



SOMMCD 0132



## FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

Sonata in A major D664

'Wanderer' Fantasy in C major D760

Sonata in B flat major D960

GEORGE EMMANUEL LAZARIDIS piano

<b>Sonata in A major D664</b>	(15:55)	<b>Sonata in B flat major D960</b>	(42:22)
1. Allegro moderato	5:40	1. Molto moderato	20:04
2. Andantino	4:37	2. Andante sostenuto	10:15
3. Allegro	5:38	3. Allegro vivace con delicatezza	3:39
		4. Allegro ma non troppo	8:24
<b>'Wanderer' Fantasy in C major D760 (20:35)</b>		<b>Total timing</b>	<b>79:20</b>
1. Allegro con fuoco ma non troppo	5:48		
2. Adagio	6:31		
3. Presto	4:48		
4. Allegro	3:26		

Recording location: St. Mary's Church, Walthamstow, 24 & 25 October 2011

Recording producer: Siva Oke

Recording engineer: Ben Connellan

Photographs and cover images: © Sakis Kolalas

Design and typesetting: Andrew Giles

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# FRANZ SCHUBERT

Sonata in A major D664

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'Wanderer' Fantasy D760

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piano



# Franz Schubert

## Sonatas in A major D664 and B flat major D960 'Wanderer' Fantasy

A purely musicological approach to Schubert's piano music would perhaps begin with the statement that his sonatas mark the end of the first great era of the genre, the culmination of the line that began with the Sonatas of Haydn and was continued by those of Mozart and Beethoven, with significant contributions from Clementi, Dussek and Weber.

Whilst undoubtedly true, as a statement, it does not address the circumstances in which Schubert's works were written. His greatest piano music was composed in the last ten years of his all-too-short life, the period 1818-1828, which also saw his equal contributions to symphony, string quartet and to song. But with regard to Schubert's piano music there is a general truth in the claim that his approach to large-scale sonata structure was what might be termed traditional – that is to say, almost exclusively four-movement works (although there are many important exceptions) – in significant contrast to the later works of Beethoven, for example, such as his last five piano sonatas and quartets.

We should not forget that Schubert was only 31 when he died: had he enjoyed a life-span such as Beethoven's 56 years, or Haydn's 77, there can be little doubt that his later works would have evolved into quite different structures, the more so had he lived to hear the music of Berlioz and Liszt – or Wagner's

*Tannhäuser, Lohengrin* or *Die Walküre* – which he could well have done, had he lived as long as Beethoven.

It may be difficult for us today to imagine life in Biedermeier Vienna in the 1820s: the city was, of course, much smaller than it soon became, and was dominated musically by the presence of Beethoven, who had lived there for more than thirty years. Schubert was in awe of the older genius, as was every other musician in Europe, and took to ensuring he frequented the same coffee- and eating-houses, particularly the *Gasthaus*, that Beethoven patronised, on occasion supping at a table just a few feet from the master. Beethoven's profound deafness was common knowledge and, after 1818, had become total: they could never have conversed normally, and, in such circumstances, Beethoven's social graces were confined to eating, more often than not with long-standing friends, before returning to his rooms to continue with his music.

Schubert and Beethoven did eventually meet, however, if only at the very end of Beethoven's life, when, as Schindler reported: '...it came that I put before Beethoven a collection of Schubert's songs, about sixty in all [!], many of them still in manuscript. This was not done merely with a view of providing him with an agreeable occupation, but also to give him a proper idea of Schubert.' The stratagem appeared to work, for Schindler continued: '...for several days he could not tear himself away from them...he could not praise their subject and Schubert's original treatment of them too much.' And as Beethoven lay mortally ill, Schubert and Anselm Hüttenbrenner visited the composer. When he was asked whom he wished to see first, Beethoven is reported to have replied 'Schubert may come first. You, Anselm, have my mind, but Franz has my soul.'

Although some have cast doubt on parts of Schindler's account of the meetings with Beethoven, Schubert is known to have sought the older man's music whenever he could. The effect the works of Beethoven had upon Schubert was profound, not least in Beethoven's new approach to key-relationships – especially in keys a third apart – and to evolving structures. If these matters were important to the younger man, the essential point is not that Beethoven directly 'influenced' Schubert to any great degree (other than in the general sense of being proof of what a composer, freed from the constraints of 'position' or obligation, could achieve), but that the older man's music reinforced Schubert's own natural expression. Beethoven's admiration of Schubert's songs would have been a considerable encouragement for the twenty-something composer. But if Beethoven's manner of composing was one of continuous refinement, or workings-out as shown by his numerous musical sketchbooks, Schubert's expression appears less hard-won, a genuine sense of natural flow that seems to have been part of a continuous creative stream. Nor is this confined to Schubert's melodic genius: on considering the vast amount of work he left, it would equally appear that there was never a time in his life when he was not thinking about music, and how best to express his unstoppable inspiration in structural terms.

