

SCHUBERT

IMPROMPTUS OPUS 90
FOR THE PIANO

EDITED BY MURRAY BAYLOR

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Alfred Music Publishing Co., Inc.
P.O. Box 10003
Van Nuys, CA 91410-0003
alfred.com

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Book Alone:
ISBN-10: 0-7390-1863-9
ISBN-13: 978-0-7390-1863-7

Book & CD:
ISBN-10: 0-7390-7761-9
ISBN-13: 978-0-7390-7761-0

Cover art: A Schubert Evening in a Viennese Home, 1897
by Julius Schmid (1854–1935)
Oil on Canvas
Erich Lessing/Archiv für Kunst und Geschichte, London

FOREWORD

Of the many famous composers who lived and worked in Vienna, Europe's most musical city, Franz Schubert was the only one who made his home there from birth to death. Though his genius was recognized by a few when he was a child—and he had written at least one great masterpiece by the time he was seventeen—only a small part of his music had been published when he died at the age of 31. Considering the fact that he had had little more than a dozen years as a mature composer, the large, rich heritage of wonderful vocal and instrumental music that he produced is indeed astonishing.

SCHUBERT'S PIANO MUSIC

Schubert's music seems to fall between classical and romantic classifications—perhaps between that of Beethoven and Chopin. Although he first became known in Vienna as a composer of *lieder*, the piano was his instrument, and he wrote some of his finest music for piano solo and piano duet. The kind of instrument he played, however, usually called a *fortepiano*, was very different from a modern Steinway. In the *Kunsthistorische Museum* in Vienna there is a well-maintained piano that he once owned. Its compass is from the F an octave below the bass staff to the F two octaves above the treble—six octaves in all. The action is light and the key drop shallow, permitting brisk tempos. It is a piano, of course, for a home, not a concert hall. While the volume is small compared with a modern instrument and the sound decay is short, the tone is bright, silvery and attractive, particularly in the upper octaves.

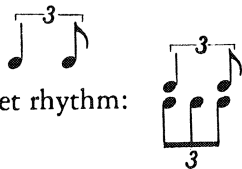
Because of these characteristics, the music that Schubert wrote for this kind of instrument was quite different from that written by later composers. His music was not intended for a virtuoso playing in a concert hall but for a musician communicating with friends in more intimate surroundings. Probably because of his love of singing and song writing, he often incorporated in his piano music singable melodies that must be phrased with the breath pauses and points of emphasis that a fine singer would give to a song. Not only the spirit of song pervades this music, but also the spirit of dance. In the Vienna of his time, social dancing was very popular among young people, and Schubert often played for his friends to dance. Out of these improvisations he wrote about 400 short waltzes, *écossaises*, minuetts, *ländler*, galops, etc.

In addition to his melodic gift, another part of the originality of Schubert's music lies in his use of harmony—his subtle or bold modulations, often to the mediant or the submediant, his use of the Neapolitan chord, his unexpected, poignant shifts from major to minor, and his expressive use of dissonance; all are used in a very personal way. Repeated chords, frequently with quick left-hand jumps, are characteristic. In triple meter, Schubert may briefly contradict the rhythmic pulse by accenting every other beat, thus giving the impression of a change to duple meter—a hemiola—measures that a 20th-century composer might notate as a change from 3/4 to 2/4 time.

Another unusual rhythmic aspect of Schubert's music is his ambiguous use of the dotted-eighth, sixteenth figure. Sometimes he used it in a literal sense, but at other times he used it to indicate a rhythm with a dot of variable length as used by baroque composers (and some of today's popular music performers). When he wrote:



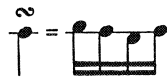
to sound simultaneously with eighth-note triplets in another voice, it was usually intended to sound like:



conforming to the triplet rhythm:

Playing the sixteenth note after the triplet, as one might if interpreting it literally, usually sounds clumsy, although exceptions do occur, and this interpretation of the variable dot doesn't apply to all situations.

Other ambiguities in the interpretation of Schubert's music occur in his use of common ornaments. Most often single grace notes are melodic ornaments played before the beat, though there are exceptions, when harmonic ornaments—*appoggiaturas* on the beat—were probably intended. Pairs of grace notes or groups of three are also normally played before the beat as melodic ornaments. Trills start on the main note rather than on the auxiliary, and the *Pralltriller*—the short trill or inverted mordent (♯)—is played as a three-note figure. For turns, however, classical practice should be followed, namely, for turns over the note:



and turns between notes:



Finally, a word concerning opus numbers. Unfortunately, the opus numbers for Schubert's music were assigned in chaotic order by publishers, most of them after his death. Opus 94, for instance, was written before opus 90. Accordingly, the most reliable guides to the chronological order of the compositions are the numbers assigned by Otto Erich Deutsch in his thematic catalogue (for example, D. 899 to indicate op. 90) and they are frequently used to identify the works, in addition to, or as a substitute for, the opus numbers.

THIS EDITION

This edition has been prepared using photoduplicates and microfilm copies of Schubert's manuscript, graciously provided by the Pierpont Morgan Library of New York City. We are indebted to the scholarship of the late Christa Landon and Walther Dürr whose admirable work for the fifth volume of the *Neue Schubert-Ausgabe: Werke für Klavier zu zwei Händen* (Bärenreiter-Verlag, 1984) has been helpful.

Fingerings, metronome marks in parentheses and pedalings are all editorial and should be understood to be only suggestions. Schubert's indications of pedaling are very rare and unspecific. The word *pedale* appears in the manuscript of the *Impromptu No. 3* at the very beginning, and is the only indication of pedaling in this set of *Impromptus*. There is little doubt that Schubert used the pedal freely in his playing and intended its use in his music, though certainly not in the long washes of opaque sound that would be appropriate in the music of Liszt or Debussy.

Schubert's musical handwriting is clear in some respects, but vague or unclear in others. There are revisions and emendations that probably indicate haste in copying. Slurs in the manuscripts are not always clear as to where they start or end, and they are not always consistent. Accent marks (>) and diminuendo marks (≡) are hard to distinguish from each other since they are often almost the same length. Dynamic indications are often sparse and inconsistent. There are places where ties from one measure to the next in sustained chords are not complete, and occasionally intended accidentals have been omitted. In this edition accidentals not in the manuscript have been put in parentheses as well as a few editorial performance suggestions, which of course are not obligatory. One puzzling dynamic indication, *fp* ≡ (see *Impromptu No. 1*, measure 196) is probably intended to mean *f* ≡ *p*. Obvious oversights in slurring and ties have been corrected without comment.