

ACCOMPANYING SCHUBERT'S *DER LINDENBAUM*

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This article first appeared in *Piano Journal* 18/52, February 1997, pp. 15-21. Here it is slightly revised and includes, at the end of the article, a photograph of the original tree, which fell in 1912, and a beautiful colour photograph of the replacement tree.

Piano Journal is published by the European Piano Teachers Association.

This web version is dated 25 April 2000, revised 12 August 2005.

Every solo pianist is likely to be asked occasionally to accompany a singer. Accompaniment is an art in itself, for which good advice is readily available.¹ In this article I will look closely at just one song, Schubert's *Der Lindenbaum*. Even by Schubert's standards, this song is remarkable for the eloquence of its piano part, an eloquence which has not, however, been fully discussed in print to my knowledge.

Der Lindenbaum (The Linden [or Lime] Tree, D911/5 of 1827), from Schubert's *Winterreise* (Winter Journey) cycle, is one of his best-known songs. Ideally one would become familiar with all 24 songs of the cycle, but this one is often sung in isolation. For this purpose it is perhaps enough to know that the cycle tells of the snow-bound wanderings from his village of an outcast whose love has been rejected. The present song deals with his thoughts of the linden tree in the village square, where some of his happy moments had been spent. The accompanist, no less than the singer, must know the poem and the translation of every word.² These are given in Figure 1; the poet is Wilhelm Müller.

Figure 1. Poem and translation.

Der Lindenbaum	The Linden Tree
1. Am Brunnen vor dem Tore da steht ein Lindenbaum; ich träumt' in seinem Schatten so manchen süssen Traum.	By the well in front of the [village] gate there stands a linden tree; I dreamt in its shade many a sweet dream.
2. Ich schnitt in seine Rinde so manches liebe Wort; es zog in Freud' und Leide zu ihm mich immer fort.	I carved in its bark many a word of love; in joy and in sorrow it drew me ever to it.
3. Ich musst' auch heute wandern vorbei in tiefer Nacht, da hab' ich noch im Dunke die Augen zugemacht.	Once more today I had to wander past it in the dead of night, and even in the darkness I closed my eyes [rested and dreamt].

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| <p>4. Und seine Zweige rauschten,
als riefen sie mir zu:
komm her zu mir, Geselle,
hier find'st du deine Ruh'!</p> | <p>And its branches rustled
as if they were calling to me
'Come here to me, friend,
here you will find your rest.'</p> |
| <p>5. Die kalten Winde bliesen
mir grad' in's Angesicht,
der Hut flog mir vom Kopfe,
ich wendete mich nicht.</p> | <p>The cold winds blew
straight into my face,
my hat flew from my head,
but I did not turn around.</p> |
| <p>6. Nun bin ich manche Stunde
entfernt von jenem Ort,
und immer hör' ich's rauschen;
du fändest Ruhe dort!</p> | <p>Now I am many hours' journey
away from that place;
but still I hear the rustling:
You would find rest there!</p> |
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In the piano introduction Schubert, as in many of his songs, provides a concise representation of the poem's main idea. These eight bars are as marvellous an example as any of this use of the piano. On the evidence of Schubert's whole song output we can safely assume that every note takes part in the intended meaning, so we must keep the poem in the foreground of our mind as we study the passage. It can happen, especially in sight-reading, that we are not sure exactly what the composer had in mind in a given passage; in that case we should make a definite guess, so that our performance may be convincing - for it is far preferable to be convincingly wrong than unconvincing! In the present case we might arrive at the following understanding of the passage. (See Figure 2, in which I have put words to the music not necessarily to suggest a literal matching but just to convey the ideas.)

Figure 2. The prelude and its possible interpretation.

