



T B S



Tessa Uys Ben Schoeman

Programme

Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

Introduction and Allegro for Strings, Op. 47

Arranged by Otto Singer II

The remarkable story of Elgar's rise to global fame – from provincial musician to international figure – during the dozen years or so of the Edwardian era is well-known. Coincidental with his large-scale orchestral and choral works at that time, the popular appeal of his Serenade for Strings and the initial Pomp and Circumstance Marches was reinforced by such immediately melodious gems as the Salut d'Amour and Serenade de Matin. Elgar's music – of all types – was greatly sought after, his new music was published immediately, with demand – as we shall see – extending to piano transcriptions commissioned by his publishers of his orchestral works.

The piano transcriptions of Elgar's orchestral music have largely remained unknown but at the time were welcomed by a grateful public. Such was his fame that several established musicians were commissioned to undertake those tasks: Siegfried Karg-Elert and Otto Singer made solo piano versions of Elgar's major orchestral works – Karg-Elert transcribed both Symphonies and Falstaff following Otto Singer's admirable transcription of the Introduction and Allegro for piano duet – two pianists at one piano.

Otto Singer (1863-1931) was a noted composer whose reputation at the time was largely predicated upon his piano duet transcriptions of Bruckner's nine symphonies, which were outstandingly well done. Although Elgar's Introduction and Allegro was written in 1905 for the string section of the London Symphony Orchestra – the premiere was conducted by Elgar – thereafter, however, the work tended to be neglected. It was the only piece of relative significance by Elgar that he never conducted on record.

Those familiar with Elgar's scores know his music is scrupulously marked as to how he wanted every phrase – sometimes every bar or note within that phrase – to be played. Whilst it may appear a relatively easy task to reproduce what the composer wanted, this is by no means easy in Elgar's orchestral scores any more than it is in the music of Wagner, Mahler or Richard Strauss. Details must be observed, of course, but never exaggerated at the expense of the underlying structure. It is a measure of Singer's insight and skill that the piano duet transcription appears to 'fit' the keyboard admirably.

The work is constructed from three main ideas, textural and melodic – the original string double-stopping transferring admirably to spread keyboard chords. Thereafter, the pianists' four hands cope fully with the changing contrapuntal texturalisation to the point where Elgar's linear and harmonic thought – the first, a Celtic theme allegedly inspired by distant voices; the second, the extended fugal working of a newer, organically connected, theme – leads inexorably to a powerfully ringing conclusion.

(Notes by Robert Matthew-Walker)



25 January 2026
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Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)

Symphony No 7 in A major Opus 92

Transcribed by Franz Xaver Scharwenka

Poco sostenuto – Vivace; Allegretto; Presto – Assai meno presto (trio); Allegro con brio

Beethoven's Symphony no. 7 in A major, Op. 92 was written between 1811 and 1812, while Beethoven was recuperating from ill health at a Bohemian spa town, Teplice. A year later, in 1813, the work was first performed for wounded soldiers from the Battle of Hanau and Beethoven (the conductor at this event) addressed the audience: "We are moved by nothing but pure patriotism and the joyful sacrifice of our powers for those who have sacrificed so much for us."

The second movement, *Allegretto*, was so instantly popular that it had to be repeated as an encore. Indeed, that exact same movement was used in the film *The King's Speech* (played in the background to the dramatic war-time speech of King George VI, played by Colin Firth). The pathos and heroic qualities of this music thus remain timeless. The outer movements are large in scope, as Beethoven constantly expanded the formal boundaries and explored new possibilities of orchestration. Scharwenka incorporated the dense textures and complex counterpoint into his duet transcription, thus challenging the two pianists to the utmost and demanding considerable physical stamina.

Scharwenka was born in 1850 in Posen, East Prussia and died in Berlin in 1924. Although he began learning to play the piano by ear when he was three, Scharwenka did not start formal music studies until he was 15, when his family moved to Berlin where he enrolled at the *Akademie der Tonkunst*. He travelled widely as a piano virtuoso and scored a considerable success in England in both this capacity and that of composer. Scharwenka was an inspiring teacher and a composer of symphonies, piano concerti and an opera, as well as a quantity of instrumental music, including the transcriptions for piano four hands of all the nine Symphonies by Beethoven.

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Tessa Uys and Ben Schoeman Piano Duo

In 2010, Tessa Uys and Ben Schoeman established a duo partnership after being invited to give a two-piano recital at the Royal Over-Seas League in London. Ever since, they have performed regularly at music societies, festivals and at the BBC and in 2015, they embarked on their journey with the nine Scharwenka/Beethoven Symphonies transcriptions.

Born in Cape Town, **Tessa Uys** was first taught by her mother, Helga Bassel, herself a noted concert pianist. At 16, she won a Royal Schools Associated Board Scholarship and continued her studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London where she studied with Gordon Green.

In her final year she was awarded the MacFarren Medal. Further studies followed in London with Maria Curcio, and in Siena with Guido Agosti. Shortly after this Tessa Uys won the Royal Over-Seas League Competition and was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music. During the past decades, Tessa Uys has established for herself an impressive reputation, both as concert performer, and as a broadcasting artiste, performing at many concert venues throughout the world and with such distinguished conductors as Sir Neville Marriner, Walter Susskind, Louis Frémaux and Nicholas Kraemer.

Also born in South Africa, **Ben Schoeman** studied piano with Joseph Stanford at the University of Pretoria and then received post-graduate tuition from Boris Petrushansky, Louis Lortie, Michel Dalberto, Ronan O'Hora and Eliso Virsaladze in Florence, Imola and London.

He obtained a doctorate from City, University of London and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He won 1st Prize in the 11th UNISA International Piano Competition, the Gold Medal in the Royal Over-Seas League Competition, the contemporary music prize at the Cleveland International Piano Competition, and the Huberte Rupert Prize from the South African Academy for Science and Art. He has performed at Wigmore Hall, the Barbican Centre and Queen Elizabeth Halls in London, Carnegie Hall in New York, the Konzerthaus in Berlin, the Gulbenkian Auditorium in Lisbon, and the Enescu Festival in Bucharest. Ben Schoeman is a Steinway Artist and a senior lecturer in piano and musicology at the University of Pretoria.

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