PART THREE

The nineteenth century: issues of style and development

Published online by Cambridge University Press
Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

Published online by Cambridge University Press
Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

4 The Lieder of Schubert

MARIE-AGNES DITTRICH

Was the German Lied, as so often has been claimed, born on 19 October 1814 with the composition of *Gretchen am Spinnrade*? Did Schubert (1797–1828) – known not so much for composing as he was for a kind of channeling while in "a state of clairvoyance or somnambulism, without any conscious action," as his close friend the singer Johann Michael Vogl once observed – achieve on that day a "breakthrough in the principle of the Romantic art song"?[1] Did he create the Lied, the most important new musical genre of his century, out of a vacuum, without models and other inspirational sources save that of Goethe's "musical poet's genius"?[2] Is it true, as George Grove insisted as long ago as 1883, that Schubert had only to "read the poem, and the appropriate tune, married to immortal verse (a marriage, in his case, truly made in heaven), rushed into his mind, and to the end of his pen"?[3] Or is there nothing new under the sun: are there models and historical antecedents even for Schubert's songs?

In setting Goethe's famous poem "Gretchen am Spinnrade," the new, according to many critics, is the celebrated accompaniment that imitates the whirling motion of the spinning wheel and the foot treadle of the spinner, all of which succeeds in placing the listener in the middle of a highly realistic albeit imagined scene. But of course, the accomplishment is not as innovative as many have insisted. The *Spinnerliedchen* from the winter episode of Haydn's oratorio *The Seasons* (1801) exploits the very same means. Like Haydn, Schubert was guided by an established *topos*, or "topic" – one of numerous characteristic musical figures associated with various moods, scenes, and situations long familiar to Western Europe.[4] What is new in *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, rather, is Schubert's exploitation of the song's means: his polyrhythmic combining of an accompaniment and a quite differently structured vocal line. How felicitously he solves the compositional problem posed by the opening words "Meine Ruh ist hin" by illustrating the single word "Ruh," or peace, with a long note in opposition to the restlessness of the entire line: "My peace is gone, my heart is heavy." Then, there is the way Schubert configures Gretchen's vocal line so as to ascend in tandem with the mounting agitation of Goethe's poem; how long he withholds harmonic resolution in order to stretch the tension. Also, there is the young girl's struggle for breath and the way the spinning wheel comes to a shattering standstill and is started again only with great effort.

Published online by Cambridge University Press
Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

Finally, there is Schubert's daring to better Goethe by intensifying a barely disguised rondo form. Yet again, Gretchen repeats the words "Meine Ruh ist hin, mein Herz ist schwer," a repetition that succeeds in emphasizing the oppressed mood to which she seems destined to remain captive, not just to the end but beyond the song's limits. Schubert could create something fundamentally new precisely because he worked at a time when composers could count on listeners holding certain expectations. And because they recognized the spinning song as a *topos*, the song's extraordinary features cannot have escaped them.

In truth, the modern aspect of many a Schubert Lied is the unexpected handling of the well-known, one that affords the observer a choice: either to discover the unexpected or to recognize the known. For Schubert's contemporaries, both were easier than they are for us today, since songs of all sorts were used to accompany life's routine. One sang in the kitchen, in the spinning-room, in the field, while dragging or rowing; one sang in church, walking in the woods, dancing on holiday; and one sang at home to entertain friends, at banquets to praise brave deeds, at bedsides to comfort children. Wherever one turned, familiar sounds were to be encountered: the church liturgy of common and feast days, the fanfares and marches of wind bands, traditional dances in the country and new ones in the city, serenades from beneath the windows of pretty maidens, the hurdy-gurdy of beggars. Then, there was the musicality of the seeming natural world (not to mention the real world of babbling brooks or breezes rustling through trees), where church bells announced masses, weddings, and, with monotonous clang, funerals. One knew the posthorn signal and recognized hunting horns from afar. Attending the theater or a concert, or hearing a neighbor's child practice the piano through an open window, such sonic fallout made up part of the fabric of daily existence. Schubert listened to all of this and more and reflected it in song in sometimes obvious, sometimes subtly stylized form.

Schubert once wrote that, in the way he accompanied Vogl, his audience perceived something "new and unheard of" – namely, how in the moment of performance they seemed "as one."[5] In contrast to the keyboard treatment in most eighteenth-century Lieder, Schubert's piano parts typically are no longer structured as a simple, subordinated supplement to a more important vocal line; the piano has at least become its equal and sometimes more than that, for frequently it sets the tone for an entire Lied. This could encompass the rapid motion of the trout in the brook in *Die Forelle*; the rocking of the boat in *Gondelfahrer* or *Des Fischers Liebesglück*; the rattling chains of the dogs in *Im Dorfe* (*Winterreise*, No. 17); the serenade of the guitar or mandolin in *Ständchen* (*Schwanengesang*, No. 4); or the blowing of the wind in *Herbst*. But the keyboard part is not merely background music or sound

