



Franz
SCHUBERT

The
Piano
Masterworks
vol. 1

Allegretto, D. 915 Impromptus, D. 935
Sonatas, D. 960, D. 664, D. 894
Wanderer-Fantasie, D. 760

Anthony Goldstone

FRANZ PETER SCHUBERT (1797-1828) THE PIANO MASTERWORKS, volume 1

Schubert was surely the greatest miracle in Western music. A non-exhaustive summary of his known works runs as follows, beginning with the music requiring most performers and with the rider that, working at frenetic intensity often on more than one project simultaneously, he did not finish all he started (so necessitating approximations): several operas/Singspiele; much sacred choral music including several masses, one alone of which, the great Mass in E flat, written in his final year, takes well over an hour to perform; much secular choral music; ten or eleven symphonies as well as other orchestral works; an hour-long octet, an almost similarly expansive string quintet, the *Trout* quintet, around sixteen string quartets and two trios for violin, 'cello and piano – several of these works being not too far off an hour in length; eight works for piano and one other instrument; over eight hours of original piano duets; around twenty piano sonatas, several on a very large scale, and a large amount of other piano music; and finally – for good measure – well over six hundred songs.

It is not only the quantity of Schubert's output (imagine the time required merely to copy out that number of someone else's notes), but the transcendental beauty and greatness of so much of it, conjured from the ether by one soul, that renders us speechless in awe and gratitude.

When we remember that he had to work for his living, having no patronage; was seriously affected by illness; had no electric light - let alone a computer, that essential tool of so many contemporary composers; heard only a small proportion of his works performed (they sprang from his pen as fully-formed masterpieces, an eternal legacy to posterity); did not live in seclusion, having a circle of friends; and died two and a half months before his thirty-second birthday, we appreciate that we are indeed deep in the realm of the miraculous. Yet Schubert does not thunder us into submission as the Thor-like Beethoven can; he speaks to and for humanity as a divinely blessed human being. "The Divine Art" indeed.

The recordings, of which these two programs represent the first volume, are intended to offer a series of balanced recital programmes, each culminating in one of Schubert's late, great piano sonatas as its "second half", preceded by the more important smaller-scale works (with the exception of the monumental *Wanderer-Fantasie*). The listener may well wish to take an interval before the main work.

1

Written on 26 April 1827 "for his dear friend Walcher as a memento" (Ferdinand Walcher was to leave Vienna for Venice on state business), the *Allegretto in C minor* [1] is suffused with an almost Brahmsian intensity relieved by a tender middle section in A flat major, and might be subtitled "Parting is such sweet sorrow".

The *Four Impromptus, D.935*, were composed in December 1827 to follow the first set of four of earlier that year, which had been given the fashionable title *Impromptus* by the publisher Haslinger. In truth there is nothing extempore in these carefully worked out pieces. Indeed, Schumann believed the first two of this second set to be the opening movements of a projected sonata. Actually the first [2], were it not to lack a development section, would be an expansive sonata movement. Its opening rhetoric and drama give way to a beautiful second subject

group that includes an emotional duet around a murmuring accompaniment. The opening theme returns as a short coda.

Number two [3] is a *Ländler*-like piece in simple ternary form, the predominantly gentle outer sections enclosing a busier episode with characteristically accented second beats. In the B flat major third Impromptu [4] a theme reminiscent of the composer's *Rosamunde* incidental music (1823) serves as the subject of five resourceful variations, the third passionate in B flat minor, the fourth eccentrically syncopated in G flat major. The scintillating final variation leads to a mellow close.

One might describe the exhilarating fourth Impromptu [5], in F minor like the first, as being in the "Hungarian" style, but its cross--accents also recall the *Furiant* from Bohemia. Rocket-like scales burst forth, and these form the germ of the material of the substantial central section, which includes some delightful waltz moments. The extended coda, at first elf-like with veiled slowed-down references to the first bar of the piece, then breaks loose in a virtuoso stampede, ending with a staggering six-octave downward scale using almost the full compass of the pianos of Schubert's day.

Rounding off a wondrous sonata trilogy written – or at least completed – in September 1828, two months before Schubert's death, the *Sonata in B flat major*, emanating, it

sometimes seems, from the next world, represents the consummation of his corpus of about twenty piano sonatas. At the opening [6], from the silence a quiet hymn emerges - one whose melody, spanning but half an octave, is bisected by an ominous shudder deep in the bass, which in the course of this first movement becomes an *idée fixe*. From these elements flows what is almost a “stream of consciousness” – a lyrical outpouring with tragedy seldom far away, combining seemingly spontaneous organic growth with a perfectly satisfying structure, and dying away to fragments of the hymn and that chilling distant rumble. The “heavenly length” (Schumann on Schubert’s “Great” *C major Symphony*) of the movement is reinforced in this performance by observance of the exposition repeat, which enables nine extraordinary bars (before the repeat of the opening) to be heard which would otherwise be lost.

