

Schubert
Sonata in B-flat Major Op.
Posth.
Impromptus Op.90
Carol Rosenberger



D/CD 3018



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FRANZ SCHUBERT

D/CD 3018

**Sonata in B-flat Major / Sonate in B-Dur / Sonate en si bémol D. 960 Op.
posth. (40:03)**

- 1 Molto moderato (16:22)
- 2 Andante sostenuto (10:55)
- 3 Scherzo: Allegro vivace con delicatezza (4:25)
- 4 Allegro, ma non troppo (8:01)

**Four Impromptus / Vier Impromptus / Quatre Impromptus D. 899 Op. 90 (29:03)
(29:03)**

- 5 Impromptu No. 1 in C Minor / Nr. 1 in C-Moll / No. 1 en do mineur (9:48)
- 6 Impromptu No. 2 in E-flat Major / Nr. 2 in Es-Dur / No. 2 en mi bémol (4:38)
- 7 Impromptu No. 3 in G-flat Major / Nr. 3 in Ges-Dur / No. 3 en sol bémol (6:15)
- 8 Impromptu No. 4 in A-flat Major / Nr. 4 in As-Dur / No. 4 en la bémol (8:01)

CAROL ROSENBERGER, Bösendorfer Imperial Concert Grand Piano

TOTAL PLAYING TIME / GESAMTSPIELZEIT / DUREÉ TOTALE: 69:12

"That Vienna gave birth to Franz Schubert would in itself be a title to fame, even if she did not always provide him with the means to work in peace, untroubled by cares..." wrote Marcel Brion, in describing the special relationship between Schubert's music and his birthplace, and went on to quote Annette Kolb: "No other music speaks of the Austrian landscape, reflects the Austrian sky to such a degree". To Nadia Boulanger a Schubert melody was a supreme example of genius, of that magic one cannot define, "so simple that there's nothing to it, just innocence and an irresistibly

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spontaneous movement that makes it a masterpiece." Arthur Schnabel, who brought Schubert's piano sonatas to the public after a century of neglect, called them "a safe supply of happiness". The alchemy by which Schubert was able to transform and transcend experience is beautifully described by Schubert's biographer Maurice Brown as "the power... by which his music achieves sublimity, and radiates 'light that never was on sea or land'". Nowhere among Schubert's piano music is this description more apt than in the great **Sonata in B-Flat Major D. 960**, Schubert's last piano composition.

Schubert wrote the B-flat sonata, along with the two other large-scale op. posthumous sonatas, the C Minor D. 958, and the A Major D. 959, just months before his death. The composer was living in a tiny room in a poor district of Vienna, at the home of his brother Ferdinand. Although Schubert was ill and increasingly depressed during these months, his output was staggering. In addition to the last three piano sonatas, 1828 was the year of the F Minor Fantasy, the C Major Symphony (No. 9), the C Major Quintet D. 956, *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen* D. 965 (The Shepherd on the Rock), and thirteen songs of the group known as *Schwanengesang*.

At the end of his finished copy of the B-flat sonata, Schubert wrote the date: "Vienna, 26 September 1828." In October he finished his last instrumental composition, the C Major Quintet, and summoned up the strength for a short excursion out of the city to Eisenstadt, where he visited Haydn's grave. On November 19, the incomparable melodist was dead. He was, according to his wish, buried near Beethoven's tomb.

Although Schubert's music incorporated much of the style perfected by the great Classical figures such as his admired Beethoven and Haydn, Schubert the musical innovator played a pivotal role as the musical tide turned towards the Romanticism of the 19th Century. Schubert's now-popular Impromptus and Moments Musicaux are generally acknowledged as the first departure by a major composer from the dominance of the sonata as a piano form, and the first examples of the new lyrical piano composition or "character piece", which was to become increasingly important in the Romantic style. True, piano pieces with the title "Impromptu" had first appeared in print in 1822, as a creation of Bohemian composer J.H. Vorisek, who modelled his impromptus on similar works of his teacher, W.J. Tomasek. For pianists, however, it is Schubert who claims the Impromptu forevermore.

