

Annual Review of Schubert's Life

1814

The immediate effect of Schubert's desire to get away from the *Stadtkonvikt* was to present his father with the opportunity to impose a condition, that he should enter the *Imperial Normalhauptschule* (Teachers' Training College) to which he could commute from the family home in the Säulengasse schoolhouse. As well as the notion of preventing young Franz from wasting his time with what was considered to be an unpromising career in music, his father (and perhaps his brothers too, also teachers) no doubt thought that the profession of teaching could give financial security in uncertain times and also provide some measure of protection against conscription into the army. In November 1813, shortly before his seventeenth birthday, Schubert entered the College to train for a profession that he would come to find oppressive.

On leaving the *Konvikt* Schubert started work on his second opera, *Des Teufels Lustschloss* (D84) on 30th October 1813, based on the Kotzebue play, and he continued to work on this until 22nd October 1814. Now living in his father's home in the schoolhouse at Säulengasse (the Himmelpfortgrund schoolhouse) he travelled six days each week to the College in the Annagasse. He still took his lessons with Salieri two days a week and sang in the choir at the Lichtental church. Nevertheless he managed to find time to compose prolifically, study at the College proving to be rather less demanding on his time than it had been at the *Stadtkonvikt*.

On 15th April 1814 the armies allied against Napoleon entered Paris forcing Napoleon to abdicate and causing his banishment to Elba. This had deep echoes for Schubert who had lived through the French army's bombardment of Vienna when he was twelve. Joseph von Spaun recalled many years later that 'it was a magnificent sight to see the glowing cannon balls curving across the night sky, while the many conflagrations reddened the sky. Before our very eyes a ball from a howitzer fell in the University square and burst in one of the lovely fountains there; but all of a sudden there was a crash in the house itself, a howitzer shell having fallen on the Seminary building. It penetrated every floor down to the first and burst on the first floor in Prefect Walch's room, who was just turning the key to go in.'^[1] A poem celebrating the allied armies' victory appeared in a Vienna newspaper on 16th May and resulted in three settings of the words by Schubert – *Die Befreier Europas in Paris*, The Liberators of Europe in Paris, D104.

The very next day he began work on a Mass in F (D105), and within a few days of beginning this large work Schubert saw a performance of Beethoven's *Fidelio* in its final revision at the Kärntnertheater thus further widening his experience. Written for the festival of the hundredth anniversary of the Lichtental church, the *Mass in F* was performed there probably in September (rather than the October date postulated by Deutsch^[2]), the young composer directing an orchestra with double wind (oboes, clarinets, bassoons and horns), a chorus of thirty voices and soloists. The work was his first completed Mass, and also his first public performance, and whilst the commission was without remuneration it created in him a lifelong interest in the form of the Mass as a framework for larger-scale composition, and also for the opportunities it offered for public performance.

His ten-month course of studies at the College over, Schubert in the autumn of 1814 began his career as a teacher at his father's school, where his dislike of the work made him perhaps too harsh a disciplinarian with his young pupils. Kreissle (Schubert's first biographer) tells us that he could be rather ill-tempered and quick to raise his hand to the side of the head of any offending child^[3]. His many disagreements with his father soon made life at home unbearable for him and he would escape to visit friends like the Grobs, themselves friends of the Schubert family, to talk and make music. The recent performance of his Mass at the Lichtental church had required six soloists and Therese Grob had on that occasion sung for him the part of first

soprano. Therese was a year younger than Franz and had a distinctively pure voice of which he grew fond, and this fondness evidently extended to Therese herself. Indeed there seems little doubt that Therese became the love of Schubert's life, but whether through her family's concerns at his lack of financial prospects, or because of Metternich's restrictive marriage laws, the relationship did not progress to marriage and eventually in 1820 she married someone else, a master baker. In the meantime Schubert would continue to write for her and she would perform many works for him.

The Mass had been a great success, with Salieri embracing him and declaring that as his pupil he would bring him great honour. On this occasion Schubert's father showed delight, glowing with pride at his son's achievement, and resulting in a promise, according to Franz's brother Ferdinand, to buy Franz a piano of his own.

Towards the end of the year Schubert discovered Goethe's *Faust*, perhaps at the encouragement of Spaun, and a new sensitivity to text emerged in Schubert's songwriting, an early response being revealed in *Gretchen am Spinrade* (D118), Schubert's first great song. Several other Goethe settings swiftly followed. In December he wrote two versions of a song *Am See* (By the Lake, D124) to a text by Johann Baptist Mayrhofer. Spaun had presented the poem to him as suitable for setting, and within a few days he took Schubert, manuscript in hand, to visit his old friend Mayrhofer.

Spaun and Mayrhofer, with Kenner and a number of others senior to Schubert by several years, were members of a circle of friends that had been founded in Linz in 1811 centred upon a group of former students from the Kremsmünster seminary. Those now in Vienna kept up their friendship and their zeal for self-improvement and education (*Bildung*) which was a central tenet of the group. It was the pursuit of these aesthetics that occasioned Dr McKay to confer the name on them of the *Bildung Circle*, a term that has found general favour. It was probably as a result of the meeting between Spaun, Mayrhofer and Schubert that Franz was invited to join the circle. It was to prove a major turning point in his life.

"The abiding mistrust of inactivity and laziness, amongst older members of the circle, who believed that time was to be used gainfully for the advancement of knowledge and understanding, must have rubbed off on Schubert, whose productivity over the next few years was astonishing."^[4] 1815 alone was to provide a feast of close on one hundred and fifty songs.

Notable works of 1814:

- D97 A minor *Trost: an Elisa* Matthisson song 1814
- D100 Eb major *Geisternähe* Matthisson song 1814 Apr
- D105 F major Mass 1 S,A,T,B,orch,(org) 1814 17 May- 22 Jul
- D101 E minor *Erinnerung (Todtenopfer)* Matthisson song 1814 Apr
- D112 Bb major String Quartet (8) 1814 5-13 Sep
- D116 C minor *Der Geistertanz (3)* Matthisson song 1814 14 Oct
- D113 F major *An Emma* 3 Versions Schiller song 1814 17 Sep
- D118 D minor *Gretchen am Spinnrade* Goethe song 1814 19 Oct
- D119 Ab major *Nachtgesang* Goethe song 1814 30 Nov
- D121/1&2 E minor *Schäfers Klage* Version 2 in C minor Goethe song 1814 30 Nov
- D122 G minor *Ammenlied* Lubi song 1814 Dec
- D124 G minor *Am See* 2 Versions Mayrhofer song 1814 7 Dec
- D125 Bb major Symphony No.2 10 Dec 1814 - 24 Mar 1815
- D126 C minor *Szene aus Faust* 2 Versions Goethe song 1814 12 Dec.

Notes

[1] Deutsch: [Schubert: Memoirs by his friends](#), p.353

[2] McKay: [Franz Schubert: A biography](#), p.40, note 13

[3] Kreissle von Hellborn: [Franz Schubert](#), p.34

[4] McKay: [Franz Schubert: A biography](#), p.47

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