Pianistic Imagery in Franz Schubert’s *Die schöne Müllerin*

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Abstract

Franz Schubert’s *Die schöne Müllerin* was the first true song cycle of the nineteenth century. Known for his contributions and innovations in German *Lieder* composition, Schubert published this twenty-song cycle in 1824. Composed as a set of songs based on a collection of poems with a continuing story line, the influence of *Die schöne Müllerin* on the art song is still in evidence today. Schubert’s use of imagery, especially in the piano accompaniment, was one of his biggest contributions to the development of musical style in *Lieder*. Treating the piano part as more than just a simple chordal accompaniment, he depicted emotional states in the piano part so that the listener could truly engage in the musical and poetic drama of the cycle. Schubert’s masterful combination of vocal melody with dramatic accompaniments established a lasting compositional end for all who followed him in the field of art songs.
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Franz Schubert (1797-1828) was a prolific Austrian composer whose works had wide-reaching influence in Germany, as well as in other parts of the world. In addition to nine symphonies, many solo piano compositions, liturgical music, and the six-hundred *Lieder*, Schubert wrote two very influential song cycles, *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*. His first cycle, *Die schöne Müllerin (DsM)*, published in 1824, shows close attention to pianistic detail and imagery. Schubert’s genius was that, in just twenty songs, he could take the listener through every emotion experienced by the journeyman miller. Through evocative musical and emotional imagery, he enabled the piano part to interact with the drama’s characters and events of the poetry. This thesis will explore the purposeful collaboration between the piano and the voice used by Franz Schubert in his song cycle, *Die schöne Müllerin*, specifically tracing the pianistic imagery used to depict the dramatic elements and characters of the poetry.

Franz Schubert began his work on the cycle in 1823. Set to a group of poems written by the Wilhelm Müller, Schubert named the cycle *Die schöne Müllerin*.¹ It was the first true song cycle of the nineteenth century; while Beethoven had written the cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* eight years before, it was not a true cycle in that Schubert’s “cycle” was a collection of songs while Beethoven’s “cycle” was a continuous movement consisting of several songs.² In Schubert’s work, each song played an integral part in the cycle as a whole.

¹. “The beautiful miller-maid.”
Schubert chose the poems for his *DsM* from a series of poems written by the German poet Wilhelm Müller (1794-1827). These poems, used often as a party game in British literary circles, were purposely written to mock popular myths; they were filled with irony and aloofness. The members of the group would each choose a character to portray, snidely reciting these narrative parodies to poke fun at the folk poetry of the time. Müller, one of the readers, took his original poems and added to them, creating a collection of twenty-three poems, published at Dessau in 1821. This cycle contained a prologue and an epilogue, where Müller took the opportunity to gently ridicule poetry styles of the time.³

Schubert saw in these poems, an opportunity to create a dramatic and serious setting with universal significance. Rather than viewing them as a humorous cycle to be used as parlor entertainment, he saw the collection as a narrative that revealed the harsh realities of life. He excised the prologue and epilogue, as well as three other poems that he did not believe added to the drama of the cycle. Schubert conceived *DsM* as a collection to be performed in its entirety, rather than as a set of free standing individual songs. He wanted the cycle to illuminate the poetry and to support what he saw as twenty songs that had a dramatic arc. He used mainly strophic forms, but each song is expertly detailed without ostentatious displays of technique. Rather, he employed simple melodies and harmonies and made his songs unique and extraordinary.⁴

This tragic love story was composed in 1823, the year Schubert had to face a tragedy of his own. He was diagnosed with syphilis—the disease that would weaken him

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and take his life five years later, along with typhoid fever, at the young age of 31.

Schubert may have identified with the dejection and sorrow the protagonist experiences in the cycle. His last song cycle, *Winterreise*, reveals even more the despair he was facing, as he entered the final year of his life (1828).

