The Piano at the Carnival

Anthony Goldstone

Joyful and mischievous music inspired by the carnival and the masked ball

Schumann Chopin
Liszt Khachaturian
Dvořák Sydney Smith

The Piano at the Carnival

Aram Khachaturian, arr. Alexander Dolukhanian

***Masquerade* Suite**	première recording	16.11	
1	Waltz		3.59
2	Nocturne		3.29
3	Mazurka		2.43
4	Romance		3.21
5	Galop		2.39

Robert Schumann

Carnaval, Op. 9		30.00	
6	Préambule		2.15
7	Pierrot		1.44
8	Arlequin		1.02
9	Valse noble		1.45
10	Eusebius		1.55
11	Florestan		0.51
12	Coquette		1.35
13	Réplique		0.47
14	Papillons		0.49
15	A.S.C.H. – S.C.H.A.: Lettres dansantes		0.46
16	Chiarina		1.30
17	Chopin		1.05
18	Estrella		0.32
19	Reconnaissance		1.47
20	Pantalon et Colombine		1.06
21	Valse allemande – Paganini		2.31
22	Aveu		1.15
23	Promenade		2.34
24	Pause		0.18
25	Marche des Davidsbündler contre les Philistins		3.53

Fryderyk Chopin

26 **Souvenir de Paganini ("The Carnival of Venice")** 3.14

Franz Liszt

27 **Hungarian Rhapsody No. 9 ("The Carnival of Pesth")** 11.42

Sydney Smith

28 **Fantaisie brillante on Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera***, Op. 10
première recording (except piano roll made c. 1919) 5.08

Antonín Dvořák, arr. Paul Klengel

29 **"Carnival" Overture, Op. 92** première recording 10.16

Total playing time **76.31**

Anthony Goldstone, piano

Recorded in St. John the Baptist Church, Alkborough, N. Lincs., England, in 2008 and 2009
Piano: Grotrian <www.grotrian.de>
Piano Technician: Benjamin E. Nolan
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Music publisher (*Masquerade* Suite): Boosey & Hawkes. All other works P.D.

Music of the Carnival

Carnival, celebrated predominantly though by no means exclusively in Catholic countries, is the period of revelry – and excess – preceding the forty days of abstention during Lent, commemorating the privations of Jesus in the wilderness. The origin of the word is not clear, but it may come from the Latin *carne vale*, farewell to meat (theoretically forbidden in Lent), and the tradition goes back at least as far as the middle ages in Italy. Masked balls have figured importantly in the festivities, during which often "anything goes" and which reach a climax on the day before Ash Wednesday, the start of Lent, famously known as Mardi Gras (fat Tuesday, Shrove Tuesday in Britain). Many works of art – visual, literary and musical – have been inspired by the possibilities of the carnival; for the pianist the pinnacle is Schumann's Carnival, Op. 9, which is the focus of the present recital.

The iconoclastic poet and author Mikhail Lermontov (1814-1841), who was killed in a duel at the age of twenty-six, wrote his satirical play *Masquerade* in 1836, but it was rejected by the censors and not produced in Lermontov's lifetime. The problem was that the plot, in which an innocent wife, falsely suspected of infidelity by her husband, is finally poisoned by him with ice cream during a masked ball, pointed an accusing finger at the decadence of the Russian aristocracy. When *Masquerade* was produced in 1917, the year of the Russian Revolution, Alexander Glazunov wrote the incidental music, and in the ensuing Soviet era the Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian (1903-1978), who was an enthusiastic communist, was asked to write incidental music for the production commemorating the centenary of the death of Lermontov in 1941. Three years later he distilled this into the five-movement ***Masquerade* Suite** that has become a firm favourite.

The present arrangement for piano of the orchestral score is by the composer's compatriot, the noted composer and pianist Alexander Pavlovich Dolukhanian (1910-1968), who was the chess champion of Armenia in his late twenties and who married the celebrated mezzo-soprano Zara Dolukhanova. I have made modifications in order to eliminate several (presumably inadvertent) divergences from the original score and to restore orchestral detail omitted by Dolukhanian for the purpose of simplification.

Despite the gruesome nature of the story, there is much of what Shostakovich praised as Khachaturian's "basically optimistic, life asserting view" in the music. The most popular

movement is the spirited Waltz **[1]**, to which the persistently sharpened fourth degree of the scale in the main theme contributes a sinister tinge. The Nocturne **[2]** contains a soaring melody played in the original by a solo violin, while the Mazurka **[3]** is a jaunty example of the Polish dance-form that was a part of the staple fare of nineteenth-century Russia. The wronged wife is depicted in the melancholy Romance and the suite ends with a madcap Galop **[5]**.

