

A Project entitled  
*An Investigation of Love Pieces in Piano Repertoire through a Recital Project*  
Submitted by  
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submitted to The Education University of Hong Kong  
for the degree of *Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Creative Arts and Culture and*  
*Bachelor of Education (Honours) (Music)*

in April 2022



## Declaration

I, *Lau Wing Shun*, declare that this research report represents my own work under the supervision of *Dr. Philbert King Yue Li*, and that it has not been submitted previously for examination to any tertiary institution.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

*Lau Wing Shun*

*6<sup>th</sup> April 2022*



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## **Abstract**

This capstone project is a summary of my five-year studies at Education University of Hong Kong. I applied my art administration skills and musical knowledge to organize a public piano recital on 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2022. The one-hour recital, entitled “*A Journey of...*”, represents the experience of love in our lives through music. Therefore, it is divided into three stages of love – “Passion,” “Marriage,” and “Farewell.” It features six love pieces written in the Romantic Period (ca. 1820-1910) by renowned composers, including *Three Romances, Op. 11* by Clara Schumann (1819-1896), *Three Romances, Op. 28* by Robert Schumann (1810-1856), *Marriage, S. 161/I* by Franz Liszt (1811-1886), *Wedding Day at Troldhaugen, Op. 65, no. 6* by Edvard Grieg (1843-1907), Franz Liszt’s (1811-1886) piano transcription of *Isolde’s Love Death* from opera *Tristan and Isolde* by Richard Wagner (1813-1883) and Leopold Godowsky’s (1870-1938) piano transcription of *Good Night* from *Winter Journey* by Franz Schubert (1797-1828). An in-depth study and detailed music analysis of the programme concerning their historical background, compositional elements, stylistic practice, and thematic ideas with the support of score quotation are done. All findings are presented in a live-broadcast recital. A presentation and a final reflective report conclude my project.

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## **Introduction**

As a final year student of the double-degree programme, I would like to integrate what I have learnt in both areas by this creative project – *An Investigation of Love Pieces in Piano Repertoire through a Recital Project*. I will examine selected piano works from different periods featuring a specific theme, “love,” through a piano recital. I will apply my art administration skills and musical knowledge to prepare and organize the concert such as preparing the programme notes, managing and promoting the concert, live-recording, and studying the music in the lens of music theory. Throughout the process, the bi-weekly reflective journals will record the progress of the project. There will be a post-event evaluation and a final presentation to conclude my investigation.

## **Objectives**

Upon the completion of this project, there are three expected outcomes. First, I will demonstrate the musical knowledge and skills learnt from the music related courses in the Coterminal Double Degree programme, especially music performance skills, music history, and theoretical knowledge, by delivering a unique and creative interpretation to the audience.

Second, I will be able to illustrate my skills in arts administration learnt from the creative arts and culture related courses throughout the organization of the recital, from project planning, programme preparation, promotion to operation. I will record my own process with the bi-weekly journals from October 2021 to December 2021 regarding the pre-recital works and piano rehearsals throughout the period. It will be summarized in the final presentation.

Third, I will evaluate the whole process of this creative project. Both musical decision and administrative execution will be reviewed and presented in the final presentation. The post-concert reflective report will support my future projects and concerts.

## **Methodologies**

The project will last for six months. The creative project begins with the literature review of the six pieces. Books, articles, scores, and essays regarding the historical background and musical analysis of the chosen pieces will be examined. Through content analysis, a better understanding of the compositional elements, stylistic practice, and thematic ideas will be gathered. I will also seek performance advice from teachers and pianists. My final interpretation of the pieces will be delivered to the audience on the stage. In response to the pandemic situation, a hybrid mode with both face-to-face and online platforms will be conducted throughout the project. The preparation work will include venue booking, negotiation with the Education University of Hong Kong Technical Arts Team (TechArts) on supportive works, promotion, and materials design. The recital will be held at the Steinway Recital Hall at Tsim Sha Tsui with live-streaming support on Instagram, and the presentation will be done on EdUHK campus. Video and audio recording will be executed by TechArts. Reflective report will be based on my recorded performance and administrative works.

1) YouTube Link of the recital (Instagram live-broadcast version):

<https://youtu.be/2aQF3t31Y0I>

2) YouTube Link of the recital (Technical Arts version):

<https://youtu.be/3xKrI3li-xI>

3) Link of the E-booklet, Poster and Programme List (PDF format):

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1\\_puLTPTsXa60\\_C56\\_54VtmpjhyYWFZS6?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1_puLTPTsXa60_C56_54VtmpjhyYWFZS6?usp=sharing)

4) Link of the PowerPoint Presentation (Google Slides):

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1WiNkMAuoNRi-eTo8kJh1\\_iW5qFhYSrGm8A1qq2oIPrc/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1WiNkMAuoNRi-eTo8kJh1_iW5qFhYSrGm8A1qq2oIPrc/edit?usp=sharing)



## Timeline (from September 2021 to April 2022)

# Timeline

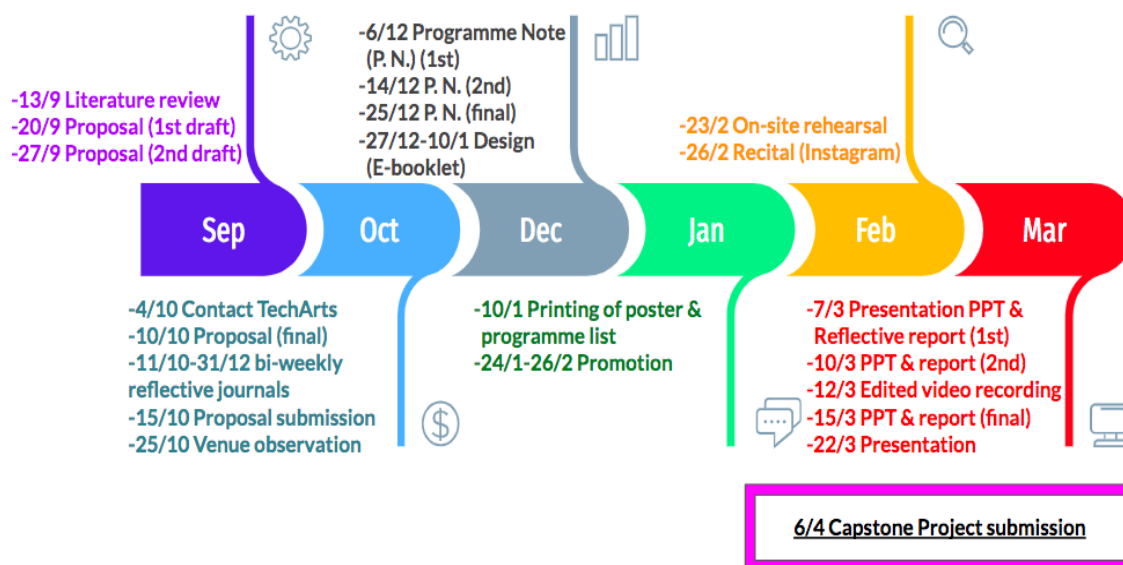


Figure 1: Project Timeline

## **Programme Design**

### *Passion*

- 1) C. Schumann - Three Romances, Op. 11
- 2) R. Schumann - Three Romances, Op. 28

### *Marriage*

- 3) Liszt - Marriage, S. 161/1
- 4) Grieg - Wedding Day at Troldhaugen, Op. 65, no. 6

### *Farewell*

- 5) Wagner / Liszt - Isolde's Love Death, S. 447
- 6) Schubert / Godowsky - Good Night

.....

