musicology students whose labours they will have eased to the accolades they have already earned for this unprecedented project as a whole.

David Gramit
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Discs 27–31

From March 1823 to 1826, from 'Viola', D. 786 to 'Der Wandrer an den Mond', D. 870: this is a hugely rich swathe of song. It begins in the midst of the unhappiest period of Schubert's life, with the composer recovering from the first stage of syphilis at home; at age 26, he had to re-order his life, his priorities, his hopes for the future. Forced to see everything in an altered and darkened light, it is no wonder that he would be drawn to his friend Franz von Schober's allegorical ballad 'Viola' about a flower that hastens forth into love and life too soon, only to freeze to death. It is no wonder that he would gravitate to Schiller's pilgrim songs whose personae lament the rent tissue of life's happiness ('Pilgerweise', D. 789) or end in nihilistic despair ('Der Pilgrim', D. 794). It is no wonder that he sang swansongs about transfiguration in the wake of life's ending ('Auf dem Wasser zu singen', D. 774) and no wonder that he might have seen himself mirrored in Wilhelm Müller's suicidal miller lad in *Die schöne Müllerin*, D. 795. All of these songs were composed under the sign of death; if the words he wrapped in music were not his own, the choice of texts for music is never disinterested and certainly was not ever so for Schubert.

And yet, we see him in late 1823 and thereafter reconciling himself to an inalterable fate in a myriad of ways. His personae sing of the world's dissolution in the fires of creativity and death (his friend Johann Mayrhofer's 'Auflösung', D. 807), of savouring the beauty of the world before the heart and body break (Karl Lappe's 'Im Abendrot', D. 799, with its telling acknowledgements of doubt, lament and apprehension). 'Die junge Nonne', D. 828, bares a heart now at peace in the wake of a 'wild, mighty storm', and Friedrich Schlegel's 'Fülle der Liebe', D. 854, seems the summary in a nutshell of Schubert's own Pilgrim's Progress, with its youthful spirit awakened to suffering, its 'noble flames' and 'fatal wound', and its ultimate realization that his sorrow is a blessing. He now has an even deeper understanding of suffering outsiders doomed to death: for the last time, he returns in 1826 to the tragic figures of Mignon and the Harper from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* in order to clothe them in unforgettable music, and he finds his way to seven poems from the *Poetic Diary* of Ernst Schulze, a talented young poet suffering both from a frustrated erotic fixation on the Tychsen sisters in Göttingen (a tragic story from start to finish) and, eventually, the tuberculosis that killed him. A soul in torment with little or no hope of surcease peers out at us from these songs, although the immortal 'Im Frühling', D. 882; 'Über Wildemann', D. 884; and 'Lebensmut', D. 883 lie outside my purview, on disc 32.

Personal circumstances were, of course, not the only impetus to song composition; Schubert was always responsive to events in the book trade, and Schulze's well-deserved, if brief, poetic fame and the appearance of a complete edition of his works were surely factors. By the same token, the composer could hardly have failed to take note of the cottage industry in translations of Sir Walter Scott, and his seven songs from that writer's 'The Lady of the Lake' are testaments to his deep involvement in the literary culture of the day. That culture

included various home-grown poets, among them the ambitious, sycophantic Patriarch of Venice Johann Ladislaus Pyrker (Hungarian-born) – Schubert met him in Bad Gastein in the summer of 1825 – and the young, pushy Johann Gabriel Seidl; Johnson amusingly writes that Seidl 'climbs the greasy pole of Viennese literary life in determined fashion'. It was, as always with the best composers, a confluence of factors that led to the merger of poem and music, with the book trade, life's exigencies, his friends' reading tastes, and the musical matters on his mind at the time all playing their part.

