

Jorge

Federico

O S O R I O

FINAL THOUGHTS

THE LAST PIANO WORKS OF SCHUBERT & BRAHMS

CEDILLE
♯

FINAL THOUGHTS

THE LAST PIANO WORKS OF SCHUBERT & BRAHMS

DISC 1 (77:02)

SCHUBERT

Sonata in A major, D. 959 (39:19)

- 1 I. Allegro 14:51
- 2 II. Andantino 8:04
- 3 III. Scherzo: Allegro vivace 4:53
- 4 IV. Rondo Allegretto 11:20

BRAHMS

Seven Fantasies, Op. 116 (21:53)

- 5 No.1 Capriccio in D minor 2:19
- 6 No.2 Intermezzo in A minor 3:18
- 7 No.3 Capriccio in G minor 2:59
- 8 No.4 Intermezzo in E major 4:31
- 9 No.5 Intermezzo in E minor 3:16
- 10 No.6 Intermezzo in E major 2:58
- 11 No.7 Capriccio in D minor 2:16

Three Intermezzos, Op. 117 (15:30)

- 12 No.1 Andante moderato 4:53
- 13 No.2 Andante non troppo e con molta espressione 4:34
- 14 No.3 Andante con moto 5:55

DISC 2 (79:24)

BRAHMS

Six Piano Pieces, Op. 118 (22:52)

- 1 No.1 Intermezzo in A minor 1:54
- 2 No.2 Intermezzo in A major 5:49
- 3 No.3 Ballade in G minor 3:21
- 4 No.4 Intermezzo in F minor 2:27
- 5 No.5 Romanze in F major 4:06
- 6 No.6 Intermezzo in E-flat minor 5:02

Four Piano Pieces, Op. 119 (14:59)

- 7 No.1 Intermezzo in B minor 3:50
- 8 No.2 Intermezzo in E minor 4:39
- 9 No.3 Intermezzo in C major 1:48
- 10 No.4 Rhapsody in E-flat major 4:31

SCHUBERT

Sonata in B-flat major, D. 960 (41:13)

- 11 I. Molto moderato 19:03
- 12 II. Andante sostenuto 10:10
- 13 III. Scherzo: Allegro vivace con delicatezza 3:58
- 14 IV. Allegro ma non troppo 7:50

JORGE FEDERICO OSORIO

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As a nonprofit recording company, Cedille Records' albums are supported by sales, contributions, and grants. Our utmost gratitude goes to the following individuals whose generosity has supported additional promotional efforts for this special album:

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PROGRAM NOTES

BY ANDREA LAMOREAUX

*“Time, though producing much that is beautiful,
will not soon produce another Schubert.”*

ROBERT SCHUMANN

*“The art of music here entombed a rich possession,
but even fairer hopes.”*

INSCRIPTION ON SCHUBERT'S TOMB
BY FRANZ GRILLPARZER

The death of Franz Schubert, in November 1828 at the age of 31, was premature even by the lifespan standards of the early 19th century. In an instance of sad irony, March of that year saw Schubert finally score a major triumph: a public concert in Vienna of his own music, well performed, well received, and even profitable (the composer had hitherto been chronically short of money). Previous to that event, his music had been known and admired mostly through word-of-mouth fame among his wide circle of friends: poets and fellow musicians who appreciated his talent but were usually unable to help him get wider recognition. Publishers were interested in his songs and short keyboard pieces but didn't exhibit much enthusiasm for works such as symphonies and string quartets.

But he never gave up, and his final years added up to one amazing burst of creativity. Documenting those years we find the completion of his last symphony, nicknamed the *Great C Major*; the song-cycle *Winterreise* and the songs later collected into the set called *Schwanengesang* (Swan Song), his sixth mass setting, two piano trios, his last string quartet (No. 15) and incomparable String Quintet, and the set of three piano sonatas that he sketched in the summer of 1828 and completed in September. Having numbered the finished copies Sonatas I, II, and III, he seems to have intended them as a cycle. He had written a number of sonatas for piano previously, but here he strikes out on a new path. The sonatas are interconnected in terms of thematic similarities and their similar usage of extremely free modulations and explorations of many different keys, some of them harmonically “remote” from the tonic keys in which the sonatas are actually cast. In this sense, Schubert was looking ahead to the Romantic era of increasing harmonic freedom, while still sticking to Classical sonata form, used in his own way.

