

BOOK REVIEWS

Julian Horton, ed. *Schubert, Early Romantic Composers* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015). xxxiv + 482 pp. £192.00.

Schubert, edited by Julian Horton, is the latest addition to Ashgate's series The Early Romantic Composers. Each volume of the series presents a collection of important essays on a specific composer, with, to date, separate anthologies dedicated to Schumann, Chopin, Beethoven and Mendelssohn. The *Schubert* volume consists of an introduction by Horton, followed by 23 essays drawn from book chapters and articles ranging from Robert Schumann's famous discussion of the 'Great' C-Major Symphony from 1840 to David T. Bretherton's 2011 article on Schubert's 'Gondelfahrer' settings. The major portion of the selections consists of late twentieth to early twenty-first century writings on Schubert (roughly from 1982 to 2011) and thus offers a substantial cross section of the more recent reassessment of Schubert's life and works which addresses what are now felt to be misunderstandings growing out of the unusual reception history of Schubert's music. A number of earlier influential articles are also included, which provide the foundation for the later discussions of the composer's music. These consist of the Schumann article mentioned above and writings of Theodore W. Adorno and Donald Francis Tovey, both dating from 1928, the centenary of Schubert's death, as well as three subsequent contributions to Schubert scholarship from Joseph Kerman, James Webster and Carl Dahlhaus from the 1960s to 1970s.

The essays are organized according to five main headings: 'History and Biography'; 'Reception and Interpretation'; 'Harmony and Tonality'; 'Instrumental Music'; and 'Song'. These categories, though, are not mutually exclusive – in fact there are strong threads that run across the separate sections linking the contributions on different subjects to common stylistic features or complimentary ideas. Horton has provided a very good introduction that sets the context for many of the essays and gives a brief summary of some of their main ideas. His discussion of Adorno's *Schubert* (1928) is particularly useful.

In the introduction, Horton also explores a specific issue connected with each section and engages with it in his own analysis of a relevant work. Thus for 'History and Biography', which features the debate over Schubert's sexuality that erupted in the 1990s, he looks at the second movement of the 'Unfinished' Symphony in B minor, D. 759, in answer to Susan McClary's reading of the movement's musical processes as representing 'gay subjectivity'.¹ Here he brings into the discussion the new understanding and theories of Romantic instrumental form that have emerged in the last two decades to show that some of the unusual practices McClary identifies are in fact quite widespread in the music of the period and thus do not point to a radically different subjectivity. The other issues Horton addresses include the relationship between lyrical and developmental passages in

¹ See her 'Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert's Music', in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood and Gary C. Thomas (New York: Routledge, 1994): 205–33. For another critique of McClary's article, See Suzannah Clark, *Analyzing Schubert* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 189–93.

Schubert's instrumental music; the use of third relations and hexatonic cycles in his music prior to 1820; and the effects of lyricism on classical sonata form.

Each analysis skilfully works in dialogue with essays included in the anthology and also brings in more recent research by other scholars in the field. While Horton's analyses are very convincing, I do have some reservations about the conclusions he reaches in his discussion of Schubert's Fifth Symphony in B-flat major, D. 485. Here he draws on the very fine essay by Su Yin Mak in the anthology and the distinction she makes between the looser, associative relationships in Schubert's lyrical approach to form, which she designates as paratactic, and the tighter, interdependent and hierarchical relationships characteristic of the classical norms of sonata form, which she refers to as hypotactic. Using the first movement of the Fifth Symphony as an example, Horton makes the point that the paratactic construction typical of Schubert's later work is not present in this piece of music, stating that the movement is 'an object lesson in expanded classical syntax' and that the main theme 'with some modification would not be out of place in a Mozart symphony' (pp. xxiv–xxvi). He then compares the movement with the first movement of the 'Unfinished' Symphony in B minor, D. 759, where each part of the form is self-contained, creating a structure of separate blocks of distinct material which do not interact or interpenetrate. He concludes that this idiosyncratic, lyrical manner of construction only emerged after 1822.

Although Horton demonstrates the conventional syntactical aspects of the Fifth Symphony, his discussion does not deal with the highly unusual motivic make-up of the main theme, which consists almost exclusively of the opening basic idea. This idea is repeated across the whole theme without any appreciable change and within a regular phrase length of four measures, fragmenting slightly at the run-up to the cadences. Such extensive motivic repetition differs from Classical practice, which involves motivic/rhythmic contrast on a local level and a more flexible phrase structure;² it is, however, precisely the characteristic of Schubert's writing that Felix Salzer identifies as 'lyrical' and associates with the tendency to create self-contained, static units in his sonata forms.³ The same type of motivic repetition is also found regularly in Schubert's earliest sonata forms and leads often to the block-like construction discussed in the 'Unfinished' Symphony.⁴ In fact, the first movement of the First Symphony in D major, D. 82, from 1813 presents many striking parallels to the features Horton singles out in the 'Unfinished'.