The songs on these five discs include one song cycle, a variety of solo songs, and two fragments completed by Reinhard van Hoorickx – the Rückert song 'Die Wallfahrt', D. 778a, and the Schulze song 'O Quell, was strömst du rasch und wild', D. 874. There are also four part-songs with piano accompaniment ('Gebet', D. 815; 'Lied eines Kriegers', D. 822; 'Coronach', D. 836 and the quartet version of Mayrhofer's 'Gondelfahrer', D. 809), Johnson thus reminding us that 'lied' extends beyond the borders of solo song to encompass ensemble singing. There is even a choral work, 'Mondenschein', D. 875: song is both a private pleasure and a way to create a sociable world. Of the solo songs, there is not a dud or a 'lesser creation' in the lot, nor does Johnson strike a false note in the way he brings these important works to life in sound. It is as if he were channelling Schubert himself somehow (no thanks to the novel *Sleeping with Schubert*, whose protagonist does just that on a lower level of artistic endeavour by far). For example, Schubert's piano introductions say much before a single word is sung, and Johnson brings out every nuance of these multivalent passages, from the crystalline-clear, delicately plangent prelude to 'Viola', D. 786 (with Ann Murray at her best) to the mysterious, cavernous chords at the beginning of 'Lied "Die Mutter Erde"', D. 788, to the transcendent barcarolle of 'Auf dem Wasser zu singen', D. 774. Johnson is the only pianist I have ever heard who actually pays attention to the paired *crescendo* and *decrescendo* markings in almost every bar of the introduction to 'Auf dem Wasser zu singen'. And what he does with the advent of major mode at the end of each strophe and the interlude/postlude in major is sheer magic. Johnson, I would venture, took note of the metaphysical meanings of the key signature, in A♭ major throughout, despite the fact that much of the song *sounds* in the parallel minor mode achieved by a forest of flats and double-flats. Only at the end of each strophe is the last trace of melancholy at the thought of death vanquished, and we must repeat the process three times before the victory is complete.

Of the songs before *Die schöne Müllerin* (in Johnson's ordering), I want to single out for special praise the lucent soprano Geraldine McGreevy for the loveliest performance of 'Lachen und Weinen', D. 777, I have ever heard, a far cry from the cutesy-obnoxious, extroverted renditions one hears all too often. Neither pianist nor singer forgets for an instant the inwardness of this experience, the wonderment at emotional ambivalence. Why tears and laughter are so often mingled in any and everyone's experience of love should not be the stuff of ham-acted flirtatiousness but, sadly, it often is. Sir Thomas Allen, who I recently heard having what seemed to be a thoroughly good time as Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte*, has just the right heft and gravity in 'Der Pilgrim', D. 794, to suggest someone whose entire youth was given over to a spiritual quest that led nowhere; by song's end, an older and disillusioned persona gives up on all possibility of finding what he once sought. I will admit to a complete passion for this song, one of the greatest in the lied canon, its hymnlike strains unstoppable until the final passage. Despite the many beauties of this performance, I could wish that Sir

Thomas had made more of the twofold invocation of the chilling words 'And the There is never Here', capped off by soft and loud incarnations of the final chord in a manner Brahms would echo half a century later at the end of 'Denn es gehet', the first of the *Vier ernste Gesänge*. And Lynne Dawson makes the majestic ascent up the scale at the climax of 'Du bist die Ruh', D. 776 unforgettable. That this is extremely difficult to execute (and 'execute' is the *mot juste* for some performances of this song), especially given the 'fade-out' to softness in the wake of arrival at the peak, is something all singers know.

