

CONCERTS FROM THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS 2012-2013

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# PAUL LEWIS

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SATURDAY, MARCH 2, 2013  
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COOLIDGE AUDITORIUM  
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, THOMAS JEFFERSON BUILDING

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THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS  
Coolidge Auditorium

SATURDAY, MARCH 2, 2012 — 2:00 PM

WILLIAM AND ADELINE CROFT MEMORIAL FUND

# PAUL LEWIS

PIANO



## PROGRAM

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

Sonata in C minor, D. 958 (1828)

*Allegro*

*Adagio*

Menuetto: *Allegro*—Trio

*Allegro*

BRIEF PAUSE

FRANZ SCHUBERT

Sonata in A major, D. 959 (1828)

*Allegro*

*Andantino*

Scherzo: *Allegro vivace*—Trio: *Un poco più lento*

Rondo: *Allegretto*—*Presto*

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

### FRANZ SCHUBERT, Sonata in C minor, D. 958

The final year of Franz Schubert's life yielded some of his most indelible masterworks. The three piano sonatas that were completed in September of 1828, half a dozen or so weeks before Schubert died, belong to that category and offer a compelling final testament to his love for the instrument and its capacity to bring to life his musical ideas. These works simultaneously acknowledge Schubert's lyricism, display his command of larger structures, evince his startling originality, and confront his internal Beethoven (who still loomed large a year and a half after his death in 1827). The C-minor and A-major sonatas (D.958-9) make an interesting pair, sharing certain traits while showcasing the broad range of Schubert's imagination.

The music that opens Schubert's C-minor piano sonata shares some traits with several illustrious predecessors in the same key, written some twenty-two to thirty years earlier—Beethoven's Variations in C minor (WoO. 80) of 1806 and his "Grande Sonate pathétique" (op. 13) of 1798. It is unfair to Schubert to dwell on these relationships to Beethoven, except in their capacity to illuminate the striking inventiveness of Schubert via the inspiring force of Beethoven. This originality emerges in the context of deviation from the shared musical aspects of the pieces.<sup>1</sup> An example of this is the composers' different approaches to the employment of structural delineators such as the scales that separate themes and sections. In the case of Beethoven's op. 13 sonata, the first such passage prepares an E-flat-major (the mediant key) transformation of the introductory theme; in Schubert's sonata, the scale passage leads to a mysterious interlude in A-flat major (the sub-mediant key):



Beethoven: Piano Sonata in C minor, op. 13, I: mm. 4-5



Schubert: Piano Sonata in C minor, D. 958, I: mm. 12-15

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Fisk (among others) outlines the rather direct thematic/harmonic relationship of D. 958 to Beethoven's C-minor variations; here some surface similarities between the introduction to the "Pathétique" sonata and D. 958 are briefly explored. Charles Fisk, *Returning Cycles* (United States: University of California Press, 2001), 180.

Had Schubert used a B-flat in the bass and a D-natural in the scale, he too would have found himself in E-flat, but without the disorienting effect of a sudden “settling” in an unexpected key. Both composers use new configurations of the descending scale to launch into new areas; for Beethoven it is the movement proper, while for Schubert it is a motoric variation of the opening theme:

Beethoven: Piano Sonata in C minor, op. 13, I: mm. 10-11

Schubert: Piano Sonata in C minor, D. 958, I: mm. 19-21

This thematic variation now emphasizes plaintive melodic half- and whole-steps in the place of the repeated notes heard earlier. Because Schubert prepared the ear for A-flat earlier, his use of it in extending the theme feels seamless and special at the same time.

The “official” second theme was prefigured in the early A-flat episode, but is now fully presented in E-flat. Certain passages really illustrate Schubert’s ability to “orchestrate” for the piano—listen for the colorful effects he achieves with simple repeated notes above and below the melody. As the music becomes more agitated, Schubert transforms the secondary theme into an impassioned outburst before calmer winds prevail at the end of the exposition. The development section is highly chromatic compared to what came before; starting in the now-expected A-flat, Schubert plays around with the sudden cadence that ends the exposition, gradually turning it into a melody related to music we have just heard. The musical space occupied becomes stranger when the music moves to D major, and the bass starts to slink around chromatically in the depths. Echoed in the upper voice, this serpentine music creates a highly unstable environment, spiced further at one point with a spry chromatic line in the right hand. The darkness of the low bass line makes it difficult to know where one is tonally until a low G rings out with the rhythmic motive that opens the work. Schubert uses that motive to launch into the recapitulation, in which he continues to develop the movement’s material. Still disturbing but now more stable, the wandering bass leads to a quiet ending.

