

GOING BEHIND THE NOTES: EXPLORING THE GREAT PIANO COMPOSERS
AN 8-PART LECTURE CONCERT SERIES

SCHUBERT: POET OF THE SOUL

Dr. George Fee
www.dersnah-fee.com

Schubert The Man-Vienna in His Time (1797-1828)

Performance: 6 Laendler, German Dances, and Waltzes

Romantic Thought
Schubert's Music
Thoughts on Playing Schubert's Music
Examining the Moments Musicaux

Performance: Moments Musicaux, D. 780, Op. 94
Moderato--Andantino--Allegro moderato--Moderato--Allegro vivace--Allegretto

Performance: Hungarian Melody, D. 817

10 Minute Break

Observations on the Sonata in B-Flat Major, D. 960, Op. Posth.

Performance: Sonata in B-Flat Major, D. 960, Op. Posth.
Molto moderato
Andante sostenuto
Scherzo: Allegro vivace con delicatezza
Allegro ma non troppo

SCHUBERT'S MOST SIGNIFICANT PIANO MUSIC

6 Moments Musicaux, D. 780	4 Impromptus, D. 899
4 Impromptus, D. 935	"Wanderer" Fantasy in C Major, D. 760
3 Klavierstücke, D. 946	Fantasy in F Minor for 4 hands, D. 940
Sonatas, especially A Major, D. 664; A Minor, D. 784; A Minor, D. 845; D Major, D. 850; G Major, D. 894; C Minor, D. 958; A Major, D. 959; B-flat Major, D. 960	

ESSENTIAL SCHUBERT LISTENING AND STUDY

Lieder (625 of them)	Piano Trios in B-flat Major, D. 898; E-flat Major, D. 929
Piano Quintet in A Major, D. 667 ("Trout")	String Quintet in C Major, D. 956
String Quartets, especially A Minor, D. 804; D Minor, D. 810; G Major, D. 887	Symphonies, especially No. 5 in B-flat Major, D. 485; No. 8 in B Minor, D. 759; No. 9 in C Major, D. 944

RECOMMENDED SCHUBERT INTERPRETERS

Current: Malcolm Bilson (fortepiano), Imogen Cooper, Simone Dinnerstein, Radu Lupu, Menahem Pressler, Andras Schiff, Grigory Sokolov, Christian Zacharias. Interpreters of the past: Alfred Brendel, Wilhelm Kempff, Artur Schnabel (largely responsible for putting Schubert's sonatas into the repertoire)

RECOMMENDED SCHUBERT READING

Black, Leo. Franz Schubert: Music and Belief. The Boydell Press, 2003.
 Bostridge, Ian. Schubert's Winter Journey: Anatomy of an Obsession. Knopf, 2015.
 Brendel, Alfred. On Music. A Capella Books, 2001.
 Brown, Maurice J. E. Schubert: A Critical Biography. Da Capo Press, 1977.
 Erickson, Raymond, ed. Schubert's Vienna. Yale University Press, 1997.
 Marek, George R. Schubert. Viking, 1985.
 Osborne, Charles. Schubert and His Vienna. Alfred A. Knopf, 1985.

SONATA IN B-FLAT MAJOR, D. 960—FIRST MOVEMENT

Expo:	Principal Key Area			Transition		Second Key Area			Closing Area			
	1	20	36	48	74	80						99
	Bb	Gb	Bb	f#m	V/F	F						F
Dev:	118	131	137	141	146	149	159	163	173	193	199	203
	c#	A	g#m	B	bbm	Db	E	C	dm	Bb	dm	V7/Bb
Recap:	Principal Key Area			Transition		Second Key Area			Closing Area		Coda	End
	216	235	255	267	293	299			318		336	357
	Bb	Gb/f#/A	Bb	bm	V/Bb	Bb			Bb		Bb	

SCHUBERT: POET OF THE SOUL

Schubert The Man- Vienna in His Time (1797-1828)

A frequent image of Schubert is one of his being a diminutive, corpulent, agreeable, seraphic fellow who wrote primarily charming music. Such an image is horribly wrong. Yes, he was short--barely 5'1". But he was not overweight or even chubby. He was not timid, shy, naïve, or always agreeable.

He was fiercely energetic, with enormous drive and determination. His personality was forceful, vigorous, animated, and intense. He was a serious person and did not talk a great amount. But, paraphrasing the E.F. Hutton television commercial from the 1970's, "When Schubert talked, people listened." What he believed, he felt deeply. He did not doubt his ability in the least, and knew he had something special.

Schubert had grey eyes and was extremely nearsighted. He reeked of tobacco due to his perpetual pipe smoking. He was an avid walker. People liked him, and frequently called him "Franzl."

