

SCHUBERT IN POETRY

INTRODUCTION

Finding references in poetry to the composer Franz Schubert (1797-1828) was not an intentional effort on my part. Quite by accident I came upon a poem about Schubert on the Internet and out of curiosity I decided to search for more poems. I had no idea that I would find the quantity and variety of poets and poems. Nor did I expect that Schubert in poetry would be evident in the early 19th century, witness Alfred de Musset's 1839 poem "Jamais" – only eleven years after Schubert's death.¹ I found mention of Schubert in the 19th century American poet Sidney Lanier's 1876 poem "Clover" and in the Austrian playwright and poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal's "Zu Lebenden Bildern" (1893).

In opposition to European romanticism and naturalism from the 1880s into the early 20th century, with a burst of creative energy the avant-garde *modernismo* movement began in Latin America with the greatest influence upon it being from French symbolism. Some of the *modernismo* poets in Latin America wrote poems about Schubert: Rubén Darío (Nicaragua) "El País del Sol" (1893) – Darío is considered the founder of *modernismo*; Salvador Díaz Mirón (Mexico) "Música de Schubert" (1901); Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera (Mexico) "La Serenata de Schubert" (1888); and, Amado Nervo (Mexico): "Perlas Negras – XII" (1898).² Here, then, is more evidence of how far Schubert's reputation traveled from his Austrian homeland.

In establishing a timeline of the 20th century, following are some poets from the first three decades with the publication dates of their Schubert-related poems: Edward Arlington Robinson (ca. 1902); Mildred McNeal McSweeney (soon after 1910); Peter Altenberg (1916); and Benno Geiger (1919). As Schubert began to achieve wider posthumous notice in the 19th and 20th century and as his music was increasingly played and recorded, his name entered the realm of poetry. From the mid-20th century on, the upward curve of Schubert-related poems is steeper and expanding. This proliferation of Schubert poems leads to the expectation that Schubert would have found a place in surprisingly underrepresented 19th century German poetry - as far as I have found - that is to

¹ Musset's poetry is almost everywhere online. An analysis of the poet's motivation to write "Jamais!" is in Scott Messing, *Schubert in the European Imagination. Vol. 1: The Romantic and Victorian Eras*, University of Rochester Press, 2006, 109-112. In another project I just completed, on Schubert's *Winterreise* in art, I wrote: "As early as 1834, French music publishers published translations of the songs. In the mid-1830s, Schubert's songs were sung in Paris in public and privately in salons by the famed tenor Adolphe Nourrit (1802-1839), whose audience included Liszt, Chopin, Meyerbeer, Berlioz, Heine, and many other French and Polish notables, nobles, artists, poets, and musicians." Musset, former lover of George Sand who then became Chopin's companion, was very much part of that scene.

² "The Origin of Modernism in Latin America" at <<http://science.jrank.org/pages/10258/Modernism-Latin-America-Origin-Modernism-in-Latin-America.html>>. The Internet is rich in books and articles about *modernismo* in Latin America.

say, in the German-speaking areas of Europe. Schubert in German poetry should be a fruitful area of research. There are 139 authenticated artists in this database. Of the 139, thirty-three are dead and 107 are living, over a 178-year span during which these poets were born.

The poets' countries of origin in this anthology - almost all born in the 20th century (only seventeen have birth years in the 19th century) - are Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, England, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Israel, Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Poland, Russia, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, USA, Venezuela, and Wales. Knowing how popular Schubert has been in Japan opens up the possibility that his name and music may have been an inspiration to a Japanese poet.

I found that some poets make only a passing reference to Schubert. In some cases, his mention is not the central theme of the poems but is relevant within the poem's context. The poems with only a passing reference to Schubert have been included because the choice of the single mention of Schubert in a poem or an allusion to him or his compositions had some meaning for the poet and therefore has meaning for us and warrants inclusion in this anthology. Naming Schubert is possibly recognition of the poet's cultural allegiance to an icon of European music known worldwide as well as a message to the reader that this is a shared allegiance. In other poems, Schubert is obviously the great impetus for the poet's creation. The composer, or his music whether or not specifically cited, is the inspiration and appears to have played an important part in the poet's personal and creative life.

Until the advent of the Internet historically, those for whom poetry was a calling wrote poetry. For some writers poetry is a daily all-consuming activity and one way to make a living; for others poetry is written outside the hours of their workaday lives. Many poets are in academia as teachers of their language and literature.³ A recent but not unexpected phenomenon is the Internet-based free publication of poems at poetry-only web sites. Internet readers are encouraged to "express themselves" so that more poetry has found its way into cyberspace than might have existed in ink on paper only. For many first-time cyberpoets the Internet is the only place where they will find publication – without cost and with an almost guaranteed readership. Most of the poetry sites seem to be unmoderated so it appears that all submissions are welcome.

