

The Piano Collection CD07 Schubert (2007)



Schubert – Impromptus (complete) 01 – *Impromptu in C minor Op. 90 No. 1 – Allegro molto moderato* 02 – *Impromptu in E-flat major Op. 90 No. 2 – Allegro* 03 – *Impromptu in G-flat major Op. 90 No. 3 – Andante* 04 – *Impromptu in A-flat major Op. 90 No. 4 – Allegretto* 05 – *Impromptu in F minor Op. 142 No. 1 – Allegro moderato* 06 – *Impromptu in A-flat major Op. 142 No. 2 – Allegretto* 07 – *Impromptu in B-flat major Op. 142 No. 3 – Andante mit Variationen (Rosamunde)* 08 – *Impromptu in F minor Op. 142 No. 4 – Allegro vivace*

Schubert wrote his 8 Impromptus in 1827, one year before he died and it's hard to understand that the nowadays very popular Impromptus were published so late. Opus 142 was only printed in 1839 and the numbers 3 and 4 of Opus 90 had to wait until 1857, thirty years after they originated! *impromptu schubert*

With few exceptions, there is nothing here that suggests improvisation, much less unpreparedness. Although ostensibly composed with an eye on the burgeoning amateur market, at least two of the pieces (No. 2 of the first set and No. 4 of the second) require something close to a virtuoso technique if they are to be brought off with the necessary panache and colour. And even the more evidently 'easy' ones – in particular, the beautiful, lyrical G flat (No. 3 of the first set) and the deceptively four-square A flat (No. 2 of the second) – need the subtlest possible control of texture and sonority to release the true extent of their magic. In a clear concession to the demands of the then new and clamorous amateur market, the G flat Impromptu (in five flats, thus embracing all the black keys of the keyboard) was for many years printed in G major (using only one black key, F sharp) on the grounds that it was easier to play. Not so – easier to read, yes; but actually harder to play.

Schubert's writing for the piano was not always as natural as either his music or the accounts of

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Written by bluesever

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his playing would lead us to expect, but in the case of the G flat Impromptu (Op. 90) he got it just right. The keys lie under the hands in the most comfortable and grateful way, so that playing the piece is a physical as well as a musical pleasure. The range of emotion, atmosphere, sonority and structure in these eight pieces is enormous. What they have in common, with the partial exception of the two 'virtuoso' ones, is an almost continuous outpouring of lyricism. Most of them are in a straightforward ternary form, with a relatively turbulent middle section. In this and other respects they anticipate the nocturnes of Chopin and John Field. They constitute the first group of works by a major composer to break away from the dominance of the piano repertoire by sonata form; thus they have historical as well as artistic significance.

---franzpeterschubert.com

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