



Schubert

Bicentenary Schubert (1797-1997)

Die schöne Müllerin (The Fair Maid of the Mill) D 795 (1823)

Franz-Peter Schubert

The Poet's Prologue

I invite you, Ladies fair and Men of Taste
And all who like to see and hear something new,
To listen to a brand-new show
That's written in the very latest style...
Wilhelm Müller

Once upon a time, there was a fair-haired miller's lad, honest, naïve, drunk with fresh air and space, who fell in love with his master's pretty daughter, a beautiful young lady with blue eyes. Destiny assigned them a tryst on the bank of a fresh stream, eternal confidant, eternal traveller, in the heart of the green countryside of Austria. The miller's apprentice was direct; the young lady coquettish, she showed herself more accessible to the calling of the horn ("you call that art!", Schubert said to one of those "blowers of wind" in the Vienna Opera orchestra) than to the quivering of her lovesick lover's lute. Hence, the coquettish lady will forget the crystal-clear water where *The Trout* wriggles, the smell of fresh-cut hay, the moon and the stars, the immense sky, and this in order to crane her neck all the better towards the highway which leads towards the town, where a braggart is walking past with his gun and laden with the skins of innocent game, thus provoking the desperate deed from the poor miller's apprentice who is turned down by his socially not so humble lover.

One remembers how - at least according to legend - Franz Peter Schubert, visiting his friend, the singer Randhartinger, surreptitiously borrowed a collection of poems left lying on the table: they were *Die schöne Müllerin* by Wilhelm Müller, poet, specialist in philology, in old languages, in history and fervent reader of Shakespeare, Wilhelm Müller, who, with this cycle, wanted to find again the spirit of Volkslied, such as it descended from the

Minnesänger (the Minstrels), if not from the Troubadours, and who had hoped very much (1827) that the ear of a kindred spirit would catch, some day, the melodies from his words and who would give him back his own, not knowing that Schubert had already done so.

It is well-known how, next morning (by way of excuse?) Schubert sat down at the piano in front of Radhartinger and *with his pleasant tenor voice, accompanying himself*, sang to him some of these fresh-blown melodies, drawn from the collection in question. The poet and the composer never met. What would, therefore, Müller have written to Schubert, if he had heard his *Schöne Müllerin* such as it is told to us here, in a succession of small lyrical dramatic pictures, spontaneous expression of the Germanic soul, if not of simply the soul, by an interpreter whose nationality is: Musician.

But let us leave it to the interpreter to excuse herself - in her turn: "where is the achievement? You will ask. There is no achievement. It is only a matter of approaching the original intention, that of the poet as much as that of the musician, and, by forgetting oneself, to meet one and the other separately, then together, in their quest of the absolute, at the very end of a new aesthetic where the instrument becomes voice and the voice instrument..."

Even if Schubert was perfectly conscious of his limitations as a pianist (in this connection, compare the *Erlkönig* of May 8, 1993, Rachmaninoff Hall, Moscow), even if Müller admitted that his Lieders only lead to one half of life, a paper life in black and white, until music animates them - nature and art, which according to the happy formulation of Goethe seemed to flee each other, here, at last, seem to meet at the end of a possible elegiac homage of the revolutionary Clairette to the Austrian Pretty Miller's Daughter of the Petit Trianon.

Giselle Monsegur Vaillant

Microbiography

Having set off from the Bastille under the bonnet of Clairette Angot (*Jadis, les Rois, race proscrite...*) the singer will seek glory at the bosom of the enemy (*ira chercher la gloire au sein des ennemis...*) by pouring to *Faust*, by Gounod, the elixir of youth of a valiant and pure soprano and, in addition, by giving back to the Provençal language - with the 1st production of *Mirèio* (Rumanian State Opera) in the language of Frédéric Mistral (Nobel Prize) before an audience who appreciated Ninon Vallin - this historical dimension that Dante and Petrarca had granted it a long time ago, although, still, perfectly ignored by the great Opera Houses of London, New York, Milan or Paris (alias La Grande Boutique).

