

SCHUBERT

Piano Works for Four Hands

Lebensstürme, D. 947

2 Marches caractéristiques, D. 886

Divertissement à la hongroise, D. 818

Jenő Jandó • Ilona Prunyi



Franz Schubert (1797 - 1828)

Allegro in A minor, Lebensstürme, D. 947

Deux marches caractéristiques, D. 886

Divertissement à la hongroise, D. 818

Franz Schubert was born in Vienna in 1797, the son of a schoolmaster, whose path it seemed he might follow as an assistant teacher. He enjoyed a sound musical training as a cathedral chorister and when his voice broke in 1812 rejected the offered scholarship and further general education in favour of a career that allowed him more time for music. In 1814 he embarked on a course as a primary school teacher and the following year joined his father, although he showed no great aptitude for his new profession, which he was to practise intermittently, as need arose, for a year or so. The greater part of the remaining years of his life were devoted to music and to the company of his friends. By the time of his death in 1828 some of his music had been published and there was increasing interest in his compositions. Nevertheless he never held any official position in the musical establishment in Vienna and much of what he wrote was intended for the entertainment of his own circle, which included both professional and amateur musicians, poets and painters.

It was natural, in the circumstances of the time and of his own social circle, that Schubert should write a considerable amount of music for piano duet. His first music in this form was written in 1810, when he was still at school and the last, including *Lebensstürme*, in 1828, the year of his death, itself the result of a debilitating and then incurable venereal infection contracted some six years earlier. The title *Lebensstürme* was the later invention of the publisher Diabelli, who issued the work in 1840. It is far more than the characteristic piece advertised, a sonata movement of symphonic dimensions, for which it has been suggested the Grand Rondo of the same year might have been intended as a finale. The sonata movement was completed in May 1828.

The Two Characteristic Marches were probably written in 1826. The circumstances of their composition are not known, but they come at a period of Schubert's life when he was writing a number of such works, some more obviously intended for publication, such as the piano duet marches to mark the death of Tsar Alexander I and the coronation of his successor Nicholas I, written about the same period. The two C major Marches are vigorous and popular additions to piano duet repertoire.

In 1818 Schubert had the good fortune to find summer employment as music teacher to the two young daughters of Count Johann Karl Esterházy at his country house at Zseliz in Hungary. He left Vienna in June and stayed at Zseliz until November, when he was glad to return to his friends in the city. Life at Zseliz offered security, the companionship of a pretty maidservant, pleasing young pupils and the chance to compose without undue disturbance. Six years later, in 1824, he resumed his summer employment at Zseliz, this time on more favourable conditions, but now Schubert was sobered by his illness and by recurrent thoughts of death, feelings alleviated to some extent by the presence of the younger of his two pupils, the eighteen-year-old Countess Karoline. As on his earlier visit, he wrote piano duets for the young countesses, but the *Divertissement à la hongroise*, written after his return to Vienna, was not among these compositions. At its heart, however, is a Hungarian melody written down during his stay, and this suggested the extended work, in three movements, that proved extremely popular after its publication in 1826. The middle movement is a march in C minor, with a contrasting trio, while the outer movements, in what might be considered characteristic Hungarian style, include the typical stressed rhythms and melancholy turns of melody associated with the genre. Schubert dedicated the *Divertissement* to Katharina von Lászny, a singer married to a Hungarian. It was through her that Schubert in 1827 met Hummel and his pupil Ferdinand Hiller. The *Divertissement* is an attractive work and hardly deserved the criticism of Wagner, who found it trivial, and of Mendelssohn, who found its rhythms monotonous. Liszt thought well enough of the work to arrange it for one player and to orchestrate the march.

Jenő Jandó

Jenő Jandó was born at Pécs, in south Hungary, in 1952. He started to learn the piano when he was seven and later studied at the Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music under Katalin Nemes and Pál Kadosa, becoming assistant to the latter on his graduation in 1974. Jandó has won a number of piano competitions in Hungary and abroad, including first prize in the 1973 Hungarian Piano Concours and a first prize in the chamber music category at the Sydney International Piano Competition in 1977. In addition to his many appearances in Hungary, he has played widely abroad in Eastern and Western Europe, in Canada and in Japan. He has recorded all Mozart's piano concertos and sonatas for Naxos. Other recordings for the Naxos label include the concertos of Grieg and Schumann as well as Rachmaninov's second concerto and Paganini Rhapsody and the complete piano sonatas of Beethoven.

Ilona Prunyi

Ilona Prunyi was born in Debrecen in 1941 and studied at the Liszt Academy in Budapest, distinguishing herself in the Liszt-Bartók Competition while still a student. Her career as a concert performer was interrupted by a period of ill health, and for personal reasons she spent ten years as a teacher at the Academy before making her début in 1974. Since then she has appeared frequently in solo and chamber music recitals and as a soloist with the principal Hungarian orchestras.

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STEREO

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Playing
Time :
55'12"

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Lebensstürme, D. 947

1 Allegro ma non troppo (11:39)

Deux marches caractéristiques, D. 886

2 Allegro vivace (6:54)

3 Allegro vivace (7:23)

Divertissement à la hongroise, D. 818

4 Andante (11:19)

5 Marsch: Andante con moto (3:44)

6 Allegro (13:54)

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