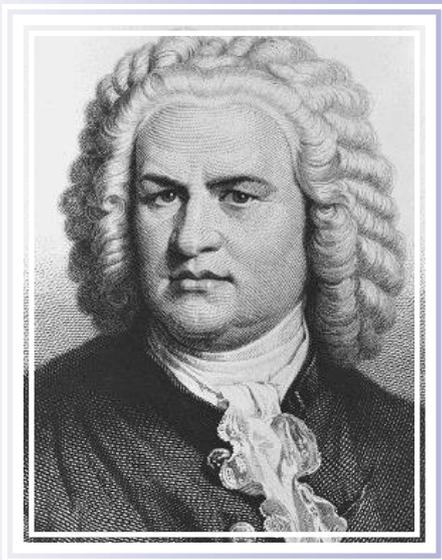




The Stories
of
Bach & Schubert



FRANZ SCHUBERT

with notebooking pages

by 
Homeschooling Downunder

Introduction

This ebook has been prepared to inspire young students as they study the life and works of two master composers.

It Includes:

- The life stories of two composers from *The World's Great Men of Music* by Harriet Browner 1922 (with some light editing).

She writes in her forward;

“As a honey-bee flutters from flower to flower, culling sweetness from many blossoms, so the compiler of such stories as these must gather facts from many sources--from biography, letters, journals and musical history. Then, impressed with the personality and individual achievement of each composer, the author has endeavored to present his life story.

While the aim has been to make the story-sketches interesting to young people.... Students of piano, violin or other instruments need to know how the great composers lived their lives. In every musical career ...there is a wealth of inspiration and practical guidance for the artist in any field. Through their struggles, sorrows and triumphs, divine melody and harmony came into being, which will bless the world for all time to come.”

- A Notebooking page

To further enhance this study I suggest you also check out [Classics for Kids](#). Here you will find online recording of some of the composers works plus activities.

Enjoy!

Johann Sebastian Bach

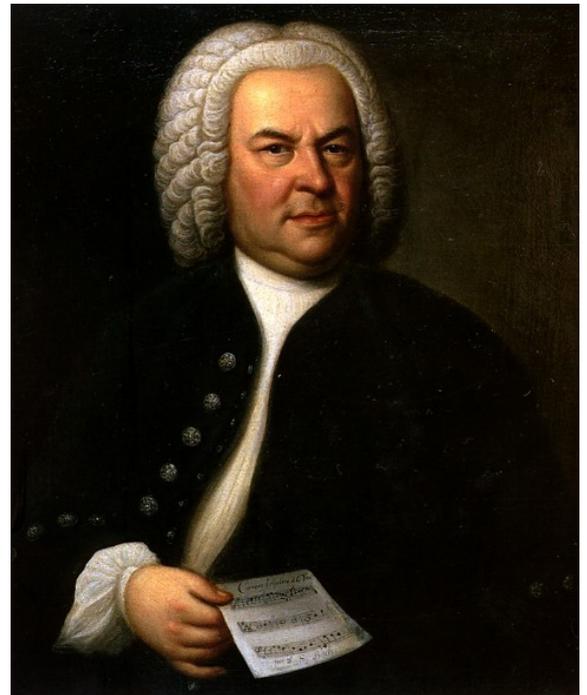
Born: Germany 1685

Died: 1750

Musical Period: Baroque

Famous Works:

- Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring
- Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor
- St Matthew Passion
- Brandenburg Concertos



His Life Story

Away back in 1685, almost three hundred and twenty five years ago, one of the greatest musicians of the world first saw the light, in the little town of Eisenach, nestling on the edge of the Thuringen forest. The long low-roofed cottage where little Johann Sebastian Bach was born, is still standing, and carefully preserved.