Some biographers' attempts to make something romantic out of Schubert's teenaged acquaintance with a neighborhood girl, or when he taught a Hungarian noblewoman during a summer in Hungary, are totally baseless. There are no known romantic relationships with any women in Schubert's life. A few scholars have hypothesized, rather convincingly, about Schubert's private life. But the search for facts has left everyone in the dark for the past two centuries.

I have spent much time in these presentations exploring the personalities and lives of many of the composers, because I believe that doing so is essential to the understanding and interpretation of the music of those composers. In the case of Schubert, I have just shared above what I believe is essential to know about Schubert's personality. I am today going to let Schubert's music do most of the talking, and most of my talking will be specifically about his music.

Schubert's life was very brief. He lived simply, and he was not at all a celebrity. There exist today only 71 letters and a very tiny fragmentary diary. What is important to know is his society and his philosophical world.

Schubert was the only one of the four great so-called "Viennese classicists" who was born in Vienna. In the year of his birth, 1797, Mozart was dead, Haydn was retired, and Beethoven was 27 years old. One can still visit the apartment where Schubert was born in the kitchen, and which had only one other room. He was the 12th of 14 children, only five of which survived infancy. His father was a schoolteacher.

Blessed with a beautiful voice, Franz became one of the Vienna choirboys in his youth -the choir which had performed at the Imperial Chapel since 1498, and which now tours the world. Many of us heard them in Midland in 2017.

Even as a child, Schubert was an avid string player, and loved playing chamber music. He could play the piano, but in his whole life he never really practiced it. He never owned a piano, partly because

as an adult he never had a residence of his own. Since he never had a job other than a few semesters of teaching at his father's school when a teenager, he basically mooched off his friends.

His friends were really his only life other than music. He was part of a circle of mostly young, intellectual, artistic, liberal, mostly male bohemians. They hung out in their homes and coffee houses, endlessly discussing literature, philosophy, and politics, while drinking wine and smoking their pipes.

On the surface, post- Napoleonic Vienna appeared to be a joyous place. A city of 250,000 people, it swelled enormously just before and during the Congress of Vienna. The Congress of Vienna was an international gathering from 1814 to 1815, set up to deal with issues which had arisen during the Napoleonic wars, and to redraw many national boundaries. While some serious business was occasionally transacted, most of the time the entire city partied, along with the European rulers and their entourages, which, combined, totaled well over 10,000 people. As Talleyrand wrote, "The Czar of Russia loves, the King of Denmark drinks, the King of Württemberg eats, the King of Prussia thinks, the King of Bavaria talks, and the Emperor of Austria pays."

Gemütlichkeit , which translated, means "good spirit," became the trademark of Vienna. Expressing charm and cultivating the enjoyment of life became everyone's goal. The more than 100 coffeehouses boomed, the many dozens of theaters were in full swing, and Vienna's infamous gambling and prostitution thrived. Everyone danced, with even the less financially well-off Viennese taking up dancing.

We will now hear six of the 400 plus dance pieces which Schubert composed for the piano. The Laendler was an Austrian folk dance. (Some of you may recall that in the Sound of Music movie, Maria and Captain von Trapp dance a Laendler.) The Laendler, along with a dance called the German Dance, evolved into the Waltz, whose popularity in Vienna soared in the 1780's. This was partially because couples could dance closer together in the Waltz than in other dances. Schubert would frequently improvise such dances when he socialized with his friends in their homes. Even in these short dances, he infused the genre with an endless variety of human emotions. As I perform these short dances, you can envision yourselves listening in a home in Vienna in the 1820's.

PERFORM: Six Laendler, German Dances and Waltzes

Romantic Thought

I suppose Vienna in the 1820's was somewhat like America in the roaring 1920's--on the surface, always partying. However, serious, thoughtful people, in both eras, were troubled, and saw the superficial frivolity as ominous. In Vienna, there was much melancholy and pessimism beneath the "Gemütlichkeit." These dark feelings were intensified by the fact that after the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, European rulers were suspicious of anything which could be perceived as a threat to their governments. This included any liberal thought, and residents acting as spies for the government were omnipresent in Vienna. Members of Schubert's circle were deeply upset by the repressive police state and the strict censorship in Vienna, and a few of them were even temporarily imprisoned for expressing ideas which were a far cry from revolutionary.

Schubert and his circle keenly felt pessimism and resignation, and they and many other sensitive, inquisitive people psychologically withdrew from the physical world, and sought refuge in the higher things in life.

They embraced the philosophical, literary, and artistic thought which had begun in England, and then spread to Germany. It was not called "Romanticism" at the time but was later given that label. It is a term which covers many disparate, nebulous ideas. What is relevant to Schubert, who was influenced by it, and in turn, himself influenced the movement, is that the poets, novelists, philosophers, and painters were seeking to transcend the increasingly industrialized, urban, material world.

