FRANZ SCHUBERT

(1797-1828)

The Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio Joseph Kalichstein, piano Jaime Laredo, violin Sharon Robinson, violoncello

Disc A [64:15]

Trio in B-flat major, D. 898 (Op. 99) [42:23]

- 1. I. Allegro moderato [15:13]
- 2. II. Andante un poco mosso [10:59]
 - 3. III. Scherzo: Allegro [7:10]
- 4. IV. Rondo: Allegro vivace [8:43]
- 5. Notturno in E-flat major, D. 897 (Op. 148) [9:42]
- 6. Trio in B-flat major, "Sonatensatz", D. 28 [11:55]

Disc B [74:07]

Piano Trio in E-flat major, D. 929 (Op. 100) [47:37]

1. I. Allegro [16:21]

2. II. Andante con moto [10:11]

3. III. Scherzando: Allegro moderato [7:01]

4. IV. Allegro moderato [13:45]

Sonata in A minor for Arpeggione and Piano, D. 821 [26:24]

5. I. Allegro moderato [11:53]

6. II. Adagio; Allegretto [14:25]

Sharon Robinson, violoncello Joseph Kalichstein, piano

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SCHUBERT CHAMBER MUSIC

CHUBERT WAS NOT ONLY A MASTER of the traditional genres of chamber music (string quartets, quintets, trios and so on), but was equally ready to expend some of his most valuable musical thoughts in unorthodox media. There is no more striking instance of this trait than his Sonata in A minor, D821. Even though this work is nowadays almost invariably heard as a work for cello (or just occasionally viola, or double bass), it was not designed to be performed in this way. Schubert composed it to be played on the Arpeggione—a short-lived instrument invented in 1823 by the Viennese guitarist, luthier and instrument-maker Johann Georg Staufer (1778-1853), who had a shop in Vienna and also contributed lasting improvements to the development of the guitar. (Schubert himself owned a guitar which he bought at Staufer's shop.) Staufer's Arpeggione—also called the Bogen-guitarre (bowed guitar) and Guitarre d'amour—was in fact a hybrid of cello and guitar. Indeed, although the instrument was held between the knees and was played with a bow, it had the general appearance of a large guitar, with a fretted fingerboard and six strings. It was not a success with players at large—it was a delicate instrument and had quite a small tone—and though for a while a small number of musicians took it up with enthusiasm, by the mid-1830s it had been phased out of concert life.

Insofar as it is remembered at all, the *Arpeggione*'s only claim to fame is the sonata composed for it by the 27-year-old Schubert in November 1824. He dedicated the work to the guitarist Vincenz Schuster, one of the few musicians to have become a devoted *Arpeggione* player (he even published a Method

for the instrument in 1825). There is no evidence, however, that Schuster ever played the sonata. Nevertheless he, and Staufer's instrument, had brought into the world a mature Schubert masterpiece which, arranged for cello, was later to take its place as one of the asbsolutely essential monuments of the cello repertoire.

Like many of Schubert's works the A minor Sonata languished in obscurity, unpublished and unplayed, for several decades after the composer's death, until discovered by the great English scholar and Schubert-champion Sir George Grove. In 1867 he wrote that 'At the Library of the Musik-verein, besides the autograph of the great Symphony in C, I saw a copy of a sonata by Schubert for Piano and Arpeggione (whatever that may have been) which, being dated as late as 1824, ought to possess some value'. Grove's instinct, thus off-handedly expressed, was perfectly correct, and since its first publication in 1871, arranged for cello, the sonata has never been out of the repertoire. Even so, the piece poses difficulties for cellists because the Arpeggione possessed a slightly greater range across the open strings and utilized a different tuning system. Both these features seem to have appealed to Schubert, who exploited the possibilities presented by the guitar-like tuning. This allowed the performer a range of two octaves plus a fourth without shifting or changing positions (more than is possible on the cello), and the six-string arrangement was conducive to virtuosic, arpeggiated passages. The flexibility allowed Schubert to write lines where a range of four octaves is spanned within a couple of bars, giving full rein to his characteristic melodic lyricism in a particularly dramatic fashion.

