

Reception and Beyond: New Thoughts on Schubert in Nineteenth-Century England

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I'm delighted to be here. I feel a bit of an imposter among Schubert specialists, but hope you'll bear with me. My angle is English reception through changing patterns of performance and listening. The aim is to stimulate thought by looking for new information, and new possibilities, in the functioning of Schubert's music across nineteenth-century England.

Let me begin by saying I didn't plan my outcome in advance, setting out to prove or disprove some theory about Schubert's music and image, or about England's. I just decided to explore the territory as broadly as possible from about 1830 to 1915 to see what was typical at different times over this 85-year period. Everyone knows the perceived difficulties in Schubert's case – his uneventful career, early death, belated publication, elusive character and so on. I've taken these as challenges ripe for reinterpretation, not as hurdles. And though I've relied on the work of previous scholars – Otto Erich Deutsch, John Reed, David Gramit, Christopher Gibbs and Scott Messing – I've chosen to position myself as far as possible *within* nineteenth-century England as a period inhabitant, not outside it, a modern Schubertian looking back.

Like Deutsch and Gibbs, I do history from left to right, in chronological order; unlike them, I haven't sought chiefly to document Schubert's arrival at our own notion of canonic status through repertory history and press criticism – matching up the first time this or that piece was performed in England with what a few critics said, in a kind of 'journey to immortality'. By the same token, like Messing, I'm interested in how music accrues wider cultural meaning; but unlike him, I don't start with a modern social anxiety (such as gender relations) and work backwards to trace all its ramifications in written discourse about Schubert. As you may know, Messing's recent two-volume study *Schubert in the European Imagination* (Rochester, NY, 2006, 2007) examines how a very particular, feminized, image of Schubert and his music vis-à-vis the 'masculine' Beethoven, constructed by Schumann in 1838, percolated through Europe, including England, before the Great War. For all its obvious interest, to me that's not Schubert but Schumann reception, it serves a pre-determined conclusion about Austro-Hungarian political identity, and tells us little about the dynamic, distinctive practice of Schubert's music in England – what the music achieved or meant here, among a very wide group of listeners, performers and composers.

I prefer to take an overview of what a lot of people heard, where they heard it, who performed it, when, how regularly things were repeated, how the repertory mix changed – and then try to deduce from all that, some kind of meaning, historically, for British culture. To be frank, I'm less interested in what England did (or didn't do) for Schubert's image and immortality, than in what he did for us. I shall divide the discussion into three parts – Part 1: 1830–1860; Part 2: 1860–1890; and Part 3: 1890–1915.

Part 1: 1830—1860

It's a commonplace that no one in England had heard of Schubert until the 1830s. In 1882, George Grove's 'Schubert' entry in the *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* referred to the English critic Edward Holmes's sojourn in Vienna in 1827 'without so much as hearing Schubert's name'. Well informed and deliberately seeking out musicians in the German-speaking lands, Holmes indeed said nothing of Schubert in his book *A Summer's Ramble among the Musicians of Germany* (1828), confirming for Grove that few Viennese had heard of the composer either. Admiring Holmes as a kindred spirit, Grove was of course keen to highlight the difference fifty years had made in Schubert's reputation – a difference for which, by the 1880s, he himself could take some of the credit.

So much you probably knew. But did you realize that a lifelong critical position held by Holmes drew on impressions from that same 1827 trip? He believed German culture offered a worthy model to the English not because it produced great composers, but because so many ordinary German-speaking people loved and cultivated music routinely, as practising amateurs. Along with the notable rise of Teutonism in middle-class English intellectual circles after about 1830, through Thomas Carlyle, George Eliot, T. H. Lewes and others, this enquiring attitude formed a backdrop to growing awareness of Schubert's music in England.