Within the sonata form itself, Schubert's departure from Beethoven's masterful, tight structure, the pinnacle of Classical sonata form, was misunderstood and underrated in his lifetime, and throughout most of the 19th Century. These misconceptions have been slow to disappear. Schubert's innovations in sonata form, which later in the 19th Century were to be further developed by Brahms, came about from the demands of the lyrical content. Schubert's structure arises from the requirements of his long lyrical lines, and from his textural and harmonic innovations. His sometimes-sudden flights into remote keys, connected more loosely to the basic harmonic pattern, the startling changes in color and affect, the emphasis on the complete lyrical statement rather than motivic development, are some of the Schubertian delights which caused nervousness among those who felt that Beethoven's were the only possible solutions.

From a later perspective, we can see that comparing Schubert's form to Beethoven's is like comparing an alpine meadow to a stretch of coastline. After all, neither could be improved upon. Schubert's structure gives the listener a long rein; it does not pull us firmly toward a structural goal, but it is precisely that aspect which allows his lyricism to flourish to its fullest extent. The listener is therefore able to focus on the fantasy. As Brahms said, "A melody that seems to have been born in a short moment is almost always the result of hard work." The same can certainly be said of musical form which allows the musical content its deepest and fullest communication.

While the music is unfolding, one perceives the beautiful utterance, the sad or joyful emotion of the moment, the breathtaking change in tonal color, the chilling cloud, the warmth of emerging sunlight. The first time I heard Webster Aitken play a number of Schubert sonatas in a concert cycle, I commented to him that while the music was in motion, I was aware mainly of the beautiful moment, but that at the close of each sonata, the image of the whole had seemed to snap into place. Aitken replied that this was exactly his aim in performance — that the beautiful phrase be heard as part of a well-sculpted whole. "Those sonatas hang inside me like chandeliers!" he said. Throughout our long friendship, I had many fascinating discussions with Aitken about the subtleties of playing Schubert's piano music: communicating the conversational in the music; heightening the drama that is lyrical in nature; finding the right balance between the beauty of the moment and the elucidation of the long line; retaining the sense of melodic simplicity while illuminating the subtleties of nuance and color; communicating an energy which is for the most part soft-spoken, but which

generates long-lasting momentum.

It is not difficult to understand why Schubert's piano music found only slow acceptance on the concert circuit. His music does not demand the limelight; its surface manner is, like its composer's *persona*, unassuming. Its drama takes place in a lyrical context. Its glow is deep and intimate. If one wants to draw a parallel with its composer, and his pattern of lifetime friendship, one could say that closer acquaintance — intimate acquaintance — with Schubert's music breeds devotion.

Schubert's piano music was to wait nearly a century for public acceptance. It was not until the pioneering performances of Schnabel that the sonatas began to be recognized and to be heard in public performances of note. Even in London, the pianists' city, it was not until 1938 that the complete cycle of Schubert's piano sonatas was performed in public — this time by Webster Aitken, who had felt the call to his own Schubert mission while studying with Schnabel.

Certainly the publishers of Schubert's time did not provide his masterpieces with much of a welcome. The publishers to whom he wrote so humbly and hopefully wanted more saleable works — shorter, less difficult to play or sing — and they wanted to pay little or nothing for whatever they did accept. Not until 1897, the centenary of Schubert's birth, was a reasonably complete edition of his works available. The publishing history of the eight Impromptus (op. 90, D. 899 and op. 142, D. 935) is typical of Schubert's publishing experience during his lifetime. Schubert wrote all eight Impromptus in 1827, some during the spring in Dornbach, near the Vienna woods, and some in autumn. Of these, only op. 90 nos. 1 and 2 were published during Schubert's lifetime, by the Viennese publisher Tobias Haslinger. Nos. 3 and 4 were not published until 1857 — thirty years later — by Haslinger's son Karl. Even then, G-flat major was considered too difficult a key to read, and no. 3 was transposed to G Major in the published edition! In February of 1828 two German publishers, H. A. Probst (Leipzig) and B. Schott's Sons (Mainz), wrote to Schubert with inquiries about possible publication of some of his music. The letter from Probst was at first sent to the composer Josef Schubert, who was no relation to Franz and was irritated at receiving the letter. Schubert replied to Schott, offering ten sets of compositions, including the Four Impromptus op. 142. The response Schubert received from Schott was a discouraging masterpiece of misjudgment. The Impromptus were pronounced "too difficult for small pieces" and therefore unlikely to sell well: "If at any time you should

write something less difficult and yet brilliant in an easier key, please send it to us without more ado."

