

Notwithstanding all the admiration I have felt for our dear friend over the years, I am nonetheless of the opinion that we shall never make a Mozart or Haydn out of him as far as instrumental and church music are concerned, whereas he stands without peer in the lied. In this species of composition he achieved a fame that he need share with no one else. I therefore believe that Schubert must be treated by his biographer as a composer of lieder.

So wrote Joseph von Spaun—early mentor and lifelong friend of Franz Schubert (1797-1828)—in the year after the composer's death. This statement is less proof of a serious misjudgment by Spaun than it is an illustration of the fact that Schubert's ultimate reputation was guaranteed by the body of work gradually discovered over the years after his death: symphonies, piano sonatas, chamber music, church music, and, yes, the indisputably masterful art songs.

Indeed, his lieder—with their memorable melodies and expanded harmonic discourse—marked Schubert as the herald of the romantic era. But growing up as he did toward the end of the transition from late 18th-century classicism to the heroic style exemplified by Beethoven's middle period, Schubert received his own thorough grounding in the Viennese classical style. The son of a schoolmaster, Schubert received early musical instruction from members of his family, then in his ninth year he began outside studies. After 1808, when he was accepted as a choirboy in Vienna's imperial court chapel, he began studies at the Imperial and Royal City College, where he played violin in the student orchestra. After a time, his studies in musical composition at the college came to be supervised by the imperial Kapellmeister Antonio Salieri, friend of Haydn, rival of Mozart, and sometime teacher of Beethoven over the years 1799-1809. After an initial period of study under Salieri focused on counterpoint exercises and setting of Italian texts, Schubert began to produce an astonishing variety of works which reflected both his mastery of his teacher's lessons and his exposure to "hands-on" musical performance in the chapel choir and the student orchestra. While he continued his studies with Salieri until late 1816, he left the court chapel when his voice changed in 1812 and left the imperial college at the end of 1813 to prepare to take on teaching duties at his father's elementary school. The demands of teaching notwithstanding, by the time

Schubert composed his Mass in G in the first week of March 1815, he had written his first two symphonies, the Mass in F, eight string quartets, three stage works, and dozens of songs, including one of his most famous settings of verses by Goethe, "Gretchen am Spinnrade."

Schubert probably wrote the Mass in G (his second) for Michael Holzer, the choirmaster of the parish church of the composer's birthplace, the Viennese suburb of Liechtenthal, and for Therese Grob, the young soprano with whose voice and person Schubert may have been infatuated, as some evidence suggests. The music shows the influences of Haydn's and Mozart's masses, as well as of Beethoven's Mass in C, and while the solo parts (most prominently the soprano) are somewhat demanding, Schubert's choral writing caters to the modest capacities of a small parish choir. Nevertheless, the pacing of the mass is effective, and despite the economy of means, the work abounds with lilting melodies and striking instrumental details, such as the "walking" bass line in the Credo, and the string writing that becomes increasingly elaborate as the Benedictus unfolds.

Schubert was clearly not an orthodox Catholic: in all of his mass settings he omitted the words "Credo in unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam" ("I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church"), although his brother Ferdinand inserted those words when he edited the G major Mass for publication after the composer's death. Other signs of Schubert's free thinking are his settings of numerous biblical and liturgical texts in the vernacular. Schubert set Moses Mendelssohn's German translation of the 23rd Psalm ("The Lord is my shepherd") as a gift for his friend Anna Fröhlich—a voice teacher at the Vienna Conservatory—and her three sisters. In its original version and later transcription for male voices, Psalm 23 served as an examination piece for vocal quartets at the Conservatory. Ulrich Eisenlohr wrote "perhaps it is no exaggeration to describe the work as altogether one of the most beautiful psalm-settings ever written." Like many other beloved part songs of Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms, Psalm 23 is today most often performed by choirs.

The modern tradition of the male glee club has its origin in the *Liedertafel* (literally, “song table”), an informal gathering of singers, poets, and composers who enjoyed a meal together and then performed partsongs. The first *Liedertafel* was convened in Berlin on 24 January 1809 by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s musical confidant Carl Friedrich Zelter. Behind the convivial social occasion of the *Liedertafel* lay the mission of promoting German poetry and song; this cause may have been the catalyst for the establishment of *Liedertafel* throughout German speaking lands. Schubert contributed at least two dozen pieces to the male partsong (or chorus) literature. “Die Nacht” (“Wie schön bist du”) was published with three other pieces for men’s voices in October 1823. The publication of “Widerspruch” (“Contradiction”) as part of *Vier Gedichte von J[ohann] G[abriel] Seidl* for men’s voices and piano was announced on 21 November 1828—the day of Schubert’s burial after his untimely death two days earlier—so it was probably composed earlier that year. “Ständchen” (“Serenade”) is a more unusual example, a setting for men’s chorus with contralto solo (the world would have to wait 42 years for Brahms’s Alto Rhapsody). This is yet another work associated with Anna Fröhlich, who requested it in July 1827 as a birthday present for one of her girl pupils. “Ständchen,” a poem by Schubert’s friend Franz Grillparzer, is *about* a serenade, sung by a young man to his beloved, and Schubert’s piano accompaniment imitates the plucking of guitar strings.

