

Annual Review of Schubert's Life

1822

As a member of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* Schubert now had contact with most of the performers and people of musical influence in Viennese life. He was beginning to get occasional performances and received two important reviews of his songs in Vienna (on 19th January & 23rd March). It was in the January of 1822 that Schubert attended a party where he met a young writer Eduard von Bauernfeld who became a close and valuable friend, and there renewed his acquaintance with Moritz von Schwind. He also became acquainted with Weber when Weber was on a four-week visit to Vienna (February/March) for a production of his opera *Der Freischütz*.

Schubert's career seemed in the ascendancy, but as the year moved on his anxiety to see his own opera *Alfonso and Estrella* produced was mounting. The continuing lack of news about a production eventually became transformed in his mind into the certainty that it would not be put on. His friend and co-author Franz von Schober (libretto) believed they had produced a fine work and had fed Schubert's hopes that this would bring the pair of them success and financial stability. Schubert was at the time facing further financial problems, and at the same time the Schobers had seen their own family fortunes decline largely as a result of Franz von Schober's heavy gambling, forcing them to sell the family house and to move to a modest apartment.

Schubert's friends were finding the composer to be increasingly difficult and ungrateful, and he succeeded in alienating good & important friends like Spaun and Vogl. He quarrelled with some and neglected others. There was a growing resentment among them at the influence that Schober had over him in encouraging him in a hedonistic way of life, urging him to behave as he pleased regardless of the consequences or the feelings of others.

Between the April and August of 1822 Schubert produced nothing new other than a sketch for a *Kyrie* (D755), a song *Du liebst mich nicht* (D756) and a piece for female voices *Gott in der Natur* (D757), although he presumably did some work latterly on the A-flat Mass (D678) which still hung on from three years earlier, November 1819.

In these summer months, doing little or no work and in a state of despondency, with most of his friends out of Vienna for the summer and all musical life having come to a halt for the vacation, Schubert seems to have turned to other pleasures, indulging in sexual adventures in the seamier side of Vienna.

In the early autumn, and without consulting his friends, Schubert sold the copyright to his published songs outright to Diabelli, much to the anger of Leopold Sonnleithner who had been looking after Schubert's interests and had arranged for the original publication of the songs.

It was with the return of musical life to Vienna in the autumn that his creative appetite began to return, and he was heartened by hearing from friends in Graz that he was going to be proposed for membership of the Styrian Musical Society. The recommendation that he be so honoured would be passed by the committee the following year, in April 1823. Now there was a consuming urge to work and the remainder of the year saw a flush of masterworks from his pen, commencing

in October with the Symphony in B-flat minor 'The Unfinished' (D759) and closely followed by the *Wandererfantasie* (D760) of November, as well as around ten songs to words by Goethe, Collin, and Rückert.

Whilst commentators once believed that Schubert probably contracted syphilis in the January or February of the following year it now seems likely that the illness had begun to manifest itself by the end of the present year, 1822. The resulting impairment to his health was to cause him deep distress throughout the seven remaining years of his life, yet astonishingly was to bring about the most remarkable and radical change to his music. It is from around this time that the music generates a greater emotional intensity than had been possessed before and is at its most evident in those large-scale instrumental works that were now at his command, their expressive range no longer circumscribed by a text.

"The last half of 1822 was the most critical period of Schubert's life, both artistically and personally. He was to emerge, through the 'Unfinished' Symphony, one of the most eloquent instrumental tone-poets of all time" ^[1]

Notable works of 1822:

D678 A flat Major Mass for S,A,T,B, orchestra, organ 1819 Nov-1822 Sep
D759 B Minor Symphony 8 "Unfinished" 1822 Oct
D760 C Major *Wandererfantasie* 1822 Nov
D764 A flat Major *Der Musensohn* (2 versions - 2nd in G) Goethe song 1822 early Dec
D765 G Major *An die Entfemte* Goethe song 1822 Dec
D766 D Major *Am Flusse* Goethe song 1822 Dec
D767 C Major *Willkommen und Abschied* (2 versions, 1st in D) Goethe song 1822 Dec
D768 B flat Major *Wandrers Nachtlied* ('Über allen Gipfeln') Goethe song 1822 Dec
D771 A Minor *Der Zwerg* Collin song 1822 Nov
D772 D Minor *Wehmut* Collin song 1822 Nov
D775 C Major *Dass sie hier gewesen* Rückert song 1822 to 1823.

Notes

[1] Newbould: [Schubert, The Music and The Man](#), p174

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