The distinguished pianist Alfred Brendel — a premier interpreter of music by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Liszt as well as Schubert — studied the sketches for the sonatas as well as their final forms (not all composers' first versions survive, but these did). He commented:

Examination of Schubert's sketches for the sonatas reveals him as highly self-critical; moreover, it shows that the “heavenly lengths” of the sonatas were actually a later addition, not conceived from the start. In his subsequent corrections, Schubert elaborated on his themes and expanded them, giving them more “musical space”... proportions are rectified, details start to tell, fermatas suspend time. Rests clarify the structure, allowing breathing space, holding the breath or listening into silence.

The phrase “heavenly length” is a quote from Schumann, who used it to describe the nearly hour-long *Great C Major Symphony*. The last three piano sonatas are also notable for their length and somewhat unusual for being in four movements, instead of three. In D. 959 and 960 we have sonata-allegro, slow movement, scherzo with trio, and sonata-rondo.

Commentators have found connections between the themes of the sonatas and some of Schubert’s songs, and they’ve pointed out the sense of “wandering” in the far-ranging modulations through which the sonatas progress. The image of the wanderer is evoked in many Schubert lieder, certainly in *Winterreise* and in his final vocal scene, *The Shepherd on the Rock*. But there’s no need to impose extra-musical images on the sonatas: these are works that stand on their own. A striking characteristic is the composer’s use of cyclical form: deriving later themes and harmonic progressions from earlier ones, a technique that’s often credited to the innovations of Liszt, but which was actually pioneered by Schubert.

The Sonata in A major, D. 959, has a first movement marked simply Allegro (Lively). Its opening theme is a series of chords followed by arpeggios, motives that will be echoed later in the piece. The second theme, more songlike, modulates traditionally to the dominant key, E major, but in between Schubert touches on several other keys. The development is based mostly on the second theme; the recapitulation leads to a coda based on the first theme. In the second movement, Andantino (rather slow), the basic key is F-sharp minor, the relative minor of A major; it’s an extended A-B-A form whose “B” section is a kind of fantasia with chromatic accents. The Scherzo picks up the pace with its fast tempo indication, Allegro vivace; the trio section is slower, and once again a number of different keys are explored through ingenious modulation sequences. For the finale, Schubert borrowed a theme from one of his earlier piano sonatas and casts the conclusion as a sonata-rondo: several recurrences

of the main theme with episodes and a development section in between. The final, emphatic coda, marked Presto, is a transformation of the theme heard at the very start of the piece.

Rather unusually, the tempo marking for the first movement of the Sonata in B-flat, D. 960, is not Allegro but Molto moderato. There are three main thematic presentations, one in the home key with a striking trill, one in the minor mode, and one in the expected dominant key, F major. All of these ideas are further explored in the development. The Andante sostenuto second movement, emphasizing sustained tones at a moderate pace, starts in the key of C-sharp minor which, according to the traditional key structure of Classical sonatas, is very “remote” from the sonata’s home key of B-flat. This is once again in A-B-A form, with a contemplative main theme. This sonata’s Scherzo is also marked Allegro vivace, but with the addition this time of “con delicatezza” — delicately, indicating a light-fingered touch through the rapid modulations, plus a Trio section cast in the minor mode. The finale is tonically ambiguous to start, although it will end firmly in the tonic key of B-flat after a great deal of thematic and harmonic exploration. Its tempo starts out Allegro ma non troppo — not too much — and later moves to Presto. This is an exceedingly dramatic movement with complex rhythms as well as thematic intricacies that harken back to ideas introduced earlier.

