

Georges Cziffra
(1921-1994)

Transcriptions

Grandes Études de Concert

pour piano

Volume I

Sous la direction de
István Kassai

Cziffra
E D I T I O N

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INTRODUCTION TO MY TRANSCRIPTIONS

My most important desire and wish was to one day give my experiences with the Piano over to each pianist, and future young performer. But I have never seen myself as a teacher in the general meaning of the word. Rather I see in myself someone who sheds light, one who directs with a small lamp those similar to himself. My intentions may appear presumptuous to some, but it is what I have found my calling to be. One day without searching, I just found that this is what I can give. It was as if destiny was pulling the plow, and I was just following behind. Being led through storms and into unknown territories.

Throughout my whole youth I have been enthralled by improvisational art, and during occasional concert as a pianist, I had wanted to finish with such a short piece, that, personally, could stand alone, and which was not prepared for eternity. When I improvise I feel as if I become one with myself, and my body is freed from all earthly pain. It is truly a process of going beyond my own talents, which makes it possible at each occasion to step over the known boundaries of the technical side of the piano performance. While I give myself over completely to the moment of inspiration, while I give the field of form and theme over completely to my imagination I always try to maintain a discipline of my thoughts on the following two-three tracks, so that my hands can follow the path of my vision. The practice of this at one time tender and at another time enchanting method, made it possible for me in the moments of creation to discover the future form of piano performance.

A few months after my arrival in France, in the Paris studio Pathé-Marconi, the art director suggested we improvise a few known melodies in front of the microphone. It was not necessary for him to ask a second time, for I have always loved to amuse myself that way. At that time Rossini was my favourite. The product of a few hours of improvisation became *La Danza* (The Dance) and then the *Paraphrase sur l'ouverture de Guillaume Tell*. (Paraphrase to the opera William Tell.) After listening to the tape of improvisations, the paraphrases and rewriting which followed, I found that destiny had decided, that I should open a different road in the music world and a new field in piano performance. This was a mighty undertaking.

The following years I studied very carefully these works of creation. I saw so many things in them that were new, I at times became frightened. But I could do nothing against it. That is how it was. I was but a servant to art. And what an art it was. For it was at this time that I came to realize can establish for the future of piano performance the method of methods. However, there was one problem. It is extremely difficult to put on paper the product of an improvisational session. To put on paper the uniqueness of the improvisational form. But it was important to try, to make it a real work of art, so that other artists could read and play them. One needs an ear, and untiring patience with the piano. From those who have attempted to tackle this titanic work, many have stepped back. Even when we played back on tape slowly the creations, we saw insurmountable difficulties.

One day my son George said that he would like to give it a try. At this time he was 25 years old. With a tremendous amount of energy and enthusiasm he took on the work. Slowing down the tape in both directions, he wrote down the place of each sound, and slowly after a point he was able to give form to a certain amount of my musical creations. Finally I too became involved in writing down the musical notes, which now turned into true composition – which mirrored my thoughts and emotions. I must say that this work represented for me the excitement of creation. Later, I asked the Hungarian piano performer expert István Kassai, who I had a great deal of trust in, to look over and inspect what we now had in written form.

When certain musicians see this collection, they might possibly declare: 'This cannot be played'. I can assure them that that is not the case. In his time, when Ferenc Liszt published his own works, everyone thought that only he could play it. But times change: techniques develop, and today a professional piano performer – and one or two amateur – with great pleasure and not too many mistakes in interpretation, are able to follow his large virtuosos. I think that today's piano performers learn these works easier. It becomes more 'natural', and my hopes are that one day they will become part of musical culture.

In the following outlines I would like to diagram those piece which we will become familiar with tonight.

Between 1982-1983 I recorded Brahms' *Fifteen Hungarian Dances*, which had originally been written for four hands. Inspired by the popular melodies of his time Brahms composed 21 pieces. While these works left a free hand to personal interpretations the compositions temperaments were not their unique feature. Liszt – whose piano ornamentation was too virtuoso for his taste – he did not really like. I wanted to break through this stylistic period through Hungarian themes, and bring peace between these two great musicians. Respecting Brahms' constructive spirit, and Liszt's enthusiasm for improvisation.

The following five pieces I had recorded before 1958, which I had named 'concert etude'.

La Vol du bourdon (The Bumblebee). Rimsky Korsakoff's famous intermission with the Sultan has been put innumerable times to music. My rewriting has the advantage of bringing out unmistakably the octave technique ... As it is built up on a long cadence I must mention the internal chromatic line does not break. In relation to the octave, when I am asked, what is the secret of performance, I always answer: Work, work, and more work.

A *Tritsch-tratsch polka* was probably the young Johann Strauss's most popular piece. I wrote a variation on the bridges between the different

rhythmic themes. This piece, can possibly be understood as a free 'paraphrase'. An ideal work for the elaboration of the reflexes.

Roman Fantasy is purely an improvisational piece which contains the two traditional 'slow-fast' elements that are distinct for Central-European melodies.

A la Valse triste (The Sad Waltz) was composed in 1916 by the famous Ferenc Vecsey (1893-1935), who is unfortunately today a forgotten violin performer. This piece in his day was very popular, and even words were written to it. In the salons it belonged to the regular repertoire. In Budapest during my 'bar piano' days, I was often asked to improvise to this beautiful theme. In memory to those days in my life, I wanted to rewrite this dramatic and painful fantasy.

