

The forty years that followed the initial discovery of Franz Schubert's posthumous body of work yielded a hefty stack of published editions, the purification and expansion of which has occupied scholars and publishers until the present day. This is Schubert's legacy: one hundred and seventy-four years of conjecture, due in part to his premature death, but also his own stubborn unwillingness to promote his music while he lived. In the case of the Sonata for Arpeggione and Piano (D821), by the time it was published in 1871 the instrument for which it was written had long vanished into obscurity, essentially creating a free-for-all for just about any pitched instrument that could handle the composition's range; today it is played most frequently on the viola, cello, double bass and classical guitar, but performances on the flute and clarinet are not uncommon. The arpeggione, or bowed guitar, is exactly that: a fretted instrument with six strings tuned exactly like a classical guitar [E-A-D-G-B-E] and held vertically between the knees. The similarity to the tuning of the double bass is inescapable, however, due to the use of solo tuning strings, any advantage that this conveys—whether technical or musical—is undone when the piece is played in written G-minor. Our intent with this article is to introduce a new edition that we hope will provide double bassists with an uncluttered presentation of the score (based on the composer's autograph and other Urtext editions), and to put forth another view of the solo part that takes advantage of the similarities between the double bass and the arpeggione. To this end, we will examine the strange phenomenon of the arpeggione itself, the composer and the circumstances under which he composed the sonata, existing editions for the double bass, and finally, the musical and technical implications that our edition presents.

What would compel Schubert to write a sonata—and a substantial one at that—for such an instrument? For a man who spent his entire adult life in dire financial straits, this appears to be a very foolish decision indeed. It is evident, however, that although Schubert was interested in and motivated by commercial success, he was a notoriously bad businessman and an even worse self-promoter. In the midst of the Rossini craze in Vienna, composers during this period came to understand that financial prosperity was no longer tied exclusively to commissions from the aristocracy and the church, and that the rise of the bourgeoisie in Europe had created a new, lucrative opportunity in opera for the masses. Schubert, for his part, made several attempts to break into this scene, but was met with little success. Even though his music consistently received favorable reviews, the overwhelming consensus among critics and audiences alike was that Schubert's operas were ill paced and lacked the most basic elements of compelling drama. Alfonso und Estrella, an opera for which Schubert had particularly high hopes, failed to ignite any excitement among the Viennese at all. Even some of Schubert's closest friends admitted that it was not his best work and discouraged the pursuit:

... the weaknesses of the libretto are apparent. The stage movement is slow and clumsy, and the main action is constantly held up by the pageantry and the pastoralism. There are no minor characters of any importance, so that the action proceeds for the most part in a series of duets. The piece is full of fresh lyrical writing, especially in the love scenes of Act II. But even here it is too static. It seems to be more a succession of musical tableaux than a music drama.

Schubert met this kind of criticism with open-mouthed astonishment. The opera's librettist, Franz von Schober, was a very close friend of Schubert's and a charismatic, influential member of the bourgeoisie cluster of artists, writers, and musicians with whom Schubert kept company in Vienna. Schober's charisma, however, did not translate into a talent for dramatic writing, and blame for the opera's failure lies mostly at his door. Loathe to accept the libretto's shortcomings at first, he admitted the following, long after Schubert's death: "... an opera libretto... such a miserable, still-born, bungling piece of work that even so great a genius as Schubert was not able to bring it to life..."⁹ It is clear that Schubert's devotion as a friend to Schober clouded his own assessment of the opera's virtues, for he continued to believe that Alfonso und Estrella was one of the best works he had written, if not the best.¹⁰

The case of Alfonso und Estrella illustrates Schubert's tendency—shared by many composers and artists—to not only express his devotion to his friends and colleagues through his compositions, but also to allow his friendly, sentimental nature to exercise a high degree of influence on the choices that might have made him more financially successful as a composer. With that in mind, and in the absence of more specific information, it seems logical that Schubert's decision to write a sonata for arpeggione and pianoforte must also have been guided by nothing more than a friendly gesture toward the instrument's maker and the enthusiast, Vincenz Schuster, who presumably requested the piece. No evidence suggests that the sonata was a legitimate commission or indicates that Schubert received any remuneration whatsoever from the requesting parties. "One might almost say that Schubert is a composer of Friendship as Bach had been a composer of the Church and Handel a composer of the State."¹¹ Although certainly sweeping in its generalization, this statement by the authors Harman, Milner, and Mellers implies that in order to understand Schubert's modus operandi, one must position his friends and colleagues at the epicenter of his motivation.

