

**Franz Schubert (1797-1828) Quartettsatz in C minor, D.703 (1820)**

*Allegro assai*

At the age of eight, Schubert started to learn the violin from his father; six years later he was composing for the family string quartet: brothers Ignaz and Ferdinand on violin, Franz on viola and his father on cello. However, the eleven or so quartets that Schubert wrote between the ages of 14 and 20 are now, like Mozart's early quartets, rarely played. The exuberant "Trout" piano quintet of 1819 and this *Quartettsatz*, a surviving first movement of a planned C minor quartet written in 1820, set the scene for the great chamber works of his later years: in 1824 the Octet, the "Rosamunde" and "Death and the Maiden" quartets; in 1826 the G major quartet; in 1827 his two piano trios; and in his last year, 1828, the incomparable C major two-cello quintet. It is not clear why Schubert failed to continue with the "*Quartetsatz*" quartet beyond its first movement and a sketch of 40 odd bars for an *Andante*. It may be that he was unable to match the power of the first movement to make a hoped-for great leap forward in quartet writing. The movement opens with threatening, semitonal creepings.

"*The phrase itself has a dramatic intensity which is new in Schubert's chamber music, an intensity which is all the more powerful because it begins quietly*" (Jack Westrup). The tension is relaxed by the joyfully open *dolce* second subject in *Ab* major; it encourages the transformation of the opening phrase into more nostalgic versions of itself, before the opening phrase's final emphatic return.

