

# FAMOUS WORKS FOR PIANO DUO

Schubert · Saint-Saëns · Ravel · Lutoslawski  
Rachmaninoff · Zimmermann · Messiaen

PIANO DUO VAN VEEN  
Jeroen van Veen · Maarten van Veen



## Famous Works for Piano Duo

**Franz Schubert 1797-1828**

### Fantasy in F minor D.940

- |                        |      |
|------------------------|------|
| 1. I. Allegro          | 4'41 |
| 2. II. Largo           | 2'49 |
| 3. III. Allegro Vivace | 5'43 |
| 4. IV. Tempo 1         | 5'15 |
- Maarten plays piano primo*

**Camille Saint-Saëns 1835-1921**

### Variations on a theme by Beethoven

#### Op.35

- |                          |      |
|--------------------------|------|
| 5. Moderato assai        | 0'42 |
| 6. Tempo du Minuetto     | 1'11 |
| 7. Allegro               | 1'12 |
| 8. Poco meno mosso       | 1'51 |
| 9. Tempo del Tema        | 0'50 |
| 10. Molto Allegro        | 1'20 |
| 11. Moderato Assai       | 1'29 |
| 12. Presto leggierissimo | 1'02 |
| 13. Alla marcia funèbre  | 1'18 |
| 14. Tempo del Tema       | 0'30 |
| 15. Adagio               | 1'05 |
| 16. Allegro              | 2'16 |
| 17. Presto               | 3'03 |
- Maarten plays piano primo*

**Maurice Ravel 1875-1937**

### La Valse

- |                                  |       |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| 18. Mouvement de Valse viennoise | 12'04 |
|----------------------------------|-------|
- Jeroen plays piano primo*

**Witold Lutoslawski 1913-1994**

### Variations on a theme by Paganini

- |                         |      |
|-------------------------|------|
| 19. Allegro capriccioso | 5'20 |
|-------------------------|------|
- Jeroen plays piano primo*

**Sergei Rachmaninoff 1873-1943**

- |                      |      |
|----------------------|------|
| 20. Russian Rhapsody | 9'59 |
|----------------------|------|

**Igor Stravinsky 1882-1971**

### Rite of Spring

- |             |       |
|-------------|-------|
| 21. Part I  | 15'40 |
| 22. Part II | 19'31 |

**Bernd Alois Zimmermann 1918-1970**

### Monologue for two pianos

- |                     |      |
|---------------------|------|
| 23. I. Quasi irreal | 2'21 |
| 24. II.             | 3'26 |
| 25. III.            | 3'40 |
| 26. IV.             | 2'28 |
| 27. V.              | 7'42 |

**Olivier Messiaen 1908-1992**

- |   |      |
|---|------|
| 28. Amen de la Consommation, Visions de l'Amen Part VII | 8'21 |
|---|------|

## A note from the artist

Piano duo playing has always been a great deal of my life. Since my childhood Maarten and I played together on one and two pianos. Communication on two pianos was an issue, since the second piano was located in an outdoors location. But with microphones we managed to play together and practice the repertoire. Later on, we got the opportunity to perform in the Music School of Doetinchem on the Bizetlaan. When we studied on the conservatory Ton Hartsuiker, who was a great fan of two piano playing, gave us a fixed Tuesday evening to work in a room on the two piano repertoire. We are still very grateful for all who helped us in our careers. The first album was released in 1992, a studio recording made in K & W, the great hall of the Utrecht Conservatory. The second album is live recorded during one of the many concerts we gave in the world.

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## About the music

**Franz Schubert (1797-1828) Fantasy in f major D.940**

Schubert has written a large number of works for piano à quatre-mains.

This genre was particularly popular with the music-loving bourgeoisie. In a time when there was no radio, gramophone record, compact disk or tape registration, the most common way to hear music was either to go to a concert or play it. In order to meet the demands of home playing; symphonies, operas, chamber works and songs appeared almost immediately after publication in versions for piano (whether piano four hands or not). At the same time, of course, original pieces were also written for this new genre. The compositions of Schubert, Saint-Saëns and Lutoslavski are among the finest in the repertoire. We can state that after the five 'Sonatas for piano four hands by Mozart', Schubert's 'Fantasy in f' is no more and no less than a highlight of the genre. The work was completed in April 1828 and, together with the manuscript of a 'Piano Trio in E-flat', given to Karoline Estherhazy, one of Johann Estherhazy's two piano-playing daughters. All elements of Schubert's art can be found in the 'Fantasy': the beautiful singing melodies, the melancholy harmonic turns from major to minor, the drama, but also the almost symphonic design, the variations in the melodic alternations and the magical fugue technique in the final.

