

Schubert's "Ständchen" in the Voice of the Cinematic Amateur

JENNIFER RONYAK

In 1838 Franz Liszt described what it was like to listen to the amateur Baron Karl von Schönstein, the singer to whom Franz Schubert had dedicated *Die schöne Müllerin*. Scattered sources, as well as Schubert's own positive assessment of Schönstein, reveal that he was a fine singer. For him, the term "amateur" would have referred to the fact that singing was not his primary profession, as opposed to any lack of ability.¹ Liszt, however, goes further than prais-

ing Schönstein's mastery; he also finds special value in his status as an amateur: "In the salons, I heard an amateur, the Baron Schönstein, present Lieder by Schubert. [I did so] with lively joy, and often to the point of tears. . . . The Baron Schönstein declaims them with the science of a great artist and sings them with the simple feeling of the dilettante, who gives himself over to

nehme ich mit Vergnügen an, das ich Bar Schönstein immer gern singen höre." In *Schubert: Die Dokumente seines Lebens*, ed. Otto Erich Deutsch, reprint of 2nd edn. (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1996), 537–38. Secondary sources cataloging multiple contemporaneous accounts of Schönstein's singing include Eric Van Tassel, "'Something Utterly New': Listening to Schubert Lieder 1: Vogl and the Declamatory Style," *Early Music* 25/4 (1997): 702–14, and Heinrich Kreißle von Hellborn, *Franz Schubert* (Vienna: Carl Gerold's Sohn, 1865), 135, 136, 142, 437. Although officially of amateur status (having not made his main career in music or the theater, but as a bureaucrat with a noble title), Schönstein did perform in both private and public concerts. The aforementioned and additional sources note that he was a fine singer of Italian vocal music as well, and that he was "converted" to Schubertian song.

This article draws on a paper given at the National Conference of the German Studies Association in 2013 and on lectures given at the University of Arkansas in 2013 and at the Kunstuniversität Graz in the summer of 2017; I thank those in attendance for their insightful comments. Alexandra Monchick, as well as Alexander Stefaniak, provided helpful feedback on drafts of the article, as did the anonymous readers for this journal. I am also grateful for Dana Gooley's work on the text and for the engraving work done by the journal's staff.

¹See, for example, letter of Franz Schubert to H. H. von Jenger, 25 September 1828, "Die Einladung zu D. Mens

his feelings without worrying about the public. . . ."² In this article, I trace the presence of this "simple feeling of the dilettante," as well as broader ideas concerning amateurism or dilettantism, through three performances of Schubert's song "Ständchen" (*Schwanengesang*, D. 957, no. 4).³ I take one suggestive stream of twentieth-century performance and reception history of the song as my object of analysis: film stagings of nineteenth-century amateur parlor performances of the song. I focus on these film representations for a number of reasons. First, such film scenes contain vivid audio and visual materials, which allow for readings of individual performances of the song that a study of the

²Franz Liszt, "Lettre d'un Bachelier És-Musique; A M. Lambert Massart," *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* 5/35 (2 September 1838): 345–52, at 352. Portions of this letter also appeared in German shortly thereafter. See Franz Liszt, "Bruchstück eines Briefs von Liszt: über seinen letzten Aufenthalt in Wien (Übersetzung aus der Gazette musicale de Paris von Reuter)," *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 9/32 (19 October 1838): 128–30. "Dans les salons, j'entendis avec un plaisir très-vif et souvent une émotion qui allait jusqu'aux larmes, un amateur, le baron de Schonstein, dire les Lieder de Schubert. La traduction française ne nous donne qu'une idée bien imparfaite de ce qu'est l'union de ces poésies presque toutes extrêmement belles, avec la musique de Schubert, le musicien le plus poète qui fut jamais. La langue allemande est admirable dans l'ordre du sentiment; peut-être aussi n'ya-t-il qu'un Allemand qui sache bien comprendre la naïveté et la fantaisie de plusieurs de ces compositions, leur charme capricieux, leur abandon mélancolique. Le baron de Schonstein les déclame avec la science d'un grand artiste, et les chante avec la sensibilité simple d'un amateur qui se laisse aller à ses émotions sans se préoccuper du public. Un des meilleurs souhaits que je puisse vous faire, mon ami, c'est que vous alliez à Vienne, ou qu'il aille à Paris, et que nous ayons alors le bonheur de l'entendre ensemble."

³Lieder were an especially important genre in the amateur sheet music marketplace in the nineteenth century. Axel Beer, in *Musik zwischen Komponist, Verlag und Publikum. Die Rahmenbedingungen des Musikschaflens in Deutschland im ersten Drittel des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 2000), 429, presents tables containing percentages of published vocal music by thirteen major German publishers studied during the period that verify that Lieder were by far the main vocal music product of these publishing houses. Additional studies that address this phenomenon often consider the perspective of individual canonical composers in this marketplace, or think speculatively about the performance consequences of particular songs for hypothetical voices: Barbara Turchin, "Schumann's Conversion to Vocal Music: A Reconsideration," *Musical Quarterly* 67/3 (1981): 392–404; David Gramit, "Lieder, Listeners, and Ideology: Schubert's *Alinde* and Opus 81," *Current Musicology* 58 (1995): 28–60; Lawrence Kramer, "Performance and Social Meaning in the Lied: Schubert's *Erster Verlust*," *Current Musicology* 56 (1994): 5–23.

scarce documentation of amateur performances in the nineteenth century cannot to the same degree. Second, these film scenes, and the films in which they occur, offer a dense layering of fragmentary nineteenth-century historical materials with newer agendas and aesthetics. This combination mirrors, albeit very freely, the mix of current aesthetic concerns and the search for historical meanings and contexts that sometimes preoccupy musicology as a discipline. Like music historians, makers of period film arguably seek to find meaning in or make meaning from the past, although with much greater creative license than professional historians, either demonstrating the past's "foreignness" or its continuity with the present.⁴ Scholarship has also demonstrated that some audiences approach period films as sites for meaningful—if itself amateur and loose—historical thinking.⁵ These aspects of period film invite analyses that similarly take into account relationships between values, social practices, and aesthetics of the nineteenth century, the reception of these in the twentieth, and how our current preoccupations might relate to either of these perspectives. Third, these parlor performances of "Ständchen" in film also involve a narrower contradiction essential to the nonhistoricity in the films. In each case, a celebrity woman movie star both sings and otherwise portrays the amateur onscreen. This paradox can engender additional insight into

⁴Robert Rosenstone, "Inventing Historical Truth on the Silver Screen," in J. E. Smyth, *Hollywood and the American Historical Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 183–91, at 184, advances the position that historical films—even in all their dramatic license and presentist concerns, modern techniques—are also a way of "doing history, if by the phrase 'doing history' we mean seriously attempting to make meaning of the past." While period film as a term can also include looser categories of the "historical" (i.e., adaptations of classic literature or newly written fictional scenarios set in the past), aspects of this perspective certainly apply.

⁵Claire Monk, *Heritage Film Audiences: Period Films and Contemporary Audiences in the UK* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), addresses this factor through extensive empirical audience research (using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in a survey given to two contrasting groups of period film audiences in the U.K.). For some segments of her audience, period films were important because they facilitated either a chance to see the past as "foreign," or, on the other hand, a chance to think about how current social struggles had roots in the past (see, for example, 133–35).

changing twentieth-century representations of the "simple feeling of the dilettante" onscreen, and how these portrayals are dependent on various levels of professional musical mastery and vocal dilettantism on the part of each star. When viewed in light of each celebrity's persona beyond the single film under study, the actresses' performances accrue further layers of meaning.

Keeping in view these intricate aspects of the evidence, this article analyzes staged parlor performances of Schubert's "Ständchen" in three diverse period films from two different eras of filmmaking.⁶ These are the operetta-influenced Schubert picture *Leise flehen meine Lieder* (1933), in which operetta star Mártha Eggerth sings as the Countess Esterházy, the classic novel adaptation *Jane Eyre* (1934), in which Virginia Bruce sings as the titular character, and a newly written piece of "governess fiction," *The Governess* (1998), in which Minnie Driver performs the song as said governess. The three stagings of the "simple feeling of the dilettante" reveal a number of overlapping ways in which the figure of the amateur, together with Schubert's well-known song, have signified across the twentieth century and into the present. In each case, the characters' vocal and visual presence onscreen, the relationship of these scenes to the whole films and their sources and contexts, and the specific persona of each star as a celebrity and singer beyond the specific film combine to allow comment on several factors concerning the figure of the amateur. Each film presents a vision of amateur singing that brings to life the

special emotional or personal authenticity signaled already in Liszt's comment. This valorization of amateurism is sometimes buttressed and sometimes undercut by the star actresses' musical and nonmusical identities beyond the film. Alongside this unsteady valorization, the film scenes also offer audiences opportunities to think about the particular social benefits or obstacles that could have inflected women's amateur music-making in the nineteenth century in particular. This interpretive angle gains depth when considering how the films' audiences might have understood each actress's persona beyond the space of the films. Given that the types of period films under study—operetta, classic literary adaptation, and "free" historical fiction or costume drama—have traditionally been thought by the film industry and critics to be gendered feminine and to be made for women audiences, the specific close readings of actresses' personas in relationship to the films found in this article particularize the implications of these larger contexts.⁷

My analysis also has several aims with respect to the existing scholarship on amateurism in general and its relationship to nineteenth-century Lieder in particular. I explore the term "amateur" in a few overlapping senses, some of which I have already mentioned, all of which coexisted as partial meanings of the term in the early nineteenth century, and some of which continue to exist today. These include: amateurs as performers having a special sincerity or authenticity, amateurs as having limited mastery, amateurs as making music purely for leisure, amateurs as making music for calculated social reasons (especially in the case of seduction), amateurs as sometimes derided or distrusted for their lack of expertise or specialization, and amateurs as having access to a special sort of creativity by not being bound to the rules of professionals. I take the potential aesthetic qualities of these various aspects of amateurism seriously. Although I touch upon all of the above meanings, I emphasize scenarios that bring to mind

⁶I employ the term "period film" throughout this article as an umbrella term that applies to a few more specific genre designations within film studies for films clearly set in the past, in order to address their commonalities. For example, *Leise flehen meine Lieder* could be designated an intensely fictionalized biopic, an operetta film, or a hagiographical film about Schubert the canonical composer. *Jane Eyre* is more specifically classified as a classic adaptation; the *Governess* could be classified as belonging partly to the recent decades of "heritage film" in a specifically U.K. context, or as a more internationally driven "period film." Belén Vidal, *Figuring the Past: Period Film and the Mannerist Aesthetic* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), especially at 19, uses "period film" as a broader category that encompasses production companies and distribution plans beyond the U.K. context. (She also includes *The Governess* in her analysis at 154–61.)

⁷See Vidal, *Figuring the Past*, 24–26, and Chris Robé, "Taking Hollywood Back: The Historical Costume Drama, the Biopic, and Popular Front U.S. Film Criticism," *Cinema Journal* 48/2 (2009): 70–87.

the nonmastery, or at least lack of specialization, of some amateur voices. Previous studies of song performance—especially after the age of recordings—have generally tended to focus on classically trained and usually masterful Lied singers. In response, this study includes two film stars—Bruce and Driver—who are not at all Schubert experts. In the case of all three actresses under study, however, their public profiles, the presence of their differing singing voices in other film and recording contexts, and their onscreen Schubert performances shine light on how film representations of amateur voices across the twentieth century richly engage with key terms of a discourse on amateurism that was established already in the nineteenth century.

