Schubert's Reputation from His Time to Ours

By

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Frontispiece: *Pencil drawing of Franz Schubert by Leopold Kupelwieser, July 1821.*

With gratitude to the helpful and encouraging readers of my

Gesellschaft der Schubertfreunde

Andy B., Heidi D., Mike V., Jinshil Yi, and Kenny Z.

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The death of Robert J. Kessler (1933-2021), co-founder and managing editor of Pendragon Press since 1972, led to the dissolution of this press and made it necessary for their authors to find new homes. I am indeed grateful to Ethics Press for providing this new home. The book's renewed life gave me the opportunity to make a number of small changes, corrections, and to add several paragraphs that address the most recent Schubert scholarship.

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2024

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– "Schubert's Symphony in C," 163-68; originally published in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 12, no. 21 (March 10, 1840), pp 81-83 [includes the reference to "himmlische Länge" ("heavenly length"), 165-66].

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Chapter One
"Heavenly Length" and "Fairer Hopes"

> "Here, beside sheer musical mastery of the technique of composition is life in every fiber, color in the shadings, meaning everywhere, the acutest etching of detail, and all flooded with a romanticism which we have encountered elsewhere in Franz Schubert. And this **heavenly length**, like a fat novel in four volumes by Jean Paul—never-ending, and if only that the reader may go on creating in the same vein afterwards."[1]
>
> Robert Schumann writing about Schubert's "Great" C Major Symphony

> "The art of music here entombed a rich possession, but even far *fairer hopes*." [2]
>
> Franz Grillparzer inscription on Schubert's tombstone

A milestone in the apotheosis of Franz Peter Schubert (1797-1828) occurred early in 2011 when *New York Times* music critic Anthony Tommasini released the results of his "two-week project to select the top 10 classical music composers in history, not including those still with us."[3] Although "enlivened by the more than 1,500 informed, challenging, passionate and inspiring comments from readers of *The New York Times*," Tommasini's final choices were his alone. While conservative, the list contained at least one surprise omission, Joseph Haydn. The logic here was simply that "one of the Vienna Four just had to go, and Haydn's great legacy was carried out by his friend Mozart, his student Beethoven and the entire Classical movement." In one case moral turpitude influenced the result. The fact that "Wagner was an anti-Semitic, egomaniacal jerk" caused him to go down a notch in Tommasini's estimation, since Verdi and Wagner were "tied as composers but not as people." For this reason, Verdi got the nod at No. 8

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[1] *Schumann on Music,* 165-66.

[2] *Documentary Biography*, 900; *Dokumente*, 580. In German: "Die Tonkunst begrub hier einen reichen Besitz aber noch viel schoenere Hoffnungen. See Figure 1.

[3] Anthony Tommasini, "The Greatest," *New York Times,* January 11, 2011.

and Wagner No. 9. Here is Tommasini's entire list: 1) Bach; 2) Beethoven; 3) Mozart; 4) Schubert; 5) Debussy; 6) Stravinsky; 7) Brahms; 8) Verdi; 9) Wagner; and 10) Bartók.

Overall, Tommasini's list may not surprise us today, but most music critics a hundred years ago would not have picked Schubert in a coterie of the ten greatest composers, much less topped only by Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart. In fact, after more than a century of writings about the "feminized," excessively repetitive, and incompetent composer of *Ave Maria,* the lofty placement of Schubert on such an elite list comes as something of a shock. This says a lot about the growing stature of the song, at the very least. In contrast to many nineteenth- and twentieth-century critics who devalued song in favor of opera in the vocal realm and such prestigious large-scale instrumental forms as the symphony, string quartet, and the piano sonata, Tommasini advocates on behalf of Schubert "for his hundreds of songs *alone*—including the haunting cycle 'Winterreise,' which will never release its tenacious hold on singers and audiences."[4]

Tommasini also singles out Schubert's last three piano sonatas and the last two symphonies. Concerning the latter pair, Tommasini writes: "Schubert's first few symphonies may be works in progress. But the 'Unfinished' and especially the Ninth Symphony are astonishing. The Ninth paves the way for Bruckner and prefigures Mahler." Tommasini's position is clearly shared by the conductor Bernard Haitink, who chose the Schubert Ninth over Beethoven's Ninth to conclude the 2012-13 season of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and more dramatically by James Levine, who a few weeks later in May 2013, also chose to conduct the Schubert Ninth, the "Great" C Major, to mark his return to the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra after an absence of more than two-years.[5] One year later the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Riccardo Muti, which featured all of Schubert's symphonies along with songs and chamber works, marked the belated Chicago debut of the Mass No. 5 in A-flat Major, an event lauded as one of

[4] *Schubert's Winter Journey: Anatomy of an Obsession* by singer Ian Bostridge in 2015, a study clearly designed for a wide audience, reinforces Tommasini's claim. Emphasis added.