The name Bach belonged to a long race of musicians, who strove to elevate the growing art of music. For nearly two hundred years there had been organists and composers in the family; Sebastian's father, Johann Ambrosius Bach was organist of the Lutheran Church in Eisenach, and naturally a love of music was fostered in the home. It is no wonder that little Sebastian should have shown a fondness for music almost from infancy. But, beyond learning the violin from his father, he had not advanced very far in his studies, when, in his tenth year he lost both his parents and was taken care of by his brother Christoph, fourteen years older, a respectable musician and organist in a neighboring town. To give his little brother lessons on the clavier, and send him to the Lyceum to learn Latin, singing and other school subjects seemed to Christoph to include all that could be expected of him. That his small brother possessed musical genius of the highest or-

der, was an idea he could not grasp; or if he did, he repressed the boy with indifference and harsh treatment.

Little Sebastian suffered in silence from this coldness. Fortunately the force of his genius was too great to be crushed. He knew all the simple pieces by heart, which his brother set for his lessons, and he longed for bigger things. There was a book of manuscript music containing pieces by Buxtehude and Froberger, famous masters of the time, in the possession of Christoph. Sebastian greatly desired to play the pieces in that book, but his brother kept it under lock and key in his cupboard, or bookcase. One day the child mustered courage to ask permission to take the book for a little while. Instead of yielding to the boy's request Christoph became angry, told him not to imagine he could study such masters as Buxtehude and Froberger, but should be content to get the lessons assigned him.

The injustice of this refusal fired Sebastian with the determination to get possession of the coveted book at all costs. One moonlight night, long after every one had retired, he decided to put into execution a project he had dreamed of for some time. Creeping noiselessly down stairs he stood before the bookcase and sought the precious volume. There it was with the names of the various musicians printed in large letters on the back in his brother's handwriting. To get his small hands between the bars and draw the book outward took some time. But how to get it out. After much labor he found one bar weaker than the others, which could be bent. When at last the book was in his hands, he clasped it to his breast and hurried quickly back to his chamber. Placing the book on a table in front of the window, where the moonlight fell full upon it, he took pen and music paper and began copying out the pieces in the book.

This was but the beginning of nights of endless toil. For six months whenever there were moonlight nights, Sebastian was at the window working at his task with passionate eagerness. At last it was finished, and Sebastian in the joy of possessing it for his very own, crept into bed without the precaution of putting away all traces of his work. Poor boy, he had to pay dearly for his forgetfulness. As he lay sleeping, Christoph, thinking he heard sounds in his brother's room, came to seek the cause. His glance, as he entered the room, fell on the open books. There was no pity in his heart for all this devoted labor, only anger that he had been outwitted by his small brother. He took both books away and hid them in a place where Sebastian could never find them. But he did not reflect that the boy had the memory of all this beautiful music indelibly printed on his mind, which helped him to bear the bitter disappointment of the loss of his work.

When he was fifteen Sebastian left his brother's roof and entered the Latin school connected with the Church of St. Michael at Lüneburg. It was found he had a beautiful soprano voice, which placed him with the scholars who were chosen to sing in the church service in return for a free education. There were two church schools in Lüneburg, and the rivalry between them was so keen, that when the scholars sang in the streets during the winter months to collect money for their support, the routes for each had to be carefully marked out, to prevent collision.

Soon after he entered St. Michael's, Bach lost his beautiful soprano voice; his knowledge of violin and clavier, however, enabled him to keep his place in the school. The boy worked hard at his musical studies, giving his spare time to the study of the best composers. He began to realize that he cared more for the organ than for any other instrument; indeed his love for it became a passion. He was too poor to take lessons, for he was almost entirely self-dependent—a penniless scholar, living on the plainest of fare, yet determined to gain a knowledge of the music he longed for.

One of the great organists of the time was Johann Adam Reinken. When Sebastian learned that this master played the organ in St. Katharine's Church in Hamburg, he determined to walk the whole distance thither to hear him. Now Hamburg was called in those days the "Paradise of German music," and was twenty-five good English miles from the little town of Lüneburg, but what did that matter to the eager lad? Obstacles only fired him to strive the harder for what he desired to attain.