The story line of *DsM* is the account of a fictional young miller on a journey. The opening of the cycle finds the young miller completing his apprenticeship and wandering through the countryside. He comes upon a brook, a sort of ‘character’ that becomes an essential player of the cycle. The young man decides to follow the brook wherever it leads: he stumbles on a mill that provides an opportunity for employment. He sees a beautiful girl, the miller’s daughter (the Müllerin of the title), with whom he immediately falls in love. All is well in the heart and mind of the journeyman, as he sings a song of thanks to the brook in *Danksagung an den Bach* for leading him to his love.

After a restful evening portrayed in *Am Feierabend*, the miller decides to woo the miller’s daughter. His initial excitement on seeing her has been subdued, because now his mind is consumed with doubts. He sings to the brook in *Der Neugierige*, begging it to answer his question: “*Will’s ja nicht weiter sagen, sag, Bächlein, liebt sie mich?*” Wondering why she does not notice him, he begins to grow impatient at her lack of response in *Ungeduld*, and continually repeats “*Dein ist my Herz, und soll es ewig, ewig bleiben!*” The closing songs of part one (*Morgengruß, Des Müllers Blumen* and *Tränenregen*) follow the young man’s halting efforts at courtship. The central climax of


6. “I won’t tell anyone what you say; tell me, little brook, does she love me?”

7. “My heart is yours, and it shall always remain so!”
the cycle comes in song eleven, Mein! in which the journeyman miller is filled with feelings of possessive triumph and victory, proudly exclaiming "Die geliebte Müllerin ist mein!". This song marks the dramatic high point of the cycle, dividing the first half from the second.

Unfortunately for the journeyman, the second half of the cycle is a stark contrast to the first. After trying to impress the girl, the lad's undying love for her continues to grow stronger, but he soon realizes that his feelings are not reciprocated. A bold green-clad hunter enters the story at song fourteen, Der Jäger, and the miller's daughter is captivated by him. This "betrayal" leaves the lad helpless and lost for the remainder of the cycle. He struggles with jealousy and self-pity as he is faced with the harsh reality that the girl will never be his. He comes to such deep despair that he simply cannot recover. The grief-stricken miller finally drowns himself in his one companion, the friendly brook. Des Baches Wiegenlied, is a lullaby sung by the brook, musically taking his friend to his final resting place.

There are several important characters that Schubert portrays in DsM. First is the journeyman miller, who continuously expresses his feelings and describes the events taking place in his life. He experiences many emotions from extreme joy to utter despair during the course of the cycle. Composing a song cycle that explored such a wide range of emotions was one of Schubert's most important contributions to art song composition. DsM represents an attempt to portray for the listener the deep inner workings of human nature.

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8. "The beloved miller's daughter is mine!"

Next is the brook, the lad’s one loyal companion. The brook is often represented by the flowing eighth and sixteenth notes in the piano accompaniment. Schubert was the first early master of accompaniments that signified dramatic elements and characters. In DsM, he recognized the keyboard’s potential for representing the motion of the water and made the brook a supporting musical character in the cycle. The miller puts a lot of his faith in the brook, following it wherever it flows. He believes the brook to be a true friend, especially since it is the brook which leads him to the mill where he finds his true love. The brook sings in words only once—a lullaby at the end of the cycle after the miller drowns—but it is wordlessly presented throughout most of the cycle in the piano accompaniment. The flowing semi-quavers in the right hand of the piano are heard in many of the songs representing the sometimes placid and sometimes riled waters, but finally depicting the embracing waters in the end.

Although only the man and the brook actually sing any text in the cycle, Schubert uses pianistic imagery to depict other characters and events in the story line. The churning of the mill, for example, is represented by passages of semi-quavers showing the upward and downward movement of the mill-wheel. The miller’s daughter plays a significant role in the story as the journeyman’s love. Passages referring to her, such as in the songs Mit dem grünen Lautenbande and Morgengruss are filled with harmonically simple and passionate melodies. Schubert gives her voice only once, when she decides to leave the miller’s side to go inside because it looks like rain is coming. Other than that, we only see her through the eyes of the journeyman miller.