[5] Tommasini, "With Wheelchair and Lively Baton, Levine Commands Carnegie Hall," *New York Times,* May 19, 2013.

the top ten most memorable concerts of the season. The list goes on. The long-delayed apotheosis of Schubert has arrived.

While it is hard to top Schubert's fourth-place finish in the *New York Times* list, an unbiased search on the internet offers a sampling of a more populist assessment of the composer's current reputation. An indiscriminate survey of the greatest composer lists on Google, however quirky, shows that Schubert no longer basks in obscurity (table 1.1).

Remarkably, Schubert is one of only four composers to appear in at least eight of these ten top ten lists. Bach never ranks lower than third in nine of the lists, although he is missing entirely from the remaining list. Mozart appears mainly in the second or third position, with one first position, one fifth position, and one absence. Not only is Beethoven the only composer on all ten lists, his lowest position is fourth place (on the quirky list that offers the medieval visionary Hildegard as No. 1), along with five third-place finishes, two seconds, and two firsts. Like Mozart and Bach, Beethoven is also the only composer to top Schubert whenever they share a list. The other frequent repeaters are Wagner (seven lists), Brahms, Haydn, and Tchaikovsky (five), Chopin, Handel, Stravinsky, and Verdi (four), and Mahler and Schumann (two). For a composer who completed only one and a half symphonies in his maturity and contributed no operas to the repertoire, Schubert's prominent place among the giants seems particularly noteworthy: fourth place (two lists), fifth (two), sixth (one), seventh (two), and eighth (one).

The internet also offers a series of more specialized lists, ranking various genres "for their innovation and influence, as well as their aesthetic importance, historical significance and lasting popularity."[6] Here, too, Schubert fares remarkably well. In the list of "The 100 Greatest Classical Symphonies" the "Great" C Major is No. 10, while his "Unfinished" Symphony is No. 13.[7] On "The 100 Greatest Solo Keyboard Works" the

[6] www. digitaldreamdoor.nutsie.com/pages/best-classic.

[7] In the list of top 100 Classical Symphonies compiled in 2009 by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, the "Great" C Major also places No. 10, while the "Unfinished" is demoted to No. 19 and the Symphony No. 5 in B-flat at No. 40. http://digitaldreamdoor.nutsie.com/pages/best-classic-symp.html.

Sonata in B-flat Major (D. 960) makes it to No. 6, just below Liszt's Sonata in B Minor, while the "Wanderer" Fantasy is ranked No. 13. In the "100 Greatest Classical Chamber Music Works," Schubert surpasses even Beethoven and Mozart with no fewer than three works in the top ten: the String Quintet in C (No. 2), the String Quartet in D Minor ("Death and the Maiden") (No. 5), and the "Trout" Quintet (No. 6). Beethoven's String Quartet in C-Sharp Minor appears at the head of this classical genre, but only Schubert can boast three works in the top six. Overall, the chamber list includes three works by Beethoven, three by Schubert, and two each by Mozart and Brahms. Since these lists were compiled by major broadcasters, they are probably more thoroughly vetted and edited than some of the previously cited personal and more idiosyncratic lists. In any event, Schubert's ubiquitous appearance on these lists is significant.

Although popularity can constitute can be a sign of success and recognition, the reputation of composers, a central component of reception history, is more than a popularity contest. The inherent frivolity of top-ten lists aside, the unmistakable rise of Schubert's critical reputation in the eyes of critics, music historians, performers, and audiences is a serious and important cultural and aesthetic story, the story explored in *Schubert's Reputation from His Time to Ours.* I trace Schubert's trajectory from relative obscurity as a locally distinguished songwriter to a lofty position in the musical firmament with growing stature in the prestigious domains of the symphony, the piano sonata, and chamber music, if not concerto and opera. The magnitude of Schubert's current prestige would come as a surprise to his contemporaries and to observers in generations to follow, but this acclaim did not come out of nowhere.

