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“Wo sind sie hingegangen?”: Hidden Melodies and Schubert’s “Greisengesang”

Abstract
This analytical vignette explores Schubert’s inventive handling of vocal and accompanimental texture, focusing on a technique by which he moves the vocal part from the principal melody into an inner or bass voice. These passages, in which the vocal line cedes its role as the bearer of melody and hides within the texture, relate in striking ways to the poetry associated with them: Schubert tends to reserve these hidden melodies for poems that deal with concealment, interiority, seclusion, inwardness, and intimacy. Analysis of a representative song—“Greisengesang,” D. 778 (1823)—reveals the different strategies that Schubert uses to reposition the voice within the texture and the profound expressive effects that result.

Keywords
Schubert, texture, text-music relations, “Greisengesang,” Schenkerian analysis

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“Wo sind sie hingegangen?”: Hidden Melodies and Schubert’s “Greisengesang”

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Friedrich Rückert’s poem “Greisengesang” describes an old man who summons up memories of past love and passion (Example 1). Just as he stays warm inside his frost-covered house, so does he feel warmth in his heart, despite the ravages of age, which have turned his cheeks pale and his hair gray. Within his heart, and his dreams, the roses of youth continue to bloom.

Example 1: “Greisengesang” (Rückert), text and translation

Der Frost hat mir bereifet
Des Hauses Dach;
Doch warm ist mir’s geblieben
Im Wohngemach.

The frost has covered
The roof of my house,
But I have kept warm
In my living room.

Der Winter hat die Scheitel
Mir weiss gedeckt;
Doch fliessst das Blut, das rothe
Durch’s Herzgemach.

Winter has whitened
The top of my head,
But the blood flows red
In my heart.

Der Jugendflor der Wangen,
Die Rosen sind
Gegangen, all’ gegangen
Einander nach.

The youthful flush of my cheeks,
The roses
Have gone,
One by one.

Wo sind sie hingegangen? Where have they gone?
In’s Herz hinab. Down into my heart;
Da blühn sie nach Verlangen, There, as before,
Wie vor so nach. They bloom as desired.

Sind alle Freudenströme Have all the rivers of joy in this world
Der Welt versiegt? Run dry?
Noch fliesst mir durch den Busen A silent stream still flows
Ein stiller Bach. Through my breast.

Sind alle Nachtigallen Have all the nightingales
Der Flur verstummt? In the meadows fallen silent?
Noch ist bei mir im Stillen Within me, secretly,
Hier eine wach. One still stirs.

Sie singet: “Herr des Hauses! She sings: “Master of the house,
Verschleuss dein Tor, Bolt your door
Dass nicht die Welt, die kalte, Lest the cold world
Dring’ in’s Gemach. Should penetrate the parlor.

Schleuss aus den rauhen Odem Shut out the harsh breath
Der Wirklichkeit, Of reality
Und nur dem Duft der Träume And give shelter
Gib Dach und Fach!” Only to the fragrance of dreams!”

In his 1823 setting of the poem (D. 778), Schubert dramatizes this flow of hidden passion—a passion the speaker feels acutely within himself, even if it cannot be seen by the outside world—with a stunning textural transformation in the first line of the fourth stanza, “Wo sind sie hingegangen?” (Where have they gone?). Up to this point, the vocal melody and the piano’s right hand have doubled each other. When the singer begins, for example, his melody is doubled at the unison in the right hand and at the octave in the left hand. (See Example 2 for Schubert’s setting of stanzas 1–3, which is nearly identical to his setting of stanzas 5–7.2) The texture, reminiscent of that in his song “Ihr Bild,” is stark, simple, stripped bare. Schubert momentarily thickens the texture at cadential moments (in mm. 8–9, 12–13, 16–17, 20–21, and 27–29); still, the voice and the piano’s right hand remain wedded to each other. Already in the opening section of the song we can see how Schubert’s