**Camille Saint-Saëns** (1835-1921) *Variations on a theme by Beethoven Op.35*  
Camille Saint-Saëns was also a master of variation technique. Fans of his 'Third Symphony' (with organ) but also of the 'First Cello Concerto', 'Third Violin Concerto' in the 'Fourth Piano Concerto' can testify this. The Beethoven Variations for two pianos are less well-known, but no less beautiful and convincing. The theme consists of the trio of the minuet from the sonata in E-flat Op.31 No.3 by Ludwig van Beethoven. The most striking characteristic of the trio is its upbeat; ta-da, so three-one. This upbeat determines the introduction, the six variations, the fugue in the finale of the 35th opus number of Saint-Saëns. Particularly effective are the sixth variation 'Alla Marcia Funèbre' and the 'great final fugue'.

**Maurice Ravel** (1895-1937) *La Valse*

As early as 1906, Ravel had a sort of tribute in mind to the waltz king Johann Strauss. At first he thought of a symphonic poem with the title 'Wien'. In the end it became a 'danse choregraphique': 'La Valse'. According to the composer the piece could be interpreted as the apotheosis of the waltz. Through swirling nebulae one can see faintly waltzing pairs. The mists slowly lift and an immense concert hall becomes visible. Crowds of people dance there. The ballroom is gradually lit and eventually even overexposed in light. The waltzing couples are so flooded with light that reality is distorted: the Imperial Viennese court around 1855. The waltz has grown into a fatal whirl. No one can escape. The joy becomes oppressive even frightening. Suddenly, after a tremendous acceleration, everything is over. Maybe it was just a dream or maybe a warning. When Ravel wrote this work, having retired to the Ardèche in the winter of 1919/1920, everyone had the indescribable misery of the First World War still fresh in their minds. Certainly Ravel, who not only had lost good friends, but also served actively on the battlefields as a sick brother. Moreover, this War marked the end of the Habsburg Empire, of the court in Vienna, whose waltz had become as wry as it was a magnificent symbol in the course of the 19th century. For example, 'La Valse' can also be regarded as a symbol of the end of the old world. The version for two pianos was created almost simultaneously with the well-known for orchestra orchestra.

**Witold Lutoslawski** (1913-1994) was born into a musical family. His father Józef Lutoslawski was a pianist, but he organized groups for the liberation of Poland from the Russian occupation of Poland, which had existed since 1815; he was arrested in

1915 and executed three years later. His mother Maria Olszewskich Lutoslawska was one of the first women in Europe to study medicine. Witold was taught piano and violin as a little boy. At the age of five he started to improvise and when he was nine years old he wrote his first small compositions (Preludium for piano). At the age of fifteen he did private studies for composition. This was followed by studies at the Frédéric Chopin Academy of Music in Warsaw from 1932 to 1937, as well as several studies in mathematics. In 1938 the Symphonic Variations came into being, the first valid work. During Hitler's raid on Poland, Lutoslawski was leader of the military broadcaster and was arrested by the Germans, but was able to flee after eight days. The composer in hiding kept himself alive by working as a bar pianist and music teacher. In 1941 he wrote his Paganini-Variations for two pianos, a showpiece that has been on the repertoire for all piano duos.

**Sergei Rachmaninoff** (1873-1943) was born on the Oneg Estate in the Novgorod district. Musical talent was discovered early in Rachmaninoff. His older cousin Aleksander Siloti, himself a piano virtuoso, introduced twelve-year-old Rachmaninoff to Nikolai Zverev, a conservatory teacher who took gifted youths as pupils to prepare them for the conservatory. After four years, Rachmaninoff was admitted to the Moscow Conservatory. He studied piano with Siloti, counterpoint with Sergei Taneyev and composition with Anton Arensky. The Russian Rhapsody from 1891 is a masterpiece in a nutshell: it illustrates all his gifts as a composer and pianist, with naturalness, as can be heard later in his compositions. In 1892 he graduated - a year earlier than the average student - and was awarded a gold medal for composition. In the same year, the famous prelude in cis (Op.3 No.2, "Moscow Bells") from the series of piano works *Morceaux de Fantaisie*, Op.3. In that year he also held his first major tour of Russia. In 1934 Rachmaninoff settled permanently in the US. From there he undertook many concert tours. Many recordings have been made of his work. Included are his piano concertos, his Prelude in C sharp Op.3 No.2, and the Paganini variations. He also played together with Vladimir Horowitz, but that was never recorded.

