

GMLI 546: Chamber Music of Schubert, Schumann and Brahms

Professor: Dr. Benjamin Binder

E-mail: binderb@duq.edu

Office Phone: 412-396-4355

Office Location: Room 208, School of Music

Office Hours: Drop-in or by appointment

Location of Class Meetings: PNC Recital Hall, School of Music

Time and Date of Class Meetings: Mondays 11:00 am – 12:40 pm

Credits: Two

Prerequisites: Graduate Status or MUSC I-IV

Course Description

The piano music, songs and small-ensemble music of Schubert, Schumann and Brahms are suffused with a poetic, literary element that transcends genre. In this course, we will immerse ourselves in the intimate expressive world of the *Hausmusik* of these three closely-related composers, drawing connections across the boundary between vocal and instrumental music. Fusing scholarship with active music-making whenever possible, we will focus on selected repertoire through musicological study, analysis, discussion, and performance. Along the way, we will tackle a variety of issues, including cultural and political context, historical and contemporary performance practice, and the relevance of the composers' biographies.

Course Objectives

It has often been said that in order to understand Schubert's instrumental music, you have to understand his songs. Within his milieu, Schubert was cherished for his ability to penetrate to the heart of a poem in his 600+ songs. Each setting reflected the deepest concerns of Schubert's time and place in Biedermeier Vienna, and his instrumental music invokes many of the same expressive strategies. Schumann, on the other hand, wrote solo piano music almost exclusively for the first ten years of his compositional career before devoting himself to song in 1840. To understand Schumann's setting of poetry in his *Lieder*, then, it's crucial to understand the poetic world of his piano music. Brahms, meanwhile, has often been lionized as the great champion of "absolute" instrumental music, but he was profoundly indebted to Schubert and Schumann, and as recent research has revealed, this included a commitment to poetic, even extra-musical, expressivity. One of our principal goals in this course will be to unearth the full range of meaning embedded in this music by seeking out interpretive relationships across genres.

We will also aim to use our musicological and analytical insights to address issues of performance. Understanding how a particular harmonic configuration or formal strategy is responding to a poem in a Schubert song, for example, can help us make

more creative and compelling performance choices when those same features arise in one of his instrumental works. Conversely, we will also ask how the realities and practicalities of performing this music might inform what we say about it as musicologists and critics.

Learning Outcomes

Here are some of the things you will do or should be able to do by the end of the semester:

- Analyze the complex relationships between music and text in German Romantic song; characterize the unique approaches to song composition taken by Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms
- Relate works by these composers in different genres to each other in order to uncover their deeper poetic meanings
- Situate the chamber repertoire of Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms within each composer's life and/or social and cultural environment; use this information to make imaginative and productive performance decisions
- Interpret the complex relationship between this music and its (possible) autobiographical significance with historical and critical sensitivity and responsibility
- Explain the poetic and aesthetic implications of unusual sonata-form strategies taken by each composer
- Identify the essential problems of interpretation when performing selections from this repertoire; conduct targeted musicological research and analytical study to address these problems

Course Materials

All materials (scores, recordings, readings, videos) will be distributed in class, posted online (on E-Res or Blackboard), and/or held on reserve behind the circulation desk at Gumberg Library. Your weekly assignment sheet will always give precise information about the location of all necessary materials. There are no required materials for the course.

Attendance

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class meeting. You are responsible for reminding me of your attendance if you are late; if you don't, you may be marked absent. Latecomers will be recorded as such; persistent or egregious lateness will be penalized at my discretion.

Absences from class are either excused or unexcused, and *only verified excuses will be accepted*. Valid excuses for missing class are limited to illness (verified by a note from a professional health-care provider), pre-existing commitments (e.g.

performing ensemble tour or paid professional engagement, verified by a printed program), family emergencies (verified by Karen Kriss), mental health emergencies (verified by the Counseling Center or other health professional) and religious holidays not otherwise specified in the Duquesne calendar. You must inform me of pre-existing commitments and religious holidays as soon as possible. If you fail to do so, I may not accept the excuse. While I will hold to these guidelines, I reserve the right to determine whether or not an excuse is valid.

All unexcused absences will result in a deduction of 50 points from your final grade. Excused absences will not be penalized, provided that you make up the work you missed. The makeup assignment I give you will probably consist of a written summary and critique of the materials we had discussed for the class you missed, but it may consist of other activities as well. You need to complete the makeup assignment in order to avoid the 50-point penalty, and your performance on the makeup assignment will be counted as your preparation and participation for the class you missed (see info on preparation and participation grade below). If your excused absence was foreseeable (e.g. a concert tour), you must turn in the makeup assignment by the beginning of the class meeting you are missing (or, at my discretion, at some other specific time, depending on the nature of the assignment). If your excused absence was not foreseeable (e.g. illness), the makeup assignment is due by the beginning of the following class meeting.

