

SSUSA NEWSLETTER

SCHUBERT SOCIETY OF THE USA

Vol. 3, No. 3, 2005

Dear Members and Friends,

May 28 marked the eightieth birthday of the world-renowned German baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. In an interview published in the July 2005 issue of *The Gramophone*, the singer speaks most aptly of Schubert's Lieder, and particularly of *Winterreise* which he has recorded at least nine times; some count twelve with the pirated versions. The performance and reception histories of Lieder in the middle and late twentieth century, especially Schubert's Lieder, owe an ineffable debt to Fischer-Dieskau without whose artistry, intelligence, musicianship, and dedication we would be a great deal poorer. The Schubert Society of the USA sends its most heartfelt birthday wishes to Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau all year long.

Another anniversary we wish to note is that of our sister society The Schubert Institute-UK (SIUK). See Membership News with a brief report from Crawford Howie on the upcoming event. We will share more news about the occasion in our 2006 newsletters. Congratulations, SIUK.

In July, the great German tenor Peter Schreier celebrated his seventieth birthday and announced his retirement. When asked to name his favorite song cycle, he responded without hesitation *Die schöne Müllerin*. Schreier's marvelous song performances and his dedication to Schubert will be warmly remembered in the world of Lieder. His superb musical intelligence blends naturally with a willingness to explore the boundaries of his art. Happy birthday, Peter Schreier.

From time to time, we will publish short pieces submitted by members and readers. We received such a contribution from George D. Gopen about one special performing experience. See Newsletter Article.

A brief report: in 2005 we published three numbers of the SSUSA Newsletter; announced the launch of our scholarly journal *Arpeggione* for which we appointed an editor, associate editor, and editorial board; grew the membership; expanded our contact list; purchased a computer; arranged ticket discounts for members; and received an increasing number of queries from our web site. Since the launch announcement we are receiving subscriptions from academic and public libraries for *Arpeggione*. We are pleased with our progress and wish to thank our members for their support. We ask our members and readers to spread the word about the SSUSA. Please encourage your colleagues and friends to contact us and we will be happy to send them a complimentary copy of the newsletter.

2006 begins our fourth year. We look forward to having you continue with us on this exciting journey.

Dr. Janet I. Wasserman, Founder and Executive Director
752 West End Avenue #5H • New York, NY 10025-6231 USA
Tel/Fax: 1-212-222-2015 • E-mail: SchuSocUSA2003@aol.com
www.schubertsocietyusa.org

The SSUSA is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

Copyright © SCHUBERT SOCIETY OF THE USA, INC. 2003 – 2005

ADVISORY BOARD NEWS

RAYMOND ERICKSON is spending part of his Fall semester sabbatical doing Bach research in Leipzig. His research visit is preceded by a series of piano recitals on a tour that takes him from the east coast of the US to Germany and Austria. While he has no Schubert on his program, he made up for this absence before he left by hearing a very pleasing performance of the A Major Sonata (D664) by one of his DMA piano students.

MARILYN HORNE was honored with the 2005 Lifetime Achievement Award from *The Gramophone* in association with WQXR, the classical radio station of *The New York Times*, which broadcasts Ms. Horne's "On Wings of Song" recital series. Said James Jolly, *Gramophone's* editor: "Marilyn Horne is one of the most distinguished singers of our time, and I'm delighted to be presenting her with this major award on behalf of a magazine that has been following her career for as long as she has been recording."

SUSAN KAGAN presented a lecture-recital on September 25 on the piano music of Ferdinand Ries who was a pupil of Beethoven. The recital's occasion was the first convention of the American Beethoven Society held at The Ira F. Brilliant Center for Beethoven Studies at San José State University, California. The conference celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the Beethoven Center. Earlier in the summer, she recorded Ries's first piano sonatas for Raptus Records of Netherlands.

