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Franz Schuberts ”Arpeggione” sonata

Style, background and role in romantic viola repertoire

Till dokumentationen hör följande inspelning: xxx
Abstract

The importance that Franz Schubert’s music has on any classical musician is almost indisputable. His output stretches over all the important genres of his time and while he never wrote solo pieces specifically for the viola, one work has gained an essential status in the viola repertoire. That work being the sonata for arpeggione and piano, D. 821. Volumes have been written on Schubert, his style, early 19th century Vienna, romanticism, classicism and the formal development of the sonata form as well as the rise of the bourgeoisie music scene. Perhaps less is written on the viola and especially the arpeggione. My aim in this paper is to answer the question,” why arpeggione?” Why does this work hold such a high status in our repertoire? I shall approach this question by both presenting the sonata in question by drawing its background and generally the style and background of Schubert and early romantic Vienna, and also by introducing two alternative early romantic sonatas, both by esteemed composers and written originally for viola. Lastly, I shall dissect the mostly arrangement-related challenges of the arpeggione sonata and discuss different reasons for it having attained such an important role in spite of its problematic suitability for the viola.

Keywords: Schubert, Arpeggione, Classicism, Romanticism, Sonata, Arranging, Viola
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1 Introduction

The so-called ”Arpeggione” sonata was written by Franz Schubert (1797-1828) in November 1824. It was scored originally for the now forgotten instrument Arpeggione with the accompaniment of piano but has since become a part of key sonata-repertoire for stringed instruments, particularly the viola and cello. The piece, later assigned the number D. 821 in Otto Erich Deutsch (1883-1967) catalogue of Schubert's works, has since attained a high status in the canon of chamber music and is one of Schubert’s most known and quoted compositions.

In this study I intend to go through Schubert's piece and the era and overall context in which it was conceived. I shall also cast a short view on the instrument I’ve chosen to represent the sonata in this paper, the viola, and its role during the time the sonata was written. To conclude, I will analyze the compatibility of the sonata towards the viola and compare it to other early-romantic era music written specifically for the instrument. My aim is to both question and re-evaluate the role the arpeggione-sonata has attained in the romantic viola-repertoire. Why does this piece, written originally for a completely different instrument that possessed a vastly different register, hold such a high status even in modern day viola-repertoire? Especially when this extremely large register poses many difficulties for arranging the work for any other instrument. Why are works like Mendelssohn and Hummel sonatas still basically curiosities in viola recitals? Even when those works, both sonatas written originally for viola and piano respectively, possess the same galant melodic charm of the early-romantic era and are works written by two of the most esteemed composers of the era, the former especially well known for his writing for stringed instruments.
1.1 Background

The Sonata remained in limbo for several decades, sharing the fate of many highly valuable Schubert compositions. The very term "arpeggione" was virtually unknown during the second and third quarters of the last century. Strangely enough, various reference books do not mention the term. Even the Schubert biographer **Kreissle von Hellborn** was perplexed by this term and in 1865 offered the theory that the arpeggione was a small harp. Apparently, he had never seen the Sonata, which clearly prescribes changes between pizzicato and arco. The earliest reference to the instrument seems to have been made in the first edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, published in 1879. Nevertheless, Jacquot's *Dictionnaire des instruments de musique* of 1886 still ignored its existence.¹

To analyze Schubert’s sonata, one has to understand both Schubert's musical style and the era, not to mention his surroundings and background of early 19th century Vienna. The early 19th century was an inventive time for new instruments and even the arpeggione was just another "guitarre-violoncell" of which there were many different kinds. In Vienna alone there were multiple makers of these kind of "bowed guitars". However, the design that **Johann Georg Stauffer** (1778-1853) (a noted violinmaker and very notable maker of guitars) presented in the early 1820’s seems to be the instrument that Schubert's work was written for. **Vincenz Schuster** (1797-1863), to whom the work was written, is also credited as the inventor of the arpeggione. However the only piece that called for an "arpeggione" is Schubert's sonata and therefore it is believable that Schuster’s arpeggione, of which he was an apparent virtuoso, is in fact Stauffer’s "bowed guitar". It is most likely that there existed multiple designs for the instrument (for there are records of many different makers of these instruments) and Schuster’s name for it was yet another attempt to popularize it. This "boom" of bowed guitars was very short lived since most guitar players, to whom the instrument was marketed, did not find it tempting and also because by this point the viola da gamba (the other inspiration behind the bowed guitar) had basically disappeared. Thus, it didn’t take long for people to seemingly completely forget about these instruments. Still the sonata lived on.

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Since the sonata’s creation, it has obtained a place in the core repertoires of at least three stringed instruments (double bass, viola and in particular the cello) and also become one of the more important chamber music works in Schubert’s oeuvre. The first movement main theme and the tragically beautiful second movement theme are apt examples of Schubert’s melodic skills while the third movement offers a few virtuoso moments for the player. Stylistically the work exists at the crossroads of classical form and galant phrasing while containing melodies with a clearly romantic aesthetic. Still, it can be seen as a very classical work, even in Schubert’s output.

1.2 Purpose

In this paper I intend to focus more on the viola and viola-repertoire. And while I believe that a cursory presentation of the arpeggione is necessary, the emphasis is on Schubert’s sonata itself and not so much on the instrument it was originally written for. What interests me, is what makes Schubert’s piece such a work of interest for violists, and moreover what distinguishes it from all the other candidates of early-romantic viola literature. For Schubert, being the ever-productive composer, had most likely no big difficulties in writing the piece. And while in the classical canon we have built in a need for extramusical meanings behind works, in Schubert’s case the name ”arpeggione” has truly gotten a whole new meaning and can also be seen to describe the art and structure of the piece and less the instrument that time forgot.\(^2\) More in vein of Bruckner’s ”romantic” or more closely in era and style, Beethoven’s ”spring” sonata, not to mention Schubert own ”Death and the maiden” and the like.