The hunter is shown in the clattery accompaniment of Der Jäger, which provides a difficult challenge to any pianist. This song is particularly important because it reveals
the resentment of the rejected journeyman; the man is faced with the fact that the girl does not love him because she has instead fallen for the charming hunter. The symbolic color green, which the journeyman originally associates with his love for the maiden, now becomes a symbol of the hunter, a person who threatens the security of his love.

Schubert gave his music a life-like quality by using these symbols and text-painting to make the listener feel as if he or she was experiencing the same events as the characters in the poems. Taking a closer look at each individual song will show Schubert’s dedicated focus on making each song a complete unit of its own, all the while providing support to the overall plot line of the cycle as a whole. Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, a great baritone of his day and one of the most famous Lieder performers stated, “The simplicity of the inter-related songs, none of which was meant to stand on its own, is what gives the twenty songs their cyclical character.”

The first of the twenty songs in DsM is Das Wandern. This optimistic and energetic strophic song has a folk like character. The journeyman is excited about the road ahead and anticipates traveling it with joy. From the start, Schubert sets up the connection with folksong. The song has five verses, challenging the performers to provide musical expression by varying the dynamics and articulation. Because of the structure of the song, the pianist and vocalist must agree on how to bring forth the meaning of the song. Arnold Feil declared, “One cannot sing this melody without piano accompaniment, because the voice and piano parts are so intertwined in a single musical

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structure that one makes no sense without the other. The voice part is not purely melody, the piano part not purely accompaniment.”¹² Although the folksongs can be sung on their own, it is the piano part that adds much drama and meaning to the songs.

While the vocal part expresses the narrator’s thoughts and feelings as he sets out on his journey, the piano accompaniment is of equal importance in this piece, representing the churning of the mill-wheels and the steady flow of the brook. With its repetitive semi-quavers in the right-hand and the broken octaves in the left-hand, it pushes the song forward, showing the energy and excitement of this new expedition through the countryside. The bass notes should represent the constant rumbling of the mill, as the top voice in the piano shows the churning of the mill-wheels along with the splashing brilliance of the water (Figure 1).

![Figure 1: Das Wandern: m.m. 1-4.](image)

The pianist should vary his touch for each verse, mirroring the topical variety in text throughout the five verses. Particularly in the fourth verse, “Die Steine selbst, so schwer sie sind, die Steine!”¹³ should be performed with a heavier quality, giving more

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¹³ “The mill-stones themselves are so heavy!”
weight to both the voice and piano. This technique is used to enhance the picture of the heavy mill stones being described in the text.\textsuperscript{14}

*Wohin?*, the second song in the cycle, bears a similarity to *Das Wandern*, but also has its distinct differences. Both contain the 2/4 time signature, as well as rippling semi-quavers in the right-hand, while the singer provides a simple and joyful melody. It is in this song that the brook that becomes his boon companion first appears. The brook is shown in the right-hand throughout the cycle, and particularly in this song alongside the repeating fifths in the left hand (Figure 2).

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure2.png}
\caption{\textit{Wohin?}: m.m. 1-3.}
\end{figure}

Similar to *Das Wandern*, *Wohin?* relays the innocent happiness that the journeyman is feeling. This is one of the few songs not written in strophic form. Instead, it is written in the rondo style—ABACADA. Still containing the rippling semi-quaivers to impel the piece along, *Wohin?* is full of excitement and anticipation as the man wonders where the brook is leading him and what is up ahead.

Minor harmonic inflection throughout *Wohin?* could be interpreted in several different ways. Gerald Moore, the famous *Lieder* accompanist, believes that the minor sections of the piece simply add to the mystery of what this journey will bring. Curiosity

and anticipation are at their peak, demonstrated by the major and minor contrasts taking place.\textsuperscript{15} John Reed thinks the minor sections foreshadow the trauma to come, and are placed there to remind the listener that this is not a simply joyous occasion; while the man enjoys his wandering, he will be defeated in the end. Not only do the minor key changes imply this, but also words like \textit{hinunter} allude to the words that the man will utter at the end of the cycle as he drowns himself in the brook.\textsuperscript{16} Schubert, heavily influenced by Mozart, used these major-minor contrasts often in his art songs. He believed changing the tonality even for a few measures could drastically change the mood and style of the song.

