

A black and white photograph of a man with curly hair, wearing a dark turtleneck sweater and dark trousers, sitting on a wooden chair. He is holding a book or sheet music in his lap and looking towards the camera. The background is a rough, textured stone wall with some small plants growing at the base. The overall mood is artistic and contemplative.

Richard Ormrod
plays Schumann
and Schubert.

Kreisleriana op. 16 Robert Schumann

32:53

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|------|
| 1 | Äußerst bewegt | 2:38 |
| 2 | Sehr innig und nicht zu rasch | 8:46 |
| 3 | Sehr aufgeregt | 4:13 |
| 4 | Sehr langsam | 3:45 |
| 5 | Sehr lebhaft | 3:02 |
| 6 | Sehr langsam | 4:30 |
| 7 | Sehr rasch | 2:03 |
| 8 | Schnell und spielend | 3:56 |

Piano Sonata in B-Flat Major, D 960 Franz Schubert

38:10

- | | | |
|----|---|-------|
| 9 | Molto moderato | 15:28 |
| 10 | Andante sostenuto | 10:16 |
| 11 | Scherzo: Allegro vivace con delicatezza | 4:01 |
| 12 | Allegro ma non troppo | 8:25 |

Total Time 71:03



Kreisleriana

Kreisleriana op. 16 is often thought of as one of Schumann's most fanciful and eccentric compositions. The title was taken from E. T. A. Hoffmann. Johannes Kreisler was one of the author's most enduring creations – a wild and gifted Kapellmeister. Schumann had already noted in his diary in 1832 that reading Hoffmann had opened up “new worlds” to him and, as the eight fantasies of Kreisleriana took shape between May and September 1838, the full extent of this influence became clear. Though today the eccentricity and unpredictability of Kreisleriana appears as one of the work's great strengths, it was in apologetic tones that Schumann confessed to his publisher, at the preparation of the work's second edition, that he had “unfortunately often ruined” his compositions.

This sense of a musical style that tends to undermine itself by sudden cuts and interruptions of the musical flow may well be an inheritance from Hoffmann – the reference being, quite possibly, the novel “Lebensansichten des Katers Murr”. In this book, Murr, the tomcat belonging to the Kapellmeister Kreisler, writes his views on life on sheets that become interleaved with the manuscript of Kreisler’s own biography. Due to an editorial oversight, the whole bundle gets printed together, and the random juxtaposition of the two works is the result, with all the sudden and irrelevant changes of narrative direction that this entails.

In the first movement of op. 16, the wild waves of D Minor that characterize the opening give way, without change to

the rhythmical texture, to a tender if semi-submerged melody in B-Flat Major. In the expansive second movement, the longing lyricism of the rondo theme is twice interrupted by intermezzi – the first a sort of contrapuntal exercise, the second an animated and passionate outburst in G Minor. The third movement is frenetic at the opening, characterised by a twitchy repeated rhythm. But again the middle section interrupts, the triplets receding into the background as a relaxed duplet accompaniment to a wandering and soulful melody. No. 4 is static in character, and interjections from low bass voices lend it a lonely, dark colour, until a surprisingly simple, song-like section marked “piu animato” dispels, for a while, the shadows. Musically repetitive rhythms are again at the heart of no. 5,

whose quasi-palindromic form centres around a devilish, waltz-like motif. Barcarolle-like rhythms and the sunny key of B-Flat Major mostly characterize no. 6, though here, too, there is a surprise change of tack – to C Minor and austere, French Overture rhythms. Wildness is the theme of no. 7, and here the middle section is a contrapuntal exercise of extreme virtuosity, framed by a C Minor section dominated by tumbling arpeggios. The movement ends with a stunned – and wholly unforeseeable – chorale. No. 8 is one of Schumann’s strangest and most remarkable creations. The almost disembodied right hand passagework is underpinned, four octaves below, by a bass voice that remains stubbornly indecisive, being nearly always displaced from the beat. The result is both playful

and ghostly, and is suitably undercut by the two robust episodes, the second of which is marked to be played “with all possible strength” before the piece trails off to the far reaches of the bass register and an unharmonised PPP.

