

Chapter 7

Goethe and Schubert: *Claudine von Villa Bella*— conflict and reconciliation

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Goethe and Schubert reception: a tradition redefined

The impression of a hapless relationship between Schubert and Goethe has been fueled by the reception histories of both artists. Christopher Gibb's pioneering essay "‘Poor Schubert’: images and legends of the composer" charts this recurring image of "poor Schubert" in private letters, articles and biographies written after the composer's death.¹ This perception of Schubert, partly born of the Romantic idea of the "unrecognized artistic genius, the artist who valiantly struggles for acceptance and yet is inexplicitly ignored by the world until after his death,"² thus set in antithesis with the canonical artist and titanic personality of Goethe, has contributed to misconceptions about the relationship between Goethe and Schubert.³ Goethe's "rejection" of Schubert's first book of songs was claimed to be influenced by Zelter, to whom Goethe sent the songs for advice. Such arguments are clearly unfounded: in the 891 letters exchanged between these artists there is no mention of Schubert

1 Christopher Gibb, "‘Poor Schubert’: images and legends of the composer" in Christopher Gibb (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Schubert* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 36–55.

2 Ibid., p. 46.

3 See, for example: O. Linke in "Schubert und Goethe", *Neue Musik Zeitung*, 12 (1891); R. Boehmer-Aachen, "Goethe und Schubert", *Rheinische Musik- und Theaterzeitung*, 14 (1913): 486–9; Konrad Volker, "Schubert und Goethe", *Die Musik*, 14 (1915): 129; M. v. Leinburg, "Schubert und Goethe" (Munich: Propyläen Ausgabe, 1928); M. Zeiner, "Goethe und Schubert", *Die Quelle*, 79 (1929): 105; Romain Rolland, "Goethe's Interest in Music", *Musical Quarterly*, 17 (1931): 177, 190; P. Riesenfeld, "Goethe und Schubert", *Signale für die musikalische Welt*, 90 (1932): 267; Konrad Huschke, "Schubert und Goethe", *Musica*, 7 (1953): 580–81; Alexander Witeschnik, "Goethe und Schubert: Die Geschichte einer einseitigen Liebe", *Jahrbuch des Wiener-Goethe Vereins*, 67 (1963): 78–85; Joseph Müller-Blattau, "Franz Schubert, der Sänger Goethes", in *Goethe und die Meister der Musik* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1969), pp. 62–80; David Dalton, "Goethe and the Composers of his Time", *Music Review*, 34 (1973): 157–74; Frederick W. Sternfield, *Goethe and Music: A List of Parodies and Goethe's Relationship to Music: A List of References* (New York: The New York Public Library, 1979), introduction, p. vii.

Lieder; on the contrary, letters prove the dispatch was never sent to Zelter, nor was he in Weimar during the period in which Schubert's first songbook arrived.⁴ In their portrayal of a "neglected Schubert,"⁵ scholars have overlooked the significance of Goethe's acknowledgement of Schubert's second dedication in his diary as early as 1825: "Sendung von Schubert aus Wien, von meinen Liedern Kompositionen" (A parcel of my song compositions from Schubert of Vienna).⁶ Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Weimar's most eminent musician at the time, and Felix Mendelssohn, friend and musical advisor to the poet, did not discover Schubert until 1827.⁷ Whether Goethe's failure to respond to Schubert in a personal letter of thanks was linked to his reticence in encouraging the younger generation of Romantic literary artists⁸ or colored by the sad reality that these artists never met,⁹ one will never know. What is clear, however, from the new censorship laws, which were tightened up as a result of the Congress of Vienna, is that Schubert could not have published his opus 19 Lieder in Vienna with the dedication to Goethe on the title page of this volume, without the poet's written permission.¹⁰ At some point—perhaps the same day as Goethe acknowledged receipt of these songs in his diary—a written missive must have been sent to Vienna to allow these songs to be published with a dedication to the poet.¹¹ The loss of this letter coupled with the legend of Schubert's neglect¹²

4 Edith Zehm, Sabine Schäfer, Jürgen Gruß and Wolfgang Ritschel, *Briefwechsel mit Zelter*, vols 20.1; 20.2 and 20.3, in Karl Richter (ed.), *Goethe [-] Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens*, Münchner Ausgabe 22 vols (Munich: Hanser Verlag, 1985–98).

5 Gibbs traces this image of Schubert in musicology in " 'Poor Schubert': images and legends of the composer", pp. 46–8. A good example is the review of Newman Flower's book, "Franz Schubert: The Man and his Circle", *New York Times*, 25 November 1928, cited in Robert Winter, "Whose Schubert?", *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 27/1 (1993): 97.

6 Gustav von Loeper, Erich Schmidt, Hermann Grimm et al. (eds), *Weimar Ausgabe: Goethes Werke* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1887–1912), part III, vol. 10, June 16, 1825, pp. 68–9. Hereafter referred to as *WA*.

7 R. Larry Todd, *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 72.

8 Examples are found in the works of Wachenroder (*Herzensergießungen*), E.T.A. Hoffmann, Bretano, and Kleist (*Das Käthchen von Heilbronn*). For an example of Goethe's polemical broadsides against Romanticism, see Johann Peter Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994), April 2, 1829, p. 343.

