

The NAXOS logo is located in the top left corner. It consists of a blue square containing a white graphic of a classical building facade with columns, and the word "NAXOS" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters below it.

NAXOS



Schubert
Piano Variations

Yevgeny Yontov

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

Piano Variations

13 Variations on a theme by Anselm Hüttenbrenner in A minor, D576 (1817)	14:23
1 Theme: Andantino	1:13
2 Variation No. 1	0:49
3 Variation No. 2	0:52
4 Variation No. 3	0:53
5 Variation No. 4	0:53
6 Variation No. 5	1:05
7 Variation No. 6	1:22
8 Variation No. 7	0:52
9 Variation No. 8	1:01
10 Variation No. 9	1:10
11 Variation No. 10	0:53
12 Variation No. 11	1:10
13 Variation No. 12	1:01
14 Variation No. 13: Allegro	1:07
10 Variations in F major, D156 (1815)	16:21
15 Theme: Andante	1:05
16 Variation No. 1	0:50
17 Variation No. 2	0:44
18 Variation No. 3: Più moto	1:17
19 Variation No. 4	2:05

Franz Schubert was born in Vienna in 1797, the son of a schoolmaster, and spent the greater part of his short life in the city. His parents had settled in Vienna, his father moving there from Moravia in 1783 to join his schoolmaster brother at a school in the suburb of Leopoldstadt and marrying in 1785 a woman who had her origins in Silesia and was to bear him fourteen children. Franz Schubert was the twelfth of these and the fourth to survive infancy. He began to learn the piano at the age of five, with the help of his brother Ignaz, twelve years his senior, and three years later started to learn the violin, while serving as a chorister at Liechtental church. From there he applied, on the recommendation of Antonio Salieri, to join the Imperial Chapel, into which he was accepted in October 1808, as a chorister now allowed to study at the Akademisches Gymnasium, boarding at the Stadtkonvikt, his future education guaranteed.

During his schooldays Schubert formed friendships that

20 Variation No. 5: Andante con moto	1:16
21 Variation No. 6	1:15
22 Variation No. 7: Scherzando	1:15
23 Variation No. 8	1:46
24 Variation No. 9: Adagio	1:37
25 Variation No. 10: Allegro	3:11
26 Variation on a waltz by Diabelli in C minor, D718 (1821)	1:03
27 Adagio in G major (1st version), D178, No. 1 (1815)	6:17
28 Adagio in G major (2nd version), D178, No. 2 (fragment) (1815)	6:05
29 Allegretto in C minor, D900 (fragment) (1822/23*)	1:48
30 Allegro moderato in C major, D347 (1813*)	1:43
31 Andantino in C major, D348 (1816*)	3:27
32 Adagio in C major, D349 (fragment) (1816*)	4:46
33 Fantasie in C major (Grazer Fantasie), D605A (1818*)	11:59

* Probable dates

he was to maintain for the rest of his life. After his voice broke in 1812, he was offered, as expected, a scholarship to enable him to continue his general education, but he chose, instead, to train as a primary school teacher, while devoting more time to music and, in particular, to composition, the art to which he was already making a prolific contribution. In 1815 he was able to join his father as an assistant teacher, but showed no great aptitude or liking for the work. Instead he was able to continue the earlier friendships he had formed at school and form new acquaintances. His meeting in 1816 with Franz von Schober allowed him to accept an invitation to live in the latter's apartment, an arrangement that relieved him of the necessity of earning his keep in the schoolroom. In August 1817 he returned home again, when room was needed by Schober for his dying brother, and resumed his place, for the moment, in the classroom. The following summer he

spent in part at Zseliz in Hungary as music tutor to the two daughters of Count Johann Karl Esterházy von Galánta, before returning to Vienna to lodge with a new friend, the poet Johann Mayrhofer, an arrangement that continued until near the end of 1820, after which Schubert spent some months living alone, now able to afford the necessary rent.

