

Thomas Wozonig

UNIVERSITÄT FÜR MUSIK UND DARSTELLENDEN KUNST W GRAZU

“Zur Müllerin hin / so lautet der Sinn?” Power Structures in the Performance Tradition of Franz Schubert’s *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*¹

Abstract

Since the middle of the 19th century, Franz Schubert’s song cycles *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise* are not only considered as an outstanding contribution to the *Lied* genre, but also as “romantic” compositions *par excellence*, whose protagonists might be depicted adequately only by performances of male singers. The “masculine nature” (Carl Lafite) of these thoughts, emotions and actions might be inappropriate for female singers. This attitude, which is still present today (even amongst professional musicians and musicologists), though, contradicts not only the performance practice of the early 19th century, but

¹ This paper is a translation of a presentation held at the symposium *Masculinities and Their Cliches in Music and Theater*, organised by the Centre for Gender Studies at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz on 27 and 28 October 2017. I would like to thank Nikola Franziska Gschwendner and Bettina Valicek for their assistance in the translation of the text. Since it would be too complicated to indicate the responsibility for the translation at each passage, and since the last corrections were applied by myself, the note “translated by the author” refers to all German sources that were created in the process of writing this paper.

even Schubert's handling of his songs. In fact, the idea of these two cycles as "men's cycles" has only developed in the course of the 19th century, when various impacts such as the general upvaluation of the *Lied* genre, the transfiguration of the composer, the interpretation of his songs as being a personal statement, and the idea of *Werktreue* shaped the reception of Schubert's compositions. These factors led to the consolidation of strong and still valid power structures, in which men are regarded as the norm, whereas women (and other alternative voice categories like countertenors) appear as deviation from this norm. These structures are tightly related to similar conditions and principles which have been outlined in the past decades by the masculinity studies on higher levels of our society. In this paper, I will set out this whole process by delineating the performance practice at Schubert's time, his own attitude (insofar as it is possible), the various influences of romantic musical aesthetics, and the development of the mentioned performance tradition towards the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Furthermore, a number of statements from the 21st century will demonstrate that these concepts are still common today, and I will correlate them with some certain principles pointed out by masculinity studies from the last decades.

Keywords

Gender, masculinity, Franz Schubert, song, Lied, romanticism

Introduction: Schubert's "Men's Cycles"

"[...] It is also possible to present particularly ambitious or curious recordings: *Die schöne Müllerin* accompanied by a guitar, sung by a woman, or by non-native speakers of various nationalities."² In our time, it is outlandish to read a quotation like this: the song cycle *Die schöne Müllerin* by Franz Schubert as a pure domain of men, and its

2 K. Engel, *Der Vogt und die Müllerin. Franz Schubert "Die schöne Müllerin" D 795*, [in:] *Liederabend. Klaus Florian Vogt* [concert programme], 11 December 2013, pp. 10–11, [online] <https://www.konzerthaus-dortmund.de/page/MediaLib/file/Programmheft/201314/Prog-Vogt.pdf> [accessed: 1.09.2017]. Transl. by the author.

performance by women compared with curious and serious interventions in the work like the change of the accompanying instrument or the underlying text.

However, the origin of this quotation is not that distant as one might think. It comes from a programme for the song recital of German tenor Klaus Florian Vogt held on 11 December 2013. The person who is responsible for this text is a female German musicologist, who, according to her homepage, is an employee at the Niedersächsischen Musiktage, the Dortmund concert hall, the Lucerne Concerts, the Beethoven Festival Bonn and "other ensembles and organisers".³ Obviously, her experience within the musical life of Germany rendered her impression of a woman's interpretation of *Die schöne Müllerin* as an exotic phenomenon.

Although the cultural liberalism of the 20th and 21st centuries has led to many new concepts of performance and reception of Schubert's works—e.g. there is an increasing number of countertenors⁴ engaging with the song cycles, such as Austrian Bernhard Landauer, who sang *Winterreise* in 1996⁵—there is still scepticism about the performance of Schubert's "men's cycles" by female singers. The reactions vary from value-free amazement (like in the example above) to rejection, when considered as an aesthetic malpractice.

In fact, the two song cycles, composed respectively in 1823 and 1827, are just the most famous examples of a larger debate in the area of *Kunstlied* about the tradition of distinguishing "women's songs" and "men's songs" (with the remaining songs being assigned to more or less "unisex" category). Werner Bodendorff enumerates the main criteria for such allocations as: text template, the narrative context, and the title.⁶

3 [online] http://www.wortuebermusik.de/seiten/ke/person_1.html [accessed: 1.09.2017].

4 It might lead to new and fruitful perspectives to abandon the dichotomy of men and women by adding to the issue the category of the countertenor's voice, which in the 19th century has often been said to stand close to "sexual ambivalence and androgyny". Such perspectives might question the dependency of the construction of gender/sex on the body of the singer by rather focussing on the pure voice and its qualities. A stimulating paper on this issue (focused mostly on opera, though) was recently published by Anke Charon. See: A. Charon, „Das Timbre mit seinen maskulinen Zügen...". *Eine Hörprobe zur Konstruktion von Geschlechtlichkeit bei Gesangsstimmen*, [in:] *Singstimmen. Ästhetik, Geschlecht, Vokalprofil*, ed. S.M. Woyke et al., Würzburg 2017, pp. 199–221.

5 [online] <http://www.bernhard-landauer.at/?p=2196&lang=en> [accessed: 1.09.2017].

6 W. Bodendorff, *Franz Schuberts Frauenbild*, Augsburg 1996, p. 11.

In this way, an identification of the interpreter of the song is rendered in the perception of an audience.

It is thus clear that all songs with a woman's *persona* (a female voice in first person) or with a respective title (e.g. *Cora an die Sonne* D 263 or *Lilla an die Morgenröthe* D 273) belong to the first category, whereas it might be possible that a new or altered narrative context breaks this linkage. *Der König in Thule*, for example, is originally sung by Gretchen in Goethe's *Faust I*, but being the archetype for Schubert's setting (D 367), the context of the drama is suspended, with the song becoming neutral in its *persona*. This tradition of distinguishing women's songs from men's songs is based on a concept of *Lied* as a narration with distinct roles or even as a "piece of opera", as the German bass-baritone Thomas Quasthoff claimed.⁷

For sure, such concepts, like any other aesthetic opinions, have their justification (as long as they are well-argued and allow for differing positions). On closer inspection, though, it appears that a big number of sceptics is satisfied by an thoughtless and even inexact reference to the text archetype. This attitude is regularly supported by emphasizing the authority and the will of the composer. As it is generally known, this way of thinking has persisted since the development of our discipline in the 19th century.⁸

For this paper, I would even go as far as to say that some of these ideas appear not to be unlike some of the power structures on higher social levels outlined by the masculinity studies within the last three decades.

First of all, it is obvious that in the context of Schubert's song cycles, the male singer represents the norm, whereas female singers are marked as "the Other". The presence of the male singer is not perceived consciously, but it rather appears as an "unmarked gender". It represents the universally accepted and therefore not questioned norm, in contrast to the "abnormal" female singer.⁹ The general acceptance of the man, in turn, leads to a confirmation and prolongation of that imbalance. This view has already been formulated by Michael Kimmel, who in

7 However, at no point of the interview Quasthoff expressed reservations about a performance of the song cycles by women. See: [online] <http://oe1.orf.at/programm/20170507/474067> [accessed: 1.09.2017].

8 N. Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance*, Oxford 2013, pp. 8–15.

9 K. Starck, B. Sauer, *Political Masculinities: Introduction*, [in:] *A Man's World? Political Masculinities in Literature and Culture*, ed. *idem*, Newcastle upon Tyne 2014, pp. 3–10.

1990 stated as following: "that which privileges us is rendered invisible by the very process that constructs this privilege."¹⁰

Another principle outlined by masculinity studies is what Todd Reeser formulated as the "fact that in a two-way manner institutions create masculinity but masculinity likewise contributes to the creating of institutions."¹¹ With regard to our issue, this explains that the "male institution" of the Schubert's song cycle has been shaped as such by the long tradition of male performances (and later recordings), whereas the resulting performance practice likewise favours and, by that influences, male singers—with Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (1925–2012) being the most prominent example. In consequence, it might lead to the situation that singers are afraid of engaging themselves with the song cycles, unless the access is granted by an established member of an institution. A prominent example is Christa Ludwig (*1928), a distinguished opera singer who had worked with renowned musicians such as Maria Callas, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Fritz Wunderlich, Plácido Domingo, Karl Böhm, Herbert von Karajan and others, and had sung on all major stages around the world. She first found herself in the situation to perform *Winterreise* in 1982 at the age of 56, when she was asked by the Wiener Musikverein (Viennese Music Association) to sing the composition. Ludwig, rather than studying it like all other parts she had sung before, rather asked another singer for advice—and, in fact, permission, as she stated in an interview:

Well, yes, of course, I love this piece! I said: "For God's sake, that's a man's business!" Well, then I asked Hans Hotter, I said: "Do you think I could sing *Winterreise*?" And then he thought about it for two minutes and said: "Well, if there's a miss who can sing it, it's you, so, sing it!"¹²

10 M. Kimmel, *After Fifteen Years: The Impact of the Sociology of Masculinity on the Masculinity of Sociology*, [in:] *Men, Masculinities and Social Theory*, ed. J. Hearn, D. Morgan, London 1990, p. 93.