The piano recital, titled "*A Journey of...*", is a one-hour music program featuring the love pieces in classical piano repertoire. Since love is inevitable in our lives, the selected repertoire will connect with our personal experiences. I divide the recital into three stages - "Passion," "Marriage," and "Farewell" to let the audience experience different aspects of love.

The programme has six pieces in total. All the works are related to Romantic Period, including *Three Romances, Op. 11* by Clara Schumann (1819-1896), *Three Romances, Op. 28* by Robert Schumann (1810-1856), *Marriage, S. 161/1* by Franz Liszt (1811-1886), *Wedding Day at Troldhaugen, Op. 65, no. 6* by Edvard Grieg (1843-1907), Franz Liszt's (1811-1886) piano transcription of *Isolde's Love Death* from opera *Tristan and Isolde* by Richard Wagner (1813-1883) and Leopold Godowsky's (1870-1938) piano transcription of *Good Night* from *Winter Journey* by Franz Schubert (1797-1828). I design the performance order of the pieces by allocating them into the aforementioned three stages of love. Each piece has its respective relation to the theme, which will be explained in the "Literature Review" section in detail.

## Literature Review

### a) *Passion* Section

The recital commences with the *Passion* stage with Clara Schumann's *Three Romances Op. 11* (1839) and Robert Schumann's *Three Romances Op. 28* (1839). Lott (2015) stated that these two sets of Romances had a unique relationship to their early struggle as a couple wishing to be united in marriage. As Clara's father Friedrich Wieck (1785-1873) fiercely rejected their marriage, they were separated during the long-term lawsuit period. Meanwhile, Clara dedicated her Romances to Robert which influenced Robert to compose his set of Romances and dedicated back to her as a Christmas present. Finally, they achieved the consent from the court and married in September 1840.

Clara's *Three Romances Op. 11* was composed early in 1839 as a dedication to Robert, while Robert was in Vienna. After Clara sent the copy of the 2nd Romance to her future husband in July 1839, Robert responded that "You appreciate me as a composer as I do. Each of your thoughts penetrates my soul, just as I have you to thank for all my music" (Litzmann, 2013). One of the main perspectives that attracted Robert was the element of duet textures in the Andante sections (see *figure 2 to 4*).

*Clara Schumann, 1839, mm. 18-20, figure 2: duet passage between Soprano and Tenor*



*Clara Schumann, 1839, mm. 5-11, figure 3: duet passage in mm. 7-11 between Alto and Bass*



*Clara Schumann, 1839, mm. 90-93, figure 4: duet passage between Soprano and Bass*



Robert admires Clara's duetting texture in her second Romance in G minor. He imitates the elements in his second Romance as well (*figure 5*). Daverio (1997) wrote that Robert's second Romance in F-sharp major (in 6/8 time) features duetting texture with the siciliano dance rhythms in the melody, which the rhythm usually associates with pastoral scenes and lamenting elements in nineteenth-century opera.

Robert Schumann, 1839, mm. 1-4, figure 5: duet passage in inner voices

II

Einfach M. M. ♩ = 100  
Semplice

Robert was deeply influenced by Clara's set which he later made his own contribution to the same design in 1839- *Three Romance Op. 28*, which is published in 1840. Herttrich (2009) said Robert regarded it as one of his successful works in his later years. Although he did not think his romances were well deserved to dedicate to Clara, he gave her the work as a Christmas present in 1839. Coincidentally, Clara loves the second Romance the most. Smith (1987) mentioned that Clara responded "... as your bride, you must certainly dedicate something more to me, and I know of nothing more tender than these *Three Romances*, in particular the second one, which is the most beautiful love duet." In addition, Parham (2019) quoted that the second Romance in F-sharp major was also the very last piece Clara heard on her deathbed by requesting her grandson to play it.

As written in Lott (2015), both composers used varied melodic repetitions in their romances, the structures were likely to be in three-part form and tended to be in minor mode (except their 3rd Romances are in Rondo form), for instance, in Clara's first Romance in Eb minor, mm. 1 to 15 is section A, mm. 16 to 32 is section B, mm. 33-44 section A', mm. 44 to the end is coda section. In Robert's 1st Romance in Bb minor, mm. 1 to 24 is section A, mm. 25 to 66 is section B, mm. 67 to 90 is section A', mm. 90 to the end is coda section. Daverio (1998) commented that both sets connect with each other by recalling the Medieval style. For instance, Clara's Romances did not finish in perfect authentic cadence. Instead, plagal

cadences (in her first Romance, *figure 6*) and Picard thirds (in her second Romance, *figure 7*) were used to project a “timeless” quality, or church-like genres. Similarly, Robert’s last Romance closed with plagal cadence in which the subdominant chord (E major) and tonic chord (B major) alternated for four extended measures (*figure 8*).

*Clara Schumann, 1839, mm. 46-49, figure 6: plagal cadence Ab minor to Eb minor in mm. 48-49*



*Clara Schumann, 1839, mm. 146-151, figure 7: after the G descending Phrygian scale in bass in mm. 146-147, there is plagal cadence from C minor to the Picardy third chord G major*



*Robert Schumann, 1839, mm. 373-383, figure 8: plagal cadence in mm. 375-383, E major to B major*



He also pointed out that Robert's first Romance in B flat minor starts with a left-hand evocation of the harp or lyre in the minor mode (*figure 9*), while Clara's first Romance in E flat minor also starts with a harp-like arpeggiated pattern in the bass which built the style of an ancient troubadour (*figure 10*).

*Robert Schumann, 1839, mm. 1-3, figure 9*



*Clara Schumann, 1839, mm. 1-3, figure 10*



Daverio (1997) further commented on the similarities of the third Romance from both sets. The author said that both composers employed Rondo form in third Romances. Clara's third Romance in A flat major is in five-part rondo form (mm. 1 to 24 is section A, mm. 25 to 56 is section B, mm. 57 to 68 is section A', mm. 69 to 120 is section C, mm. 121 to the end is section A''). Robert's third Romance in B major includes two "Intermezzo" passages in the middle (Intermezzo I in mm. 114 to 218 and Intermezzo II in mm. 258 to 303).

## b) *Marriage* Section

Liszt's *Marriage* from his *Years of Pilgrimage—Second Year: Italy* (1858) will open the second part of the recital. It was inspired by Italian masterpieces of art and literature from the Renaissance era. Plantinga (1984) revealed that Liszt once told Berlioz about his impression towards Italy in October 1839, around the time he composed *Marriage*: "This amazing country appeared to me in its purest forms. The art works showed itself in his unity and universality. Raphael and Michelangelo assisted me to comprehend Mozart and Beethoven most clearly." According to Calella (2018), the work was inspired by the Renaissance work "*The Marriage of the Virgin*" by Italian painter Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino (1483-1520) during his travels with his beloved wife Marie d'Agoult in Italy. Liszt later transcribed *Marriage* for organ or harmonium with alto solo and women's choir titled *Ave Maria* S. 60 in 1883 after hearing Saint-Saëns' playing on the organ, where the second theme was set to text "*Spirit of love, bless us*". Rüschi (1975) also suggested that this piece was associated with Ave Maria. The pentatonic first motive in the beginning (*figure 11*) imitated the sound of church wedding bells of northern Italy and was similarly quoted in the opening of Liszt's *Ave Maria* (*The Bells of Rome*) S. 182 in 1862 (*figure 12*). Charles (1989) supported the relevance of the bell in Liszt's letter to Louis de Ronchaud: "I told about the village festival containing ringing of little bells named campanella difesta that the rapid notes, varied rhythm filled the air with spirits."