Between the *Abduction from the Seraglio* (Radio France) and the Beggars' operas in the gem-Theatres of deepest France, the American Church of Paris will entrust her with *Alleluias* by Mozart, *Mélodies* by Fauré or other melancholy Ballads by the author of the *Dubliners*, James Joyce, as set to music by the composer-conductor Edmund Pendleton; while one luminous Easter Day, before the altar of the American Cathedral of Paris where Heads of State and Hollywood stars crowd in order to read the Gospel of the day, the Agnus Dei, K 317 op. 14 (*Krönungs Messe*) by Mozart, accompanied by the organ, will transform the Minnie Hauk of the *Barber of Seville* into the deeply moving Countess of the *Marriage of Figaro*.

It took the Austro-Hungarian audience of *La Traviata*, in Duplessis gowns and Germont suits, who greeted this "exceptional voice" in a seemingly endless standing ovation (Magyar State Opera) to feel this new frisson which perhaps was only rivalled by that of the audience at La Scala in 1955, hearing Marias Callas in the same rôle, this being the challenge that the first Vestal of the Gauls sent out - with the help of the cabaletta of Norma - to the Guerra Romana, from Yves Nat's Béziers to the Iron Gate.

Riga revisited in that Wagner Hall that saw Richard Wagner's beginnings as a conductor and established the triumph of Hector Berlioz, Franz Liszt, Anton Rubinstein and Clara Schumann, was the prelude to the apotheosis of the Moscow Concerts (Maly, Rachmaninoff Halls) with the help of Radio and TV Ostankino - in order to confirm all the more, in the heart of *the Capital of Music*, the words of Pauline Viardot who was bold enough to express surprise in connection with *Tristan* and before a speechless Wagner, that Germany should have no lyrical musical artists. (See the "*Vorspiel und Liebestod*", April 30, 1993, Maly Hall, Moscow: the first occasion ever that the work was performed by a single artist, singing and accompanying at the same time).

1 / Travelling

To travel is the miller's joy,
To travel!
He must be a bad miller
Who never had an urge to travel,
To travel.

From the water we have learnt it,
From the water,
That never rests by day or night
And is always on the move,
The water.

We learn it from the mill-wheels too,
The mill-wheels.
Which cannot bear to keep still
And never get tired of turning,
The wheels.

Even the mill-stones, heavy as they are,
The mill-stones!
They join in the merry dance
And even long to move faster,
The mill-stones.

O travel, travel, my delight!
O travel!
O good master, o good mistress
Permit me to go on in peace
And travel.

2 / Whither ?

I heard a brooklet rushing
Out of its rocky spring,
Rushing down to the valley,
So clear and sparkling.

I know not what happened to me,
Nor who gave me such advice,
But, I too, had to follow
With my walking-staff.

Downward and ever onward,
And ever following the brook
And ever fresher and brighter
The brook went on rippling.

Is that, then, my road?
O brook, tell me, whither?
With your rippling you have
Quite bemused my mind.

Rippling do I say?
That is surely no rippling:
It must be the water-sprites singing,
And dancing deep down below.

Let them sing, Friend, let them murmur
And wander gaily on!
There are mill-wheels turning
In every crystal-clear brook.

3/ Halt!

I see a mill gleaming
Among the alders:
Through the rushing and singing
The rumble of the wheels breaks through.

O welcome, welcome,
Sweet song of the mill!
And the mill-house is so cosy
And how the windows gleam.

And the sun, how brightly
It shines down from the sky!
O brook, dear little brook,
Was this what you meant?

4 / Thanksgiving to the brook

Was this what you meant,
My rippling friend?
Your singing, your gushing,
Was this what it meant?

“Go to the maid of the mill”,
It seemed to say.
Have I understood you aright?
“To the maid of the mill!”
Did she send you?
Or have you bewitched me?
That, I would like to know:
Did she send you?

However it may be,
I am content:
What I sought, I have found
However it may be.

I asked for work,
And I have it in plenty
For both hands and heart,
In plenty.

5/ After the Day's Work

O that I had a thousand
arms to use!
That I could furiously
Guide the wheels!
O that I had breath
To blow through every grove!
That I could turn
All the stones!
So that the lovely mill-girl
Would notice my faithful heart!

