



BEEETHOVVEN

DIABBELLI VARIATIONS

GEOFFFREY MADGGE

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

DIABELLI VARIATIONS, OP. 120

Some classical compositions are at a first hearing not always so easy to comprehend. In the case of the 33 *Diabelli Variations* it may be a challenge for some listeners. The connections with Diabelli's waltz theme are always present, but at times well hidden behind the surface.

Beethoven began working on the composition in 1819 and completed it in 1823. The work was published by Diabelli's new publishing firm in 1824. It is without doubt one of his greatest achievements. The original intention of Anton Diabelli (1781-1858) was to have fifty one composers write just one variation on his waltz theme to celebrate the opening of his firm. What a surprise he must have experienced when he received no less than 33 variations by Beethoven. How different they would have sounded next to those written by several of the minor composers who also wrote one or two variations that were independently published. It should not be forgotten that he also invited several other well known composers, amongst others Franz Schubert, Franz Liszt (11 years old!), Hummel, Moscheles and Czerny, who also contributed to the joint project.

This masterpiece that without difficulty can stand next to any of Beethoven's later works, or masterpieces like Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, was so original for its time that even Anton Diabelli must have been quite bewildered by what was possible with his rather simple, even may we say, banal theme. The work, like most of Beethoven's

compositions, such as his string quartets and piano sonatas, is a monumental addition to the solo piano variations repertoire.

How to listen to this work, especially if it is the very first time? Of course the best is to simply just experience it without having an opinion. The first listening is always, I believe, an important moment. Everyone hears differently according to background and listening experience. What do we hear, are there any landmarks? Let's look at the various moods and feelings that are expressed. Starting with the first waltz theme of Diabelli we would not expect the astonishingly sublime thoughts and profound feelings ranging from grotesque humor to a tender lyricism, a sinister mystery, spiritual depth and the grandest nobility to occur during the commencement of such a composition. Everything that had influenced Beethoven in the past is introduced. The first martial variation for example, a reminder of his revolutionary 'Napoleonic' period, is quite a contrast to the theme. But there are also many lyrical and brilliant variations scattered throughout the work while a middle slow variation (number 20) is far beyond its time, a variation with spiritual depth, even sounding orchestrally as if played by trombones!

The last three variations before the monumental fugue contain a depth hardly ever found in the piano repertoire since Bach's and Handel's masterpieces, these composers are indeed the main influence behind the final fugue (var 32).

And then from the hand of the master, something totally unexpected and certainly the apotheosis of the entire composition, a minuet in the style of Haydn and Mozart! Also several variations can be heard that also refer to other composers whom he admired. A very good example is variation number 22, referring to Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* and the aria *Notte e giorno faticar*.

The last variations, numbers 30 and 31, show the influence of Bach's aria number 25 from the *Goldberg Variations*. This is an incredible contrast to the monumental fugue several variations later in the style of Handel, whom he greatly admired. He concludes with an unworldly minuet showing the influence of Haydn. With this final variation he implies that everything has been said already and he appropriately ends the work with an impatient C major chord, as if to say "take it or leave it, I'm finished."

I think that one of the best ways to listen is to follow the emotional line and imagine that Beethoven, at that time completely deaf, would surely have sung everything inwardly. Possibly only by following his own inward singing could he write such a masterpiece so close to the inner depth of his spiritual personality.

