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Viennese composer Franz Schubert (1797-1828) left a vast oeuvre spanning various genres. Lieder represent the majority of his output with over 600 compositions. Schubert was the first to elevate the Lied from a melody with a simple accompaniment to a complex artform, making the text as important as the music itself, while keeping the music independent at the same time. “[...] *melodies that accompany me through life, eventful and calm, unsteady and mysterious, gloomy and bright, like life itself*” (Johann Mayrhofer: *Erinnerungen an Franz Schubert*, 1829)

“Nachtstück” (Nocturne) for voice and piano was composed in 1819 and is not part of a cycle. The text is a poem by Schubert’s contemporary and good friend Johann Mayrhofer. An introduction creates the scenery for the story (mm. 1-17), and is followed by a song within the song (mm. 18-39) with a very “harpistical” accompaniment (in the original piano version the sustain pedal should be held down to imitate the sound of a harp); the story then concludes with a lively accompaniment, and rapidly shifting tonality in the closing bars (mm. 40-68). The three parts differ in tempo and colour, and should evoke contrasting atmospheres. Since this composition is a song, accompaniment and melody should be clearly separated through articulation or playing position on the string (especially from mm. 41). Schubert’s Lieder are full of hidden messages (e.g. the slowly descending chromatic scale of the opening is a death motif). The correspondence of music and text shows the subject of death often paired with major keys, while reality and life are depicted in minor keys.

Johann Mayrhofer: Nachtstück

*Wenn über Berge sich der Nebel breitet
Und Luna mit Gewölken kämpft,
So nimmt der Alte seine Harfe, und schreitet
Und singt waldeinwärts und gedämpft:
„Du heilige Nacht: Bald ist’s vollbracht,
Bald schlaf ich ihn, den langen Schlummer,
Der mich erlöst von allem Kummer.“*

When the mists spread over the mountains,
and the moon battles with the clouds,
the old man takes his harp, and walks
towards the wood, quietly singing:
‘Holy night, soon it will be done.
Soon I shall sleep the long sleep
which will free me from all grief.’

*Die grünen Bäume rauschen dann:
„Schlaf süß, du guter, alter Mann“;
Die Gräser lispeln wankend fort:
„Wir decken seinen Ruheort“;
Und mancher liebe Vogel ruft:
„O lass ihn ruhn in Rasengruft!“
Der Alte horcht, der Alte schweigt,
Der Tod hat sich zu ihm geneigt.*

Then the green trees rustle:
‘Sleep sweetly, good old man’;
and the swaying grasses whisper:
‘We shall cover his resting place.’
And many a sweet bird calls:
‘Let him rest in his grassy grave!’
The old man listens, the old man is silent.
Death has inclined towards him.

Nachtstück

in C-moll Op. 36 Nr. 2, D. 672

by Franz Schubert
arranged by Elisabeth Plank

Measures 1-3 of the piano score. The key signature is C minor (three sharps). The time signature is common time (C). The first measure starts with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The second measure begins with a crescendo (*cresc.*). The third measure ends with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The bass line includes the following chord symbols: C#4/A#4, G#4, D#4, C#4/E#4, A#4, A#4, B#4-B#4/E#4.

Measures 4-6 of the piano score. Measure 4 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. Measure 5 is marked piano-piano (*pp*). Measure 6 begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The bass line includes the following chord symbols: D#4, Bb4/Ab4, G#4, C#4, C#4, B#4/G#4, C#4/A#4, D#4/G#4.

Measures 7-8 of the piano score. Measure 7 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. Measure 8 is marked forte (*f*). The bass line includes the following chord symbols: C#4/E#4, A#4, A#4, B#4, B#4/E#4, B#4.

Measures 9-11 of the piano score. Measure 9 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. Measure 10 is marked piano-piano (*pp*). Measure 11 is a whole rest. The bass line includes the following chord symbols: D#4, Bb4/Ab4, C#4/G#4, C#4/A#4, B#4/G#4.

Nachtstück

12

pp

B# D#

17

pp

6 6 6 6

B

19

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

21

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

G