Graded Assignments

1. By and large, this will be a discussion-based, workshop-style seminar course, supplemented by a few mini-lectures. Therefore, a large portion of your final grade will be determined by your **preparation and participation** for class. At the beginning of every class meeting, I will distribute an assignment sheet dictating what you are expected to read, listen to, analyze, study, think about, and generally do or be ready to do before our next meeting. Your preparation and participation grade will be based largely on how well you are able to demonstrate during our discussion that you have done this assignment. Your grade is also dependent on active, engaged, creative, thoughtful, and constructive participation in our discussions, both in terms of quantity and quality. Be aware that sparse, insubstantial and/or non-existent participation will likely result in a very low participation grade.

A rubric and grading scheme for preparation and participation, located on Blackboard under "Assignments," gives more details on how your grade in this area will be formulated. It also provides you with a guide on how to maintain excellence in your preparation and participation. Shortly before the midpoint of the semester, I will also send you a report to let you know how you are doing in the area of preparation and participation, based on the rubric. I will give you a sense of what grade you would receive in that area if the class were already over. However, please keep in mind that this will only be an approximate indication of where your grade currently stands, not an actual grade.

One final note on preparation and participation: small written assignments or brief class presentations may be assigned from week to week that will be graded separately and taken from the overall point total devoted to this area (250 points). For example, I might ask you to present a summary of an article to the class worth 20 points. I would grade your summary out of the 20 points, and the remainder of your preparation and participation grade (230 points) would be calculated proportionally based on the rest of your overall performance throughout the semester.

2. For 12 of our class meetings, you will have the opportunity to submit a **response paper** as part of that week's assignment. At the end of each week's assignment sheet, I will explain what you need to do in this paper. Generally speaking, a response paper is a document of no less than 600 words (approx. 2 pages, double-spaced) in which you briefly summarize the material I've specified and offer your own critique and ideas in response to it, according to the stated instructions. These papers are intended to help you organize your thoughts before we meet, so that we can get right into the discussion with the questions, concerns, and ideas that you've already formulated. Papers are due on Blackboard by the beginning of class and should be submitted as Microsoft Word documents.

You need to complete 6 response papers by the end of the semester, which means you can skip 6 weeks of papers. It is your responsibility to keep track of this, however, not mine. Papers will be graded largely on how well they demonstrate that you've read and/or studied the material and made some substantial progress in coming to understand it. I also expect you to follow the instructions given in the assignment sheet about what you need to discuss in these papers. Your prose need not be perfect, but it should be clear enough for me to understand what you're trying to say.

Finally, if you like, you may submit extra response papers over and above the 6 required papers as extra support for your preparation and participation grade. Those of you who find it difficult to participate regularly in class because of linguistic or personal issues may want to exercise this option. If during class discussion you show me that you've done the work and thought creatively about it, there is probably no need to submit these extra papers. Extra papers will not be graded with points – I will simply read them and factor them in to my calculations when it comes to figuring out your preparation and participation grade. Extra papers should be e-mailed to me, not posted on Blackboard.

3. For at least two class meetings during the semester, you will be giving a **performance** as part of our activities for the day. The piece you perform will be integrally related to the assignment for the week. In class, we will explore the ways in which our musicological and analytical study of your piece might inform the way we perform it. In this workshop setting, you will take a leading role by

demonstrating aspects of the piece and trying out various different ways of performing it as warranted by our discussion.

Your total grade for performance will be the average of all the individual grades you received for your performances. High grades will be given to students who have clearly practiced and prepared the piece in a thoughtful, timely, and thorough manner. My level of expectation is that all repertoire will be ready for performance in a public masterclass with a renowned guest artist. Singers and pianists of songs should also have a total command of the meaning of their texts, both word-for-word and as a whole, and singers must take care to learn their songs with good German diction. Be sure to prepare your music well in advance.

To see what music you will be responsible for performing in class, see the course schedule at the end of the syllabus.

