

NAXOS

SCHUBERT

Complete Overtures • 1

The Looking-Glass Knight • The Devil's Pleasure Castle
Claudine from Villa Bella • The Four-Year Sentry Duty
Prague Sinfonia • Christian Benda



Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

Overtures • 1

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. 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 Liechtenthal 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 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 make 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. 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. 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.

It was natural that any young composer would have ambitions in the field of opera in a period when the theatre offered the height of success. In 1811 his friend Josef von Spaun, whom he had known when the latter lodged at the Stadtkonvikt and ran the school orchestra, took him to see Josef Weigl's Singspiel *Das Waisenhaus* (The Orphanage) and he saw the same composer's *Die Schweizerfamilie* (The Swiss Family). It was probably in December of the same year that Schubert embarked on his first composition for the theatre with August von Kotzebue's Singspiel *Der Spiegelritter, D. 11* (The Looking-Glass Knight) [2], completing the dramatic overture and music for the first act, before abandoning the attempt. The *Overture* starts with a slow introduction, going on to a histrionic *Allegro vivace*. It was perhaps in 1812 that he wrote an *Overture* to Albrecht's comedy *Der Teufel als Hydraulicus, D. 4* (The Devil as Engineer) [1], a composition remarkable enough as the work of a boy of fourteen or fifteen, and scored for an orchestra of flutes, clarinet, bassoon, horns and strings, while the former includes both oboes, trumpets and timpani.

The same years brought two concert overtures, the *Overture in D major, D. 12* [3], and the *Overture in D major, D. 26* [4], both of which include three trombones. The second work is dated 26th June 1812 and was later revised by the composer. The first of the two starts with an ominously dramatic introduction, before proceeding

to the customary *Allegro*, an effective demonstration of Schubert's growing maturity. Both suggest ambitions beyond the confines of the Stadtkonvikt orchestra or, indeed, of the amateur resources otherwise available, while reflecting the influence of what he would have heard in the theatre where in 1813 he attended a performance of Gluck's *Iphigenie auf Tauris* with Milder in the title-rôle and Vogl as Orestes, which moved him to tears and, according to Josef von Spaun, set him studying any score of Gluck that he could find.

Between 30th October 1813 and 15th May 1814 Schubert tackled another Singspiel by Kotzebue, *Des Teufels Lustschloß, D. 84* (The Devil's Pleasure Castle) [5], revised later in the latter year and presumably written under the guidance of Salieri, with whom Schubert had been taking lessons since 1812 and was to continue to do until 1816. The *Overture*, scored again with trombones, leads straight into the action which deals with the love of the impoverished knight Oswald for his wife Luitgarde, put to the proof by her rich uncle, a plot that has something in common with Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* in its testing of virtue and the magic of the enchanted castle.

In May 1815 Schubert returned to the theatre with a version of the one-act Singspiel *Die vierjährige Posten, D. 190* (The Four-Year Sentry Duty) [6] by Theodor Körner, a young poet who had accompanied Spaun and Schubert to Gluck's *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, and shared their enthusiasm. Körner, house-dramatist at the Burgtheater, joined Lützow's Free Corps and was killed in August 1813 in a battle at Gadebusch near Mecklenburg. In Körner's comedy a French soldier, Duval, is left on sentry duty in a German village, when his regiment withdraws. He settles down, falling in love with the daughter of a local judge, but when, after four years, his regiment returns, he is in danger of being shot as a deserter. He avoids this fate by donning his old

uniform and seeming to continue his sentry duty, claiming that he must be properly relieved before anything else. A kindly general eventually pardons him and all ends happily. The *Overture* opens in idyllic pastoral tranquillity, leading to a lively *Allegro* that also finds a place for a military element.

In July 1815 Schubert completed his music for Goethe's three-act Singspiel *Claudine von Villa Bella*, D. 239 [7]. The music for the second and third acts was burnt by the servants of Josef Hüttenbrenner in his absence from Vienna in 1848, a fate that also befell the score of the second act of *Des Teufels Lustschloß*. Published by Goethe in 1776, *Claudine von Villa Bella* centres on the attraction that Claudine, the betrothed of Pedro, finds for the unreliable Augustine, who turns out to be Pedro's brother, allowing Claudine and Pedro to be happily re-united. The *Overture* gently sets the romantic scene, before launching into a vigorous *Allegro*.

The same year brought music for his school-friend Albert Stadler's play *Fernando* and in November and December Schubert composed music for Mayrhofer's two-act *Die Freunde von Salamanka*, D. 326 (The Friends from Salamanca) [8]. Don Alonso, with the help of his friends Fidelio and Diego, plans to rescue

Countess Olivia from an attack staged by the two accomplices, thus proving his heroism and merit as Olivia's lover, while thwarting the designs of Count Tormes, who hopes to win the hand of Olivia, whom he has never met. The plot is successful and means are found to pair off Fidelio and Diego with other girls, while Count Tormes alone is left disappointed. The plot is derivative, with heroine and gull suggesting Shakespeare's Olivia and Malvolio from *Twelfth Night*. The *Overture* opens with an effective sonata-form movement, aptly setting the scene.

