Life and Works of Schubert
Spoken Text

CD 1

1 Piano Quintet in A major ('Trout'), D. 667 (mvt 4: Theme with Variations: Andantino)

The man who wrote that music was nothing if not sure of his vocation. 'The state should keep me,' he once told a friend, 'for I have come into the world for no other purpose than to compose.' Well the state didn't, but to a large extent his friends did. Of all the great composers Schubert was the most convivial and the most careless. Inspired melody, coloured by hardly less inspired harmony, flowed from his pen as naturally as rivers flow into the sea – and often with similar results: having completed a piece, he frequently forgot all about it as his mind turned at once to something new.

So who *was* this 'son of the muses' (to borrow the title of one of his songs)? Well, he arrived here on the 31st of January 1797. Among the major composers who made Vienna their home (Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven and Brahms for starters), Schubert was the only native, albeit of the very outskirts. His father, also called Franz, was a Moravian-born schoolmaster of peasant origins; his mother, a Silesian locksmith's daughter, was employed before her marriage as a cook. Both parents were musical, particularly his father, who left us a concise and striking picture of his son's childhood education.

> FRANZ THEODOR SCHUBERT: Before he was five I prepared him for elementary instruction and in his sixth year sent him to school, where he consistently did better in class than his schoolmates. When he was eight I gave him elementary instruction in violin playing, and got far enough for him to play duets fairly well; then I sent him for singing lessons to Michael Holzer, the choirmaster at Lichtental parish church, who often assured me, with tears in his eyes, that he had never had such a pupil.
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> HOLZER: Whenever I set out to teach him something new, it seemed that he knew it already. Consequently I gave him no real instruction but merely talked with him and regarded him in silent astonishment.

But the boy himself, now eight years old, was *not* silent. His brother Ignaz, was his first piano teacher.

> IGNAZ SCHUBERT: After only a few months, he informed me that he had no further use for my instruction and that henceforth he would continue on his own. And within a very short time he acquired a mastery of the keyboard which I myself would never reach.

These cosy scenes, though, stood out in sharp relief against the backdrop of Vienna as a whole. Lately overrun and briefly occupied by the French, with Napoleon in residence at the Schönbrunn palace, the city had been largely stripped of food, and to a considerable extent of money too, by the French army. What effect all this had on the child Schubert we can only guess at, but it may well have contributed to the air of protective self-containment that seems to have characterised his personality as a child and early adolescent. One witness to this was Georg Eckel, a fellow

student at the Imperial Seminary, to which Schubert was sent at the age of eleven, after winning a choral scholarship.

> ECKEL: Even in boyhood and youth, his life was primarily one of inner, spiritual thought, which he would seldom express in words but almost only in music. Even with his close friends he was generally silent and uncommunicative. On the walks which the pupils took together, he usually kept apart, walking with lowered eyes and with his hands behind his back, playing with his fingers (as though on keys). He seemed entirely lost in his own thoughts. I seldom saw him laugh; more frequently I saw him smile, sometimes for no apparent reason, as if it were a reflection of the inner life of the soul.

Another of his fellow students, Anton Holzapfel, was among the first to see beyond the protective screen that Schubert had drawn around himself, and he was mightily impressed.

> HOLZAPFEL: He was one of those deep, quiet natures who, from the standpoint of superficial book-learning, often seem to have little talent. But even in those days his intellectual development was far in advance of his years; I remember particularly a long poem of his, written in the manner of Klopstock's odes (a style hardly understood by us pupils). And its theme? 'God's omnipotence in the creation'!

Among the first to perceive that music held the key to Schubert's real personality was one of his older schoolmates, Josef von Spaun, who became a friend for life.

> SPAUN: I quickly noticed how this usually quiet and very ordinary-looking child surrendered himself completely to the impressions of the beautiful symphonies we played in the school orchestra. It was his delight in the music and the excitement with which he took part that first made me notice him.

Although this was a student orchestra, its standard was remarkably high, and it was here that Schubert came to know at first hand many of the symphonies of Haydn and Mozart, as well as the earlier symphonies and overtures of Beethoven, then still very much alive and the brightest jewel in Vienna's musical crown. From his original position, in the second violins, standing just behind Spaun, he graduated fairly quickly to leader of the first violins and was soon directing the orchestra whenever its official conductor, Schubert's instrumental teacher Wenzel Ruzicka, was away or indisposed. Ruzicka was yet another who was clearly flummoxed by Schubert's astonishing facility.

> RUZICKA: There was nothing I could teach him! He seemed already to have learnt it from God Himself!

All in all, Schubert, in his quiet way, made a great impression on everyone at the Seminary – not only by his musical talent but by what was perceived as his upright morality.

In 1809, when he was twelve, the harsh realities of political life intruded on Schubert's musical-cultural haven. The French, ousted from the city some years before, returned with a vengeance. And now, no longer in the suburbs, Schubert found himself near the very bull's-eye of their attentions. But, as Spaun remembered many years later, even this had its beauties.

> SPAUN: On the evening of May the twelfth, at nine o'clock, the bombardment of the city began. It was a quite extraordinary sight to see the glowing

> cannonballs arching across the night sky, itself reddened by the many fires below. Before our very eyes a ball from a howitzer fell in the University square and burst on one of the fountains. Then, all of a sudden there was a crash in the school-house itself, a howitzer shell having fallen on the building. It penetrated every floor down to the first.

…and narrowly missed, to the sorrow of the student body, one of the most unpopular members of the Seminary faculty, who escaped with his life by the proverbial whisker.

Physically, and perhaps psychologically too, the Seminary was a comfortless place and Schubert was only too glad when the holidays came round. At home again, he founded the family string quartet – two of his brothers playing the violins, Franz the viola, and their father the cello. And of course he provided some of the repertoire as well. This is part of the first movement of his first quartet.

2 String Quartet No. 1 in mixed keys, D. 18 (mvt 1: Andante–Presto vivace)

3 Part of the first movement of the thirteen-year-old Schubert's First String Quartet.

Given his literary leanings and his well-documented homesickness as a boarder, it's surprising that the earliest surviving letter by Schubert himself comes from 1812, by which time he'd been at the school for fully four years. It was written to one of his brothers, probably Ferdinand, and in its adolescent self-consciousness and rather laboured attempts at humour it set the tone for many of his letters as an adult.

> SCHUBERT: I have long been pondering my present circumstances and have concluded that, although satisfactory on the whole, there is room for improvement here and there. You know from experience that we all like occasionally to eat a roll or a few apples, the more so if after a middling lunch we have eight-and-a-half hours to wait for a pretty unappetising supper. This wish is increasingly frequent, and, come what may, I had to make a change. The pittance I get from Father goes to the devil almost at once, and what am I to do for the rest of the time?

And he now twice deliberately misquotes the Bible.

> SCHUBERT: 'Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be put to shame.' Matthew, iii. 4. My own thoughts exactly! So what if *you* were to spare a few Kreuzer a month? You'd scarcely notice it, while I in my cell should count myself lucky, and rest content. I repeat, I take my stand upon the words of the Apostle Matthew: 'He that hath two coats, let him give one to the poor,' etc. In the meantime I hope that you will lend an ear to the voice that calls unceasingly to you, the voice of – Your loving, poor, hopeful and again poor brother Franz

By this time, as it happens, that voice was beginning to break and his days as a choirboy were therefore numbered. But the most critical event of that year, for Schubert personally, was the sudden and completely unexpected death of his mother at the age of fifty-five. And on that subject, very frustratingly, not one syllable from him or indeed from anyone else has come down to us. Though the family was evidently close-knit, there is not a single mention of his mother in the whole of Schubert's surviving correspondence, nor any piece of music that commemorates her in any way.

In the same year as his mother's death, Schubert began having regular lessons in counterpoint with the celebrated Court Kapellmeister Antonio Salieri, who hoped to groom him

as a composer of Italian opera. But Schubert was having none of it. His destiny, as he saw it, lay firmly in the Germanic tradition (and rather oddly, for a man who lived and taught in Vienna for more than half a century, Salieri regarded the German language as – his word – ‘barbaric’). In fact Schubert had already been composing for some time. His earliest surviving pieces – some songs, a piano duet and a string quartet – date from 1810, when he was thirteen.

Strange to say, since Vienna, then as now, was one of the great European opera centres, it wasn’t until a year later that Schubert had his first experience of opera in the theatre. He was taken by Spaun to see two so-called ‘Singspiels’ (that’s to say operas with spoken dialogue) by the now forgotten but then popular composer Josef Weigl, a close associate of Mozart’s. Not long afterwards, Schubert started work on his own first opera, but never took it beyond the first act. As a composer of unfinished works, he started early. Another of these, from the next year, was a trio for piano, violin and cello, which likewise never got further than the first movement – but already here we find that quality of emotional ambivalence which was to become one of the hallmarks of his mature style.

4 Piano Trio (in one movement) in B flat, D. 28

5 Part of the one-movement Piano Trio in B flat. As usually happens at boarding schools, Schubert’s previously family-centred life found a new focus in the companionship and stimulus of his school friends and contemporaries. Through Spaun, he gradually came into contact with a circle of like-minded young men, a number of whom became friends for life. Most of them, like Spaun, and his brother Anton, hailed from the city of Linz. Most of them, too, were older than Schubert and came from privileged aristocratic backgrounds. Unofficial brotherhoods, bound by a common, generally idealistic outlook, were a standard feature of the German-speaking world at that time. This one came to be known as the ‘Bildung Circle’. The term ‘Bildung’ refers to the principled pursuit of self-improvement through education and culture, and we get a taste of its philosophy and somewhat self-conscious character in an unofficial manifesto by Anton von Spaun – the younger brother of Josef.

> ANTON VON SPAUN: We must study humanity, and all ages, and what the greatest figures of the past did and thought, and how one thing leads to another, and how one thing follows *out* of another, so that we may clearly comprehend, and have a positive influence on those whom we love, on our brothers. And beauty, too – powerfully, refreshingly and upliftingly – influences the human heart, like the sounds of music, a Madonna by Raphael, an Apollo, the song of a divinely inspired poet – all draw us heavenward with a power beyond understanding; therefore let us, too, dedicate our lives, and flee nothing so much as an excess of destructive passions and the deficiency and emptiness of an indolent spirit.

When that was written, in 1813, Schubert was an impressionable sixteen-year-old whose horizons were expanding on an almost daily basis. One of the great highlights of that year was a visit to the opera, again with Spaun (*Josef* Spaun), to see Gluck’s great tragedy *Iphigénie en Tauride.* Schubert was bowled over both by the music and by the singing, in particular of Anna Milder and the famous baritone Johann Michael Vogl, whom he all but worshipped. After the opera they adjourned to a nearby tavern, to crown a great evening out with a little celebration.

> SPAUN: While we were still there, revelling unrestrainedly in the joy of what we had heard, a professor at the next table mocked our enthusiasm, declaring that Milder had crowed like a cock and that Oreste had the feet of an elephant.

> Schubert sprang up in a rage and, in doing so, knocked over a glass full of beer, and there ensued a violent exchange of words which would have turned to blows but for some calming voices, which came in on our side, and thus appeased us. Schubert was ablaze with fury over this, a state quite foreign to his normally gentle disposition.

In fact, that evening was far more memorable for a quite different event. Also sitting at that table was another friend of Spaun's, the already famous young poet Theodor Körner. He was impressed by Schubert, who was at something of a crossroads, and he now spoke the words Schubert most longed to hear, encouraging him to make music the whole focus of his life, to throw caution to the winds and live only for art. Only in music, Körner assured him, would he be able to find true happiness and fulfilment. Sad to say, Körner himself was killed on the battlefield only a few months later, at the age of twenty-two.

But while the literary world mourned a tragedy, Schubert's father may secretly have seen it as a measure of divine justice. While he was both proud and delighted by his son's musical brilliance, he had lectured him throughout his years at the Seminary on the dangers of making a career in music. It was his desire, his expectation, that Franz, like his brothers, should follow his father in the honourable profession of schoolteaching. And it has to be said that for all his genius Schubert, practically speaking, was in no position to take Körner's advice in the first place. He was 16 years old, he had next to nothing in terms of proper professional credentials, he had neither the technique nor the temperament to become a performing virtuoso, he came from a humble middle-class background and had no connections to the nobility and high aristocracy, and on top of all that he was chronically indecisive. He was, in fact, granted an endowment scholarship that would have enabled him to complete his education at the Seminary, but for various reasons, none of them his father's, he decided against it. And so it was that he returned home and resigned himself to the prospect of becoming a primary-school teacher – though not *before* turning out several more string quartets, a delightful Octet for wind, and his first symphony.

6 Symphony No. 1 in D, D. 82 (finale)

7 Part of the last movement of Schubert's First Symphony.

Among those waiting to welcome Schubert on his return home was his new stepmother. His father had remarried within a year of becoming a widower, and the warm, easy relationship between Schubert and his stepmother is one of the happiest aspects of his family story. After only a little time, he regularly addressed her as 'Mother' – which only makes one wonder further about his relationship with his real mother.

The first eight months of 1814 were spent at the intriguingly named 'Normal School of St Anna', where Schubert trained as a primary-school teacher. Very unusually, he produced practically no music during this time, but between his graduation and the end of the year – in addition to his dreaded classroom duties – he composed his first Mass, another string quartet, two more sacred choral works, and some seventeen songs. These included his first unalloyed masterpiece, which also marked his first setting of verses by Goethe, the poet who came nearest to obsessing him. *Gretchen am Spinnrade* ('Gretchen at the Spinning-wheel') depicts Gretchen's desperate longing for the return of her faithless lover Faust, with the refrain 'My peace has gone, my heart is sore, I shall find it never, and nevermore'. The accompaniment represents the regularity of the spinning-wheel, which tragically falters at the very end, as grief overwhelms her.

8 Gretchen am Spinnrade, D. 118

9 Though the Schuberts' family string quartet remained an all-male preserve, it was three women who loomed largest in Schubert's life that autumn: his new 'mother', the fictional Gretchen, and the young Therese Grob, who sang the soprano solos in the performance of his first Mass. She was also the first to sing Gretchen and over the next couple of years many of Schubert's songs and other vocal works were written with her voice in mind. We have no evidence from Schubert himself, but it seems entirely likely that she was his first and greatest love. A study of his circumstances at the time, and hers, plus the testimony of two of his closest friends, make it almost certain. The first, tantalising bit of evidence comes from Anton Holzapfel.

> HOLZAPFEL: Schubert was usually sparing of words, indeed quite uncommunicative… so it was in character that he told me nothing of his feelings for Therese Grob by word of mouth, which he could easily have done in private, but rather in a lengthy, enthusiastic letter, unfortunately since lost.