To show their affinity to the partsongs (and because they are wonderful pieces of music!), tonight’s program includes three of the approximately 700 lieder that Schubert composed during his brief life. “Geheimes” (“A Secret,” March 1821) is a setting of a poem from the “Book of Love” section of Goethe’s *West-östlicher Divan (Poems of the West and the East)*. “Nacht und Träume” (“Night and Dreams,” before June 1823) sets Matthäus von Collin’s poem that addresses the night as a deity, lamenting the inevitable break of day. The piano accompaniment of “Auf dem Wasser zu singen” (“To Be Sung upon the Water,” 1823, verses by Friedrich Leopold Graf zu Stolberg-Stolberg) evokes the “shimmer of the reflecting waves” (“Schimmer der spiegelnden Wellen”) in the poem’s first line.

Before he reached the age of twenty, Robert Schumann (1810-1856) devoted himself to literary and musical pursuits in nearly equal measure. At the age of seven he began piano lessons, in his tenth year he gave his first public performances, and soon after that began composing. But by age thirteen he was also writing poetry, drafting scenes for plays (never completed), and writing biographical essays about composers. In 1825, Schumann and fellow students founded a *Litterarischer Verein* that became a forum for reading the masterworks of German literature; thanks to this society Schumann became thoroughly familiar with the dramas of Friedrich Schiller. Around this time Schumann also developed a passion for the “idiosyncratic writings” (in John Daverio’s words) of Jean Paul (the pen name of J.P.F. Richter). In 1828, Schumann acceded to wishes of his mother (his father had died in 1827) and left Zwickau (the town of his birth) to attend law school in Leipzig. Once there, he avoided the lecture halls at the University of Leipzig, instead beginning piano lessons with Friedrich Wieck, in whose salon Schumann met the musical elite of Leipzig, as well as the nine-year-old Clara Wieck, already an accomplished pianist. Through one or more of these new contacts, Schumann encountered Schubert’s music and was overwhelmed. Schumann compared Schubert’s music to Jean Paul’s prose, because of its “psychologically unusual connection of ideas.” The music of Schubert may have been the catalyst for Schumann’s growing awareness of his life’s mission: by July 1830 he decided he wanted to devote his life to music.

The ensuing decade was one of growth and struggle. Growth came from first encounters with the music of Chopin, and from intense study of the music of Johann Sebastian Bach and Beethoven. Struggles included Schumann’s attempt to overcome a handicap in his right hand—which ultimately ended his career as a pianist—and a legal battle in 1839-40 with Friedrich Wieck for the right to marry Wieck’s daughter Clara. Surprisingly, the protracted litigation coincided with an astonishing burst of creativity. February 1840 began what Schumann called his *Liederjahre*, during which he composed the cycles *Myrthen*, *Liederkreis* (one each for verses of Heine and Eichendorff), *Dichterliebe*, *Frauenliebe und -leben*, and many single songs (in all, 125 songs by January 1841). Like Schubert, Schumann supplemented his solo songs with partsongs, beginning with the *Drei Gedichte*, Op. 29, to verses of Emanuel Geibel. Schumann

composed these from late July to early October 1840, the period encompassing his marriage to Clara on 12 September, the day before her 21st birthday. The titles of the Op. 29 partsongs are “Ländliches Lied” (“Rural Song”), “Lied: In meinem Garten” (“Song: In My Garden”), and “Zigeunerleben” (“Gypsy Life”). The vocal ensemble expands with each song: two-part women’s chorus, three-part women’s chorus, and four-part mixed chorus.

Schumann composed “Beim Abschied zu singen” (“To Sing at Parting”) to verses by Ernst von Feuchtersleben in May and June of 1847 for an upcoming festival in Zwickau. The composer conducted the first performance on 10 July 1847. Schumann wrote “Bei Schenkung eines Flügels” (“On the Gift of a Piano”) to accompany his gift of a new Klems piano to Clara on her birthday, 13 September 1853. The performance in the Schumann home that day may have been the last until the 21st century, for the partsong did not appear in print until 2010. The text is a verse Schumann wrote in July 1840

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), whom Andrew Rudd describes in Literature Online as the “titan of German Romanticism, ... [who] charted the cultural and political history of Europe through the turbulent years of the French Revolution to the Napoleonic Wars and beyond,” was the author of novels, poems, plays, and scientific and philosophical treatises. Best known today for *Faust*, in his own time and immediately thereafter one of his most influential works was the novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (*Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*), which describes the maturation of the young adult Wilhelm as he experiences life in the wide world away from his family. One of the central characters is the little orphan girl Mignon, into whose mouth Goethe placed poignant verses he described as songs. These verses came to be set to music by many composers in several languages, among them Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Liszt, Ambroise Thomas, Tchaikovsky, and Hugo Wolf. In the novel, the untimely demise of Mignon marks a major transition in Wilhelm Meister’s coming of age. Schumann’s Opus 98 (1849) is in two parts: the songs of Goethe’s characters Mignon, the harp player, and Philene; and the *Requiem für Mignon*, a setting of passages about Mignon’s funeral rites from *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* Book VIII, chapter 8. The *Requiem für Mignon* was premiered in Düsseldorf on 21 November 1850.