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2 Method

My methods include a view of the early-romantic style, early 19th century Vienna, Schubert, and also repertoire and historical context of the viola. I shall more closely analyze aspects of the sonata, its melodical writing, basic structure etc. and also draw observations from my personal experience with the piece, thereby attempting to present a critical view of the sonata as a problematic arrangement but also an artistically rewarding addition to both viola-, as well as, general chamber music -repertoire. My big question is of course: ”why arpeggione?” And while tempted to answer immediately: ”why not!”, the time I’ve spent both studying and playing the piece and the research I have done on various surrounding subjects, lead me to question the role this sonata has achieved and make me want to present options and even rivals to this great work.

3 Analysis

My way of analyzing the sonata in question consists of mainly painting it’s historical background and drawing out essential details to support my conclusions. I shall cover both the stylistic, as well as the cultural background of Schubert and his native Vienna, then continuing with a general view of the viola and its background. I will give special attention to two important works which I intend to present as alternatives to Schubert’s sonata. Lastly I will conclude with an analysis of the sonata itself as well as the instrument it was originally intended for. In the later theoretical part of the analysis I shall give a compact technical view of the Arpeggione as well as a concise summation of the sonatas structure and form.
3.1 Vienna and the early romantic style

“For everyone, surely, who can enjoy the good things of life, especially for the artist, perhaps quite especially for the musical artist, Vienna is the richest, happiest and most agreeable residence in Europe.”

Thus wrote the German composer, writer and music critic Johann Friedrich Reichardt (1752-1814), when describing Vienna in the first decade of the 19th century. At this time the Austrian capital was experiencing a boom that had drawn composers like Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) to live and practice their art in the city. The cultural life in Vienna was supported by two bastions, the old traditionally Italian and/or French-speaking cosmopolitan aristocracy that still favored music and architecture in their baroque guise, and the new emerging bureaucracy, charged with the centralization of the multi-national state, that spoke German and favored German literature. The most important writers of that time in Vienna were German speaking officials from the bureaucracy, writers like Franz Grillparzer (1791-1872) and Adalbert Stifter (1805-1868) while the court poets were all Italian.

In music, and German music especially, a clean break between the classical and the romantic is something that has been since artificially underlined as if Beethoven and Weber would have knowingly issued a break with the old. Interestingly the “great triumvirate” of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, as Charles Rosen calls it, was already born long before Beethoven’s death as people in Vienna nostalgically complained about the frivolity of the musical life (mostly inflicted by the then extremely popular Italian opera), and yearned to the musical performances of the three great figures. In those early days of the new century, it was

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the important writer, thinker, composer and critic **E. T. A. Hoffmann** (1776-1822) who as early as 1812 coupled the three composers together as inventors of a new art. For Hoffmann the triumvirate were truly the first “romantic” composers and the especial idolizing of Mozart affected him to such extents, that he would fittingly change his third name to Amadeus. In Beethoven one can find the transition between classical and romantic, but not only musically, but also culturally. When he came to Vienna, originally to study with then recently deceased Mozart, he was following in the virtuoso court-performer footsteps. The then newly emerging bourgeoisie never really touched him, and Beethoven at least socially remained firmly with the aristocracy. His patrons were mostly counts and dukes and though he had his republican anti-authoritarian ideals, they were noble thoughts inspired by Rousseau, and had nothing to do with the Viennese officialdom. Beethoven, though not sharing the same high social status, was more comparable to the old court composer Salieri, than the young emerging Schubert.

Conservatism in Viennese musical life stayed strong and even as late as 1827, when the rapidly growing trend of nationalism swept Europe, **Joseph Weigl** (1766-1846) at the age of 60, inherited the post of court Kapellmeister from the then late Salieri. Weigl had studied under Salieri and had also a connection to Haydn, with him having been Weigl's godfather. Apart from the conservative power dynamics, it is noteworthy that Weigl still continued the trend of composing operas chiefly in Italian which reflects the then already quite old-fashioned tastes of the Austrian nobility. Chiefly the musical tastes of the capital had centered around Haydn, Mozart and more conservative successors of their style, like the piano virtuoso Hummel, and Mozart’s pupil (known nowadays mostly because of him finishing Mozart’s requiem) **Franz Xaver Sussmayr** (1766-1803). This continued until Rossini-mania swept the city after 1813 with the performances of *Tancredi* and *L’italiana in Algeri*. Viennese romanticism was firmly tied to more practical things in music and its chief motor was always the rise of instrumental music in the late 18th century. Unlike German romanticism with its grander themes and mixings of literature, music and philosophy, which occupied composers from Hoffmann to Schumann all the way to Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In Vienna composers were expected to write compositions for their own use, either as glittering examples of their own virtuosity, or as works dedicated to their pupils and patrons. Any higher cause (excepting of course church music) for the composition seemed pointless since the Viennese held in highest esteem above all craftsmanship. This is why program music also failed to make any impression in the city. The connection between music and more literary art forms was so thin that no major composers of songs came from the city between Schubert and
Hugo Wolf (1860-1903).\(^6\)

Schubert indeed suffered from the lack of possibilities, never having had the opportunity to flourish within the residences of the aristocracy like the young Beethoven but also never enjoying the artistic possibilities of bourgeoisie salons that existed in Berlin or Paris but hardly in Vienna. The oppressive times between 1821 and 1848 when Count Klemens von Metternich (1773-1859) acted as state chancellor, made it difficult for any societies or clubs, since the regime and its censors saw almost any gatherings of students or artists as suspicious and possibly revolutionary. Even Schubert’s circle of friends and the Schubertiads suffered from this. Also, Beethoven in his late years virtually retired from musical life. His more ambitious later works (written with professionals, more than amateurs, in mind) hardly found any foothold since the city lacked any appropriate premises for orchestral concerts, though he alone could draw resources to have his symphonies performed (unlike Schubert). It took 30 years until Otto Nicolai (1810-1849) composer, conductor and founding member of the Vienna Philharmonic, began a series of public orchestra concerts in 1842 and another 30 years for a symphony orchestra appropriate hall to be built in Vienna (The Musikverein in 1870).

