

Friedrich Kuhlau
Works for Solo Piano
Vol. 1

Marie-Luise Bodendorff

Friedrich Kuhlau (1786-1832)

Works for Solo Piano, Vol. 1

Marie-Luise Bodendorff, piano

	Divertissement in E-flat Major, Op. 37 (1822)*	18:44
1	I. Maestoso	2:03
2	II. Allegretto	5:16
3	III. Marcia	5:20
4	IV. Rondo alla polacca	5:01
5	V. Allegro assai	1:03
	Piano Sonatina in C Major, Op. 20, No. 1 (1820)	7:55
6	I. Allegro	3:03
7	II. Andante	2:27
8	III. Rondo	2:25
	Piano Sonatina in G Major, Op. 20, No. 2 (1820)	10:11
9	I. Allegro	4:43
10	II. Adagio e sostenuto	2:28
11	III. Allegro scherzando	3:00
	Piano Sonatina in F Major, Op. 20, No. 3 (1820)	10:03
12	I. Allegro con spirito	3:55
13	II. Larghetto	3:34
14	III. Alla polacca	2:34
	Piano Sonata in E-flat Major, Op. 4 (1810)	24:58
15	I. Largo assai	2:48
16	II. Allegro con brio	7:00
17	III. Tema con variazioni	5:44
18	IV. Adagio	4:19
19	V. Vivacissimo	5:07

Total 71:51

* World premiere recording



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A German in Denmark

By Andrew Mellor

On 23 January 1811, the curtain at Copenhagen's Royal Theatre went up to reveal an unfamiliar German musician on stage. 'His bony form seemed somewhat clumsy in his black concert attire', read a report of the event. 'He had a good head of curly hair and a long ruddy face marred by the lack of one eye [...]. Then he sat down and began to play the piece, his Piano Concerto in C Major, and the impression of awkwardness that had encumbered his overall appearance vanished. He proved to be a master'.

The musician was Friedrich Kuhlau. Weeks earlier, in the final days of 1810, the 24-year-old had escaped to the Danish capital under the name Kasper Meier. For years,

Kuhlau struggled to make ends meet as a pianist in the northern provinces of Germany and when Napoleon finally took control of Hamburg, he faced conscription into the army. The decision to travel north proved to be one of the most astute of his career, even if it was only conceived as a stopgap. Kuhlau was no stranger to bad luck, but as newcomer to Denmark he easily worked his way into the country's musical and aristocratic milieu. Within three years he was walking the corridors of its palaces as a Danish citizen, and would live in the country for the rest of his life.

Daniel Friedrich Rudolph Kuhlau was born in Uelzen, near Hanover, in 1786. When he fell down a staircase as a child, a shard of glass from a bottle he was carrying injured the young Friedrich's right eye, which he eventually lost. During his convalescence, Kuhlau's

bandmaster father bought his son a piano, sealing the young man's relationship with the instrument that would come, as much as the flute, to define his career.

By 1803, his family had settled in Hamburg, where Kuhlau quickly progressed and soon was studying with Christian Friedrich Gottlieb Schwencke, who had succeeded Carl Philip Emmanuel Bach as organist at Hamburg's Katharinenkirche. His decision to head north may have been influenced by his uncle's employment as an organist in the north Jutland town of Aalborg. Either way, Kuhlau hit Danish soil running. The Royal Danish Theatre performance of 1811 was well received, as much given the Danes' natural affection for an awkward, underdog figure as for their genuine interest in Kuhlau's music. Denmark knew of Beethoven and sensed Kuhlau's connection to the German master's style in his own music's

sense of drama and elegance. Kuhlau had already played Beethoven's Op. 16 Quintet for Piano and Winds in Denmark before introducing the Royal Danish Theatre audience to his own concerto.

