

RIPON  
CONCERTS

*Chamber music in the Cathedral*

2019-20  
Jubilee Season



# Piano Masterworks from Vienna

Paul Lewis – Piano

Monday 4 November 2019, 7.30pm  
Ripon Cathedral

Programme

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Patron: Julius Drake

## Welcome

Welcome to this very special concert in our current season. It is not every day that artists of such calibre come to perform in the city. Ripon sits alongside Tokyo, Brisbane, Sydney, London, New York, Chicago, Geneva, Moscow and Montreal in Paul Lewis's current performance schedule.

Ripon punches well above its weight in terms of the quality of music regularly on offer. Those present at the St Cecilia Orchestra's recent monumental performance of Mahler's Second Symphony will have been overwhelmed by the quality of the playing. This concert was not a one off but one of many high-quality performances by one of the very best provincial symphony orchestras.

Ripon's Choral Society stages wonderful concerts four times a year and showcases great choral works in a repertoire which embraces everything from the baroque to the contemporary. Many young soloists singing in these concerts have gone on to have international careers.

The Ripon International Festival likewise brings high-quality musicians and a varied diet of musical genres to the city.

The Cathedral is also a focus and famous for its sacred choral and organ music.

This society prides itself in engaging a wide range of artists: from those starting on their careers, for whom a performance opportunity is so important, to those like Paul Lewis, who are of the very best in the world. The list of artists and chamber works performed is comprehensive. It covers a very wide range of chamber groups and individuals who have played works by almost every composer. Highlights are documented in the Society's Jubilee Programme which celebrates 25 years of recitals and chamber music in Ripon – copies are still available from Charles Monck.

Those of us who promote musical events sometimes wonder if these musical jewels are appreciated by the city. They should be recognised and receive the support they deserve.

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*we get on with*



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Monday 4 November 2019 | Ripon Cathedral

# Paul Lewis - Piano

## Programme

**Franz Schubert (1797-1828)**

Sonata for Piano No. 18 in G major D894 (1826)

*Molto moderato e cantabile*

*Andante*

*Menuetto: Allegro*

*Allegretto*

- interval -

**Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)**

33 Variations on a Waltz by Diabelli, Op. 120



# About the music

## Schubert - Sonata No. 18 in G major

Schubert's G major sonata for piano was, unusually, published in the composer's lifetime. The publisher, Tobias Haslinger, called the first movement *Fantasia* - Schubert more prosaically called it *Molto moderato e cantabile*. Three more great sonatas were to come, none of them published until Schubert was long dead. This sonata is generally seen as technically fairly easy but musically it stretches the interpreter to the limits. It is essentially gentle though with occasional rapids: the harmonic journey is sometimes extraordinary.



The four movements are *Molto moderato e cantabile*, *Andante* (Schubert's preferred indication for a sonata "slow" movement), *Allegro moderato* (the minuet and trio), and *Allegretto*. The first movement differs from the textbook sonata-allegro only in texture and tone, not in the basics of its actual form: the two principal subjects are both given in their traditional keys and, unlike many of Schubert's sonata-movements, the recapitulation takes place in the home key of G major. There may be no more patient melody in all of Schubert than the *pianissimo* opening tune, whose

animation seems at times to become all but suspended. The unseen force that propels this relaxed exposition comes to the fore in the cataclysmic, triple-*fortissimo* climaxes of the development.

The tender, almost Schumannesque main melody of the following *Andante* is made to embrace some wildly contrasting sections of music, during which *fortissimo sforzandos* spill over into cascading figures. The Minuet is aristocratic, with a gracious, ornamented trio.

The refrain theme of the Rondo finale is nearly as unhurried as the opening theme of the first movement. The delightfully contrasting ideas include a happy peasant dance and, during the central episode, a *cantabile* tune in C minor. After the last reprise of the refrain idea, to which is appended a witty and wonderful coda, the four bars that opened the movement appear one last time – *un poco più lento*, lovingly – to draw the final cadence.