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2 The song exists in multiple autographs, some with more vocal ornamentation than others; many scholars believe that the most ornamented autograph reflects some of the coloratura additions that Johann Michael Vogl added when performing the piece. For a discussion of the different versions, see Richard Kramer, Distant Cycles: Schubert and the Conceiving of Song (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226452333.001.0001), 47–52, and Walter Dürr, ed., Neues Schubert-Ausgabe, ser. 4, vols. 3a+b (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1982), xxii–xxiii.
piano textures respond to the meaning of the poem: the colorless piano accompaniment in the first part of each phrase conjures the house’s frosty exterior and the old man’s white hair; the denser chords—particularly in mm. 12–13 and 20–21, accompanied by a change to the major mode—evoke the warmth that lies within.3

Yet the textural transformation in the fourth stanza—and also in the last stanza, which is set to nearly identical music—is even more expressive, and more radical. (Example 3 shows the measures associated with stanza 4, picking up where Example 2 left off.) In m. 30, the vocal line suddenly dips into the chords: beginning on G3, it doubles the lowest notes of the piano two octaves above, which themselves are doubled an octave above.

Having acted thus far as the structural melody (i.e., the upper part of an outer-voice structural framework), the vocal line abandons the melody and hides itself within the piano accompaniment. I use the word “hide” in the sense that the vocal melody is buried within the texture, not in the sense that it is inaudible or unimportant; in fact, in many ways the vocal melody at “Wo sind sie hingegangen?” draws attention to itself precisely because it diverges from its expected textural path. The moment is marked not only by the textural change, but also by a sudden cessation of movement: time seems to slow as the music comes to rest on an elongated V chord in m. 29 and then seems almost to stop entirely; the V chord is prolonged over the next four measures as the piano’s upper voice sustains 2 and the alto and bass voices effect a slow-motion voice exchange.

What makes this passage so remarkable is that the vocal line changes roles. In terms of pitch space, it may be sandwiched into the middle of the texture, but in terms of voice-leading function, it acts as a bass line. Example 4, a Schenkerian reduction of the passage, shows how the voice leading works; the shaded line charts the course of the vocal melody as it moves through the texture. (The line doesn’t correspond to the actual register of the vocal melody; instead, it shows how the vocal melody functions in the overall SATB framework.) By tracing the shaded pathway, we can see how the vocal melody continues to change roles—never, though, returning to the structural melody. After doubling the bass line it doubles an inner voice, beginning in m. 36, on the last syllable of “hinab.” From there it climbs upward and provides a missing inner voice. (I use square brackets, rather

Example 2: “Greisengesang,” mm. 1–29

Mässig langsam.

Der Frost hat mir be-

rei - fet des Hau - ses Dach; doch warm ist mir's ge - blie - ben im Wohn - ge - mach. Der

Win - ter hat die Schei - tel mir weiss ge - deckt; doch fliesst das Blut, das ro - the, durch's

Herz - ge - mach. Der Ju - gend - flor der Wan - gen, die Ro - sen sind ge -

gan - gen, all' ge - gan - gen ein-an - der nach.
than parentheses, to indicate which notes are provided by the voice but not by the piano, in order not to confuse them with implied tones that don’t appear in the texture at all but that our ears supply in order to complete the chords.) Then, after briefly doubling the inner voice once more (mm. 41–42), the vocal line again provides a missing inner voice
Example 4: “Greisengesang,” mm. 29–48, Schenkerian reduction

(mm. 42–44, “nach Verlangen”) before returning to where it began over fifteen bars earlier, dropping once more into the bass voice and doubling the $\hat{5}-1$ gesture of the piano’s left hand (mm. 44–48).^4

The purely musical drama of these measures suggests a feeling of growing and then fading away, rising and then sinking, blooming out and then folding up again; across this passage, the vocal melody becomes gradually more present and more melodic before sinking to the depths. This musical process joins with and reinforces the meaning of the poem’s fourth and eighth stanzas. In stanza 4 we are told that the roses blossom in a private, enclosed place. The lyric speaker knows they are there—but he alone. His pale face and weakened body show no outward signs of the emotion that wells up inside him. Stanza 8 returns to this private space, protected from the “harsh breath of reality” (*rauhen Odem der Wirklichkeit*) and enveloped in the “fragrance of dreams” (*Duft der Träume*). Schubert’s shifting voice-leading functions create a powerful musical narrative that enhances the poetic narrative: a mellifluous melody wells up from the vocal line, but for all its soaring

