

## Understanding Classical Music Group

At the January meeting the programme for the year was discussed and agreed; the programme will be based around composers that we have not previously reviewed and music written for less common instruments, such as classical guitar.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to the composer Franz Schubert, firstly a review of his life and secondly an explanation of three of Schubert's songs. For the first part of the meeting the group watched a video about Schubert's life and music obtained from the U3A Resource Centre. The video explained how Schubert's music was perhaps somewhat overshadowed by that of Beethoven, despite Beethoven reputedly stating on his death-bed that Schubert would prove to be a worthy successor. It was also suggested that Schubert's physical appearance and his mental health did little to help promote his music to the general public. Schubert died aged 31 in 1828 and his music did not attain wide recognition until after his death from either typhoid fever (official record) or syphilis (suggested by some historians).

In the second part of the meeting David Owen Norris examined and explained a number of Schubert's lieder or songs (a BBC lecture). These songs were in effect the popular music of the day, the text based on romantic poetry. Three songs of very different moods were described with the aid of piano and soloist. The songs were of course written in German so the first step in understanding, if not fluent in German, would be to obtain an English translation. With this translation to hand the listener can then begin to hear how the music is designed to match the story being told. David Norris explained how the piano accompaniment provides the sound effects to describe the action taking place within song – such as galloping horses, whirling leaves and a driving rhythm in the song 'Erlkonig', a song about a child and a horseman being pursued by an evil goblin. Many other examples were described each illustrated by the soloist and pianist.

Our next meeting will be on **Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> March** 10.00am at **STARTFORTH\_SCHOOL** when the subject will be 'The Pipe Organ', king of instruments, and the different ways in which the instrument is used in classical music.

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