

SCHUBERT Sonatas D 959 & D 960
DAVID DEVEAU, piano



STEINWAY & SONS

DAVID DEVEAU has performed for five decades on four continents, in concerto, recital and chamber music performances. In the US, he has appeared as soloist with the Boston Symphony and Boston Pops, the San Francisco Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Houston and St. Louis Symphonies, the Miami Symphony, Portland Symphony and countless regional orchestras. He has toured China twice, performed and taught in Japan and Taiwan, performed in the UK, France, Germany and Canada. This is his third release for Steinway & Sons. David Deveau served on the music faculty of MIT for over three decades, and as Artistic Director of the Rockport Chamber Music Festival (Massachusetts) from 1995-2017. He now makes his home in coastal Maine.



There is a certain mythology surrounding the masterpieces Franz Schubert produced in his last year, 1828, at age 31. Dying of syphilis, it has often been observed that his creative spirit was racing against the clock to complete not only his last three piano sonatas (in C minor, and the two on this recording in A and B-flat), but the C major string quintet, the *Schwanengesang* (literally *Swan Song*), the E-flat major Mass, and the F minor Fantasy for piano duet. It is also commonly believed that both the death of Beethoven in 1827, his Viennese neighbor (and overwhelming presence), and Schubert's awareness of his own impending death emancipated him in a certain sense, allowing him to fully realize his own, individual art. He was as un-famous as Beethoven was famous, and having lived in the older giant's shadow all of his life, he now sensed a new artistic liberty.

Known during his lifetime mostly as a composer of *lieder* (German art song), Schubert had a devoted following of fellow musicians and music-lovers who recognized his great genius and helped him financially as best they could. But his short life was often one spent in virtual penury. Most of his greatest works weren't published until years after his death; he himself never got to hear actual performances of some of his most important output. This was a tragedy almost as significant as Beethoven's deafness.

Despite his dire circumstances, Schubert's prodigiousness in composition was a miracle, with approximately two thousand individual works to his credit. Like Mozart's before him (who had died in 1791 at age 35), Schubert's music seemed to pour out of him at a superhuman pace, and with his death, the Viennese classical epoch was essentially over, Romanticism taking its place. Schubert's *oeuvre*, like Beethoven's, stands at the crossroads of the two stylistic periods, displaying traits of each period in almost equal measure. The received Classical forms and genres of sonata, symphony, string quartet, piano trios, masses, and other absolute music were utilized and expanded. But it is the ever greater emotional/expressive range and reach of the music that makes it Romantic. Schubert didn't invent the *lied*, but he perfected it and created an unparalleled melding of verse and tone to yield some 600 songs, many uniquely powerful, haunting, touching, and melancholic. His melodic gift extends to his instrumental compositions as well, with many of these works having a song-like affect. Long melodic lines, supported by a strikingly original harmonic language, seem to spin out effortlessly. One is often reminded of the human voice in Schubert's instrumental works, whether it's heard in the violin, the oboe,

the clarinet or the piano. (Contrast this with so much of Beethoven, whose short motifs are often little three or four note kernels that he then varies, expands and twists as the composition unfolds.) Schubert's treatment of melody and form differ substantially from Beethoven's; where Schubert will often treat the recapitulation as an almost exact replica of the exposition (of course with the tonic key being necessarily established by the end), Beethoven often alters his recapitulations in quite significant ways, possibly shortening or lengthening the section, and even adding new, previously unheard elements. Schubert is generally far more doctrinaire in his formal constructs, with generous proportions that have led to some of his later works being described as of "heavenly length". In this respect, he looks ahead to Bruckner and Mahler while in his pithy and compact *lieder*, he anticipates Hugo Wolf.

The two sonatas on this recording are well represented in the catalogue, and are treated to a remarkable range of interpretations, including vastly different tempos, dynamic range choices, articulations, pedaling and rubato. I have played both works over a span of more than four decades, and interestingly, as I age, I find in these iconic pieces more youthful vitality, humor, energy and general high spirits than I did as a young man. The opening movement of the B-flat is profoundly poignant and expansive, but there are moments of unbridled joy and energy, as well. Listen to the vitality in the third movement of each; and the final movements of both have an ebullience that seems positively death-defying. The first movement of the A major is like a great Alpine ascent, with the promise of a restful, dreamy sleep provided by the coda. It is in each slow movement that we sense Schubert by turns reflective and accepting, or alternating pathos with extreme emotional anguish (A major) or a period of cautious hopefulness (B-flat). The entire range of human emotional experience seems contained in the pages of these two towering works, with the slow movements providing the emotional heart of each sonata. It's no surprise that musicians and audiences return to these pieces over and over, for solace, and for hope, and for vanquishing despair.

– David Deveau

SCHUBERT
Sonatas D 959 & D 960

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at the Shalin Liu Performance Center, Rockport, Massachusetts.

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Piano: Steinway Model D #586518 (New York)

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SCHUBERT Sonatas D 959 & D 960 | DAVID DEVEAU, piano | Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Sonata in A major, D 959

- 1 I. Allegro 12:24
- 2 II. Andantino 7:40
- 3 III. Allegro vivace 5:40
- 4 IV. Allegretto 12:15

Sonata in B flat major, D 960

- 5 I. Molto moderato 14:48
- 6 II. Andante sostenuto 10:19
- 7 III. Allegro vivace con delicatezza 4:37
- 8 IV. Allegro ma non troppo 8:22

Playing Time: 76:10



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