

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE PIANO FANTASY FROM BACH TO DANIELPOUR

Benjamin Harding, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2013

Dissertation directed by: Professor Bradford Gowen

The Fantasy, as the term suggests, is a genre that composers have found congenial for exploring innovative and imaginative processes. Works in this genre are numerous in the solo piano literature, and extend even to works for piano and orchestra and to chamber music with piano. I was curious to explore how a specific genre of music maintained similar characteristics but evolved over time. A fantasy is primed to be inventive and I wanted to see how composers from different eras and backgrounds would handle their material in this genre. I have learned that composers worked through formal developments while making innovations within this genre.

The heart of my dissertation is presented through the recording project. Because of the abundance of piano fantasies, many works had to be excluded from this project for time's sake. On two compact discs, I have recorded approximately two hours of solo piano music. I have included some shorter fantasies to magnify significant developments from era to era, country to country, and composer to composer. The first disc has recordings of eighteenth and nineteenth-century fantasies: *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue*, BWV 903 by J.S. Bach (1685-1750); *Fantasia in C major*, H. XVII, 4 by Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809); *Fantasy in c minor*, K. 475 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-

1791); *Fantasia in f-sharp minor*, Op. 28 by Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847); and *Polonaise-Fantaisie* in A-flat major, Op. 61 by Frederic Chopin (1810-1849). On the second disc I have included mid-19th, 20th and 21st-century piano fantasies: *Fantasy and Fugue on the Theme B-A-C-H* by Franz Liszt (1811-1886); *Fantasia Baetica* by Manuel de Falla (1876-1946); *Three Fantasies* by William Bergsma (1921-1994); *Fantasy, Aria and Fugue* by Frederic Goossen (1927-2011); and *Piano Fantasy* (“*Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden*”) by Richard Danielpour (b. 1956).

The accompanying document includes program notes for each of the pieces recorded. They were recorded on a Steinway “D” in Dekelboun Concert Hall at the University of Maryland by Antonino D’Urzo of Opusrite Productions. This document is available in the Digital Repository at the University of Maryland and the CD’s are available through the Library System at the University of Maryland.

THE PIANO FANTASY FROM BACH TO DANIELPOUR

by

Benjamin Harding

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts
2013

Advisory Committee:

Professor Bradford Gowen, Chair
Professor Denny Gulick
Professor Barbara Hagg-Huglo
Professor Rita Sloan
Professor Mayron Tsong

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CD Track Listing.....	iii
Program Notes.....	1
Glossary.....	11
Bibliography.....	12
Score List.....	13

CD TRACKS

CD 1

1. *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue*, BWV 903 – Fantasy Bach
2. *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue*, BWV 903 – Fugue
3. *Fantasy in c minor*, K. 475 Mozart
4. *Fantasia in C major*, H. XVII, No. 4 Haydn
5. *Fantasia in f-sharp minor*, Op. 28 – Con moto agitato Mendelssohn
6. *Fantasia in f-sharp minor*, Op. 28 – Allegro con moto
7. *Fantasia in f-sharp minor*, Op. 28 – Presto
8. *Polonaise-Fantaisie in A-flat major*, Op. 61 Chopin

CD 2

1. *Fantasy and Fugue on the Theme B-A-C-H* Liszt
2. *Fantasia Baetica* de Falla
3. *Three Fantasies* – This is the way an eagle feels Bergsma
4. *Three Fantasies* – March by night
5. *Three Fantasies* – Toccata
6. *Fantasy, Aria and Fugue* – Fantasy Goossen
7. *Fantasy, Aria and Fugue* – Aria
8. *Fantasy, Aria and Fugue* – Fugue
9. *Piano Fantasy* (“*Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden*”) Danielpour

Program Notes

The culmination of the early development of the fantasy is J.S. Bach's *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue*, BWV 903. Combining the freely-invented style of early fantasies and toccatas, and the stricter contrapuntal notions of the *ricercar*, Bach pushes the boundaries of the genre while combining compositional precedents. This composition is prescient of later fantasies in the way it explores chromatic harmony with vigor and zeal.

