

SCHUBERT AND LISZT:  
A COMPARISON OF THREE SCHUBERT LIEDER  
AND LISZT PIANO TRANSCRIPTIONS

by

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## ABSTRACT

As a pianist and singer, I chose to explore a topic for my Honors project that encompassed these two music mediums. I was therefore intrigued to study and compare the works of two giants of the nineteenth century, Franz Schubert and Franz Liszt, the former known for composing hundreds of memorable *lieder* (plural for “art songs” in German), and the latter acclaimed for transcribing many of Schubert’s *lieder* for solo piano. These *lieder* continue to captivate listeners with their unforgettable melodies, harmonic ingenuity, and texts written by some of the most lauded German poets of the time, and Liszt’s works serve as exemplary transcriptions that retain the essence of the *lieder* despite the piano’s limitations in reflecting the words of the song.

This project included a recital where I sang and played the three following pieces: “Ständchen” from *Schwanengesang*, “Gretchen am Spinnrade”, and “Du bist die Ruh.” Each of the three pieces was first sung and then played on the piano for the audience to hear the similarities and differences between the two versions of the same song. The research portion of my Honors project provides an overview of Schubert’s *lieder*, the historical context and motivations behind Liszt’s choice of transcribing many of Schubert’s *lieder*, the impact of Liszt’s transcriptions and performances, and a comparison of the three featured *lieder* with musical analysis.

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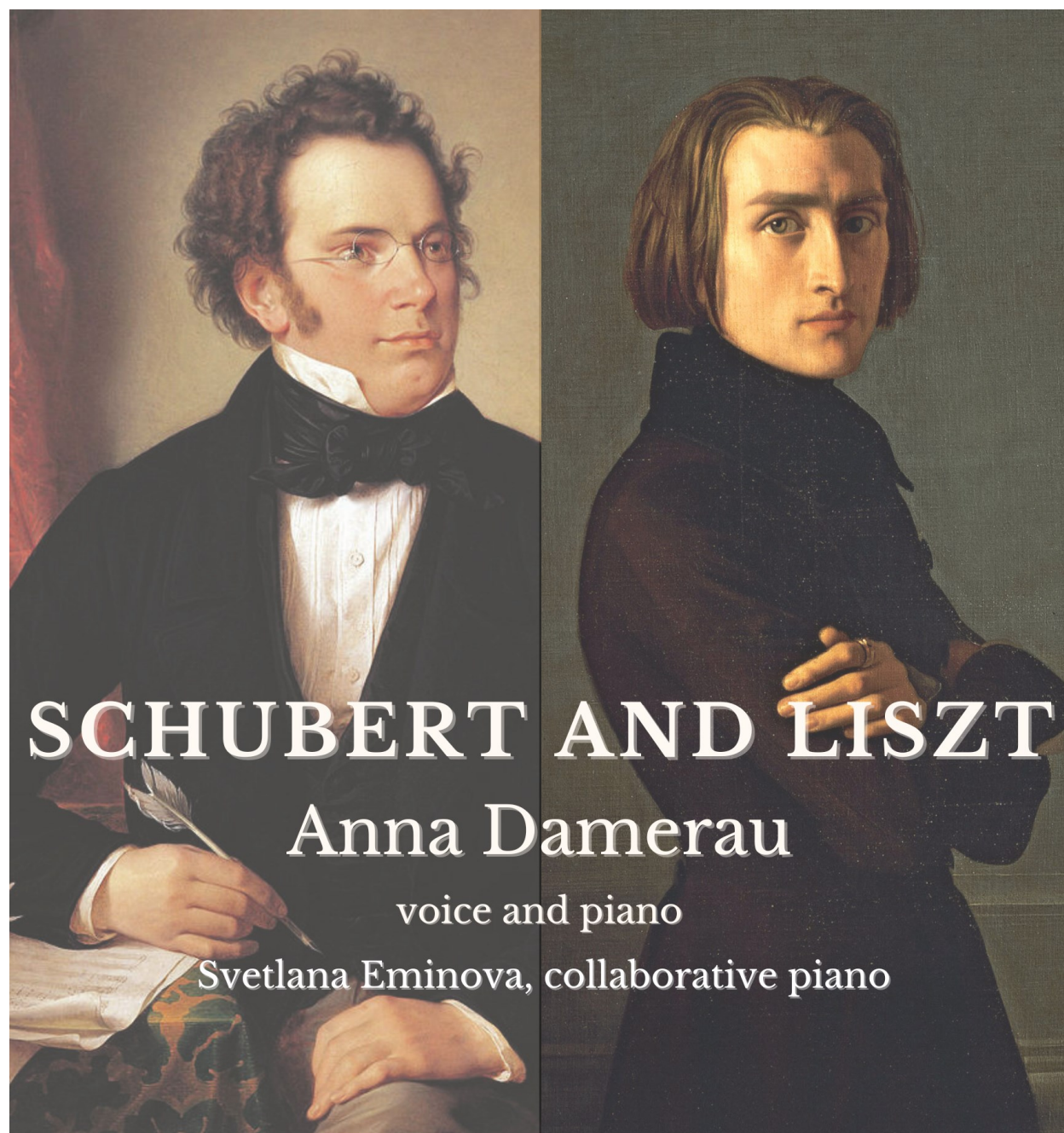
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Friday, April 28th, 2023