Daniil Shafran, cello

Felix Gottlieb, piano

Schubert

Sonata For Cello And Piano In A Minor

"Arpeggione", D. 821



One of the greatest cellists of the twentieth century, a performer who combined technical brilliance with soulful expressiveness, Danil Shafran was born in 1923, in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). Shafran's first teacher was his father, who was the principal cellist of the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra. At the age of eight, Shafran started studying with Alexander Shtrimer, at the Special Music School for Children. Two years later, he was among a group of students selected to advance directly to the Leningrad Conservatory. When he was eleven, Shafran made his debut with the Leningrad Philharmonic, continuing his studies with Shtrimer, who taught the young cellist to appreciate music in the wider context of humanistic culture and of art in general. In 1937, Shafran won the All-Union competition for cellists and violinists. The prize was a magnificent 1630 Amati cello, which Shafran played until the end of his life. This instrument had a delicate, but gorgeous, tone, and Shafran was sometimes criticized for playing an instrument that was perceived as more appropriate for chamber music. In 1950, the year he graduated from the Leningrad Conservatory, Shafran won the Prague International Cello Competition. Although Shafran toured Europe, the U.S., and Japan, he shunned the glamour of international fame, preferring to perform and record in the U.S.S.R. His recordings, for the Melodiya label, include much of the standard cello repertoire, with particular emphasis on Romantic and -century Russian music. For example, he recorded Kabalevsky's Cello Concerto No. 1 in 1954, creating, two years later, a legendary recording of the Cello Sonata by Shostakovich, with the composer at the piano. One of the high

points of Shafran's career was his 1967 performance of Kabalevsky's Cello Concerto No. 2, one of the most demanding works of the cello repertoire. Written as a musical monument to the victims of World War II, and dedicated to Shafran, Kabalevsky's extraordinarily difficult work provided the cellist with an opportunity to display his prodigious technique and profound musicality. Throughout his career, Shafran sought to enrich the cello repertoire by playing transcriptions of works for other instruments. Many of these transcriptions, which include the Franck Violin Sonata and the Shostakovich Viola Sonata, are miniatures by composers such as Schumann, Chopin, and Brahms, which he often offered as recital encores. Shafran's performances of these familiar encore miniatures, such as Schumann's "Träumerei," from the Kinderszenen for piano, were truly magical, for his playing could transform a familiar piano piece into cello music of unearthly beauty. Shafran was particularly known for his rich, expressive tone; his vibrato was unique, and when he played without vibrato, Shafran used his prodigious bowing technique to enrich his tone. A hallmark of Shafran's highly personal style, in addition to his finely nuanced and profoundly expressive tone, was his inimitable rubato. All in all, Shafran was a stupendous virtuoso whose breath-taking technical skill was totally subservient to a profound, overwhelmingly powerful musicality. Always in total control of the formal aspects of the music he played, Shafran constantly sought, as he revisited a particular piece, to probe deeper into its inner being, methodically striving to reveal the sometimes incomprehensible complexity of the music that he played. He died in 1998.

Schubert

**Sonata For Cello And Piano In A Minor
"Arpeggione", D. 821**

Daniil Shafran, cello

Felix Gottlieb, piano

1. Allegro moderato (A minor) 10:30
 2. Adagio (E major) 4:24
 3. Allegretto (A major) 8:01
- Total Time 22:55

Transferred from a 15ips 2-track tape
Recorded 1978 Recorded by Meloydia



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