By far the largest composition on these five discs is Schubert's first Müller cycle, a watershed work by anyone's definition. In *Die schöne Müllerin*, Schubert tells the story of a young man – a poet-singer – destroyed by Eros, ending with the most tragic outcome possible. Perhaps the composition of this poetic monodrama was one way to face vicariously what despair could lead one to do and thereby save himself from it, although no dabbling in psychological speculation almost two centuries later can adequately suggest the mental agonies he must have endured. For this work, in which the recently invented genre of song cycle was for the first time elevated to the breadth and depth of symphony or opera, Schubert edited Müller's cycle, paring away the ironic Pirandello-esque 'Poet's Prologue' and 'Epilogue', as well as three poems from the body of the narrative. Johnson, wanting his listeners to know the complete poet's text in its final form and the earliest stages of its creation, has the incomparable Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau read aloud the five omitted poems, plus 'Ein ungereimtes Lied' (An unrhymed poem) from the original 1816–17 *Liederspiel* (song play) in which Müller played the role of the miller lad. A group of talented young people, including the artist Wilhelm Hensel, his sister Luise Hensel, the later historian Friedrich Förster, and Wilhelm Müller, met at the home of the Berlin councillor Friedrich von Stägemann; his wife Elisabeth had once possessed a pretty voice, and the inventor of the 'song play', Johann Friedrich Reichardt, was much taken with her. For their weekly revels, the young folk chose the popular poetic theme of a miller maid wooed by would-be lovers of different ages and occupations, among them, a *Junker* or landowner, a gardener, a miller's apprentice, and the archetypal bold hunter. Müller, in love with Luise Hensel, had to endure the disappointment of seeing the older poet Clemens Brentano head over heels about her as well (but she refused him). Upon his return from Italy, Müller went back to his poems for the Stägemann circle and both amplified and revised the work as a monodrama entirely in the miller lad's mind and voice.

Here, the singer is Ian Bostridge. I approached this CD with considerable trepidation when it first appeared, given the renditions by other performers that have long had a permanent place in my mind's ear. I have fond childhood memories of my father's tales about the time he heard Fritz Wunderlich sing this cycle in live performance; born too late, I could only hear it at second-hand, first on LP and then on CD, but even at this mechanical remove, it was, is, and will forever be wondrous. More recently, I had the experience of joining forces with the great baritone Sanford Sylvan and the pianist David Breitman during the Schubert bi-centennial year, when I gave pre-concert lectures before their performances of the two Müller-Schubert cycles. But I need not have worried; this too is a great performance, especially for the great gift of Johnson's playing. Would that Bostridge were still singing as he does on this recording: I have just heard a recent CD in which he tackles an array of Hugo Wolf's Mörike songs in a manner devoid of all sweetness, subtlety or lyricism. It is as if he did not trust the music to say what must be said without a thick impasto of melodramatic

overstatement (and this in Wolf, who dictates to the performer precisely what he wants!), while the hubris of Bostridge's claim to be single-handedly bringing Wolf to the public's attention is quite remarkable. But the singer was younger when he recorded *Die schöne Müllerin*, and I would imagine that he had the benefit of Graham Johnson's superlative understanding of Schubert to keep such tendencies to exaggeration in check.

There are too many felicities to point them all out, but a short catalogue of just a few can suffice to make clear the beauty of this performance. Johnson and Bostridge take 'Wohin?' ever so slightly slower than many performers, which brings out the song's reflective side. The limpidity of Johnson's piano-brook is a marvel, especially when the prevailing clarity gives way briefly to muffled mystery for the nixies who sing below the water's surface. In 'Halt!', I have never before heard the low bass semitone figures in the introduction sound quite so compact with mystery, the tiny detail fraught with prophecy. The three personae of 'Am Feierabend' constitute a peril for such as Bostridge, whose 'liebe Mädchen' hovers on the brink of parodistic sappiness and whose light voice can only approximate what one imagines is the miller's deeper, weightier, authoritative voice. But in 'Der Neugierige' Bostridge gets two of the most exquisite moments in all of song right: the lad's two invocations to the brook, 'O Bächlein meiner Liebe', displays of the transcendence a truly great composer can create with nothing more than the tonic pitch and the neighbour notes on each side (Mozart does something similar with the beginning of the Countess's act 3 aria, 'Dove sono' in *The Marriage of Figaro*). Bostridge treats the phrases as pure legato, unsullied by any mannerisms. A little later, with the opposition of 'Ja' and 'Nein', he gives in to his now unstoppable tendency to prink and fuss with each word, but the two crucial moments are just right. And Johnson perfectly captures a scenario we can almost see as well as hear in the introduction to 'Morgengruss'. Here, the lad mentally rehearses the first phrase of his serenade and then, sweetly impatient to get on with it, wraps up the matter with a cadential flourish in the piano and begins to sing. Johnson lingers every so slightly in the middle of this introductory playlet, prolonging minimally the hinge between rehearsal and cadence as if to tell of indecision, then without breaking goes on to conclude the introduction.

