

Franz SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

1 Andante in A major D 604	5'03
3 Klavierstücke D 946	30'23
2 Allegro assai in E flat minor	13'34
3 Allegretto in E flat major	12'02
4 Allegro in C major	4'47
5 Adagio in E major D 612	4'20
6 Adagio in G major D 178	7'05
Wanderer-Fantasy D 760	21'51
7 Allegro con fuoco ma non troppo	06'31
8 Adagio	6'50
9 Presto	4'44
10 Allegro	3'46
Total time:	68'47

Irakly AVALIANI piano

In Memory of Richard Schlachet

Recorded at studio Guimmick, Yerres, France, June 2010
Piano Steinway: Pierre Malbos
Recording, editing and mastering: Sebastien Noly (Sonogramme)
Artwork: Catherine Geoffray
Design: Frederic Berard-Caseneuve

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INTIMATE JOURNEY WITH THE PIANO

Familiar with playing the piano since his childhood, Schubert maintained a deep and close relationship full of mystery with this his instrument of predilection. From very early on he began to explore the potential of the piano at all levels. The instrument was at the heart of Schubert's work as a composer from the beginning in 1815-1816. For him it was the source of the most personal language which made possible a spontaneous expression of his musical thought through performance. Schubert came back to the piano every time he felt compelled to obey the inner need to create. His piano works were part of his creative process throughout his short life. The piano was to provide the exceptional partner for his Lieder and it occupied an all-important position in his repertoire of Dances, Variations, diverse pieces and Sonatas. Schubert gave the piano a hitherto unimagined palette of colours, timbres and intensity of sound – flowing melodic lines unleashed to paint a musical landscape of luminous lyricism lent life by visionary images. By rendering the musical element poetic, he set free the instrument's sensual potential, broadening its technical scope. Schubert's inspiration, drawn from a variety of sources seemed to engage in a direct dialogue with the piano, which follows an intimate path drawing him far beyond an inner journey or mere dreams, towards a more distant sphere swathed in twilight. This is because for Schubert the piano is the instrument which translates ever-changing moods, ranging from passionate tenderness to painful nostalgia, from shadows to radiance – moments captured to create a dream-like universe exerting a magic power over our emotions. The music is like a perpetual quest, a relentless search for a world which in the end will bring reconciliation.

This recording offers the listener a wider than usual succession of short pages and alternating conceptions, providing, as it were, an echo of the personal discoveries, which sustained the miracle of Schubert's multi-faceted creations.

Andante in A-major, D. 604

Examination of this untitled Andante, perhaps destined to be included in a sonata, makes it possible to date it to August or September, 1816 – a fertile period for Schubert's piano compositions. This piece, rich with ardour and reverie, makes full use of all the piano's possibilities. A sweeping theme conjures forth developments which culminate in a sequence of brilliant virtuoso passages and figures.

Three Klavierstücke, D. 946

- I. *Allegro assai* in E-flat minor
- II. *Allegretto* in E-flat major
- III. *Allegro* in C major

These three piano pieces were written a few months before Schubert's death: the untitled manuscript bears the date May 1828. They were not conceived as parts of a single whole. Brahms linked them together and prepared the first edition for publication in 1868, giving them the modest title *Klavierstücke* (pieces for piano). These free pieces pursue the same musical course used for the *Impromptus*, while at the same time representing a broadening of those short forms. As far as their thematic nature is concerned, this polished writing is rich in rhythmic invention and its subtle modulations seem to swell the space of sound. They point to the increasing enrichment of Schubert's creative powers. The profound lyricism and intense poetry flowing from these pages are part of the new flowering of the composer's work at the end of his life. Moods of dark anxiety alternate with moments of vital energy. These contrasting accents juxtapose a world of shadows and motifs obsessed with death, on

the one hand, and light-hearted moments of bucolic freshness and dreams of a paradise lost and perhaps re-gained, on the other. A series of metamorphoses via sound sheds inspired light on this world of subtle emotions.

The *Allegro assai* intertwines pain and calm in an almost breathless rhythm. A serious and anxious atmosphere gives way to a supple melody of gentle reflection and then left-hand chords indicate a return to the initial suffering.

The *Allegretto*, which complements the previous piece – its mirror image – alternates episodes of peaceful reverie, accentuated by obscure tonalities, with nightmare visions of a heart-rending confession.

The *Allegro* with its radiant colours appears to triumph over tragic forces. A reflective interlude leads up to a vigorous final coda, which does not, however, wipe out all trace of emotional wounds.

Adagio in E major, D. 612

This *Adagio*, perhaps originally destined to be a movement of a Sonata never completed, proffers a simple initial theme developed through a style of writing rich with ornament, providing ample scope for the pure beauty of virtuoso piano playing.

Adagio in G major, D. 178

This piece, dated April 8th in 1815, which was to prove a prolific year, marks a return to the piano after several months devoted to symphonic works, both dramatic and sacred. Embellished by chords centred around an initial theme, this *Adagio* develops more plaintive keys and then returns to the first motif enhanced by arpeggio chords.

Wanderer-Fantasia in C major, D 760

- I. *Allegro con fuoco, ma non troppo*
- II. *Adagio*
- III. *Presto*
- IV. *Allegro*

The title, **Wanderer-Fantasia**, refers to the subject of the song *Der Wanderer* from which Schubert takes the theme for this *Adagio*. It was composed in November 1822, in response to a commission from a rich Viennese amateur pianist and this extraordinary piece presents the player with an extremely demanding challenge. Schubert's writing for the piano here is highly innovative: the Fantasia has been composed like a sonata but with a free rendering of that form. As regards the impact of its sound, the piece transcends the normal resources of the instrument and moves towards a language bordering on the orchestral. The thematic and rhythmic coherence of the Fantasia cements its complexity, bringing together the four movements to lend dramatic intensity to this powerful and expressive work.

The *Allegro* achieves its impact through a tumultuous theme consisting of chromatic flurries and rapid scales, which contrasts with the moment of lyrical pain which follows.

The *Adagio*, which introduces fluid variations of the revisited theme from the song *Der Wanderer*, conjures up a dark and shadowy atmosphere.

The violent chords of the *Presto* bring to mind the initial *Allegro*, now metamorphosed. Schubert weaves a short waltz into the work, which provides an interlude full of charm.

The final *Allegro* provides a contrast, as it reaffirms the initial theme of the **Fantasia** now evolving as a fugue and proceeding as a rapturous virtuoso outpouring, involving all possible resources of the piano and culminating in dazzling crescendi.

The ardent nostalgia to be felt in this work defines the arduous journey of the solitary traveller, a stranger in his world, wandering endlessly as he searches for a

haven of love. This quest for a distant and ever-elusive land, this aspiration borne along by a current of love towards the infinite, is revealed in the rhythms of the journey and the rhythms of heart-beats, which only the trembling thrill of music enables us to hear.

Marguerite Haladjian
Translated by Eve Judelson

Irakly Avaliani was born in Tbilissi, Georgia. He began his musical studies at the Tbilissi High School of Music, then went on to Moscow Tchaikowsky conservatory. After winning the highest awards there, he continued his studies with Ethery Djakeli who introduced him to the work of Marie Jaëll and, over a period of five years, completely reconstructed his piano technique. Today he is one of the few pianists to have explored this path, as did also Albert Schweitzer, Dinu Lipatti and Eduardo Del Pueyo. Irakly Avaliani has lived in Paris since 1989. Irakly Avaliani's recording career, consistently lauded by the music press, has been patroned by Mecenat Group BALAS since 2000.