

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Sonata
in A Minor

"Per Arpeggione"
(1824)

arranged for Viola and piano

Viola Part

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Franz Schubert

Sonata in A Minor “Per Arpeggione”

The “Guitarre d’amour” was invented in 1821 by Johann Georg Stauffer (1778-1853). About the size of a ‘cello, this instrument had a fretted fingerboard and six strings, tuned the same as the guitar (E A D G B E). It later became known as the “Arpeggione,” because of its facility with guitar-like arpeggiations.

Due to a number of technical problems, the Arpeggione never became popular, and suffered a rapid obsolescence. Its guitar-shaped body made it awkward to hold, and it was difficult to play loudly on a single string because of the low curvature imposed by its many strings. In fact, the sonata presented here is probably the only significant work written specifically for this unusual instrument.

Schubert wrote this piece in 1824, and the care taken to suit the music to the instrument is quite apparent. It can be noted that rarely are dynamics stronger than “p” indicated, especially in fast passages. He made good use of the instrument’s arpeggiating abilities, and wrote the music to show off the arpeggione’s extensive range.

The fact that the music has outlived the instrument by some two centuries is a tribute to Schubert’s genius for memorable melodies. It is sometimes used as a showpiece by exceptional ‘cello players, as only the most capable virtuosi can reach the impossibly high places. Even on viola the higher ranges are difficult, and the lower registers (below open C) are of course impossible.

Nonetheless, the piece lends itself ideally to the tonality of the viola. In this arrangement, I have relied heavily on the assistance of Jean-Pierre Coulon. The low ranges had to be re-octavised to fall within the range of the viola. For the high parts, I have opted to re-octavise a few passages to make the piece more accessible to amateur and semi-professional players. The octave on the A string was taken as the practical limit.

Regarding bowings - Schubert’s bowings for the arpeggione are of course of limited use, but do give an idea of the phrasing. Since I am not myself a violist, I have deferred to the bowings offered in the edition by Paul Doktor. Still, the player is encouraged to take these with a grain of salt, and to work out for him- or herself bowings and phrasing that are appropriate to one’s individual style and capacities. Similarly, the dynamics indications are best taken as suggested starting points. As implied earlier, had the piece been written for other bowed instruments, it would have probably had a lot more mf, f, and ff markings.

Tempo indications in the original are sketchy, and in several places ambiguous. The markings shown (and reflected in the demo midi file) are my own interpretation, largely influenced by a wonderful midi created by John Cowles.

A note on the passage starting at bar 330, and similar passages later in the piece. The recommended way to play this is to double-stop the C and G strings, playing the A on the G-string as a “drone.” This gives an interesting “fiddle” effect and is easier than negotiating the shifts if the section is played on adjacent strings in 3rd position.

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Fred Nachbaur, January 1999

Sonata "Per Arpeggione" in A Minor

Franz Schubert (1824)

Allegro moderato

Viola

mf

14 *decresc. p cresc. decresc. pp cresc.*

20 *fp decresc. cresc.*

24 *pp cresc.*

28 *mf decresc. pp f tr*

33 *p*

38 *(ritard.) (a tempo) decresc. 3 pp*

42 *cresc.*

45 *p cresc. p*

48 *cresc. f p tr cresc. decresc. 3*

52 *pp*

55 *f* *decresc.* *f* *decresc.*

B

59 *p* *cresc.*

62 *f* *p* *cresc.* *decresc.*

tr *tr* *3* *5*

67 *cresc.* *decresc.* (Pizz.)

tr

72 1. 2. *fz* *p* *cresc.*

C (poco rit.) [Pizz.]

