



PRIMA
CLASSIC

ANASTASIYA
EVSINA

B E N E D I C T I O N
LISZT & BRAHMS

B E N E D I C T I O N

L I S Z T & B R A H M S

FRANZ LISZT: THE TRANSCENDENTAL ÉTUDES, S.139

1. IX. "Ricordanza"
2. X. "Appassionata"
3. XI. "Harmonies du Soir"
4. XII. "Chasse-neige"

JOHANNES BRAHMS: VARIATIONS ON THE THEME BY ROBERT SCHUMANN, OP.9

5. Theme. Ziemlich langsam
6. Var. 1. L'istesso tempo
7. Var. 2. Poco più moto
8. Var. 3. Tempo di tema
9. Var. 4. Poco più moto
10. Var. 5. Allegro capriccioso
11. Var. 6. Allegro
12. Var. 7. Andante
13. Var. 8. Andante (non troppo lento)
14. Var. 9. Schnell
15. Var. 10. Poco Adagio
16. Var. 11. Un poco più animato
17. Var. 12. Allegretto, poco scherzando - Presto
18. Var. 13. Non troppo Presto
19. Var. 14. Andante
20. Var. 15. Poco Adagio
21. Var. 16. Adagio

FRANZ LISZT

22. Les Anneés de pèlerinage II, Italie, S.161: V. Sonetto 104 del Petrarca
23. Les Harmonies poétiques et religieuses, S. 173: n.3, "Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude "



BENEDICTION: FROM THE SHADES TO THE LIGHT

Why not reflect on art as a benediction of life, finding in it a redemption for our struggles, emotions, and imperfections? Art can help us survive the hardest moments. It grants us the power to act and the patience to wait, the wisdom to accept and the optimism to rejoice. Art allows us to feel at the deepest and express at the fullest. It is a blessing in itself. Let's admit it: we are no longer truly alive when the soul dies, and the soul dies where art ceases, even if the body still endures. I reflected on this through the music of Liszt and Brahms and it felt like a meditation on transcendence that leads to benediction.

The album "Benediction: Liszt and Brahms" brings together works by Franz Liszt and Johannes Brahms, two towering figures in piano music. Liszt, the ultimate virtuoso of his time, perhaps of all time, attained fame comparable to that of a modern rock star. Brahms, in contrast, preferred to focus on composition, avoiding the limelight of virtuosity. Yet, in his performances, he undeniably showcased his genius.


Liszt's Transcendental Études exhibit a vast emotional range, blending the composer's signature virtuosity with an expressiveness akin to the vivacity of fireworks, showcasing strength and vitality. Technically groundbreaking for their time, these études remain foundational in the virtuoso solo piano repertoire. This album selects the most contrasting études from the set, aiming to reveal not just opposing emotions but the subtle transitions between them: the nostalgic melancholy of *Ricordanza*, the restless disquietude of *Appassionato*, radiant calm of *Harmonie du soir* and the desolate despair of *Chasse-neige*.

Brahms' Variations on a Theme by Schumann, Op. 9, immerses the listener in a world strikingly different from Liszt's. Based on the "Clara's theme" from Robert Schumann's *Bunte Blätter*, Op. 99, the piece is especially poignant. Brahms, deeply in love with Clara Schumann, dedicated the variations both as an homage to Robert's mentorship and as a deeply personal offering to Clara. The theme is introspective and haunting; Brahms transforms it into 16 variations that explore a wide range of feelings: simplicity, melancholy, exuberance, rebellion, before settling into a serene, almost prayerful conclusion. This progression from darkness to light parallels the notion of a blessing as a restorative force. Brahms once wrote: "Music is a language that speaks where words fail. It is a benediction to the soul."