*Liszt, 1858, mm. 1-2, figure 11: first pentatonic motive*





Liszt, 1862, mm. 1-2, figure 12



Erdoğan (2016) analysed that the piece is formed by two sections and a coda, featuring two main ideas, motive I (mm. 1 to 2, was based on E major pentatonic scale) and motive II (mm. 3 to 4, continued in the same key but ended with an imperfect cadence in B major), as shown in figure 13.

Liszt, 1858, mm. 1-4, figure 13: first motive in mm. 1-2, second motive in mm. 3-4



The piece is developed by motivic transformation of the two motives. Lang (1936) regarded motive I as a sound phenomenon that forms the foundation of the work. Section A served as the introduction of the biblical marriage scene as well as the main protagonists of the piece (motive I and II), it provided a feeling of a transcendental realm. In Plantinga's observation, he (1984) interestingly pointed out that the bass note of every two measures formed a descending whole tone scale (G sharp-F sharp-E-D-C) when motive I reappeared along with the harp-like arpeggio accompaniment in mm. 9 to 17. Erdoğan (2016) said that it was very unusual in Romantic tradition to begin a piece with suspended tonality even though whole tone scale started to be used from the 19th century.

Backus (1988) reckoned the middle section as a processional theme, presenting the appearance of the Hail Mary and her wedding ceremony. From m. 38, the piece modulates to the chromatic mediant G major where motive III was presented at the top of the right hand melody. Way (1996) proposed that section B had a climatic structure where motive III pattern accumulates three times, first in m. 38, second time in m. 77, and the fortissimo climax in m. 92. In the meantime, motive I was inserted with motive III in m. 77 and m. 92. Each repetition expands in dynamics, texture and the range of keyboard register. Gut (1990) further asserted that the treatment of the motives mingling together projected the composer himself and his wife, implying the symbol of union of Hail Mary and Saint Joseph. To sum up, Yu (2012) concluded that Liszt applied religious and pastoral atmosphere as musical topics to connect with the artwork and his personal life. The dramatic moments were achieved from repetition, transformation and juxtaposition of different motives and themes.

Grieg's *Lyric Pieces Op. 65, No. 6 - Wedding at the Trolldhaugen* was written in 1892 for Grieg's 25th wedding anniversary with Nina Grieg, which was published in 1896. Cook and Mascarenhas (2015) believe wedding marches possessed a unique position in Grieg's works. He demonstrated a tendency to relate his music with weddings since 1869, including his *Op. 17, 19, and 65*. Moreover, the *Wedding at the Trolldhaugen* was placed at the end of his concert programs after 1897.

Grimley (2006) suggested that the recurrence of Grieg's composition elements towards folk-like and march-like wedding in his piano pieces contribute a jubilant finale to his music. Wilkinson (1915) believe that the form, March and Trio, was associated with the Norwegian rustic festivity with old-fashioned costume and customs. The piece began with strict march time as if the double bass and cello were playing with huge determination (*figure 14*), then

later became exciting with its rushing and explosions, for instance the fast arpeggios and bustling pattern (*figure 15*).

Grieg, 1896, mm. 1-9, figure 14

Tempo di Marcia un poco vivace. Edvard Grieg, Op. 65 N° 6.

6. *p*

Grieg, 1896, mm. 31-56, figure 15

*cresc.*

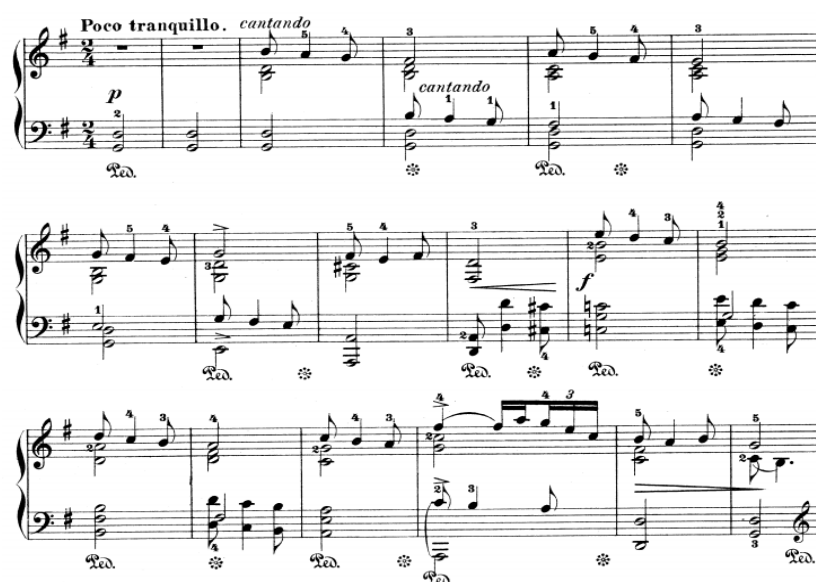
*poco a poco*

*più cresc.*

*f*

In the middle slow section in G major (*figure 16*), the author described it as the sweet conversation between the bride and bridegroom in canon. The love duet became charmer in the B major pianissimo passage (*figure 17*), yet suddenly interrupted by the return of the March section (mm. 107 to 162). Lastly, the coda (mm. 163 to 179) with triple forte always contained the tonic pedal (D note) in the bass, which implies the end of the wedding party.

Grieg, 1896, mm. 57-74, *figure 16*



Grieg, 1896, mm. 75-82, *figure 17: B major passage in mm. 75-82*



### c) Farewell Section

The last part of the recital includes two piano transcriptions. It starts with Liszt's piano transcription of Wagner's opera *Tristan and Isolde*. In Wagner's original script, this song describes Isolde holding and mourning her dying lover, Tristan, while singing as if he is still alive. Eventually, she dies at her highest ecstasy. As Wagner's father-in-law, Liszt was already familiar with this opera years before its premiere in 1865. Rahmer (2013) said that Liszt had followed Wagner's composition process from 1857-1859 through letters and had examined the finished work. Suttoni (1981) suggested that Liszt made the piano transcription of the final aria of the opera in 1867, named *Isolde's Love Death*, which became famous throughout Europe before Wagner's opera accessed most places. He inserted four-bar introduction from the love duet of Act Two. Badami (2009) said that this four-bar introduction sets the entire mood of the piece and hints the climatic ending to the listeners (figure 18).

Wagner/Liszt, 1875, mm. 1-4, figure 18: four-bar introduction



Regarding the piano transcription, Badami (2009) described that Liszt was trying to interpret Wagner's purpose in terms of sounds and climax of the act. Moreover, the reason why this transcription became successful was because Liszt brilliantly combined orchestral timbre and texture with piano techniques, most significantly the string tremolos that appeared in different registers and with different dynamics. The tremolos were arranged as shaken (mm. 5 to 6),

broken chords and octave tremolos (m. 32) as shown in *figures 19 and 20* respectively. In the final climax (m. 65), the imitation of enormous dynamics of the Wagnerian orchestra is done by applying suspended harmonies with repeated triple-forte chords (*figure 21*). Thus, the piano transcription may show the echoing effect of the harmony and generated a huge resonance.

