Music of a lesser genre? Schubert’s development and transformation of the piano duet medium


Abstract

Schubert’s gift for transforming smaller genres into greater ones is not unique to his Lieder: the formal, stylistic and aesthetic innovations in Schubert’s piano duets reveal an authentic development of this genre. Schubert’s four-hand piano repertoire enjoyed the same performance setting as his songs, but in reception history have not enjoyed the same level of popularity. This chapter therefore seeks to examine why the duets have been misrepresented in scholarship and criticism, and also how Schubert’s contribution differed radically to that of his predecessors. Firstly, the significance of the social milieu of the early nineteenth century in cultivating the duets shall be considered as also the many negative associations accompanying this musical setting. Key issues of reception history, which have contributed to the neglect of Schubert’s piano duets within Schubert scholarship, will also be addressed. Following an exploration as to why these works have been neglected within scholarship, the history of the duet genre will be considered in order to place Schubert’s contribution in a broader context. Finally, Schubert’s own contribution will be assessed, alongside how traditional musicological approaches to the duets have begun to be overturned.

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The Music: The piano duet drew from Schubert some of his most intimate and imaginative creations. The medium wonderfully suited his affection for music-making with friends and provided the chance for adventures in form. Several of these works are extended one-movement explorations, but the Fantasie in F minor is virtually a miniature cyclic symphony. Paul Lewis and Steven Osborne are both characterful pianists, but here they put themselves at the service of the music and each other, losing themselves in the beauty (besides the challenges) of Schubert’s writing. Collaborative excellence. This CD makes the two pianists much more than the sum of their four hands. (Music of Franz Schubert). Edited by Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson. For Piano. 30 Original Works This anthology contains 30 original works by composers of the Classical period and intends to reflect the stylistic breadth of the music of this time, from Mozart to Hummel and Haydn to Schubert. Several pieces a… 15.99 EUR - Sold by Woodbrass Pre-shipment lead time: On order. Schubert is unusual and indeed unique among composers in that some of his greatest works are written for piano duet. He wrote as much music for duet as for solo piano, and reaches emotional depths which take this repertoire far away from its domestic origins. The rest of the works on this disc are much less well known but equally fascinating. Who better to commit these works to disc than two of the brightest stars in the British piano scene, Paul Lewis and Steven Osborne? As well as their individual achievements, they also have a long-standing friendship and performing relationship which you will hear reflected in their magisterial performances on this marvellous disc.