Piano Sonata B-Flat Major

Written in the final months of his short life, the B-Flat Major Sonata D 960 is Schubert's last work for piano. Knowing as we do how acutely aware Schubert was by this time of his own approaching death, the work has an almost unbelievable spaciousness and grandeur. The four movements unfold in an unhurried and lyrical manner, and by no means tend at the exclusion of all else to gloominess.

The first movement is a huge sonata form based, as so often with Schubert, not on two thematic groups, but on three. A sublime and broad theme in B-Flat ends mysteriously with a low trill on a G-Flat, and this ushers in a second rendition of the opening theme, this time in the key of G-Flat. This key relation remains central to the sonata, and the second subject emerges in F-Sharp (G-Flat) Minor.

The enormous development, however, is based mainly on the material of the third theme, with its characteristic dactylic rhythm. There are similarities here with the song D 489 “Der Wanderer”, and a bleakness that recalls “Die Winterreise”, before the music builds to a great climax in D Minor. The passage which follows is one of Schubert’s most sublime, and the opening theme of the sonata is gradually brought to mind though not exactly in B-Flat. Rather it sits poised *on* that note, as though viewed from afar.

The second movement has a static, almost funereal quality. The theme, given in thirds, is suspended between pizzicato “pedal” notes which span four octaves. The repetitive rhythm of these accompanying figures lends the music a mes-

merizing stillness which is only temporarily dispelled by the gushing lyricism of the middle section. The Scherzo is playful and marked to be played with “delicacy”. However, in its short duration it nonetheless revisits several of the important keys of the work – D-Flat Major, A Major, B-Flat Minor – and has as a result a condensed and rather sophisticated character. The trio section even seems to offer a commentary on the G-Flat trill that overshadowed the opening of the sonata, though here the atmosphere is decidedly tongue-in-cheek.

This slightly madcap feel persists into the finale which begins, like the finale of the celebrated “Trout” quintet, with a call to attention on an open octave – the only difference being that here it is

emphatically the *wrong* open octave, being a G instead of the dominant, F. Only at the end of this long Sonata-Rondo does this matter get resolved, as the G descends – in semitone steps – to an F (passing again through the signature note of G-Flat) before the short but brilliant coda that concludes this greatest of all Schubert’s piano works.

Richard Ormrod

Richard Ormrod is an acclaimed soloist. He has twice performed concertos with the Philharmonia orchestra conducted by David Parry at the Barbican centre, London; toured the Pacific Rim as concerto soloist with the Philharmonia Virtuosi, from Los Angeles to Tokyo; made four international tours with the Czech Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra, including to the United States and performed with the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, broadcast live to 38 countries. Richard also plays a wide range of recital repertory in venues across the U.K. as well as in more than a dozen countries abroad. He was a semi-finalist in the Leeds International Competition at the age of 19 and went on to win prizes at other international competitions including the Rubenstein and Tchaikovsky competitions.

Richard made his first concerto appearance at the age of 10. After studying with Beate Popperwell, and with Michael Young at Wells Cathedral School, Richard went on to read Music at King's College Cambridge. At age 17, Richard spent the first of five summers as Artist-in-Residence at Aspen Music Festival, Colorado. Later he studied for several years with Elisso Virsaladze at the Moscow Conservatory.

Chamber Music is central to Richard's musical life. He was awarded the accompanist's prize at the Tchaikovsky International Violin Competition. As pianist with the Salzburg Hyperion Ensemble, he has performed in numerous countries and he has also joined the renowned Dorian Wind Quintet on

three U.S. tours. Richard has frequently performed with Trio d'Archi di Praga and joined the Czech Nonet for extensive tours during their 85th anniversary season.

Richard serves on the piano faculty of the Royal Northern College of Music. He lives in the mountains of North Wales with his partner and their two young daughters.

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