Wagner/Liszt, 1875, mm. 5-6 & m. 32, figures 19 & 20: shaken and broken-chord tremolos



Wagner/Liszt, 1875, m. 65, figure 21: octave tremolos and repeated triple-forte chords



The last piece ending the recital is Godowsky's transcription on Schubert's *Good Night* from song cycle *Winter Journey*. The piece was originally composed by Schubert near the end of his life when he was suffering under syphilis. The original text "*Good Night*" depicts his



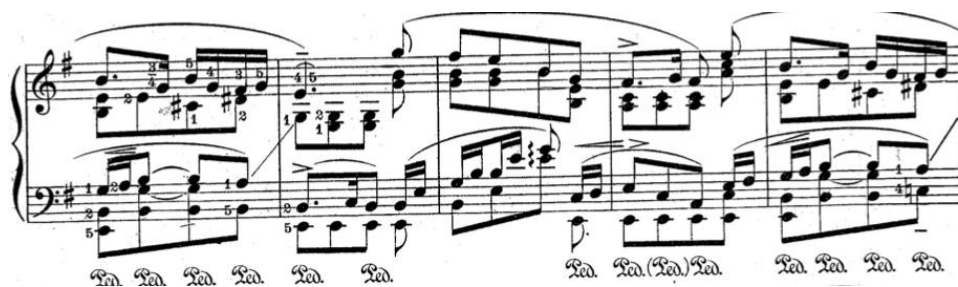
utmost loneliness to his lover before starting his journey in the snow. Dempsey (2020) concluded that “wandering” was the main idea of the entire song cycle, which had so many repetitions to symbolize the wanderer’s unstable mental state during his farewell. The sudden shift to major implied the searching for hope but he ended up suffering an emotional death. Acerb (2008) stated that Godowsky transcribed twelve Schubert’s songs in 1926 and he knew that the piano transcription was the chance to compose a new piece. Therefore, he created colourful timbre to the original by adding his own thought and inspiration. Denton (1987) said that Godowsky retained Schubert’s original melodic line but rearranged it to a low register in few places (*figure 22*). He also transposed it to E minor instead of the original D minor.

*Schubert/Godowsky, 1927, mm. 1-3, figure 22: main melody in lower register*



Denton also mentioned that Godowsky demonstrated his contrapuntal writing techniques in this transcription. For example, there are four independent voices in verse one (*figure 23*). Regarding the performance aspect, the rich texture, added notes and non-harmonic notes challenge performers in terms of balance and voicing, particularly in the last verse in triple piano in E major where the right hand contained four-note chords and left hand played arpeggio (*figure 24*, from the fourth quaver beat of m. 72 and onwards). Eventually, the author concluded that the richness and variety of timbre obtained by such interwoven counterpoint was a testament to Godowsky's mastery.

*Schubert/Godowsky, 1927, mm 10-14, figure 23: first verse*



*Schubert/Godowsky, 1927, mm. 72-73, figure 24: last verse in triple piano*





## **Reflective Report of the Recital Project**

Under the fifth outbreak of the pandemic, situation varies very fast. My piano recital project “A Journey of...” on 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2022 has undergone different challenges. Fortunately, it turned out to be a success. I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on both administrative works and piano performance.

### **a) Administrative Works**

To have a high-quality recording, I invite three senior members from the EdUHK Technical Arts team, Peter Leung, Vanessa Koon, and Alan Chu, to take charge of the design and management, the video part, and the audio part respectively. I created a WhatsApp group as the platform for us to discuss the collaboration including the equipment setting, time management, and programme. In addition, Peter and I once visited the performance site (Piano Arts Service Limited at Tsim Sha Tsui) on 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2021 to check the Steinway and Sons Grand Piano (model M), the area and position for equipment setting, as well as the approximate number of audience (forty seats) (figures 25 and 26).

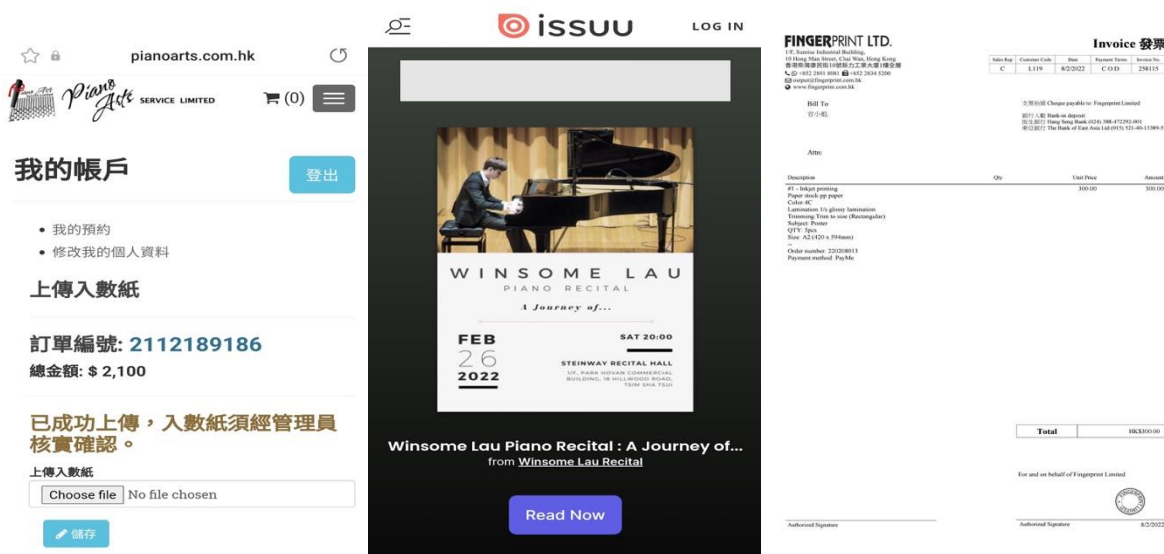
*Figures 25 & 26: Venue observation with Peter on 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2021*



In order to keep the venue, I reserved the venue for three hours on 26<sup>th</sup> February night via the first-come-first-serve online booking system (figure 27), with splitting the time half and half

for the recital and equipment setting. For the promotional design, I prefer E-booklets over bulky physical copies for environmental and cost-effective reasons (figure 28). After confirming the designs of the poster cover, programme list, personal bio, and programme note with Peter, he generates a QR code for the E-booklet and places it under the programme list on the handy leaflet. I also prepared a poster for the audience to sign their autographs. I used the pricey printing service from the Fingerprint Company (figure 29), which is famous for its high quality paper and printing technique.