5:30 PM

PepsiCo Recital Hall



SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Presents

**Anna Damerau, voice and piano**  
**Svetlana Eminova, collaborative piano**

Friday, April 28, 2023

5:30 PM

PepsiCo Recital Hall

**Program**

Lieder by Franz Schubert (1797-1828) and piano transcriptions by Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

“Ständchen” from *Schwanengesang*, D. 957, No. 4

“Ständchen” from *Schwanengesang*, S. 560, No. 7

“Gretchen am Spinnrade”, D. 118, Op. 2

“Gretchen am Spinnrade”, S.558, No. 8

“Du bist die Ruh”, D. 776, Op. 59, No. 3

“Du bist die Ruh”, S.558, No. 3

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Upper Division Departmental Honors.

Anna Damerau is a student of Dr. San-ky Kim and Dr. Tamás Ungár.

The use of recording equipment or taking photographs is prohibited.

Please silence all electronic devices including watches, pagers, and phones.

RECITAL PHOTOS AND LINK



Photos taken from the recording of the performance at TCU on April 28, 2023, in PepsiCo Recital Hall.

[Anna Damerau Schubert and Liszt Honors Recital - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6slq_4KRPo)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6slq\\_4KRPo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6slq_4KRPo)

## Schubert and Liszt: A Comparison of Three of Schubert's Lieder and Liszt's Piano Transcriptions

### Franz Schubert – the “Prince of Song”

Austrian composer Franz Schubert (1797-1828) is considered one of the most prominent musicians of the early nineteenth century. As a prolific composer, he wrote over a thousand instrumental and choral works, including genres such as symphonies, piano sonatas, string quartets, operas, and masses.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, Schubert is most well-known for his German lieder (art songs) and has been referred to as the “Prince of Song.”<sup>2</sup> According to Jean-Anne Teal-Greenshields, Schubert composed over 620 lieder in his short lifetime of 31 years and developed the lieder as an independent music genre.<sup>3</sup> Schubert's lieder, with their unforgettable melodies, emotional depth, appealing harmonies, and devotion to the meaning of the text have continued to captivate listeners to this day.

Schubert faced several hardships during his lifetime. The composer experienced severe illness, as well as several periods of financial struggles and a feeling of dissatisfaction, considering himself to be “the most miserable being in the world.”<sup>4</sup> Despite his musical training, including his private studies with Antonio Salieri, Schubert worked as a schoolmaster at his father's school for several years, which took away much of the time he wished to dedicate to

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<sup>1</sup> Gregg Whiteside, “What's so Great about Franz Schubert? Gregg Whiteside Knows...,” WRTI Your Classical and Jazz Source, last modified September 29, 2020, <https://www.wrti.org/wrti-spotlight/2020-01-31/whats-so-great-about-franz-schubert-gregg-whiteside-knows>.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher H. Gibbs, *The Life of Schubert* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.), chap. 3 “Ingenious Schubert: ‘The Prince of Song,’” 41–59, *Musical Lives*, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316257029.006>.

<sup>3</sup> Jean-Anne Teal-Greenshields, “‘The Prince of Song’: Franz Schubert, His Early Lieder,” (DMA diss., University of Maryland, College Park ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1996), Order No. 9637754, ii and 42, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/304253353?parentSessionId=BQBCJc6jh8IsAMqXKaUPRofUGvCjlpmoiS6bBfONozA%3D>.

<sup>4</sup> Maurice J.E. Brown, “Franz Schubert,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed May 4, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Franz-Schubert>.



music, referring to himself as a “frustrated musician.”<sup>5</sup> These hardships influenced many of Schubert’s compositions, and his songs are no exception. Aside from being lyrical and beautifully crafted, Schubert’s music is also filled with intense emotion.

There is also a romantic element to Schubert’s music. The period of literature and poetry is considered to have started as early as the 1770s, a few decades before the start of the Romantic period in music in the 1820s.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, Schubert’s choice of poets for his lieder would have prompted him to compose music infused with romanticism. In his lieder, he explores the topics of love, nature, faith, and the supernatural.

Despite his innate talent and musical genius, Schubert was not widely recognized during his lifetime.<sup>7</sup> Unlike composers such as Mozart, Beethoven, and Liszt who frequently performed in public settings, Schubert often performed in more intimate and private salon settings, a practice that became popular during the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> The Bohemian members of society - musicians, writers, artists, and other middle-class music amateurs - would gather weekly at social events known as *Schubertiades* to hear Schubert perform his newly composed works for voice, piano, and chamber settings.<sup>9</sup> Although his music was revered by his close circle of friends,

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<sup>5</sup> Brown, “Franz Schubert.”

<sup>6</sup> “Introduction to Romanticism,” Romanticism, Brooklyn College English Department, last modified February 12, 2009, <http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/cs6/rom.html>; “Romantic music,” New World Encyclopedia, accessed May 5, 2023, [https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Romantic\\_music&oldid=1092134](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Romantic_music&oldid=1092134).