Turning to the essays in the anthology, Horton has chosen excellent material. *Schubert* brings together some of the most influential articles on the composer's music from across the last century as well as a number of fine contributions from contemporary scholarship. The most prominent theme that emerges from the collection is the attempt to understand Schubert the man and composer on his own terms. Here ideas arising from the early reception history of Schubert's music play a prominent role. Thus Christopher Gibbs' chapter on some of the myths and

² See Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972): 57–64, for a discussion of the importance of rhythmic variety and balanced periodicity in the classical style.

³ See his 'Sonatenform bei Franz Schubert', in *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft* 15 (1928): 86–125. For a translation and excellent commentary, see Su Yin Mak, 'Felix Salzer's "Sonata Form in Franz Schubert" (1928): An English Translation and Edition with Critical Commentary', *Theory and Practice* 40 (2015): 1–121.

⁴ For a discussion of the unusual structure of Schubert's early sonata-form movements, see Brian Black, 'Schubert's Apprenticeship in Sonata Form: The Early String Quartets' (PhD diss., McGill University, 1997).

misunderstandings in the composer's biography is particularly apt to begin the anthology. It provides a contextual background for many of the other articles in the collection, although since its publication in the *Cambridge Companion to Schubert* in 1997 a large quantity of new material on Schubert and his circle has been uncovered.

Horton has also included Susan Youens's seminal study of the historical background to Wilhelm Müller's *Die schöne Müllerin* and David Gramit's influential and engaging article on the reception of Schubert's music in Victorian England, which helps to reveal the roots of some of the prejudices against his music that lingered into the twentieth century. Two more recent articles contribute to a deeper understanding of Schubert the man. John Gingerich presents Schubert as a self-critical composer striving, as he himself expressed it, 'after the highest in art'. David T. Bretherton deals with the political side of Schubert and his circle of friends and shows a close engagement in contemporary politics on the part of the composer in his setting of Johann Mayrhofer's 'Gondelfahrer'. Both articles provide a useful corrective to older portraits of Schubert as a naïve and indiscriminating composer.

The most hotly debated issue of Schubert biography in the last few decades has undoubtedly been the question of his sexuality. Horton includes in the anthology the two essays that constitute the epicentre of this controversy: Maynard Solomon's 'Schubert and the Peacocks of Benvenuto Cellini' and Rita Steblin's response 'The Peacock's Tale: Schubert's Sexuality Reconsidered'. Unfortunately, in providing the context for these articles in his introduction, Horton inadvertently creates the wrong impression concerning the circumstances surrounding their publication and also mentions an unfair smear against Steblin, i.e. that her reaction was 'in some estimations, politically motivated' (p. xiv).

Solomon's article, published in *19th-Century Music* in 1989, argues that the relationships between Schubert and his male friends were probably homosexual in orientation. Despite encountering fierce initial resistance in the press, this view came to be accepted in the scholarly community.⁵ Rita Steblin's response to Solomon raises serious doubts about his evidence, his methods and his conclusions. She examines in detail the points he presented and challenges each one, providing new information from her own research, correcting mistranslations of important documents and restoring the proper context for some of the quotations Solomon used for his argument. Her article was published in the late summer of 1993 as the centrepiece of a special issue of *19th-Century Music* 'Schubert: Music, Sexuality, Culture', which included a response from Solomon and commentaries on the controversy from leading scholars in the field.

The unsubstantiated charge that Steblin is politically motivated comes mainly from one of the commentaries – that of Robert Winter, who portrays her article as part of a 'counteroffensive' against Solomon that originated in the popular press.⁶ He attacks her personally as an unimaginative purveyor of kitsch, whose 'black-and-white fantasy land admits of no ambiguity, no irony, no double entendre', and accuses her of attempting to shut down any conversation about Schubert's sexuality. A similar charge – that Steblin is harbouring a primarily political agenda in her work – is found at the end of James Webster's commentary as well.⁷ Such ad hominem attacks poisoned the debate that ensued. Fortunately, Steblin emerged from this bitter controversy as

⁵ Susan McClary describes the intensity of this debate in relation to the reaction to her own work in 'Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert's Music', 205–9.

⁶ Winter, 'Whose Schubert?', *19th-Century Music* 17/1 (Summer 1993): 94–101.

⁷ See Webster, 'Music, Pathology, Sexuality, Beethoven, Schubert', *19th-Century Music* 17/1 (Summer 1993): 93.

one of the leading archival researchers and writers on Schubert and his circle.⁸ It is disappointing, though, that the accusation should resurface two decades later in Horton's introduction without any reference to its source or discussion of its veracity. Yet Horton does a service to the present understanding of Schubert by offering both the Solomon and Steblin articles one after the other so that the reader can compare them closely and see which one is more plausible now that the dust has settled.