Published online by Cambridge University Press
Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

painting: it symbolizes the poetic self. Therefore, the flowing sixteenth- or eighth-note motion of the brook in *Die schöne Müllerin* stands in for merriment (as in No. 1), gentleness (No. 4), or agitation (No. 5), thereby reflecting and commenting on the protagonist's ever-shifting feelings. And when in the sixth song he voices the crucial question, whether his love is returned, the brook falls silent. Similarly, the wanderer in *Winterreise* (No. 13) no longer hears the posthorn when he realizes that, for him, there will be no letter. A suggestion, as it were, of impressionism produced by a diminished seventh chord in *Die Stadt* (*Schwanengesang*, No. 11) is not merely to depict water rippled by the wind, but to indicate the unsettled yearning for unnamed, lost happiness. The repetition of tones in *Die liebe Farbe* (*Die schöne Müllerin*, No. 16) reminds one of a death knell, and yet it does not imitate the "real" sound of a bell as much as it symbolizes the endless mourning of the despairing lover. It is idle to argue whether the celebrated piano part in *Erlkönig* should portray the galloping of a horse. Schubert realized in all these cases a symbolism which Goethe – although he detested all tone-painting – would have allowed: "to imitate thunder with music is not artful, but the composer who gives me the feeling I would get when I heard thunder would be highly admired."[6]

Many walking songs, with their regular beat, express not only a physical motion but also indicate a path through life in the sense of a personal destiny. One cannot actually walk to the tempo of the first song in *Die schöne Müllerin* – even though it is entitled *Das Wandern* (Wandering) – since the eighth notes are too fast and the quarters too slow. Yet the song's speed seems not illogical. And in *Winterreise* one perceives, after the walking pace established at the beginning in *Gute Nacht*, that the slower tempo of the last song expresses the protagonist's weariness with life, or, perhaps more accurately, that life has beaten him down. The sarabande of *Die Nebensonnen* (No. 23) shows his step dragging, and the repeated dactyls of *Das Wirtshaus* (No. 21), marked "Sehr langsam," plainly suggest the rhythm of a funeral march. Goethe's mysterious Mignon walks a similar trail through life. Several of her songs put one in mind of the pavan or *Totentanz*, which in Schubert's hands generally points toward an inexorable fate. Such destiny speaks as well from the music of *Der Tod und das Mädchen*, and Nos. 18 and 20 from *Die schöne Müllerin*, *Trock'ne Blumen* and *Des Baches Wiegenlied*. Other songs exploiting a rhythmic ostinato in similar fashion include *Suleika I* (D720), *Abendstern*, *Fülle der Liebe*, and *Der Zwerg*. In a number of other Lieder evenly measured chords together with solemn texts evoke variously prayers or hymns, as in *Hoffnung* (D295), *Pax vobiscum*, *Heliopolis I* (D753), *Der Pilgrim*, and *Der Kreuzzug*.

Quite different are familiar rhythms occurring in an unusual context to produce an effect of alienation. Thus, the waltz, a popular dance in

Published online by Cambridge University Press
Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

Schubert's Vienna, commonly symbolized free and uncomplicated mirth. (Hearing others speak of a *Trauerwalzer*, or "Mourning Waltz," Schubert is said to have asked, "what donkey composed a Trauerwalzer?," unaware that his own *Waltz in A flat* [D365, No. 2] had been given that title.) But Schubert's *Der Atlas* (*Schwanengesang*, No. 8) presents the listener with a waltz rhythm in a surprisingly deep range to characterize ironically the unfortunate Titan's words, "proud heart, you have so desired it, you wished to be happy." In *Erlkönig*, at the words "du liebes Kind, komm, geh' mit mir" (you dear child, come, go with me), a ghostly waltz in far too fast a tempo makes the enticement of the Erlkönig seem especially sinister. Another popular dance of Schubert's day, the *Ländler*, appears markedly slower than customary in *Du liebst mich nicht*, yet another song that treats, as its title makes clear, unreturned love. Together with the exaggerated dance tempo, nothing in life, not even, as is revealed in the poem's last line, rose blooms, jasmine, and narcissus, mean anything if love is not reciprocated.[7]

When the piano part closely matches the vocal line, the result seems to be that the text is bolstered by a kind of empathetic unanimity. Thus, in *Ständchen* not only the voice but also the piano seems to plead "Liebchen, komm zu mir" – darling, come to me. *An die Musik* features a piano part that anticipates the pitches repeated by the voice: "Du holde Kunst" (you lovely art). Elsewhere, the piano is capable of placing the poetic self in an unexpected light. An independent keyboard part is used to good purpose in *Kriegers Ahnung* (Warrior's Premonition, *Schwanengesang*, No. 2) where the singer begins with a rhythm contrasting with the piano's initial statement, thus heightening the loneliness of the soldier amid sleeping comrades. In *Aufenthalt* (Resting Place, *Schwanengesang*, No. 5), a contradiction between the vocal and instrumental accompaniment proclaims a conflict between the protagonist and the world around him. Similarly, once the wayfarer of *Winterreise* reaches the village in *Im Dorfe*, the voice and piano map out separate worlds and in so doing point up the fact that the central character, although other people physically surround him, has reached a point where contact with others is impossible.

