

the PROGRAM6
JULY*Thursday*

8 PM

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Garrick Ohlsson, *piano*

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DIANE CHEN KOCH-WESER AND JAN KOCH-WESER

PIANO SONATA NO. 14 IN A MINOR, OP. 142/D. 784 [1823]

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Allegro giusto
Andante
Allegro vivace

ETUDE, OP. 65, NO. 1 [1912]—

ETUDE IN D-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 8, NO. 10 [1894]—

PRELUDE, OP. 59, NO. 2 [1910-11]—

POÈME, OP. 32, NO. 1 [1903]—

SONATA NO. 5, OP. 53 [1907]

Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915)

:: INTERMISSION ::

PIANO SONATA NO. 20 IN A MAJOR, D. 959 [1828]

Franz Schubert

Allegro
Andantino
Scherzo: Allegro vivace
Rondo: Allegretto—Presto

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Notes
ON THE
PROGRAM

BY
Sandra Hyslop



This familiar watercolor by Wilhelm August Rieder portrays Schubert in the year 1825. It has been copied frequently by other artists, and by Rieder himself, who reproduced the image in oils in later years.

Franz Schubert's myriad compositions for piano run the gamut from charming, insouciant dances—which Schubert played for entertainment at house parties—to some of the most challenging works that a pianist can essay. In addition to dozens of the dances, his published piano compositions include more than twenty sonatas, eight Impromptus, six *Moments Musicaux*, and the *Wanderer Fantasy*. Many sophisticated works for piano four-hands, too, must be counted among Schubert's great contributions to a pianist's repertoire, as well as the piano parts to his 600+ songs, many of them demanding a high degree of technical and musical facility.

PIANO SONATA NO. 14 IN A MINOR, OP. POST. 142/D. 784

Franz Schubert (b. Himmelfortgrund, a suburb of Vienna, January 31, 1797; d. Vienna, November 19, 1828)

Composed February 1823; 21 minutes

Schubert began composing solo sonatas for the piano in 1815, by which time he had composed dozens of solo songs with piano accompaniment, but relatively little music for piano alone. From the first Piano Sonata in E major (D. 157) to the last in B-flat major (D. 960), Schubert traversed a steep path in a span of only thirteen years, 1815-1828. Beginning with a native feel for the instrument and an uncanny ear for melody, he grew steadily in his abilities to shape thematic materials and structure.

Three of his twenty-plus piano sonatas (some sonatas exist as partial, or fragmentary pieces) are in the key of A minor, composed in 1817, 1823, and 1825. Of these three, the two later sonatas belong to a category of "most demanding in a pianist's repertoire."

Robert Schumann, himself a prolific composer of piano music, as well as a discerning writer of music criticism, named the A-minor Sonata of this concert one of Schubert's best. Unusual in its overall design, the work comprises three movements, the first of which is more than twice as long as the other two put together.

The complexities of the Allegro giusto leave an overwhelming impression of unsettled despair, even anger, only fitfully relieved by moments of repose. The movement embodies drama on a vast scale. For the most part, Schubert centers his attention around the key of A minor, with forays into surprising harmonic byways. The drama is increased by the wide range of dynamics, beginning and ending pianissimo, Schubert builds to several fortissimo outbursts. A coda concludes the movement in a quiet A major.

The far-away key of F major and the gentle opening of the Andante come as a surprise. The principal theme and its variants, quietly simple melodies, are accompanied by unassuming harmonies, all of which Schubert sets in inventive ways. The little pianissimo turn figure, which he marks "sordino" [in a violinist's score, sordino indicates that a mute is to be applied to the strings], soon becomes an important and extended thematic element. To the very end, the turn figure continues to hover, like an insistent breeze overhead. The piece ends quietly with a final iteration of the four opening bars.

The dramatic last movement returns to the key of A minor, with scurrying triplets, scalar flourishes, and romping chords. Again, the dynamics range from pianissimo to fortissimo, and the whole piece ends in a flurry of double octaves and four emphatic A-minor chords:
Now ! Am Done!

ETUDE, OP. 65, NO. 1 (1912)
ETUDE IN D-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 8, NO. 10 (1894)
PRELUDE, OP. 59, NO. 2 (1910-11)
POÈME, OP. 32, NO. 1 (1903)
SONATA NO. 5, OP. 53 (1907)

Alexander Scriabin (b. Moscow, January 6, 1872; d. Moscow, April 27, 1915)

Composed 1894-1911; 24 minutes

Like a few other composers—Richard Wagner and Carlo Gesualdo are two prime examples—the Russian pianist and composer Alexander Scriabin has become renowned for bizarre, even unlawful, behaviors. Socially ostracized for their choices and actions, such composers created music that, while achieving degrees of success, was tainted by having originated from the inspired mind of a person whose social skills needed polish. The critical response to Scriabin’s music, during his lifetime, and for some time thereafter, became tangled with the judgmental criticism of his life choices, and of his unstable mental condition.

But we do not sit this evening in a seminar room, awaiting a lecture on psychopathic symptoms. We are in a concert hall, where one of the world’s leading pianists presents the convincing evidence of Scriabin’s enduring achievements as a composer for that instrument. Scriabin was, after all, an inspired and prolific creator of substantial scores. He may not have achieved the recognition he desired as the “Second Coming” deity, but he lives on in the uniquely beautiful music that he composed.

