

SCHUBERT

Complete Overtures • 2

Rosamunde • The Twin Brothers

Fierabras • The Conspirators

Prague Sinfonia • Christian Benda



Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

Overtures • 2

Franz Schubert was born in Vienna in 1797, the son of a schoolmaster, and spent the greater part of his short life in the city. He began to learn the piano at the age of five, with the help of his brother Ignaz, twelve years his senior, and three years later started to learn the violin, while serving as a chorister at Liechtental church. From there he applied, on the recommendation of Antonio Salieri, to join the Imperial Chapel, into which he was accepted in October 1808, as a chorister now allowed to study at the Akademisches Gymnasium, boarding at the Stadtkonvikt, his future education guaranteed.

During his schooldays Schubert formed friendships that he was to maintain for the rest of his life. After his voice broke in 1812, he was offered, as expected, a scholarship to enable him to continue his general education, but he chose, instead, to train as a primary school teacher, while devoting more time to music and, in particular, to composition, the art to which he was already making a prolific contribution. In 1815 he was able to join his father as an assistant teacher, but showed no great aptitude or liking for the work. Instead he was able to continue the earlier friendships he had formed at school and make new acquaintances. His meeting in 1816 with Franz von Schober allowed him to accept an invitation to live in the latter's apartment, an arrangement that relieved him of the necessity of earning his keep in the schoolroom. In August 1817 he returned home again, when room was needed by Schober for his dying brother, and resumed his place, for the moment, in the classroom. The following summer he spent in part at Zseliz in Hungary as music tutor to the two daughters of Count Johann Karl Esterházy von Galánta, before returning to Vienna to lodge with a new friend, the poet Johann Mayrhofer, an

arrangement that continued until near the end of 1820, after which Schubert spent some months living alone, now able to afford the necessary rent.

By this period of his life it seemed that Schubert was on the verge of solid success as a composer and musician. Thanks to his friends, in particular the older singer Johann Michael Vogl, a schoolfriend of Mozart's pupil Süßmayr, Leopold von Sonnleithner and others, his music was winning an audience. He lodged once again with the Schobers in 1822 and 1823 and it was at this time that his health began to deteriorate, through a venereal infection. This illness overshadowed the remaining years of his life and was the cause of his early death. It has been thought a direct consequence of the dissolute way of life into which Schober introduced him and which for a time alienated him from some of his former friends. The following years brought intermittent returns to his father's house, since 1818 in the suburb of Rossau, and a continuation of social life that often centred on his own musical accomplishments and of his intense activity as a composer. In February 1828 the first public concert of his music was given in Vienna, an enterprise that proved financially successful, and he was able to spend the summer with friends, including Schober, before moving, in September, to the suburb of Wieden to stay with his brother Ferdinand, in the hope that his health might improve. Social activities continued, suggesting that he was unaware of the imminence of his death, but at the end of October he was taken ill at dinner and in the following days his condition became worse. He died on 19th November.

During Schubert's final years publishers had started to show an interest in his work. He had fulfilled

commissions for the theatre and delighted his friends with songs, piano pieces and chamber music. It was with his songs, above all, that Schubert won a lasting reputation and to this body of work that he made a contribution equally remarkable for its quality as for its quantity, with settings of poems by major and minor poets, a reflection of literary interests of the period. His gift for the invention of an apt and singable melody is reflected in much else that he wrote.

Schubert wrote his *Overture in D major, D. 556* [1] in May 1817. It is scored for woodwind, horns, timpani and strings, but, unusually, without trumpets, the usual companions of drums. It opens with an *Allegro maestoso* leading to an *Andante sostenuto*, which returns after the *Allegro vivace* which provides the substance of the work that has the necessary theatrical quality to serve as the introduction to a play.