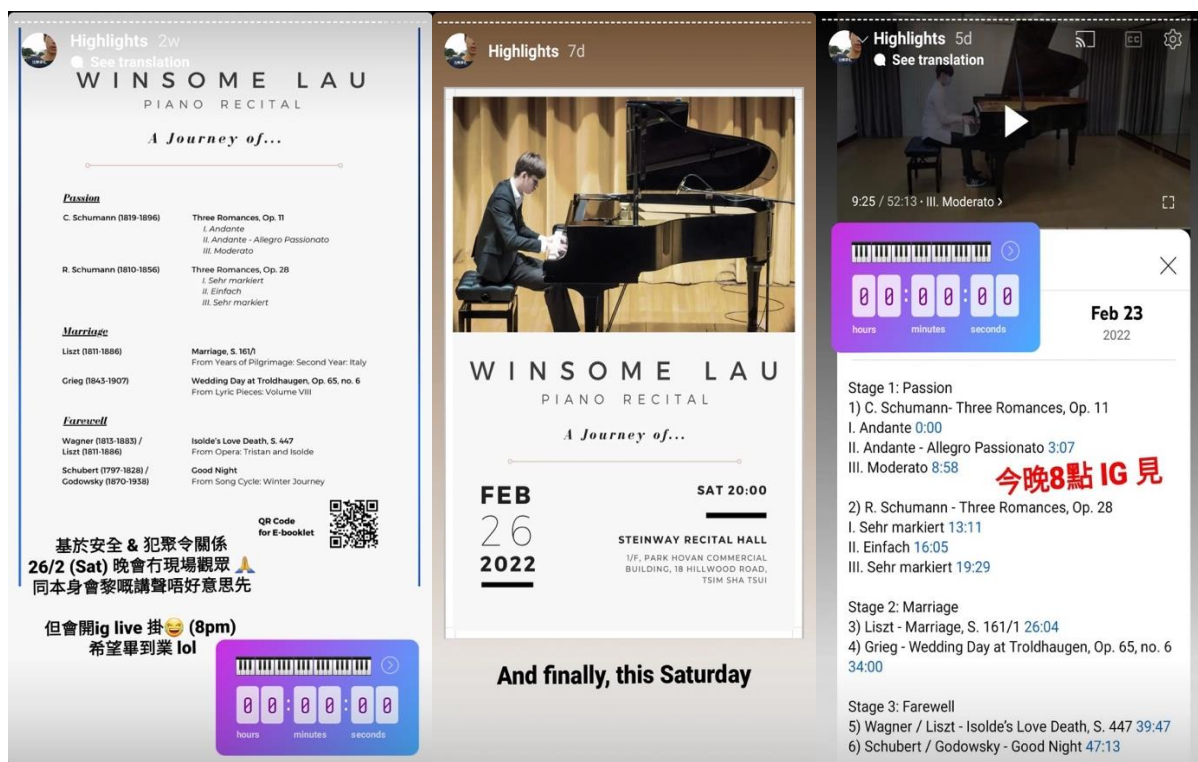
*Figures 27-29: Receipts of venue booking, cover of the E-booklet and invoice of poster printing*



Since the seated are limited, I have to invite the audience privately. Unfortunately, another unexpected wave of COVID-19 arose with a soaring number of confirmed cases every day. The manager of the concert venue reduced the number of audience, and may even ban audience access on account of safety and law issue due to social distancing policy. I tried to negotiate with him to maintain certain number of audience. It was my first public recital, which means a lot to me. However, the manager insists the house rule, so I cannot allow audience to attend my recital physically. Also, I have to change the format of the leaflet and

poster to online. I have to take quick action to face the challenge. I changed the format of my live recital into a live broadcast, and announced it on social media platform, Instagram (figures 30 to 32). When the dates get closer to my recital, I also promoted it on WhatsApp to remind and attract more audience.

*Figures 30-32: Announcement of live broadcast plus promotion of the programme list, promotion of poster and programme on Instagram*



## b) Piano Performance

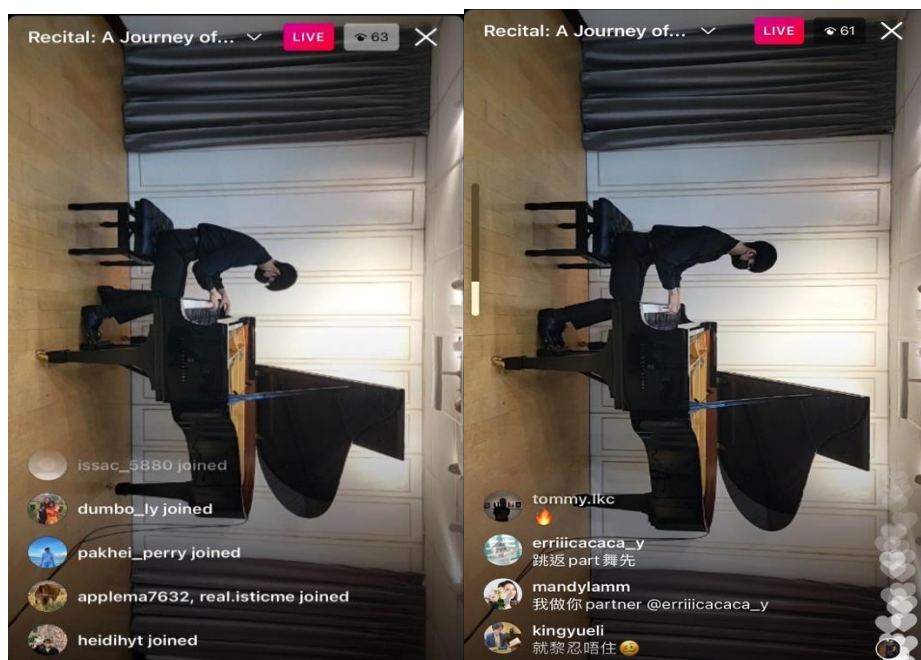
Three days before the recital, I visited the venue for programme run-through with my supervisor. I was asked to record the entire run-through, which it made me nervous at the moment. Nevertheless, I listened to my supervisor's advice as I could listen to this recording for reflection and also treat it as a backup recording for the capstone project. At the beginning of my rehearsal, I had stage fright. I felt myself stiff and uncomfortable, which restricted my body movement. I took a deep breath and concentrate my mind on the keyboard manual and the sound of my playing. After some time, I overcame the stage fright from the beginning of

my third piece. Overall, I am happy with my playing, which I did not have serious memory slips. It enhances my confidence and motivation to ace my recital. After listening to the recording, I figured a few mistakes on technical accuracy, the imbalance power and volume at the loud sections. For example, the climax parts in Grieg, Liszt and Wagner's works were played with over-power, which may not be suitable at the venue.

The worst is yet to come. I got sick one day before the recital. Fortunately, my rapid COVID test was negative, so I do not have to postpone my recital. The show must go on. Since my stamina did not allow me to practice the piano as usual, I had more mental practice to strengthen my memory of the music.

On my recital day, I arrived on time and treasured the precious one-hour rehearsal. The supporting team also showed up on time for equipment set up. During my final rehearsal, I tried to sing out aloud and moved along while I was playing the pieces to calm my myself down and ease the nervousness as soon as possible. About fifteen minutes before the recital, I tested the live streaming function with my phone to check the sound quality and to seek public attention. As my recital started, I found myself can perform and enjoy the music confidently as if I was delivering my music to the audience directly. Although, I made a couple of mistakes in the octave parts of Liszt's *Marriage*, my supervisor and I reckoned that my final performance was better in terms of musical flow and expressiveness. Furthermore, the audience was so enthusiastic to give numerous comments, feedback and compliment which encouraged me to do an encore with Brahms's Romance in F major, op. 118, no. 5 to end the recital (figures 33 and 34).

*Figures 33 & 34: Screenshots of my live-broadcast recital on Instagram*



All in all, the credits for the success of this recital project subjects to the support of professors, Technical Arts members and friends. It is an incredibly precious experience to me which affirms my music and administration skills and motivates me to hold more recital in the future.