There's yet another reason I bring Holmes to your attention. He was chaperoned on that continental journey by Mary Novello (Mrs Vincent Novello), his London landlady and friend, wife of his musical mentor; she, too, kept a diary of the trip, unpublished, which now rests in the Novello-Cowden Clarke collection of this Library [the Brotherton Library, Leeds]. Lively and opinionated, it's more personal than Holmes's. By opening another window on the same sights and sounds he witnessed, she reminds us of other women who participated in cultural work but whose contributions have not been sufficiently noted. Some were engaged with Schubert's music in England, including Arabella Goddard, Agnes Zimmermann, Wilma Neruda, Lucy Broadwood, Jessie Grimson and Rosa Newmarch. I'd like to bring them in.

But back to my 'Part 1'. London Schubert performances began in the early 1830s and 40s. Though rare, these occurred at elevated occasions with visiting artists at which a few Schubert songs, and instrumental reworkings of songs, were added to mixed early Romantic programmes. The point was to give variety and novelty to the prevailing fashion for Italian opera selections and Parisian keyboard displays. Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient, Elise Meerti, J. T. Kroff and Josef Staudigl presented landmark Schubert songs in this way; Ferdinand David played his own Violin Fantasia on a Theme by Schubert; and Liszt performed his keyboard transcriptions (also appearing many times in the regions, not just in London).¹ What started as a select drawing-room trickle became a gentle stream, then a river, when English publishers saw Schubert's marketing potential with middle-class piano-owners and parlour singers. Wessel, Ewer, and Cramer & Co. all produced editions to supply and stimulate amateur demand, even to the point of press ridicule, in 1839, that so many 'new' and apparently

¹ For an exemplary programme, see that of Madame Dulcken's Annual Grand Morning Concert, Her Majesty's Theatre, 31 May 1841, at which Meerti sang 'Ave Maria' and David (Dulcken's brother) played his Fantasia on a Theme of Schubert (Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, London, accessible at <http://www.cph.rcm.ac.uk/Programmes1/Pages/BtoR4.htm>).

authentic songs by a dead Viennese composer could be endlessly rolling off English presses – in fact not an absurd comment, *pace* Deutsch,² given Schubert's unprecedented fecundity and the known opportunism of music publishers. Meanwhile Adelaide Kemble, Charlotte Sainton-Dolby and other indigenous artists began adding Schubert songs into their mixed programmes as well.

From the mid-1840s to the late 50s, a smaller tributary of more imposing works made slower progress – the Overture to *Fierrabras* (D796), the D minor Quartet (D810), the Piano Trio in E flat (D929), and the 'Great' C major Symphony (D944). That slowness pertained despite the taste leadership and strong advocacy of Felix Mendelssohn at the Philharmonic Society (1844), Joseph Joachim at the Musical Union (1852) and August Manns at the Crystal Palace (1856). Resistance was surely attributable to two things: jealousy by London musicians, including the young journalist J. W. Davison who in the 1840s still felt himself an unjustly neglected 'native' composer (he wasn't the only one); and an undeveloped, certainly underfunded and undisciplined, chamber and orchestral culture in the English capital. In Manchester, where serious chamber music was well rooted, Charles Hallé seems to have had better results with the two Piano Trios, in E flat and B flat (D898), and the Quartet in A minor (D804).

Part 2: 1860—1890

It was in this period that Schubert truly registered in England, thanks to a leap in the range and number of pieces available (piano, chamber and orchestral, some choral: many given repeatedly); the high status of composers programmed alongside him (Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms); and the new level of public awareness generated by rediscovery and promotion, whether through H. R. Haweis's popular if sentimental *Music & Morals* (1871; including his Schubert essay of 1866 from the *Contemporary Review*) or, more especially, at the Crystal Palace through Manns's performances and Grove's programme notes and music dictionary. I'll focus on two sites of this dramatic shift – St James's Hall (located between Piccadilly and Regent Street in London) and the Crystal Palace, Sydenham.