Alas, how weak my arms are!
What I can lift, what I can carry,
What I can saw, what I can fell,
Every apprentice can do the same.
And there I sit with the whole company,
In the quiet cool hours of rest,
And the Master says to all:
"I am pleased with your work!"
And the lovely maiden bids
A good night to one and all.

6/ The Eager Questioner

I ask it of no flower,
I ask it of no star,
None of them could tell me
What I so long to know.
I am no gardener, alas
And the stars are too high above;
So I will ask my little brook
Whether my heart has belied me.

O brooklet of my love,
How silent you are today!
One thing only I want to know,
One little word alone.

"Yes" is the one little word,
The other is "No";
Those two little words enclose
The whole world to me.

O brooklet of my love,
How strange your behaviour is!
I won't repeat what you'll tell me.
Say, brooklet, does she love me?

7/ Impatience

I would like to carve it on every bit of bark
I would like to engrave it on every pebble,
I would like to sow it in every fresh flower bed
With cress seeds which would quickly reveal it.
I would like to write it on every piece of white paper :
“Thine is my heart, and ever shall remain!”

I would like to train a young starling
Till it could speak these words pure and clear,
Till it could speak them with the very sound of my voice,
With the warm pulsing of my heart,
Then it would sing at every window-pane:
“Thine is my heart, and ever shall remain!”

I would like to breathe it into the morning breezes,
I would like to whisper it through the budding grove;
O, could it radiate from every star-like flower,
Could it be borne to her on fragrant wings!
O waters can you drive nothing but wheels?
“Thine is my heart, and ever shall remain!”

I thought it must be there in my eyes,
I thought one could see it burning upon my cheeks,
I thought it could be read from my silent mouth,
That every breath of mine could plainly tell her.
Yet she notices nothing of my anxious longing.
“Thine is my heart, and ever shall remain!”

8/ Morning Greeting

Good morning, fair maid of the mill!
Why do you turn away your head so suddenly,
As though something had hurt you?
Did my greeting so greatly vex you,
Did my gaze disturb you so much?
Then I must go away again?

O let me but stand afar,
Looking at your dear window,
From afar, quite far away!
O little blond head, peep out!
Peep out from your round archways,
You blue morning stars!

You sleep-laden eyes,
You dew-heavy flowers,
Why do you shrink from the sun?
Was the night so kind to you
That you stay closed and cower
And yearn for its quiet bliss?

Now shake off the veil of dreams,
And rise fresh and free
Into God's bright morning!
The lark is twittering in the air

And from the depths of my heart
Love calls out its pain and sorrow.

9/ The Miller's Flowers

Beside the brook grow many little flowers,
Gazing with clear blue eyes;
The brook is the miller's friend,
And blue are the eyes of my love.
Therefore they are my flowers.

Close under her window,
I will plant these flowers.
They will call to her when all is silence,
And when her head sinks in slumber;
For you know well what I would say.
And when she closes her eyes
And sleeps in sweet, sweet repose,
Then, like a vision in dreams,
Whisper to her: "Forget me not, forget me not!"
That is what I would say.

And when at dawn, she opens the shutters,
Then look up with loving gaze;
The dew in your eyes
Shall be my tears.
That I will shed on you.

10/ Shower of Tears

We sat together side by side
In the cool shade of the alder,
We gazed together so intimately
Into the babbling stream.

The moon came too,
And also the stars
And all looked together so quietly,
Into the silver mirror.

I looked not at the moon,
Nor at the shining stars,
I saw only her reflection,
I looked at her eyes alone.

I saw them nodding and glancing
Up from the happy brook;
The little blue flowers on the bank,
Were nodding and glancing too.

And from the depths of the brook
Shone the whole heavens,
That looked as though they would draw me
Into the depths below.

And over the clouds and stars

The stream babbled gaily,
Calling, rippling and singing:
“Friend, friend, come to me!”

Then tears welled in my eyes,
And the mirror dimmed:
She said: “It's going to rain,
Good bye! I'm going home.”

11/ Mine!

Little brook, rush no more!
Wheels, stop your rumblings!
All you merry forest birds
Large and small,
End your twittering!
Through the grove,
To and fro,
Let one rhyme alone be heard:
The beloved maid of the mill
Is mine, is mine!
Spring, are these all the flowers you have?
Sun, have you no brighter beams?
Ah, then must I, all alone,
With that blessed word of mine,
Go uncomprehended through the wide world!