The style and approach of Mozart and Beethoven (at his most reflective) are adopted by Schubert in his A-flat-major *Adagio*. The melody is a model of Classical elegance, with a distinctive ornament in an inner voice appearing whenever the theme is heard (with one exception). By the fifth bar it is established that the arguments of this movement will be harmonically driven, with Schubert continuing to explore mediant (third) relationships as well as chord sequences related by the interval of a perfect

fourth,<sup>2</sup> resulting in an auspicious harmonic variant of the theme that culminates in an oscillation of fourth-related chords (e.g., A-flat–D-flat–G-flat–D-flat). Beyond their application at the local level, such details are replicated to a degree structurally, as in the contrasting theme that follows the opening in D-flat minor. This minor-key theme moves into a remarkable space wherein the melody becomes subsumed by waves of arching arpeggios (of repeated-note triplets), with Schubert accenting the moments of greatest dissonance. As the movement progresses and the themes are varied, the juxtapositions of angst and peaceful repose become more exaggerated, yielding an effect similar to that achieved by Beethoven in the great *Adagio sostenuto* movement of his “Hammerklavier” sonata (op. 106). Schubert’s *Adagio* is more compact, with a final statement of the theme followed by isolated gasps that review the main harmonic “events” of the movement, before an emphatic arrival in A-flat major, incorporating the expected plagal oscillation (expected because of the preponderance of fourth-relations) before softly closing.

Schubert maintains the close relationship between C minor and A-flat major in the quirky *Menuetto*. A restless opening theme gives way to a playful second idea in which Schubert creatively uses the different registers for color, much as he would in the *scherzo* of the A-major sonata (D. 959). After a rather startling affirmation of A-flat, Schubert returns to the opening theme, now buried in the upper voice of the left hand, and suffering a process of interruption similar to the one just heard at the close of the second movement.<sup>3</sup> The Trio, as you may have guessed, is in A-flat major, and is distinguished by a recurring figure in the bass that supports a mixed-mode central section before returning to the ambiguous ending of the minuet’s main portion.

The *tarantella*<sup>4</sup> that closes the sonata is remarkable, partially due to its having self-contained ideas that remain subtly directed by the harmonic conceits of the preceding movements. The main theme features loping pairs of notes in the melody above a *moto perpetuo* string of eighth notes in the bass. Schubert explores this theme a great deal in its first instantiation, even presenting it in the parallel major in the course of its 92 measures before suddenly stopping on D-flat (also heavily favored earlier in the movement), then introducing an unexpected scalar idea that serves the same interruptive function as silence had previously in the second and third movements. Embedded within this strange passage is a reference to the fourths oscillation of the second movement (D-flat–G-flat–D-flat), but Schubert quickly moves on to the next theme, now in C-sharp minor. This charming theme features a cross-hands technique in which melodic ideas are passed between upper and lower registers around a pulsing, repeated-chord accompaniment in the center. A scalar component is introduced and explored, leading to an interesting transformation of the idea (now relegated to the right hand alone) that also includes the omnipresent fourths oscillation. Yet another transformation of this secondary material reintroduces the groupings that characterize the movement’s main theme without

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<sup>2</sup> What are identified here as fourth-relationships could also be seen as downward fifth relationships. The focus on the fourth is based in part on the scale degree of the key (D-flat is the fourth scale degree of A-flat, for instance) and on Schubert’s later use of fourth oscillations that draw on the plagal tradition, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Incidentally, the figuration in the right hand that closes the main section of the *Menuetto* would later be employed by Brahms to great effect in the finale of his third piano sonata (op. 5).

<sup>4</sup> Fisk, 196. Fisk is careful to point out that the finale is not just a “dance of death”; he argues that these final piano works of Schubert are influenced by and indebted to *Winterreise*, composed just before and possibly during the composition of some of the piano pieces.

actually invoking the tune. The extended passages that follow are more developmental than a typical rondo episode; after such an extensive initial appearance of the theme, such a development was required of Schubert in order to balance the movement, leaving the door open for a “sonata rondo” form interpretation of this rich movement. A great feature of this development section is its clear reference to the main theme (through its prominent rhythm) while simultaneously exploring secondary ideas in a new accompanimental context. When the opening theme does return, it is appropriately truncated as Schubert rapidly recaps the expository material, echoing the arpeggiated waves of the second movement with a final ascent and descent in a restless C minor. Par for the course, the quiet ending is interrupted by the final cadence.



