzo and Trio in F sharp minor, with a dramatic, unexpected turning back into F minor for the return of the opening Allegro.

4. An abridged return of the first theme leads into an exciting fugato section, where an earlier theme is combined with other motives. Building up to an heroic climax, a sudden interruption returns us to the tragic inevitability of the opening theme, to conclude this monumental work.

It seems that Schubert used the notation  in both the eighteenth century sense (as we now accept it in Bach), as well as in the modern, literal sense. It is often advisable to assimilate the rhythm  with other triplet rhythms if present (i.e. to play it as ) so as not to disturb the unfolding of the music, although there are instances where the dotted rhythm should be interpreted as a cross-rhythm against the triplets. In short, there are

many ambiguous cases, Schubert sometimes having left no precise indication. In this performance, we have interpreted the dotted rhythms according to the context of the music.
DC

COCKTAIL SUITE Michael Easton (born 1954)

This music was intended for a film set on a train. First I wrote songs, but the singer could not look dignified dashing through the Kentish countryside at one hundred miles per hour: the string quartet gave up at the first set of points, and I finally settled on piano duet. By that time the projected film had run out of money, and so I wrote the music as a little Suite of duet pieces, each based on a favourite cocktail.

ME

The front page of the duet version, published under the name of Michael Rainford, gives the date of composition as 1982, and states that it is designed as a light-hearted work for concerts, eisteddfods, and as a study in tricky rhythms.

Rum Punch Rag opens the Suite with the characteristic two-step beat and syncopated melody. Next comes Whisky Sour Waltz with its gentle sophistication and inner warmth. A move then to South America, Tequila Tango, enlivens the scene, before we come under the influence of the smoke-filled bar, perhaps in the 'happy hour', in Martini Melody. The work ends with visions of the 'flapper' era of the nineteen twenties as the Schneider Cup Charleston runs its course.

MC & DC

**AUF DER HEIDE BLÜHEN
DIE LETZTEN ROSEN**

Robert Stolz (1880-1975) arr. Max Cooke

Robert Stolz composed music mainly for operettas, but not exclusively so; he also wrote piano music, and music for films, for example. The melody on which this duet is based is an individual song, which has appeared in a film. The simple tune resembles a folk song, and the text also embodies some common folk beliefs. The last blooms on the heath presage the passing of summer, just as advancing years lead to the fading of the delights of youth.

This piano duet version was written in honour of Einzi Stolz, Robert's last wife, who came to Australia for the award of the Apex/Robert Stolz Scholarship, which annually provides an Australian with a year's study in Vienna.

MC

JAMAICAN RUMBA Arthur Benjamin (1893-1960) arr. Joan Trimble

Born in Sydney, Arthur Benjamin actually spent little of his working life in Australia. After having studied at the Royal College of Music in London, he was appointed Professor of Piano at the New South Wales Conservatorium of Music, but he subsequently returned to England, where he remained for most of his life. His work as a composer turned increasingly towards opera, but he also composed orchestral works, a violin concerto, a concertino for piano, and in his later years he wrote much music for films. Writing in *Australian Music in the Twentieth Century*, Margaret Seares describes Benjamin's music as "...that of an elegant stylist, revealing a flair for orchestral writing and, in his operas, a strong sense of theatre."

Jamaican Rumba is perhaps Benjamin's most famous piece, and was composed in the 1930s. It has been arranged for several formats, here for piano duet by Joan Trimble.

The title is self-explanatory, the piece being an entertaining miniature Jamaican Rumba. There is little melodic invention, although the fragmentary tunes are quite catchy. The main compositional devices the composer uses to propel the work forward are bright rhythms and added-note harmonies such as sixths and sevenths.

DC

ZANZIBAR BOAT SONG (No 6 from Room Music Titbits)

Percy Grainger (1882-1961)

This apparently serene and tranquil music is based on rather macabre lines by Rudyard Kipling:

They burnt a corpse upon the sand —

The light shone out afar:

It guided home the plunging boats

That beat from Zanzibar.

Spirit of fire, where'er Thy altars rise,

Thou art the Light of Guidance to our eyes!

Percy Grainger wrote that the reading of these verses induced a musical mood in which the wistful theme of the poem and the rhythmic suggestion of "the plunging boats" played their part. It is not intended to be programme music.

MC

**TOCCATA IN F MAJOR BWV 540
J S Bach (1685-1750) arr. Percy Grainger**

Grainger was clearly not restrained by the views of Baroque purists already beginning to have influence when he made this arrangement in the nineteen thirties. His approach to the work is one that adheres to tenets of nineteenth century Romantic Bach scholars, but this is not to say that he lacked insight into many of Bach's intentions. He makes clever use of doublings at the octave

to imitate organ pedals, changes of texture to imitate registration changes, and tremolo in the bass with sustaining pedal to simulate the reverberation of an organ in a church. It supposes performance on a Romantic organ as the model, and being arranged for three or more pianos, there can be little expectation that the sounds will resemble those of a baroque instrument on which a stylistically authentic presentation may be sought.