In many instances contradiction or skepticism is manifest in the accompaniment as it turns toward minor and thereby reveals the vocal line's major key to be deceptive, as in *Mut* (*Winterreise*, No. 22) and *Tränenregen* (*Die schöne Müllerin*, No. 10). Also, Schubert knew how effective it could be to silence the piano and leave the singer alone. Appropriately enough for a song given over to solitude, the piano, in *Einsamkeit*, as if struck dumb, at length abandons the singer to express the terrors of war. Commenting on the picture named in *Ihr Bild* (*Schwanengesang*, No. 9), the piano doubles the vocal line in octaves to bestow upon the latter a singularly frightening and hollow timbre: the poetic persona stands alone. At the moment the

Published online by Cambridge University Press
Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

text specifies that the picture "stealthily began to come alive," accompanying chords begin anew. Similarly, in *Der Doppelgänger* (*Schwanengesang*, No. 13) spooky two-note chords are filled out with fuller harmonies at the mention of the beloved.

Melodic and harmonic conventions in songs of Schubert's time gave rise to expectations on the part of listeners. The familiar association of major and minor with the affects of joy and sadness, respectively, emerged in the sixteenth century to solidify as convention well before Schubert's time. Consequently, Schubert used these modes accordingly in the Rückert song *Lachen und Weinen*. The daily bread of composers in the Classical and Romantic eras was a reliance on the association of higher and lower chords and keys within the circle of fifths with brightness or height, on the one hand, and depth, darkness or death, on the other. In Schubert's early song *Der Taucher*, E major expresses heavenly light while in the low range of C♭ major one finds an "infernal space." The words "todesschwangere Frieden" (death-prophesying peace) in *Fahrt zum Hades* (Journey to Hades) occur in D♭ minor. The vocal line in *Ganymed* ascends as the youth is carried on high; in *Nachthymne* the protagonist looks down from a great height, both in terms of pitch and of the circle of fifths, when B major is reached.

Schubert could, if he chose, exploit high and low sonorities, keys, and major and minor modes contrary to the above-mentioned conventions, as he does repeatedly in *Winterreise*, where departures from the norm generate powerful effects. *Letzte Hoffnung* (Last Hope), No. 16, is in E♭ major, but the tonic chord is withheld and therefore all the more poignantly emphasized when the character reveals that he falls to the ground in order to "weep on the grave of my hopes." In *Mut*, No. 22, one hears the words "merrily into the world" at first in G major, but then, like a slip of the tongue, in G minor as if to reveal, unintentionally, the wanderer's true feelings. Many a Schubert song presents death as a redeeming Savior, the result being a negation of the conventional association of death and the minor mode. The word "darkness," in *Die Nebensonnen*, from the line "in darkness I shall feel better," is lit up by an arresting C♯ major chord. In *Nachthymne*, words that express yearning for death are in major, and yet this seemingly positive expression is denied by the *Totentanz* rhythm and the pianissimo dynamic marking.

Cadences, which allow for the release of melodic and harmonic tension, are perhaps the most self-evident component of tonal music, and consequently, Schubert inserts them strategically to punctuate the musico-dramatic content of his songs. A tonic chord in *Erlkönig* abruptly terminates (mm. 129–31) a chromatic passage that earlier flowed unimpeded into other keys (mm. 77ff., mm. 102ff.). This sudden end marks the death of the child well before the narrator can utter the decisive word "tot"

Published online by Cambridge University Press
Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

(m. 147). The co-creating listener thus gains prescience. Similarly, the tension of dominant chords in *Letzte Hoffnung* generates unrealistic hope that a leaf will not fall: later the falling fifth (dominant to minor tonic, m. 20) signals falling leaves and the cessation of hope. In *Ellens Gesang III* (D839) an unresolved dominant harmony lends the entreaties of the girl, "Oh mother, hear a pleading child," unusual intensity. Not before the invocation "Ave Maria" is a resolution reached to announce, through harmonic stability, the security she longs for. Indeed, Schubert can be quite economical with this simple device to express peace or death. In *Des Baches Wiegenlied* (*Die schöne Müllerin*, No. 20), the resolution of the leading tone D♯ to E is delayed to occur only once, at the very end of the vocal line (m. 20). *Der Tod und das Mädchen* shows Schubert tellingly avoiding the leading tone in the stanza sung by Death. *Nachthymne* ends with a plagal instead of the usual authentic cadence with leading tone; and in *Auflösung* a dominant seventh moves irregularly, not downwards but upwards as if to imply that the gravitational pull of such a sonority is negated – a fitting way to satisfy the song's title: Release. At the end of *Ständchen* the singer remains on the third of a chord as if questioning, although the piano postlude appears to promise a happy ending in the major mode. In *Du bist die Ruh* and in *Frühlingssehnsucht* (*Schwanengesang*, No. 3) the voice ends on the fifth of a chord. This note, in both cases, is initially the root of the dominant harmony, and thus a sign of incompletion, of anticipation – according to the poem – of hope. Transformed in the following measure into the fifth of the major (tonic chord), tension and any lingering doubt happily are released. This felicitous ending is not to be had following the last open fifth (between bass and voice) at the end of *Winterreise* in the song *Der Leiermann*: it closes on a minor chord.