The fantasy opens with two flourishes followed by a triplet pattern mimicking toccata-like passagework that dissipates into extended flourishes and harmonic progressions fueled by arpeggios before coming to the curious section marked 'Recitative'. To my knowledge, this is the only place where Bach used this term in his keyboard compositions. The fluid passages interspersed with chords of accompaniment, as in a vocal recitative, highlight the ideas of movement and stillness, and of commotion and stability. The emotional satisfaction of the final sequence into the major cadence is astonishing. In many ways, this emotional harmonic build-up with its tension, consonance and dissonance reflects many of the tendencies that Bach's son, C.P.E. Bach, would embody at the height of his output in the *Empfindsamer Stil*.

The following fugue, although strict at first, quickly embraces a loose structure, mimicking improvisational traits. The subject of the fugue has a fleeting relationship with several key areas. The rapid harmonic rhythm slows down only in places where the counter-subject outlines definitive harmonies. With the subject's second entrance at the interval of the seventh to the countersubject, this aggressive harmony leads one straight away to the free treatment to come. At the end of the fugue, after the culminating

descending octave doubling in the bass, we hear a final flourish reissuing the spirit and style of the opening fantasy.

The *Fantasy in c minor*, K. 475 of 1785 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) was composed several months after the c minor sonata, K. 457. Although first published together, Mozart himself played them separately on occasion. It is interesting to note that there is no key signature given, even though the piece opens with a c minor passage. The piece is highly chromatic for the period, moving from key to key via common tone and chromatic movement.

This piece may also reflect Mozart's interest in labyrinth pieces. A labyrinth piece's characteristics include moving to and from remote key areas connected by a common tone and, an almost exact repeat of the beginning at the end of the piece. There is historic precedent for labyrinth pieces. In 1782, he came into possession of Bach's *Little Harmonic Labyrinth* and soon after he moved to Vienna and became under the influence of the Freemasons. He joined a Masonic lodge in 1784 and his father became an honorary member in 1785. This piece may have been a working out of Masonic ideas as it related to their understanding of their spiritual process that takes place in a labyrinth.

Free improvisational passages are juxtaposed against more regular lyrical sections. Tempo markings and extreme changes of style delineate sections of the piece. The opening comes back at the final section and gives the entire work a sense of completeness. One can hear traces, as in Bach's Chromatic Fantasy, of the *Empfindsamer Stil* throughout the work, as the emotional build-up is tumultuous in its chromaticism, extreme variation in note values and tempi, sighing-motives, movement from dissonant harmonies to clear and warm consonant ones, and fast changes in harmonic rhythm. In

this piece we have moved away from the Baroque identity of the fantasy. We have a personal drama which could almost be a scene in an opera complete with an overture, aria, recitative and orchestral embellishments.

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) called his *Fantasia*, H. XVII/4 in C Major, a “Capriccio” in a letter to a publisher explaining his newly-composed, comical work. This piece was completed in the same month as the late C major sonata, Hob. XVI/48, and was immediately published by Artaria. Although the piece has a vocal quality, there are many passages where Haydn implements instrumental effects, like horn calls, though to be sure, this is a keyboard piece, filled with triadic ascending and descending arpeggios, virtuosic hand crossings, and fast sequences of scalar passages. To capture the comedic quality desired, he prepares the listener to expect a certain key area and then leaps or slides into something completely different. To add to the comic nature of this work, Haydn inserts wide leaps in register with surprising dynamic shifts. Typical of Haydn is the irregular phrase structure of this piece. Playful and full of zest, it is whimsical, and has dramatic shifts of mood within a light-hearted framework. The form of this piece is a rondo but that formal structure is masked by the seemingly rough edges of each section. We do not have the operatic quality of the previous Mozart work but a unique and unpredictable exploration within the variety of fantasy.

In the 19th century we see many examples of a new concept, the multi-movement fantasy. Felix Mendelssohn’s (1809-1847) *Fantasia in f-sharp minor*, Op. 28 belongs in this collection. This work’s title has a curious origin. The final manuscript was completed on January 29, 1833. Letters to Mendelssohn’s sister suggest that this piece had the original name “Scottish Sonata”. This would seem, on the surface, to link it to his

“Scottish” Symphony and to the “Hebrides” Overture. However, the starting date of the composition in 1828 was well before his visit to Scotland in 1829. Mendelssohn had the *Fantasia* Op. 28 published in 1834 in Bonn, leaving out the original title.

