



Myung Whun Chung *piano*

ECM NEW SERIES





**Myung Whun Chung** *piano*

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I am often asked how, as a person born in Korea in the last year of the Korean War, I came to know classical music. My response is that I had the good fortune to be born the sixth of seven children, and that all five before me played music. Therefore, I am certain that not only for all of my life, but also the nine months before I was born I heard lots of music. It is thanks to this that music is for me the most natural thing in life.

Some months ago, my second son, who works for ECM, had the idea that I should make a piano recording, and although I don't consider myself a 'real' pianist anymore, the idea that my grandchildren would be able to hear this music from my heart was very appealing.

The selection of these pieces is somewhat scattered but most have a connection to personal experiences. Debussy's *Clair de Lune* is a gift for my second granddaughter, whose name is Lua (moon). The Schubert *Impromptu* in G-flat major I played for my first son's marriage. If music is the language of the spirit, this is certainly one of the most beautiful examples. *Autumn Song* is one of the works that I played at the Tchaikovsky competition in 1974. It is a piece greatly loved by the Russian people who touched me deeply. Schumann and Chopin are very special to pianists. Intimate dialogue in dream land. The *Nocturne* in c-sharp minor is for my sister Kyung Wha who remains for me not only one of the greatest violinists of all time, but also the most passionate musician I have ever known. I owe much of my musical development to her. Finally the Mozart and Beethoven, perhaps the greatest of them all. Pure gifts from heaven.

My warmest thanks to Manfred Eicher who was instrumental in the making of this recording. A profoundly gifted ‘listener.’ I believe that musicians are only responsible for half of the real musical experience — the other half must be done by the listener. How one listens and receives the music is perhaps the most important gesture.

This record is my personal musical thanks to all who share my love for the wonderful music.

October 2013  
Myung Whun Chung







나는 종종 한국전쟁의 마지막 해에 태어난 사람으로서 어떻게 클래식 음악을 접할 수 있었냐는 질문을 받는다. 내 대답은 바로 형제 중 위에 다섯이 음악을 하는 칠 남매의 여섯째로 태어난 복이었다는 것이다. 그러므로 내 전체 인생은 물론, 태어나기도 전 아홉 달 동안에도 나는 음악을 꽤 많이 들었을 것이다. 덕분에 음악은 내 인생에서 가장 자연스러운 것이 되었다.

몇 달 전 ECM의 프로듀서로 일하고 있는 둘째 아들이 피아노 음반을 만들자는 제안을 했다. 비록 이제는 나 자신을 피아니스트라고 생각하진 않지만, 나의 손주들이 내 가슴에서 우리나라 음악을 들을 수 있을 거란 생각에 그 제안이 마음에 와 닿았다.

선택한 곡들이 조금은 두서가 없어 보이지만 대부분이 내 개인적인 경험과 연관이 있다. 드뷔시의 ‘달빛(Claire de Lune)’은 이름이 루아(Lua:달)인 둘째 손녀를 위한 선물이다. 슈베르트의 즉흥곡 G 플랫 장조는 내가 큰아들의 결혼식에서 연주한 곡이다. 만약 음악이 영혼의 언어라면, 이 곡이야말로 가장 아름다운 예 중의 하나임이 분명하다. 차이콥스키의 ‘가을 노래(Autumn Song)’는 내가 1974년 차이콥스키 콩쿠르에서 연주했던 곡 중 하나이다. 이 곡은 내게 깊은 감동을 주었던 러시아 사람들이 대단히 사랑하는 곡이다. 슈만과 쇼팽은 피아니스트들에게 아주 특별하다. 꿈속에서의 내밀한 대화라고나 할까. 야상곡 C 샹프 단조는 경화 누나를 위해 연주하였다. 누나는 내게 역사상 가장 위대한 바이올리니스트 중 한 명일

뿐만 아니라, 내가 아는 가장 열정적인 음악가이기도 하다. 그리고 내 음악적 발전에 큰 영향을 주었다. 마지막으로 모차르트와 베토벤의 작품이 있는데, 아마도 가장 훌륭한 작품들일 것이다. 그야말로 하늘에서 내려온 순수한 선물일 것이다.

만프레드 아이허에게 따뜻한 감사를 전하고 싶다. 그는 이번 녹음 작업에서 악기와 같은 역할을 하였다. 정말 깊은 재능을 지닌 ‘듣는 이’. 나는 진정한 음악적 경험에서 음악가는 오직 절반의 책임이 있을 뿐, 나머지 절반은 듣는 사람에게 있다고 믿는다. 듣는 사람이 어떻게 음악을 듣고 받아들이는지가 아마도 가장 중요한 부분이 아닐까.

이 음반은 내가 사랑하는 이 아름다운 음악을 공감해주는 분들을 위한 개인적인, 그리고 음악적인 감사의 표현이다.

2013년 10월  
정명훈

## On the pieces

A musical work will often stand like a monument, to which a performance or a recording can bring us closer, but which will always stay at a remove. However, there are also pieces we find we can draw towards ourselves, or that come unbidden — pieces we perhaps learned as children at the piano, or that arrived later, to stay with us, ever-present and familiar.

Such are the pieces here: ‘Für Elise’, through which generations of young children have learned the name of Beethoven; favourite Chopin nocturnes and Schubert impromptus; ‘Clair de Lune’; ‘Träumerei’. We may feel we know these pieces, have known them all our lives.