The *Overture in B flat major*, D. 470 [9] has been dated to September 1816 and suggested as the possible overture of the *Cantata in Honour of Josef Spendou*, D. 472. Canon Spendou was Chief Inspector of Elementary Schools and in charge of the fund for teachers' widows. The *Overture*, perhaps originally for string quartet, is scored without flutes and clarinets, its opening *Adagio maestoso* leading to an energetic *Allegro*, a fitting introduction, whether to a comedy or a serenade.

Keith Anderson

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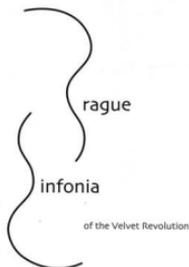
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Prague Sinfonia

During the celebrations of the Czech National Day on 28th October 2006, former President of the Czech Republic Václav Havel became Honorary President of the Prague Sinfonia in a gala concert under Christian Benda at the Czech National House in New York City. The orchestra was established as an expanded version of the Prague Chamber Orchestra during their sixteenth tour of North America, after having collaborated for over ten years with Christian Benda, chief conductor and artistic director. The orchestra has toured widely throughout the world and is a regular component of Czech musical life, with concert series in Prague and participation in festivals. Recordings for companies including EMI, Decca, Sony Classics, Naxos, Polydor, Nippon Columbia, Denon, BMG, Telarc, Ariola, Eurodisc, and Supraphon have won a number of prestigious prizes, including the Wiener Flötenuhr, the Grand Prix du Disque Académie Charles Cros twice, and the Golden Disc Award for the sale of one million records.



LOBKOWICZ PALACE
at the Prague Castle Complex



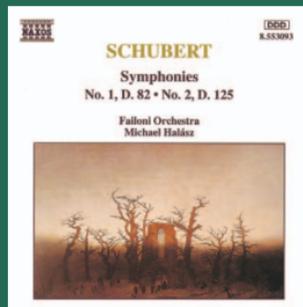
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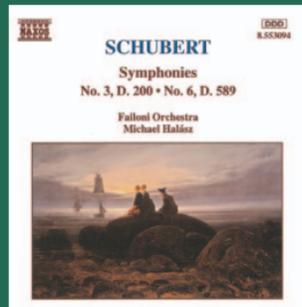


Christian Benda comes from an old family of Czech musicians and composers, and enjoys a distinguished international career as a conductor, collaborating with leading soloists and orchestras throughout the world, appearing at international festivals, in the concert hall and in the recording studio. His many recordings include orchestral works ranging from Bach and Haydn to Malipiero and Casella, together with a variety of works by his distinguished ancestors. He is chief conductor and artistic director of the Prague Sinfonia created by President Václav Havel. His video, radio and television recordings include productions for the BBC, Radio Luxembourg, Radio France, ORF, Hessischer Rundfunk, SWR, TVSR, RSI, SF DRS, TV Cultura, as well as for Czech, Polish, Slovenian, Serbian, Hungarian and Chinese television.

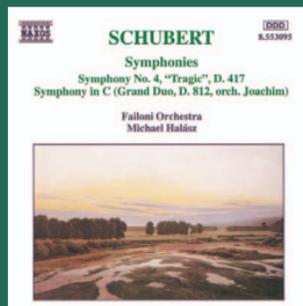
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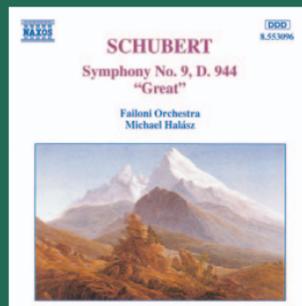
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Revered for his incomparable *Lieder*, Franz Schubert was also an avid opera-goer who yearned, largely in vain, for success as a composer of stage works. This disc features several of his less familiar early overtures, from *Der Spiegelritter* and *Der Teufel als Hydraulicus* (circa 1811/2) and his first completed opera, the Medieval fantasy *Des Teufels Lustschloß* (1813/4), to the *Overture in B flat* (1816). It is hard to believe that such accomplished and effective music was the work of a teenager.



Franz
SCHUBERT
(1797-1828)



Complete Overtures • 1

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| 1 | Der Teufel als Hydraulicus (The Devil as Engineer), D. 4 | 3:38 |
| 2 | Der Spiegelritter (The Looking-Glass Knight), D. 11 | 8:32 |
| 3 | Overture in D major, D. 12 | 8:16 |
| 4 | Overture in D major, D. 26 | 6:36 |
| 5 | Des Teufels Lustschloß, (The Devil's Pleasure Castle) D. 84 | 9:04 |
| 6 | Der vierjährige Posten (The Four-Year Sentry Duty), D. 190 | 7:22 |
| 7 | Claudine von Villa Bella (Claudine from Villa Bella), D. 239 | 7:56 |
| 8 | Die Freunde von Salamanka (The Friends from Salamanca), D. 326 | 5:54 |
| 9 | Overture in B flat major, D. 470 | 5:50 |



Prague Sinfonia
Christian Benda



Includes Free Downloadable Bonus Track available at www.classicsonline.com.
Please see inside booklet for full details.

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Playing Time
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