3. Our final two class meetings will be devoted to **presentations**. In your 10-minute presentation, you'll have the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills that you've learned in this course to a piece of your own choosing. After studying your piece extensively, you will identify a particular performance problem that might be resolved or productively addressed by musicological research and study. The presentation will outline the problem, survey the findings of your research and analysis, and propose a solution or useful approach to the problem. Alternatively, you can identify a particular musicological issue about a piece that you find interesting, and your presentation would be devoted to a discussion of how issues of performance would shed light on that problem. As part of your presentation, you may perform brief excerpts of your piece to help demonstrate important ideas. To do this, you can team up with people in our class, ask me to accompany you, or bring in friends from outside of class. You can also make a transcription of a piece that isn't originally for your instrument if you so choose. Finally, you will also be encouraged to submit further written materials to me (such as detailed analyses, elaboration of your argument, and more critiqued evidence from primary and secondary sources) which I will consider as a supplement to the content of your presentation. Further information about the presentations will be distributed separately.

4. As part of the presentation project, you will write an brief **annotated bibliography** related to your chosen piece. This will give you the chance to explore the scholarly materials that you studied for your presentation in greater depth. The bibliography will consist of summaries and critiques of 3 scholarly sources relevant to your piece, including a discussion of how each one would be useful in resolving the central issue or question you are investigating (minimum 300 words each, approx. 1 page each). Further information about the annotated bibliography will be distributed separately.

5. On Monday 12/7, I will hand out the **take-home final exam**. This is an open-book exam covering all the material from the entire semester. You will be given two

detailed essay questions to answer, including specific requirements about what pieces and readings to discuss. The exam is designed to take 4 hours (2 hours for each essay), and my expectations will be set accordingly. However, you will have a week to prepare for the exam with questions in hand. Exam essays are due on Monday 12/17 at 8 pm and must be submitted on Blackboard as a Word document or PDF.

Other Information About Graded Assignments

I will not accept any late assignments in this course. All late/missed assignments receive a grade of 0. I will allow you *one extension* during the term, provided it is justified. The earlier you request an extension, the more likely I am to authorize it. An extension may be used on any response paper or the annotated bibliography; however, it may not be used for the final exam or the presentation.

Please note that all written assignments must be submitted as PDF files or Microsoft Word documents (.doc or .docx) on Blackboard.

Grading Scheme

Preparation and participation:	250
Response papers:	180 (6 X 30)
Presentation:	200
Annotated bibliography:	50
In-class performance:	100
Take-home final exam:	220
Total:	1000

Scale For Final Grades

At the end of the semester, you can add up all the points you've earned to determine your final grade:

A 930-1000	A- 900-929	B+ 870-899	B 830-869	B- 800-829	C+ 770-799
C 700-769	D 600-699	F Below 600			

Academic Integrity

All violations of the Duquesne University Academic Integrity Policy (<http://www.duq.edu/academics/university-catalogs/2014-2015-undergraduate/academic-policies/academic-integrity>) will be handled with the utmost severity, according to the procedures explained in the policy. Please review the policy in detail. If you witness an integrity violation, you must inform me about it immediately. If you are an accomplice to an integrity violation, you will be prosecuted along with the principal perpetrators. I will be on the lookout at all

times for integrity offenses, and I encourage you to do the same. Our learning environment is not a police state, of course, but it should be a place of the highest ethical standards, where respect and concern for the academic process and for one's colleagues is paramount.

Please understand that you can discuss each week's assignment with other students outside of class in order to help each other get a better handle on course material. However, when it comes to the actual execution of any graded assignment – the response papers, the final exam, the presentation, the annotated bibliography – you must do all your own work. (In addition, for the final exam, you may *only* consult with me for help.) I strongly encourage you to contact me at once if you have any questions or concerns about a possible academic integrity issue, so that we can maximize your ability to help one another and minimize the chances of an unintended violation.

Students With Documented Disabilities

All students who have documented disabilities (physical, psychological, or otherwise) must meet with me during the first two weeks of class to arrange for appropriate accommodations. This must be handled through the Office of Disability Services. For more information, please see the office website at <https://www.duq.edu/life-at-duquesne/student-services/disability-services>.

Office Hours and Extra Help

Please knock on my door at any time if you would like my help with anything whatsoever related to the course. If I'm free, I'll be happy to meet with you. I can also make a specific appointment with you to meet at a particular time; just send me an e-mail or ask me in class.

Course Schedule:

Please note: This schedule is only a general guide to the semester; your specific assignment will be distributed a week before each class meeting. If any changes are made to the assignment after the assignment sheet has been distributed, I will let you know via e-mail and the Blackboard announcements page. (NB: All Blackboard announcements are duplicated as e-mails, so if you lose track of your e-mail for some reason, you can always check Blackboard for any updates you may have missed.)