By this period of his life it seemed that Schubert was on the verge of solid success as a composer and musician. Thanks to his friends, in particular the older singer Johann Michael Vogl, a schoolfriend of Mozart's pupil Süßmayr, Leopold von Sonnleithner and others, his music was winning an audience. There was collaboration with Schober on a new opera, later rejected by the Court Opera, but in other respects his name was becoming known as a composer, beyond his immediate circle. He lodged once again with the Schobers in 1822 and 1823 and it was at this time that his health began to deteriorate, through a venereal infection that was then incurable. This illness overshadowed the remaining years of his life and was the cause of his early death. It has been thought a direct consequence of the dissolute way of life into which Schober introduced him and which for a time alienated him from some of his former friends. The following years brought intermittent returns to his father's house, since 1818 in the suburb of Rossau, and a continuation of social life that often centred on his own musical accomplishments and of his intense activity as a composer. In February 1828 the first public concert of his music was given in Vienna, an enterprise that proved financially successful, and he was able to spend the summer with friends, including Schober, before moving, in September, to the suburb of Wieden to stay with his brother Ferdinand, in the hope that his health might improve. Social activities continued, suggesting that he was unaware of the imminence of his death, but at the end of October he was taken ill at dinner and in the following days his condition became worse. He died on 19th November.

During Schubert's final years publishers had started to show an interest in his work. He had fulfilled commissions for the theatre and delighted his friends with songs, piano pieces and chamber music. It was with his songs, above all, that Schubert won a lasting reputation and to this body of work that he made a contribution equally remarkable for

its quality as for its quantity, with settings of poems by major and minor poets, a reflection of literary interests of the period. His gift for the invention of an apt and singable melody is reflected in much else that he wrote.

Schubert enjoyed a close friendship with Anselm Hüttenbrenner in Vienna between 1815 and 1821. From a land-owning family in Graz, Hüttenbrenner, the eldest of three brothers, studied with Antonio Salieri and was prolific enough as a composer, although his career lay eventually in government service in Graz. It was from Anselm Hüttenbrenner that the conductor and composer Johann von Herbeck was able in 1865 to gain access to Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*, which had remained in Hüttenbrenner's possession until then. Schubert wrote his *13 Variations on a theme by Anselm Hüttenbrenner* in August 1817, taking the theme from Hüttenbrenner's *String Quartet in E major, Op. 3*. The simple A minor theme leads to a variation with a more active bass line and a second variation in which interest turns to the semiquaver figuration for the right hand. There follows a rhythmic variation, a fourth version of the theme accompanied by rapid figuration and a fifth in A major with triplet semiquavers. The sixth variation moves from F sharp minor to A major, with a seventh in A minor and accompanied by left-hand semiquaver triplets. The A minor eighth is followed by a shift again to the major in the ninth, with its triplet figuration. The tenth has the theme in octaves in the bass, accompanied by demisemiquavers above, the eleventh recaptures the initial mood of the theme and the twelfth has a running accompaniment in an inner voice. The work ends with an *Allegro* in 3/8, alternating major and minor, ending emphatically in the former.

The year 1815 found Schubert teaching in his father's schoolroom. It also brought his first meetings with Schober and with Hüttenbrenner. The *10 Variations in F major* bear the date 15th February 1815, and the work, like the *First Sonata*, written in the same month, was dedicated to Salieri. The theme is marked *Andante*, with a first variation given with a triplet accompaniment, a rumbustious second and an even livelier third variation. The fourth, a slower minor variation, leads to a fifth marked *Andante con moto*, with a right-hand triplet chordal accompaniment, and a sixth in octaves. The seventh variation is marked *Scherzando*,

the eighth has a dotted rhythm for its right-hand octaves and a final brief cadenza, leading to the ninth, an ornamented *Adagio*. The work ends with an *Allegro* in 3/8, bringing inevitable memories of Mozart's 'Se vuol ballare, signor Contino' and brief moments of display.

In 1821 the composer and publisher Anton Diabelli proposed a collection of variations from fifty Austrian composers on a waltz theme he had written. Beethoven refused the challenge, but instead wrote his own set of thirty-three variations on the tune. Schubert responded at once with a C minor variation of the original C major waltz. The whole work was published in 1824, with Beethoven's work as a separate part and the contributions of other composers in alphabetical order, Schubert as the 38th contributor.

Schubert wrote his *Adagio in G major* in April 1815, following it at once with a more dramatic second version, a fragment here tactfully completed. The C minor *Allegretto*, that breaks off after moving into the major, is a fragment, conjecturally from 1822 or 1823. The fragmentary *Allegro*

moderato in C major was written ten years before, probably in 1813. It is followed here by an *Andantino*, again only fragmentary in form and dating probably from 1816 and here with a convincing conclusion, after the drama and variety of the second part of the piece. Probably from the same year comes the fragmentary *Adagio in C major*, which starts to explore more distant keys, before breaking off.

