

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: **IMPROMPTU: FROM PUBLISHER'S
IMPULSE TO AN ESTABLISHED SMALL-
SCALE GENRE IN PIANO LITERATURE**

Margarita Glebov, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2009

Directed By: Professor Larissa Dedova, School of Music

The word 'impromptu' began to appear in music literature in the early 19th century, specifically as title for a relatively short composition written for solo piano. The first impromptus appear to have been named so by the publishers. However, the composers themselves soon embraced the title to indicate, for the most part, fairly short character pieces. Impromptus do not follow any specific structural pattern, although many are cast in ternary form. The formal design ranges from strict compound ternary in the early impromptus to through-composed and variation forms.

The peak of impromptu's popularity undoubtedly came during the middle and late 19th century. However, they are still being composed today, albeit much less frequently. Although there have been many variants of impromptus in relation to formal design and harmonic language over the years, the essence of impromptu remains the same: it is still a short character piece with a general feeling of spontaneity.

Overall, impromptus may be categorized into several different groups: some appear as part of a larger cycle, such as Dvorak's G minor Impromptu from his Piano Pieces, B. 110; many others use an element of an additional genre that enhances the character of the impromptu, such as Liszt's Valse-Impromptu and Antonio Bibalo's Tango Impromptu; yet another group consists of works based on opera themes, such as Liszt's *Impromptu Brillant sur des thèmes de Rossini et Spontini* and Czerny's *Impromptus et variations sur Oberon*, Op. 134.

My recording project includes well-known impromptus, such as Schubert's Op. 142 and the four by Chopin, as well as lesser known works that have not been performed or recorded often. There are four impromptus that have been recorded here for the first time, including those written by Leopold Godowsky, Antonio Bibalo, Altin Volaj, and Nikolay Mazhara. I personally requested the two last named composers to contribute impromptus to this project. My selection represents works by twenty composers and reflects the different types of impromptus that have been encountered through almost three hundred years of the genre's existence, from approximately 1817 (Voříšek) to 2008 (Volaj and Mazhara).

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By

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