One final note is that the pianist should not slow down at the end of the piece. This is an error in many performances, but there is no such indication in Schubert’s score; besides, a rallentando destroys Schubert’s careful text-painting of the brook. The semi-quavers must continue at regular tempo until the fermata on the final G Major chord.\textsuperscript{17}

Following the pianissimo ending of \textit{Wohin?}, the sturdy \textit{Halt!} comes as a stark contrast. The journeyman’s excitement is peaking, for he has caught sight of the mill. The pianist must portray the energy of the clacking mill-wheel in the circular arpeggiations in the right hand. He sees the mill along with the beautiful house shining in the morning sun. He feels curious and impatient as he repeatedly asks the brook, \textit{“War es also}

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\textsuperscript{15} Moore, \textit{Schubert Song Cycles}, 7.
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\textsuperscript{16} Reed, \textit{Schubert Song Companion}, 182.
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\textsuperscript{17} Moore, 8.
\end{flushright}
The question seems optimistic at first, but as the piano accompaniment plays a diminished seventh chord, the question seems to express uncertainty and doubt.  

The pianist continues the mill theme of right-hand semi-quavers, with frequent rising and falling passages in both hands showing the turning of the mill-wheel but restfully at half tempo. The pianist should pay special attention to the rising and falling dynamics to give full effect of the mill. This piece represents the first time, of many that the journeyman expresses doubt and questions what his future may hold.

The recurring question, “War es also gemeint,” returns at the beginning of the fourth song, *Danksagung an den Bach*. This song, in contrast to the first three, is very slow and introspective. The protagonist realizes that his fate is tied up in the brooks, and he is hoping that the maiden will reciprocate the same love that he feels for her. This short song opens in G Major, but takes a turn into the parallel minor in the second stanza of the piece. This change in tonality represents the text accurately, showing that the miller is having doubts again, thinking that perhaps he has only been enchanted by the running waters. This suspicion does not stay with the miller for very long, as the piece soon returns to the major for the third stanza, in which the miller gives thanks to the brook for leading him to the mill and to his true love.

The piano accompaniment in *Danksagung an den Bach* is calmer and more tranquil than the previous songs but still contains similar characteristics. The rhythms of

18. “Was this all meant to be?”


the brook have been augmented and the whole piece requires a softer and more delicate touch.\textsuperscript{21} This fourth song concludes the first subsection of \textit{DsM}, as here the introduction ends and the deep plot line begins.\textsuperscript{22} As \textit{Danksagung an den Bach} ends in a slow tempo and with a pianissimo marking, \textit{Am Feierabend} begins forte and quick.

The first song to portray a drastically different emotion in the singer as well as in the piano accompaniment is \textit{Am Feierabend}. It is also the first piece set in a minor key. Beginning with a vigorous, energetic introduction, the miller’s frustration is shown as he would like to demonstrate his worthiness by lifting the heavy mill-stones.\textsuperscript{23} The left-hand syncopation shows the clacking of the mill-wheels and should be carefully articulated by the pianist (Figure 3).

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure3}
\caption{\textit{Am Feierabend}: m.m. 9-12.}
\end{figure}

Schubert does something new in the cycle beginning in bar 45 where the mood, dynamics, and tonality completely change. The miller describes his peace and joy when

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{21} Youens, \textit{Schubert}, 78.
\item\textsuperscript{22} Feil, \textit{Franz Schubert}, 59.
\item\textsuperscript{23} Moore, 14.
\end{itemize}
he finds himself sitting by the fire with the other workers and with the beautiful maiden. He has fallen even deeper in love and longs for the girl as she says “Gute Nacht.”  