Schubert's harmonic audaciousness was not lost on his contemporaries, a point perhaps in need of being emphasized given that today's listeners likely have been habituated to associate such boldness to too large a degree with the later nineteenth and much of the twentieth century (Liszt, Wagner, Mahler, Strauss, Schoenberg, and others). The critic for the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, in 1827, focusing on the first two Lieder of the composer's Op. 59 – *Du liebst mich nicht* and *Dass sie hier gewesen* – observed:

> Herr Schubert is far-fetched and artificial to an excessive degree – not in melody, but in harmony. In particular he modulates so oddly and so unexpectedly to the most remote regions as no composer on earth has done, at any rate in songs and other small vocal pieces . . . But equally true is the fact that . . . he does not seek in vain, that he really conjures up something, which, if performed with complete assurance and ease, truly speaks, and communicates something substantial, to the imagination and sensibility. Let us therefore try ourselves on them, and them on us![8]

Published online by Cambridge University Press
Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

In many of his songs, Schubert handles not only harmony in unexpected ways, but also form, a point that can only be appreciated if one understands what constitutes the norm. During his day, the word "Lied" invariably implied a strophic song in which deliberate simplicity – both textual and musical – guaranteed tuneful primacy. In support of this, the text's regular meter is matched by the music's symmetrical form, almost always major-key harmonies, and, if accompanied at all, is done so with a minimum of fuss. "As unmusical as possible" is how the Swiss composer, critic, and music publisher Hans Georg Nägeli, in 1826, described such a song, an opinion still held by many today.[9] Goethe nonetheless cherished this approach to song composition and not out of narrow-mindedness or because he was unmusical – as sometimes is still ingenuously suggested – but rather because he fully appreciated the inherently musical qualities of poetry. Accordingly, music's purpose is but to flesh out the sovereignty of a poet's words. Such a text-dominated sensibility, along with the performance tradition of these only apparently simple Lieder, would appear to be largely forgotten and poorly comprehended today.[10] Schubert himself demonstrated not only an understanding but also an appreciation of such Lieder throughout his career.

His celebrated 1815 *Heidenröslein* neatly corresponds, if not entirely, to the simple-strophic plan. Unlike Brahms's easy-going setting, Schubert's emphasizes the unusual word "morgenschön" (beautiful as the morning) by means of an unexpected note in the melody (c♯ instead of the expected c♮). Other, longer, descriptive or dramatic texts were in Schubert's day often not set strophically, but through-composed. Inspired in part by opera, composers freely mixed different styles, alternating recitative or arioso with song-like passages. The keyboard parts in these lengthier compositions also were more varied: besides clear-cut chordal accompaniments, there were passages of tone painting and virtuoso display. Reflecting this generic freedom, such works might be labeled *Gesänge*, *Balladen*, or *Kantaten* rather than Lieder. Schubert's *Erlkönig*, in fact, was called a cantata in a review in 1826.[11] According to his friend Josef von Spaun, as a youth Schubert would indulge himself for days in the dramatic ballads of Zumsteeg.[12] Presumably, he was fascinated not only by Zumsteeg's expressive music but also by the exciting and often sinister, blood-soaked texts to which the composer was drawn. Friedrich Schiller, a friend of Zumsteeg, was the author of many of these sensational ballads; a one-time medical student, Schiller perhaps was too deeply intrigued by dissections – or so some literary critics have speculated.[13] Moreover, Schubert was stirred by the operas of his day; one of his favorites was Luigi Cherubini's gloomy *Médée* (1797). It therefore is not surprising that some of Schubert's early works bear titles like *Leichenfantasie* (Corpse Fantasy), *Thekla, eine Geisterstimme* (Thekla, the Voice of a Ghost),

Published online by Cambridge University Press
Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

Der Vatermörder (Father's Murderer), *Totengräberlied* (The Grave-Diggers' Song), *Der Geistertanz* (Ghosts' Dance, D15, D15A, and D116), and *Die Schatten* (The Shadows).

Many of Schubert's early works respect the traditional distinction separating lengthy, dramatic *Gesänge* from short, lyrical songs. When exceptions occur, they almost always point toward the desire for bold effects. Later he experimented with numerous hybrids of both kinds of songs until around 1816 when he created a synthesis that combined the uniformity of strophic songs with the expressiveness of ballads. It is worth noting that while almost always admired now, Schubert's achievement disturbed critics of his day, some of whom were put off by the lack of generic tidiness. Thus in 1824, a critic for the AmZ, reviewing this time the four songs published as Op. 23 – *Die Liebe hat gelogen*, *Selige Welt*, *Schwanengesang*, and *Schatzgräbers Begehr* – wrote that Schubert "does not write songs, properly speaking, and has no wish to do so . . . but free vocal pieces, some so free that they might possibly be called caprices or fantasies." Although he "invariably succeeds in mapping out the whole and each detail in accordance with the poetic idea," in "the execution he frequently is less successful, seeking to make up for the want of inner unity, order and regularity by eccentricities and wild goings-on which are hardly or not at all justified."[14]

The inclusion of recitative passages in some of Schubert's early songs doubtless may be traced not only to Zumsteeg but also, in one instance, perhaps to Mozart – his *Die ihr des unermesslichen Weltalls Schöpfer ehrt*, K619 – and Beethoven, at the start of his *Seufzer eines Ungeliebten*, WoO 118.[15] The traditional use of recitative generally signals the arrival of a new situation or of comparatively stronger emotions and, as such, makes possible a contrast in affect. Many such recitative passages alternate with arioso moments of reflection. Even Schubert, to begin with, used them this way, as may be observed in *Hagars Klage*, his first preserved song from 1811, but also as late as 1817, in the Ossian-setting of *Die Nacht*. Already in the fall of 1815 with *Erlkönig*, Schubert used the traditional recitative in a new way in order to gain a singular result. At the end of this Lied, it seems, the storyteller's voice fails as if moved by the tragic situation, a strategy that draws in and actively involves the listener in the moment of dramatic climax. Vivid expression is communicated by other means, too. In a song such as Schubert's *Am Meer* (*Schwanengesang*, No. 12), one hears the piano tremolo – a device surely copied from orchestral music – which allows the composer to comment on the demonic love at the heart of Heine's poem. Tremolos again are encountered in the many settings Schubert made of Goethe's *Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt* at the words "Es schwindelt mir, es brennt mein Eingeweide" (I am dizzy, my innermost organs burn). Felicitous although such word painting now seems, Goethe would not have approved.

