

VISIONS:
A Master's Recital by Lin Xiangning



~Programme~

SCHUMANN
Piano Sonata No. 1 in F# minor, Op. 11

RAVEL
Miroirs
II. Oiseaux Tristes
III. Une barque sur l'océan

DE FALLA
Fantasia Baetica

Dear listeners,

Good evening, and welcome to my recital. In the last few weeks of practicing, with the encouragement of my Professor, Dr Thomas Hecht and my lovely studio mates, I started penning images and words to help me sense the music with greater intimacy and truth. Hence, I have written a short story (in italics) to accompany each piece that you will soon experience. In sharing these visions with you, I hope you find resonance in them, and the music.

Robert Schumann- Piano Sonata No. 1 in F# minor, Op. 11

Ask any musician about the love story of Robert Schumann and Clara Wieck, they would tell you that it was epic. One of the main reasons is that at the beginning, their love was forbidden by Clara's father. In 1836, Clara was sent away, and any form of communication between the two lovers was disallowed. Composed during this period of separation, the Sonata is steeped in Schumann's desperation and affection towards his beloved...

*at every turn, I hear her name.
once a whisper, twice declaimed.
thrice a holler, stung with pain.*

*clamorous thoughts and searching cries,
in her presence turn butterflies.
her tender lips sooth chafing skies,
and knowing eyes, an amber sunrise.*

*but clatter, clap, clang and clash!
his clarity robbed in a flash.
with raging fever he writhes and writes,
music his clarion call, beseeching light
clawless and weak reality has damned his pride.*

*at every turn, he calls her name.
once he whispers, twice declaims.
thrice he hollers, seared in pain.*

*clamorous thoughts and searching cries,
in her presence once turned butterflies.
yet now, mangled lips grate splintered skies,
and hollowed eyes chase empty sunrise.*

Maurice Ravel- selections from *Miroirs*

In 1905, Ravel penned a collection of piano pieces titled *Miroirs*. With precision and imagination, he paints various animal, land, and sea-inspired soundscapes. Featured in this programme is a scene of sad birds trapped a humid forest, as well as a boat sailing free on the open ocean. Ravel cites a line from *Julius Caesar* as a source of inspiration behind the aesthetics and formal construction of this collection: "the eye sees not itself but by reflection, by some other things"...

II. Oiseaux Tristes

Once upon a time, a little bird flew into a dark brooding forest. It sang its song and was mesmerised by the echoes from the trees. It sang again! But this time, the hollow echoes from the trees pierced its heart with abject loneliness. On that day, the little bird named itself "Lonely".

Lonely soon came to know the other birds of the forest: Grief, Pain, Sorrow, and Resignation. Sometimes in the evening, they would all surge towards the skies in a flash, shrieking, "Nevermore! Nevermore of this sadness!" But, the forest would only whisper, "Evermore. Evermore of your sadness."

And so, these sad birds... well, they go on singing their sad little songs, into the hollow echoes of the forest.

III. Une barque sur l'océan

*The sad birds are lonely,
But the boat alone is free*

*It beckons the breeze
And waltzes on waves
Droplets of bliss
Ricochet upon its face*

*In roiling storms,
It swirls and flails,
Trusting the tides with its tissue sails
Yet with delight,
it sings and jives,
There is no being more alive!*

Manuel de Falla- Fantasia Baetica

In 1919, de Falla composed this wonderful evocation of Baetis, an ancient Roman province which constitutes most of present-day Andalusia, Spain. Many elements of the flamenco tradition are interwoven in this fantasy, such as the *cante jondo* (deep song), *taconeo* (foot stamping), and the variations of guitar flourishes. May the following poem serve as a cartography of this reimagined land of Baetica...

In a land that now is, breathed a land that once was.

Enter Baetica.

*Beneath the proud and smouldering sun, the air
-- a potent blend of fish, sweat, and olived hair.*

*On your right, the main square!
Women adorned in sheaths so livid, the colours bite your eyes.
Flocked 'round the fountain like firebirds, fierce chatter and salacious pries.*

*Darting across is young Manuel, fleeing his mother's nags and chase.
Is it a case of the runaway chicken?
Or again, spilling sauce over the linens?*

*Turn a corner, you see two young lovers,
up against the wall of pomegranate flowers.
Fervent kisses and earnest murmurs,
Forbidden love blooms best late-summer.*

*Far across town you hear a cry.
A lament raucous and pained,
Eased barely by broken flourishes in vain.
They say:
A song that aches and stings, blunt and true it ever rings.*

*Deep in the night when the day's bustle hangs shimmering,
A young maiden paces her courtyard wondering,
Should I love him, or should I not?
Thoughts drift into sleep soon after, along with the rest of the lot.*

*When the sun shines, day strikes again.
And again, and again it did, till Baetica was no more.
But it lives through a fantasy, which is now mine.
And because this moment exists, mine is now thine.*