

Schubert had as the model for his *Impromptus* short character pieces by the Czech composer Wenzel Johann Tomášek (1774–1850) entitled *Eclogues* and *Dithyrambs*. Schubert's two sets of *Impromptus*, *Opp. 90* (*D. 899*) and *142* (*D. 935*), bear only slight resemblance to Tomášek's pieces. Writer George Jellinek describes them as "essentially songs without words." *Opus 90, No. 1* (*Allegro molto moderato*), is in C minor and commences in a ruminating manner. The theme resembles a folk melody as intoxicating as it is heartrending. *No. 2* (*Allegro*), in E-flat major, is a stylized waltz in the nature of a *scherzo*, employing soaring triplet figures with a dancelike staccato interlude. *No. 3* (*Andante*), in G-flat major, is vintage Schubert. Musicologist Maurice J. E. Brown notes: "The chief beauty of [this] *Impromptu* is the way in which Schubert uses the four falling notes of his slow tune in endlessly varied devices: to give fresh contours to his melody, to introduce touches of color by placing them in unexpected keys, [and] to build up a climax. On the last page all three of these techniques combine to produce an unforgettable close to the songlike piece." *Impromptu No. 4* (*Allegretto*), in A-flat major, contains glossy passages in thirds that are brilliantly conceived and represent "a dance in the moonlight—with the feet scarcely touching the ground" (Artur Schnabel).

Dedicated to Count Franz von Brunswick (1779–1849), a cellist and an ardent, well-informed connoisseur of Beethoven's works, the *Sonata No. 23 in F Minor, Op. 57*, began its embryonic development as Beethoven was working on his opera, *Fidelio*. The subtitle, "*Appassionata*," is said to have been applied by the publisher, not by Beethoven. Writer Romain Rolland contends that the subtitle is unusual, "because it happens to apply. This is, indeed, an impassioned work; the fact that its title has brought it an unusual degree of popularity does not in the least undermine its power or its stature."

Following the classic sonata-allegro format, *Op. 57* has been described as more "normal" in layout than Beethoven's previous efforts in this genre. The contrast between the first two themes is profound: an explosive, rhythmically driven opening theme is juxtaposed with a

smooth and elegant secondary theme. This contrast produces a diversity of moods and quicksilver changes, moments of tranquility followed immediately by a brief deluge. All these features heighten the musical drama, with an added tonal coloration expressed in the "contralto" voice range chosen for the second theme. The second movement (*Andante con moto*) has a single mellifluous theme that is both attractive and dignified, with a set of four imposing variations. Surprisingly, the last variation does not end on a tonic chord. Instead, there is a jolting dissonance that leads without interruption to the finale (*Allegro ma non troppo*). This last movement relies on the sonata-allegro form, as did the first. However, it takes on the character of a *moto perpetuo*, bringing the sonata to a brilliant and forceful conclusion.

Program notes by Elmer Booze

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please make sure that all personal electronic devices are turned off.

For the convenience of concertgoers the Garden Café remains open until 6:30 p.m.

Selections from concerts at the Gallery can be heard on the second Sunday of each month at 9:00 p.m. on WGMS, 103.5 FM.

This is the last concert of the season at the National Gallery. Concerts will resume on Sunday, 7 October 2001, with a performance by the National Gallery Orchestra, George Manos, conductor.

The Fifty-ninth Season of

THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL and
F. LAMMOT BELIN CONCERTS

National Gallery of Art



2390th Concert

PAUL BADURA-SKODA, pianist

Sunday Evening, 24 June 2001
Seven O'clock
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

PROGRAM

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756–1791) Fantasia in D Minor
KV. 397 (1782)

Mozart Variations on “Ah vous dirai-je, maman”
KV. 364 (1781–1782)

Franz Schubert
(1797–1828) Sonata in A Minor, Opus posthumous 164
D. 537 (1778)

Allegro ma non troppo
Allegretto quasi andantino
Allegro vivace

INTERMISSION

Schubert Four Impromptus, Op. 90
(D. 899) (1827)

No. 1 in C Minor
No. 2 in E-flat Major
No. 3 in G-flat Major
No. 4 in A-flat Major

