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Franz Schubert: A Biography

Elizabeth Norman McKay

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In his short, tumultuous life, Franz Schubert (1797-1828) produced an astonishing amount of music. Symphonies, chamber music, opera, church music, and songs (more than 600 of them) poured forth in profusion. His "Trout" Quintet, his "Unfinished" Symphony, the last three piano sonatas, and above all his song cycles Die Schone Mullerin and Winterreise have come to be universally regarded as belonging to the very greatest works of music? Who was the man who composed this amazing succession of masterpieces, so many of which were either entirely ignored or regarded as failures during his lifetime? In this new biography, Elizabeth McKay paints a vivid portrait of Schubert and his world. She explores his family backround, his education and musical upbringing, his friendships, and his brushes and flirtations with the repressive authorities of Church and State. She discusses his experience of the arts, literature, and theater, and his relations with the professional and amateur musical world of his day. She traces the way Schubert's manic-depression became an increasingly significant influence in his life, responsible at least in part for social inadequacies, professional ineptitude, and idiosyncrasies in his music. And she examines Schubert's decline after he contracted syphilis, looking at its effect on his music and emotional life.

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