

Annual Review of Schubert's Life

1820

Schubert was fortunate in his friends. Vogl for instance helped him to pay his rent when he moved out of the single long and gloomy room that he shared with Mayrhofer on a largely 'box-and-cox' basis. Joseph von Spaun, Anselm Hüttenbrenner, Vogl, and both Ignaz Sonnleithner and his son, also gave him continued help and material support.

Whilst he was sharing with Mayrhofer, Anselm Hüttenbrenner's brother Joseph, who admired Schubert inordinately, moved into a room of the same house a floor below Schubert and Mayrhofer and undertook to do those things that Schubert had no taste for, becoming his amanuensis and general factotum. Schubert soon began to tire of his unceasing attention, and as he was to do with many friends who had unselfishly helped him in many ways, began to treat him rudely and inconsiderately. He became nicknamed "The Tyrant" by his friends, perhaps good-humouredly at first, but many of them took offence as he acted thoughtlessly and unkindly, especially to those who had been able to help him materially when he needed support.

His distancing from Mayrhofer was probably not helped by his abandonment of the opera *Adrast* (D137) after he had pressured Mayrhofer to write the libretto for him. Schubert stopped writing this to start a dramatic oratorio *Lazarus* (D689) in the hope that it would be performed as an Easter cantata. That too was never to be finished, perhaps in this case interrupted by the affair with the police in March 1820. 'Student' groups were held to constitute a danger by promoting ideas contrary to absolute government, and as a result the Bildung Circle was viewed with suspicion. Schubert was present when the group was raided by the police, the members being said by the Commissioner to have resisted the police and to have mocked authority. Schubert was perhaps fortunate, for as a result Senn was imprisoned for more than a year and then banished from Vienna.

Meanwhile, at the performance, intended at first to be directed by his brother Ferdinand as the newly-appointed choirmaster at Alt-Lerchenfeld, Haydn's *Nelson Mass* (aka *Coronation Mass*) was substituted for the unfinished *Lazarus*, possibly with Schubert himself directing.

After his drunken affray with the police a rather frightened Schubert with a black eye would seem to have stayed with his brother for a few days, and there composed for him six short *Antiphons* (D696) for Palm Sunday, with the idea that Ferdinand might pass these off as his own compositions and so enable his brother to enhance his reputation in his job.

The first (semi-)public concert outside Vienna to contain a work by Schubert, probably the *Overture in E minor* D648, occurred on the 7 April 1820 given by the Styrian Musical Society at Graz.

Die Zwillingsbrüder (D647) was put on at the *Kärntnertor-Theater* on 14 June with Vogl in the dual role as the twin brothers. Although it was received rather coolly, Schubert's friends made "a lot of noise" in calling for the composer. Schubert, reticent, and probably recognising that he had misjudged the lighter-hearted nature of the music required, refused to acknowledge his presence, and although

sitting with Anselm Hüttenbrenner it was left to the latter good-humouredly to announce that the composer was unfortunately not in the house to take his call. Six performances were given of this comic singspiel, and then it fell from the repertory.

In July 1820 (and perhaps early August) Schubert was on holiday at the Atzenbrugg country-house fest – a fallow period – as were the summer months of the surrounding years 1819-1822. On his return rehearsals began on *Die Zauberharfe* (D644) for its premiere in August. In the nine weeks between the two premieres Schubert seems to have attempted no work other than the revision of this score. This melodrama, with its incomprehensible plot, quickly suffered the fate of *Die Zwillingsbrüder* in falling out of the repertory.

In October he started another operatic venture, *Sakuntala* (D701), but this too was to remain unfinished, although he would work on it through the end of the year and into early 1821.

On 21 November Therese Grob was married, and on account of his original hopes towards her, the news was much to Schubert's distress.

December 1st saw the first public performance of a Schubert song, *Erlkönig* (D328), given at one of Ignaz Sonnleithner's salons. Sonnleithner with three other patrons put up their own money for a private publication of the song and about 100 copies were sold.

It is probable that sometime in the same month Schubert commenced the Quartet in C minor (*Quartettsatz*) (D703) – a milestone work – but that too was, regrettably, to remain unfinished.

Notable works of 1820:

D644 *Die Zauberharfe* Three Acts Hofman Melodrama 1820
D689 Oratorio *Lazarus* - 1st act and part of 2nd only Niemeyer 3 Sopranos, 2 Tenors, Bass, SATB, orchestra 1820 Feb
D696 6 Antiphons for Palm Sunday SATB for Ferdinand 1820 Mar
D701 *Sakuntala* Sketches for 2 Acts Only Neumann Opera 1820 Oct/Nov
D703 C Minor String Quartet 12 "*Quartettsatz*" 1820 Dec
D708a D Major Sketches for a Symphony (completed by Brian Newbould) 1820+ prob.early 1821 .

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