SEYMOUR LIPKIN is in the midst of recording all the Schubert piano sonatas for the Newport Classics label for which he recorded all the Beethoven sonatas. He anticipates a release of the Schubert works either late next year or in early 2007. About his Beethoven project, July's *The Gramophone* had highest praise in a full-page review for Lipkin's playing and interpretation. He will be playing Haydn and Mozart on the January 23, 2006 program of the Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players in New York; see: <www.jupitersymphony.com>.

SUSAN YOUENS was awarded an NEH fellowship in 2005 to continue her research projects on Heine and the Lied and on the social history of the Lied, both volumes expected to be published by Cambridge University Press.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

ERIK BATTAGLIA sent news of the successful thirty-third summer course of Lieder classes, "Il Lied Tedesco," sponsored by the Scuola Superiore Hugo Wolf in Acquasparta, Italy, founded by his father, the baritone and Lieder masterclass teacher Elio Battaglia. The curriculum, designed for singers and pianists, studies the German Lied from Bach to Strauss. Included are courses on interpretative technique and vocal technique, a course for accompanists with lectures in the history of the German Lied, and a course for pronunciation and knowledge of the German texts. Upon completion of the summer's work participants presented a recital, recorded by RAI/TV, of Mahler songs with a final farewell rendition of Schubert's *Ständchen* (Mayrhofer). See <www.scuolahugowolf.it>.

The SSUSA received a copy of *I Lieder di Richard Strauss*, translated, edited, and introductory notes by Erik Battaglia, published in 1999 by the Scuola Superiore Hugo Wolf on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Strauss's death. The score-size book traces the publication history of Strauss's Lieder noting the first performances as well as providing background about the poets and Strauss's compositional approach.

CRAWFORD HOWIE reports below on the 50th issue of *The Schubertian*:

“January 2006 will mark the appearance of the 50th issue of *The Schubertian*, the journal of The Schubert Institute (UK). SIUK came into existence in 1991 and its first Newsletter, edited by the distinguished Schubert scholar, John Reed, was published in June of that year. With its thirteenth issue in March 1996 came a new name - *The Schubertian* - although the A4 format was retained. In July 2001, this format was changed to its present A5 format and in October 2005 the 49th issue became the first to be available in both printed and PDF format. As current editor I am tremendously indebted to my predecessors, John Reed, Paul Reid, and Richard Morris, for their sterling efforts in making the journal what it is, a healthy mixture of informative and, we hope, stimulating material for lovers of Schubert’s music, both *Kenner und Liebhaber*, to my colleagues on the SIUK committee for their unfailing encouragement, and, not least, to Andrew Shackleton, whose ‘behind the scenes’ assistance in matters of editing, production and layout has been invaluable.” CH

NANCY B. REICH is on the program with her paper “Two Voices: The Diaries of Fanny Hensel and Clara Wieck” at the International Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel Conference, 13-15 November 2005, at the College of Music of Florida State University.

NEWS ITEMS

We report on the progress of the *Sakontala* project of Denmark-based Finnish impresario and producer **Antti Sairanen** to present the work's world premiere in a concert version, and then to take this newly realized version of Schubert's uncompleted opera on a tour of the Nordic countries. As we reported in earlier newsletters, the noted Danish composer Karl Aage Rasmussen completed the task of reconstruction into a two-act version based on recently discovered sketches by Schubert in the Wiener Stadt- und Landesbibliothek Musiksammlung. The score, piano score, and vocal scores are nearing completion by Danish music publisher Edition Wilhelm Hansen in Copenhagen.

In preparation for the first performance, Sairanen has organized an ensemble of a Finnish orchestra and its conductor, and of singers and chorus. He has also established partnerships with various rehearsal and performance venues, vocal coaching staff, and technology and communications entities for recording, web streaming, and TV transmission. The producer is backed by a dedicated project staff along with the necessary marketing and public relations partners. The international flavor of *Sakontala* begins first of all with the Indian poet Kalidasa who wrote the original 5th Century text. The singers and vocal coaches are from Finland, Latvia, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Lithuania. A number of organizations and institutions from Denmark and other Nordic countries will be represented in the project. Sairanen looks forward to the support of several noted financial and cultural institutions in northern Europe as well as from the EU in connection with a full and complete scenic version of the Schubert/Rasmussen opera to be readied for a EU tour in 2007. For more information on the project, write to: antti.sairanen@rnet.dk.