This study further holds a microscope to Schubert's song to ask about the nature of its special charm and popularity. It asks how this relates to enduring myths concerning Schubert's most popular songs as "natural" repositories of melody and the image of Schubert himself as a composer from which these melodies poured out. Upon the publication of *Schwanengesang*, in fact, Gottfried Wilhelm Fink singled out "Ständchen" as a special case that aligns with these ideas: "In poetry and music 'Ständchen,' no. 4, belongs among the most admirable cantilenas. In addition to the elegant languishing words, the melody has something so sweetly alluring [and] the simple, restlessly demanding accompaniment adorns so appealingly, that it will undoubtedly become everyone's favorite."⁸ As these three films and further reception history research document, Fink was right.⁹ The question is why. The specific use of Schubert's song in these three parlor performances, as well as

⁸Gottfried Wilhelm Fink, review of *Winterreise* and *Schwanengesang*, *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 40/7 (7 October 1829), cols. 659–62. My translation modified from Walburga Litschauer, "The Origin and Early Reception of *Schwanengesang*," in *A Companion to Schubert's Schwanengesang: History, Poets, Analysis, Performance*, ed. Martin Chusid (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 9.

⁹For example, Christopher H. Gibbs, *The Presence of Erlkönig: Reception and Reworkings of a Schubert Lied* (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1992), 137, notes that "Ständchen," which he calls a "meta-song" about singing itself, was among Schubert's most popular in the nineteenth century.

in other aspects of these three films' scores, offers some evidence toward at least a partial answer. In this effort I also particularize some of the central observations of Adorno in his 1928 essay on Schubert. Adorno found the fragmentary "potpourri" arrangement of Schubert's hits for use in the successful "biographical" operetta *Das Dreimäderlhaus* (1916) to be an essential part of the operetta's status as kitsch. Yet Adorno connected this popularized fragmentation of Schubert's works to his larger intuitions about the "crystal," "frozen," and "landscape" dispositions of Schubert's melody-rich musical forms in multiple musical genres, which eschew, among other devices, "organic" Beethovenian development.¹⁰ Adorno thus found the middlebrow genre of operetta to reveal something profound about Schubert's music. I seek to discover what these three cinematic amateurs, and the also arguably middlebrow films in which they star, can tell us about the enduring link between amateur voices and a serenade that was always meant to sound out from within them.

MÁRTHA EGGERTH: OPERETTA MASTER AS ARISTOCRATIC AMATEUR

A number of sound films loosely based upon mythologized and often purely fictional aspects of Franz Schubert's life and works appeared starting in the 1930s, following on the earlier international success of the operetta *Das Dreimäderlhaus* and two subsequent English-language versions, *Blossom Time* (U.S., 1921) and *Lilac Time* (England, 1922). In one rather successful film example, director Willi Forst's *Leise flehen meine Lieder* (1933, English version *Unfinished Symphony* 1934), stage and film operetta star Mártha Eggerth performs "Ständchen" in an idealized parlor scene. Eggerth was a masterful singer onstage, onscreen, and in studio recordings. But in this parlor staging her status as a professional master of classical singing (if

¹⁰Theodor W. Adorno, "Schubert (1928)," translated by Jonathan Dunsby and Beate Perrey, this journal 29/1 (2005): 3–14, at 8–10. See also Beate Kutschke, "Kitsch: ein unerlaubtes Glück? Zum Kitschbegriff bei Adorno," in *Musik und Kitsch*, ed. Katrin Eggers and Nina Noeske (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2014), 105–23, at 106–11.

primarily known from her appearances in the light genre of operetta) actually works to underscore the "simple feeling of the dilettante" in the form of an amateur's fantasy of beautiful, natural singing. This masterful onscreen performance also works to bind "Ständchen" to the myth of Schubert as the "natural" composer of "naturally" melodic Lieder. The film inherits this myth from the nineteenth century and propagates it heavy-handedly throughout its scenes. When analyzed beyond the space of the single film, Eggerth's portrayal of the amateur Countess onscreen also collides with aspects of the film genre of operetta, with her identity as a star across multiple operetta performances and films, and with aspects of her star image as constructed in the film industry press and the popular press in Austria and Germany. The interaction of these elements illuminates a broader array of possible meanings that her onscreen performance as the Countess may have carried for musically and socially attentive viewers. Lastly, Eggerth's onscreen performance had further consequences for the reception of Schubert's already popular Lied during the 1930s. The specific musical characteristics of the onscreen arrangement, and of a related recording made for purchase and for radio play, allowed the song to fluidly traverse generic hierarchies that organized how listeners encountered classical and popular music on the radio.

Eggerth's performance of "Ständchen" as the Countess Esterházy comes after a great deal has already taken place in the film. Earlier in the film, the Countess attends the Princess Kinsky's salon, where Schubert is performing for the first time in the hopes of gaining increased patronage for his career. During Schubert's performance at the piano of themes from his Unfinished Symphony, the Countess Esterházy interrupts his performance with laughter unrelated to his music. Taking great offense, Schubert breaks off his performance and leaves the salon, creating a bad reputation for himself with respect to potential patrons. Feeling guilty, the Countess Esterházy convinces her father to hire Schubert as a music teacher for her and her sister.

Shortly after Schubert arrives at the Esterházy estate, he gives the Countess her

first singing lesson. After Schubert explains that rhythm is the most basic element of music, he hands her the score to "Ständchen" and instructs her to repeat the opening text after him in rhythm, with the support of a metronome. She does so and follows the spoken pattern on her own with "in den stillen Hain hernieder" (mm. 11–12) before picking up the melody elegantly, with wonderful legato and breath support, and with the accompaniment of a nondiegetic string section at "Liebchen, komm zu mir" (mm. 13–14, see ex. 1, which provides the full score to the song). As she continues to sing with the strings, Schubert stops conducting, and the metronome, as phallic symbol, stands up still and straight, as Laura Tunbridge has noted in her reading of the scene, which emphasizes the mastery of the Countess's seduction.¹¹ The remainder of the Countess's performance, while certainly sensitive to the song's rhythm, partakes in such a luxurious legato that Schubert's dotted rhythms in the vocal line give way to a seemingly more "natural" way of declaiming the German text. The Countess uses a small amount of portamento rather frequently. She flaunts her virtuosity at the moments where the song goes into a high tessitura. In mm. 27–28, on "fürchte, Holde, nicht," and again, on "jedes weiche Herz," she masterfully pulls back the dynamic level to a shimmering *piano*, and lingers extensively on the high note before executing her final portamento to the cadence—a device that she uses to even greater effect on its last appearance on the second "Komm, beglücke mich" (mm. 49–50).

The Countess thus goes from ostensibly needing a basic lesson in rhythm, let alone the elements of melody and harmony Schubert mentions in his short speech to her, to singing not only well but with overwhelming operatic prowess. Considered from the standpoint of the singing voice of the fictitious Countess, as opposed to the operetta film star Eggerth, the Countess proves in large part to correspond to aspects of Liszt's positive assessment of the

¹¹Laura Tunbridge, *Singing in the Age of Anxiety: Lieder Performances in New York and London between the World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 89.

Mässig

Singstimme

Planoforte *pp*

5

Lei - se fle - hen mei - ne Lie - der durch die Nacht zu dir;
Hörst die Nach - ti gal - len schla - gen? ach! sie fle - hen dich,

9

in den stil - len Hain her - nie - der,
mit der Tö - ne sü - ssen Kla - gen

13

Lieb - chen, komm zu mir! flü - sternd schlan - ke
fle - hen sie für mich. Sie ver - stehn des

The image shows a musical score for Schubert's 'Ständchen'. It consists of a vocal line (Singstimme) and a piano accompaniment (Planoforte). The score is in 3/4 time and B-flat major. The tempo is marked 'Mässig' and the piano part is marked 'pp'. The lyrics are in German and are written below the vocal line. The score is divided into four systems, with measures 5, 9, and 13 marked at the beginning of their respective systems. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand.

Example 1: Schubert, "Ständchen."

similarly aristocratically titled Schönstein in the nineteenth century. She pursues Lied singing passionately and masterfully, without concern for earning money or reaching a large public audience. While her additional budding love interest in Schubert and her status as a seductress in this scene may tarnish this otherwise purely artistic vision of her as a nineteenth-century amateur, it also adds an aura of

intimacy to her approach. She sings only for herself and him. For the viewer, the Countess's transformation from a supposedly extreme beginner to a master of melodic singing could also serve as a fantasy of amateur singing that itself is based in amateur and Schubertian "naturalness"; amateur singers viewing the scene can imagine that they could sing the song equally well with little training.

18
Wip - fel rau - schen in des Mon - des Licht, in des Mon - des
Bu - sens Seh - nen, ken - nen Lie - bes - schmerz, ken - nen Lie - bes -

22
Licht, des Ver - rä - thers feind - lich Lau - schen fürch - te, Hol - de, nicht,
schmerz, rüh - ren mit den Sil - ber - tö - nen je - des wei - che Herz,

27
fürch - te, Hol - de, nicht!
je - des wei - che

32

Example 1 (*continued*)

In specific terms of Schubertian “naturalness,” the Countess’s performance also adds “Ständchen” to the list of Schubert Lieder that the film portrays as easily imitated, natural melodic forms that practically sing themselves.¹²

¹²Tunbridge, *Singing in the Age of Anxiety*, 90, also notes that Eggerth in at least one other film instance treats a Schumann Lied more like a familiar folk song than art music.

Two additional scenes in the film hammer this message home. Early on, Schubert begins to form a friendship with the daughter of the owner of a pawn shop, who helped him to earn a higher than standard price when selling his guitar there. While Schubert and the girl have their first extended conversation following this event, they hear women at a nearby well singing an *a cappella* choral arrangement of “Der Lindenbaum.”

37 ^{2.}
Herz. Lass auch dir die Brust be - we - gen, Lieb - chen, hö - re

41
mich! be - bend harr' ich dir ent - ge - gen!

45
komm, be - glü - cke mich! komm, be - glü - cke mich,

50
be - glü - cke mich!

55
dimin.

cresc.

f

p

f

pp

The musical score consists of five systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The lyrics are in German. Performance markings include dynamics like *f* (forte), *p* (piano), and *pp* (pianissimo), and articulation like *cresc.* (crescendo) and *dimin.* (diminuendo). There are also slurs and accents throughout the score.

Example 1 (continued)

Schubert tells her that "the song that they are singing—it is by me." The girl assumes that he "must earn much money" with such a popular song. Schubert then answers: "[people] do not pay for my songs." The girl counters "how so—one must surely pay for the sheet music!" At this point, Schubert explains: "My songs are so easy, that everyone can immediately sing them after hearing them (*nachsingen kann*)." An additional scene prior to the Countess's performance secures the myth's stronghold in the film. While Schubert is teaching mathematics to a classroom full of young boys, he dreamily breaks with writing multiplication tables on the board for the boys to repeat after him. Transforming the numbers into a $\frac{2}{4}$ time signature, he begins to sketch just the melody of "Heidenröslein," while also humming. On the next "repeat after me," the boys inadvertently repeat the melodic fragment: given that the voices actually belong to the Vienna Boys Choir, they do so masterfully. Before we know it, a fully harmonized arrangement in an *a cappella* performance emerges from the boys in the classroom. In relationship to the scene at the well and this additional choral singing scene, the Countess's solo performance thus shows the communal singability of Schubert's songs to be just as operative in the private confines of a staged music lesson in an aristocratic home.

