

# SCHUBERTIADA

## 全部舒伯特鋼琴獨奏會



**Robin Zebaida**

羅賓·斯巴達

*An evening of favourite songs & best loved piano pieces by Franz Schubert including Erbkönig, Serenade, Marche Militaire & Impromptus.*

**29 / 09**

**2021 Wednesday 8pm**

**Hong Kong City Hall Concert Hall**

2021年9月29日 星期三晚上八點

香港大會堂音樂廳

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# SCHUBERTIADÉ

Robin Zebaidaplays Schubert

01

## Four Impromptus D 935

no 1 in F minor

## Drei Klavierstücke - Three Piano Pieces D 946

no 1 in Eb minor

## 12 Lieder von Franz Schubert S 558

no 1 Sei mir begrüßt - I greet you

no 2 Auf dem Wasser zu singen - To be sung on the water

no 3 Du bist die Ruh - You are peace

no 4 Erlkönig - The Erlking

## Four Impromptus D 935

no 2 in Ab Major

## Schwanenengesang

### - Swansong 14 Lieder von Franz Schubert S 560

no 10 Liebesbotschaft - Love's Message

no 7 Ständchen - Serenade

no 3 Aufenthalt - Resting place

## Four Impromptus D 899

no 3 in Gb major

## Marche militaire D 733, no 1

The performance will run for about 75 minutes with no interval.

即興曲編號935 第一首F小調

三首鋼琴作品編號946 第一首降E小調

四首舒伯特藝術歌曲 編號558

《我向你致意》《在水面上歌唱》

《你帶來寧靜》《魔王》

即興曲編號935 第二首 降A大調

三首舒伯特藝術歌曲《天鵝之歌》編號560

《愛的信息》《小夜曲》《休息處》

即興曲編號899 第三首降G大調

'軍隊進行曲' 編號733 第一首

演奏會長約75分鐘，不設中場休息。

Schubert

Schubert arr. Liszt

Schubert

Schubert arr. Liszt

Schubert

Schubert arr. Tausig

舒伯特

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Persons with symptoms of flu and people who have been in contact with COVID-19 patients within the last 14 days may not attend the performance

A photograph of pianist Robin Zebaida in a dark suit, seated at a grand piano. He is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. His hands are positioned on the keys. The background is dark with some red light accents.

# ROBIN ZEBAIDA

羅賓·斯巴達

"A pianist of Herculean stamina ... with strength in charm, lyricism and subtle turns of phrase." ~Musical Opinion

"Exquisite elegiacal playing and fiery thunderous brilliance." ~South China Morning Post

Lauded after a Liszt recital by Musical Opinion magazine as 'a pianist of Herculean stamina', Robin Zebaida enjoys a performing career that has taken him to over 100 countries across all continents. Highlights of past seasons have included concerts in USA, Canada - where he collaborated with conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin - Central America, Europe, the Far East and Australia, where his Sydney recital was reported as achieving 'a warmth and empathy with the audience rarely seen'. In London he has performed at St John's Smith Square and the Queen Elizabeth Hall.

Recent concerts have included Robin Zebaida's debut in China to a capacity audience in the Shenzhen Concert Hall, along with tours to the Far East and special programmes to commemorate the anniversaries of Richard Strauss and Anatol Liadov. The 2014/15 season included performances in UK, Switzerland, France, Germany and Hong Kong, with a focus on Russian music to commemorate the centenary of the death of Alexander Scriabin.

Plans for the current season focus on the Far East, where he recently performed at Hong Kong's City Hall Concert Hall, and as part of the 6th Shenzhen Piano Music Festival in China. Live performances and a recording of solo piano music and song transcriptions of Schubert are projected for 2021. He is also in demand for lectures, pre-concert talks and masterclasses, and has been invited to serve as a jury member on the panels of several regional and international piano competitions, many of them now online.

Robin Zebaida's wide ranging and extensive repertoire from Bach to Gershwin also encompasses less familiar fare, as reflected in his CD 'Off the Beaten Track' on the Regent label. Particular areas of interest include Russian music, orchestral and vocal transcriptions, and music for the left hand. In a career which embraces many aspects of music making, he also appears as accompanist, chamber music partner and concerto soloist. His group Classical Cornucopia has performed on several Classical Music themed cruises.

Robin Zebaida was born and educated in London, England, later winning an Exhibition award to read Music at New College, Oxford, from where he graduated with maximum distinction in performance. He completed his formal studies as a postgraduate at the Royal College of Music.