11 T.W. Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction*, Chichester 2010, pp. 19–20.

12 „Also, ja natürlich, ich liebe das Stück. Ich sag: »Ja um Gottes Willen, das ist doch 'ne Männersache.« Ja, dann hab' ich erst den Hans Hotter gefragt, hab' gesagt: »Meinen Sie, ich könnte die *Winterreise* singen?« Und dann hat er zwei Minuten nachgedacht und gesagt: »Ja, wenn's einer singen kann als Fräulein, dann sind Sie das, also singen Sie's.«. *Christa Ludwig im Gespräch mit Hans Bünthe—Zeugen des Jahrhunderts* (2001) [film], [online] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rxZjRylwSU> [accessed: 2.12.2017]. Transl. by the author.

Although it seems a bold idea to establish a connection between these principles of masculinity studies and the performance practice of Schubert's songs, there is a certain evidence to confirm this venture. One of these proofs is that, at Schubert's time, there was no such binding distinction between women's songs and men's songs: the modern concept had to be shaped first in the course of the 19th century, thus declaring and consolidating the performances by men as the norm in contrast to performances by women, which were regarded as deviation. Nowadays, this concept is entrenched in our musical life, and male performers themselves contribute to this tradition by defending it and rejecting female singers. The celebrated German *Lied* singer Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, for example, opposed female interpreters in the two song cycles throughout his life (whereas he, as I have mentioned, encouraged the tradition with his own recordings). In an interview published in 1996, he confirmed: "In this regard, I am all old-fashioned: I am against it!"¹³ The whole debate is not only based on objective musical criteria, what is highlighted by the fact that very often but general assumptions and prejudices in relation to sex are also expressed. German singer Robert Holl (*1947), renowned for his Schubert interpretations, said that in *Winterreise* "typical emotions of men are described",¹⁴ whereas Christa Ludwig, more self-confident after her first performances of this cycle, asserted that "women are more sensitive and have greater emotional depth than men."¹⁵

Like in many other aspects of our modern musical culture, these ideas have their roots in the 19th century, when Romantic aesthetics transformed Franz Schubert into a musical genius alongside other celebrated composers and declared his compositions as "fixed star in the firmament".¹⁶ And that very process led over decades to perceiving *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise* as men's cycles. In this paper, I will set out this development by delineating the performance practice at Schubert's time, his own attitude (insofar as this is possible), the various influences of Romantic musical aesthetics, and the development of the mentioned performance tradition towards the end of the 19th

13 S. Näher, *Das Schubert-Lied und seine Interpreten*, Stuttgart-Weimar 1996, p. 62. Transl. by the author.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 115. Transl. by the author.

15 Liner notes for the DVD *Christa Ludwig: Die Winterreise*, Arthaus Musik 2009.

16 "Einem Fixstern gleich steht Schuberts Lied am Firmament." Quotation from: C.D., *Das Schubert'sche Lied*, "Signale für die musikalische Welt", No. 17/4 (1859), p. 34.

and the beginning of the 20th century. To prevent the risk of being accused of inaccuracy and dubious generalisation, it is necessary to clarify two aspects: on the one hand, this paper focuses only on the German tradition of Schubert reception (disregarding, for example, the vivid, but different situation in France at the same time); on the other hand, it has to be clear that the concept of Schubert's song cycles as pure men's cycles has never been the only approach to the *Schubertlied*: like today, there have been female singers and respective supporters throughout the 19th and 20th centuries (although, of course, they have been as underrepresented as they are today).

Schubert's *Lieder*

To explain the development of the *Lieder* cycles to men's cycles, it is necessary to consider the history of the genre as a whole. The *Lied* at time of Schubert's life was not as respected as it is nowadays. It was rather entertaining than demanding, its compositional requirement was reduced (rather in Germany than in Vienna; see below), and it had its place in the bourgeois and aristocratic area, where it was a fixed component of social life. In 1753 Karl Wilhelm Ramler and Christian Gottfried Kruse postulated in the preface of their *Oden mit Melodien*:

We are living more socially with other people than merely our family. We take walks in avenues, in fields, in gardens. And what can be more natural in such an occasion than singing? However, one does not want to sing a serious song, as they came together for interrupting the severity.¹⁷

This concept shaped the perception of the *Lied* genre for over a century and is nowadays called by the term *Berliner Liederschulen* (German: "Berlin *Lieder* schools"). In general, Schubert's *Lieder* have to be determined in this exact social context, even though his own songs

17 "Wir leben mit mehreren Leuten gesellig, als bloss mit unserer Familie. Wir gehen spazieren in Alleen, in Feldern, in Gärten. Und was ist bei diesen Gelegenheiten natürlicher, als daß man singt? Man will aber keine ernsthaften Lieder singen, denn man ist zusammengekommen, seinen Ernst zu unterbrechen." Quotation from: K.W. Ramler, C.G. Krause, *Vorbericht*, [in:] *Oden mit Melodien*, ed. *idem*, vol. 1, Berlin 1753, p. [2]. Transl. by the author.

would soon embark to go far beyond the compositional standards of the Berlin *Lieder* schools.

In January 1821, the first private meeting of “14 good acquaintances” was held, where “a great deal of exquisite songs by Schubert was played and sung by himself.”¹⁸ This was the first *Schubertiade*. The term was actually used by the participants themselves, the first time presumably by Adolf Friedrich Franz von Schober (1796–1882), a temporary donor of accommodation, worshipper and good friend of Franz Schubert, who already mentions *Schubertiaden* in a letter dated on November 1821.¹⁹ During those Schubertiades, music was played in a comfortable environment, probably a lot was experimented and tried out, and also greater compositions, like pieces for piano four hands, trios or quartets were presented.²⁰ The main genre, though, was *Lied*, performed by various singers and accompanied mostly by Schubert himself. Paul von Schilhawsky probably defines the situation correctly when he writes: “The performances back in these days were not demanding; one would, of course, present from sheets, and occasional errors would not be of any significance; for Schubert himself was playing along, partly supporting, partly correcting—and in no way playing correctly all the time.”²¹ To get an impression of this environment, one might take into account the famous drawing of Moritz von Schwind from 1868 (see: Illustr. 1).

In this artistic environment, the baritone Michael Vogl was the main interpreter of the *Lieder*, and if Schubert’s songs were sung outside of these meetings, Ludwig Tietze (or Titze; 1797–1850) would sing on most of these occasions. Furthermore, the layman and “tenoral baritone”²² Carl Freiherr of Schönstein (1796–1876) was regarded as one of the best interpreters of Schubert’s compositions, in particular of *Die schöne Müllerin*, that was dedicated to him. It is well documented that women

18 E. Hilmar, M. Jestremski, *Schubert-Enzyklopädie. Mit einem Geleitwort von Alfred Brendel*, vol. 2, Tutzing 2004, p. 667. Transl. by the author.

19 See: *Franz Schubert. Die Dokumente seines Lebens*, ed. O.E. Deutsch, vol. 1, München 1914, p. 11.

20 E. Hilmar, M. Jestremski, *op. cit.*, p. 668.

21 P. von Schilhawsky, *Wege zur Liedinterpretation. Franz Schubert, Robert Schumann, Johannes Brahms, Hugo Wolf, Gustav Mahler, Richard Strauss*, Wien–München 2004, p. 14. Transl. by the author.

22 G. La Face Bianconi, *Das Haus des Müllers. Zur Interpretation von Franz Schuberts Liedzyklus „Die schöne Müllerin“*, Wien 2013, p. 4.



Illustr. 1: Moritz von Schwind, *Ein Schubert-Abend bei Josef von Spaun*, sepia drawing, ca. 1868, Wien Museum.

participated in domestic musical life (mainly as singers),²³ and that especially those in the surrounding of Schubert were enthusiastic about his songs. As an example, Johanna Lutz (1803–1883)—engaged to Leopold Kupelwieser (1796–1862) and praised as a great interpreter of Schubert’s songs by her contemporaries²⁴—wrote in a letter in December 1823: “[...] when I am alone, I usually play Schubert’s *Lieder*. They really are so beautiful”²⁵ and Friedrich von Hartmann wrote about his private music house (but not a *Schubertiade*) in April 1827: “[...] Miss Arneth was pleasingly singing songs by Schubert and Himmel [...]”²⁶ But how is the attitude with the *Lieder* cycles, or rather with the treatment of women’s and men’s songs in general? In short: even though there is only a small number of evidences, it becomes clear that, whereas there was some kind of basic differentiation, there was no obligation in performance in the sense of an aesthetic “right or wrong”. As an example one might mention Johanna Lutz, of whom several of such

23 W. Bodendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

24 Lutz [Luz], (*Maria*) Johanna, [in:] *Schubert and His World: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. P. Clive, Oxford 1997, p. 122; L. von Sonnleithner, *Über die Art, Schubert’s Lieder vorzutragen*, [reprinted in:] “Schubert durch die Brille”, No. 12 (1994), p. 105.