In fact, in the decades after Schubert's death, the composer enjoyed the admiration and respect of several notable advocates: influential musical boosters such as Schumann, Liszt, Brahms, and Mahler; influential performers, including Liszt, Julius Epstein, Charles Hallé, Artur Schnabel, Rudolf Serkin, and Mitsuko Uchida (to mention only a handful of pianists from the past two hundred years); and tastemakers from George Grove in the nineteenth century to Donald Francis Tovey, Charles Rosen and Richard Taruskin in the twentieth. Nevertheless, throughout his lifetime and for most of his posthumous career, Schubert has usually been relegated

to the shadow of his more illustrious fellow Viennese traveler: Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827).

A composer's reputation rests on much more than his or her work. Critics, musicologists, theorists, performers, and audiences all contribute their considerable portion. The composer creates, but others bring to that creation their perception, appreciation, and value. Thus, the increasingly popular reception of Schubert the master songwriter and lyrical melodist directly reflects the rising regard (particularly in scholarly circles) for song, melody, and lyricism. It has taken longer for scholars and critics to perceive, and value, Schubert's success in larger forms, especially sonata form. Although some of Schubert's music gained critical and popular traction early on (e.g., the "Wanderer" Fantasy, the "Great" C Major Symphony, and the String Quintet in C Major), it was not until the end of the twentieth century that most of Schubert's symphonies, chamber music, and piano sonatas fully emerged from Beethoven's shadow.

For this to happen it was crucial to reinterpret perceived non-Beethovenian formal and stylistic characteristics not as flaws but as strengths and hallmarks of a new paradigm. It is my thesis that around the time of his bicentennial in 1997, the composer's critical fortunes changed to the point of achieving a rough parity with those of his famous contemporary. Today Schubert enjoys a reputation and prestige equaling and frequently surpassing that of nearly any other classical composer. This book tells the story of how and why this happened.

Lyricism, "Heavenly Length," Femininity, and Other Liabilities

Various obstacles have stood in the way of Schubert's reputation from his time to ours, challenges that we might collectively call the Schubert Problem. One challenge, Schubert's lack of time to grow as an artist, was the greatest obstacle to Schubert's reception, and for generations seemed insurmountable. For more than a century Schubert's reputation suffered from the misfortune of premature death. In fact, Schubert's early death at the age of thirty-one probably contributed more than any other single factor to the history of his reception. In particular, it robbed Schubert of the

opportunity to create a critical mass of great symphonies or operas, genres that historically, perhaps invariably, require more maturity and time, although he made a good start with the former and concerted effort to accomplish the latter. Aside from his unequivocal success with genres such as piano duets for four-hands, partsongs, and dances of various types, in his lifetime and far beyond, Schubert was profiled primarily as a “song composer,” a genre in which Schubert attained mastery and critical respect long before turning twenty. Then and now, being defined as a song composer made it harder to receive unbiased critical attention for accomplishments in prestigious, large instrumental genres.

For more than a century the lyricism so admired in Schubert’s songs was deemed incompatible with the blue-chip larger instrumental forms found in such genres as the symphony and the string quartet, particularly works based on sonata-allegro form. Sonata-allegro, defined in the 1820s in Beethoven’s image by Adolph Bernhard Marx, enjoyed considerable prestige as the century progressed, even as it was subverted, transformed, and replaced by the generation of composers that followed Beethoven and Schubert. It was not until decades later that Schubert’s music and reputation gradually but increasingly stepped out of the shadow of his better-known contemporary Beethoven, whose large-scale instrumental works served as the textbook model of what it meant to be a great composer—that is, a composer of symphonies, chamber music, and piano sonatas—and master of sonata form.

