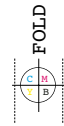


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One of the song's many admirers was Sylvester Paumgartner, a resident of the village of Steyr in Upper Austria, some 90 miles from Vienna. As an assistant manager of the local mines and an amateur cellist, Paumgartner had both the desire and the means to host musical gatherings in his residence. In the summer of 1819, Schubert, accompanied by an older friend, the singer Johann Michael Vogl, vacationed in Steyr. Also present was Albert Stadler, whom Schubert had known since he was a boy at the Imperial and Royal Court Seminary in Vienna. Both Vogl and Stadler were natives of the region. Vogl, having maintained his connections with the locals, helped Schubert to be assimilated quickly into life in Steyr, and specifically, into several prominent households, including Paumgartner's.

This was a happy time for the composer. That region of Upper Austria was astonishingly beautiful, his company was good, his health appeared unimpaired, he was able to compose (including a short birthday cantata for Vogl, first performed on 10 August), and there were many enthusiastic listeners and amateur performers close at hand. Schubert and Vogl stayed at the house of Albert

Schnellman, a lawyer with eight attractive daughters. They also enjoyed the hospitality of a merchant named Josef von Koller, whose daughter Josefine, as we are told by Schubert, was pretty, played the piano well, and sang several of his songs.

It probably was during this summer holiday that Paumgartner approached Schubert about composing a new chamber work, which was to incorporate the melody from *Die Forelle*. Another stipulation was that the new work should copy both the form and the instrumentation of a work by Johann Nepomuk Hummel, which Paumgartner and his friends are likely to have played at home in Steyr. There is some disagreement as to which of Hummel's works this might be, but based on Stadler's later reference to a 'Hummel Quintet, *recte* Septet' it is very possible that the work in question was Hummel's still-popular Septet in D minor, composed in 1816, which also had been published in a quintet version for violin, viola, cello, double bass and piano.

We do not know whether Schubert's so-called 'Trout' Quintet was begun that summer in Steyr, later in the autumn upon his return to Vienna, or even several years later. (Schubert

Although 1827 was the last full year remaining to him before his death, it was a banner year for Franz Schubert, as it saw not only the completion of the imposing song-cycle *Winterreise* but also two sets of piano impromptus (D.899 and D.935), and the two full-length piano trios heard here. For many music-lovers of the era, Schubert's name – if they recognized it at all – was associated with songs.

For the most part, his purely instrumental works received far less exposure. Indeed, during the first months of 1827, as Beethoven became mortally ill, his friend and early biographer Anton Schindler brought him a stack of Schubert's vocal works. This possibly was Beethoven's first exposure to Schubert's music. The elder composer was impressed with both the quantity and the quality of what he was shown, and commented to Schindler that Schubert would make a big stir in the world – a statement very similar to what Mozart had said about the young Beethoven several decades earlier. If Beethoven had not died in March, it is tempting to imagine how he might have reacted to Schubert's chamber music, to say nothing of his symphonies. The elder

composer might have done much to promote Schubert's career.

It is not hard to understand why Schubert found himself in the position of being known chiefly as a composer of songs. It would be many decades before music was disseminated via radio or sound recordings, and so actual performances were of paramount importance in building a composer's reputation. Some of these performances would be given by professional musicians in formal or semi-formal environments such as concert halls and salons. Not everyone had access to these venues, however. Amateur musicians could fill that gap. They played or sang at home, either alone, or with (or for) friends and family, and so excessively difficult music had less financial value for publishers, as did music calling for instruments that might not be readily available. Songs were within the reach of anyone with a voice and (usually) a piano.

Schubert's written exchanges with publishers concerning his E flat Piano Trio illustrate this dilemma. Following successful performances of this work, he wrote to Schott's firm in

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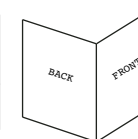
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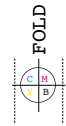


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Mainz and set a price of 100 florins for the trio, plus 60 florins for the D.935 Impromptus and a five-part choral setting. Schott replied that they had no immediate use for the trio, as they recently had published several other works in that genre. Schubert sent the trio to H. A. Probst, a Leipzig-based publisher, who accepted it, but offered only 60 florins for it, in spite of Schubert's protests. 'As a rule,' wrote Probst, 'a trio is only a prestige piece, and only very rarely is capable of bringing in much money.' Be that as it may, the E flat Trio was the sole work of Schubert's to be published abroad during his lifetime.