Strophic settings – and *Die schöne Müllerin* has many – are famously tricky. If there is no differentiation between the repeated strophes, boredom can set in rather quickly; if there is too much tinkering with difference, the enterprise can sound twitchy, the shape of the entire song torn asunder from within. Johnson has it just right in 'Tränenregen': he wants the delicate mood of the song not ripped to pieces by excessive fussing, and yet what he does with the turn to minor mode in the final section, especially the last phrase in the piano, is a marvel of muted melancholy. We hear the emergence at song's end of the sadness that was there all along, just below the surface, and Johnson makes us hear the relationship. And one is grateful beyond words for the refusal of extroverted heartiness in 'Mein'. How many times have we heard this song in hyper-exuberant mode? Johnson's and Bostridge's rejection of this all too common path allows us to take note of the doubt beneath the song's affirmations, doubt that will be confirmed all too soon. One might wish (dangerous words for Bostridge in his present incarnation) for a greater sense of urgency, panic, even a touch of hysteria, in 'Der Jäger', but the singer's bitter mockery of the miller maid in 'Eifersucht und Stolz' – that acidulous vocal 'slide' to tell of the maid's craned neck as she looks for the hunter – is actually quite good: drama to just the right degree. And his subtle distinction

between the lighter-voiced, consolatory brook and the suicidal miller lad in 'Der Müller und der Bach' is perfect.

Even those who think they know this cycle can learn from Johnson's profound readings of these songs. For example, Schubert rings bells for the dying – the 'Zügenglöcklein', or 'passing bells' rung in parish churches when a parishioner was dying, so that all who heard might pray for the person's soul – in several of his greatest songs, and 'Des Baches Wiegenlied' is one of them. Johnson makes the passing bell stand out from the rest of the texture, not in an obtrusive way but just enough for us to see the belfry in our minds. Bostridge was not old enough at the time he recorded this cycle to give the epiphanic moonrise in the final lines the deeper beauty one hears from other singers, but Johnson more than makes up for him. Shall we ever hear a 'dying away' postlude as beautiful as this one? I doubt it.

On disc 29, the highlights include Anthony Rolfe Johnson's exquisite performance of 'Abendstern', D. 806; Johnson's hair-raising rendition of the waves of pianistic sound engulfing the world in 'Auflösung', D. 807 (each wave seems to originate from somewhere near the foundations of the cosmos); and Marie McLaughlin's dark, eerie 'Gesang der Norna', D. 831. On disc 30, Johnson and McLaughlin actually take note of the fact that, in Sir Walter Scott, Ellen's first two songs are lullabies, and perform them with the requisite hushed understatement (one of many such rare occurrences of attention to details of context in the HSE), while the Scott trio, 'Coronach "Totengesang der Frauen und Mädchen"', D. 836 – a beautiful work one does not often have the opportunity to hear – is wonderfully sung by Patricia Rozario, Lorna Anderson and Catherine Wyn-Rogers. Matthias Goerne's dark-hued voice lends Schubert's 'Fülle der Liebe', D. 854, a gravity entirely appropriate to an extraordinary song. In the original Hyperion edition, Peter Schreier and Johnson performed an 'assembled' cycle of Schulze songs that Johnson entitled *Auf den wilden Wegen* after a phrase from 'Auf der Bruck "Auf der Brücke"'; here, given the different ordering imperative, the songs are disassembled back to their status as individual works. On disc 31, Peter Schreier sings 'An mein Herz', D. 860 and 'Der liebliche Stern', D. 861, songs in which Schubert took note of the poet's self-diagnoses of his own mental distress and accordingly transformed obsession into form and figure. Richard Jackson makes declamation as expressive as his singing (elsewhere in these discs) for the single melodrama in all of Schubert's songs, the 'Abschied von der Erde', D. 829. Christine Schäfer's Mignon is both waif-like and possessed somehow of preternatural wisdom; my only complaint is that I have the sound of the incomparable Anthony Rolfe Johnson and Ann Murray singing the B minor duet version of 'Mignon und der Harfner', D. 877/1 from an earlier CD with Johnson accompanying, and it will be a long time, if ever, before any other performance supersedes that one in my estimation.