**Bernd Alois Zimmermann** was born in 1918 in Bliesheim near Cologne. He studied music at the Musikhochschule in Cologne and Berlin, furthermore philosophy and German literature at the universities of Bonn, Cologne and Berlin. In 1950 he became a lecturer at the Institute of Musicology of the University of Cologne. From

1957 he taught composition and gave seminars on film and theater music at the Musikhochschule in Cologne. Zimmermann wrote compositions for orchestra, vocal music, chamber music, music for solo instruments and electronic music. In the period 1958-1960 he composed an opera, *Die Soldaten*, according to the principles of the pluralistic treatment of sounds. In this masterpiece, the composer reaches the pinnacle of his abilities within the extreme complexity of the serial writing. He gives concrete form to a spherical time in which past, present and future come together and merge into a huge expressive field of tension. Zimmermann's work is not that extensive, but it does occupy a prominent place in the post-war music history of Germany. He internalized the serial principles and avant-garde rigor of Darmstadt. The way in which Zimmerman combined these influences with jazz and with the work of earlier composers also makes him one of the forerunners in the field of postmodern composition techniques. Bernd Alois Zimmermann's music is permeated with a deeply religious and social feeling. This is particularly the case in *Antiphonen* for viola and chamber orchestra (1961) and *Ich wandte mich und sah an alle Unrecht, das Schah unter der Sonne*, an ecclesiastical work for two reciters, bass and orchestra, which he completed in 1970. Shortly afterwards he committed suicide. His *Monologue* for two pianos is an arrangement of the *Dialoge* for two pianos and large symphony orchestra.

#### **Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) *The Rite of Spring***

'I'm afraid!' screamed the famous French actress Sarah Bernhardt after she saw Vaclav Nijinsky dance the *Petruskja* on June 13, 1911, 'I am afraid because I have just seen the greatest actor in the world!' The premiere of *Petruskja*, with ballet music by Stravinsky, was a great success. Debussy praised the magical spinning sounds with which Stravinsky brought the mechanical puppets from a puppet show to life. Compliments that gave Stravinsky full confidence that his composer's ears were in top condition. And that worked out well. He just wanted to complete his *Sacre*. First sketches had been on paper since 1910, but Igor had to wait a while for the final scenario and concept. The *Sacre du printemps* was to be premiered by Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*. But that just didn't happen. Some sources claim that Nijinsky required as many as two hundred rehearsals. And there were only six performances scheduled. Nijinsky broke radically with all the laws of classical dance. No fairy tales floating through the air, but an emphasis on earthly weight and stamping. No tripping on pointe shoes and turned outward feet in the classic 'first position', but turned inward

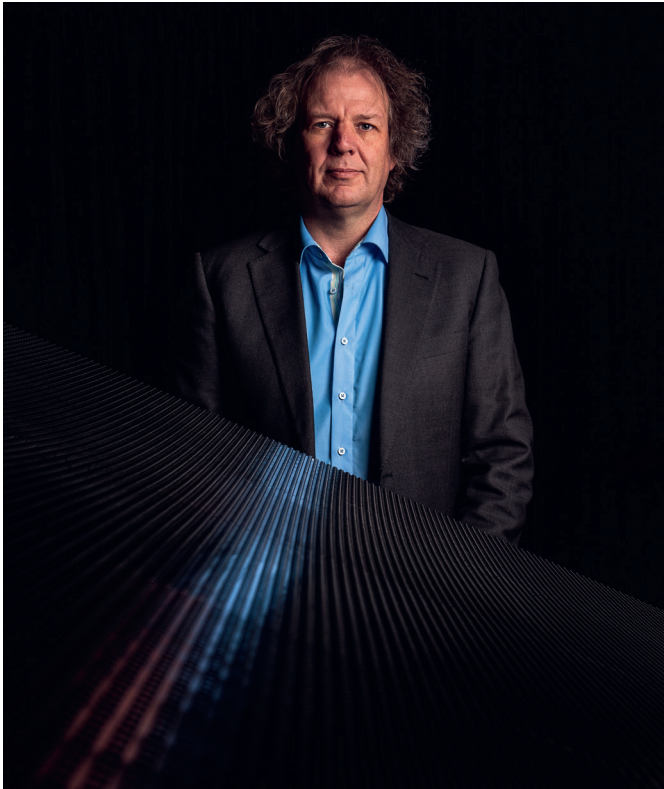
toes, knees and elbows. The *Théâtre des Champs-Élysées* was still brand new. In the spring of 1913 Diaghilev cautiously started with less provocative ballets. But on May 29, the *Sacre* bomb exploded, with the violence of a Russian spring. To the great surprise of Stravinsky, who was not only proud, but also very familiar with his own music, there was great commotion. The uproar started during the prelude. When the curtains opened and longhaired young girls on stage gave their knees stamping, according to Stravinsky, a 'storm' arose. Stravinsky saw Nijinsky from a chair trying to help the dancers with the tricky rhythms by yelling numbers to them. Diaghilev tried to restore order by turning the hall light on and off. A dance, interpreted as a spastic movement, elicited the comment that a doctor had to come, 'No, two doctors! A dentist!'

