

# Piano Concerto No. 1

## ***A Programmatic Concerto for Piano and Orchestra***

### **I: Cassiopeia**

The movement opens with dark colours in the orchestra, and a pulsing bass ushers in the soloist. The intensity builds, climbing upwards for over a quarter of the movement. The piano part becomes more and more demanding, boasting of its own virtuosity. After a number of false climaxes, the material transmogrifies into a frenzied blur, so much so that the muse-consumed soloist leaves the orchestra behind. As the piano and orchestra are reunited, an optimistic sweeping theme epitomises Cassiopeia's arresting beauty. As the energy dissipates, a more delicate, sorrow-tinged passage bears witness to Cassiopeia's sudden comprehension of the consequences of what she has done. After sentencing, a high, solitary note depicts the heavenly realm in which Cassiopeia will live out her days. At the close, the listener is left sharing in the cyclical despair of her fate.

### **II: Andromeda**

The piano opens with a pure theme, evoking Andromeda's innocence. As the horns and clarinets join, the line grows into a declaration of deep resentment towards her mother. The music soars, but not for long as a corner is turned to present a more atmospheric mood. Andromeda, still confined by the sighing allure of forever falling motifs, manifests her agitation and desperation as she tugs at her chains. The music calms and the unaccompanied piano returns with chaste diction as Andromeda's fate, as the casualty of her mother's outrageous vanity, is anchored by the plaintive-hued theme. In a brief moment of stately dignity, a final attempt is made to free herself, only to drift deeper into the mythological world. Despite surrendering to the sustained tranquillity, her profound sense of abandonment does not lift, and the movement closes without any hope of rescue.

### **III: Perseus**

The powerful chords and repeated couplets of the opening section serve to reinforce Perseus's masculinity and extol his determination in hunting down Medusa. A notable increase in tempo introduces animated swooping gestures in both the piano and orchestra. The soloist's scalic material is both rapid and rhythmically intricate, emphasising cleverness and cunning over mere brawn. The orchestra competes with the piano for the airspace, but neither triumph. Perseus undertakes a controlled descent after becoming curious over what he thought was a statue on a rock. A loud, striking, piano chord punctuates his sudden cognizance that it is, in fact, a chained woman. The voices of the previous movements are drawn together in celebration of Andromeda's dramatic rescue and the ensuing romance leads to a sustained climax. A formidable cadenza-like episode marks the apotheosis of the concerto as Perseus honours his wife: now immortalised in the form of a constellation.