Kuhlau's continental provenance prompted aristocrats to seek him out as a teacher. With the memory of poverty lingering still, the pianist developed a fierce work ethic but was never entirely satisfied teaching. At the request of Adam Oehlenschläger, he wrote his first *singspiel* for the Royal Danish Theatre, *Røverborgen* (Robbers' Castle), which premiered in 1814. The sometimes-bumpy relationship with the theatre that ensued would reach its height in 1828 with Kuhlau's music for the play *Elverhøj* (Elves' Hill), written to celebrate the wedding of King Frederik VI's daughter. The score would become a touchstone of Danish culture, its

status sealed a century and a half later when parts of its overture were elaborately choreographed by a band of score-reading robbers in the movie *Olsen-banden ser rødt* (The Olsen Gang sees red, 1976).

Kuhlau's career was characterised by loose relationships with both the Royal Danish Theatre (he spent one season as its chorus master) and the Royal Court (with which he wangled his own semi-freelance position of 'Court Chamber Musician'). His life was similarly ill defined, chaotic even, and he developed a voracious appetite for alcohol and tobacco. In 1814, Kuhlau's struggling parents and youngest sister moved from Germany to live with him at his house in Lyngby, north of Copenhagen. The arrangement put a strain on the composer's finances, at which point he started to churn out numerous works for rapid publication, among them over a hundred

scores for flute that have ensured his name retains currency in woodwind circles.

It was as a pianist that Kuhlau was best known in his lifetime. In that capacity, he would travel to Sweden and Austria as well as returning to his native Germany. On one such trip in 1825, Kuhlau had a well-documented encounter with his musical hero Ludwig van Beethoven, whose five piano concertos he had already premiered in Denmark.

As described in Thayer's *The Life of Ludwig van Beethoven*, a party including Beethoven and Kuhlau took a walk in the countryside before stopping at a tavern to fill up on drink, retiring to Ludwig's quarters to partake in some intellectual horseplay which included both composers writing out musical canons. Kuhlau wrote a canon on the name of Bach while Beethoven's took as its theme a version of his companion's name: 'kühl, nicht lau'

(cool, not lukewarm). Beethoven wrote apologetically to 'my dear Kuhlau' after the event, apparently embarrassed that he may have overstepped the bounds of good humour. Both Beethoven and his publisher Schlesinger liked and admired their Danish-German acquaintance, to whom they affectionately referred in correspondence as 'the cyclops'.

Back in Copenhagen, life's stresses caught up with Kuhlau. He lost both his parents in 1830 and six months later, in February 1831, his house burned to the ground, with it all his unpublished manuscripts including that for a second piano concerto. He never fully recovered from a night in the bitter cold watching the blaze, which put him in hospital for three months having aggravated an existing chest ailment. He died in Copenhagen a little over a year later.

Kuhlau's music bore all the hallmarks of early Romanticism at a time when Danish music was only just cottoning on to it. He was also a stylish pianist who relished the instrument's rapidly advancing technology and was well placed to capitalise on the middle class fashion for having the instrument at home. His piano music can be divided into works intended for teaching or improving the technique of talented amateurs, and grand works for accomplished pianists. Across the board, his best piano music is melodically rich, explores the full sonority of the instrument and ranges in texture from the delicate to the imposing.

Beethoven's influence is obvious in Kuhlau's **Divertissement in E-flat Major, Op. 37**, published in 1822 but composed the year before. The first and last movements of this through-composed

work can be considered an introduction and coda respectively. A Beethovenian theme emerges in the variation-form second movement. It is passed from high to low, tracked by accompanying features and given new incarnations in different registers – beautifully so when, at 4'42, it stalks the discourse in a low left hand that takes its own unusual turn.

Kuhlau's 'Marcia' is more than a march. It uses a refracted version of the same theme to examine aspects of 'march' form with not inconsiderable charm, even indulging in some light counterpoint. The 'Rondo alla polacca' has plenty of interest besides the composer's toying with the distinctive polonaise rhythm, not least his fluent way of observing a theme from multiple angles using contrasting register, perspective and harmony. It leads straight into the firework finale.

Kuhlau's three **Sonatinas, Op. 20** date from 1820 and were probably conceived for teaching. No. 1 in C Major is built simply but has its own luminous charm and symmetrical satisfaction. It distils some of Kuhlau's preferred methods down to their simplest form, such as the transferral of the theme from right to left hand in the opening movement.