This original version for two pianos was created in close collaboration with Robert Craft, Stravinsky's right-hand man. Over the years many changes have been made by Igor himself, sometimes to renew the rights when they threatened to expire, but often also because the playing quality of orchestras increased. Some of these changes are not included in recent editions of this monumental work. After looking at the list of Craft's books, the idea arose to record this version. The original version of this 4 handy version was the starting point for the Van Veen brothers.

#### **Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) *Visions de l'Amen, Part VII, Amen de la Consommation***

*Visions de l'Amen* is a suite of seven pieces for two pianos, commissioned for the *Concerts de la Pléiade* that were held during the German occupation of Paris. It was composed in 1943. Olivier Messiaen describes the music as seven musical visions, which reflect the living beings that say "Amen" in gratitude for their existence. Messiaen explains the different roles of the two piano parts: he assigned the primo part (played by Yvonne Loriod) "rhythmic difficulties, chord clusters, all that has speed, charm, and quality of sound". The secondo part (played by himself) he assigned "the principal melody, thematic elements, all that demands emotion and strength". One of the principal themes of the work is the Creation theme appearing in the seventh movement, over ten times. A monumental work for two pianos that requires strength, power, and well-trained pianists since the extreme force to play the massive chords over and over again. The result is a mind-blowing composition putting the pianos almost in fire!

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**Piano duo Jeroen and Maarten van Veen** were raised a musical family. The brothers started playing together at a young age before entering the conservatory. In 1989 they recorded their first album. They studied at the Utrecht Conservatory with Alwin Bär and Håkon Austbø, and Maarten continued in Amsterdam with Ton Hartsuiker. The Van Veen brothers made their debut at the Festival Wien Modern in Vienna in 1993. They played with various orchestras and worked with conductors like Howard Williams (Adams), Peter Eötvös (Zimmermann), Neal Stulberg (Mozart & Bartok) and Robert Craft (Stravinsky). They were prizewinners of the 4th Murray Dranoff International Two Piano Competition (U.S.A, 1995). In the 1996 Emmy Award-nominated documentary “Two Pianos One Passion”, they were filmed during the two-week piano competition. In 1998 they founded the International Piano Quartet and then worked with Robert Craft, gave concerts and were asked to record “Les Noces” at the famous Abbey Road studios in London (2000). The New York Times review called the recording “the best recording ever”. After this recording, they toured several times in America and Canada. They also worked on recordings for radio and TV such as AVRO, NOS, IKON, NCRV and for WTBC-TV & Radio (Florida, U.S.A.). As of March 2007, they have been named Artistic Director for the Dranoff International Two Piano Foundation in Miami, Florida.

*‘Enthusiastischen Beifall und Bravorufe gab es anschließend für die Interpretation des eminent schwierigen La Valse von Ravel. Die Höllandische Bruder Jeroen und Maarten van Veen entfesselten einen wahren Klangrausch, kam es zu virtuosens Klankaskaden, besser kann man diese Werk wohl kaum spielen!’*  
Wiesbadener Tagblatt 28 mei 1991

*‘The highlight of the evening was Jeroen and Martin van Veen’s two piano performance...Their Playing was nothing short of sensational!’*  
The Salt Lake Tribune 12 februari 1996

*‘When the boys played the variations by Saint-Saëns I stood up and shouted to Loretta, now I understand this piece!!’*  
Harold C. Schonberg



*Thanks to VPRO & Pleun Verbeij*

Recordings:

Tracks 1-19:

K & W, Utrecht, The Netherlands

Recorded by Lex van Diepen jr., Studio 8, Hilversum

Tracks 20-28:

2002, Kleine Zaal Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (tr.1);

2008, Concertzaal, Tilburg, The Netherlands (tr.2-3)

2001, De Doelen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands (tr.4-8)

Production: Anneke van Dulken, Wim Laman

1992, Bad Gleichenberg, Austria (tr.9)

Thanks to: Concertzaal Tilburg & VPRO

Mastering: Vanveenproductions/Pianomania

Executive Producer: Jeroen van Veen

Engineered & Mastered by: Pianomania

Software: Pro Tools, Logic & Sequoia

Cover photo: Joeri van Veen

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