Publisher response to the towering op. posthumous sonatas was equally negative. In early October of 1828, Schubert, having given up on Viennese publishers, wrote to Probst, offering him the three sonatas, the string quintet and the Heine songs, and asking that the three sonatas be dedicated to Hummel. Six weeks later Schubert was dead, not knowing that Probst had turned down the entire batch of manuscripts. When the sonatas were finally published by Diabelli ten years later, Hummel was dead, and Diabelli elected to dedicate the sonatas to Schumann. Although Schumann was a champion of the C Major Symphony, having discovered it among Ferdinand Schubert's manuscripts in 1838, he did not turn out to be a champion of the three sonatas dedicated to him.

One possible factor in the long neglect of Schubert's piano music was that, unlike Beethoven, who promoted his music via his own virtuoso performances, Schubert had never established a reputation as a virtuoso pianist. He was not able to attract wealthy patronage as Beethoven was able to do. His music was, for the most part, performed in modest environments with and for his circle of friends, "the Schubertians".

There are, however, interesting descriptions of Schubert's piano playing, one from a biography published in 1839 (*Die Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*) by Schubert's brother Ferdinand: "Although Schubert never represented himself as a [pianoforte] virtuoso, any connoisseur who had the chance of hearing him in private circles will nevertheless attest that he knew how to treat this instrument with *mastery* and in a quite *peculiar manner*, so that a great specialist in music, to whom he once played his last sonatas, exclaimed: 'Schubert, I almost admire your playing even more than your compositions!'" Another description of Schubert's piano playing came from his friend Albert Stadler: "Nice touch, steady hand, a clear pleasant way of playing, full of spirit and sentiment. He belonged to the old class of piano players who do not use their fingers like hammers on the keys."

Maurice Brown makes the point that the "grand utterance" of the sonata is Schubert's "natural voice". Certainly all three of Schubert's last sonatas are conceived on a grand scale, and make a more dramatic use of the piano's capabilities than do his earlier sonatas. There is a strong sense of the dark side in all three, which lends perspective and depth to the "supply of happiness" and power to the "grand utterance".

The A Major and the C Minor establish their scope and dimension from the very outset with bold motives often likened to Beethovenian style, whereas the B-Flat enters the world serenely, establishing the deep, magical glow that pervades the entire sonata.

The **B-flat Major Sonata** epitomizes Schubert's ability to reveal the most profound and exhilarating insights in statements of enduring simplicity. The work's powerful communication unfolds over a span of some forty minutes, and yet its very first statement establishes much that is memorable about the entire work. The breadth and depth, the reflectiveness, the rich, spacious chordal texture, the play of light and shade, the expansiveness, the breathtaking beauty — so much is established in that first inspired statement! As the opening statement comes to rest midway, a low, faintly ominous trill is heard in the bass. The trill unsettles us, and reminds us of life's darker questions. At the same time, true to life, the trill serves as a transition, leading us back to the statement's affirming conclusion. The low trill also helps to establish the spaciousness of tonal register which is notable in all three of Schubert's last piano sonatas, as it is in Beethoven's late sonatas.

The first movement's rich texture thins out slightly toward the end of the exposition, when a questioning motive first appears, in its lighthearted aspect, against a luminous, cascading dance of triplet arpeggios. A questioning recitative closes the exposition, giving way to a startling modulation to C-sharp minor. The first movement's main theme sounds dark and lonely here, in minor. The tonality of C-sharp minor and the dark emotional tone foreshadow the second movement. The lighthearted three-note motive we heard earlier turns tentative, questioning, and as the texture thickens, leads to the emotional climax of the entire movement. An impassioned buildup gives way to other-worldly strains of the opening theme, floating high above gentle repeated chords and higher still above the rumbling low trills which are felt throughout the passage. Gradually, we are led back to the affirmation of the opening statements.