In April, there was a lively exchange online at the **Lieder List** about Schubert's so-called Kosegarten cycle. Amazingly, there were two London performances of the cycle in April: one at the Banqueting House and the other at the Austrian Cultural Forum. The debate continues. To view the messages exchanged about the Kosegarten cycle, go to LIEDER-L@LISTSERV.UH.EDU.

Prof. Rüdiger Görner (Department of German, Queen Mary University of London) kindly sent us a copy of his lecture, "Schubert's Unanswered Question: Literary Reflections on a Musical Theme" presented in 1997 on the occasion of Schubert's bicentenary. The Austrian Cultural Institute, London, published the lecture in 1998.

If you want to see Schubert's opera *Alfonso und Estrella* in modern dress, a DVD of the 2004 production at the Teatro Lirico di Cagliari has been released on the Dynamic label, with subtitles (as well as cuts).

The DVD is reviewed in the July issue of *Opera News* with an overall positive nod for the music and singing, less satisfaction with the dramatic impact, and high praise for the video direction and visual look.

Schumann, Schubert und der Schnee / Schumann, Schubert and the Snow, an opera "for piano" created and directed by Hans Neuenfels, premiered October 7 in Bochum's Jahrhunderthalle as part of the 2005-2007 RuhrTriennale, which commissioned the work and co-produced it with the Komische Oper Berlin. The evening's program, in English at <www.ruhrtriennale.de/en/programm/2005/schubert-schumann-schnee/>, briefly discusses Neuenfels's conception of creating a fictitious meeting between the two great composers who never met in life. The libretto interweaves texts from Schubert and Schumann to provide the basis of a relationship between the two men, which pivots around their ideas regarding the Lied, for which both composers are justly famous.

In his article "**How to View 26,000 Operas at Once**" (*The New York Times*, July 31), Anthony Tommasini discusses the new opera database from the Metropolitan Opera archives (1883 to this year). Using the site's search capability to type in "Schubert" one can find a list of 160 concerts, galas, benefits, tours, and special performances with Schubert on the program. It is a fascinating glimpse at the evolution of the Met's own programming – from weekly concert galas to 'opera only' seasons. Equally interesting in the Met's programming history is the evolution of Schubert works from the omnipresent Ave Maria and Rosamunde Overture and sprawling concerts with a Schubert Lied or two sung by the great voices of the day to full-fledged Lieder evenings. After the 1960s, there were far fewer Schubert-included programs at the Met but there began evenings of concerts by great singers that bespoke a deeper awareness of Lieder as well as more diverse Schubert offerings from the Metropolitan Opera orchestra and its spin-off Met Chamber Ensemble. To go directly to the Met Archives database, type: <<http://66.187.153.86/archives/frame.htm>>.

Note an online compilation of Schubert-related news, reviews and articles at **Surfwax.com** <http://news.surfwax.com/music/files/Schubert_music.html>. The list is updated daily and is truly international - from Malaysia to Missoula – with coverage from local newspapers right up to the BBC. The archives go back only about one year.

Also note **Brian Black**'s paper "Aspects of Romanticism in Schubert's Early Sonata Forms" presented at the American Musicological Society October 2005 meeting in Washington, DC, and at the Society for Music Theory November 2005 annual meeting in Boston.

This past July the devoted French Schubertian **Christophe Le Gall** inaugurated a "reality series" of interviews called *Entretiens d'outre temps* with "Franz Schubert en direct de Vienne." If you wish to be seriously entertained in French, go to <www.resmusica.com/aff_articles.php3?num_art=1532>. Le Gall has been online since 2000 with his own notable classical music web sites, which are <www.resmusica.net> and <www.ResMusica.com>.

