

**MARCO  
POLO**

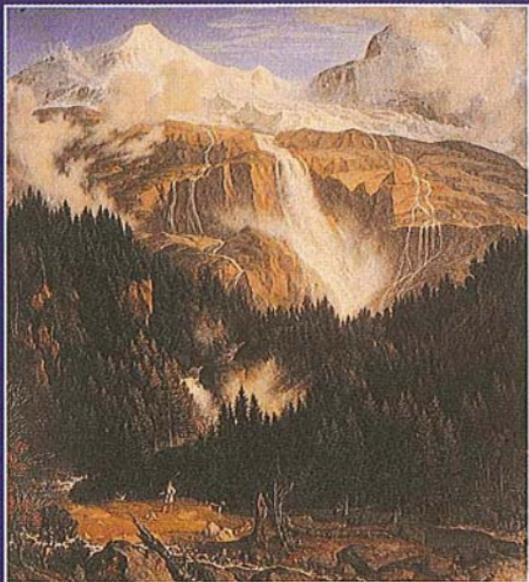
**DDD**

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Woldemar  
**BARGIEL**

Suite, Op. 31  
Fantasies, Opp. 5 and 12  
Three Character Pieces, Op. 8

Daniel Blumenthal, Piano



## **Woldemar Bargiel (1828 - 1897)**

**Three Character Pieces (Drei Charakterstücke), Op. 8**

**Fantasie No. 1 in B Minor, Op. 5**

**Fantasie No. 2 in D Major, Op. 12**

**Suite in G Minor, Op. 31**

Woldemar Bargiel occupied a distinguished position as a teacher and composer in an active career that spanned the larger part of the second half of the nineteenth century. Born in 1828 in Berlin, the son of a music teacher, Adolf Bargiel, and his wife, Marianne Tromlitz, the first wife of Friedrich Wieck and mother of Clara Schumann, he had his earliest musical training from his parents, learning piano, violin and organ, and was a choirboy of Berlin Cathedral. He had his first lessons in counterpoint from Siegfried Dehn and following the advice of Schumann became a student at the conservatory established by Mendelssohn in Leipzig. Here his teachers included the great pianist Ignaz Moscheles, Hauptmann, Rietz and Niels Gade. In 1850 he returned to Berlin, working first as a private teacher, while developing his powers as a composer. In 1859 he was invited by Mendelssohn's friend Ferdinand Hiller to join the staff of the Cologne Conservatory as a teacher of theory. Seven years later he was succeeded in this position by his Berlin pupil Ernst Rudorff, moving to Rotterdam as Kapellmeister and Director of the Maatschappij tot Bevordering van Toonkunst. Here he won a reputation as a choral conductor and met Hermine Tours, whom he later married. He remained in Rotterdam until 1874, when his friend Joseph Joachim invited him back to Berlin as professor of composition at the Royal Hochschule für Musik. The following year he became a senator of the Akademie der Künste and director of master-classes in composition. It has been pointed out that his appointment represented the first incursion of a romantic composer into academic circles. He retained his positions in Berlin until his death in 1897, exercising a strong influence over many pupils, notably the conductor Peter Raabe and the music historian Johannes Wolf.

As a half-brother of Clara Schumann, Bargiel was closely allied with Schumann and the younger generation of musicians that included Brahms and Joachim. In 1853 Schumann, in *Neue Bahnen*, joined his name with those of Joachim, Kirchner, Gade, Franz and Heller as outstanding among younger musicians. His piano compositions remain very firmly in the tradition of Schumann, works well crafted, but with limitations of which Joachim seems to have become aware, although they enjoyed great popularity in his lifetime. In addition to his piano music he wrote chamber music, including a D major *Suite* for violin and piano, the subject of Joachim's reservations, overtures to *Prometheus*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Medea* and a symphony, as well as a number of choral works.

The *Three Character Pieces, Opus 8*, open in a mood of high emotion, with stormy arpeggios and runs through which a dramatic melody emerges, later relaxing into a gentler passages before the turbulent figuration of the opening returns, capped by strong final chords. The second piece is more lyrical in tone, starting with the chords of a tender hymn, moving to a section of more variety, an accompanied melody, the material from which the movement is developed. This is followed by the final *Allegro con fuoco*, music with the vigour of Schumann in an extrovert frame of mind. The pieces are dedicated to Clara Schumann.