A cousin of the heavenly *Adagio* of the contemporaneous *String Quintet* and of the 1827(?) *Notturmo* for violin, ’cello and piano, the slow movement [7] begins and ends in rapt meditation, its sustained melodic line gently punctuated and encompassed by a hypnotic *ostinato* pattern. In the more urgent and worldly central song episode, to a pulsating accompaniment, a dark ensemble of male

voices is answered by a single soprano. A similar dichotomy between the ethereal and the material exists in the *Scherzo and Trio* [8]. It is as if a carefree, lively waltz recollected in a dream were interrupted by the harsh reality of B flat minor gloom with painful, stabbing accents.

The shock “wrong” key prank (foreshadowed in the four-hand *Grand Duo* of 1824) introducing the dance tune which opens the finale [9] may, strangely, be a pointer to Schubert’s ultimate acceptance of his part in the human tragedy; there is a sense of ironic incongruity which in no way cancels out the searching spirituality of the first two movements.

Impassioned outbursts intrude into the mostly cordial mood; finally, the issue of the “wrong” key – perhaps a metaphor for his own differentness – having been resolved with exquisite pathos, Schubert closes the book (and very soon his all-too-short life) with an unapologetic affirmation.

2

With a wonderfully affecting *andante* song without words at its heart, the *Sonata in A major*, the former of Schubert’s two for piano in that key, dates from 1819. The first movement [1] is predominantly melodic (no surprise with Schubert!), sometimes playful, pitting running triplet quavers against his

favourite crotchet, two quavers rhythm (prevalent also in the *Fantasie*). A typically knowing Schubertian touch is that the first movement ends on a gently falling B-A, which is then reiterated, this time in D major, to open the second movement [2]. (He had already the previous year experimented in the *Grand Sonate* for piano duet with making two discrete movements sound almost continuous by means of a subtle link.) The finale [3] has all the freshness - including the gusty showers - of a spring morning, and can hardly resist breaking into a fast waltz. There are wonderful decoys of key and the short coda is deliciously cheeky. The whole work is a perfect example of the art that conceals art.

Schubert wrote the *Fantasie in C major*, centred on his song *Der Wanderer* (1816), in 1822. The opening of the slow section quotes the part of the song set to these words by Schmidt von Lübeck: "The sun seems to me so cold here... I am a stranger everywhere." Compare Schubert's own sentiments: "It sometimes seems to me as if I did not belong to this world at all." The work appears on the surface worldly enough, revelling in extreme virtuosity (which defeated its composer) from the outset. The marvel is that a defiant, truly symphonic masterpiece unfolds, not the empty showcase that it might have been in the hands of a lesser creator.

The secret lies largely in its revolutionary construction, united during its continuous

twenty-minute span by a radical economy of material, its startling diversity achieved through organic development and transformation of motifs. Schubert here takes a leap into the future, and his pioneering work had a huge influence on later composers - through Liszt, who actually transcribed this work for piano and orchestra, incidentally rendering it far less taxing for the pianist, to Wagner, and so on to the present day.

A brief outline (if only to marvel at): the fiery opening section [4] immediately introduces motif (a) with its pervasive rhythm and repeated notes, "externalised" from *Der Wanderer*; the music melts into a lyrical melody, derived from {a} with its tail "curled"; the fiery music returns and is developed, featuring "upside-down" versions - both hands simultaneously playing the other one's material the wrong way up. As it calms down it "chances" again upon the "curly tail", which becomes the start of another lyrical melody, {b}; the fiery music is further developed, with wrist-breaking octaves, subsiding into the second section [5], in which the brooding *Wanderer* is treated to free variations culminating in a passionate quasi-cadenza; this dies away to a closing murmur which, transformed, becomes a rallying call for (and figures importantly in) the very quick third section [6], itself based on (a), now modified into a galloping scherzo

rhythm. Following the central seductive *Ländler*-like trio section, which is a mutation of {b}, the scherzo's shortened reprise ends in well-nigh unplayable cascades; after a pause, the fast fourth section [7] opens with an "orchestral" fugal exposition with {a}, extended, as its subject, then launches into a triumphant finale recalling the fugue subject and hammering home the work's opening rhythm.

Only a brilliant visionary could have dreamed up – and assembled the bones of – this musical super-organism; only an artist of supreme genius could have fleshed it out with music of such power and beauty. Schubert was of course both.

