



“Rosamunde”: Sounds of hope

The Schumann Quartet is making a comeback from the coronavirus hiatus with a new Schubert CD and concerts



Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

String Quartet No. 6, D 74

- [1] Allegro
- [2] Andante
- [3] Menuetto. Allegretto
- [4] Allegro

Quartet Movement in C minor, D 703

- [5] Allegro Assai
- [6] Andante (Fragment)

String Quartet No. 13, D 804 „Rosamunde”

- [7] Allegro
- [8] Andante
- [9] Menuetto – Allegretto – Trio
- [10] Allegro. Moderato

Schumann Quartet

Erik Schumann, Violin / Ken Schumann, Violin / Liisa Randalu, Viola / Mark Schumann, Cello

Berlin Classics // 0301410BC // Release: 14 August, 2020

+++ EP as pre-release +++: The string quartet “Rosamunde – Fragment Pt. 1” has been available as a download and stream since 17 July, 2020 and the „String Quartet No. 6 D 74 Pt. 2” since 31 July, 2020.

After issuing three successful concept albums since 2017, of which the most recent, “Chiaroscuro”, has just been nominated for an Opus Klassik award, the Schumann Quartet has chosen three string quartets by Franz Schubert for its new album, “**Fragment**”. The recording on the Berlin Classics label in collaboration with the German public broadcaster SWR 2 will be issued on 14 August, 2020, in digital form and on CD. The string quartet “Rosamunde – Fragment Pt. 1” is already available as an EP at popular download and streaming sites.

Schubert's works display a direct appeal, deep expression and honest emotions, exactly like the playing of the Schumann Quartet. This ensemble regards every performance as an experiment in which it can create a spontaneous connection with the audience through music. Even in studio recordings, it always plays in the moment, allowing it to keep its repertoire sounding fresh. Over the years, the four members of the ensemble have engaged intensively with Schubert's “Rosamunde” quartet of 1824 and now felt the time was ripe to capture their current interpretation of the work in a recording. They have combined this well-known piece by the mature Schubert with the composer's sixth string quartet and his Quartettsatz in C Minor, including the fragment of an andante movement that follows it.

“[Schubert] was an artist who was always struggling with himself. Perhaps it is just this that we love so much about his music. He reveals his innermost feelings, his soul, as no other composer does. We immediately feel close to him, as though he were sitting next to us,” is how Ken Schumann, the quartet's second violinist, described the special magic of the pieces on this CD in an interview with the online magazine *nusic*.

Schubert often drew on his own songs or melodies in his instrumental compositions. This is also the case with his “Rosamunde” quartet, in which he employed material reminiscent of the lied “Gretchen am Spinnrade” (“Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel”) and used not only the theme from his incidental music to the play “Rosamunde” that lends the quartet its nickname but also quoted the lied “Die Götter Griechenlands” (“The Gods of Greece”). It was the only one of his string quartets to be performed in his lifetime, and with great success at that.

Schubert did not have a very high opinion of his first efforts in this genre, but they were still doubtless important steps on his path to shaking off his stylistic reliance on his musical models, Haydn, Mozart and Salieri. The largely cheerful String Quartet No. 6 of 1813, full of musical experiments by its just 16-year-old composer, is the opening work on the Schumann Quartet's CD. It is followed by the Quartettsatz in C Minor of 1820, a piece that oscillates between light and darkness and derives much of its power from the song-like quality of its melodies. Even today, it is not known why Schubert put aside his work on the following andante movement after just 40 bars. The Schumann Quartet has integrated this fragment as a central element in its recording, even naming the album after it. The way the solitary first violin suddenly falls silent creates a vacant space into which, after a short moment of surprise, the first movement of the “Rosamunde” quartet can nestle with its gently swaying opening, agreeably dissipating any brief confusion the listener may have felt.

Schubert's outlook and that of our times bear certain similarities, as Ken Schumann told *niusic*: “We have to look on as the world gradually goes mad. You always have this yearning for a better world. All of these hopes, desires, dreams are contained in every note of Schubert. And we can feel it.”

Happily, we can also feel the first signs of relief in the culture scene after the huge shock of the coronavirus pandemic, with the Schumann Quartet finally able to return to the stage after several long months. On 25 and 26 July, the ensemble could be heard in the Frieder Burda Museum in Baden-Baden with two programmes for the Beethoven anniversary year. On August 3, it performed in Klosters, Switzerland, as part of the “Klosters Music” festival, playing Mozart's Clarinet Quintet in A Major with the clarinetist Pablo Barragán and Mendelssohn's famous Octet in E-flat Major together with its colleagues from the Quatuor Van Kuijk.

These are all sounds that are full of hope, just as Schubert's music is. After the enforced break, the three Schumann brothers and Liisa Randalu are looking forward with great enthusiasm to their concerts and the release of their CD.

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