

Friday, November 10, 2017, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Ian Bostridge, *tenor*
Wenwen Du, *piano*

PROGRAM

Franz SCHUBERT (1797–1828) *Winterreise*, Op. 89, D. 911
Gute Nacht
Die Wetterfahne
Gefrorne Tränen
Erstarrung
Der Lindenbaum
Wasserflut
Auf dem Flusse
Rückblick
Irrlicht
Rast
Frühlingstraum
Einsamkeit
Die Post
Der greise Kopf
Die Krähe
Letzte Hoffnung
Im Dorfe
Der stürmische Morgen
Täuschung
Der Wegweiser
Das Wirtshaus
Mut
Die Nebensonnen
Der Leiermann

Please hold your applause until the end of the program.

*This program will last approximately 70 minutes
and be performed without intermission.*

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Solitude Beckons

Ian Bostridge on Franz Schubert's *Winterreise*

With a heart filled with endless love for those who scorned me, I... wandered far away. For many and many a year I sang songs. Whenever I tried to sing of love, it turned to pain. And again, when I tried to sing of pain, it turned to love.

—Schubert, “My Dream,”
manuscript, July 3, 1822

Winterreise—*Winter Journey*—a cycle of 24 songs for voice and piano, was composed by Franz Schubert towards the end of his short life. He died in Vienna in 1828 aged only 31.

Schubert was renowned, even in his own lifetime, as a song composer of matchless fecundity and a master of seductive melody; the *Winter Journey* apparently discombobulated his friends. One of the closest of these, Joseph von Spaun, remembered 30 years later how the cycle had been received by the Schubert circle:

For some time Schubert appeared very upset and melancholy. When I asked him

what was troubling him, he would only say, “Soon you will hear and understand.” One day he said to me, “Come over to Schober’s today, and I will sing you a cycle of horrifying songs. I am anxious to know what you will say about them. They have cost me more effort than any of my other songs.” So he sang the entire *Winter Journey* through to us in a voice full of emotion. We were utterly dumbfounded by the mournful, gloomy tone of these songs, and Schober said that only one, “The Linden Tree,” had appealed to him. To this Schubert replied, “I like these songs more than all the rest, and you will come to like them as well.”

Another close friend, with whom Schubert had shared digs some years before, was Johann Mayrhofer, government official and poet (Schubert set some 47 of his poems to music). For Mayrhofer, *Winter Journey* was an expression of personal trauma:

He had been long and seriously ill [with the syphilis he had first contracted towards the end of 1822], had gone through disheartening experiences, and life had shed its rosy color; winter had come for him. The poet's irony, rooted in despair, appealed to him: he expressed it in cutting tones.

Spaun confounded even more dramatically the personal and the aesthetic in his account of the cycle's genesis. "There is no doubt in my mind," he wrote, "that the state of excitement in which he wrote his most beautiful songs, and especially his *Winter Journey*, contributed to his early death."

There is something profoundly mythologizing about these accounts, especially Spaun's, which has something of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane about it—the dejection, the friends who miss the point, the sense of a mystery that will only be understood after the death of its progenitor. As against the persistent legend of "poor Schubert"—unappreciated, unloved, unsuccessful in his own lifetime—it is worth remembering that he earned well from his music, was welcomed into the salons of the well-connected (if not the aristocracy), and earned critical plaudits as well as his fair share of brickbats. Schubert was probably the first great composer to operate as a freelancer outside the security and restriction of a church position or noble patronage and, allowing for a certain youthful fecklessness, he did well for himself. His music was second only to Rossini's for its popularity on Viennese programs; it was played by most of the great instrumentalists of the day; and his fees were substantial. *Winter Journey* itself did not fall still-born from the press. Here is one contemporary review, from the *Theaterzeitung* of March 29, 1828:

Schubert's mind shows a bold sweep everywhere, whereby he carries everyone away with him who approaches, and he takes them through the immeasurable depth of the human heart into the far distance, where premonitions of the infinite dawn upon them longingly in a rosy radi-

ance, but where at the same time the shuddering bliss of an inexpressible pre-sentiment is accompanied by the gentle pain of the constraining present which hems in the boundaries of human existence.