The great joy of listening to such a master made him forget the long tramp and all the weariness, and spurred him on to repeat the journey whenever he had saved a few shillings to pay for food and lodging. On one occasion he lingered a little longer in Hamburg than usual, until his funds were well-nigh exhausted, and before him was the long walk without any food. As he trudged along he came upon a small inn, from the open door of which came a delightful savory odor. He could not resist looking in through the window. At that instant a window above was thrown open and a couple of herrings' heads were tossed into the road. The herring is a favorite article of food in Germany and poor Sebastian was glad to pick up these bits to satisfy the cravings of hunger. What was his surprise on pulling the heads to pieces to find each one contained a Danish ducat. When he recovered from his astonishment, he entered the inn and made a good meal with part of the money; the rest ensured another visit to Hamburg.

After remaining three years in Lüneburg, Bach secured a post as violinist in the private band of Prince Johann Ernst of Saxe-Weimar; but this was only to fill the time till he could find a place to play the instrument he so loved. An opportunity soon came. The old Thuringian town Arnstadt had a new church and a fine new organ. The consistory of the church were looking for a capable organist and Bach's request to be allowed to try the instrument was readily granted.

As soon as they heard him play they offered him the post, with promise of increasing the salary by a contribution from the town funds. Bach thus found himself at the age of eighteen installed as organist at a salary of fifty florins, with thirty thalers in addition for board and lodging, equal, all in all, to less than fifty dollars. In those days this amount was considered a fair sum for a young player. On August 14, 1703, the young organist entered upon his duties, promising solemnly to be diligent and faithful to all requirements.

The requirements of the post fortunately left him plenty of leisure to study. Up to this time he had done very little composing, but now he set about teaching himself the art of composition.

The first thing he did was to take a number of concertos written for the violin by Vivaldi, and set them for the harpsichord. In this way he learned to express himself and to attain facility in putting his thoughts on paper without first playing them on an instrument. He worked alone in this way with no assistance from any one, and often studied till far into the night to perfect himself in this branch of his art.

From the very beginning, his playing on the new organ excited admiration, but his artistic temperament frequently threatened to be his undoing. For the young enthusiast was no sooner seated at the organ to conduct the church music than he forgot that the choir and congregation were depending on him and would begin to improvise at such length that the singing had to stop altogether, while the people listened in mute admiration. Of course there were many disputes between the new organist and the elders of the church, but they overlooked his vagaries because of his genius.

Yet he must have been a trial to that well-ordered body. Once he asked for a month's leave of absence to visit Lübeck, where the celebrated Buxtehude was playing the organ in the Marien Kirche during Advent. Lübeck was fifty miles from Arnstadt, but the courageous boy made the entire journey on foot. He enjoyed the music at Lübeck so much that he quite forgot his promise to return in one month until he had stayed three. His pockets being quite empty, he thought for the first time of returning to his post. Of course there was trouble on his return, but the authorities retained him in spite of all, for the esteem in which they held his gifts.

Bach soon began to find Arnstadt too small and narrow for his soaring desires. Besides, his fame was growing and his name becoming known in the larger, adjacent towns. When he was offered the post of organist at St. Blasius at Mühlhausen, near Eisenach, he accepted at once. He was told he might name his own salary. If Bach had been avaricious he could have asked a large sum, but he modestly named the small amount he had received at Arnstadt with the addition of certain articles of food which should be delivered at his door, gratis.

Bach's prospects were now so much improved that he thought he might make a home for himself. He had fallen in love with a cousin, Maria Bach, and they were married October 17, 1707.

The young organist only remained in Mühlhausen a year, for he received a more important offer. He was invited to play before Duke Wilhelm Ernst of Weimar, and hastened thither, hoping this might lead to an appointment at Court. He was not disappointed, for the Duke was so delighted with Bach's playing that he at once offered him the post of Court organist.