And Holzapfel goes on to describe her, as he remembered her from 1815.

> HOLZAPFEL: Therese was no beauty, but she was well built, a little plump, with a fresh, round, childlike face. And she did have a lovely voice.

Anselm Hüttenbrenner specifically quotes Schubert himself, but only from memory, and many years after the event.

> HÜTTENBRENNER: One day, while walking in the country, I asked him if he'd ever been in love. As he was so cold and brusque towards women at parties, I had been inclined to think he might have a real aversion to them. 'Oh no!' he said.
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> SCHUBERT: I loved someone very dearly and she returned my love. She was a schoolmaster's daughter, somewhat younger than myself, and she sang most beautifully and with great feeling. She was not exactly pretty and her face had pock-marks; but she had a heart, a heart of gold. For three years she hoped I would marry her; but I could find no position which would have provided for us both. She then later married someone else, which hurt me very much. I love her still, and no one since has ever appealed to me so much. But it seems she was not meant for me.

The underlying facts of this are less simple and more interesting. Early in 1815, a law had been introduced whereby the majority of Austrian men were forbidden to marry without the official approval of the state. This could be acquired only if the applicant could prove an income deemed adequate, by the state, to support a wife and any children who might arise from the proposed marriage. How many children doesn't seem to have been specified. At no time in his life would Schubert have qualified for permission to marry.

The story of Schubert in the schoolroom is not a happy one. His father rashly put him in charge of the youngest children, who bore the brunt, often the physical brunt, of his frustration. As his sister rather archly put it, 'he kept his hands in practice on the children's ears'. But the job had one great advantage: it allowed him more time for composition than any other occupation would have, and he seized the opportunity with astonishing energy. Indeed this turned out to be the most productive single year of his life, boasting, *among other things*, two symphonies, *five* dramatic works – including four operas –, two more masses and other liturgical works, numerous dances and sonata movements for piano, a substantial string quartet, and more than 150 songs, including several of his greatest and most famous Goethe settings: *Heidenröslein*, *Rastlose Liebe*,

Wandrers Nachtlied and the terrifying *Erlkönig* (or 'The Erl King'), still felt by many people to be the best of all his songs, if not the best song ever written. It describes the ride through a forest, on horseback, of a father, cradling his ailing child, with Death in close pursuit. And in the very last word, last note, of the song, Death claims his victim.

10 Erlkönig, D. 328

11 The astonishing *Erlkönig*.

An explosion of genius such as Schubert experienced in 1815 is hard to find in the whole history of music, and that all this was the work of an eighteen-year-old primary-school teacher simply boggles the mind. But then in one respect, pointed out by Spaun, Schubert was perhaps unique, even among the great composers.

> SPAUN: The sheer speed of his composition was simply fantastic. Consider, for example, that his first reading and subsequent composition of Goethe's *Erlkönig* was the work of a single afternoon!

It should come as no surprise that a man who could write music of that demonic intensity could experience the music of other composers with a comparable intensity, be it of joy, sorrow, peace or whatever. Schubert was far too disorganised to keep a regular diary but he did have an occasional stab at it – usually very self-consciously, often embarrassingly – and one particular entry at this time of his life tells us a lot about his experience and vision of great music. It was written after hearing a performance of Mozart's String Quintet in G minor.

Mozart: String Quintet in G minor, K. 516 (mvt 4: Adagio–Allegro)

> SCHUBERT [VOICE-OVER]: A light, bright, fine day, this will remain with me for my whole life. As though from a great distance the magic notes of Mozart's music gently haunt me still. With what extraordinary vigour, and yet with what gentleness was it impressed deep, deep into my heart. Thus does our soul retain these heavenly impressions, which no time, no circumstances can erase, and they illuminate our very existence. In the darkness of our lives they reveal to us a shining, clear, entrancing distance, for which we hope with all our hearts. Oh Mozart, immortal Mozart, how many, oh how endlessly many such comforting perceptions of a brighter, better life hast thou brought to our souls!

The sincerity and depth of feeling there transcends the rather stagy poeticising at the end. On the other hand, Schubert could at times be affected, pretentious, over-literary, phoney-philosophical and mainly incomprehensible, as in this entry from around the same time:

> SCHUBERT: Happy he who finds a true man-friend. Happier still who finds a true friend in his wife.
> To a free man, today, marriage is a terrifying thought: he exchanges it either for sorrow or for crude sensuality.
> Man bears misfortune without complaint, but feels it the more keenly.
> Wherefore did God grant us compassion?
> Light mind, light heart. Too light a mind generally betokens a too-heavy heart.
> Urban politeness is a mighty antithesis to the sincerity of human relationships.
> The greatest misfortune of the wise and the greatest fortune of the foolish rests upon convention. To be noble and unhappy is to feel the full depths of

misfortune and happiness, just as to be noble and happy is to feel happiness and misfortune.

Okay, he was a musical not a literary genius, but he was also still a teenager, and riding the first wave of that musical romanticism which would practically engulf the nineteenth century after his death. The romantics lived for the moment; they prized the improvisatory crystallisation of fleeting emotions and sensations. The poetic snapshot of passion took precedence over classical proportion and pre-ordained structures. Not for nothing did Schubert call his most popular piano pieces 'impromptus' and 'moments musicaux' ('musical moments'). And of course the combination of living at home and teaching little school children grew more irksome almost by the day. His one concentrated attempt to break out of this trap was to apply for a better and more lucrative job elsewhere – this one an exclusively musical post at a teachers' training college in the town of Laibach, now Ljubljana in Slovenia. But, as the job advertisement made clear, it wasn't going to be a cinch.

ANNOUNCER 1: A teacher is hereby sought, who in addition to excellent conduct, must be a thoroughly trained singer and organist as well as a good violinist, and must possess not only an elementary knowledge of all wind instruments, but be capable of instructing others therein. This music master shall give musical instruction to his pupils for three hours daily during the school year, and in addition take the Country School candidates three times a week during their six-months preparatory course, for at least an hour at a time. He must also hold the rank of college teacher and be allowed at the same time to devote his remaining hours to private teaching – but on no account to such occupations whereby the status of an official teacher might be endangered.

Well, he didn't get the job. And even if he had, it's unlikely that he would have stayed the course. For a start, he was not a timetable man – but nor was he a defeatist. His first response to his rejection was to sit down and write a fourth symphony. In the meantime, the enterprising Spaun took the liberty of sending a complete set of Schubert's Goethe songs to the great poet himself, explaining the composer's exceptional shyness and asking on his behalf whether Goethe would accept the dedication of a published collection. The letter was ignored, and the songs were returned without comment.

Schubert was now nineteen, and his life was about to change. In the autumn of 1815 he had been introduced to an almost exact contemporary, the aristocratic Franz von Schober, an associate of the 'Bildung Circle' and already a sophisticated man of the world, certainly in his own estimation. Tall, handsome, smooth, facile and verbally articulate, he was in many respects Schubert's polar opposite. Oozing charisma, he quite overwhelmed the diminutive, tongue-tied Schubert, who quickly became an adoring admirer. He was hardly alone. Schubert's friend and former schoolmate Eduard von Bauernfeld was almost equally entranced.

BAUERNFELD: Schober surpasses us all in mind, and still more so in speech!

And as described by another old friend from the Seminary, Josef Kenner, he was…

KENNER: An amiable, brilliant young man, endowed with the noblest talents, and possessed of extraordinary gifts.

It was Schober, more perhaps than any other individual, who made it possible for Schubert to follow the course first urged on him by the ill-fated Körner after that near-brawl in the tavern four years before, something for which Schober never ceased to pat himself on the back.

> SCHOBER: I shall always retain the eternally uplifting feeling of having freed this immortal master from the constraint of school, and of having led him on his predestined path of independent, spiritual creation, and of having been united with him in true and most intimate friendship right up till his last breath.

Certainly the man had a streak of vanity, but Spaun confirmed that in this case those back-pattings were almost entirely justified.

> SPAUN: One really must not underestimate the services rendered to Schubert by this brilliant youth, with his burning passion for art. Schober, with the consent of his mother, repeatedly received Schubert into his home and gave him many proofs of his friendship and pastoral concern… The society of a young man so enthusiastic about art and of such refined culture as Schober, himself an accomplished poet, could clearly have only the most stimulating and favourable effect on Schubert. Schober's friends also became Schubert's friends, and I am convinced that living among this circle of people was far more advantageous to Schubert than if he had lived among a circle of musicians and professional colleagues, though he did not neglect these either… In particular, Schober is deserving of the greatest credit for having brought about Schubert's association with the great Johann Vogl – something achieved only after many difficulties.

Vogl was indeed great: one of the leading singers of his day, both in opera and recital. And he was the man to put Schubert's songs on the map. Thirty years Schubert's senior, he was a man of considerable self-importance, even pomposity, and one can imagine the deep scepticism with which he condescended to accept Schober's invitation. At that time the name of Schubert was unknown to him, as to most people.

> SPAUN: At the appointed hour he made his appearance at Schober's, quite majestically, and when the small, insignificant Schubert made a somewhat awkward bow and stammered some incoherent words about the honour of the acquaintance, Vogl wrinkled his nose in evident contempt, and the beginning of the acquaintance seemed to portend disaster. Finally Vogl said, 'Alright, let's see what you have there; accompany me,' and thereupon he took up the nearest sheet of music, containing Mayrhofer's poem, 'Augenlied'. Vogl hummed rather than sang it, and then said coldly, 'Not bad'. As the audition progressed, however, he grew increasingly friendly. On leaving he clapped Schubert on the shoulders and said to him, 'There is something in you but you are too little a comedian, too little of a charlatan; you squander your fine thoughts without making the best of them'. To others, however, he expressed himself more favourably. When the song 'Die Dioskuren' came to his notice he was frankly incredulous that such depth and maturity could emanate from this tiny and awkward young man. He now invited Schubert to his home, rehearsed songs with him, and soon became Schubert's most ardent admirer.

– to put it mildly. The same man who uttered that evidently grudging 'not bad' was later to declare:

> VOGL: Before Schubert's genius we must all bow; and if he does not come to us, we must crawl after him on bended knee.

Yet, as Spaun explains, even Vogl's advocacy couldn't do the trick overnight. For all his genius, Schubert proved a hard act to sell.

> SPAUN: The company of those who admired Schubert's prodigious talents and bestowed the greatest applause on his songs greatly grew in number, yet he remained without any substantial provision and his position was truly dispiriting. Not a single publisher could be found who would have dared to risk even a little for Schubert's magnificent creations.

But thereby hangs a rather amusing tale. In 1817, Schubert, at the urging of his friends, sent a copy of *The Erl King* to the publishers Breitkopf & Härtel. They looked it over, decided it wasn't for them, and then returned it, they thought, whence it came – to one Franz Schubert of Dresden. This elderly tone-merchant, knowing nothing of his Viennese namesake, wrote back to the publishers at once.

> SCHUBERT OF DRESDEN: Sirs – About ten days ago I received a much-esteemed letter from you in which you enclosed a manuscript of Goethe's 'Erl King' purporting to have been set by me. With the greatest astonishment, I have to inform you that this cantata was never written by me. I shall keep the same in my possession in the hope of finding out what fellow it was that had the discourtesy to send you such trash, and also to discover the blackguard who has thus misused my name.

It was hardly the reaction which anyone expected, but at least it was a reaction. It was also an omen. The tide was a long time turning.

> SPAUN: For many a year our Schubert remained a victim of money troubles, and couldn't even afford the rent of a piano. Yet the difficulties of his position did not check his industry in the least; he had to sing and compose, it was his life. Come what may, he remained forever cheerful and over a number of years he amiably accepted the hospitality of an old friend at evening supper parties which generally went on until after midnight. If it became late, he did not go home but put up with a modest night's lodging in my room, or another's, where he always slept excellently, often with the customary spectacles on his nose, even in his sleep. And in the morning he would sit down in his shirt and underpants and compose one lovely thing after another.

12 Mass No. 5 in A flat, D. 678 (Gloria)

13 Part of the Mass in A flat, Deutsch 678.

While Schubert was a genius only in music, he had a wonderful, almost unique talent for friendship. The solitary, withdrawn little boy of the early Seminary days now found himself, on the threshold of official manhood, the nucleus of an ever-expanding tribe of friends and admirers – most of them, interestingly, not musicians but writers, poets, artists, lawyers, doctors, civil servants, and even the odd aristocrat. In their estimation of his character and friendship they were virtually unanimous – whether it was Spaun…

> SPAUN: Schubert was unusually straightforward, sincere, incapable of malice, friendly, grateful, modest and sociable; sharing his joy but keeping his sorrow to himself.

…or Bauernfeld…

> BAUERNFELD: In many ways he was like a child. Confiding, frank, as honest as can be, sociable, communicative in joy – was there anyone who knew him otherwise? His devotion to his friends and relatives was great, as was their love for him; a brother could wish for no better brother, a father for no better son, and he was for each friend whatever a friend could ask.

…or Leopold von Sonnleithner:

> SONNLEITHNER: Although well aware of his worth, he was a stranger to pride and vanity, and set so little store by outward manifestations of applause that he often purposely stayed away from the first productions of his works.
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> SPAUN: Schubert's modesty knew no bounds. The loudest jubilation of his friends and the greatest applause of a numerous crowd could not turn his head. Even the highest honour and recognition which came to him from great artists did not lessen his quiet modesty. If, sometimes at musical parties, the singer who performed his songs was overwhelmed with enthusiastic applause, while no one gave a thought to the little man who sat at the piano, accompanying the songs of his own creation, the unassuming artist did not feel in the least offended.

14 Auf der Bruck, D. 853

15 *Auf der Bruck* ('By the Bridge'), Deutsch 853. And that brings us to the end of CD 1.

CD 2

1 As the first year of Schubert's 'official' maturity dawned, not one of his songs had been published, nor had any of his orchestral works been played in public – and these now included six symphonies and seven concert overtures. Well, that was about to change. In February his song *Erlafsee* was printed as a supplement to a publication called *The Pictorial Pocket Book*, and less than a month later an 'Overture in the Italian Style', one of two, was performed at the Theater an der Wien. Then, for more than a year, nothing. A scandal? Well, yes and no. The fact is that when it came to self-promotion, Schubert wasn't even in the ball park. Such mundane matters seem hardly to have occurred to him. As his friend Sonnleithner pointed out:

> SONNLEITHNER: Unlike most young artists, he was himself the *last* to think of the publication of his works. Only when some of his friends had, without his collaboration, issued twelve of his works to his profit did he take this task upon himself.