<sup>7</sup> Charles Arthur Madsen, “The Schubert -Liszt Transcriptions: Text, Interpretation, and Lieder Transformation,” (Ph. D. diss., University of Oregon ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2003), Order No. 3080592, 40. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/288095533?parentSessionId=btWknIqmyhDCUoMqeh68k0ZJB1OW%2BZISIoO2WmKOp9o%3D>.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Parloff, “Franz Schubert (1797-1828): Shepherd on the Rock, Op. 129, D. 965, for Soprano, Clarinet and Piano,” Parlance Chamber Concerts, last modified September 27, 2009. <https://www.parlancechamberconcerts.org/parlance-program-notes/franz-schubert-1797-1828/>.

<sup>9</sup> Parloff, “Franz Schubert (1797-1828).”

Schubert was largely unknown outside his native city of Vienna.<sup>10</sup> It was only after Schubert's death that his name became well-known and later added to the list of the greatest composers of Western classical music.<sup>11</sup>

### **Franz Liszt and the Schubert Transcriptions**

Franz Liszt (1811-1886) was a virtuosic pianist, composer, pedagogue, conductor, music editor, and one of the most influential musicians in history.<sup>12</sup> His practice of giving solo recitals in larger concert hall settings shaped the practices of modern piano performance, while many of his compositions greatly expanded piano technique.<sup>13</sup> According to scholar and professor Alan Walker, Liszt wrote some 700 arrangements, paraphrases, and transcriptions of works by composers including Mozart, Meyerbeer, Verdi, Schumann, and Schubert.<sup>14</sup> Some of his most famous transcriptions are the Schubert lieder.

One of the factors that prompted Liszt to transcribe many of Schubert's songs was a tragedy that occurred in 1838. That spring, the Danube River melted after a winter freeze, flooding Budapest and entire villages in Hungary as its banks overflowed. Lives and homes were lost, leaving thousands of people with no shelter, struck with famine and disease amid this unprecedented tragedy.<sup>15</sup> According to Alan Walker, Hungary appealed for international aid to assist those in need.<sup>16</sup> Liszt promptly left Venice for Vienna where he composed and prepared

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<sup>10</sup> Suzannah Clark, *Analyzing Schubert* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), chap. 1 "Singing Schubert's praises: the voice of Vogl in Schubert's early history", 8, <https://books.google.com/books?id=YXnqQaro02sC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

<sup>11</sup> Madsen, "The Schubert - Liszt Transcriptions," 40.

<sup>12</sup> Kevin LaVine, "Biographies: Franz Liszt," Library of Congress, Library of Congress Music Division, accessed May 4, 2023, <https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200187503/>.

<sup>13</sup> Alan Davidson, "Franz Liszt and the Development of 19th-Century Pianism: A Re-Reading of the Evidence," *The Musical Times* 147, no. 1896 (2006): 33-34, <https://doi.org/10.2307/25434402>.

<sup>14</sup> Alan Walker, "Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions," *The Musical Quarterly* 75, no. 4, Anniversary Issue: Highlights from the First 75 Years (1991): 249, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/741850>.

<sup>15</sup> Walker, "Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions," 248.

<sup>16</sup> Walker, "Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions," 248.

works to perform at his charity concerts to collect donations. He gave eight charity concerts, and his efforts enabled him to raise 24,000 *gulden*, which was the largest private donation raised for this cause.<sup>17</sup>

There seems to be a scholarly debate about the year when Liszt first started studying and transcribing the works of Schubert. In an email correspondence, Professor Alan Walker stated that Liszt began writing his first Schubert transcriptions in 1837-1838, shortly before the Danube tragedy.<sup>18</sup> According to Tzu-Yun Chen's dissertation, Liszt transcribed Schubert's lieder in 1838 for his charity concerts. Charles Arthur Madsen's dissertation, on the other hand, indicates that Liszt began transcribing Schubert's works as early as 1833.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, despite these disagreements, there is a consensus that Liszt began transcribing Schubert's lieder in the 1830s, and during his stay in Vienna in 1838, Liszt transcribed some of Schubert's works, which he performed at his famed recitals.<sup>20</sup>

### **Liszt's Motivations**

Besides the noble act of giving charity recitals to benefit those in need, Liszt was motivated to transcribe many of Schubert's lieder for three other reasons. According to Alan Walker, Liszt intended 1) to promote Schubert's works and make Schubert known outside Vienna; 2) to explore piano technique in his transcriptions, including techniques for

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<sup>17</sup> Walker, "Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions," 248.

<sup>18</sup> Alan Walker, "Message from Anna Damerau - Piano Student of Dr. Tamás Ungár - Schubert/Liszt Lieder Project Questions," Email message to author, March 6, 2023.

<sup>19</sup> Tzu-Yun Chen, "A Century of Schubert Lieder Transcriptions" (DMA diss., University of Texas at Austin ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2003), Order No. 3110722, 16.  
<https://www.proquest.com/docview/305299181/F750364700BC4A06PQ/2?accountid=7090>; Madsen, "The Schubert - Liszt Transcriptions," iv.