Being a three-movement fantasy and initially entitled ‘Sonata’, we could link this work to Beethoven’s Op. 27 sonatas marked ‘quasi una fantasia’. Beethoven had pushed the sonata genre into a new formal expression; Mendelssohn simply codified this idea in this work. The first two movements are ABA with the third movement in Sonata-Allegro form. Like Beethoven’s Op. 27, no. 2, there is an ominous mood and atmosphere in the opening of the piece. The middle section of this movement builds through tremolo-like passages in both hands into a climactic statement of the first theme from the opening section.

The second movement is charming in its opening theme, and lyrical in its second. Pianistically, the shift of the melody from the right hand to the left hand is a challenge. The last movement is a fast-paced scherzo with rapid passages in both hands. The portentous nature of the first movement returns to haunt this fantasy right to the final low, dark trill and cadence. This piece truly moves away from the jovial nature of the Haydn fantasy and the operatic manner of the Mozart fantasy into a style of introspection and Romantic fervor.

The *Polonaise-Fantaisie* in A-flat major, Op. 61 by Frederic Chopin (1810-1849) merges two genres. The polonaise is, of course, firmly associated with Chopin since he took the native Polish dance and turned it into a symbol of nationalism. Within Op. 61 he expands on his conception of the polonaise as a character piece and wraps it in an improvisational quality. Certainly, the *Polonaise-Fantaisie* is more fantasy than

polonaise, but the polonaise rhythm is scattered in a unifying way throughout the work. What is especially exceptional about this fantasy is the innovative introduction. Chopin delays the satisfaction of hearing the main polonaise-like theme by divulging only fragments of the polonaise rhythm as he builds harmonic tension. The drama of the opening is vivid and personal. This piece, as a whole, could be considered to be in a loose rondo form.

A significant development in the history of the fantasy genre is the use of thematic transformation to unify an improvisatory piece. Part of the attraction of such a work is the movement from one emotional center to another; from searching to arriving, from mourning to triumphant ecstasy. This ecstasy is brought about by presenting the opening theme in a modified way in the coda: it is completely rewritten, using a different harmonic base and rhythm to give the piece a victorious close.

An important example of this approach is Franz Liszt's (1811-1886) *Fantasy and Fugue on the Theme B-A-C-H*. Originally written for organ, it was transcribed for piano by the composer and premiered by Alexander Winterberger on May 13, 1856. Not surprising is Liszt's expert use of chromaticism and the diminished chord as devices to delve into surprising tonal centers. Before this composition, the pairing of a fantasy and a fugue would have presented the fugue as a separate piece from the opening fantasy. Here, the fugue is embedded in the Fantasy and becomes a part of the fabric of the piece. This piece is arranged around a series of pitches explored in a free way. It is fragmentary, since Liszt chooses to divide the piece into segments unified only by the pitches presented and the repeated harmonies. This composition is a perfect example of the compositional tool of thematic transformation, a technique for which Liszt is known and

which proved to be highly influential in the compositions of Richard Wagner, Cesar Franck, and others.

Given that this piece was written during Liszt's extended stay in Weimar, it has a certain connection to his other music written during this period. This music has a religious overtone, partly because he was asking deeper questions about his life, partly because he was exploring the music of Bach, and partly because of personal difficulty and loss in his family. Throughout the darker chromaticism in the earlier part of the piece one can sense the composer working through life's bigger questions, and feel the pain of loss. A triumphant perspective is given in the end. It is as if the composer declares that he has hope in life, even searching through pain. We have here the fantasy taking on a philosophical bent. Through the genre of fantasy, Liszt was attempting to search for transcendence and metaphysical meaning.