The sonata is an emotionally complex work, its moods moving restlessly between melancholy and a somewhat hectic ebullience, mirrored in the change between minor and major tonalities. Even the very opening of the sonata-form first movement is imbued with considerable pathos, but the contrasting second subject is scurrying and agile, requiring much agility on the part of the player. The second movement is a songful serenade—its main theme deserves to rank among Schubert's finest melodic inspirations—which nevertheless discloses hints of tension and drama at its climaxes. The finale is a sonata-rondo with an ambling and amiable main theme but another busy subsidiary one, and episodes that once again hint at a pervasive, underlying melancholia. Nevertheless the work ends in confident style, with a final pizzicato arpeggio that reminds us of the nature of the instrument for which it was originally conceived.

Schubert seems only to have begun taking the piano trio medium seriously towards the very end of his life, yet one of his earliest surviving chamber works is a Trio-Movement in B flat, D. 28 for piano, violin and cello composed in July and August of 1812, when he was merely 15. It was not, in fact, published until 1923. At 15, the young Schubert was going through a stressful period. His mother died suddenly in May, aged 55, and only a fortnight later he began taking lessons in theory and composition with the famous Kapellmeister of the imperial court (and to us, equally famous as the rival of Mozart), Antonio Salieri. In July—the same month that he began the trio-movement—Schubert sang for the last time as a choirboy in the choir of the Imperial Chapel; his voice had broken, which gave him all the more reason to concentrate his energies on composition. Salieri's strict instruction in counterpoint, fugue and setting of Italian texts certainly revolutionized the young musician's technique, and he was kept very busy producing little pieces-mainly vocal-to Salieri's specifications.

Perhaps the trio-movement was also an exercise for Salieri, or the young composer's own demonstration to himself of the technical prowess he had so far achieved. He entitled the piece 'Sonata', and it is, indeed, a rather copybook handling of a simple sonata form; but whether it was intended as the first movement of a larger piano trio, or was to be regarded as complete in itself, there is no means of knowing. This is a charming *Allegro* movement that displays a positively Mozartian elegance, especially in the mellifluous opening subject. It is if anything rather superior to his first attempts at the string quartet genre, which date from around the same time. Its energy and confidence are attractive, and the way Schubert delightfully extends the lyrical second subject might almost be described, even this early in his career, as, well, Schubertian.

It appears that 15 years passed before Schubert returned to the piano trio medium, in 1827, the year of Beethoven's death. By this time Schubert could not have been unaware of Beethoven's magnificent achievements in the genre, especially with the two op. 70 Trios and the monumental 'Archduke' Trio op. 97 of 1811. I say 'appears', because the order in which Schubert composed his two mature trios remains unknown, and some Schubert scholars have not accepted the 1827 date for the Piano Trio in B flat, D. 898, posthumously published in 1836 eight years after the E flat Trio but generally regarded as the earlier of them (Otto Erich Deutsch, the great cataloguer of Schubert's works, was one: he suggested 1825 as more likely). Schubert's autograph, which might have supplied a date, has been lost, and the mystery is deepened by the fact that Schubert seems never to have referred directly to the B flat Trio in his extant correspondence, whereas he made strenuous efforts to have the E flat Trio published. While there is documentary evidence of performances of the E

flat Trio on 28 January and 26 March 1828, there is none of the B flat—but an (unspecified) Trio by Schubert was played by the violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh, the cellist Joseph Linke and the pianist Carl von Bocklet at a concert on 26 December 1827 in the hall of the Vienna Philharmonic Society. Scholars are divided as to whether this could have been the B flat work, or a prior rendering of the E flat.

At all events when the B flat Trio was published, eight years after the E flat, the printed edition bore the title 'Premier Grand Trio', which was presumably the title on the manuscript. The opus number 99 may also have originated with Schubert, whom we know to have specifically designated the E flat Trio opus 100. (Schubert's opus numbers, often assigned by his publishers, generally reflect the haphazard order of publication of his works both before and after his death, which is one reason Deutsch's catalogue numbers have been accepted as a more accurate indication of the order of composition.) The burden of probability—especially if the 1827 Notturno (see below) was originally intended as the slow movement—is that the B flat Trio was indeed composed before the E flat, but only just before; in fact, they were probably intended as a contrasted pair of works. The Schubert scholar John Reed has suggested that the composer's silence about it may indicate that it was sold to or at least being considered by a publisher very shortly after it was composed, so that Schubert would have no reason to hawk it to prospective publishers as he did with the E flat.

