

Life in Lieder

In der Fremde, op. 39, no. 1	Robert Schumann (1810-1856)
Heimweh II, op. 63, no. 8	Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
Kennst du das Land?	Hugo Wolf (1860-1903)

Gretchen am Spinnrade D. 118	Franz Schubert (1797-1828)
Die junge Nonne, D. 828	
Ihr Glocken von Marling	Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

An die Musik, D. 547	Franz Schubert
Mondnacht, op. 39, no. 5	Robert Schumann
Frühlingsnacht, op. 39, no. 12	

INTERMISSION

Nacht und Träume D. 827	Franz Schubert
Die Mainacht, op. 43, no. 2	Johannes Brahms
Die Nacht, op. 10, no. 3	Richard Strauss (1864-1949)
Morgen, op. 27, no. 4	

Der Tod und das Mädchen D. 531	Franz Schubert
Auf dem Kirchhofe, op. 105, no.4	Johannes Brahms
Allerseelen, op. 10, no. 8	Richard Strauss
Morgenstimmung	Hugo Wolf

* Pieces have been programmed to flow thematically. Please withhold applause until the end of larger sets, as indicated by the spacing in the program. Thank you.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Mezzo Soprano **Kindra Scharich** has been praised by The San Francisco Chronicle for her, "noble, vocally assured singing, with stately grace and deep-rooted pathos." Accustomed to singing in a broad range of styles, she is equally at home on the operatic or concert stage. Current and past season operatic highlights include singing Hansel and Zerlina in Opera San Jose's productions of *Hansel and Gretel* and *Don Giovanni*, as well as the Countess Lydia Ivanovna in their West Coast premiere of David Carlson's *Anna Karenina*. She has also frequently worked with LA Opera and appeared in their "Saturday Morning at the Opera" series. Enthusiastic about working with living composers, in the spring of 2014, Scharich will premiere new works by composer Kurt Erickson and is currently collaborating with composer Janis Mattox on her Spanish chamber opera *Sueños de Medianoche (Midnight Dreams)*. Scharich's participation in the early music scene has included the great choral works of J.S. Bach and over 10 roles in Handel operas. She is also a founding member of the Vinaccesi Ensemble, a group that champions lesser-known works of the Baroque. A dedicated recitalist, Scharich's many performances include those presented by the American Composer's Forum in Los Angeles, as well as Lieder Alive of San Francisco. Kindra studied voice and piano at Eastman School of Music and earned bachelor's and master's degrees in vocal performance from the University of Michigan. She also completed her post-graduate education at San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Her longtime voice teacher is Jane Randolph, and she regularly coaches and collaborates with pianist John Parr of the Deutsche Oper Berlin. www.kindrascharich.com

Pianist **George Fee** has performed numerous solo recitals throughout the United States, and has presented many master classes, lectures and workshops. He received his doctorate in piano performance from Indiana University, where he was a student of Menahem Pressler, and also earned his bachelor's degree from the Oberlin College Conservatory and master's degree from the University of Wisconsin. Dr. Fee has received many awards, including first place National Piano Award in the National Federation of Music Clubs Biennial Student Auditions and third prize in the National Guild of Piano Teachers International Piano Recording Competition. Dr. Fee has always been an avid student of music history. His doctoral dissertation, *The Solo Keyboard Sonatas and Sonatinas of Georg Anton Benda*, is a major resource in the field of 18th century music. In more recent years, he has investigated the fundamentals of piano technique to determine means of preventing and curing pianistic injury. Dr. Fee and his wife, Dr. Susan Dersnah Fee, have been independent music teachers in San Diego since 1999, after teaching in Michigan for 20 years. Their website is www.dersnah-fee.com

EXPERIENCING LIEDER

A *Lied*, by literal definition, is a song in German. This could include 12th century troubadour songs (*Minnelieder*), folk songs, hymns, and choral works. But the word is most often applied to German and Austrian settings of late-18th and 19th century poetry for solo voice and piano. There are literally thousands of significant *Lieder*. At their best, they can provide as powerful, riveting, and touching an emotional experience that a listener can receive from music.

Nearly everything one can experience in life is addressed in the poetry, and nearly every human emotion is reflected somewhere in *Lieder*. The combination of words and music can intensify the emotional experience provided by words or music separately.

