



# Returning Cycles: Contexts for the Interpretation of Schubert's Impromptus and Last Sonatas (California Studies in 19th-Century Music)

*Charles Fisk*

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This compelling investigation of the later music of Franz Schubert explores the rich terrain of Schubert's impromptus and last piano sonatas. Drawing on the relationships between these pieces and Schubert's *Winterreise* song cycle, his earlier "Der Wanderer," the closely related "Unfinished" Symphony, and his story of exile and homecoming, "My Dream," Charles Fisk explains how Schubert's view of his own life may well have shaped his music in the years shortly before his death.

Fisk's intimate portrayal of Schubert is based on evidence from the composer's own hand, both verbal (song texts and his written words) and musical (vocal and instrumental). Noting extraordinary aspects of tonality, structure, and gestural content, Fisk argues that through his music Schubert sought to alleviate his apparent sense of exile and his anticipation of early death. Fisk supports this view through close analyses of the cyclic connections within and between the works he explores, finding in them complex musical narratives that attempt to come to terms with mortality, alienation, hope, and desire.

Fisk's knowledge of Schubert's life and music, together with his astute and imaginative attention to musical detail, helps him achieve one of the most difficult goals in music criticism: to capture and verbalize the human content of instrumental music.



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