Composers known for their melodies have commonly experienced difficulties in elevating their stature. The creation of memorable tunes such as those composed by Schubert, Pyotr Il’yich Tchaikovsky, or George Gershwin, to name a trio of classical composers known for their great melodies and alleged difficulties with larger forms, tends to overwhelm and obscure the imaginative use to which these melodies are often put. Another near contemporary of Schubert, Fryderyk Chopin, often regarded deprecatingly as a “miniaturist” as well as a melodist, did not even attempt to compose symphonies or string quartets. Not surprisingly, Chopin faced resistance in gaining positive recognition for formal competence in his largest solo piano works, the Second and the Third piano sonatas. We might also note that Tommasini did not include Chopin in his top-ten list,

and that Tchaikovsky does not appear in his short list, nor do any composers known primarily for their songs or melody more generally (with the exception of Schubert).

The accusation of formal incompetence constitutes critical business as usual. Sometimes a perceived lack of education was to blame, although Schubert and Gershwin were by no means the least thoroughly trained composers of their respective eras. Schubert, Gershwin, Chopin, Tchaikovsky, and others eventually gained stature for their large-scale works, in addition to their great tunes, but in each case it has taken more than a generation for this to happen.

To be fair, even Beethoven was not immune to criticism, although his perceived inadequacies were more benign and the critical consequences less dire. For more than a decade, the Grand Mogul of Vienna himself was accused of incompetence and waywardness in his Ninth Symphony (1824) and especially in such difficult late compositions as his final quintet of quartets (1824-26). While Schubert may be branded as a brilliant songwriter who never fully mastered larger instrumental forms, Beethoven has been equally unfairly criticized for a *lack* of lyricism and tunefulness.

Perhaps in Beethoven's case this critical pigeon holing is not entirely unmerited. For years we have known how hard he worked to create even a tune as seemingly simple as "Ode to Joy."[8] Although Beethoven was a far more gifted melodist than he is given credit for, it might not be too difficult to reach a consensus that great tunes like the "Ode to Joy" are rarer in the Beethoven canon than in Schubert's. Meanwhile, since the 1960s people have started to notice the sketch evidence for Schubert's compositional process, which reveals that the natural, songlike melody that opens the Piano Sonata in B-flat (D. 960) was realized only after considerable effort.[9]

The central accusation that Schubert never mastered large forms has roots that extend to the composer's lifetime. One of the central criticisms was Schubert's alleged prolixity. As evidence for the prosecution, prior to the publication of the Piano Trio in E-flat Major (D. 929) one month before

[8] Winter, "The Sketches for the Ode to Joy," 173-209,
[9] Hilmar, *Franz Schubert.*

Schubert died, the composer lost his nerve and cut the repeat of the exposition (230 measures) and, far more significantly, another 100 measures of the development. For over a century Schubert's capitulation was interpreted as agreement with his publisher and his friends that the movement was excessively long; his decision to cut his work it was thought, constituted only a pragmatic move to gain its publication. Scholars now offer persuasive support of Schubert's uncut version on artistic grounds, and several recordings have opted for the longer version.[10]

For further evidence further evidence that artists as well as scholars are reevaluating Schubert's alleged discursiveness, we might turn to the first ending option in the first movement of the Piano Sonata in B-flat Major, an option available since the nineteenth century, albeit a rarely chosen one. In contrast to earlier generations of pianists, including Schnabel, who almost invariably ignored this repeat, a number of contemporary pianists, among them Leon Fleisher, Evgeny Kissin, Murray Perahia, András Schiff, and Mitsuko Uchida, have opted to play the dramatic first ending of the B-flat Sonata with its prominent return of the ominous trill introduced early in the movement, even though this choice leads to a twenty-minute first movement. But this recent acceptance of Schubert's repetitiveness is not settled law. Other modern pianists, including Alfred Brendel and, more surprisingly, the fortepianist Malcolm Bilson, continue to omit this repeat and first ending, perhaps in order to avoid the "heavenly length" Schumann described in his review of the "Great" C Major Symphony, a work often subjected to considerable earthly pruning.