**FRANZ SCHUBERT, Sonata in A major, D. 959**

The juxtaposition of the late A-major piano sonata, D.959, composed around the same time as the C-minor sonata in 1828, illustrates what may be perceived as alternate universes founded on similar musical principles. The sonatas share certain characteristics, including rhythmic and contour similarities in some of the themes; consider for example the rhythmic content and affect of the opening measures of both sonatas:

**Allegro**

Schubert: Piano Sonata in C minor, D. 958, I: opening

**Allegro**

Schubert: Piano Sonata in A major, D. 959, I: opening

What we find with the A-major sonata is an increased flexibility as to what constitutes thematic material of significance. While there are recognizable melodies that reappear as such throughout the work, it is perhaps more profitable to envision Schubert’s motives as multipurpose scaffoldings upon which musical material is pressed, allowing the underlying shape to emerge while clothing the music’s surface in ostensibly new garb. An effect of this approach is that motives coalesce into discrete units that can be deployed in different combinations to develop the musical arguments, often disguising themselves through transformation or new associations.

As an example, consider the opening of the piece, and what constitutes the theme:

Thirds melody (pitches enlarged)

Schubert: Piano Sonata in A major, D.959, I: mm. 1 through 8

Just a few bars later, Schubert writes music that can be conceptualized as “new” or “the same”:

Thirds melody (pitches enlarged)

Schubert: Piano Sonata in A major, D.959, I: mm. 15 through 23

These musical corpuscles<sup>5</sup> each go on their own transformational journey within the context of larger phrase structures, occasionally serving as connecting tissue while at other times being stretched to occupy full passages, or appearing quite clearly in thematic guise while at other times serving an accompanimental role. Bearing this caveat about thematic constitution in mind, the principal second theme does have a clear identity, the lyricism of which is brought to the fore by the staccato passage that leads to it. It does not take long before the infectious nature of the “germ-anic” motives take their toll on the second theme as well, leading to further exploration of the opening music.

Transformation is the key to the development section, as the second theme and “thirds” theme live afresh alongside a repeated-chord accompaniment that ties everything together. Again, Schubert’s achievement throughout this movement is his ability to re-contextualize small motivic units within the scope of broader themes and developmental processes. When the recapitulation does come, it is a coalescing of these ideas back into their initial configuration. The movement’s coda is something of a revelation—the opening music is brought back in a *pianissimo* setting, this time allowed some space to breathe and develop. What feels like a final resolution in A major is undermined immediately, however, by a subsequent arpeggio in B-flat major. Such a gesture is reminiscent of the playful yet disturbing end to the close of the scherzo movement of Beethoven’s op. 106 piano sonata (“Hammerklavier”), with its surprising, insistent, pounding B-naturals in the context of B-flat major. Schubert’s ending remains serene after the flagrant but brief harmonic departure.

The F-sharp-minor *Andantino* is rightly revered as one of Schubert’s great middle movements. The outer sections are like a dirge in 3/8, with a lamentoso melody (with its characteristic ornamentation) supported by a modest bass line and an occasional

<sup>5</sup> This is not comprehensive, even within these short examples. The elements identified here are the thirds melody (with enlarged notes for comparison), the recognizable half cadence, triplets (here in generally descending arpeggios, but in other places taking scalar/oscillatory profiles), and a recurring rhythm marked “X.”

secondary voice at poignant moments. The central section explores rather unexpected territory<sup>6</sup>—essentially a cadenza with recitative, and inherently dramatic. A beautifully executed C-sharp major passage transitions from the recitative-like material back to the movement’s main theme, now adorned with a significant countermelody on top, along with a slightly more elaborate bass. The movement closes with a distant rumble of alternating rolled chords in the bass.

A delightful *scherzo* follows that dispels any remaining gloom. This is playful music that flirts with rolled chords (up and down) across the keyboard’s compass. Despite the octave displacement, the main theme references the “thirds” idea from the opening movement, as well as the ornament from the second. A contrasting section within this primary area temporarily evokes the cadenza and recitative ideas heard in the *Andantino*. The *Trio* section is a light palate cleanser that maintains the childlike demeanor of the movement’s main body.