9 On June 16, 1825, the same day as Franz Schubert's letter and manuscript containing the op.19 settings arrived, Lea Mendelssohn sent an exemplar of Mendelssohn's newly published, Piano Quartet no. 3 in B minor from Berlin, for which she had already requested permission to dedicate it to Goethe. Goethe wrote to Mendelssohn thanking him for the dedication of the Quartet, which Mendelssohn had played for him on his third visit to the poet in Weimar; see Karl Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Goethe und Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy* (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1871), p. 50.

10 Otto Biba, "Goethe in the Vienna Music Scene of his Era", in Lorraine Byrne (ed.), *Goethe: Musical Poet, Musical Catalyst* (Dublin: Carysfort Press: 2004), p. 27.

11 Ibid.

12 Gibbs, "'Poor Schubert': images and legends of the composer", p. 48.

and Goethe's "Olympian aloofness [and] blindness to new writers of talent"¹³ have fueled misconceptions surrounding Goethe's "neglect" of "Poor Schubert."

The image of "Poor Schubert" was created in counterpoint to the portrayal of a musically conservative poet in Goethean reception history and musicology.¹⁴ This pervasive image of Goethe has engendered the scholarly neglect of Goethe's correspondence with Zelter, which contains a wealth of musical material, and is one of the few areas in Goethe philology that has been left unexplored.¹⁵ It has also influenced the portrayal of Goethe's musical historicism as an excessive veneration of past musical styles, rather than the desire to challenge contemporary norms in art by asserting the validity of the art of a plurality of peoples and periods. The new perceptions of historical processes which emphasized modernity and granted little role to any reference to the past, and thereby engendered an increasingly teleological perspective on music history, portrayed Schubertian song as an evolutionary

13 Lesley Sharpe, "Introduction", in Lesley Sharpe (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Goethe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 2.

14 See, for example: W.J. Wasiliewski, *Goethes Verhältnis zur Musik* (Leipzig: Sammlung musikalischer Vorträge, 1880); Wilhelm Bode, *Goethe und die Tonkunst*, 2 vols (Berlin: E.S. Mittler und Sohn, 1912); Hermann J. Abert, *Goethe und die Musik* (Stuttgart: J. Engelhorn's Nachf., 1922); Edgar Istel, "Goethe and Music", *Musical Quarterly*, 14 (1928): 216–54; Romain Rolland, "Goethe's Interest in Music", *Musical Quarterly*, 17 (1931): 157–94 and also "Goethe the Musician", in Dagobert D. Runes (ed.), *Goethe Symposium* (New York: Roerich Museum Press, 1932), pp. 3–17; Emil Voigt, "War Goethe musikalisch?", *Musik*, 23 (1931): 321–7; Ferdinand Kuchler, *Goethes Musikverständnis* (Leipzig-Zürich: Hug, 1935); Friedrich Blume, *Goethe und die Musik* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1948); M. Heller, "Goethe and Music", *German Quarterly*, 22 (1949): 205–08; Louise Levin, "Goethe and Music", *Contemporary Review*, 176 (1949): 225–30; John Greenhill, "Goethe's attitude towards music and contemporary composers", *Australian Goethe Society Proceedings* (1950): 18–26; Guido Kisch, "Music in Goethe's Life", *Monatshefte für deutschen Unterricht*, 42 (1950): 243–51; Hans Pleß, "Goethe und die Musik", *Musikerziehung*, 3 (1950): 70–76; Anne-Marie M. Sauerlander, "Goethe's Relation to Music", in J. Alan Pfeffer (ed.), *Essays on German language and Literature in honour of Theodore B. Hewitt* (Buffalo: The University of Buffalo Studies, 1952), pp. 39–55; W.C.R. Hicks, "Was Goethe Musical?", *Publications of the English Goethe Society*, 27 (1958): 73–139; Susan Sonnet, "Goethe and Music", in *Soundings: Collections of the University Library* (California: University of Santa Barbara, 1970), pp. 30–33; John L. Miller, "Goethe and Music", *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies*, 8 (1972): 42–54; David Dalton, "Goethe and the Composers of his Time", *Musical Review*, 34 (1973): 157–74; Meredith McClain, "Goethe and Music: Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt", in Wolodymer T. Zyla (ed.), *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: One Hundred and Fifty Years of Continuing Vitality* (Texas: Texas Tech. Press, 1984), pp. 201–77; Ernst-Jürgen Dreyer, *Goethes Tonwissenschaft* (Berlin, Frankfurt am Main & Vienna: Ullstein, 1985); H. Zeman, "Goethe und die Musik, Prologomena zu einem großen Thema", in Harmut Kronos (ed.), *Wort und Ton im europäischen Raum. Gedenkschrift für Robert Schollum* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1989), pp. 109–14; Elmar Budde, "Goethe und die Musik", in *Goethe Spuren. Ein Lese-Buch zum Konzertprojekt* Herausgegeben vom Konzerthaus Berlin/Schauspielhaus am Gendarmenmarkt (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 1998), pp. 15–35.

15 For development of this idea, see Lorraine Byrne Bodley, "The Curse of Silence: 200 Years of Myth-Making belied by the Goethe-Zelter Letters", in Lorraine Byrne Bodley, *Goethe and Zelter: Musical Dialogues* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008): Part 1.

development, an improvement on Goethe's aesthetic theories of song, without acknowledgement of its connection with aesthetic ideals of earlier eras. Only in recent years have scholars begun to chart the more complex contours of Schubertian song.¹⁶

Goethe and Schubert: worlds apart?