The graduation from major liability to asset is a significant component of Schubert's delayed apotheosis. From early on Schubert was revered for his songs, but a number of later arriving instrumental works, most notably the "Great" C Major and the Symphony in B Minor ("Unfinished"), were nonetheless established in the repertoire by the 1870s. However, until the recent past they continued to receive considerable criticism for one

[10] For scholars who advocate the long version of D. 929, see in particular John M. Gingerich, *Schubert's Beethoven Project* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 280-301. For an uncut recording, see András Schiff (piano), Yuuko Shiokawa (violin), and Miklós Perényi (violoncello), *Schubert Piano Trios* (Teldec Classics 0630-13151-2) (1997).

perceived flaw or another, again mostly due to length. Schubert's increased stature over the years has even led to the inclusion of previously maligned works, especially since 1997. For example, one work that was regularly disparaged for its alleged gratuitous virtuosity and its destruction of a great Schubert melody (*Sei mir gegrüsst*), the Fantasy in C Major for Violin and Piano (D. 934), has become rehabilitated to the point where it rests on the verge of the chamber music canon, and many virtuoso violinists still want to play it, if they can locate a pianist capable of negotiating its many difficulties.[11]

Increasingly, it is evident from concert programs that established pianists almost certainly are playing considerably more Schubert today than they did several decades ago. Gone are the days when a pianist of Sergei Rachmaninov's stature could innocently ask (as he did in the late 1920s), "Schubert wrote piano sonatas?" At least a half dozen of Schubert's chamber compositions (four quartets, the quintet, and the octet) are repertory staples, and pianists who do not perform the Piano Sonata in B-flat Major are an endangered species.

Songs may not always impress critics, but they were and are the most popular music on the planet, by far. Schubert had success in various genres during his lifetime, but his songs are the sole remunerative, popular, and critically acclaimed genre that remains in the mainstream of the modern repertoire. The other genres in which Schubert achieved significant recognition—partsongs (a choral form), dances, and piano four hands—faded from musical life. The works Schubert composed in the mainstream instrumental genres (symphonies, chamber music, and piano sonatas) were far less recognized in his own lifetime. In a number of notable cases these works remained unknown for decades after his death. Although his initial recognition as a songwriter followed Schubert for generations and he did not surpass or even seriously challenge Beethoven in the instrumental domain, he gradually received broad critical and popular recognition in the most prestigious instrumental genres.

[11] McCreless, "A Candidate for the Canon?" 205-30.

Although Schubert was a capable pianist, he possessed neither the technical skills nor the temperament to achieve success as a professional performer. In an era where most concertizing professionals promoted their own compositions, the non-virtuosic Schubert was at a disadvantage in that he composed no piano concertos or virtuosic variations and fantasies on opera themes, a well-paved avenue to success and recognition. In the decade after Schubert's death, Liszt, the leading piano virtuoso of his age, began to champion Schubert's music and in the process transformed the solo "Wanderer" into a concerto. He also transcribed nearly sixty of Schubert's songs with piano accompaniment into solo piano pieces, published them, and performed many of them in his recitals for decades. Until much later in his career, however, Liszt left untouched Schubert's piano sonatas, a genre that did not find a secure home in public recitals until later in the century. Despite this neglect, Liszt's extraordinary advocacy did much to bring Schubert's music, especially the songs, to the European public.

The most effective way to establish a reputation in the nineteenth century, followed by posthumous prestige, was to succeed in either symphony or opera. And success in a court opera setting or publicly funded venues such as the Paris Opéra was the main way for a composer to achieve financial solvency as well as prestige. Success in both domains was almost too much to hope for. Beethoven, inarguably the dominant symphonic composer of the first half of the century, managed to gain a more equivocal immortality for his only opera, *Fidelio.* Indeed, several other composers known for their symphonic works did achieve a degree of operatic acclaim in their lifetimes, perhaps most notably Tchaikovsky (*Eugene Onegin, Pique Dame*), Bedřich Smetana (*The Bartered Bride*) and Antonín Dvořák (*Russalka*). Hector Berlioz (*The Trojans*) would not gain recognition as an opera composer until the 1960s after a century of neglect.

The reception of Schubert's symphonies can be seen as a case of "too little, too late." The too little part is that Schubert lived long enough to complete only one mature symphony, the "Great" C Major of 1825-26, and one admired gem among his earlier symphonies, No. 5 in B-flat Major (D. 485), composed in 1816. As for being too late, neither of Schubert's most significant symphonic works, the "Unfinished" Symphony in B Minor of 1822 nor the "Great" C Major did not become known until years after the

composer's death, nearly four decades in the case of the "Unfinished." The first performance of the "Great" C Major occurred in 1839 and the "Unfinished" did not debut until 1865.

