



Bisel Classics

Joachim  
**RAFF**

Am  
**Giessbach**  
Opus 88

**PIANO  
SOLO**

[www.bisel-classics.com](http://www.bisel-classics.com)

## Preface

---

The title of this piece was inspired by the famous Am Giessbach falls at the eastern end of Lake Brienz, in Switzerland location of the historic Grand Hotel but this piece composed around 1862, predates the present hotel by at least 12 years. Dropping in 14 stages over 500 meters the falls are a site of outstanding natural beauty and in this piece, Raff evokes the course of the water with rippling arpeggios underlined by a melody full of pathos and beauty. The classification of the piece as a study is somewhat misleading since the unbroken arpeggiation provides a challenge not just in its constancy, but in the observance of voicing in which the melody and the accompaniment swap layers. This alternation of voicing is reinforced by the phasing of beats which lends momentum to the rhythm - in a sense, the melody is constantly tripping over the beats, inducing the sensation of falling along with the restless undulation of its dynamic contours. Like the nature of the falls themselves, the music is precipitous and ever changing in a dynamic portrait steeped in Romantic feeling.

The piece is heavy with the influence of Liszt for whom Raff worked for a number of years before leaving his employ in less than amicable terms but this is no mere parody of Lisztian virtuosity. Raff, may justly be regarded as projecting too much to the influence of his master in the early days of his compositional career but this piece arrives at a much happier and more fulfilled time in his life when he had discovered a serious voice of his own. The fireworks are not for show only, they reveal a deep originality which never stoops to sentimentality to make its mark.