A key aspect of Schubert reception needing more study is the regularity and high artistry of chamber music performances at St James's Hall, at the Monday (later Monday and Saturday) Popular Concerts (or 'Pops'), run by Chappell's for forty years from 1859. Although begun tentatively as a more affordable way to build and educate general audiences for classical music than hiring a full orchestra would have been, the 'Pops' actually succeeded brilliantly. Distinguished players, lofty music, helpful programme notes and reasonable prices made the series work, and continue to work, season after season, filling the hall. Hallé himself was a regular at St James's Hall in the early days, along with Jules Benedict. Both were associated with Schubert performance and teaching, Hallé giving the first English performances of many of the piano sonatas, whether systematically in his own 'recitals' from 1867 or even earlier at the Pops. Sealing that link were Hallé's much-publicized editions of the sonatas for Chappell in 1867-8.

Yet Clara Schumann, Arabella Goddard and Agnes Zimmermann, too, were supremely important pianists of equal technique and (dare one suggest?) more sensitivity than Hallé, who played Schubert's works at the Pops. Clara was particularly associated with the Sonata in A minor

² Otto Erich Deutsch, 'The Reception of Schubert's Works in England', *Monthly Musical Record* 81 (1951), 200-3, 236-9 (202).

op. 42 (D845), and Goddard with both the *Fantasia Sonata* in G op. 78 (D894) and the big posthumous B flat *Sonata* (D960).³ Moreover, it was Wilma Norman-Neruda (later Lady Hallé) who often led the main Pops quartet from the later 1870s (before Joachim arrived every spring to lead for six weeks), simultaneously stimulating a dramatic take-up of the violin by English women and girls.⁴ Louis Ries, Ludwig Straus and Alfredo Piatti joined her as familiar, reliable, even inspiring players whom audiences came to trust. Key chamber repertory from Bach to Weber was given regularly in this way, Schubert being represented by more than forty works not counting his songs, which were also done, sometimes by Raimund von Zur Mühlen or George Henschel. In fact, many of Schubert's signal chamber works were introduced at the Pops in the 1860s, including the *String Quintet* in C (D956) in 1863; the 'Trout' *Quintet* (D667) and the *Octet* (D803), both in 1867; and the *Fantasia* in C for Violin and Piano (D934) and the G major *Quartet* (D887), both in 1868. More than introduced, these pieces were programmed steadily, helping in turn to open listeners' ears for what were perceived as more difficult, modern chamber works, notably by Brahms.

You don't need me to recount the Schubert Sydenham phenomenon, which gathered momentum in the 1860s together with Hallé's activities, the Pops, and the publication in 1865 of Heinrich Kreissle's biography. But it's important to stress a few points about the Crystal Palace set-up that may not be fully appreciated. Manns had originally taken the lead in doing the 'Great' C major *Symphony* in 1856, in part because he was seeking to build up and train a permanent, well-disciplined band that rehearsed every day, unlike the venerable but virtually bankrupt Philharmonic Society. For this he needed good *new* scores (not Beethoven), big challenges, and a command over freelance players that would be rewarded by public response as well as critical acclaim. With Schubert, and very soon Grove's enthusiasm, research and contacts, notably with the publisher Spina in Vienna, he got both. The resulting national, indeed international, kudos from this strategic move made Manns's position (and the band's) secure, despite grumblings from some Palace shareholders that a full orchestra at Sydenham was an expensive waste of time.

Together Grove and Manns prevailed, so that Schubert's music – and that of Schumann, Berlioz, Dvořák, and many English composers besides – was continually on tap almost year round for more than thirty years. Although not a revelatory conductor on the level of Bülow or Richter, Manns was still strong in Schubert – rhythmic and fiery when necessary and showing genuine Romantic sympathy, according to C. V. Stanford. At Sydenham Manns gave the gamut of Schubert's orchestral, symphonic and dance music, besides sacred choral and dramatic works including the *Song of Miriam* (D942), *Psalm 23* (D706), the *Mass* in A flat (D950) and *Die Verschworenen* (D787).⁵ Public preference overwhelmingly favoured the 'Unfinished' and 'Great' C major symphonies, together with the *Rosamunde* music, but Manns continued to stretch his players and listeners at every concert – itself a

³ For a list of Schubert works done at the Pops to 1892, including successive dates, see the *Catalogue of Works Performed at the Monday Popular Concerts during Thirty-Four Seasons commencing February 14, 1859, and finishing April 11, 1892* (London: Chappell & Co., [1892]), 31-2. I am grateful to Therese Ellsworth for her advice on Schumann and Goddard.