The rondo that rounds out the A-major sonata is one of those miracles of brilliance, beauty and structural cohesion. Drawing heavily on motivic ideas first introduced in the opening movement, the rondo theme and ensuing variants and episodes sculpt their own identity from shared genetic material. What makes this confluence of ideas more astounding is that Schubert came up with this rondo theme first—over ten years earlier, in fact, as the *Allegretto quasi Andantino* movement of his Sonata in A minor (D. 537), composed in 1817. Comparing the two provides a remarkable glimpse of Schubert’s compositional maturation:

**Allegretto quasi Andantino**  
*legato*

Schubert: Piano Sonata in A minor, D. 537, II: opening

**Allegretto**

Schubert: Piano Sonata in A major, D. 959, IV: opening

The later version is more sophisticated, yet the ease with which it flows (and can be played) is greater. Despite the unique sound and profile of each of Schubert’s ideas in the rondo, nearly every facet, from rhythmic motives to harmony, figuration and technical requirements (such as cross-hand technique) is derived from material used earlier in the

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<sup>6</sup> Reminding one perhaps of the frantic episode near the close of the “Wanderer” Fantasy’s (D. 760) second section.

sonata. The employment of these ideas seems so effortless that one may not notice at first blush. Such compositional technique has a buttressing effect on the solidity of the structure as a whole. As the movement progresses, the rondo theme returns in its original state after a pause, except it is also interrupted by silence. Schubert here chops the theme into smaller chunks, each punctuated by silence. This dicey gambit yields dramatic tension relieved by a *Presto* coda that revisits the world of the first movement's coda. Lightning-fast arpeggios now shed some light on the fleeting B-flat major transit near the close of the opening movement. However, the expected cadence is once again interrupted by a pause. The last component of the main theme then reasserts itself, becoming parsed into shorter snippets to propel the music forward before rocketing upward in an A-major arpeggio. Ultimately the movement closes with a transformed but clear reference to the opening of the first movement, including its embedded proto-cadence for the piece as a whole, which is finally given its definitive statement to close this remarkable work.

*David Henning Plylar*  
*Music Specialist*  
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*harpsichord*

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## ABOUT THE PERFORMER

**Paul Lewis** is internationally recognized as one of the leading pianists of his generation. His many awards have included the Royal Philharmonic Society's Instrumentalist of the Year Award, the South Bank Show Classical Music Award, the *Diapason d'Or de l'Année*, two successive Edison awards, the 25th *Premio Internazionale Accademia Musicale Chigiana* in Siena, the *Preis Der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik*, a Limelight Award in Australia, and three Gramophone awards, including Record of the Year in 2008. In 2009 he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Southampton. His concert performances and Harmonia Mundi recordings of the complete Beethoven Sonatas, Concertos and the Diabelli Variations have earned him unanimous acclaim from all over the world, culminating in 2010 with the honor of becoming the first pianist in the history of the BBC Proms to perform all five Beethoven concertos in a single Proms season.

Paul Lewis is a guest at many prestigious venues and festivals including the Schubertiade Schwarzenberg, Lucerne Piano Festival, La Roque d'Anthéron, Rheingau, and London's Wigmore Hall where he has appeared on more than fifty occasions. He has performed with many of the world's leading conductors including Sir Colin Davis, Bernard Haitink, Christoph von Dohnányi, Sir Mark Elder, Sir Charles Mackerras, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Daniel Harding, Sir Andrew Davis, Andris Nelsons, Emmanuel Krivine, and Armin Jordan.

Recent and forthcoming highlights include concerto performances with the London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, London Philharmonic, Philharmonia Orchestra, New Japan Philharmonic, NHK Symphony, Boston Symphony, Bavarian Radio Symphony, Oslo Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Tonhalle Orchestra, and Mahler Chamber Orchestra. Solo recitals have taken him to such major venues as London's Royal Festival Hall, Berlin Philharmonie, Vienna Konzerthaus, Toppan Hall Tokyo, Orchestra Hall Chicago, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, KKL Luzern, Tonhalle Zürich, Festspielhaus Baden Baden, and the Auditorio Nacional Madrid.

At the beginning of 2011, Paul Lewis embarked upon a two year project to perform all the mature piano works from the last six years of Schubert's life. This series is being presented in London, New York, Chicago, Tokyo, Melbourne, Rotterdam, Bologna, Florence, the Schubertiade Schwarzenberg, and at other major venues worldwide. Future recording plans for Harmonia Mundi include two double CDs of Schubert solo works, Mozart concertos with Mahler Chamber Orchestra and Daniel Harding, and solo works by Schumann and Mussorgsky.

Paul Lewis studied with Ryszard Bakst at Chethams School of Music and Joan Havill at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, before going on to study privately with Alfred Brendel. Along with his wife, the Norwegian cellist Bjørg Lewis, he is artistic director of Midsummer Music, an annual chamber music festival held in Buckinghamshire, U.K.

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**GABRIEL KAHANE**, singer-songwriter  
**TIMOTHY ANDRES**, composer-pianist  
**FRIDAY, APRIL 5, 2013**  
**BPM** Coolidge Auditorium

On this rare appearance together, receiving critical acclaim from publications both august and alternative, Andres and Kahane take an extraordinarily broad view of the modern musician's life.

ANDRES

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