<sup>20</sup> Walker, "Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions," 249.

incorporating voice and piano into one instrument; and 3) to broaden Liszt's repertoire for his frequent performances.<sup>21</sup>

Liszt admired Schubert from a young age. Although it is unknown whether the two composers met, Liszt's first stay in Vienna took place between 1821 and 1823, during Schubert's lifetime.<sup>22</sup> During this first brief stay in Vienna, the young Liszt studied with Antonio Salieri who also taught Schubert from 1812 to 1817.<sup>23</sup> As a result, Liszt would have been familiar with Schubert as a student of Salieri. Over a decade after Schubert's passing, in 1838, following the Danube flood disaster, Liszt was back in Vienna transcribing Schubert's lieder. He first transcribed 28 of Schubert's art songs and performed several at charity concerts. Therefore, the success and popularity of Liszt's transcriptions and his admiration for Schubert motivated Liszt to transcribe 56 of Schubert's lieder, creating a new genre of art song transcriptions for solo piano.<sup>24</sup>

Liszt desired to make the composer renowned since Schubert was little known outside of Vienna and was largely forgotten after his death.<sup>25</sup> Much like Mendelssohn's rediscovery of Johann Sebastian Bach, which prompted Bach's revival in the nineteenth century, Liszt was eager to promote the works of Schubert whom he referred to as his "cherished hero."<sup>26</sup>

Schubert's music must have struck Liszt in a special way, and this fascination was not limited to his vocal compositions. When referring to Schubert's piano works, Liszt once said that "pianists

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<sup>21</sup> Walker, "Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions," 250.

<sup>22</sup> Walker, "Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions," 250.

<sup>23</sup> Madsen, "The Schubert -Liszt Transcriptions", 33.

<sup>24</sup> Walker, "Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions," 249

<sup>25</sup> Walker, "Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions," 251.

<sup>26</sup> *Franz Liszt: The Schubert Song Transcriptions for Solo Piano/Series I: "Ave Maria", "Erlkonig", and Ten Other Great Songs*, (New York: Dover Publications, 2021.), ix. Alan Walker, "Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions," 251.

scarcely realize what a glorious treasure they have in Schubert's piano compositions."<sup>27</sup> In addition to the 56 song transcriptions, Liszt also arranged Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasy* for orchestra and piano. He also composed "Soirees de Vienne" based on some of Schubert's waltzes, conducted Schubert's Symphony No. 9 in C Major and opera *Alfonso and Estrella*, and edited several volumes of Schubert's solo piano compositions.<sup>28</sup>

Transcribing Schubert's lieder enabled Liszt to further advance piano technique. Thus, many of his transcriptions are technically challenging, as are some of the original Schubert songs, such as "Auf dem Wasser zu singen" and "Erlkönig". A major challenge Liszt had to overcome was integrating into a single instrument the voice and piano parts, which are two different mediums.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the piano is limited in its ability to reflect the words, diction, vocal inflection, and facial expressions of the singer.<sup>30</sup> Liszt implemented various techniques such as changes in register, rhythm, and timing. Liszt also insisted that the published transcriptions include the text of the original song above each line of music.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, by seeing the lyrics, the pianist could make choices in phrasing, articulation, timing, and dynamics.

Though Liszt believed in staying loyal to the original works, he did wish to perform these transcriptions as pianistic performance pieces for his recitals.<sup>32</sup> Known as the "Paganini" of the piano, Liszt brought the art of piano performance to new heights.<sup>33</sup> His virtuosity and command of the keyboard left audiences enamored, and Liszt's achievements resulted from countless hours

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<sup>27</sup> Walker, "Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions," 251.

<sup>28</sup> Walker, "Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions," 251; Walker, "Message from Anna Damerau."

<sup>29</sup> Walker, "Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions," 256.

<sup>30</sup> *Franz Liszt: The Schubert Song*, x.

<sup>31</sup> *Franz Liszt: The Schubert Song*, ix.

<sup>32</sup> Walker, "Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions," 251.

<sup>33</sup> Davidson, "Franz Liszt and the Development," 33.

dedicated to the improvement of piano playing.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that Liszt's works are just as musical as they are technical and virtuosic. In the case of the Schubert song transcriptions, Liszt cared about bringing the music to life and showcasing the brilliance of Schubert's songs, while also expanding piano technique and discovering the piano's full potential.<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, Liszt transcribed Schubert's songs to expand his repertoire. The transcriptions became so popular that Liszt performed them at recitals. Between 1839 and 1847, Liszt gave over a thousand recitals in countries such as Italy, France, Germany, Spain, England, Russia, and Turkey.<sup>36</sup> Such a feat would not have been possible without his dedication and love of music.

### **The Impact of Liszt's Transcriptions**

Liszt's performances of his transcriptions were an immediate success. The initial publications by Diabelli and Haslinger sold out so quickly that more works were soon commissioned.<sup>37</sup> Though Liszt had an interest in transcribing Schubert's music, at one point the pressure of writing so many of them for the publishers became overwhelming. He is said to have complained, "Haslinger overwhelms me with Schubert. I've just sent him twenty-four new songs, and for the moment I'm rather tired of this work."<sup>38</sup> In 1839, Liszt produced several transcriptions including twelve songs from the *Winterreise* song cycle, and by 1846, all 56

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<sup>34</sup> Kezia J. Schrag, "From Voice to Piano: Liszt's Transcriptions of *Ständchen* and *Widmung*" (DMA diss., University of Kansas, 2014.), 6, <http://hdl.handle.net/1808/19575>.

