



The Splendor of Shihor, Sarah, and Sandoval

By Brian Lauritzen

It's difficult to wrap one's mind around the concept that anything created by a 31-year-old is "late work." But tragically, Franz Schubert died at that tender age. The music he produced in his final years shows a depth beyond his years. Age, as they say, is just a number.

In pianist Ory Shihor's program of two of Schubert's last three piano sonatas, we get a glimpse of the man behind the music.

Schubert was ridiculously prolific. In a compositional life that was basically only two decades, he wrote more than 1,500 works. This includes more than 600 lieder (songs), nearly as many pieces for solo piano, 20 stage works (operas, incidental music, etc.), more than 20 string quartets (also quintets, trios, and duos), a dozen symphonies of which seven were completed (turns out *The Unfinished Symphony* is just an unfinished symphony), and some 40 liturgical works, including several masses.

Schubert was also radically depressed. (Understandably so, for a young man diagnosed with syphilis before he even turned 30.) In a letter to a close friend he wrote, "I feel myself to be the most unfortunate, the most miserable being in the world. Think of a man whose health will never be right again, and who from despair over the fact makes it worse instead of better; think of a man, I say, whose splendid hopes have come to naught, to whom the happiness of love and friendship offers nothing but acutest pain, whose enthusiasm (at least, the inspiring kind) for the Beautiful threatens to disappear, and ask yourself whether he isn't a miserable, unfortunate

fellow. My peace is gone, my heart is heavy, I find it never, nevermore...so might I sing every day, since each night when I go to sleep I hope never again to wake, and each morning merely reminds me of the misery of yesterday."

If you've ever battled depression, or know someone who has, you know that's precisely what it feels like. There is no hope. And yet, Schubert's music from the end of his life is not an endless stream of woeful laments. In fact, his late music searches for peace, comfort, and meaning among the darkness. Perhaps, this search brought Schubert some manner of consolation.

Classical music fans met violinist Sarah Chang when she was 11 and released her first album called *Debut*. (She was 10 when she recorded it.) At that age, Chang had already been playing violin for six years. Her mom taught her to play simple one-finger melodies on the piano at age three. For her fourth birthday, Chang was given a 1/16-sized violin. When she was five, she got accepted to the Juilliard School in New York. At age eight, she auditioned for two of the most prominent conductors in the world, Zubin Mehta and Riccardo Muti (then with the New York Philharmonic and Philadelphia Orchestra, respectively), and was given immediate engagements by both.

Then came that debut album and a meteoric rise to a stardom that transcended classical music. All of the most important stages and concert halls in the world? She's played them. All of the most prestigious orchestras and chamber musicians/groups? She's collaborated with them. An ad

campaign with Pete Sampras and Wynton Marsalis? Check. Olympic torchbearer? Check. Appointment by President Obama to the Presidential Commission on Russian Relations? Special Cultural Envoy for the U.S. Department of State? Check and check.

She just turned 37 last month.

Chang's recital here at The Wallis with pianist Julio Elizalde includes one of César Franck's best-known works: the Violin Sonata in A major, written when the composer was 63 as a wedding present for the 31-year-old violin virtuoso Eugène Ysaÿe and his wife Louise Bourdau. The score was given to Ysaÿe the morning of the wedding and, after a quick rehearsal with one of the piano-playing wedding guests, Ysaÿe performed it at the ceremony.

In late January, jazz great Arturo Sandoval gives us a glimpse into the future of jazz, with a series of performances featuring what he calls the "Young Lions," a group of up-and-coming performers. Sandoval, who met Dizzy Gillespie in the late 1970s in his native Cuba, defected while touring with Gillespie in 1990, and became a naturalized American citizen in 1998. Along with his showcase of the next generation of jazz talent, Sandoval himself will take the stage for a solo show that is sure to heat up a cold winter night.

Join Brian Lauritzen and other guest moderators for free pre-concert conversations in the Bram Goldsmith Theater with the artists prior to select classical music performances, along with a complimentary glass of wine provided by The Henry Wine Group.