The sforzando in measure 56 reminds the man of his frustration in not being able to woo the maiden. The original tempo and dynamics return once again beginning in bar 59. The reoccurrence of section A is sung with even more intensity as the man feels confused and unsettled, expressing his emotions in higher and higher pitches. It must be realized that the left-hand mill-wheels are now in quicker rhythm as the piece picks up its drive and forward motion (Figure 4).

![Figure 4: Am Feierabend: m.m. 59-61.](image)

When performing *Am Feierabend*, it is vital that the pianist and vocalist follow Schubert’s markings precisely. With all of the changing dynamics, tempi, and moods, the song, if performed correctly, can display many conflicting emotions in the man’s heart. The contrast and intense moments in this piece clearly show Schubert’s appreciation for dramatic elements in music.

One of the most demanding songs for the singer to perform is the sixth song, *Der Neugierige*. In the song the miller stands by the stream with thoughts flowing through his

24. “Good night [to everyone]”

25. Moore, 17.
mind, curiously wondering if the beautiful miller-girl loves him. Before the singer even begins his monologue, the piano sets the mood of the piece by asking a sort of question evidenced in the phrasing and harmonies (Figure 5). The raised fourth scale degree in the melodic line suggests the unrest that the journeyman faces as he asks his question.

![Musical notation](image)

Figure 5: Der Neugierige: m.m. 1-4.

The music reflects great tenderness and simplicity as the miller begs the brook, saying “Wills’ ja nicht weiter sagen, sag,’ Bächlein, liebt sie mich?” The brook continues to inhabit in the semi-quavers of the piano beginning in bar 23, but the blocked chords in the left-hand provide a sense of stability. The pianist should be careful not to drown the singer in the semi-quavers, for this piece is more about the text than the flowing waters. As the miller continually asks the brook his question, the brook seems to ignore him—probably because it knows the answer!

The next piece, Ungeduld, begins a series of four songs all written in strophic form. It also shows the miller’s impatience as he wonders if the girl notices him. The


27. “Won’t you say anything more? Tell me, dear little brook, does she love me?”

28. Feil, 64.

29. Capell, Schubert’s Songs, 194.
miller is overtaken by the hope that the maiden will reciprocate his longing for her, a hope which he can no longer contain.

The impatience mentioned in the title is heard in the incessant triplets of the piano accompaniment. These triplets will become an interesting feature of the cycle, possibly representing the journeyman’s impatience with the hunter that will come in song fourteen. The left hand contains dotted semi-quavers that should be played precisely and with direction. John Reed states, “The young man’s impatient ardour is expressed by a sort of rhythmic dislocation, so that the voice seems always to be a beat ahead of the piano.”

This continues until the refrain of each verse where the voice joins together with the piano, as the man exclaims, “Dein ist mein Herz!”

The journeyman’s intense longing for the miller’s daughter is clearly observable in the cycle’s eighth song, Morgengruss. This fresh, simple song evokes the beautiful morning that the journeyman as he serenades the girl with his love. He longs for the girl, but wonders if his greeting disturbs her. The melody contains the rising sixth that was prominent in Ungeduld, an interval associated with the miller’s desire and longing throughout the cycle. This is one example of how Schubert uses melodic devices like the rising sixth throughout his whole cycle so that they could be understood and appreciated, each containing its own symbolic meaning (Figure 6).

30. Reed, 185.

31. “My heart is yours!”
1. Guten Morgen, schöne Mühle rin! Wo
2. laß mich nur von ferne stehn, nach
3. Ihr schlummertrunknen Äugelein, ihr
4. Nun schütelt ab der Träume Flor, und

Figure 6: Morgengruss: m.m. 4-6.

It is unclear whether or not the miller actually speaks to the maiden in this song, but it seems more probable that he is just imagining what he would say to her. In his pathetic state of mind, he cannot picture a situation in which the girl would reciprocate his feelings of devotion. He wonders why she turns her head and does not want to give him any attention. The brook seems to be present in the piano accompaniment as passages of triplets come at the end of each verse, and despite the journeyman’s doubts, the mood of the piece is calm and serene.