A wider outlook now opened for Sebastian Bach, who had all his young life struggled with poverty and privation. He was now able to give much time to

composition, and began to write those masterpieces for the organ which have placed his name on the highest pinnacle in the temple of music.

In his comfortable Weimar home the musician had the quiet and leisure that he needed to perfect his art on all sides, not only in composition but in organ and harpsichord playing. He felt that he had conquered all difficulties of both instruments, and one day boasted to a friend that he could play any piece, no matter how difficult, at sight, without a mistake. In order to test this statement the friend invited him to breakfast shortly after. On the harpsichord were several pieces of music, one of which, though apparently simple, was really very difficult. His host left the room to prepare the breakfast, while Bach began to try over the music. All went well until he came to the difficult piece which he began quite boldly but stuck in the middle. It went no better after several attempts. As his friend entered, bringing the breakfast, Bach exclaimed:--"You are right. One cannot play everything perfectly at sight,--it is impossible!"

Duke Wilhelm Ernst, in 1714, raised him to the position of Head-Concert Master, a position which offered added privileges. Every autumn he used his annual vacation in traveling to the principal towns to give performances on organ and clavier. By such means he gained a great reputation both as player and composer.

On one of these tours he arrived in Dresden in time to learn of a French player who had just come to town. Jean Marchand had won a great reputation in France, where he was organist to the King at Versailles, and regarded as the most fashionable musician of the day. All this had made him very conceited and overbearing. Every one was discussing the Frenchman's wonderful playing and it was whispered he had been offered an appointment in Dresden.

The friends of Bach proposed that he should engage Marchand in a contest, to defend the musical honor of the German nation. Both musicians were willing; the King promised to attend.

The day fixed for the trial arrived; a brilliant company assembled. Bach made his appearance, and all was ready, but the adversary failed to come. After a considerable delay it was learned that Marchand had fled the city.

In 1717, on his return from Dresden, Bach was appointed Capellmeister to the young Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen. The Prince was an enthusiastic lover of music, and at Cöthen Bach led a happy, busy life. The Prince often journeyed to different towns to gratify his taste for music, and always took Bach with him. On one of these trips he was unable to receive the news that his wife had suddenly passed away, and was buried before he could return to Cöthen. This was a severe blow to the whole family.

Four years afterward, Bach married again, Anna Magdalena Wülkens was in every way suited for a musician's wife, and for her he composed many of the delightful dances which we now so greatly enjoy. He also wrote a number of books of studies for his wife and his sons, several of whom later became good musicians and composers.

Perhaps no man ever led a more crowded life, though outwardly a quiet one. He never had an idle moment. When not playing, composing or teaching, he would be found engraving music on copper, since that work was costly in those days. Or he would be manufacturing some kind of musical instrument. At least two are known to be of his invention.

Bach began to realize that the Cöthen post, while it gave him plenty of leisure for his work, did not give him the scope he needed for his art. The Prince had lately

married, and did not seem to care as much for music as before.

The wider opportunity which Bach sought came when he was appointed director of music in the churches of St. Thomas and St. Nicholas in Leipsic, and Cantor of the Thomas-Schule there. With the Leipsic period Bach entered the last stage of his career, for he retained this post for the rest of his life. He labored unceasingly, in spite of many obstacles and petty restrictions, to train the boys under his care, and raise the standard of musical efficiency in the Schule, as choirs of both churches were recruited from the scholars of the Thomas School.

During the twenty-seven years of life in Leipsic, Bach wrote some of his greatest works, such as the Oratorios of St. Matthew and St. John, and the Mass in B Minor. It was the Passion according to St. Matthew that Mendelssohn, about a hundred years later discovered, studied with so much zeal, and performed in Berlin, with so much devotion and success.

Bach always preferred a life of quiet and retirement; simplicity had ever been his chief characteristic. He was always very religious; his greatest works voice the noblest sentiments of exaltation.

