

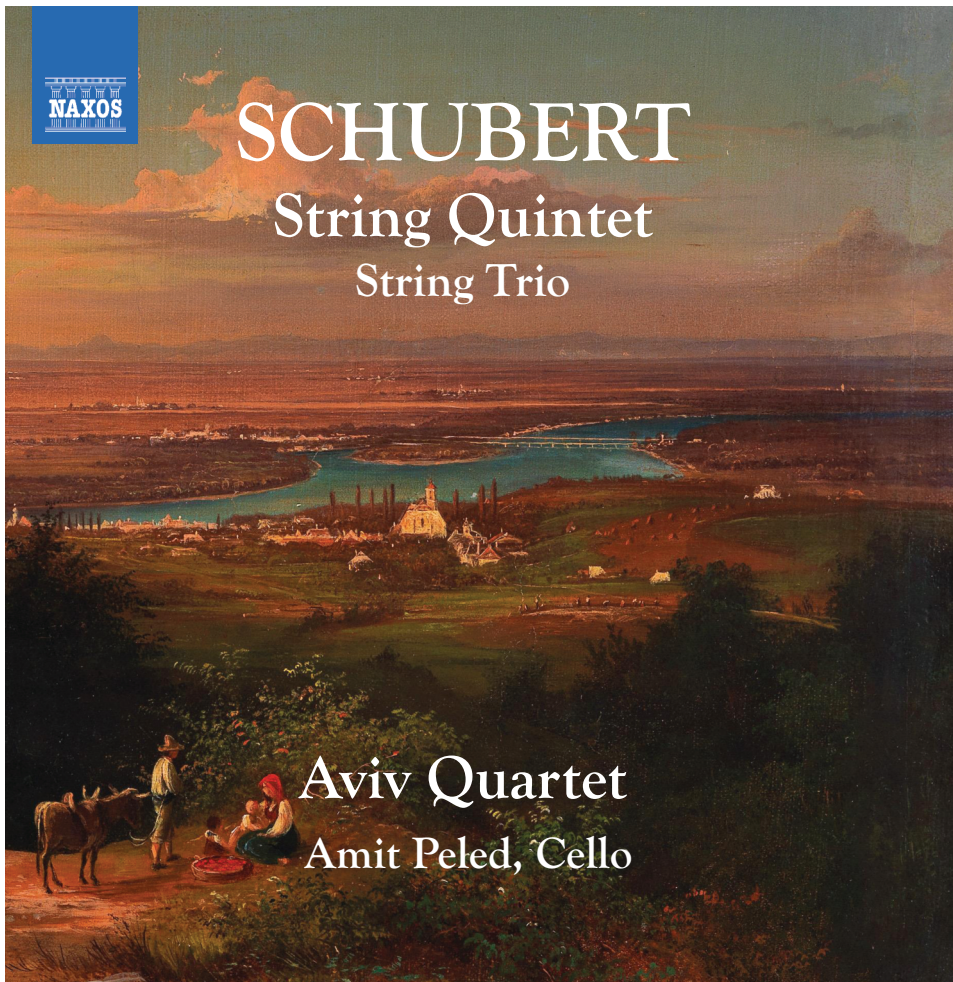


SCHUBERT

String Quintet

String Trio

Aviv Quartet
Amit Peled, Cello



Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

String Trio in B flat major, D. 581 • String Quintet in C major, Op. 163, D. 956

Vienna has always claimed Franz Schubert as peculiarly its own. Others, such as Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven, had made their home there, but Schubert was a native of the city. Nevertheless his parents had moved to the capital from other parts of the Empire, his father from Moravia and his mother from Silesia. Schubert's father was a schoolmaster, a profession that it seemed likely his son might in the end follow. As a boy, the fourth of 14 children of whom only five survived, he was trained as a choir boy of the Imperial Chapel, under Antonio Salieri, and, in consequence, as a pupil of the Staatskonvikt, where he took a leading part in orchestral activities, as he had in family chamber music. His first surviving compositions date from 1810, his second year of study.

When his voice broke, at the age of 15, Schubert was offered a scholarship for further academic study, but rejected this in the hope of being able to devote his time more fully to music. In 1817 he took the customary short course to qualify him as a primary schoolteacher and the following year joined his father as an assistant in a profession for which he never showed the least aptitude. Already he had proved prolific as a composer, with a particular facility in setting words to music and a gift for apt melody. In the course of his short life, however, he was never to gain full recognition with any official employment. Much of his music was performed at private gatherings, to the delight of his friends, in whose company he took the greatest pleasure, intermittently deserting the classroom for the freedom of lodgings shared with his friend Schober and later with Mayrhofer.

Schubert's final years were darkened by illness and the probability of an early death, as a then incurable venereal infection took its toll. In 1828 there was the first public concert devoted to his music, some of which had already been published, while other publishers had begun to show some interest, particularly in more readily marketable products for the gifted amateur. On his doctors' advice he moved to the Vienna suburb of Wieden to stay with his brother Ferdinand, but in spite of

intermittent bouts of energy, he became increasingly debilitated and died on the afternoon of 19th November.