Published online by Cambridge University Press
Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

He criticized even Beethoven, whom he otherwise admired, for a setting because its operatic style did not suit Mignon's character.[16] In Schubert's later Lieder, recitative-like elements almost imperceptibly fuse with the lyrical, and despite the unmistakable contrast that ensues a high degree of uniformity is achieved. In the Mignon song *Heiß mich nicht reden* (D877, No. 2) the declamation is free with recitative-like inflection at the words "allein ein Schwur drückt mir die Lippen zu" (but an oath seals my lips); nevertheless, the preceding pavan rhythm, a symbol of inevitability, remains perceptible: despite her emotional outburst, Mignon is bound to her fate. Likewise, the recitative style emerges at the words "es schrien die Raben vom Dach" (the ravens shrieked from the roof) in *Frühlingstraum* (*Winterreise*, No. 11), even if, at the same time, it recalls the dotted rhythm of "merry bird calls" heard at the song's start. A declamatory recitative dominates throughout the Heine songs *Die Stadt* and *Der Doppelgänger* (*Schwanengesang*, Nos. 11 and 13). *Ihr Bild* shows a recitative-like melody with an accompaniment reduced to the barest minimum, at the time a completely new idea, and one that decisively influenced Hugo Wolf.[17]

Schubert is justly famous for his sudden major–minor changes, the juxtaposition of chords a third apart, and chromaticism. Many of the harmonies in his Lieder are so strongly wrought that they would find themselves completely at home within the realm of opera. In the songs, their effect is perhaps even more striking, since Schubert frequently relies on forceful harmonies in the context of Lieder cast according to varied strophic design. Whoever actively listens to *So laßt mich scheinen*, (D877, No. 3), another Goethe Mignon song, will be overwhelmed by the sudden shift in m. 38 from F♯ major to D minor at the word "Schmerz" (pain), because what is expected is the surprise of D major, heard in the second stanza (m. 18). Just as gripping is the often-cited switch from D major to B♭ major at the words *gegen Wind und Wetter* (mm. 51–55) in *Mut (Winterreise*, No. 22): the latter key is quite unexpected, since, at the words "against wind and weather," the listener anticipates D major or G major. At the phrase "even if my heart is split," in *Fülle der Liebe*, a wrenching from A♭ major to E minor (actually F♭ minor) takes place precisely at the word "zerspalten" (split). In this case, nothing has prepared the listener for such an unusual conjunction of harmonies.

Even more shocking for listeners during Schubert's day would have been the shifts between chords a half step apart. Such chromatic sideslipping appears already in his longer, earliest songs, as if Schiller's Sturm und Drang texts had provoked the composer to the edge of a harmonic precipice. In other words, Schiller's dramatic style might well be recognized as an influence on the development of Schubert's song, as was Goethe's poetry. (The numbers alone are compelling: after Schubert's seventy-four Goethe settings, his friend Mayrhofer follows with forty-seven, and Schiller next with

Published online by Cambridge University Press
Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

forty-four.) Already in the previously mentioned *Leichenfantasie* Schubert risked highly irregular chromatic progressions and deliberately so, because the text reads "königlich wider die Zügel sich bäumen" (royally rearing up against the reins). Comparable is the connection between two chords in second inversion, F major and F♯ minor, in *Der Kampf* (The Struggle), a setting of another Schiller poem, at the words "und laß mich sündigen" (and let me sin). *Gruppe aus dem Tartarus* (D583) might reasonably be considered a study in chromaticism. Climaxing in a portrayal of the eternal torment of the damned, the poem reads in translation: "eternity circles above them, breaks in two the scythe of Saturn" (the guardian of time). The splintering of the scythe is depicted by a harmonic rupture midway through the strophe: it begins in C major but ends in D♭ major; at the word "bricht" (breaks) the two keys seem to collide. In the repeat, the vocal line doubles at the octave the conventional bass notes of a cadence in the piano: an ascending fourth followed by a falling fifth. Every listener in Schubert's time would have expected the pitches g♯/c♯ after the initial c♯/f♯. However, Schubert's cadence moves from c♯ to c♮. In the *Petrarca-Sonett*, G♭ major is abruptly confronted by G minor at the moment the poetic self discovers it will never escape the god of love. A tone in common, namely B♭, is initially the third of G♭ major but then suddenly of G minor. Thus, the foundation beneath the melodic line shifts, thereby powerfully suggesting that those chased by the deity will find the very ground snatched from beneath them. *In der Ferne* (*Schwanengesang*, No. 6) includes a jerking downwards from B minor to B♭ major in the middle of a musical phrase (mm. 17–18), at the words "Mutterhaus hassenden" (hating the mother's home), a provocation in the view of the AmZ critic, who went so far as to voice the fear that musical anarchy was but around the corner.[18] While Schubert clearly engages with and otherwise acknowledges his relationship to the traditions of German song in many other ways, in these and other bold uses of harmony he seems indebted to no one.

