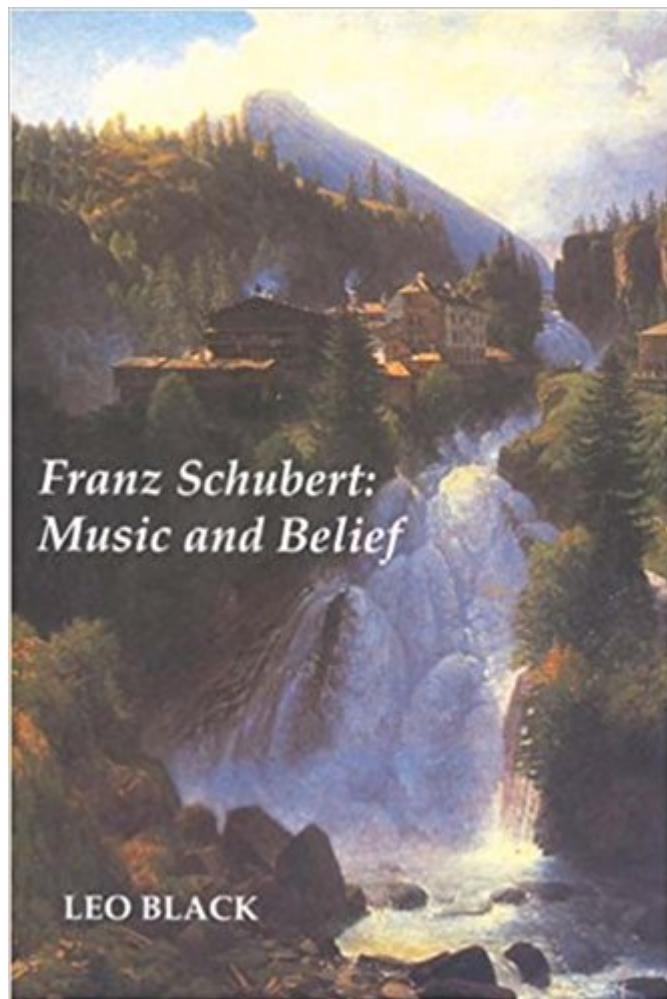


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Franz Schubert: Music And Belief



Synopsis

Remarkable new study...Its central submission, that we have hitherto disregarded or misinterpreted the most profound intuitions of a unique composer, certainly carries conviction. And even after one reading there are already musical passages that this Schubert enthusiast finds himself hearing in quite a new way. Bayan Northcott, BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE The old stereotypes of Schubert as Bohemian artist and unselfconscious creator have been replaced over the past half-century with a picture of a difficult man in difficult times. The author aims to redress the balance, concentrating firstly on works where Schubert's beliefs are clearly expressed (masses, other religious music, songs amounting to *Geistliche Lieder*). This also prompts an examination of instrumental masterpieces [Unfinished and Great C Major Symphonies, and the *Wanderer Fantasy*], which show that Schubert's religious side encompasses awe and terror as well as wonder. Schubert's 'complete voice' is thus clearly heard, rather than the sombre one currently emphasised in both literature and concert.

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Customer Reviews

Remarkable new study. --BBC Music Magazine A thoroughly convincing study of the music, beautifully and unpretentiously written... Excellent study does memorable justice to the composer. --Classic FM [This] book is an invaluable addition to Schubert studies, not only as a treasure trove for the academic, but also for the performing musician.... The author is clearly a musicologist of the highest order, but he also proves to be a philosopher of insight and generosity, and it is here that his genius lies.... Leo Black has written a masterpiece and a monument. --The Oldie

LEO BLACK is a former BBC chief producer for music.

Anyone who knows enough about Schubert to read this review knows the composer was not a conventionally religious person, which is hardly the same as saying his struggles with the human spirit had nothing to do with his artistic creations. Leo Black, the BBC's longtime chief producer for music, draws on a lifetime of intimacy with Schubert's compositions to deliver a point of view probably only he could provide. Offering neither a narrow, dusty study of Schubert's "sacred" music nor a bland, comprehensive summary of Schubert's entire musical output, Black instead shows how the genuinely spiritual elements in Schubert's music appear and reappear and inform even many of his "secular" masterpieces. Black's individual insights are far too many to mention, but among them, I must thank him for encouraging me to hear and learn Schubert's marvelous choral work, "Gesang der Geister über den Wassern" (D.714), of which I have now accumulated many recordings. Also, because of the attention Black gives throughout to the central role of vocal music in Schubert's life and work, I ended up purchasing every individual volume in Graham Johnson's "Complete Songs" cycle for Hyperion, as well as the full box set when it was issued -- no small investment, but easily worth the price. Anyone who already loves Schubert will find this book valuable and thus appreciate him even more. If you don't know Schubert, I can't think of a better guidebook to read as an introduction.

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