Despite the slightly windy Romantic rhetoric, the writer has clearly perceived and engaged with what has become the acknowledged, canonical sublimity of the cycle; that transcendental quality which transmogrifies what could so easily be mistaken for a self-indulgent parade of disappointed love lyrics. For the initiate, *Winter Journey* is one of the great feasts of the musical calendar: an austere one, but one almost guaranteed to touch the ineffable as well as the heart. After the last song, "The Hurdy-Gurdy Man," the silence is palpable, the sort of silence that otherwise only a Bach Passion can summon up.

Yet the very notion of the "initiate" will set some alarm bells ringing.... Piano-accompanied song is no longer part of everyday domestic life, and has lost its one-time supremacy in the concert hall. Art song, as Americans call it—what Germans know as *Lieder*—is a niche product, even within the niche that is classical music; but *Winter Journey* is incontestably a great work of art which should be as much a part of our common experience as the poetry of Shakespeare and Dante, the paintings of Van Gogh and Pablo Picasso, the novels of the Brontë sisters or Marcel Proust. It is surely remarkable that the piece lives and makes an impact in concert halls all over the world, in cultures remote from the circumstances of its origins in 1820s Vienna....

MY OWN WAY TO *Winter Journey* was eased by great teaching and by personal idiosyncrasy. I first came across the music of Franz Schubert and the poetry of Wilhelm Müller (who wrote the words of *Winter Journey*) at school, aged 12 or 13. Our miracle of a music teacher, Michael Spencer, was always getting us to do magnificently, even absurdly, ambitious musical projects. As a singer, and not an instrumentalist, I had always felt slightly outside the charmed circle, though

we sang plenty enough fantastic music—Britten, Bach, Tallis, and Richard Rodney Bennett for starters. When Michael, Mr. Spencer, suggested that he (piano) and one of my classmates, Edward Osmond (clarinet), perform something called “The Shepherd on the Rock,” I had no idea how brilliantly off the wall it was. Going to his house on a Saturday morning to be with the other musicians and rehearse was one of the great excitements of my life.

“Der Hirt auf dem Felsen” was one of the very last pieces Schubert composed, written at the express request of the great opera diva Anna Milder-Hauptmann, whose voice was a contemporary marvel: “a house,” as one had it; “pure metal,” another. The opening and concluding verses are by the poet of *Winter Journey*, Wilhelm Müller, but nothing could be further from Schubert’s great song cycle than this dazzling confection of virtuoso pastoral. A shepherd stands on a rock singing into the Alpine landscape before him. His voice echoes and re-echoes and he remembers his lover far away. A grieving middle section is succeeded by an excited and excitable invocation of spring. Spring will come, the shepherd will wander, and he and his girl will be reunited. It’s the very opposite of *Winter Journey*, as we shall discover.

Somewhere in a box in my attic is a tape of that school performance. I haven’t listened to it for a long time, but I do remember that the famous vocal challenges of the piece are unaddressed by my fragile treble. At the same time, there was something nice about reclaiming this trouser role, this travesty shepherd boy, for an actual boy’s voice. Anyway, I fell in love with the music but then promptly forgot it, this first encounter with the Lieder tradition.

Step up another great teacher, this time a German master at senior school, Richard Stokes, whose deep, urgent, and infectious love of song infiltrated many, if not most, of his lessons. Imagine 20 or so 14- and 15-year-olds, in varying states of vocal health, bellowing Schubert’s “Erl King” or Marlene Dietrich’s “Where Have All the Flowers Gone?” in the language lab, and you get the idea. It was “The Erl King” that made me fall in love with German song, the Lied, with a passion which dominated my

teenage years. It was one particular recording of it—played in our very first German lesson—which seized my imagination and my intellect: Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, the prince of German baritones, and Gerald Moore, his English accompanist. I didn’t yet speak the language, but the sound of it and the drama which piano and voice—sometimes honeyed, sometimes trembling, sometimes incarnate evil—together conveyed were utterly new to me. I got my hands on as many recordings of Fischer-Dieskau’s song singing as I could, and I sang along to them, probably right through my voice change from treble to tenor: not ideal for my embryonic vocal technique, as Fischer-Dieskau was unmistakably a baritone.