That time was still some way off, but the combination of his friends' support, his growing reputation, and Vogl's championing of his songs gave him the courage, heavily bolstered by Schober, to quit the schoolroom and seek his fortune elsewhere. Relations between him and his father, too, had become very tense, only adding to his craving for escape. In the summer, he finally struck lucky. He was appointed music tutor to the very wealthy Esterházy family in

Hungary (though not the same branch of it as Haydn served). Compared with the drudgery in his father's schoolhouse, and the stern requirements of that job he didn't get in Laibach, this felt to him at first like going to Heaven. As he reported ecstatically in a letter to Schober and other friends:

> SCHUBERT: I am excellently well. I live and compose like a god, as though that were as it should be.

Sounds like that unbounded modesty might just have slipped a bit, but why not? His sense of release was overwhelming.

> SCHUBERT: O thank God, I *live* at *last*! And it was high time, otherwise I should have become nothing but a thwarted musician.

Nor was it just a question of escape. He delighted in his surroundings and in the people – especially one of them.

> SCHUBERT: Our castle is very nice, although not one of the largest, and is surrounded by a most beautiful garden. I, however, live in the manager's house, which is fairly quiet, except for some forty geese, who sometimes cackle so loudly that you can hardly hear yourself speak… Good people all around me, all of them. It must be very unusual for a count's retinue to fit together so well. *The chamber maid, by the way, is* ***very pretty*** *and is now my frequent companion!* (the manager is my rival!). The count, however, is rather rough, the countess haughty but more sensitive; and the little countesses whom I teach are lovely children. So far, thank goodness, I have been spared from dining with the family.

Distance, as so often, lent enchantment, and his letters to his own family show no trace of strain. Quite the contrary. In a letter to his brother Ferdinand, to whom he was very close, he sounds less like a twenty-one-year old genius and more like a freshman writing home from his first term at university.

> SCHUBERT: Dear Brother, I have a request: please give my love to my parents, brothers and sisters, friends and acquaintances, not forgetting Karl in particular. As for my city friends, please *kick* them mightily, or *have* them kicked, to force them to write to me. You can tell Mother that my laundry is very well looked after, but that I'm greatly touched by her motherly care. (But if I could have *more* things, I'd be very glad if you could send me an extra supply of handkerchiefs, neckerchiefs and stockings. Also I need two pairs of cashmere trousers.) It's beginning to get cold here already, yet we won't be leaving for Vienna before mid-November. I'm very much looking forward to the grape-harvests, which I've heard a lot of nice things about. The grain-harvest too is very fine here. The corn isn't put into barns, as in Austria. It's erected in enormous great stacks which they call Tristen. They are often some 80 to 100 yards long and 100 to 120 feet high, and stacked with such skill that the rain can run off them without doing any damage. Oats and other crops are buried in the earth. Happy as I am here, though, and kind as the people are, I'm impatiently awaiting that moment when the call goes out 'To Vienna, to Vienna!' Indeed, O my beloved Vienna, thou holdest all that is most dear and

> cherished in thy narrow space, and nothing but the sight of this, the *heavenly* sight, will appease my yearning.

And there's that self-conscious whiff of literary affectation again.

Unsurprisingly, Schubert's sudden longing for Vienna coincided with a feeling of disenchantment at his present circumstances. We now begin to encounter with increasing frequency signs of his highly volatile mood changes. These often occur within the same letter, as they occur similarly in his music. One minute he's up, the next he's down – or, more often, hovering uneasily somewhere in the middle.

> SCHUBERT: Here I'm forced to rely entirely on myself. I have to be composer, author, audience, and God knows what else. I tell you, there's not a single person here who has even the smallest feeling for true art (except maybe the countess now and then). So here I sit, alone with my Muse, and have to hide her in my room, in my piano, in my bosom. Have no fear, then, that I shan't stay in this place a minute longer than is absolutely necessary.

But while he *was* there he made the best of it, and some of his most popular piano duets were written especially for the two young countesses whose musical education was the main reason for his employment.

2 Marche militaire No. 1 in D, D. 733

3 The *Marche militaire* No. 1, D. 733.

Schubert is renowned, among other things, for his wistful melancholy, and for his deep sorrow. But almost as characteristic is his capacity for anger, even violence, in both his music and his life. We saw that one extraordinary eruption in the tavern after the opera – back then, an isolated outburst. It now begins to seem part of a pattern.

Schubert was raised as a devout Roman Catholic, in a country where the alliance of Church and state traditionally conspired to stifle dissent and so-called 'free thought'. But in Schubert's case the treatment was riven with flaws. His attitude to religion in general and to Christianity in particular was ambivalent to say the least. It's interesting that in all his settings of the Mass, from the age of seventeen onwards, he pointedly left out the words 'Et unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam' ('In one catholic and apostolic church'). And the Hungarian clergy really seem to have brought out the beast in him.

> SCHUBERT: You can't imagine what a gang the priesthood is here: as bigoted as mucky old cattle, stupid as arch-donkeys and as boorish as bisons. You can hear sermons here the like of which even our venerated Padre can't begin to match. They blather on something lovely from the pulpit about blackguards and riffraff and so on; oh, and they put a death's head on the pulpit and say: 'See here, you pock-pitted mugs, this is what you'll look like one day'. Or else: 'There: fellow takes a slut into the pub, they dance all night, then they go to bed tight, and when they get up there are three of 'em.'

In November, Schubert returned with the Esterházys to Vienna, where he moved in with Johann Mayrhofer, ten years his senior and one of the most profound influences on his development as a song-writer. Schubert set many of his verses to music and Mayrhofer further instilled in him the poetic values of the Romantic movement, and deepened his already exceptional sensitivity to language. They made an odd pair: Schubert the cheerful, diminutive innocent with his head in the clouds (this anyway is how he was commonly perceived) and Mayrhofer the sophisticated, world-

weary misanthrope, whose deeply melancholic temperament led to his suicide eight years after Schubert's death. The single room they shared, in well-planned alternation, wasn't in itself anything to write home about but what came out of it was beyond price. As Mayrhofer reflected:

> MAYRHOFER: The room itself had felt the hand of time: the ceiling somewhat sunk, the daylight reduced by a large building opposite, a clapped-out piano, a single narrow bookshelf; such was the room which, together with the hours spent in it, will never be effaced from my memory.

In the course of the next two years, as Anselm Hüttenbrenner observed, Schubert came as close as he ever did to establishing a regular routine.

> HÜTTENBRENNER: Every morning at six o'clock sharp he sat down at his desk and composed right through till one or two in the afternoon, in the course of which many a pipe was smoked. After that he never composed during the afternoon but, rather, went to a coffee-house, where he would sit over a small cup of black coffee for an hour two, reading the newspapers and smoking. In the evenings he socialised with friends and very occasionally would go to the theatre.

Their lives were organised in such a way that, during the day at least, the two men were rarely in the room at the same time. But there were inevitable overlaps, and Mayrhofer admitted, with characteristic delicacy, that the mix of temperaments wasn't always an easy one.

> MAYRHOFER: Our idiosyncrasies could not but show themselves; we were both richly endowed in this respect, and the consequences could not fail to appear. Schubert's happy outgoing nature and my introspective one were thus thrown into high relief.

It's interesting that even Mayrhofer, who shared a room with him for two years, characterises Schubert's as a 'happy, outgoing' nature. Throughout the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth this was the standard popular image, despite the fact that an enormous amount of Schubert's music suggests otherwise. To a certain extent this was consciously fostered by many of his friends after his death, and it goes along with the complementary myth that his personality was 'simple'. Spaun declared it as a fact.

> SPAUN: Schubert's mode of life was as simple as he was himself.

Well, let's look at the evidence. First, the music – and we won't cook the books by turning to his later music. Only a little time after that popular, popu*list Marche militaire* came what's generally regarded as Schubert's first instrumental masterpiece: the lone quartet movement in C minor, known for some reason by the German name 'Quartettsatz', which simply means 'quartet movement'. But what a movement!

4 String Quartet in C minor ('Quartettsatz'), D. 703

5 The 'Quartettsatz' in C minor, Deutsch 703.

For all his precocity in music, it could be said that psychologically Schubert was a late developer. It's in his twenties that we find most of the characteristics generally associated with adolescence. He began to develop a pronounced sensuality hardly evident at all in his teens. His attraction to that chamber-maid in Hungary was not one of love. She was certainly no successor

to Therese Grob. And there's almost a leer and a wink in the way he refers to her – like a swaggering teenage braggart (with nothing in fact to brag about). We find the same thing in a letter from Upper Austria during his visit there with Vogl.

> SCHUBERT: At the house where I'm lodging there are *eight girls*, nearly all of them pretty. So as you can see, *I have plenty to keep myself occupied*!

The voice of lust, not love – with another dash of adolescent image-flexing just below the surface.

Schubert's fabled sweetness and generosity of spirit, too, showed signs of fraying at the edges, to the concern of some of his friends – Anton Holzapfel, for instance.

> HOLZAPFEL: Josef Hüttenbrenner, in particular, became almost an object of aversion to Schubert, who often put him off so rudely, treated him so harshly and inconsiderately, that we nicknamed him 'The Tyrant'.

And later:

> HOLZAPFEL: I rarely see Schubert these days, and when I do, we don't really get on. But who knows, maybe his new, abrasive manner will stand him in good stead, and help make a strong man and a mature artist out of him.

A mature artist he already was, of course, but outside his art, few if any of his friends would claim that he ever became 'a strong man'. And even where his art was concerned, the almost scheduled self-discipline of his two years at Mayrhofer's – all those 6:00 a.m. starts – gave way to something more haphazard. A man who produced in fourteen years more compositions than Bach or Handel did in fifty can hardly be accused of laziness, but the picture painted by Sonnleithner does rather make one wonder.

> SONNLEITHNER: Where composing is concerned, Schubert was extraordinarily fertile and industrious. For everything else that goes by the name of work, however, he had no use. He loved spending his evenings at a tavern, in the company of fun-loving friends, and on these occasions midnight often passed unnoticed and pleasure was indulged to excess. As a result of this he acquired the habit of staying in bed in the morning until ten or eleven o'clock; and since this was the time when he felt the greatest urge to compose, the morning hours passed in this way, and the best time for earning some money by teaching was lost. This kind of lifestyle was mainly to blame for his not being able to retain the post of coach at the Kärntnertor theatre, which he once held very briefly. He was incapable of keeping punctually to the rehearsal hours and the mechanical side of this work irked him.

In fact he was increasingly becoming something of a shambles, even where his own music was concerned. Our witness is Anselm Hüttenbrenner.

> HÜTTENBRENNER: Schubert was extraordinarily careless with his numerous manuscripts. When close friends came to see him and he played them new songs, which they liked, they would often take the books away with them, promising to bring them back soon, which they very rarely did. Schubert often had no idea who had gone off with this or that song. So my brother, who lived in the same house, attempted to round up all these strayed lambs, which cost

> him much time and investigation. But he thus put away in a drawer more than a hundred of Schubert's songs, well preserved and properly arranged.

Nor was he merely absent-minded. His approach to the act of composition itself was… well, idiosyncratic to say the least. And Kunigunde Vogl, the singer's wife, wasn't the only one with stories to tell.

> KUNIGUNDE VOGL: When they were sharing lodgings on holiday one year, my husband was anxious to provide Schubert with plenty of manuscript paper, in the hope that he might abandon his curious habit of writing his compositions on countless little scraps of torn-off paper. One day Vogl came home about noon and found that Schubert had gone out; but on his desk lay a new composition, once more written on several little scraps of paper, while the new manuscript paper sat nearby, apparently untouched. At that moment, the copyist happened to come in; Vogl gave him this new work to copy out and asked him to bring the copy round the next day. This he did. Vogl called Schubert to the piano, saying 'Come Schubert, we must try this'. When the song was finished Schubert turned to Vogl and said: 'Not bad; who wrote it?' His own composition and he hadn't even recognised it!

Well, that's a famous anecdote but there may be more to it than meets the eye. Vogl was nothing if not self-confident and he wasn't above making alterations in other people's music, Schubert's included – transposing it to other keys, adding various embellishments and so on. If he did it in this case, then Schubert's comment takes on a whole new meaning: after Vogl's 'improvements' it was no longer Schubert's. The scraps of paper are mentioned by several people, but the popular picture of Schubert as a kind of simple-minded miracle worker, taking dictation straight from God, is really nonsense. What made him perhaps the greatest song-writer who ever drew breath isn't the quality of his melodies, though some of them aren't too bad either, but, like Mozart in opera, like Shakespeare and Goethe, his phenomenal psychological insight – his capacity to zero in on the finest shadings, the deepest recesses of the human spirit, and express them with luminous and often frightening clarity. Composition for him was often a searing experience, and his friends were not the kind of people who would cultivate the society of a simpleton. That said, he did compose like a man possessed. Spaun was often a witness to this.

> SPAUN: In the morning Schubert was occupied with composition, aglow, with his eyes shining and even his speech changed, like a sleepwalker… In the afternoon, however, he was quite another person.

Another person. Now *that* brings us closer to Schubert the man – a character infinitely more fascinating and convincing than the convivial, cheerful son of the muses who just happened to be a genius. We're not talking here about a psychotic, Jekyll and Hyde type of split personality, where one has no consciousness or memory of the other, but we *are* talking about a condition that is far more common than most people realise, even today. Schubert's friends and contemporaries may not have known specifically about 'cyclothymia', or manic-depression, but they certainly recognised its effects. Bauernfeld put it rather simply.

> BAUERNFELD: Schubert had, so to speak, a double nature – the Viennese gaiety being interwoven with and ennobled by a trait of deep melancholy.

Spaun, considering the latter part of Schubert's life, used a more extreme and dramatic vocabulary.

SPAUN: His body, strong as it was, gradually succumbed to the cleavage in his souls, as I would put it, of which one pressed heavenwards and the other… bathed in slime.

But Bauernfeld too could summon up dramatic imagery.

BAUERNFELD: There were times when a black-winged demon of sorrow and melancholy forced its way into Schubert's vicinity − not altogether an evil spirit, it is true, since, in the dark, consecrated hours, it often brought out songs of the most agonising beauty.

6 Der Strom, D. 565

7 BAUERNFELD: In the old days Dessauer had sung one of his serious songs to Schubert, who praised the composition. German poets generally end with death and the grave, and Dessauer wondered whether the song was not indeed too sad, too melancholy. Schubert replied: 'Do you know *any* **happy** music?'