The fact that some of the world's greatest composers were inspired to compose hundreds of *Lieder*, representing some of their most meaningful writing, adds to the significance of this genre. The musical impact can be enormous, whether the finest German poetry was selected to be set, or whether lesser poetry was utilized.

The extreme concentration of a *Lied*, where every note and every syllable is meaningful, adds to its emotional impact. Mere passagework, display or virtuosity for its own sake is not present in *Lieder*. They are usually quite short, very frequently less than three minutes.

Intensity should not be measured in size of forces. A string quartet performance can prove to be more overwhelming than that of an entire symphony orchestra. One person, alone on the stage, reflecting through the human voice the emotions all human beings feel, and supported only by the piano, truly distills music to its essence. The effect upon the soul of the listener can be as profoundly penetrating as the intense focus of a laser beam.

An intimate venue, the only rightful home for *Lieder*, allows you, the listener, to vividly experience the emotions of the poetry and music in a way that a large concert hall does not.

LIEDER IN TODAY'S WORLD

In today's frenetic music world, the *Lieder* recital has become nearly extinct. Concert managers aim to attract large audiences to fill large halls, and to hear celebrity artists, who are frequently heavily promoted as glamorous personalities. The relatively few *Lieder* which are performed or recorded today are usually done by those who primarily sing opera, which is an entirely different art form. This is in no way meant to imply that great opera singers are incapable of also being great *Lieder* singers. But perhaps an analogy could be drawn when comparing the skills of a great film actor with those of a great stage actor, or a painter of murals with those of a painter of miniatures. The size of the theater, the number of singers on the stage, the lights, the costumes, the orchestra—all of these elements working together facilitate and perhaps necessitate a broader approach to the singing of opera. On the other hand, the absence of all of these elements in a *Lieder* recital allows for a kind of intimacy and immediacy of interaction that is difficult to emulate on the operatic stage.

TODAY'S RECITAL

Today's recital is entitled "Life in *Lieder*." Deborah Stein and Robert Spillman, in their outstanding book, *Poetry into Song: Performance and Analysis of Lieder*, (Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 6-13) state the following: "The essential elements of German Romanticism can be expressed in four main themes . . . the theme of Heightened Individuality . . . the Evocative World of Nature . . . the Seductiveness of Mystery . . . Spiritual Salvation."

Heightened Individualism was epitomized by the figure of the Wanderer, “the solitary figure whose travels through the world reflected a similar spiritual journey within This Romantic protagonist mused and brooded, communed with nature and spoke to God On the one hand nature healed with nurturing warmth and soothing breezes; on the other, nature destroyed with debilitating cold and menacing storms The heightened reactions to the mysteries of the psyche, the world of nature, and the spiritual were most vivid at night, when darkness provided an escape from daily life and intensified the unknown, when the poet was solitary and felt more in tune with the mysterious The theme of religious fervor and devotion . . . permeates much German Romantic poetry. Religious faith was intimately linked to the German Romantic longing for death (as spiritual salvation) The Romantics adopted the medieval image of death as a gentle release from life’s complexities and a serene return to nature’s peaceful domain The image of yearning for peaceful death depicts the Romantic’s conviction that release from all earthly torment including the inescapable pain of lost love, can be attained through spiritual salvation.”

The selections chosen for today’s performance follow the spiritual journey of the Wanderer, feeling alienated and longing for lost childhood, for home, for lost love; seeking consolation in religious feeling, music, and nature; experiencing night and dreams; and confronting death and release. The dates of composition of these *Lieder* span the period from Schubert, at the age of 17, on the afternoon of October 19, 1814, penning *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, universally recognized as the first truly great *Lied*, to one of the last works of Hugo Wolf, *Morgenstimmung*, composed in 1896. The messages of all of these *Lieder* remain powerful and relevant today, since they speak of the universal human experience.

It is our hope that after today’s recital you, the listener, will seek out recordings by the great *Lieder* interpreters of the past, such as Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Kathleen Ferrier, Christa Ludwig, and Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, preferably with the legendary accompanist, Gerald Moore. These are easily accessible on YouTube, as well as on CD. We believe one’s life can be greatly enhanced by this rich literature.