And returning to Liszt, we find another love story in his Sonetto 104 del Petrarca (Petrarch Sonnet 104) from *Les Années de Pèlerinage* (Years of Pilgrimage). In this piece, the composer translates into music the inner conflict that the poet once expressed in words. The lyrical hero is torn between despair and reverence, but after all the turmoil, the power of love elevates the soul beyond earthly suffering. The final benediction symbolizes Laura's idealized grace, guiding the soul toward the divine. Liszt emphasizes this transformation by contrasting the earlier agitation with a meditative conclusion, suggesting that the deep suffering of unrequited love ultimately finds peace through spiritual surrender.

The album concludes with Liszt's *Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude* (The Blessing of God in Solitude), from his cycle *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*. Inspired by Alphonse de Lamartine's poetry, the piece combines virtuosic writing with profound philosophical reflection. It expresses divine gratitude and celebrates peace and spiritual renewal – a journey of the soul through doubt and hope, ultimately arriving at serenity, much like Brahms' *Variations*. This is a blissful end of the program, an epiphany after all the tempestuousness and soul-searching.

Liszt's *Bénédiction*, his Petrarch Sonnet and the Transcendental *Études*, alongside Brahms' *Variations* share a benedictory mood offering solace through music's power to transform struggle into transcendence. They form a sonic chiaroscuro, like Caravaggio's play of light and shadow, revealing hidden pain and fragile hope. Through this, the listener journeys from darkness to light, receiving the music as a blessing. Both, Johannes Brahms and Franz Liszt, embody the Romantic belief in music as a redemptive force.

The bottom of the slide features several overlapping, flowing, golden-yellow wavy lines that sweep across the width of the image, creating a sense of movement and elegance.

ANASTASIYA EVSINA

Anastasiya Evsina has distinguished herself in the world of classical piano, performing on prestigious stages including the Tokyo Opera City Recital Hall, Minato Mirai Recital Hall in Yokohama, the National Palace of Culture in Sofia, Paderewski Hall in Lausanne, and Rachmaninov Hall at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow. Now residing in Brazil, she has performed at iconic venues such as the National Theater in Brasilia, the São Paulo Cultural Center, the Eva Klabin Foundation in Rio de Janeiro, and Casa de OSPA in Porto Alegre.

Evsina's musical journey began at the age of four and culminated in a master's degree in solo piano from the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow under the tutelage of Professor Daria Petrova. She also specialized in chamber music at the Gnessin Academy, studying with Georgy Fedorenko, after graduating with honors from the Gnessin Russian Academy of Music.



Her repertoire spans a wide range of periods and styles, with a particular passion for lesser-known compositions by Feinberg and Medtner. Her deep love for chamber music has resulted in numerous collaborations, enriching her already broad repertoire. In 2023, Anastasiya and cellist Raïff Dantas Barreto released the album *Rachmaninoff: Cello Sonata, Op. 19 & Romances*, produced by Azul Music and dedicated to composer Sergei Rachmaninoff, celebrating his 150th birthday.

Recognized for her talent, Evsina has won accolades in competitions in Russia and showcased her artistry on Bulgaria's TV1. In Brazil, she continues to perform solo recitals and has appeared as a guest soloist with the Claudio Santoro National Theater Symphony Orchestra and the Symphony Orchestra of Porto Alegre. Her performances have been featured on Senate TV, and she has contributed to academia by offering master classes at the University of Brasilia and serving as a jury member in piano competitions.

In addition to her performing career, Evsina has mentored students at top institutions such as the Tchaikovsky Conservatory, Gnessin Academy, and Hochschule für Musik Saar, guiding many to significant achievements. She also developed the "Technical Solutions" course, focusing on refining piano technique.

Known for her lyrical and cohesive interpretations, Evsina's performances are marked by a natural sense of musicality. Music critic Evelina Zdravkova praised her, stating, "Evsina captivates the audience with impeccable skill and extraordinary talent, exuding powerful music with grace." On her performance of Rachmaninov's Sonata No. 1, Zdravkova remarked, "She lifted the spirit with originality, dynamism, and overwhelming expressiveness."





CREDITS

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