The composer's later songs reveal, as Paul Mies pointed out three quarters of a century ago, a tendency toward formal simplification.[19] But in rhythm, melody, texture, and harmony, as has been seen, Schubert's Lieder oftentimes are anything but simple. Thus a conflict arises between the sophistication otherwise apparent in terms of musical content and simplicity of form, one that accounts for many a strong effect.[20] Truly simple strophic songs, earlier the standard, with easily sung vocal lines, straightforward major harmonies, rhythms, and forms, are but one of many possibilities in the late works. In an otherwise complex context, simplicity can take on special meaning. In *Winterreise*, where songs are formally very different and musically multi-layered, simple stanzas sometimes symbolize tranquillity that eventually will be shown to be false. Thus Schubert's music is at odds with the words "But I

Published online by Cambridge University Press Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

have done nothing, that I should shy away from people," in *Wegweiser* (The Signpost, No. 20). The unassuming vocal line, supported by the keyboard's consoling and folk-like parallel thirds and sixths and the timeworn half cadence (mm. 25 and 39), holds out the promise of hope, yet it is cruelly crushed. Other moments of apparent solace similarly reveal themselves to be deceptive, as in the preceding No. 19, *Täuschung*, where "ein Licht tanzt freundlich vor mir her" (a light dances welcomingly before me) proves, as the title has already given away, an illusion, just as does the dream of spring in No. 11, *Frühlingstraum*, in the midst of winter. *Totengräber-Weise* (Grave-Digger's Air) illustrates how the strophic form is not always disclosed at the outset but rather emerges gradually after a complicated start. Simplicity, no longer something to be taken for granted, ensues only with effort and sometimes struggle and so takes on added meaning, symbolizing the end of conflict in the release of death.

Heine's poem "Der Doppelgänger" tells of a man standing before a house where his beloved once lived and which she left "long ago." The compositional process of Schubert's Lied recalls the "long ago" quite literally given that it harks back to the seventeenth-century chaconne with its ever-repeating bass progression of four bars, triple meter, and minor mode. Such a combination also appears at the words "Agnus Dei" in the E♭ Major Mass (D950). In the event, years earlier Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber (1644–1704) had used this very ostinato in masses.[21] A strange song by just about any criteria, it owes its expressive power in part to the way in which the "long ago" continues to haunt the protagonist. The vocal line's fractured and faltering character marvelously matches his disquieting turn of mind, an uneasiness at first difficult to pinpoint precisely. Yet the frequently stated F♯s, while they initially put one in mind of old-fashioned psalmody, grow increasingly ominous, for the note moves throughout the Lied almost like a modern-day stalker. Not only does the vocal line appear fixated by the F♯s, but the piano part is equally obsessed – the harmonies it provides, while richly varied, almost always contain the note. At the same time, the singer's phrases are oddly out of kilter with the piano's insistent, regular rhythms: only when the protagonist recognizes that the ghostly double named in the song's title is his own image (mm. 39–41) can the 3/4 meter in turn be recognized in the vocal line.[22] When this happens at the word "Gestalt," it has been claimed that Schubert struck as many keys on the piano as he could reach with his hands before releasing all but the pitches notated in the score: these he held into the next measure (m. 42).[23] As if such terror is empowered to rend asunder everything it touches, the chaconne is interrupted. But, without abandoning the central pitch of F♯, as frequently is the case with Schubert when he wishes to depict terror, a chromatic ascent begins in the accompaniment and thereafter cadences on D♯ minor (m. 47). The tonality

Published online by Cambridge University Press Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

was recognized by theorists of the day for its ability to suggest "the affect of anxiety, of the deepest mental distress, of brooding despair, of the blackest melancholy, and of the most sinister condition of the soul."[24] When the chaconne returns at last (mm. 56–59), it is significantly altered: the fourth pitch is now C (instead of C♯), so that the sadness of the "Neapolitan" (the chromatically altered supertonic chord) is enlisted to communicate mourning. The final cadence is heard in its plagal form, yet another antique touch that signals the forlorn character is not to be liberated from the prison of his past.

Schubert wrote music about music as an act of artistic citation in many of his late Lieder. In so doing, the achievement is not unlike some of the slow movements of Beethoven's last string quartets, the beauty of which is manifest precisely because of the bizarre, often harsh movements surrounding them. Also, in the late works of Liszt simplicity similarly is used, especially to place revision of his own early works in a new light.[25] Mahler, too, shows the lyrically simple transformed into something very special, a point abundantly evident in his Ninth Symphony.[26]