The German master Robert Schumann (1810-1856), in common with many musicians, was fascinated by ciphers. In his first published work, written in 1831, he used the surname of a young lady, Meta Abegg, for the first five notes (in English nomenclature A, B flat, E, G, G) of a theme with variations. The inspiration for his **Carnaval**, completed in 1835, was the arrival of Ernestine von Fricken to study with his piano teacher, Friedrich Wieck (the father of his future wife, Clara): in his ardour for her the young man realized with glee that the letters spelling Ernestine's home town, Asch, could be translated into musical notes (A, E flat, C, B or A flat, C, B in English nomenclature, as in Sphinxes 2 and 3, see below) and moreover that those letters were the only musical ones in his own surname (as in Sphinx 1, see below). One or other of the mottos occurs in most, but not all, of the movements of Carnival.

The theme of a carnival masked ball, as well as being a feel-good subject and a rich source of humour and musical ideas, no doubt appealed to the composer's complex nature in that it raised psychological issues inherent in concealed or assumed identity. Five years later he would produce another carnival-based work – Faschingschwank aus Wien (Carnival Jest from Vienna), and Carnaval itself had originally been called Fasching: Schwänke auf Vier Noten (Carnival: Jests on Four Notes), before the eventual title was arrived at – Carnaval: Scènes mignonnes sur quatre notes (Carnival: Miniature Scenes on Four Notes). Included in the twenty movements are classic *commedia dell'arte* characters mixed with some real people from Schumann's life, in and out of masks, as well as Schumann himself, in two guises. Waltz tempo, whether fast or slow, underlies the majority of the movements.

The substantial preamble **[6]** begins with a fanfare signalling the start of the dancing, which gathers momentum towards a powerful, syncopated coda. In the work's first character sketch, Pierrot, **[7]**, the devoted, put-upon servant seems rather to go round in circles, whereas Harlequin **[8]**, a flamboyant but sometimes sad clown, entertains us with his agile leaps. After a noble waltz **[9]**, Schumann's own reflective persona (Eusebius is derived from the Greek word for "pious") provides an oasis of calm **[10]**. However, his alter ego Florestan, who loves new experiences and adventure, now explodes on to the scene **[11]**, twice quoting a fragment from

Schumann's Papillons, Op. 2, a work foreshadowing Carnaval. Our attention is suddenly claimed by a coquette **[12]**, playfully teasing her admirer; he responds to her overtures **[13]**, but the outcome is inconclusive.

At this juncture Schumann interpolated into the score the musical notes derived from the four letters mentioned earlier, in the form of three mottos called Sphinxes:

No. 1 – in German nomenclature S (phonetically the same as Es), C, H, A — i.e. E flat, C, B, A;
No. 2 – in German nomenclature As, C, H — i.e. A flat, C, B;
No. 3 – in German nomenclature A, S (again = Es), C, H — i.e. A, E flat, C, B.

It can be seen from this that in fact five notes have been extracted from the four letters (not four, as stated in the title), i.e. E flat, C, B, A, and A flat. The three mottos are notated in the bass clef as breves, very long notes that have hardly been used in the last few hundred years. They are occasionally played in performance but, as Schumann has called them Sphinxes, my instinct is that he may have confused the unfamiliar symbol denoting a breve note with the even rarer one denoting a breve rest and that they were probably intended to remain "as silent as the sphinx". Scarcely less puzzling is the ensuing frenetic number **[14]** entitled Butterflies, which (who knows?) may depict merrymakers dressed as butterflies charging around at full tilt, to the accompaniment of horns (the left hand is marked *quasi corni* at the outset). The fleeting scherzo-like number that follows **[15]** is headed A.S.C.H. – S.C.H.A.: Dancing Letters, but I have been able to detect only As, C, H.

Three living people now enter the proceedings. Clara Wieck, the fifteen-year-old daughter of Schumann's piano teacher, who had already begun a brilliant career as a concert pianist, and whom he was to marry in 1840, is disguised as Chiarina **[16]** in a prophetically passionate portrait. Chopin **[17]** is a warm tribute to the great composer (of whom more later), Schumann's senior by three months, of whom he had written in 1831 in his capacity as a music critic, "Hats off, gentleman, a genius!" Marked *agitato*, the urgent twice-played melody, floating above waves of arpeggios, abounds with emotion. In contrast, Estrella **[18]**, disguising Ernestine, the young lady who inspired the work, is unexpectedly the shortest number in the entire set (apart from the run-up to the finale) and, although marked *con affetto* (with affection), is peculiarly muscular – hardly "childlike, delicate and thoughtful" (Schumann's description of Ernestine). Indeed, the conclusion leaves an unavoidable impression of

peremptory dismissal, perhaps because the relationship had ended. It is amusing that Chopin has been entrusted with keeping the two young ladies apart.