There may always be some dispute as to exactly how many works comprise Schubert's entire piano sonata output, for several of what seems to be a grand total of 23 sonatas or sonata-style works were left unfinished by the composer. Of the Sonatas that exist either complete or in a virtually performable state, any attempt at 'numbering' them would appear to be doomed to failure, and so we have to consider them in their chronological order of Deutsch (D) numbers and their year of composition, which ranged from 1815 until the year of his death, 1828.

The A major Sonata D664 (sometimes called the 'little A major' to distinguish it from the much bigger Sonata in the same key, written in 1828), was composed in the summer of 1819. It was dedicated to Josephine von Koller, of Steyr in Upper Austria. She was, by all accounts, both pretty and a talented pianist, a combination of qualities that must have attracted Schubert during what was a particularly idyllic period in his life. His 'Trout' Quintet (in the same key of A major) was composed in Steyr around the same time, also whilst on holiday.

Knowing a little of the background which led to its composition, it may not be stretching the point to suggest the Sonata's unforced lyricism and untroubled, almost carefree, nature may well have been additionally inspired by the town and environs of Steyr, with its two rivers that meet near the central St Michael's church. To the south are hills stretching in the distance to the Alps, and to the north 'the hills roll downward' as the town guide has it. A charming, unspoilt city that, two centuries ago, must have appeared idyllic. If we may be drawing conclusions where none should be sought, we do know that Schubert was occasionally directly inspired by his surroundings and by the circumstances in which he found himself. Aware of that, it is difficult not to sense such connexions in the Sonata's three sunny and lyrical movements, each in a major key.

A little over three years after composing the 'little A major' Sonata, in November 1822 Schubert composed the work known as the 'Wanderer' Fantasy, in C major D760. It is so called because – like the 'Trout' Quintet – it would appear to have been based on the opening phrase of his song *Der Wanderer*, composed in 1816. However it came about, the Fantasy is Schubert's first truly great solo piano composition and – curiously – apart from the single

Variation on a Waltz by Diabelli of 1821, is the first piano work he completed after D664. Nothing could be more different than that Sonata and the Fantasy, the latter being a four-movement, large-scale composition in which (as with Beethoven's later works) the four movements are continuous, joined together. This is, in itself, a remarkable compositional achievement, as a glance at the tempo indications for the movements reveals: *Allegro con fuoco ma non troppo*, *Adagio*, *Presto*, *Allegro* – each beginning with, or sparked off by, a variant of the song's opening.

The result is another miracle of organic compositional mastery, for Schubert not only uses variation technique to permit the change from one movement to another, and does so in a completely natural and apparently seamless manner, but also combines that variation technique with a naturally evolving sonata structure (melodically and harmonically juxtaposed) ending with a largely contrapuntal finale that reveals the composer's total mastery in a single, utterly original, work.

By September 1828, Beethoven had been dead a year and a half, and Schubert may well have resigned himself to his own imminent fate, for death was to claim him within less than two months. In 1788, during a period of six weeks, Mozart composed his last three symphonies, each one a masterpiece, and each as different as could be from the others. Forty years later, in the last months of his life – and in less than six weeks – Schubert wrote his last three piano sonatas, all three as much masterpieces as were Mozart's final three symphonies. This Sonata in B flat major is the last one of all, as Robert Simpson claimed, 'a measured and compassionate utterance of complete and profoundly sublime beneficence.'

The first movement is one of Schubert's most magnificently sustained compositions, weighty yet subtle, as well as being surpassingly beautiful in sound, yet founded upon the finest architectural strengths. The slow movement is a beautiful *barcarolle* in C sharp minor, with a superbly masculine middle section that seems to fill the whole world with its courageous melody. The Scherzo is the most beautiful that Schubert ever wrote, so full of limpid freshness, and the finale unites pathos and humour with an all-pervading melodic grace that comes from the same mood that informed the first movement. This masterpiece has the capacity to renew and refresh the listener with every hearing, a testament to human creativity as valid today as when the composer vouchsafed it to us – one of the greatest and most serene piano works since Beethoven.

