

96044

BRILLIANT
CLASSICS

SCHUBERT

COMPLETE
SYMPHONIES
ROSAMUNDE

Staatskapelle Dresden
Herbert Blomstedt
Willi Boskovsky
conductors

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Franz Schubert 1797-1828

Complete Symphonies

CD1 60'34

Symphony No.1 in D D82

- 1 I. Adagio – Allegro vivace 10'15
- 2 II. Andante 8'42
- 3 III. Menuetto: Allegro – Trio 6'08
- 4 IV. Allegro vivace 6'26

Symphony No.2 in B flat D125

- 5 I. Largo – Allegro vivace 10'28
- 6 II. Andante 8'54
- 7 III. Menuetto:
Allegro vivace – Trio 3'43
- 8 IV. Presto vivace 5'54

CD2 53'25

Symphony No.3 in D D200

- 1 I. Adagio maestoso –
Allegro con brio 9'38
- 2 II. Allegretto 4'27
- 3 III. Menuetto: Vivace – Trio 4'06
- 4 IV. Presto vivace 4'38

Symphony No.4 in C minor D417 'Tragic'

- 5 I. Adagio molto –
Allegro vivace 9'47
- 6 II. Andante 9'32
- 7 III. Menuetto:
Allegro vivace – Trio 3'20
- 8 IV. Allegro 7'44

CD3 59'22

Symphony No.5 in B flat D485

- 1 I. Allegro 7'07
- 2 II. Andante con moto 10'45
- 3 III. Menuetto:
Allegro molto – Trio 5'12
- 4 IV. Allegro vivace 5'51

Symphony No.6 in C D589

- 5 I. Adagio – Allegro 7'57
- 6 II. Andante 6'20
- 7 III. Scherzo:
Presto – Più lento 6'17
- 8 IV. Allegro moderato 9'28

CD4 78'02

Symphony No.8 in B minor D759 'Unfinished'

- 1 I. Allegro moderato 11'26
- 2 II. Andante con moto 12'39

Symphony No.9 in C D944 'Great'

- 3 I. Andante – Allegro ma
non troppo – Più moto 14'37
- 4 II. Andante con moto 15'50
- 5 III. Scherzo:
Allegro vivace – Trio 10'54
- 6 IV. Finale: Allegro vivace 12'13

Staatskapelle Dresden
Herbert Blomstedt *conductor*

CD5	62'17	
Rosamunde		
Incidental Music to the play		
“Rosamunde, Princess of Cyprus” D797		
Text: Helmina von Chézy · Edition:		
Breitkopf & Härtel		
1. 1. Overture (originally intended for the opera “Alfonso und Estrella”)	6'02	
2. 2. Entr'acte after Act I – Allegro molto moderato	7'14	
3. 3. Ballet - Allegro moderato – Andante un poco assai	7'22	
4. 3a. Entr'acte after Act II – Andante	3'01	
5. 3b. Romance “Der Vollmond strahlt auf Bergeshöhn” – Andante con moto	3'56	
6. 4. Chorus of the Shades “In der Tiefe wohnt das Licht” – Adagio	3'19	
7. 5. Entr'acte after Act III – Andantino	7'24	
8. 6. Shepherds' Tunes – Andante	1'17	
9. 7. Shepherds' Chorus “Hier auf den Fluren” – Allegretto	3'57	
10. 8. Huntsmen's Chorus “Wie lebt sich's so fröhlich im Grünen” – Allegro moderato	1'55	
11. 9. Ballet – Andantino	6'27	
12. Overture to “Die Zauberharfe” D644	9'55	

Ileana Cotrubas *soprano*

Rundfunkchor Leipzig
Horst Neumann *chorus master*

Staatskapelle Dresden
Willi Boskovsky *conductor*

Franz Schubert

Complete Symphonies

All seven of Schubert's completed symphonies – plus the B minor fragment known as the ‘Unfinished’ (though there are several other such fragments) – are played fairly often nowadays, but this wasn't always the case. During Schubert's lifetime (1797–1828) some of them were performed, but only occasionally and in small circles; his most famous pieces instead ranked among his songs and a small group of piano compositions, mainly for four hands. These works fitted perfectly into a bourgeois culture that greatly enjoyed domestic music-making and valued music with an essentially classical framework as well as a romantic and melancholic character.

The symphony was regarded as a public genre during Schubert's day; its greatest master was Ludwig van Beethoven, whose offerings combined a classical sense of structure with great energy and a strong inclination towards heroism. When Schubert's symphonies were published (some of them only decades after his death), many people criticised their length, structure and mood: the mood was decidedly romantic, especially in the ‘Unfinished’ and the ‘Great’ C major Symphony, which explains their relative popularity since about 1900, and the Beethovenian length with an un-Beethovenian approach to melody and architecture made them highly problematic. In addition, many people found particular fault with the first six symphonies: they were not public and problematic enough, since they sounded more like chamber music from a charming Haydn than orchestral music from a struggling Beethoven. Their strong divertimento-like character was largely regarded as superficial and inconsequential, whereas Romanticism strived for emotional and intellectual depth in music. Only the 20th century, the same age that brought full recognition for Haydn, gave these pieces the attention they deserve. Both Haydn and Schubert brought depth to their music, but via unconventional means.