—Geoffrey Madge

GEOFFREY MADGE

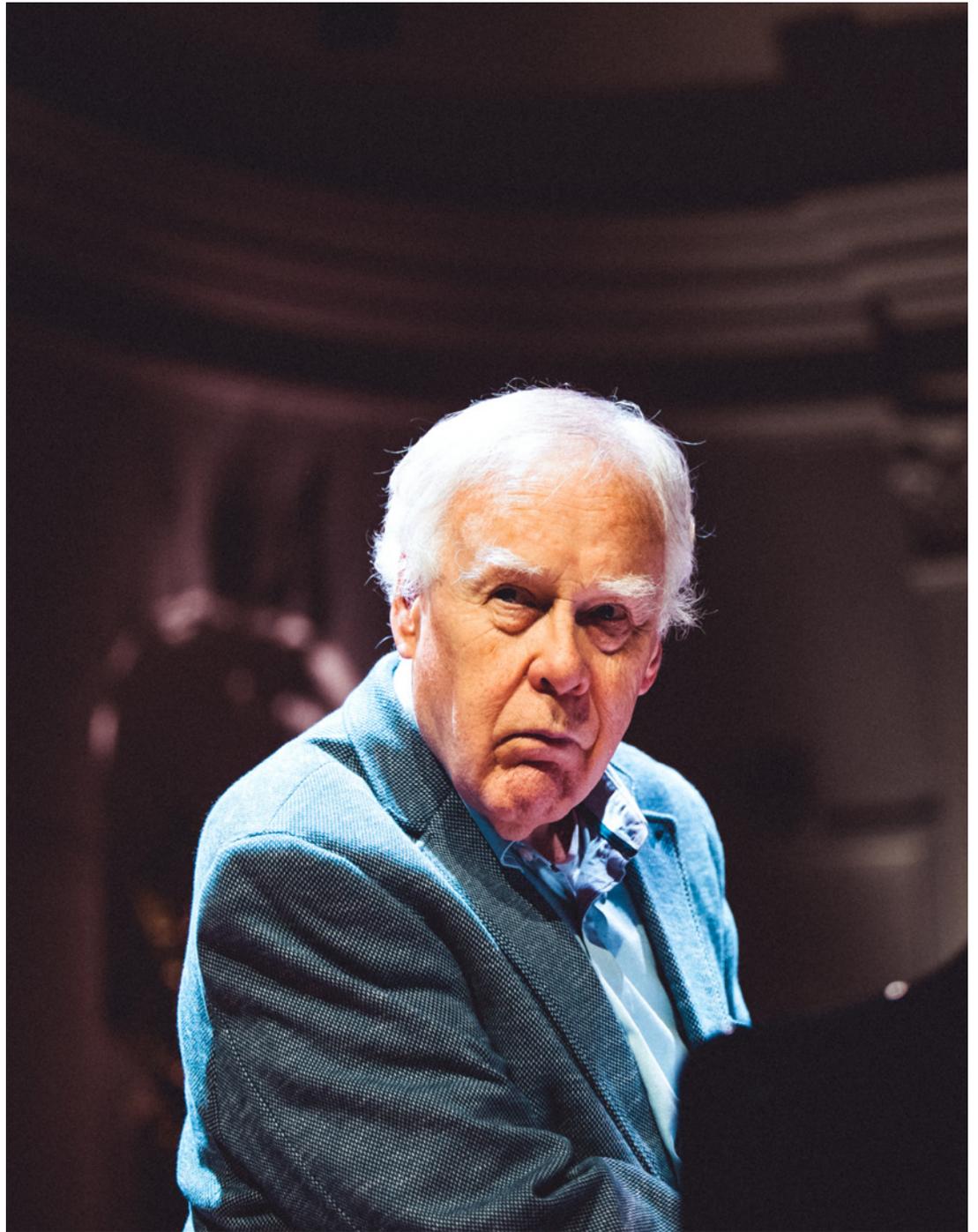
Geoffrey Douglas Madge, born in Adelaide (Australia) in 1941. He studied piano and composition at the Elder Conservatorium in Adelaide. After winning first prize in the ABC piano competition in Sydney, he went to Europe where he studied with Geza Anda and Eduardo del Pueyo.

He gave successful debut concerts in London, Cologne, Budapest and Amsterdam. In 1972 he moved to The Netherlands following his appointment as professor of piano at the Royal Conservatorium in The Hague, a position he held until his retirement in 2006.

Following a meeting in London in 1970 with the celebrated composer Iannis Xenakis, he gave many performances of his complete piano works. One of the highlights in Geoffrey Madge's cooperation with Xenakis was his very successful contribution to the Xenakis Festival in 1975 in Athens with *Herma*, *Evryali* and *Synaphai*. In that year the new Greek government, replacing the fascist regime of the colonels, decided to celebrate the new freedom by honouring Iannis Xenakis with three major concerts in a Xenakis Festival at the Herodus Atticus Theatre in Athens.

In 1975 Decca recorded his first piano concerto *Synaphai* with Geoffrey Madge as soloist and the New Philharmonia Orchestra. This recording was awarded the Dutch Edison award.