Personal idiosyncrasy played its part in my Lieder obsession too, as I used the music and the lyrics to work my way through the perils and pains of adolescence. The other Wilhelm Müller cycle, the first—*Die schöne Müllerin* (The Beautiful Miller Girl)—was perfect for someone of my very particular Romantic disposition. I thought I’d fallen in love with a girl who lived in my street, but my clumsy attentions were first unnoticed and then spurned, and in my imagination, maybe in reality, she formed a liaison with a sporty type from the local tennis club. It seemed quite natural to tramp the South London streets near her house, singing Schubert under my breath, the songs of rapture and those of the angry reject. After all, the fair maid of the mill goes off with the macho hunter, not the sensitive singing miller boy.

Winter Journey was something I got to know a little later, but I was already primed for it. I heard two great Germans sing it in London—Peter Schreier and Hermann Prey—but I somehow managed to miss my only opportunity to hear Fischer-Dieskau perform it, with Alfred Brendel, at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. I gave my own first public performance of *Winterreise* to 30 or so friends, teachers, and fellow students at St John’s College, Oxford, in the President’s Lodgings, in January 1985. People always ask me how I remember all the words; the answer is to start young. As [these words are] published, I shall have been singing the cycle for 30 years.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER a performance of *Winterreise* is a little mysterious but usually follows a pattern. Silence emerges as the last hurdy-gurdy phrase dissipates into the hall, a silence which is often extended and forms part of the shared experience of the piece; a silence performed as much by the audience as it is by singer and pianist. A mute, stunned applause usually follows, which can swell into noisier acclaim.

Acclaim? Acclaim for what? For the composer? For the music? For the performance? Is applause, and the performers' acceptance of it, somehow impertinent? It sometimes, indeed often, feels that way. The normal rules of the song recital are in abeyance. No encores are prepared or expected and, however enthusiastically the audience respond, none will be forthcoming. There is a sense of seriousness, of having encountered something above and beyond, something ineffable and untouchable.

There can also be a sense of embarrassment or awkwardness between audience and performers, which the applause does its best, eventually, to eradicate. A song cycle such as *Winterreise* is not rooted in aspects of sung or musical performance which tend to create a certain awestruck distance. Virtuosity is concealed, vocalism does not unduly draw attention to itself—even ironizes itself—and the audience member must almost feel that he or she too is singing, and hence is implicated in the subjectivity which is being projected. The audience identifies with the persona constructed on stage, embodied in sound by piano and voice, but inhabited and projected by the singer. So, having gone so deeply into difficult places, having confronted each other across the footlights and opened up our vulnerabilities over what, at 70 minutes, is a considerable time span, a return to normality can feel unapproachable. End-of-concert rituals can help or they can impede. Sometimes it feels impossible to do the customary things—meet friends, have a drink, eat a meal. Solitude may beckon.

THAT NOTION OF A SHARED EXPOSURE brings me to two myths which need deconstructing. The ideal of humility—of serving the

music, of serving the composer—is a crucial part of the balancing act in classical performance. The discipline of classical music—the score and its demands—creates an objective space in which the dangers of self-indulgence can be held at bay. Self-expression can move outwards and trace something less solipsistic. At the same time, this can only be achieved, paradoxically, through utter immersion in the work and a merging between the composer's work and the performer's personality. Erasure in the music and the projection of subjectivity through it. Sublimation. But there is no neutral way of presenting this music, and it cannot be impersonal. The performer has to access and transform private aspects of his or her own self (just as, I would argue, the composer does). What the theorists call "performativity" is definitively in play, as much as, if not more than, for the great performers of the popular tradition—a Billie Holiday, a Bob Dylan, or an Amy Winehouse.