The second movement's song is a poignant one. One has the sensation of being alone in a vast space. The melody is spare and haunting, with its intense suspensions over a low C-sharp pedal point. The sense of space is created by the touching of several octaves in turn above the low pedal-point, thus outlining the horizon of the tonal registers while creating the haunting rhythm of this deceptively simple accompaniment. The middle section of the movement encompasses the other side of loneliness — the more serene and accepting side. There is a mixture of light and dark,

major and minor, brooding and exaltation — the latter like a sudden, happy catch of breath.

The *Scherzo* is a lilting jewel with more than a hint of the dances which Schubert liked to write for his friends. It is gentle and buoyant, with some delighted chuckles. The trio is not so gentle, however, with its minor color, set in a lower register. The surprising syncopations in the bass tie into the dark side suggested by the low trills in the first movement. The trio becomes suddenly serious, and we have the sense not so much of resignation, but of inevitability. After such seriousness, the return of the *Scherzo's* buoyancy is even more affecting.

The fourth movement *Rondo* has more than a touch of the bittersweet. A lone G octave pedal point announces the first theme — a chattering figure, playful but wistful. The first part of the figure questions, the second part resolves momentarily only to be caught up in a questioning posture again by the unresolved tonality of the G pedal point. The delicate arching melody of the *Rondo's* second theme is formed from tones which emerge from the midst of the accompaniment figuration. Interrupting outbursts of fortissimo chords introduce a dotted figure which exclams its way into a chordal pile-up. In the late A Major sonata, the corresponding outburst occurs surprisingly in the middle section of the slow movement, and is unrelenting until the close of the section. Here, the sharp punctuation of the dotted figure is gradually transformed into a light, skipping version of itself, whose lilt and grace still contain a trace of wistfulness.

The first of the *Impromptus op. 90*, in C minor, begins as if it could be a larger work, such as a sonata movement. The dramatic herald of G octaves is, in fact, almost identical to the opening G octave in the fourth movement of the B-flat sonata. In the sonata movement, the tonally ambiguous effect of the C minor figuration is playful, as the tonality settles into B-flat major. Here, the same octave sets a pedal point against which a lone voice traces a wistful melody in minor. The spare, detached chords which accompany and punctuate this melody maintain the bleak mood. But, this being Schubert, the severe figuration soon gives way to a lovely, soaring melody with a smooth triplet accompaniment. The plaintive minor tune itself melts into a reassuring major during the coda.

The *Impromptu no. 2 in E-flat* has a similar lilt and "skimming" sensation to the song *Auf dem Wasser zu Singen* (To Be Sung on the Water). Yet it is dancelike as

well, with the faintest hint of a hold on the second beat. The middle section becomes more dancelike, more earth-bound, less liquid, and the Ländler-like rhythm becomes more pronounced. There is a return to the "skimming" section, and the piece ends with a coda which dances almost breathlessly to the end.

The **Impromptu no. 3 in G-flat** offers one of Schubert's sublime melodies, embedded subtly and simply in a spinning accompaniment — gentle in its manner but powerful in its ability to touch the soul with the Schubertian glow. Familiarity with the piece makes it hard to imagine in any other key than the soft warmth of G-flat major.

The **Impromptu No. 4 in A-flat** flows with gently cascading arpeggios, which pause often, giving way to musing, half-questioning chordal melody. Its three-beat pulse is slower than that of the E-flat Impromptu, and the entire piece is more introspective than No. 2, although both Impromptus share the quality of luminous passagework. The middle section is pure song, richly scored in the accompaniment.

Schubert's melody lines are always vocal, and therefore human; his settings reminiscent of a scenic wonder. In our fast-paced era, in which peaceful places and quiet moments become increasingly rare, such music is perhaps even more precious. It invites us to live a musical phrase that suggests the luminous ideal, but is within the human context. It allows us to draw a long breath while we put daily cares into perspective.