^4 The two latter autographs of the score feature essentially a stepwise descent from $B_4$ to $B_3$ in mm. 46–47, but we know from the original unembellished autograph that the basic motion is $F^\#_4-B_4$. 
beauty it can never penetrate the surface of the piano’s right-hand melody. No matter how much more florid the vocal line becomes, how much more essential to the meaning of the passage—providing crucial pitches that help to give the chords their identity—it never reconnects with the piano’s uppermost voice. Schubert’s blooming but hidden melody is a perfect musical metaphor for the old man’s blooming but hidden desire.\footnote{Graham Johnson makes a similar observation about the rising vocal melody, though he doesn’t comment on the changing relationship between voice and accompaniment: “From the stony earth of G♯ minor both the voice and the piano open outwards and upwards and reach towards the kinder, milder reaches of B major. It is as if these dying roses, in going down into the heart of the singer, have received miraculous new nourishment, and what has been a barren garden becomes, in a matter of moments, a garden of blossoming tendrils rising to meet the sunlight.” \textit{Johnson, Franz Schubert: The Complete Songs} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), vol. 1, 787.}

It turns out that this sort of hidden melody is common in Schubert’s song output. In 1997, in an essay in \textit{The Cambridge Companion to Schubert}, Kristina Muxfeldt wrote vividly (albeit briefly) about what she called the “remarkable inventiveness in the positioning of the voice within the texture” that one finds throughout Schubert’s song oeuvre.\footnote{Kristina Muxfeldt, “Schubert’s Songs: The Transformation of a Genre,” in \textit{The Cambridge Companion to Schubert}, ed. Christopher Gibbs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, \url{https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521482295.008}), 126.} In Schubert’s Lieder, she noted, sometimes the voice doubles the bass line or even sounds a functional bass on its own; at other times the vocal line is placed in an inner voice, or the singer and the pianist pass the melody back and forth. Schubert is of course not the only Lied composer to transfer the vocal melody to different parts of the texture; one finds similar strategies in the songs of later composers, notably Schumann.\footnote{Take, for example, the final song of \textit{Dichterliebe}, “Die alten, bösen Lieder,” where the vocal melody moves lower in the texture just when the poet sinks his love and pain to the bottom of the sea: the vocal melody first doubles the bass line (mm. 44–47: “Wisset ihr, warum der Sarg wohl / So gross und schwer mag sein?” [Do you know why the coffin must be so large and heavy?] and then doubles an inner voice (mm. 48–51: “Ich senkt’ auch meine Liebe / Und meinen Schmerz hinein” [I sank my love and my pain within it]).} But Schubert was one of the first Lied composers to experiment with vocal and accompanimental texture in this particular way, and he was clearly fascinated by the technique. His output is full of songs like “Greisengesang,” in which the vocal line cedes its role as the bearer of melody and sinks into the accompaniment. (The appendix at the end of this essay lists several hidden melodies in Schubert’s Lieder, along with information about where these passages occur, how the hidden melodies function, and how the music relates to the text.) Considering the prevalence of these passages in Schubert’s Lieder, it’s surprising that this aspect of his compositional craft hasn’t received more analytical attention. Schubert scholars have occasionally made reference to the way he repositions the voice within the texture, but generally only in passing, as asides in essays on other topics.\footnote{Susan Youens writes about the vocal line being chained to the bass in “Der Atlas” like Atlas to his burden, but breaking...}
The phenomenon deserves to be a central topic in our analyses of Schubert’s Lieder. Schubert’s hidden melodies have a lot to teach us, not least about the variety of his experiments with texture and voice-piano interactions. Even when it comes to this single technique—that is, repositioning the vocal melody—Schubert takes many different approaches. In surveying Schubert songs with hidden melodies, I have discovered that when he moves the vocal melody to another part of the texture he tends to use three main strategies, sometimes singly and sometimes in combination. (“Greisengesang” happens to use all three.) One of the two most common strategies is to have the singer double an inner voice that is already present in the piano accompaniment; the other is to have him double the bass line. Less often Schubert will have the singer provide an inner voice that is missing from the piano accompaniment. Further work on this topic might involve exploring whether there are structural differences and consequences when the vocal melody doubles an inner voice rather than a bass line; for example, do inner-voice melodies seem more hidden than bass-voice melodies?