⁴ Paula Gillett, *Musical Women in England, 1870—1914: Encroaching on All Man's Privileges* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2000), 81-2, 98-9.

⁵ For dates and successive performances at the Palace see the *Catalogue of the Principal Instrumental & Choral Works Performed at the Saturday Concerts from October 1855 to May 1895* (Sydenham: F. M. Evans & Co., 1895).

valuable hint to young conductors in his audiences including Dan Godfrey and Henry J. Wood.

Of course the Schubert 'industry' had its detractors. Most notable was Henry Heathcote Statham, sneering at what he called the 'Sydenham creed'. A trained architect, amateur organist and deeply disaffected contributor to Grove's *Dictionary*, Statham thought both Schubert's music and Grove's unwieldy 'Schubert' entry were undisciplined and lacking in structural power, the composer much overrated.⁶ Though he made some fair points, his tone evidently undermined any real impact. He failed to dent the transformation in Schubert's range and expressive power now perceived by thousands of English concert-goers.

Part 3: 1890—1915

The story here is one of artistic consolidation and social diffusion, but with an outcome that's far from negligible; that is, although Schubert 'firsts' recede, it's quite wrong to assume that very little happened or that what did occur was merely trivialization or kitsch. Schubert's appeal grew considerably wider among all kinds of listeners; his name conferred prestige on important venues and artists; and his music influenced the status and transmission of a parallel flowering in English song, including folksong. Moreover, thanks to the making of many fine Schubert song recordings from the 1890s onwards, scholars now have a substantial body of sound material for the long-range study of musical expression and cognition based on his work. In the twenty-first century, as in the 1860s and 70s, Schubert is again at the forefront of English music research.⁷

Back to the 1890s. Apart from the sheer explosion of activity in English musical life at this period, the key thing to remember is the rapid development, between about 1895 and 1905, of many of the features in concert culture we would recognize as modern - a craze for orchestral music (including too many London orchestras, already by 1908), concerts every day of the week and nightly (including the Queen's Hall Proms for ten weeks in summer), an aesthetic cachet attaching to serious chamber music in Wigmore Street, a febrile and competitive professional atmosphere in which artists developed specialisms and aimed for coherence in programmes (including 'the complete works of'), a continual, welcome influx of modern music from continental Europe (sometimes contrasted with the more 'conservative' homegrown article), and a small but lively group of people working to revive older music and performing styles. Schubert had to fit in with this scene, then as now. He did it very well.

⁶ See 'Schubert—Chopin—Liszt', *Edinburgh Review* 158 (1883), 475-509 (esp. 476-87). For Statham and Grove in context, see Leanne Langley, 'Roots of a Tradition: The First *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*', in *George Grove, Music and Victorian Culture*, ed. Michael Musgrave (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 168-215.

⁷ Specifically at CHARM, the AHRC Research Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music, established in 2004 as a partnership of Royal Holloway (University of London), King's College London and the University of Sheffield (<http://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk>). Recent output includes Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, 'Expressive Gesture in Schubert Singing on Record', *Nordisk Estetisk Tidskrift* [*Nordic Journal of Aesthetics*] 33 (2006), 50-70; idem, 'Sound and Meaning in Recordings of Schubert's "Die junge Nonne"', *Musicae Scientiae* 11/2 (2007), 209-36; and Renee Timmers, 'Vocal Expression in Recorded Performances of Schubert Songs', *Musicae Scientiae* 11/2 (2007), 237-68.

