

audite

A portrait of pianist Andrea Lucchesini, shown in profile from the chest up. He has curly, graying hair and is wearing a dark jacket. His hands are clasped together in front of him, resting on a reflective surface. The background is a dark, textured wall with a subtle blue glow. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting his face and hands against the dark background.

Andrea Lucchesini

SCHUBERT • LATE PIANO WORKS

VOL. III

**Franz Schubert**  
**Late Piano Works • Vol. III**

**Piano Sonata No. 18 in G major, D. 894 'Fantasia'**

- I. Molto moderato e cantabile 17:57
- II. Andante 8:21
- III. Menuetto. Allegro moderato 4:45
- IV. Allegretto 9:08

**Piano Sonata No. 19 in C minor, D. 958**

- I. Allegro 11:40
- II. Adagio 8:42
- III. Menuetto. Allegretto 3:19
- IV. Allegro 10:00

## An original product

Andrea Lucchesini was born in the Tuscan province of Pistoia, an ancient cultural landscape which he has only ever left to go on concert tours. Naturally, the question immediately arises, to what extent his pianism – not least his vocally fluent way of playing Schubert – is influenced by any form of *italianità*. Lucchesini's response to this is surprising – for, unlike opera, the Italian piano school only developed with foreign input. “At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Italian piano school was heavily influenced by the Russian school, especially that of Anton Rubinstein. One of his students settled in Naples: the focus was on producing a beautiful sound and cultivating a vocal touch. Out of this Neapolitan-Russian school of playing arose the school of Maria Tipo.”

A name which Lucchesini always utters with glowing eyes: he remains proud of being a “prodotto originale” of Maria Tipo. “I started with her at the age of six and learned everything I know from her. For Maria Tipo was not only a great pianist but also incredibly passionate about teaching. Her concept was to combine the highest technical perfection with the greatest level of relaxation, whilst always keeping a vivid sound at the forefront.”

With the opening of Franz Schubert's Sonata in G major, D. 894, Andrea Lucchesini demonstrates how creatively the sound of the piano can be used. He plays the long, sustained chords – a novelty in piano literature – bell-like, letting them die out, so that, in turn, the oscillations of the piano sound become a theme. All the while, the pianist strictly adheres to the rhythm of this “Molto moderato e cantabile”, guaranteeing that the suspense within this unusually pondering, seemingly improvisatory music does not disperse.

Contemporaries found the work's lyrical character so confusing that the publisher, Tobias Haslinger, issued it in 1826 as *Fantasie, Andante, Menuetto und Allegretto für das Piano-Forte allein*, rather than as a sonata. Of course this enumeration of single pieces is just as misleading as the heading of “Fantasie” for the first movement which, in fact, is a textbook sonata-form movement. One might have felt reminded of Ludwig van Beethoven's *Sonata quasi una fantasia* in E flat major, Op. 27 No. 1 (the counterpart of the “Moonlight” Sonata), where Beethoven idiosyncratically moves away from the standard model of the sonata.

With the endlessly calm beginning of his G major sonata which only gradually reveals a dance-like accompaniment, Franz Schubert does the same. The theme is entwined with passagework until several harsh chords abruptly cascade downwards, paving the way for a softly moving melody. Whilst Schubert introduces completely new material in most development sections following this, he aims for a dramatic structure: the principal and secondary themes are rhythmically twisted and harmonically turned, and at the end we arrive once again at a state of tender G major innocence.

Beethoven would never have followed this refined “Molto moderato” with a slow movement. For Schubert, however, this forms part of a poetic concept for a pianistic “pastoral”. A wonderful songful tune with several archaic flourishes opens the “Andante” – and of course, alongside this paragon of musical balance there is also a sense of drama and pianistic thunderclouds; their only purpose, however, is to make the main theme's return appear even more glowing, or, as Lucchesini would put it, more “utopian”.

The “Menuetto” has real scherzo-like energy and a highly ethereal trio which sounds like an unreal round sung by dolls. At the end, there is a veritable finale: a rondo with a folk-like cheering theme, followed by a clattering of quavers, framing two episodes which – with the exception of a melancholically vocal “espressivo” passage – reinforce the playful character of the ritornello.

