Department of Music  
College of Fine Arts  
presents a  

Doctoral Recital  

Micheal Smith, tenor  
Karen McCann, piano  

Franz Schubert  
*Winterreise, op. 89 (1827)*  
(1797–1828)  

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  

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 effect 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 it’s dramatic potential and it’s 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.