Despite the fact that many of Schubert's songs are now almost two hundred years old, few have lost their ability to move us, no matter how difficult many undeniably still are. In truth, the apparent peculiarity of some of the Lieder surely stems from the fact that we no longer understand what their poems address. That which nowadays sounds tamely simple may have struck listeners in Schubert's day as wildly revolutionary. Also, the large forms typical of Sturm und Drang poetry, while they likely will seem exaggerated to today's readers, encouraged the Viennese public of the 1820s – the aristocracy and middle class alike – not only to experience strong passions but to act accordingly, even if this meant flouting social mores. Many songs take issue with the Restoration politics of Metternich. Schubert's friend the poet and patriot Johann Chrysostomus Senn wrote in his memoirs that the struggles for freedom against Napoleon during the years 1813–15 "left behind in Austria a significant intellectual uplifting," and that it brought together "a splendid social circle of young literati, poets, artists and well-educated persons . . . Within this circle, Franz Schubert composed his songs."[27] Because he was suspected by the authorities, Senn's residence was searched in March 1820 and four friends there, including Schubert, hurled "opprobrious language" at the intruding officer. Senn was arrested and banned from Vienna; Schubert was "summoned and severely reprimanded."[28] That Schubert not only set Senn's poems "Selige Welt" and "Schwanengesang" (D744, not to be confused with the posthumously published fourteen songs popularly known as *Schwanengesang*, D957, settings of poems by Rellstab, Heine, and Seidl), but also published them – as Op. 23 together with Platen's "Die Liebe hat gelogen" and Schober's "Schatzgräbers Begehr" – demonstrates

Published online by Cambridge University Press
Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

solidarity with his friend.[29] Because the Metternich administration viewed every intellectual activity with suspicion, even Lieder were subjected to stringent censorship.[30] Schubert's friend Johann Mayrhofer, who was forced to earn his living as a censor, and who because of this pressure later committed suicide, disguised many of his poems' topical references beneath the guise of antiquity. *Heliopolis I* (D753) depicts "the city of the sun," a place full of hope, whereas *Heliopolis II* (D754) exhorts "let your arms embrace the world. Dare to remain devoted only to the great and the worthy." Self-assured resistance to authority is sounded in *Der zürnenden Diana* (To the Angry Diana), a topic also alluded to in *Prometheus* (Goethe). *Orest auf Tauris* treats the subjects of exile in conjunction with the yearning for deliverance.[31] The enthusiasm for the ancient world was shared by Schubert's friend the singer Vogl, whom the composer dubbed "der griechische Vogel" (the Greek bird),[32] and by the poet of *Die Schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*, the "Griechenmüller" (Greek miller) – Wilhelm Müller, who enthusiastically supported the ongoing struggle for freedom in Greece.

Social criticism of a similar sort is disclosed by medieval themes celebrating an idealized past where art is prized, as in *Der Sänger*, set to a poem by Goethe, and by songs of great deeds and ancient heroes such as the "Ossian" songs.[33] All of these Lieder show a sense of life that Schubert missed: in his own poem "Klage an das Volk" he viewed the social climate of his day as one that impeded a person attaining greatness.[34] The same message is to be discerned in the lyric dramatization of art as redeemer in *An die Musik*. Following the first line, which has been given above, the text goes on to reveal (in translation), "when life's wild tumult wraps me round, have you [art] kindled my heart to loving warmth, and transported me to a better world." Thus Schubert described his own condition in July 1824 in a letter to his brother Ferdinand as "that fateful recognition of a miserable reality, which thanks to my own imagination (God be praised), I attempt as much as possible to make more attractive."[35] Shortly thereafter, on 14 August 1824, his brother Ignaz wrote him: "The newest here is a rash of suicides, quite as if people knew for sure that upon arriving over there, they would be able to jump straightaway into heaven."[36] Alas, in many a Schubert Lied, death is the only escape. Unlike the poem on which it is modeled, Claudius's "Der Tod und das Mädchen" (Death and the Maiden), set by Schubert as D531 and where death is something to be dreaded, the setting of Spaun's "Der Jüngling und der Tod" (The Youth and Death), D545, tells of one that is longed for. (The two songs are separated by only one month: the first was composed in February 1817, the second in March.) Prompted by the Restoration, this essentially *Weltschmerz* point of view shows how much things have changed from the sunny optimism that had characterized so much of the Enlightenment. In many ways related to this is the fact that the

Published online by Cambridge University Press
Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

protagonists in most of the composer's numerous *Wanderlieder* are homeless. The most famous, after the piteous wayfarer of *Winterreise*, must be *Der Wanderer* (D489), a setting of a poem by the otherwise little-known Georg Philipp Schmidt von Lübeck, given the heartrending revelation that even though the protagonist hears the speech of other men he still feels as if he is "a stranger everywhere." Likewise, Friedrich von Schlegel's poem "Der Wanderer" (D649) treats a wayfarer who is alone and homeless, and perceives the world as good only in darkness.

The saber-rattling in Körner's "Schwertlied" (Song of the Sword) and Klopstock's "Vaterlandslied" today are no longer very palatable – Schubert made more of Körner's love poems.[37] Yet texts such as these did not always connote the chauvinistic and militaristic sentiments we find in them today. Klopstock and Körner were in no way reactionaries. Klopstock had embraced the French Revolution enthusiastically; and the patriotism and nationalism that animated Körner's poetry were at that time equivalent to political self-determination – freedom from foreign domination as well as local absolutism. Not surprisingly, either too much or too little love for one's country could prompt misgivings in Metternich's reactionary regime.