25 Franz Schubert. *Die Dokumente...*, *op. cit.*, p. 175. Transl. by the author.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 396. Transl. by the author.

“border crossings” are documented. In a letter, she described the men’s songs *Lob der Tränen* (D 711) and *Schatzgräbers Begehr* (D 761) as great compositions, which she also liked to sing on her own.²⁷ Another letter even exceeds that: “The day before yesterday my father brought me two booklets of *Müllerlieder*, which have just been published. They bring me a lot of joy.”²⁸ Another really interesting reference was received with the legacy of his student, and probably also secret admirer, the countess Caroline Esterházy: a copy of the *Müllerlieder* with handwritten entries, telling that Schubert most likely rehearsed it with her.²⁹ Moreover, it is being discussed whether three copies of the *Müllerlieder*, which were transposed by Schubert, were also intended for the countess (and not for Carl Freiherr of Schönstein, as assumed previously).³⁰ From the opposite perspective of women’s songs, there is another interesting finding: the fact that *Am Grabe Anselmos* D 504 was dedicated to the baritone Michael Vogl—a song that, through the expression of pain of losing the loved one, should actually be considered a women’s song. It is probable that it was also sung by the dedicatee.³¹

Even these few evidences point to a different concept of *Liedgesang* as it is common nowadays. When performing songs—hereby I want to refer to Paul von Schilhawsky, an opponent of the attitude that women should not sing the men’s cycles—singers have no dramatic role to play, as opposed to those in the opera:

The *Lied* singer on the other hand, cannot and should not, as he would look pathetic and unbelievable up to a ridiculous point. Not only does this apply for the assembled programs of *Lieder* recitals [...], but also for the song cycles that reveal some sort of a continuous plot. On the podium, different laws are ruling than on stage, not illusion, but poetry, not efficient poetry, but a sensitively felt narration.³²

27 Compare: Lutz [Luz], *(Maria) Johanna*, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

28 O.E. Deutsch (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 204. Transl. by the author.

29 C.N. Welsh, *Zur Aufführungspraxis der „Schönen Müllerin“*, [in:] “Schubert durch die Brille” 16/17 (1996), p. 120.

30 D. Montgomery, *Franz Schubert’s Music Performance: Compositional Ideals, Notational Intent, Historical Realities, Pedagogical Foundations*, Hillsdale 2003, p. 30.

31 W. Bodendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

32 P. von Schilhawsky, *op. cit.*, p. 17. Transl. by the author.

In these sentences, Schilhawsky basically paraphrases (without indicating it) one of the most important sources for understanding the performance of *Schubertlieder*, namely Leopold von Sonnleithner's report *Über die Art, Schubert's Lieder vorzutragen* ("About the way of performing Schubert's Lieder"), dated on December 1857. In this text, he tries to call a right picture of the *Liedesang* back into people's minds:

Hundreds of times I heard him accompanying and rehearsing his *Lieder*. He never permitted any fierce expression when performing. The *Lieder* singer generally only narrates foreign experiences and feelings, he does not on his own plays the person of these feelings, he narrates; poets, composers and vocalists have to grasp the *Lied* lyrically and not dramatically [...]. Therefore, vocalists with a good voice and an easygoing, natural speech have very often had a huge impact with those *Lieder*.³³

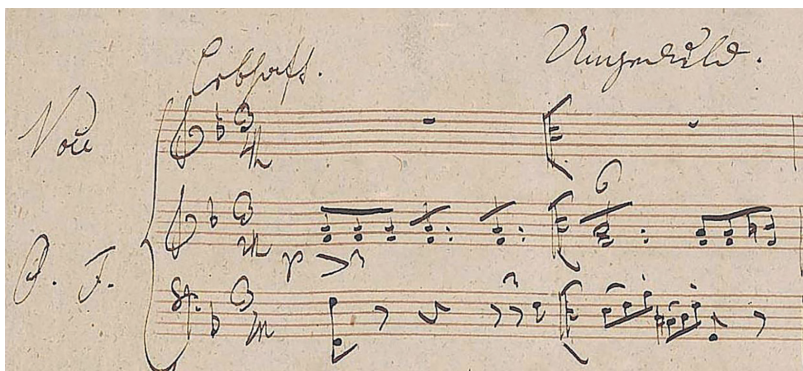
Corresponding this conception, which rejects an "excessive"³⁴ dramatic presentation³⁵ and the presentation of certain roles, there was

33 Reprinted in: "Schubert durch die Brille", No. 12 (1994), pp. 105–106. Transl. by the author.

34 Of course, there is no doubt that Schubert's songs have certain dramatic qualities, especially if being compared to the standard of that time; it was regularly recognized by early reviewers. See some of the examples in: H. Biehle, *Schuberts Lieder in Kritik und Literatur*, Berlin 1928, pp. 3–11.

35 However, the frequent deduction of this dramatic concept from Michael Vogl's qualities as an opera singer is a wrong conclusion. Although Mathias Hausmann's assertion that there was "no type of concert singer at that time yet" is perfectly correct and irrespective of the judgement that Vogl might have been an "impressive, strong person [...], the most sonorous baritone" on the "only right path of the dramatic art of singing" (E. von Bauernfeld, *Erinnerungen aus Alt-Wien*, Wien 1923, p. 106), it is hard to believe that he (and other singers) applied to the *Lied* a style that was influenced by the opera (all other quotations so far from: M. Hausmann, "Sag an, wer lehrt dich Lieder...?" *Probleme der Aufführungspraxis in Schuberts Liedern aus Sängersicht*, [in:] "Schubert durch die Brille", No. 21 (1998), pp. 9–18. Transl. by the author). Firstly, Vogl had already passed his peak by the 1820s, and it appears unlikely that he would have put great efforts into *Lieder* singing, what could have made this decline obvious in performance. Secondly, a great number of sources demonstrate that the *Schubertiaden* were informal and spontaneous situations in which there was apparently no effort for serious music making. In this regard, it is informative to take in mind Moritz von Schwind's drawing (Illustr. 1), in which Vogl does not appear in a dramatic or even operatic pose, but rather sits next to Schubert and obviously sings his part out of the same score as Schubert.

no such requirement for a definite vocal register.³⁶ Instead, the presentation of a *Lied* song should be possible for everyone with his or her individual vocal nature. In this context it is seen that Schubert usually avoided concrete definitions of the voice register in his songs, as opposed to his operas, his church music, or the cantatas (like *Ständchen* D 922 or *Mirjams Siegesgesang* D 942). Schubert usually just noted “Voce” or its German equivalent “Singstimme”, and used the neutral treble clef (see: Illustr. 2 and 3). Both details appear in his song cycles “with a pianoforte accompaniment”³⁷ as well.



Illustr. 2: Beginning of *Unge duld* in Schubert's autograph (clean copy) with the designations “Voce” and “P[iano]. F[orte].”: Wien: Bibliothek im Rathaus, accessible on Schubert Online, see: [online] http://www.schubert-online.at/activpage/manuskripte.php?top=1&werke_id=488&herkunft=gattung_einzelansicht [accessed: 2.12.2017].

³⁶ Here the relations to other vocal genres become obvious, like the secular Italian cantata, where “the definite sex of the singing body has no relevance, but is rather construed by the content and the performance itself.” See: A. Charon, *op. cit.*, p. 202. Transl. by the author.

³⁷ “Für eine Singstimme mit Pianoforte Begleitung” is the wording of the first edition of *Die schöne Müllerin*. In the case of *Winterreise*, the formulation is “for a singing voice with accompaniment of pianoforte” (“Für eine Singstimme mit Begleitung des Pianoforte”).



Illustr. 3: Beginning of *Ungeduld* in the first edition (Wien: Sauer & Leidesdorf, ca. 1824, Plate Set 502).

Furthermore, this fact gets strengthened by a comment of the composer to his women's song *Von Ida* D 228: "If this song is sung by tenor, the accompaniment will permanently fall down an octave."³⁸ Obviously it was no problem for Schubert to hear verses like "Kehr' um, kehr' um! / Zu deiner Einsamtrauernden! / Zu deiner Ahnungsschauernenden! Mein Einziger, kehr' um!" ("Turn back, turn back! / To your lonely [female] mourner! / To your intuitive trembling one / My only one, turn back!") being sung by a man.

Obviously, it would go too far to attest Schubert a complete neutrality or disinterest with regard to the performances of his songs. For sure, he had his own personal preferences, and they might have been strongly influenced by the voices of Michael Vogl and other vocalists of his environment, as it is very often presumed. The findings merely make clear that Schubert did not oppose the practice of common accessibility and adaption of his songs; in fact, he even promoted it.

