

PRELUDE

SEPTEMBER 2023 • MASTERWORKS #1



HARTFORD
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

Elgar's Enigma September 29 – October 1, 2023

Question: Can you name the famous composer who was mentored by famed composer Antonio Salieri, was the ONLY "Viennese" composer who was born in Vienna and lived there his entire life, who died unmarried at the age of 31, and who, in his short life, produced more than 1,500 music works of varying lengths?

Answer: Franz Schubert.

Although the concert title this opening weekend acknowledges Sir Edward Elgar, this issue of Prelude shines its light on Franz Schubert, a brilliant and versatile composer, whose *Unfinished Symphony* is featured on the concert that opens our 80th Anniversary Season.

Franz Peter Schubert was born in Vienna on January 31, 1797. His father, Franz Theodor, was a schoolteacher who had established a flourishing school, and his mother, Elisabeth, was in domestic service when she married.ⁱ While he was the fourteenth child born to his mother, he was the youngest son and only the fourth child to survive to adulthood.ⁱⁱ The high rate of infant mortality made large families a norm in Vienna, and after his mother's death, his father remarried and had five more children.ⁱⁱⁱ



Birthplace of Franz Schubert

The family was musical, and young Franz received instruction in piano, violin and organ from his father and his older brother, Ignaz.^{iv} The child's musical talents were evident, and when he was just seven years old, he came to the attention of famed composer, Antonio Salieri, who immediately enrolled the child in the Imperial



Franz Schubert

Seminary, where Franz played violin in the orchestra, sang in the choir and was given instruction in music theory from Salieri himself.^v Under Salieri's instruction, young Schubert began composing his first string quartets, songs and piano pieces.^{vi} Franz also had an excellent voice, and with Salieri's encouragement, he auditioned for and was accepted into a prestigious choir, which gave him free tuition, free room and board, and a place in one of the best schools in Vienna^{vii}, the Stadtkonvikt, a monastery-school.^{viii} Upon reaching puberty at the age of fifteen in 1812, the changes in his voice forced Schubert to leave the school, but he continued private instruction with Salieri for another three years.^{ix}



Stadtkonvikt

Pressured by his family, Schubert entered a teachers' training college in Vienna in the autumn of 1814 and for the next four years, worked as a teacher in his father's school.^x Between 1813 and 1815, Schubert established himself as a prolific songwriter, and in that time, he produced three symphonies, multiple string quartets and a three-act opera.^{xi} During this same

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Franz Schubert portrait by Wilhelm August Rieder

period, Schubert tried to enroll in the military, but he was rejected because he could not meet the height requirement.^{xii} Schubert was just five feet one inch tall, and his short stature and plump figure earned him the nickname, Schwammerl or “little mushroom.”^{xiii}

Another nickname was Kanevas, given his habit of always asking new acquaintances, “Kann er was?” (What can he do?)^{xiv}

While Schubert’s musical output was extraordinary, starting from his teenage years until his death (on one single day in October of 1815, he composed eight songs)^{xv}, Schubert was remarkably modest about his talent, and despite his popularity in Vienna, he never believed he was good enough.^{xvi} At the age of nineteen, Schubert simultaneously began a law degree and started work on his Symphony No. 5.^{xvii} He had grown tired of teaching and while law briefly held his interest, he quickly changed his mind, opting to dedicate himself full-time to music.^{xviii} In part, his decision was encouraged by the successful public performance of one of his works, the “Italian Overture in C Major,” on March 1, 1818 in Vienna.^{xix}

Schubert’s first masterpiece, one of his first songs, *Gretchen Am Spinnrade*, was composed when he was 17 years old, and today Schubert is credited as the creator of German Lied (or art songs), because of his enormous output and the immense popularity of his works.^{xx} During his life, he composed nearly 600 songs, which express every conceivable shade of human emotion.^{xxi}



Franz Schubert

Like many young artists in Vienna at the time, Schubert was a “party boy.” He spent many evenings enjoying songs, poetry and wine, and was known as an argumentative drunk.^{xxii} But these raucous

evenings were spent with a tight-knit group of artists who placed Schubert at the center of their gatherings, known as “Schubertiads.”^{xxiii} Schubert’s financial fortunes finally began to improve in 1821 when, with the help of his friends, he began offering his songs on a subscription basis. In Vienna, his harmonious songs and dances were popular, and throughout the city, concert parties called “Schubertiaden” became a regular fixture in the homes of wealthy residents.^{xxiv}

Unfortunately, by late 1822, Schubert encountered difficulties. Not only were his earnings insufficient to support a party lifestyle, but he became severely ill with syphilis.^{xxv} Despite his illness, he composed at a prolific pace, and he seemed to turn to music to escape his mounting health problems.^{xxvi} He produced chamber works, string quartets, piano sonatas and more, and readily admitted that he was deeply influenced by Beethoven, who he had met just twice.^{xxvii} While he greatly admired Beethoven, a fellow resident in Vienna, he was likely too timid to even introduce himself to the great master when they passed in the street.^{xxviii} It is said, however, that on his deathbed, Beethoven



Schubert at the piano, by Gustav Klimt

looked at some of Schubert’s works and exclaimed, “Truly, the spark of divine genius resides in this Schubert!”^{xxix} When Beethoven died in March of 1827, Schubert was one of forty torch-bearers at the funeral, including composers Hummel and Czerny.^{xxx} The honor was likely a clear statement of Schubert’s position in Vienna’s social hierarchy at the time.^{xxxi} Schubert died just one year later, in 1828, and prior to his death, he had asked to be buried close to Beethoven.^{xxxii}