To anyone familiar with Schubert's music but not his life, it may seem inconceivable that that question could seriously have been put by the composer of the Fifth Symphony, the wonderful, life-enhancing Octet in F, the songs *Der Musensohn* and *Die Forelle*… and this.

8 Piano Quintet in A major ('Trout'), D. 667 (mvt 3: Scherzo: Presto)

9 Part of the so-called 'Trout' Quintet, written in the summer following Schubert's Hungarian stint with the Esterházys. And if that's not happy music, what is? So, what was Schubert talking about? More to the point, perhaps, in what circumstance was he speaking? It's a well-established fact that 'cyclothymia', manic-depression, can put a grossly distorting lens on one's perspectives – at both ends of the spectrum. To interpret Schubert's obviously provocative question as something of general application, or as a peg on which to hang one's vision of his music, is to limit both oneself and him. Schubert was quite demonstrably cyclothymic – that's to say his mood swings conformed to a regular, recurring pattern and were generated from within, not in direct response to outer circumstance. But circumstances inevitably affect the responses, and it must be remembered that the romantics, particularly the German romantics (largely thanks to Schubert's idol Goethe), had a kind of narcissistic obsession with death, pain and suffering. Depression, or 'melancholia' as it was poetically called back then, far from being stigmatised, as it rather is today, was highly fashionable. If you were a poet or a composer or an artist it was almost bad form not to die young, preferably of consumption or on the battlefield (like poor Körner), though suicide (Mayrhofer's choice) was also popular − literally. With *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, Goethe unleashed a positive epidemic of it. In some circles, particularly in the generation after Schubert, there flourished what one might call 'competitive pallor' (Chopin won that one hands down). Now this isn't to dismiss or downgrade Schubert's very real suffering, or its authenticity in his music, which is as real as it gets. But it *is* to put into perspective *some* of his verbal pronouncements.

SCHUBERT: There is no one who can understand the pain, or the joy, of others. We may *imagine* that we come together, when in reality we merely go side by side. Oh, what torture it is for those who truly perceive this! What I produce is due to my understanding of music, and to my sorrows; and that which sorrow alone has produced seems to give least pleasure to the world.

Not true – certainly not for long. Top of the pops in Schubert's output were *Erlkönig* (about the death of a child), *Death and the Maiden* (both the song and the quartet named after it), *Gretchen*, and similar. And over the last century and a half or so, Schubert's sorrows have given the *most* pleasure (give or take the 'Trout' and the Fifth Symphony).

10 Symphony No. 8 in B minor ('Unfinished'), D. 759 (mvt 1: Allegro moderato)

11 Part of the first movement of the famous Symphony No. 8, the so-called 'Unfinished'.

Schubert's near-lifelong obsession with death is abundantly evident in his choice of song texts, but it would be wrong to suggest that it was in any serious degree the result of fashion. His mother, remember, died when he was fifteen, and of his thirteen siblings he was one of only five who survived childhood. But these were not things he discussed. Throughout his boyhood and youth, as we heard from Eckel a while ago, they found expression only in his music. Although he did write poetry as a young man, sometimes of quite searing immediacy, Schubert's verbal musings are often as ambiguous and never as eloquent or refined as his music. In a very few cases, though, they do contain at least the germ of an artistic philosophy.

> SCHUBERT: Pain sharpens the understanding and strengthens the mind; joy, on the other hand, seldom troubles about the former, and softens the latter, or makes it frivolous.

And there speaks the true romantic, forging a clear link, at least by implication, between creativity and masochism. On the other hand, the closely related idea of redemption through suffering was nothing new and is not to be scoffed at. Schubert saw its representation daily, throughout his childhood and adolescence, in the form of the Crucifix. And throughout that formative period he was universally admired for his gentleness, modesty, and generosity of spirit. It remained the prevailing view throughout his life. As he acquired adult independence, though, and achieved a measure of local celebrity, he developed, as Bauernfeld observed, a quite unexpected streak of arrogance, an intolerance, and a disregard for the feelings of those whom he saw as beneath his respect, regardless of their social standing.

> BAUERNFELD: He came to suffer a genuine dread of commonplace and boring people, of philistines, whether from the upper or middle classes – people, that is, who are usually known as 'educated' (which he, in their view, was not). He thus adopted as his motto Goethe's outcry: 'I would rather die than be bored!' Among commonplace people he felt lonely and depressed and was generally silent and apt to become ill-humoured, no matter how much attention was paid to his own rising fame.

One witness to this, and one of the very few ever to express a dissenting view of this much-beloved man, was Franz von Andlau, Schubert's junior by two years.

> ANDLAU: Schubert formed, as it were, in my view, a pendant to Beethoven. I met him frequently. His personality was of the most disagreeable kind. He shared with Beethoven his taciturn withdrawal from the world, and his gloomy bearing; one would never have suspected from this wooden appearance, this most unprepossessing exterior, the greatly gifted creator of so much wonderful music.

But Andlau got off lightly. Bauernfeld tells of two who didn't.

BAUERNFELD: Late one summer evening, Schubert dragged me forcibly to a coffee-house at which he was in the habit of winding up the day, or rather the late hours of the night. It was already one o'clock and an extremely lively musical discussion had arisen over the hot punch. Schubert emptied glass after glass and had reached a sort of elated state in which, more eloquent than usual, he was expounding to Lachner and me all his plans for the future. At this point a singular misfortune brought in two celebrated members of the Opera House orchestra. As these people came in Schubert stopped short in the middle of his impassioned discourse; his brow puckered, his small grey eyes gleamed out fiercely from behind his spectacles, which he pushed restlessly to and fro. But scarcely had the musicians caught sight of him than they rushed up, grasped him by the hands, paid him a thousand compliments and almost smothered him with flattery. Finally it transpired that they were eager to have a new composition for their concert, with solo passages for their particular instruments, and they were sure that Meister Schubert would prove accommodating. But the master turned out to be anything but accommodating; and remained silent. After repeated entreaties he said suddenly:

SCHUBERT: No! For you I will write nothing!

BAUERNFELD: 'Nothing for us?' asked the men, taken aback.

SCHUBERT: No! Not on any account.

BAUERNFELD: 'And why not, Herr Schubert?' came the rejoinder. 'I think we are just as much artists as you are! There are none better in the whole of Vienna.' 'Artists!' cried Schubert, hurriedly draining his last glass of punch and getting up from the table. Then the little man pulled his hat down over his ears and faced the virtuosi, one of whom was tall, the other more inclined to stoutness, as though physically threatening them.

SCHUBERT: Artists? Musical hacks are what you are! Nothing else! One of you bites at the brass mouthpiece of his wooden stick and the other blows out his cheeks on the horn! Do you call that art? It's a trade, a knack that earns money, and nothing more! You call yourselves artists? Blowers and fiddlers are what you are, the whole lot of you! *I* am an *artist*! I am Schubert, Franz Schubert, whom everybody knows and recognises! Who has written great things and beautiful things, that you don't begin to understand! And who is going to write still more beautiful things: the *most* beautiful things! Cantatas and quartets, operas and symphonies! Because I am not just a composer of dances, as the stupid newspapers say, and as the stupid *people* repeat**!** I am Schubert! Franz Schubert! And don't you forget it! If the word 'art' is mentioned, it's *me* they're talking about, not you worms and insects, who demand solos for yourselves that I shall never write for you! You crawling, gnawing worms that ought to be crushed under my foot – the foot of the man who is reaching to the stars! To the stars, I say, while you poor, puffing wretches wriggle in the dust and rot!!

BAUERNFELD: The dumbfounded virtuosi just stood there gaping, unable to speak, while Lachner and I attempted to get the over-wrought composer away

from the scene of an incident which was unpleasant, to say the least. And eventually, with soothing words, we brought him home.

The next morning I hurried round to see how things were, as his condition had seemed to me serious. I found him still in bed, sound asleep, with his spectacles on his head as usual… in the room, his clothes of the previous day lay strewn all over the place. On his desk lay a half-written sheet of paper, with a sea of ink spilled on it from the overturned ink-well. On the paper was written, 'two o'clock at night'. There followed a few rather confused aphorisms, indeed violent outbursts of feeling. There was no doubt he had written them down yesterday, after the violent scene. 'O Enviable Nero', I read…

SCHUBERT: Enviable Nero! Thou who wert strong enough to destroy loathsome people to the music of strings and song!

BAUERNFELD: He woke up. 'Ah, so it's you?' he said, after he'd recognised me, then he adjusted his spectacles and with a friendly smile, offered me his hand. 'Have you slept it off?' I asked with a certain emphasis. 'What nonsense!' Schubert blurted out and, with a loud laugh, jumped out of bed. I could not refrain from mentioning the previous evening. 'What will people think of you?' I said, in a rather schoolmasterish voice. 'The rogues!' replied Schubert, but quietly and good-naturedly…

SCHUBERT: Don't you know they are the most scheming rascals in the world? And at my expense too. They deserved the lesson! Though I am sorry about it. But I will write them the solos they asked for and they will still fawn on me for them. I know these people!

BAUERNFELD: Well, there you have a bit of Schubert.

Not, fortunately, a bit that surfaced too often – at least in his life. In his music, counterparts to this eruption happen all over the place. They sometimes seem to take us to the brink of madness – often with shattering and disturbing effect. Nowhere is this more striking than in the weird, violent outburst in the *Andantino* of Schubert's penultimate piano sonata, one of the most heart-rendingly sorrowful movements ever composed. We'll join it just before it all seems to go mad:

12 Piano Sonata in A major, D. 959 (mvt 2: Andantino)

13 By 1821 Schubert's star was definitely in the ascendant. His name was beginning to be known by a mainstream audience, and in March a single, high-profile charity performance of *The Erl King* by Vogl and Anselm Hüttenbrenner catapulted him, or at least his music, into the limelight – which he himself characteristically shunned. Well, yes and no. There was one particular circumstance in which he was the focal point, and he showed every sign of enjoying the fact. It had its origin in a party thrown by Schober at the end of January 1821. Its first chronicler was the uncommonly tall Josef Huber, with whom the uncommonly small Schubert was later to share lodgings for a year or so.

HUBER: Last Friday I had the most excellent entertainment: Schober invited Schubert round in the evening, along with fourteen of his closest acquaintances. So a lot of splendid songs by Schubert were sung and played by himself, until after ten o'clock in the evening. Following that, punch was drunk, offered by

> one of the party, and as it was very good and plentiful, the party, already in a happy mood, became still merrier; so it was three o'clock in the morning before we parted. You can imagine how agreeable the enjoyment of so many cultivated men must be for me.

This gathering was the prototype of many similar parties which came to be known as Schubertiads. Sometimes Vogl would sing, sometimes others, sometimes four together, for which purpose Schubert wrote many of his vocal quartets.

By the time of this first Schubertiad, many of his songs, dances and partsongs were beginning to achieve real popularity, and by the end of that year twenty of his songs had been published. Meanwhile, more performances of his music outside Vienna were carrying his reputation to the wider musical world.

But was it the kind of reputation he wanted? As we heard in that almost frenzied outburst in the coffee house with Bauernfeld, he resented being typed as a song and dance composer, as a bourgeois miniaturist, however gifted. His worldly ambitions may have been slight but his artistic ambitions were colossal. However modest in his manner and conversation, he had for some considerable time been sizing himself up next to Beethoven, *the* Colossus, already regarded by many people as the greatest composer who ever lived – and the most gigantic in his conceptions. Like Beethoven, the diminutive Schubert, all five feet of him, also thought big. He, too, grappled, or aspired to grapple, with the big metaphysical issues, and in particular the large-scale, symbolic fusion of form and feeling that we in the trade call symphonic. Beethoven was the most intimidating composer in history, and he haunted the whole of the nineteenth century. Schubert, Schumann, Liszt, Brahms, Wagner – all saw themselves in the perspective of Beethoven's gargantuan achievement. The trick for each of them was to find a distinctive and personal compositional voice, and an intellectual command that could hold its own against Beethoven's example. The most sensational and original of the earlier works in which Schubert nails his colours to the mast is the 'Wanderer' Fantasy for piano. The title isn't Schubert's but it comes from his song *Der Wanderer*, which plays an important part in the work. As a piece of symphonic thinking it's hard to beat. The whole thing is made from a few thematic kernels which are then transformed, rethought and developed, and the structure is a kind of single arc from beginning to end, comprising four linked movements whose organic connection creates an extraordinary unity. It's also the most brazenly virtuosic piano work Schubert ever wrote. When trying to play it for some friends he just threw up his hands at one point, saying 'Let the devil play this! I can't!'

14 Fantasy in C ('Wanderer' Fantasy), D. 760

15 The concluding part of the 'Fantasy in C, Deutsch 760, better known as the 'Wanderer' Fantasy. And that brings us to the end of CD 2.

CD 3

1 The 'Wanderer' Fantasy is unique in Schubert's pianistic output, unlike anything he did before or afterwards, and in many ways startlingly out of character – certainly atypical. The same year also saw the composition of his fifth Mass – in A flat, the famous 'Unfinished' Symphony (one of the greatest symphonies by any composer, though strikingly unlike the 'Wanderer' Fantasy), and once again a treasury of songs. Schubert, in all his songs, writes quite wonderfully for the voice; in almost every branch of his output we find a dramatic range and intensity equal to anyone's; yet the one area in which he failed to make any kind of a big impact – ever – in fact to this day – is opera. There's far from universal agreement as to why this should be so, but on one

point critics seem to be united. Like Haydn, Schubert was unlucky in his choice of librettos. But it wasn't just luck. He seems to have had a curious blind spot when it came to distinguishing a good from a bad one. More perplexing, indeed exasperating to those who were trying to help him and advance his career, was his curious indifference as to the performance and reception of his works. Worldly ambition seems to have been almost entirely missing from his character. The first of his operas to be staged – *Die Zwillingsbrüder* ('The Twin Brothers') – was the ninth to be written. None of the previous eight had come close. But this one was put on at the prestigious Kärntnertor theatre, with the celebrated Vogl playing both the title roles and the equally famous Adalbert Gyrowetz conducting. Some debut! Yet there's no evidence that Schubert attended any of the rehearsals. On the opening night the audience gave it a pretty lukewarm reception, though the reviews were generally favourable. Nevertheless, the opera closed after six performances and Schubert never gave it another thought.

The biggest Schubertian drama of this period, as it happens, was for real – and not for the good. Indeed Schubert ended up on the register of the notorious Police Minister, Count Sedlnitsky.

