

# MESSAGE À TOUS LES PIANISTES

**EMI**  
CLASSICS

**Georges  
Cziffra**



## Introduction to my transcriptions

My most important desire and wish was one day to give my experiences with the piano to every 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 concerts as a pianist, I had wanted to finish with just 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, and while I give the field of form and theme over completely to my imagination, I always try to maintain a discipline of thought, 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 producer 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 Overture to William Tell.) After listening to the tape of the 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, that 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 that I could 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. Of those who have attempted to tackle this titanic work, many have stepped back. Even when we played the creations back on tape slowly, 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 gradually he was able to give form to a certain amount of my musical creations. Finally I too became involved in writing down the music, which now turned into true composition and 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 virtuoso István Kassai, in whom I had a great deal of trust, 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: technique develops, and today a professional pianist - and one or two amateur - with great pleasure and not too

many mistakes in interpretation, are able to follow his great virtuoso works. I think that today's pianists learn these works more easily. It becomes more 'natural', and my hopes are that one day they will become part of musical culture.

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 - Brahms 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'. *Le Vol du bourdon* (The Bumblebee). Rimsky Korsakov's famous interlude with the Sultan has been arranged innumerable times. 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.

*La Valse triste* (The Sad Waltz) was composed in 1916 by the famous Ferenc Vecsey (1893-1935), who is unfortunately today a forgotten violinist. In his day, this piece 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 1857. It is different from the original version, thus leaving open the possibility that it can be studied in a different way.

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

Brahms : Danse hongroise n° 5, 2<sup>e</sup> version (page 5)  
Editions Fondation Cziffra/Peters, Frankfurt

## No. 5

J. Brahms - G. Cziffra

*Allargato* (1857 J-1881)  
*Il primo tempo più forte*

The musical score is presented on five systems of grand staves. It begins with a tempo marking 'Allargato' and a dynamic marking 'Il primo tempo più forte'. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'f' and 'p'. The score is a transcription of the original work by Johannes Brahms, adapted by Georges Cziffra.

Musical score for page 10, featuring five systems of piano music. The notation includes various dynamics such as *p*, *f*, *pp*, *sf*, and *cresc.*

Musical score for page 11, featuring four systems of piano music. The notation includes various dynamics such as *p*, *f*, *pp*, *sf*, and *cresc.*

Moderato (3/4 - 111)  
 Adagio (3/4 - 111)

Moderato (3/4 - 111)  
 Adagio (3/4 - 111)

Tempo 1.  
 Adagio (3/4 - 111)

Moderato

arr. per a. ... Tempo I

arr. per a. ... Tempo I

arr. per a. ... Tempo I

Piu vivo! MM 4-100

arr. per a. ... Tempo I

arr. per a. ... Tempo I

Moderato

Tempo I

Piu vivo

Moderato

arr. per a. ... Tempo I

arr. per a. ... Tempo I

arr. per a. ... Tempo I

Vivo

Fondo (MM 4-100)