3.2 Schubert

It was the year 1783 when Franz Theodor Florian Schubert (1763-1830), the son of a Moravian peasant, left the province of Zuckmantel (then Austrian Silesia and now the region of Olomouc in modern Czech Republic), and moved to Vienna to study a year at the Vienna University before becoming a school tutor. In 1785 he married Elisabeth Vietz (1756-1812), a housemaid of Silesian origin, with whom he went on to have 14 children. Franz Peter Schubert was born 31.1.1797. At this point his father had already worked for eleven years as a schoolteacher and the family resided at the northwest part of Vienna in the suburb of Himmelpfortgrund. Though Schubert’s parents came from the provinces, he himself can be regarded as a throughout Viennese composer. He spoke and his music speaks the Viennese vernacular and he never had the somewhat alienated feeling or difficulties many other Austrian composers had in Vienna, whether it was Mozart’s problematic relationship with the court, Bruckner’s monastic withdrawnness or Mahler’s existential weltschmerz and anti-

\(^6\) See cit. 4, p. 86-99
Semitic treatment. Of the great austro-germanic composers, Schubert truly is the most Viennese.

Schubert as a real product of Viennese culture is of course something that has been exaggerated throughout the years, partly as a way to canonize him into the city and moreover into the romanticized view of the city as a haven of classical music. There are precisely few Viennese composers who really were brought up in the city, and most of the famous ones weren’t even Austrian as was the case with Brahms or Beethoven. In other words, Schubert has been poorly picked from his historical context and moved into the romantic ideal of Vienna, the Vienna of Mozart, pastries, waltzes and Freud. In a way Schubert himself, as many artists of his era, shunned the dirty and chaotic city life of the early 19th century, which is evident by only looking at the themes and landscapes to which he set his music. His operas and scenic music were partly inspired by the German *singspiel*-tradition (his days being still the formative years of the romantic German opera) where dialogue still superseded recitative and also by the boom of chivalry dramas, *Ritterdrama*, and magical dramas, *Zauberspiel*, inflicted by Walter Scott (1771-1832). The settings of his lieder touch hardly on any urban themes of the day, and the romantic escapism is strongly evident in his output, as can be seen in the settings of his song cycles. In Schubert’s music his protagonist is the romantic wanderer, a subject who is confronted with the hostility of reality.

Schubert, the ever-versatile composer, also wrote extensively church music and, even though opposing bitterly the institution and dogma of the catholic church, composed a large corpus of holy music including six complete masses in Latin, one German mass, an unfinished Oratorio, a *Stabat Mater* and even set music to a Hebrew text of psalm 92 for the Vienna Jewish community which shows his tolerance towards the efforts of the Jewish population to integrate to the general culture. Still in Schuberts day, the society’s everyday life very much spun around the church’s public ceremonies with the mass holding a noteworthy place, both in people’s life’s and as a musical genre. Schubert also saw, and held

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in great esteem, the rich tradition of sacred catholic music, to which he had been orientated already as a choir boy.8

Of the instrumental solo music that Schubert composed, the most important to mention are his works for piano. An output of around twenty sonatas (of which some incomplete), his achievements in piano literature hardly pale in comparison to those of Beethoven, though his have been neglected due to a trend in music history writing, where there has been an emphasis on the vagueness of form compared to the deterministic and unambiguous structure of Beethoven’s sonatas. It is the romantic wanderer that shapes Schubert’s writing, an operatic sense of drama, a spontaneity as real as life yet fantasy-like. Most of Schubert’s piano music was never published in his lifetime, which also accounts to its obscurity compared to Beethoven. Of the other piano works, notable are the Impromptus, Klavierstucke and Moments musicaux. The Wanderer-fantasie holds a special place in romantic piano literature, and more than any other of Schubert’s instrumental work, reflects in form the struggling of a romantic hero.9

Already in 1804, the young Schubert had come to the attention of Vienna’s leading musical authority Antonio Salieri (1750-1825) through his vocal talent. A few years later he was accepted to the Imperial Seminary, where he was exposed to the symphonic music of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven, beginning a lifelong admiration of the latter. For Schubert, to truly step in the footsteps of the three great classicists, it meant composing symphonies. Through his life he wrote seven finished symphonies, six unfinished (including the famous “unfinished” symphony in B minor, D. 759) and seven finished overtures. The symphonic art stayed with him from the very early days until his death, from him writing two overtures in D major, D. 12 & D. 26, already in 1811-12 while at the Seminary (both works likely seen and refined by Salieri), all the way to the fully-blooded romanticism found in the sketches of his last unfinished symphony, D. 936A. Schubert’s symphonies can be divided into the early classical works (including his first six symphonies written between 1813-1818) and the later


more romantic-in vein works, the “unfinished” (1822) and the “great” C major symphony, D. 944, written in 1825-26. Of course the tragic fate of these works was to be mostly never performed in Schuberts lifetime. Much like with Mozart’s The Magic Flute, it didn’t take long for Schuberts “Great” C major to be recognized as a masterpiece, and ten years after his death it was already championed by Schumann and Mendelssohn, though for some time it proved too difficult for orchestras to perform. To conclude, an extract from a letter by Schubert to his publishers at Schott written only a few months before his death, shows his own ambition and humility towards the symphonic form:

"This is the list of my finished compositions, excepting three operas, a Mass and a symphony. These last compositions I mention only in order to make you acquainted with my strivings after the highest in art"