In 1819, following the assassination, by a student, of an outspoken conservative playwright, the government drew up and implemented the 'Carlsbad Decrees', designed to crush all opposition to absolutist regimes and to silence, thereby, all active proponents of democratic reform. Among these was Schubert's friend from the Seminary days, Johann Senn, who'd been on the regime's list of suspects even before the assassination. Unfortunately, when the police finally made their swoop on Senn's rooms in the small hours of a cold morning in March in 1820, Schubert and another friend, Josef von Streinsberg, were there too. It was late but they were all awake, had all been drinking, and caution was the last thing on their minds. They were arrested and taken into custody. Senn, the sole intended target, fared the worst of course. He was imprisoned for fourteen months before being deported to his home district and permanently exiled from Vienna. The following report was submitted to Count Sedlnitsky by his High Commissioner, Leopold von Ferstl.

> FERSTL: Concerning the stubborn and insulting behaviour evinced by Johann Senn, native of Pfunds in the Tyrol, on the occasion of his arrest as a member of the Freshmen Students' Association, during which he used the expressions, amongst others, that he 'did not care a hang about the police,' and further, that 'the Government was too stupid to be able to penetrate his secrets,' it is also said that his friends, who were present, Schubert, the school assistant from the Rossau district, and the law-student Streinsberg, chimed in against the authorised official in the same tone, inveighing against him with insulting and opprobrious language. The High Commissioner of Police reports this officially, in order that the excessive and reprehensible behaviour of the aforesaid Senn may be suitably punished; moreover, those individuals who have conducted themselves rudely towards the High Commissioner of Police during their visit to Senn will be called and severely reprimanded.

It must have been a bitter and frightening experience, but it did nothing to interfere with Schubert's prodigious creativity. A mere nine weeks after the closure of *Die Zwillingsbrüder* at the Kärntnertor, Schubert's next theatre-piece, *Die Zauberharfe* ('The Magic Harp'), was staged at the elegant Theater an der Wien. The opening night was a rather dismal affair – even Schubert's friend Josef Rosenbaum wrote in his diary:

> ROSENBAUM: Went to 'Magic Harp': wretched trash; utterly failed to please; the machinery jammed, and went badly, although nothing remarkable. Nobody knew his part, so the prompter was always heard first.

One or two of the critics wrote quite favourably of the music, but not of much else.

> CRITIC 1: On the book of this melodrama there is nothing very edifying to be said. Eagles and doves, genies and monsters appear – but all in vain, for there is no entertainment! Even a bat is to be seen – big enough, in truth, to be mistaken for a vampire. The tale from which these rarities are culled may have some significance and the presentation may be attractive – still, everything here is left to the music, the settings and the machines. Yet even these are incapable of stemming a flood of boredom. It is to be wished that the talented composer will in future find a better subject and a full measure of deliberation.

This one, in fact, ran to eight performances before it too died and disappeared. None of Schubert's operas has ever really entered the mainstream repertoire, but the one that came closest, albeit well after his death, was *Die Verschworenen*, regarded by many scholarly Schubertians as his most accomplished and consistent.

2 Die Verschworenen, D. 787 (Duet: 'Sie ist's! Er ist's!')

3 The first duet from *Die Verschworenen*.

By far the strangest work of 1820 is a pencilled tale in the first person, later given the title 'My Dream' by Schubert's brother Ferdinand. Biographers, critics, psychologists and psychiatrists have practically fallen over each other trying to divine the meaning, the true significance of this bizarre document, and they're still at it, even today. Is it autobiographical? Is it really the account of a dream? Could it even have been written under the influence of opium? Whatever the truth, its fascination for readers of every kind persists to this day.

> SCHUBERT: I was the brother of many brothers and sisters. Our father and mother were kind. I was deeply and lovingly devoted to them all. Once my father took us to a feast. There my brothers became very merry. I, however, was sad. Then my father approached me and bade me enjoy the delicious dishes. But I could not, whereupon my father, becoming angry, banished me from his sight. I turned my footsteps and, my heart full of infinite love for those who disdained it, I wandered into far-off regions. For long years I felt torn between the greatest grief and the greatest love. And so the news of my mother's death reached me. I hastened to see her, and my father, mellowed by sorrow, did not hinder my entrance. Then I saw her corpse.
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> Tears flowed from my eyes. I saw her lie there like the old happy past, in which according to the deceased's desire we were to live as she had done herself. And we followed her body in sorrow, and the coffin sank to earth. – From that time on I again remained at home. Then my father once more took me to his favourite garden. He asked whether I liked it. But the garden wholly repelled me, and I dared not say so. Then, reddening, he asked me a second time: did the garden please me? I denied it, trembling. At that my father struck me, and I fled. And I turned away a second time, and with a heart filled with endless love for those who scorned me, I again wandered far away. For many and many a year I sang songs.

> Whenever I attempted to sing of love, it turned to pain. And again, when I tried to sing of pain, it turned to love. Thus I was split between love and pain. And one day I had news of a gentle maiden who had just died. And a circle formed around her grave in which many youths and old men walked as though in everlasting bliss. They spoke softly, so as not to wake the maiden. Heavenly thoughts seemed forever to be showered on the youths from the maiden's gravestone, like fine sparks producing a gentle rustling. I too longed sorely to walk there. Only a miracle, however, can lead you to that circle, they said. But I went to the gravestone with slow steps and lowered gaze, filled with devotion and firm belief, and before I was aware of it, I found myself in the circle, which uttered a wondrously lovely sound; and I felt as though eternal bliss were gathered together into a single moment. My father too I saw, reconciled and loving. He took me in his arms and wept. But not so much as I.

The conjunction of that haunting and disturbing reverie and the unprecedented, angry 'Wanderer' Fantasy makes one wonder whether both might have been triggered by some momentous, even traumatic event in Schubert's life. And they're not the only pointers. In November of the same year we find him writing into a friend's notebook, very uncharacteristically, two lines which he attributes to Martin Luther.

> SCHUBERT: Who loves not wine, woman and song, / Remains a fool his whole life long.

And under that he writes:

> SCHUBERT: For eternal remembrance. Franz Schubert

Turn the leaf over and we find another quotation, this one from Goethe:

> SCHUBERT: One thing will not do for all. / Let each man live in his tradition. / Let each consider his own mission, / And he who stands?,... beware a fall.

…after which he pointedly adds,

> SCHUBERT: For remembrance.

The fact is that Schubert had indeed had a traumatic experience – one that was to change the rest of his life and leave its mark on his music.

4 String Quartet in D minor ('Death and the Maiden'), D. 810 (mvt 1: Allegro)

5 The opening of the so-called 'Death and the Maiden' Quartet.

Having always enjoyed the most robust good health, Schubert had recently detected the symptoms of a serious illness, and one directly related to his way of life. It explains his sudden departure from the lodgings he'd been sharing with Schober and his equally unexpected return to the family home. Later he was hospitalised and as a result of the treatment he received lost his hair. Years later, Schober looked back on this period with a surprising lack of compassion.

> SCHOBER: Schubert had let himself go to pieces; he frequented the outskirts of the city and roamed around in taverns, at the same time admittedly

> composing his most beautiful songs in them, just as he did in the hospital too – where he found himself as the result of excessively indulgent sensual living.

Well, perhaps that isn't so surprising. Schober was smoothly distancing himself, with that moralistic little tailpiece, from a situation for which he himself was widely felt to have been responsible. Josef Kenner was in no doubt about it.

> KENNER: Schubert's genius immediately attracted the heart of this striking and seductive young man, whose great gifts have been so worthy of a moral foundation and would richly have repaid a stricter schooling than the one he unfortunately had. But shunning so much effort as unworthy of genius and summarily rejecting such fetters as a form of prejudice and restriction, this scintillating individual won a lasting and pernicious influence over Schubert's honest susceptibility. All who knew Schubert know how he was made of two natures, foreign to each other, and how powerfully the craving for pleasure dragged his soul down to the very depths of moral degradation, and how highly he valued the utterances of friends he respected. His surrender to this false prophet, who embellished sensuality in so flattering a manner, is all too understandable. More hardened characters than he were seduced by Schober's devilish attraction into worshipping the man as an idol.

But Eduard von Bauernfeld wasn't one of them. His thumbnail sketch of Schober in his diary is a nice corrective to the adoring pictures painted by Schubert and their mutual friend Moritz von Schwind.

> BAUERNFELD: Schober has lately arrived here from Breslau. He has led a somewhat adventurous life and was an actor for a time. He is five or six years older than us, and a bit of a man-of-the-world, full of smooth, disingenuous flattery and disputatiousness, and a great favourite with the ladies, despite being somewhat bow-legged. We at once began an agreeable relationship. Moritz worships him like a god. I find him fairly human. But certainly interesting.

As well as being a ladies' man he had a knack for easy friendships with the admiring young men who invariably clustered around him, but they were seldom long-lasting. The friendship with Schubert survived their period of greatest intimacy, and while other friends fell away, Schubert remained loyal to the end of his life. As he wrote in November of 1823:

> SCHUBERT: Only you, dear Schober, I shall never forget, for what you have meant to me no one else can mean.

Nor was there anyone who did him greater harm. The very deterioration in Schubert's character and conduct that Schober referred to – the 'going to pieces' bit – dated from the closest phase of their friendship. As a role model, Schober was a disaster. Preaching a doctrine of unbridled hedonism, he encouraged the weak-willed Schubert to pursue precisely that 'excessively indulgent sensual living' that he, as we've heard, later affected to disparage. We've already encountered some of the effects: the partying into the small hours, the late rising, the heavy drinking. Later this may very well have extended to the smoking of opium – after alcohol, the nineteenth-century artist's poison of choice.

As to the drinking, the evidence doesn't suggest that Schubert was an alcoholic, but there seems little doubt that he drank to excess. Spaun's loyal denials of this after Schubert's death are more touching than convincing.

> SPAUN: The many references one hears to Schubert's love of wine can only perpetuate the entirely false view that he was intemperate and addicted to drink. On the contrary, Schubert was *always* temperate and had he not been so by nature, his slender finances would have made him so. For many years I used to take supper with him every day at an inn and was frequently with him in convivial company, when brilliant supper parties followed the performance of his songs. Never once did Schubert have too much of the good things of life!

But that doesn't square at all with the testimony of Sonnleithner, another loyal friend.

> SONNLEITHNER: Alas I must confess that I repeatedly saw him in a drunken state. On one occasion I was with him at a party, in one of the suburbs, where there was much music-making and feasting. I went home at about two in the morning; Schubert stayed on longer and I discovered the next day that he had had to sleep there as he was quite incapable of getting himself home. And this in a house where he had not long been known.

Nor do the recollections of the writer Wilhelm von Chézy make for comfortable reading.

> CHÉZY: As soon as the blood of the vine was in him, he liked withdrawing into a corner and giving in to a quiet, comfortable anger during which he would try to create some sort of havoc as quickly as possible, for example, with cups, glasses and plates, and as he did so, he would grin and screw his eyes up tight.

To anyone who loves Schubert's music (well, to anyone of a compassionate nature), this is painful stuff. And it did nothing to help Schubert's cause. To adapt a phrase from the computer age, with Schubert, what you saw was *not* what you got. For many, the sight was too much, as Bauernfeld sadly perceived.

> BAUERNFELD: Inwardly a poet and outwardly a kind of hedonist, it was only natural that Schubert was judged, as a person, by his appearance, which lacked, shall we say, the customary social polish.

It certainly did. Our witnesses are Sonnleithner and Hüttenbrenner.

> SONNLEITHNER: Schubert was below average height [around five feet], with a round, fat face, short neck, a not-very-high forehead, thick, brown, curly hair; back and shoulders rounded, arms and hands fleshy, short fingers; eyes grey-blue, eyebrows bushy; nose stubby and broad, lips thick. The colour of his skin was fair rather than dark, but inclined to break out into little pimples and was darker because of this. His head sat somewhat squeezed between his shoulders, inclining forward. In repose, his expression appeared dull rather than vivacious; sullen rather than cheerful; one could easily have mistaken him for a Bavarian peasant.

> HÜTTENBRENNER: His appearance was anything but striking or prepossessing. And dress was a thing in which he took no interest whatever; consequently he disliked going into smart society, for which he had to take more trouble with his clothes. He neglected his appearance generally, especially his teeth, and he smelt strongly of tobacco and drink.

But more distressing than either his appearance or his drinking or his whoring, or whatever he did, was the cavalier way in which he began treating some of his friends, apparently under Schober's influence. The impression was of a susceptible teenager aping his 'man of the world' idol, and getting it badly wrong. When he was invited somewhere, or had arranged to meet someone, it was anybody's guess as to whether he'd actually show up. He would if he felt like it. The same thing happened when he himself invited friends round. He lived, or so it sometimes seemed, entirely according to his own desires and inclinations. The surprise is not that he alienated and wounded some of his friends but that he didn't alienate more of them. Most remained steadfast in their devotion to him. But there were times when even the most loyal, like his brother Ferdinand, were sorely tried by his behaviour – even at second hand. Shortly before leaving for Hungary to join the Esterházys, Schubert borrowed some musical manuscripts from a certain Josef Hugelmann, promising that he would leave them with Ferdinand for Hugelmann's collection. Instead, he took them with him to Hungary, without a word to anyone. When Hugelmann arrived at Ferdinand's to collect them as arranged, Ferdinand knew nothing about them. Hugelmann was naturally outraged that his prize possessions had apparently disappeared and ordered the innocent Ferdinand to find them or else. After three equally fruitless visits, Hugelmann blew his top, and poor Ferdinand took the full blast. As he described the scene in a letter to his miscreant brother:

> FERDINAND: The man railed so violently against your utter thoughtlessness – blustering, shouting and using such foul language – that I very much cursed the honour of his acquaintance. Will you please let me know where this music may be found, so that I can pacify this raging monster?

In his reply, Schubert understandably deplored Hugelmann's conduct but there wasn't even a hint of regret or apology for his own.

> SCHUBERT: The quintets belonging to that arch-donkey Hugelbeast have accompanied me here by mistake, and, by Heaven! he shall not have them back until he has atoned for his vulgar rudeness by a written or verbal apology. If, moreover, an opportunity arises to administer a vigorous scrubbing to this unclean pig, I shall not fail to give it him in a substantial dose. But enough of that wretch!

Even accounting for his cyclothymia, this was a Schubert his friends and family hadn't known before. For some – Vogl, for instance (his most distinguished and influential champion), and Kenner, and quite a number of others – Schober was Schubert's 'evil genius', not only his seducer (Kenner's word) but, worse, his corrupter. There's no doubt that Schober was the dominant figure in their relationship, and little doubt that his power to manipulate Schubert was a source of satisfaction to him. There's even the suggestion that Schober, who came from a well-heeled aristocratic background, actually took money from Schubert to alleviate his own personal position. It comes in a letter by Anton von Spaun (brother of Josef), written to his wife in 1822.