The image shows a musical score for the piano introduction of Schubert's 'Der Erlkönig'. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of eight bars. The tempo is marked 'Mässig'. The first bar is annotated with 'Leaves rustle' and '3 3' above the treble clef. The second bar is annotated with 'Listen!' and 'Rustling continues'. The third bar is annotated with 'Message unclear' and 'cresc.'. The fourth bar is annotated with 'Becoming clear . . .'. The fifth bar is annotated with 'Come to me!' and 'fp'. The sixth bar is annotated with '(Come to me!)' and 'PPP'. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'pp', 'fp', and 'PPP'. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

The first bar undoubtedly portrays the rustling of the tree's leaves, and that is where most commentators leave off. The second bar has two single notes; I believe they are a call to attention, saying 'Listen!' or 'Are you listening?', as the tree prepares to convey its message.³

Their character will then be gently penetrating, but certainly not abruptly assailing. Those two notes do not belong musically to the remainder of the passage according to normal phrase structure; if they are played as "just notes" they will probably sound like a meaningless interjection.

The rustling continues in bars 3 and 4, incorporating a more subdued echo of the attention-getting figure now in the bass. The rustling seems to stall in bar 5 with the same figure (on the submediant - a suitable harmony for a moment's hesitation) given three times in a row. That would be unusual in absolute music, but here it indicates the phase of transformation of the rustling, much as a conjuror places a cloth over the hat before pulling out a surprise. After the stalling, the rustling emerges in bar 6 with a changed figure and direction as the message is gradually clarified. In that process the music moves outward to the bass and treble as if to make a big gesture or to open its arms in welcome, and the thirds appear which will take part in the message.

Finally in bar 7 the message is revealed in all its clarity: 'Come to me!', or in German 'Komm zu mir'. The tree is beckoning because it would give the outcast rest, and the comforting intention is present in the character of the call. The figure is repeated *ppp* in bar 8 - here the pianist might think of the call coming from the distance, but it is still expressive and so should not have a timid or weak sound. Thus the vision in the prelude fades out as the song is about to begin.

The all-important figure bearing the message of beckoning, entreating or welcoming (bar 7) should be studied closely. First, its apparent dotted rhythm need not be understood according to its literal or text-book meaning, when the 32nd-notes would be too rushed for the context, but instead more likely as a triplet rhythm. Schubert had no literal notation for a triplet where one note covers two of the three divisions, and instead often used the dot as an indication to lengthen the note in accordance with the prevailing rhythm. This is a big subject and I cannot give all the evidence here. Compare bar 68 where the piano has triplets against the voice's dotted notation, and especially bar 75 which has the converse arrangement (Figure 3). It is understandable that Schubert would avoid the clumsiness of the spelled-out triplet notation seen in the Figure. The same approach might be taken to the notation in bar 2 and many other places in this and other Schubert pieces. In their recorded performance Lotte Lehmann accompanied by Paul Ulanowsky⁴ clearly accepted the interpretation of those rhythms throughout the song in the manner I have indicated. Gerald Moore,⁵ on the other hand, took the literal approach.

Figure 3. The triplet notation problem.

Likely performance:

Schubert's notation:

The image displays two versions of a musical score for a song. The top version, labeled 'Likely performance', shows a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics 'Stund - e' and 'Ru - he dort!'. The piano part features a prominent triplet figure in the right hand, marked with a '3' and a 'y' above it. The bottom version, labeled 'Schubert's notation', shows the same music but with different triplet markings, including a '3' and a 'y' below the notes in the piano part.

The notes of the beckoning figure include 'horn fifths', typical of a hunting-call, but clearly adapted here to a very different kind of call. The character of the call includes an element of longing, and this is typically portrayed by Schubert with a long note on the main beat followed by a small descending interval - thus literally "*long-ing*". It should be compared with its modified forms found later: the vocal part of bar 11 echoed in the following bar in the piano, as well as bars 37, 43 (see Figure 4), and the many parallel places. With all these recurrences it can fairly be called the song's main motive.

Figure 4. Recurrences of the song's main motive (from bars 7-8).