Even beyond Schubert's lifetime, the sources clearly underline that men and women for a long time interpreted song cycles, and sometimes women were even preferred. Max Müller, a son of the poet, found *Die schöne Müllerin* best performed by Jenny Lind (1820–1887).³⁹ As another example, in a letter from Marie von Pratobevera to Josef Bergmann (22 January 1828) we can read: "Our little nightingale [the sister of the writer, Franziska] was singing really soulfully, especially the newest

38 H. Biehle, *op. cit.*, p. 9. Transl. by the author.

39 P. von Schilhawsky, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

songs of Schubert *Die Winterreise* [...]”⁴⁰ Also the mezzosoprano singer Amalie Weiss (Amalie Maria Joachim, née Schneeweiss, 1839–1899), who provided outstanding services to *Liedgesang* after her career as an opera singer, was able to sing *Winterreise* “[...] without any critics for aesthetic loss [...]”⁴¹

Change of Concepts During the 19th Century

It is well known that the reception of Schubert’s works was quite a complex process. Although modern scholars agree that he has never been as misunderstood and misjudged composer as it was claimed in earlier literature, it is nevertheless wrong to claim that “Schubert was fully recognized as a piano and *Lied* composer during his lifetime.”⁴² In fact, a closer look reveals that Mahling’s assertion is somehow true for the situation in Vienna—here, the ambitious compositions of Mozart and Beethoven had already introduced a higher and more diverse standard of song composition—whereas in Germany the press remained sceptical about Schubert’s innovations for a longer time.⁴³

In some respects, the early Schubert reception resembles the reception of Beethoven’s early instrumental compositions: the contemporaries were aware of his extraordinary talent, but they were not able to appreciate and to categorize his compositions with regard to the musical texture. Accordingly, we very often come across phrases like “too much”, “too far”, “too free”, and similar ones. In an article from the “Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung” (*AmZ*) we find the following lines:

Schubert does not write songs and he does not want to [...], but free songs, some of them so free, that they can only be denominated as capriccios or fantasias. The composer succeeds in building the layout as a whole and in de-

40 T.G. Georgiades, *Schubert. Musik und Lyrik*, Göttingen 1992, p. 195. Transl. by the author.

41 E. Schmierer, *Geschichte des Liedes*, Laaber 2017, pp. 328–329. Transl. by the author.

42 C.H. Mahling, *Zur Rezeption von Werken Franz Schuberts*, [in:] R. Karpf (ed.), *Zur Aufführungspraxis der Werke Franz Schuberts*, München 1984, p. 13. Transl. by the author.

43 It should be mentioned, however, that even in Germany attitudes could have varied, with the *Symphony in C major* D 944 (“Great”) being the best example: it was immediately celebrated in Leipzig, where it was premiered on 21 March 1839, whereas it was more or less rejected in Berlin at the same time. See: *ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

tail, as far as the idea is concerned, but not even close to its execution, which tries to compensate the lack of unity, order and regularity by barely or even unmotivated, wild temper and hustle. The vocal line, mostly declamatory, is at times unsingable and frequently unnecessarily difficult. The harmony is mostly fine, the modulation free, very free and often more than that. The reviewer knows no other composition of this genre, or even any other composition, that goes that far, not to mention further.⁴⁴

In another review, published three years later, we can read as follows:

Schubert seeks and writes in an unnatural way, not only in the melody, but also in the harmony, and most of all he modulates very suddenly to the most remote areas, like no other composer in the world—at least, as far as his songs are concerned. It is acknowledged that intellect and spirit are inherent in his songs.⁴⁵

Print media in Vienna, with "Wiener Theaterzeitung" and "[Wiener] Allgemeiner musikalischer Anzeiger" leading the way are, as already mentioned, more well-disposed towards the composer, despite scattered critique of excessive length⁴⁶, "[misguided] interpretation and treatment of the text"⁴⁷ or of pomposity and modulations which overwhelm the singing.⁴⁸ In fact, Schubert could not escape these allegations, since Ludwig van Beethoven—one of the biggest ironies in music history—was regarded as the most exemplary composer of *Lied* until the second half of the 19th century.⁴⁹

44 AmZ, No. 26 (1824), p. 426. Transl. by the author.

45 "Schubert sucht und künstelt, nicht in der Melodie, aber in der Harmonie sehr, und besonders moduliert er so befremdlich und oft so urplötzlich nach dem Entlegensten hin, wie, wenigstens in Liedern und anderen kl. Gesängen, kein Komponist auf dem ganzen Erdball. Daß in den Liedern oder liedermäßigen Gesängen Geist und Seele liegt, ist anerkannt" AmZ, No. 17 (1827), pp. 291–292. Transl. by the author.

46 "[Wiener] Allgemeiner musikalischer Anzeiger", No. 5 (1829), p. 19.

47 "[Wiener] Allgemeiner musikalischer Anzeiger", No. 12 (1829), p. 46.

48 *Ibid.*

49 See: "Neue Zeitschrift für Musik", No. 20/18 (1844), pp. 69–71. Still in 1863, Ferdinand Gleich states that "Beethoven's *Adelaide* is the only true rival of the *Schubertlieder*". *Charakterbilder aus der neueren Geschichte der Tonkunst*, Leipzig 1863; citing: H. Biehle, *op. cit.*, p. 16. Transl. by the author.

Nevertheless, this renunciation of pre-existing norms through an enhancement of formal, harmonic and pianistic means was reinterpreted in the sense of a romantic view of art during the late 1840s. The strongest tendencies progressed from the journal “Neue Zeitschrift für Musik” (NZfM), which, as is well known, was established by Robert Schumann. In 1848, the following report was published:

Schubert, the Novalis of new music, first plucked us dark roses from the garden of romance. His life was formless and anarchic. It was commiserated that Schubert did not reach a grander accuracy and roundness of the form, not restricted by the laws of the old school. We do not accept the possibility of the opposite. His harmonies are the genuine truth of his poetry, and yet they attain the same verdict of missing the point and not being adequate with those.⁵⁰

Two years later, in the next edition of the same journal an association with another writer was made. “The fact that Schubert is affected by Schlegel’s romance is proven through his songs.”⁵¹

The *Lied* genre and Schubert’s respective compositions were, in fact, linked with an “emphatic aesthetic of art”, according to which the *Lied* was “no longer a composition easy to sing”, but “rather brought to the level of art”.⁵² This may be surprising in two ways. On the one hand, because until the 20th century aesthetic debates about the genre preferred the exact relation to the text, strophic form and melodic similarity to folksongs.⁵³ On the other hand, because, until Richard Wagner, the centre of Romantic musical aesthetics was rather the “Metaphysik der Instrumentalmusik” (“metaphysics of instrumental music”) as it was shaped by the writings of Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, Ludwig Tieck and E.T.A. Hoffmann around

50 C. Kretschmann, *Romantik in der Musik*, NZfM, No. 29/1 (1848), p. 4. Transl. by the author.

51 J. Schäffer, *Romantik in der Musik II*, NZfM, No. 32/37 (1850), p. 191. Transl. by the author.

52 E. Schmierer, *op. cit.*, p. 85. Transl. by the author.

53 *Ibid.*, pp. 100–102.

1800.⁵⁴ "Only there", says Tieck, "is art independent and free. It writes its own laws, fantasises playfully and aimlessly, and yet it fulfills and reaches the highest one. It follows its dark urges and expresses what is deepest and most wonderful with its dalliance",⁵⁵ through which it opens the primate of 18th-century vocal music (which is mainly the genre of opera). Therefore, the potential is being restricted by having to give the text—and with that the characters and the plot—a mannered relation to reality, quite different from instrumental music with the symphony as its accomplished form:

Symphonies can express such a colorful, manifold, complicated and beautifully constructed drama, which a poet can never give. They expose enigmas in puzzling language, they do not depend on laws of probability, they do not need to conform to history or a character's background, they stay in their own sheer poetic world. Consequently, they avoid all means to ravish, to enchant, the matter is the purpose, from the beginning to the end. The purpose itself is present in every moment and commences and concludes the artwork.⁵⁶

It is obvious that Schubert's songs do not fit into this perception, since he deals with literary source material in a previously unknown way. The musical (re-)interpretation of the text template through semantically charging the piano part is a new and major quality of

54 C. Dahlhaus, *Romantische Musikästhetik und Wiener Klassik*, "Archiv für Musikwissenschaft", No. 29 (1972/3), pp. 167–181; *Europäische Romantik in der Musik*, ed. C. Dahlhaus, N. Miller, vol. 2, Stuttgart 2007, p. 175.