Bach's modesty and retiring disposition is illustrated by the following little incident. Carl Philip Emmanuel, his third son, was cembalist in the royal orchestra of Frederick the Great. His Majesty was very fond of music and played the flute to some extent. He had several times sent messages to Bach by Philip Emmanuel, that he would like to see him. But Bach, intent on his work, ignored the royal favor, until he finally received an imperative command, which could not be disobeyed. He then, with his son Friedmann, set out for Potsdam.

The King was about to begin the evening's music when he learned that Bach had arrived. With a smile he turned to his musicians: "Gentlemen, old Bach has

come." Bach was sent for at once, without having time to change his traveling dress. His Majesty received him with great kindness and respect, and showed him through the palace, where he must try the Silbermann pianofortes, of which there were several. Bach improvised on each and the King gave a theme which he treated as a fantasia, to the astonishment of all. Frederick next asked him to play a six part fugue, and then Bach improvised one on a theme of his own. The King clapped his hands, exclaiming over and over, "Only one Bach! Only one Bach!" It was a great evening for the master, and one he never forgot.

Just after completing his great work, *The Art of Fugue*, Bach became totally blind, due no doubt, to the great strain he had always put upon his eyes, in not only writing his own music, but in copying out large works of the older masters. Notwithstanding this handicap he continued at work up to the very last. On the morning of the day on which he passed away, July 28, 1750, he suddenly regained his sight. A few hours later he became unconscious and passed in sleep.

Bach was laid to rest in the churchyard of St. John's at Leipsic, but no stone marks his resting place. Only the town library register tells that Johann Sebastian Bach, Musical Director and Singing Master of the St. Thomas School, was carried to his grave July 30, 1750.

But the memory of Bach is enduring, his fame immortal and the love his beautiful music inspires increases from year to year, wherever that music is known, all over the world.

FRANZ SCHUBERT

In the old Lichtenthal quarter of the city of Vienna, in the vicinity of the fortifications, there still stands an old house. It is evidently a public house, for there hangs the sign--"At the Red Crab." Beside this there is a marble tablet fastened above the doorway, which says that Franz Schubert was born in this house. At the right of his name is placed a lyre crowned with a star, and at the left a laurel wreath within which is placed the date, January 31, 1797.



FRANZ SCHUBERT

This then was the birthplace of the "most poetical composer who ever lived," as Liszt said of him; the man who created over six hundred songs, eight symphonies, operas, masses, chamber works and much beautiful piano music, and yet only lived to be thirty-one. It is almost unbelievable. Let us get a nearer view of this remarkable musician.

His father kept a school here; there were five children, four boys and a girl to provide for, and as there was nothing to depend on but the school-master's pay, it is easy to see the family was in poor circumstances, though the wife managed most carefully to make ends meet. They were a very devoted family altogether. Little Franz early showed a decided fondness for music, and tried to pick out bits of tunes of his own by ear on an old dilapidated piano the family possessed. He made friends with a young apprentice who took him sometimes to a piano warehouse in the city, where he was allowed to play his little tunes on a fine piano.

When Franz was seven he began to have music lessons at home, the father teaching him violin and his big brother Ignaz, the piano. Franz, in his eagerness to learn soon outstripped his home teachers, and told them he could go on alone. It was then decided he should go to the parish choir master, Holzer, to learn piano, violin, organ, singing and thorough bass. Soon Holzer was astonished at the boy's progress. "Whenever I begin to teach him anything I find he knows it already; I never had such a pupil before." By the time Franz was eleven, his voice had come out so well that he was given the place of head soprano in the parish

church, and played violin solos whenever they occurred in the service. He had even begun at home to compose and write down little piano pieces and songs. The parents considered that this remarkable talent should be cultivated further, if possible, in order that it might assist the slender purse of the family. There was a choir school, called the Convict, which trained its boys for the Imperial Chapel. If Franz could prove his ability to enter this school, he would receive free education in return for his services.