Reconnaissance **[19]** can be interpreted as both recognition and searching, for it opens with what might be an animated flirtation, interrupted by an anxious episode as the couple is separated among the crowd, following which the lovers find each other and resume their dalliance. In Pantaloon and Columbine **[20]** we see the rich, lascivious merchant slyly propositioning the shrewd, dancing servant girl, who appears first and also has the final word. Next **[21]** comes a no-nonsense German waltz, whose participants are presently sidelined by an intruder performing dazzling pyrotechnics on his violin. The Genoese Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840) was taking Europe by storm with a technique that was said to come from the devil; Schumann had heard him play in Frankfurt in 1830; here he even raises the stakes, requiring each hand of the pianist to enact Paganini-like leaps, the difficulty being compounded by the unsettling time lag between the hands. At the end of this demonic circus act four gong strokes from Hades dissipate to reveal a ghostly harmony that, to our relief, returns us to normal life.

A heartfelt avowal of love **[22]** precedes a stroll, to a waltz accompaniment **[23]**, providing, at its close, the last trace of repose before a brief flurry **[24]** announces the "League of David" – allies, real, imaginary, past and present, of the composer in his campaign for the bold, meaningful and progressive in art – marching out to a subversive three-beats-in-the-bar **[25]**. The pace accelerates, but at two points, 1'29" and 2'25", the "Philistines" attempt to impose their dreary *Großvater-tanz* (grandfather's dance), labelled in the score "theme from the seventeenth century". This was the tune traditionally played at the *Kehraus*, literally the sweeping out of the revellers as, at midnight, Shrove Tuesday became Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. In other words, these reactionary fossils are killjoys, and so they are mercilessly knocked about and ridiculed in the uninhibited fun and games. An extended reprise of the last section of Préambule brings to a conclusion this highly original work, whose dedicatee was, surprisingly, the Polish violinist-composer Karol Lipiński (1790-1861), a friend, admirer, colleague – and perhaps the only serious rival – of Paganini.

The supreme "poet of the piano", Fryderyk (Frédéric) Chopin (1810-1849), born to Polish and French parents, lived in Poland until his life was more than half over, at the age of just twenty, after which he became an exile in Paris following the suppression of the Polish uprising against the ruling Russian Empire. While still in Warsaw, in 1829, he witnessed Paganini's astonishing virtuosity and showmanship, which included the performance of a spectacular set of variations

that he had composed on a tune with the character of a barcarolle called *Le carnaval de Venise* (the tradition of the Venice carnival, with its extravagant masks, goes back to the thirteenth century); this *coup de theatre*, dedicated, it so happens, also to Lipiński, immediately made the ditty into a "hit". Chopin was so overwhelmed that he composed his own variations for piano on the melody, entitling it, in homage, **Souvenir de Paganini [26]**.

Through-composed and rocking in 6/8 time between the two most basic harmonies, tonic and dominant, this little gem uncannily presaged his famous Berceuse of 1843-4, and it may also be viewed as the embryo of the greatest of all gondola music, his Barcarolle of 1846. Strangely, three years before composing Souvenir de Paganini Chopin had, at just sixteen, written a set of variations for piano duet on a less familiar variant of the same tune (recorded by Goldstone and Clemmow on Divine Art dda25070), which had been appropriated by the Irish poet Thomas Moore as one of the collection of National Airs for which he wrote his own words. One can imagine Chopin's surprise as he heard Paganini perform the same melody, slightly altered. There is no indication of tempo prefacing Souvenir de Paganini: I have chosen one that reproduces some of the brilliance of Paganini's *pièce de résistance* while, I hope, retaining the grace inherent in Chopin's conception.