As simple as Morgengruss is, the next song, Des Müllers Blumen, is just as uncomplicated and serene. Written in the key of A Major and a 6/8 meter, the song has a sway to it with a flowing and arpeggated melodic line. The quality of the piece is similar to a folksong; the miller decides to plant flowers near the girl’s window, hoping to show her his devotion. He says he will wait by her window and lovingly glance at her in hopes that she will fall in love with him.

This strophic song is similar to Morgengruss in its simplicity. It is a flowing love song in which the miller continues to attempt to show his devotion for the maiden.

Although the piece should be performed with freedom, it is essential to keep the forward

32. Feil, 67.
motion of the cycle as to never forget the brook that is still flowing in the background. The drama must also seem to flow as it moves toward its inevitable conclusion.

Song ten of the cycle is entitled Tränenregen. It seems to be a continuation of Des Müllers Blumen as it was written in the same key of A Major. The song, describing the miller’s and the girl’s time together by the river, is first filled with remembrance of the moments they spent together. In the end, though, as the music turns to minor, the evening ends in worry and uncertainty.

The rising and falling in the vocal line should be given special attention, as it helps to show the man’s emotional imbalance. As the song switches to the parallel minor in verse four, the listener may perceive something of the hurt that the miller feels as the girl bids him farewell in an emotionless manner.33 The ambiguity of the text should be demonstrated in the vocal line to truly show the miller’s feelings at this point in the cycle. Although this tenth song, numerically speaking, ends the first half of the cycle, it is not until song eleven, Mein! that we sense a definite climax in the story line of DsM.

Transitioning from the key of A Major to its dominant, D Major, Mein! is all about the victory the man experiences in believing he won the girl. The fresh energy of this piece makes it the first emotional climax of this cycle, providing a rollicking conclusion to the first half of the cycle. The vocalist should enter with excitement singing legato on top of the pianist’s hammered touch.34 His doubts have been subdued for the time being and he rejoices in the hope that the girl’s love will be his forever.

33. Moore, 33.

34. Moore, 36.
The middle section of *Mein!* modulates into the key of Bb Major, the lowered sixth scale degree of D Major, but also the cycle’s initial tonality. Schubert does this to unite the song to the cycle as well as to start the next section in a new key. The key of Bb Major represents the journeyman’s happy and contented state. The accompaniment evokes the mill-wheels, recounting the miller’s naïve joy in *Das Wandern*, now fully realized. The performers should pay close attention to the transition into section B of the piece, bars 38-40, showing a rallentando a bit to allow for freedom in the augmented rhythm of the miller’s final declaration “*Mein!*” (Figure 7).

![Sheet Music](image)

*Figure 7: Mein!: m.m. 38-40.*

After the section in Bb Major, the tempo picks up again in D Major. The piece continues with great piano and voice collaboration filled with joy and excitement shown in the text. Schubert uses fortissimo for the first time in the cycle with a crescendo from a piano dynamic marking beginning in bar 89 as the singer exclaims, “*Die geliebte Müllerin ist mein, ist mein, mein, ist mein!*” (Figure 8).
As if beginning again in the cycle’s original tonality of Bb Major, No. 12 Pause acts as a subtly ironic resting place in the cycle. It is with this song that the downward emotional trajectory begins, eventually ending in tragedy. The man sings to his lute, which is represented by the ostinato of the accompaniment. The melody line is to be sung with freedom and passion, while the piano is bound with a contrastingly tight rhythmic passage.

To reinforce the text in which the man is singing about how full his heart is, the harmonies travel into different tonalities, like its relative key of G Minor, to express the miller’s “fearful apprehension.” Despite his doubts at some points, the miller expresses

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35. Moore, 38.

a confident contentment with this new state of affairs. He decides to hang his lute on the wall because his heart is simply too full to sing anymore.

   For the next song in the cycle, *Mit dem grünen Lautenbande*, Schubert used a modified strophic form in the key of Bb Major. Filled with bliss, the song could be a letter from the miller to the maid in which he stresses her love for the color green. He decides to send his green lute-ribbon along to her in hopes that she will wear it in her hair so that she will always be reminded of his love.