No. 2 in G Major is more dramatic and also more elaborate, right from its opening unisons. We hear simple versions of the scalic figures Kuhlau deployed in more complex works (including the Sonata Op. 4) and which suited the technologies of the modern piano. The 'Adagio e sostenuto' in E flat surrounds its more decorative central episode with lyricism cast in close-quartered harmonies, a fitting set-up for the playful finale.

No. 3 in F Major is more complex still, its opening movement requir-

ing the pianist to cross hands and including a development section in miniature. The Larghetto toys with the repetition of melodic notes and chords while the finale, another polonaise, sees Kuhlau's scale figurations metamorphose into full-on rollercoasters.

Kuhlau composed a total of 22 piano sonatas between 1809 and 1831. The first, his **Piano Sonata in E-flat Major, Op. 4**, was written before the composer had left Germany. It is obviously the work of a young man, but one well acquainted with the modern piano's sonorous capabilities and with a sense of musical fashion. Sometimes Kuhlau can appear to borrow innovative devices from others, pasting them into an essentially conservative musical language. But the dramatic potency and arresting clarity of the music here are rarely in doubt. Both qualities are established in a

39-bar introduction full of Kuhlau's favoured dotted and double-dotted rhythms that also features a twisting weave of arpeggios which casts a spell over the music.

The opening movement proper starts with an Allegro in Beethovenian mould alternating thick, dotted-rhythm chords with strings of sixteenth notes. Those two ideas dominate the movement. Next comes a set of variations on a folk-like theme built of two halves. Kuhlau disguises his theme with rhythmic devices including triplets (variation 1), the relative minor key (variation 2) and a quickstep melodic adaptation (variation 3). Finally a free variation in a funereal style gives way to an Allegro Scherzando passage built from a segment of the theme, followed by a cadenza and a chordal coda.

Kuhlau's 'Adagio' is notably imaginative. Both the varied accompaniments and the right hand's



Marie-Luise Bodendorff

elaborate figurations anticipate Chopin, as Edmund Noel Dawe has suggested. Once again we hear Kuhlau's emotive way of rendering a theme as a tightly and beautifully harmonised chorale. The Vivacissimo finale has few of the contrasts of its predecessors but some telling touches, such as its consistent flipping or 'inverting' of the two voices of the right hand. Technical interest and clarity take precedence over virtuosity, but the young Kuhlau carefully avoided sullyng the dramatic with the inelegant.

38-year-old **Marie-Luise Bodendorff** was born in Augsburg and has in recent years distinguished herself in concert series and at several festivals in Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Spain, France, Serbia and China. She began playing the piano as a 5-year-old and debuted two years later with the Südwestdeutsches Kammerorchester Pforzheim in an adaptation of Kuhlau's Sonatina in C Major, Op. 20.

Marie-Luise Bodendorff is a student of Olga Rissin-Morenova, Vladimir Krainev, Brigitte Engerer, Christopher Oakden and Niklas Sivelöv. She has been a prize winner in numerous international piano competitions and has performed as a soloist with several orchestras in countries such as Germany, Romania and Italy. She currently teaches piano and chamber music at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen.

En tysker i Danmark

Af Andrew Mellor

Den 23. januar 1811 gik scenetæppet på Det Kongelige Teater op for en ukendt tysk musiker. "Hans ranglede skikkelse virkede lettere klodset i det sorte koncerttøj," lød en beretning fra aftenen. "Hans nydelige hoved med krøllet hår og langt, rødmosset ansigt var skæmmet af et manglende øje [...] Så satte han sig og begyndte at spille værket, sin klaverkoncert i C-dur, så indtrykket af kejtethed, der havde tynget hans generelle fremtoning, forsvandt. Han viste sig som en mester."