Schubert's two trios were by far the most important essays in the form since Beethoven's 'Archduke', and the B flat Trio (in the same key as the Beethoven) is a predominantly—indeed, for its supposed date, astonishingly—

sunny work on the expansive scale of Schubert's late masterworks. The first movement, a jubilant, swaggering Allegro moderato, opens with a bold marchlike theme with yodelling triplet motifs, initially in the strings but then passed to the piano while the cello makes pizzicato play with the march rhythm. Some commentators see in this first subject a paraphrase of the song Des sängers Habe (The Singer's Treasure), D. 832, composed in 1825 to words by his friend Franz Xaver von Schlechta, which begins 'Shatter all my happiness in pieces, take from me all my worldly wealth, yet leave me only my zither and I shall still be happy and rich!' and ends by asking that the zither be placed on the poet's grave so his ghost can touch its strings at night. The song is in the same key, B flat, as the opening of the trio, and if it is indeed the basis of the first subject would seem to establish a fatalistic sub-text to the Trio's apparent optimism. Schubert's masterly handling of tonality is shown by the way he delays the appearance of the dominant (F major) for the second subject, seeming to establish D instead but then having the cello launch the second subject from the dominant of D as a portal into F. This subject itself is a songful melody in Schubert's most ardently romantic vein. All three instruments have their share of the tune, which is rounded off by a momentarily dramatic codetta distinguished by leaping octaves (and unexpectedly interrupted by a silent bar) that leads round to a repeat of the exposition.

The development plunges into B flat minor and deals vigorously—but hardly tragically—with both main subjects in order, while moving away to the most distant tonality possible (E major) in order to effect a return to B flat. But this is done remarkably circuitously. Schubert establishes the dominant of B flat as if the main key is about to return at the moment of recapitulation, but

then instead recapitulates the first subject in the 'wrong' key of G flat, moving to D flat and then—when we have almost given up hope of it—finally returning to B flat by stealth. After an otherwise perfectly orthodox recapitulation, there is a sudden climactic outburst of passion in A flat to begin the coda, but this quickly blows itself out and the movement ends in the same cheerful mood that it began.

The cello, so often the agent of lyrical expression in this work, introduces the suave opening melody of the Andante un poco mosso in E flat in its alto register, over a rocking accompaniment in the piano. Some commentators have suspected that Schubert intended a reference here to the famous Adagio cantabile of Beethoven's Pathètique Sonata. It could almost be a highly sophisticated lullaby, and is taken up by the violin, with the cello in duet, providing a new theme as counterpoint. The two string instruments converse tenderly for a while, and then the piano has the theme after a move to B flat, still with blissful counterpoints from the other players. The music then modulates to E flat for a decorative but more anxious central episode, with a pulsing, syncopated accompaniment, which moves to C minor—some commentators have discerned similarities here with the slow second movement of the 'Unfinished' Symphony. After rippling scales and arpeggios from the piano have steered us into C major, Schubert brings back the initial melody on the violin, in A flat, from which key the music continues to modulate tenderly until finally regaining E flat in time for a nostalgic, lingering coda.

There follows a delightful, fast-moving scherzo in B flat whose main theme—which seems to be that of the comparable movement in the *Trout* Quintet, but turned upside down—contrasts a smiling descending phrase with

a staccato one of repeated crotchets and ascending quavers. The Trio, in E flat, which seems to look back to the *Andante*, is a sublimated waltz, the strings floating above the piano's accompanying rhythm.

The main subject of the rondo finale is a playful, stylish theme led off by the violin. Like the first movement's opening subject, this appears to be based on a song Schubert had written many years before: Skolie, D. 306-a drinking song (Greek skolion) of 1815 to words by Johann von Deinhardstein, that suggests the very briefness and fleetingness of life is reason enough to enjoy the scent of flowers and the kisses of maidens. A Schubertian version, in other words, of the sentiment 'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may'. Perhaps here, if only by sly reference, Schubert acknowledges the likely shortness of his own life in this piano trio apparently so untouched by sadness. Skolie's original key was B flat, so he didn't even have to transpose it to form his rondo theme. Not that this is a textbook rondo. It is more like a sonata allegro in which development and recapitulation merge. A forceful first episode with an angular five-note opening phrase generates another, rather cheerfully rustic tune. It gathers up shimmering piano tremolandi and trills in both piano and (mysteriously) in the violin and is vigorously developed until the Skolie tune reappears in E flat, leading to a return and further development of the vigorous episode with its trills, rusticity and intricately interwoven counterpoint. Altogether this music occupies so much of the movement that it begins to feel as if it, and not the Skolie tune, is the principal subject. And indeed, just where we expect a final appearance of the Skolie tune, Schubert sets off instead on a Presto coda, still based on the five-note opening of the episode, that rings down the curtain on this eventful and marvellously inventive work.