Schubert’s final public concert took place on March 26, 1828,^{xxxiii} a little more than six months before he died of typhoid fever on November 19, 1828.^{xxxiv} It was not until Schubert’s death that his musical genius received the recognition it deserved, and unquestionably, his talent lay in his ability to compose

virtually any kind of musical form.^{xxxv} Unlike many of the composers of his time, Schubert was never a conductor or an accomplished virtuoso, and most of his large-scale instrumental pieces remained unknown until years after his death.^{xxxvi}

Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*, featured on our concert program, did not come to light until nearly three decades after his death. He had completed just two movements of the Symphony before it was confined to a desk drawer belonging to friends, brothers Anselm and Josef Hüttenbrenner.^{xxxvii} As Schubert's recognition grew, the composition was finally brought to the public's attention in 1865.^{xxxviii}

In 1872, a memorial to Schubert was erected in Vienna's Stadtpark.^{xxxix} In 1888, his grave, along with Beethoven's, was relocated to Zentralfriedhof, the cemetery in Vienna that is one of the largest in the world.^{xl} He was placed alongside fellow composers, Johannes Brahms and Johann Strauss II.^{xli}



Top Image:
Schubert's
First Tomb

Bottom Image:
Schubert's
Final Grave



JOIN US!

Please join the HSO on September 29 – October 1, 2023, in celebration of the start of our 80th Anniversary season that features Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*, Elgar's *Enigma Variations*, as well as *American Dance Music* by composer Daniel McCarthy, and a very special *Concerto for Brass Quintet and Orchestra after Handel* by HSO's friend, conductor/composer Gerard Schwarz.

Did you borrow this Prelude? Get your own free copy! Whether you're a ticket buyer, donor, curious about the music, or know someone who is, just send an email to dshulansky@hartfordsymphony.org We'll make sure you receive Prelude by email, in advance of each HSO Masterworks concert!

Have we sparked your curiosity and desire to learn more about Franz Schubert? If so, we hope you will explore some of our recommendations:

Almost everyone is familiar with Schubert's *Ave Maria*, performed live in concert by the late and great Luciano Pavarotti, during one of the Three Tenors concerts in Los Angeles:

[**Luciano Pavarotti - Ave Maria \(Schubert\) - YouTube**](#)

One of the world's most well-known chamber music compositions is Schubert's joyful *Trout Quintet*:
[**Schubert: Das Forellen Quintett / Trout Quintet D.667 Op.114 from Esbjerg EnergiMetropol - Bing video**](#)

Schubert's haunting string quartet, known as *Death and the Maiden*, was the soundtrack for a 1994 Roman Polanski film of the same name, starring Sigourney Weaver and Ben Kingsley:

[**Schubert: String Quartet No. 14 "Death and The Maiden" - Bing video**](#)

To watch the full movie, click this link:

[**Watch Death And The Maiden online free - Crackle**](#)

Be filled with wonder as you listen to Schubert's "Great" Symphony, Symphony No. 9:

[**Schubert: Symphony No. 9 "The Great" / Munich Philharmonic Orchestra - Bing video**](#)



WONDERING HOW THE MUSIC OF OUR FEATURED CONCERT WILL SOUND? Try HSO'S LISTENING GUIDE, with links to the pieces you'll hear on our concert stage – and more!

Listen to Schubert's Symphony No. 8, his *Unfinished Symphony*, conducted by Claudio Abbado:

[**Schubert Symphony No 8 B minor Unfinished Claudio Abbado Ferrara 1989 - YouTube**](#)

Enjoy this recording of Elgar's Enigma Variations, performed by the BBC Symphony and conducted by Leonard Bernstein:

[**Edward Elgar's Enigma Variations | BBC Symphony Orchestra, Leonard Bernstein - YouTube**](#)

Delight in this recording of the *Concerto for Brass Quintet and Orchestra After Handel's Concerto Grosso in F Major* by Gerard Schwarz:

[**Concerto for Brass Quintet and Orchestra \(after Handel's Concerto Grosso in F major, Op. 6,... - YouTube**](#)

CASEY'S CLASSICS

Want the best recordings of the pieces you'll experience on the concert program? **Coleman Casey**, HSO's dear friend, Director Emeritus and beloved in-house audiophile, offers his recording recommendations of selections featured in our upcoming Masterworks Concert.

Franz Schubert's **Symphony #8 (the "Unfinished")** has literally dozens of great recordings in the catalog, but a perennial favorite is the version by Bruno Walter with the Columbia Symphony Orchestra (SONY), a recording that reflects the wisdom of a lifetime of performance experience, allied to the Viennese understanding of the subtleties of this great masterpiece.

It will be no surprise that Gerard Schwarz's recording with the Seattle Symphony Orchestra of his own work, **Concerto for Brass Quintet and Orchestra (after Handel)**, is essential if you love this work (NAXOS).

Sir Edward Elgar's **Enigma Variations** continues to be one of his greatest and most popular works, and Pierre Monteux and the London Symphony Orchestra bring a special feeling of gravitas and emotional charge to it (DECCA).



Franz Schubert

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