Den omtalte musiker var Friedrich Kuhlau. Uger tidligere, i de sidste dage af 1810, var han 24 år gammel flygtet til den danske hovedstad under navnet Kasper Meier. I årevis havde han uden

større held forsøgt at skabe sig en karriere som pianist i det nordlige Tyskland, og da Napoleon endelig overtog kontrollen med Hamborg, stod Kuhlau til at blive tvangsudskrevet til hæren. Beslutningen om at rejse nordpå viste sig at være en af hans karrieres klogeste, selvom rejsen i første omgang kun blev set som et midlertidigt stop på vejen. Kuhlau var ikke ubekendt med mangel på held, men som tilflytter lykkedes det ham at indynde sig i Danmarks musikalske og aristokratiske kredse. I løbet af tre år færdedes han hjemmevant i palæernes korridorer og endte med at tilbringe resten af sit liv i landet som dansk statsborger.

Daniel Friedrich Rudolph Kuhlau blev født i 1786 i Uelzen nær Hannover. Da han som barn faldt ned ad en trappe, knustes en flaske, han havde båret på, og et glaskår havnede i hans højre øje. Øjet

endte han med at miste, men under sygelejet købte hans far, der var kapelmester, et klaver til sønnen og knyttede dermed den unge mands skæbne til det klaver, der i lige så høj grad som tværføjten skulle komme til at definere hans karriere.

I 1803 bosatte familien sig i Hamborg, hvor Kuhlau hurtigt gjorde fremskridt og snart efter studerede hos kantor Schwencke, der havde efterfulgt C.P.E. Bach som organist ved Katharinenkirche i Hamborg. Hans beslutning om at drage nordpå kan meget vel have været påvirket af onklens ansættelse som organist i Aalborg. Uanset hvad blev Kuhlaus møde med Danmark straks en succes. Koncerten i 1811 på Det Kongelige Teater blev vel modtaget, hvilket nok lige så meget skyldtes danskernes hang til at fatte sympati for en akavet, undertippet skikkelse som oprigtig interesse for Kuhlaus musik. Danmark kendte til Beethovens musik og fornemmede

Kuhlaus forbindelse til den tyske mester i hans flair for drama og elegance, og Kuhlau havde allerede optrådt med Beethovens Kvintet for klaver og blæsere, op. 16 i Danmark, før han introducerede sin egen klaverkoncert til Det Kongelige Teaters publikum.

Kuhlaus kontinentale baggrund fik aristokratiet til at opsøge ham som klaverlærer. Med sin egen fattigdom i frisk erindring udviklede han en streng arbejdsdisciplin, men stillede sig til gengæld aldrig helt tilfreds med at undervise. På opfordring fra Adam Oehlschläger skrev han sit første syngespil til Det Kongelige Teater, *Røverborgen*, som havde premiere i 1814. Hans til tider knortede forhold til teatret nåede sit højdepunkt i 1828 med musikken til skuespillet *Elverhøj*, skrevet i forbindelse med fejringen af kong Frederik VI's datters bryllup. Partituret skulle senere blive en hjørnesten

i dansk kultur og fik halvandet hundrede år senere slået sin status fast i en sindrig filmkoreografi udtænkt af den partiturkyndige Egon Olsen i Erik Ballings *Olsen-banden ser rødt* fra 1976.

Kuhlaus karriere var kendetegnet af løse tilknytninger til såvel Det Kongelige Teater (hvor han var syngemester en enkelt sæson) og hoffet (hvor han fik etableret sin egen semi-freelancestilling som kongelig kammermusikus). Også hans liv var uafklaret og lettere kaotisk, samtidig med at han udviklede en voldsom appetit på både alkohol og tobak. I 1814 flyttede Kuhlaus fattige forældre og yngste søster fra Tyskland for at bo hos ham i huset i Lyngby. Det familiære arrangement belastede komponistens økonomi og foranledigede ham til at udgive værker i hastigt tempo, heriblandt de mange værker for fløjte, som

siden har sikret Kuhlau høj status i træblæserkredse.

