

TRAY GOES HERE



Victor Rosenbaum, piano

American pianist Victor Rosenbaum has concertized widely as soloist and chamber music performer in the United States, Europe, Asia, Israel, and Russia in such prestigious halls as Tully Hall in New York and the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, Russia. He has collaborated with such artists as Leonard Rose, Paul Katz, Arnold Steinhardt, Robert Mann, Joseph Silverstein, Malcolm Lowe, and the Brentano, Borromeo, and Cleveland String Quartets. Festival appearances have included Tanglewood, the Rockport Chamber Music Festival, Kfar Blum and Tel Hai (in Israel), Yellow Barn, Kneisel Hall (Blue Hill), Musicorda, Masters de Pontlevoy (France), the Heifetz Institute, the International Keyboard Institute and Festival in New York, the International Music Seminar in Vienna, and the Bowdoin International Music Festival. Concert appearances have brought him to Chicago, Minneapolis, Tokyo, Beijing, St. Petersburg (Russia), Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, New York and Boston, among others.

A student of Elizabeth Brock and Martin Marks in his hometown of Indianapolis, Rosenbaum later studied with Rosina Lhevinne, at the Aspen Festival, and with Leonard Shure, while earning degrees at Brandeis and Princeton Universities. Rosenbaum serves on the faculty of the New England Conservatory in Boston, where he formerly chaired the piano and chamber music departments, and the Mannes College of Music in New York. He has been Visiting Professor of Piano at the Eastman School of Music, a guest teacher at Juilliard, and presents lectures, workshops, and master classes for teachers' groups and schools both in the U. S. and abroad, including London's Royal Academy of Music, Royal College of Music, and Guildhall School, the conservatories of St. Petersburg and Moscow, Beijing Central Conservatory, the Toho School in Tokyo and other institutions such as the Menuhin School, and the Jerusalem Music Center. Rosenbaum was Director and President of the Longy School of Music from 1985-2001.

His highly praised recording of Schubert is on Bridge Records and the release of the last three Beethoven sonatas on the same label was named by American Record Guide critic Alan Becker as one of the top ten classical recordings of 2005. **This is his third recording for Fleur de Son Classics.** Two other discs on the Fleur de Son label are of music of Mozart and Schubert.



Schubert: Music From His Last Year Victor Rosenbaum, piano

Schubert: Music From His Last Year
Franz Schubert

Victor Rosenbaum, *piano*

Sonata in c minor, D. 958

- 1. Allegro [12:25]
- 2. Adagio [08:11]
- 3. Menuetto: Allegro [03:28]
- 4. Allegro [10:53]

Four Impromptus, D. 935

- 5. I. Allegro moderato (f minor) [12:53]
- 6. II. Allegretto (A-flat Major) [8:16]
- 7. III. Andante (B-flat Major) [13:27]
- 8. IV. Allegro scherzando [7:59]

Total Timing: [77:36]

Executive Producers
Joanne Castellani, Michael Andriaccio
Recording and Mastering Joel Gordon
Graphic Design L A Promotional Design

Cover photo Benjamin Cheung
Inside photo Joshua Levine
Manufacturing EchoData Group

Recorded in Jordan Hall of the New England Conservatory, Boston, MA. August 20, 2012



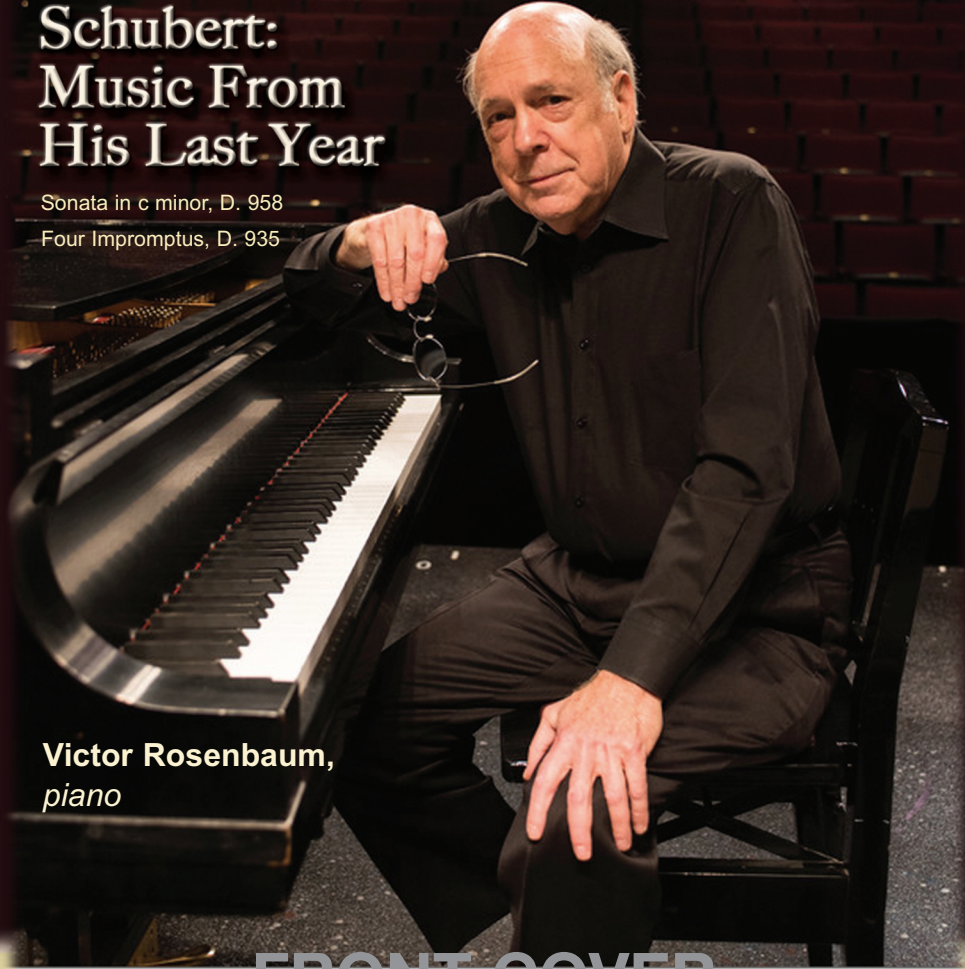
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Made in USA. tel: 716.681.8106 ~ fax: 716.681.9208
fleurdeson@aol.com
www.fleurdeson.com