Socially, his appeal branched outwards through the People's Concert Society chamber concerts in working-class suburban venues from the late 1880s, at which the B flat Piano Trio and *Rondo brilliant* (D895) were especially well liked;⁸ through the Queen's Hall Promenade Concerts from 1895, at which Schubert performances far outnumbered those of Elgar, Verdi, Rossini, Grieg, Bach, Schumann, Sibelius, Haydn and Debussy; and through the London County Council outdoor summer orchestral concerts from about 1906, in parks and squares all over Greater London, at which not only the 'Unfinished' was in repertory but also the 'Great' C major – more warmly received by these 'ordinary' listeners than by more experienced ones elsewhere.⁹

At the other end of the social scale, Schubert's name alone carried serious cultural weight, especially when linked with appearances by leading recitalists (singers, pianists and violinists) and legitimate string quartets, visiting and English, at the newly built Bechstein (later Wigmore) Hall and Aeolian Hall (New Bond Street). The very first Bechstein concert, indeed, in early 1901, featured Zur Mühlen with a group of Schubert songs; three years later the same singer gave there the first complete *Schöne Müllerin* (D795) in England. Also at the Bechstein, a young Elena Gerhardt, often accompanied by Artur Nikisch, gave over a period of years, chiefly 1906–14, regular and commanding vocal recitals embracing Schubert; she also sang in Birmingham, Manchester and other regional centres. As early as 1904, Artur Schnabel made his impressive Bechstein début, playing the posthumous A major Sonata (D959), warmly welcomed.

As for chamber music, Schubert flourished in serious programmes of the Bohemian Quartet (with Josef Suk, and on at least one occasion including Lionel Tertis), the Kruse, the Brodsky and London String Quartets, the Rosé and the Grimson Quartet – the last, led by a woman, Jessie Grimson, who from autumn 1913 was one of the first women to join the Queen's Hall Orchestra. Such concerts at the Bechstein were not aspirational, like the Proms: by any measure they were 'top-drawer' – the best music, by the best players, for the most discriminating audiences, in the best hall in town.

Meanwhile Schubert's aesthetic inspired new programme types juxtaposing his Lieder both with English art song and English folk- and traditional song, of which some published arrangements, notably those by Lucy Broadwood, bear uncanny resemblance to Schubert's accompaniments with their sensitivity to vocal line and text. Artistic renderings in this manner made otherwise rough or simple English 'county songs' more attractive within drawing-room culture, still a lively pursuit for musical amateurs.¹⁰ In concerts, programmes of the folksong collector Kate Lee offer one example. Even more salient is the duo recital partnership of Harry Plunket Greene and Leonard Borwick, who were particularly prominent in 1897 with an all-Schubert programme of ten songs, one sonata, two impromptus, and a dance, on

⁸ Alan Bartley, 'Chamber Music Concerts in Suburban London, 1895–1915: Aspects of Repertoire, Performance and Reception' (PhD, Oxford Brookes University, 2004). I wish to thank Alan Bartley for sharing details of PCS Schubert performances with me.

⁹ Walter Yeomans, 'London's Municipal Orchestra', *Musical Times* 53 (1912), 657–8, in which the symphony is referred to as 'the mighty Schubert No. 7 in C'.

¹⁰ Dorothy de Val, 'The Transformed Village: Lucy Broadwood and Folksong', *Music and British Culture, 1785–1914: Essays in Honour of Cyril Ebrlich*, ed. Christina Bashford and Leanne Langley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 341–66 (esp. 354–5).

many other occasions mixing in English songs. Greene also produced a vocal tutor, *Interpretation in Song* (1912), which explained the art of recital planning among much else; he made some exemplary recordings both of English traditional songs and of Schubert's (in English). Ultimately recordings were not just the latest technological revolution for a music-mad commercial market in England: in practice they offered repeat hearings instantly, making popular assimilation easy. As with the earlier flood of sheet music, gramophone records fed back into living concert culture, increasing desire to see and hear favourite Schubert performers in person.

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So, what does all this add up to? Let me offer a brief interpretation.