The sonatas were published posthumously, and Schumann, although a great admirer of Schubert’s work, seems not to have cared for them very much. Johannes Brahms, on the other hand, regarded them as masterpieces. The careers and life-cycles of Brahms and Schubert could not have been more different. While Schubert labored in relative obscurity, in the European musical world of the late-19th century Brahms was universally acknowledged as the preeminent master; thanks to his symphonies, chamber works, and choral pieces including the great German Requiem. Respected and honored, the mentor of Dvořák and

great friend of pianist-composer Clara Schumann and violinist-composer Joseph Joachim, he entered the decade of the 1890s with a curious kind of pullback from his achievements. After completing his second string quintet, he told his publisher he wouldn't send any more new works, that it was time for "younger folks." This attitude changed when he encountered the artistry of a virtuosic clarinet player, Richard Mühlfeld, for whom he composed a trio, a quintet, and two sonatas. Brahms's last years also saw the creation of his *Four Serious Songs*, a set of chorale-preludes for the organ, and the four sets of piano pieces heard here. The clarinet sonatas, also playable on viola, are happy pieces, but the trio and quintet, and certainly the songs and organ pieces, have tinges of Brahms's signature "autumnal" melancholy. It was in this musical mood that Brahms turned back to his own instrument, the piano, for a series of short, introspective works of different names (Intermezzo, Capriccio, etc.), that he thought of simply as *Klavierstücke*: piano pieces. In miniature, they reveal his total mastery of his craft: harmony, counterpoint, melodic variation, rhythmic complexities, the relationships between main themes and accompanying figures. Probably all written between 1891 and 1893, they were published in four separate sets.

Pianist Orli Shaham has commented, "I am constantly amazed at the layers of complexity Brahms achieves through the most simple means." These are in fact simple pieces, though backed up by the highest compositional skill, and they are very intimate expressions of musical thought. They might best be heard by imagining that you are playing them yourself, instead of listening to someone else, and thus envisioning Brahms playing them for himself alone. To the first set he gave a rather fanciful overall name: *Seven Fantasies*. Individually they are named Capriccio (three fast-paced, rather dramatic pieces) and Intermezzo (four more lyrical and thoughtful works). Five of the seven — all but two of the Intermezzos — are cast in minor keys.

What is an Intermezzo? In the realm of instrumental music, it doesn't have particular meaning; in the world of opera, it means a short passage for the orchestra alone, usually to cover a scene change. It's an arbitrary title that Brahms used for the set of three pieces he published as Op. 117. The first has an inscription from a Scottish lullaby, and Brahms called this little vignette "a lullaby of my sorrows." There's a sense of unsatisfied yearning in each piece; two of the three are in minor keys, emphasizing the sadness.

The six pieces of Op. 118 were published as just *Six Piano Pieces*, although they have individual titles, again, mostly Intermezzo. The first two make a contrasting pair: one tempestuous in A minor; the other expansive in A major. A "Ballade" might suggest storytelling, although if there is a story behind this one in G minor, it is inscrutable. Another Intermezzo, in F minor, is paired with a lyrical Romance in F major. The finale is an Intermezzo in the unusual key of E-flat minor, which he sent as a special gift to Clara Schumann.

The final set, published as *Four Piano Pieces*, starts with a bitter Intermezzo in B minor, followed by an Intermezzo in E minor whose second section is a sunny evocation of the Austrian Ländler folk dance. A brief and light-hearted Intermezzo in C follows before the starkly dramatic finale, a Rhapsody, indicating turbulent emotions, that opens in the usually placid key of E-flat major but ends in an emphatic E-flat minor. While there's no way of knowing what Brahms had in mind when he created this miniature masterpiece, it does impart a feel of final summation.

Andrea Lamoreaux is Music Director of WFMT, Chicago's classical-music station



JORGE FEDERICO OSORIO

Jorge Federico Osorio has been lauded throughout the world for his superb musicianship, powerful technique, vibrant imagination, and deep passion. He is the recipient of several international prizes and awards, including the highly prestigious Medalla Bellas Artes, the most distinguished honor granted by Mexico's National Institute of Fine Arts.

Osorio has performed with many of the world's leading ensembles, including the symphony orchestras of Atlanta, Chicago, Cincinnati, Dallas, Detroit, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Seattle, and the National Symphony Orchestra of Mexico; the Israel, Warsaw, and Royal Philharmonics; the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra (OSESP), Moscow State Orchestra, Orchestre Nationale de France, Philharmonia Orchestra, and Amsterdam's Concertgebouw Orchestra. He has collaborated with such distinguished conductors as Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, James Conlon, Bernard Haitink, Manfred Honeck, Mariss Jansons, Lorin Maazel, Juanjo Mena, Carlos Miguel Prieto, Robert Spano, Klaus Tennstedt, and Jaap van Zweden, among many others. His concert tours have taken him to Europe, Asia, and North, Central, and South America. American festival appearances have included the Hollywood Bowl, Mainly Mozart, Newport, Grant Park, and Ravinia, where he performed all five Beethoven Concertos with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Maestro Conlon in two consecutive evenings.