   The piano as well as the melody line contains a sprightly and upbeat quality. The music maintains a hopeful attitude and the miller is still happy at this point in the cycle. The pianist and vocalist should perform this short song in a light manner as the articulation and phrasing imply.

   Song fourteen, *Der Jäger*, represents a strong emotional turn in the cycle. Written in the key of C Minor and performed at a very fast pace, the hunter, the miller’s rival, arrives on the scene. The music reveals that the miller is filled with uneasiness and irritation, brilliantly expressed in the tempo and style of the song. One must wonder if the simple compound meter represents the hoof beats of the hunter’s horse as well as the miller’s irritation towards the situation.

   The piano accompaniment is crucial to the performance of *Der Jäger*. The triplets in the piano represent the hunter riding into the town. Acting as a true percussion instrument, right from the outset, the piano part sets the mood for the song, making the listener aware of the harsh emotions felt by the journeyman in this fugato introduction (Figure 9).

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37. Capell, 196.
The song is symmetrical and repetitive in style, written in strophic form. The simplicity of the music aids the listener in hearing the text and in focusing on the emotions portrayed in the text and in the piano, rather than harmonic changes. The man immediately becomes aware of the hunter and of the competition that may ensue between them. The hunter is dressed in green, once the color symbolizing the miller’s love for the maiden, but now making the miller feel threatened, jealous, and green with envy.

The miller’s jealousy grows increasingly stronger in Eifersucht und Stolz (Jealousy and Pride). Tormented, he asks the brook to scold the miller’s daughter for falling for the pompous hunter. Written in the key of g minor, it provides the relative minor to the cycle’s tonality of Bb Major, indicating that love and jealousy are two sides of the same coin!

As soon as the song begins, the listener is thrown into the emotions of the man along with the harsh rushing waters and the clacking of the mill displayed in the piano accompaniment. The semi-quavers should be played with clear distinction while the vocalist speaks clearly with full emotion. Reed believes that these eighth-note passages might represent an angry version of the mill and brook from the opening two songs, Das Wandern and Wohin?.

38. Reed, 190.
The song takes a surprising turn to G Major near the end of the piece. While typically the major key symbolizes a happier and light-hearted mood, the man is escaping the pain of reality by painting a picture of someone who is at peace and above jealousy. The miller complains to the booklet about the maiden’s “betrayal,” telling the booklet to inform the maiden that he’s doing fine; he is off playing dances for children on a reed flute. This of course is not the truth, because the man is in despair, but he does not want the maiden to know it.

The sixteenth song in the cycle, *Die liebe Farbe*, begins in B Minor, a key which had not yet been explored in *Die schöne Müllerin*. Schubert, along with Beethoven, used this key in many of his works to represent anger alternating with determination. The vocalist should not vary his tone because the mood is one of sadness and should not be elaborated or ornamented. This presents an extremely difficult task for the singer, that is, to sing beautifully and correctly without emphasizing one note over another.

Because of the nature of the dry and somber vocal line, the intensity of the song lies with the piano accompaniment. The incessant F sharps in the right hand act like a funeral march or a persistent representation of the mental anguish and the romantic longing he experiences.³⁹ This is the saddest song in the cycle—it expresses hopeless despair, the emotional paralysis that will finally finish him. The pianist should be quick to emphasize these incessant notes occurring over five hundred times as an important facet of this strophic song (Figure 10).⁴⁰

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39. Reed, 191.

40. Moore, 52.
Figure 10: *Die liebe Farbe*: m.m. 4-7.

*Die böse Farbe* is in complete contrast to the previous song; *Die liebe Farbe* means the favorite color, while *Die böse Farbe* speaks of the evil color. Schubert differentiates by setting this seventeenth song in B Major rather than the parallel minor which appeared before. This piece, in contrast to emotionally torpid *Die liebe Farbe*, expresses his inner conflict with broken chords.\(^{41}\) Also, the hunter’s triplets are once again present, ever reminding the miller of his competitor. In comparison, however, the F sharp, while not as noticeable, is still a prominent pitch in the piano accompaniment as it continues to harass the poor man.