Robert Schumann found this to be the "most perfect in form and conception" of any of Schubert's sonatas.

## Beethoven - The Diabelli Variations

Beethoven worked on his *Veränderungen* (variations or transformations) on a waltz by Diabelli between 1819 and 1823 in response to a challenge issued by Diabelli to all the important composers intended to assemble a composite set of variations which he could publish for charity. Several accepted the challenge but none so comprehensively as Beethoven who determined to write a full set all on his own. He evidently took great care in the final sequence of variations, only settling on that version after an earlier

version had been hawked round the London publishers by his friend Ferdinand Ries. The tune is a simple waltz, somewhat rustic in its effect, on the face of it unlikely to spawn one of the greatest keyboard works of the century. Yet it has been recognised as such almost from the beginning. Diabelli introduced the publication thus:

"We present here to the world Variations of no ordinary type, but a great and important masterpiece worthy to be ranked with the imperishable creations of the old Classics—such a work as only Beethoven, the greatest living representative of true art—only Beethoven, and no other, can produce. The most original structures and ideas, the boldest musical idioms and harmonies are here exhausted; every pianoforte effect based on a solid technique is employed, and this work is the more interesting from the fact that it is elicited from a theme which no one would otherwise have supposed capable of a working-out of that character in which our exalted Master stands alone among his contemporaries.



Many commentators have provided their exposition of the structure and meaning of the work. We follow in these notes the suggestions of William Kinderman and the great Alfred Brendel who treated them, along with other works by Beethoven and Haydn, in a lecture entitled "Humour in Music" in which he detected what in German would be called *Laune*, essentially impudent humour containing at least implications of vulgarity and faintly ridiculous. (Brendel is not alone in this approach - for Kinderman parody was the key.)

The 33 variations can be taken to fall into three sections, variations 1–10, 11–24 and 25–33, following broadly the three movements of a classical sonata but other groupings also make musical sense.

**Theme: *Vivace*** Diabelli's theme, a waltz with off-beat accents and sharp changes in dynamics, was never intended for dancing. Brendel's suggested title for the theme, making the case for viewing the Diabelli Variations as essentially a humorous work, is *Alleged Waltz*.

**Variation 1: *Alla marcia maestoso***. Brendel calls this *March: gladiator, flexing his muscles*, and characterises it as "serious but slightly lacking in brain."

**Variation 2: *Poco allegro***: a delicate hushed tense variation called *Snowflake* by Brendel.

**Variation 3: *At the same tempo***. *Confidence and nagging doubt* for Brendel.

**Variation 4: *Un poco più vivace*** is a *learned ländler*.

**Variation 5: *Allegro vivace***: The fifth variation is an exciting number with

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brehtaking rhythmic climaxes. For the first time in the series, there are elements of virtuosity, which will become more pronounced in the variations which immediately follow. Brendel's title for this variation is *Tamed goblin*.

**Variation 6: *Allegro ma non troppo e serioso*:** both this and the following variations are brilliant, exciting, virtuosic pieces. This sixth variation features a trill in nearly every bar set off against arpeggios and hurried figures in the opposite hand. Brendel's title for this variation is *Trill rhetorics (Demosthenes braving the surf)*.

**Variation 7: *Un poco più allegro*:** *Sforzando* octaves in the bass hand against triplets in the treble make for a brilliant, dramatic effect. Brendel's title is *Snivelling and stamping*.

**Variation 8: *Poco vivace*:** the eighth variation offers relief and contrast with a soft, strongly melodic piece, the stately melody moving over rising figures in the bass. The marking is *dolce e teneramente* ("sweetly and tenderly"). Brendel's title for this variation is *Intermezzo (à la Brahms)*.

**Variation 9: *Allegro pesante e risoluto*:** another variation characterised by Brendel as "deeply serious but slightly lacking in brains", Variation 9 is constructed out of the slimmest of materials, consisting of little more than Diabelli's opening grace-note and turn repeated in various registers. The direction is always ascending, building toward a climax. Brendel's title for this variation is *Industrious nutcracker*.