The Fifth Hungarian Dance which is found in the appendix, originates from 1957. It is different from the original version, thus leaving open the possibility that it can be studied in a different relation.

I hope that these few pages open a new door to the world, and that these pieces stimulate a more individualistic rather than a stereotypical interpretation.

Georges Cziffra

Danses hongroises

No. 1

J. Brahms – G. Cziffra

Allegro molto (MM ♩ = 144)
poco marcato, espressivo

f
m.d.
mp
legg.
m.s.
p
loco
loco
loco
loco

7
13
19

2 5
3
2 3
5 2
5 3 5
5 3 5
4 2 3 1

25

mf

m.s.

Red. (*) Red. (*) Red. (*) Red. (*) Red. (*) Red. (*)

7 7 7 2 1 3 2 4

Detailed description: This system contains measures 25 through 30. The right hand features a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment of quarter notes. Performance markings include a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and a 'm.s.' (mezza sostenuto) instruction. Redaction symbols (circles with a diagonal slash) and asterisks are placed below the bass staff. Fingering numbers (1-5) are indicated above the right hand notes.

31

Red. (*) Red. (*) Red. (*) Red. (*) Red. (*) Red. (*)

7 7 7 3 4 5 3 4 5

Detailed description: This system contains measures 31 through 36. The right hand continues with intricate rhythmic patterns, including some triplet-like groupings. The left hand accompaniment remains consistent. Redaction symbols and asterisks are present in the bass staff. Fingering numbers (1-5) are shown above the right hand notes.

37

Red. Red. Red. Red. Red.

5 3 4 2 3 5 3 4 2 1

Detailed description: This system contains measures 37 through 41. The right hand has a more melodic line with some slurs. The left hand accompaniment consists of simple chords and quarter notes. Redaction symbols are used in the bass staff. Fingering numbers (1-5) are indicated above the right hand notes.

42

Red. * Red. Red. Red. Red.

5 2 1 2 1 2 2

Detailed description: This system contains measures 42 through 46. The right hand features a series of slurred eighth-note patterns. The left hand accompaniment is simple. Redaction symbols and an asterisk are present in the bass staff. Fingering numbers (1-5) are shown above the right hand notes.

47

f

p legg.

8_A loco 8_A loco

Red. * Red. * Red. * Red. * Red. *

3 2 5

Detailed description: This system contains measures 47 through 52. It begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a first ending bracket. The second ending is marked *p legg.* (piano, leggiero) and includes a 'loco' instruction. The right hand has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, while the left hand has a simple accompaniment. Redaction symbols and asterisks are used in the bass staff. Fingering numbers (1-5) are indicated above the right hand notes.

53 *loco*
p *f* *scherzando stacc.*
senza lo.

58 *loco*
p *f* *p legg.* *fz (p)* *loco*

64 *f* *loco*
legg. mf *f* *f* *f*

Più moderato (MM ♩ = 88)

70 *loco*
p *fz fz fz fz* *ff* *sostenuto loco*

75 *mosso* *poco rit.* *veloce, brillante* *sostenuto*

78 *poco mosso* *sostenuto loco*
ff *mf*
 Led. * Led. * Led. * Led. * Led. * Led. *

83 *mosso* *sostenuto loco* *mosso*
m.s. *ff* *f*
 Led. Led. Led. * Led. Led. Led. *

87 *vivo, scherzando* *meno loco* *veloce*
mf legg. *f fz* *fz* *ff con fuoco, brillante*
 senza Led. col Led.

90 *scherzando loco* *mosso loco* *poco rallentando*
fz *p subito* *fz con grazia* *p*
 senza Led. senza Led.

96 *a tempo loco* *staccato* *loco*
f *p subito*
 Led. * Led. * Led. * Led. * Led. * Led. * senza Led.

101 **Tempo I**

legato, espressivo

ossia: come prima

8 *loco*

mf p m.s. m.d.

107

mp mf p

8 *loco*

113

8 *loco*

119

8 *loco*

125 *espressivo*

mf p *legato*

131 *mf*

Musical score for measures 131-135. The piece is in a minor key. Measure 131 starts with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth-note patterns and slurs, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5. A first ending bracket labeled '8' spans measures 134 and 135. Pedal markings (*Ped.*) are present at the end of measures 131, 132, 133, 134, and 135.

136 *loco*

Musical score for measures 136-140. The tempo is marked *loco*. The right hand continues with eighth-note patterns, including triplets and slurs. The left hand accompaniment includes chords and single notes. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5. Pedal markings (*Ped.*) are present at the end of measures 137, 138, 139, and 140.

141 *loco*

Musical score for measures 141-145. The tempo is marked *loco*. The right hand features eighth-note patterns with slurs and accents. The left hand accompaniment includes chords and single notes. Pedal markings (*Ped.*) are present at the end of measures 142, 143, 144, and 145.

146 *loco* *scherzando* *loco*

Musical score for measures 146-150. The tempo is marked *loco* and the mood is *scherzando*. The right hand features eighth-note patterns with slurs and accents. The left hand accompaniment includes chords and single notes. Pedal markings (*Ped.*) are present at the end of measures 147, 148, 149, and 150.

151 *loco* *f* *mp* *scherzando* *loco*

156 *f* *loco* *mf staccato*

161 *p subito e stacc.* *loco* *f* *martellato*

166 *accelerando scherzando* *poco loco a* *p* *senza Led.*

171 *poco* *cresc.* *fz rf fz rf* *f* *mosso* *a tempo* *loco* *fz* *ff*