The *Overture in D major in the Italian style, D. 590* [2] was written in November 1817, with its companion *Overture in C major in the Italian style, D. 591* [3], the descriptive titles known in Schubert's time but not to be attributed to him. One of the overtures, perhaps the first of the pair, had a public performance in March 1818 and was welcomed by critics, with praise for the work's 'youthful fire'. Both reflect the influence of Rossini, whose operas increasingly fascinated the Viennese public. 1816 had brought performances in Vienna of *L'inganno felice* and *Tancredi*, followed in 1817 by *L'italiana in Algeri*, and the fashion was to continue into the following decade, exciting the jealous opposition of composers writing in the German classical tradition. The first of the two new overtures starts with an *Adagio* that leads, after the opening chords, to an Italianate theme. The strings introduce the principal theme of the *Allegro giusto*, which, in its course, seems to make direct reference to Rossini. The second overture takes on an increasingly Italian air, particularly with the *Allegro* and

its contrasting themes. Schubert arranged both overtures for piano duet, and the *Overture in C major* for two pianos, eight hands, to be performed in this version in March 1818 in a private concert.

Schubert's music for Georg von Hofmann's play *Die Zauberharfe* (The Magic Harp) was written in the summer of 1820 and the spectacular melodrama was briefly staged at the Theater an der Wien in August, when it excited bad reviews and only mixed praise for Schubert's contribution. The *Overture*, however, is much better known as the *Overture to Rosamunde, D. 644* [4], substituted by Schubert for his original borrowing from his music for *Alfonso und Estrella*. In modified sonata form, the overture has an *Andante* introduction, followed by a *Vivace* in apt popular style. From the same year, in which Schubert had also tackled Mayrhofer's *Adrast* and Johann Philipp Neumann's *Sakuntala*, Hofmann's Singspiel *Die Zwillingbrüder, D. 647* (The Twin Brothers) [5] had its staging in June at the Kärntner-Theater, with music commissioned from Schubert in 1819. Based on the French *Les deux Valentins*, the piece seemed to offer a good rôle to Vogl, who played the parts of the brothers, but won no success, although the overture and other contributions by Schubert have great charm.

Schubert wrote his *Overture in E minor, D. 648* [6] in February 1819 and it had its first public performance at the Redoutensaal in November 1821. The work is scored for the usual woodwind, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani and strings, and marks an important stage in Schubert's orchestral writing in its dramatic handling of these instrumental forces.

1821 also brought a collaboration between Schubert and his friend Schober in a grand romantic opera, *Alfonso und Estrella*, the subject of their attention during a summer holiday that took them to St Pölten and the

countryside at Ochsenburg. With hopes for a production, Schubert continued work on the opera, completing the music in February 1822, but it had to wait for many years before it had a performance, given in Weimar in 1854 by Liszt, who revered Schubert but was well aware of the defects of the work. The overture, however, served initially as an *Overture to Rosamunde, D. 732* [7], later to be replaced by the overture to *Die Zauberharfe. Rosamunde, Fürstin von Zypern* (Rosamunde, Princess of Cyprus), staged at the Theater an der Wien in 1823, was the work of the blue-stocking Helmina von Chézy, who had provided the complex libretto of *Euryanthe* for Weber, with equal lack of success.

The Singspiel *Die Verschworenen (Der häusliche Krieg)*, D. 787 (The Conspirators / Domestic Warfare) [8] was the work of Ignaz Franz Castelli, who had published it as a challenge to composers. Schubert wrote his music for the work in April 1823, but no performance proved possible and it was first heard in 1861. His setting had, in any case, been anticipated

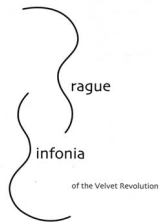
elsewhere. Based on the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes transposed to a medieval Crusading context, the work elicited music that contains a military element, suited to its subject.

The same year saw the setting by Schubert of *Fierabras* [9] by Josef Kupelwieser, brother of his friend, the painter Leopold Kupelwieser, and at the time secretary of the Kärntnertor-Theater. The three-act opera is set in the time of Charlemagne, a pseudo-historical romance in which the noble Moorish knight Fierabras is eventually enlisted in the ranks of the Emperor's Paladins, to his apparent satisfaction. Parts of the work were heard in Vienna after Schubert's death and the *Overture*, scored for an orchestra with four horns and three trombones, provides an imposing and dramatic introduction to a work remembered, if at all, for its music rather than its text.