I sin levetid var Kuhlau dog primært kendt som pianist. I denne egenskab rejste han både til Sverige og Østrig og tilbage til sit tyske fødeland. På en sådan rejse havde Kuhlau i 1825 et veldokumenteret møde med sit musikalske forbillede, Ludwig van Beethoven, hvis fem klaverkoncerter han allerede havde givet danske førsteopførelser. Som beskrevet i Alexander Thayers Beethoven-biografi tog et selskab omfattende Beethoven og Kuhlau på landlig udflugt, gjorde holdt på et værtshus for at få forfriskninger og fortsatte så hjemme hos Ludwig med forskellige intellektuelle løjer, heriblandt udarbejdelsen af kanoner. Kuhlau skrev en kanon over navnet Bach, mens Beethoven som tema valgte at udlægge sin kollegas navn: "kühl, nicht lau" (kølig, ikke lunken). Efterfølgende skrev Beethoven undskyldende til "min kære Kuhlau",

tydeligvis flov over måske at have overskredet hans grænser. Både Beethoven og hans forlægger, Schlesinger, kunne godt lide og beundrede deres dansk-tyske bekendtskab, som de i breve hængivenligt omtalte som "kyklopen".

Tilbage i København begyndte tilværelsen at sætte sig spor hos Kuhlau. Han mistede begge forældre i 1830, og et halvt år senere, i februar 1831, brændte hans hus ned til grunden, inklusive alle hans utrykte manuskripter og manuskriptet til en ny klaverkoncert. Han kom sig aldrig helt efter at have stået ude i den iskolde nat og fulgt ildens hærgen og måtte tre måneder på hospitalet efter at have fremskyndet en allerede kendt brystlidelse på denne måde. Han døde i København lidt over et år senere.

Kuhlaus musik havde alle den tidlige romantiks kendetegn på et tidspunkt, hvor dansk musik kun

lige var ved at få øjnene op for dén musikalske udvikling. Han var også en stilbevidst pianist, der nød instrumentets hastige tekniske udvikling, og så forstod han samtidig at udnytte middelklassens forkærlighed for at have et klaver stående derhjemme. Hans klavermusik kan inddeles i værker til undervisningsbrug eller forbedring af teknikken hos talentfulde amatører og stort anlagte værker for erfarne pianister. Generelt er hans bedste klavermusik melodisk rig, den afsøger instrumentets store klangpotentiale og varierer sin tekstur fra det sarte til det overdådige.

Påvirkningen fra Beethoven er tydelig i Kuhlaus **Divertissement i Es-dur, op. 37**, som blev udgivet i 1822, men komponeret året forinden. Første og sidste sats i dette gennemkomponerede værk kan betragtes som henholdsvis introduktion og coda. I andensatsen, en variations-

sats, dukker et Beethoven-lignende tema op. Det bevæger sig fra det lyse til det mørke register ledsaget af forskellige akkompagnementsfigurer og antager nye skikkelser i forskellige registre – særlig smukt ved 4:42, hvor forløbet fortsætter i en dyb venstrehånd, der går sine egne ekstraordinære veje.

Kuhlaus "Marcia" er mere end blot en march. Ved hjælp af en opbrudt version af det samme tema undersøges sider af marchgenren med ikke ubetydelig charme og endda anvendelse af lettere kontrapunktik. "Rondo alla polacca" påkalder sig betydelig opmærksomhed, også ud over komponistens leg med den karakteristiske polonæserytme, ikke mindst på grund af den letløbende måde, Kuhlau iagttager et tema på fra flere vinkler ved hjælp af kontrasterende registre, perspektiver og harmoniseringer. Den fører direkte over i finalens festfyrværkeri.

Kuhlaus tre **Sonatiner, op. 20** er fra 1820 og antagelig skrevet til undervisningsbrug. Nr. 1 i C-dur er enkelt opbygget, men har sin egen lysende charme og symmetriske tilfredsstillende. Den destillerer nogle af Kuhlaus foretrukne teknikker til deres enkleste form, for eksempel ved at flytte temaet fra højre til venstre hånd i åbningssatsen.