Of course, the "natural" intrusion of beautiful vocal performances into the plot of this film does not only stem from this myth concerning Schubert's Lieder. It is more broadly related to the genre of operetta off and onscreen, from which Forst took the general inspiration for this film. In operetta, as in all musical theater, skillful singing punctuates the drama as a matter of generic expectation, regardless of the identity of the characters in the drama. But beyond this basic fact of musical theater, the operetta genre as practiced in Vienna in the first few decades of the twentieth century, including in early sound film, offered an especially escapist vision. Charm—even to the point of a hazy kitsch—was frequently a feature of the genre. Past times were to be primarily idealized, and any more troubling aspects of the plot were to be relatively neutralized if not fully resolved by the

end.¹³ *Leise flehen meine Lieder* does not necessarily portray this ideal too rosily: Schubert's love affair with the Countess is thwarted by her father, and his last attempt to perform his symphony for her—as a gift for her wedding to another at the end of the film—results in her crying out and fainting, as well as his determination to leave the symphony unfinished. Although this is countered by a sudden shift of scene, to a country shrine to the Virgin Mary accompanied by a chorus-orchestra recording of Schubert's *Ave Maria*, we don't necessarily leave the theater with all of this potential sadness washed away. But the idealization of these three song performances does a lot to counter any negative emotional effect. With this in mind, it is worth noting that the Countess's performance, while vocally masterful, scrupulously avoids acknowledging that Rellstab's pleading text and Schubert's setting of it projects worry and urgency that the beloved will not respond in kind. Through the entire performance the Countess steadfastly takes a primarily playful approach to the emotional implications of the text and music. She sings everything with an untroubled, knowing smile that seems to treat the song more as a site of melodic and sensual pleasure for her and her listener than as a site of any emotional turmoil. This approach is especially clear at the beginning of the song's B section (mm. 38–59) at m. 38 on "Lass auch dir die Brust bewegen": the Countess's tempo and vocal energy become more urgent, but do nothing to fully embody the sense of true

¹³Fredericke Jary-Janecka, "Schubert—zweifach popular. *Das Dreimäderlhaus*—von der Operette zum Film," in *Das Musiktheater in den audiovisuellen Medien: . . . ersichtlich gewordene Taten der Musik' Vorträge und Gespräche des Salzburger Symposions 1999*, ed. Peter Csobádi, Gernot Gruber, Jürgen Kühnel, Ulrich Müller, Oswald Panagl, and Franz Viktor Spechtler (Anif/Salzburg: Verlag Mueller-Speiser, 2001), 446–58, at 446. Jary-Janecka cites Franz Lehar's approach to escapism in operetta (Österreichischer Rundfunk/Ö1: *Phonmuseum* from 22 December 1984): "Meine Lebensaufgabe sehe ich darin, den grauen Alltag meiner Mitmenschen zu verschönern, indem ich in der Musik . . . das bringen will, was sich jeder Mensch erhofft: Freude und ein bisschen Sonnenschein." She also notes that operetta is particularly well suited to this escapist goal, in that it presents an idealized past in a "perfect union of words and music."

urgency or worry that could be conveyed by this contrasting moment in the song. The happy smile on her face further neutralizes what Schubert's score seems to construct as a troubled, impatient outburst.

As Tunbridge has also briefly noted concerning this film, viewers would have likely known Eggerth from her fame both on the Viennese operetta stage and in a handful of earlier films; her film career continued also beyond the filming of *Leise flehen meine Lieder* to encompass further singing roles in German-language films and later, in Hollywood.¹⁴ Insofar as the singing scene, especially, sonically highlights the fact that the Countess is also the star Eggerth, it is reasonable to consider the ways in which viewers who followed her career might have taken into account these factors when also getting to know the character of the Countess onscreen. In fact, the press coverage of Eggerth shortly before, around, and slightly after the release of this film in 1933 presents multiple sides of her image as a star that could have had implications for how the Countess signified onscreen.

The popular illustrated press went beyond chronicling Eggerth's vocal and acting talent and popular success to try to capture her distinct charm, which was apparently something even more special in person than in a magazine photograph or onscreen. For example, an author for the illustrated *Das Magazin* in 1932 insists that her "appeal" is so attractive precisely because she seems to be unaware of it: it is "natural," much like both Schubert's song and the Countess's performance as constructed for the film.¹⁵ Still, while this portion of the press steadfastly advertised her star quality, the trade press for the film industry in Austria reveals the more negative and limiting viewpoints propagated during the same period. Her professional decisions were sometimes criticized as too selfish or diva-like, especially concerning a particular contract negotiation that she was involved with in 1936.¹⁶ A newer sort of coverage began to make her career and,

especially, any opinions that she might wish to express secondary to those of her singing film star husband, Jan Kiepura, whom she married in 1936. Once the two became established as a couple, the film trade press was predictably much more interested in hearing his artistic views than in covering Eggerth separately or directly.¹⁷ Given this atmosphere, film moments like the Countess's performance, much like powerful performances by women in earlier eras of musical theater genres and opera, offered a picture of both approachable amateur naturalness and artistic "amateur" mastery that alternately confirmed and subverted how her star image was constructed offscreen.

The combination of Eggerth's vocal mastery as heard onscreen and the aural fictive image of Schubert's as "natural" within the film poised her approach to the song to be marketable to a rather wide audience, which went beyond those listeners who might have been broadly knowledgeable about Schubert. Her potential audience would have reached well outside of the film's original German-speaking context, since it was produced in a number of different international versions (including the English one aforementioned) shortly after the completion of the German version, as was the case with many films during the period. She recorded the song in a shortened version for Odéon in 1933, a recording that was also distributed under the Parlophone label (the length of a record side during the period necessitated the cut).¹⁸ The A' section of the song (mm. 1–27, second ending at m. 37, on the repeat) is left out entirely. While some features of her handling of the vocal line in the film itself carry over—for example, the lingering cadential portamento gestures—her approach to the recording otherwise tones down the lustful playing with the rhythm of the melodic line that she engages in in the film scene. This situates the recording not only on the stricter

¹⁴Tunbridge, *Singing in the Age of Anxiety*, 89–90.

¹⁵F. W. K., "Neue Tonfilm=Soubretten I. Martha Eggerth," *Das Magazin* 8/93 (May, 1932), 7209–7211, at 7210–7211.

¹⁶See, for example, "Die Diktatur der Stars," *Der Wiener Film* (14 July 1936), 1.

¹⁷See "Kiepura und Eggerth auf dem Weg nach Wien," *Der Wiener Film* (15 June 1937), 2, and "Der Kiepura und der Eggerth Film der Projektograph," *Der Wiener Film* (15 December 1936), 1.

¹⁸Marta Eggerth, soprano, and Otto Dobrindt, conductor, "Ständchen," D. 957, no. 4, Odéon, Be 10409, recorded 25 August 1933.

side rhythmically and tempo-wise, in comparison to her onscreen performance; it also does so with respect to a number of the other plentiful professional recordings of the song during the period, which sometimes took great license with rubato, tempo, and outright pauses. But while in this sense it might seem to constrain the dramatic "excess" of the operetta film scene in favor of a relative "Werktreue," the way in which it was marketed and broadcast helped to further cast Schubert's song in the 1930s as a popular, accessible tune. At least one pressing of the record specified the song as being from the film *Unfinished Symphony* (the title of the English-language version release). And records of an Austrian radio broadcast of the program "Aus Tonfilmen" show that this recording was played alongside a number of other sung and danced genres in the movies, especially tunes that had a foxtrot rhythm.¹⁹ It was thus likely that radio listeners heard "Ständchen" at one moment as a film song, and another in a more "elevated" presentation along other classical Lieder and, even, with spoken poetry in particular programs. The flexible generic company that "Ständchen" kept in these radio broadcasts also participated in a larger set of trends and discourses that Laura Tunbridge has analyzed concerning Lieder in live performance, in recordings, in radio, and in film during the period. Schubert's songs had a secure status by the 1930s as essentially high-brow works in British and American contexts—a feature that they surely shared, if with different cultural associations, in Austria and Germany. But the numerous ways in which they were used and presented sometimes offered them as prime musical material for "middlebrow" audiences as well: those members of the middle classes that aspired to a higher level of attainment of cultural capital through cultivating their tastes, or at least

having them cultivated by outside forces, like educational programs on the radio.²⁰

The aspects of the film, "Ständchen," and Eggerth that I have just discussed went beyond guaranteeing a general intersection of the high-brow with middlebrow audiences and tastes. It linked the myth of Schubert's "natural" Lieder with an updated popular presentation of these ideas onscreen through the amateur countess and the master Eggerth. These elements gave viewers and listeners access not only to cherished music but to an earlier nineteenth-century form of historiography, as in the testimonials of Schubert's friends and the early histories based upon them, where mythologizing the lives of composers in relationship to their works was not yet fully discounted as a form of finding truth in the past.²¹ If we momentarily consider the idealized portrayal of the Countess's singing to be one more narrow form of hearkening back to this earlier, "poetic," tradition of writing about musicians and music history, then perhaps it contains a kind of historical truth that a quick dismissal of it as "mere" presentist 1930s operetta film would fail to consider.

VIRGINIA BRUCE:
A CROONING DIVORCÉ AS JANE EYRE

Historical truth, accuracy, or authenticity are even more contested terms in the discussion of films that adapt classic literature than in

²⁰Tunbridge, *Singing in the Age of Anxiety*, 1–12, and especially 43, 52–81.

²¹The myth of Schubert as a "natural" genius from which "natural" melodies poured out almost unconsciously was initially spread through anecdotes from his friends after his death. For example, Joseph von Spaun reported that it was astonishing to see Schubert compose as if he was a "sombambulist" in a kind of trance. Cited in Andrea Lindmayr-Brandl, "Wenn ich ein Stück fertig habe, fange ich ein anderes an": Datierung und Schaffensrhythmus bei Franz Schubert," *Musicologica Austriaca: Jahresschrift der Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Musikwissenschaft* 20 (2001): 119–36, n. 2. Lindmayr-Brandl also cites an anecdote in which Schubert did not recognize his own composition, "Der Unglückliche," a mere fourteen days after putting it on paper. More recent scholarship continues to investigate the strength of this myth. See Lorraine Byrne Bodley, "Music of the Orphaned Self? Schubert and Concepts of Late Style," in *Schubert's Late Music: History, Theory, Style*, ed. Lorraine Byrne Bodley and Julian Horton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 331–56.