When one looks beyond such established misconceptions and reexamines the narrative of Goethe's and Schubert's lives, it becomes clear that these artists had more in common with each other than conventional appraisals allow. This chapter will pursue, in particular, one unexplored trajectory: the parallels and paradoxes in the realm of German music theater, where Schubert's lifelong ambition to make inroads into the German operatic world finds its counter-image in Goethe studies. Goethe's extensive work in German music theater—from the early operatic fragments to the evolution of the Schauspiel into hybrid forms of Singspiel and Italian Libretti, right down to the Festspiel, the late operatic fragments and final work of universal music theater: *Faust II*—is represented in Goethe reception by a significant lacuna. Hugo von Hofmannsthal's designation of Goethe's music theater as "Nebenwerke," works of secondary importance in the poet's creative canon, is challenged by Goethe's own estimation of these works for he included them in the first volume of his collected works and by the popular reception of these works during his own lifetime. The ripples from the stone which Hofmannsthal cast in 1913 have spread through Goethe scholarship in Germany and beyond, where the works have been neglected from the canon of research to the present day, as a cursory glance at the commentary on these works in the *Münchener Ausgabe* will affirm.¹⁷

To borrow Thomas Denny's words: "Schubert's music for the theater [also] remains a problematic repertory."¹⁸ The operatic fragments, the lack of performances, the wide variety of popular and serious genres, the artistic development evident between early and late works, and the desire to elevate the standards of contemporary musical theater all find their counter image in Goethe's musico-theatrical works. Apart from some dissenting voices—Maurice Brown,¹⁹ Elizabeth Norman McKay,²⁰

16 Otto Biba, "Goethe in the Vienna Music Scene of his Era", pp. 7–40.

17 In recent years this lacuna in Goethe reception has been addressed in the seminal work of such scholars as Benedikt Holtbend, Markus Walduras, Jörg Krämer and the publication of Goethe's music-dramatic works by Metzlar Verlag in 2004. Tina Hartmann's study *Goethes Musiktheater* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2004) is the first comprehensive investigation into Goethe's music theater, and an important milestone in understanding Goethe's contribution to the rise of German national theater.

18 Thomas Denny, "Schubert's Operas: 'the judgment of history?'" in Christopher Gibbs (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Schubert* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 237.

19 Maurice Brown, "Schubert's Two Major Operas: a consideration of the Possibility of Actual Stage Production", *Music Review*, 20 (1959): 104–18.

20 Elizabeth Norman McKay, "Schubert as a Composer of Operas", in Eva Badura-Skoda and Peter Branscombe (eds), *Schubert Studies: Problems of Style and Chronology*

and Thomas Denny²¹—Schubert’s operatic oeuvre, like Goethe’s, has been largely overlooked and the extent of his endeavor in the field of opera underestimated. This chapter will chart a historic performance of Schubert’s and Goethe’s *Claudine von Villa Bella*—directly inspired by this musicological lacuna—where my perception of both artists’ achievements was fed into the musical life of rehearsals and informed the decisions of directors and performers.

Goethe’s music-theatrical innovations in *Claudine von Villa Bella*

Goethe’s first edition of *Claudine von Villa Bella* was published in Berlin by August Mylius in May 1776 with the subtitle, *Ein Schauspiel mit Gesang* (A play with music)—a term Goethe coined to indicate the literary quality of the text.²² Goethe’s Schauspiel, an avant-garde mixture of tragic and comic elements, which later developed in *opéra comique* and *opera semiseria*,²³ anticipated future developments in the North German Singspiel. Goethe’s handling of arias as part of the dramatic action, from the tradition of Italian *opera buffa*, had never been written into German opera before this time. Goethe’s introduction of the bandits onto the musical stage is unprecedented and his handling of this motif is unconventional in that it is centered upon the conflict between the individual and society.²⁴ Of central importance is Goethe’s development of the operatic tradition of the *lieto fine* where a tragic dramatic situation turns away from a tragic conclusion right at the last moment. Goethe’s employment of the *lieto fine* in *Claudine* reveals the direct influence of this *seria* tradition, though not to establish the harmony of the relationships but to make sense of this disharmony as Crugantino voices in the closing scene.

Although *Claudine von Villa Bella: Ein Schauspiel mit Musik* is a serious work for German music theater, its innovative form invited a caviling response from critics.²⁵ A further difficulty was the limitation of performance possibilities for composers, for whom the requirements of six singers exceeded the possibilities of most North German ensembles. André’s setting of 1778/79 was never performed,

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 85–104; and Elizabeth Norman McKay, *Schubert’s Music for the Theater* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1991).

21 Denny, “Schubert’s Operas: ‘the judgment of history?’”, pp. 224–38.

22 I traced the reception of both Schauspiel and Singspiel during Goethe’s time in my article “Revisiting *Claudine*: Schubert’s Goethe Singspiel”, in Lorraine Byrne (ed.), *Goethe and Schubert: Across the Divide* (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2003), pp. 161–92.