Nr. 2 i G-dur er mere dramatisk og også, lige fra den unisone indledning, lagt kunstfærdigt an. Vi hører enkle versioner af de skalafigurer, Kuhlau anvendte i mere komplicerede værker (heriblandt hans Klaversonate, op. 4), og som passede til det moderne klavers tekniske muligheder. "Adagio e sostenuto" i Es-dur omgiver sin mere dekorative midterdel med lyriske vendinger med tæt placerede akkorder: en passende indledning til den legende finale.

Nr. 3 i F-dur er endnu mere kompleks og fordrer i åbningssatsen, at pianisten lader hænderne bytte

plads, ligesom den omfatter en gennemføringsdel i miniatureformat. Larghettoen leger med gentagelse af enkelte toner og akkorder, mens finalen, endnu en polonæse, lader Kuhlaus skalafigurer forvandle sig til regulære rutsjebaneture.

Kuhlau komponerede i alt 22 klaversonater mellem 1809 og 1831. Den første, hans **Klaversonate i Es-dur, op. 4**, blev skrevet inden komponistens afrejse fra Tyskland. Den er tydeligvis et ungdomsværk, men også skrevet af en komponist fortrolig med det moderne klavers klanglige potentiale og tidens musikalske modestrømninger. Nogle gange synes Kuhlau at låne originale indfald fra andre og så klistre dem på et grundlæggende konservativt tonesprog. Men musikens dramatiske styrke og overraskende klarhed er der sjældent grund til at tvivle på. Begge kvaliteter bliver slået fast i en 39 takter lang intro-

duktion fuld af Kuhlaus foretrukne punkterede og dobbeltpunkterede rytmer, der også lader arpeggioer kaste deres helt eget fortryllende skær over musikken.

Den egentlige åbningssats begynder med en allegro i traditionen fra Beethoven, hvor massive akkorder i punkterede rytmer veksler med kæder af sekstendedelstoner. Disse to grundidéer dominerer hele satsen. Derefter følger en variationsrække over et folkemusiklignende tema i to dele. Kuhlau behandler sit tema på forskellig vis; med rytmiske påhit som trioler (variation 1), i paralleltonearten (variation 2) og så med en rask melodisk tilpasning (variation 3). Endelig afløses en fri variation i sørgemarchstil af en allegro scherzando-passage baseret på en del af temaet, der så igen efterfølges af en kadence og en korallignende coda.

Kuhlaus "Adagio" er bemærkelsesværdigt opfindsom. Som Edmund

Noel Dawe har påpeget, foregriber både det varierede akkompagnement og de omfattende figurationer i højrehånden Chopin. Igen hører vi den følelsesladede måde, hvorpå Kuhlau formår at gengive et tema på i form af en stram og smukt harmoniseret koral. Vivacissimo-finalen har ikke de samme kontrastvirkninger som de foregående satser, men i stedet et par særlig kendetegnende træk såsom den konsekvente 'drejning' eller 'omvending' af de to stemmer i højrehånden. Teknisk finesse og klarhed har forrang over virtuositet, og det er tydeligt, at selv unge Kuhlau var omhyggelig med at bevare elegancen i sit drama.

38-årige **Marie-Luise Bodendorff** er født i Augsburg og har de seneste år markeret sig i koncertserier og på adskillige festivaler i Tyskland, Danmark, Sverige, Spanien, Frankrig, Serbien og Kina. Hun begyndte at spille klaver som 5-årig og debuterede to år senere med Südwestdeutsches Kammerorchester Pforzheim i en bearbejdelse af Kuhlaus Sonatine i C-dur, op. 20.

Marie-Luise Bodendorff er elev af Olga Rissin-Morenova, Vladimir Krainev, Brigitte Engerer, Christopher Oakden og Niklas Sivelöv. Hun er prisvinder i talrige internationale klaverkonkurrencer og har optrådt som solist med adskillige orkestre, blandt andet i Tyskland, Rumænien og Italien. Hun underviser i klaver og kammermusik på Det Kongelige Danske Musikkonservatorium i København.

DDD

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