The text-expressive connotations of Schubert’s hidden melodies also warrant further examination. Schubert tends to reserve his hidden melodies for poems that deal with concealment, interiority, seclusion, inwardness, and intimacy. A technique as simple as sinking the melody into an inner or bass voice can suggest an array of diverse but related poetic ideas: entering a secret place, descending into the grave, coming to rest, shutting out the external world, retreating into memory and dreams. What other poetic ideas and images inspired Schubert to use this technique, and how did he tailor each textual drama to the textural drama at hand?

9 Another theoretical option—realized only rarely by Schubert—is to have the vocal melody provide a missing bass voice. One example is “Die liebe Farbe,” from Die schöne Müllerin. Muxfeldt notes that in mm. 6–7 the vocal melody (if performed by a tenor or baritone) provides a functional bass, with the left hand tracing a similar contour in thirds above the voice and the right hand playing repeated F♯s; thereafter the roles of the voice and the right hand swap as the lines cross; Muxfeldt, “Schubert’s Songs,” 129–30.
Finally, hidden melodies like the one found in “Greisengesang” demonstrate that even if texture is one of music’s so-called secondary parameters, for Schubert the positioning of the voice within the texture is far from secondary in importance—not incidental or trivial, but deeply meaningful. The pathways that Schubert’s melodies take as they move through the texture—sometimes singing out on top, other times dipping within, plunging deep beneath, or even floating high above—are more than merely lines on a graph. They are powerful expressive trajectories that are no less vital to the shape and affect of a song than comparable melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic trajectories. In our continued explorations of Schubert’s Lieder, we ought to follow these pathways and listen carefully to what his hidden voices have to tell us.

APPENDIX. SOME REPRESENTATIVE HIDDEN MELODIES IN SCHUBERT’S LIEDER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>D. Date</th>
<th>Relevant measures (and function of hidden melody)</th>
<th>Poetic context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“An den Mond”</td>
<td>259 1815</td>
<td>50–52 (doubles bass), 52–54 (doubles inner voice), 55–56 (provides inner voice), 56–57 (doubles bass)</td>
<td>The speaker locks himself away from the world, embraces a loved one, and enjoys an intimacy “unknown and undreamt of by men.” The bass and inner-voice doublings create a feeling of privacy, inwardness, and seclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Lied eines Schiffers an die Dioskuren”</td>
<td>360 1816</td>
<td>8–10, 31–33 (doubles inner voice)</td>
<td>A sailor feels calmed and comforted by two stars that shine above him and guide him on his journey. The inner-voice doubling captures the sailor’s mood (quieted, feeling an inner peace) and his place in the scene (situated between the stars above and the sea below).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Der Tod und das Mädchen” 531 1817 30–33 (doubles inner voice), 36–37 (doubles bass)  
Death tells the Maiden that she will sleep softly in his arms. The vocal melody descends into the bass line as the Maiden descends into sleep and death.

“Der Wanderer” 649 1819 6–9, 11–14 (doubles bass)  
A wanderer walks by the light of the moon. The voice follows the bass line just as the wanderer follows the moon.

“Nachtviolen” 752 1822 33–43 (doubles different inner voices, leaping from one to the other)  
The speaker basks in the beauty of a violet and experiences the blossoming of their “sacred union” in the silence of night. The inner-voice doubling creates a feeling of intimacy as the vocal melody is embraced by the piano’s upper and lower voices.