23 Goethe’s combination of forms reveals the influence of Piccinni’s setting of Goldoni’s *La buona figliuola* which embodies both elements and with which Goethe was familiar. Hartmann, *Goethes Musiktheater*, p. 549.

24 While this flight motif runs through all of Goethe’s Singspiel, it is usually women who seek to escape an oppressive and restricted situation. See, for example, Goethe’s *Erwin und Elmire*.

25 See *Beytrag zum Reichs-Postreuer*, pp. 285–7; *Neuer gelehrter Mercurius; Auserlesene Bibliothek der neuesten deutschen Litteratur* 10 (1776), pp. 490–98. The only positive report appeared in *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*, 31/2 (1777): 495. All reports are reproduced in Thomas Bauman, *North German Opera in the Age of Goethe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 172. See also Byrne, “Revisiting *Claudine*”, p. 162.

those by Seckendorff and Neeffe suffered a similar fate; and the first performance, in a setting by Ignaz von Beecke, took place in the Viennese Hofburgertheater on 13 June 1780.

Ten years after the work was written, Goethe decided to redress these issues in his recasting of *Claudine*,²⁶ where the number of singers was reduced to five and the dramatis personae were more clearly defined. The two couples, Pedro and Claudine, Rugantino and Lucinde, do not represent the comic and serious couple of *opera semiseria* and the North German Singspiel; they are equal in class and through their difference in character they give the piece its variety. Although the introduction of two couples reduces the dramatic conflict present in the *Sturm und Drang* motif of two men in love with one woman, it allows Goethe the possibility of a true *lieto fine*, which was ruled out in the original design. This final ensemble at the end of Act 2 offers the composer a wealth of possibilities which is unprecedented in Goethe's earlier libretti. Although Goethe was familiar with *opera buffa* long before he conceived the revisions for the Singspiel,²⁷ this closing finale clearly benefits from Goethe's direct experience of *opera buffa* during his Italian journey.²⁸ At the same time Goethe's dramatis personae contradict the relatively solid types of *buffa* which had been adopted from the *commedia dell'arte* and which had begun to be dissolved in Italy in the 1780s. Although the dramatic complexity of the characters in the first version is now relinquished, subtleties of characterization are unfolded in musical passages which also realize the possibilities of the musical-dramatic form. The Italian reworking of *Claudine* is therefore dramaturgically better as a Singspiel through this developed function of the songs.

Schubert's setting of *Claudine von Villa Bella* (D.239)

It is clear from Schubert's knowledge of music theater that he would have recognized Goethe's engagement with the tradition of *opera buffa* and it is not surprising that he chose to set Goethe's revised libretto, which not only offered him more musical possibilities, but forms an interesting play on traditions with which Schubert was familiar. Many of these innovations are centered upon Goethe's introduction of Lucinde as a true *buffa* figure, whose liveliness forms a direct contrast to the heroine, Claudine. For this reason Goethe gives Lucinde the rococo-like arietta of Amor's arrows, "Hin und wieder fliegen Pfeile" (Arrows flying back and forth), which follows Gluck's aria form and is also the most popular aria form of *opera seria*. Schubert's setting exquisitely realizes the irony in Lucinda's arietta where the strong

²⁶ *Italienische Reise, Hamburger Ausgabe*, ed. Erich Trunz (Hamburg: Christian Wegner Verlag, 1964), 11, pp. 516–17. Hereafter referred to as *HA*.

²⁷ See, for example, Goethe's letter to Johann Heinrich Jung on 3 February 1772, where he asks Jung to return the score of *Il mondo alla rovescia*, in J.W. v. Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke: Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche* (Frankfurt am Main, 1994–99), part II, vol. 1, pp. 255 and 774. Hereafter referred to as *FA*.

²⁸ For an example of his familiarity with this tradition, see Goethe's "Frauenrollen auf dem römischen Theater durch Männer gespielt", published in *Teutschen Merkur* in 1788. *WA*, part I, vol. 47, pp. 270–74.

metrical form of the aria stands in contrast to the lightweight theme which portrays the aggressive flight of Amor's arrows, namely the dangers of love, of which the realistic Lucinda is already conscious. Significantly Lucinda's arietta comes first, thereby usurping the real title figure. Schubert's variance of musical styles, between "Hin und wieder fliegen Pfeile" and Claudine's "Alle Freuden, alle Gaben, die mir heut' gehuldigt haben" (All the joys and all the presents lavished on me in abundance) which follows, heightens the humorous contrast between Lucinda's arietta and Claudine's romantic (and no less topical) aria about her beloved's flowers, which are valued above all other birthday gifts.

The musical humor in Schubert's setting is not limited to the female characters. As Pedro takes leave of Claudine in Act 1, the mock heroic style in which Schubert crafts his scenic aria, "Es erhebt sich eine Stimme" (Hear the ringing voice uplifted) brilliantly underscores Goethe's parody of a standard situation of *opera seria*. Pedro's juxtaposition of his love for Claudine and the question of honor plays upon the popular theme of opera and oratorio where the opera hero must leave behind his beloved as he sets out on a Herculean quest for fame and wealth. Without pointing to any particular opera, Goethe casts Pedro in an ironic light: his entire striving for fame applies neither to war nor power but is centered around the notion of honor as he sets out to find his brother. The conflict is, in any case, only the appearance of conflict, since in the course of the aria Pedro has already decided in favor of love and his absence will only be for a short time.