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## **Appendix 1: Programme Notes**

### 1) Three Romances, Op. 11

C. Schumann (1819-1896)

*I. Andante*

*II. Andante - Allegro Passionato*

*III. Moderato*

Clara Schumann's *Three Romances, Op. 11* was written in 1839 and dedicated to her beloved Robert Schumann. However, her father Friedrich Wieck strongly opposed their marriage by any means. It led to a long-term lawsuit, which forced them to be separated until obtaining approval from the court in 1840. The whole set starts in E flat minor, with exquisite and restless melodies creating a sighing effect. It opens a tragic introduction to begin the set work, which apparently echoes their personal experience in love. The next Romance in G minor features a duet texture as if two people singing intimately, which is Robert's favourite. As the music goes, the romance becomes greater. The music gets faster and more intense in the middle section to depict the passion and fire between the lovebirds. The last Romance in A flat major is full of imagination, with a timeless quality. The elegance turns into a waltz in the middle, to enhance the sweetness of their romance. The music sings in harmony all around.

### 2) Three Romances, Op. 28

R. Schumann (1810-1856)

*I. Sehr markiert*

*II. Einfach*

*III. Sehr markiert*

Robert Schumann's *Three Romances, Op. 28* was inspired by Clara Schumann's set of Romances. He wrote his own set in 1839 as a Christmas present to Clara, which he considered as one of his most successful works. The first Romance in B flat minor is somehow similar to

Clara's first Romance, which share the same perpetual rhythmic idea in a much more impassioned manner. The second Romance in F sharp major is an extremely intimate duet, probably also influenced by Clara's idea of her Opus 11. It also became Clara's favourite which she requested her grandson to play for her next to her deathbed. The refrain theme of the last Romance in B major is sharply rhythmic and imitative. Robert inserts two contrasting Interludes in the middle of the piece. The return of the refrain theme ends the set pleasantly.

3) Marriage, S. 161/1

Liszt (1811-1886)

(from Years of Pilgrimage: Second Year: Italy)

Liszt's *Marriage* was inspired by Renaissance art and literature. During his travels with his beloved wife Marie d'Agoult in Italy, he was surprised by Italian artworks by Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino (aka Raphael) and Michelangelo. Specifically, Raphael's painting *The Marriage of the Virgin* inspired Liszt to compose *Marriage*. The beginning of the piece sounds like church wedding bells of northern Italy. It also introduces a biblical marriage scene as well as the main protagonists that provides a feeling of a transcendental realm. The middle section consists of a processional theme which presents the appearance of the Hail Mary and her wedding ceremony. After the dramatic climax, the music calms down to a very peaceful and sweet ending, which implies the end of the wedding ceremony.

4) Wedding Day at Trolldhaugen, Op. 65, no. 6

Grieg (1843-1907)

(from Lyric Pieces: Volume VIII)

Grieg's *Wedding Day at Trolldhaugen* was written in 1892 for Grieg's 25th wedding anniversary with Nina Grieg, later published in 1896. It is associated with the Norwegian rustic festivity with old-fashioned costume and customs. The piece begins with strict march

time and strong determination, which later becomes more exciting with its rushing in tempo and explosions in dynamics. In the middle slow section, it is a sweet conversation between the bride and bridegroom, yet suddenly interrupted by the return of the March section. At last, the music ends with a sudden outburst after a tranquil passage.

5) Isolde's Love Death, S. 447

Wagner (1813-1883) / Liszt (1811-1886)

(from Opera: Tristan and Isolde)

The penultimate piece of the recital is Liszt's piano transcription of Wagner's opera *Tristan and Isolde*. In Wagner's original script, this song describes Isolde holding and mourning her dying lover, Tristan, while singing as if he is still alive. Eventually, she dies at her highest ecstasy. As Wagner's father-in-law, Liszt was already familiar with this opera years before its premiere in 1865. He had also followed Wagner's composition process from 1857-1859 through letters. In his piano transcription in 1867, Liszt attempted to interpret Wagner's purpose in terms of sounds and climax of the act. The success of this transcription should count on Liszt's outstanding craftsmanship in combining orchestral timbre and texture with piano techniques. Towards the ending of the music, Liszt utilized the highest and lowest range of the piano to create an astonishing resonance for the final pinnacle. This transcription has become one of the standard repertoires in piano literature.

6) Good Night

Schubert (1797-1828) / Godowsky (1870-1938)

(from Song Cycle: Winter Journey)

The recital ends with Godowsky's transcription on Schubert's *Good Night* from song cycle *Winter Journey*. The piece was originally composed by Schubert in 1827 near the end of his life when he was suffering under syphilis in his 30s. The original text of *Good Night* depicts

the protagonist's utmost loneliness after the breakup with his lover and starts his journey in the snow. "Wandering" is the main idea of the entire song cycle, which has so many repetitions to symbolize the wanderer's unstable mental state. Godowsky's piano transcription in 1926 retains Schubert's original melodic line but rearranges it to a low register in few places which creates a gloomy and depressed atmosphere. The sudden shift of mood towards the end implies the searching for hope, Godowsky chooses an extremely soft volume and a slower speed to display a temporary sweetness of memory. However, the music goes back to the darkest mood in which the wanderer ends up suffering an emotional death. His spectacular writing and arranging techniques turn Schubert's song into an instrumental work pianistically.

## **Appendix 2: Reflective Journals**

### **First Reflective Journal: Clara Schumann- Three Romances, Op. 11**

In this first bi-weekly journal, I will highlight some piano practice issues that I encountered in Clara Schumann's *Three Romances, Op. 11*. In general, the whole set work requires a very delicate and flowing tone because all back-and-forth rhythmic and melodic pattern in these three movements are set in a very quiet atmosphere. The dynamics "*p*" and "*pp*" can be seen in most of the piece except the climax (*f* and *ff*) of the second movement. Therefore, I relax my fingers and wrist to press the keys without any unnecessary force, and using half-pedal technique on the sustaining pedal to create the appropriate music character. Moreover, two or more melodic lines exist in parallel and/or contrary motion, in both right hand and left hand of each movement. So, I have to ensure all melodic lines can be heard by careful dynamic voicing and articulation.

The first movement is a prelude in ABA form with a 3/4 meter. However, the A sections (mm. 1 to 15 and 32 to 44) shows the features of the 6/8 time because the grouping of notes is in a pair of six semiquavers. Therefore, I have to stress more on the first and seventh semiquavers to show the metrical stress in each group. Mm. 9 to 12 are supposed to be played in cross-hands. However, I find it more convincing to reallocate the notes without hand-crossing, to avoid the extra moving time of the left hand from high register to lower register. I also reallocate some notes in the downbeat of m. 9 and 12 for the left hand to assist the large chords. In section B, there are more chromatic motions in the passage. For instance, in mm. 20 to 21 and 25 to 27, the inner voices move downwards chromatically, which will be highlighted in my performance to show the harmonic colour.