**Variation 10: *Presto*:** Traditionally viewed as the close of the first part of the work, Variation 10 is the most brilliant of all the

variations, a break-neck presto with trills, tremolos and staccato octave scales. Brendel's title is *Giggling and neighing*.

**Variation 11: *Allegretto*:** the second part begins with another variation built out of Diabelli's opening three notes, this time quietly and gracefully. (In the film *Copying Beethoven* the opening of this variation appears as the theme of the sonata written by the copyist that Beethoven first ridicules then later, to redeem himself, begins to work on more seriously. Brendel's title for this variation is *Innocente (à la Bülow)*.

**Variation 12: *Un poco più moto*:** Ceaseless motion with lots of running fourths. Brendel's title for this variation is *Wave Pattern*.

**Variation 13: *Vivace*:** powerful, rhythmic chords, *forte*, each time followed by nearly two bars of silence, then a soft reply. Diabelli's mild opening turn is turned into the powerful chords, and his repeated chords become a long silence. The sequence is ended with two soft, anti-climactic notes. Brendel's title for this variation is *Aphorism (biting)*.

**Variation 14: *Grave e maestoso*:** the first slow variation. Brendel calls this variation *Here He Cometh, the Chosen*.

**Variation 15: *Presto scherzando*:** one of the last variations to have been composed. Variation 15 is short and light, setting the stage for the following two loud virtuosic displays. Brendel's title for this variation is *Cheerful Spook*.

**Variation 16: *Allegro*:** A virtuosic variation, *forte*, with trills and ascending and descending broken octaves. Brendel's title for this variation and the following one is *Triumph*.

**Variation 17: *Allegro*:** This is the second march after the opening variation, most of it *forte*, with accented octaves in the bass and ceaseless, hurried figures in the treble.

**Variation 18: *Poco moderato*:** another variation using the opening turn in Diabelli's waltz, this time with a quiet (*dolce*), almost meditative character. Brendel's title for this variation is *Precious memory, slightly faded*.

**Variation 19: *Presto*:** fast and busy, in sharp contrast to the variation which follows. The two parts are often in canon. Brendel's title for this variation is *Helter-skelter*.

**Variation 20: *Andante*:** an extraordinarily slow-moving variation consisting almost entirely of dotted minims in low registers – a striking contrast with the variations immediately before and after. Diabelli's melody is easily identified, but the harmonic progressions are unusual and the overall tonality is ambiguous. Brendel describes this Variation 20 as "hypnotic introspection" and offers as a title *Inner sanctum*.

**Variation 21: *Allegro con brio – Meno allegro – Tempo primo***

An extreme contrast to the preceding *Andante* and the start of the underlying third part of the variations. The accompanying chords repeated so many times at the start of each section and the repeated trills repeated from the highest to the lowest registers ruthlessly exaggerate features of Diabelli's theme. Brendel's title for this variation is *Maniac and moaner*.

**Variation 22: *Allegro molto, alla «Notte e giorno faticar» di Mozart***

A reference to Leporello's aria at the beginning of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

The music is rather crudely humorous in style. Because Leporello is complaining that he has to "Work day and night", it is sometimes said that here Beethoven is grumbling about the labour he poured into these variations. It has been suggested, too, that Beethoven is trying to tell us that Diabelli's theme was stolen from Mozart. Brendel's title for this variation is *'Notte e giorno faticar' (to Diabelli)*.

**Variation 23: *Allegro assai*:** a virtuosic variation which Kinderman and Brendel see as a parody of finger exercises published by Johann Baptist Cramer (whom Beethoven did admire as a pianist, if not as a composer). Brendel's title for this variation is *The virtuoso at boiling-point (to Cramer)*. He characterises Nos. 23, 27 and 28 as "one-track minds in an excited state", suggesting an ironic approach.