¹⁹The program "Aus Tonfilmen" was aired regularly on national radio in Austria during this period and was documented regularly in the program-periodical *Radio Wien*. "Ständchen" (here titled "Leise flehen meine Lieder," perhaps to recall the film) is listed on the program "Aus Tonfilmen" from *Radio Wien* in *Salzburger Wacht*, no. 244 (21 October 1933), 13.

the case of an almost fully fictional, new poetic scenario as is found in *Leise flehen meine Lieder*. Consider film adaptations of Charlotte Brontë's 1847 *Jane Eyre*. The popularity and high literary status of Brontë's novel have led to multiple adaptations for the stage and the screen since the late nineteenth century. The Hollywood of the 1930s and 40s participated in this tradition, offering several film versions of the novel. One adaptation was produced by Monogram in 1934, technically a "B" film company. Film scholars have generally preferred to attend to other adaptations; one scholar in 1975 even dismissed this one as an "inept travesty" of the novel.²² But critics at the time of its release—at least in the trade press—praised its accuracy as an adaptation.²³ Its running time of only an hour surely presented problems when dealing with a novel of such great breadth, leaving the presentation of the story quite fragmented and not leaving much room for the subtle autobiographical reflections of Eyre. The adaptation interests me here, however, for several reasons. Most importantly, the film rewrites a scene in the novel involving Eyre's first official meeting with her employer, Edward Rochester, in a way that turns Eyre into a significant singing force within the film that she is not in the novel. Upon first being called in to take tea with Rochester, Eyre is asked to sing Schubert's "Serenade," which she does in a way that captivates him. Again we are confronted with "the simple feeling of the dilettante," albeit

this time through a voice that—while skilled—connects less clearly to classical singing and Schubertian mastery than Eggerth's. Similarly, the character of Jane Eyre also offers a different historical perspective on the character's gender and its relationship to natural mastery or, as the case may be, equally natural discomfort with singing in the parlor. Because Hollywood star Virginia Bruce portrays Eyre, audiences who followed the fan press in 1934 would have had information about her relationship status and recent reentry into the world of work to give them an opportunity to think simultaneously about Eyre's predicament and working women in the 1930s. Meanwhile, the use of Schubert's song would have served as a further marker of the cultural quality of a film already based on a literary classic, especially given the film industry's efforts to market such films as educational to a middlebrow audience aspiring to be cultivated.²⁴ Bruce's performance of the song, however, brought it out of a potentially distant realm of classical music and into the space of what any Hollywood musical film might showcase, including, for example, other music that she would sing in films to success in the next few years, like a sleek tune by Cole Porter. In this, her performance also updated the original relationship of "Ständchen" and the amateur marketplace to include new styles of singing marked as both masterful and accessible in the 1930s.

Where the film's parlor music scene is concerned, some preliminary notes on the major interventions made by the film adaptation into the original text are in order. In the novel, Eyre is hired as a governess at Thornfield after having gained extensive teaching skills during her time at an orphanage. She arrives and settles into her position for several months at Thornfield, all without yet meeting the master of the house. Eyre offers on "one afternoon in January" to carry a letter from the housekeeper to be mailed

²²Michael Riley, "Gothic Melodrama and Spiritual Romance: Vision and Fidelity in Two Versions of 'Jane Eyre,'" *Literature/Film Quarterly* 3/2 (1975), 145–59, at 145 (n. 1).

²³Such recognition of the film's fidelity to the novel didn't always connect to high praise for the film in general. For example, review of *Jane Eyre* (Monogram), *Film Daily* (17 July 1934), notes that "the Brontë novel is followed conscientiously, but its emotional charm has been missed." Other reviews emphasized the value of the film for the whole family, as well as its connection to the classic. Review of *Jane Eyre* (Monogram), *Hollywood Reporter* (30 June 1934):3: "A faithful, literal translation of the Brontë novel, that has been given an excellent cast and a really good production by Monogram. The story has about it a slightly dated odor, but manages to retain a great deal of charm, and the production itself is worthy of a good place on any program. There is a great deal to sell in this picture and there should be no difficulty with it whatsoever, particularly since it is so very important to bring along the whole family."

²⁴Articles in the Hollywood trade press concerning Jane Eyre and other classic adaptation films suggest, for example, that they can be screened in schools educationally or be otherwise sold as educational. See "Filming Classics Aids Ticket and Book Sales: Teachers' Chairman Urges All Bookstores to Cooperate in Sales of Study Guides," *Motion Picture Herald* (24 November 1934).

in the nearby town. On her walk, she encounters a man on a horse; they both slip and fall down on the ice. While Eyre helps them, the rider, who is actually Edward Rochester, quizzes her about her identity; she lets him know that she is the governess at Thornfield. Meanwhile, he plays games, asking her whether she knows "Mr. Rochester," instead of just introducing himself. Once Eyre returns home, she eventually learns from others in the household that the traveler was actually Rochester. The next day, Rochester asks Eyre and her pupil, Adèle, to have tea with him in the evening; Mrs. Fairfax, the housekeeper, is also present. After a rather tense, if amusing conversation, in which Rochester even accuses her of bewitching his horse and causing the accident, Rochester firmly tells her to "go into the library" to play the piano, only slightly apologizing for giving an order instead of asking. After she has barely begun, Rochester cries "Enough! . . . You play a *little*, I see; like any other English school-girl; perhaps rather better than some, but not well." Following this uncharitable assessment of Eyre's musicianship, Rochester also scrutinizes some of her watercolors; while he is a bit more charitable, he continues in his typical gruff and playful manner.

The film, on account of its run time, condenses much of this action. For example, the incident with the horse happens already when Eyre is on her initial approach to Thornfield for the first time, and the watercolors do not appear in the tea scene. In an additional condensation in the service of the central love story between Eyre and Rochester, the tea scene only involves the two of them, and the majority of the important, playful, and characterizing dialogue of the scene in the novel is not only cut but is not represented in any way. In a replacement of all of these other aspects of the tea scene, the film instead completely reconfigures Eyre's turn at the piano, adding her singing and turning it into a musical and romantic success. Her performance, however, also signals her discomfort in her position as an employee and, on top of this, some degree of sheepishness stemming from her early romantic feelings for Rochester.

In the scene, Eyre enters the drawing room and immediately projects awkwardness in her

facial expression at recognizing that the man on the horse was in fact Rochester. Unlike Eyre in the novel, who responds to Rochester's barbs and jokes partly by playing along, here Eyre apologizes for being rude, eliciting a similar apology in Rochester. The next portion of the conversation proceeds awkwardly but politely. In a continuation of this new Hollywood politeness, Rochester asks Eyre "Would you sing for me?" Once she is seated at the piano, Rochester asks "Do you know the serenade? Schubert?" In the performance that immediately follows this prompt, Eyre accompanies herself at the piano while singing the first A section of the song in a rather low key. After a free two-measure introduction that does not replicate Schubert's score, Eyre continues with an English-language version. She sings fluidly and with successful legato, with a rich, at least somewhat trained voice, and with occasional portamento. Most notably, however, she uses pauses that are much more than to be expected—even within the rubato practices in professional Lied singing as found in 1930s recordings. Instead, at the end of phrases, or even half phrases, she pauses luxuriously each time, perhaps more for reasons of breath than for expression.

These pauses, however, have expressive effects in relationship to Eyre's character and the Schubert song that can be contextualized within and beyond the film. Staying for the moment with the character of Eyre, these pauses give the impression that she is accustomed to singing only for herself, as opposed to singing for a public audience, much like in Liszt's construction of Schönstein's sincerity in the 1830s. While I would argue that this positive aspect is the chief onscreen effect of her approach, in that she is more musically comfortable than uncomfortable, it is also possible to see the haltingness of this performance as connected to her larger discomfort in the scene in which Rochester commands her, however politely, to play for him. In this way the film scene engages more with larger tropes in nineteenth-century governess fiction and the actual social status of governesses during the period than with the specificity of Eyre directly, since, as noted above, she tends to hold her own much more wittily in the novel

than in this screen adaptation, at least when around Rochester.

In this larger historical sense, however, Eyre's sheepishness here and in later scenes with Rochester recalls the problem of the "status incongruence" of governesses in nineteenth-century British households, an element of their social position that was also thematized in numerous novels.²⁵ M. Jeanne Peterson has summarized the basic intersecting complications involved in the class and social status of governesses within middle-class families using the term "status incongruence."²⁶ In order to properly qualify as a governess, a woman had to be a "lady" (or "gentlewoman"). She generally had to hail from a real upper-middle class (if not actually noble) background, where she herself would have been trained in the feminine accomplishments of the modern languages (especially French) and the arts, with the purpose of being a successful social ornament to her future husband. However, due to a loss of her family fortune in one way or another, the "lady" was then required to seek actual paid work as a governess, a good marriage being at least momentarily difficult for her for lack of a proper dowry. Taking any work was thus "debasement" to such a "lady," who was bred for better things, yet at least she still found her workplace in the realm of a family with higher class status, and thus stayed within the expected and respectable sphere of the home. Once employed by a middle-class family, a governess often not only suffered this basic incongruence between her previous status as a lady of leisure and her current status as an employee, but also did not know how she actually fit into the structure of the family for which she worked. Charlotte Brontë, who herself worked as a governess, expressed one dimension of this problem in a short note to

her best friend Ellen Nussey while she was working for a family during 1839. In her note, she "apologized for the fact that it was in pencil by explaining: 'I cannot just now procure ink without going into the drawing-room, where I do not wish to go.'" Kathryn Hughes contextualizes this comment within the ongoing problem of status for governesses. Brontë does not wish to leave her privacy for the family drawing room, because it is deeply unclear whether she is an adopted "member" of the family or a "mere" employee who is not fully welcome there; it is perhaps further unclear to Brontë which one of these things she would rather be in the situation.²⁷ The character of Jane Eyre of course departs from this general pattern in that she acquired her accomplishments, including the "added" musical one of singing and playing Schubert alluringly in the film, at an orphanage, although she was not actually at all low-born. But her confused position between employee, "member of the family," and (to complicate things further) love-interest of Rochester nevertheless plays a role, which Bruce communicates in the film through various indications of embarrassment and personal discomfort in gesture, facial expression, and awkward pauses, of which the musical ones make up a small part. Monogram's *Jane Eyre*, while adapting the novel and the past era to its own production limitations and sleeker Hollywood presentations of romantic involvement nevertheless transmits this important tension concerning nineteenth-century class interactions while digesting the challenging novel for a wide audience.

Yet even though Eyre's encounters with Rochester in the film generally make her sheepish, the film also represents her more willful, independent side. It does so through moments of dialogue that align her character less with Brontë's own Eyre or her dialogue than with glimmers of the sassy or spunky "independent woman" type cultivated in many films in the 1930s. Katherine Hepburn and other films stars of the period were known for such roles, which left an impression of headstrongness even when the plots of films

²⁵For a quick overview of the genre, see Cecilia Wadso Lecaros, "The Victorian Governess Novel," *The Victorian Web: Literature, History, and Culture in the Age of Victoria*, <http://www.victorianweb.org/victorian/gender/wadso2.html>.

²⁶M. Jeanne Peterson, "The Victorian Governess: Status Incongruence in Family and Society," *Victorian Studies* 14/1 (1970): 7-26 (term at 15); Kathryn Hughes, *The Victorian Governess* (London: Hambledon Press, 1993), 27-48.

²⁷Kathryn Hughes, *The Victorian Governess*, 85.

ultimately resolved this through a love relationship that "tamed" this quality.²⁸ In the case of Eyre's character, Bruce is given a few opportunities to inhabit this kind of character before her growing feelings for Rochester take over; later in this film similar "spunky" outbursts are less frequent but still leave a trace. Scenes from her pre-orphanage childhood prefigure this in the movie, where she boldly sticks up for herself. Eyre as an adult, played by Bruce, is given her first such strong dialogue when she leaves the orphanage as a young adult, upon being dismissed from teaching there for not harshly disciplining a student. She replies: "I'll get out, gladly . . .," calling the headmaster also a "cruel, stingy, child beater" that should be "tarred and feathered."

