

NICCOLÒ PAGANINI „24 CAPRICCI“

“None sings as purely as those in deepest hell; it is their singing that we take for the singing of angels.” (Franz Kafka)



Tanja Becker-Bender
Photo: Marco Borggreve

The “24 Capricci“ by Niccolò Paganini have left a great and formative impression of unaccompanied violin music on me at a very early point – of course alongside with Bach’s surpassing works.

Already in my early childhood, I could never become tired of listening to the “Capricci” over and over again – fascinated by the kaleidoscope of this ingenious music! I was hardly aware of the technical challenges at that time...

Niccolò Paganini, most famous of all violinists and shrouded in mystery and legend as a phenomenon in music history, simply dedicated these “Capricci“, his superb “Opus 1“ for Solo Violin, to “the Artists”. This compositional stroke of a genius are for us, who are trying to get an idea of Paganini’s demonic nature, a testament of his own playing and illustrate at the same time his complex and uncompromising personality.

“He is the personification of yearning, of pride, of mania and of sorrow.” (Ludwig Rellstab)

Exempt from any conventions, these character sketches capture in the most dense succession portraits, scenes and mood pieces, ranging from the virtuoso firework of the “number 1”, from operatic duets, from diabolically growling thunderstorms (No. 10) up to tender and sensitively drawn studies of personality.

One can find the richest human facets in this musical cosmos – and one can come a bit closer to Paganini, the person, in his time: A highly gifted composer, who committed himself with utmost abandonment to his instrument and who subordinated everything in his life to the freedom as a travelling virtuoso and free-lance artist – everything except his most affectionate dedication as a single father to his son Achille...



Niccolò Paganini
Portrait by Sir E. H. Landseer (1849)

These works have accompanied me throughout my life as a violinist – it is now a moment that is as consequent as it is fulfilling for me that I have been able to record them. I regard it as an exceptional joy and honour to have been given the opportunity to play on a “brother violin“ of Paganini’s famous “Cannone“, namely a wonderful Guarneri del Gesù from 1728, which is owned by the Fazenda Ipiranga in Brasil and on loan to me through the German Music Instrument Funds.

Tanja Becker-Bender, February 2009