So, too, the change in name to Rugantino reveals this character as paradigmatic: "Rugantino" is a figure of the romantic improvised comedy; he plays the part of the typical Roman, comparable with Pulcinella for the Neapolitans. If Goethe called Rugantino after his favorite castrato, whose voice remained on his ear after his Italian journey, and thus transformed the hero of the first edition into a charismatic favorite of the general public, then this is in no way to be considered as a caricature. Schubert grasps the essence of Rugantino's character in "Räuberlied" (Bandits' Chorus), where he portrays him as a prototype of the best *buffa* singers: charming, temperamental, a harmless philanderer who seduces audiences with his song.

Although Schubert was still in his teens when he composed Goethe's Singspiel, it is clear from his musical setting he immediately grasped Goethe's parody of various traditions which the poet weaves into both music and dialogue. At the end of the work, Basco remarks:²⁹

Und wie man sonst ein theatralisch Werk	And just as it is usual to end a theatrical work
Mit Trauung oder Tod zu enden pflegt;	With a wedding or a death;
So, fürcht' ich, unser schwärmend lustig Leben	So I fear our life of unbridled amusement
Wird sich mit einer schalen Ordnung schließen. ¹	Will end with a shallow arrangement.

So, too, the customary expectation (to die or marry) of the music-theatrical form, is later parodied by Pedro, who ironically remarks: "Kaum ist der Bruder mir wiedergefunden, / ist ihm auch eine Geliebete nicht weit" (I've hardly found my

²⁹ *FA*, part I, vol. 5, p. 709. See also *Berliner Ausgabe: Goethes Werke*, ed. Siegfried Seidel et al. (22 vols, Berlin/Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag 1978), vol. 4, p. 168. Hereafter referred to as: *BA*. All translations, unless otherwise stated, are mine.

brother / When a lover is also at hand).³⁰ Such a play with traditions surely attracted Schubert to Goethe's libretto, the popular romantic comedy and musical humor of which are realized in the easy approachable nature of Schubert's setting. Towards the end of his life, Goethe confided in Eckermann that he had never worked with a composer of the same artistic caliber.³¹ Without question Schubert is the composer who came closest to realizing Goethe's operatic ambitions,³² though tragically his single Goethe operatic setting is now fragmentary.³³

Staging Goethe's and Schubert's *Claudine von Villa Bella*

The aims of the first staged performance in English of Goethe and Schubert's *Claudine von Villa Bella* were threefold: firstly, to stage a performance of a rarely-heard Singspiel by Franz Schubert; secondly, to address the misconception of Goethe as an unmusical poet, who was worlds apart from Schubert; and thirdly, to give young professionals from Northern and Southern Ireland the opportunity to work together on an educational project, which moved beyond the reception history of these artists, and brought about a crossing of cultural and political borders in the students' lives.³⁴ In staging *Claudine* music was seen neither as a sentimental panacea nor a facile solution to the Northern Ireland Peace Process, but as a practical forum whose presence could be intensely instructive. In rehearsals another world emerged against the backdrop of a divided country, a world which we hoped would herald the arrival of a new attitude in the performance.

The tradition of drama as political commentary in Ireland

The aim of this production was not to promote political drama, for this objective has already been addressed in Ireland by such companies as the Field Day Theatre Company, founded by dramatist Brian Friel and actor Stephen Rea in 1980 with the intention of establishing a new dramatic tradition that would unite Ireland culturally in ways that politics had not succeeded in doing. In Brian Friel's *Translations*, the play that launched the Field Day Theatre Company, classical myth plays an important role. Since then such adaptations of classical myths as Tom Paulin's *Antigone* and Seamus Heaney's *Philoctetes* which have appeared alongside other translated works

³⁰ *FA*, part I, vol. 5, p. 716 and *BA*, vol. 4, p. 175.

³¹ Johann Peter Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe*, ed. Hubert Houben (Wiesbaden: F.A. Brockhaus, 1959), February 12, 1829, p. 240.

³² For a detailed description of how Schubert's music reflects Goethe's artistic aims, see Lorraine Byrne, "Revisiting Claudine", pp. 178–92.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

³⁴ The stage performance took place in the Royal Irish Academy of Music in Dublin on 4 April 2003. A concert performance was given a week earlier in the University of Ulster, Jordanstown on 24 March 2003.

from Chekhov and Molière, demonstrate Friel's recognition that "it is necessary to look beyond Ireland in order to examine the condition of Ireland."³⁵

With the belief that our project should ideally lead to a cultural state of being rather than a political entity, we regarded the function of this North–South project in a similar way to playwright Stewart Parker, who believed that drama can help "substitute vibrant and authentic myths for the false and destructive ones" on which so many have been weaned.³⁶ To rehearse such a rare work as Goethe and Schubert's *Claudine* is artistically enriching. The full immersion into another culture allowed students to connect with the spirit of that culture and form an understanding that results in a broadening of human insight. The tenor of rehearsals migrated steadily away from fun to a desire to move beyond the past into a new relationship with the world. An expansive exploration of other cultures enabled the cast to transcend themselves as students of a small island and to enter the vanguard of a more peaceful humanity.