<sup>35</sup> Schrag, "From Voice to Piano," 20.

<sup>36</sup> Walker, "Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions," 259.

<sup>37</sup> Walker, "Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions," 249.

<sup>38</sup> Walker, "Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions," 260.

transcriptions had been published.<sup>39</sup> The widespread popularity of Liszt's transcriptions led to the study, publication, and performance of Schubert's original compositions.<sup>40</sup>

Some sources indicate that Schubert was occasionally performed prior to Liszt. For instance, Carl Czerny performed some of Schubert's works in France, including some of his own transcriptions such as "Ständchen" and "Das Wandern."<sup>41</sup> However, despite these rare performances outside of Vienna, Schubert remained largely unknown, and after his death, he was almost entirely forgotten. With his own song transcriptions, Liszt made Schubert's works sensational.

### **"Ständchen" from *Schwanengesang***

Schubert composed his well-known "Ständchen" (Ger. "Serenade") in 1827, a year before his death. This serenade is the fourth song of the *Schwanengesang* (Ger. "Swansong") cycle consisting of fourteen songs, published posthumously in 1829 by Tobias Haslinger.<sup>42</sup> The text is taken from the poetry of Ludwig Rellstab (1799- 1860) and depicts an evening serenade, a romantic song that a man would dedicate to his beloved one, reflecting on love and nature at dusk. Often, he would sing and accompany himself with a stringed instrument, such as a guitar.

"Ständchen"  
Ludwig Rellstab

Leise flehen meine Lieder  
Durch die Nacht zu Dir;  
In den stillen Hain hernieder,  
Liebchen, komm' zu mir!

Flüsternd schlanke Wipfel rauschen  
In des Mondes Licht;  
Des Verräters feindlich Lauschen  
Fürchte, Holde, nicht.

"Serenade"  
English Translation by Anna Damerau\*

Softly plead my songs  
Through the night to you;  
Down to the quiet grove,  
Darling, come to me!

Whispering slender treetops rustle  
In the moonlight;  
Of the hostile traitor's overhearing  
Do not fear.

<sup>39</sup> Walker, "Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions," 249.

<sup>40</sup> Madsen, "The Schubert - Liszt Transcriptions," 37-40.

<sup>41</sup> Madsen, "The Schubert - Liszt Transcriptions," 34.

<sup>42</sup> Franz Schubert, *Ständchen*, D. 957 from *Schwanengesang*, First edition (Vienna: Tobias Haslinger, n.d. [1829]), 27-31; Schrag, "From Voice to Piano," 7.

Hörst die Nachtigallen schlagen?  
 Ach! sie flehen Dich,  
 Mit der Töne süßen Klagen  
 Flehen sie für mich.

Do you hear the nightingales' beating of wings?  
 Ah! They beseech you  
 With their tones of sweet lament  
 They beseech for me.

Sie verstehn des Busens Sehnen,  
 Kennen Liebesschmerz,  
 Rühren mit den Silbertönen  
 Jedes weiche Herz.

They know the heart's yearning  
 They know the pain of love  
 They stir with their silver tones  
 Every consecrated heart.

Lass auch Dir die Brust bewegen,  
 Liebchen, höre mich!  
 Beben harr' ich Dir entgegen!  
 Komm', beglücke mich!<sup>43</sup>

Let you also move your heart  
 Darling, hear me!  
 Trembling, I meet you  
 Come, make me happy!<sup>44</sup>

\*German texts translated by Anna Damerau with some knowledge of German and the aid of the sources provided in footnote 43.

Schubert's serenade is memorable for its simple, heartfelt melody soaring above the piano accompaniment, which mimics the sound of the strumming of a guitar accompanying the serenader. The song follows an AAB structure, with the A part repeated with a new verse followed by a more yearning B section before the final return to the musical elements found in the A section. Although the piece is in the key of D minor, Schubert uses mode mixture by alternating the parallel keys of D minor and D Major. The mode mixture helps create the magical atmosphere of love with both its joyful and bittersweet moments.

"Ständchen" was one of Liszt's first Schubert lieder transcriptions. Liszt transcribed the song in 1838-39, and in 1840, Haslinger published it as part of the complete set of the fourteen song transcriptions of the *Schwanengesang* cycle set for solo piano.<sup>45</sup> While Liszt's transcription closely follows the original, he made several changes to reflect his interpretation. For instance, he made a few rhythmic adjustments, as well as a couple of arpeggios in thirds, runs, and

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<sup>43</sup> "Ständchen: Song Texts, Lyrics & Translations," Oxford Lieder, accessed May 7, 2023.

<https://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk/song/988>; Franz Schubert, *Ständchen*, 27-31.

<sup>44</sup> Ludwig Rellstab, "Ständchen," trans. Anna Damerau, 2023; Google Translate, Google, accessed May 6, 2023, <https://translate.google.com/>; "Ständchen: Song Texts," Oxford Lieder.