Schubert died young, and his short lifespan compared to his vast musical output combined with the evidently poor financial surroundings in which he spent his last years, have formed the popular image of the composer. While all these remarks are more or less true, it is also true that Schubert enjoyed a very privileged musical training. His school-teacher father supported musical activities and taught the young Schubert violin in addition to which he got musical training as a choir boy and as a pupil in the Imperial Seminary. It is evident that Schubert's career suffered for long because of his own modest and humble nature. He relied extensively on support from his friends, who constituted a notable network by the late second decade of 19th century. A catharsis in Schubert’s career occurred with the first performance of Erkönig, D. 328 in 1821 which attracted more critical acclaim than the composer would receive for the rest of his life. This also ushered a new stream of publications and Schubert's name began slowly to be known beyond Austria. Notably Schubert managed one official concert devoted only to his own work which rather tragically was overshadowed by Paganini’s visit to Vienna. Fittingly Schubert’s first fame came in the lied genre and he was widely published and performed already during the 1820s (in Vienna mostly) while his instrumental music was virtually unknown outside the borders of the city. But what is most

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See cit. 6
remarkable, is the amount of fame and possibilities Schubert attained during his life, when we consider the fact that he wasn’t a virtuoso performer (like Mozart or Beethoven) and the absence of professional orchestras and public concert halls in Vienna in the early 19th century. This is underlined by the fact, that Schubert was by all known accounts shy and reluctant to promote himself. For the last 8 years of his life his writing pace slowed considerably, which shows partly a shift in his motivation to write for a more professional crowd instead of the family string quartet. Schubert's death was preceded by an illness which possibly was a mercury poisoning caused by treatment of syphilis (there exists a lot of speculation on what caused Schubert's early death) and his cause of death was officially diagnosed as typhoid fever. Franz Schubert died, aged 31, on the 19th of November 1828 in the apartment of his brother Ferdinand.

Chamber Music and later style

Throughout his rather short life, Schubert nevertheless managed to produce an astonishing amount of music, a body of work that encompasses around 1000 works, most often categorized in O. E. Deutsch catalogue. From his youth until his untimely death he wrote somewhat diligently in all genres, sometimes emphasizing one genre over another. When it comes to chamber music, Schubert's most noted pieces were born during his middle and late stylistic periods, beginning with the “Trout” quintet, D. 667, a work which unusual instrumentation (inclusion of a double bass instead of a second violin) was modelled after J. N. Hummel’s Septet, op. 74 after a wish from its dedicatee. The quintet was one of the few chamber works Schubert produced during his “Years of Crisis” between 1818-1823. During this time Schubert was tightly associated with a close circle of friends, artists and students, whose gatherings became to be known as the “Schubertiads”. The crisis was two-fold, in 1820 Schubert and four of his friends were arrested by the police who were at this time extremely suspicious of any student gatherings in fear of possible revolutionary plans. These years also represent a time of some compositional crisis in Schubert's career that can be seen in the high amount of unfinished works and fragments. One of them is also the other seminal chamber

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work he composed during this time, the *Quartettsatz* movement for string quartet, *D. 703*. Schubert seemed to have arrived at a compositional crossroad, greatly affected by the growing influence and admiration of Beethoven, whose instrumental compositions on a large scale with a wide range of emotional states, works which presented the composer with the problem of unification, drew the younger composer to associate himself more with the musicians of Beethoven’s circles.\(^{14}\) Between 1824-26 there is a new flourishing in Schubert's chamber output. After the suspended process of the above-mentioned quartet movement, a hiatus of a few years followed, a time the composer dedicated to operatic and symphonic works. The flute variations *Trockne Blumen, D. 802* finally break this pause and are then followed by two string quartets, *D. 804 & D. 810*, works written most likely the *Ignaz Schuppanzigh’s* (1776-1830) quartet-concerts in mind (Schubert having made Schuppanzigh's, an esteemed violinist and performer of Beethoven’s works, acquaintance in 1823).\(^{15}\) Perhaps the greatest chamber work written by Schubert is the octet in F major, *D.803*, a work modelled after Beethoven’s beloved septet and a work which in its hour-long duration and grand outer movements pushed the boundaries of the term *Hausmusik* (“home-music”) and paved the way towards Schubert’s late long symphonic works. These productive years also produced the Rondo in b minor for violin and piano, *D. 895* and of course the Sonata “Arpeggione” *D. 821*.

### 3.3 The romantic viola - Early romantic solo repertoire

The viola has perhaps suffered the ups and downs of musical treatment more than any other stringed-instrument. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century it held much the same position in the orchestra that the 1st and 2nd violins occupy today. The violin with its higher pitch and its more exquisite tone-colour, was continually 'knocking at the door,' and the viola found itself servant where once it had been master.\(^{16}\)

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\(^{16}\) Forsyth, Cecil. 1914. *Orchestration.* London: Macmillan
The viola never had the soloistic appeal of its more preferred siblings, the violin and the cello. Whereas they occupied the center of both soloistic works and chamber music, first in the trio sonata form and later in the piano trio, the viola came to be regarded as a filling in the then rather young symphony orchestra, the vital but forgotten middle voice. Much can be attributed towards the classical ideal of a clear melodic line cast opposite an accompaniment, and the viola being of an inconvenient register and the fact, that the instruments of the time (tenor violins or small violas with a dampered sound) were clumsy to play, it’s quite easy to see why the instrument didn’t achieve a more soloistic role. In spite of this there were exceptions, like Carl Stamitz (1745-1801) who can be seen as the father of all viola soloists. A well-known composer and violist whose viola concerto is still today one of the most played and required pieces in any orchestra audition. But it was both Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) whose chamber music lifted the viola from its early-classical shadows with a more independent and demanding texture. Both men played viola in the performances of their work and we can largely attribute the tradition of composers playing viola to have started with them. This more autonomic role would culminate in Mozart’s Sinfonia Concertante, K. 364, a double concerto for viola and violin where the violas writing is both equal in amount and matches all the technical difficulties and most importantly shows the low register dark soloist capabilities of the instrument.\(^{17}\)