The last work included here is the *Fantasy in C (Grazer Fantasie)*, dating probably from 1818. It is marked *Moderato con espressione*, but diverges into an *Alla polacca* in F sharp major, and explores a variety of keys and moods in its progress. The so-called *Graz Fantasy*, a relatively recent discovery, was found in 1962 in Graz among papers inherited from Josef Hüttenbrenner, younger brother of Anselm, and bearing the former's signature. It was authenticated as a work of Schubert by Walther Dürr. The *Fantasy* suggests something of a style yet to come, with its varieties of key and mood and technical demands.

Keith Anderson

Fragmentary Works – Performance Issues

The existence of incomplete works by Schubert raises important performance questions. First, should fragmentary works be performed and recorded? My opinion is simple: if the music is beautiful or interesting enough, people should be able to listen to it. There are, of course, examples of poor fragments of music by great composers, which is probably why these fragments remained fragments – the composers realised that the musical material was not good enough. The fragments chosen for this recording, however, all have aesthetic and expressive value. Each of them is a unique piece of music by Schubert and well worth listening to.

If these fragments are to be enjoyed as musical pieces, a second question surfaces: should they be performed as they are, or should the performer attempt to complete the pieces? The answer to this question is more complicated. Some believe that adding any note to what is written is wrong. Others believe that, when performed, fragments should be fully completed, since the composer himself would probably never have given a public performance of

an incomplete piece. My opinion is somewhere between the two extremes. On the one hand, a fragment should not be stopped mid-phrase. On the other hand, adding an elaborate portion of music would mean that the piece was no longer by Schubert. The performer, then, should make an intelligent guess as to what the composer meant to write and try to approximate these intentions. In some cases, Schubert left fairly clear indications as to how he meant to end a piece, and his fragments can be fully completed with a fairly high degree of confidence. In other cases his intentions are totally unclear. In these instances, one should lead into a cadence to finish off the phrase and then stop. Examples of both cases are present on this recording and will be explained when discussing the pieces.

Schubert composed two versions of the *Adagio in G major, D178*, but the second one exists today only as a fragment. There is almost no doubt, however, that he did complete the second version as well. The fragment ends at the bottom of a left-hand page (on the back of which is the beginning of the piece), and contains very few corrections.

It is then highly improbable that this was a work in progress. Schubert probably had a working draft from which he copied the music into the manuscript, after which the next page went missing.

Both versions begin with a similar section in rounded binary form containing nine repeated bars followed by fifteen repeated bars. The following section, though distinct in each version, is long and elaborate in both. At the very end of the first version, a variation on the material from the first nine measures reappears to finish off the piece. In the second version, we get the beginning of that – only two bars, and then the fragment ends. It is clear, then, that Schubert meant to end the second version of the *Adagio* with a variation of its own first nine bars. Hence, in this recording an approximation of what Schubert could have written is added to the existing fragment to complete the piece.

The *Allegretto in C minor, D900*, is an example of a fragment in which Schubert's intentions are not clear at all. In fact, very little is known about this piece in general. Even the date of composition is unclear. According to Deutsch, it was composed in 1827, one year before he died, but according to more modern research, it must have been composed in the years 1822-1823. In this recording, I have decided not to elaborate beyond the existing fragment. After a section in C minor, Schubert changes the key signature and a new melody in C major appears. After fewer than six bars in the new key, a cadence is reached, ending the fragment. There is no indication as to what would have come next, so I have decided to stop at the cadence. The only thing I added is a low A note to the last chord, since it is clear that the cadence leads to A minor.

As with *D900*, very little is known about the fragmentary *Allegro moderato in C major, D347*. According to Deutsch, it was composed in 1813. If that is true, it could have been Schubert's first attempt at composing a piano sonata. Its 73 measures include all the main sections of a sonata exposition, including the characteristic move to the key of the dominant and a subsequent virtuosic closing section reaffirming the new key. Missing are only the last few

measures of the exposition, whose role is to lead back to the beginning of the exposition or ahead to the beginning of the development. It is clear that Schubert either did not have time to finish the piece or did not know how to continue. The last three measures lack harmony – there is only a melodic line. Since this line could be harmonized in a number of different ways, I have decided to omit these three measures altogether and stop at the half cadence of measure 70.