# FRANZ SCHUBERT

法蘭茲 · 舒伯特 (1797 – 1828)

05

Lachen und Weinen - laughter and tears - is the title of one of over 600 songs and vocal works Schubert composed in his all too brief lifetime. It neatly sums up the character of much of his music, indeed of Schubert himself. Like Janus, the two-headed god of gates and transitions of Roman mythology, his art often seems to point in opposing directions simultaneously. Or rather, it presents different emotional takes on the same themes, often in rapid succession.

Schubert suffered from cyclothymia, a form of manic depression, and the works of his maturity, inevitably early for someone who did not live to see 32, are peppered with major/minor alternations of the same music. Indeed, this musical "bipolarity" became something of a hallmark of Schubert's late works. In tonight's programme alone, you can hear it in the central sections of Impromptus in F minor and A flat, the Klavierstück no 1 in Eb minor, and in the songs Ständchen, and Sei mir begrüßt.

Although Schubert's music is often remembered for the melancholy and consolatory moods it evokes, we shouldn't forget the radiant joy exuded in songs like Der Musensohn and Mein!, the exuberant Octet in F and Trout Quintet, and the youthful insouciance of the 3rd and 5th Symphonies. An introvert by nature, especially perhaps in his youth, he regularly shunned the limelight later on, and retreated from promoting his own work.

So prodigious was his output – he composed more works in 15 years than either Bach or Handel did in 50 – that he even sometimes failed to recognise his own music. Once one piece was completed, he immediately started out on the next.

In one famous instance the great baritone of the day Johann Vogl, an ardent admirer, got him to run through one of his many songs. Schubert's response after they finished was "Not bad, who wrote it?"



Along with the alternation of major and minor, two other signature strokes of Schubert's mature works should be mentioned here: While he was capable, both in his music and in real life, of expressing anger and even violence, long sections of his late piano music rarely rise above a whisper - p, pp and even ppp, giving rise to one of the biggest technical challenges to the modern-day pianist performing it on powerful contemporary instruments.

Perhaps the most poignant feature of his later works is the sudden cutting dead of a phrase just before its conclusion, such as happens several times in the Klavierstück no.1, the *Moment Musical* in C# minor D 780, no 4, and just about everywhere in the late B flat major sonata. Schubert takes you right to the brink and then, suddenly, nothing! For the last five years of his life, Schubert suffered from what was then almost certainly terminal illness. He knew it would take his life prematurely, as indeed it did. Is it too fanciful to see these sudden silences as a musical portrayal of this pitiful predicament?

If Schubert was a bit of a loner in earlier life, his friendships blossomed in his late teens. and it is the almost universal recollection of his close circle of friends, bar the odd outburst in the local tavern, how generally amiable and well-liked he was. As writer and broadcaster Jeremy Siepmann puts it: "there is no composer in history whose life story is rooted so deeply, richly and pervasively in the experience of friendship as Schubert's".

Indeed, it was his friends who carried him through his life promoting, often at their own expense, the publication of his music, and writing off his debts. In particular, the introduction made by Schober, a rakishly handsome aristocrat, to that already mentioned star of both opera and Lied Johann Vogl, was supremely significant in putting Schubert on the map as a song writer while he was still alive.

Notwithstanding the enormous amount of time taken up to create at breakneck speed so much music in such a short life, Schubert was often to be found with friends at the local coffee house or tavern. And of course, what could be more Schubertian than the Schubertiade, "an informal, unadvertised gathering held at a private home, sponsored by one of Schubert's wealthier friends or aficionados of his music. It served as a literary-musical salon, and often included poetry recitations, dancing, and other sociable pastimes".



# TODAY'S PROGRAMME

今晚演出的曲目

## Impromptu in F minor D 935, no 1 Schubert

The two groups of Impromptus and later Klavierstücke all date from the last year of Schubert's life and represent some of his most enduring and endearing piano music, though the scent of death seems to hover constantly.

Chances are if you come out of tonight's concert whistling one of the many memorable melodies you've heard, it won't be from this piece! The magic of this Impromptu lies not in its hummable tunes, but in the trance-like manner it takes tiny cells of three or four notes, or the very simplest of rhythmic patterns, and continually repeats and develops them, leading eventually into the magical landscape of the two extended, hypnotic sections in which the treble and bass endlessly play off each other, as left hand crosses over the right. This dreamlike soundscape brings to mind Schumann's comment, referring to his "Great" ninth symphony, about Schubert's "heavenly length", as well as Alfred Brendel's description of Schubert moving with the "assurance of a sleepwalker". The rhythmically jagged, dramatic opening statement acts as a framework, returning in the middle of the work, and again at the very end.