12/ Pause

I have hung my lute on the wall,
I have wound a green ribbon around it.
I can no longer sing, my heart is so full,
That I cannot contain it in songs.
The burning pain of my longing
I would once enclose in jesting rhymes,
With plaints that were soft and gentle.
I thought that my pain was not small.
Ah! How great now is the burden of my happiness,
That no rhyme on earth can contain it?

Now dear lute, rest upon your nail!
And if a light breeze passes across your strings,
Or if a bee brushes its wings against you,
I shall tremble with fear and shiver!
Why did I leave the ribbon hanging for so long?
Often it flaps over the strings as with a sigh.
Is that the echo of my love's pain?
Could it be the prelude to unheard songs?

13/ With the Lute's Green Ribbon

“What a pity that the pretty green ribbon
Should fade here on the wall
I am so fond of green!”
That is what you said to me, my beloved,
So I untie it at once and send it to you:
Now may green be dear to you!

Though white is your true love's colour,
Green too can still have its price,
I too am fond of it.
For our love is ever green,
And green is the distant landscape of hope,
Therefore we are fond of it.

Now entwine in your tresses
The green ribbon,
You are so fond of green.
Then I shall know where hope abides,
Then I shall know where love has its throne,
Then at last shall I love green.

14/ The Hunter

What does the hunter seek here by the mill-stream?
Stay, insolent hunter, in your preserve!
There is no game here to hunt;
Here dwells my doe, a tame one,
And if you want to see that tender little doe,
Leave your guns in the forest.
And leave your barking dogs at home,
And don't blow noisy calls on your horn,
And shave that bristling hair from your chin,
Otherwise you'll frighten the doe in the garden.

It would be better though, if you staid in the forest,
And left mill and miller in peace.
What use are fishes among green branches?
What can squirrels want with the blue pond?
So stay in the forest, arrogant hunter,
And leave me alone with my three wheels,
And if you would please my beloved,
Then, Friend, know what is troubling her heart:
The wild boars come out of the forest at night
And trample and root out the ground in her kitchen garden,
Those wild boars, shoot them, you hunter-hero!

15/ Jealousy and Pride

Whither so fast, so troubled and wild dear brook?
Are you hurrying angrily after that arrogant brother hunter?
Turn round then, turn round and chide rather the maid of the mill
For her light, wanton, petty fickleness!
Did you not see her last night standing at the gate
And craning her neck to look down the road?
When the hunter with his catch merrily returns home,
Then no modest maid should put her head through the window.
Go to her, I pray you, and not a word about my dejected looks;
Tell her: "he has cut a reed pipe from my banks,
And is playing merry songs and dances for the children".

16/ The Favourite Colour

In green I will attire myself,
In green weeping willow:
My beloved is so fond of green!
I shall seek a cypress grove
A thicket of green rosemary:
My beloved is so fond of green!

Away to the merry hunt!
Away over heath and hedge!
My beloved is so fond of the chase.
The game that I chase is Death,
My hunting-ground is my love's anguish:
My beloved is so fond of the chase.

Dig me a grave in the grass,
Cover me with green turf:
My beloved is so fond of green.
No black cross, no bright flowers,
Only green, all green around:
My beloved is so fond of green.

17/ The Evil Colour

I should like to go forth into the world,
Forth into the wide, wide world,
Were it no so green, so green,
Out there in wood and field.

I should like to pluck all the green leaves
From every branch:
I should like to turn all the green grass
To a deadly white with my tears.

O Green, you evil colour,
Why do you look at me always
So proudly, so insolently, so gloatingly
At me, a poor man whose colour is white?

I would like to lie in front of her door,
In storm and rain and snow,
And softly sing by day and night,
One little word: "Adieu!"

Hark! When a horn sounds in the wood
Her window rattles open:
And though she does not look out for me,
I still can look at her.

O unwind from your brow
The green, green ribbon.
Adieu, adieu! And give me
Your hand in farewell!

