

NAXOS

Ferdinand
RIES

Piano Concerto in C minor
Concerto Pastoral

Christopher Hinterhuber, Piano
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra • Uwe Grodd



Ferdinand Ries (1784–1838)

Piano Concertos, Vol. 4

As one of the finest pianist-composers in Europe of his time, it is surprising that the name Ferdinand Ries is not better known today. The neglect of most of his major works is even more puzzling given his long association with Beethoven, first as his pupil, and later as a life-long friend and colleague. In most other circumstances this would have prompted an exhaustive study of his music but in Ries's case this has not happened. One of the reasons for this may lie in his publication of an important book of reminiscences about Beethoven that has proved to be of such enduring interest that scholarship has concentrated on this rather than his music. Of Ries's own career comparatively little has been written although it is to be hoped that important initiatives such as the publication and recording of his complete works for piano and orchestra will serve to stimulate interest in this fascinating composer.

Unlike Beethoven, whose deafness drove him from the concert platform relatively early in his career, Ries remained one of Europe's most celebrated virtuosos until well into the 1830s. His receptiveness to new musical trends and his ability to develop and exploit them was as fundamental to his success as an artist as it was to his close contemporary Hummel. This quality of Ries is reflected in the formal diversity of his works for piano and orchestra: in addition to concertos, there are several sets of variations, two large-scale rondos and a polonaise. Beethoven, by comparison, restricted himself principally to the solo concerto, the genre Mozart had brought to the peak of perfection in the mid-1780s, although the *Choral Fantasia, Op. 80*, with its lengthy fantasia-like introduction for the piano and subsequent theme and variations structure, bears some similarity to the sets of variations later written by his pupil.

Ries published nine concertos, the first for violin and the remaining eight works for the piano. The concertos were numbered sequentially in order of publication and, as a consequence, the numbering of the first six works is not only misleading, since the sequence of piano concertos starts with *Concerto No. 2*, but the

individual publication dates bear little relation to the actual dates of composition. The explanation for this rather confusing state of affairs is probably straightforward. Ries composed piano concertos first and foremost for his own use. Like Mozart and Beethoven before him, he withheld works from publication while they were still largely unknown to his audiences. Whether he continued to perform the works is uncertain, but there seems little doubt that his decision to delay their publication reflected his wish to prevent others from doing so. In the 1820s Ries published three of his earlier concertos: the *Fourth Concerto, Op. 115* (1823), composed in Bonn in 1809; the *Fifth Concerto, Op. 120* (1823), place and date of composition uncertain; and the *Sixth Concerto, Op. 123* (1824), composed in Bonn in 1806. With the publication of these works and a seventh more recent work the stage was set for the composition of Ries's last two concertos and several smaller works for piano and orchestra.

Ries's concertos inevitably invite direct comparison with those of his teacher. Beethoven's influence is certainly there to be seen, not only in the overall scale and structure of the works but also in their rugged, powerful orchestration. But in many other respects, the works are dissimilar and intentionally so. Their musical organization is deft – there are numerous examples of clever motivic manipulation in the concertos – but it is also apparent that they are not thematically-driven in the manner of Beethoven's works. They are melodically rich but not motivically dense and in this they bear a similar relation to Beethoven's works as Pleyel's do to those of Haydn. The solo writing is also very different and its pianism, like Hummel's, looks forward to Chopin and Mendelssohn rather than back to Beethoven's great Middle Period sonatas and concertos. While the large-scale structure of Ries's concertos still conforms closely to that of the late eighteenth-century concerto, their internal musical organization differs considerably, particularly in the matter of tonal architecture. Ries's harmonic vocabulary is not

fundamentally different from Mozart's but the range of tonal relationships is greatly expanded and the old eighteenth-century tonic-dominant polarity is weakened. Another striking feature of Ries's concertos is the proliferation of tempo markings within a single movement; when combined with carefully marked *rallentandi* and frequent cross-rhythms in the solo part, the movements demand an expressive flexibility in performance that is almost as foreign to Beethoven as it is to Mozart. The rhapsodic quality of Ries's style is heightened further by the interpolation of cadenzas – some surprisingly extensive in scope – in the middle of movements rather than before the final tutti; cadenzas also serve on occasion to introduce movements rather than to function as a link between movements.