78 *decresc.* *f* *p*

Arco

83 *cresc.* *decresc.*

89 *(a tempo)*

D

92 *(poco rit.)* *fp* *fp*

95 *cresc.* *f* *cresc.* *fz* *p*

99 *pp* *cresc.* *mf* *(a tempo)* **E**

104 *pp*

107 *cresc.* *mf*

113 *cresc.* *f* *ff* *cresc.* *ffz* *decresc.*

119 *p* *cresc.* *fp*

125 *(ritard.)* *decresc.* *mf* *(a tempo)* **F**

130 *cresc.* *decresc.* *pp*

135 *cresc.* *fp* *decresc.* *p* **G**

140 *pp*

146 *cresc.* *(Pizz.)* *(Arco)* *decresc.* *pp* *(ritard.)* *f*

151 **H** *tr* *cresc.* *decresc.*

155 *(poco accel.)* *ritard.*
p *decesc.*

159 *(a tempo)*
pp

162 *cresc.* *p*

165 *cresc.* *p*

167 *cresc.* *f* *dim.* *p* *tr* *cresc.* *decesc.* *3*

171 *p*

174 *f* *J*

177 *p*

180 *cresc.* *f* *decesc.* *p* *tr*

184 *cresc.* *decesc.* *fp* *decesc.* *tr* *cresc.* *decesc.*

189 *(rit.)* *p* *cresc.* *decesc.* *K*

194 *pp* *cresc.* *decresc.*

199 *dim.* *f* *decresc.* *decresc.* *p*

205 *ff* *Adagio (mm=60)*

210 *p* *cresc.* *decresc.* *cresc.* *decresc.*

218 *cresc.* *decresc.* *pp*

225 *pp* *cresc.* *mf* *decresc.* *cresc.* *mf* *decresc.* *p*

232 *cresc.* *f* *decresc.* *p* *pp* *cresc.*

239 *decresc.* *p* *cresc.* *fp* *decresc.*

246 *cresc.* *decresc.* *p* *cresc.* *fp* *decresc.*

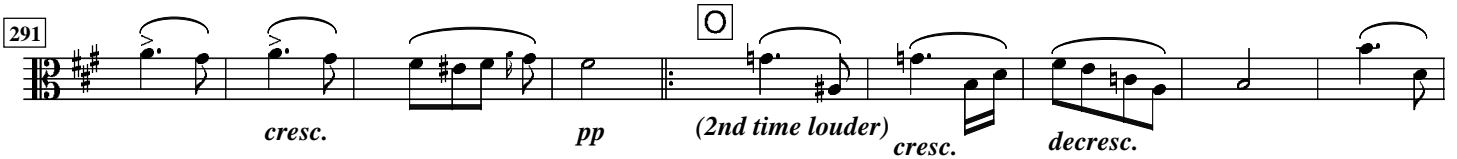
253 *p* *cresc.* *decresc.* *p*

260 *pp*

268 

275 *(accel.)*  *rit.* 3 *Allegretto*
p

282 

291 

cresc. *pp* (2nd time louder) *cresc.* *decresc.*

300 

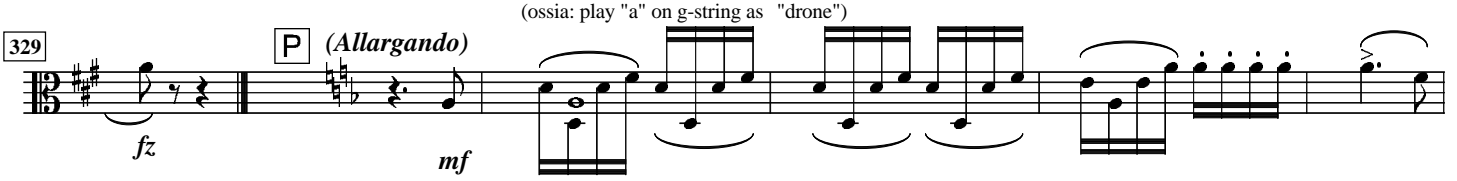
cresc. *decresc.* *cresc.* *decresc.* *p* *decr.*