These mixed aspects of Bruce's character onscreen would have been complemented by press reports during the period for Hollywood fans who kept up with Bruce's personal life in the fan magazines. Bruce, in fact, had only just come back to the screen as Eyre after a few years hiatus during her marriage to the actor John Gilbert. She had left the screen to devote herself to her marriage; now, in 1934, she was returning to her career as her marriage broke up. In addition to ongoing sensationalist coverage of the divorce during 1934 in the fan magazines, both the trade press and the fan press noted that *Jane Eyre* was Bruce's first foray back onto the screen.²⁹ One fan magazine in 1935 went further. In an extended interview with Bruce, it thematized her work as a modern woman on the screen as both an essential part of her personal character and a kind of compensation for, if not deep cause of, her failed marriage. In an article in *Modern Screen* of January 1935, titled "Wanted: A Remedy for Heartbreak" and subtitled "To Work Rushes Virginia Crushing Memories of an Ill-starred Marriage," Bruce emphasizes that

I'm working because I want to. Work is the only cure for heartache, the only intelligent, civilized thing to do. Life nowadays is too big, too wonderful, for any normal woman to collapse in the midst of the debris and confusion of a shattered romance or a broken marriage. . . . Moreover, I find one can't destroy ambition. I had loved acting and I wanted more than anything to go back to it. And the rest you know. My courage finally snapped. . . . And so we separated. . . . I had accepted the role of Mrs. John Gilbert, yet at heart I wanted to be Virginia Bruce, too, and this wasn't possible.³⁰

Bruce's first role back after her marriage hiatus thus offered some fans an opportunity to think about women at work within earlier nineteenth-century contexts as well as current ones: in life, she lost a love affair and regained work that she found valuable; on film, she worked tenaciously only to be rewarded by a classic love affair.

All of these factors had the potential to inform viewer's perspectives on Bruce's mixed elegant-awkward presentation of Schubert onscreen. Her performance of Schubert in this film also opened up a new path for her in singing roles. The multiplication of her singing voice across additional films between 1934 and 1936 would have thus offered viewers of the films an opportunity to hear Schubert's song through the lens of a repertoire and performance style that extended beyond Lieder to include even the crooned popular songs of Cole Porter. Reviews of *Jane Eyre* occasionally singled out her singing in the film, always with praise and sometimes expressing delight; audiences had now discovered for the first time that Bruce had a lovely voice.³¹ She subsequently sang as Jenny Lind in *The Mighty Barnum* from 1934, where in one scene she sang, for example, a simple melody

³⁰Katharine Hartley and Juliette Laine, "Wanted: A Remedy for Heartbreak, For Kay/For Virginia, To Europe Sailed Kay Seeking a Panacea for Heartbreak and Loneliness/To Work Rushes Virginia Crushing Memories of an Ill-starred Marriage," *Modern Screen* (January 1935), section on Virginia Bruce, 39, 86–88, quotation at 39 and 87.

³¹The trade press, for example, remarked on the discovery of Bruce's singing voice. Review of *Jane Eyre*, in *Hollywood Reporter* (30 June 1934), 3: "Mainly the picture serves to bring Virginia Bruce back to the screen, and not only is the gal very beautiful to look at, but her performance is lovely and, actually, she sings. Just one song, but it's enough to prove that Miss Bruce has a voice that records well and without any facial contortions to distract the attention."

²⁸See Richard Dyer, *Stars*, new ed., with a supplementary chapter and bibliography by Paul McDonald (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 54–57.

²⁹The fact of Bruce's professional return to the screen is occasionally, briefly noted in the trade press. See, for example, *Hollywood Reporter* (10 May 1934), 6. The fan magazine *Modern Screen* gave the divorce and its potential causes and resolutions extensive, ongoing coverage during 1934 and 1935.

with wonderful legato and control in a higher range than her Schubert performance in *Jane Eyre*. The most famous of her onscreen moments as a singer from the period, however, comes from *Born to Dance* in 1936, where she sings Cole Porter's "I've Got You under My Skin." The song was soon to become the biggest hit and, later, most well-known standard from the film. Her performance here recalls her performance of Schubert's "Ständchen" more than one might expect. There are of course important differences: this time her character is a confident Broadway star, even to the point of taking the role of a *femme fatale* who is only made vulnerable by falling in love; as a result, she is surely less halting and sheepish than when singing Schubert at the piano. But her performance of both songs projects a similar informality. In the case of the Porter, listeners would recognize her easy, speechlike pace with the melody and freedom with pauses as typical of the style. If we listen to her Schubert with the Porter in our ears, it begins to sound as if her approach to Schubert was molded slightly by singing conventions surrounding the period's Tin Pan Alley masters of Broadway and the screen. Nowhere is the connection more apparent than when Bruce descends into a low, rich chest voice. In the case of the Schubert, she actually does this by taking the final phrase of the A section in mm. 27–28 down a full octave; in the Porter the momentary highlighting of this chest register is composed-in. In both cases, the aural impression is of a singer enjoying the luxurious ease of making a rich sound, with no need for extra projection, in the chest range of the voice, where wallowing in resonance is the most physically possible. Furthermore, while it may be possible that Bruce's vocal powers would have allowed her to be somewhat successful without amplification, these gestures in particular remind one of the trend of crooning that electric recording during the period made especially popular. Bruce can be heard to croon Schubert much as one would Porter, vocally blurring the lines between high, middle, and lower or at least popular genres of song once again.

Bruce's onscreen performance of "Ständchen" thus opened up multiple avenues of engagement for contemporary audiences. They could interpret the film scene socially and aesthetically in

ways that mixed musical and social values of the 1930s with an image of nineteenth-century parlor music-making that made claims on literary and cultural history through its connection to a literary classic. In relation to the original novel, the film intensified the more conservative aspects of classic adaptations; even as it gives Eyre some measure of independence, it largely smooths out her character, her love affair, and its resolution in ways that neutralize the more challenging aspects of the novel's proto- or, indeed, fully feminist tone. This conservative side of the film, and the literary prestige it lends to the film, were also arguably strengthened by the focused presentation of Schubert: the prominent canonical composer is, after all, pointedly mentioned by Rochester by name, as if also naming his importance to the audience.³² But Bruce's manner in performing the song also works against a more highbrow reading of these conservative tendencies by bringing the song into the realm of crooning accessibility. In this, her performance builds upon the existing myth of the "naturalness" of Schubert's melodies that had been underscored by a very different, if also popularly accessible, performance by Eggerth in the Forst film around the same time. And although we are far removed from these overlapping, although also different, film and reception contexts today, the ongoing familiarity of this particular song makes it easy even today to take this message away from these staged parlor performances in both films. Neither singer was an amateur, either in the sense of their professional status or any unpleasant limitations on their vocal talents. But in these portrayals and the way that they could resonate offscreen, both women provide an image of Schubert's serenade for amateurs that leads viewers to believe its elegance was or even is within the realm of everyday possibility.

MINNIE DRIVER: CELEBRITY DILETTANTE AS TRANSGRESSIVE ARTIST

While a handful of films between the 1940s and 90s also deployed parlor performances of

³²See "Filming Classics Aids Ticket and Book Sales," *Motion Picture Herald* (24 November 1934).

"Ständchen"—some as part of nineteenth-century period scenes, and some in contemporary settings—I turn now to the more recent period film *The Governess* (1998), directed by Sandra Goldbacher, which contains another such scene involving the singing of actress Minnie Driver. I do so because the film can show us how the mix of presentist aesthetic and social attitudes with a historicist fascination with the nineteenth century—which I have identified in my analyses of the two aforementioned films—continues in our current era of period film. My analysis will also show how Driver's performance onscreen—again combined with her image and endeavors beyond the film—update the concept of the "simple feeling of the dilettante" for current audiences. In this case, the idea of nonmastery and other potentially negative connotations of dilettantism are more present than in the case of the other films. This film brings with it a number of changes in critical and audience expectations for period films, including an intensified industry and audience scrutinization of the "authenticity" of period details in such films in recent decades.³³ The main plot elements in *The Governess* show again, in this new context for period film, how present concerns—in this case highly political ones—can be made to shine through in an aesthetic approach that continues to mix a modern agenda with the nineteenth century as a setting.³⁴ The particular mix of past and present that this film accomplishes is perhaps most striking in the parlor performance of "Ständchen" that is at the center of my analysis. Here, a decidedly modern voice, tuned to, if not extensively trained for, current styles of pop, folk, and to some extent jazz singing collides

with Schubert's 1820s Lied. In this musical detail, the film offers an onscreen vision of amateur singing that is updated to reflect a construction of the "natural" or "untrained" voice as the general public would recognize it today. When viewed additionally in light of Driver's persona as built through her other film appearances and, especially, her activities as a recording artist offscreen, the performance further has the potential to elicit additional mixed negative and positive responses concerning amateurism or dilettantism in today's musical world.

The Schubert scene has significant dramatic importance in the film. Driver's performance as her character, Rosina, serves as a final catalyst for her sexual affair with the family patriarch, Charles. Insofar as the film centers on this affair, it picks up on a long-standing trend in nonfictional and fictional accounts of governesses in nineteenth-century households, wherein governesses are seen as a potentially sexually destabilizing presence within the families for which they worked.³⁵ A brief account of the film's plot, characters, and themes can contextualize the role of the parlor music scene in the affair and the affair's place in the film. The plot focuses on the young, Sephardic Jewish woman Rosina da Silva, who at the beginning of the film enjoys a culturally rich and comfortable life within the confines of the Sephardic neighborhood in London's East End during the 1830s. Her life there is painted with lavish, even exotic red hues in her clothes and the interior design of her family's house; Edward Shearmur's newly composed music for these scenes plays loosely with sounds that viewers can associate with both Klezmer and Andalusian music, and the vocalist Ofra Haza adds to the exotic effect by ornamenting her melodies in a recognizably "non-Western" way. Rosina's father is suddenly killed. Instead of giving in to her mother's wishes to marry an old fish merchant, Rosina decides to take employment as a governess. In order to make herself more attractive as an applicant, she decides to conceal her Jewish identity, renaming herself "Mary Blackchurch." She finds employment

³³For the relationship between these earlier aspects of "heritage film" as well as more recent approaches to categorizing and analyzing period film, see also Belén Vidal, *Figuring the Past*, 9–26. Monk, *Heritage Film Audiences*, also addresses various audience segments' concern for at least perceived historical authenticity in period film and how this intersects differently with more conservative vs. more liberal political outlooks.

³⁴See, for example, *Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture Rewrites the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John Kucich and Dianne F. Sadoff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), for an exploration of how postmodern cultural products often exploit the Victorian era as a site through which to portray the onset of modern social and scientific trends.

³⁵Kathryn Hughes, *The Victorian Governess*, 119–21.

on a country estate on the Isle of Skye in Scotland with the Cavendish family. Patriarch Charles Cavendish spends all of his time experimenting with photography in his lab, to the chagrin of his uptight and bored wife, Mrs. Cavendish, who claims to miss London (even though, as we later learn, she has never been there). Their young daughter Clementina (who the newly named “Miss Mary Blackchurch” will educate) is reluctant to be under a Governess’s watch and is frequently seen talking about murder or at least cruelty when playing with her dolls; the family’s young adult son, Henry, has been kicked out of Oxford for smoking opium and consorting with prostitutes and is soon also on the premises. These aspects of the narrative loosely adapt the trope of “Gothic” children found in earlier governess novels as well, most famously in Henry James’s *Turn of the Screw*. Rosina (known now as Mary—for simplicity’s sake I will continue to refer to her as Rosina) shows an earnest and informed interest in Charles’s scientific experiments, and is responsible for discovering that saline solution can assist in fixing photographic images on paper. These events lead to both a scientific collaboration between the two and a passionate affair. At the climax of the film, Charles breaks off the consuming affair and cruelly disavows Rosina’s scientific insights into photography in front of a visitor from the Royal society; the son, Henry (who has also been in love with Rosina), reveals her henceforth concealed Jewish identity to Charles; and Rosina herself then gives up the “Mary Blackchurch” charade, reveals the affair to Mrs. Cavendish, and leaves for home. The end of the film finds Rosina flourishing as an independent photographer and portraitist, focusing on her own Sephardic community; though she is visited in London once more by Charles Cavendish, who sits for a portrait, she declares the affair permanently over.