**Variation 24: *Fughetta (Andante)*:** lyrical and beautiful, greatly contrasting with the preceding variation, this little fugue seems to be an allusion to Bach. Acting on a hint given him by the second half of Diabelli's theme, Beethoven inverts this in the second half of the fughetta. Brendel calls this variation *Pure Spirit*.

**Variation 25: *Allegro*:** simple chords in the right hand over a ceaseless, busy pattern in the left hand. Brendel's title for this variation is *Teutscher (German dance)*.

**Variation 26: (*Piacevole*) :** this variation is a deconstruction of the theme, consisting entirely of three-note broken triad inversions and stepwise figures. The switch at the halfway point from descending to ascending passages, a characteristic of the waltz faithfully preserved throughout the work, is seen here. These three final C major

variations before the minor section have in common a textural distance from the waltz. Brendel's title for this variation is *Circles on the Water*.

**Variation 27: *Vivace*:** the structure of this variation is similar to the preceding, in the exclusive use of three-note figures, the descending-to-ascending pattern, and the switch to stepwise passagework in contrary motion at the midpoint of each half. The triplet pattern consisting of a semitone and a third is taken from the rosalias at measures 8–12 of the theme. Brendel's title for this variation is *Juggler*. He suggests an ironic approach, characterising Nos. 23, 27 and 28 as “one-track minds in an excited state”.

**Variation 28: *Allegro*:** this variation misleadingly sounds like the climax of the work but there is more to come. Brendel points out that as of 1819 there was but a single C minor variation (No. 30) and that the late additions of Nos. 29 and 31 expanded the use of the key into “a larger C minor area”. Brendel's title for this variation is *The rage of the jumping-jack*.

**Variation 29: *Adagio ma non troppo*:** the first of three slow variations, this appears to be the beginning of the end and might be regarded as beginning the *Adagio* of this Variation-sonata; from this *Adagio* we are carried back, by the grand double fugue, Variation 32, into the original bright uplands and the concluding graceful Minuetto-Finale. Brendel's title for this variation is *Stifled sighs (à la Konrad Wolff)*.

**Variation 30: *Andante, sempre cantabile*:** slow and expressive, like the variation which follows. Its final bars lead smoothly to Variation 31. Brendel's title for this variation is *Gentle grief*. There are only hints of

Diabelli's two-part structure.

**Variation 31: *Largo, molto espressivo*:** deeply felt, filled with ornaments and trills, there are many similarities with the arietta of Piano Sonata, Op. 111. The ending of this variation, an unresolved dominant seventh, leads naturally to the following fugue. Brendel's title for this variation is *To Bach (à la Chopin)*. The structure is a foreshortening of Diabelli's theme.

**Variation 32: *Fuga: Allegro*:** while in traditional variation sets a fugue was often used to conclude the work, Beethoven uses his fugue to reach a grand climax, then follows it with a final, quiet minuet. The fugue of Variation 32 is set apart by its foreign key, E $\flat$  major. Structurally, the piece abandons Diabelli's two-part original. Melodically, it is based on Diabelli's falling fourth, used in many of the preceding variations, as well as, most strikingly, on the least inspired, least promising part of Diabelli's theme, the note repeated ten times. The bass in the opening bars takes Diabelli's rising figure and presents it in descending sequence. Out of these flimsy materials, Beethoven builds his powerful triple fugue. The themes are presented in a variety of harmonies, contexts, lights and shades, and by using the traditional fugal techniques of *inversion* and *stretto*. About two thirds through, a *fortissimo* climax is reached and, following a pause, there begins a contrasting *pianissimo* section with a constantly hurrying figure serving as the third fugal subject. Eventually, the original two themes of the fugue burst out loudly again and the work races impetuously toward its final climax, a crashing chord and a grand sweep of arpeggios twice down and up the entire keyboard.