The early romantic era brings a new role and new demands to the viola, composers like Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826) and Hector Berlioz (1803-1869) praise the instrument in their writing and explore its sound in their orchestra writing while offering it bigger and bigger shoes to fill in works like Weber’s Andante e Rondo Ungarese, Op. 35, and Berlioz Harold en Italie, H. 68. These works sadly remain curiosities, and neither can be seen as a romantic concerto, a genre that the viola more or less (not counting a few obscure works) skips over. When it comes to sonatas, there luckily exists a few original works from known composers. While this particular text concerns itself mostly with Schuberts sonata, one of the key questions is the need for violists to play this work when there still exists original music for viola and piano from the early romantic/late classic era. Two of them raise special interest, sonatas by Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) and Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837).

Mendelssohn’s viola sonata in c-minor was written between November 1823 and February 1824. Already from the choice of the key we can see a willingness to write an original work

for viola that could showcase the instruments characteristic low register through an open c-string. Though this choice possibly mirrors the influence of Beethoven’s important corpus of works in c-minor (like the Violin Sonata Op. 30, no. 2) to the then 14-year old youngster.

The work is written in three movements (I. Adagio – Allegro, II. Menuetto – Allegro molto, III. Andante con variazioni) and is a very charming yet not at all light work with a serious atmosphere and an average duration of around 25 minutes. The sonata was never published in Mendelssohn’s lifetime and had to wait until 1966 to be printed. Though the menuetto lived on when the composer reworked it into his First Symphony, Op. 11, also in c-minor. Mendelssohn himself was an accomplished violinist and also enjoyed playing the viola which is very much evident in the sonata. Already the slow adagio introduction of the first movement culminates in two long church bell – like fortepiano octaves on the open c-string, that are preceded by a very melismatic melody, also on the low c-string. And the ending of the piece is a spirited chase with a lot of arpeggiated texture that is appropriate for the viola (unlike a section in Schubert’s sonata that is discussed later). In short, the sonatas writing is not only versatile, with a lot of the slow themes appearing on the low strings and a lot of the fast passages on the higher strings (which shows a throughout practical understanding of the viola as an instrument), but also daring and fearless without a trace of any influence of the less flattering stereotypes on the violas limits as a solo instrument.

In comparison to Mendelssohn’s work, the E-flat major Sonata, Op. 5, no. 3 by Hummel was an earlier work, and while the former piece already shows a heavily romantic language, the latter is written in a typical late-classic Mozartian idiom with a haydn-esque sense of humor. Hummel, like Mendelssohn and Mozart, was a child prodigy who with his piano playing entertained the courts of Europe from a very young age. At the age of eight he was accepted as a pupil of Mozart, and like his teacher, undertook concert tours through Germany, Denmark and England with his father accompanying the young virtuoso. The viola sonatas origins can be found presumably from a stay at the court of Denmark in 1790, where the young Hummel drew much attention and acclaim. This stay likely prompted the dedication, “A Son Altesse Madame la Princesse Royal de Dännemarc” with the explicit added specification of: “With permission”. Hummel wrote and published the work in 1798 and it

was printed with two violin sonatas for unknown reasons. The work, despite a negative first review in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, proved successful and was republished by Peters in Leipzig in 1818 and during the next few years also in Paris and London with Hummel himself being delighted at its success.\(^{19}\) The sonata has proven a welcome addition to the Viola repertoire, and is one of the few truly longstanding viola works despite having since faded underneath more successful pieces, though now being rediscovered (significantly thanks to the 2011 critical edition of the sonata by Henle). The piece is a customary three movement sonata (*I. Allegro moderato, II. Adagio cantabile, III. Rondo: Allegro con moto*) with a similar form to the 25-year younger Schubert sonata. It is a tricky and quite demanding work when played at an appropriate tempo but does suffer from some unergonomic choices in the viola-part writing which reflect the composer’s lesser familiarity with the instrument. Still it has some, in the writer’s opinion, brilliant writing in it and a considerably demanding piano part, fitting Hummel’s virtuosity on the instrument. The short and beautiful slow movement incorporates a rather unorthodox presto piano solo cadenza and the rondo third movement boasts a racing texture that brings the work to a triumphant finish. Notably both the Mendelssohn and Hummel sonatas final movements contain a significantly more demanding and virtuoso piano part than the Schubert sonata.

The romantic era delivered only few notable viola sonatas in addition to the already mentioned works. **Mikhail Glinka** (1804-1857) wrote an incomplete sonata in 1835 that despite its incompleteness has become standard repertoire, as has the 1862 sonata by **Henri Vieuxtemps** (1820-1881). Less played are the sonatas by **Anton Rubinstein** (1829-1894) and by the English **George Onslow** (1784-1853). The by far most known viola sonatas from the romantic era are of course the two sonatas, *Op. 120*, by **Johannes Brahms** (1833-1897) which he composed late in his life in 1894. Both sonatas were written by Brahms originally for clarinet and piano, but he reworked both pieces for viola with some minor changes and additions to the texture. Other viola-works from the romantic era include the well-known and seminal *Märchenbilder, Op. 113* for viola and piano by **Robert Schumann** (1810-1856), *Elegie, Op. 30* by Vieuxtemps and *Reverie* by **Henryk Wieniawski** (1835-1880). In addition to the already mentioned *concertante* works by Berlioz and Weber, there exists also an intriguing work by Hummel, the *Potpourri for Viola and Orchestra, Op. 94*, which is a fantasy