As a student, Schubert presumably received guidance toward his later choice of Lieder texts: besides Latin and Greek classics, he came into contact with the poetry of the Enlightenment and Empfindsamkeit, including many works by Schiller and Goethe. Later, his circle of friends helped to shape his literary interests. Two groups, the so-called "Linzer" or "Oberösterreichischer Kreis" (Upper Austrian group) and the "Wiener Kreis" (Vienna Group), thanks to their concern for social and educational problems and their influence on Schubert, have become the focus of musicological research.[38] Under the sway of the ancients but also of Herder, Goethe, and Schiller, the Upper Austrian group of friends debated the beneficial influence of art and the ways in which it might incite greater productivity and human happiness. The political Restoration following the Congress of Vienna in 1815 dampened much of this idealism, and so it is no coincidence that for a time Schubert belonged to Vienna's "Unsinnsgesellschaft" (Nonsense Society), where much sentimental and idealistic poetry was parodied.[39] Inspired by his Viennese friends, Schubert turned to contemporary Romantic poetry. Whether from the various groups he frequented or through his many individual friendships, the lively exchange that clearly ensued stimulated him to expand upon his choices in texts and thereby sharpen his tastes. To this, there also is the composer's own innate literary sensibilities, which, despite the old but inaccurate cliché that he would set willy-nilly any poem that came into his hands, reveal a number of shared traits despite the many and different subjects, some unique to him, others the result of living at the time he did. Establishing absolutes

Published online by Cambridge University Press
Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

clearly is foolhardy in a composer as prolific as Schubert, yet recurring topics nonetheless are to be observed: social and artistic freedom, the joys of friendship, an absorption with nature, earthy delight in life, a fascination with death, a sympathetic bonding with social outcasts and misfits, love in all of its multifarious permutations. But even when initially attracted to the subject of a poem, he rejected it if it did not seem musically suitable. Only a portion of what he composed was released for publication after performance and discussion within his circle of intimates.

Schubert's influence on later composers is impossible to ignore. Liszt surely was not alone in admiring the older composer's "ability," as he put it, "to dramatize to the greatest degree his lyrical inspirations."[40] The poetical piano introductions and conclusions that Schumann composed for many of his songs seem not too far removed from what Schubert fashioned for his *Der Lindenbaum* (*Winterreise*, No. 5) or *Die junge Nonne.* Moreover, Schubert's characteristic scenarios re-echo in the bell sounds and waltzes of Schumann's *Dichterliebe.* Brahms's raindrops in *Regenlied* and *Abendregen* fall in a way very similar to the leaves in Schubert's *Letzte Hoffnung*, the sixteenth song of *Winterreise.* The bird in Brahms's *Auf dem Schiffe* flies much as does *Die Krähe* in *Winterreise*, No. 15. The rhythm of Brahms's *Es liebt sich so lieblich im Lenze* is adjusted to the changing moods of the female protagonist in ways that recall many a Schubert Lied. Veiled chords in Liszt's *Blume und Duft* remind us of Schubert's *Daß sie hier gewesen* just as the beginning of the *Faust Symphony* suggests the start of Schubert's *Szene aus Faust.* The tone repetition in Wolf's setting of the Michelangelo poem "Alles endet, was entstehet" symbolizes death much as in *Die liebe Farbe*, the sixteenth song from *Schöne Müllerin*, or *Der Wegweiser* from *Winterreise.* Moreover, Wolf's recitative-like shaping of melody and his modulations could be rooted, at least in large part, in Schubert's earlier experiments. Whoever knows Schubert's songs will find them reverberating again in almost every Lied of these and other composers from the nineteenth century. But that Schubert directly influenced a specific composition can reasonably be claimed only where an unequivocal quotation is uncovered. In his *Herbstgefühl*, Op. 48, No. 7, Brahms refers to the concluding pitches of Schubert's *Doppelgänger*, and in his canon *Einförmig ist der Liebe Gram*, Op. 113, No. 13, harks back to the hurdy-gurdy man of the last song of *Winterreise.* That we hear so much of Schubert in later songs – even though, for example, Wolf undoubtedly learned as much from Schumann or Wagner – is probably because, of all the songs composed in the nineteenth century, we know Schubert's best. The Lieder of his contemporaries, like Lachner or Randhartinger, or somewhat older composers like Krufft, only now are beginning to interest performers; presumably because of their comparatively greater length, the ballads of Reichardt and Loewe have yet to return to fashion. One need not restrict

Published online by Cambridge University Press
Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

this scenario to the longer songs of these composers. The same could be said for countless later composers, among them some discussed or otherwise mentioned in the pages of this book, such as Cornelius, Franz, and Kirchner.

Only when we know the Lieder of these and other composers better will we be able to judge what was common in Schubert's day as well as what he alone could have written in just his own way. But we should not limit ourselves to the repertory of song in searching for influences upon Schubert and those who came after him. Schubert gained stimulation from all genres: from Mozart's D minor Fantasia, K397, quoted in the *Leichenfantasie*, Beethoven's keyboard tremolos mentioned above, the harmonic language of Cherubini's operas, and more. Not only did Schubert develop something new by exploring the unusual in music that has come down to us as important and worth knowing. Just as significantly, what he and other composers of his day thought was new and from whence it came are questions as yet far from answered.

Translated by Sven Hansell, revised by the editor

Published online by Cambridge University Press
Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011