HISTORY OF THE LIED

Lieder written in 18th century Germany were intended to be sung in the home amongst friends. They often resembled simple, accessible folksongs, and had very basic, self-effacing accompaniments. Several developments coalesced around the turn of the 19th century which allowed the *Lied* to greatly blossom: 1) a renaissance and growing popularity of highly personal, emotional German lyric poetry which was partially a reaction against the rationalism of the Enlightenment, 2) the growing popularity of the piano as a household instrument, replacing the clavichord or harpsichord, 3) a growing educated, urban middle class, which prized the arts, as well as cultivated domesticity.

A composer faces many decisions when setting a poem to music. These include: 1) the relationship of words to music in terms of dominance, 2) whether to emphasize the general mood and meaning of the poem, or aim to highlight the details of the rhythms and inflections of the words, 3) whether to provide the same music for each verse (strophic) or make the song through-composed, 4) whether to utilize poetry of the greatest literary giants or lesser poets, and whether to use poems that are already extremely lyrical, or are less inherently musical in themselves, 5) what role to assign the accompaniment.

Lieder before Schubert gave obvious primacy to the words, through a simple melody and a clearly subservient accompaniment. **Schubert** elevated the importance of the musical elements to equal importance with the poetry and also increased the importance of the piano accompaniment. He utilized the poetry of 91 poets (some of the greatest, as well as some viewed as mediocre), in a great variety of settings. His 620 *Lieder* cover a wide range of subjects. His friend Grillparzer wrote, “He made poetry sound and music speak.” Schubert had a unique gift of combining and transforming Viennese gaiety and

melancholy into universally felt emotions. An unsurpassed melodist, his harmonies and modulations astound in their unexpected turns, and yet seem so inevitably right. As the legendary accompanist Gerald Moore has written of Schubert: "I find myself in the evening of my life turning more and more to the master whom Artur Schnabel described as the composer nearest to God. No one ever expressed himself with such lack of artificiality; so spontaneous is his song that the process of transplanted from mind to manuscript without loss of freshness or bloom is miraculous. His heart was full of music, which in its unerring directness, unsurprising naturalness and sublime eloquence uplifts our soul."

Schumann, having been almost exclusively focused on the piano in the first dozen years of his composing, gave the piano a much larger role in his *Lieder* than it had ever been previously granted. The piano's harmonies and frequent melodies are largely responsible for the mood. Extensive preludes, interludes and postludes are not uncommon. Schumann usually set the poems of the greatest poets, including many by Eichendorff and Heine, and created a magical atmosphere which reflects the emotional heart of the poem. The majority (133) of his 260 *Lieder* were composed in a 12 month period beginning in late-January of 1840, the year of his marriage to Clara.

Liszt wrote over 70 songs utilizing poems of 44 poets in five languages, the majority of which are *Lieder*. The earliest of his often experimental and vastly underperformed songs are sometimes, in his own words, "mostly inflated and sentimental, and usually overpadding with accompaniment." Their theatrical drama can make them seem almost operatic. But Liszt revised many of them later, and, especially in his later years, composed songs of great intimacy and simplicity. Liszt was also important in the history of the *Lied* because of his transcribing hundreds of *Lieder* and performing these transcriptions in the concert hall—the first time that *Lieder* in any form were to enter the concert hall.

Brahms aimed for simplicity in his *Lieder*. Not a literary connoisseur like Schumann and Wolf, he did not set what was universally regarded as the greatest poetry. He tended to select poems that dealt with love, nature, home, nostalgia, and death. The words of the poems tended to become a vehicle for a restrained, narrow ranged melodic line, which often resembled a folk song. But that melodic line and its harmonization capture the essence of the general mood, and are reflective of his life experiences.

Richard Strauss, while best known for his symphonic poems and operas, composed nearly 200 songs, many of which were for voice and orchestra. Most were written between the ages of 20 and 40, and are notable for their unique melodic qualities, rich accompaniments and emotional atmosphere. Few composers have known the human voice as did Strauss. Many of his *Lieder* were written with his irascible soprano wife, Pauline, in mind to sing.