As already intimated, there are no doubts about the date of the Piano Trio in E flat, D. 929. This is firmly fixed to November 1827, and may have been the Trio played at a Schuppanzigh concert on 26 December; if that was in fact the B flat Trio, the premiere of the E flat must therefore have taken place in a 'Schubertiad' arranged on 28 January 1828 to celebrate the engagement of his close friend Josef von Spaun. In contrast to his silence about the B flat Trio, Schubert's correspondence shows he was eager to get the E flat work published, approaching Schott of Mainz —who rejected it—and then assigning it somewhat reluctantly in May to Probst of Leipzig, who paid a fee far less than Schubert had hoped for. After the first performances Schubert had cut 99 bars from the finale, and he instructed Probst to make sure the cuts were observed in the printed edition and that the work should be performed by 'capable people' who could ensure 'continual uniformity of tempo at the changes in time-signature in the last movement'. Despite the composer's impatience, Probst was dilatory about issuing the work. I await the appearance of it with longing', Schubert wrote to the publisher in October: clearly he was aware of the Trio's importance. At this time he also instructed that the work 'is to be dedicated to nobody, save those who find pleasure in it'. Probst printed the Trio that same month, but it seems Schubert never saw a copy before his death on 19 November.

Robert Schumann considered the two piano trios as a contrasted pair, 'essentially and fundamentally different', and this may indeed have been Schubert's intention. For Schumann, the E flat was the 'more spirited, masculine and dramatic' of the two works: he also described it as being like 'some angry portent in the sky'. It is also more discursive, and laid out on an even larger scale

than the B flat. The first movement opens with a bold motif in octave unison octave—which will not heard again until the end of the development—that expands into a fiery opening theme, given a jagged, almost Beethovenian feeling by explosive *fortissimo* chords. Shortly the music moves to the distant key of B minor for a theme at once witty and pathetic, in a nagging ostinato rhythm. These abrupt juxtapositions of key and character are a feature of the work as a whole. A suave third theme in B flat, presented by cello and violin in canon, with purling triplet figuration in the piano, is in fact developed from a pendant to the first theme and leads to a vigorous codetta.

The whole exposition is repeated, and the development begins with another foray into the remote B minor. It concerns itself almost entirely with the third theme while modulating to darker regions and heightening both the drama and the pathos. Half-lights and shadow envelop the music, while the piano's incessant gushes of descending triplet figuration provide the only illumination, while becoming decidedly obsessive in effect. After quiet hints of thematic change, we arrive suddenly at the recapitulation and the reappearance at last of the abrupt octave figure with which the movement began. The recapitulation is fairly orthodox—the theme in ostinato rhythm now reappears at first in E minor and the third theme in E flat; in the coda the second theme, too, finally confirms that key, and though the octave figure appears to have the vehement last word, Schubert allows a breath of an echo of the ostinato rhythm, pianissimo, to bring the movement to a whispered close.

The following *Andante con moto* in C minor is one of his most inspired movements. Over a staccato walking rhythm—or perhaps it is a funeral march?—the cello gives out a pathetic, bittersweet melody, taken up and re-

peated by the piano. Though nothing could sound more Schubertian, it was established long ago (and seems to be rediscovered periodically as if new information) that he based this theme on a Swedish folksong, 'Se solen sjunker' (The sun is setting), which he heard sung by Isak Albert Berg, a young Swedish singer who visited Vienna in early November 1827. The movement as a whole is a rondo, with the episodes introducing an atmosphere of passionate protest and even tragedy. Perhaps Schubert has the *marcia funebre* of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony at the back of his mind, another slow C minor rondo withion an E flat work. The reappearance of the song theme brings drum-roll-like *tremolandi* in the piano and a wild, despairing climax, suavely moved away from only to encounter another climactic outburst. The rondo theme rounds off the movement with the immovable melancholy of life.