In this recording, whilst respecting Bach's ideas, the performers have been true to Grainger's intentions, being aware of differences between these and any original or authentic interpretative concepts. In its own way, it is correct in its historic accuracy of Grainger's Romantic version of the work.

Rather than using three pianos, this recording was made by the three performers playing separately, using digital multitrack techniques.

MC

THE TEAM OF PIANISTS

"The Team of Pianists ... provided pianism of the highest order, stamped with individual warmth and personality." Barbara Hebden, Brisbane Courier Mail.

"... absolute command and expertise implied by virtuosity ..." Peter Platt, Sounds Australian.

MAX COOKE

Following music and language studies at the University of Melbourne, Max Cooke studied at the Ecole Normale de Musique (Paris) under Alfred Cortot and his assistant Madame Bascourret de Guéraldi, as well as at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. In 1951 he took up a position as Chief Study Piano Teacher at

the Conservatorium (University of Melbourne). After his initial appointment there he was promoted to Senior Lecturer, subsequently Associate Professor (Reader), and he was for six years Dean of the Faculty of Music.

His career has included many performances as concerto soloist with orchestras, solo recitals, chamber music and accompaniment with musicians well-known here and overseas. In the last ten years, he and Darryl Coote have performed together as a professional duet team.

A direct line can be traced between their performance of the Fauré Dolly Suite and the first performance of the same work in 1898 by Alfred Cortot and Edouard Risler. Both Cortot and his assistant Blanche Bascourret were closely associated with Fauré.

DARRYL COOTE

Melbourne-based Darryl Coote studied with Max Cooke at the University of Melbourne, where he obtained the degrees of Bachelor of Music (Honours) and subsequently Master of Music.

In 1985-86, Darryl studied with Kurt Bauer at the Musikhochschule in Hanover, Germany, where he developed a specific interest in German music and language. A special highlight of his career in 1988 was to accompany Sir Yehudi Menuhin in a concert of the Musical Society of Victoria.

He has played concertos with Australian and overseas orchestras, piano duets with Max Cooke, two-piano works with Robert Chamberlain, and chamber music with Ian Morgan and Robert Macindoe, from the Melbourne Symphony, and with oboist Anne Gilby.

ROBERT CHAMBERLAIN

Robert Chamberlain studied for Bachelor's and Master's degrees in music at the University of Melbourne under Max Cooke. He studied in Vienna, as a winner of the Apex/Robert Stolz Scholarship, and at the Banff Centre for the Arts, Canada, where he worked with distinguished artists and teachers. He maintains an active performing schedule, including recordings, concerts as soloist and accompanist for singers and instrumentalists, and as ABC artist. As a partner in the Team he has taken part in all of its varied activities.

Recorded in the studio of Move Records, Melbourne, 11th—16th February 1994
Bach/Grainger Toccata recorded 9th and 10th April

Producers: Max Cooke and Darryl Coote
Digital recording and editing: Martin Wright, Move Records, assisted by Vaughan McAlley
Piano Technician: Nic Hamilton
Graphic design and illustration: Jim Pavlidis

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**WORKS FOR
FOUR HANDS
AT ONE PIANO**

Primo -
Darryl Coote
Secondo -
Max Cooke

GABRIEL FAURÉ
Dolly Suite Op 56
1 Berceuse 2'29"
2 Mi-a-ou 1'48"
3 Le Jardin de Dolly
2'35"
4 Kitty Valse 2'07"
5 Tendresse 3'10"
6 Le Pas Espagnol
2'04"

**FELIX MENDELSSOHN-
BARTHOLDY**
7 Andante and
Variations in B flat
major Op 83a 11'25"

**FRANZ PETER
SCHUBERT**
8 Fantasie in F minor Op 103
D 940 16'35"

MICHAEL EASTON Cocktail Suite
9 Rum Punch Rag 2'06"
10 Whisky Sour Waltz 2'15"
11 Tequila tango 1'47"
12 Martini Melody 1'59"
13 Schneider Cup Charleston
1'42"

ROBERT STOLZ arr.
MAX COOKE
14 Auf der Heide
Blühen die letzten
Rosen 4'52"

ARTHUR BENJAMIN
arr. **JOAN TRIMBLE**
15 Jamaican Rumba 1'45"

SIX HANDS AT ONE PIANO
Primo - **Robert Chamberlain**
Secondo -
Max Cooke
Terzo -
Darryl Coote

**PERCY
GRAINGER**
16 Zanzibar
Boat Song
3'53"

**THREE
PIANOS**
Piano 1 -
**Robert
Chamberlain**
Piano 2 -
Darryl Coote
Piano 3 -
Max Cooke

J S BACH arr. **PERCY GRAINGER**
17 Toccata in F major BWV 540 8'16"