The place and date of composition of Ries's *Fifth Concerto*, the '*Concerto Pastoral*' in D, *Op. 120*, is uncertain. The work's dedication to His Royal Highness Oscar, Hereditary Prince of Sweden, in the edition published in Vienna in 1823 by Sauer & Leidesdorf, suggests that it was composed after Ries's appointment as a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music in 1813. Ries spent six weeks in Sweden in 1813 following his eventful concert tour to Russia in 1812. While in Sweden he gave the première of two major works for piano and orchestra, the *Concerto in C sharp minor*, *Op. 55* (dated 'St Petersburg 1812' on the uncharacteristically untidy autograph) and the brilliant Swedish National Airs with *Variations*, *Op. 52*, the first of Ries's works for piano and orchestra that does not employ conventional concerto form. The success of these works may well have led to an invitation to compose a further concerto. In the event, however, Ries was preoccupied with establishing himself in England as pianist, teacher and composer. He made his London début on 21st May 1813 playing the *Concerto in E flat*, *Op. 42* (*Concerto No. 2*) and performed the *C sharp minor Concerto* at Drury Lane under the direction of Sir George Smart shortly before the work's publication in 1815. It is unclear whether the orchestra used the parts that had been prepared for the Stockholm première two years earlier but in any event the published version of the concerto included a heavily revised solo part and the

addition of a pair of trumpets to the orchestration. In view of Ries's preoccupation with the *C sharp minor Concerto* during his first two years in England it seems unlikely that the '*Concerto Pastoral*' was composed before 1815. It is likely that it was written between the revision of that work and the *Variations on 'Rule Britannia'*, *Op. 116*, composed at Hastings in 1817. In many respects the work resembles Ries's earlier concertos although there is an easy mastery of structure and a level of inventiveness in its conception that reflects Ries's greater experience as a composer.

The title '*Concerto Pastoral*' is surely Ries's own. It is one of only three of his concertos to have a title but unlike the other two works the authority for the title is the first published edition and not the composer's autograph score. The choice of title immediately conjures up Beethoven's '*Pastoral*' *Symphony*, a work that Ries probably knew well. Beethoven was not alone in composing works in the pastoral idiom; there was a long tradition in Austria and Bohemia of composing pastoral symphonies, masses, motets and even concertos. Few if any of these works were intended to be programmatic in the sense of conveying a plot or sustained narrative. They offer instead a generic depiction of nature that rests upon a number of common thematic, harmonic and structural devices: these include unusually slow harmonic rhythm, an emphasis on subdominant harmonies, long phrase lengths, pedal and drone basses, the use of stereotypical 'yodelling' figures, and prominent use of wind instruments. In other words, music in the 'pastoral' idiom during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries represented a kind of sub-genre within which composers wrote utilising a number of widely accepted stylistic conventions. That so many of these conventions can be heard in Ries's *D major Concerto* is proof that the work was conceived in the pastoral style and lends credence to the idea that the title was the composer's own. The long, leisurely unfolding of the principal theme in the first movement, with its slow rate of harmonic change, is radically different from the taut, rhythmically-active theme found in the work's immediate predecessor, the *C sharp minor Concerto*. There are moments of

heightened tension in the music but these serve more to punctuate long stretches of gentle lyricism than offering real dramatic contrast. The prominence given to the horns – which is apparent from the very first bars of the work – is another hallmark of the pastoral style. Ries includes solo horn passages in both the second and third movements, the first of which functions as a link between the movements. These solos – in reality they are horn calls – employ the type of yodelling motives that are an important element of the pastoral style. The lovely second movement *Andantino* is also remarkable for its orchestration: Ries omits the violins and instead employs a seductive, dark-hued combination of solo horn, solo cello, two bassoons, *divisi* violas, cellos and basses. After the last notes of the horn call die away, the strings enter pianissimo to usher in the rondo theme that is presented initially by the soloist. The theme itself contains many characteristic pastoral elements and it is no surprise that the horns are deployed once again in prominent fashion. There is even a remarkable solo horn passage which is notated in duple metre against the compound metre of the piano solo and orchestra. Like all Ries's concerto finales, this movement exhibits an intriguing mix of brilliant virtuoso display, delicate lyricism and gruff, powerful orchestral outbursts.