Schubert died before completing his final symphony, generally known today as the Symphony No. 10 in D Major (D. 936A), although Brian Newbould's realization offers more than a glimpse of its potential greatness.[12] Eventually, Schubert achieved a measure of belated immortality in the symphonic realm. On the other hand, operatic success remained one of Grillparzer's "fairer hopes," despite efforts from Liszt to present a revised performing version of *Alfonso und Estrella* in 1854. In 1988, conductor Claudio Abbado's recorded *Fierrabras,* and a video performance this opera was released in 2007 starring Jonas Kaufmann. Both were accomplished but ultimately unsuccessful attempts to establish *Fierrabras* in the repertory.[13]

Schubert's posthumous reputation has been haunted by several well-meaning statements expressed within a dozen years after his death. In fact, so powerful was their staying power that they influenced Schubert's reputation for well over a century and continue to inhabit program notes and non-scholarly surveys. The first remark occurred shortly after the composer's death when his famous early mentor and champion, the singer Johann Michael Vogl, wrote in an 1831 letter to Albert Stadler, a friend from Schubert's youth, that Schubert's music "comes into existence during a state of clairvoyance or somnambulism."[14] What Vogl meant as a compliment to Schubert's natural genius gradually evolved into Sir George

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[12] The Newbould realization of the Tenth along with other significant symphonic fragments (D Major, D. 708A; No. 7 in E Minor, D.729; D Major, D. 615; No. 10 in D Major, (D. 936A) and a completed version of the third movement of the "Unfinished," was recorded for the first time by Neville Marriner in the 1980s (Philips 412 591-2) and is currently available in various reissues. The Newbould realizations of No. 7 (D. 729) and No. 10 (D. 936A) have been published. *Franz Schubert: Symphony No. 7 in E* (D. 729) (Kingston upon Hull: University of Hull Press, 1992) and *Franz Schubert: Symphony No.10 in D Major* (D. 936A) (London: Faber Music, 1995).

[13] *Fierrabras,* Arnold Schoenberg Chor and The Chamber Orchestra of Europe, conducted by Claudio Abbado (DG 427 341-2, 2 CDs) (1988); *Fierrabras,* Zurich Opera House, conducted by Fran Welser-Möst (DVD, EMI Classics 5 00969 0) (2007).

[14] "Albert Stadler: Salzburg," January 17, 1858," in *Memoirs,* 146.

Grove's influential portrait in the 1880s of a composer who wrote too easily, too rapidly, and with insufficient thought, discipline, and self-criticism.[15]

As late as 1976 the pianist Alfred Brendel, a Schubert specialist and advocate, reinforced, not only the gist of Vogl's remark and its reincarnation in Grove, but its critical implications: "As I have written elsewhere, compared to Beethoven the architect, Schubert composed like a sleepwalker. In Beethoven's sonatas we never lose our bearings; they justify themselves at all times. Schubert's sonatas happen. There is something disarmingly naïve in the way they happen."[16] Although we will see in the final chapter that Richard Taruskin clearly does not think of Schubert in these terms, when he titled his detailed, subtle, and laudatory survey of the composer in the third volume of *The Oxford History of Western Music* published in 2003, he chose "The Music Trance" without apology.[17]

A few years after Vogl's offhand remark to Stadler, the composer Robert Schuman, an ecstatic early Schubert admirer and the critic and editor of the journal *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik,* uttered two well-intended pronouncements that inadvertently prolonged Schubert's residence in critical purgatory. One of these public statements, which Schumann meant as the highest praise, was his description in 1840 of the "heavenly length" (*himmlische Länge*) that Schubert exhibited in the "Great" C Major Symphony, the work Schumann discovered in 1839 and reviewed the following year. [18] It didn't take too long for the phrase "heavenly length" to metamorphose into a euphemism for "too long." Even if Schumann's remark did not directly inspire them, many future critics readily concurred with its implied criticism and contributed to the persistent dismissal of Schubert's large-form works, especially his finales, often deemed too long, too repetitive, and too discursive. The diffusive Schubert was the prevailing

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[15] Grove, *Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn.*

[16] Brendel, "Schubert's Piano Sonatas, 1822-1828," in *Musical Thoughts and Afterthoughts*, 62.

[17] Taruskin, "The Music Trance," in *Oxford History of Western Music,* 3: 61-118.

