

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

FACULTY CONCERT SERIES

BRUCE VOGT, piano

*This concert is part of IdeaFest 2014,
a UVic event celebrating research and creativity.*

Saturday, March 8, 2014 at 8:00 p.m.

Pre-concert talk at 7:30 p.m.

Phillip T. Young Recital Hall

MacLaurin Building, University of Victoria

Adults: \$17.50 / Students & seniors: \$13.50

PROGRAM

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

Sonata No. 13 in A Major, D. 664, Op. 120 (1819)

i. Allegro moderato

ii. Andante

iii. Allegro

Four Impromptus D. 899, Op. 90 (1827)

i. Allegro molto moderato: C minor

ii. Allegro: E-flat Major

iii. Andante: G-flat Major

iv. Allegretto: A-flat Major

Intermission

(Beverages and snacks available at the
concession located in the lounge)

from **Moments Musicaux, D. 780, Op. 94 (c.1824)**

No. 6: Allegretto in A-flat Major

Sonata No. 16 in A minor, D. 845, Op. 42 (1825)

i. Moderato

ii. Andante poco moto (theme and variations)

iii. Scherzo: Allegro vivace

iv. Rondo: Allegro vivace

PROGRAM NOTES

"Schubert's tonality is as wonderful as star clusters, and a verbal description of it is as dull as a volume of astronomical tables." (D. F. Tovey)

"I've discovered something which you may perhaps find valuable. I find myself using quite spontaneously too a means of expression which I think is quite unusual: namely silence. Now don't laugh! It is perhaps the only way to give the emotion of a phrase its full power." (Claude Debussy in a letter to the composer Ernest Chausson)

"The art of Music has here entombed a rich treasure but yet much fairer hopes." Those are the words inscribed on Schubert's tombstone. And certainly we can think with regret of the many works that he surely would have created had he had something like a normal life span.

Schubert, at the time of his death, was well known only to his own circle of friends and even they knew him mostly as a song composer. His achievement as a composer of instrumental music was not at all understood. How could it be, when most of his instrumental works were not yet published? Many of them would not be heard for decades. His 8 symphonies, 15 string quartets, many other chamber works, 21 piano sonatas, masses, other choral works and much, much more – these were almost all unknown. When these works were finally being heard and pondered over, they were too often patronized as formally flawed. Even fifty years ago it was not uncommon to hear many of Schubert's instrumental works described as undisciplined works. There were a few champions of note. Liszt and Brahms both recognized the greatness of Schubert as an instrumental composer. And in 1894, Antonín Dvořák wrote these words: "[He] is never at fault in his means of expression, while mastery of form came to him spontaneously... Schubert's musical individuality is unmistakable..."

The stature of Schubert's piano sonatas took a particularly long time to be recognized. It was long thought that it was only in shorter works – such as the *Impromptus* and *Moments Musicaux* – that Schubert's genius for instrumental writing could thrive. His sonatas were seen as diffuse and overly repetitive. It was not until the 1920s, especially with the advocacy of the pianist Artur Schnabel, that some of the sonatas began to be established in the repertoire. And it is only in the last few decades that competent editions

of his sonatas have appeared. 21 sonatas have survived in some form, 13 of them complete. In his lifetime only three sonatas were published and yet at least 10 of the 21 sonatas are major works.

The **Sonata in A Major, D. 664** is Schubert's first masterpiece in the genre (though there are at least three earlier sonatas which very much deserve to be in the active repertoire). It was almost certainly composed in 1819 but was not published until 1839 – eleven years after the composer's death. The autograph was promptly lost and so the first edition is all that we have. Fortunately it appears to be fairly accurate.

Impromptus and *Moments Musicaux* were the kind of shorter "domestic" works which publishers could sell. And yet it is typical of Schubert that though these works are simpler in form – ternary in structure – they are also works of variety and great originality. The **Four Impromptus D. 899** were composed in 1827. Only the first two were published in Schubert's lifetime.