Their goal was to heal their fragmented selves, to find their true selves, and to find a spiritual home. They yearned to go beyond the known and sought the Infinite and the Transcendent. They saw themselves as Wanderers on a spiritual journey, an inner quest. They were disillusioned by governments, and felt they were lonely outcasts, alienated from a world devoid of feeling. They sought a Paradise which they believed had once existed and then been lost. "Sehnsucht," an impossible word to adequately translate, but sometimes defined as "an unquenchable yearning for what cannot be," was a common thread. They retreated inwards to seek peace.

Some found what they sought in established religion. Many more devoted themselves to Nature and elevated Nature to a sacred status. They viewed the arts as the salvation for society, as well as the vehicle to bring consolation to the individual. Nearly all of them believed music to be the best path to a higher world.

Like all human beings, they sought to give and to receive love, and suffered greatly when their relationships did not work out. Above all, they spoke, wrote, painted, and composed from their hearts.

Schubert's Music

In his short life of 31 years, Schubert wrote an extraordinarily large amount of music and in so many genres. His output includes well over 1,000 compositions: nine symphonies, six significant Masses, 15 string quartets, other chamber music, two extraordinary piano trios, nearly two dozen piano sonatas, many shorter piano pieces, and a large number of works for two pianists at one piano. Many people are not aware that he wrote 17 operas--a form in which he was not comfortable, but in which he composed more pages of music than in any other genre. Most significantly, he composed 625 songs. A song in German is called a Lied. Therefore, Schubert wrote 625 Lieder.

With Schubert not being widely known, very little of his music was published in his lifetime. The "D." numbers appearing after Schubert's compositions references Otto Erich Deutsch, who in 1951 published the first comprehensive catalogue listing all of Schubert's works in chronological order.

How did Schubert produce so much music in such a brief life? His answer to that question was that when he finished one work, he started another. If Haydn had died at the same age as Schubert, he would only be a footnote in the history books. If JS Bach had died at the same age as Schubert, we would have primarily one Brandenburg Concerto and some organ and harpsichord Toccatas.

Schubert's production indeed seems miraculous. He was self-taught as a composer. He did not even compose with a piano nearby, saying that using a piano would interrupt the progress of his thoughts. At the young age of 18, he composed arguably the most powerful Lied ever written, Erlkönig (The Erlking). He wrote it in only one hour and then suggested that he and his friends go locate a piano and try it out.

Another extraordinary fact is the high percentage of Schubert's works which are unarguably true masterpieces. Clearly, every Schubert work is not a masterpiece. But the large number which are, are among the greatest music ever written by anyone. Some of these are listed in your program.

The key to the understanding of all of Schubert's music lies in his songs. In output and in attitude he was primarily a vocal composer. Song was his inspiration and he made instruments consistently sing to a degree in which they never had before.

Schubert was not only a melodist. He created increased color and emotional intensity as a result of his harmonies and modulations, which astound with their unexpected and almost miraculous turns. He has been called the "master of the unexpected," and his harmonies and modulations are responsible for much of the mystery and magic of his music. For those unfamiliar with the term, a modulation is a change of key.

I will show some examples at the piano shortly.

Schubert's harmonies support the melody, guide the melody, and work as a team with the melody. The listener senses the emotion of both the melody and the harmony. Schubert's rhythms are also powerful components of his music, whether they are dancing, peaceful, or ominous. Therefore, Schubert used the basic musical elements of melody, harmony, and rhythm to create a unique, original, personal synthesis.

This miraculous synthesis seems to reflect everything in human existence and covers the entire gamut of emotions.

Franz Liszt said that Schubert was "the most poetical composer who ever lived". . . . But Schubert's music also has tremendous drama and intensity.

His music is full of graciousness, charm and playfulness and evidences the "Gemütlichkeit" of post-Napoleonic Vienna.....But it also can be profoundly serious, and full of despair.

It can appear simple..... But beneath the apparent simplicity can lie great profundity.

It can whisper – so calmly, tenderly, and intimately. But it can be explosive.

His pieces can be very shortBut they can be very expansive and spacious- in length and scope.

His music can transport us to heavenly realms..... But it reflects delight in everyday, earthly joys.

His music can console us, comfort us, and suggest a blissful state..... But it can also frighten us.

It can make us cry tears of joy..... But it can create tears of sorrow..... It can also bring us tears which are a mixture of joy and sorrow, where we “smile through our tears and cry through our joy”Or it sometimes can penetrate to a region too deep for tears.

Love and pain are much of what Schubert’s music is about. He himself said: “Whenever I attempted to sing of love, it turned to pain, and when I sing of pain, it turns to love.”