Manuel de Falla's (1876-1946) *Fantasia Baetica* was composed in 1919 for Arthur Rubinstein. This piece was to be paired with Stravinsky's "Piano-Rag Music" (1919) in a purchase from Rubinstein to help Stravinsky and de Falla who suffered financial loss at the time of the Russian Revolution and during the First World War, respectively. Debussy had died shortly after de Falla began working on this piece. Could this personal loss be a catalyst for much of the deep emotional exploration in the piece? De Falla did write the three minute work for guitar *Homenaje pour "Le Tombeau de Claude Debussy"*. There is no external record to confirm this, but one has to wonder about whether or not the hurt of loss is memorialized in *Fantasia Baetica*. This was de Falla's last virtuoso piece for the piano.

“Baetica” is the Roman name for Andalusia and this piece represents the effervescent music of that region. De Falla surveys the possibilities of the piano as it represents the various instrumental and vocal folk idioms of Andalusia in a virtuosic capacity. De Falla’s music here is filled with massive chords, quick repeated notes and virtuosic leaps. The harmonies evoking exoticism, thin-textured repeated notes reminiscent of guitar strumming, harsh percussive chords, and the trademark *cante jondo* bring de Falla out of his impressionistic-like music to a more focused, national style. The pianistic ideas are beyond anything that the guitar idiom or the voice could present. The piece could be considered in either rondo form or ABA. De Falla was an outstanding pianist in his own right, having won the Ortiz y Cussó, an early twentieth-century international piano competition, in 1905. His virtuosic approach to the piano is unmistakable here.

Three Fantasies by William Bergsma were written in 1943 and revised in 1983. Articulations, pedallings and tempo changes were updated in the later edition used in this project. Besides being a fantasy, each piece has a title. The first is “This is the way an eagle feels”. This movement is a short, monothematic work treating an opening theme presented in varying keys and registers. The second title is “March by night”. It, too, is monothematic, and bears no apparent connection to the previous movement. The only contrasting section in this second fantasy can be heard in the left-hand changing from a staccatissimo walking-bass line to a held-out legato section at measure nine, only to return shortly thereafter to the staccato notes. The last title is simply, “Toccata”. These titles were not used in 1943, because, as the composer later stated, he could not think of a third title. It occurred to him that the last movement is a toccata, so he might as well just

call it that. As we have seen previously, the toccata has a deep history and relationship with the genre of fantasy. And in the way that these pieces are programmatic, one can see possible links to Schumann's *Fantasiestücke*, Op. 12.

Frederic Goossen's (1927-2011) *Fantasy, Aria and Fugue* was written in 1973. Goossen, a prolific composer, was a professor of composition at the University of Alabama for the major part of his career. The fantasy movement has traces of a contrapuntal approach. In the opening, he uses strong octaves and chords mixed with more flowing passages. Also contributing to the fantasy-like quality of this movement are quick changes in meter and in harmonic rhythm.

The aria movement explores the idea of recitative and song. The theme of the aria is often accompanied by a second voice in a duet-like manner. The recitative sections have quicker, instrumental passages and pointillistic tendencies. The first two movements end with an *attacca* into the next.

The final fugue is strict in treatment. The subject is presented in a detached way, though in other places in the fugue, Goossen is precise in presenting phrasing in contrast to the separated touch of the opening. Towards the end of the fugue we have full texture, chords and rhythms reminiscent of the previous movements, complete with a restatement of the fantasy's opening.

The final piece on my recording is Richard Danielpour's *Piano Fantasy* written in 2008. This fantasy is based upon the Bach chorale from the *Saint Matthew Passion*, "Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden". This chorale comes after the death of Jesus when the believer finds comfort in Christ's suffering in that His death will, in the end, give life to the Christian even as the Christian plods through anxiety and fear. Danielpour explores

these ideas in an extraordinarily free way. He is specific in his markings for sonorities, using, for example, such terms as “ethereal” and “bell-like”. The actual melody for the chorale is, for the most part, obscured throughout the piece. As this piece is based loosely upon contours and certain rhythmic tendencies of the *Saint Matthew Passion* melody, it is relatable to Bach’s chorale preludes for organ where, in a more direct statement of a chorale melody, Bach would surround it in improvisational embellishment.

Danielpour’s fantasy traverses many sound landscapes. The opening is declarative with double-octaves as if to be played on an organ. In some moments, the writing evokes evanescent sounds, toccata-like passages, thundering octaves and bell-like chords. There is even a moment where the composer seems to conjure French café piano music. There are moments of peace and there are moments of wild aggression.

