

Schubert – Rosamunde

Franz Peter Schubert (1797-1828) wrote the incidental music to the play *Rosamunde, Princess of Cypress*, for a friend Helmina von Chézy. Already ridiculed for her libretto to Carl Maria Weber's *Euryanthe*, the Viennese critics likewise derided Chézy for the ineptness of her writing. The romantic drama made it through two performances with the only saving graces being the incidental music that Schubert composed for the venture. Despite the success of the music, Schubert saw little merit in arranging a suite from the music, but instead used some of the score in other works such as a string quartet.

Bits and pieces of the original score were published as independent works over the years, but a unified version of the complete incidental music (Gesamtausgabe) was not made available until after the discovery of the original manuscript by Arthur Sullivan and George Grove in a closet in Vienna in 1867. Breitkopf & Härtel issued the completed score in 1891.

Schubert wrote no specific overture for *Rosamunde*. Instead he dusted off an overture to his unperformed 1820 opera *Alfonso und Estrella* for the opening night of the play, but when the *Rosamunde* manuscript was published in 1891 as Op. 26, it was not with the *Alfonso und Estrella Overture*, which had actually introduced the play in the theater, but with a still earlier one which Schubert had composed in 1820 for a different play by a different writer, called *The Magic Harp*.

Thus, the ***Overture to Rosamunde*** may be said to have served a double duty for two independent works.