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# ARTUR SCHNABEL

## Schubert Impromptus

Pristine  
XR

I hope this issue means that Schnabel, whose loss we so deeply deplore, recorded the remaining three numbers of this set of Impromptus. He was rarely lucky in the recording of his piano tone but this present disc is about average, and has an excellent bass.

There is a hint, in the music, of the tragic song *Der Wegweiser* (The Signpost) in *Die Winterreise*, which was of course composed much later, and it is curious how Schubert was haunted by this march rhythm. How beautifully Schnabel plays the quiet modulation of G minor to A flat major, one of Schubert's magical touches. There is some waywardness about the tempo and one is reminded of Schnabel's views about the playing of triplets in the course of the piece, but this is most endearing and masterly playing and, if expectation be fulfilled, I look forward greatly to the appearance of the remainder of the set, the G flat major particularly.

A. R., The Gramophone, October 1951 - review of HMV 78rpm issue, D.899 No. 1 in C minor

Artur Schnabel's recording of the two sets of Schubert's Impromptus was made in 1950 when this great artist was nearly 70, EMI's new digital remastering is of the same programme issued in 1988 when the notes, reproduced here, were by none other than Denis Matthews. If the taped piano tone is not the most ingratiating, Schnabel's uncomplicated, open-hearted response to the music underlines the benefits of wisdom and simplicity: Schubert is allowed to speak entirely for himself.

Jeremy Nicholas, Gramophone, November 2005 - review of EMI CD reissue, *Schubert Impromptus*

### Producer's Note

Artur Schnabel was 68 when he recorded the Schubert Impromptus for EMI in the early summer of 1950, with barely a year left to live. At the time EMI/HMV was still a 78rpm-only label, but early tape recorders had been installed in its Abbey Road studios and had been in use for a couple of years by the time this recording had been made. Yet despite returning to Studio 3, where so many of his other solo piano recordings had been made over the previous two decades, his engineers still struggled to capture Schnabel's piano tone well, something picked up on by reviewers ever since - as illustrated here. My task, in taking on this project, was to see whether XR remastering might finally lay this criticism to rest. It wasn't an easy task - the piano is an unforgiving instrument that can quickly become clanky or boomy if you get it wrong. But here I think I have found a tonal sweet spot, and Schnabel's interpretations shine even brighter as a result. I've also been able to address some quite significant pitch issues heard on EMI's various releases, where three of the recordings were sharp, the last two significantly so at A448 despite the earlier recordings coming in at A440. Elsewhere pitch drift has also been cured. **Andrew Rose**

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT [WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM](http://WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM)  
SARL Pristine Audio, 144 Rue de l'Eglise, 24610 St. Méard de Gurçon, France

# Artur Schnabel

plays

## Schubert

### Impromptus D899 & D935

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EMI studio recordings, 1950



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SCHUBERT EIGHT IMPROMPTUS, D899 AND D935  
ARTUR SCHNABEL

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XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a  
photograph of Artur Schnabel

Schubert 4 Impromptus, D.899  
Recorded 6-8 June 1950  
Abbey Road Studio 3, London  
Matrix Nos. 2EA 14755/60  
Issued as DB.21320, 21335, 21351

Schubert 4 Impromptus, D.935  
Recorded 8-9, 12-13 June 1950  
Abbey Road Studio 3, London  
Matrix Nos. 2EA 14761, 14765/7,  
14774/8  
Issued as DB.21382, 21500, 21611, 21557

Total duration: 57:18

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ARTUR SCHNABEL

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## SCHUBERT *Impromptus*

### 4 Impromptus D.899

- 1 No. 1 in C minor (8:55)
- 2 No. 2 in E-flat major (4:10)
- 3 No. 3 in G-flat major (4:57)
- 4 No. 4 in A-flat major (6:09)

### 4 Impromptus D.935

- 5 No. 1 in F minor (9:06)
- 6 No. 2 in A-flat major (7:17)
- 7 No. 3 in B-flat major (10:08)
- 8 No. 4 in F minor (6:36)

Artur Schnabel *piano*