55 L. Tieck, *Symphonien*, [in:] *Phantasien über die Kunst*, ed. W.H. Wackenroder, L. Tieck, Stuttgart 2005, p. 110.

56 "Diese Symphonien können ein so buntes, mannigfaltiges, verworrenes und schön entwickeltes Drama darstellen, wie es uns der Dichter nimmermehr geben kann; denn sie enthüllen in rätselhafter Sprache das Rätselhafteste, sie hängen von keinen Gesetzen der Wahrscheinlichkeit ab, sie brauchen sich an keine Geschichte und an keine Charakteres zu schließen, sie bleiben in ihrer reinpoetischen Welt. Dadurch vermeiden sie alle Mittel, uns hinzureißen, uns zu entzücken, die Sache ist vom Anfange bis zu Ende ihr Gegenstand: der Zweck selbst ist in jedem Momente gegenwärtig und beginnt und endigt das Kunstwerk." Transl. by the author. See: *op. cit.*, p. 110–111.

his songs. However, Schubert again gives the music a “history” and a “character”, to paraphrase Tieck.⁵⁷

Here, crucial criteria for the “emphatic aspiration of art with a tendency towards originality”⁵⁸ was found, which should influence Schubert’s reception from now on. When contemporary authors indicate that “Schubert’s works show first signs of romanticism”,⁵⁹ it does not simply give reference to Schubert’s compositional innovations as mere analytical findings, but it becomes clear that his songs show a “Subjektivierung der Ästhetik” (“subjectivisation of the aesthetics”, to speak with a phrase by Hans-Georg Gadamer)⁶⁰, which was unknown

57 Especially if one considers Tieck’s views, it remains unclear how Schäffer builds the connection to Friedrich Schlegel’s philosophy in the aforementioned article. In fact, Schlegel, like Novalis, considered music as a “complete, symbolic system”, almost as “sounding mathematical”, thus being self-referential and autonomous. Here, the parallels to the metaphysics of instrumental music are obvious (see: M. Perrakis, *Nietzsches Musikästhetik der Affekte*, Freiburg–München 2011, pp. 32–34). It is possible, though, that the author had in mind Schlegel’s (at that time well known) concept of “Progressive Universalpoesie” (“progressive universal poetry”), an overall approach that strives to “blend, soon to meld poetry and prose, ingenuity and criticism, poetry of art and poetry of nature [...] and to fill up all types of arts with educational subjects of any kind [...] It comprehends everything that is poetic, from the biggest system of art comprising other systems itself, to sigh, the kiss, exhaled by the poetic child with a simple song.” (F. Schlegel, 116. *Athenäums-Fragment*, [online] <https://www.lernhelfer.de/schuelerlexikon/deutsch-abitur/artikel/116-athenaeums-fragment> [accessed: 06.12.2017], transl. by the author). Although this concept is never linked to music in Schlegel’s writings, it is interesting that some writers of the 19th century notice a close connection between poetry and music within Schubert’s songs and express this observation in formulations with strikingly resembling Schlegel’s concept: one needs to point out “the spirit which unites the whole [Schubert’s *Lied*]; the poetry, which enlivens the same; and the organism, which gives it the vivid expression”. (F. von Hentl, “Wiener Zeitschrift für Kunst, Literatur, Theater und Mode”, No. 36 (1822), p. 289); “In accordance with word and melody a dramatic element” (H. Barbedette, *Franz Schubert. Sa vie, ses oeuvres, son temps*, Paris 1865, p. 23).

58 E. Schmierer, *op. cit.*, p. 102. Transl. by the author.

59 W. Neumann, *Die Componisten der neueren Zeit, in Biographien geschildert*, vol. 28, Cassel 1855, p. 7. Transl. by the author.

60 Since the *Lied* had been a well established genre when Schubert started to assimilate it, one might refuse Josef Schreier’s proposal to change the phrase to “Ästhetisierung der Subjektivität” (“aestheticization of the subjectivity”). See: J. Schreier, *Novalis-Vertonungen. Die musikalische Rezeption der Texte Friedrich von Hardenbergs—Anzeige eines Forschungsdesiderats*, [in:] „Blüthenstaub“. *Rezeption und Wirkung des Werkes von Novalis*, ed. H. Uerlings, Berlin 2010, pp. 231–266.

prior to Schubert's work. This leads to the quotation from e.g. August Reissmann, who in 1861 said:

Schubert's progress on the topic of musical poetry is beyond any doubt. The modern *Lied* is a truly positive, new creation of art. The old poetry was a mass-poetry. At the outset, the human understands his relationship to the whole, just before he learns to feel himself. Therefore [...] Bach, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven had had to bring to music the sufferings and joys of mankind before the single subject was able to express the sensibility of the individual.⁶¹

This subjectivisation results in Schubert's tendency to reinterpret the text archetypes and to give them a personal character. This is already indicated by the "Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung" from 1826, where a review of the 1819 song *Sehnsucht* D 636 states that "in execution of certain details, at times it is still too much, and additionally, his interpretation of what is the primary feeling of the poet is insufficient."⁶² A year after the Schubert's death, another critic says about *Das Heimweh* D 456, composed 1825, that "the struggle of art and nature's omnipotence is in vain. Their replicas are never as true as the reality [...]. In *Heimweh*, Schubert has chosen the wrong path, namely the one without being prompted to do so by the poet's words", and a bit later in the same text, "with all due respect for the composer's talent, we have to declare this perception and treatment of the text as a failed attempt."⁶³ In 1867, Otto Gumprecht finds that the "youthful enthusiasm of the 18-year-old composer has apparently interpreted more into the literature [of the *Erlkönig*] that it holds. His music overshines the harsh simplicity of the eerie ballad and enfolds the nordic haunting spirit in allure of seductive sensuality."⁶⁴ However, the most severe reactions were evoked by *Winterreise*. A basically positive announcement in the

61 A. Reissmann, *Von Bach bis Wagner. Zur Geschichte der Musik*, Berlin 1861, p. 112. Transl. by the author.

62 AmZ, No. 28 (1826), p. 480. Transl. by the author.

63 *Das Heimweh. Die Allmacht (Gedichte von J.L. Pyrker.) In Musik gesetzt für eine Singstimme mit Begleitung des Pianoforte, von Franz Schubert. 79. Werk, fl. 1. – C.M. Wien, bey Tobias Haslinger, "[Wiener] Allgemeiner musikalischer Anzeiger"*, No. 12 (1829), p. 46. Transl. by the author.

64 "Die jugendliche Begeisterung des 18 jährigen Komponisten hat offenbar mehr in die Dichtung [*des Erlkönigs*] hineingetragen, als in ihr liegt, seine Musik überblüht die herbe Einfachheit der unheimlichen Ballade, sie kleidet den nordischen Spukgeist in die Reize verführerischer Sinnlichkeit." O. Gumprecht, *Franz Schubert, "Unsere Zeit. Deutsche Revue der Gegenwart"*, No. 3/13 (1867), p. 141. Transl. by the author.

“[Wiener] Allgemeiner musikalischer Anzeiger” states that “it often happened that he felt deeper and stronger than the poet and that the sense of the words was not given without exaggeration.”⁶⁵ More or less at the same time, similar report was given in the AmZ: “*Erstarrung*: The musical narrative (triplet) does not correspond with the state which the poet gives the wanderer”, then: “*Gute Nacht*: this passage [“Gott hat sie so gemacht”] will give the audience shudder, but that is just too much.”⁶⁶ Also very striking is a verdict of Arnold Niggli from 1881: “In 6 *Heinelieder* [*Schwanengesang*] the form still more concise, the mood more memorable, often in a compelling punchline and the individual words more fraught with meaning than Goethe.”⁶⁷ From where we stand today, it appears difficult to understand Eduard Hanslick’s verdict to prefer Ludwig Berger’s setting on Wilhelm Müller’s *Ich möchte ziehen in die Welt hinaus* to Schubert’s *Die böse Farbe* from *Die schöne Müllerin*, because Schubert’s interpretation with the “fresh and bold” beginning does not “meet the mood of a lover’s pain”.⁶⁸ In this song cycle, Schubert’s will to personal interpretation also appears on a superior level: as it is known, he did not set all of Wilhelm Müller’s poems to music, but left out the prologue as well as three other poems and, by doing so, strongly provided the concept of a serious narration, which would not have been possible if he had retained the parodistic prologue.⁶⁹

Gradually, Schubert’s songs were gaining the exceptional position that they behold today. Crucial for that was, as already mentioned, the positive reinterpretation of the subjective text perception and interpretation, as well as the advanced compositional means: the concept of male

65 “[Wiener] Allgemeiner musikalischer Anzeiger”, No. 3 (1829), pp. 10–11. Transl. by the author.

66 AmZ, No. 40 (1829), pp. 653–662. Transl. by the author.

67 A. Niggli, *Franz Schuberts Leben und Werke*, Leipzig 1881, p. 33.

68 E. Hanslick, *Schuberts “Müllerlieder”, gesungen von J. Stockhausen*, [in:] *Sämtliche Schriften: Aufsätze und Rezensionen. 1855–1856*, ed. D. Strauß, vol. 1/3, Wien–Köln–Weimar 1995, p. 253.