The second work on the recording, the *Concerto in C minor, Op. 115*, dates from 1809 and was probably composed before Ries set out on his lengthy European tour. It is clearly a more individual work than his *Concerto in C* of 1806, the earliest of Ries's extant piano concertos, and it is likely that he performed the work regularly during the next few years. Its long-delayed publication may indicate that he continued to play the work after the composition of the *Concertos in C sharp minor* and *D major*. The obvious ancestor of the work is Beethoven's *C minor Concerto, Op. 37*, but the turbulent style of its impressive first movement is also reminiscent of Mozart's great *D minor* and *C minor Concertos*, works that Beethoven himself deeply admired. If its orchestral fabric nods in Beethoven's direction, particularly in the first movement, the piano

writing does not in spite of Ries's lessons with Beethoven. His pianism is that of the younger generation, of artists such as Johann Nepomuk Hummel whom he must have met on many occasions in Vienna. This is evident in the *Molto adagio* second movement and in the unorthodox *C major Allegretto* finale which is interrupted by an *Adagio* leading to a brisk *Allegro* conclusion filled with dazzling bravura writing.

The use of contrasting tempi within a rondo movement may have prompted Ries to think about the possibilities of writing self-contained concert rondos. The experience of composing and performing works such as the *Swedish Variations* and the *Rule Britannia Variations* also provided him with valuable opportunities to experiment with independent concert works for piano and orchestra. All of these works take much the same external form: they consist of a lengthy slow introduction that may or may not have a motivic association with the main body of the work. This, be it a rondo or a set of variations, invariably includes sections within it that are contrasted by metre, tonality and tempo thus ensuring that the work contains sufficient variety to keep the audience entertained. The *Introduction et Rondeau Brillant, WoO54*, composed in 1835, is no exception. Although many of Ries's works remained unpublished at the time of his death, it is symptomatic of his declining fortunes as an artist that such an impressive work as this should have suffered the same fate. It shows no weakening of inspiration either in its thematic ideas or musical structure, nor does the solo writing suggest that Ries's powers as a performer were in any way diminished. It is a work that is every bit as impressive as its predecessors and it is difficult to imagine Ries's audience reacting with any less enthusiasm than they had at his numerous other premières. Within three years of its composition both he and Hummel were dead and with them, the last links to the golden age of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven were severed.

Allan Badley

Christopher Hinterhuber



Photograph: Nancy Horowitz

Born in Klagenfurt, Christopher Hinterhuber studied with Alex Papenberg, Rudolf Kehrer, Lazar Berman, Avo Kouyoumdjian and Heinz Medjimorec and received further artistic encouragement from Oleg Maisenberg and Vladimir Ashkenazy among others. After winning prizes at international piano competitions in Leipzig, Saarbrücken, Pretoria, Zurich and Vienna he performed as the “Rising Star” 2002/3 with violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja in the international series at major European concert halls and Carnegie Hall, New York. Since then he has worked with many renowned orchestras and conductors, with engagements at major festivals. A special project was the recording (Schubert, Rachmaninov, Schoenberg) and filming (his hands) for the French-Austrian film *La pianiste* after Elfriede Jelinek directed by Michael Haneke, which won the Grand Prize of the Jury in Cannes 2001. He has given master-classes in Japan, Europe and South America and was appointed professor of piano at the University for Music and Performing Arts in Vienna in 2010.

