

Ave Maria

Over the years, the hymn Ave Maria has been set to music numerous times. The most famous of those was composed by Franz Schubert. Today, this piece of music is loved and well known around the universe for its simplicity and ability to move practically anyone who hears it. Even when performed only as an instrumental, the song still has a tremendous emotional pull. The piece was composed around 1825 when Schubert was only 28 years old.

Although many people are not aware of it, the words to the hymn were originally written by Walter Scott for his "Lady of the Lake." The narrative poem was originally published by Scott in 1810, with the words describing the struggle that occurs between a number of Scottish Highland clans during the 16th century. Although the account in the poem is fictional, some of the clans purported their loyalty to King James V while others had loyalties elsewhere. The young heroine of the poem is Ellen Douglas. Eventually, she finds herself forced to hide in the depths of a mountain cave along with her father as they seek to escape the wrath of the king. It is while she is in hiding that she begins to sing a song. The song, "Hymn to the Virgin", is a prayer to the Virgin Mary for comfort and help. Her song, the hymn within the poem, forms the basis for the much beloved song we now know so well, Ave Maria.

"The Lady of the Lake" was translated into German in 1819 by Philip Adam Storck. It was his translation that would eventually serve as the basis for the book of songs by Schubert which was written in 1825. In Schubert's book, Ave Maria is referred to as "Ellens Dritter Gesang", which translates as "Ellen's Third Song." One year later, a separate edition of the same songs were to both the original English words as well as German words.

It has been said that this piece was performed for the first time in a small Austrian town at a castle belonging to Countess Sophie Weissenwolff. According to reports, the song was dedicated to her and eventually she was frequently known as the lady of the lake.

Today, Ave Maria is still one of the most popular songs in all of the world, especially among hymns. At times, the song is sung to words that are not the same as those of Scott, Storck or Schubert. In some cases, the song is performed solely in instrumental versions and not words are used.

The opening words of the song as well as the refrain are believed to have inspired the adaptation of the melody as the setting for the complete body of the traditional Catholic prayer Ave Maria. As a result, the Latin version of the song is used on such a frequent basis today, along with Schubert's melody, that a misconception has arisen that Schubert might have originally written the melody specifically to serve as a setting for the prayer.

New British recording artists The Priests will be including Ave Maria in their new album of classical hymns. The hymn will be produced in four different languages by the trio including Spanish, Latin, English, Italian and German. The album will be produced by Mike Hedges and will be a unique take on several traditional hymns inspired by the church.

About the Author

Peter Ruppert recommends to visit [the Priests website](#) to find out more about their worship music.

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