The tapestry of Goethe's libretto

Exploring Schubert's setting of Goethe's *Claudine von Villa Bella* opened up the possibility of discussing how all cultures, as well as all civilizations, are mixed, hybrid forms, full of elements taken from other cultures. Through discussion of the libretto's hybrid form it was shown that no culture is pure; every identity is a construction, a composite of different histories, migrations, conquests, liberations and so on. Students found it interesting to learn how history had defined Schubert's identity first as a composer of song; had later decried his innovative handling of large-scale forms, and even today still partly conceals his true musical identity in so far as most musicians are generally unaware of the large number of works which he wrote for the musical stage. Students were also surprised to discover that Goethe, one of the great humanistic writers of nineteenth century Germany, traveled across identities both in his writing and in his promotion of *Weltliteratur* (world literature) as a forum of communication among intellectuals and peoples across national borders. For Goethe, *Weltliteratur* was neither the amalgamation of national literatures nor the canon of world masterpieces, but rather a dynamic process of rapprochement among European citizens with the goal of breaking down the walls of national prejudices that hampered peaceful coexistence in the wake of the Napoleonic wars.³⁷ At a time when Ireland's population was rapidly embracing other cultures, the idea that Goethe recognized the advantages gained by German culture through its exposure to diverse forms of art brought the Olympian poet closer to the cast. Our idea behind such workshops was to discuss the idea of culture, not nationalistically, but to show students how it is made and can be remade for others. As Goethe saw in the past and

35 Eamonn Hughes, "To Define Your Dissent: The Plays and Polemics of the Field Day Theatre Company", *Theatre Research International*, 15/1 (1990): 70.

36 Stewart Parker, *Dramatis Personae* (Belfast: John Malone Memorial Committee, 1986), pp. 19–20.

37 Gerhart Hoffmeister, "Reception in Germany and abroad," in *The Cambridge Companion to Goethe*, p. 232.

in different cultures an opportunity to overcome the alienation of time and distance, we sought in rehearsals and performance to catch both artists' relationship to the nineteenth century, as well as to our own.

As musicologist and founder of this cultural peace project, my aim was to offer students an authentic vision of the possibilities for human community through discussions and performance of Goethe's and Schubert's text. As an educator, one of my central concerns is to teach students the art of interpretation, namely, how one reads, understands, and connects the artistic works of human culture with human activities. The goal of interpretation, in my opinion, is to learn how to connect things with each other—different peoples, different places, different cultures. In interpreting Goethe and Schubert's text we sought to teach students that all human activity takes place in history and is *of* history, but that culture is only culture when it is relived, reinterpreted and renewed.

Goethe's poetic form of drama appealed to the students greatly. In the tapestry Goethe weaves, one is conscious of human feeling rather than politics and history. Although a light-hearted piece, Goethe's text is a highly structured narrative which concretizes the really fundamental themes of human existence. Goethe crafts these themes into a sustained and focused narrative: his Singspiel embodies the distilled essence of human experience, gives symbolic answers to the most basic human questions, and offers stylized solutions to the most basic human decisions. Goethe's picture of the social order legitimates its institutions, codes, and values. It captures the zeitgeist of a time and place and at the same time evolves in rhythms linked to the rhythms of a larger historical and cultural evolution. By the standards of *Faust* and *Iphigenie*, the pantheon of archetypal characters in *Claudine* may, on first reading, seem glib; however, the dramatic personae of Goethe's Singspiel elicit a certain kind of personal involvement and constitute communal points of reference. They reflect the collective psyche as distinct from the factual reality: their very names reverberate with deeper meaning and the place, too, has mythic connotations. In performing this Singspiel in a modern context, the question is how to deal with this tale once we become conscious of it as myth, and how to mount a traditional performance of the first staged performance of this Singspiel in English, without violating contemporary experience.

Watching the wind: conflict resolution through a performance of *Claudine*

The answer emerged in the broad aims of the production as part of the Peace Process. In *Rainbow of Desire*,³⁸ Augusto Boal persuades us that theater germinated from our ancestors' attempt to come to terms with the enigmas of human nature. Ritualistic theater aimed at correcting the imbalances that existed between humans and fellow humans, humans and nature, and humans and the "world beyond" or the supernatural. Put differently, drama is central in the making of a culture, in the humanizing of the world.

38 Augusto Boal, *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy* (New York: Routledge Press, 1995).

Rather than interpreting the Singspiel in relation to historical events, which seemed to us gratuitous, we focused on addressing the notion of conflict through performance. Two directors shepherded the peace process among the cast. The translator and dramaturge, Dan Farrelly, a Germanist and Goethe scholar, had a seminary background in liberation theology and emancipatory praxis. We had worked together on a North–South performance of Goethe’s *Urfaust* in 1999. Dan had led workshops on Goethe’s *Iphigenie* in Johannesburg in 2001 as part of the Truth and Reconciliation Program in South Africa, where Goethe’s heroine was reframed within an indigenous concept—that of *ubuntu*, the meaning of which is twofold: humanness or humanity. Characteristically, Dan’s translation of *Claudine* aimed at a very naturalistic dialogue that was true to the spirit of the poet in contemporary performance and in rehearsals he accomplished this with characteristic dignity and quiet persistence. The role the Northern Irish playwright and director Andy Hinds played was also of paramount importance. This was evident from the beginning, not only from his desire to be guided by the formative forces of the spirit of the play, but also from his stagecraft and his ability to gain the trust of the cast at the first rehearsal. Hinds lured the students actively and inventively through a mosaic of insights, impressions and central themes, and inspired them to slip into the spirit of the respective characters. So too did the Dublin-born conductor, Colman Pearce, who brought years of experience of conducting Schubert’s symphonic works to the project, and who immediately recognized the musical and dramatic possibilities of Schubert’s score.³⁹ On discovering the scope of Schubert’s contribution to German opera, Pearce became committed to countering received opinions of Schubert’s opera in this production, and his characteristic good humor and innate musical gifts combined to elicit the best from those who worked with him.

