

# Strategies to Enhance the Artistic Quality of Piano Recording

Marija Bajalica

Portfolio of recorded performances and exegesis  
submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

.....

Elder Conservatorium of Music  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
The University of Adelaide

January 2013

# Table of Contents

|   |      |
|---|------|
| Abstract.....   | iv   |
| Declaration.....  | vi   |
| Acknowledgements .....  | vii  |
| Format of the Submission .....  | viii |
| Introduction.....   | 1    |
| Background to the Study .....   | 2    |
| At the beginning.....   | 2    |
| Further influences.....   | 3    |
| The form of the project.....  | 9    |
| Methodology .....   | 11   |
| How methodology was defined.....  | 11   |
| Investigative pattern .....   | 13   |
| The Repertoire.....   | 15   |
| About the Recordings .....  | 16   |
| Venues, sound engineers and pianos.....                                 | 16   |
| Schedule.....   | 17   |
| Recording equipment.....  | 18   |
| Listening equipment .....   | 19   |
| PART A: Sound Recordings.....   | 20   |
| Contents of CD1.....  | 21   |
| Contents of CD2.....  | 22   |
| Contents of CD3.....  | 23   |
| Contents of CD4.....  | 24   |
| PART B: Exegesis.....   | 27   |
| Introductory Comments .....   | 28   |
| Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Sonata in B flat major KV 570.....             | 30   |
| Sergej Prokofiev: Romeo and Juliet, Ten Pieces for Piano Op 75.....     | 41   |
| Robert Schumann: Symphonic Etudes Op 13.....                            | 63   |
| Johann Sebastian Bach: Prelude and Fugue in G sharp Minor BWV 887 ..... | 91   |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Johannes Brahms: Drei Intermezzi Op 117 ..... | 104 |
| Johannes Brahms: Klavierstücke Op 118 .....   | 111 |
| Conclusions.....                              | 138 |
| List of Sources .....                         | 144 |
| Bibliography .....                            | 144 |
| Musical scores.....                           | 146 |
| Discography .....                             | 147 |

# Abstract

Many pianists have remarked how interpretations that prove successful in a concert setting do not always fare well when transferred to the medium of recording. This project sought to identify why this is so and to devise strategies that pianists can use to successfully project interpretative ideals to listeners of a recorded product.

For each recording, a performer works within a given studio environment. This project focuses on artistic strategies that may be used when particular interpretative and sound ideals are not well reflected in the recorded product. At the core of the research is an exploration of the performing skills that can be utilised by the pianist to achieve enhanced outcomes in a given recording context. Elements frequently addressed through the project include the quality of *staccato* touch, continuity of *legato* lines, timing through rests, sonority of thicker *ff* textures and the distance through which the sound is best projected.

The project emphasised how important it is for the performer to understand recorded sound and the medium of recording from the perspective of a listener. The main reason for this is that the listener does not hear the sound in the same way the performer does during a performance. They are only privy to what is picked up by the microphone and transferred to the audio format, not the total experience of the sound that fills the performance space and to which the performer reacts. This project has documented some strategies that use the listener's perspective as a starting point for managing the performance inside the recording space. The reader will learn how and why issues of resonance influenced the quality of transmission of interpretative ideals more than any other factor. This research also highlighted the importance of monitoring the optimal levels of expressive engagement during a recording session, brought to attention the importance of the aesthetic value of a recorded sound and suggested a variety of mental strategies and performing approaches for a performer's consideration prior to and during the process of recording.

The primary outcome of this research resides in the recorded performances themselves. While the methodology was structured in a way that enabled testing and evaluation of different strategies and solutions, it was essentially a creative rather than a scientific journey. It was a

performance study carried out through a series of recordings and re-recordings. The outcome of this process is a set of four CD recordings with an explanatory exegesis. The exegesis tracks the creative approach to the repertoire that was performed and addresses the questions that form the core of the research.

# Declaration

I hereby declare that the recordings and the supporting exegesis that comprise this submission are my original work.

They contain no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contain no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text of the thesis.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for photocopying and loan. It should be noted that permission for copying does not extend to the CDs in Part A without consultation with the author.

Marija Bajalica

June 2013

# Acknowledgements

My first thanks go to Mr Geoff Smith, my piano technician, for “sweetening” the Steinways just the way I like.

Sincere thanks to my recording engineers and producers, Kevin Roper and Peter Dowdall, for their time and professionalism in making this project audible.

Extended thanks to my co-supervisor, Professor Charles Bodman Rae, for the excellent advice he gave me and for his valuable assistance in formatting the project.

I wish to thank my principal supervisor, Emeritus Professor David Lockett, for his curious engagement and dedicated guidance throughout this research. Without his editorial skills, support and patience during the times when I struggled to bring my concepts to their full potential, this project would be less than I was able to achieve. I would also like to express my gratitude for the profound respect with which he treated me as a musician, pianist and a human being. It was a privilege having him as a mentor.

# Format of the Submission

The submission consists of two parts.

Part A represents the primary performance focus of the project and is presented in the form of four CD recordings. The first, second and third CDs contain integral versions of each of the works recorded as part of the project. The fourth CD is a collection of musical examples that are at the core of the discussion contained in Part B.

Part B is an exegesis that examines issues encountered during the project. It is a detailed commentary on the specific challenges that arose and the strategies that were put in place to deal with them.

Given that the primary focus of the project is upon the recorded outcomes, the examiner may wish to commence an exploration of the submission by listening to the integral versions of the works (CD1, CD2, CD3), which represent my overall artistic view of the repertoire. The short examples (CD4) would be best heard within the context of the discussion contained in the exegesis.