Keith Anderson

Prague Sinfonia

During the celebrations of the Czech National Day on 28th October 2006, former President of the Czech Republic Václav Havel became Honorary President of the Prague Sinfonia in a gala concert under Christian Benda at the Czech National House in New York City. The orchestra was established as an expanded version of the Prague Chamber Orchestra during their sixteenth tour of North America, after having collaborated for over ten years with Christian Benda, chief conductor and artistic director. The orchestra has toured widely throughout the world and is a regular component of Czech musical life, with concert series in Prague and participation in festivals. Recordings for companies including EMI, Decca, Sony Classics, Naxos, Polydor, Nippon Columbia, Denon, BMG, Telarc, Ariola, Eurodisc, and Supraphon have won a number of prestigious prizes, including the Wiener Flötenuhr, the Grand Prix du Disque Académie Charles Cros twice, and the Golden Disc Award for the sale of one million records.



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Christian Benda

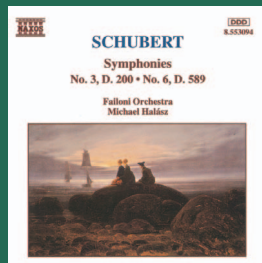


Christian Benda comes from an old family of Czech musicians and composers, and enjoys a distinguished international career as a conductor, collaborating with leading soloists and orchestras throughout the world, appearing at international festivals, in the concert hall and in the recording studio. His many recordings include orchestral works ranging from Bach and Haydn to Malipiero and Casella, together with a variety of works by his distinguished ancestors. He is chief conductor and artistic director of the Prague Sinfonia created by President Václav Havel. His video, radio and television recordings include productions for the BBC, Radio Luxembourg, Radio France, ORF, Hessischer Rundfunk, SWR, TVSR, RSI, SF DRS, TV Cultura, as well as for Czech, Polish, Slovenian, Serbian, Hungarian and Chinese television.

Also Available



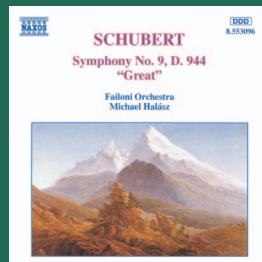
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Although Schubert's dream of success as a composer for the stage largely eluded him, some of his theatrical music was performed during his lifetime. His overtures for Georg von Hofmann's *Die Zwillingbrüder* and for *Die Zauberharfe* – later transferred to *Rosamunde, D. 644* – sadly won little praise, though the *Overture in the Italian Style, D590* was appreciated for its 'youthful fire', and the *Overture in E minor, D. 648* was heard in 1821. Volume 1 is also available on Naxos 8.570328 and Schubert's *Alfonso und Estrella* is on Naxos DVD 2.110260.

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HELP WITH ART

Franz
SCHUBERT
(1797-1828)



Complete Overtures • 2

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| 1 | Overture in D major, D. 556 | 6:46 |
| 2 | Overture in the Italian style in D major, D. 590 | 7:54 |
| 3 | Overture in the Italian style in C major, D. 591 | 7:27 |
| 4 | Rosamunde, D. 644 | 10:23 |
| | from <i>Die Zauberharfe</i> (The Magic Harp) | |
| 5 | Die Zwillingbrüder (The Twin Brothers), D. 647 | 4:01 |
| 6 | Overture in E minor, D. 648 | 6:11 |
| 7 | Rosamunde, D. 732 from <i>Alfonso und Estrella</i> | 5:50 |
| 8 | Die Verschworenen – Der häusliche Krieg
(The Conspirators – Domestic Warfare), D. 787 | 7:03 |
| 9 | Fierabras, D. 796 | 8:53 |



**Prague Sinfonia
Christian Benda**



Recorded at Arco Diva-Domovina, Prague, Czech Republic, from 10th to 12th November 2006
 Producer and Editor: Jiří Gemrot • Engineers: Karel Soukeník and Václav Roubal
 Booklet notes: Keith Anderson • Cover Picture: *View of Vienna with Hendelplatz in foreground*
 19th century engraving (Art Archive / Museen der Stadt Wien, Vienna / Alfredo Dagli Orti)



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Playing Time
64:28



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