

Schubert's Ninth Symphony Brings Surprise to Manhattan

by Renée Sigerson

July 31—There are ringing out in upper midtown Manhattan these days, the voices of politically active New Yorkers, first singing, and then listening to critical musical passages of Franz Schubert's posthumous and great work, his Ninth Symphony; whereby, following upon this exercise, there emerge citizens who proceed with more vigor and self-confidence to engage their minds in dialogue with Lyndon LaRouche, on the urgent matter of the necessary actions to counter the crisis we are moving to solve, than the same people showed before they participated in this musical exercise.

Here we see that this work of Schubert, once again, has been brought forward as an instrument to shape a change in the direction of history. A moment of reflection on the circumstances associated with this composition's unique role in history may prove helpful in sustaining this process in Manhattan and other locations as well.

Some aspects of the story are well known, others not.

In 1837, the German pianist, journalist, and composer Robert Schumann—a man known for deep political convictions—undertook a trip to Vienna, Austria. According to his own account, while standing in long, awed silence between the two gravestones of Ludwig von Beethoven and Franz Schubert, Schumann was overcome by a strong desire to visit someone who knew these two heroes of his life, whom he deeply regretted never to have known in person. He resolved then to walk to the home of Schubert's brother Ferdinand, with whom he had exchanged correspondence in his magazine, hoping to share with him profound thoughts concerning the loss of these very special men.

When Ferdinand allowed him to open the chest of his brother's unpublished music manuscripts, Schumann was overcome with an all-encompassing but eerie sense of joy. (He used the word *Freudeschau-ernd*.) "Who knows," he later wrote, "how long the

Symphony . . . would have remained covered with dust in the dark, had I not quickly agreed with Ferdinand to send it to Leipzig to the directors of the Gewandhaus," a leading German musical institution, where it was handed over to the composer and conductor Felix Mendelssohn. Schumann added, that while the Viennese loved Schubert's songs, of which he had written over 600, Schubert's symphonic works had barely ever been performed. Schumann warned: "Whoever does not know his Symphony knows little of Schubert himself."

But most important for current purposes in retelling this somewhat well-known story, is Schumann's observation that, following Beethoven's death in 1828, it had come to be assumed that *never again, would anyone else ever be able to write another symphony with the kind of "decisive influence upon the masses, as upon the progress of the species" which Beethoven's nine symphonies had uniquely accomplished.* (emphasis added-rs) It was as if human progress had come to a grinding halt. As Schumann stated, composers in general had become convinced that "after Beethoven, stay away from symphonic plans;" and that those who attempted to write symphonies came across, at best, like academic students who were attempting to imitate previous composers; or, even worse, like madmen such as the degenerate Hector Berlioz.

Schubert's Ninth Symphony, the score of which was sitting for nearly a decade in a pile of dust, was the first example of a truly great symphonic work which was "independent" of any maudlin efforts to simply mimic Beethoven. "We see here how correctly Schubert's genius manifests itself," Schumann wrote, as the composition "leads us to a region, where we previously have nothing to remember of having been there before." Despite its extended breadth, the composition has "life in every thread" and meaning everywhere.



The genius Franz Schubert (1797-1828), as depicted by Wilhelm August Rieder in 1825.

Into the Twentieth Century

Schumann knew he could unleash this powerful demonstration of human creativity under the trustworthy baton of Felix Mendelssohn, himself an original but rigorous composer. Unfortunately, by the time of the advent of the recording industry in the Twentieth Century, the moral sense and knowledge of what Schubert had accomplished with this composition was by and large lost. With only one exception, recordings of this perfected and powerful work tend to be silly, to the point of being boring and trivial, because modern musicians are incapable of detecting the principle underlying the organization of Schubert's ideas.

Lyndon LaRouche has emphasized that throughout the Twentieth Century, the only conductor who recognized the intense flame of genius at work in this composition was Wilhelm Furtwängler, whose determination to always perform music “between” as opposed to “on” the notes, is the pre-requisite for any intelligible attempt at this composition.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Lyndon LaRouche held extended, in-depth discussions on the questions of musical composition and performance, and the importance of music for civilization, with a dear friend, violinist Dr. Norbert Brainin. The founder of the only string quartet (The Amadeus Quartet) that successfully performed the

full repertoire of compositions of Ludwig von Beethoven, Brainin publicly stated that LaRouche was the only person he had ever met who truly grasped the underlying principle of successful musical composition, a principle which Brainin named (in German) *Motivführung*, best translated as “motivic thorough-composition.”