69 In contrast to *Die schöne Müllerin*, Schubert composed all the poems of the text template for *Winterreise* by the same writer. Interestingly, some musicians of the 19th century held a debate about if one should prefer the order of Schubert, or the original order of Müller. See: U. Hartung, *Zur Aufführungspraxis der “Winterreise” im 19. Jahrhundert*, “Schubert durch die Brille”, No. 10 (1993), pp. 57–61.

genius as a creative and original being now becomes apparent.⁷⁰ "The work of a genius signifies innovation and freedom for all of humanity, because the genius opens up new ways for everybody. To find them, one needs originality, powers of imagination, and a vision."⁷¹ In the case of Schubert, this concept of originality is exceeded by his exceptional biography. His early—and thereby comprehensive—work as a composer and the (presumed) impossibility of a fundamental education at such a young age managed to turn him into a unique genius gifted by nature. Consequently, following only his intuition, he did not have much choice but to adversely affect the current standards of his time. "Once Schubert had found a principal theme, he followed the main issue boldly, without looking left or right. Therefore, we will still find disregard of a finer musical taste [...]"⁷²

Unlike Mozart's or early Mendelssohn-Bartholdy's, Schubert's musical reception was almost exclusively confined to the *Lied* genre, with *Gretchen am Spinnrade* D 118 composed in 1814 in the centre of this glorification. According to broad consensus in the second half of the 19th century, the *Kunstlied* was brought to its high position as an art form only by Schubert: the *Kunstlied* originated, so to say, from Schubert's genius.

He started, and the song began with him. His beginning was not "can", but it was "must". Basic instinct chases him towards the music, trance lets him see and understand distant thoughts and close-up faces. The song compels him, he compels the song. [...]

Schubert was a genius. His spark ignited. With an unprecedented divinatory certainty, he created his work.⁷³

70 For the concepts of male genius as well as for the special case in which it was possible that genius could also be attributed to (performing) women, see: C. Müller-Oberhäuser, *Die Maske des Genies*, [in:] *History/Herstory. Alternative Musikgeschichten*, ed. A. Kreuziger-Herr, K. Losleben, Köln–Weimar–Wien 2009, pp. 105–124.

71 *Ibid.*, pp. 111–117. Transl. by the author.

72 E. Hanslick, *Geschichte des Concertwesens in Wien*, Wien 1869, p. 282.

73 F. Günther, *Schuberts Lied. Eine Ästhetische Monographie*, Berlin–Leipzig 1928, pp. 17–18, 23. Transl. by the author.

Schubert was appointed his place next to other male musical geniuses of the 19th century through the *Lied* genre—and not through the later, also celebrated, instrumental works. This is probably most concisely stated by Joseph Schlüter, who writes in his book *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik* (*The General History of Music*), which appeared in 1863: “Schubert’s *Lied* shows, next to Beethoven’s sonata, the organic perfection of modern musical art; it is the true finale to the buildup started a century ago.”⁷⁴

A very interesting component in this cult of Schubert is the fact that in the 19th and early 20th century (and at times even today⁷⁵), Schubert was tendentially seen as a “female” genius, or rather a genius with female traits. The two-folded explanation for this lies in Schubert’s reception, which is mostly focused on the *Lied* genre. On one hand, the significance of other genres, especially of the mighty, heroic, and masculine symphony dominated by Beethoven was often neglected; on the other hand, his orientation towards a genre which is so closely associated with reclusion, modesty, domesticity and emotionalism shows similarities to those typically female essential features, which with women were attributed in the 19th century.⁷⁶ Joseph Schlüter illustrates this quite boldly in his *General History of Music*:

The *Lied* was only barely touched by the manly Beethoven, whereas Schubert engaged in it with spirit and an unmatched mastership. [...] Such an abundance of precious harmony and deep sensitivity lies and impels within them, a sublime, diverse variety of a heartfelt, a tender love life full of lust and pain on the one side, a quietly contemplating melancholia on the other side.⁷⁷

74 J. Schlüter, *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik*, Leipzig 1863, p. 137. Transl. by the author.

75 Lawrence Kramer stated in 1990 that the modern thinking about Schubert is still shaped by certain qualities such as “naive, passive, self-indulgent, childlike, and feminine”. “Recent discussion”, he continues, “has added the possibility of homosexuality to the mixture, shaking up the ostentatiously heterosexual *mise-en-scène* of classical music.” L. Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice: 1800–1900*, Berkeley–Los Angeles 1990, pp. 1–20.

76 W. Bodendorff, *op. cit.*, pp. 16–24.

77 “Das von dem männlichen Beethoven im Ganzen wenig gepflegte Lied behandelte in seinem Geiste und mit unerreichter Meisterschaft Franz Schubert [...] solche Fülle des edelsten Wohllauts und tiefer Empfindung lebt und treibt in ihnen, eine so reizende vielgestaltige Abwechslung dort eines innig zarten, lust- und schmerzbelegten Liebeslebens, hier tiefer Schwermuth und still in sich sinnender Melancholie.” See: J. Schlüter, *op. cit.*, p. 136. Transl. and highlighted by the author.

With this Schubert cult, which is based on his *Lied* compositions, the two *Lieder* cycles hold a special position. Nevertheless, both of them, especially *Winterreise*, had initial difficulties to be recognised. The reason for this is easy to find: the idea of a song cycle in the sense of an integral concept, following a higher principle, was frowned upon until the late 19th century. In the case of *Die schöne Müllerin*, apparently an understanding of a cycle whose parts belong together has never arisen (the concept of staggered publication in four individual books may have also been a reason for this), even though the individual songs were quite popular from the beginning.

With *Winterreise* (published in two volumes), Schubert's concept could no longer be denied. One had to concern oneself with the general situation, even though reaction to the cyclic element were almost never positive. However, critics in Vienna were much more favourable towards the composer. According to an article about the first part of *Winterreise* in a Viennese newspaper, Schubert "understood his poet in his unique and genius way" and made "something indeed successful".⁷⁸ The emphasis on the composer's individual interpretation should be noticed here. The "Wiener musikalischer Anzeiger" has a friendlier approach towards *Winterreise*. In 1829, a critic states: "The climax of it are No. 1 and *Die Post*. Nos. 5, 6, 8, 12, 15, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24 are all pretty much well-made and even in the unmentioned songs good parts can be found, which let you forget some of the seeking, the forced modulations and such nebulae".⁷⁹ Among the German critics there was an almost united front against the cycle concept. One of the mildest critiques comes from "Münchner AmZ" in 1828: "The whole piece suffers from a certain monotony because the composer has kept it especially broad. We are not in favour of song cycles at all. [...] Nevertheless, we recommend the sweet, gentle, and artful petals of this wreath of flowers."⁸⁰ One month later, a reviewer from Berlin stated, "Schubert has a talent, shows originality and would even show more, had not been the fatal op. 89. [...] It could have been a good song, had it not been 24."⁸¹ Another extensive review was published by the "Leipziger AmZ" (some of its comments have already been

78 "Wiener Theaterzeitung", No. 39 (1828), p. 156. Transl. by the author.

79 "Wiener Musikalischer Anzeiger", No. 3 (1829), pp. 10–11. Transl. by the author.

80 "Münchner AmZ", No. 39 (1828), p. 612–613. Transl. by the author.

81 "Berliner AmZ", No. 26 (1828), p. 207. Transl. by the author.

stated above in connection with Schubert's personal interpretation of the text templates). The opinion of the reviewer is best summarised with a sentence taken from another text in the same issue, dealing with another Schubert work: "we cannot help but prefer the *Schwanengesänge* of the young deceased over [*Winterreise*]; we consider it much kinder, composedly, with a much bigger variety of inventions and sense for feelings."⁸² Even in 1897, George Armin in his article *Franz Schubert als Liederkomponist (Franz Schubert as a composer of songs)*, criticizes the "lack of harmonic linkage in *Winterreise*".⁸³ In case of *Die schöne Müllerin*, such criticism appears rarer. In 1862, for example, a critic of the NZfM complained about the monotony of this cycle when sung as a whole.⁸⁴

Nevertheless, a number of songs from these cycles became instantly popular, the most famous being *Wohin?* and *Der Lindenbaum* respectively. But it was not until 1856 that the German baritone Julius Stockhausen (1826–1906) presented the whole song cycle *Die schöne Müllerin* for the first time in Vienna. Later, he repeated the experiment in Hamburg (1861 with Brahms as accompanist) and in 1866 in Russia (with Anton Rubinstein).⁸⁵ During the concert in the 1856, the Austrian music critic Eduard Hanslick was a member of the audience. He afterwards put his enthusiasm into the following concert review:

Stockhausen took leave from the audience, and he did so with the simplest programme in the world. In contrast to the usual smorgasbord of pieces which do not belong together, the only thing we read on the programme was: *Die schöne Müllerin*, a song cycle by Franz Schubert. As far as we know, this concept is entirely new; but the truly surprising visit proved that it was a fortunate one. [...] By performing the whole cycle of *Müllerlieder*, which consists of 20 pieces, he for the first time allowed the audience to experience the conception of a work whose pieces are in parts well known, whereas some parts are remarkably ne-

82 "[...] So können wir doch nicht umhin, den *Schwanengesängen* des früh Entschlafenen bey Weitem den Vorzug vor [*der Winterreise*] einzuräumen; wir finden sie viel liebenswürdiger, gehaltener, erfindungsreicher und empfindungssinniger." G.W. Fink, *Recension Nr. 1. Winterreise [...] Nr. 2. Schwanengesang [...]*, AmZ, No. 40 (1829), p. 659. Transl. by the author.

