



Wednesday 7 July 2021

James Lisney piano

PROGRAMME NOTES

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Four Impromptus D935

No. 1 in f minor - Allegro Moderato

No. 2 in A-flat - Allegretto

No. 3 in B-flat - Theme (Andante) with Variations

No. 4 in f minor - Allegro scherzando

Schubert wrote two sets of Impromptus (D899 and D935). Composed in 1827, a year of fervent creativity, the Impromptus are some of his most popular and best-loved piano works.

The word "Impromptu" is misleading, suggesting a small-scale spontaneous salon piece. In fact, all of Schubert's Impromptus are tightly organised, highly cohesive works, and the longest lasts over ten minutes. Schumann suggested that Schubert may have had something much larger in mind when he composed the D935 set, and even posited that the key sequence of the four pieces formed a piano sonata in all but name. Certainly the F minor Impromptu (the first of the D935 – the set ends with another F minor impromptu) has the grandeur and scale one expects from the first movement of a piano sonata from this period, but all four works also stand alone, each distinct in their own right.

Schubert arr. Liszt

Liebesbotschaft

Ständchen

Die Taubenpost

Liszt transcribed the whole of *Schwanengesang*, a set of songs written at the end of Schubert's life; Liszt's arrangement was published in 1840, 12 years after Schubert's death.

Liszt's great skill as an arranger, and his sensitivity to the originals, is evident in these three pieces, but this is also very much his own work in the way he changes the piano texture to provide a personal commentary on the original song text and the music. Liszt sometimes takes Schubert very literally, at other times he adds flourishes and embellishments, but he always retains the essential melodic structure of the song.

James Lisney enjoys a rich musical life, moving seamlessly from concerto and recital soloist to chamber musician, song accompanist and pianist director. Initiatives, such as his Schubertreise series at London`s South Bank Centre, his extensive Beethoven Project or the recording company Woodhouse Editions, provide a platform for his wide-ranging musical sympathies.

James Lisney made his Wigmore Hall debut in 1986 and early representation by the Young Concert Artists Trust in London led to a career that has taken him to many prestigious venues and gained invitations to appear with major orchestras. Highlights include residencies at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and Carnegie Recital Hall in New York.

James Lisney`s repertoire ranges from baroque masterpieces to music of the present day. In the past decade, the music of Schubert and Beethoven have been a central pre-occupation (in performance and in recordings) and he regularly presents cycles of the piano sonatas and relevant chamber music. His recordings (on Naxos, Bis, Somm, Olympia and Carlton) have gained the highest recommendations. Highlights of recent seasons include Schubert cycles at the Leipzig Gewandhaus and in Mumbai. This autumn he will be touring Beethoven`s 'Diabelli' Variations in France, the Netherlands, Bristol and the Prague Rudolfinum.

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