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Der Lindenbaum'. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into three sections, each with a boxed bar number indicating a recurrence of the main motive. The first section starts at bar 9 with the lyrics 'Am Brunnen vor dem Tore da steht ein Lindenbaum ich träumt'. The second section starts at bar 37 with the lyrics 'Und seine Zweige rauschten,'. The third section starts at bar 43 with the lyrics 'hier findest du deine Ruh!'. The piano accompaniment features a prominent figure of two beamed eighth notes, which is highlighted in each of the three sections. The piano part also includes a piano dynamic marking 'p' and a hairpin decrescendo.

The readily available Peters edition of *Winterreise* unfortunately has many mistakes.⁶ For example, in Schubert's autographs one sometimes has to look closely to distinguish a hairpin decrescendo from an accent.⁷ In bar 7 Peters printed a decrescendo instead of the accent which correctly appears in the *Neue Schubert Ausgabe* (Bärenreiter, 1979). This is important as it allows the proper full-hearted expression rather than a withdrawal.

We can now ask why it was a figure in double-notes which emerged from the tree's rustling to form its message, and which is often used later in the accompaniment. The answer may be that double-notes suggest two participants - here the outcast and the tree, or a hint of the outcast and his beloved who had been sitting there. The use of double-notes in such roles was to be developed fully by Chopin, for instance in his Barcarolle Op. 60 (1846).

I cannot prove that my view of *Der Lindenbaum's* prelude is close to what Schubert had in mind, but I offer it as a fair possibility, and it will be supported by later developments in bars 37-44. I have discussed the prelude at such length because of its extraordinary significance. How would you compose a piano phrase to portray a tree giving a specific message? You might think it impossible, yet that is what Schubert has done here - could any composer match it?

Let us move on now to the song itself. The simple tune of the first two verses speaks for itself - it has even been adopted as a folksong in German-speaking countries. The piano figure in bars 20 and 24 is probably derived from the attention-getting figure in bar 2, the dominant note preceded by a short upbeat reminding the wanderer, and the performers, to "keep listening" to the tree (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. A subsidiary motive and its recurrences.



For verses three and four the previous music is re-used, the first of these being in minor, after the minor rustling by the piano. With the fourth verse the major returns, and the piano gives a version of the beckoning motive - compare bar 37 with bar 7 (see again Figure 4). This return of the motive reflects the poem, for it is exactly here that the outcast once more hears the tree's beckoning, and so my earlier interpretation of this motive is supported.

The fifth verse is set in a declamatory rather than a lyrical style, providing a fine contrast. The harmony is contrasted too, but there is no modulation as it consists entirely of the augmented sixth and dominant seventh chords in E. The effect of the wind on the tree's leaves is portrayed in the piano part - in bars 46 and 48 some of the leaves are perhaps being blown off - yet again the message is gradually clarified and returns as before in bars 57 and 58. The *decrescendo* of bar 52 may have to be anticipated if the pianist is to avoid drowning the singer's low notes in the previous bar. Careful thought is needed for the fingering of the piano part in this verse.

There is now only a single verse remaining, yet Schubert wishes to give again the material of the earlier pairs of verses so as to attain a full ternary form (see Figure 6). His solution is simply to repeat the poem's last verse. The fermata just before this verse begins (bar 58) should not be overlooked - it conveys the expanse of time during the wanderer's travels to the distant place.

Figure 6. Ternary form of *Der Lindenbaum*.

Verses:	1-2	3-4	5	6-6
Material:	A	A	B	A
Keys:	E-E	e-E	E:V	E-E
Length:	24	20	14	24
Bars:	1-24	25-44	45-58	59-82

The accompaniment of this final verse is similar to that of verses three and four, but it is not the same. In the former verses, motion to a place is represented; in the latter it is not *motion* to a place but *residing* in the place. This difference is perhaps represented by the passing notes in the former accompaniment (for instance the $\text{F}\sharp$'s in bar 29 - see Figure 7) and their absence in the latter (compare bar 59), for passing notes may be taken as corresponding to motion and simple chord-lines to absence of motion. Further, the former figure aims for the third degree of the scale (G natural), while the latter aims for the fifth degree (B). Compared to the first degree as "home base", the third might be considered "en route" to the fifth as a "home away from home", again reflecting the text.