Schubert’s music has an ambiguity, not unlike Mozart’s, and indeed there are many similarities between Mozart’s and Schubert’s music. Even when both of their music gives an impression of being rather calm and at times playful on the surface, one senses an uneasiness lurking beneath. Schubert is reputed to have once said to a friend, “Do you know any jolly music .I don’t!”

If this is an accurate quotation, it is hugely important in understanding Schubert. The view of Schubert from the mid-19th century until the 1960’s was the fictitious one I referred to in my opening. In the 1970’s scholars began to react, and perhaps even over-react, to this image, and began emphasizing that Schubert was a deeply flawed human being and was full of darkness and constant despair.

Certainly, Schubert could express despair with an intensity which perhaps no composer exceeded before or after him. If you doubt this statement, go listen to the entire cycle of 24 songs that make up “Winterreise” (Winter Journey). After that 70 plus minutes you won’t disagree. If that cycle of songs, or some of Schubert’s songs set to the poetry of Heine in the Schwanengesang, don’t shatter you, nothing in music is likely to.

Read the poetry which Schubert read and set to music. Much of it is full of despair. Ponder the poetry of Winterreise -the protagonist doesn’t end in despair- he starts from the point of despair, and then probes the meaning of existence. Nature in these poems is not consoling -it is hostile, and the snow is symbolic of a desolate inner life.

Schubert called Winterreise “a cycle of terrifying songs,” and was frustrated that after he had first performed them for several friends, all the friends unanimously did not like ANY of the 24 songs , except for one friend who liked only one of the 24 songs! Schubert shortly after wrote: “My creations come about through my sense for music and my sufferings, and those which suffering alone has produced, seem to please people least.” I suppose this is illustrated by the famous words of Ella Wilcox: “Laugh, and the world laughs with you. Weep and you weep alone.”

Loneliness, alienation, and isolation are what apparently lay at Schubert’s core. He wrote: “No one understands another’s pains, nor another’s joys. People think they come together. Yet they only draw close. Alas for him who realizes this.”

Yet, Schubert’s music so often contains what can only be described as “radiance” and spiritual uplift.

So therefore, one can see in both Schubert and Mozart's music a continuous conflict between the forces of darkness versus the forces of light, between the negative and the positive, between death and life.

Schubert's music, like Mozart's, frequently sings with a grace and transparency, as opposed to Beethoven's terse, driving, motivic constructions. But in Schubert's late symphonies, chamber music, and piano sonatas, he summons the same titanic forces as does Beethoven. However, Beethoven seems to struggle every step of the way in his music. He is the active fighter, the superhuman, heaven-storming Titan, wrestling with the Gods, striving to overcome adversity. Schubert's music consistently seems almost more personal and more vulnerable. We can more easily feel that he is us.

Schubert's earlier music, until he was about 26 years old, is considerably lighter and cheerier than is his music written after 1823. A clearly noticeable change occurred in his life and in his music at that time. He had contracted syphilis and knew that his life would be forever altered. This is when the ominous, darker elements enter his music, never to be suppressed. (He did not actually die from syphilis, but rather from an epidemic of typhus. However, the syphilis had weakened his body.)

Schubert's music is not meant for the concert hall. He wrote it primarily for his friends to hear in private homes, where long evenings would transpire, and no one was in a hurry to leave. His music unfolds on its own timetable, and it can be quite spacious and leisurely as it strolls along on its journey. Robert Schumann complimented its "heavenly length."

However, Schubert was not only writing for his friends. He was also writing for posterity, as shown by the fact that he was sometimes writing huge symphonies when he knew there was no occasion or place to perform them. He was writing for us, 200 years later, and his music is timeless. It is intended to be savored in an atmosphere of solitude, peace, and tranquility – something we have all too little of in today's world. I do not believe he could have written as he did, had he lived in today's frenetic world. But Schubert's music is exactly what our world so desperately needs.

One of Schubert's friends asked, "Where do these songs come from?" Robert Schumann answered that question several years later when he wrote: "Schubert's music seems to come from another world." The legendary pianist, and pioneer proponent of Schubert's sonatas, Artur Schnabel, described Schubert as the composer closest to God. Indeed, there is clearly a spiritual dimension to Schubert's music. He was not devoutly religious in the sense of going to Mass or confession. But so much of his music seems to transport us into a deeply spiritual state, along with causing us to reflect on our human joys and sorrows.

Thoughts on Playing Schubert's Piano Music

It may surprise you that many pianists find Schubert's music to be the most problematic music to play of any composer. I once talked with a pianist in her late 20's who had won many international competitions and performed in public many of the pieces regarded as technically the most difficult in existence. When I asked her which Schubert works, she played, she said, "Oh, I don't play any of Schubert's music in public. His music is too difficult."