Carol Rosenberger

Die kreative Kraft, die es Schubert erlaubte, Erlebnisse umzugestalten und zu übersteigern, sind von Schuberts Biographen, Maurice Brown, beschrieben worden als "die Kraft ..., durch die die Musik Erhabenheit erreicht, und ein "Licht ausstrahlt, das niemals auf Wasser oder Land geschienen hat." Nirgendwo in Schuberts Klaviermusik ist diese Beschreibung treffender als in der großen Sonate in B-Dur D. 960, Schuberts letzter Klavierkomposition. Die kraftvolle Art der Mitteilung entfaltet sich über eine Zeitspanne von etwa vierzig Minuten, und doch führt schon die allererste Aussage ein, was das ganze Werk so eindrucksvoll macht. Weite und Tiefe, Nachdenklichkeit, die reiche, weitausgreifendeakkordische Struktur, das Spiel von Sonnenschein und Schatten, Überschwänglichkeit, atemberaubende Schönheit — so Vieles wird in dieser ersten einfallsreichen Aussage vorgestellt! Wenn die einführende

Aussage gegen die Mitte des Werkes hin zur Ruhe kommt, hören wir nun einen tiefen, etwas bedrohlichen Triller im Bass. Der Triller beunruhigt uns, erinnert uns an die dunkleren Fragestellungen im Leben. Zugleich, nach dem Leben abgesehen, dient der Triller einem Übergang, der uns dabei zum bejahenden Abschluß der Aussage zurückführt.

Die reiche Struktur des ersten Satzes wird gegen Ende der Exposition leicht ausgedünnt, vor allem wenn ein nun gragendes Motiv eingeführt wird, eine leichtherzige Erscheinung gegenüber einem leuchtenden, kaskadenförmigen Tanz von arpeggionierenden Triolen. Das fragende Rezitativ schließt die Exposition ab, und leitet zu einer überraschenden Modulation nach cis-Moll über. Das Thema des ersten Satzes klingt hier dunkel und einsam, in Moll. Das leichtherzige drei-notige Motiv, das wir schon früher hörten, wird nun zaghaft, fragend, und führt mit der sich nun verdichtenden Struktur zum gefühlsmäßigen Höhepunkt des ganzen Satzes. Eine gefühlsvolle Steigerung wird durch die Jenseitsmelodie des Eröffnungsthemas ersetzt, die hoch über den leise wiederholten Akkorden schwebt und noch höher über den grollenden tiefen Trillern, die durch die ganze Passage hindurch gefühlt werden. Langsam werden wir zur bejahung des eröffnenden Motivs zurückgeführt.

Das Lied des zweiten Satzes ist eindringlich und einsam. Die Melodie ist kärglich und eindringlich mit seinen intensiven Suspensionen über tiefen Cis Pedalpunkten. Das Gefühl von Räumlichkeit entsteht durch das Anschlagen von mehreren Oktaven nacheinander über den tiefen Pedalpunkten, was den Horizont der tonalen Register ausleuchtet und auch den eindringlichen Rhythmus dieser so trügerisch einfachen Begleitung ergibt. Der Mittelteil des Satzes beinhaltet die andere Seite der Einsamkeit — die Seite mehr annehmender Gelassenheit. Da ist eine Mischung von Dunkel und Hell, Dur und Moll, Versunkensein in tiefen Gedanken und voller freudiger Ausbrüche.

Das Scherzo ist ein beschwingtes Juwel, mit mehr als nur einem Anklang an Tänze, die Schubert so gerne für seine Freunde schrieb. Es ist leicht und schwebend, voller stillvergnütem Lachen. Das Trio des Scherzo ist aber weniger sanft in seiner Mollfärbung und in den tiefer gesetzten Registern. Die überraschenden Synkopierungen im Bass gemahnen an die dunklen Seite, die durch die tiefen Triller aus dem ersten Satz angedeutet ist. Das Trio wird plötzlich ernsthaft, und wir haben das Gefühl nicht nur von Resignation, sondern auch Unausweichlichkeit.

Der vierte Satz Rondo hat auch mehr als nur einen Hauch von bitterer Süße. Ein

einsamer G-Oktavenpedalpunkt zeigt das erste Thema an — eine schwätzerische Figur, spielerisch, aber doch sinnend. Die zart übergreifende Melodie des zweiten Themas des Rondos ist aus Tönen geformt, die aus der Mitte der Begleitungsfiguren ausbrechen. Unterbrechende Ausbrüche von fortissimo Akkorden führen eine punktierte Linie ein, die ihren Weg bis in einen großenakkordischen Zusammenstoß hineindrängt. Die harte Betonung der punktierten Linie wird langsam zu einer leicht hüpfenden Version ihrer selbst transponiert, deren trällernde Leichtigkeit und grazie aber immer noch einen Hauch von sehn suchtsvoller Wehmütigkeit mit sich trägt.