> ANTON VON SPAUN: Vogl is much embittered against Schober, for whose sake Schubert behaved most ungratefully toward him, and who makes the fullest use of Schubert in order to extricate himself from financial embarrassments and to defray the expenditure which has already exhausted the greater part of his mother's fortunes. Vogl says that altogether Schubert is now on quite the wrong road.

Just how wrong Vogl couldn't then have known. But Schubert knew. And he knew there was no turning back. By the end of 1822, Schubert, now only twenty-five, was diagnosed with syphilis, for which in those days there was no known cure. It was not invariably fatal, but the chances of escape were slim. In the early weeks of 1823 he was too ill to leave the house; by the spring his condition looked desperate, and in May he was admitted to the Vienna General Hospital. On the eighth of that month he wrote a poem entitled *My Prayer*, which clearly suggests that he feared for his life.

SCHUBERT: With a holy zeal do I yearn
Life in fairer worlds to learn;
Would this gloomy earth might seem
Filled with love's almighty dream.

Sorrow's child, almighty Lord,
Grant Thy bounty for reward.
For redemption from above
Send a ray of endless love.

See, abased in dust and mire,
Scorched by agonising fire,
How I in torture go my way,
Nearing doom's destructive day.

Take my life, my flesh and blood,
Plunge it all in Lethe's flood,
To a purer, stronger state
Deign me, Great One, to translate.

Lethe is the name of the river in Greek mythology whose water erased the memories of all who drank it.

And now, perhaps, we have a partial explanation of the almost exaggeratedly self-confident, assertive, at times quite aggressively virtuosic 'Wanderer' Fantasy. This is real macho music – and the only work of Schubert's of which that could fairly be said. Given that it comes from the same year as the onset of his syphilis, there's at least the possibility that this is the Schubertian counterpart of the defiant Fifth Symphony which was Beethoven's first robust response to the discovery of his encroaching deafness. It even shares the same tonality – C – and in particular C major, the key of the famous Fifth's triumphalist last movement.

More typical of Schubert is the fact that it was in the hospital, at the same time as he wrote that anguished 'Prayer', that he wrote the first songs of what was to become his most popular, most beloved song cycle.

6 Die schöne Müllerin, D. 795 (Halt!, No. 3)

7 The third song, 'Halt!', from the cycle *Die schöne Müllerin*.

When Schubert was ill, he was more than ever reliant on publishers for his income, such as it was. And in that connection he would have been in dire straits but for the enterprise and devotion of his friends. Left to his own devices he would have been destitute, but friends and family ensured that he wasn't. To that extent he was always something of a spoiled child. As recently as a year before the emergence of his syphilis, his growing reputation as a song-writer

had been based almost entirely on circulated manuscripts or hand-made copies. It was at around that time that Leopold von Sonnleithner, Josef Hüttenbrenner and others decided to do something about this.

> SONNLEITHNER: We resolved that we would look for a publisher for his works, a task for which Schubert, with his naive simplicity, was entirely unsuited. I offered 'The Erl King' to both Haslinger and Diabelli, but both refused it (even without fee) as they expected no financial success because the composer was unknown and because of the difficulty of the piano accompaniment.
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> Hurt by this refusal, we decided ourselves to arrange its publication for Schubert's benefit. Between us we were able to meet the costs of the first volume out of our own pockets and, in February 1821, 'The Erl King' was engraved.
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> When my father announced, at one of our soirées, that it was available, almost 100 copies were bought that same evening by those present and the expenses of the second volume were covered. So we had the first twelve works engraved at our own expense and sold on commission at Diabelli's.
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> From the abundant proceeds we paid Schubert's debts, namely his outstanding rent, his shoemaker's and tailor's accounts and his debts at the tavern and the coffee-house, and handed over to him, in addition, a considerable sum in cash; unfortunately some guardianship such as this was necessary, for he had no idea how to manage his money and was often led by his tavern friends into wasteful expenditure from which the others benefited more than he did himself.

It says a lot for the loyalty, affection and esteem in which he was held that his friendships survived the strains he sometimes put them under. And it can't have been easy.

> SONNLEITHNER: If his affairs had continued as set up by his friends, Schubert would have received considerable profit from his works and remained the legal owner. But behind our backs, Diabelli offered him eight hundred florins for the plates and copyright of the first twelve works; this sum induced Schubert to accept the offer and then it was all over with his freedom. For those twelve works he got about two thousand florins in all, which makes an average of a hundred and sixty-six for each work, a fee he never attained again later. But this really rather ungrateful behaviour on Schubert's part did not cause a breach with us in any way; we regretted his weakness but continued to promote the performance and propagation of his works.

Let it never be said that Schubert was unlucky in his friends, with the possible exception of Schober – but, as we've seen, even he played an invaluable role at the beginning of their friendship.

A rather disturbing gloss on this story is a letter from Schubert to Messrs Diabelli and Cappi which makes it very clear that Schubert's 'naive simplicity', as Sonnleithner put it, was nothing like as pronounced as it seemed and that he was by no means 'entirely unsuited' (Sonnleithner again) to dealing with publishers.

> SCHUBERT: Sirs, Your letter was a surprise indeed, since according to Herr von Cappi's own statement the account appeared already to be settled. Having by no means discovered the most honest intentions in my publishers' earlier

> transactions, I was well placed to understand this second procedure, from which, gentlemen, you will easily comprehend my reasons for entering into a permanent arrangement with another dealer. What I do not quite understand, by the way, is your indication of a debt of a hundred and fifty florins, since according to your statement the copying of the opera amounted only to a hundred. Be that as it may, however, it seems to me that the exceedingly small sale price of my earlier things, as well as that of the Fantasy at fifty florins, should long ago have liquidated a debt unjustly charged to me. But as I greatly doubt whether you take this all-too-human view, I would remind you that I am still entitled to twenty copies of the later and twelve of the earlier books, and may even more justifiably ask for the fifty florins of which you earlier deprived me. If you will kindly add this up, you will find that my demand is not only the greater, but the more just. In conclusion I request that you return to me all my manuscripts, of the engraved as well as the unengraved works.
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> Respectfully, Franz Schubert, Composer.

Throughout his life, Schubert's 'circle', so to speak, remained resolutely male. This, though, was a reflection not so much on him, or them, but of the society in which they lived. The suggestion that Schubert was homosexual can't be dismissed out of hand, but the evidence for it remains pretty slim. Close friendships between men, or groups of men, were very common, and the sometimes extravagant (and, yes, occasionally erotic) language they used was part of the common exchange of affectionate expression, in those days and in that place. Most of Schubert's friends got married, Schober prominent amongst them, and, if Schubert hadn't contracted syphilis, so might he have done – if he could qualify for the state's permission. But there's no doubt that the character of friendships within Schubert's circle, as described by Bauernfeld and others, would be hard to imagine in a sexually mixed society.

> BAUERNFELD: It was not uncommon for us all to spend the night together, at one or other's lodgings. Where property was concerned, we adopted a communistic view; hats, boots, neckerchiefs, coats and other articles of clothing, if they happened to fit, were common property; but gradually, through manifold use, they passed eventually into undisputed private possession. And where money is concerned, whoever was flush at the moment paid for the others.
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> It was generally Schubert who played the part of Croesus and who, off and on, used to be swimming in money, if he had happened to dispose of a few songs, or even a whole cycle. To begin with there would be high living and entertaining, with money being spent right and left – then we were on short rations again! Indeed we regularly commuted between plenty and want.

If Schubert's character in society was less than strong, in music he was indefatigable. Even in that terrible May of 1823, hospitalised and troubled by despairing thoughts (and on top of the *Schöne Müllerin* songs), he started work on another full-length opera, *Fierrabras*. With it, once again, he demonstrated his strange inability to detect a fatally flawed libretto. Even stranger, though, was his apparently chronic failure to capture the spirit of the times. However much he might be able to grasp it intellectually, his operas, in style, character and approach, were resolutely out of step with fashion – no matter how good the music. If he truly understood this, you'd have thought that he had two choices: conform, or abandon ship. Instead, without opera ever having been a consuming passion – as with Mozart, Wagner and most of the Italians – he chose repeatedly to swim doggedly against the tide, expending a lot of his own and his collaborators' time and energies on projects which were almost guaranteed to fail – as almost every one of them did.

Nevertheless, it could be that work on *Fierrabras* actively helped his recovery from the first, nasty stage of his disease, because by late summer he was back to something like normal, albeit fairly briefly. In the view of many Schubert scholars, the music is the finest he wrote for the stage, but the stage it never saw, at least in Schubert's lifetime, thanks to the almost inevitable rejection by the management. Never one to lick his wounds for long, Schubert, though still weakened by a combination of illness and exertion, immediately accepted a commission to write the incidental music for a play called *Rosamunde*, by Helmina von Chézy. This he continued to work on despite a serious reversal of his health, involving a second bout of hospitalisation. He was now attended by two doctors and subjected to a combination fast-and-diet, which it was hoped might arrest the progress of the disease. If it failed, Schubert could anticipate not only a premature death but the onset of a debilitating decline, both physical and mental, which could well end in insanity and serious neurological breakdown. Fortunately, he rallied, his condition even improved, and he finished the score on time. *Rosamunde* did in fact make it as far as the stage, but the reviews of the play and its production, described by one critic as 'a fiasco', assured its cancellation after only two performances. The music, however, was highly praised, and not only survived but has long since found a place of its own in the permanent orchestral repertoire.

8 Incidental music to 'Rosamunde', D. 797 (Ballet Music No. 2)

9 Until his final days, Schubert never relinquished the idea that he might someday, at last, write a successful opera. But the ambition is likely to have been as much a financial as an artistic one. As it happens, *Rosamunde* marked his unintentional farewell to the stage and in the early months of 1824 he returned to the realm of instrumental music – in particular, chamber music. In March he wrote to his friend Kupelwieser, summarising his latest achievements, and his plans for the future.

> SCHUBERT: Of songs, I haven't written many new ones, but I have tried my hand at several instrumental works, including two string quartets and an octet for strings and wind, and I want to write another quartet. In fact I intend by this means to pave my way towards grand symphony.

The sound of a man with a cool head, a clear vision and a farsighted strategy; a man with a sober, confident, realistic outlook. Not a hint of a panic-stricken invalid, anxiously counting days, months and hours – yet only a little earlier, in a brief letter, we find a very different character.

> SCHUBERT: In a word, I feel myself the most unhappy and miserable creature on Earth. Imagine a man whose health is lost forever, and who in despair over this makes things ever worse instead of better; imagine a man whose highest hopes have perished, a man for whom the happiness of love and friendship can now offer nothing but pain, whose enthusiasm for all things beautiful dwindles with every passing day, and I ask you, is he not a most wretched and unhappy being? Well may I sing every day now, for every night I go to sleep in the hope that I shall never wake again, and each morning tells me only of yesterday's grief.

More remarkable still than the contrasts within that one letter is the fact that the man who wrote it had only lately finished writing this.

10 Octet in F, D. 803 (mvt 4: Andante with variations – variation 2)

11 Part of the wonderful Octet in F for strings and wind – hardly what you'd expect from a doomed invalid, let alone from a man struggling with despair. Doomed, yes – or so he certainly felt –, but only an occasional invalid. As Schubert moved through the progressive phases of syphilis, he experienced long periods of remission, in which (apart from sporadic attacks of pain and giddiness, which he was largely able to conceal) it was almost possible to forget that he was ill. But it must be remembered, in the light of the music we've just heard, that an artist, be it a composer, a writer, a painter, an actor or whatever, doesn't have to feel something in order to express it – or rather, to communicate it. On the other hand, if we want music that does reflect the state of mind expressed in Schubert's letter, we can find it without any difficulty in either of the quartets he mentioned, which date from the same time.

12 String Quartet in A minor, D. 804 (mvt 1: Allegro ma non troppo)

13 Part of the A minor String Quartet, which was given its well-received public premiere by the Schuppanzigh Quartet (the best in the business) within weeks of its completion.

In 1824 Schubert was composing at a sustained level and with an intensity of concentration higher than ever before. As his friend Moritz von Schwind wrote to Schober in March:

> SCHWIND: If you visit Schubert these days, he says 'Hello, how are you? Alright? Good.' And he goes on writing.

– composing, as they say, 'like there was no tomorrow'. Well, happily there was a tomorrow – and many of them. Behind his unimpressive and now sporadically sickly exterior, Schubert's will to live, in spite of his worsening depressions, was as tough as old boots. But the yo-yo of his symptoms can hardly have helped. On the 10th of April, Schwind wrote to Kupelwieser:

> SCHWIND: Schubert is almost wholly well – and sends you many greetings.

But four days later he reported:

> SCHWIND: Schubert is not well. Among other things he complains of pain in his bones, particularly in his left arm, so that he can't play the piano at all.

At the end of May he was much improved, and, spurred by the need to make money, he returned to the service of the Esterházys at their summer home in Hungary. But his mood was far from happy. As he reported to Schober:

> SCHUBERT: Here I am, sitting alone in the depths of the Hungarian countryside. And there isn't a soul here with whom I could exchange a single sensible word.

Well, that's certainly not the way it seems in an account by Schubert's friend and champion Baron von Schönstein, who was with him on that very visit. He begins by talking about the family but ends rather differently – and interestingly.

> SCHÖNSTEIN: The two daughters of the Count were already very good pianists when Schubert went there. In addition to this the former had a very beautiful soprano voice, trained by the best Italian masters. The wealth of creative musical power in Schubert was soon recognised in the Esterházy

> household, where he became a great favourite of the family. Up to the time of his death, he was frequently at Count Esterházy's house. A love affair with a maid-servant, which Schubert started soon after his arrival, was succeeded by a more poetic flame which sprang up in his heart for the younger daughter of the house, the Countess Caroline. This flame continued to burn to the end of his life. Caroline had the greatest regard for him and for his talent, but she did not return his love; perhaps she was unaware of the degree to which it existed. I say the degree, for that he loved her must surely have been clear to her from a remark of Schubert's – his only declaration in words. Once, when she playfully reproached him for not having dedicated any composition to her, he replied 'What is the point? Everything is dedicated to you anyway.'

But he took the hint, very belatedly as it happens, and did eventually dedicate to her one of his greatest instrumental masterpieces, the exquisitely lyrical, heart-rendingly poignant, and ultimately tragic Fantasy in F minor for piano duet.