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on beloved opera-themes of Hummel’s time by both Mozart and Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868). Sadly, this work was for long known only as a “butchered” version known as “Fantasy”, before the original was again unearthed in 1973.20

3.4 Sonata D.821 "Arpeggione"

When talking about the instrument “Arpeggione” itself, we can be quite certain that the instrument for which Schubert’s sonata was conceived, is the “bowed guitar” invented by the noted Viennese luthier and guitar maker Johann Georg Stauffer in 1823. As already discussed in the introduction, the instrument can be seen as a part of the early 19th century trend of inventing new instruments which in turn was ushered by both the new romantic search for new sounds and expressions and the new bourgeoisie class and its growing appetite for music and entertainment. Unlike the saxophone, a whole family of instruments invented by Adolphe Sax (1814-1894), the arpeggione quickly vanished from the music scene. Vincenz Schuster, a guitarist who also very likely played the cello, played the first performance of the sonata in December 1824. He was also the dedicatee and inspiration of the sonata and went on to compose a school for the arpeggione (with detailed descriptions of the instrument) which was published by A. Diabelli & Comp. in 1825.

The arpeggione is pretty much a mixture of a guitar and a cello. A six-string instrument with resemblance towards the cello but smaller and fretted like a guitar. The strings are tuned like on a guitar (E-A-d-g-h-e) but the instrument was played like a cello, positioned between the knees and without a tailpiece as was convention still in the early 19th century. Schuster describes the tone of the instrument similar to a basset horn in the low register and like an oboe in the high register. Another source describes the sound alike to that of a cor anglais. What is interesting here, is of course that most descriptions draw comparisons to wind instruments, whether this was motivated by the will to advertise the instrument is possible since these comments come mostly from advocates of the instrument. The only comparison to a stringed instrument that can be found, is a review of a concert in Berlin in 1826, where the sound of the instrument was said to resemble that of a violas sul ponticello playing (a playing

style, where the bow is drawn very close to the bridge to produce a kind of scratchy or glistening sound). This can of course be seen as a verification to the custom of violists playing Schuberts sonata, however more likely this comparison was meant as an insult towards the bowed guitar which becomes clear through the negative tone of the review itself.\footnote{21}{See cit. 2}

In the big picture all bowed guitars were of same origin and in Schuberts case the term arpeggione is therefore two-fold since it also describes a playing style, very representative of the bowed guitar and its possibilities of great arpeggio-sequences or “super-arpeggios”.\footnote{22}{See cit. 1 With “super-arpeggios” Geiginger means places where the arpeggio-effect comes out through a quick execution of a chord where Schubert has distanced the bass note from the rest of the chord and thus given a bigger gesture to it. These occur f. ex. in the end of the first movement exposition and in the beginning of the recapitulation (see app. 2)} Schubert uses this to great extent, even though the sonata lacks any real virtuoso-passages for this particular technique to flourish. The arpeggio-texture is very skillfully woven into the piece and therefore its most distinct thematic message is in its singing melodic lines whereas its more moving fast passages move around a very tiny intervallic range. Paradoxically the sonata omits any traditional arpeggione-texture that we would associate with stringed instruments, not counting one distinct passage recurring in the third movement. But even that particular passage is not constructed like a typical broken chord texture in classical string literature. (see app. 1)

D. 821

The a-minor sonata for arpeggione and piano did not disappear from the music scene for long and has been part of standard repertoire since it’s posthumous first edition in 1871 which included a cello and an optional violin part. The earliest viola part is likely an arrangement of the slow second movement for viola and piano that appeared in a collection of classical works arranged for viola and piano in ca. 1930 by the well-known German violinist, violist, publisher and viola-advocate Paul Klengel (1854-1935). The sonata is, and has been for long, mostly known for its cello arrangement. The violin arrangement never proved successful, likely due to the violins lack of a low register and the existence of original violin works by Schubert. Both violists and double bassists have the work in their core repertoire, and it has also found its way through later arrangements to the repertoire of flutists and trumpetists. The well-known Bulgarian composer Dobrinka Tabakova (1980-) has written an arrangement for

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{2} See cit. 2
\bibitem{1} See cit. 1
\end{thebibliography}
viola and string orchestra. The sonata has become without a doubt one of Schubert's most played and beloved works.

The work is cast, as is typical of the era, in three contrasting movements. The main sonata-form first movement in a minor, a bright but very short slow second movement in E major and a closing third movement rondo in A major. As written earlier, most of the sonata’s structure is very melodic with the first movement having its contrasting lively major secondary theme, the second movement written surprisingly in ¾ and the final rondo having its customary dance-like feel. Stylistically the work is very traditional, and in its language, almost more classical than romantic with a throughout galant phrasing.

The first movement (allegro moderato) begins with the piano playing the main theme before the arpeggione repeats it and leads it in a very long uncut phrase to a high a-note. Then follows a lively second theme in major which is lead through a virtuoso passage to the thematic climax of the movement. The exposition ends in big arpeggio-pizzicato chords (examples of Karl Geiginger’s “super-arpeggio”)23 which are followed by the development section beginning with a major-version of the main theme in the piano with a pizzicato accompaniment. The development section concludes with the dynamic high point and thematic climax of the movement with the constant, almost aggressive, repeating of the dominant e-note which is then through a cadenza-like solo-passage lead back into the tonic a minor main theme. After a customary recapitulation with the secondary lively theme in minor the movement seems to end in major but a dramatic almost opera-like coda ends the movement tragically in minor. The second slow movement (adagio) is a short almost intermezzo-like passage between the two longer outer movements. It is a bright E-major gem of music with a semplice theme which is marginally varied and lead into a solo-passage (very similar to the one at the end of first movement development) that brings the music attacca to the third movement. The closing rondo-movement (allegretto) is a combination of lively themes as is customary with an ABACBA form. The movement is also quite long for a formally very classical rondo with an average duration of nearly 10 minutes. The work closes on a very arpeggio-like passage with a long broken chordal run followed by two closing chords with the latter having a wave-line indicating arpeggio, perhaps meant by Schubert to differ from the former with a slower division of the individual notes.