In retrospect, some of the things a Schubert scholar might consider problematic for reception I would suggest had their benefits, at least in England. The time-lag from composition to publication, for example, meant that Schubert's unfolding output 'arrived' just at the right moment when professional opportunity was expanding rapidly here, not least for string players. By the same token, the popular or amateur status of much of Schubert's music for voice and keyboard easily found a home (and a ready market) where parlour and piano culture were so deeply embedded, and where it was perfectly normal, indeed almost obligatory, to mix vocal and instrumental genres. Any modern Schubertian who applies anachronistic taste hierarchies will surely undervalue the mid-Victorian appetite for music – all kinds of it, all taken in and enjoyed (whatever the genre or performing space). And just think how fortuitous it was for Schubert's developing reputation that Chappell & Co. decided, for audience-building purposes in the late 1850s, to focus on chamber music. The great irony is that this idea for filling St James's Hall had been J. W. Davison's, for decades author of the Pops programme notes – the very same Davison who in 1844 had publicly declared Schubert's overture at the Philharmonic Society beneath notice and his songs unremarkable. Davison soon changed his tune and became an avid supporter, reminding us of the myriad contingencies surrounding our use of period criticism.

In the end, I would single out three major achievements in English culture for which we can thank Schubert – all modern in tendency, far-reaching in effect:

1. His orchestral music put the Crystal Palace on the map, and Crystal Palace put England on the map – in international music scholarship, research and performance, helping to forge the nation's new reputation for serious intellectual work in music. It was the Crystal Palace success with Schubert that in large part influenced Breitkopf & Härtel to undertake their complete edition in the mid-1880s.
2. His lyric model and keyboard accompaniments raised the bar in English song-setting, including arranged folksongs. And his own songs helped create the vocal recital as a distinct concert type and high-art listening experience pre-1914, in turn placing the English singer, art song and song composer on a par with the best instrumental chamber musicians.
3. His 'feminine' side, far from being thought a weakness in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century England, was highly valued for its influence on listeners, especially male listeners according to Rosa Newmarch, allowing them to be moved emotionally and spiritually when Victorian organ recitals and

oratorios could no longer do the trick. Newmarch used the word 'ice-melting' in this context, and bracketed Schubert's orchestral music with Tchaikovsky's and Grieg's in its power to affect, in particular, young British males previously shy of showing any feeling for music.¹¹ More than the rhetoric of a shrewd writer, this last observation reflected the genuine testimony of young listeners coming to serious music for the first time in the 1890s and early 1900s, among them Arthur Hugh Sidgwick:

Nothing can alter the effect of the Unfinished. I have heard it played by a superb orchestra, by an excellent orchestra, by a moderate orchestra, by an amateur orchestra; under Colonne, under Mengelberg, under Richter, under Steinbach, under Wood (order alphabetical), under an energetic but limited enthusiast, under a gentleman who was evidently making the best of a bad job. I have heard it with every detail perfect, the strings exquisite and poignant beyond belief, the oboe concentrating in its lament the secular sorrow of humanity. I have heard it with a gross and exasperating exaggeration of the rallentandos. I have heard it with the wood-wind out of tune, and the drum making wild shots at his part and finally abandoning it in despair. But at every hearing the thing itself stands out indubitable, apart from and above any varieties of interpretation. [...] It is simply glorious and perfect music.¹²

Issues of gender are of course inescapable in all musical cultures, past or present. But where one analyst seeks gendered language to expose layers of social or political stratification, another will use patterns of social activity and consumption to explain observable cultural shifts. Method, angle and outcome are distinct in the two approaches. It is surely for this reason that Schubert in Scott Messing's 'European imagination' differs strikingly from Schubert in the English experience, as I have explored it. Where a postmodern musicologist studies 'feminization' through representational means, a social historian sees 'opening up' in real time. I believe that before 1915, coherent patterns of English performance, participation and listening show that Schubert's music had an opening effect on the aesthetic valuing of all kinds of music, assisting a lifetime of personal artistic discovery for many individuals, male and female alike. Since reception in its widest sense can hardly signify a more fruitful outcome at any time or place, I rest my case. Thank you for listening.

¹¹ Newmarch, 'Four Phases of the Promenade Concerts', typescript, August 1927, Henry Wood Papers, British Library Add. MS 56442, fols. 19-26 (esp. 21-2). The reference is to the years 1895-1901.

¹² *The Promenade Ticket: A Lay Record of Concert-Going* (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1914), 19-20, 23.