Figure 7. Accompaniment figures: (a) en route (b) having arrived.

The postlude, typically, shows a fading-out of the song's image (the *crescendo* of bar 5 replaced by the *decrescendo* of bar 80). It is otherwise analogous to the prelude, and so provides once more the song's synopsis. The last bar again has the poignant entreaty, but it is a muted one falling only a tone to the key-note, and of course on the tonic harmony rather than the dominant as in bars 7-8. The marking *dim* after *decresc* is typical of Schubert's endings, and is something of a puzzle, as both words are usually defined to mean 'becoming softer'. Here again a text-book definition, in this case of *dim*, is not necessarily appropriate: Schubert might have understood it to mean 'fading out' by whatever means are appropriate, including possibly a slowing down. Thus the song and the wanderer recede beyond the horizon.

A solo pianist can learn two lessons from the study of this song, apart from an appreciation of the song itself. The first lesson is that the close attention given to the accompaniment should carry over to solo pieces in which the melody is played by the top fingers of the right hand, as for example in Schubert's G-flat Impromptu D899/3. In such pieces the character is provided perhaps even more by the manner of playing the accompaniment than by the melody. Further, a single note on the piano can hardly swell in intensity, so it is the shaping of the accompanying notes in between the melody's notes which supplies this ingredient.

For the second lesson, we note that solo scores usually provide little clear indication of the composer's expressive intentions. The pianist must then decide upon the likely meaning unaided. In accompanying songs, however, one naturally takes into account the meaning of the poem. By studying a number of songs by a given composer and matching the music to the poem, one may build up an idea of the composer's expressive intentions in his or her use of the various musical resources. The ideas thus obtained can then sometimes be applied to the composer's solo music. Such applications might be the topic of a future article; here I have dealt with only one song, but what a song!

Endnotes:

1. Gerald Moore, *The Unashamed Accompanist*, London, Methuen, 1943 (Revised 1959).
 2. A useful source is S. S. Prawer, *The Penguin Book of Lieder*, Middlesex, Penguin, 1964.
 3. Or the two notes could represent the wanderer saying 'What was that?' - in German 'Was gibt's?' - as he stops in his tracks and puts his head on one side to listen to the rustling.
 4. Issued only on 78rpm records to my knowledge. (Revision April 2000: since issued on CD Pearl GEM 0033, 1998.)
 5. Gerald Moore, *The Schubert Song Cycles*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1975, p. 96, and in recordings.
 6. See Julian Armitage-Smith, "Schubert's *Winterreise*, Part I: The Sources of the Musical Text", *Musical Quarterly* 60/1 (1974), pp. 20-36.
 7. *Franz Schubert Winterreise: the autograph score*, New York: Pierpont Morgan Library and Dover, c1989.
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**A photograph of the original tree which fell in 1912. Caption:
Der Lindenbaum
Wilhelm Müllers ("Am Brunnen vor dem Tore") in Allendorf a. d. Werra (1912
gestürzt)
Photographie
(Source: Otto Erich Deutsch, *Franz Schubert: Sein Leben in Bildern* (Franz Schubert:
His Life in Pictures). München und Leipzig, Georg Müller, 1913, page 549.)**



**Der Lindenbaum
Wilhelm Müllers („Am Brunnen vor dem Tore“) in Allendorf a. d. Werra (1912 gestürzt)
Photographie**

A photograph of the replacement tree planted in 1912 for the original of *der Lindenbaum*, which had stood for over 600 years at Bad Sooden-Allendorf an der Werra, near Hessen, Germany. (Source: a postcard.)