<sup>45</sup> Madsen, "The Schubert - Liszt Transcriptions," 13.



ornamentation, particularly towards the end of the piece. Furthermore, while Schubert's song follows an AAB structure, Liszt expanded the piece by adding a third A section before the contrasting B section, changing the form to AAAB. This third A section is "untexted" since the original song does not include a third verse of text for the A section.<sup>46</sup>

The most profound difference between the original lied and Liszt's piano transcription is the change from the initial texture of solo voice with accompaniment into a duet with piano accompaniment, thus evoking the singing of two lovers.<sup>47</sup> In the first verse, the vocal line is found in the soprano register, while in the second verse, the register changes to a male voice range an octave lower. In the third "untexted" verse, Liszt creates an echoing effect by joining the two voices in the third verse.<sup>48</sup> Another interpretation of the echo in the upper register is that it represents the song of a nightingale.<sup>49</sup> In these ways, Liszt's transcription retains the atmosphere and beauty of Schubert's work while adding a voice of his own.

### **"Gretchen am Spinnrade"**

Another classic of the vocal standard repertoire is Schubert's "Gretchen am Spinnrade" ("Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel"), a piece which Schubert composed at the age of seventeen in 1814.<sup>50</sup> The text was written by Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832) and originates from Act One, Scene 18 of the German legend *Faust*.<sup>51</sup> In this legend, the main character Faust agrees to make a deal with the devil for all he desires on earth. Faust eventually falls in love with the

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<sup>46</sup> Madsen, "The Schubert - Liszt Transcriptions," 128.

<sup>47</sup> Madsen, "The Schubert - Liszt Transcriptions," 126.

<sup>48</sup> Madsen, "The Schubert - Liszt Transcriptions," 128.

<sup>49</sup> Madsen, "The Schubert - Liszt Transcriptions," 132.

<sup>50</sup> Franz Schubert, *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, Op. 2, D. 118, ed. Max Reger (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1926), Plate 34045. [https://s9.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/8/8c/IMSLP262084-PMLP25880-Schubert\\_Gretchen\\_am\\_Spinnrade\\_D118.pdf](https://s9.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/8/8c/IMSLP262084-PMLP25880-Schubert_Gretchen_am_Spinnrade_D118.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> Anthony K. Jensen, "Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe (1749—1832)." In *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, by The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (IEP), accessed April 20, 2023, <https://iep.utm.edu/goethe/>.

young maiden Gretchen and plans to deceive her.<sup>52</sup> Schubert’s song depicts Gretchen at the spinning wheel daydreaming of Faust, to whom she ascribes the qualities of a gentleman, not knowing of his ill intentions or the tragedy to come. The text is presented below:

“Gretchen am Spinnrade”

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Meine Ruh ist hin,  
Mein Herz ist schwer,  
Ich finde sie nimmer  
Und nimmermehr.

Wo ich ihn nicht hab  
Ist mir das Grab,  
Die ganze Welt  
Ist mir vergällt.

Mein armer Kopf  
Ist mir verrückt  
Mein armer Sinn  
Ist mir zerstückt.

Meine Ruh’ ist hin,  
Mein Herz ist schwer,  
Ich finde sie nimmer  
Und nimmermehr.

Nach ihm nur schau ich  
Zum Fenster hinaus,  
Nach ihm nur geh ich  
Aus dem Haus.

Sein hoher Gang,  
Sein edle Gestalt,  
Seines Mundes Lächeln,  
Seiner Augen Gewalt.

Und seiner Rede  
Zauberfluss.  
Sein Händedruck  
Und ach, sein Kuss!

Meine Ruh ist hin,  
Mein Herz ist schwer,  
Ich finde sie nimmer  
Und nimmermehr.

Mein Busen drängt sich

“Gretchen at the Spinning-wheel”

English Translation by Anna Damerau

My rest is gone,  
My heart is heavy,  
I will find peace never  
And nevermore.

Where I do not have him  
For me is the grave,  
The whole world  
To me is bitter.

My poor head  
Is crazy  
My poor mind  
Is shattered.

My rest is gone,  
My heart is heavy,  
I will find peace never  
And nevermore.

For him only I go  
Out to the window,  
For him only I look  
Out of the house.

His superior gait  
His noble figure  
His mouth’s smile  
His eyes’ power.

And his speech’s  
Magic flow.  
His hand grip  
And ah, his kiss!

My rest is gone,  
My heart is heavy,  
I will find peace never  
And nevermore.

Nach ihm hin.

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<sup>52</sup> William Anderson, “Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe's Faust: Summary & Analysis,” SchoolWorkHelper, St. Rosemary Institution, 2020, accessed May 3, 2023, <https://schoolworkhelper.net/johann-wolfgang-von-goethes-faust-summary-analysis/>.

Ach, dürft ich fassen  
 My bosom yearns  
 Und halten ihn.

For him.  
 Ah! May I grasp  
 And hold him.

Und küssen ihn  
 So wie ich wollt,  
 An seinen küssen  
 Vergehen sollt!