Schubert's symphonies can be divided into two groups. After lessons at a religious school (Konvikt) in Vienna, the composer founded his own orchestra in which he

played the viola, and his first six symphonies were written for this ensemble between 1813 and 1818. In 1822 he became seriously ill, and although he made a partial recovery, he realised that his illness would eventually prove fatal. This had a major impact on his style, as he thereafter set to work on a number of orchestral fragments followed by two substantial works: his 'Unfinished' Symphony (1822) and the 'Great' C major Symphony (1825–6). Although there are indeed considerable differences between the earlier and the later symphonies, as Romantic authors have pointed out, the similarities are just as striking.

The spirit of Haydn and Mozart is indeed present in many aspects of the first six symphonies. Schubert does not write for greater forces than the average Mozart orchestra, and the instrumental parts can be played by a good amateur (just like Haydn and Mozart, Schubert saw the orchestra from the perspective of an orchestral musician, with strings at the heart of the sound and winds given greatest prominence in short passages of dialogue). All the movements have distinct motifs and melodies; like Mozart, Schubert tends to develop melodies, especially long ones. He is much more daring than Mozart in his use of harmony, however – not so much by introducing unexpected chords and unusual harmonic changes, but by introducing expected chords and changes at unexpected moments. Indeed, from a harmonic perspective Schubert's music can be described as much more static, as he likes to postpone resolutions, especially in long movements such as the finales of the first three symphonies. Even when he is writing to a very clearly defined musical structure, such as the scherzo, small deviations from these forms in all the first six symphonies betray a new approach to concord and discord: the distinction between harmony in the tonic and the dominant becomes less clear-cut to allow for a much richer language, not only in the development section where by convention harmonic richness is stimulated, but also in the exposition and the recapitulation of many movements. The result is a certain loss of the concision that is so typical of Haydn's and Mozart's music, and of energy (since Schubert, unlike Beethoven, is very sparing with great dynamic

contrasts), but an increase in lyric expansion. Already in the earlier symphonies, one observes Schubert's inclination towards long passages without great dramatic contrasts but with an essentially continuous sonority. Even in his Fourth Symphony, in the 'tragic' key of C minor (the nickname 'Tragic' is the composer's own), Schubert is more a lyric than a tragic composer. The opening movement has the hallmarks of a tragic symphony: the key, the punctuated rhythms, the slow introduction with many sustained discords, the emphasis in the instrumentation on the winds and the many sudden dynamic accents. The symphony's nickname, however, is only really appropriate for the first movement; the second is a beautiful cantabile, the third a scherzo with spiky rhythmic accents (no more tragic than the scherzo in the light-hearted Fifth Symphony) and the finale combines joyful melodies with heavy instrumentation.

The Sixth Symphony shows the influence of Rossini, who became hugely popular in Vienna after 1815. Schubert took the Italian composer's persistent melodic style and use of short motifs and rapidly repeated notes in the accompaniment, and combined these with his own unorthodox approach to harmony and discord, as well as a Haydnesque style of orchestration.

Tentatively received at first, the last two symphonies came to be held in high esteem by Romantic authors. The drama in the music, which in earlier compositions sheltered behind a façade of Haydnesque beauty and charm, now comes to the fore: everything that had been moderated by a sense of Classicism in Schubert's earlier works is now fully exploited in the name of a new mode of expression and innovative approach to form. On a large scale, the Classical framework has remained, but in the finer details Schubert is much more daring. While the 'Unfinished' is almost as long as the previous completed symphonies (and it is highly likely that Schubert envisaged more movements than the two we have now), the 'Great' C major is even longer than Beethoven's 'Eroica' and 'Pastoral' symphonies.

The 'Unfinished' Symphony is remarkable for several reasons, among them

Schubert's new approach to instrumentation: the symphony opens in a dark mood and with low, soft instruments, but what appears to be an introduction turns out to be the main theme. Schubert is also much more daring than before in the placing of concords and discords; many of his gestures are recognisable from other tragic music of the time, but the mood now constantly fluctuates between introvert pessimism and extrovert tragedy. Indeed, harmony is an extremely important means of expression, and the second movement is just as adventurous – although a Classical framework is still discernible here, the proportions are highly unorthodox. It is remarkable that Schubert is able to largely stick to the same innovations as he employed in the earlier symphonies, but to create an entirely new emotional world by exploiting them more fully.