In 1988 Philips issued Madge's anthology of Ferruccio Busoni's solo piano works on six CD's. This production was an international success and received many prizes, including another Dutch Edison award and the Belgian Caecilia Prize. His performances of the monumental Busoni Piano Concerto in a number of international festivals have received rave critical response.





In the 1980's he became well-known worldwide through his integral performances of the monumental *Opus Clavicembalisticum* by K. Sorabji. He was the first and only to get permission from the composer to perform this mammoth 3½ hour work. Since his first complete performance of O.C. in the Holland Festival (Utrecht) on June 11 1982, more performances followed in Chicago, London, Bonn, Montreal, Paris and Berlin. The release of the five CD production by BIS of his Chicago performance, recorded and filmed by WFMT Chicago, received high critical acclaim.

Madge has meanwhile composed a considerable amount of music, including string quartets, songs, works for piano solo, a ballet *Monkeys in a cage*, premiered in the Sydney Opera House in 1977 followed by 30 performances and a piano concerto, premiered in Amsterdam in 1985.

Through his connection with the Greek musical world he came into contact with the Nikos Skalkottas Society in Athens and was asked by the president of the Society to give the first complete performance of the cycle of Skalkottas' *32 Piano Pieces* during the 1979 ISCM Festival. In 1998 the Swedish label BIS invited him to record the piano concertos as part of their Skalkottas project.

Geoffrey Madge's repertoire is extensive with unique programmes that are a combination of baroque, classical, 19th century and many contemporary works. More recently he has been performing Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* and *Hammerklavier Sonata*, the late sonatas by Schubert, Reger's *Bach Variations* and the *Debussy Études*.

Amongst his many CD releases, which include the Bach/Busoni transcriptions, nine CD's of works by Leopold Godowsky including his complete *Chopin Etudes*, Dimitri Mitropoulos, Julius Reubke, Ernst Krenek, Stefan Wolpe, Iannis Xenakis, Russian music from the 1920's, Medtner's three piano concertos, George Gershwin's *Piano Concerto* and his *Rhapsody in Blue*.

Geoffrey Madge has given masterclasses in Russia, India, Poland, France, England, Germany, Australia and Holland.

In September 2005 he was awarded the prestigious Polish Silver Medal "For Merits to Culture Gloria Artis" for his very prominent artistic creations and great contribution to culture.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

33 VARIATIONS ON A WALTZ BY ANTON DIABELLI

OP. 120

Geoffrey Madge

piano

total time: 61'55

1	1'05	Theme	Vivace
2	1'51	Variation 1	Alla marcia maestoso
3	0'57	Variation 2	Poco allegro
4	1'35	Variation 3	L'istesso tempo
5	1'16	Variation 4	Un poco più vivace
6	1'07	Variation 5	Allegro vivace
7	2'07	Variation 6	Allegro ma non troppo e serio
8	1'15	Variation 7	Un poco più allegro
9	1'55	Variation 8	Poco vivace
10	1'49	Variation 9	Allegro pesante e risoluto
11	0'43	Variation 10	Presto
12	1'08	Variation 11	Allegretto
13	1'01	Variation 12	Un poco più moto
14	1'09	Variation 13	Vivace
15	4'12	Variation 14	Grave e maestoso
16	0'43	Variation 15	Presto scherzando
17	1'14	Variation 16	Allegro

18	1'18	Variation 17	Allegro
19	2'05	Variation 18	Poco moderato
20	1'11	Variation 19	Presto
21	2'40	Variation 20	Andante
22	1'29	Variation 21	Allegro con brio - Meno allegro - Tempo primo
23	0'56	Variation 22	Allegro molto, alla 'Notte e giorno faticar' di Mozart
24	1'03	Variation 23	Allegro assai
25	3'22	Variation 24	Fughetta Andante
26	0'50	Variation 25	Allegro
27	1'25	Variation 26	Piacevole
28	1'18	Variation 27	Vivace
29	1'03	Variation 28	Allegro
30	1'48	Variation 29	Adagio ma non troppo
31	2'22	Variation 30	Andante, sempre cantabile
32	5'39	Variation 31	Largo, molto espressivo
33	3'58	Variation 32	Fuga Allegro
34	4'21	Variation 33	Tempo di Menuetto moderato



J.S. Bach
Goldberg Variations
Geoffrey Madge
ZEF 9670



J.S. Bach
The Art of Fugue
Geoffrey Madge
ZEF 9683

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