The B flat *String Trio*, D. 581, was written in September 1817, a year after Schubert's first surviving attempt at the form, an incomplete B flat *Trio* started in 1816. The form itself, with violin, viola and cello, presents its own particular challenge. Haydn made significant use of it, and Mozart contributed a work in *concertante* style. Beethoven wrote string trios in both a four-movement form, the structural counterpart of the string quartet and in the six-movement *divertimento* style, with alternating dance-movements. Schubert takes the first as a model, with an opening movement of transparent texture that follows the pattern of a classical first movement, with a shift of mode and tonality in the central section, before the re-appearance of the principal theme in the original key. The F major slow movement allows fine interplay between the three instruments and is followed by a *Minuet* framing a contrasting E flat major *Trio* that allows the viola rather more prominence. The work ends with a charming *Rondo*.

The C major *String Quintet* is very different in character. It was written in September and October 1828, during the period of Schubert's final illness, and is mentioned in a letter from the composer to the publisher Probst, who had proved dilatory in the publication of the E flat *Piano Trio*, described by Schubert with some bitterness as his *Opus 100*. Probst showed no interest in the *Quintet*, which was finally published in 1853. The scoring of the work, for two violins, viola and two cellos, follows a pattern used by the cellist Boccherini and by the French-born Georges Onslow, grandson of the first Earl of Onslow, both of whose compositions were probably known to Schubert. This presents a different texture from the more commonly found string quintet of two violins, two violas and one cello, as used by Mozart. Critics have detected in Schubert's final compositions an attempt by the composer to secure for himself the succession to Beethoven, whose final C major *String Quintet* of 1826 was not finished.

Schubert's splendid *Quintet*, one of the most compelling works in chamber music repertoire, opens with chords with their own implicit degree of increasing tension, followed by dramatic arpeggio figures. The most glorious of all melodies is initially entrusted to the first cello, shadowed by the second cello, starting in the unexpected key of E flat major, but moving to the dominant G major. It is a snatch of this melody that opens the central development, with its complex use of material that has already appeared in one form or another.

The slow movement moves to E major, with the first violin adding its own embellishment to the principal theme in the inner parts, accompanied by the plucked notes of

the second cello. The middle section of the movement starts a journey through relatively distant keys, travelling from F minor to a final C major and a return of the first section with increasingly elaborate accompaniment above and below. An energetic *Scherzo* is contrasted with a sombre *Trio*, introduced by viola and second cello. Something of the existing tension is dissolved in the final *Allegretto*, which nevertheless retains a recurrent element of the ominous in a movement that admirably balances and summarises the whole work and crowns the achievement of Schubert.

Keith Anderson

Amit Peled

Photo: Lisa-Marie Mazzucco



Praised by *The Strad* magazine and *The New York Times*, internationally renowned cellist Amit Peled is acclaimed as one of the most exciting and virtuosic instrumentalists on the concert stage today. Having performed in many of the world's most prestigious venues, including Carnegie Hall and Alice Tully Hall at the Lincoln Center in New York, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C., Salle Gaveau in Paris, Wigmore Hall in London, and the Konzerthaus Berlin, Peled has released over a dozen recordings on the Naxos, Centaur, Delos, and CTM Classics labels. He is on the faculty of the Peabody Institute of The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, and has performed in and presented masterclasses around the world including at the Marlboro and Newport Music Festivals and the Heifetz International Music Summer Institute in the US, the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival in Germany, International Musicians Seminar Prussia Cove in England, and Keshet Eilon in Israel. Peled performs on the only known copy of the 'Servais' Stradivarius by Vuillaume (c. 1865). He is represented by CTM Classics.

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Aviv Quartet



Founded in 1997 in Israel, the Aviv Quartet (Sergey Ostrovsky and Philippe Villafranca, violins; Noémie Bialobroda, viola; Daniel Mitnitsky, cello) was awarded the Grand Prix and four special prizes at the Third Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition (1999), First Prize (Amadeus Quartet Prize) at the Charles Hennen Concours, International Chamber Music Competition for Strings (1999), the Schubert Prize at the International Chamber Music Competition 'Franz Schubert and Modern Music' (2003), Second Prize and the International Critics Prize at the Bordeaux International String Quartet Competition (2003), and Second Prize at the Prague Spring International Music Competition (1998). The Aviv Quartet has performed at leading venues worldwide including

Carnegie Hall, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Sydney Opera House, Cologne Philharmonie, Vienna Konzerthaus, Wigmore Hall, Royal Festival Hall, The Louvre Auditorium, Théâtre de la ville in Paris, and Beethoven-Haus Bonn. The Quartet recently presented the Beethoven *Quartet* cycle in six concerts in Geneva. Its recordings for Naxos, including works by Hoffmeister, Schulhoff and Dohnányi, have been highly acclaimed for their freshness of spirit, vivacity, and outstanding ensemble performance. Aviv, Hebrew for 'spring', represents the Quartet's artistic philosophy of fresh thinking, stripping away artificial coverings to reveal true nature, sharper definition, and heightened awareness.

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