

# At the Piano

---

The series “At the Piano” is intended for all those who have some experience playing the piano and would now like to play easier original works by famous composers. Students, teachers and those returning to the piano will encounter a wealth of well-known works.

## Contents

Each volume in the series is devoted exclusively to one composer. This is because each composer has his own style and thus places his own very personal demands on his piano works – not only from the point of view of technique but also as regards musical interpretation.

## Technique

All of the pieces have been arranged in progressive level of difficulty. They enable you to practise very different pianistic skills, including runs, breaking chords, arpeggios, parallel thirds, trills, playing chords and polyphonic playing. Thus most of the pieces also prepare you for more demanding pieces by the composer in question. We have endeavoured to keep variety in mind when compiling the pieces: slower ones follow faster ones, dances come after studies, variations after sonata movements, etc.

## Urtext

All of the pieces have been edited according to the strictest Urtext principles, as have all Urtext editions by G. Henle Publishers. In short, this means that the musical text is unaltered and presents the composer’s intentions. Additions that are essential – even great composers occasionally make mistakes – have been given in parentheses. And as we do not wish to dispense with the

aid of fingerings, we clearly differentiate between the ones we have added (in normal writing) and those that are original (in italics). Composers in the Baroque, Classical and even Early Romantic periods were extremely sparing with indications regarding articulation, phrasing, dynamics and tempo. This was because in those days they could assume that experienced players already knew how something was to be played. This might not always be immediately clear to musicians today. Nevertheless, in our Urtext editions we deliberately do without “well-intentioned” additions and questionable alterations, as are often to be found in other editions. Those who use our editions are free of such patronisation; they can be sure of the authenticity of the musical text and make the most of the ensuing flexibility for their own stylistically confident interpretation.

## Guide

This cannot, of course, be done without any help at all. The series “At the Piano” provides an introduction to dealing with Urtext editions as well as a first pedagogical guide on how to get to grips with original works of an easy and medium level of difficulty from a technical and musical point of view. To this end, each piece is preceded by some information on practising it, on its history and on understanding the musical text. In so doing we would like to provide players with a foundation upon which they can develop their own approach to the work, their own personal interpretation and above all, enjoy making music. Pianists who are enthusiastic and prepared to put in a little effort – no matter whether young or old, starting to play or returning to the instrument – will then be able to play their Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms or even Liszt with conviction.

# Playing Schubert

Franz Schubert (1797–1828) is both familiar and at the same time unknown to music lovers. There are too many question marks surrounding his life and his works. Schubert the ...? The composer of Lieder? Undoubtedly, but only a fraction of his more than 600 Lieder are known. The composer of operas? He wrote over ten operas, of which he thought a great deal, but which are today virtually unknown. The composer of symphonies? Only the last two ones are really well known, the famous “Unfinished” and the “Great” in C major. The chamber musician? Admittedly, his late string quartets are played a great deal today, as is the String Quintet, the two piano trios and in particular the famous “Trout Quintet”.

 But what about Schubert the composer of works for piano? The earliest work that has survived is a Fantasy in G major for piano four-hands. After his last “great” Piano Sonata, he only wrote a few other compositions. Thus one could almost say that his compositions began and ended with the piano. At all events, it permeated all of his creative output. Aside from chamber music with piano and his Lieder, to which the piano belongs per se, Schubert wrote over 60 works for piano solo and over 30 for piano four-hands. The latter were for the most part intended for social music making. It is here that the countless dances he wrote also belong, the majority of which, over 650, are also for piano. This fact alone shows that – in contrast to those of his contemporaries Joseph Lanner or Johann Strauß (father) – they were not intended for the ballroom but for social gatherings amongst a circle of friends. The term “Schubertiade” coined for such occasions is still in use today. His friend Joseph Sonnleithner wrote: “He [Schubert] never danced, but was always willing to sit down at the piano where he improvised the most lovely waltzes for hours on end; he would repeat the ones he liked, so as to remember them and to write them down afterwards.” Generally 16 measures, at most 24, his dances are for the most part little musical gems that are full of the most unbelievably creative melodies (see nos. 2–6).



The popularity of Schubert’s dance pieces is also shown by the fact that many of them were printed immediately, whereas he otherwise usually had great difficulty in finding publishers for his works. Only three of his piano sonatas were published during his lifetime, and of the other works for piano solo, only the *Moments musicaux* and the first group of the *Impromptus* were issued. When Schubert enquired of Breitkopf & Härtel in 1826 whether they “might be willing to take on several of my works in return for a small commission, as I greatly desire to become as well-known as possible in Germany”, the publisher merely offered him free copies in place of money. He did not have any success with Schott either: the *Impromptus* D 935 were rejected because “as little pieces they are too difficult”. In writing these pieces and the *Moments musicaux* (see nos. 7–9) in particular, Schubert may not have created a new genre but he had caused it to flourish as never before. In these pieces he found expressive areas that no other composer before had uncovered. The same applies to his more mature sonatas (see no. 12), which are often unfairly compared to those of Beethoven, despite the fact that in them Schubert deliberately moved away from Classical sonata form, developing new structures that were very forward-looking.

Even though Schubert became increasingly popular in the later years of his life – for example the two song cycles *Die schöne Müllerin* and the *Winterreise* were published – he did not garner much success during his lifetime, a fact that caused him a great deal of distress. The fact that he still managed to create an oeuvre of such vitality and diversity, of such melodic beauty and harmonic depth, is even today very admirable and makes him one of the very great composers.

Most of Schubert’s works were given their opus numbers posthumously and thus shed very little light on when they were composed. The musicologist Otto Erich Deutsch published a catalogue of the composer’s works “in chronological order” in 1951. The numbering that he assigned – from D 1 to D 998 – is for the most part still in use today.