***Claudine*: a pantheon of hidden conflicts**

“There is one story and one story only,” said Robert Graves in his lovely poem “To Juan at the Winter Solstice,” and perhaps in a certain sense that is true, though I have taken Graves’ line out of context and attached a different meaning to corroborate my belief that the imaginative narrative in *Claudine* is based on a scenario that goes back into astonishing reaches of antiquity. In *Claudine*, Pedro, a sympathetic and engaging character, is faced with a problem that it is necessary for him to solve,⁴⁰ he makes a series of attempts to overcome that problem while undergoing considerable anguish,⁴¹ and eventually, at the darkest moment of all, calls on some insight which

39 The score *Claudine von Villa Bella: Goethe’s Singspiel set by Franz Schubert*, ed. Lorraine Byrne and Dan Farrelly (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2003) was specially published for the performance. Dan translated Act 1 of Goethe’s Singspiel and I scored the piano reduction of Schubert’s setting.

40 *Claudine von Villa Bella, BA*, vol. 4, pp. 125 and 131–2; *Goethe’s Singspiel set by Franz Schubert*, pp. 62 and 78–9. The complete text for Schubert’s Singspiel is also published in Christian Pollack (ed.), *Franz Schubert Bühnenwerke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe der Texte* (Vienna: Hans Schneider Verlag, 1988), pp. 433–92.

41 *BA*, vol. 4, p. 132; *Goethe’s Singspiel set by Franz Schubert*, p. 79.

enables him to succeed, an insight that was not accessible to him at the beginning of the story.⁴² Taken on those terms, the story is one of conflict, perhaps with some external force, perhaps entirely within the soul of the protagonist, that leads to a clear resolution and illumination. Why has this formulation been so enduring and, apparently, universal? Is it simply a common expectation that has become a self-fulfilling requirement? Why is it expected? When did the need for such a formulation get built into human cultural expectations? A clue to our answer can be found in the history of Greek tragic drama through the notion of catharsis and the dramatic reconciliation of conflict. In Goethe's text the conflict has been domesticated, yet a vestige of this therapeutic function survives. *Claudine* begins with a setting of the scene and introduction of characters in a state of relative equilibrium. It then proceeds to a disruption of this equilibrium with the introduction of Rugantino, a catalyst for conflict.⁴³ There follows an exploration of the causes and consequences of his exile⁴⁴ followed by Pedro's various attempts at resolution,⁴⁵ which build toward a climax,⁴⁶ and it ends with resolution into a new state of relative equilibrium.

Dramatic workshops: stepping stones to the performance

Like Goethe and Schubert's creation of the *Singspiel*, the play was discovered in the process of performance. Rehearsals started with a character or a mood, and it was interesting to explore two different characters from the same background—namely Pedro and Rugantino—and to consider why Rugantino is adrift in the world. Workshops advanced in a healthy Socratic manner, asking questions to elicit insights: what moods do the scenes conjure forth? How are the characters' temperaments revealed in language and in speech? How do the different temperaments of Pedro and Rugantino orientate themselves on stage? Studying the temperaments gave the students insight into the polarity between the strengths and weaknesses of each persona. An extraordinary sympathy and understanding for the character of Rugantino and for the culture from which he arose emerged in rehearsals, where the discussion of the theme of conflict moved towards consideration of the roots and sources of conflict within us.

The condition of conflict and the themes of social and familial exile were explored against the hybrid nature of contemporary culture. In discussions of the text the cast recognized the dramatic notion of Protagonist and Antagonist in the symbolic conflict between Pedro and Rugantino, who embody contradictory principles in

⁴² *Claudine von Villa Bella: Ein Schauspiel mit Gesang*, HA, vol. 4, p. 258. *Claudine von Villa Bella: Ein Singspiel*, BA, vol. 4, pp. 167–8.

⁴³ Rugantino is the reason for Pedro's departure in Act 1 which disrupts the equilibrium of the opening scene, *Claudine von Villa Bella: Goethe's Singspiel set by Franz Schubert*, p.62.

⁴⁴ *Claudine von Villa Bella: Goethe's Singspiel set by Franz Schubert*, pp. 78–9. BA, vol. 4, pp. 131–2.

⁴⁵ *Claudine von Villa Bella: Goethe's Singspiel set by Franz Schubert* p. 79. See BA, vol. 4, pp. 132; 145–6; 163f.