The great piano virtuoso, teacher and visionary Franz (Ferenc) Liszt (1811-1888), born in Hungary into a German-speaking family, has been adopted by the Hungarian nation as its national musical hero (as the Poles have done with Chopin). It is an irony that he was probably motivated to write "Hungarian" music by falling in love with the *Divertissement à la hongroise* for piano duet by an Austrian with parental roots in Moravia and Bohemian Silesia – Franz Schubert. Liszt made an arrangement for two hands of the *Divertissement* in 1838-9 (he also did an orchestration and other versions of the second movement), and then embarked on composing a series of works that would culminate in the nineteen Hungarian Rhapsodies based on Hungarian and Gypsy melodies that are among his most popular works. As opposed to number six, which I have recorded on a CD entitled "Tzigane" devoted to Gypsy-inspired music (Divine Art 25033), the celebratory ninth, subtitled **"The Carnival of Pesth" [27]** – Pest(h) being the eastern part of Budapest, seems more ethnically Hungarian than Gypsy. It dates from 1853.

In the former of the Rhapsody's two separate but complementary parts, a dramatic introduction ushers in a debonair melody, which is then given decorative variation treatment, at times conveying an Italianate character, once again *à la* Paganini. A cadenza, at 3'01", leads

to a syncopated dance tune that, notwithstanding some meditative moments, builds in power and elaboration before coming to rest in a gentle upward figuration derived from the opening theme. The second part begins with an energetic, unmistakably Hungarian melody, followed by a section beginning at 7'33" described by the fine Hungarian Liszt interpreter Louis (Lajos) Kentner as a "delightful 'scene' where a pretty masked female tries her powers of seduction and receives a gruff refusal from the elderly gentleman, her intended victim. This part of the music," he goes on to write, "is so realistic that I had guessed its descriptive purport long before I heard that such a tradition actually existed." The energetic melody returns, then gives way to a wild dance, after which the triumphant reprise of the debonair melody from part one, together with the gathering up of other material, ensures that the work, while rhapsodic, feels satisfactorily organised.

From Venice and Pesth to Stockholm, or rather to Boston, Massachusetts. Giuseppe Verdi's (1813-1901) opera *Un Ballo in Maschera* (*A Masked Ball*) was originally called *Gustavo III* and recounted the assassination of King Gustav III of Sweden, who was shot during a masked ball in the Royal Opera House in the Swedish capital in March, 1792, and died a fortnight later of infection from the wound. Here there is an fascinating parallel with *Masquerade*, in that regicide was too sensitive a subject for the censors in Italy, particularly since, as the opera was being rehearsed in Naples in January 1858, in Paris an Italian revolutionary, with accomplices, attempted to assassinate Napoleon III (who was on his way to see Rossini's opera *William Tell*), and by the time of the first production, in Rome in February 1859, the story had been relocated, improbably, to New England and the victim of the plot demoted to colonial governor: Riccardo, Conte di Warwich, Governatore di Boston (Richard, Earl of Warwick, Governor of Boston)!

Sydney Smith (1839-1889), who was born in Dorset, England, to a musical father, could claim among his teachers Mendelssohn's mentor, Ignaz Moscheles, in Leipzig. He became hugely fashionable in England as a pianist and teacher and, internationally, as a composer, mostly for the piano, of hundreds of pieces of salon music, including potpourris of the latest operas etc. In this genre he was a skilled craftsman, creating effective, tuneful and moderately demanding *morceaux* that gifted lady amateur pianists could conquer, being rewarded for their diligence with an appropriate sense of achievement. Grove's Dictionary of 1889 said of him rather patronisingly, "his compositions … are extremely popular with the numerous class of performers whose tastes are satisfied by a maximum of brilliancy combined with a minimum of difficulty." In fact Smith's **Fantaisie brillante on Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* [28]**, dating

from around 1861, is quite difficult to play. In just over five minutes it utilises three numbers from the first act of the opera: "O figlio d'Inghilterra" at the start, "La rivedrà nell' estasi" at 2'02", and "Alla vita che t'arride" at 3'26". The sparkling coda reveals Smith's familiarity with Mendelssohn's piano concertos.

It is hard to imagine many amateur pianists making much headway with Paul Klengel's (1854-1935) transcription of Antonín Dvořák's (1841-1904) **"Carnival" Overture [29]**. No compromises have been made in fitting this rich, hectic and complex orchestral score on a keyboard for performance by ten fingers. As well as being as a "house arranger" for Simrock, the publishing house of Brahms and Dvořák, the Leipzig-born and -trained elder brother of the 'cellist and composer Julius Klengel was a violinist, pianist, conductor, academic and composer. In 1928 he was described as "a man of wide general culture and an admirable example of the good all-round musician" by Grove's Dictionary, which also rated his gifts as an arranger as "occasionally amounting almost to genius," citing his transformation of Brahms's clarinet quintet into a sonata for violin and piano, which "won Brahms's enthusiastic approval, as well as Joachim's, who played it in public on more than one occasion with Professor Paul Klengel himself."