18/ Withered Flowers

All you flowers
That she gave me,
Should go with me
Into my grave.

Why do you look
At me so sadly
As if you knew
My fate?

You flowers all,
So withered and so pale,
You flowers all,
Why are you so wet?

Tears cannot revive
The green of May,
Nor make dead love
Bloom again.

And spring will come
And winter will go,
And flowers will spring up.

And flowers will lie with me
In the grave,
All the little flowers
That she gave me.

And when she walks
Past the hillside
She will think in her heart:
"His love was true".

Then little flowers,
Come forth, come forth!
May has come,
And Winter is over.

19/ The Miller and the Brook

The Miller

When a true heart
Dies of love
lilies wither
In every flower-bed;

The full moon hides
Behind the clouds
Lest men
Should see her tears;
The little angels
Close their eyes
And sob and sing
The soul to rest!

The Brook

And when love
Frees itself from grief,
A star, a new one
Twinkles in the sky;

And three roses,
Half red and half white
That never will wither,
Will spring from the thorny bough.
And the angels shed
Their wings
At every dawn
And descend down to earth.

The Miller

O brook, dear brook,
You mean so well;
How can you know
What harm love does!

Down there, down there
Is cool rest!
O brook, little brook,
Sing on then.

20/ The Brook's Lullaby

Rest, rest, close your eyes!
O weary traveller, you are home.
True faith is here,
You shall lie with me
Until the sea drinks the streams dry.

I will lay you in a cool bed,
On a soft pillow,
In a blue crystal chamber.
Come, come to me,
You who know how to rock
And rock and lull my friend to sleep!

If a hunting horn sounds
From the green forest,
Then I will foam and roar
Around you to still it.
Do not look within,
Little blue flowers!
You might give heavy dreams
To my sleeping boy.

Away, away, from the mill-path,
You wicked maid,
That your shadow may not awaken him!
Throw me your dainty kerchief
That I may cover his eyes.

Good night, good night!
Till all shall awake,
Sleep off your joy, sleep off your sorrow!
The full moon rises,
The mists recede,
And the sky above, how wide it spreads!

Three other Lieders

21/ The Trout (Schubart)

In a bright little stream,
Briskly and gaily sped the wily trout,
Like an arrow past me.
I stood on the bank and carelessly watched
The cheerful fish swimming
In the clear little stream.

A fisherman with his rod,
Stood there on the brink,
And cold-bloodedly watched the fish writhing.
As long as the clear water is undisturbed,
I thought he won't catch the trout with his angle.

But as last, the rascal found that time was too long.
He made the water muddy, by a trick,
And before I realized it,
His rod quivered,
The fish dangled on it
And I, with blood boiling, beheld the cheated catch.

22/ Love's Message (Rellstab)

Rushing brooklet, so silvery bright,
Are you hurrying to my beloved so gaily and quickly?
Dear brooklet, be my messenger,
Bring her my message from afar.

All the flowers that she tends in her garden
And that she wears so lovingly on her bosom,
And her roses brightly glowing,
Dear brooklet, you cool and clear, refresh them.

When, beside the brook, she is lost in dreams
And hangs her head to think of me,
Comfort my sweet heart with a friendly glance,
For her loved one will soon come back.

When the sun sinks with rosy beams,
Rock my beloved to sleep
With your rippling, babble her to sweet rest,
And whisper dreams of love to her.

23/ Restless Love (Goethe)

Into snow and rain
Against the wind
Through foggy gorges
And clouds of mist
Onwards, ever onwards,
Without halt or rest!

Rather would I endure
My way through suffering
Than bear so many
Of life's pleasures.

All this aching from heart to heart,
How strangely, alas!
It begets its own pain!
How shall I flee?
Go towards the forest?

All, all in vain!
Love, thou art
Life's crown:
Joy without peace.

Discography

Recital - Salle Gabriel Fauré Concert Live

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Mozart - Fauré - Schumann - Schubert - Verdi - Berlioz

Finnvox 98001 / 54'24".

Fauré / Verlaine

Mélodies de Venise- La bonne Chanson

Clair de lune - Spleen - Prison

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Antti Joki

Balance Engineer

Mika Jussila

Finnvox Mastering

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