The miller now immerses himself in self-pity and expresses his hatred for the color green and everything associated with it. He is broken-hearted and devastated at the maiden’s betrayal. The singer must fully commit to the emotions felt by the miller in order to give full depth to the textual expression. In addition, the pianist must give the same focus to portraying the characters and motives to paint the dramatic situation, all the while supporting the singer.

*Trockne Blumen* tells the grieving tale of the dry flowers that represent dead love. The miller asks to be buried with the dry flowers he received from her. He does not feel resentment towards the girl; his love for her is too strong. He hopes one day that she will

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41. Feil, 77.
pass by his grave declaring, "Der meint ‘es true!'" At that point the flowers will once again spring up out of his grave into the Spring sunshine.

The song begins in the key of E Minor but moves to the bright key of E Major to indicate that the flowers that will bloom again. The music seems happy as the spring will come again. The miller wants nothing more than to have the girl realize his true love, so the vocalist should be careful to sing these precious lines with tenderness and sweetness. The accompaniment acts as tear drops as the man is weeping on the dry flowers.

The miller, lost in his own grief, stands on the bank ready to jump in throughout Der Müller und der Bach as he shares a conversation with his companion and fate holder, the brook. Beginning with the lute introduction shown in the piano part, the song starts in G Minor as the miller is mentally and physically exhausted. Thankfully, for the listener, when the brook begins its remarks to the miller, the hopeful major mode is employed. The brook’s rippling accompaniment figures return as it sends words of encouragement and hope to the man.

Unfortunately, the brook’s words are not enough to save the miller, whose music returns to the minor mode. The water is presented gracefully in the piano part as the miller finds release by drowning himself in the brook. His final words are, "Ach, Bächlein, liebes Bächlein, so singe nur zu."  

42. “He meant it when he said he loved me!”

43. Youens, 108.

44. “Ah brooklet, dear brooklet, so just sing on.”
The brook slowly fades away as the man becomes “ein Sternlein, ein neues, am Himmel erblint.” As the piano line descends in the last few bars, the miller’s descent down to the brook is shown (Figure 11). The only comfort for the listener is to think that the man has finally found peace.

![Piano sheet music](image)

Figure 11: Der Müller und der Bach: m.m. 84-89.

Die schöne Müllerin comes to a close with a lullaby, Des Baches Wiegenlied. This epilogue is a lullaby sung to the now deceased miller by the brook. Schubert ends the cycle in E Major, harmonically as far away as possible from the key of Bb Major in the first song. Indeed in his death, the miller is a world away from the hopeful opening Das Wandern, therefore showing Schubert’s calculated intentions in his choice of keys throughout the cycle.

This five-verse strophic song should be performed with enchantment as the singer uses his softest tones sung with extreme tenderness. The pianist should play with the lightest touch while maintaining rhythmic precision. The vocalist and pianist must collaborate on this to provide the final resting place to this rather long twenty-song cycle.

45. “A little star, a new one, twinkles in the sky.”

46. Moore, 72.
Reed sums up the cycle in a great way. “Die schöne Müllerin is not a sort of pastoral love story. It is a parable on a favorite Romantic theme, the belief that a true and pure ideal love can never find its fulfillment on earth. It is about Romantic longing which is its own reward, because it can only be satisfied in death.” Schubert expressed this Romantic ideal expertly in music, bringing Müller’s words to life in a sympathetic and emotional way.

Franz Schubert’s use of complex imagery in the piano accompaniment is what makes Die schöne Müllerin so remarkable. Because of the powerful techniques he used to depict characters and events, an informed collaboration between pianist and vocalist is essential to the performance success of this cycle. The accompanist must understand that his or her goal is not merely to act as a supplement to the voice; rather, it is to portray characters and events, interact with and support the singer, and provide a contextual backdrop for the music of the cycle.

47. Reed, 192.
Bibliography