83 The wording is: "Mangel eines harmonischen Zusammenhanges in der *Winterreise*." "Die Redenden Künste. Zeitschrift für Musik und Literatur unter spezieller Berücksichtigung des Leipziger Musiklebens", No. 3 (1897), pp. 528–530.

84 NZfM, No. 56/13 (1862), p. 106. Transl. by the author.

85 S. Youens, *Schubert—“Die schöne Müllerin”*, Cambridge 1992, p. 22.

glected. Through this, the singer had the advantage to interpret the individual lyric parts in a dramatic fashion. He did not have to feel as the concert's host anymore, but as the vivid and individual centre of the whole. [...]

About half of the audience might have known every note of *Müllerlieder*; however, hardly anyone was not amazed about the ingenious force of the composer who was able to compose a cycle of 20 songs in such a consistent fashion.⁸⁶

Only now, when Stockhausen started to engage with *Die schöne Müllerin* (and also *Winterreise*)⁸⁷ as complete cycles, the two works started to raise to the status they hold today, and it was at that time when the idea of the cycles as men's cycles became step by step fully established. The concept of the cycles as dramatic narrations gave additional importance to the emotions and actions carried out by the main characters of the cycles: only performances by men seemed appropriate to these compositions—regardless, whether one considers the main characters to be somehow related to the persona of the composer himself, or if one just thinks of an unidentified miller's assistant and an unknown wanderer. Probably the first one to claim that Schubert put parts of his life story and feelings into his songs was François-Joseph Fétis in 1844.⁸⁸ Hermann Kretzschmar was of a similar opinion by stating that Schubert transformed the "modest, calm, lovely daft miller's assistant into a very definite figure", and he assumed "that Schubert somehow put parts of his character in this figure", which would be the explanation for the "uniformity of character".⁸⁹

In addition, some writers speculated rather soon whether Schubert might have revealed in his songs not only his character and emotions but also his sorrows. As it is well known, Schubert became aware of his disease—most likely syphilis—not later than 1823 (what, in fact, makes it possible that Schubert wrote *Die schöne Müllerin* during his stay in a hospital in October and November 1823).⁹⁰ In this regard, writers

86 E. Hanslick, *Schuberts "Müllerlieder"...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 250–253.

87 U. Hartung, *op. cit.*, pp. 58–59.

88 E.J. Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens et bibliographie générale de la musique*, vol. 8, Paris 1844, pp. 147–148.

89 Quoted and transl. from: G. La Face Bianconi, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

90 *Ibid.*, pp. 24–25.

have focused on *Winterreise* more often than on *Die schöne Müllerin*,⁹¹ with the first extant account being a text by Austrian nobleman Joseph von Spaun (1788–1865):

For some time, Schubert had been in a gloomy mood and seemed to be afflicted. On my question, what was going on within him, he answered: “Well, you will both hear and understand”. One day he told me: “Come to Schober’s today and I will play you a cycle of terrifying songs; they have affected me more than has ever been the case with any other songs.” Then, he sang for us, with a voice full of feeling, the entire *Winterreise*. We were altogether dumbfounded by the sombre mood of these songs, and Schober said that one song only, *Der Lindenbaum*, had pleased him. Thereupon Schubert leaped up and replied: “These songs please me more than all the rest, and in time they will please you as well.”⁹²

Here, Schubert becomes transfigured as suffering and plagued genius, who puts his grief into his compositions. This renders the concept of the composer and his work as a somehow inseparable unity: neglecting or intervening in the work is now put on a level with an attack on the person of the composer himself, or at least on an unidentified, but realistically suffering male figure. Thereby, writers and musicians of the 19th century did not perceive it as a contradiction that all this deeply felt and tragic emotions can stand alongside happy and exuberant feelings of joy. Schubert is rather one of the earliest examples of the “disturbed idyll” in terms of “romantic irony”, in which the “quandary of reality and illusion” becomes an important principle which especially influenced Robert Schumann.⁹³

These concepts of the cycles containing (quasi)personal feelings and experiences reinforced the claim for authenticity in performance. Furthermore, some writers now emphasise that Schubert’s song cycles

91 A spectacular work on this issue was published by Lawrence Kramer (*Franz Schubert: Sexuality, Subjectivity, Song*, Cambridge 1998), in which the author claims that Wilhelm Müller and Franz Schubert have created the figure of a “full blown masochist” who, in his obsession with the beloved woman, displays parallels to the thinking of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch.

92 The original German text can be found in: E. Budde, *Schuberts Liederzyklen. Ein musikalischer Werkführer*, München 2012, pp. 68–69. Parts of the translation at hand come from: E. Haywood, *Terrifying Songs*, “Radio Times”, No. 66 (1939), pp. 12–18.

93 E. Schmierer, *op. cit.*, p. 115. Transl. by the author.

have not only dramatic, but even theatrical qualities. I have already quoted Hanslick's statement of "dramatic fashion" in *Die schöne Müllerin*; Félix Clément in 1868 calls Schubert a "singer of pain", comparing him with Victor Hugo, and states that "the dramatic scenes in his songs could form a number of great operas";⁹⁴ and in 1928 Felix Günther said: "also with Schubert, the prevailing mood is stage, scene."⁹⁵ I also want to recall Quasthoff's statement about the "piece of opera" from the beginning of this paper.

As indicated before, the discussion about which voice is more appropriate for the song cycles is often held even within the male registers alone. First indications for this emerged around the middle of the 19th century, when, for instance, the NZfM deploras that "there is no singer who sings these songs [*Winterreise*] in the way Schubert imagined and felt them. Schubert seeks for the simple, innocent natural tones."⁹⁶ In 1869, the Austrian writer and Schubert friend Eduard von Bauernfeld (1802–1890) published his recollections, in which he states: "Schubert's voice was *une voix de compositeur*: a cross of a gentle tenor and baritone, his singing was simple and natural, deep, without coquetry."⁹⁷ This idea of Schubert's own voice, in combination with the contentual interpretation of the song cycles, led to precise conceptions of how the cycles should be sung, especially *Die schöne Müllerin*:

The young journeyman miller, wandering so naively-trustingly and innocent [...] actually is a very sensitive, beauty loving patron, miller and poet, like his creator himself. [...] The *Müllerlieder* are intended for a light, flexible and higher male voice. Baritones do not look fortunate here, bassists are not concerned with them, and also women should step back from them.⁹⁸

94 F. Clément, *Les musiciens célèbres depuis le seizième siècle jusqu'à nos jours*, Paris 1868, pp. 616–617. Transl. by the author.

95 F. Günther *Schuberts Lied. Eine Ästhetische Monographie*, Berlin–Leipzig 1928, p. 27. Transl. by the author.

96 NZfM, No. 51/15 (1859), p. 130. Transl. by the author.

97 "Schuberts Stimme war *une voix de compositeur*: ein Mittelding von sanftem Tenor und Bariton, der Vortrag einfach und natürlich, innig, ohne Koketterie." E. von Bauernfeld, *op. cit.*, p. 244. Transl. by the author.

98 "Der junge Müllerbursche, der da so naiv-gläubig und unberührt auf die Wanderschaft geht [...] ist in Wahrheit ein äußerst empfindsamer, schönheitsdurstiger Patron, Müller und Poet dazu, wie sein Schöpfer selbst [...] *Die Müllerlieder* sind für eine leicht bewegliche höhere Männerstimme gedacht. Baritone nehmen sich bei ihnen weniger günstig aus, Bassisten haben nichts mit ihnen zu schaffen, und auch Frauen sollten ihnen ferne bleiben." C. Lafite, *Das Schubertlied und seine Sänger*, Wien–Prag–Leipzig 1928, pp. 40, 48. Transl. by the author.