This inventory is unable to include all the poetry published online especially those without the poet's name which negates any attempt at authentication.

³ Being a poet was a specific place in society and one where a poet might even obtain recognition as his or her country's poet laureate. In the modern era we see more women reaching candidacy and being named poet laureate. Since its inception in 1937, the US has named eight women as poets laureate while the UK, after 341 years of males-only in the position, named its first woman poet laureate in 2009, and she appears in this inventory.

Many persons who submit their poems only to a poetry site use a pseudonym or tag that renders the poet essentially anonymous. Many of the poems are surprisingly good. There are many sites which accept poems written in English by contributors for whom English is not their first language. Unfortunately, those with poor English-language skills write much of this poetry. Citing Schubert's name somewhere in the title or the poem does not succeed in adding luster to an otherwise banal effort. The new cyberpoets are a widely varying population of the good, the bad and the indifferent thus rendering poetry on the Internet, as with much else there, a blessing and a curse. Those poets who were first published in print may have their poems published on a variety of poetry sites, including the sites of the magazines in which the poems appeared in print, or on sites maintained by national poetry collections, such as the Scottish Poetry Library.⁴

Those who make their living by teaching and writing poetry are often joined by others holding full-time non-academic jobs for which poetry promises little financial gain, few critical reviews in newspapers and literary journals, and few if any book sales. Yet, the love of poetry exists everywhere and those who write poetry are undaunted by the difficulty of publishing and reaching a readership. University presses and specialty poetry book publishers still exist and continue to find a book-buying public. Not knowing the sales numbers I cannot say what sort of impact the Internet has had on sales of these editions. Many of the poets who have written briefly or at length of Schubert achieved fame and honors during and after their lifetimes. Others are not, for want of a better word, 'practicing' poets but persons who write poetry as well as having a desire to express their deeply felt inclination toward Schubert in a poem.

I found the texts of many poems online (thanks to search engines) where I would formerly have had to spend hours at library shelves searching for Schubert in a poem.⁵ Happily, there are many reference works about poets and poetry around the world as well as scores of national poetry collections in substantial print editions, which prove that writing and reading poetry are still among the supreme human attributes of intellect, culture and language.

Because of the time and cost involved and possible difficulty in obtaining rights and permission to reproduce all the poems in their entirety - now in draft at 214 pages - I decided to opt for a simpler annotated inventory of poets with their life years and nationality provided along with the titles of their poems, the year created, and any known publication information. Several poems are only in their original language because no English translation is known to exist.

⁴ The Scottish Poetry Library is an Edinburgh-based public institution that collects and makes available Scottish poetry as well as poetry from around the world.

⁵ For close to a century we have (in print) *The Columbia Granger's Index to Poetry in Anthologies* (up to the current 13th edition in 2007), which provides title, first line, and last line indexes as well as subject and author indexes in 2,416 pages.

Some commentary is provided in the inventory entries in the form of a note about a Schubert reference, which may be useful to the reader new to the life of Schubert and new to the poet named. The annotations will, I trust, elucidate the direct references to Schubert; clarify an allusion to the composer or to his music; and explain historical circumstances and names from the past. While this is not a primer on poetry or a literary explication of a poem's meaning or the poet's intent the annotations should help the reader.

In many entries I reproduce the poem's line or lines about Schubert. I have tried to observe as fully as possible the American Fair Use doctrine so as to avoid copyright infringement, much as the recitation of phrases and lines from an author's book are used in a book review to allow an informed literary or scholarly discussion of the work under consideration. I urge the reader and researcher to avail themselves of the poem's complete text in the publications cited in order to appreciate fully the art of the poet.

Where a particular poem may find special favor with a reader, I leave further investigation to the reader as part of the continuing adventure into poetry. The Internet allows almost instant answers to satisfy one's curiosity and search for information. That most of the texts were available on the Internet is evidence of how rich a resource it has become for the art of poetry. Many of these poems are in existing print collections under the poet's name. I tried to identify at least two sources of a poem's text: online and in print, but web sites can disappear and a poem can be removed from an existing site.

That Schubert appears by name, or by the name of his composition, is sufficient to focus our notice and read the poem, and in reading the poem find a new poet or a new way of seeing Schubert, or understanding the pleasure his music has for someone else as well as for ourselves, or finding that Schubert had some impact on the poet's life. In the briefest of references, we are at one with the poem and with the poet. That is an experience to treasure.