Interested readers who may want to enter the web site of the **Société Franz-Schubert** will find themselves shut out. No one has been able to explain why access has been denied to the Internet site of French Schubertians. The SSUSA would appreciate any information from readers. The URL is <www.franz-schubert.org/>.

In May 2005, for the fourth time the small Austrian city of Steyr held its own six-day **International Schubert Festival** to celebrate the music of one of its greatest visitors. Schubert visited Steyr several times in the company of one of the city's famous native sons, the opera singer Johann Michael Vogl. The city is justly proud of the fact that the great Piano Quintet in A (The Trout, D667) was commissioned, composed, and first performed in Steyr. The noted Schubert scholar **Dr. Walburga Litschauer** made a presentation during the musical-literary evening "Schubert in the Opera World of His Time." Whether

there will be a 2006 festival is unknown. See <www.tourism-steyr.at/sommer/en/events_schubert.htm> and <www.schubertfestivalsteyr.at>.

The University of Music and Dramatic Arts Graz has announced its February 2006 International Competition titled “**Franz Schubert and the Music of Modern Times.**” There is an age limit, and the branches open for competitors are: 1) DUO for Voice and Piano (LIED); 2) TRIO for Piano, Violin and Violoncello; and 3) STRING QUARTET. For complete information and forms, go to: <www.kug.ac.at/schubert/index_2006_e.php>.

Update on *The Top Ten People of the Millennium Sing Their Favorite Schubert Lieder* about which we reported in the last newsletter: Having left Off-Off-Broadway after a remarkable critical reception this past January, playwright-director Alec Duffy recreated his production in a three-day run in September at Chicago’s Victory Gardens Theater as part of a commemoration of Albert Einstein's revolutionary 1905 papers. The overall event was co-sponsored by the Illinois Humanities Council and Chicago’s Goethe Institute. The production features Einstein played by a walrus-mustached actress speaking in a light German accent. Some cast members “sing” Schubert’s Lieder. To see where the production goes next, visit <www.toptenpeople.com>.

PUBLICATIONS

Recently published is the American edition of **Conrad Wilson**, *Notes on Schubert: 20 Crucial Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005). Wilson, former program editor of the Edinburgh International Festival, music critic, and contributor to the *New Grove*, has written succinct and intelligent essays in a small book of commentary of 130 pages that include listening and reading lists as well as a very short glossary. Each essay approximates the length of a major program note, with citations to scholarly publications about Schubert and the work discussed. The book’s format is chronological in which Wilson notes his favorite performers and recordings for each work. Twenty selections are obviously too few for a devoted Schubertian, however, Wilson writes with authority and sensitivity.

Note a recent article by **James William Sobaskie**, “The ‘Problem’ of Schubert’s String Quintet,” in *Nineteenth-Century Music Review*, Vol. 2, Issue No. 1, 2005, pp. 57-92.

For those interested in acquiring the **Bärenreiter Urtext Edition** of Schubert’s Lieder, a complete list of contents and editions can be viewed at <www.baerenreiter.com/html/schubert-lieder>.

Complete study scores for four of Schubert’s operas are available from **Musikproduktion Juergen Hoeflich** in Munich. Each score includes an informative preface in German and English about the composer, the work, and performance material. To date, the Schubert entries are: *Alfonso und Estrella*, *Die Zauberharfe*, *Die Zwillingsbrüder*, and *Fierrabras*. In preparation are *Des Teufels Lustschloss*, *Fernando*, and *Der Vierjährige Posten*. See <www.musikmph.de>.

In the Spring 2005 *American Brahms Society Newsletter* there is a mention of the AMS Southern Chapter meeting (February) at which **Valerie Goertzen** (Loyola University, New Orleans) presented “Brahms’s Readings of Schubert’s Ländler.”