Schubert's music does not contain virtuosity for its own sake. But its difficulties are legion. For one thing, it is not really piano music. By that I mean that composers such as Chopin, Liszt, and Rachmaninoff created music, which was inspired by, and tailor-made for, the piano. Schubert was a singer and string player and did not think like a pianist. When Schubert was writing music to be played on the piano, he clearly was internally hearing the sound of the human voice and the textures of a string quartet. This frequently results in his music being awkward and not fitting the piano in an idiomatic, natural way. Another challenge is that Schubert did not write for the modern piano, and the piano of his time was a very different animal than the pianos we play today.

I know of no composer's piano music in which a larger number of interpretive decisions are required to be made. It is far easier to play music which is primarily either in the so-called "classical" or so-called "romantic" style, where a pianist can enter the mindset of the style and let the music almost play itself. Despite many people incorrectly considering Schubert to be a "romantic" composer, Schubert's music should not be considered as either classic or romantic, although it has more in common with the classical than the romantic. His music is a hybrid of the two, and it's being a hybrid affects every parameter an interpreter needs to consider. For example, it is much easier to play music where continuous pedal usage is the default or where the pedal is only rarely utilized. Neither of these describes Schubert's music, causing the pianist to perpetually be concerned that he/she is using a bit too much or not enough pedal. It is easier to play music where either almost no tempo fluctuation is wise, or a great deal of fluctuation works well. Again, with Schubert's music, the pianist must always be concerned that there not be too much, or too little, tempo fluctuation, as well as that the basic tempo is neither dragged nor rushed.

The bottom-line answer for most Schubert interpretive questions, I believe, is the same as for most things in life- to adopt a moderate, middle course – never over-doing, or under-doing, anything.

The first prerequisite of a pianist playing Schubert's music is to produce a warm tone, to make the piano, which is actually inherently a percussion instrument, able to sing. Schubert wrote after one of his own performances: "Several people assured me that the keys became singing voices under my hands, which if true, pleases me greatly, since I cannot abide the accursed chopping in which even distinguished pianoforte players indulge." One of Schubert's musician friends wrote of Schubert's playing: "He still belonged to the old school of pianists whose fingers had not yet begun to attack the keys like birds of prey."

A pianist needs to frequently communicate a sense of intimacy in Schubert's music, yet not fall into the trap of sounding too precious. It does not work to try and recreate the sound Schubert heard from his piano. We play the modern piano. Today's pianist has to take this private music, meant to be played for oneself, or for a few friends in a home, and project it out into a concert hall – but not in the same manner by which one would project most 19th-century music. The intensity and drama of the music should never be minimized – but also never be expressed through any harsh tone. One of Schubert's friends wrote: "He never allowed violent expression in performance."

What does a pianist actually do in objective terms to convey the pain and joy in Schubert's music? A pianist can only control two things: Number 1-how fast to put a key down. The speed of the key descent is what determines the dynamic level. A piano key is best controlled with a non-percussive touch which means starting the key descent after already being in touch with the key. The arms, however, may come from above until the key is reached. But at that point beautiful playing requires the player to ride the key down at the exact speed which will produce the desired sound already implanted from practice in the player's ear. A non-percussive touch is essential in obtaining a wide range of differing shades of sound, and to guarantee that loud sounds do not sound angular and harsh. Dynamic shadings are crucial to expressivity, and Schubert's music exploits the entire range of sound from the ultimate softness to the fullest possible sound without harshness. Schubert also frequently requests sudden contrasts from loud to soft and from soft to loud.

The other aspect a pianist controls is the precise rhythmic placement of every note in a piece and a piece's basic underlying tempo. It is not expressive to play every note of Schubert's music in a mathematically steady tempo. A pianist needs to let the phrases breathe as a singer would breathe, and the best way to learn to play Schubert's piano music is to rehearse and perform with an outstanding Lieder singer. In fact, I do not believe one can be a great Schubert pianist unless one has done a significant amount of study of his songs.

It is crucial to not play Schubert's slower music too slowly, though it is very tempting to do so out of great love for every detail. This temptation is a major challenge when playing Schubert's music. A player can love a piece too much for its own good, and we can end up losing our listeners if we become too self-absorbed in our reveling in an overt love for the exquisite beauty of every detail.

It is also important that Schubert's faster pieces not be played too fast. Doing so loses the character, lilt, swing, and dancelike qualities, and doesn't allow sufficient space for dynamically shaping the harmonies. After all, as Artur Schnabel wrote, "The space between the notes is where the artistry lies."