Within the fantasy is a fugue whose subject is the melody of the chorale. It is offset at first by a descending interval and then an extended descending scale passage. This compositional technique disguises the chorale melody. As the fugue progresses, the player senses that the composer may have had the organ in mind, since the performer is constantly required to use finger substitution in order to achieve the legato indicated.

Each one of the composers selected for this project has used elements, forms and models of the past. To compose a fantasy does not necessarily mean to shed traditional structures and forms. On the contrary, the composers represented in this project embraced older forms while experimenting with their own creative capacity. As a player, the intriguing issue for me in this project was to express the imaginative aspects of each piece. I found myself relying in what the composers had written and in how they represented their imagination and innovations in the score. I am still curious about this

genre as it affects other works in a composer's oeuvre, and I am curious as to how the imagination is sparked and developed in experimental ways within controlled parameters and historical precedent. This curiosity for me will continue and grow as I meditate on these pieces and continue to explore this significant genre.

GLOSSARY

Andalusia. A region in southern Spain. Today it is an autonomous community recognized by Spain as a nationality and is divided into eight provinces.

Cante jondo. A vocal style in flamenco music. *Jondo* means deep.

Empfindsamer stil. The north German “sensitive” or “sentimental” style of the eighteenth-century featuring melodic and harmonic chromaticism, and typical of C.P.E. Bach’s late lieder and keyboard sonatas and fantasies.

Fantasy. An innovative and imaginative instrumental composition, often characterized by alteration, embellishment, exaggeration, and improvisatory sections resulting in the pushing of boundaries in established forms and norms. Throughout its use, fantasia has often simply meant to improvise.

Little Harmonic Labyrinth. This is an organ piece by Johann Sebastian Bach listed as BWV 591.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Gillespie, John. *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music*. New York: Dover Publications, 1965.

Gordon, Stewart. *A History of Keyboard Literature*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1996.

Kirby, F. E.. *Music for Piano: A Short History*. Portland: Amadeus Press, 2000.

Marshall, Robert L. ed.. *Eighteenth-Century Piano Music*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Matthews, Denis ed.. *Keyboard Music*. New York: Penguin Books, 1972.

Richards, Annette ed.. *C.P.E. Bach Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Todd, Larry R. ed.. *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1990.

Wright, Craig. *The Maze and the Warrior: Symbols in Architecture, Theology, and Music*. London: Harvard University Press, 2001.

SCORE LIST

Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue, BWV 903 J.S. Bach (1685-1750)
Dadelsen, Georg von ed.. *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in d minor*. Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2009.

Fantasy in c minor, K. 475 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)
Plath, Wolfgang and, Wolfgang Rehm ed.. *Piano Sonatas, Volume 2*. Kassel: Bärenreiter Verlag, 2002.

Fantasia in C major, H. XVII, No. 4 Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)
Gerlach, Sonja ed.. *Fantasia in C major, H. XVII: No. 4*. Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 1969.

Fantasia in f-sharp minor, Op. 28 Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
Reitz, Julius ed.. *Felix Mendelssohn: Complete Works for Pianoforte Solo*. New York: Dover Publications, 1975.

Polonaise-Fantaisie in A-flat major, Op. 61 Frederic Chopin (1810-1849)
Mikuli, Carl ed.. *Nocturnes and Polonaises*. New York: Dover Publications, 1998.

Fantasy and Fugue on the Theme B-A-C-H Franz Liszt (1811-1886)
Sauer, Emil von ed.. *Mephisto Waltz and Other Works*. New York: Dover Publications, 1994.

Fantasia Baetica Manuel de Falla (1876-1946)
De Falla, Manuel. *Fantasia Baetica*. Boca Raton: Masters Music Publications, no date.

Three Fantasies William Bergsma (1921-1994)
Bergsma, William. *Three Fantasies*. Fort Lauderdale: Plymouth Music Company, 1983.

Fantasy, Aria and Fugue Frederic Goossen (1927-2011)
Self-published.

Piano Fantasy ("Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden") Richard Danielpour (1956-)
Danielpour, Richard. *Piano Fantasy*. New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 2008.