Schubert wrote dozens of works for chorus and some of them are major works. The **Impromptu in C minor** begins as a kind of *ballade* with a solo singer answered antiphonally by a mixed chorus. However the main body of the work develops as a kind of variation-fantasy before an echo of the antiphonal solo-chorus opening returns in the distance. The **Impromptu in E-flat Major** exuberantly explores the visceral joy of scalar patterns, with a middle section à l'*Hongroise*. The **Impromptu in G-flat Major** is essentially a "Song Without Words", a miracle of vocal evocation. When it finally was published 29 years after Schubert's death, the G-flat key was changed to G Major and the time signature simplified. As well it suffered a banal change in one of its most beautiful harmonic progressions. This is all too typical of the disrespectful way Schubert's instrumental works were treated for so long. The **Impromptu in A-flat Major** can be linked to the flowing "watery" accompaniments of many of his songs. The song "Auf dem Wasser zu Singen (To be sung on the water)" is in the same key, oscillates in a similar fashion between the tonic minor and major and has a similar rippling effect. However the tragic middle section of this *Impromptu* finds no reflection in the song.

The *Six Moments Musicaux* were published in 1828. However, the **Moment Musical in A-flat** had already been published in 1824 and given a fanciful title by the publisher: "Les Plaintes d'un Troubadour". Indeed it is a kind

of lament, but surely more suitably seen as one of the many laments of wanderers and other outcasts to be found in so many of Schubert's songs.

"My best greetings to [brother] Ferdinand...I am certain that he has been ill 77 times again, and fancied himself 9 times at least on the point of death – as though dying were the worst evil we mortals had to face. If only he could see these marvellous mountains and lakes, whose aspect threatens to crush us or swallow us up, he would become less enamoured of the tiny span of human life, and would be ready joyfully to give his body to the earth, to be quickened by its incomprehensible forces into new life." [Schubert, in a letter to his father, 1824]

The **Sonata in A minor D. 845** was published in 1825 as opus 42 and was the first of Schubert's sonatas to be published. In fact it is one of his only large-scale instrumental works published in his lifetime. The sad fact was that publishers were only somewhat willing to publish Schubert's instrumental works and then only his occasional or domestic works – dances and other shorter piano solo and piano duets, rather than his more ambitious, large-scale creations. (Of course some of these seemingly lighter works are also works of genius).

Once again, our only source for this sonata is the original edition. The autograph and any sketches are lost. It is a more serious problem in this case, because not only is this original publication filled with obvious errors but there are four measures missing! The copyist must simply have skipped a line of the autograph – this occurs in the first variation of the 2nd movement. Yet it took the music world more than 130 years to notice the gaping hole in this work (Paul Badura-Skoda pointed it out in an article published in 1958)!

Few of Schubert's letters have survived but a letter to his father refers to his own performance for some friends of the *Andante* movement of this sonata. It tells us a great deal about what he valued in performance, in sound-making:

"What pleased me especially were the variations in my new sonata...which I performed alone and not without merit, since several people assured me that the keys become singing voices under my hands, which, if true, pleases me greatly, since I cannot endure the accursed chopping in which even distinguished pianists indulge, and which delights neither the ear nor the mind."

Program notes by Bruce Vogt

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, March 9, 2:30 p.m. (Admission by donation)

CELLO CLASS RECITAL

Featuring students from the studio of Pamela Highbaugh-Aloni.
Phillip T. Young Recital Hall

Sunday, March 9, 8:00 p.m. (\$20 & \$18)

AVENTA presents: **Strange News** **Aventa Ensemble**

Bill Linwood, conductor

With Arthur Kisenyi, actor and Rick Sacks, vibraphone
Norway's leading composer Rolf Wallin and Ugandan actor Arthur Kisenyi join Aventa in the presentation of *Strange News*, a work that confronts the challenging issue of child soldiers, with video, live electronics, surround sound and the participation of local media. Also featuring works by Victoria's Christopher Butterfield and Alberta/New York composer Zosha di Castri.

Tickets available at the door.
Phillip T. Young Recital Hall

Tuesday, March 11, 12:30 p.m. (Admission by donation)

TUESDAYMUSIC

Take an afternoon break to enjoy a concert of varied repertoire and instruments featuring School of Music students.
Phillip T. Young Recital Hall

Friday, March 14, 12:30 p.m. (Admission by donation)

FRIDAYMUSIC

Featuring School of Music woodwind students.
Phillip T. Young Recital Hall

Friday, March 14, 8:00 p.m. (Admission by donation)

GUITAR CLASS RECITAL

Featuring students from the studio of Dr. Alexander Dunn.
Phillip T. Young Recital Hall

Sunday, March 16, 2:00 p.m. (Admission by donation)

PIANO CLASS RECITAL

Featuring students from the studio of May Ling Kwok.
Phillip T. Young Recital Hall

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