What an enterprise this was/is and how grateful we should all be for this panoramic sweep through Schubert's mammoth song *oeuvre*, the pianist mimicking the composer's own work-ethic in the production of these 40 discs. I certainly feel like a three-toed sloth of idleness in comparison with such industry. But it is quality more than quantity that rules here and a depth of understanding that is both humbling and exhilarating. In these discs, one is led by the hand through an entire kingdom of Shakespearean profundity, with a vast variety of personae. Here is the Titanic record *toute entière* of a probing mind's investigation

into every aspect of musical composition, and Johnson follows him along every highway and byway of the journey. It is a stunning achievement.

Susan Youens
University of Notre Dame

Discs 32–34

An image of Schubert was on my mind six years ago when I first encountered W.H. Auden's poem entitled 'The Composer', a portrait of an exemplary musician, an ideal figure based on no single historical life but composed of impressions gleaned from many. In it Auden imagines the composer as unique, a figure whose 'song is an absolute gift'. I thought of Schubert: 'Pour out your presence … O imaginary song. You, alone … are unable to say an existence is wrong … pour out your forgiveness like wine.'[1]

In the Hyperion recordings (discs 32 to 34), Schubert offers important lessons as to how a composer should conduct himself. The standards he sets are hard and high, but they are the basis for the attainment of durable distinction in any life or art: honesty, courage and what T.S. Eliot called 'A condition of complete simplicity/(Costing not less than everything)'.[2]

Schubert's honesty, for example, is evident in his choice of Seidl's 'Sehnsucht' (disc 32; track 3), where he has set the following words: 'For many a day I have suffered because no song of mine has turned out well, because none can be forced to murmur freely, like the west wind'. His courage is evident in his embrace of solitude, both personal and intellectual when writing *Winterreise* (1827), one of the great masterworks of the vocal literature. This was at once an account of, a rejection of and a portrait of a typical figure who succumbed. In Schubert's setting there is a personal intensity, a sense that much is at stake, a recognition of his fate when he addresses the hurdy-gurdy player: 'Strange old man, shall I go with you? Will you turn your hurdy-gurdy to my songs?' (Disk 34, track 17)

In this recording (discs 33 and 34) the artistry of Matthias Goerne and Graham Johnson is extraordinary. Both musicians are in complete command of the performance, where a restrained approach to the text pays dividends in an affecting but never affected presentation of these songs. Goerne's perfectly even voice announces the beginning of an odyssey, where the portrayal of frozen feelings in 'Gefrorne Tränen' (disc 33; track 3) is mesmerizing. Such feelings return in 'Erstarrung' (disc 33; track 4) only for the wanderer to become again as dead, bordering almost on the catatonic. In a highly expressive interpretation of 'Der Lindenbaum' (disc 34; track 17) the dramatic aspect of the song is increased by the singer's highly controlled manner – a magisterial command which increases the intensity rather than obstructs it. Indeed in the *forte* repetitions of 'Wasserflut' (disc 33; track 6) Schubert comments on such restraint: 'And the soft snow melts away' (stanza 2); 'there will be my sweetheart's house' (fourth strophe). 'Auf dem Flusse' (disc 33; track 7) is an intellectual performance, cerebral in the best sense; indeed, this wanderer becomes a lost figure of man – the more so because of his intellectual capacity. Like Goethe's *Werther*, his tragic plight is augmented by his brilliance, and a similar sense of lost possibililties haunts us through this

[1] W. H. Auden, *Collected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson (New York: The Modern Library, 2007), p. 181.

[2] T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, no. 4, 'Little Gidding'.

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