October saw the publication of *The Book of Lieder: The Original Text of 1000 Songs*, selected and translated by Richard Stokes (Faber, 2005). Ian Bostridge wrote an interesting Schubert-centered article “Gripped By Song” (*The Guardian*, October 1, 2005) in conjunction with the book’s news release.

NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

The Phantom Narrator Revealed: Performing the Final Song of Schubert's *Winterreise*

Schubert's *Winterreise* is the wintriest of journeys. It begins, in "Gute Nacht," with the persona telling us that the good days are over and winter has come. His girl no longer speaks of love, and her mother no longer mentions marriage. It is cold and dark, and he must journey, with no foreseeable destination, and at a time of year not of his choice. This is the emotional high point of the cycle: It is all down hill from here.

Throughout these twenty-four songs, our down-trodden young man reports to us the weather, his surroundings, his memories, his dreams, some sounds, and more sights; but until the final song, the only companions we hear of are a solitary crow (#15) and a few inhospitable dogs (#17). The penultimate song, "Die Nebensonnen," suggests that the traveler's hold on reality is weakening. Schubert kept Müller's ordering of the twenty-four poems intact except for the transposition of "Die Nebensonnen" with its predecessor, "Mut!" (#22), perhaps because the mental shakiness elides so well with the final song. Our traveler sees three suns. He also had three suns, he tells us, two of which have now gone down. Some suggest those two are the eyes of his beloved. Some suggest the three are love, faith, and hope. I have always taken them to be his happiness, his sanity, and his life. Trembling, we come to the final song, "Der Leiermann."

If there is such a thing as perfection in a work of art, this song is one of its few manifestations. The open fifths in the base of the piano would have suggested all by themselves the extremity of his emptiness – a persuasive, non-resolving resolution for this lengthy and burdensome journey; but the grace notes that spoil their perfection add to the pervasive emptiness a twinge of neurosis. No matter how many times I encounter them, I always find them shocking, unnerving. But the shock comes from more than their assault on 19th century tonality: They introduce, for the first time in the whole seventy-five-minute progression, another human being – not once, but twice. One of these two newcomers is obvious: He is a hurdy-gurdy player, as poor and as solitary as our traveler, whose droning instrument dominates the work of the piano accompaniment. His music has already become our music, even before the persona asks that it become his music as well. The sight, the sound, and the concomitant pathos create just the kind of restless resting place this cycle requires.

The other intrusive newcomer at the beginning of "Der Leiermann" is quite hidden. There is no one new to see but rather a new voice to hear. For twenty-three poems, the traveler has served as our narrator; but for the first four of the five stanzas of "Der Leiermann," we are listening to a new voice, a faceless, omniscient narrative voice, who relates the scene for us and changes our relationship to it. If this voice is still our main character's voice, his voice has changed. Perhaps this represents the sound of a man who, as suggested by "Die Nebensonnen," has lost his mind. There is a new numbness here that could be the result of just that kind of loss of affect. But it could also be a new character, a narrator, separate from action, who gives us a new sense of distance, a new perspective from which to survey the scene. Our hero is no longer capable of sane description; someone else has to help us finish the journey. If that is the case, then the re-introduction of the traveler's voice in the final stanza gives us yet another new voice – the voice of the insane, the beaten, the pathetic, the person in total collapse. It comes, if not out of "nowhere," out of a cognitive world entirely different from the rational, detailed, portrait-painting voice of the first four stanzas. Here, in Robert Jordan's translation, is the end of "Die Nebensonnen" and the first four stanzas of "Der Leiermann":

Ah, you are not my suns!
Look others in the face!
Lately indeed I too had three;
now the two best have gone down.

If only the third would follow them!
I shall be better in the dark.

.....
Over there beyond the village stands a hurdy-gurdy man,
and with numb fingers he winds as best he can.
He staggers around, barefoot on the ice,
and his little plate always stays empty.
No one want to hear him, no one looks at him,
and the dogs growl around the old man.
And he lets it pass, lets everything be,
winds, and his hurdy-gurdy never stays still.