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## George Emmanuel Lazaridis

Over the past twenty years, George Emmanuel Lazaridis' many appearances have received great critical acclaim from audiences and critics alike, recognizing him as one of the finest pianists of his generation. His recordings have been rapturously received by the press – “special enough to be beyond comparison” (*BBC Music Magazine*, Adrian Jack), and “of such drama, power and concentration, that they hold their own even if you stop to consider celebrated recordings of Horowitz, Argerich, Brendel and Zimmerman” (*Gramophone Magazine*, Bryce Morrison). His recording of the Liszt Sonata in B minor and Paganini Caprices for *Linn Records* were recently selected among the top 50 best releases of the decade by *The Pianist* magazine and his release of Schumann's *Papillons* on SOMM has been ranked amongst the top five best performances on record, alongside keyboard giants such as Sviatoslav Richter and Claudio Arrau.

Mentored by Yonty Solomon at the Royal Collage of Music in London, he has also worked with Alfred Brendel, Ruth Nye, Domna Evnouhidou, Paul Badura Skoda, Noretta Conci Leech and Douglas Finch. From the age of eleven he has received a plethora of prizes, honorary awards and scholarships such as the 'Jeunes Solistes D' Europe', Steinway & Sons, Scholarships from the Hattori, Onasis and Levendis Foundations, the RCM 'Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother' award and the Chappell Medal 2000, a TCM Fellowship, medals from the prestigious Academy of Athens, the Worshipful Company of Musicians and many more.



Born in Greece in 1978, Lazaridis enjoys a flourishing international career that has taken him from the US and Mexico to Europe, Russia, Egypt and the Middle East. He has performed in major venues such as the Royal Albert Hall, Barbican, Carnegie Hall, Concertgebouw, the St Petersburg Philharmonia Hall, Palais des Beaux Arts, Baden Baden Festspielhaus, Cologne's Philharmonie, Stockholm's Konserthus, Cité de la Musique in Paris, Vienna's Konzerthaus and Musikverein, the Athens Megaron, Birmingham's Symphony Hall and the Palace of the Arts in Budapest among others.

He has performed with leading orchestras such as the St Petersburg Philharmonic, Hamburg Philharmonic, the Royal Philharmonic, the Strasbourg Philharmonic, the Warsaw Symphony, the Munich Symphony, the Wiener Kammer Orchester, The RTBF Symphony, the Debrece Symphony, the London Festival Orchestra, the English Symphony, the Qatar Philharmonic, all the Greek Symphony Orchestras, the Athens Camerata and many more, under the direction of Sir Neville Marriner, Ingo Metzmacher, Yuri Temirkanov, Yoel Levi, Theodor Guschlbauer, Michel Tabachnik, Maxim Schostakovic, Alexander Myrat and others.

He has also collaborated with renowned ensembles and artists such as the Medici Quartet, the Ysaye Quartet, the Vienna Octet, the BT Scottish Ensemble, the Hellenic Quartet, Leonidas Kavakos, Huseyin Sermet, Dimitri Sgouros, Michael Tilson Thomas, Yannis Vakarelis and Cyprien Katsaris, *et al.* Lazaridis has also performed in many International Festivals around the world, including Harrogate, Athens, Montpellier, Istanbul, Patras, Trento, Nafplion, Demetria, Norfolk & Norwich, Hampstead & Highgate, the Chopin International Festival, the Springboard Trust Festival and the Monterrei International Festival.

Recent international tours have included the 'Rising Stars' concert series in Europe and New York, a tour with the Medici Quartet in Greece and the UK, sequel performances with the St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra performing Brahms's Concerto No. 1 under the direction of Nikolai Alexeev, as well as a concert tour in the USA including sequel performances at New York's Carnegie Hall, Merkin Hall and Princeton's Richardson Auditorium.

Lazaridis has also built a wide reputation as a talented composer and teacher. He has given Masterclasses in piano performance, body language and the psychology of live interpretation at the Trinity College of Music, the Birmingham City University, the Manhattan School of Music, Kutztown University, the Megaron Halls and at numerous Conservatoires in Greece and the UK.

Since September 2010, he holds the post of Artistic Director at the Thessaloniki Concert Halls Organization 'The Megaron', Greece ([www.tch.gr](http://www.tch.gr)).



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