The film is markedly feminist and aims simultaneously to comment on the history of antisemitism.³⁶ With respect to the film’s femi-

³⁶Helene Myers, “Educating for a Jewish Gaze: The Close Doubling of Antisemitism and Philosemitism in Sandra Goldbacher’s *The Governess*,” in *Antisemitism and Philosemitism in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*:

nism, scholars have primarily focused on the crucial role of the sensuous portraits that Charles makes of Rosina in the photographic lab, and, especially, a nude portrait that she takes of him while he is sleeping. These various images open up issues for analysis including the figure of the constructed, photographic “tableau” as a specific type of image guiding the film’s aesthetics, as well as the gender problematic symbolized by Rosina turning the traditional male gaze around in reverse on her lover.³⁷ (Importantly, this photograph spells the death knell of the very relationship that was solidified with Rosina’s singing.) These feminist concerns are intensified by the 1830s setting of the film, which allows audiences to assume that all this action takes place in a world where society was inherently more restrictive for women, even while glimmers of a more modern time (like the invention of photography) and the values that would come with it (independence for women) were appearing.

As a British-directed period film of the late 1990s, *The Governess* also has ties to a larger body of period films, dubbed “heritage films,” that were seen as a particularly successful cultural product of England during the 1980s and 1990s. Although Belén Vidal has argued that this film has more in common with internationally, cooperatively produced period films made between 1990 and 2010 than with “heritage film” in the stricter British sense, I mention the category here in order to think through the issue of how viewers might perceive or make use of the pastness that suffuses the film. The critical discourse on specifically British “heritage films” of the 1980–90s—for example, those by the Merchant Ivory Company like *The Remains of the Day*—originally criticized the genre for idealizing upper-class life of past

Representing Jews, Jewishness, and Modern Culture, ed. and intro. Phyllis Lassner and Lara Trubowitz (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), 103–18, focuses on the thematization of Rosina’s Jewishness in the film.

³⁷Lynette Felber, “Capturing the Shadows of Ghosts: Mixed Media and the Female Gaze in *The Women on the Roof* and *The Governess*,” *Film Quarterly* 54/4 (2001): 27–37, analyzes the role of photography and the reversal of the male gaze in Rosina’s actions in the film. Belén Vidal, *Figuring the Past*, 154–61, focuses on the photographic images, related to the love affair, that are embedded in the visual language of the film as a “tableau.”

historical periods and playing directly into the values of conservative Thatcherist politics.³⁸ Yet at least one more recent study of the audiences of such films shows that many dedicated fans—especially younger ones who are college educated and generally have left-leaning politics—follow such films to think through the difficult socioeconomic, gender, and other conditions of the past and their relationship to present struggles for social justice.³⁹ In that *The Governess* explicitly thematizes the heroine's feminist journey, for certain audience members it would certainly be viewed as a site through which to probe the historical reach of such political issues. In its dialogue, the film also goes beyond the "proper" or "elevated" tone that critics and audiences associated with heritage films a decade earlier. In this sense, a surface historical authenticity of tone, created by generally antiquated dialogue and the performers' accents and diction, is punctured by conversations much more "modern" and indeed "raunchy" than, say, a strict adaptation of a Brontë or Austen novel would permit. In one scene early in the film, for example, Rosina and her sister, both sexually inexperienced, talk about whether they would drink semen. But these nods to modernity, in combination with the historically set feminist theme of the film, does not erase the film's meticulously detailed visual setting in the past, or the historical thinking it invites from audiences. Instead, these elements reach out to contemporary audiences seeking to find the historical precursors to their feminism in the past.

With these contexts in mind, Rosina's onscreen performance of Schubert is of special interest. The scene uses one of the few "period" pieces of music in the film. Except for one other English parlor song sung by Clementina in the same parlor scene, the film otherwise only uses newly composed music for the score. Goldbacher stages the scene so that present-day vocal aesthetics, the needs of onscreen dramaturgy, and Schubert's well-known song come together. The scene occurs not too long after Charles and Rosina have kissed passionately for the first time. Mrs. Cavendish, both

children, Charles and Rosina are all present. While Clementina, the young daughter, is playing and singing a tune, Mrs. Cavendish interrupts her. Mrs. Cavendish and the two children then all enjoin Rosina to sing; much like Bruce's *Jane Eyre*, she also goes to the piano reluctantly. Choosing the sheet music for Schubert's "Ständchen," she hands it to Mrs. Cavendish, who will play the piano. A performance of the bulk of the first A section (mm. 1–22) ensues. To successful dramaturgical effect, the ensemble between Mrs. Cavendish, who shows little musical sensitivity, and Rosina, who certainly has some, is tense; the reedy tone of the piano, which may or may not be a period instrument, is also exploited negatively instead of positively. Rosina sings the melody breathily and without significant rubato, albeit with a successful legato and no unpleasant sense of straining. While she certainly does not sound like anyone who would be hired to record or concertize with Schubert's Lieder today, she does give the distinct impression of someone singing sweetly and expressively, while not at all concerned about a public. She, like the Countess and Eyre before her, has an updated version of Liszt's description of the "simple feeling of a dilettante." If she has a public, it is just one person—as she confirms in the next scene—Charles. Charles is bothered by her serenade in the extreme. He leaves the room; shortly thereafter Rosina follows him, and the sexual affair begins in earnest.

Rosina's performance thus builds upon the positive values historically associated with amateur performance by using a decidedly modern approach that might be construed as especially "natural" or even "untrained." Through this performance, we also get an updated sense of what it means for Schubert's most popular melodies to themselves be "natural" and easily imitated by anyone. This myth of Schubert's lieder is also embedded in the film in earlier scenes that prefigure Rosina's parlor performance. The song's melody travels on an acousmatic trajectory, from offscreen diegetic performance, to onscreen humming, to the parlor scene just analyzed. Rosina first hears it in the background at her home in London, while she is working on placing her

³⁸See, for example, Monk, *Heritage Film Audiences*, 1–4.

³⁹See especially Monk, *Heritage Film Audiences*, 133–36.

employment ad. There her relative, a professional singer as we learn later, is practicing it with a pianist far in the background; after a trial or warm up attempt at a phrase, she launches into the A section full force. Later, while Rosina is assisting Charles in his lab and putting together a still-life set for a photography project, she hums the melody softly under her breath: the song that her relative was diligently studying becomes for her an unconscious outpouring of melody. Seen in this light, Rosina's parlor performance builds on this impression of "naturalness" in the Schubert while also ascribing it to her amateur performance: she sings by heart, while Mrs. Cavendish chases the score at the piano.

Driver's singing voice is thus a significant aural presence within the film. But while her singing and humming of Schubert dramatically encode a positive view of amateur singing, Driver's identity offscreen—especially where it concerns her musical abilities—can lead us toward a more complicated picture of the endeavor. At least one critic who watched the film was not impressed with Driver's Schubert. According to him, Driver's governess "impresses her employers with her culture, knowledge, foreign languages, even her singing of Schubert. We could have done without the latter."⁴⁰ Driver's voice indeed sounds "dilettantish" compared to a performance of a classically trained singer; here the term is of course used in a pejorative sense that I have largely left aside in this article up to this point. This negative usage of the term "dilettante," like the extremely positive aspects mentioned in the context of Liszt's praise of Karl von Schönstein and the more neutral definition of amateurs as often having simply less skill than professionals, has been in place since at least the later eighteenth century. At that time, "dilettante" was used as a weapon within disputes involving the relationship between inherited high social status vs. status that might be earned by genuine musical skill or artistry. Professional musicians who sought increased

respect and higher social status based on their achievements occasionally wielded the term "dilettante" as an insult against those who enjoyed that social status already and thus could merely dabble in music, many times with less skill.⁴¹

Driver qualifies as a musical "dilettante" in a modern sense, building on this class-based, negative aspect of the term. Before embarking on her successful film career, Driver had made some initial strides in the direction of music. Although the extent of her formal musical training as a young student is unclear, she apparently devoted herself to music-making from her days in boarding school, before proceeding to study acting at the Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art. As a member of the Milo Roth band, she received a recording contract when she was nineteen, but the group was dropped by the label soon afterwards. Since her early flirtation with a music career, she has been known primarily as a film and television actress; her most highly acclaimed role was in 1997's *Good Will Hunting*. She has since returned to music and produced three full length albums, some of which contain songs that she has written, and another on which she sings a variety of covers. Although she has a musical background of some depth, her current musical career has been primarily received as a surprising offshoot of her film career.

Driver's status as a celebrity "dilettante" in the field of popular singing adds an additional layer to her onscreen status as a domestic amateur singing Schubert's "Ständchen" within *The Governess*, especially for any viewers who might be aware of her efforts as a musician offscreen and the role of her music-making in her overall career. These aspects of Driver's

⁴⁰Edwin Jahiel, "The Governess (UK, 1998)," Review of *The Governess*, *Movie Reviews by Edwin Jahiel*, <http://edwinjahiel.jessicajahiel.com/governes.htm> (accessed 3 January 2018).

⁴¹Y. Bar Yosafat, "Kenner und Liebhaber," 33, recounts a late-eighteenth-century case in which the term "dilettante" turned from being simply neutrally descriptive (or even positive) to being grounds for insult. Johann Joachim Quantz had a flute student, the Danish nobleman Joachim von Moldenit, who at one point published a set of flute sonatas where "dilettante" appeared after his name. After he later published an open letter to Quantz in which he claimed to be a better musician than Quantz, Quantz published a reply in which he wielded "noble dilettantish judgments" as an insult back. Yosafat cites this exchange from Richard Hibbitt, *Dilettantism and Its Values: From Weimar Classicism to the fin de siècle* (London: Legenda, 2006), 9.

persona and voice also relate to the larger phenomenon of celebrity dilettantism in music from the later twentieth century to the present, including cases like Gwyneth Paltrow's much more recent turn as a country singer (2010). Driver's professional shift from acting into singing and Paltrow's similar move can be understood through the concept of celebrity capital. Researchers in celebrity studies have developed this term in relationship to Pierre Bourdieu's earlier concepts of different types of capital, which embraced not just straightforward financial capital, but cultural, social, and symbolic versions.⁴² Celebrity capital refers to the value that celebrities accrue via their fame; it can be exchanged for other types of capital and, put more plainly, status in other fields.⁴³ To take just one of many notable examples of this kind of exchange, some film celebrities (like Arnold Schwarzenegger) have used their celebrity status to move into electoral politics. Film actors and actresses like Driver have been able to use their status to move into other fields of arts and entertainment—clearly with much greater initial ease than, say, an unknown artist who did not already have celebrity status. The public and critics do not always complain about a performer's dilettantism in the second field of supposedly "lesser" expertise into which a celebrity is able to gain admission via fame. And in the earlier Austrian and Hollywood contexts I've already discussed, this particular kind of distrust of "sudden" new talents (as in the case of Bruce, who "suddenly" showed everyone she could sing) was certainly not shunned or criticized in either the industry or the fan press. But in today's context, some actors or actresses who make

the move into music are perceived negatively, or at least with initial distrust or disbelief. In other words, there can be a cost (in the form of critical or popular complaints) for paying for one's entry into the music profession—or into a new segment of it—using celebrity capital.

