Department of Music
College of Fine Arts

presents a

Doctoral Recital

Micheal Smith, tenor
Karen McCann, piano

Franz Schubert

Winterreise, op. 89 (1827)

I Gute Nacht
II Die Wetterfahne
III Gefrorene Tränen
IV Erstarrung
V Der Lindenbaum
VI Wasserflut
VII Auf dem Flusse
VIII Rückblick
IX Irrlicht
X Rast
XI Frühlingstraum
XII Einsamkeit

INTERMISSION

XIII Die Post
XIV Der greise Kopf
XV Die Krähe
XVI Letzte Hoffnung
XVII Im Dorfe
XVIII Der stürmische Morgen
XIX Täuschung
XX Der Wegweiser
XXI Das Wirtshaus
XXII Mut
XXIII Die Nebensonnen
XIV Der Leiermann

Fremd bin ich eingezogen
Der Wind spielt mit der Wetterfahne
Gefrorne Tropfen fallen
Ich such' im Schnee vergebens
Am Brunnen vor dem Tore
Manche Trän' aus meinen Augen
Der du so lustig rauschest
Es brennt mir unter beiden Sohlen
In die tiefsten Felsengründe
Nun merk' ich erst, wie müd' ich bin
Ich träumte von bunten Blumen
Wie eine trübe Wolke

Von der Strasse her ein Posthorn klingt
Der Reif hätt' einen weissen Schein
Eine Krähe war mit mir
Hie und da ist an den Bäumen
Es bellen di Hunde, es rasseln die Ketten
Wie hat der Sturm zerrissen
Ein Licht tanzt freundlich vor mir her
Was vermied' ich denn die Wege
Auf einen Totenacker
Fliegt der Schnee mir ins Gesicht
Drei Sonnen sah ich am Himmel steh'n
Drüben hinterm dorfe steht ein Leiermann

This recital is presented as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Musical Arts in Applied Music

Micheal Smith is a student of Alfonse Anderson

Friday, December 10, 2010       6:00 p.m.

Dr. Arturo Rando-Grillot Recital Hall
Lee and Thomas Beam Music Center
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
PROGRAM NOTES

In approaching Winterreise, (1827) opus 89, Nos. 1–24, D. 911, a singer must come to terms with a single, overarching fact of its composition: Schubert (1727–1828) began and finished composition of this massive cycle, one year before he died, after a very extended hospitalization for end-stage syphilis. The affect of this protracted illness, which forced an extended isolation from his friends and his music, cannot be minimized.

Schubert encountered the first 12 poems of Winterreise by Wilhelm Müller (1794–1827)—who also was the source of the poetry for Die Schöne Müllerin—early in that year and only found the second 12 poems in October of that year. This large, complex and extremely dramatic composition would be the last major creative output of Schubert’s life, or in the words of Josef von Spaun as quoted by Winter, “the songs of Winterreise were his real swansong. From then on he was a sick man, although his outward condition gave no immediate cause for alarm”.

Of this cycle, which his friends thought so gloomy and unbeautiful, Schubert said, “I like these songs more than all the others and you will get to like them too.” Indeed, they appreciated the dramatic content but were justifiably surprised that this cycle would be so different than his previous cycle that was set to the same poet’s work.

Winterreise then is something to be approached as a singer and listened to as an audience with a different paradigm. Kimball rightly states that this cycle is a monodrama in two parts and it must be sung and listened to in this way as well. This cycle is almost operatic in its scope and dramatic journey but the journey is accomplished in small portraits, almost reminiscent of the miniature character pieces of Schubert’s Moments Musicaux (1823–1828). Each song gives us glimpses into the character’s reaction to events that already happened and it details his physical journey as it corresponds to his emotional journey. It creates an atmosphere of feeling and mood from the first note to the last in each song. It tells the tale of a young man who thought he had found love but instead was betrayed in his trust. His journey is one of realization, escape, longing, resignation, despair, rest denied, and finally... the peaceful acceptance of his fate.

This encompassing tale is one that occurs in 1 hour and 15 minutes of music. The first half of 12 songs is just over 40 minutes of continuous music. There is an intermission and then the second half of 12 songs is over 30 minutes long. This presents a dramatic challenge to the singer to not only create 24 distinct moods and individual emotional landscapes, but to also do this without any more dramatic collaboration than the accompaniment. The singular emotional landscape and spare nature of the music are difficulties in and of themselves, but the other facet of Winterreise that deters many singers is its length. According to Luana Devol, the amount of singing in this cycle is analogous to one of the largest female Wagnerian roles, Isolde. This is a cycle of songs that is not performed very often in its entirety, however, due in large part to its dramatic potential and its singular and spare nature, it has been staged, adapted, dramatically interpreted on Broadway, and around the world in countless ways.

This cycle has inspired scholarship on its interpretation and performance practice by many performers and musicologists. Famous soprano Lotte Lehman, who was an amateur painter as well, created a series of portraits that attempted to encapsulate the character and feeling of each one of the songs. These portraits would be published with her book Eighteen Song Cycles: Studies in Their Interpretation. Taken as a whole they are a wonderful visual representation for the emotional state of the unnamed wanderer and combined with her notes they are an invaluable source of interpretive material.

This song cycle should in no way leave the listener utterly depressed and without hope. The singer should always convey the sense of a longing for the life that could have been. Schubert, as his dear friend says, created this cycle as his “Swan Song,” and it should never be forgotten that a lifetime of potential creativity was compressed into this brilliant, almost-opera, Winterreise.

2 Ibid.