14 Fantasy in F minor for piano duet, D. 940

15 Part of the substantial F minor Fantasy which Schubert dedicated to Countess Caroline Esterházy.

Baron von Schönstein can hardly have been the only one that summer to find Schubert's behaviour at times rather strange.

> SCHÖNSTEIN: It was. It was. Among other things, he was frequently seized with the fancy that he had been poisoned. Indeed this delusion took hold of him to such an extent that he no longer had a moment's peace, and on the evening before my return to Vienna he begged me to take him with me.

The Baron agreed, and the summer came to an unexpected end. If Schubert was indeed unrequitedly in love, the return to Vienna must have been a relief on that score alone: more distraction, and less bittersweet frustration without daily exposure to his unattainable beloved. Some biographers have dismissed the evidence of his love for her as 'extremely flimsy' but we have it affirmed not only by Schönstein, who was on the scene at the time, and knew both Schubert and the Esterházys well, but also by Bauernfeld – first in a diary entry.

> BAUERNFELD: Schubert seems to be seriously in love with Countess Esterházy. I feel very happy for him.

And later, looking back, he stated without doubt:

> BAUERNFELD: He was head over heels in love with her. Fortunately, in his case, an idealised love was at work, mediating, reconciling, compensating. The Countess may be regarded as his visible, beneficent muse – a Leonore to his musical Tasso.

On the professional front, Schubert returned to mixed news. On the one hand there were a number of fairly high-profile performances of his music, both in Vienna and abroad, particularly in Germany, and an increasing rate of publication – though mostly of his lighter, more populist songs and piano pieces. On the other hand, public and critics alike greeted his first complete song cycle, *Die schöne Müllerin*, with a deafening silence: no reviews, no performances, hardly any sales. Two forces were behind this. As with *The Erl King*, though nothing like so extremely, the

accompaniments were often beyond the capacities of the average amateur pianist. More significant, and concerning, was a decline in the musical taste of the Viennese as a whole. Perhaps in reaction to the repressive regime of Prince Metternich, the fashion, increasingly, was to turn away from so-called 'serious' music in favour of the lightweight, the frothy, the sensational – just the sort of escapist fare that the Italian impresario Barbaia was serving up at the opera house. Needless to say, it was a development that troubled Schubert, and not only on his own behalf. As he wrote to Spaun:

> SCHUBERT: Altogether, it's a veritable misery the way everything is becoming petrified into a kind of insipid prosiness. It's happening everywhere, yet most people look on without concern, even feel comfortable with it, as they glide calmly over this slime into the abyss. To go upwards, of course, is harder; yet this rabble could be driven in pairs, if only something were done from up above.

In the meantime, Schubert did his bit – partly by demonstrating time and again that light music could be combined with high art, that entertainment didn't have to mean 'dumbing down', as we say today.

16 Impromptu in F minor, D. 935 No. 4

17 Part of Schubert's last Impromptu, in F minor – and that brings us to the end of CD 3.

CD 4

1 The year 1825 saw a huge improvement in Schubert's health. Indeed he returned to something like his old self. Witness his embarking with Vogl on what amounted to a four-month concert tour of Upper Austria, which turned out to be perhaps the happiest time of his life. Wherever they went, his music was known, and they enjoyed the hospitality and company of a wide range of people, of a wide range of ages. In Gmunden, where they stayed for six weeks, their host was Ferdinand Traweger, a prominent musical amateur and patron, whose four-year-old son Eduard remembered the visit all his life.

Although he remained a bachelor to the end of his days, Schubert, like that later bachelor Brahms, had a great rapport with children (except, as we've seen, in the classroom). He loved them and they loved him. Perhaps because so much of the child Schubert lived on in the man, he felt immediately comfortable in the presence of children. He was enchanted by the little Eduard, and the feeling was mutual.

> EDUARD TRAWEGER: I still remember this scene as though it were today. When Vogl sang and Schubert accompanied on the piano, I was always allowed to listen. On these wonderful occasions friends and relations were often invited. With such music, and such performances, it was inevitable that deep feelings should surface, and it was not an uncommon occurrence for the men to throw themselves into one another's arms, while their emotion overflowed in tears. Ah, how often have I told of such occasions afterwards! When I awoke in the morning, still in my nightshirt, I used to rush in to Schubert. I no longer paid morning visits to Vogl because once or twice, when I disturbed him in his sleep, he had chased me out as a 'bad boy'. But Schubert, in his dressing-gown, with his long pipe, used to take me on his knee, puff smoke at me, put his

> spectacles on me, let me feel his scratchy face and rumple up his curly hair. He was so kind to everyone that even we children could not be without him.

Nor, of course, was it only men and boys who were moved to tears by the combination of Schubert and Vogl. It was an almost universal experience. Spaun remembers one occasion among many.

> SPAUN: A small sympathetic audience was invited, and then began the songs, so fraught with deep feeling. These moved everyone so much that after the performance of some melancholy songs, the entire female part of the audience, my mother and sister at their head, dissolved into tears and the concert came to a premature end midst loud sobbing. Nice refreshments and Schubert's and Vogl's good humour soon restored an air of gaiety, and in the best of moods and glorious moonlight and starlight we eventually made our way home through the lovely countryside.

There was a new element of Schubert that emerged during that happy summer: a quiet, easy openness with others, in situations where, before, he would have been guarded or self-conscious – a quality almost of serenity. Anton Ottenwalt, Spaun's brother-in-law and a friend of Schubert's (though not a close one), was particularly struck.

> OTTENWALT: I had never seen him like this, nor heard him: serious, profound, as though inspired. How he talked of art, of poetry, of his youth, of friends and other people who matter, of the relationship of ideals to life etc.! I was more and more amazed at such a mind, whose artistic achievement is often said to be unconscious, hardly revealed to or understood by Schubert himself. Yet how simple was all this! I cannot tell you of the extent and the unity of his convictions – but there were glimpses of a world-view that is not merely acquired, and the share which worthy friends may have in it does not detract from its individuality. That's why I'm so glad that he seemed to like being near me, and was inclined to show that side of him normally reserved for kindred spirits.

It rather suggests that he may to some degree have come to terms with the fact of his illness. The quite justified if not very attractive self-pity that he'd poured out to Kupelwieser, in that anguished letter, was now remarkable for its absence. But the fire in the belly that had always been a part of him was far from being extinguished. Near Salzburg, towards the end of their four-month idyll, Schubert and Vogl found themselves in a landscape the like of which they'd never seen.

> SCHUBERT: Having crawled slowly up a great mountain, with terrible rockeries before our noses and on either side, as if the world had been nailed up with boards, here, suddenly, at the highest peak, you look down into a fearful great abyss, which threatens to shake your very heart. Having recovered somewhat from the initial fright, you look at these incredibly high rocky walls, which seem to close up at some distance like a blind alley, and you wonder in vain where any outlet may be found.

But he soon had something else on his mind, and it incited him to a pitch of fury and outrage unique in his correspondence.

> SCHUBERT: Here, in the midst of this terrifying natural scenery, Man has sought to commemorate his still more dreadful bestiality. For it was here that the Bavarians and the Tyrolese on either side of the river Salzach, which makes its tumultuous way far, far below, indulged in that frightful massacre at which the Tyrolese, concealed in the rocky heights, fired down with hellish shouts of triumph on the Bavarians, who were endeavouring to gain the pass, but were hurled wounded into the depths without even seeing where the shots came from. This most infamous act, which went on for weeks, was marked by a chapel on the Bavarian side and a rough cross in the rock on the Tyrolese, partly to commemorate and partly as a sacred sign of expiation. O Thou glorious Christ! To how many shameful actions must Thou lend Thine image! Thyself the most awful monument to mankind's degradation, Thine image is set up by them as if to say 'Behold! we have trampled with impious feet upon Almighty God's most perfect creation; why should it cost us pains to destroy with a light heart the remaining vermin, called Man?'

2 **Winterreise, D. 911 (Rückblick, No. 8)**

3 Part of a song – 'Rückblick' – from the cycle *Winterreise*, perfectly catching Schubert's mood in that verbal diatribe against mankind.

When Schubert returned to Vienna, he also returned to many of his old ways, once more under the influence and in the company of Schober. As Bauernfeld noted matter-of-factly in his diary:

> BAUERNFELD: Schubert is back. Tavern and coffee-house gatherings with friends, often till three in the morning.

Late nights; heavy drinking and smoking; none of the country air and exercise he'd been getting for the last few months; and who knows what sexual escapades: it was hardly what the doctor ordered, but for the moment, at least, it appeared to be doing him no harm. Three months later, though, he was too ill to join his friends at a special New Year's Eve party, for which Bauernfeld had written a satire on their circle, casting Schubert in the role of Pierrot. But if his health was declining, so, once again, was his behaviour. Again he felt the pangs of loneliness, as certain old friends, now established in polite society, began to shun him for his dissolute ways and shabby appearance, while others married and moved on, devoting themselves to family life. In turn, by way of ricochet, Schubert himself now hurtfully neglected many of those old friends who still desired his company. He was hardly friendless, but the constitution of his circle was changing. Most of his newer friends were now appreciably younger than he was. As he approached his thirties, now the elder of the circle, some of them, Schwind for instance, were barely into their twenties.

Professionally, however, things were looking up. In December of 1825, the publishers Cappi & Co. placed an advertisement in the *Vienna Times*.

> ANNOUNCER 2: The art-dealers Cappi & Co., in the Graben, are showing a most successful portrait of the composer Franz Schubert, reproduced by Herr Passini from the original painting by Wilhelm Rieder, price 3 florins. This greatly gifted composer, whose music, especially his vocal compositions, has often delighted distinguished audiences, appears in this picture to the life. It is a most speaking likeness, and we are certain that the composer's numerous friends and admirers will find it a highly acceptable gift.

The portrait was on sale at other shops as well. More substantially and significantly, in 1825 alone no fewer than forty of his pieces were published, including a full-scale Mass, twenty-eight songs, a set of thirty-four waltzes, and the extended Piano Sonata in D. What serious composer in his twenties today could claim anything even remotely comparable? Or back then, come to that. At the same age, Beethoven had yet to write his first symphony, and Haydn, still virtually unknown, had just started his first salaried employment. The still-popular myth that Schubert was shamefully neglected in his lifetime just doesn't fit the facts. Closer to the truth is an entry by Karl Beethoven in one of his deaf uncle's conversation books:

> KARL BEETHOVEN: They greatly praise Schubert but it is said that he hides himself.

And that brings us to the extraordinary fact that the world's two greatest living composers, resident for almost three decades in the same not terribly big city, never met until the elder was on his deathbed, if even then. The man who brought it about – if he indeed did – was their mutual friend Anton Schindler.

> SCHINDLER: As Beethoven's illness made his usual mental activities impossible, it was necessary to think of some distraction suited to his intellect and inclination. Thus it was that I presented him with a collection of Schubert's songs and vocal works, many of which were then still in manuscript. The great master, who previously had not known five songs by Schubert, was amazed at their sheer number and couldn't believe that Schubert had already written over 500. But if he was amazed at their number, he was utterly astonished by their content. For several days on end he simply could not tear himself away from them, spent hours every day over them, calling out 'Truly, in Schubert there dwells a divine spark!' He now wanted to see his operas and piano works; but his illness soon made this impossible. Nevertheless he still often spoke of Schubert and prophesied that he would make a great stir in the world.

Not at that time a very daring prophecy. Mozart said the same about Beethoven.

Well, now we come to the strange doubt as to whether Beethoven and Schubert ever met at all – because we have an extraordinary conflict of evidence. Spaun, writing many years later, insists that they didn't.

> SPAUN: Schubert's visit to Beethoven is pure fiction. Schubert often lamented to me how deeply he regretted that Beethoven had been so inaccessible, and that he'd never had the opportunity to speak to him.

Oh? That's not how Anselm Hüttenbrenner tells it.

> ANSELM HÜTTENBRENNER: It is an absolute fact that Schindler, Schubert and I visited Beethoven at his sickbed about a week before he died. Schindler announced us both and asked Beethoven whom he wanted to see first; whereupon he declared that Schubert should come in first. From this I concluded that Schubert had been acquainted with Beethoven prior to this.

Not a safe assumption. Why in the world, after all, would Beethoven have ever wanted to see Anselm Hüttenbrenner first (if at all)? And why did Hüttenbrenner have to 'conclude' anything? Schubert was right there – he could have asked him directly. In any case, if Schubert had 'been

acquainted' with Beethoven earlier, would he really have kept it a dark secret, never mentioning it to anyone, before or after? Who knows?

What is established beyond any doubt is that Schubert was one of the torch-bearers at Beethoven's funeral. Another was the then very famous composer-pianist Johann Nepomuk Hummel, and with him, though not among the torch-bearers, was his pupil (and later a famous virtuoso himself) Ferdinand Hiller, then sixteen. Some days after the funeral, the two were at a social occasion where they both met Schubert for the first time. What happened a little later made the occasion unforgettable. More than fifty years on, Hiller remembered it as though it had been yesterday.

> HILLER: After dinner Schubert sat down at the piano with Vogl at his side – the rest of us settled down comfortably in the large drawing-room, wherever we felt inclined, and then began a unique concert. Song after song ensued – the performers inexhaustibly generous, the audience inexhaustibly receptive. Schubert hadn't much of a technique, Vogl no longer had much of a voice, but they had such life and feeling. They were so completely absorbed, that the wonderful compositions could not have been interpreted with more clarity or vision. Of my own emotions and enthusiasm I dare not speak – but my master, with almost half a century of music behind him, was so deeply moved that tears ran down his cheeks.

Schubert, for his part, was thrilled to meet Hummel, and still more thrilled at Hummel's response to his music. It was to Hummel that he dedicated his last three sonatas. By the time they were published, though, both men were dead. The publisher Diabelli dedicated them instead to the young Robert Schumann, after which they were basically forgotten for almost a century. Today, however, they've long been counted amongst the greatest ever written.

4 Piano Sonata in C minor, D. 958 (mvt 1: Molto moderato)

5 Part of Schubert's very Beethovenian Sonata in C minor, Deutsch 958.

It's an extraordinary, still shocking fact that on the centenary of Schubert's death, in 1927, Sergei Rachmaninov, one of the greatest pianists in history, was unaware that Schubert had written any sonatas at all. So – it wasn't during Schubert's life that his music was neglected: it was afterwards. A similar fate awaited his last symphony, the so-called 'Great' C major – so called to distinguish it from the earlier, not-so-great Symphony No. 6, also in C.