In Gwyneth Paltrow's case, the critical and public distrust of her new musical efforts was significant. She was harshly criticized for taking on the country music genre from a position of no experience as a professional singer or country singer, and her case thus serves as an extreme example through which to view Driver's pop music efforts and her onscreen Schubert performance. Paltrow's few forays into singing publically followed from two main influences: she was coached to sing country music for her role as a struggling musician in Nashville for the film *Country Strong* (2010), and, as a helpful coincidence, she also had the successful popular musician, Chris Martin of Coldplay, as her husband around the same time. Her talents were suddenly on display and most publicized with respect to a promotional performance that she did as part of the 2010 Country Music Awards. Again, based on the perception that she purchased her new role as a country singer all too easily using celebrity capital, her efforts were met with critical distrust. As one writer sympathetically put it, this situation was compounded by the fact that she made this concert debut within country music, a genre that is especially associated with authenticity:

She's bound to come in for some ridicule from folks who don't consider this scion of Los Angeles showbiz royalty "authentic" enough. The entire notion of authenticity in popular music is questionable at best and ludicrous most of the time, and when it comes to country music in particular—well, this sort of cold shoulder extends at least as far back as Olivia Newton-John. In other words, it's a criticism that is old, tired and irrelevant.⁴⁴

While expectations within country music circles are at the heart of the distrust of Paltrow's talent, larger negative attitudes

⁴²Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), especially 1–54 and 99–164.

⁴³See especially, Olivier Driessens, "Celebrity Capital: Redefining Celebrity using Field Theory," *Theory and Society* 42 (2013): 543–60. Driessens in fact goes a bit further than suggesting that celebrities "have" a type of capital that can be exchanged for all other types; instead, he considers celebrity inherently to be capital. He also cites earlier uses of the term by Sue Collins in "Traversing Authenticities: *The West Wing* President and the Activist Sheen," in *Politicainment: Television's Take on the Real*, ed. Kristina Riegert (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 181–212.

⁴⁴Ken Tucker, "Gwyneth Paltrow Sings Her Brains Out at the CMA Awards," *Entertainment Weekly* (10 November 2010), <http://www.ew.com/article/2010/11/10/gwyneth-paltrow-cma-awards/> (accessed 4 January 2018).

toward Hollywood “aristocrats” who take their privilege too far are also at work in her case.

Still, singing like Paltrow’s also recalls a kind of authenticity, traditionally associated with amateurism, that is associated with singers of popular music today. Namely, the “untrained,” “natural,” or even attractively flawed quality of such singer’s voices in general are perceived by the general public as more authentic than operatic ones or even Broadway ones with finesse. A hint of this attitude permeates the working philosophy of professional vocal coach Roger Love, who works with actors wishing to sing. He asserts that the link between natural, informal amateur singing and successful singing in pop or country is an easy one to make, and that singing along to recorded songs provides a strong foundation: “Singing along to recorded vocal music is like having a mini-singing-lesson.”⁴⁵ Though our popular musical middle-class tastes have shifted dramatically away from those of the early nineteenth century, or of the 1930s, this rhetoric of singing as “natural” refashions statements like those of the early nineteenth-century publisher and singing pedagogue Hans Georg Nägeli, who himself insisted that a number of the best expressive devices for singing solo Lieder are already there in natural amateur practice.⁴⁶ It also of course overlaps with the myth concerning Schubert’s Lieder that animates much of my discussion across this article.

When considered in light of celebrity dilettantism in music and the reactions it can provoke, Driver’s vocal efforts offscreen can inflect our understanding of the function of her Schubert performance onscreen. Driver, like Paltrow, felt some pushback when she first started to pivot toward music after having a career primarily in film. By her account, as she announced her plans “people [were] like, ‘huh?’ You can’t do that. . . . I’ve been trying to tell people that I did this long before I was an

⁴⁵Roger Love, cited in Coeli Carr, “Gwyneth Paltrow Shines as a Singer: Natural Talent or Just Good Coaching?” ABC News/abcnews.go.com (12 November 2010), <http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/gwyneth-paltrow-singing-actresses-natural-talent-good-coaching/story?id=12119556> (accessed 4 January 2018).

⁴⁶Mireille Geering, *Die Sologesangschule von Hans Georg Nägeli* (Zürich: HUG & Co., 2003), 19.

actress. I don’t think anyone took it very seriously, though.”⁴⁷ Although her three albums have all received some initial press upon their release, they have not been subject to much additional professional commentary. Individual amateur reviews of her three albums on amazon.com reinforce the discomfort that the public seems to feel with Hollywood stars taking a dilettantish turn as a singer, or at least a singer in the “wrong” genre, even as they also suggest inherent qualities in Driver’s pop singing approach that relate to the positive values that have been associated with amateur performance since before and around the year 1800. The positive comments allude especially to her sincerity or authenticity and even her lack of overblown technical display. For example, one reviewer remarked that “there is variety, excellent production, and Minnie’s voice sounds real to me, unlike some other female vocalists who sing just too many notes.”⁴⁸ Another asserted that “her voice is sexy, soft, raspy and breathy, no power ballads here, and no irritating vocal runs. It gives it a refreshingly honest feel, like it is meant for just you.”⁴⁹

This last reviewer describes the plain honesty and intimacy of Driver’s delivery in a securely pop-music centered context. Despite the large cultural gap between the early nineteenth century and today, and even the 1930s and today, the similarity to Liszt’s description of Schönstein, and to the ways that Eggerth’s and Bruce’s much earlier performances signified on and offscreen, is palpable. In deciding to have Driver sing Schubert in the film, Goldbacher and Driver seem to have at least

⁴⁷Cited in Corey Moss, “Minnie Driver Launches Music Career with Pete Yorn Assist,” *MTV News*/mtv.com (16 January 2004), <http://www.mtv.com/news/1484414/minnie-driver-launches-music-career-with-pete-yorn-assist/> (accessed 4 January 2018).

⁴⁸Paul Schwotzer, “A Bit Surprised, I Thoroughly Enjoy this CD,” review of *Ask Me to Dance* on amazon.com (posted 9 November 2014), https://www.amazon.com/gp/review/R31QRT0NM66BFL?ref=glimp_1rv_cl (accessed 4 January 2018).

⁴⁹G. E. Williams, “Very Mellow Soothing Sexy CD,” Review of *Everything I’ve Got in My Pocket* on amazon.com (posted 31 May 2007), https://www.amazon.com/Everything-Ive-Got-My-Pocket/product-reviews/B005G6PX50/ref=cm_cr_arp_d_viewopt_kyw?ie=UTF8&reviewerType=all-reviews&pageNumber=1&filterByKeyword=just+for+you (accessed 4 January 2018).

understood this intuitively, if not historically. For a twentieth- or twenty-first-century viewer and listener who might be only vaguely familiar with the differences between classical singing and popular singing approaches, Driver in fact stands in for an "amateur" nineteenth-century voice much more convincingly than a singer who might produce a more strictly Schubert-appropriate sound. Interestingly, Driver herself seems to have made a different decision elsewhere, where operatic coloratura, instead of Schubertian parlor song, was at stake. When cast as Carlotta in the 2004 film of Andrew Lloyd Weber's musical *The Phantom of the Opera*, she declined to sing the role, recognizing that her nonoperatic voice could not handle the virtuosic operatic style assigned to the character.⁵⁰ Given this case, the fact that Driver ultimately did dare to sing the Schubert Lied attests to the power of the myth of Schubert's "natural" singable Lieder, and the type of "authenticity" that Driver and Goldbacher clearly worked to bring to the scene by combining the aesthetics of pop singing with current approaches to historical detail in period film. A voice like Driver's, in fact, may be the only way to recall the complex of values that once attached to a much more masterful Schubertian amateur like Schönstein. Few classical singers today of his stature would also be viewed as amateurs or dilettantes, regardless of the degree to which they do or do not earn a full living through singing.

"STÄNDCHEN'S" CINEMATIC MELODIC CORE

For all of their mixes of twentieth-century aspects with nineteenth-century elements, all three of the films discussed have one secure historical artifact in common: Schubert's song. As already analyzed, Eggerth's, Bruce's, and Driver's vocal approaches to the song bring to mind a number of questions concerning the song's longstanding popularity, its reception through and around these films, and its particular melodic qualities. But the three films also

comment more extensively on the nature of this ubiquitous exemplar of Schubert's gift of song, making implicit statements about the nature of its melody, its accompaniment, and what the relationship between them can tell us about Schubert's song craft.

Adorno was already sensitive in 1928 to the ways that the operetta fictionalizing Schubert's life fractured his works into more fragmented bits of melody.⁵¹ Keeping Adorno's general interest in the fragmentary juxtapositions of the potpourri in mind, it is worth looking more closely at the kind of splitting and formal and textural distortions Schubert's song undergoes in the films. Taking the three films together, we see a combination of actual formal fragmentation of the song through musical cuts, changes of the range in certain phrases, visually motivated film editing decisions impacting the song's form, and the musical separation of the cantilena melody from, as Fink put it, the "restlessly demanding" accompaniment. These musical decisions show continuity in the films' attitudes toward "Ständchen" as a song, even as they also show some aesthetic changes over the large gap between the 1930s and 1990s.

A short reminder of two main musical details concerning the relationship between vocal melody and piano accompaniment in Schubert's setting can best introduce this discussion. The most basic is the distinction between the long-breathed melodic phrases in the voice and the "guitar strumming" accompaniment in the piano: kept together, the two give the impression of a singer accompanying his own entreaties with a guitar. The second detail, however, complicates this simple division of labor between melody and accompaniment and also artfully complicates the phrase structure of the song throughout. The A section of the song (mm. 1–36), which is repeated to a new stanza of text as A' (mm. 1–27, second ending immediately on m. 37), features at first what seems like it will be a 4+4+4+4 melodic structure, in that the two first complementary entrances of the voice parallel each other in this metric order. However, each of the two

⁵⁰Cited in Angel Cohn, "Minnie Driver Tunes Out" *TVGuide*/tvguide.com (December 22, 2004), <http://www.tvguide.com/news/minnie-driver-phantom-37224/> (accessed 4 January 2018).

⁵¹Adorno, "Schubert (1928)," 8–10.

first four-measure phrases (mm. 5–8 and 11–14) is actually followed by a two-measure echo of the last phrases of the voice in the piano, breaking up and extending the 4+4 to be 6+6 (these echoes occur in mm. 9–10 and 15–16). Deftly, Schubert uses these piano echoes to set up what will be vocal echoes in the next two phrases: here the echoes that were formerly the job of the pianist exclusively get transferred to the voice. The last of these also takes the voice into a potentially virtuosic tessitura (mm. 27–28), which Eggerth used to great effect and Bruce took down an octave. Though I have already discussed these two moments earlier, I will recontextualize them in what follows. The material of these echoes is also important in the nine-measure first ending (mm. 28–36), where a related figure in the piano is presented twice, highlighting a modal mixture between major and minor that will also be important in the last vocal phrases of the song in the B section (mm. 46–53), at “Komm, beglücke mich.” In short, the initial piano echoes of the voice, as well as their extension into important interlude and closing material, complicate what could otherwise be a highly square vocal melodic structure and offer musical space for reflection through their various harmonic guises.