Schubert was the first performer of this work, accompanying himself at the piano. He was performing for friends, in a domestic setting, and he was neither a great pianist nor much of a singer. That nonperformance is, of all the performances that could have ever been, the one we would all like to have experienced. The thought of it can inform us, and it can feed our imaginations. At the same time, it cannot be our model.

THE OTHER MYTH is that which denies the relevance of the personal to the creation of this music; the feeling that talking about the life of the creative artist is a vulgar distraction from the thing itself, from Art with a capital A. Many writers on music, and on the other arts, decry the practice of biographical criticism and would claim to eschew it. It has, nonetheless, an insidious capacity to creep back in despite analyses of the intentional fallacy or declarations of the death of the author. Is this no more than the natural inclination to relish gossip, even rarefied gossip?

It is undoubtedly true that there is no clear and prescriptive relationship between life and art or art and life. To put it at its most crass,

Schubert wrote jolly music when he was gloomy and gloomy music when he was jolly. But the relationship between artistic expression and lived experience works over a broader span. It is not just a matter of the mood of the moment, and it also encompasses matters of personal character or predisposition as well as intellectual presuppositions. Art is created in history, by living, feeling, thinking human beings; we cannot understand it without grappling with its associations to and grounding in worlds of emotion, ideology, or practical constraint. Art is made from the collision between life and form; it does not exist in some sort of idealized vacuum. Only by investigating the personal and the political, in their broadest sense (and this is

especially true of Romantic art), can we properly assess the more formal aspects. [My writing on *Winterreise* does] not set out to do anything so systematic; it is no more than a small part of a continuing exploration of the complex and beautiful web of meanings—musical and literary, textual and metatextual—within which this *Winter Journey* works its spell.

—Ian Bostridge

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Ian Bostridge's international recital career has taken him to the Salzburg, Edinburgh, Munich, Vienna, Aldeburgh, and Schwarzenberg Schubertiade festivals and to the main stages of Carnegie Hall and the Teatro alla Scala, Milan. He has held artistic residencies at the Vienna Konzerthaus and Schwarzenberg Schubertiade (2003–04), the Amsterdam Concertgebouw in a Carte-Blanche series with Thomas Quasthoff (2004–05), Carnegie Hall in a Perspectives series (2005–06), the Barbican Centre (2008), the Luxembourg Philharmonie (2010–11), the Wigmore Hall (2011–12), and the Hamburg Laeiszhalle (2012–13).

His recordings have won all the major international record prizes and been nominated for 15 Grammys. They include Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* with Graham Johnson (Gramophone Award, 1996); Tom Rakewell (*The Rake's Progress*) with Sir John Eliot Gardiner (Grammy Award, 1999); and Belmonte (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*) with William Christie. Under his exclusive contract with Warner Classics, recordings included Schubert lieder and Schumann lieder (Gramophone Award, 1998); English song and Henze lieder with Julius Drake; Britten's *Our Hunting Fathers* with Daniel Harding; Mozart's *Idomeneo* with Sir Charles Mackerras; Janáček's *The Diary of One who Dis-*

appeared with Thomas Adès; Schubert with Leif Ove Andsnes, Mitsuko Uchida, and Antonio Pappano; Britten orchestral cycles with the Berliner Philharmoniker and Sir Simon Rattle; Wolf with Antonio Pappano; Bach cantatas with Fabio Biondi; Handel arias with Harry Bicket; Britten's *Canticles* and both Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* (Gramophone Award, 2003) and *Billy Budd* (Grammy Award, 2010); Adès' *The Tempest* (Gramophone Award, 2010); and Monteverdi's *Orfeo*. Recent recordings include Britten songs with Antonio Pappano for Warner Classics, Schubert songs with Julius Drake for Wigmore Hall Live, and Shakespeare songs with Antonio Pappano for Warner Classics (Grammy Award, 2017).

Bostridge has worked with the Berliner Philharmoniker and Wiener Philharmoniker; the symphony orchestras of New York, Chicago, Boston, Los Angeles, and London; the BBC Symphony Orchestra; and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Amsterdam, under Sir Simon Rattle, Sir Colin Davis, Sir Andrew Davis, Seiji Ozawa, Antonio Pappano, Riccardo Muti, Mstislav Rostropovich, Daniel Barenboim, Daniel Harding, and Donald Runnicles. He sang the world premiere of Hans Werner Henze's *Opfergang* with the Accademia Santa Cecilia in Rome under Antonio Pappano.