It is interesting, though, that such debates are held more eagerly about *Die schöne Müllerin* than *Winterreise*, probably because of the aforementioned presumption that Schubert's and the miller's assistant's voices were in some respects similar. When it comes to *Winterreise*, the general opinion is that these songs require a lower, more serious and somehow more mature voice. Carl Lafite, after a detailed examination of *Die schöne Müllerin*, only states: "The *Müllerlieder* go better with a tenor, *Winterreise* demands for a baritone."⁹⁹

But it is not only demanded for an adequate voice to sing the cycles which precludes women and some male registers from the performance: another factor which emerged at the end of the 19th century is the claim that some performances would contradict what Schubert has actually intended and, therefore, written in his scores. Already in 1868, German music writer and composer Selmar Bagge (1823–1896) complained about the second edition of *Die schöne Müllerin*, which had been published by Anton Diabelli in 1830 and which was said to be influenced by Michael Vogl's performance practices. Alongside quite serious changes of the melodic line, three songs of the cycle¹⁰⁰ were transposed down a third, modifying the voice range from tenor to baritone:

It remains surprising that there was no one in Vienna to raise his hand to ask if these changes were really Schubert's own act, or if a stranger took the liberty to do that, or if Schubert had at least agreed with them. Whoever is familiar with Vienna, especially the Vienna at this time, might give oneself the explanation for that indifference which is common for all serious issues.¹⁰¹

The intention of the composer is now considered a "serious issue", and within this concept, this intention is only graspable in terms of

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 82. Transl. by the author.

¹⁰⁰ *Ungeduld, Trockne Blumen, Des Baches Wiegenlied*. In fact, *Ungeduld* was originally written in F major and only later transposed to A major. Therefore, it seems indeed very likely that Michael Vogl was engaged in the Diabelli edition and contributed to the key changes. Since it is not possible to outline an entire philological research in this paper, it must suffice here to put to debate this *Werktreue* concept, especially when based on the key order of the cycles (see for example: E. Budde, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–44, who tries to connect Schubert's key signatures with Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart's key characterization).

¹⁰¹ S. Bagge, *Der Streit über Schubert's Müllerlieder. I.*, AmZ, No. 6 (1868), pp. 36–37. Transl. by the author.

the composer's score, which is considered beyond doubt. Therefore, modifications like transpositions or changing of the melodic line become intolerable—even if the score might not reflect the actual performance practice at the time of its creation. Some of the writers were by all means aware of that fact, what clarifies the following statement by Günther:

It seems to be a hard task to read Schubert correctly. The singer is still lulled by the custom, a lethargy of the mind, in short by the tradition [...], he is almost compelled to contravention of the master's word, which eventually trace back to the famous Michael Vogl. [...] As soon as an artist sings Schubert in a Schubertian manner, which is necessarily against the tradition, which—that has to be clear—does not reflect the ideas of Schubert, but rather the tacky ideas of the "improvers" Vogl and Diabelli, he will be attacked immediately. The purpose of this book is to fight against this traditional misconception in the modern Schubert interpretation and to let the master speak for himself. One takes a look on Schubert's score, nothing else. Immediately his artistic Credo is revealed, a Credo that seems to speak: *Credo, ergo sum*. But also: *Sum, ergo credo*.¹⁰²

Here one can clearly identify the concept which has deeply influenced the past 150 years of our musical culture, and which Nicholas Cook called by the phrase "Plato's curse". The interpreter, considered a medium, has to put him- or herself in service of the composition and its underlying idea. This obligation is usually demanded in a double-track form: if the composition in the form of score does not furnish a sufficient sense of the *Werktreue*, it might be supported by the authority of the composer himself, whose intention is then conjured up. As we have seen, also Günther demanded to "let the master speak for himself". It becomes obvious that those who insist on the composer's allegedly will "do not express their opinions directly but rather ventriloquise them. Faithfulness to the composer is tempered by the essential unknowability of his intentions, which enables them to function as a vehicle for the performer's own judgements about the music."¹⁰³ As for classical music in general, this conception has also firmly persisted in case of Schubert's song cycles, as proves the following statement by Fischer-Dieskau: "I think that these works were not heard in this way by the composers: in the inner ear, there was still a male voice sounding."¹⁰⁴

102 F. Günther, *op. cit.*, pp. 25–26. Transl. by the author.

103 N. Cook, *op. cit.*, pp. 13–14.

104 S. Näher, *op. cit.*, p. 63. Transl. by the author.

The 20th Century

In the 20th century, the mentalities which evolved in the 19th century were consolidated and, even more, codified by the “possibility to conserve singing on recording mediums”, as Werner Bodendorff determined: through this, “apart from exceptions, it becomes quite clear who sings which songs”.¹⁰⁵ As it is clarified with many statements of the 20th century, it was a common attitude to consider the distinction between men’s and women’s songs not as a defect, but rather as an unchangeable fact; interpreters should just stick to their respective category. It is clear, though, that this renunciation meant bigger sacrifices for female singers. A quotation by Carl Lafite illustrates the situation:

As one can see out of the preceding considerations—and many cases within the private musical life confirm this recognition—Schubert’s nature, irrespective of the melodic qualities, offers infinitely more to men than to women, whereas there have been female singers of Schumann’s and Brahms’s works at any time. And if one takes a closer look at this issue, one notices that in fact a big part of Schubert’s song world was created specially for the use of men: *Müllerlieder*, *Winterreise*, *Schwanengesang* [...] moreover, many more are of such a masculine nature, that a woman cannot approach them by definition. Therefore, a big and important part of this repertoire is gone for women.¹⁰⁶

Decades later, this “take it as it is” mentality is still common even amongst professional musicians. As an unlimited example, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau deploras that “we have much more «men’s pieces» than «women’s pieces»—indeed, the latter repertoire is relatively small! But after all, there are enough songs which can be sung by both sexes.”¹⁰⁷ And his colleague Robert Hall was of the same opinion:

Neither could I sing the *Mignon* songs or *Frauenliebe und -leben* – these are typical feelings of women. I may sing them to another person, for example during classes, but only to inspire the female singer to express her personal feelings. I believe that no man considers singing this women’s songs. Therefore I cannot understand why women want to sing these song cycles so urgently. There are so many almost unknown Schubert *Lieder* which are also rather

105 W. Bodendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 121. Transl. by the author.

106 C. Lafite, *op. cit.*, pp. 99–100. Transl. by the author.

107 S. Näher, *op. cit.*, p. 63. Transl. by the author.

great—and hardly anyone sings them. Moreover, Schumann's *Frauenliebe und -leben* is one of the most beautiful cycles—and it is performed too seldom.¹⁰⁸

This attitude was common not only in the 1990s: in fact, one can come across such assertions also today. In July 2014, a German blogger posted an entry entitled *Die schöne Müllerin: Helle Stimmen* ("bright voices"). At the end of the introduction, he states:

There is another group I want to preclude from this consideration [...]: countertenor and female voices. I am aware that Brigitte Fassbaender and Christa Ludwig sang Schubert, but somehow, their voices do not really fit into the role of the enamoured miller's apprentice, who adores the woman with the light, loose and little changing mind ["mit dem leichten losen kleinen Flattersinn"]. Other songs by Schubert are certainly ideal for women's voices [...].¹⁰⁹

Subsequently, the author enumerates songs which, in his opinion, are typical women's songs.

But not only is this issue still stimulating aesthetical debates: it also leads to personal, often emotional statements, offences, and even conflicts. This explains why some people in the internet felt somehow pushed towards talking about "lesbian cycles",¹¹⁰ whereby the reference to homosexuality clearly reveals a derogatory and homophobic attitude. But critics do not only exist on the internet: the aforementioned Christa Ludwig, for example, mentions that a colleague (whose identity she did not reveal) resented her venture of singing *Winterreise*.¹¹¹ And even far beyond that goes an incident which the German countertenor Jochen Kowalski experienced in one of his song recitals in 2013: "At a song recital in Bad Kissingen even fight scenes arose due to the collision of the differing attitudes: serious ladies at the age of my mother all of the sudden went on each other's throats. As a consequence, the festival director [...] had to intervene and calm down the wranglers!"¹¹²

108 *Ibid.*, p. 115. Transl. by the author.

109 *Die schöne Müllerin: Helle Stimmen*, Silvae [blog], 18.07.2014, [online] <https://loomings-jay.blogspot.co.at/2014/07/die-schone-mullerin-helle-stimmen.html> [accessed: 1.09.2017].

110 *Frauen singen „Männerzyklen“ – ein absolutes no-go?*, Capriccio Kultur-Forum [forum], [online] <http://www.capriccio-kulturforum.de/index.php?thread/1834-frauen-singen-m%C3%A4nnerzyklen-ein-absolutes-no-go/> [accessed: 1.09.2017].

111 *Christa Ludwig im Gespräch mit Hans Bunte...*, *op. cit.*

112 *Der Countertenor Jochen Kowalski. Gespräche mit Susanne Stähr*, Kassel 2013, p. 96. Transl. by the author.

Conclusion

As it was examined in the previous pages, one can find strong power structures in the performing tradition of Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*: within this "masculine institution" of the "men's cycles", women still appear as an exotic phenomenon and a deviation. As with similar power structures on higher social levels of our society, this otherness is by no means a natural fact, but emerged—or better: was established—only in the course of the 19th century, when Schubert's work and person was gradually becoming appreciated and transfigured. This process led to a strong association and even equation of the cycle's *personas* with the composer and his biography. Eventually, this association was consolidated by embedding the songs into the highly influential *Werktreue* movement towards the end of the 19th century.

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