“Aus Heliopolis I” 753 1822 53–56, 60–63 (doubles inner voice)  
The speaker imagines an idealized utopia where he will feel the healing rays of the sun. The piano sings above the vocal melody just as the sun shines above the speaker.

“Aus Heliopolis II” 754 1822 31, 37, 47–57 (doubles bass)  
The speaker ascends to a mountaintop where a ruined castle stands and takes it in fully so that he will find the right words with which to memorialize it in art. The bass doubling suggests the profundity of the scene and the connectedness the speaker feels with the earth and the castle itself.

“Schatzgräbers Begehr” 761 1822 32 (doubles inner voice and provides inner voice)  
A treasure hunter digs into the earth, “climbing gladly down,” even though he knows he may end up digging his own grave. The inner-voice doubling depicts his descent into the grave.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Greisengesang”</td>
<td>778 1823</td>
<td></td>
<td>30–35 (doubles bass), 36–37 (doubles inner voice), 38–40 (provides inner voice), 41–42 (doubles inner voice), 42–44 (provides inner voice), 45–48 (doubles bass voice)</td>
<td>An old man with pale cheeks feels the hidden passion that lies deep within his heart. The voice doubles the bass when the man says the roses of youth have gone down into his heart; the inner-voice doublings (where the vocal melody sings beneath the piano melody but never reconnects with it) suggest his blooming but hidden desire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Die liebe Farbe”</td>
<td>795 1823</td>
<td></td>
<td>6–7 (provides bass, if sung by a low voice)</td>
<td>The miller, fearing he has lost the millmaid to the hunter, imagines digging a grave for himself. The vocal melody is rooted to the bottom of the texture just as the miller is rooted to the earth and to thoughts of suicide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Der Sieg”</td>
<td>805 1824</td>
<td></td>
<td>9–10 (doubles bass), 35–38 (doubles bass), 48–49 (doubles bass)</td>
<td>The vocal melody doubles the piano’s bass voice and then floats above it just as “age-old dreams” float over the flowers, soothing the speaker’s mind, before he takes his own life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Am Fenster”</td>
<td>878 1826</td>
<td></td>
<td>50–51, 54–55 (doubles inner voice)</td>
<td>A monk addresses the high walls of his room, which reflect the moonlight, feeling comforted by them. The inner-voice doubling suggests his position in the scene (enclosed within his chamber, looking up at the walls and the moon).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Alinde”</td>
<td>904 1827</td>
<td></td>
<td>21–22 (doubles bass), 23–34 (doubles inner voice), and comparable passages in later strophes</td>
<td>The speaker seeks his beloved, Alinde, and asks a reaper, a fisherman, and a hunter for help. The bass and inner-voice doublings evoke the voices of the different characters and, in the final strophe, the voice of Alinde herself; the doublings thus suggest listening to the voices of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Auf dem Flusse”</td>
<td>911 1827</td>
<td></td>
<td>5–21 (doubles and embellishes bass)</td>
<td>The wanderer ponders the river that flows beneath a surface of ice and compares it with the passion that flows within his cold heart.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Der Kreuzzug” 932 1827 39–46 (doubles bass) A monk hears the distant singing of passing knights from the seclusion of his room. The bass doubling creates a feeling of distance; it also marks a shift in poetic voice from the narrator to the monk.

Abstract
This analytical vignette explores Schubert’s inventive handling of vocal and accompanying texture, focusing on a technique by which he moves the vocal part from the principal melody into an inner or bass voice. These passages, in which the vocal line cedes its role as the bearer of melody and hides within the texture, relate in striking ways to the poetry associated with them: Schubert tends to reserve these hidden melodies for poems that deal with concealment, interiority, seclusion, inwardness, and intimacy. Analysis of a representative song—“Greisengesang,” D. 778 (1823)—reveals the different strategies that Schubert uses to reposition the voice within the texture and the profound expressive effects that result.

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