For many (probably most) confirmed Schubertians, this towering masterpiece, almost an hour in length, represents the absolute peak of his achievement, the culmination of his whole life's work. Well, although its quality is just about universally acknowledged it isn't quite the culmination we once thought. Until fairly late in the twentieth century it was attributed to Schubert's last year, but modern scholarship has now established that it actually dates from 1826, when Schubert was still in his twenties. Not that it makes a whit of difference to its intrinsic stature, but the fact is that many of Schubert's greatest works followed rather than preceded it. It was, however, his last symphony – his ninth: the same number as Beethoven's last, his 'Choral' Symphony.

Sad to say, as Leopold von Sonnleithner explains, Schubert himself never heard a note of his own last symphony.

> SONNLEITHNER: Soon after it was composed, the great C major Symphony was rehearsed by the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, but was shelved because of its length and difficulty. It was not until 1839 that a performance of the work

> in its entirety was planned, but even then, certain vital players refused to attend the necessary number of rehearsals, so the concert committee had to settle, on this occasion, for the first two movements only.

When, later in that same year, the symphony did finally receive its first full performance, at a concert in Leipzig conducted by Felix Mendelssohn, Schubert had been dead for more than a decade.

6 Symphony No. 9 in C ('Great'), D. 944 (mvt 4: Finale: Allegro vivace)

7 Music from Schubert's ninth and last symphony, the 'Great' C major – of which he never heard a note. The same goes for No. 8, the 'Unfinished'. The shocking truth is that he never heard a single one of his symphonies in a professional performance. So to that extent, yes, indeed, he was neglected in his lifetime. But then he probably did less than any major composer, apart from Schumann, to push his own music. It has to be said, too, that it was a lot harder and more expensive to set up orchestral concerts than evenings of songs and chamber music. And we also have to consider the fact that in those days the standard of orchestral playing was way below what we take for granted today: the difficulties faced by those uncooperative players were very real. It wasn't just in matters of technique, though, that Schubert (like Beethoven in his late sonatas and quartets) was writing beyond his time. Labels are almost always inadequate, and often misleading, but it could fairly be said, I think, that Schubert was the first 'tragic' composer – something he couldn't have afforded to be if, like Bach, Mozart and Haydn, he'd been in the full-time service of the nobility or the Church. Another of the things that made Schubert in a sense the first of the great romantic composers was his almost breathtaking unconcern for the requirements and desires of specific audiences. Yes, he did write quite a few works on commission, just as he wrote reams of popular dances and piano duets, but for the most part – certainly when it comes to his best music – he wrote strictly according to his own impulse. He wrote what he had to write, expressed what he had to express, whatever it cost him, particularly in his last years. A case in point is the *Winterreise* ('A Winter Journey'), which is commonly regarded today as the greatest song cycle ever written. At the time, it bewildered even his friends. Spaun was only one of several.

> SPAUN: For a time Schubert's mood became unaccountably gloomy and he seemed quite upset. When I asked him what was the matter he merely said to me 'Well, you'll soon hear it and then you'll understand'. One day he said to me 'Come to Schober's today, and I shall sing you a cycle of grisly songs. I'm anxious to know what you think of them. They have affected me more than has been the case with any others.' So, in a voice wrought with emotion, he sang the whole of the *Winterreise* through to us. We were quite dumbfounded by the gloomy mood of these songs. Schober, indeed, confessed that he'd only liked one, 'Der Lindenbaum' – to which Schubert only said, 'I like these songs more than any I have written, and you will get to like them too'.

8 Winterreise, D. 911 (Erstarrung, No. 4)

9 'Erstarrung' ('Benumbed') from *Winterreise*.

The atmosphere, the spare textures, the sometimes eerie distancing of singer and accompanist, are all vital factors in the impact of the *Winterreise* songs, but despite Schubert's word in his confident prediction, they aren't really the kind of thing one 'likes', precisely. Of course Schubert was too modest to say 'one day you will find them overwhelmingly moving,' but his prophecy was accurate. Not only Schober but virtually everyone who had begun by being

resistant to the songs fairly soon came round, and acknowledged that they show Schubert at the peak of his genius. Though not in connection with *Winterreise*, honours began to crowd in on Schubert, and not only in Austria. His music now received widespread coverage throughout the musical centres of Germany. The Leipzig *Musikalische Zeitung*, for instance, devoted some 2,000 words to a single sonata, which was all but unprecedented. Never before had the time been more favourable for a major publicity campaign on behalf of Schubert's music, though of course the impetus didn't come from Schubert himself – it came from Sonnleithner and others.

> SONNLEITHNER: His friends advised him to give a concert and this he decided to do; but since even now he was not the man to initiate anything of the kind himself, it was we again who, gladly and affectionately, arranged and managed the concert.

Plans were made, a programme was drawn up, the hall was booked, tickets went on sale, and the event was a sell-out. This was the first time ever that a public concert had been mounted consisting entirely of Schubert's music, and, as Bauernfeld reports, it was a roaring success.

> BAUERNFELD: The hall was crammed, every single piece was greeted with overwhelming applause, the composer was recalled times without number. The concert yielded a net profit of almost [three] hundred Gulden – which in those days was a lot of money! But the main thing was: Schubert had found his public and was in great heart!

As well he might be. The concert was indeed a tremendous success, and the audience got far more than its money's worth. The programme included a movement from his last string quartet, never heard before, a work for women's chorus and another for men's, a remarkable, extended song with piano and French horn, and the whole of the magnificent E flat Trio for piano, violin and cello.

10 Piano Trio in E flat, D. 929 (mvt 1: Allegro)

11 Part of the Piano Trio No. 2 in E flat.

From a musical, financial and social point of view, the benefit concert was a triumph – as a concert. But as a publicity coup – and that, after all, was the main idea – it was, as that melancholy phrase has it, a damp squib. Not because the firework failed to ignite but because there was no one there to report it. As luck would have it, all the critics, of all the papers, were obsessed, to the exclusion of everything else, with a gaunt, saturnine Italian violinist for whom Vienna was just a stepping-stone to the conquest of the world. *A* violinist? No. In the words of one critic, and the opinion of them all, he was…

> CRITIC 2: The most wonderful, most extraordinary musical phenomenon, a comet on the musical horizon, of a kind which returns perhaps only once in a thousand years, is at this time within our walls. It is Paganini!… Only one voice is to be heard in the city and this cried out 'Harken to Paganini!' The man has now given five concerts, and netted at least 70,000 Gulden! It is not surprising that, in comparison to him, all other musical performers are put in the shade.

What *is* surprising is that none of Schubert's friends saw it coming. Paganini's reputation preceded him like the roar that heralds a tidal wave. Those who think of him only as 'the Demon Fiddler', though – the man whose feats of virtuosity were considered literally superhuman – may

be surprised to learn that Schubert too was Paganini-mad. The fact is that Paganini was also a supreme lyricist, and after hearing him play for the first time, Schubert's reaction was far removed from Paganini's generally demonic image. 'Today,' he said…

> SCHUBERT: Today I heard an angel sing.

And anyone who wonders why Schubert never became rich need only listen to the tale told by Bauernfeld – a tale already begun a little time back, remember.

> BAUERNFELD: Whenever Schubert brought in a good deal of money, there would be much high living, money being spent left, right and centre… To one such time of plenty, immediately following Schubert's benefit concert, I am indebted for having heard Paganini. The five gulden, which this concert pirate demanded, were quite beyond my means; that Schubert had to hear him went without saying, but he simply would not hear him again without me; he was seriously annoyed when I hesitated to accept the ticket from him. 'Don't be an idiot!' he cried –
>
> SCHUBERT: I've already heard him once, and I was very annoyed that you weren't there! I tell you, we shall never see this fellow's like again! And I have stacks of money now – so come on!
>
> BAUERNFELD: And with that he dragged me off. Who could have resisted such an appeal? According to custom I was also treated at the inn, after the concert, and a bottle more than usual was charged up to enthusiasm.

Schubert's generosity is a matter of record, but this was more than that. This kind of reckless spending, one of the standard symptoms of the manic-depressive cycle, was a regular feature of Schubert's behaviour throughout his adult life.

Only a little more than six months after his unreported benefit concert and his Paganini binge, Schubert was dead. Yet such was his resilience and his fantastic productivity that almost nobody saw it coming. His output was fantastic, and its sustained quality defies human understanding. He turned out one masterpiece after another, and at a rate that similarly beggared belief: the F minor Fantasy, the A major Rondo and the so-called 'Lebensstürme' for piano duet; the three last piano sonatas (each colossal in its highly individual way); a host of songs; the Mass in E flat; and by general consent the greatest of them all, the transcendent C major Quintet for strings.

12 String Quintet in C, D. 956 (mvt 4: Allegretto)

13 Part of the C major Quintet for strings.

In addition to the prodigious musical output of his last few months, Schubert twice summoned up the strength to join friends on lengthy walking expeditions in the country (this despite having collapsed, shortly before the second of these, at a tavern with the now ironic name of 'The Red Cross'). Schubert's doctors grew increasingly pessimistic about his health, but there's no sign that Schubert had any sense of impending death. He was full of plans for the future, some of them surprising. Few would argue with the claim that in 1828, the year after Beethoven's death, Schubert was by a wide margin the greatest of living composers. Yet in November, with characteristic, well, almost sensational humility, he began a course in counterpoint with the esteemed composer and theorist Simon Sechter. And in spite of his

worsening health, as Baron von Schönstein reported, he still had spells where he seemed quite normal.

> SCHÖNSTEIN: When I dined with Schubert about ten days before his death he was remarkably cheerful, indeed almost unrestrained in his gaiety, a mood which may have been favoured by the large amount of wine he drank that evening.

When Spaun called in a few days later, things had deteriorated, though not dramatically.

> SPAUN: I found him ill in bed, but his condition didn't seem serious. He corrected my copy and was glad to see me, saying 'There's really nothing the matter with me, but I'm so exhausted I feel I could fall through the bed'. I left him without any anxiety at all, and it came as a thunderbolt when, only a few days later, I learned of his death. Poor Schubert, so young and at the start of such a brilliant career! There is no doubt in my mind that the state of excitement in which he composed his most beautiful music contributed to his early death.

The next, and more worrying, bulletin came from the patient himself, in a letter to Schober.

> SCHUBERT: I am ill. I have had nothing to eat or drink for eleven days now, and can only wander feebly and uncertainly between armchair and bed. My doctor is treating me. If I take any food I cannot retain it at all. So please be so good as to come to my aid in this desperate condition with something to read. I have read Cooper's 'Last of the Mohicans', 'The Spy', 'The Pilot', and 'The Pioneers'. If by chance you have anything else of his, I beg you to leave it for me at the coffee-house with Frau von Bogner. My brother, who is conscientiousness itself, will bring it over to me without fail. Or indeed anything else. Your Friend, Schubert.

Alone among Schubert's friends, Schober stayed away from the composer in his last weeks, for fear of infection.

On the 17th of November, Bauernfeld and Lachner came round to discuss plans for a new opera. Schubert was now alarmingly weak, but perfectly lucid. That evening he became feverish and delirious, and on the 18th he began to suffer from hallucinations. His brother Ferdinand was there.

> FERDINAND: On the very evening before his death, though only half conscious, he said to me: 'I implore you to take me to my room, not to leave me here, in this corner under the ground; do I not deserve a place above ground?' I answered him: 'Dear Franz, rest assured, believe your brother Ferdinand in whom you have always trusted, and who loves you so much. You are in your own room, and lying on your bed.' And he said: 'No that is not true: Beethoven is not lying here.' Could this be anything but an indication of his inmost wish to repose by the side of the master he so greatly revered?

Maybe; maybe not. But as far as we know, those were Schubert's last recorded words. He then fell into a coma, and on the next day, at three o'clock in the afternoon, he died. His age was thirty-one.

> BAUERNFELD: At his funeral, the long procession of friends and admirers accompanied the cherished remains, and soon the sounds of Mozart's Requiem rose into the air, sorrowing and mourning the master of song.

The master of song – yes, he was that. But he was also the master of sonata and symphony; of sacred choral works and chamber music; of harmony – and music in the round. Beethoven, no less, had detected in him the spark of Divinity. Yet even his friends, many of them anyway, underestimated his achievement. When the choice of an appropriate Requiem came up for discussion amongst them, the singer Ludwig Tietze, who had participated in the excellent benefit concert, among others, scandalised Josef Hüttenbrenner, and with good reason.

> JOSEF HÜTTENBRENNER: Tietze was absolutely opposed to a Requiem. Any Requiem. He said Schubert was a good song-writer but that a Requiem, which was only merited by great composers, was more than he deserved.

Well, as we've already heard from Bauernfeld, Tietze was overruled. Within days of Schubert's burial, the announcement of Vienna's first memorial tribute went out.

> ANNOUNCER 3: The friends and admirers of Franz Schubert, Musician and Composer, dead before his time, are herewith informed that on Thursday the 27th of November, 1828, at 10.30, a Requiem Mass will take place, organised by the Musical Society of St Ulrich's Church, who will on this occasion perform the Requiem by Mozart.

Mozart, the composer whom Schubert loved above all others, notwithstanding his reverence for Beethoven.

Engraved on the monument placed by Schubert's grave in 1830 were the words of the poet Grillparzer, whose epitaph set the tone of Schubert's reputation for the next 100 years.

> GRILLPARZER: The art of music here entombed a rich possession, but far fairer hopes.

The strange truth is that nobody, with the possible (but only possible) exception of Schubert himself, had a full grasp of his whole output, or of its quality. Modest to a fault, except when he was playing intellectual snob under the influence of Schober, Schubert never talked a lot about his music. Much of it never got played, and most of what did was at private gatherings. And the bulk was colossal: of songs, he wrote over 600, most of them masterpieces; I don't suppose more than a handful of scholars have taken the time and trouble to tot up the precise number of his piano pieces – every last waltz, ländler, march and écossaise; and I wonder how many people there are, even today, who can honestly say they know all the partsongs, the sacred and liturgical works, let alone all the operas. The orchestral music is much better known in terms of completeness, mainly because there's less of it; but if I had to select one branch of Schubert's output that brings us closest to the complete man, I could do it without hesitation. I don't know who it was who first called chamber music 'the music of friends', but he probably had Schubert uppermost in his mind. There's no composer in history whose life story is rooted so deeply, richly and pervasively in the experience of friendship as Schubert's. And I can think of no work more enchanting, more convivial, more contagiously affectionate in its celebration of friendship than the great Octet in F. I can also answer Schubert's question to Dessauer: 'Do you know any *happy* music?' 'Yes… I do.'

14 Octet in F, D. 803 (mvt 3: Scherzo: Allegro vivace–Trio)