The scherzo—in correspondence Schubert calls it a minuet—unfolds in canon between piano and strings, and the writing remains imitative even when he dispenses with strict canonic discipline. Coming after the tragic *Andante*, it is not exactly light-hearted music: Schubert wanted it played 'at a moderate pace and *piano* throughout'. But it has an elegant charm and a distinctly dance-like character: mortality is no reason not to enjoy the dance while the music plays. The trio, in A flat, is an earthier, more rustic dance (Schubert said it should be 'vigorous, except where *p* and *pp* are marked'), seeming to stamp its feet on the first beat of the bar, that suddenly hesitates and moves off into a nervous reverie of little repeated-note figures, then leads back to the reprise of the scherzo.

The finale begins as an apparently carefree piece with an ebullient opening theme in amiably tripping 6/8 time. Yet it moves seamlessly and unexpect-

edly into a febrile, anxious second subject in C minor characterised by nervous, insistent repeated notes, heard first on violin, then cello, then piano. Though this move from E flat to C minor is not as surprising as that from E flat to B minor in the first movement's exposition, there is a kind of emotional parallelism here in the appearance of a dark key and the character of the theme that enters there. A passionate and virtuosic episode leads to a development of the febrile repeated-note theme and then of the first subject, in considerably less carefree mood.

The tonality eventually stabilizes around B minor, and here occurs the most astonishing event in the work. Against cascading right-hand patterns in the piano and trudging pizzicati in the violin, the cello reintroduces the melancholic song theme from the slow movement, adapted to the prevailing 3/4 metre. This kind of 'cyclic' return of a theme from another movement in a finale was almost unprecedented at the time. As well as affirming the unity of the piece as a whole, this spectre from the past provokes a furious reaction in the shape of the strenuous development of the finale's own themes that now ensues and leads eventually into the recapitulation, the first subject returning in its original playful guise. The recapitulation is both full and fairly regular, but in the coda, based at first on the first subject, the burden of emotion seems to become too great to bear and the song theme returns once more on the cello, this time in darkest E flat minor. But the violin joins in and the major mode beckons, enabling Schubert to snatch a last-minute 'cheerful' ending, based on the first subject, from the jaws of the song's despair. The whole course of this finale is one of his most remarkable conceptions.

There remains one other Schubert work for piano trio—a substantial Adagio in E flat, D. 897 first published by Anton Diabelli in 1846 under the title Notturno (this is the form on the first page of music: the title page, in French, calls the piece Nocturne). It is generally thought to be Schubert's first attempt at a slow movement for the B flat Trio, and to have been rejected in favour of the Andante un poco mosso. The manuscript is written on music-paper identical to that of the E flat Trio and Winterreise—another work of autumn 1827—so if this movement was indeed originally intended as part of the B flat Trio, that strengthens the likelihood that the B flat and E flat Trios were both written in the same period.

The theory that this is a 'rejected' slow movement has caused some critics to regard the *Notturno* as 'obviously inferior' to the Trio's *Andante un poco mosso*. To others—the present writer included—that inferiority is by no means obvious, and the fact that Schubert had preserved the manuscript does not suggest that he wished to discard it. Perhaps he simply decided it was not in keeping with the overall mood and thrust of the B flat Trio, and would be better retained as an independent composition. Not only does it have some affinities with the *Andante un poco mosso*, but some aspects of it seem prophetic of the sublime slow movement of Schubert's great C major String Quintet of September-October 1828: not least in its slow harmonic movement and highly expressive use of pizzicato.

Formally the piece is a rondo. The harped piano chords and the main melody in mellifluous thirds on violin and cello, with echo effects, create at once the character of a slow lyric serenade. When the piano has the tune it is time for the strings to accompany with guitar-like pizzicati. The first episode is a bolder,

march-like idea in 3/4 time—unusually, in E major, the 'Neapolitan' degree one semitone away from the tonic E flat—with a rippling triplet accompaniment in the piano that gives the impression of a faster tempo, though in fact there is no change. This is developed at length, the triplets becoming a running bass line in the piano's left hand. After a long dominant preparation the music returns to E flat for the 'serenade' theme, now with a more decorative form of accompaniment. The second episode is a variant of the first, now in C major, and after further passionate development, with some unexpected modulations, it again winds up in E flat for the third and final statement of the lyric rondo theme, decorated with trills in the piano's upper register, with which the *Not-turno* closes in a mood of nostalgia and regret.

Notes by Malcolm MacDonald

Malcolm MacDonald has written numerous books, including works on Brahms, Schoenberg, John Foulds, and Havergal Brian. He is editor of the music journal, Tempo.





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