⁴⁶ BA, vol. 4, pp. 145–6; 167–8; 171f.

their characters, namely the conflict between conformity and contradiction. Based on their discussion of these characters, students identified conflict in Goethe's text, as a clash of actions, ideas, desires or wills between: 1) person against person (the father/son conflict); 2) person against environment (the theme of inimical brothers, one of whom stands in direct conflict with society through his life as a vagabond), and 3) person against himself (Pedro's conflict with some psychological, emotional, or moral element in his own character).⁴⁷ In rehearsals the following questions were raised: Who is affected by the conflict between Rugantino and his father; who has a distinct stake in its outcome? How is Pedro's and Rugantino's relationship to one another affected by questions of power and affluence? What triggered the original dispute? What issues does Pedro need to resolve? When did this conflict begin? What circumstances existed that gave rise to it? How will it be resolved? In answering these questions, students drew on memory as well as direct observations of the text, considering conflicts on different levels: family, community, regional and national. The nature of conflict and forgiveness were considered in relation to the modern secular struggle in Northern Ireland. Through *Claudine*, a light-hearted piece with its veiled depiction of life's harsher realities, students could examine this concept and experience a personal catharsis in a way which had an impact on the spirit of the group, without ever pushing it to the edge. In discussion the two groups were as different from one another as one could possibly imagine—polar opposites in nearly every conceivable way, which, in itself, through contrast and comparison, threw light on issues that otherwise might have receded into the background. (One of the advantages of the *Claudine* fragment is that different endings could be discussed in rehearsals, as only Act 1 had been translated for publication and performance in Schubert's setting.)

A Singspiel rewritten for the music's sake

In preparing the production we looked at the function of music in the play. Was it there to accentuate conflict, heighten mood, or to provide a background to the scene? As Walter Pater said, "All art aspires to the condition of music."⁴⁸ In Goethe that aspiration results in a simultaneity of events occurring, neither confusing the situation nor making it over complex, but achieving the richness of a music that moves beyond dramatic expression. As Goethe intended, the musical component boosted the momentum of the Singspiel, injected it with more life, elevated and

47 These dramatic tensions are augmented in the first edition of the libretto through the *Sturm und Drang* motif of one woman loved by two men (revealing the influence of the popular German translation of Guglielmi's *La sposa fedele, Robert und Kalliste*); the theme of betrayed innocence (much explored in Weiße's and Hiller's productions) where Claudine's "light" character takes on social sharpness and the first duet of the Schauspiel, a debate between Pedro and Claudine, is musically and dramatically parallel to the action arias of Italian *opera buffa*.

48 Walter Pater, "Essay on the school of Giorgione", *Fortnightly Review*, October ed. (1877).

intensified the atmosphere. The Singspiel moved along seamlessly, and the poet used music to facilitate that flow.

Frontiers of reconciliation

Instead of providing an exceedingly dense account of rehearsals day by day like a diary, my focus is on the transformative potential of this unique production as a peace-enhancing process and addresses the question of whether it achieved a successful step towards genuine reconciliation and social transformation. In what sense was it a true reconciliation and was it attainable? How does one handle the necessary prerequisites of reconciliation? Who were the instruments of reconciliation in this cultural project? Who would carry the flame once the production came to an end? Fundamentally, how can Ireland—a country of spectacular beauty and promise—come to terms with its tragic history? Like the truth itself, the relationship between peace and reconciliation is extremely complex and the questions no one can answer are: How long after a collective injustice was committed does it need to be atoned for? And how much atonement is required? This project was one attempt to heal the gaping wounds of Northern Ireland's past and its role was to make matters of collective historical responsibility and accountability into questions of present awareness. The production promoted dialogue, kindled friendships, and helped "humanize" the other side. Students' deep affinity for music reached beyond dialogue, beyond music, beyond words, and was an effective tool for promoting peace. In this web of entertainment and education, the first performance in English of Schubert's and Goethe's *Claudine von Villa Bella* was a production about the change of heart that must impel the Northern Ireland peace process. The tenor of the students' transformations was transparent.

The cultural side of peace

One of the aims of the performance was societal healing through reconciliation. Promoting the Northern performance revealed community awareness of the Peace II commission, yet in contrast to the full house of the Dublin performance, the seats in the Northern theater were empty. Students were deeply disillusioned by this cultural impasse, and what it affirmed to us was our belief that until the mindset changes, genuine reconciliation will remain elusive, grievances will remain deep-seated, reintegration will be illusory, development will remain a mirage. Very little has been written on the quotidian lives of the Northern Ireland people that acknowledges the living reality of loss. The impression is that everyone manages, but the question is how and in what context. The real issues here are human and moral, and these *are* capable of being addressed through art. The first production in English of Goethe and Schubert's *Claudine von Villa Bella* opened a small window in the Northern Ireland peace process. This historic occasion sought to address misconceptions of Schubert's and Goethe's endeavors in German music theater, by mounting a semi-professional performance of this operatic fragment with a cast from Northern and Southern Ireland. In our search for symbolic change, it became one small step on a

historic bridge between the past of a deeply divided society characterized by strife, conflict, untold suffering and injustice, and a future founded on the recognition of democracy and peaceful coexistence based on equality and self-determination.

Postscript

Since this performance took place the two political sides in Northern Ireland are now sharing government with each other. Nevertheless, the process is considerably slower and the residue of antagonism will take a considerable time to abate. It is my hope that, in some small way, our performance of Schubert's and Goethe's *Claudine von Villa Bella* will have increased our cast's awareness of the need for a peaceful coexistence and helped them cross some borders of their own.

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