## Klavierstück no 1 in Eb minor D 946, no. 1

### Schubert

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The three Klavierstücke D 946, composed in Schubert's last year, were intended to become a third set of four impromptus, but lay unfinished when he died.

This dark, turbulent piece combines in abundance all the Schubertian trademarks mentioned above: the preponderance of quiet dynamics, combined with sudden, loud flashes of anger; the repetition of minor themes in the brighter major, and the "sudden death" silences just before a phrase is about to conclude. The urgent, ghoulish mood is established without preamble in the repeated triplet patterns. A slower, chordal central section in B major barely offers respite with its glittering, will-o'-the-wisp scales, spine-chilling tremolos and lugubrious character. A further episode, to complete what would have been a more extended piece was crossed out by the composer, and is not played tonight.

## 12 Lieder von Franz Schubert S 558

### Liszt

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no. 1 Sei mir begrüßt - I greet you

no. 2 Auf dem Wasser zu singen

- To be sung on the water

no. 3 Du bist die Ruh - You are peace

no. 4 Erlkönig - The Erlking

#### **no. 1 Sei mir begrüßt - I greet you**

Friedrich Rückert

English Translation © Richard Wigmore

You who were torn from me and my kisses,

I greet you!

I kiss you!

You, whom only my yearning greeting can reach,

I greet you!

I kiss you!

You who were bestowed on this heart

by the hand of love,

you who were taken

from my breast! With this flood of tears

I greet you!

I kiss you!

Defying the distance that, hostile and divisive,

has come

between you and me;

frustrating the envious powers of fate,

I greet you!

I kiss you!

As in love's fairest spring

you once came to me

with greetings and kisses,

so with all the fervour of my soul

I greet you!

I kiss you!

One breath of love dissolves time and space,

and I am with you,

you are with me;

I hold you closely in my arms' embrace,

I greet you!

I kiss you!

Themes of separation and longing abound in German Romanticism - in real life as in art. According to Siepmann once again: "The German romantics (largely thanks to Schubert's idol Goethe), had a kind of narcissistic obsession with death, pain and suffering. Depression, or 'melancholia' as it was poetically called back then, far from being stigmatised, as it rather is today, was highly fashionable. If you were a poet or a composer or an artist it was almost bad form not to die young, preferably of consumption or on the battlefield, though suicide was also popular - literally. With The Sorrows of Young Werther, Goethe unleashed a positive epidemic of it. In some circles, particularly in the generation after Schubert, there flourished what one might call 'competitive pallor'."

In I greet you, to verses by Rückert, the Sei mir gegrüsst! Sei mir geküsst! refrain acts as backdrop for the entire song. In these pandemic times, the prevalent theme of the departure of, or separation from, a loved one will no doubt take on special meaning for many.

## **no.2 Auf dem Wasser zu singen - To be sung on the water**

Graf Friedrich Leopold zu Stolberg-Stolberg

Translation © Richard Wigmore

Amid the shimmer of the mirroring waves  
the rocking boat glides, swan-like,  
on gently shimmering waves of joy.  
The soul, too, glides like a boat.  
For from the sky the setting sun  
dances upon the waves around the boat.  
Above the tree-tops of the western grove  
the red glow beckons kindly to us;  
beneath the branches of the eastern grove  
the reeds whisper in the red glow.  
The soul breathes the joy of heaven,  
the peace of the grove, in the reddening glow.  
Alas, with dewy wings  
time vanishes from me on the rocking waves.  
Tomorrow let time again vanish with shimmering  
wings, as it did yesterday and today,  
until, on higher, more radiant wings,  
I myself vanish from the flux of time.

In Auf dem Wasser zu singen, the human soul is likened to a boat gliding on shimmering water. Ever the dramatist, Liszt builds the song up into something of a storm; after the melody rises progressively from the tenor line, through alto to soprano, Liszt adds a fourth verse in which the tune appears reinforced in octaves reaching a dazzling climax before fading away into the setting sun.

### **no. 3 Du bist die Ruh**

Friedrich Rückert

English Translation © Richard Stokes

You are repose  
And gentle peace,  
You are longing  
And what stills it.  
I pledge to you  
Full of joy and pain  
As a dwelling here  
My eyes and heart.  
Come in to me,  
And softly close  
The gate  
Behind you.  
Drive other pain  
From this breast!  
Let my heart be filled  
With your joy.  
This temple of my eyes  
Is lit  
By your radiance alone,  
O fill it utterly.