The longer second movement is also in ABA form, but with a 4/4 meter. I figured that the main motive (descending scale) appear in each voice accordingly (bass in mm. 1 to 6, alto in

mm. 7 to 11, soprano and tenor in mm. 17 to 20). It is challenging to manage the voicing in this section. Therefore, I use slow practice to observe my thumb movement, and using rotation movement to highlight the motive in alto voice while playing the accompaniment in soprano voice gently (i.e. mm. 7 to 11). In the fast section (mm. 51-84), there are large harmonic intervals at the left-hand part (mm. 52, 58, and 78 to 79), where I cannot execute it at a fast tempo because of the limit of my hand size. I tried to arpeggiated them but it sound clumsy and inappropriate. I omit some of the notes while keeping the same musical effect. For example, there are five fast tenth harmonic intervals (D-F# and D-F) in m. 58, I omit some of the D notes at the bass. I will only play the first and fourth ones because they are on the downbeat, meanwhile all the F# and F remains the same. In the return of A section, I have to memorize some other large leaps in both hands first (e.g. mm. 104 to 115), and concentrate on the hand movements to enhance the accuracy in my practice.

The last short movement is in five-part Rondo form in 3/4 time. The technical requirement of this movement is simpler than the previous movement. There are only a few places to be aware of – in mm. 41 to 46, the dotted rhythm may take turns to be highlighted. For instance, the notes can be highlighted in alto in mm. 41 to 42, soprano in mm. 42 to 43, tenor in mm. 43 to 44, soprano in mm. 44 to 45, and tenor in mm. 45 to 46. Furthermore, C section (mm. 69 to 120) should be played with mellow tone, which can be done by using soft pedal in mm. 85 to 88 for the modulated theme in parallel minor. In mm. 89 to 96, the tension and dynamics are increasing but suddenly changes to *pp* in m. 97, where the use of pedal should be reduced in half before playing the first chord in m. 97.

## **Second Reflective Journal: Robert Schumann- Three Romances, Op. 28**

In the second bi-weekly journal, I will highlight some performance matters that occurred in Robert Schumann's *Three Romances, Op. 28* during my practice, and also some information about the recital venue observation during my site visit on October 29<sup>th</sup>.

The first movement of the Schumann *Op. 28* is a prelude in 2/4 time in ABA form. The prelude is in a determined manner, and the momentum of this movement never stops until the very last chord (m. 111). While the top melody sings and accents frequently on the second crochets, the rhythmic pattern features broken semiquaver triplets in every quaver. In order not to tighten the muscles of my right hand, I try to stay close to the keys as much as I can and rotate my forearm to produce a flowing accompaniment. For a better execution of forearm rotary, I have to treat my thumb as the centre of rotation, and put less weight on my pinkie on the downbeat octave and plays it as staccato, which it is a more natural movement to rotate my left forehand and reaching the next note above the octave. Besides, it is tempting for me to start the movement in a very loud volume to response to the forte, sforzando, and accent markings. However, there is a double forte marking in mm. 9 to 16, so I need to restrain myself from an exaggerated loud volume at the beginning.

The slow second movement is also in ABA form but in 6/8 time. In section A, it features duet passage in the inner voices in thirds apart, accompanied by broken chords in both hands. I have to voice the upper inner melody more prominent (right hand thumb) and ensure the accompaniment in the background as soft as possible. During practice, I try to close my eyes and feel the calmness and peace of the piece, and as if to tell a simple love story. Section B contains a chordal texture with the melody at the right hand. As a result, I would play pianissimo for the left-hand octaves and right-hand inner broken chords (besides the accented notes in mm. 13 to 15) so as to bring out the top line.



The last movement is an extended seven-part Rondo (ABA'CA'DBA'), with two difficult Intermezzos (C and D sections) inserted in the middle. The first Intermezzo in mm. 114 to 218 contains a dialogue and echo of the motive between two hands. I have some technical issues in mm. 116 to 122. When my left hand is playing the motive, it can't align with right hand chords. For example, the second beat of m. 117 (the left hand E note) may be played a bit faster or slower than the right hand G-sharp and C-sharp. In order to prevent it, I try to stress all the downbeats and upbeats. For instance, the left-hand part in mm. 116 to 117, all the notes are played softer except the notes in downbeats like the C-sharp, accented G-sharp and E notes. In mm. 131 to 138, where stretto takes place in both hands and some notes are overlapping, I use my right hand to play both E notes in both voices at the second-last note in m. 132, and the very last notes D and F-sharp afterwards. In the first beat of m. 133, I don't use cross-hand technique as indicated, but using my right hand to play the accented A note and E note, which was written for the left-hand part. The same approach will be applied in mm. 135 to 138. Moving on to the second Intermezzo in mm. 258 to 303, the melody starts on the second-quaver beat instead of the first beat after the E minor chord in m. 258. However, I still need to prepare the first downbeat well to show the rhythmic pulse. For the inner melody parts (mm. 258 to 265, 274 to 277, and 282 to 293), the difficult places are to phrase the melody with only the thumb, so I have to plan the dynamics or articulation carefully on each note.

### Recital Venue Observation

I invite Peter Leung, who is the member of the EdUHK Technical Arts Team, to be the sound engineer of my recital project. On October 29<sup>th</sup> (Tue), Peter and I went to observe the recital venue, Piano Arts Service Limited at Tsim Sha Tsui (address: 1/F, Park Hovan Commercial Building, 18 Hillwood Road, Tsim Sha Tsui). Apart from trying out the Steinway grand

piano, we also considered the stage plan for the recital. There will be two Technical Arts Team members with their recording equipment set at the back as shown below (figure 35).

Stage Plan

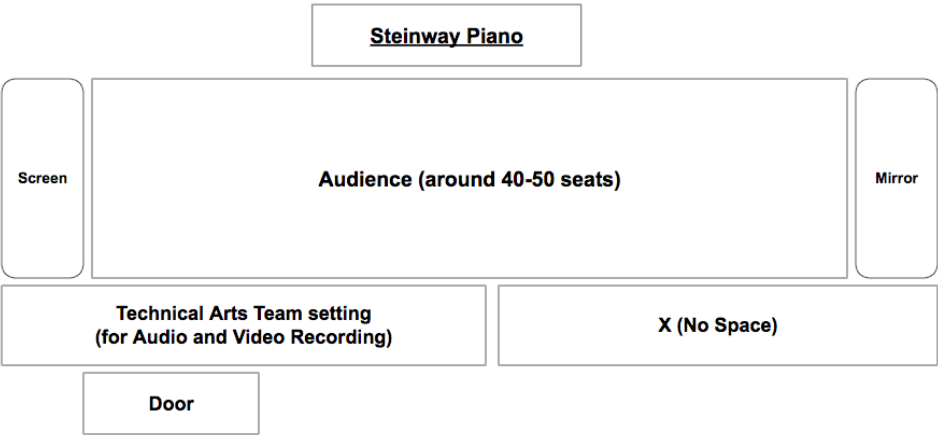


Figure 35: Initial stage plan

**Third Reflective Journal: Liszt's Marriage, S. 161/1 and Grieg's Wedding Day at Trolldhaugen, Op. 65, no. 6**

In the third bi-weekly journal, I will highlight some practice issues in Liszt's and Grieg's works. Personally, Liszt's *Marriage* reminds me of Debussy's music. Similarly, both of them trying to depict musical scenes by various tone colours or sound effects. For example, the opening pentatonic motive (mm. 1 to 2 and mm. 5 to 6) is associated with the wedding bells sound in Italy by legato markings. I interpret it by adding tenuto and finger-pedal to each note to imitate the timbre and resonance of the bells. From mm. 9 to 19, the triple *piano* section is imitating the harp on the keyboard. The arpeggiation on the right hand should be treated with melodic directions instead of overlooking it as accompaniment figure. In mm. 30 to 32, the second motive is repeated in mm. 34 to 36, but with different nuances and articulations. There are *staccatos* at the end of each short phrase in mm. 30 to 32, and *tenutos* in every first note of the short phrase in mm. 34 to 36. As a result, they create different musical characters. As the music gets faster from m. 92, the pentatonic motive appears again in octaves at the left hand but in a much faster rhythm. Although this rhythmic pattern appears in every bar, it is not exactly the same. The big octave leaps need precise practice for accuracy and to ensure my hand shape is firm and natural. Meanwhile, in the same passage, the melodic phrase at the top right-hand part is in double forte, which asks for careful phrasing rather than making it harsh.