They are, however, not fixed objects but infinite spaces, holding limitless possibilities of performance and occasion. We have known these pieces all our lives. Now we can know them again.

‘Clair de Lune’ (Moonlight) is the exquisite slow movement of Debussy’s *Suite bergamasque*, which he wrote in 1890, at a time when he and his music were closely in touch with the poetry of Paul Verlaine. One can imagine why. Verlaine’s poetry offered invitations into fantasy landscapes but also clarity; it offered melancholy but also an echo of long-past festivities. This piano movement in D-flat originally had a title from another Verlaine poem, ‘Promenade sentimentale’, about a lonely walk at dusk beside a pool with waterlilies, which may account for some watery sounds in the middle section. And perhaps the high chords which open that section were meant to sound like rays of the setting sun. However, when Debussy came to revise the piece

for publication, in 1905, he renamed it after another Verlaine poem, so that now those same chords may suggest falling moonlight.

We might hear some of that, too, in Chopin's nocturne in the same key. Chopin had written his first nocturnes in his early twenties, two sets of three, adapting a genre invented by John Field. After that they came as pairs, as corresponding panels, the first in this pattern being the two of op. 27, published in 1836 with a dedication to Countess Apponyi, wife of the Austrian ambassador to the French court and the hostess of a salon at which Chopin performed. He also played this nocturne for Robert Schumann and Clara Wieck in Leipzig; Mendelssohn, who was there as well, wrote to his sister Fanny of this 'lovely new notturno'. Lovely it is indeed, moving through two phases, of song and something like a barcarolle, and repeating both with extension and embellishment.

Chopin, Schumann and Mendelssohn never knew 'Für Elise', which came to light only in 1867, when a music scholar in Munich, Ludwig Nohl, published it. His source for the manuscript, now lost, was supposedly a woman whose son may have inherited it from Therese Malfatti, to whom Beethoven proposed in 1810. (She, more than twenty years Beethoven's junior, married a civil servant six years later, and in 1828 invited Schubert to one of her house balls.) Some have doubted the story of the missing manuscript and suspected that Nohl wrote or adapted the piece himself, but Beethoven's authorship is proved by a couple of sketches. It may also be that Nohl misread the inscription,

and that Beethoven composed the piece with his beloved Therese in mind. 'Für Therese', if that is what it should be, is a slow rondo in a minor, with short episodes in C major and d minor.

The latter opens out as the key of Tchaikovsky's 'Autumn Song', which he wrote in the spring of 1876, immediately after finishing *Swan Lake*, as part of a commission for piano pieces to be published monthly through that year in a music magazine. When all twelve had appeared, Tchaikovsky put them together as *The Seasons*. This was the October instalment, marked 'Andante doloroso e molto cantabile' and based on a melody thoroughly characteristic in its shapeliness and poignancy. With its slow minim beat, one could imagine the piece as a number in one of the composer's ballets: a lament or a farewell.

'An inexhaustible wealth of melodic invention' was what Tchaikovsky found in Schubert, who wrote his two sets of impromptus in 1827. The first set's second number, in E-flat, begins with the right hand rippling up and down the keyboard in major scales, but with chromatic wobbles that open the way for a more melodically phrased passage in the minor before the scales come back. This time they lead, through a reminiscence of the minor-mode music, to a more forceful and impassioned middle section in b minor, with wonderful modulations—and also with the scale motif asserting itself frequently in the left hand. The opening section is repeated, and after it comes a coda returning to the b minor theme but ending finally, desperately, in e-flat minor.

Another Schubert impromptu is to follow, but first comes another of his keenest admirers, Schumann, with two pieces. 'Träumerei' (Dreaming), from his 1838 collection *Kinderszenen*, is a little masterpiece not only of evocation but also of musical invention, in finding different ways the same idea can go. Its F major prefaces the C major of the 'Arabeske', from the following year. Schumann took the term, which for him had nothing to do with the oriental, from Friedrich Schlegel, who used it to connote a coherent multiplicity of material and viewpoint in a novel. This Schumann achieves on the scale of a piano movement, interweaving what he would probably have regarded as 'feminine' in the main subject and 'masculine' in the two episodes, the first, in e minor, having a beautiful transition back to the principal music, the second, in a minor, very short. The piece comes to an end, then adds an extraordinary coda, of union.

The second Schubert impromptu is the next in the same set, in G-flat, one of his great songs without words. Supported always by arpeggios that not only provide harmonic grounding but also stimulate the instrument's resonances and so add lustre to the melody, a line extends itself in two strains, the second repeated with variation, and passes into a central section which, though darker, soon comes up with its own noble theme. This is brought back before the full reprise of the opening.

There is also a second Chopin nocturne, the one in c-sharp minor he wrote in 1830 but failed to publish with others of this early period, almost certainly

because he had left the manuscript in Warsaw with his elder sister, Ludwika. After a brief introduction, repeated, the melody arrives, with arpeggios that, again, provide both setting and light. There is a middle section in which the music moves from the private to the patriotic. Then it flows back.

The end comes in C major, with Mozart's variations on a French children's song, 'Ah! vous dirai-je, Maman', which he probably wrote in 1781 or 1782. The tune, better known now in an early nineteenth-century English setting ('Twinkle, twinkle, little star'), is followed by twelve variations. Often it is impossible to imagine Mozart's state of mind while composing. In this case, though, one can hear him having fun.

Paul Griffiths





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