

Schubert, lieder, miniatures: Romantic inwardness

4/11/2017

Salon

- Open house on a designated day with live entertainment (hired or not).
- At the cusp of the private and the public sphere.
- Music usually performed by women – unless by the composer.
- Only in such an environment does the idea of a “public display of privacy” lose its paradoxical, even faintly ridiculous mien. (Taruskin)

Josef Danhauser, *Liszt at the Piano* (1840)



Lizst at the Piano members (L → R)

- Alfred du Musset, french poet
- Amandine Aurore Lucie Dupin, aka George Sand, extremely important author, literary critic, public free spirit.
- Victor Hugo (*Hunchback of N Dame, Les Miserables*)
- Berlioz and Rossini hugging. Lizst (at the Piano).
- Countess Marie d'Agoult (1805–76), host
- “A portrait of shared solitude.” (Taruskin)
- Machismo in the bust of Beethoven – why?

“Music trance”

- Franz Anton Mesmer (1734 – 1815), inventor of “mesmerism” i.e. hypnotism.
 - Mesmer used the glass armonica.
- Appears to prove the existence of a realm of reality that transcends sense perception; a truer realm? An aesthetic realm? An inner realm?
- Genre: the autobiography, diary, biography
- Industrial revolution: cheap editions of music, musical instruments for private ownership.
- Esp. music, which was known to induce such states. Herder: “in the mirror of tones the human heart learns to know itself.”
- Submediant modulation: precedent is **Beethoven, Op. 130, Cavatina**

John Field

- Born Ireland, 1782
- Grows up in London, student of Clementi – composition, piano, and instrument making.
- Ends up in Moscow, composing primarily piano music, frequently taking up Russian themes.
- **18 Nocturnes** Stylistic features:
 - Wide ranging left hand harmonic writing, supported by pedal
 - Melismatic decoration over slow harmony
 - Surprising modulations
 - See esp. no. 14: *scena*
 - Cf. Beethoven's word for similar pieces: Bagatelles - "trifles"
- *"As a rapid modulating tool, **the augmented 6th was to Field as the diminished 7th was to Weber**, and appeared regularly from the London period alongside modulation by 3rds."*

Franz Liszt on Field

- In writing as in playing, Field was intent only on expressing his inner feelings for his own gratification. It would be impossible to imagine a more unabashed indifference to the public than his. He enchanted his public without knowing it or wishing it. His nearly immobile posture, his expressionless face did not attract notice. His glance did not rove.... It was not hard to see that he was his own chief audience. His calm was all but sleepy, and could be neither disturbed nor affected by the thoughts of the impression his playing made on his hearers.... Art was for him in itself sufficient reward for any sacrifice.... Field sang for himself alone.

Taruskin on Field

- The music a pianist like Field composed for salon performance (whether by himself or by one of his fashionable lady pupils) served the same social purpose, for both composer and audience, as the concerto had served for Mozart. A statistical survey of Field's output bears this out: he started his career as a public musician in London, with a concerto (in E \flat , 1799), made his early name in Russia with more concertos, but after 1822 composed only for solo piano or for piano intimately accompanied by a string quartet ad libitum. He had shifted his field of operations from the concert hall to the salon, and his music responded to the change with an ever-increasing quotient of *Innigkeit*.
- “The Field tradition” to which Schubert and Chopin belong.

Franz Schubert (1797 - 1828)

- Born Vienna, studies with Antonio Salieri. Musical talent earns him the chance to get a good education (not common for someone of his station).
- Early compositions: fantasie in G for two pianos, **Hagars Klage**
 - Length
 - Ends in a different key from the one in which it begins
- Appears to follow the family profession (education), as a “day job.”
- Productivity 1815-1816: 65 bars of new music a day.
- 1818: Hired by Esterhazy estate to teach at Zseliz (summer spot)
- 1823: health problems (syphilis). Suggestions of “sexual excess” in lifestyle. (Grove) NB: fixed sexual orientation is an invention of the late 19th century (Freud).
- Supported by friends and family, devotes all his time to composing at age 16.
- By the age of nineteen,
 - six operas (mainly singspiels, short comic works in German with spoken dialogue)
 - five symphonies
 - sixteen string quartets (composed for family recreation)
 - dozens of dances for piano or small chamber ensemble
 - literally hundreds of songs set to verses by contemporary poets. Including **Gretchen am Spinnrade** (“Little Margaret at the spinning wheel”), and **Erlkonig** (“the elf king”)