Grieg's *Wedding Day at Trolldhaugen* is easier to memorise because of its strict ABA form, which A section just repeat at its return. Nevertheless, it is still a technically challenging piece. The A section features a lot of jumping fifths in the left-hand part to imitate the brass sound, which ask for a firm and stable hand shape. Since my pinkie is weak, I sometimes cannot project any sound even if I stroke the keys. From mm. 31 to 44, both hands alternate the semiquaver pattern with the left hand playing the downbeat and the right playing the upbeat. As the melody is in the right hand, I used to violet the metrical hierarchy by over-

powering the right-hand melody. Therefore, I have to pay extra attention to the stress of the first downbeat of my left hand. At the same time, I need to practice the relaxation of my arms and shoulders to execute the alternating pattern. The climax triple forte section in mm. 49 to 56 features fast back-and-forth arpeggios at the left hand. I practice shifting my hand to the correct position by upper arm movement. I found this approach may increase the accuracy of my playing.

#### **Fourth Reflective Journal: Clara Schumann- Three Romances, Op. 11**

In the fourth reflective journal, I will reflect again some practice issues in Clara Schumann's *Three Romances, Op. 11*. After the coaching from my supervisor, there are several things that I learn and need to aware. In Clara's set, I have to be cautious to keep the music flow by not taking too much time in between phrase or bars. Although my supervisor credit my idea of applying rubato, it went too much that the entire flow is stopped, and the long phrases were disconnected.

In the second movement, the first melodic phrase lasts for two bars and follows by the next phrase from m. 3. I must connect these phrases by imagining the *legato* sound played by cellos and double basses to keep the flow. Also, I need to imagine a bigger setting of the piece, as an orchestral and somehow operatic work, to enhance the richness of sound. So, the melodic phrases or the motives from different voices are interweaving with colourful dynamics and timbres. I imagine the strings playing in the first theme in minor tonality (mm. 1 to 17), and then some woodwinds including flutes and clarinets playing in the brighter major passage in mm. 17 to 27. As the music is interrupted by a single line statement which appears a few times throughout the movement in mm. 27-28, and mm. 98-99, I relate it as the singing voice of an operatic singer, which is played in a singable and free manner. In the middle section (*Allegro Passionato*), I used to play it in 2/2 time, which means to stress the first and third beat only. However, it is suggested not to play the upbeats stronger to achieve the passionate and progressive mood.

In the third movement, I stress more on the first beat to produce the pulse of a waltz, including both the A section (mm. 1 to 24) and the B section (mm. 25 to 56). Sometimes, I am tempted to emphasize the second beat in the B section because of the syncopation in right hand, but I still need to make the first beat in left hand clear. Moving on to the poignant C

section (mm. 69 to 120), as the passage repeats four times, I experimented different way of interpretation in my practice sessions. Finally, I design to make it plain and simple, rather than dramatic.



## **Fifth Reflective Journal: Wagner/Liszt's *Tristan and Isolde* and Schubert/Godowsky's**

### **Goodnight**

In Liszt's piano transcription on Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*. Some technical challenges already exist in the opening section such as the triple *piano* tremolo. In mm. 5 to 14, which melody is played by clarinet in Wagner's original version, the tremolos should be much softer. Besides of keeping my hand relax, I keep my fingers close to the keys to control the volume. Also, I need to be aware of the pedalings and have subtle change to keep the volume down. In mm. 51 to 64, it features a gradual increase of volume and tension to welcome the final triple forte climax section. I need to think about the big structure of the piece and start the first phrase in m. 50 softly, otherwise it is hard for me to get a much louder towards m. 58. During the crescendo, I also need to ensure my left-hand downbeats get louder continuously to project the music direction. Finally, in mm. 65 to 69, it reaches the grand and dramatic climax in the hands together repeated chord tremolo with extreme registers. I try to explore my entire arm movement to generate a powerful resonance.

In Godowsky's piano transcription on Schubert's *Goodnight*. I need to be familiar with the original version of the song before working on the execution. Schubert's original version is an art song, which phrasing, breathing and pauses should be well delivered and imitated for the piano transcription. It is in contrapuntal writing with four voices, featuring counter melody under the main melody. So, I need to show the voices with relative tone colour and melodic treatment. For instance, in mm. 16 to 23, when the original melody is in the soprano range, there are some motivic passages interweaving in different voice parts (two semiquavers plus one quaver), I have to bring them out in the repeat section. In mm. 24 to 33, the melody at the top appears with echoes and/or imitations in the bass part, and sometimes in the tenor part, which I need to emphasize with accents. From m. 49 onwards, the texture becomes much thicker which consists of big chords with added notes. It takes me more time on slow practice

for memorising the passage. Towards the end, the texture of the triple *piano* section is complex, I bring out only the top melody whereas the other parts are extremely soft to create a sweet character.





### **Sixth Reflective Journal: Robert Schumann- Three Romances, Op. 28**

In the final reflective journal, it is another reflection on Robert Schumann's *Three Romances*. My supervisor said that my playing of the first movement can't sustain the powerful manner where in some places the volume dropped. I was suggested to practice with the chords in downbeats first rather than playing with the accompaniments, or even only with the left hand. The purpose of this practice is to focus on the long phrasing and structure of the piece. In mm. 9 to 24, the interpretation of the double forte is tricky. I just need to maintain the tension and rhythmic pulse without pounding on the keys. Before section B starts in m. 24, I used to lower the volume on the second beat as it is the last chord of the entire phrase. Yet, in order to make a bigger contrast in the soft piano section in m. 25, it is better to increase the volume. In section B, mm. 25 to 44 is repeated almost the same in mm. 45 to 60. However, it sounds boring and ineffective. As a solution, I try to play softer in mm. 25 to 44 and getting much louder in mm. 45 to 60 towards the augmented sixth chords in m. 62. I keep the tension until the return of the modulated section A in m. 67.

In the second movement, there are a few places I need to work on. First, the double dotted rhythm in m. 2, 4, 19, 21 and 24 can't be played strictly. As it is a slower intimate movement, they should be played under-dotted. Regarding the low octaves featured in B section (mm. 9 to 17), I am warned to aware the contact point of the keys. I should place my hand towards the wooden board of the piano to have a better control of the keys. Thus, a very soft sound can be produced. Lastly, in the third movement, as it is in rondo form where the main refrain theme repeats several times, I have to make changes among them. For instance, in the beginning of the movement, I can play it in a more percussive and strict manner to make a bigger contrast against the soft section in mm. 26 to 66. However, after two Intermezzos are played, the final appearance of the refrain can be played in a more subtle and pleasant manner because it is approaching to the elegant ending with alternating plagal cadence.