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770–1827) Sonata No. 23 in F Minor (“Appassionata”)
Op. 57 (1804–1805)

Allegro assai
Andante con moto
Allegro ma non troppo

The National Gallery welcomes for the third time the return of pianist **Paul Badura-Skoda**, who first performed in this concert series in 1995. Born in 1927 in Vienna, his unusual musical talent was discovered early and was encouraged by his family and his teachers. In 1945 he entered the Vienna Conservatory. Two years later he won the first prize in the Austrian Music Competition, which was a scholarship for Edwin Fischer’s master classes in Lucerne, Switzerland. Within a few years, Badura-Skoda became Fischer’s assistant and, after Fischer’s death, carried on the master classes in Vienna, Salzburg, Edinburgh, and Siena. In addition to the classes with young artists, he has devoted much time and enthusiasm to the strenuous process of adjudicating important piano contests. He has become a regular and celebrated guest at the world’s most prestigious music festivals. The legendary conductors under whom he has performed concertos include Wilhelm Furtwängler, Josef Krips, Karl Böhm, George Szell, and Georg Solti. In partnership with Jörg Demus, Badura-Skoda played and commented on all of Beethoven’s piano sonatas for West German Television in the composer’s bicentenary year (1970). Performances of Beethoven cycles followed in Mexico, Chicago, Paris, Vienna, and Barcelona. In the Mozart bicentenary year (1991), he played Mozart’s complete sonatas in a series of four evenings. He subsequently presented the same program in Germany, Spain, France, Japan, Canada, and the United States. In the course of his career Badura-Skoda has recorded more than two hundred long-playing records and dozens of compact discs, including complete cycles of piano sonatas of Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert. In 1993 the French government bestowed upon him one of its highest medals of honor, naming him a *Chevalier de la légion d’honneur*. Paul Badura-Skoda appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Gerhild Baron International Artists Management of Vienna, Austria.

In spite of a busy teaching and playing schedule between 1781 and 1784, Mozart found time during those years to compose some of his best chamber music. Among the outstanding examples are the six *String Quartets*, dedicated to Haydn, two *Duets for Violin and Viola*, KV. 423 and KV. 424, and the *Quintet for Piano and Winds*, KV. 452. Only a few

piano works were produced during that period. Most were fantasias, and notable among them is the *Fantasia in D Minor*, K. 397. These works were left unfinished by Mozart, and K. 397, according to Erik Smith, writing in *The New Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, was completed by an employee of the publisher Breitkopf and Härtel with “ten unsuitable and perfunctory bars.” Nevertheless, this short (approximately seven minutes long), dramatic work is filled with an emotional intensity that resembles an opera scene for solo piano. Evoking this image without the benefit of lyrics, background sets, or costumes, it is a tribute to Mozart’s genius.

The variation form, as developed by Mozart, stemmed from his career as a virtuoso improviser on popular songs such as *Ah vous dirai-je, maman*. This simple and catchy theme has never lost its popularity and is known to children in English-speaking countries as *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*. Mozart endows it with twelve variations, packed with technical difficulties and brilliant passage work. Fancy trills, arpeggios, silvery scales, and wide leaps are in evidence, as well as imaginative harmonies, appearing in variations eight and eleven, that presage the music of Beethoven.

One of the paradoxes of Franz Schubert’s career is that he introduced innovations in musical romanticism that did not apparently influence Beethoven or any of his other contemporaries, yet these innovations had a profound impact on later romantics, such as Schumann, Brahms, and Bruckner. One reason for this “delayed reaction” is the fact that many of Schubert’s works were undiscovered and unpublished until long after his death. The *Sonata in A Minor, Opus Posthumous 164*, is a prime example, having been written in 1817 but not published until 1851. Even after its publication, the sonata received little attention from critics and performers until the mid-twentieth century. Schubert’s circle of friends and admirers consisted of people who were famous only in Vienna, such as the poets Franz von Schober and Johann Mayrhofer, and the playwrights Johann Nestroy and Ferdinand Raimund. These associates, although they were fond of Schubert’s music and loyal to him, were not of sufficient fame and influence outside of Vienna to be vehicles for the dissemination of his compositions.