As with the second version of the *Adagio in G major*, the fragmentary *Andantino in C major, D348*, and *Adagio in C major, D349* were probably completed by Schubert, but the last page of each of them has been lost. Both fragments end at the bottom of a page, and they are both part of a larger manuscript that includes Schubert's *30 Menuets, D41*, of which ten are missing.

The *Andantino in C major* begins with a calm and relatively quiet section in C major before moving on to a more active and dramatic section in C minor. The last five measures of the fragment are almost an exact repeat of the first five measures of the piece, suggesting a form similar to that of the *Adagio in G major*. Thus, I have decided to complete the fragment by adding a few measures from the opening section and slightly rearranging them in order to create a stronger ending.

Completing the *Adagio in C major* is a more complex task. Instead of having an A section, a B section and a beginning of another A section (as is the case with the *Andantino in C major*), the fragment of the *Adagio* includes an A section, a B section, a variant of the A section and a beginning of a variant of the B section. The beginning of the second B section seems to be an exact repetition of the beginning of the first B section, only half a step lower (the first B section is in F major, while the second one is in E major), I decided, therefore, to complete this B section in the new key. I did not attempt, however, to complete the whole piece, since it is not clear what Schubert planned on doing after completing the second B section.

Yevgeny Yontov



Yevgeny Yontov

Israeli pianist Yevgeny Yontov has performed in Israel, Europe, and North and South America, in such notable venues as Carnegie Hall in New York and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C., and alongside such distinguished artists as David Shifrin, Paul Neubauer, and members of the Orion and Miró quartets. He has won the Gold Medal at the Wideman International Piano Competition in Louisiana, First Prize at the Tel-Hai International Concerto Competition in Israel, and awards at the Olga Kern International Piano Competition in New Mexico, the "Città di Pinerolo" International Piano Competition in Italy and the Bösendorfer International Piano Competition in Arizona. Yevgeny Yontov's musical studies began at the age of six with Adela Umansky. He received a Bachelor of Music degree from the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music in Tel Aviv, where he studied with Arie Vardi, and is currently studying with Boris Berman at the Yale School of Music, where he is pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree. www.yevgenyyontov.com

Photo: Grace Song

Franz Schubert's life was centered around a variety of close friendships. The theme for the *Variations, D576* comes from a string quartet by Anselm Hüttenbrenner, the colleague and friend to whom Schubert sent his *Unfinished Symphony* and among whose papers the *Graz Fantasy*, which explores a variety of keys and moods, was found in 1962. In 1821 Anton Diabelli invited 50 Austrian composers to write variations on his waltz theme, and Schubert was swift in submitting his minor key reply. The recording is completed with the early *Variations, D156*, dedicated to Salieri, and several relatively unknown yet beautiful fragments.

Franz
SCHUBERT
(1797–1828)

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--------------|
| 1 – 14 | 13 Variations on a theme by Anselm Hüttenbrenner in A minor, D576 (1817) | 14:23 |
| 15 – 25 | 10 Variations in F major, D156 (1815) | 16:21 |
| 26 | Variation on a waltz by Diabelli in C minor, D718 (1821) | 1:03 |
| 27 | Adagio in G major (1st version), D178, No. 1 (1815) | 6:17 |
| 28 | Adagio in G major (2nd version), D178, No. 2 (fragment) (1815) | 6:05 |
| 29 | Allegretto in C minor, D900 (fragment) (1822/23*) | 1:48 |
| 30 | Allegro moderato in C major, D347 (1813*) | 1:43 |
| 31 | Andantino in C major, D348 (1816*) | 3:27 |
| 32 | Adagio in C major, D349 (fragment) (1816*) | 4:46 |
| 33 | Fantasie in C major (Grazer Fantasie), D605A (1818*) | 11:59 |

* Probable dates

Full track details will be found in the booklet



Yevgeny Yontov, Piano

Recorded at Morse Recital Hall, Yale School of Music, New Haven, Connecticut, USA, 11–14 May, 2015
 Producer & Engineer: Eugene Kimball • Editor: Matthew LeFevre • Booklet notes: Keith Anderson
 Cover image © Flynt / Dreamstime.com



8.573707

DDD

Playing Time
68:26



© & © 2017
 Naxos Rights US, Inc.
 Booklet notes in English
 Made in Germany
www.naxos.com