Like the first song, *Du bist die Ruh* has a similarly devotional text, and here Liszt varies the texture quite magically, with much hand-crossing and sharing out of the melodic line between the two hands.

## no. 4 Erlkönig

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

English Translation © Richard Wigmore

Who rides so late through the night and wind?

It is the father with his child.

He has the boy in his arms;

he holds him safely, he keeps him warm.

'My son, why do you hide your face in fear?'

'Father, can you not see the Erlking?

The Erlking with his crown and tail?'

'My son, it is a streak of mist.'

'Sweet child, come with me.

I'll play wonderful games with you.

Many a pretty flower grows on the shore;

my mother has many a golden robe.'

'Father, father, do you not hear

what the Erlking softly promises me?'

'Calm, be calm, my child:

the wind is rustling in the withered leaves.'

'Won't you come with me, my fine lad?

My daughters shall wait upon you;

my daughters lead the nightly dance,

and will rock you, and dance, and sing you to sleep.'

'Father, father, can you not see

Erlking's daughters there in the darkness?'

'My son, my son, I can see clearly:

it is the old grey willows gleaming.'

'I love you, your fair form allures me,

and if you don't come willingly, I'll use force.'

'Father, father, now he's seizing me!

The Erlking has hurt me!'

The father shudders, he rides swiftly,

he holds the moaning child in his arms;

with one last effort he reaches home;

the child lay dead in his arms.

It is remarkable to think today that when, on Schubert's behalf, one of his friends wrote to Goethe to see if he would accept a dedication from the composer of *Erlkönig*, the letter went unanswered and the manuscript was returned without comment. A first attempt to get the song published was likewise rejected as the piano part was considered unplayable.

This terrifying masterpiece, composed in a single afternoon when he was just eighteen, and eventually published as his op. 1, is often considered Schubert's best song, if not one of the greatest songs of all time. The poem tells of a father riding home at full speed through a forest carrying his sick son. The boy's increasingly urgent (and higher pitched) entreaties that an evil spirit, the Erlking, is whispering to him and trying to snatch him away are brushed aside by his father. After a dramatic cessation of the relentlessly pounding right-hand piano octaves the final, a brief recitative chillingly reveals that on his arrival, the child in his arms is dead.

The atmosphere of demonic intensity achieved here is unmatched in Schubert's output and the original song offers supreme challenges to both singer, who has to act out four distinct roles of narrator, father, son and evil spirit, and pianist, in the stamina needed to play the repeated octaves.

Several arrangements of this song exist, including for orchestra (by Berlioz and, once again, Liszt), solo violin (Ernst), cello quintet and, at the extreme end, for piano left hand. This last transcription was made by Count Geza Zichy, a student of Liszt who, while still in his teens, lost his right arm in a hunting accident.

## Impromptu in A flat major D 935, no. 2

### Schubert

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In contrast to the weightier structure of the F minor, the Impromptus in Ab and Gb both share a simpler and shorter ternary (A-B-A) form. Notwithstanding the somewhat sombre chordal accompaniment, this *allegretto* is a gentle triple-time dance, where the emphasis shifts teasingly from the second beat of the bar to the first. Major - minor alternations imbue the busier, more unsettled middle section with darker hues.

# Schwanengesang - Swansong

## 14 Lieder von Franz Schubert S 560

### Liszt

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no. 10 Liebesbotschaft - Love's Message

no. 7 Ständchen - Serenade

no. 3 Aufenthalt - Resting place

#### **no. 10 Liebesbotschaft**

English Translation © Richard Wigmore

Murmuring brook, so silver and bright,  
do you hasten, so lively and swift, to my beloved?

Ah, sweet brook, be my messenger.

Bring her greetings from her distant lover.

All the flowers, tended in her garden,  
which she wears so charmingly on her breast,  
and her roses with their crimson glow:  
refresh them, brooklet, with your cooling waters.

When on your banks she inclines her head  
lost in dreams, thinking of me,

comfort my sweetheart with a kindly glance,  
for her beloved will soon return.

When the sun sinks in a red flush,  
lull my sweetheart to sleep.

With soft murmurings bring her sweet repose,  
and whisper dreams of love.

#### **no. 7 Ständchen**

Ludwig Rellstab

English Translation © Richard Wigmore

Softly my songs plead  
through the night to you;  
down into the silent grove,  
beloved, come to me!

Slender treetops whisper and rustle  
in the moonlight;  
my darling, do not fear  
that the hostile betrayer will overhear us.