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23 See cit. 1
4 Conclusions

The main conclusions has to do with the sonatas compatibility, and I shall both here and later in the discussion go through the different difficulties which need to be overcome when tackling the piece on a viola. Mostly, it is a question of arranging the piece and to do justice to the original arpeggione texture. However beyond the musical and aesthetic issues there lie purely technical difficulties which demand sometimes a great deal of arranging, and therefore one is left with the well justified question: ”why arpeggione?” Worth mentioning is also that I have included my own reflections on the work having myself practiced and performed it during this year.

4.1 On the sonatas functionality and need of arranging

The sonata works considerably better on the viola than on the violin because of the violas low c-string which allows the execution of some of the low arpeggione-notes. Problems arise because of the high-register passages which, when played as written, end up on very high and unergonomic positions on the viola, and even when painstakingly practiced and flawlessly delivered, don’t sound convincing. Both sound quality and technical difficulties make those sections rarely worth playing in the higher octave, whether it is the original octave or not. This is a result of the fact that many passages need to be played an octave higher since the original arpeggione could descend all the way to the low E (its lowest string and just a third higher than the cellos low c-string). What is then problematic is that many thematic high points culminate on top of long rising and often arpeggiated runs, which do not work because they end up way too high on the viola for the instrument to be able to bring out a musically fitting and convincing sound.
In the first movement, being in a minor key, many of the arpeggiated passages start from the low A (a third lower than the violas lowest c-string) and therefore they are usually begun one octave higher but then compensated with a descending run to the third and fifth of the chord before continuing upwards along the original passage of notes. Or alternatively the change into the original octave occurs later during the passage so that the direction of the notes can be kept (see app. 3). The first movement has the most of these places which simply demand arranging when executed on the viola. The two virtuoso-runs in the side-theme are of particular note: bars 60-61 & 177-178 (see app. 1). Often it is possible to not “cut” these rising arpeggio-passages and preserve all notes as written while simply moving the whole segment one octave lower. Karl Geiginger's aforementioned “super-arpeggio” effect is also lost, since it relies on a low bass note, separated from the rest of the chord, which cannot be produced on the viola because of its more limited set of strings and especially since that note often is the low open E. No arrangement manages to bring out the effect and violists are left with different possibilities with either transforming the chord in a higher octave as an attempt to convey the “super-arpeggio” effect (Henle-edition), but with the doubling of the e-note, or by keeping the original octave (Bärenreiter) and just ignoring the effect by having a more concise chord with the low e and b notes brought up by an octave (see app. 2).

The second movement doesn’t share the same arranging difficulties as the first movement when performed on the viola. The only big difference is the minor secondary theme of the movement which cannot be played in the original octave but needs to be transposed an octave higher, starting on the open g on the viola. But the effect is still there since the theme before has ended high enough for there to be a substantial drop between the themes (even though not as substantial as on the arpeggione where the interval is 2.5 octaves) and the open g string on the viola can be seen as underlining the difference between the sweet and vibrated nature of the preceding theme and the contrasting and tragic minor one. The end of the movement has again a cadenza -like ascending arpeggiated passage (comparable to the one linking the development and recapitulation in the first movement) which has to undergo a similar arrangement as with the one ending the first movement (see app. 3). But as stated before, the changes that need to be done in the slow movement are quite superficial and scarcely disturb the nature of the movement which in its melancholic sweetness can be even seen benefitting from the dark alto-tones of the viola.

In the third movement we have the most popular and folk-like music in the sonata. A rustic rondo with dancelike themes and an overall joyous atmosphere. There are two segments of
interest in the rondo, both drawing out technical demands. The first segment begins the B-part of the movement, following a connecting cadence-passage after the melodic A-part. Schubert writes, as is customary, a contrasting B-part which in this particular rondo is a fierce and virtuoso recurring figure. This figure is by far the most technically challenging detail in the whole sonata and this is largely due to its cellistic nature. The fast string crossings in this section pose great difficulties for violists and what is quite customary writing for a cello (or the original arpeggione which was held like a cello, thus the cello-like writing) becomes, albeit manageable, a seriously demanding passage for a violist (see app. 4). The other section of interest appears at the end of the C-part of the rondo and is a long sequential passage with a pizzicato-accompaniment from the stringed instrument. This accompaniment is an ascending arpeggiated chord that recurs through a modulating segment which leads the music from the E-major C-part back to the a-minor B-part of the movement. What makes things again demanding for a violist happens when Schubert, in the middle of this accompaniment, introduces a pedal note on the prior mute first 8-note of the bar. This pedal note uses the arpeggiones six-stringed design and is played from the instruments lowest e-string. So, after a cellistic section Schubert introduces guitar-like writing which again sadly transposes rather clumsily to the viola. The low pedal note is brought one octave higher on the viola-arrangement but even if it is playable, it is evident that it suits the viola far less than the cello. Not only is the original register possible on the cello, so is the guitar-like use of the thumb for playing the pedal note (see app. 5).

All these examples work in favor of the more familiar custom of performing the piece on a cello. The cello has both convincing and big sounding low and high registers and in general just a far larger range which serves much better as a substitute for the original arpeggio since no passages need to be cut. Therefore, the original characteristic of the arpeggione and subsequently of the sonata, comes out much better. Though this concerns mainly the first and third movements. The second movements viola-friendly nature surely accounts for its rather early publication as a stand-alone piece for viola and piano in Klengel's compilation.