[18] Schumann, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musk* 12 (1840), 82-83, English translation in *Schumann on Music,* 165-66: "And this heavenly length, like a fat novel in four volumes by Jean Paul—never-ending, and if only that the reader may go on creating in the same vein afterwards."

view in the composer's reception, until the tide began to turn around the time of Schubert's bicentennial.[19]

Equally damning to Schubert's reputation was Schumann's second well-meaning but soon to be misconstrued comment from the review "Schubert's Grand Duo and Three Last Sonatas" published one year before he had discovered the "Great" C Major. The remark relates to Schubert's musical character. Schumann wrote: "Thus, whoever has some sensibility and schooling will recognize both Beethoven and Schubert on the first page and distinguish between them. Compared with Beethoven, Schubert is a feminine character, much more voluble, softer and broader; or a guileless child romping among giants. Such is the relationship of these symphonic movements to those of Beethoven. Their intimacy is purely Schubertian. They have their robust moments, to be sure, and marshal formidable forces. But Schubert conducts himself as wife to husband, the one giving orders, the other relying upon pleas and persuasion. All of this in relationship to Beethoven! Compared with others he is man enough, the boldest and freest, indeed, of all the newer musicians."[20]

Like the "heavenly length" statement, Schumann's comment on the relative masculinity and femininity of Schubert and Beethoven has been taken out of context and distorted. Few writers quote another Schumann sentence on Schubert's masculinity in the essay on the "Great" C Major: "The symphony's utter independence of Beethoven's symphonies is another indication of its masculine origin."[21] Despite these nuances and apparent contradiction, the image of the feminine Schubert retained its traction for well more than a century and became a powerful factor in assigning value to Schubert's reputation, especially in contrast to the persona and the work of Beethoven who was looked upon as *more* masculine. The notion that Schubert's music was less masculine than Beethoven's soon evolved into an image of Schubert as a feminine composer, a characterization abetted by

[19] As we later see, descriptions of diffuseness, discursiveness, and repetitiveness from Grove to Tovey, Theodor Adorno, Carl Dahlhaus, James Webster, and Thomas Denny persisted with remarkable tenacity.

[20] Schumann, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 8 (1838), 178-79; reprinted in *Schumann on Music* 142.

[21] English translation in *Schumann on Music,* 166.

the composer's attention to poetry, song, and other lyrical trappings associated with feminine sensibilities and feminine genres.

For a startling illustration of how gendered language continued to form a major part of Schubert analysis (and for how long it held sway) we need only to turn to Hugh Macdonald's 1978 characterization of the middle section in the Andantino movement of Schubert's Piano Sonata in A Major (D. 959) as a passage "which very strongly suggests hysteria" or another burst of violence that suggests "a child's uncontrolled bad temper."[22] In the final stage of this evolution in the late twentieth century, the characterization of Schubert evolved from feminine to gay and finally to a musical "Other," and for a while in the 1990s, so did his music. In Chapters 8 and 9, I will return to the feminization of Schubert, exploring how writers on Schubert beginning with Maynard Solomon have addressed the issue of Schubert's sexuality, why the topic mattered so much in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and why it no longer seems to matter, and in fact often is dismissed or ignored in recent writings about Schubert.

As with many composers known primarily as songwriters and melodists more generally, Schubert's reputation has suffered due to the perceived incompatibility between lyricism and successful large forms. Schubert's success as a melodist and his predilection to allow his lyricism to infiltrate, even permeate, his larger forms, stood in sharp contrast with the success of Beethoven, a composer known and appreciated more for developing motives rather than full-fledged tunes and for mastery in creating larger forms from short, more idiosyncratically instrumental melodic signatures. The opening motto of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony represents the gold standard of the motivic approach. Beethoven's larger forms had become the central critical heroic paradigm even in his own lifetime, and Schubert would be perpetually regarded as non-Beethovenian. For many years Schubert's lyric-feminine paradigm would invariably be judged as inadequate.