But in the film *Leise flehen meine Lieder*, the accompanimental echoes and interludes are either excised completely or used for glances away from the main action, and the strumming aspect is often underrepresented. These arrangement choices suggest that Schubert’s vocal material has an integral melodic life of its own that was more important to the film’s makers than this subtle interaction with the accompaniment. The first hint of this comes in the overture to the film, which combines themes at its beginning and end from Schubert’s Unfinished Symphony with a central presentation of “Ständchen.” In a strings-only arrangement, we hear mm. 5–8, skip over the first piano echo, then hear mm. 11–14, skip over the next echo, and then hear a compressed version of the rest of the A section (only mm. 23–28; perhaps importantly, the major mode version of the phrase). Upon arriving swiftly at the contrasting B section, we hear the first full vocal line followed by the inclusion of

Schubert’s original two-measure interjection of the pianist. But these phrases are followed by only a fragmentary presentation of the first “Komm, beglücke mich,” without the minor-mode vocal descent (missing mm. 51–53) or the closing piano coda (missing mm. 54–59). The strings accompany this almost purely vocal-melodic presentation with lovely imitation of the main melody throughout; however, in the process they ditch the strumming accompaniment altogether. While the conventions of overture-writing for musical theater certainly allow for this kind of a fragmentary presentation of important melodies, the way that this practice is executed in the film also advances a perspective on this song: that these echoes and interludes are not at its true heart. Similarly, even though Eggerth’s parlor performance presents the song nearly completely, in terms of these echoes and interludes, Forst cuts the camera shot away from her whenever he can during these accompanimental interjections: these musical moments become a pause to be used not for making the song complete, but for allowing us to look around the room, to see the Countess’s sister watching the scene from above. Tellingly, although the nondiegetic orchestral accompaniment this time includes a tracing of the strumming motion of the original, its volume is so downplayed that the scene also privileges the melodic kernel of Schubert’s song above all.

The separation between Schubert’s “natural” melody and its accompaniment is even more pronounced throughout *The Governess*. The parlor scene is the only place we hear both melody and accompaniment clearly in their relatively original form (the only change is that the voice is doubled in the piano, unlike in Schubert’s original accompaniment). However, the staged performance scenario and the assumedly intentional poor quality of the ensemble between the two characters already begins to separate the two elements. And, as discussed, we also hear Rosina humming the melody alone, giving its singular identity more presence. The accompaniment does have another important role to play in the nondiegetic music, however. In moments largely either prefiguring or reflecting upon the longing and tragedy of Rosina and Charles’s affair,

we hear a short passage of the strumming accompaniment only in the piano. The excerpt uses enough material so as to highlight the song's essential minor key, its temporary turn to the relative major in the A section, and its journey back to the minor. The accompaniment's "restlessness" becomes divorced from the graceful melody that it supports, in a way that also supports the other additionally particular or fragmentary focus on certain period details—especially in the photographic scenes—that Belén Vidal identifies as "figures" characteristic of the film's style.⁵² Where Schubert's song is concerned, this separation, like the moments in *Leise flehen meine Lieder* that prefigure it, suggests that the melody may again in some sense stand on its own.

In addition, all three films offer a perspective on Schubert's song that could be said to downplay the unmistakably dramatic outburst at the beginning of the B section of Schubert's song (mm. 38–45, especially) in favor of the sleeker and less dramatic melodic pleasures of the A section. In *Leise flehen meine Lieder*, this stance on the song is not overwhelming but is arguably present. As discussed earlier, we certainly hear Eggerth sing this opening of the B section (mm. 38–45) masterfully; but her placid smile and marked happiness in this moment onscreen seem to skew her delivery away from the passage's full dramatic import within the song: she just doesn't seem that desperate in her entreaties. But in the case of Driver and Bruce, the dismissal of the song's B section is definitive. Driver sings in the parlor the first A section only up to m. 22, with no hint of the B; her onscreen and offscreen vocal abilities perhaps fall short of the high tessitura echo in mm. 27–28, and so the scene simply concludes before we get to find out. Meanwhile, Bruce makes it through the full A section once, again not concerning herself with the B. Her "amateur" solution to the high tessitura echo at the end of the A (mm. 27–28) is simply to take it down an octave, neutralizing any call for virtuosity once again. Through all of the above musical and performative approaches to

the song's material, the three films promote the view that Schubert's song is above all the vocally grateful, and arguably graceful, melodies of its A section. All other musical elements of the song may have their roles to play, but they are secondary observations about and extractions from Schubert's Lied.

EPILOGUE

The steadfast focus on these specific parts of Schubert's song in the three films raises the question of how much the myth of Schubert's "natural" song melodies is just a product of historically contingent processes of reception, and how much we might be able to find a kernel of aesthetic truth within it. Here is where I think that we can profitably ponder the multifaceted figure and discourse of the amateur once more. "Ständchen" was, as mentioned at the start, popular with a broad and diverse set of amateur performers, and it has enjoyed a related sort of popularity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries on film and in recordings, even as domestic amateur Lied-singing has dwindled as a practice. It is plausible that the characteristic melodic phrases of the A section highlighted in these films held some degree of the same sway over amateurs already during the nineteenth century, especially the group of them that would not have enjoyed an extremely high level of Schubertian mastery. The four vocal phrases of the A section of the song employ a basic, if also inspired, mixture of elegant parallelisms with gradually developing melodic scope and variety. They start out (in the first two phrases) in a way that singers of at least moderate skill could reasonably achieve with ease. After that, the rest of the A section invites them to work toward completing that section with similar vocal grace, even as the changing tessitura becomes more difficult. Perhaps some amateur singers could only achieve this effect by humming, as Driver does onscreen, or by taking the occasional phrase down an octave, as does Bruce.

In such cases, the private personal effect, or the effect of singing the song in intimate company, may have something to do with what Lawrence Kramer has dubbed "songfulness," a

⁵²Vidal, *Figuring the Past*, 9–26, 154–61.

term encompassing a few related meanings. In its broadest sense, it is a special, pleasurable quality of “just singing” that Kramer links, for one, to songs like Schubert’s *Heidenröslein* and a primordial sort of intimacy. His concept also puts the texts of these songs in a distinctly liminal position, where their presence is important in provoking meaning or interpretation but truly perceiving them in detail is not.⁵³ In the case of these films’ reception perspectives on “Ständchen,” I would not want to downplay the text this far. The text does contribute to the seductions portrayed in these parlor scenes and likely led in part to the choice of the song in each case. But I would like to assert that “Ständchen” is presented as a reliable and accessible site of a keenly vocal, melodic pleasure. It is a pleasure not just for the professional singer’s voice and its audiences, but for all amateurs willing to access the song’s “naturalness” with theirs.

Adorno’s essay did not just present an insightful view on the relationship between theatrical, kitschy cuts of Schubert and essential aspects of his music. It also, to a much lesser degree, addressed the figure of the dilettante or amateur. While Adorno certainly used the term pejoratively elsewhere in his writings, here he uses the term “dilettante” in alliance with the myth of Schubert’s “natural” genius in a way that at least allows for a more positive reading:

For the genuine joy in Schubert’s world—the world of dances and military marches, of paltry four-hand piano music, of latent banality and slight tipsiness—has as little to do socially with bourgeois, indeed parochial strumming as it ever has with the naïve affirmation of existence. If you insist on pigeon-holing Schubert as a jobbing musician, you must always bear in mind that the kind of musician we may thus be talking about is a social outcast more in line with traveling folk, with jugglers and tricksters and their wanderings, than what we think of as a craftsman. So to find simple joy in Schubert’s marches is in fact excessive, and the time-world that they place us in is not the time-world of psychological development,

but much rather that of seething humanity. . . . One who found such anarchic joy in music, had to have been a dilettante—and when did revolution ever fail to appear to be dilettantish to the elder statesman? But this dilettantism is a dilettantism of starting over, and what seals it is the autonomous organization emanating from that beginning.⁵⁴

Much like Adorno’s charity toward the light treatment of Schubert’s melodies in operetta, this passage momentarily elevates the figure of the amateur into something basic to understanding Schubert’s originality, a gesture that simultaneously shows a glimmer of affection for amateurs more broadly. Adorno’s affection for the dilettante or amateur comes out even more strongly, however, in “Vierhändig, noch einmal,” this time through Adorno’s personal reflections concerning the green-bound bands on the piano for four-hands playing during his own childhood. Though in this article he also offers an intricate critical commentary on the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie and the genre of the symphony, he tellingly wraps the discussion on both ends with decided warmth for any individuals who would take up amateur music-making in the home.⁵⁵ In both cases we end up with a valorization of the figure of the dilettante or amateur that encompasses mixed and multiple meanings of the term and various examples within these categories simultaneously. Through my analysis, I have striven to do the same: to affirm the aesthetic contributions to meaning that “amateur voices”—whether accessed through fiction or real life—can add to the Lieder that Schubert knowingly composed for this broad and deeply varied audience. It may only be through such performances that we can fully contemplate the complex—if so often apparently natural and simple—art of Schubert’s most perennially popular Lieder.



⁵³Lawrence Kramer, “Beyond Words and Music: An Essay on Songfulness,” in *Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 51–67, at 53 and 63.

⁵⁴Adorno, “Schubert (1928),” 13.

⁵⁵Theodor W. Adorno, “Vierhändig, noch einmal,” in Theodor W. Adorno, *Musikalische Schriften IV: Moments musicaux, Impromptus*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, vol. 17 of Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann with Gretel Adorno, Susan Buck-Morss, and Klaus Schultz (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982), 303–06.

Abstract.

Scholars who have analyzed performances of Schubert's Lieder have generally focused on the voices of masterful professionals, whether looking at performances before or during the age of sound recordings. This tendency overlooks one historically important group of performers: the amateurs who made up the broad marketplace for the genre during Schubert's lifetime and throughout the nineteenth century. Studying this group of performers with any level of aesthetic particularity is, however, difficult: documentary evidence of particular singers in this group in the nineteenth century and even the early twentieth is scarce. Yet as the real-life practice of the amateur singing of Schubert's Lieder in the home gradually dwindled after the nineteenth century, fictional representations of this nineteenth-century practice began to appear in period sound films across the twentieth. While not a substitute for documentary evidence of real practices, this film phenomenon meaningfully engages with nineteenth-century cultural history, literary sources, and musical practices through presentist conventions and concerns. Such films thus offer a vehicle through which to think about continuity and change in the relationship between Schubert's song and the figure of the amateur in the nineteenth century, the twentieth century, and today.

This article analyzes three period film scenes involving nineteenth-century "amateur" performances of Schubert's "Ständchen" (*Schwanengesang*,

D. 957, no. 4). It does so in order to think about the combined aesthetic and social ramifications of the figure of the amateur in relationship to Schubert's Lieder. I look at scenes in the following three films: the operetta-influenced Schubert picture *Leise flehen meine Lieder* (1933), in which operetta star Mártha Eggerth sings as the Countess Esterházy, the classic novel adaptation *Jane Eyre* (1934), in which Virginia Bruce sings as the titular character, and a newly written piece of "governess fiction," *The Governess* (1998), in which Minnie Driver performs the song as said governess. None of these scenes offers unmediated or simple access to amateurism. Instead, in each scene, a professional, twentieth-century celebrity woman movie star both sings and otherwise portrays the nineteenth-century amateur musician and character onscreen. Keeping this tension in mind, I explore how this contradiction and other elements in each scene would have and can still provide audiences opportunities to think about the relationship between amateurism and Schubert's most popular songs. In so doing, I explore the term "amateur" in a number of overlapping senses that embrace positive and, to a lesser extent, pejorative meanings. My analysis ultimately shows how these three diverse film stagings valorize the figure and, indeed, the voice of the amateur in relationship to Schubert's music. These conclusions have implications regarding Schubert's songs and successful modes of performance that might attend them. Keywords: Schubert, "Ständchen", amateur, period film, Lied

JENNIFER
RONYAK
Schubert's
"Ständchen"