Bostridge's operatic appearances have included Lysander (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) for Opera Australia and at the Edinburgh Festival; Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*) and Jupiter (*Semele*) for English National Opera; and Peter Quint (*The Turn of the Screw*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), and Caliban (Adès' *The Tempest*) for the Royal Opera. He has sung Nerone (*L'Incoronazione di Poppea*) and Tom Rakewell (*The Rake's Progress*) for the Bayerische Staatsoper, Don Ottavio for the Wiener Staatsoper, and Aschenbach (*Death in Venice*) for English National Opera.

Performances during the 2013 Britten anniversary celebrations included the *War Requiem* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Vladimir Jurowski; *Les Illuminations* with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and Andris Nelsons; and *Curlow River* (as the Madwoman) in the Netia Jones staging for the London Barbican, which was also seen in New York and here on the West Coast. In the autumn of 2014 he embarked on a European recital tour of Schubert's *Winterreise* with Thomas Adès to coincide with the publication of his book *Schubert's Winter Journey: Anatomy of an Obsession*. In 2016 Bostridge was awarded the Pol Roger Duff Cooper Prize for nonfiction writing for the book, which will be translated into a total of 12 languages.

Recent engagements include his operatic debut at La Scala, Milan as Peter Quint, an American recital tour of *Winterreise* with Thomas Adès, and performances of Hans Zender's orchestrated version of *Winterreise* (co-commissioned by Cal Performances) in Taipei, Perth, for Musikkollegium Winterthur, and at New York's Lincoln Center. Highlights of the 2017–18 season include Berlioz's *Les nuits d'été* with the Seattle Symphony and Ludovic Morlot, recital tours to both coasts of America, the title role in Handel's *Jephtha* at the Opéra national de Paris, a residency with the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, and Britten's *War Requiem* with the Staatskapelle Berlin and Antonio Pappano.

Ian Bostridge was a fellow in history at Corpus Christi College, Oxford (1992–95) and in 2001 was elected an honorary fellow of the col-

lege. In 2003 he was made an Honorary Doctor of Music by the University of St Andrews and in 2010 he was made an honorary fellow of St John's College Oxford. He was made a CBE in the 2004 New Year's Honors. In 2014 he was Humanitas Professor of Classical Music at the University of Oxford.

Visit www.facebook.com/IanBostridge.

Wenwen Du (*piano*) trained with Dan Zhaoyi at the Shenzhen Arts School and with Lee Kum Sing at the Vancouver Academy of Music. She attended master courses at the Oxford Lieder Festival, Britten-Pears Programme, and Franz Schubert Institute, where master teachers included pianists Julius Drake, Imogen Cooper, and Helmut Deutsch, and singers Elly Ameling, Ian Bostridge, and Wolfgang Holzmair.

Wenwen Du has given piano recitals in Europe, North America, and Asia, most recently for the Coast Recital Society. She performed with Nikki Chooi and Timothy Chooi for the Coast Recital Society and Cecilian Chamber Series, with Caroline Goulding for the Vancouver Recital Society, with Anton Belov for Müzewest Concerts, with Abigail Levis and Johannes Kammler for the Aldeburgh Festival, and with Julia Bullock, Ryan McKinney, and stage director Yuval Sharon for the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

Wenwen Du has recorded for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and appeared in live radio broadcast at All Classical Portland. She has frequently appeared in concert with Ian Bostridge; their recitals have included the Dallas Opera's Titus Recital Series, the Park Avenue Armory, and Spivey Hall in the USA, the Vancouver Recital Society in Canada, and the Suseong Artpia and the Cheonan Arts Center in South Korea.

Later this season, Wenwen Du will be the guest artistic coach at Tianjin Opera for the premiere of Tang Kang Nian's opera *The Thunderstorm*, based on the novel by Cao Yu.

Management for Ian Bostridge

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