Any egotism destroys Schubert's music. As Schnabel said : " You play Russian composers as if you are the center of the universe. Mozart, Beethoven , and Schubert should be played as if you are part of the cosmos. "

Real artists know that when they perform Schubert's music it is an especially humbling experience, and they know that they are offering themselves up as sacrificial lambs. If a pianist does believe Schubert's music is easy to play, it is not likely that his/her Schubert playing will be satisfying to hear. Schubert's music is in the class of music which is too great to ever be ideally realized by any human being.

Why do we perform it?.....Because the music is so beautiful and we love it so much, and we want everyone else to love it as much as we do.

Good Schubert playing requires long experience with his music – actually an entire lifetime of experience. As Robert Schumann astutely wrote: “Some things only become clear to you when you are old.” Even short pieces of Schubert necessitate countless hours of experimentation.

Schubert playing is a learned skill and not an innate gift. I discuss many issues involved in playing Schubert’s music in my Lecture -Demonstration entitled “Schubert: Playing His Piano Music,” a video of which appears on my website, www.dersnah-fee.com/essays-educational-materials.html . The detailed handout for that presentation also appears on the website, as well as an eight- page essay, “Relevant Advice from the 18th Century On Playing 18th Century Music”, much of which is applicable to the playing of Schubert’s music.

As in all performance, it takes an ideal combination of “head and heart” to play Schubert’s music successfully. The interpreter must do the requisite analysis and examination of detail to discover the structure and architecture of Schubert’s music – determining how every note should be performed in relation to every other note in a piece. For, as I have said in previous sessions, analysis is the foundation of musicianship. However, the performer must be sure to not fall prey to “paralysis by analysis.” The performer’s ultimate responsibility is to go on stage and play with warmth and love, to make the performance appear to be spontaneous and effortless, to allow the music to take flight and soar, and to transport the listener into another world.

Examining the Six Moments Musicaux, D.780, Op. 94

The six Moments Musicaux are examples of what are called “character pieces”, short works which portray a particular mood or moods. Schubert’s character pieces could be called “Songs without Words”, though this title was never given to any of his music. Four of these Moments Musicaux were written in the last year of Schubert’s life, 1828. The other two, numbers 3 and 6, were written four or five years earlier. The set normally takes close to 30 minutes to perform. However, in the interest of time constraints, I will be omitting most of the repeats , so that I will be utilizing about 23 minutes.

As I said earlier, much of the emotional impact of Schubert’s music comes from his harmonic writing. This can be seen at all levels – chord by chord relationships, and section by section key relationships. You do not need to know any terminology unless you wish to. .What I wish is that you hear the sounds of the chords and keys as they precede and succeed each other. What is important to know is that in any piece of music from approximately 1700 to 1900 , the music is organized around a home key, and other keys have perceived relationships to that home key that are like people’s relatives - some are closer related and some are more distantly related. It is also like the planets’ relationships to the sun. Some lie much closer than others .Some chords’ relationship to the home key are like Mercury being close to the sun, and some are like Neptune being much farther away(I guess I am not to consider poor Pluto a planet anymore.)

It is also important to know that in any piece of length, it would be boring for the music to stay in the same home key. Therefore, other keys can temporarily serve as a home key. When the music moves to a new home key, it is called a modulation.

GO TO PIANO: Illustrate the following in the Six Moments Musicaux

- Overview of each piece-mood, form and principal keys; difference major and minor; major transformed into minor; minor transformed into major; how performer interprets the above; playing not by the beats but by the phrase and with a sense of direction to phrases; ; not playing slow pieces too slowly; heeding Schubert's tempo/character words; necessity of approximately same tempo between sections of Schubert's pieces.

PERFORM: Six Moments Musicaux, D.780, Op. 94

Hungarian Melody, D. 817

During two summers, Schubert taught piano to a family of nobility in Hungary. Apparently in 1824 he passed through the kitchen and heard a cook singing a Hungarian melody. It stuck in his ear and he used it as the basis of a short solo piano piece. The piece was only discovered in 1928 and it was not widely available until 1984. Schubert apparently liked the melody so much that he incorporated it into some of his other compositions as well. I include it today as an example of the not insignificant Hungarian musical influence on Schubert, as well as on other composers. It is easy to forget that Vienna lies quite far east in Europe, and that it was the capital of the huge Austro – Hungarian Empire. There is a famous saying, attributed to Metternich, that "Asia begins at Landstrasse," a street in Vienna. After the two-and-a-half-minute Hungarian Melody, we will take our break. Our second portion will be devoted to arguably Schubert's most revered work for solo piano, which I believe is one of the three greatest works to appear on this eight-part series.

PERFORM: Hungarian Melody, D. 817

10 MINUTE BREAK

Observations on the Sonata in B-flat Major, D. 960, Op. Posth.