One fine morning in October, 1808, Franz in his homespun grey suit, spectacles shielding his bright, near-sighted eyes, his bushy black hair covered by an old fashioned hat, presented himself for examination by the Court Capellmeister and the singing master. The other boys jeered at his odd appearance, but he kept his good humour. When his turn came to sing, after solving all the problems given, his singing of the trial pieces was so astonishing that he was passed in at once, and ordered to put on the uniform of the imperial choristers.

The boy soon found plenty to fill his time and occupy his mind. There was the school orchestra, in which he was able to take a prominent place. There was daily practise, in which the boys learned the overtures and symphonies of Mozart and Haydn, and even Beethoven. He loved best Mozart's "Symphony in G minor," in which he said he heard angels singing. The leader of the orchestra was attracted to the lad's playing the very first day he entered, for he played with such precision and understanding. One day Franz mustered courage to talk a little to the big conductor, whose name was Spaun, and confessed he had composed quite a good deal already, adding he would like to do it every day, only he could not afford to get the music paper. Spaun received this burst of confidence with sympathy, and saw to it that the boy was, in the future, supplied with the necessary music paper.

Franz had soon made such progress on the violin, that he began to take the first violin parts and when the conductor was absent he was asked to lead the orchestra. Indeed by his deep earnestness and sincerity, as well as ability, the gifted boy had become a power in the school.

When he went home to see his people, which could only be on Sundays and holidays, it was a happy reunion for all. If he brought home a new string quartet, the father would get out his 'cello, Ignaz and Ferdinand would take first and second violins and the young composer the viola. After it had been played through, then all the players discussed it and offered their criticism. Indeed Franz was composing at such an astonishing rate, that it was difficult to keep him supplied with

music paper. One of his works of this time was a fantasia for four hands, in twelve movements. Then came a first attempt at song writing, a long affair which also contained twelve movements, and was in melancholy mood.

Five years the boy Franz Schubert remained at the Convict School and as he had decided to give himself entirely to music, there was no reason for his remaining longer in the school. At the end of the year 1813, he left, and his departure was celebrated by the composition of his first Symphony, in honor of Dr. Lang, the musical director. The lad, now seventeen, stood at the beginning of his career; he was full of hope and energy, and determined to follow in the footsteps of the great masters of music. Of all his compositions so far produced, his songs seemed to be the most spontaneous. He probably did not guess that he was to open up new paths in this field.

Hardly had he left the school when he was drafted for the army. This meant several years of virtual captivity, for conscription could not be avoided. The only other thing he could do was to return home and become a teacher in his father's school. He chose the lesser evil and qualified at once to become his father's assistant, which would also assure him a certain amount of leisure. We can imagine him installed as teacher of the infant class, and realize how distasteful was the daily round of school work, and how he longed to have it over, that he might put on paper all the lovely themes that had come to him through the school day. Other bright spots were the happy hours he spent with the Grob family, who lived also in the district of Lichtenthal.

The family consisted of a mother, a son and daughter. They were all musical. Therese Grob had a fine voice and she enjoyed the songs Schubert brought her to sing, while her brother Heinrich could play both piano and 'cello. Many evenings filled with music were passed by the young people. His friends at the Convict too, welcomed each new piece he wrote. Nor did he forget his old master Holzer, the organist of the little church where the composer himself regularly attended.

During 1814, Schubert composed his first mass, which was performed October 16. It excited so much interest that it was repeated ten days later at the Augustine church. Franz conducted, the choir was led by Holzer, Ferdinand sat at the organ, and Therese sang the soprano solos. In the audience sat old Salieri, Court Capellmeister of Vienna, with whom Beethoven had studied. Salieri praised Schubert for his work, and said that he should become his pupil. He kept his word and gave the young composer daily lessons for some time. The father was

so proud and happy that he bought a five octave piano for his boy, to celebrate the event.

