

Lisa Feurzeig, *Schubert's Lieder and the Philosophy of Early German Romanticism*. Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014. Pp. xiii + 198. £60. ISBN 9781409447887.

An overture of sorts opens this study, presenting the Schlegels and Novalis, Friedrich Schleiermacher's hermeneutics and other aesthetic models circulating in the German realm around 1800, before the curtain rises on the author's thesis proper: Franz Schubert's songs setting the poetry of Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis reflect his awareness of contemporary philosophical thought. Feurzeig's speculations and in-depth analyses are stimulating and she warmly invites readers to extend the inquiry. For her English readership she distills valuable insight from German-language scholarship too, mostly in a chapter addressing the puzzling eroticism in Novalis's religious poetry. The bulk of the monograph is given to Schubert's Schlegel settings, those from the poetic cycle *Abendröte* (rosy-shimmer-of-dusk) and, for a final chapter, 'Im Walde,' a recondite poem that Feurzeig argues 'was literally incomprehensible to the composer' yet 'he responded to it fully and richly.' (167) A malleable theory of the composer's creative process, introduced in her case study of 'Die Berge' (Chapter 2), erases this paradox.

On and off between ca.1819-1823 Schubert set to music eleven of the twenty-two poems of *Abendröte*. Schlegel's work unfolds in two parts, each with its own prologue and a closing sonnet in the voice of 'the poet.' At the outset an unspecified voice observes that when the sun has sunk below the horizon everything in nature becomes 'redend,' seems to speak. Schubert evidently set the introductory poem some time after tackling the next one, 'Die Berge,' told from the vantage point of sentient mountains. Feurzeig wonders why this poem feels 'strangely awkward.' (Its strophes, I suspect, are modeled on the elevated Spanish verse form *Silva*.) Mountains observe what transpires in the mind of the man who scales their heights with his eyes. At first he believes he can just propel himself past the clouds into the heavenly peaks. With growing astonishment he realizes 'how firmly grounded we are upon ourselves.' Finally, desiring to play at the precipice 'where bold cliffs hang mockingly over the abyss,' he pledges to build his own thoughts up from the ground like secure rock formations. High courage swells his heart.

Allegory for a creative mind's ambition: this is how Richard Kramer construed 'Die Berge' in *Distant Cycles: Schubert and the Conceiving of Song* (Chicago, 1995; 203ff), noting that Schubert's striking turn to the subdominant at 'zu den Himmlischen oben,' colored by horn fifths and a pedal tone on G, resembles a spellbinding moment in 'Wo die Berge so blau,' the second song in Beethoven's only song cycle. Schubert sketches Schlegel's 'redend' vista with a drawn-out alphorn call in piano octaves and an echo. We see mountains too in the jagged contours of the triadic theme. Feurzeig acknowledges such aural and visual props but she wants to peer behind the scenes. She believes that Schubert created a 'template,' a mental blueprint to guide his composition. This she calls 'diagraming' a poem and infers the mediation of a Kantian 'transcendental schema' (47) in other *Abendröte* settings (all poems assuming non-human consciousness: 'The River', 'The Stars', 'The Bushes'). The composer abstracts from each poem its unique mode of expression: In the *ghasal* 'Die Gebüsch' one sound (*au*: a woeful cry) is woven into each couplet; accumulative meaning is the guiding principle in Schubert's structure too. How is this manifested in 'Die Berge'? Three poetic strophes align with the (triangular) ABA shape of the song, somewhat surprisingly, since the psychological growth witnessed by Schlegel's mountains implies no literal return. Each musical section ends with a giddy ritornello and overly solid cadences, magnified on repetition. Between the G major outer pillars is a

sketch-like music, half-spoken and unharmonized except for a plagal ('amen') cadence in E-flat, following which a rising sequence of blustery arpeggios leads to the ritornello shaded in dark B minor. Feurzeig discerns traces of a schema in the novel rationale controlling these quixotic changes. Schubert's music divides the octave into equal segments, each key a major third apart: 'What is special about the B section is that by traversing a strange path through a set of distantly related keys, and without ever backtracking, the music nevertheless arrives once more at the tonic' (44). The contrasting A section 'lives in the fifth-based world' (of earlier composers).

Feurzeig wisely stops short of maintaining that Schlegel's poetry and the concepts underlying it inspired the young composer to create his bold harmonic palette, nor does she insist that Schubert's encounter with Romantic philosophical thought laid the groundwork for such late marvels as the E-flat piano trio where exactly this architectural plan (octave segmented into major thirds) is displayed on the thematic surface. Her more modest aim, expressed in the book's final sentence, is '[to open] our minds to the idea that Schubert was truly a thinker, and that he expressed his thoughts through music' (186).

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