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Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Founded in 1893, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra has worked with many famous composers, conductors and musicians including Elgar, Sibelius, Holst, Stravinsky, Vaughan Williams and Thomas Beecham; and more recently with Michael Tippett, John Tavener and Peter Maxwell Davies. Principal conductors since the founder Sir Dan Godfrey have included Charles Groves, Constantin Silvestri, Andrew Litton, Marin Alsop and now the dynamic young Ukrainian, Kirill Karabits. The BSO has toured worldwide, performing at Carnegie Hall, New York, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Vienna Musikverein, and Berlin Philharmonie, as well as regular British appearances at the Royal Festival Hall and Royal Albert Hall in London, the Symphony Hall in Birmingham and the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester. The BSO is known internationally through over three hundred recordings, and continues to release numerous CDs each year with Naxos. Recent critically acclaimed recordings have included CDs of Bernstein, Bartók, Sibelius, Glass, Adams and Elgar, and three discs featuring arrangements of Mussorgsky, Bach and Wagner by Stokowski were nominated for GRAMMY awards in 2004, 2005 and 2006.



Photograph: Chris Zuidyk

Uwe Grodd



Photograph: Godfrey Boehnke

The New Zealand based German conductor and flautist Uwe Grodd is a Naxos Recording Artist and first gained worldwide recognition when he won First Prize at the Cannes Classical Awards 2000, for the 'Best 18th Century Orchestral Recording' with his recording of Symphonies by Johann Baptist Vaňhal (8.554341), conducting the Nicolaus Esterházy Sinfonia in Hungary. Two *Gramophone* Editor's Choice distinctions followed for première recordings of works by Hummel (8.557193 and 8.557845). Performance highlights in recent years have included a season of Handel's opera *Imeneo* at the Halle Festival in Germany and concerts with the Mexico City Philharmonic, including Richard Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* and Bruckner's *Fourth Symphony*. Uwe Grodd is Associate Professor at the University of Auckland, New Zealand and Music Director of Auckland Choral and Manukau Symphony Orchestra. A graduate of Mainz University, he studied with teachers of international repute, including André Jaunet, Robert Aitken, Manfred Schreier and Sergiu Celibidache.

www.uwe-grodd.com

The orchestral parts and scores of the following works are available from:

<http://www.artaria.com>

Sources

The sources upon which the editions used in this recording have been made are:

'Concerto Pastoral' in D, Op. 120

Edited by Allan Badley - Artaria Editions AE479
Stockholm, Statens Musikbibliotek - The Music
Library of Sweden
(Sauer & Leidesdorf edition, 1823)

Concerto in C minor, Op. 115

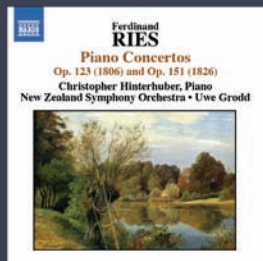
Edited by Allan Badley - Artaria Editions AE478
Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin -
Preußischer Kulturbesitz
Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv:
mus. ms. autogr., F Ries, 79N
Vienna, Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien
(Probst edition, 1823)

Introduction et Rondeau Brillant, WoO54

Edited by Allan Badley - Artaria Editions AE480
Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer
Kulturbesitz
Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv: mus. ms.
autogr., F Ries, 85N



Also Available



8.557638



8.557844



8.570440



8.572038



DDD

8.572088

Playing Time
71:26

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The fourteen works for piano and orchestra of Ferdinand Ries stand alongside those of Hummel as the most important of their kind from the early decades of the 19th Century. Intensely lyrical and yet displaying at times a rugged Beethovenian grandeur, Ries's concertos are works of impressive musical stature. The three works featured on this recording span the years 1809 to 1835 and include the fascinating *Concerto Pastoral, Op. 120*, and the *Introduction et Rondeau Brillant, WoO54*, composed at the end of Ries's long and brilliant career as a pianist-composer.



Ferdinand
RIES
(1784–1838)



Piano Concertos, Volume 4

Concerto Pastoral in D, Op. 120

| | | |
|---|-----------|--------------|
| | | 27:50 |
| 1 | Allegro | 13:24 |
| 2 | Andantino | 5:38 |
| 3 | Allegro | 8:48 |

Piano Concerto in C minor, Op. 115

| | | |
|---|--------------|--------------|
| | | 25:36 |
| 4 | Allegro | 12:06 |
| 5 | Molto adagio | 5:17 |
| 6 | Allegretto | 8:13 |

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|---|---|--------------|
| 7 | Introduction et Rondeau Brillant, WoO54 | 18:00 |
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(Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany / The Bridgeman Art Library)