Franz Schubert – Impromptus (Radu Lupu) [1999]

4 Impromptus, Op.90, D.899 *1. No.1 in C minor: Allegro molto moderato 10:43 2. No.2 in E flat: Allegro 4:40 3. No.3 in G flat: Andante 6:32 4. No.4 in A flat: Allegretto 8:17*
4 Impromptus Op.142, D.935
5. No.1 in F minor: Allegro moderato 10:11 6. No.2 in A flat: Allegretto 7:29 7. No.3 in B flat: Theme (Andante) with Variations 11:40 8. No.4 in F minor: Allegro scherzando 7:07
Radu Lupu – piano Date of Recording: 06/1982 Series: Legendary Legends Performances

Lupu is a keyboard poet, and Schubert's lyrical gems seem as though they were written for his interpretive artistry. He sings the gorgeous melodies with limpid, beautiful tone. The intimacy Lupu achieves in the G-flat impromptu sounds almost personal, an effect heightened by the transparent engineering. There's a luminosity to Lupu's traversal of these remarkable works that's irresistible; his pianism alternates subtle lights and shades. While the playing is elegant and refined, he doesn't stint on the dramatic contrasts in the music, nor does he neglect the dark poetry that pulls it into deeper regions. There are many fine versions of these classics; Lupu's stands with the best. ---Dan Davis

Schubert is a composer it is easy to fall in love with - and the more of his music one hears the deeper the love affair. He wrote one of the finest sequences of piano sonatas in the repertoire; nine progressively wonderful symphonies; about 600 songs, few if any of which I would want to be without; a sublime string quintet; 15 lovely quartets, including the unforgettably haunting `Death and the Maiden`; the immortal Trout quintet...as well as sacred music and several undeservedly forgotten operas. All, incredibly, in a too-brief life of 31 years - four younger than Mozart, and about as prolific.

He also managed to compose these eight perfect Impromptus. I have Brendel`s recording, which is all one could wish. However, Radu Lupu`s interpretations are all one could wish and more. This must surely come high in a list of the greatest classical recordings of the 20th century. What it is exactly that Lupu possesses I feel unqualified to say, but let me suggest that, simply, he lives and breathes each note of any music he plays in the richest, most fully human way possible, without once seeming over-didactic or rhetorical; as well as having the most limpid, lingering piano style, whilst never becoming lachrymose.

As for Schubert`s music - this is desert island stuff. I talked of love. Here is music so human, yet so exalted, with - as so often in Schubert - both sun and shade in the mix, and such a wealth of heavenly melody as to amaze the gods. Try No 5. I know of few more sublime pieces of music. Radu Lupu`s playing is rapt throughout. Obviously, too, a man in love. ---Glynn Luke, amazon.com

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