Do you not hear the nightingales call?  
Ah, they are imploring you;  
with their sweet, plaintive songs  
they are imploring for me.  
They understand the heart's yearning,  
they know the pain of love;  
with their silvery notes  
they touch every tender heart.  
Let your heart, too, be moved,  
beloved, hear me!  
Trembling, I await you!  
Come, make me happy!

### **no. 3 Aufenthalt**

Resting place

English Translation © Richard Wigmore

Surging river, roaring forest,  
immovable rock, my resting place.  
As wave follows wave,  
so my tears flow, ever renewed.  
As the high treetops stir and heave,  
so my heart beats incessantly.  
Like the rock's age-old ore  
my sorrow remains forever the same.

Unlike his two great song cycles, *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*, *Schwanengesang* (not to be confused with the single work D 744 of the same name) was a collection of some of Schubert's last songs, posthumously offered for publication by his brother Ferdinand. Apart from one poem by Seidl, these fourteen songs are settings of two poets, Heinrich Heine and Ludwig Rellstab. It was Rellstab's famous comment, wearing his critic's hat, likening the first movement of Beethoven's *Sonata, op 27, no 2* to "moonlight shining on Lake Lucerne" which led to the nickname "Moonlight" sonata.



Liszt transcribed Schwanengesang in its entirety, changing the order of the songs for musical effect. Tonight's selection of three songs are all to poems by Rellstab. In *Liebesbotschaft*, Love's message is conveyed from the lover to the object of his affection by a babbling brook in fast notes which run throughout the song. The famous *Serenade*, one of Schubert's most delectably flowing tunes, is given an extra verse by Liszt, as the love song is transformed into a love duet. Female and male voices alternate in the first two verses, and then - magically - come together at a distance of one beat for the rapturous final verse. The anguished mood and throbbing triplets of the last song, *Aufenthalt*, lie in sharp distinction to its title, *Resting place*.

## Impromptu in G flat major D 899, no. 3

### Schubert

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Presumably to make it more accessible to aspiring pianists, the first published edition "simplified" Schubert's original key signature from G flat to G major, and rewrote it in common time, 4/4. Why Schubert should have chosen the time signature he did remains a conundrum: "Double cut time" is highly unusual, if not unique, in anything since sacred music from the Renaissance. Perhaps he meant it to convey in this beautiful song a devotional mood? It likely also implies a more flowing tempo than is often heard. Notwithstanding its hymn-like opening in which the level barely rises above a whisper in the entire first section, more passionate stirrings establish themselves in the middle section and just before the conclusion, with a huge dynamic palette overall ranging from ppp to ffz.

One of the most magical elements of this piece is the way Schubert keeps ratcheting up the emotional tension with subtle chromatic or harmonic shifts in repeated phrases. As it draws to a conclusion, Schubert has a final twist up his sleeve, taking the music through the progressively remote and stark keys of B minor and G minor. This masterstroke manifests itself in two hammer blows, the loudest points of the piece, before dissolving resignedly back into the home key of G flat.

## Marche militaire D 733, no. 1

### Schubert/Tausig

This delightful March, the ever-popular first of a set of three, dates unsurprisingly from one of Schubert's happiest times: Having been dogged by the drudgery of the primary classroom where he dutifully followed in the footsteps of his teacher father, Schubert finally took the courage to abandon school, and in 1818 spent an idyllic summer as music tutor to the two young daughters of Count Esterhazy in Hungary. The Marche militaire was likely to have been composed for them. Much later, Schubert's unrequited love for the younger sister Karolina manifested itself in another duet, dedicated to her. Right at the other end of the emotional spectrum, the tortured *Fantasie in F minor* D.940 is one of the undisputed masterworks of the duet repertoire.

Liszt's concert paraphrase on the Marche militaire was withdrawn from publication by the composer, apparently in favour of the version by his student Carl Tausig, who died aged 29 of typhoid fever. Apart from some flirtatious harmonic twists and arabesques in the middle section, and an appended thundering coda, this arrangement is faithful to Schubert's score. Tausig transposes the march from the original key of D into the more pianist-friendly D flat major. Even without the coda, Tausig's barnstorming effort achieves the feat of packing in more notes for two hands than Schubert's original for four.

Programme notes by Robin Zebaida

Song English Translation by Richard Wigmore and Richard Stokes

#### Sources

Schubert: *The Complete Song Texts*, published by Schirmer Books, provided courtesy of Oxford Lieder ([www.oxfordlieder.co.uk](http://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk))

*The Book of Lieder*, published by Faber, provided courtesy of Oxford Lieder ([www.oxfordlieder.co.uk](http://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk))

# SCHUBERTIADE



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# SCHUBERTIADE