Schubert: Music From His Last Year Victor Rosenbaum, piano

Schubert:
Music From
His Last Year

Sonata in c minor, D. 958
Four Impromptus, D. 935



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piano

FRONT COVER

Schubert's Last Year

Think for a moment about Schubert (1797-1828) in the last year of his life . He is 31 and for six years has had bouts of illness due to syphilis, contracted in 1822. He has lived in Vienna his whole life, very much in the shadow of the titanic and hugely famous Beethoven. Unlike the older master, his public performances are few and far between; not one of his symphonies was performed in his lifetime and the bulk of the music that we now know and love was published and publicly performed only after his death.

Although he had a circle of friends with whom he met in the cafes of Vienna and who helped promote his music, Schubert never had, as far as we know, a significant romance. Is it any wonder that the theme of longing (*Sehnsucht*) imbues so much of his music? And though there is music of great charm and delight, even much of the early music has a melancholy cast: imagine the 17-year-old Schubert writing his first undisputed master-piece, the remarkable *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, setting the Goethe poem which says *my peace is gone...my heart is heavy...I shall never find peace...never again*.

In spite of many obstacles and setbacks, Schubert was nevertheless incredibly prolific. In one year alone (1815), he composed more than 150 songs of what would eventually be a total of over 600. And in the last year of his life he composed, among other works, most of the second half of *Winterreise*, more than 30 other songs, the Mass in E-flat Major, the String Quintet in C Major, as well as the Impromptus, D. 935 (heard on this disc), and completed of the "Great" C Major Symphony.

In September of 1828, Schubert moved in with his brother, seeking comfort and care as his illness progressed. In that month alone, he composed three large-scale piano sonatas, the first of which is recorded here. Although we may hear in those sonatas today a kind of final testament, Schubert continued to look to the future in spite of his deteriorating health. In one of his very last pieces, *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen (The Shepherd on the Rock)* Schubert sets a text by the Wilhelm Müller about longing for love, but ends optimistically: *Springtime will come, springtime my joy, now I must make ready to wander forth."*

The Music on This CD

It is tempting to speculate that Beethoven's death in March of 1827 may have released some creative force in tonalities, but Schubert borrows the theme and harmonic progression of Beethoven's *32 Variations* (WoO 80) evident than in the **Sonata in c minor, D. 958**. Not only is the piece in the key of one of Beethoven's favorite Schubert that allowed him to unabashedly explore Beethoven's world and aesthetic. No where is that more

for the main theme of the first movement. The sonata is also more brazenly dramatic and sinister than most of

Schubert's music, as if Beethoven's death had finally freed him to emulate his idol openly. The second move-ment starts with the same A-flat major chord in almost exactly the same disposition as the opening of the sec-ond movement of Beethoven's earliest c minor sonata, Opus 10 No. 1. In spite of these direct Beethoven derivations, Schubert's sonata emerges as very much his own, with all the hallmarks of lyricism and harmonic inventiveness that define his expressive style. A hovering and sometimes explosive third movement with a charmingly coy middle section, and a demonic Tarantella-like fourth movement complete the work. In com-posing the last three sonatas (D. 958, 959, and 960) in a rush against time, could Schubert have been trying to accomplish something commensurate with Beethoven's last three sonatas (Opus 109, 110, and 111)?

The Four Impromptus, D. 935, were composed near the beginning of Schubert's remarkably productive last year, in December of 1827. Believed by some to have been intended as the four movements of a sonata (the first and last pieces are in f minor), Schubert settled on calling them Impromptus and, thus, a companion set to other four (D. 899) composed just a few months earlier.

The stark *maestoso* opening of the first Impromptu soon gives way to melodies that are at once poignant and dance-like. An episode of quiet dialogue between high and low voices is curiously but tellingly marked *appas-sionato*, revealing that Schubert's idea of passion, unlike Beethoven's, is tied more to intimacy than to fury. The second Impromptu, an Allegretto, is, in typical Schubert fashion, both lifting and sadly wistful at the same time. The third Impromptu is a charming and delightful Theme and Variations, the theme reminiscent of the incidental music to the ballet "Rosamunde". The fourth and last Impromptu is most clearly a dance — and was probably inspired by the folk dances that he enjoyed in earlier years on summer sojourns to Zseliz in the Hungarian countryside not far from Vienna.

We can feel sad for Schubert that so much of his music was never known or performed publicly in his lifetime, regretting the relative neglect of his genius while Beethoven was lionized in the same city. We can mourn his tragically early death, and we can speculate on the great music that would have emerged in his later life. But, not have. And, when all is said and done, his life seems to have had a large and expansive arc and even a sense of completion. The works from his last year are "late" works in every sense of the word in spite of his youthful chronological age. He was dealing with life and death and his works reflect the deep philosophical introspection that emerges from confronting those issues. Listening to these works, one has less the sense of a life cut short than of a life lived quickly and fully. And really, could we ask for more than the rich treasures he left us?

—Victor Rosenbaum