

About “*Fantasy after Schubert*”

“*Fantasy after Schubert*” was commissioned by the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra to commemorate its 75th season. The work is dedicated to the orchestra’s sixth Music Director, Mario Venzago.

The form of this piece is as its title implies, and the majority of the musical material from which the work is based is derived from Schubert. There are four main components to “*Fantasy after Schubert*” which include: the opening theme to Schubert’s 9th Symphony (the Great C Major), first movement; the lyrical melody from the first movement of Schubert’s “*Wanderer Fantasy*”; the urgent dactyl rhythm (one long and two short) from this same piano work by Schubert including the descending suspended harmonic progression that accompanies this rhythm in the first movement of Schubert’s “*Wanderer Fantasy*”; and an unrelated-to-Schubert tone row. The interaction of these four main ideas provides an almost rondo-like, theme and variations.

“*Fantasy after Schubert*” opens quietly with a *Largo* section played by the strings and woodwinds introducing these main ideas of the work. This slow tranquil opening is meant to pay reverent homage to Schubert’s great musical genius. The tone row is then used as transition to the main *Allegro Molto* section where the listener hears the rhythmic dactyl theme in the brass for the first time. While the very opening slow section subtly hints at Schubert’s C major theme from the 9th symphony, this melody is now heard without camouflage in the low strings and horn. The lyrical theme from Schubert’s “*Wanderer Fantasy*” quickly follows this C major theme in similar orchestral fashion. From here the various themes interact throughout including a fugue in the strings combining the tone row theme with the C major Schubert melody. The piece continues and culminates in a grand concluding statement with the full orchestra sounding the great, C major, Schubert theme.

“*Fantasy after Schubert*” has the option of finishing at the end of this recapitulated C major theme with an alternate shorter concert ending. In the longer, concert version of this work, the piece continues to build intensely to a sudden return of the opening quiet, *Largo* music which began this fantasy. This tranquil ending to the piece now has subtle, soft interjections of Schubert’s beautiful melodies in this reverent finish to “*Fantasy after Schubert.*”

The piece was premiered by the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra on their opening subscription concert with Mario Venzago conducting September 18th and 19th, 2004, at the Hilbert Circle Theater. The length of the work is 9 minutes for the shortened version of this piece. The full-length concert version of “*Fantasy after Schubert*” is 11 minutes in duration.