Hugo Wolf's musical output consists almost entirely of *Lieder*, and there are those who rank him as the greatest song composer of all time. Most agree he at least brought the *Lied* to its fullest state of development. Like Schubert, he lived an itinerant existence without steady income, and was supported and championed by friends in the intellectual circles of Vienna. Unlike Schubert, who composed consistently throughout his short life, Wolf had several frenzied bursts of astounding productivity where he would produce many dozens of songs over a period of months, and then fall prey to his ongoing depression, producing nothing. Well over 2/3 of his nearly 300 *Lieder* were written between 1888 and 1891. In each fruitful period, his approach was to focus on one poet at a time and nearly exhaust the possibilities. Being a writer and possessing great literary knowledge (like Schumann, he was a highly regarded music critic, though unlike Schumann, quite vitriolic in his opposition to Brahms and the more conservative composers of his time), Wolf was only attracted to the greatest poetry, which included large amounts of Moerike, Eichendorff, and Goethe. He apparently never set poems of a living poet. The variety and uniqueness of each of his *Lieder* is extraordinary. Syphilitic insanity caused Wolf to be unable to compose at all in the last years of his brief life, and like Schumann, he died in an asylum. Wolf's intense correlation of text and music is unsurpassed. Every nuance and inflection of speech is captured in his original, uniquely personal, declamatory language. However, the musical elements are not

understated. The piano writing evokes fluctuating moods through the utilization of intense, unexpected, chromatic harmonies, some of which were inspired by Wagner. The piano, therefore, with its huge role, functioned similarly as did Wagner's orchestra in creating and supporting the mood of the texts. Yet Wolf's piano writing never covers or distracts from the text. It is all in the service of the poetry, but totally reflecting the drama, meaning, and soul of the poem. There is often a very powerful spiritual, introspective quality to Wolf's writing, combined with intensely concentrated gestures. His *Lieder* have sometimes been called "psychological songs." With their great sophistication, they can sometimes be difficult to fully absorb upon first hearing. But they certainly warrant rehearing and in-depth study. After Wolf, the piano was frequently replaced by the orchestra as the accompaniment and the venue for the *Lied* now became primarily the concert hall.

POETS OF TODAY'S *LIEDER*

Joseph Karl Eichendorff (1788-1857) was definitely one of the most important German Romantics, with a special sensitivity to nature. The magical, enchanting lyricism of his poetry almost seemed to be music itself. A civil servant in Breslau and Berlin, he longed for his beloved countryside.

Klaus Groth (1819-1899) was a lyric poet, who wrote of country life in his North German home. He was a school teacher, a professor, and a friend of Brahms.

Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832) was the giant of German literature. His influence on the late-18th and 19th centuries was absolutely enormous. While he was actually a proponent of Classicism and a critic of many aspects of Romanticism, the Romantics saw much powerful personal subjectivity in his poetry, novels, and plays. His poetry was set by nearly every significant composer of *Lieder* in his time and later. A true genius and complete Renaissance man, Goethe was also a philosopher, scientist, diplomat, and civil servant.

Jacob Nikolaus von Craigher de Jachelutta (1797-1855) was an important figure in Viennese intellectual life. Originally from Italy, he travelled widely, translated significant literature, and wrote poetry.

Emil Kuh (1828-1876) was a journalist and professor of German literature. He was prominent in Viennese literary circles.

Franz von Schober (1796-1882) was a gifted, wealthy, literary dilettante, who was Schubert's closest friend.

Matthaus von Collin (1779-1824) was an important scholar, journalist, dramatist, and poet in Vienna. A professor of aesthetics and philosophy, his home was a venue where Schubert's songs were frequently premiered in front of a distinguished audience, with Schubert at the piano.

Hermann von Gilm (1812-1864) was an Austrian lyric poet from Tyrol, who worked as a civil servant.

Ludwig Heinrich Christoph Hoelty (1748-1776) was the most important poet in the society of young poets known as the "*Goettinger Hain*." His poetry became extremely influential throughout the

next century. A large number of composers set his work, which was characterized by a sweetness, tenderness, and purity, and frequently reflected his delight in nature.

John Henry Mackay (1864-1933) born in Scotland, but raised in Germany, was a rebellious thinker and writer.

Matthias Claudius (1740-1815) was the editor of a popular journal, to which he contributed essays and poems. His consciously simple, natural style brought him enormous success.

Detlev von Liliencron (1844-1909) was an eminent lyric poet and novelist. He was a career German military officer, who, upon retirement, came to the United States, where he failed to make a living as a painter, piano teacher, and beer hall pianist. He returned to Germany and worked in the civil service.

Robert Reinick (1805-1852), despite very poor eyesight, was a German painter and poet, and personal friend of Schumann.

Program notes supplied by George Fee and Kindra Scharich