Schubert, affectionately known as Schwammerl (mushroom) by his friends, was short in stature (about 5 feet 1 1/2 inches tall), somewhat round, portly,

[22] Hugh Macdonald, "Schubert's Volcanic Temper," 950.

and consequently unprepossessing in appearance.[23] Writers have often commented on Schubert's unimpressive appearance, and although other musical "giants" such as Mozart (5 ft., 4 in.) and Beethoven (5 ft., 3 in.) were also short, even by contemporary standards, in Schubert's case many writers seemed to make connections between Schubert's physical and musical stature. Although Schubert possessed an artistic temperament, he did not convey the kind of dynamism or assertiveness associated with Beethoven, and most of his music seemed to exhibit facility and ease rather than Beethoven's heroic and masculine biographical and musical struggles. Moreover, Schubert's illness offered fewer opportunities to romanticize a turbulent life and horrific death. The syphilis which afflicted Schubert at age twenty-five was comparable in severity to the deafness and various stomach ailments suffered by Beethoven, and by most accounts syphilis hastened Schubert's death six years later. But by its nature, syphilis, although more life-threatening, could not compete with the poignant power of deafness to symbolize a musician's psychological suffering. Small wonder, then, that J. W. N. Sullivan chose to write a book on the spiritual development of Beethoven rather than Schubert's.[24]

Grillparzer's "Fairer Hopes"

Schubert died on November 19, 1828, about three months short of the age of thirty-two. During his lifetime he composed more than a thousand works, including more than 600 songs and hundreds of larger works. It was an astonishingly productive life, arguably too rich for nearly anyone to absorb. Soon after his first composition attempts in his early teens he composed several songs universally acknowledged as masterpieces, including *Gretchen am Spinnrade* at seventeen and *Erlkönig* at eighteen, the latter song described by Christopher H. Gibbs as Schubert's "preeminent work throughout the nineteenth century."[25] Before the age of twenty, he had created several instrumental works that are frequently performed today, such as his Fifth Symphony. In summarizing Schubert's early

[23] The historical novel, *Schwammerl* (1912), by Rudolph Hans Bartsch was the central source of *Das Dreimäderlhaus* (1916) and other stage and film adaptations.
[24] Sullivan, *Beethoven: His Spiritual Development* was influential in Beethoven reception studies for decades after its first publication in 1927.
[25] Gibbs, "German Reception," 243.

accomplishments, Tovey dismisses Schubert's youthful instrumental music, but also writes in a well-known 1927 essay that "Schubert's boyhood, then, culminated in two of his most powerful songs [*Gretchen* and *Erlkönig*], a uniquely charming piece of church music [the Mass in F], and an almost equally pretty one-act opera [*Der Vierjährige Posten*]."[26]

Over the next several years Schubert created several instrumental works as well as songs that remain permanent fixtures in the classical repertoire, most prominently the perennially popular "Trout" Quintet and the Piano Sonata in A Major, Op. 120 (at the age of twenty-two), the *Quartettsatz* [quartet movement] in C Minor for string quartet (twenty-three), the "Wanderer" Fantasy and "Unfinished" Symphony (twenty-five), and the song cycle *Die schöne Müllerin* (twenty-six). Despite the impressive instrumental pieces on this list, it was not until about 1824, when Schubert was twenty-seven, that the composer began to create the series of chamber works, piano sonatas, and the single completed symphony for which he is most revered today, beginning with the Octet and the String Quartets in A Minor and D minor.

Most historians, musicians, and listeners agree that in his last three years of life Schubert created a series of masterpieces. Among the many other works during these final years are the "Great" Symphony in C Major in 1825-26 and the String Quartet in G Major in 1826; in 1827 he composed the Piano Trio in E-flat and possibly the B-flat Trio (although some scholars place the latter in 1828) and completed the Mass in A-flat Major, eight Impromptus for solo piano, and the Fantasy for Violin and Piano. In his final year he completed the Fantasy in F Minor for piano four hands, the solo piano pieces known simply as *Drei Klavierstücke* (Three Piano Pieces), the Mass in E-flat Major, the fourteen songs published shortly after his death as *Schwanengeang* (Swan Song), the String Quintet in C Major, a final trilogy of Piano Sonatas in C Minor, A Major, and B-flat Major, a nearly-completed final opera, *Der Graf von Gleichen* and a nearly-completed Tenth Symphony. See table 1.2 for a list comparing Schubert's major compositions compared with those of Beethoven between 1817 and 1828.

[26] Tovey, "Franz Schubert (1797-1828)," 103-33, 116. For more on this essay, see Chapter 10 of this volume.