And kiss him  
 As I wish,  
 From his kisses  
 I would die!<sup>53</sup>

Schubert uses text painting to convey the meaning of the words and the motion of the spinning wheel in the music. For instance, as seen in the example below, the right hand of the piano part has a recurring sixteenth-note pattern that imitates the spinning of the wheel, and whereas the left hand represents the pressing of the left pedal of the spinning wheel. In this sense, the piano accompaniment can be viewed as a musical spinning wheel, providing harmonic support to the singer portraying Gretchen<sup>54</sup>.

The image shows a musical score for Schubert's 'Gretchen am Spinnrade'. It consists of two systems. The first system shows the vocal line (Singstimme) and the piano accompaniment (Pianoforte). The piano part has a recurring sixteenth-note pattern in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The lyrics are: 'Nicht zu geschwind. d. = 72. Me. ne Ruh' ist hin, mein Herz ist schwer, ich fin - de, ich fin - de sie'. The second system continues the piano accompaniment with the lyrics: 'Herz ist schwer, ich fin - de, ich fin - de sie'.

<http://cdn.imslp.org/images/thumb/pdfs/cc/732bb1eb5f1ed8d5755c0afeb3fbfa0991942425.png>

At one point, Gretchen stops spinning the wheel at the climactic moment when she gets completely carried away as she exclaims, “And ah! His kiss!” The incessant sixteenth-note figuration comes to a halt, and after the moment of silence, Gretchen turns back to her work, pressing on the pedal several times to get the spinning wheel running again.

<sup>53</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, “Gretchen am Spinnrade,” trans. Anna Damerau, 2023; Google Translate, accessed May 6, 2023; “Gretchen Am Spinnrade: Song Texts,” Oxford Lieder.

<sup>54</sup> Walker, “Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions,” 258.

Much like the serenade, “Gretchen am Spinnrade” was also one of Liszt’s earliest and favorite Schubert transcriptions.<sup>55</sup> Liszt first played it during one of his charity concerts in Vienna in 1838 and continued to perform and teach this piece years later during his masterclasses.<sup>56</sup> Liszt stayed true to the original song, particularly in the beginning, and retained the same structure of the piece with the same number of verses as in the original lied.<sup>57</sup> However, Liszt made several pianistic changes as the piece progressed, by thickening the texture and adding chordal leaps to heighten the growing emotions of the piece as indicated in the text.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, he chose to keep the ending identical to the ending of Schubert’s song.<sup>59</sup>

The greatest challenge was to integrate the vocal melody with the piano accompaniment while keeping the vocal part in the same soprano range as in Schubert’s original song. Furthermore, the sixteenth-note figuration of the right hand of the piano accompaniment lies within the same range as the soprano vocal part, which would make it difficult to distinguish the voice and piano accompaniment when both are being played on a single instrument. Although Liszt had the option of changing the voice range as he did in some of his other transcriptions, he chose to keep the melody in the original register since he believed that the character of Gretchen (represented as a soprano) had to be preserved.<sup>60</sup> Hence, Liszt decided to rhythmically displace some of the notes of the vocal line to fall on off-beats to make the vocal melody more distinguishable.

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<sup>55</sup> Walker, “Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions,” 258.

<sup>56</sup> Walker, “Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions,” 258.

<sup>57</sup> Madsen, “The Schubert -Liszt Transcriptions,” 120.

<sup>58</sup> Madsen, “The Schubert -Liszt Transcriptions,” 120.

<sup>59</sup> Walker, “Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions,” 124.

<sup>60</sup> Madsen, “The Schubert -Liszt Transcriptions”, 122.

Non troppo Allegro

Mei - ne Ruh - ist

*legato*

*pp*

*un poco marcato il canto*

*sempre staccato*

<https://www.pianostreet.com/liszt-sheet-music/transcriptions/schubert-gretchen-am-spinnrade.htm>

In this example, for instance, the note A (“Ruh”) in the third measure is not played at the same time as the first sixteenth note of the right-hand piano accompaniment which falls on the downbeat.

While Liszt’s transcription is technically challenging, it should be noted that he was more concerned with representing Gretchen’s character than demonstrating performance skills. When one of his students was playing the transcription in an excessively flashy manner, Liszt advised him to play in a “coy, demure manner”, saying that one must “sit quietly when you play a piece like this”.<sup>61</sup> Later, the playing becomes more passionate as the text becomes more urgent, which Liszt accomplishes by thickening the accompaniment and by expanding the range with large chords and leaps.<sup>62</sup>

### “Du bist die Ruh”

In contrast to the previous two songs examined, which were both in the key of E-flat Major, “Du bist die Ruh” is set in the key of E-flat Major. Schubert composed this art song in 1823, which was included in a collection of four songs published in 1826.<sup>63</sup> The words are by Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866), a prominent German poet and literary figure.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Madsen, “The Schubert -Liszt Transcriptions,” 122-123.

<sup>62</sup> Madsen, “The Schubert -Liszt Transcriptions,” 124.

<sup>63</sup> *Franz Liszt: The Schubert Song*, 26.

<sup>64</sup> “Friedrich Ruckert (1788-1866),” Mahler Foundation, accessed May 7, 2023, <https://mahlerfoundation.org/mahler/contemporaries/friedrich-ruckert/>.