Turning from biographical issues to the reception history of Schubert's music, the anthology includes one of the most important historical documents in this field, Schumann's report on his discovery of the Symphony in C major, D. 944 'The Great'. This article provides a vivid glimpse into the situation only 12 years after Schubert's death when a large amount of his instrumental music was still unpublished and unknown. It is famous for Schumann's enthusiastic description of the Symphony and his comment about its 'heavenly length'. Here we have the starting point of a long struggle to come to terms with Schubert's achievement as a composer of instrumental music, and Schumann's comment echoes throughout this struggle, with now positive, now negative connotations. The general course of these shifting attitudes can be discerned in some of the essays in the anthology. Of particular importance are the discussions about form, specifically sonata form, as seen in the articles by James Webster and Carl Dahlhaus. Both reply in some respects to an earlier essay by Felix Salzer, which is not included in the collection.⁹

Salzer's article 'Die Sonatenform bei Franz Schubert' from 1928 is the most detailed discussion of Schubert's sonata forms to that date and stands as the culmination of the negative attitudes towards the composer's lyrical approach to form as opposed to Beethoven's more dynamic approach. He argues that lyricism and its effects are incompatible with the basic principles of sonata form and that Schubert stands outside the form's true line of development which extends from C.P.E. Bach, through Haydn and Mozart to Beethoven. Webster's two-part article reinstates Schubert in this tradition by revealing his influence on Brahms. Part one, which is reproduced in the anthology, surveys the idiosyncratic features of Schubert's sonata forms for comparison to those of Brahms in part two. The characterization of these features in Webster's survey has greatly influenced the subsequent discussions of form in Schubert.

Carl Dahlhaus also places Schubert's sonata forms within a broader tradition, in his brilliant essay on the first movement of the G-Major String Quartet, D. 887. Here he confronts Salzer's attack on Schubert's lyricism, arguing that Schubert's 'lyric-epic' approach is equally valid to the 'dramatic-dialectic' approach of Beethoven and that features of Schubert's handling of the form, such as his reliance on variation, are part of the sonata-form tradition both before and after him. Su Yin Mak's recent distinction between paratactic and hypotactic

⁸ Rita Steblin's valuable contributions to Schubert scholarship are too numerous to list here. The following are just two highlights. Her discovery of Schubert's membership along with others of his circle in the *Unsinnsgesellschaft* or Nonsense Society as well as 29 illustrated issues of the Society's publication *Archiv des menschlichen Unsinnns* provides a revealing glimpse into the aesthetic and political ideas of Schubert and his friends as well as new biographical material and images. See Steblin, *Die Unsinnsgesellschaft: Franz Schubert, Leopold Kupelwieser und ihr Freundeskreis* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1998). Equally important are the memoirs of Joseph Lanz she has recently uncovered which provide a fascinating portrait of Schubert in the last few years of his life. See Steblin and Frederick Stocken, 'Studying with Sechter: Newly Recovered Reminiscences about Schubert by his Forgotten Friend, the Composer Joseph Lanz', *Music and Letters* 88/2 (2007): 226–65. Steblin is also an important researcher in the fields of Beethoven and Haydn biography.

⁹ See the translation and commentary by Su Yin Mak referenced in footnote 3 above.

mentioned earlier builds on Dahlhaus' article and provides a solid theoretical basis for Schubert's 'lyric-epic' sonata forms.

Schubert's innovative harmonic practice has also been a hot topic of debate over the last century and a half. Horton presents some of the most important essays in this field, beginning with Donald Frances Tovey's influential discussion of harmony in Schubert from 1928. One essay that has had wide-spread ramifications for the analysis of Schubert's works in general is Edward Cone's 'Schubert's Promissory Note: An Exercise in Musical Hermeneutics' of 1982. His demonstration of how the composer harmonically foreshadows later events in his music has immense significance for understanding the special character that arises from his distinctive harmonic processes.

The last two decades have seen a revolution in the treatment of harmony in Schubert's music. In particular a number of new and innovative theoretical approaches challenge some of the previous negative judgements of the composer's harmonic practice and provide useful working models for further analysis. The anthology includes a representative cross section of these studies. Two stand out in particular – David Kopp's work on the structural, as opposed to merely colouristic, significance of Schubert's chromatic third relations and Richard Cohn's highly influential investigation of hexatonic cycles as a harmonic system coexistent with functional tonality in Schubert's music.

In conclusion, it is extremely useful to have such a collection of major essays in one volume. Each essay represents an important contribution to Schubert scholarship, while taken together they outline the main currents of thought about the composer and his music over the last century. Furthermore, the more recent contributions provide an excellent entry into those debates that are still shaping our understanding of Schubert's accomplishments. In this respect, Horton's own analyses in the introduction provide an interesting insight into the work of a scholar engaged in new research in the field. My only criticism of the publication itself is the decision to reprint the articles and chapters in their original formats, rather than resetting them in a consistent typeface and font. The overall impression is somewhat messy at times, like a collection of photocopies, and some of the reduced type is harder to read, especially the notes from the *19th-Century Music* articles and the musical examples from the Tovey essay. I understand, however, that the costs of typesetting each article in such a substantial collection could be prohibitive. Another problem arises from printing chapters from books. A number of these chapters really need the context and terminology laid out in the preceding chapters of the source to be understood fully.¹⁰ These are only minor shortcomings, however, in a thoroughly worthwhile publication.

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¹⁰ This is especially true of the chapters by David Kopp and David Damschroder. For Kopp, see the opening chapter 'Common-Tone Tonality' in *Chromatic Transformations in Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). For Damschroder, it would be good to read through Part I of the book to understand his system of harmonic analysis. See his *Harmony in Schubert* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).