The transition to the sublime minuet that forms the final variation is a series of quiet, greatly prolonged chords that achieve an extraordinary effect. Beethoven emphasises the diminished-seventh chord by a kind of arpeggiated cadenza spanning four and then five octaves. When the music comes to rest on this dissonant sonority, it is clear that we have reached the turning point, and are poised at a moment of great musical import.

What accounts for the power of the following transition, which has so impressed musicians and critics? Donald Tovey describes this dramatic moment thus: “The storm of sound melts away, and, through one of the most ethereal and – I am amply justified in saying – appallingly impressive passages ever written, we pass quietly to the last variation.”

Brendel's title for this variation is *To Handel*.

**Variation 33: *Tempo di Menuetto moderato*:** Brendel's title for this variation is *To Mozart; to Beethoven* explaining: In the coda of the concluding variation, Beethoven speaks on his own behalf. He alludes to another supreme set of variations, that from his own last Sonata, Op. 111, which had been composed before the Diabelli Variations were finished. Beethoven's Arietta from Op. 111 is not only in the same key as Diabelli's ‘waltz’, but also shares certain motivic and structural features, while the characters of the two themes could not be more disparate. One can hear the Arietta as yet another, more distant, offspring of the ‘waltz’, and marvel at the inspirational effect of the ‘cobbler's patch’.





## Paul Lewis

Paul Lewis is internationally regarded as one of the leading musicians of his generation. His cycles of core piano works by Beethoven and Schubert have received unanimous critical and public acclaim worldwide, and consolidated his reputation as one of the world's foremost interpreters of the central European classical repertoire. His numerous awards have included the Royal Philharmonic Society's Instrumentalist of the Year, two Edison awards, three Gramophone awards, the Diapason D'or de l'Année, and the South Bank Show Classical Music award. He holds honorary degrees from Liverpool, Edge Hill and Southampton Universities, and was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the 2016 Queen's Birthday Honours.

He appears regularly as soloist with the world's great orchestras, including the Berlin Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, London Symphony, London Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony, NHK Symphony, New York Philharmonic, LA Philharmonic, and the Royal Concertgebouw, Cleveland, Tonhalle Zurich, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Philharmonia, and Mahler Chamber Orchestras. He has performed Beethoven concerto cycles with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, São Paulo State Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Flemish Philharmonic Orchestra. Conductors he has worked with include Daniel Harding, Andris Nelsons, Manfred Honeck and Bernard Haitink.

The 2018-19 season saw the conclusion of a two-year recital series exploring connections between the sonatas of Haydn, the late piano works of Brahms, and Beethoven's *Bagatelles* and *Diabelli Variations*.

He celebrates the 2020 Beethoven anniversary year with a programme that includes the *Diabelli Variations*, Piano Sonata No.13 in E flat major 'quasi una fantasia', and Piano Sonata No.14 in C sharp minor, 'Moonlight'.

Paul Lewis' recital career takes him to venues such as London's Royal Festival Hall, Alice Tully and Carnegie Hall in New York, the Musikverein and Konzerthaus in Vienna, the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and the Berlin Philharmonie and Konzerthaus. He is also a frequent guest at the some of the world's most prestigious festivals, including Tanglewood, Ravinia, Schubertiade, Edinburgh, Salzburg, Lucerne, and the BBC Proms where in 2010 he became the first person to play a complete Beethoven piano concerto cycle in a single season.

His multi-award-winning discography for Harmonia Mundi includes the complete Beethoven piano sonatas, concertos, and the *Diabelli Variations*, Liszt's B minor Sonata and other late works, all of Schubert's major piano works from the last six years of his life including the three song cycles with tenor Mark Padmore, solo works by Schumann and Mussorgsky, and the Brahms D minor piano concerto with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Daniel Harding. Future recording plans include a multi-CD series of Haydn sonatas, Beethoven's *Bagatelles*, and works by Bach.

Paul Lewis studied with Joan Havill at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London before going on to study privately with Alfred Brendel. He is co-Artistic Director of Midsummer Music, an annual chamber music festival held in Buckinghamshire, UK.

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