“Du bist die Ruh”  
Friedrich Rückert

Du bist die Ruh,  
Der Friede mild,  
Die Sehn sucht du,  
Und was sie stillt.

Ich weihe dir  
Voll Lust und Schmerz  
Zur Wohnung hier  
Mein Aug und Herz

Kehr' ein bei mir,  
Und schliesse du  
Still hinter dir  
Die Pforten zu.

Treib andern Schmerz  
Aus dieser Brust!  
Voll sei dies Herz  
Von deiner Lust.

Dies Augenzelt  
Von deinem Glanz  
Allein erhellt,  
O full'es ganz!

“You are the rest”  
English translation by Anna Damerau

You are the rest  
The peace mild  
You are the longing  
And what stills it

I consecrate to you  
Full of joy and pain  
As a dwelling here  
My eye and heart.

Come into my abode  
And close  
Silently behind you  
The gates.

Drive other sorrow  
Out of my chest!  
Full be this heart  
Of your joy.

This eyetent\*  
From your radiance  
Alone is lit  
Oh, fill it all!

\* The literal translation of “Augenzelt,” also translated as “tabernacle of my eyes”<sup>65</sup>

A gentle, flowing accompaniment enhances Schubert’s melody, creating a sense of harmony and tranquility. “Du bist die Ruh” describes the joy of being with one’s beloved; however, this song also seems to have a spiritual element to it as indicated by the word choices such as *weihe* (Ger. “consecrate”) and *Augenzelt* (Ger. “eyetent/tabernacle of my eyes”).<sup>66</sup> There are several meanings to the words in much of the poetry of the Romantic period as poets pondered the purpose of life.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> *Franz Liszt: The Schubert Song*, 26.

<sup>66</sup> Madsen, “The Schubert -Liszt Transcriptions,” 169.

<sup>67</sup> “A Brief Guide to Romanticism,” Academy of American Poets, accessed May 4, 2023, <https://poets.org/text/brief-guide-romanticism>.

In 1838, Diabelli published Liszt's earlier piano transcriptions of Schubert's lieder, including "Du bist die Ruh".<sup>68</sup> One of the most noticeable changes in the transcription is the absence of the piano introduction found in the original lied. Instead, Liszt begins his transcription with the vocal line appearing in the first measure, transposed an octave lower. In each verse that follows, Liszt makes changes to the texture. For instance, in the second verse, the melody in the soprano register is played by the right hand, while the left hand plays staccato sixteenth notes spanning a wide range of octaves. Liszt also changes the structure of the piece from AAB to AAAB, adding an "untexed" verse much like in the "Ständchen". In this third A section, the melody and harmony come together as part of a series of chordal arpeggiations that anticipate the approaching climax. It is the B section that Schubert writes a magnificent harmonic progression, beginning with the words "Dies Augenzelt", which is repeated twice. At this pinnacle of the entire piece, Liszt thickens the chordal texture and adds virtuosic chordal arpeggiations, bringing the piece to an ecstatic climax before returning to a calm and blissful conclusion.

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<sup>68</sup> *Franz Liszt: The Schubert Song*, vii, 26.

## CONCLUSION

This Honors project was a rewarding undertaking that helped me gain a better understanding of Schubert's art songs and Liszt's piano transcriptions. In my research, I enjoyed learning the background of the composers' input and works. I also enjoyed the musical analysis of the three Schubert lieder and Liszt piano transcriptions featured in my recital. Furthermore, this project also provided me with the opportunity to integrate both voice and piano, which greatly broadened my musical experience.

I also realized that knowing the composers' lives, personalities, and the context of their pieces can significantly impact interpretation and playing. For example, Schubert's songs, though oftentimes simple, contain deep, stirring emotions. Liszt's transcriptions, in spite of their brilliance and advances in piano performance and technique, remain true to Schubert's music, contrary to popular belief that Liszt primarily concentrated on showmanship. Furthermore, singing the original Schubert lieder helped me perform the Liszt transcriptions in a more song-like, lyrical manner as I considered phrasing, melodic contour, and timing. While playing the piano transcriptions, I would hum and think of the German text. Moreover, I occasionally practiced singing the original lied while simultaneously playing the piano transcription.

I found it challenging to alternate between singing and playing piano during my performance. As I began to play the same piece that I sang a few minutes earlier, my mind had to quickly switch from being a singer to a pianist, this time with additional variations on the original composition and playing both the voice and piano parts. Nevertheless, by doing so, I was able to demonstrate to the audience the similarities and differences between the two versions of the pieces. I believe that the subtleties and varying styles of the two composers would not



have been as apparent if I performed the three songs separately from the three piano transcriptions.

Furthermore, this project made me reflect on the art of performance, especially as it relates to pianists. Piano transcriptions are rarely performed, and if they are, those unfamiliar with the original work cannot compare them directly. It is difficult to translate a singer's words and expressions into the piano directly, so a recital that compares songs with their transcriptions would be one way to create a meaningful performance. In this regard, I believe we as musicians would benefit from finding creative ways to plan some of our recital programs, such as exploring a certain theme or incorporating pieces from different mediums.

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