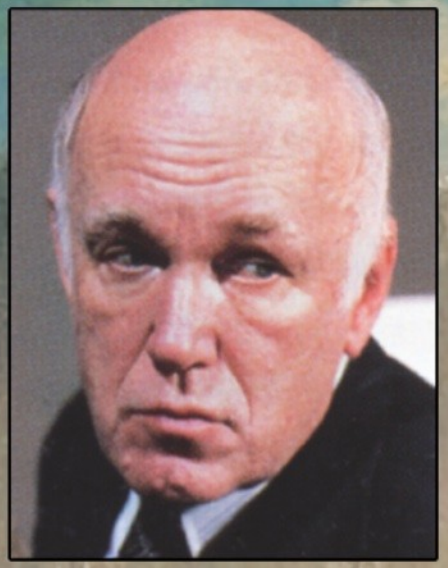

Schubert

Piano Sonatas Nos. 13 & 14
Impromptus, D. 899 Nos 2 & 4

Sviatoslav Richter

alto

Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

Piano Sonata in A Major No. 13, D. 664

1	I. Allegro moderato	12:05
2	II. Andante	6:14
3	III. Allegro	7:00

Piano Sonata in A Minor No. 14, D. 784

4	I. Allegro giusto	14:15
5	II. Andante	5:46
6	III. Allegro vivace	5:16

Impromptus, D. 899, Op. 90

7	No. 2 in E-flat Major. Allegro	4:30
8	No. 4 in A-flat Major. Allegretto	7:22

Sviatoslav Richter, *piano*

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Franz Schubert (1797-1828) was on holiday with his friend and patron the singer Michael Vogl during summer 1819. The beautiful surroundings of Steyr, Upper Austria, must have inspired Schubert to give of his best for not only did he compose the ***Piano Sonata (No.13) in A major D 664*** *(opus 120)* during the course of this holiday but also the '*Trout*' *Quintet*. This *Piano Sonata*, his first for two years, is one of Schubert's sunniest compositions and is linked to his happier 'nature' songs such as *Im Frühling*. In the *first movement* the sun is never in shadow for long. The slow *second movement* is a gentle meditation in which there is a frequent occurrence of an appogiatura which give the movement a hesitant, almost apologetic air. The almost unconfined jollity of the *final movement* has the main theme alternating with brilliant runs and arpeggios to bring the piece to an emphatically happy-go-lucky conclusion.

With the ***A minor Sonata (No.14) D 784*** *(opus 143)* we are on different ground. It was composed in 1823, by which time Schubert was aware of the nature of his illness. This and other works composed at this time (*Unfinished Symphony, 'Wanderer' Fantasy)* reflect the mixture of hope and despair he must have felt at this time. Ernest G Porter has pointed out that the sonata's opening contains the same four notes in reverse as those that open the carefree *Trout Quintet.* The phrase then takes a leap downwards with an accent on the minor third setting the tragic tone for the movement as a whole. The second subject brings an uneasy calm but pressure builds up with the right hand reaching ever higher against crashing downward scales. The *second movement* opens serenely but becomes ever more troubled and dissonant. Eventually the peaceful mood returns as the opening phrase is recalled. The *final movement* opens in determined fashion as if Schubert is resolved not to lapse into depression as the arpeggios of B flat break through. There is less dissonance in this movement and one gets the impression that what fears Schubert had at the beginning of the *Sonata*'s composition are now kept firmly under control.

It seems likely that the ***Impromptus D 899*** *(opus 90)* were composed during the summer ALC 1081 Booklet.indd 4-6 and autumn of 1827. The first two were published that year whilst the other two were

published posthumously in 1857. Schumann remarked that it would not be difficult to imagine the *impromptus* as a sonata (he was speaking of three of the opus 142 set but it might just as easily have applied to the opus 90 set). The two *impromptus* recorded here might therefore be the scherzo and finale of that 'sonata'. The ***second impromptu in E flat*** dances around like a whirligig. A more muscular contrasting section then battles it out with the first theme and the 'scherzo movement' ends on a note of defiance in E flat minor. The ***fourth impromptu***, described by Artur Schnabel as 'a dance in the moonlight' opens with cascades of thirds with a cello-like melody followed by a more passionate trio section in C sharp minor. In turn this is followed by a repeat of the first part and then by two staccato chords to bring the piece to its close.

NOTES ON THE ATIST

When the great Russian pianist **Sviatoslav Richter** (1915-97) died, a torrent of emotion, of grief and loss, was unleashed from the general concert-going and record-collecting public the like of which had not been seen in classical music circles since the death of Maria Callas 20 years earlier. It is perhaps surprising to learn that he had many critics (they were usually – and especially in Russia – supporters of Emil Gilels) and made many enemies, most famously perhaps when as a juror at the First Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow in 1958 he awarded the American pianist Van Cliburn 100 points out of a possible 10. He was never asked to sit on the jury again! Despite their professional rivalry Richter and Gilels maintained a healthy respect for each other's talent: when Gilels became the first post-war Soviet artist to play in the USA his response to the critics who went overboard in their praise was "Wait till you hear Richter!" Unsuccessful attempts were made to get Richter to play in the West but when he finally did tour the USA in 1960 the critics were astounded. The Juilliard teacher Rosina Llevinne remarked "Richter is an inspired poet of music…an exceptional phenomenon."

Richter studied in Moscow under Heinrich Neuhaus who remarked that Richter was "the pupil for whom (he) had waited for all (his) life" and that there was nothing he could teach him, although later when asked why he did not give lessons Richter modestly replied "Give lessons? Good heavens, no. If anything I ought to take a few myself!" Prokofiev was so impressed with Richter's talent that he entrusted him with the premières of his *Sixth* and *Seventh Sonatas* whilst Richter was still a student. Two further Prokofiev sonatas were premièred by Richter, and he also conducted the premiere of that composer's *Sinfonia Concertante* in 1952. Richter won the first all-Union Contest in 1945 and the Stalin Prize in 1949. Once permitted freedom to play in the West he travelled annually to France where he gave concerts alongside friends such as Britten, Rostropovich, Oistrakh and Fournier. His final concert was in Lübeck when he played three Haydn sonatas and Reger's *Beethoven Variations*. repaird for this release.

— James Murray

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