One of Dvořák's most performed orchestral works, "Carnival" is the centre-piece of a triptych of concert overtures representing, in order, "Nature, Life and Love". There is certainly an abundance of life in the piece, completed four days after the Czech master's fiftieth birthday. He laid out his programme as follows: "A lonely contemplative wanderer reaches the city at nightfall where a carnival of pleasure reigns supreme. On every side is heard the clangor of instruments, mingled with shouts of joy and the unrestrained hilarity of the people, giving vent to their feelings in their songs and dance tunes." The first theme bustles noisily, a second emphatically announces its presence at 0'48", but then at 1'51" a heart-tugging, lyrical and very Czech melody counterbalances the ebullience. A romantic *andantino con moto* central episode, beginning at 4'06", portrays "a pair of straying lovers," incorporating at 4'32" and 5'07", as a sort of *ritornello*, the motto that denotes nature in all three overtures. A contrapuntal passage then presents the second theme of the opening section in a more subdued light, in the minor mode. The music gains impetus until the resumption of the opening theme, which is largely responsible for generating the concluding couple of minutes' material. The carnival ends in a blaze of A major.

Notes © Anthony Goldstone 2009

Anthony Goldstone

Described by *The New York Times* as “a man whose nature was designed with pianos in mind”, Anthony Goldstone was, until his passing in January 2017, one of Britain’s most respected pianists. A sixth-generation pupil of Beethoven through his great teacher Maria Curcio, Anthony Goldstone was born in Liverpool. He studied with Derrick Wyndham at the Royal Manchester College of Music (which later honoured him with a Fellowship), later with Curcio in London.

He enjoyed a career encompassing six continents, the Last Night of the Proms (after which Benjamin Britten wrote to him, “Thank you most sincerely for that brilliant performance of my Diversions. I wish I could have been at the Royal Albert Hall to join in the cheers”), very many broadcasts and nearly seventy CDs (including the BBC issue of his London Promenade Concert performance of Beethoven's fourth Piano Concerto). He had an adventurous approach to repertoire and was highly praised by Vienna's *Die Presse* for “his astonishingly profound spiritual penetration”.

In the last few years Goldstone became known for his acclaimed completions and realisations of works for solo piano and piano duet by Schubert, and for two pianos and solo piano by Mozart, all of which he recorded on Divine Art CDs.

He was also one half of the acclaimed and brilliant piano duo *Goldstone and Clemmow* with his wife Caroline. The duo has made many CDs for Divine Art as well as Toccata Classics and other labels.

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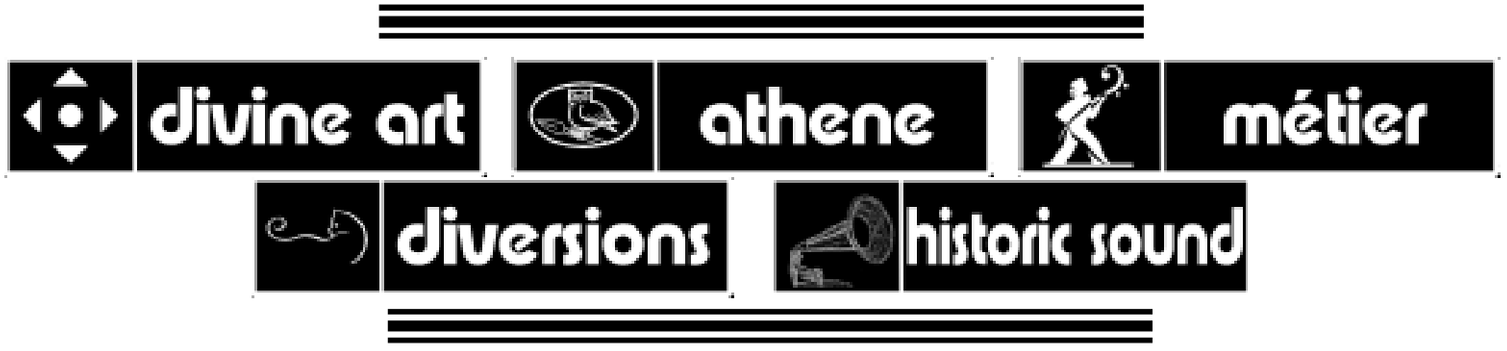

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who transcribed Dvořák's "Carnival" Overture

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