310 

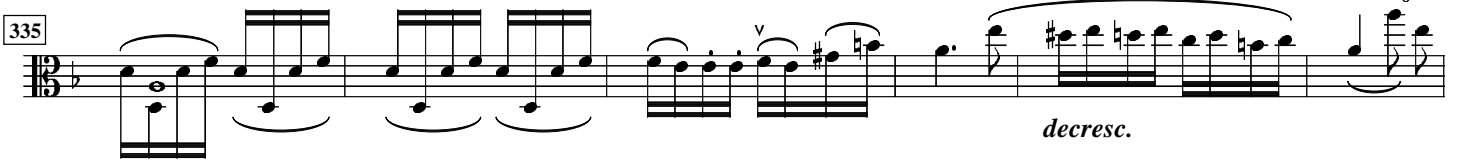
cresc. *decresc.* *p*

320 

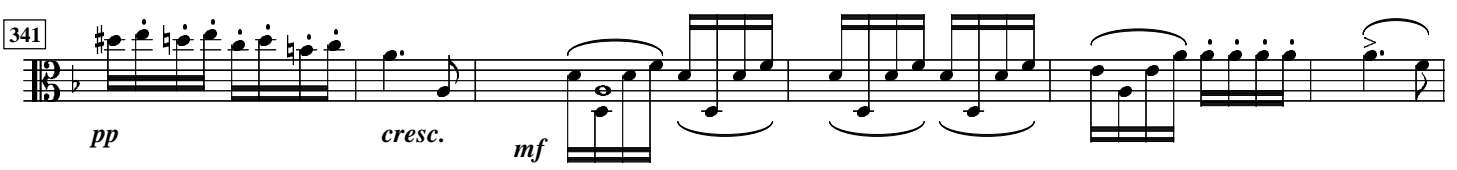
pp *cresc.*

329 

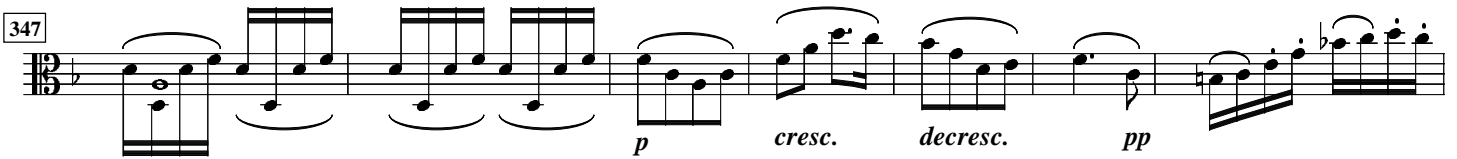
fz *mf* (ossia: play "a" on g-string as "drone") *(Allargando)*

335 

decresc.

341 

pp *cresc.* *mf*

347 

p *cresc.* *decresc.* *pp*

354 Q

p

361

369 *(poco rit)* *(accel.)* *(Allegro)*

cresc. *mf*

374

decresc.

380

pp *p*

389

pp

398 *(molto rit)* *(poco accel.)*

(cresc.) *(decresc.)*

407 *(poco rit.)* *(poco rit.)* *(Allegretto)*

p

416

425

cresc. *pp* *cresc.* *decresc.*

435

cresc. *decresc.* *cresc.* *decr.*

445 *p* *decresc.* *cresc.* *decresc.*

455 *p* *pp* *cresc.*

464 *fz* *p* *pp* *p* *meno mosso* *S*

472 *pp* *cresc.* *decresc.* *cresc.* *decresc.*

478 *leggermente* *cresc.* *decresc.* *rit.*

485 *p* *pp* *cresc.* *f* *decresc.*

494 *p* *cresc.* *fp* *a tempo (allegro)* *T*

500 *cresc.* *f* *decr.*

506 *p* *f* *cresc.* *decresc.* *pp*

514 *cresc.* *f* *decresc.* *pp* *p* *cresc.*

523 *decresc.* *p* *(poco rit.)* *U* *(allargando)* *Pizz.*

531

539

547

poco rit. V *Arco* *(a tempo)*

mf

553

decresc.

559

pp *mf*

566

cresc. *decresc.* W *pp*

573

p

580

pp *(rubato)* *sf* *p*

589

rit. X *a tempo*

cresc. *mp*

594

decresc.

600

pp *p* *pp* *pp*

609 *(meno mosso)*

618 *poco rit. a tempo ritard. a tempo*

627

637 *cresc. decresc. pp cresc. decresc. p*

647 *cresc. decresc. mf cresc. f decr.*

657 *p cresc. decresc.*

666 *p pp*

674 *dim. ff p*