All this brings the discussion to a logical question: why do violists play this sonata? It is not the custom of playing the sonata with various smaller-ranged instruments that is interesting, but the fact it can be seen as having a sort of alienating quality. Somehow Schubert managed to write a piece that, while surely fitting the arpeggione excellently, at the same time far surpassed its intended instrument in popularity. We can surely make the case that while the sonata belongs to a now practically dead instrument (though recordings with an
arpeggione or other “bowed guitar”-instrument exist), it nowadays really belongs to all instruments and thus has attained a status where the instrument with which its played, is very much secondary. Still for violists and double bassists, two instrument groups who for long were overlooked by major composers when writing solo pieces, the arpeggione-sonata presents a musically coherent and challenging work by a well-known composer of the romantic era. Something that is hard to come by. But is it worth it?

My own reflections of the piece can be summarized by a feeling of exhaustion. While it is stimulating and beautiful music with flowing phrases and moments of virtuosity, there is a feeling of fragmental disarray. The need to move phrases or parts of them into lower and higher octaves casts an involuntary shadow of disability to the otherwise flowing nature of the music. This is most evident in the first movement that heavily relies on a free singing-like quality in its phrasing. I personally worked extensively on two sections, a singing minor passage in the beginning of the development which I tried to play in its original octave but ended up moving one octave lower since its preceding upward run could also be moved one octave lower. The other passage is the aforementioned second theme’s concluding (this time in the recapitulation) virtuoso-run, which I managed to play with ending up in the original high octave, while still having to make a cut in the beginning. The Bärenreiter-edition I use, had the former segment suggested in the high octave (a custom that violists rarely go by) and the latter virtuoso-run ending an octave lower which is rarely heard on recordings where the custom seems to follow the same decision that I used. The slow movement works much better since the tempo both allows the time for notes to ring out on the viola, while also containing less need for arranging. Both upward passages (starting in bars 47 & 67) start low enough for them to be able to execute on the viola without any cuts (see app. 1). In the third movement it was precisely the cellistic passage (see app. 4) that I struggled most with. In that particular place one can choose to either use the original slur, or alternatively play without it. I do believe that a musically credible execution of the section is what matters over any authenticity, since the whole context of performing the piece with a viola already differs vastly from any authentic surroundings.
5 Discussion – ”Why arpeggione?”

In conclusion one can find different reasons for performing the Schubert sonata on the viola. Of course, no one can, nor will I, erase it from our instruments core repertoire. It is not that I personally would want to divert people to the less played, but perhaps more suitable options, of the Mendelssohn and Hummel sonatas. There exists viola music from the early romantic era with even less original compatibility, like the Notturno for viola and piano arranged from the Serenade for string trio, op. 8 by Beethoven. A work that, though published as early as 1804, was still disowned by the composer. Still the original, extremely weak, arrangement has been bettered and now it is by all accounts a charming reworking of an early Beethoven piece that presents violists the opportunity to play Beethoven together with a pianist. However, that piece is musically very straightforward, entertainment music of its era, and also a successful piece which accounts for the many arrangements that appeared already in Beethoven’s time while also accounting of Beethoven’s irritation of said reworkings. Still that particular piece will most likely never reach the same popularity in violists repertoire than Schuberts work, and therefore it needn’t ever be subjected to the same discussion even though it bears more originality towards the viola with its almost contemporary arrangement. The big reason for violists to play the Schubert piece is most likely it’s apparent authentic feel. By this I mean that it doesn’t conjure up the image of playing “another violin piece” as with the Franck sonata, or a piece “stolen from horn players” as with the Adagio & Allegro by Schumann. There is simply no crowd of annoyed arpeggione-players that would leap up and accuse us as robbers, and therefore violists and bassists can share this piece in a solemn companionship. Not even the fact that the Schubert sonata is mostly a cello piece, can disturb this, since the arpeggione belongs now to everyone.

Still why not Mendelssohn? Or Hummel? Especially in the former violists have a dramatic romantic sonata with all the fillings in place, and it is originally written for viola! Maybe it’s the slowness of viola circles to react to new publications and new findings, or the difficulty in breaking from the trend to teach the same pieces to your students, that you were taught yourself. This all mainly concerns a pedagogical context, since many internationally acclaimed soloists have had these pieces in their repertoire for years and have even recorded them. At the same time a top-class soloist is able to deliver the Schubert sonata in a credible fashion and even overshadow with personal solutions, instead of executing the technically and
musically less-compatible passages in a humble but unstable manner. But this is beside the point, since what motivates me, is to ask is it worth to still now hold the Arpeggione-sonata on a pedestal? Musically it is a beautiful gem of the late Schubert style, and this beauty can be captured by almost any stringed instrument in their respective manners. I also understand its frequent use as an audition piece, since it demands a knowledge and skill of both romantic phrasing, and classical articulation. Maybe as an answer to my own question, I would bring out all the qualities the sonata has to offer, and all the difficulties there are to overcome. But most importantly I would like to remind of the valid options of both, Mendelssohn and Hummel sonatas and dissolve the bleak misconception that there exist no alternatives to the Schubert sonata.
Literature & citations


Appendix 1 – Arpeggione-texture in Schubert's sonata
Appendix 2 – Different ways of arranging in the first movement (bar 145)

2.1 Original Arpeggione writing (in g-clef)

2.2 Possible viola-arrangement by Henle (c-clef)

2.3 Possible viola-arrangement by Bärenreiter (c-clef)
Appendix 3 – Different ways of arranging in the first movement (bars 200-202)

3.1 Original Arpeggione writing (g-clef)

3.2 Possible viola-arrangement by Bärenreiter (c-clef)

3.3 Possible viola-arrangement by Fred Nachbaur & Jean-Pierre Coulon (g-clef)
Appendix 4 – Cellistic writing in the third movement (bars 123-127)

Appendix 5 – ”Guitar-like” Arpeggione-texture in the third movement (bars 336-337)