Osorio has performed recitals and with orchestras in Berlin, Brussels, Düsseldorf, Rio de Janeiro, and Stuttgart, and at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and the Gewandhaus in Leipzig. In America, he has given recitals in recent years in Berkeley,

California (Cal Performances), Boston, and Chicago, where he has appeared on Symphony Center's distinguished Piano Series on four separate occasions. He has also given two recitals in New York City at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, both of which were highly acclaimed by Allan Kozinn of *The New York Times*.

A prolific recording artist, Osorio's discography is extensive. *Gramophone* proclaimed his solo Brahms album on ASV, "one of the most distinguished discs of Brahms' piano music in recent years." Orchestral recordings include Beethoven's five Piano Concertos and Choral Fantasy; both Brahms Concertos; and concertos by Chávez, Mozart, Ponce, Rachmaninov, Rodrigo, Schumann, and Tchaikovsky. This is Osorio's seventh recording for Cedille. His recorded work may also be found on the Artek, ASV, CBS, EMI, IMP, and Naxos labels.

An avid chamber music performer, Osorio has served as artistic director of the Brahms Chamber Music Festival in Mexico; performed in a piano trio with violinist Mayumi Fujikawa and cellist Richard Markson; and collaborated with Yo-Yo Ma, Ani Kavafian, Elmar Oliveira, and Henryk Szeryng. He began studying the piano at the age of five with his mother, Luz María Puente, and later attended the conservatories of Mexico, Paris, and Moscow, where he worked with Bernard Flavigny, Monique Haas, and Jacob Milstein. He also studied with Nadia Reisenberg and Wilhelm Kempff. Highly revered in his native Mexico, Osorio resides in the Chicagoland area, where he serves on the faculty at Roosevelt University's Chicago College of Performing Arts.

Jorge Federico Osorio is a Steinway Artist. For more information: jorgefedericoosorio.com

Producer James Ginsburg

Engineer Bill Maylone

Recorded June 27–30 and July 26, 2016

Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts, University of Chicago

Steinway Piano

Piano Technician Ken Orgel

Graphic Design Twin Collective

Cover Photo Todd Rosenberg

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ALSO BY JORGE FEDERICO OSORIO



RUSSIAN RECITAL

“Osorio eschews the flashy pyrotechnics pianists in the post-Horowitz tradition bring to the Viktor Hartmann picture gallery, using his virtuosity to illuminate what makes the music still feel so starkly original.”

— *Chicago Tribune*



CARLOS CHÁVEZ PIANO CONCERTO

“Osorio is a pianist with a forceful technique.... The blend of speed and weight in his playing is remarkable. He is sharply and cleanly supported by the Mexican National Symphony Orchestra under Prieto.”

— *Fanfare*



SALÓN MEXICANO

“With his usual intense clarity and suave panache, Osorio illuminates these composers’ contributions, which derive their style from Chopin, Liszt, Schumann, and Tchaikovsky, while wedding their melodic gifts to the Spanish and Mexican rhythms endemic to their native region.”

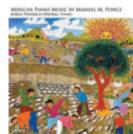
— *Audiophile Audition*



DEBUSSY & LISZT

“Osorio’s performances combine... clarity of texture with an articulate rhythmic sense that illuminate such pieces as ‘La cathedrale engloutie’ (one of the highlights of the set) from within.”

— *Chicago Tribune*



MEXICAN PIANO MUSIC BY MANUEL M. PONCE

“Osorio plays all of these pieces masterfully, with virtuosity to spare and a natural expressiveness that never compromises the music’s freshness and spontaneity.... This is an absolutely wonderful disc by any measure.”

— *Classicstoday.com*



PIANO ESPAÑOL

“Jorge Federico Osorio knows this music as well as any pianist alive, and his performances bespeak the wisdom of maturity with no loss of freshness or spontaneity.... There’s poetry aplenty, but also bravura. Sonically, this recording strikes me as ideal. In short, what you hear is what Osorio does, and what he does is pretty terrific.”

— *Classicstoday.com*

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