The final stanza brings back the traveler, his voice now shaken, betraying a mind no longer sound:

Strange old man, should I come with you?
Will you grind your hurdy-gurdy to my songs?

I have experimented with this interpretation in live performance, with stunning results. I have given a number of lieder recitals (as pianist) with my good friend Dr. Eric Meyers, a noted archaeologist and Biblical scholar. As amateurs, we attract audiences mostly consisting of our friends and colleagues at Duke University – perhaps 125 people for our presentation of *Winterreise*. I began the evening with a few minutes of oral program notes, which made my voice the narratorial voice for our duo. Here are some interesting facts about the poet, about the composition of the music (Schubert's last completed effort, which some say hastened his death), and, by they way, about the curiosity of the last song, in which a separate narrative voice appears for the only time in the whole cycle, for four of the last five stanzas. (You could almost hear some of the audience minds dismissively thinking, "Oh well, he's an English professor. He cares about those kinds of things.") And then the music. An uninterrupted hour and ten minutes of these extraordinary, sometimes searing, sometimes freezing songs, obviously requiring a maximum effort from both performers – but more obviously from the voice that had to engage directly in the struggles agonized by the words.

When we arrived at the beginning of the last song, you could feel the sense of near-exhaustion in the room. Everyone was "holding on" for one last song, after which the tension could be allowed to dissipate. Silence. Then the painful twinge of a grace note cracking the solidity of an open fifth in the left hand of the piano. After a burdensome wait, another adulterated open fifth. Then yet another, but this time accompanied by a "new voice" – a winding, aimless melody announced by the right hand, which ends on a note so dissonant with the left hand that it almost sounds like a mistake. And then the last three notes – the "mistake" – repeated, as if to say they were trying their best to resolve something, even though they failed. And then, with new energy, the right hand tries again, higher, to get *somewhere*, as the drone in the left hand continues. This time it manages to end on a note that joins the insistent tonality of the drone. Then it repeats its last three notes again, to show that by the second time around it had learned something.

And then the shocker. Over the continuing drone of the left hand, the audience heard a voice – a new voice, a foreign voice – a voice that was clearly *not* the voice to which they had been listening for more than an hour now. Here were Muller's words and Schubert's notes, surely enough; but Eric was standing there close-mouthed, silent. It took several highly charged moments for people to realize that the phantom narrative voice was emanating from the pianist. It shook the foundation of the concert-going experience. This was an intrusion. The evening's singer had been done in by "Die Nebensonnen" and had nothing more to say. The pianist's voice was cold, calculating, unmoved by the desultory details of the picture the text was painting. The keel was all too even. The empty fifths sounded even more emptied. The grace notes had nothing in them of grace.

By the end of the fourth stanza, everyone had become accustomed to the new voice. Tonally and textually, the first stanza had led us out and the second stanza led us back. The third stanza had led us out, and the fourth stanza led us back. After two such journeys with a new guide, the guide was no longer new. This was the new universe. Everyone – pulses still somewhat frazzled from the shock – had resigned themselves to the new sense of control. And then the fifth stanza. Another shock. Another new voice – as strange and foreign now as the phantom voice had been four stanzas earlier. As different as the second voice had been from the first, so different was the first voice, now contextualized by the second. Eric’s voice re-introduced our traveler, whose mind was now clearly unhinged. The final stanza invoked a pathetic response that left everyone undone, exhausted. He crescendoed and de-crescendoed on his last note, as required by Schubert, fading into despair, and the piano’s right hand made its final foray upwards, failed for the final time, and – after what seemed an endless wait – joined the empty fifth of the left hand and was silent.

George D. Gopen

George D. Gopen holds a law degree and a Ph.D. in English from Harvard University. Professor of the Practice of Rhetoric at Duke University, he teaches courses in advanced writing and the rhetorical analysis of poetry and music. He is an amateur pianist and singer.