It was in the context of reporting on his discussions with Brainin, that LaRouche first emphasized to colleagues his long-standing recognition of the importance of Furtwängler's performance of Schubert's Ninth Symphony. Brainin demonstrated—and this in no way contradicts Schumann's stress on the importance of Schubert's *independent* method of composition relative to Beethoven's works—that the common *root* of compositional approach shared by

Beethoven and Schubert, is to be found in Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, the work Brainin identified as the beginning point of Beethoven's “late” period of scientifically driven intervention into the domain of human creativity.

Brainin is unique among musicians in pointing to the Seventh Symphony—usually mischaracterized by foolish gossips as a “romantic” composition—as the beginning of a period in Beethoven's life, when he challenged musician and layman alike to open their hearts and minds to the power of music as the language of human creative activity, as opposed to any kind of stimulant of physical sensation. These compositions of Beethoven have a distinct personality.

Among musicians of that period, Schubert was the most astute in grasping what Beethoven was doing. But unlike contemporaries, he did not “mimic” Beethoven's unique personality; he internalized the method by which Beethoven had crafted this personality, and drove himself with great passion to discover greater implications of Beethoven's work within his own mind. As Schumann noted: he was successful in inspiring an effect among masses of people, when his Ninth Symphony was presented correctly; those whose admiration of Beethoven moved in the direction of doctrinaire copying of external characteristics of

Beethoven's "style," had no such effect.

There are many implications to Brainin's discussions with LaRouche on Beethoven's works, and the actual way they inspired other composers, not to be doctrinaire copyists of Beethoven's efforts, but to drive their own potential for discovery.

For now, suffice it to say that the concept of "motivic thorough-composition" recognizes that a pair or collection of musical intervals functions like a seed-crystal. Seeds spring forth into living organisms. Music is the language of the human mind, and the harmonic intervals between tones, in pairs and sequences, have the potential to generate a living process, which is what an idea really should be. In the mind of a great composer, musical intervals are "embryonic," with broad implications for unfolding a unified process of development. It requires tremendous concentration and love of humanity to drive that process forward; and if successfully presented, the effect is to transplant that underlying determination to bring this result to life, into a higher sense of purpose among human beings. In that sense, as Furtwängler noted repeatedly, the real subject of music is love.

That is why the enemies of mankind always try to crush real music and impose low forms of "entertainment" upon potentially resistant populations. That is why this new phase in the life of Schubert's Ninth Symphony, as a companion to the Manhattan Project launched by LaRouche to save the United States, has so many promising implications.

LaRouche Policy Committee member Diane Sare's approach, to have participants at Manhattan's Saturday Dialogue with Lyndon LaRouche sing *before* the meeting, has had a deep-going effect. The centerpiece of this work is to open the door for every political supporter to personally experience why LaRouche has placed so much emphasis upon Schubert's Ninth as an historically important composition, but also to demonstrate that it is only in Furtwängler's performances of this work that you can legitimately say, "this composition still lives!"

Creativity occurs within the sovereign recesses of the individual human mind; as valuable as known ideas may be, creativity does not exist in dogmatic repetition of formulas, a distinction to which Schumann was committed without compromise. Yet,—and it seems to be a paradox,—true creativity is intensely "social," or



"Whoever does not know his Symphony knows little of Schubert himself," stated composer Robert Schumann, who discovered the symphony in 1837. Here, Schumann with his wife and fellow artist Clara Wieck Schumann.

only validated as part of a social process. The paradox is only apparent, not real. Music is the historically grounded medium through which the bridge is formed between the creative processes of discovery unfolded in an individual mind, and the mental processes of large numbers of people, in the context of a real "musical event." Once a human being has experienced this process in its living form, its lingering effect takes hold of every aspect of that person's mental life. Such uplifting experiences can easily be overwhelmed in a degenerate culture, however, which is why the process of weekly efforts in this direction is so important to rebuilding the kind of national mission of the United States which it has embodied under its greatest Presidents.