Das erste der Impromptus Op. 90 in C-Moll beginnt, als ob es ein größeres Werk, wie etwa ein Sonatensatz, sein könnte. Der dramatische Verkünder in Form von G-Oktaven ist ein Pedalpunkt entgegengesetzt, dem gegenüber eine einsame Stimme eine sehn suchtsvolle Melodie in Moll nachspürt. Die kärglichen, alleinstehenden Akkorde, die diese Melodie begleiten und betonen, halten diese düstere Stimmung aufrecht. Aber, da dies ja Schubert ist, wird die finstere Figuration bald von einer lieblichen, schwebenden Melodie mit einer schwungvoll eleganten Triolenbegleitung abgelöst.

Das Impromptu Nr. 2 in Es-Dur hat eine ähnliche Leichtigkeit und ein "flüchtiges" Gefühl wie das Lied "Auf dem Wasser zu singen." Doch ist es ebenfalls tänzerisch, mit einer ganz leichten Andeutung einer Fermate auf dem 2. Takt. Der Mittelteil wird noch tänzerischer, noch erdverbundener, weniger flüssig und der ländlerähnliche Rhythmus wird betont. Es gibt eine Wiederkehr des "flüchtigen" Teils und das Stück endet mit einer Coda, die beinahe bis zum Ende Atemlos weiter tanzt.

Das Impromptu Nr. 3 in Ges-Dur bietet eine von Schuberts erhabenen Melodien, zartlich und einfach eingebettet in einer spinnenden Begleitung — sanft in ihrer Art, aber kraftvoll in ihrer Fähigkeit die Seele mit der Schubertschen Wärme zu berühren.

Das Impromptu Nr. 4 in As-Dur fließt mit zart kaskadierenden Arpeggios, die oft pausieren, um dann von einer grübelnden, beinahe fragenden akkordischen Melodie abgelöst zu werden. Sein dreiviertel Puls ist langsamer als der in Nr. 2, obwohl beiden Impromptus dieselbe Qualität in ihrem brillanten Passagenwerk gemein ist. Der Mittelteil ist rein liedhaft und seine Begleitung reich ausgestattet.

*Carol Rosenberger
Uebersetzung aus dem Englischen: Andreas Aebi*

Maurice Brown, a bien décrit dans sa biographie de Schubert, la magie avec laquelle Schubert transformait l'expérience, "la puissance... par laquelle sa musique touche au sublime et rayonne 'd'une luminosité qui transcende la lumière du réel.'" Il n'est pas d'oeuvre de Schubert pour piano où cette description n'est plus valable que pour la superbe **Sonate en si bémol majeur D. 960**, sa dernière composition pour piano. L'oeuvre fait défiler son puissant message durant environ quarante minutes, et pourtant la première phrase contient déjà une grande partie de ce que cette oeuvre a d'inoubliable; sa teneur, sa profondeur, la pensivité, la riche sonorité des accords, le jeu des ombres et des lumières, l'envergure. Cette première déclaration recèle déjà tout! Alors que la première phrase suspend son vol à michemin, un trille grave et vaguement menaçant se fait entendre à la basse. Ce trille nous trouble et nous fait penser aux aspects sombres de la vie. Au même moment, comme dans la vie réelle, ce trille sert de transition, pour réaffirmer dans la conclusion le message du début.

La riche sonorité du premier mouvement se dissipe quelque peu vers la fin de l'introduction, lorsqu'un motif se dessine, interrogateur, allègre, sur un fond où dansent une claire cascade de triolets arpégés. L'incertitude s'exprime aussi dans le récitatif qui termine cet exposé, cédant le pas à une modulation inattendue en do dièse mineur. Le thème principal du premier mouvement semble se faire entendre sombre et solitaire, ici, en mineur. Le motif allègre aux trois notes entendues précédemment devient mal assuré, et tandis que la texture s'épaissit, il nous guide vers le sommet émotionnel du mouvement tout entier. Un crescendo passionné cède le champ à des accents détachés de ce monde appartenant au thème d'ouverture, maintenant constamment leur présence au-dessus d'accords doucement répétés et bien au-dessus des trilles graves et grondants que l'on ressent à travers tout le passage. Graduellement, on voit revenir l'affirmation de la déclaration du début.