Before and after Rossini

- Symphony no. 4 (“Tragic”) (1816) – Beethoven 5
- Symphony no. 5 (1816) – Beethoven 4
- 1817 – Rossini arrives in Vienna.
- Overture in the Italian Style (1817)
- Sixth Symphony

Erlkonig and Gretchen am *Spinnrade*

- Freedom in harmony
- Depiction
- Intimacy (of emotion and venue)

Impromptu - “spur of the moment”

- 8 impromptus, 1827.
- Share with Field the ternary form (ABA).
- Shares with Field the preoccupation with the submediant – but intensifies it and combines it with more adventurous modal mixture.
- **Impromptu No. 2, Op. 90 in Eb**
 - “crossing the edge” – motion at the 3rd
 - The relationship can be traced logically, and is therefore intelligible, but its distance, not the logic of its description, is what registers. The logic, while demonstrable, is beside the point. To insist on demonstrating it works against the intended effect. (Taruskin)
 - However, “cycle of thirds?”

Schubert, *moments musicaux*

- Moments musicaux, no. 6
- More extreme harmonic ventures
- 6 pieces in loose ternary form; not really conceived as a set
- *Augenblick* – “moment”
 - 6th chords
 - New regions for tonicization (mediant, submediant, even the neopolitan 6th).
 - German 6th vs. dominant 7th

Taruskin on this kind of modulation

- The harmonic vocabulary of romantic introspection is one in which, as a matter of course, any augmented sixth chord can be resolved as a dominant seventh and vice versa, any triad in first inversion can be resolved as a Neapolitan and vice versa, and any constituent tone in a diminished seventh chord can resolve as a leading tone. The whole panoply of major and minor degree functions is freely available for use, and any one of them can function at pleasure as a pivot for modulation. In all of these techniques and more, Schubert was the chief pioneer, precisely because his art was nurtured in the intimacy of domestic genres.

Schubert, Piano Sonata in Bb (1828)

- Recording, analyze by ear

(last sonata, written a few months before his death)

Compare with the logic of tonal harmony as we have known it so far.

Gb / F# – “*doppleganger*”

Taruskin:

It relativizes the 150-year hegemony of the circle of fifths as sole arbiter of tonal coherence, positing two other cyclic models—thirds and semitones—as equally viable tonal administrators, the first accessible through mediant relationships, the other through Neapolitans. And finally, since the flat submediant is the “dominant of the Neapolitan,” this opposition among disparate harmonic routes—fifths, thirds, semitones—may be relativized in turn, and freely intermixed.

Cycle of thirds?

- **Wandered Fantasy**
 - Four movements
- What does this make possible?
 - Connect the voices
 - M3
 - m3

Interpreting Schubert's Harmony

- Maynard Solomon, "Franz Schubert and the Peacocks of Benvenuto Cellini," *Nineteenth-Century Music* XII (1988–9): 193–206.
 - Schubert's participation in the "male homosexual subculture" of Vienna.
- Susan McClary, "Constructions of Identity in Schubert's Music," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Lesbian and Gay Musicology*. (1994)
 - Submediant relations are homologous to sexual promiscuity, or alternative sexual relationships. Thirds are a pleasurable alternative to socially mandated norm.
- Kofi Agawu, "Schubert's Sexuality: A Prescription for Analysis?" in *19th Century Music*. (1994)
 - Sexuality may play a role, but probably only on the "level of reception." ... "The proof of the pudding, as always, lies in the analysis."