Many of Schubert's works are short pieces. However, he also excelled at handling large , expansive forms of music.

The Schubert Sonata in B-flat Major is one of the most revered works in the piano literature. "Revered" is definitely the appropriate word, for nearly every serious piano lover has a reverence for this piece and nearly every serious pianist whose priority is musicianship rather than virtuosity, dreams of one day playing it. Perhaps it has the status of what playing Hamlet or King Lear would represent to an actor. We all wish to experience the meaningfulness and challenge of having lived first-hand with such a great work of art and add our vision of this sonata to the thousands of interpretations which have occurred before us.

This work can communicate through so many different approaches. In a way, this is advantageous. Musical interpretation, being an art and not a science, allows and benefits from a wide variety of opinions, and great music not only can survive a multiplicity of interpretations-it can be blessed by their existence. However, it can be a frustration to a player to be torn in many directions as

one searches for one's own vision of a piece of music. A famous international pianist at age 40 once said he wouldn't feel ready to perform this sonata until he would be 80 years old. I myself have puzzled over this work for decades, always experimenting with different angles of approach and only on a very few occasions ever performing the work in public.

I believe the first movement to be the most problematic movement to interpret. It can touch listeners in many varying interpretations, and astonishingly the performance length of the first movement on recordings by major artists ranges from 13 ½ minutes to 25 ½ minutes. The length of the first movement is partially, but certainly not solely, determined by whether the player repeats the exposition section. In company with the noted Schubert interpreter Alfred Brendel, I favor omitting the repeat of the exposition in public performance.

I also believe in adopting a somewhat more flowing basic speed for the movement than some interpreters opt for. It is crucial to hold this movement together and not let it sag into separate sections. Substantial sonata movements are not primarily mood pieces. There is a tight dramatic structure which must be maintained in all sonata movements.

Part of what has motivated interpreters over the years to play either or both of the first two movements extremely slowly and in a very withdrawn manner, is the widespread but incorrect notion that Schubert was literally on his deathbed when he wrote the work. Combining this belief with the reverence we pianists all feel for this piece and the pedestal we have placed it on, has reinforced the temptation to play it in a very passive way.

There are valedictory aspects in this 38-minute work. But I believe that they should not be allowed to rob the work of its drama, intensity, and vitality. While Schubert was a musical poet, he was also a person of spontaneous, passionate, vehement feelings. Observers noted that his own playing, while "delicate at times," was "sometimes full of fire and energy."

My viewpoint on this sonata is buttressed by the fact that recent scholarship has revealed that the Sonata was written much earlier in 1828 and that Schubert was not especially ill at that time nor would have had any reason to believe that that year would be his last year on earth.

I believe the genre of the Sonata to be the supreme interpretive challenge for a pianist. Short character pieces, where one's task is primarily to convey an emotional mood, are in many respects easier to interpret. They frequently do not significantly change the mood after establishing the initial mood. In a sonata movement the pianist must show sensitivity to multiple changing moods and characters. In addition to effectively bringing out subtle details of color, the interpreter must be an architect. A firm structure must be constructed, and it takes a logical musical mind and not just sensitive feelings to organize every movement of a sonata so that the music can be meaningfully comprehended by listeners.

Not only are there multiple movements in a sonata, there usually is one especially complex and substantial movement which demands exceptionally deep study, thought and endless experimentation. This most substantial movement is usually composed in what is called Sonata -allegro form. This form

requires that there be an exposition, development, and recapitulation. The exposition establishes the home key and then creates a conflict and battle by establishing a contrasting key. The development usually explores other keys and sets up the return of the home key, which occurs at the recapitulation. The recapitulation asserts the ultimate supremacy of the home key by converting the exposition's contrasting key material into the home key. In Sonata- allegro form, at the end, one could say that the "house" always wins.

Let us now explore how Schubert utilizes this Sonata- allegro form framework in the first movement of his B flat Major Sonata. I refer you to the diagram on your program, which shows the keys and in what measures they are employed in the exposition, development, and recapitulation.

GO TO PIANO:

The **first movement** opens in a calm, serene, hymn-like manner. Then it stops and is followed by a foreboding trill on G Flat. What does that symbolize? Then, silence follows. **Play 1- 9.**

Not long after, Schubert shocks us by spending time in the far distant, mournful key of F Sharp minor. He introduces a pleading theme in this unsettling section. **Play 47-54.**

Finally, we arrive at the expected F major, a 5th up from the home key of B flat, and we are presented with a jaunty , carefree melody. **Play 80-82.**

The development section starts in the distant, bleak key of C sharp minor, which will later become the key of the second movement. **Play 117-120.**

In the development you will hear themes and motives from the exposition occurring in various unexpected keys. Each of these keys is representative of a different emotional state. Do listen for these explorations into many different emotional regions.