The 'Great' C major is, in a sense, the 'Unfinished' made finished and with tragedy transformed into joy. Expansion by constantly repeating themes in different contexts is the most important aspect of the structure, and, much more than in his earlier symphonies, Schubert exploits the possibilities of long passages within one key. The size of the orchestra, too, is very similar to that of the first symphonies, but the sound is generally more mellow. Thus the symphony stands as a remarkable work of art: it has the vitality of the Classical period and the melancholy of Schubert's personality, combining the clear and concise architecture of the late 18th century with the more adventurous structure of most Romantic music. When Schubert's last two symphonies were first presented (the 'Great' around 1840, the 'Unfinished' about 25 years later), musicians initially found the scores too difficult to play, and it took audiences several decades to recognise that Schubert had mastered Beethoven's favourite genres such as the symphony, string quartet and piano sonata in his own way, casting aside the restrictions of the Classical tradition. Schubert was one of the first composers to write music often described as poetic: on the one hand classic and clear-cut, on the other dreamy and diffuse.

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“Rosamunde”

“It is ironic that we should owe Schubert's heavenly music to such an awful concoction.”

Max Kalbeck

In late 1823, Schubert was commissioned by the Theater an der Wien to provide incidental music for the play *Rosamunde, Princess of Cyprus*, a work by Helmina von Chézy. The poetess, central figure of the “Tea Parties for Dresden's Poetic Community” and a friend of Friedrich Schlegel, had previously fashioned the libretto for Weber's *Euryanthe*. While in Vienna to attend the premiere of that opera, she was asked by Josef Kupelwieser to write a new play for his company. The reason why Kupelwieser approached this rather eccentric lady was not sheer enthusiasm but his hope of finding a suitable title role for Emilie Neumann, a young actress who was his mistress at the time. Apparently, Kupelwieser deserves most of the credit for the fact that Schubert received – and indeed accepted – the commission for the incidental music. Working under great pressure, he was given barely two weeks to compose entr'actes, ballet music and choral number's. The dance episodes were rehearsed two days before the premiere, and there was only a single rehearsal for the music, which was hardly sufficient for a thorough understanding of the score.

The first performance of *Rosamunde* took place at the Theater an der Wien on 20 December 1825, and the second – and final – performance the following night. The play was a total failure, dealing a major setback to Emilie Neumann's acting ambitions. Schubert's music, however, won the acclaim of audiences and critics alike.

Helmina von Chézy had already drawn many adverse comments from Viennese critics for her *Euryanthe* libretto, but her “grand romantic play” fared no better. Criticism did not so much focus on the story itself (the heroine, prospective ruler of Cyprus, is saved by her husband-to-be when the power-hungry ex-king tries to poison her), which was more or less what people expected at the time, as on the lack of

dramatic tension, the slow-moving plot and the uninspired, pedestrian verse. Thrown on the defensive, the poetess issued a public statement outlining what she believed were the real causes of the fiasco: the reckless haste surrounding the production, the insufficient number of rehearsals, the inexperienced staff, the sparse décor, the questionable taste of suburban audiences (then accustomed to even more lurid fare) and, last but not least, the alleged Weber clique who she claimed boycotted the performance out or pure spite after Schubert had dared to tell Weber that he liked *Der Freischütz* much better than *Euryanthe*.

The only person exempted from any blame was Helmina von Chézy herself. To her credit, the resourceful poetess recognized the value of Schubert's music immediately, ungrudgingly admitting that the public acclaim was well-deserved. In her own inimitable idiom, she enthused: "As the music surged onwards in its majestic sweep, gently transfiguring the play, mirror-like, through all its ramifications, grandiose, exquisitely melodious, tender and indescribably poignant and profound, the irresistible force of the sonorities kept everyone spellbound."

The score comprises ten numbers: three entr'actes, two ballets, a romanza for contralto, a brief shepherd's tune and three choruses. Since Schubert was given very little time to accomplish his task, he solved the problem in his own way. Rather than write an overture, he made use of a piece which he had composed for his opera *Alfonso und Estrella* – without any regrets as he considered the overture "too assertive" for the opera anyway. For his first ballet in B minor he borrowed material from the first entr'acte of *Alfonso und Estrella* and changed a chorus of the third act of the opera into the second entr'acte. All other pieces were written specifically for the play.

As far as the overture is concerned, he later found a different solution, picking the orchestral introduction from the incidental music written in 1820 for the play *Die Zauberharfe* (The Magical Harp) likewise considered unworthy of the music by the critics – as his overture to *Rosamunde*. Without this change, the entire music for *Die*

Zauberharfe may well have fallen into oblivion once and for all. Possibly, Schubert anticipated the possibility of the *Rosamunde* music becoming completely dissociated from the play for which it was intended and making its way into the concert hall. But it is highly unlikely that he expected this music, and notably the overture, to figure among his most popular works.

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