Also: if there is a pianist in your piece, but no pianist is listed, then I will be performing with you. We will meet to rehearse during the week leading up to your performance. I will expect you to be 100% prepared by the time of our rehearsal.

Class No. 1: Preliminaries

Monday 8/27

Course mechanics

Schubert's Vienna: German Romanticism and the Biedermeier Age

NO CLASS Monday 9/3: Labor Day

Class No. 2: Introduction to Schubert's songs; Unlocking meaning in Schubert's instrumental music

Monday 9/10

How to analyze a German Lied: Schubert's "Der Lindenbaum"

The challenge of hermeneutic interpretation: Schubert's *Moment Musical* op. 94/6

Repertoire:

"Der Lindenbaum," from *Winterreise*

Moment Musical op. 94 no. 6

Class No. 3: The interpenetration of song and instrumental music in Schubert's work

Monday 9/17

Understanding Schubert's songs in their cultural context: "Die Götter Griechenlands"

Music as autobiography: the String Quartet in A minor, D. 804

Repertoire:

"Die Götter Griechenlands"

"Der Leiermann," from *Winterreise*

String Quartet in A minor, D. 804, 3rd movement

Class No. 4: Schubert and the sonata

Monday 9/24

Schubert's struggle with Beethoven

Understanding Classic and Romantic approaches to sonata form

Repertoire:

Beethoven, Piano Sonata in F minor, "Appassionata," 1st movement

Schubert, Piano Sonata in A minor, op. 42, 1st movement

Schubert, "Totengräbers Heimweh"

Class No. 5: What trout and gypsies meant to Schubert

Monday 10/1

Exploring the political, sexual, and cultural meanings of Schubert's "Trout"

The cultural and poetic meaning of Hungarian style in Schubert's time

Repertoire:

“Die Forelle”

“Trout” Quintet for Piano and Strings, 4th movement

Sonata for Arpeggione and Piano, 1st movement

Class No. 6: Schumann’s “poetic” piano music

Monday 10/8

Robert and Clara – a musical love story

The literary dimension of Schumann’s piano music

Repertoire:

Selections from Schumann’s piano music – possible pieces include

Davidsbündlertänze op. 5, *Novelletten* op. 21, *Impromptus* op. 5, *Fantasie* op. 17, and *Kreisleriana* op. 16

Class No. 7: Schumann’s songs

Monday 10/15

Expressing the inexpressible: the voice of the piano

The Romantic fragment

Gender roles and performance problems in *Frauenliebe und Leben*

Repertoire:

Schumann, “Im wunderschönen Monat Mai,” from *Dichterliebe*

Schumann, “Er, der herrlichste von allen,” from *Frauenliebe und Leben*

Schumann, “Der Nussbaum,” from *Myrthen*

Class No. 8: Schumann’s chamber music

Monday 10/22

Schumann’s treatment of sonata form

Poetry and lyricism in the absolute genres

Repertoire:

Schumann, String Quartet in A major, op. 41 no. 3, 1st movement

Class No. 9: Romances and fantasies

Monday 10/29

Genre as a clue to meaning and interpretation in Romantic music

Schumann and the fairy tale: how Schumann tells stories

Repertoire:

Three Romances, op. 94

Fantasiestücke, op. 73

Class No. 10: Brahms's songs

Monday 11/5

Absolute vs. poetic prerogatives in Brahms's Lieder

Private meanings in Brahms's *Hausmusik*

Repertoire:

"Alte Liebe"

"Wie bist du, meine Königin"

Capriccio in F# minor, op. 76 no. 1

Class No. 11: Brahms's Horn Trio

Monday 11/12

Brahms and sonata form

Why the horn? and other questions of poetic meaning

Repertoire:

Horn Trio op. 40, 1st and 3rd movements

*****Annotated bibliography due Friday 11/16 by 5 pm on Blackboard*****

NO CLASS Monday 11/19: Thanksgiving break

Class No. 12: Brahms's Violin Sonata op. 78

Monday 11/26

More sonata form

(Auto)biographical reflections in the sonata: childhood, memory, loss, nostalgia

Repertoire:

Sonata for Piano and Violin in G major, op. 78

"Regenlied"

Class No. 13: Late Brahms

Monday 12/3

Brahms's autumnal worldview

Decoding the poetic meaning of Brahms's late piano works

Repertoire:

Vier ernste Gesänge

Piano Pieces opp. 116-119

Class No. 14: Presentations I

Monday 12/10

Final exam handed out in class on 12/10

Final Meeting: Presentations II

Date and time TBD (probably Friday 12/14)

Final exam due on Monday 12/17 by 8 pm on Blackboard