Schubert added many compositions to his list this year, among them seventeen songs, including "Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel." His acquaintance with the poet Johann Mayrhofer, with whom he soon became intimate, was of benefit to both. The poet produced verses that his friend might set to music. The following year, 1815, he wrote a hundred and thirty-seven songs, to say nothing of six operas, and much music for church and piano. Twenty-nine of these songs were written in the month of August. One day in August eight songs were created; on another day seven. Some of the songs were quite long, making between twenty and thirty pages when printed.

A new friend came into Schubert's life the next year. His name was Franz Schober, and he intended entering the University in Vienna. Being a great lover of music and also familiar with some of Schubert's manuscript songs, he lost no time, on arriving in Vienna, in seeking out the composer. He found the young musician at his desk very busily writing. School work was over for the day, and he could compose in peace. The two young men became friends at once, for they felt the sympathetic bond between them. They were soon talking as though they had always known each other. In a few words Schubert told his new friend how he was situated at home, and how he disliked the daily drudgery of school teaching. On hearing of these trials Schober suggested they should make a home together, which arrangement would free the composer from the grinding life he was living and enable him to give his whole time to his art. The proposal delighted Franz, and the father willingly gave his consent. And so it came about that the composer was free at last, and took up his abode at his friend's lodgings. He insisted on giving him musical instruction, to make some return for all his kindness, though this did not last long, owing to the dislike Franz always had for teaching of any sort.

Schubert, at the age of twenty-four, had composed a great quantity of music, but none of it had as yet been published. He was almost unknown, and publishers were unwilling to undertake issuing the work of an unknown man. When his songs were performed by good artists, as had been done a number of times, they won instant recognition and success. Seeing that the publishers were unwilling to print the work of an unknown musician, two of Schubert's friends undertook to publish the "Erlking," one of his first songs, at their own risk. At the Sonnleithner mansion, where musicals were regularly held, the "Erlking" had been much ap-

plauded, and when it was decided to have it published, the decision was announced. A hundred copies were at once subscribed for, and with this encouragement the engraving of the "Erlking" and "Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel" was forthwith begun.

The pieces were sold by the music publishers on commission. The plan succeeded beyond expectation, so that other songs were issued in the same way, until, when seven had appeared the publishers were willing to risk the engraving of other songs themselves. Before all this had taken place, Johann Vogl, an admired opera singer in Vienna at the time, had learned Schubert's "Erlking," and had sung it in March, 1821, at a public concert patronized by royalty. The song was received with storms of applause. Schober, who knew the singer, constantly talked to him about the gifts of his friend and begged him to come and see Schubert. At last one day he consented. They found the composer hard at work as usual, music sheets covering the floor as well as the table and chair. Vogl, used to the highest society, made himself quite at home and did his best to put Schubert at his ease, but the composer remained shy and confused. The singer began looking over some manuscripts. When he left he shook Schubert's hand warmly, remarking; "There is stuff in you, but you squander your fine thoughts instead of making the most of them."

Vogl had been much impressed by what he had seen that day, and repeated his visit. Before long the two were close friends. Schubert wrote to his brother: "When Vogl sings and I accompany him, we seem for the moment to be one." Vogl wrote of Schubert's songs that they were "truly divine inspirations."

Schubert's residence with his friend Schober only lasted six months, for Schober's brother came to live with him, and the composer had to shift for himself. Teaching was exceedingly distasteful to him, yet as his music did not bring in anything for years after he left home, he had to find some means of making a living. In these straits he accepted a position as music teacher in the family of Count Johann Esterházy. This meant that he must live with the family in their Vienna home in winter, and go with them to their country seat in the summer. The change from the free life he had enjoyed with his friends who idolized him and his beautiful music, to the etiquette of aristocratic life, was great. But there were many comforts amid his new surroundings; the family was musical, the duties were not heavy, and so Schubert was not unhappy.