Many development sections build to a climactic, forceful arrival of the home key at the recapitulation. This unusual development section, as it approaches its end, is like one of those Russian Matryoshka dolls that you keep taking away layer after layer. As we near the recapitulation, the music keeps increasingly withdrawing emotionally inwards, and the home key arrives very gently and unobtrusively.

After the recapitulation, whose function is always to restate the material of the exposition in the home key, a coda , the word meaning "tail, " appears. Some intensely anguished chords occur here. **Play 335-340.**

They are succeeded by the return of the calm opening theme of the movement which gently recedes and closes the movement. However, that ominous trill from the opening reappears right before the last four peaceful chords.

The **second movement** of the sonata, in C-sharp Minor, has a processional quality which many have perceived as funereal. It is in a three-part, A-B-A form. Much loneliness and sense of isolation is

expressed. Note the fateful , obstinately repeated accompanimental rhythmic figure, the top note of which could be representative of a bell or a falling human teardrop .**Play 1-4.**

However, consolation occurs at many points. For example, early in the movement, the music moves to the relative major key. **Play 10-15**

The music is even more uplifting when we arrive at the B section, which assumes a hymn-like character. **Play B: 1-4.**

But tragedy reappears with the return of the original section. Now that insistent accompanimental figure is transformed into an even more ominous rhythm. **Play A return:1-4**

A sense of wonder is created when there is a sudden shift to the far distant C major. **Play 100 - 104.**

However, this is not permitted to last, and we are taken back to the dark C sharp minor. Then, at one of the great moments in Schubert's music, there is a sudden, miraculous shift to a celestial C-sharp major in which the movement will remain and end in a heavenly peace. **Play 119-126 .**

I do not view this movement as funereal, but more as a memorial expression.

The pivotal moment in the drama occurred with this transformation to major at the end of the second movement. The rest of the Sonata will now seem more extroverted and playful. However, ambiguity and darkness will always continue to lurk beneath the surface . Here is the opening of the dancelike **third movement Play1-8.**

It is interrupted by an ominous Trio in B-flat Minor which contains disruptive syncopations. **Play trio:1-6.**

The enigmatic and intriguing **last movement** of the sonata opens ambiguously with a puzzling, bare G octave, followed by a search for the home key of B-flat. **Play 1-10**

There will eventually be nine of these puzzling G octaves in the movement, followed by the searching for the home key. Very near the end of the movement, after a final G octave, we hear a G flat octave. That G flat octave seems to be related to the G-flat ominous trill we heard after the opening statement of the entire sonata. It is followed by a fragment of the opening melody of this final movement **Play496-501.**

Then we hear an F octave followed by a hesitant, questioning melody. **Play 502-512.**

We sense we are near the end. How will Schubert end this piece? Will it be with darkness or will the light chase away the darkness? I'll let you wait and find out.

LEAVE PIANO:

Now that we have explored some of the musical ingredients found in the sonata, I would like to share a few thoughts of a philosophical nature.

All of Schubert's music to me portrays what we read of in the poems he set to music--a solitary human being taking a journey through life. Along the journey, one experiences the heights and depths, and everything in between. One figuratively stops to smell the flowers, as well as to look up at the starry heavens. One surveys the distant vistas of sublime mountain peaks, as well as the sparkling rush of the brook at one's feet. One experiences the desolation of winter, and the joyful awakening of spring. One experiences the joy and fulfillment of reciprocated love, as well as the sorrow, despair, and crushing devastation of unreciprocated love.

We all take a journey through life, and we can have Schubert with us to aid us. At times it can seem as if he is narrating and explaining our journey to us. It is as if he speaks as our friend, and only to us. The speaking analogy is not ill chosen. As the poet Grillparzer wrote of Schubert: "He made poetry sound and music speak."

It seems at times as if his music is reflecting exactly what we are already feeling. At other times, it is as if he is telling us what we will need to hear. He consoles us when the night seems darkest. He reminds us that there is meaning in suffering, and his music can help us to heal whatever needs healing.

I would like to share with you some written words I received from one of my audience members a few days after a performance I gave of this sonata in a home recital some years ago. Her letter shared what she perceived behind the notes: "During the Sonata it started to dawn on me – this is suffering transformed! It seemed to me as if Schubert wanted to say 'Don't be afraid, I'm not. Life is beautiful and even dark times can bring a newfound gratitude.' I felt braver as I walked outside."

I hope that each of you in your own way may be touched as this listener was, and your lives enriched by this transcendental, but also very personal, music which will conclude today's presentation. It is a work which has always been very close to my heart.

PERFORM: Sonata in B-flat, Op. Posth., D. 960