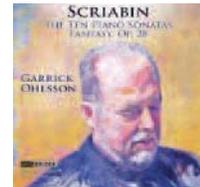
In his short lifetime (43 years), Scriabin devoted himself to composing largely for the piano. With the exception of several lush orchestral scores, his catalog comprises dozens of short pieces, as well as ten piano sonatas and a single piano concerto. Over the years since Scriabin’s death in 1915, pianists have undertaken serious explorations of his music. Russian pianists led the way, beginning with his friend Sergei Rachmaninoff, and continuing with such proponents as Emil Gilels and Vladimir Ashkenazy. Garrick Ohlsson traces his own devotion to Scriabin’s music to hearing a performance of the Seventh Sonata by the great Russian (Ukrainian) pianist Sviatoslav Richter.

For the past three decades, Mr. Ohlsson has contributed substantially to our understanding and appreciation of a composer who began his career emulating his idol Frédéric Chopin, and grew into his enduring reputation for writing harmonically daring and emotionally explosive scores. Very few works in Scriabin’s catalog are available to any but the most proficient concert performer.

This evening’s repertoire offers a panorama of Scriabin’s wide-ranging imagination—from the late-nineteenth century Romanticism of his youth to the passions and mysticism of his final years of life. He had been a favored and prodigious pupil, along with the young Sergei Rachmaninoff, of the controversial Moscow pedagogue Nikolai Sverev. Injuries to his hand set him firmly on the composer’s path, where his intimate knowledge of a pianist’s capabilities defined his work. Guided by an inner ear that heard sounds not yet exploited at the keyboard, Scriabin opened a vast world that runs the gamut of musical challenges and rewards.



Alexander Scriabin
(1872-1915)



Garrick Ohlsson has recorded dozens of Alexander Scriabin’s works for piano.

In his twenties, Alexander Scriabin became an adherent of the theosophical ideas of Helena Blavatsky, an English-woman who wrote the *Secret Doctrine* in 1888. In the spirit of her writings, with which he identified closely, Scriabin composed his symphonic fantasy *The Poem of Ecstasy* (1905-08). Simultaneously he wrote a 300-line poem to accompany (but not to be performed with) the orchestral score.

In 1907 Scriabin wrote his Fifth Piano Sonata, using musical materials from the 20-minute orchestral work as the basis for the 12-minute piano sonata. He asked that these lines from his original poem be inscribed at the head of the piano sonata’s score:

**I call you to life, oh mysterious forces!
Drowned in the obscure depths
Of the creative spirit,
Timid Shadows of life,
To you I bring audacity!**

Notes
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BY
Sandra Hyslop



1821 painting by Leopold Kupelwieser (1796-1862)

The popular iconography that has survived Franz Schubert—drawings, etchings, and paintings—leaves a collective impression of a merry band of friends engaged in the unencumbered pleasures of life in Biedermeier Vienna. The power of these visual images has sometimes overridden the widely available biographical evidence, which shows that Schubert's life was complex and nuanced, with precious moments of levity relieving his very serious life challenges.

PIANO SONATA NO. 20 IN A MAJOR, D. 959

Franz Schubert

Composed 1828; 39 minutes

The sheer numbers, let alone the quality, of compositions that Schubert produced during the mere fifteen years of his professional life defy imagination. Attempting to achieve recognition for his work—performances, publication, and other measures of success—preoccupied him always. And all of this, despite the degrading effects of the syphilitic condition that finally claimed him, at age 31.

The two piano sonatas on this evening's concert reveal the fullness of the composer's spirit in its many moods, as well as his imaginative technical skills. The joy of the man who liked playing dance music for friends and the sorrows of the man who struggled profoundly against life's blockades all appear in these sonatas. Until his death, Schubert was still planning to take lessons in counterpoint in order to improve his methods. He left this world with his spirit of exploration fully engaged.

The final three piano sonatas of Schubert's life, composed in 1828, the year of his death, have formed a triad of extraordinary beauty and achievement. He was unable to find a publisher for them, and they were made available only in 1839, by the Viennese publisher Diabelli.

The Sonata in A Major, the penultimate of Schubert's more than twenty piano sonatas, is a forty-minute journey through realms of violence and serenity, lamentation and peace, lightness and profundity. It magically captures the extremes of human experience in one beautiful statement.

The first movement begins with grand, dramatic chords interlaced with downward-falling arpeggios. It follows a traditional sonata-allegro format, but extended in such a way that early critics were bothered by Schubert's imaginative key relationships and abundant use of unexpected modulations. The coda to this movement returns quietly to the opening chords, which leads to an ending on calm arpeggios.

Schubert once again surprises the ear by introducing the key of F-sharp minor against the dying of the A-major arpeggios of the Allegro movement (the note A now becomes the center note of an F-sharp-minor chord, instead of the tonic of A major). The Andantino is cast in an A – B – A' structure, with the A sections based on sighing intervals of downward-moving seconds. The sorrowful lyricism of the beginning A section is interrupted by a dramatic fantasy that rises to an impassioned, angry climax. The calm that follows leads to the A' section, in which the sighing descending seconds are shrouded in new, profound mystery.

Again, Schubert precipitously changes the mood. The Scherzo, as sparkling as the Andantino was mysterious, skips around from key to key. The buoyancy of the movement is enhanced by Schubert's witty, improvisatory-sounding modulations.

The final movement, like the rest of the A-major Sonata, is infused with melody from Schubert's extraordinary lyrical reservoir. He casts the movement in an intricate rondo structure: A – B – A – Development – A – B – A – Coda. Insistent triplets, exceeding lyricism, and frequent, unprepared modulations are prominent characteristics. The conclusion recalls the very opening of the sonata through its sounding of a bold fanfare in A major.

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