At the Esterházy country estate of Zelész, he heard many Hungarian melodies sung or played by the gipsies, or by servants in the castle. He has employed some

of these tunes in his first set of Valses. In his present position he had much leisure for composition. Indeed Franz Schubert's whole life was spent in giving out the vast treasures of melody with which he had been so richly endowed. These flowed from his pen in a constant stream, one beautiful work after another. He wrote them down wherever he happened to be and when a scrap of paper could be had. The exquisite song "Hark, Hark the Lark" was jotted down on the back of a bill of fare, in a beer garden. The beautiful works which he produced day after day brought him little or no money, perhaps because he was so modest and retiring, modestly undervaluing everything he did. He had no desire to push himself, but wrote because impelled to by the urge within. So little did he sometimes value his work that a fine composition would be tucked away somewhere and quite forgotten. His physical strength was not robust enough to stand the strain of constant composition. Then too, when funds were very low, as they often were, he took poor lodgings, and denied himself the necessary nourishing food. If he could have had a dear companion to look after his material needs and share his aims and aspirations, his earthly life might have been prolonged for many a year. With no one to advise him, and often pressed with hunger and poverty, he was induced to sell the copyrights of twelve of his best songs, including the "Erlking" and the "Wanderer," for a sum equal to about four hundred dollars. It is said the publishers made on the "Wanderer" alone, up to the year 1861, a sum of about five thousand five hundred dollars. It is true that "everything he touched turned to music," as Schumann once said of him. The hours of sleep were more and more curtailed, for he wrote late at night and rose early the next day. It is even said he slept in his spectacles, to save the trouble and time of putting them on in the morning.

In Schubert's boyhood, the music of Mozart influenced him most. This is seen in his earlier compositions. Beethoven was a great master to him then, but as time went on the spell of his music always grew stronger. In 1822, he wrote and published a set of variations on a French air, and dedicated them to Beethoven. He greatly desired to present them in person to the master he adored, but was too shy to go alone. Diabelli, the publisher, finally went with him. Beethoven was courteous but formal, pushing paper and pencil toward his guest, as he was totally deaf. Schubert was too shy to write a single word. However he produced his Variations. Beethoven seemed pleased with the dedication, and looked through the music. Soon he found something in it he did not approve of and pointed it out. The young author, losing his presence of mind, fled from the house. But Beethoven really liked the music and often played it to his nephew.

Five years later, during his last illness, a collection of some sixty of Schubert's songs was placed in his hands. He turned them over and over with amazement and delight. "Truly Schubert has the divine fire," he exclaimed. He wanted to see the composer of such beautiful music. Schubert came and was allowed to have a talk with him first, before other friends who were waiting. When Schubert paid another visit to the bedside of the master, it was almost the end of his life, though he could recognize all who stood about him. Overcome with emotion, Schubert left the room.

A couple of weeks after this Schubert was one of the torch bearers who accompanied the great master to the last resting place. Little did the young man of thirty dream that he would soon follow after. His life at this time was full of disappointments. He had always longed to write for the lyric stage. He composed numerous operas; but they were always rejected, for one reason or another. The last, "Fierabras," which was on the point of being produced, was finally given up. The composer became very dejected, and believed himself to be the most unfortunate, the most miserable being on earth. But, fortunately for Schubert, his cheerfulness again asserted itself and the stream of production resumed its flow. With his temperament, at one moment he would be utterly despairing, the next his troubles would seem to be forgotten, and he would be writing a song, a symphony or a sonata. At all events, constant work filled his days. The last year of his life was productive of some of his finest works.

About the end of October, 1828, he began to show signs of a serious breakdown. He was living at the home of his brother Ferdinand, in one of the suburbs of the city. Although he revived a little during the early part of November, so that he could resume walks in the neighbourhood, the weakness increased, and eleven days passed without food or drink. Lingered till the nineteenth of November, he passed peacefully away, still in his early manhood. The old father, the schoolmaster at the old home, hoped to have his son buried in the little cemetery near by. But Ferdinand knew his brother's wish, to be placed near Beethoven in Währinger Cemetery. The monument, erected by his friends and admirers the following year, bears, above the name, this inscription: "Music has here entombed a rich treasure, but much fairer hopes."



Composer Notes