Le chant du second mouvement est poignant et solitaire. La mélodie austère nous hante, avec ses arrêts intenses sur un point d'orgue en do dièse, à la basse. La sensation d'espace est créée par l'appel, à tour de rôle, de plusieurs octaves au-dessus du point d'orgue à la basse, dessinant le contour du registre tonal tout en créant un rythme constant dans l'accompagnement, pourtant simple à s'y méprendre. C'est au milieu du mouvement que le compositeur s'engage vers l'autre extrémité de la solitude — là où elle est accueillante et sereine. Il y règne un mélange de lumière et

d'ombre, de majeur et de mineur, d'humeur noire et d'exaltation.

Le *Scherzo*, tel un joyau, miroite par son rythme rapide qui fait une allusion plus que voilée à la danse que Schubert prenait plaisir à écrire pour ses amis. Il est délicat et léger, avec ça et là quelques petits rires ravis bien qu'étouffés. Cependant le trio du *Scherzo* est bien moins léger, puisqu'il est en mineur et se trouve placé sur un registre plus bas. Les syncopes surprenantes de la basse évoquent la face sombre suscitée par les trilles à la basse du premier mouvement. Dans le trio, l'humeur devient sérieuse, et l'on ressent moins la résignation, que l'inévitable.

Le quatrième mouvement, un *Rondo*, contient plus qu'une allusion au doux-amer. Un point d'orgue solitaire en octave de sol annonce le premier thème — une figure à la fois animée, mais pensive. La mélodie délicate qui relie le second thème du *Rondo* emprunte les sonorités provenant du choeur des figures constituant l'accompagnement. Les percées soudaines des accords fortissimo créent une ligne ponctuée pour aboutir à un entassement d'accords. La ponctuation nette de la ligne s'estompe graduellement pour ne devenir qu'une version voltigeante d'elle-même, mais dans laquelle le rythme léger et gracieux retient cependant encore une trace de désenchantement.

Pour un peu, le début de l'*Impromptu no. 1, de l'opus 90, en do mineur* ferait penser à une oeuvre plus vaste, un mouvement de sonate, par exemple. Le message dramatique d'octaves en sol occupe un point d'orgue auquel s'oppose une voix isolée qui chante une mélodie désenchantée en mineur. Les accords espacés et détachés qui accompagnent et ponctuent la mélodie entretiennent une atmosphère morne. Mais, comme très souvent chez Schubert, la sévérité de la pièce cède le champ à une jolie mélodie qui s'élève accompagnée de sereins triolets.

L'*Impromptu, no. 2 en mi bémol* contient une cadence et rappelle la sensation d'"effleurement" du chant "Auf dem Wasser zu Singen" (Pour chanter sur l'eau). Un mouvement de danse s'y dessine aussi, qui contient une légère pause au deuxième temps. La partie centrale prend beaucoup plus l'allure d'une danse, est moins éthérée, plus terrestre, et le rythme de la musique populaire des "Ländler" devient plus prononcée. La cadence délicate du début revient, et le morceau se termine par un coda où la danse se poursuit sans relâche jusqu'à la fin.

L'*Impromptu, no. 3 en sol bémol*, offre à l'auditeur une des mélodies sublimes de Schubert, tandis que l'accompagnement l'encadre, agissant subtilement

mais puissamment afin d'atteindre l'âme et de l'émerveiller avec l'éclat Schubertien.

L'**Impromptu no. 4 en la bémol** déroule ses sereines cascades d'arpèges, faisant de nombreuses haltes où une mélodie aux accords pensifs et presque interrogateurs, prend le dessus. Sa mesure à trois temps est plus lente que celle de l'**Impromptu en mi bémol**; ce morceau dans son ensemble est d'ailleurs plus introspectif que l'**Impromptu** numéro 2, bien que tous deux partagent le caractère lumineux des passages de transition. La partie centrale n'est que chants, richement orchestrés par l'accompagnement.

Carol Rosenberger

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