Bargiel's *Fantasie in B minor, Opus 5*, is in three movements. The first, marked *Grave*, opens in a mood of solemnity, its slow progress interrupted by moments of poignancy and leading to increasing drama, before the hushed ending. The second movement *Allegretto* offers a charming contrast in key and feeling. It is followed by a final *Presto*, with its suggestions of both Mendelssohn and Schumann, the first in the rapid figuration of the opening, and the second in the chordal passage that follows.

The second *Fantasia, Opus 12*, in the key of D major, opens with arpeggiated chords, almost a hint of Brahms in its harmonies and then of Schumann's evocations of the Baroque. The second movement, marked *Allegretto un poco allegro*, offers the necessary lyrical contrast and triumphalism, although it includes a more sombre episode in its course and ends in tranquillity.

Bargiel's *Suite in G minor, Opus 31*, has five movements. It opens with a *Präludium*, music that makes an immediate call on the attention of the listener. It is followed by a more extended *Elegie*, with the lyrical melancholy suggested in the title. The song-like melody of the opening section is developed with something of the figuration of the opening *Prelude*. This leads to a *Marcia fantastica*, not as fantastic as might have been expected until a second passage introduces material a world away from the initial mood. A trill re-introduces the tread of the march, repeated with greater emphasis. The secondary material re-appears, and the process is repeated, fragments of both elements forming a brief coda. The fourth movement is a *Scherzo*, based on an expansion of its opening figure. The *Suite* ends with an extended *Finale*, motivically related, as are the other movements of the *Suite*. Here again there are echoes of Brahms, both in the autumnal melancholy of the music and in the harmonies that support this mood, broken by figuration that suggests a Bach *Toccata*, leading to more overtly romantic textures.

It would be wrong to consider Bargiel as a mere imitator, a pale reflection of Schumann and his contemporaries. He is, it is true, a composer of his own country and generation, and it is inevitable that lack of familiarity with his work should lead to the perception of echoes of his contemporaries, the fate of lesser composers. Bargiel, however, deserves attention as a composer of contemporary distinction and, in his piano music, the creator of music that has a value in itself.

## **Daniel Blumenthal**

From prize-winning performances at the Queen Elizabeth of the Belgians Competition, the Geneva International Competition, the Busoni International Competition and the competitions in Leeds and in Sydney, the American pianist Daniel Blumenthal has continued with a career that has taken him to four continents as a soloist and recitalist, in the former capacity with major orchestras in Europe and America. His extensive recordings include both solo performances and chamber music. For Marco Polo, he has recorded works by Félicien David, von Bülow, Debussy, Robert Fuchs and Bargiel.

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The half-brother of Clara Schumann, Bargiel's music suggests that of Schumann at his best, with very occasional hints of Mendelssohn, and rather more of Brahms, his near contemporary.

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STEREO

Woldemar  
**BARGIEL**  
 (1828 - 1897)

Playing  
 Time:  
 77'17"

**Three Character Pieces  
 (Drei Charakterstücke),  
 Op. 8**

- |   |                      |        |
|---|----------------------|--------|
| 1 | Allegro appassionato | (3:19) |
| 2 | Lento                | (6:45) |
| 3 | Allegro con fuoco    | (5:27) |

**Fantasia No. 1  
 in B Minor, Op. 5**

- |   |            |        |
|---|------------|--------|
| 4 | Grave      | (6:01) |
| 5 | Allegretto | (2:31) |
| 6 | Presto     | (7:22) |

**Fantasia No. 2  
 in D Major, Op. 12**

- |   |                            |         |
|---|----------------------------|---------|
| 7 | Andante                    | (6:28)  |
| 8 | Allegretto un poco allegro | (12:15) |

**Suite in G Minor, Op. 31**

- |    |  |         |
|----|--|---------|
| 9  | Präludium: Allegro                               | (2:52)  |
| 10 | Elegie: Andante,<br>molto espressivo e cantabile | (4:40)  |
| 11 | Marcia fantastica:<br>Molto moderato             | (5:06)  |
| 12 | Scherzo: Presto                                  | (3:18)  |
| 13 | Finale:  | (10:46) |

Adagio - Allegro appassionato

Recorded at the Clara Wieck Auditorium, Heidelberg,  
 from 11th to 13th January, 1993.

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Music Notes: Keith Anderson

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