### **Beyond Beethoven**

If, in Andrea Lucchesini's career, one were to put Schubert's G major Sonata into relation with the twelve years of tuition by Maria Tipo in Florence and the sense of (not only) artistic support, then the Piano Sonata in C minor, D. 958, would represent Lucchesini's "wild years". After winning the first prize at the international Dino Ciani competition in 1983, the shy young man with the curly hair was approached by CD labels wanting to make him into a keyboard virtuoso. But after five years Lucchesini accepted that the touring life was not for him. "I entered a sort of maturing crisis – that state in which, after making music almost unconsciously in one's youth, one starts reflecting. When one is young, everything is terribly easy. But suddenly I had to consider each note, study everything anew. In this process, I found chamber music incredibly helpful. One gains a whole new sensibility for sound, adapting to the vocal sound of the string instruments, moving away from the percussive piano sound. Whilst remaining accurate, of course, one acquires a softer sound."

Indeed, Schubert's C minor Sonata is closer to chamber music than one might assume after hearing the fierce opening chords, inspired by Beethoven's 32 Variations in C minor. In all movements of this sonata, written in 1828, the year of his death, Schubert strives towards a colourful "instrumentation" of his motifs and towards musical dialogues in different registers. The proximity to orchestral music was not lost on his colleague Robert Schumann: "One can hear string and wind instruments, tutti and solo passages, timpani rolls; the large-scale symphonic form, even echoes of Beethoven's symphonies [...] also support my view."

Equally resolutely, however, Schubert moves away again from Beethoven after the opening: the complex of the main theme is enriched by a second motif, a softly flowing, slightly nervous melody creating a contrast to the heroic chordal theme; later a vocal secondary theme appears. Even here, in the most dramatic of his final sonatas, Schubert insists on having the music die out lyrically: this is most perceptible in the central section of the first movement, where an entirely new theme is introduced in the bass which returns at the end, positively extinguishing the movement.

In the "Adagio" Schubert also charges the established form with a new intensity. A song-like theme with a characteristic turn and hesitant fermatas alternates twice with a ballad-like minor-keyed theme. With each repeat, however, the questioning fermatas become more urgent and the middle section more agitated, making the regained tonality of A flat major at the end appear as a reminiscence rather than a destination. The old-fashioned title of "Menuetto" does not do justice to the short third movement which seems to anticipate the shadowy scherzo movements of Johannes Brahms.

The true wonder of this sonata, however, is the finale, a fantasy on a "hunting rhythm" at once elegantly flexible and nervously agitated. After this capricious texture (with a blissful major-keyed brightening) the music charges ahead ferociously: the urgent rhythm in the middle register is accompanied by a flickering top and bottom part, before yielding to an unexpected third, lyrical theme. In this vein, the movement gradually proliferates into an oversized creation whose frenzy does not end, but is just brutally terminated by the two final chords.

*Michael Struck-Schloen*

*Translation: Viola Scheffel*



## Andrea Lucchesini

Trained under the guidance of Maria Tipo, Andrea Lucchesini gained international recognition at a very young age when he won the *Dino Ciani International Competition* at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan. Since then he has performed throughout the world with leading orchestras under conductors such as Claudio Abbado, Semyon Bychkov, Riccardo Chailly, Dennis Russell Davies, Charles Dutoit, Daniel Harding, Vladimir Jurowski and Giuseppe Sinopoli.

In 1994 Andrea Lucchesini was awarded the prestigious *Accademia Musicale Chigiana International Prize* by European music critics, followed by the *F. Abbiati Prize* from Italian music critics in 1995.

Numerous recordings document his artistic career, among them Luciano Berio's concerto *Echoing Curves*, conducted by the composer himself. This marked the beginning of his close relationship with Berio, with whom Lucchesini witnessed the creation of the composer's final and challenging work for solo piano, *Sonata*. He performed the world premiere of this piece in 2001 and recorded it together with all other piano works of Berio. In recent years, Lucchesini has enthusiastically immersed himself in the Schubertian repertoire, e.g. with the recording of the *Impromptus* and the three-part Schubert cycle on audite.

Since 1990 he has dedicated his attention also to chamber music exploring various formations and varied repertoire, including his close collaboration with cellist Mario Brunello.

In addition, Andrea Lucchesini is passionately dedicated to teaching. He currently teaches at the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole where he was also artistic director from 2008 until 2016. He is frequently invited to give master classes at major music institutions throughout Europe and in New York.

He serves as a jury member at numerous international piano competitions and was appointed *Accademico di Santa Cecilia* in 2008.

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recording:  
October 7 - 10, 2019  
recording location:  
Leibniz Saal (HCC, Hannover)  
instrument:  
Steinway D  
recording format:  
pcm, 96 kHz / 24bit  
recording producer:  
Dipl.-Tonmeister Ludger Böckenhoff  
sound & editing:  
Dipl.-Tonmeister Justus Beyer  
photos:  
Riccardo Musacchio  
art direction and design:  
AB•Design

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trailer on **YouTube**

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