Earlier piano trios, including even those by Haydn and Mozart, tended to place the piano in the spotlight, with the violin and cello playing more supplementary or subsidiary roles. It was with Beethoven that the piano trio grew up. In his mature trios, such as the 'Archduke', the three musicians are on an equal footing. As a teenager – just after the appearance of Beethoven's 'Archduke,' as a matter of fact – Schubert tried his hand at the genre. (The result was the single-movement Piano Trio in B flat, lost until 1922, which appears on the second CD.) It is uncertain why he did not return to piano trios until almost

the end of his life, when he often was plagued by the secondary manifestations of syphilis, including frequent and debilitating headaches, and possibly also by depression.

The Trio in B flat was the first to be composed, in Vienna during the waning months of 1827, after the composer had spent part of the summer on a holiday in a village outside of Vienna. The work was first heard at a private occasion – a party celebrating the engagement of Schubert's friend Joseph von Spaun. The performers, all of them professionals, also were Schubert's friends: pianist Karl Maria von Bocklet, violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh and cellist Josef Linke. (It is possible that the impetus for these two trios was Schubert's acquaintance with these three men.) The trio was not published until several years after the composer's death, however.

The E flat Trio ('one of the great masterpieces of the trio repertoire,' according to biographer Brian Newbould, and his is far from a minority opinion) was composed during the month of November, and was dedicated to 'all who find pleasure in it'. The second movement's appeal is such that it has been used in the soundtracks of at least two films: Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* in 1975, and Tony

Scott's *The Hunger* in 1983, where it is played by two chic vampires (Catherine Deneuve and David Bowie) and a young pupil!

Schubert's inspiration for this movement came at a house concert, where a Swedish tenor named Isak Albert Berg sang 'Se solen sjunker' (The sun is setting), a folk-song native to his country. Several facets of the song's melody were incorporated into the movement's opening melody, including a repeated falling octave figure, which corresponds to the words 'Farval, farval' (Farewell, farewell) in the original song. Another interesting feature of this work is its length: prior to 1827, no other piano trio had been so long. When he sent the manuscript to Probst, Schubert requested two 50-bar cuts in the final movement's development section. In recent years, however, some performers have elected to return to the composer's original manuscript, thereby rendering Schubert's so-called 'heavenly lengths' (viz. the 'Great' C major Symphony) even more heavenly!

The solitary 'Notturmo' dates from this same period, and in fact, may have been an early attempt at a slow movement for the B-flat Trio. Newbould finds this work more interesting for its several anticipations of the

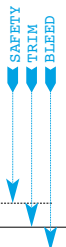
slow movement of Schubert's C major String Quintet, D.956, than for its intrinsic musical worth.

Although Schubert never wrote an actual concerto, he flirted with the genre in his Adagio and Rondo Concertante. It was composed in October 1816, possibly for the piano-playing brother of Therese Grob, his erstwhile inamorata, whom at one time he had hoped to marry.

In 1817, Schubert composed a song called *Die Forelle* ('The Trout') to a text by an 18th-century poet named Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart (no relation, apparently). The song describes the happy abandon of a trout swimming in a clear stream. A fisherman then appears. At first, he is unsuccessful in catching the trout, but then, becoming impatient, he muddies the stream, and the trout is quickly hooked and reeled in, to the chagrin of the narrator. (It is there that Schubert's song ends, but Schubart's poem continues for two more stanzas to deliver a moral: girls, enjoy your youth, but beware of seducers and their 'rods'.) This proved to be one of Schubert's most popular songs, and it was published during his lifetime.



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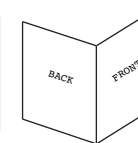
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