From the first chord Schubert's *Piano Sonata in G major* of 1826 (his only one in that key) is special in the way that Beethoven's only piano concerto in the same key is special - mellow in character and luminous in sonority. Formerly known falsely as *Fantasy-Sonata*, it is in four conventionally arranged movements, but any severity associated with the sonata genre is quite absent. The first movement [8], tellingly marked *cantabile* and unusually in 12/8 time, is generous and leisurely with a waltz-like second subject group. The surprisingly emphatic development serves only to highlight the prevailingly relaxed mood and the coda provides an exquisite resolution. Oddly this movement shares some material with the finale

of the *A major Sonata* which opens the programme on this recording.

The serene main theme of the second movement [9] yields to an enthusiastic episode, then is restated, much embellished. After the episode has returned in fresh tonalities the main theme, enriched with a heart-stopping modulation, forms a peaceful close. Schubert was among the first to write waltzes in minor keys, and the third movement [10] - although marked *Menuetto* - is one, with pathos and rustic charm, and set off by an ineffably tender trio section. The multifarious twists and turns of the folk-like finale [11] are a continual source of delight, best listened to in an "unprepared" state!

Notes © Anthony Goldstone 2001

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1999 (set 1) and 2000 (set 2)

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ANTHONY GOLDSTONE

Described by The New York Times as “a man whose nature was designed with pianos in mind”, Anthony Goldstone is recognised as one of Britain’s most respected pianists, a judgment confirmed when the BBC issued his performance of Beethoven’s *Fourth Piano Concerto* at the London Promenade Concerts in their CD series “Radio Classics”. Born in Liverpool, he studied at the Royal Manchester College of Music (which later honored him with a Fellowship) where his piano professor was Derrick Wyndham, and later in London with Maria Curcio, one of Schnabel’s greatest pupils - which incidentally made him a sixth-generation pupil of Beethoven.

Inspired by this wonderful heritage Goldstone always regarded the classics and romantics as being at the heart of his repertoire; this is illustrated by two specific CD projects: a series of rare Russian Romantics - Rebikov, Lyapunov, Arensky and Glière - and a series of six CDs devoted to the major solo works of Schubert:

“Goldstone is a native speaker of Schubert in the highest degree. This is perhaps the greatest version of the work [Sonata, D. 959] I have ever encountered, either live or on disc.” - *Fanfare*, USA.

His series of solo CDs for Divine Art ranged from Beethoven and Mozart to 20th century British composers (all with new completions and rarities) to transcriptions from ballet and opera, all of which have received the highest accolades.

International prizes in Munich and Vienna and a Gulbenkian Fellowship launched him on a busy schedule of recitals and concertos, of which he played eighty. His travels took in concert appearances in Europe, North and South America, Asia, Africa and Australasia, prestigious festival invitations and very many broadcasts. Numerous London appearances included important solo recitals and Promenade Concerts, notably the Last Night, after which Benjamin Britten wrote to him, “Thank you most sincerely for that brilliant

performance of my *Diversions*. I wish I could have been at the Royal Albert Hall to join in the cheers.”

Complementary to the mainstream repertoire was his avid interest in exploring intriguing musical byways - not only unknown works by acknowledged masters, leading to première recordings and performances of Elgar (the *Enigma Variations* in Elgar’s own piano solo version on Elgar’s own piano), Parry (the *Sonatas* etc. on Parry’s own piano), Sibelius, Bruch, Franck, Mendelssohn, Holst etc., but also unjustly neglected nineteenth-century composers such as Goetz, Herzogenberg, Alkan and Moscheles.

He founded the ensemble The Musicians of the Royal Exchange of which he was pianist/director and which has performed works by over a hundred composers. Finally, he and his wife Caroline Clemmow comprised a prominent piano duo whose recordings, broadcasts and concert appearances receive wide praise from public and critics alike. Their acclaimed seven-CD cycle of the complete original four-hand

music of Schubert, including works not found in the collected edition, (Divine Art DDA 21701) was a world first. When appropriate Goldstone introduced the music he played informally and informatively, considering the rapport he created with his audience to be of major importance.

Following a recital containing Schubert’s *Wanderer-Fantasie* and Beethoven’s *Diabelli-Variations*, *Die Presse* of Vienna wrote of him, “A musician with a sense of the grand manner, long lines unfolding without interruption, strongly hewn rhythms, warmth, a touch displaying the qualities of colour and cantabile, in addition to possessing a sure technique and real strength. An even greater impression was created by his astonishingly profound spiritual penetration.”

Goldstone’s completions and realisations of several works by Schubert and Mozart have been greeted with enthusiasm by musicologists and listeners alike. Sadly, while working with Divine Art on his last solo project, Anthony Goldstone passed away on 2 January, 2017 after a difficult illness.

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Anthony Goldstone

This recording is dedicated to the memory of Gerda Munz, to whom music, particularly the piano music of Schubert, was a source of pleasure and inspiration throughout her whole life.

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