



# Schubert's *Winterreise*

Joyce DiDonato / *Mezzo-soprano*  
Yannick Nézet-Séguin / *Piano*

Sunday Afternoon, December 16, 2018 at 4:00  
Hill Auditorium  
Ann Arbor

22nd Performance of the 140th Annual Season  
140th Annual Choral Union Series  
Vocal Performance Series

This afternoon's recital is supported by the Susan B. Ullrich Endowment Fund.

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Special thanks to Matthew Thompson, Stephen West, and the U-M Department of Vocal Performance for their participation in events surrounding this afternoon's recital.

The Steinway piano used in this afternoon's recital is made possible by William and Mary Palmer.

Special thanks to Tom Thompson of Tom Thompson Flowers, Ann Arbor, for his generous contribution of floral art for this afternoon's recital.

Ms. DiDonato and Mr. Nézet-Séguin appear by arrangement with Askonas Holt.

The translation of *Winterreise* used in the supertitles for this afternoon's recital was provided by Richard Stokes.

In consideration for the artists and the audience, please refrain from the use of electronic devices during the performance.

The photography, sound recording, or videotaping for this performance is prohibited.

## PROGRAM

*Franz Schubert*

### **Winterreise, Op. 89, D. 911**

*Text by Wilhelm Müller*

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 withhold applause until the end of the song cycle.*

*This afternoon's recital runs approximately one hour and 15 minutes in duration and is performed without intermission.*

## WINTERREISE, OP. 89, D. 911 (WINTER JOURNEY) (1827)

Franz Schubert

Born January 31, 1797 in Himmelpfortgrund, near Vienna

Died November 19, 1828 in Vienna

UMS premiere: Mezzo-soprano Sarah Walker with pianist Gareth Hancock; January 1997 in the Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre. Excerpts from the song cycle were performed as early as February 1893 by tenor Max Heinrich with pianist Erich J. Schmaal in University Hall.

### Snapshots of History...In 1827:

- The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad is incorporated, becoming the first in the US to offer commercial transportation of both people and freight
- *Freedom's Journal*, the first African-American owned and published newspaper in the US, is founded in New York by John Russwurm
- Ludwig van Beethoven dies

"I like these [songs] more than all the rest, and you will too one day." These are Schubert's words to a concerned colleague after performing *Winterreise* for him for the first time.

There are no song cycles like *Winterreise*. We have diverse examples of the genre in the vocal repertoire: story cycles with a linear thread from first to last song. Schubert's other celebrated creation, *Die schöne Müllerin*, written four years earlier, is a perfect example. Boy goes wandering; boy finds a job; boy meets a girl, believes they are meant for one another; boy loses girl to another; boy is destroyed. There are no blank chapters to be filled in by the performer's imagination, as the sad story is complete. Another type of cycle eschews storytelling altogether, and instead offers the listener various pictures by the same poet and composer, like rooms in an art gallery featuring but one painter. Schumann's Op. 39 *Liederkreis* and Barber's *Hermit*

*Songs* are masterpieces of this type. One can discern a thread here or a repeated theme there, but no "once upon a time" experience is to be had with this type of cycle. Beethoven's offering, *An die ferne Geliebte*, a groundbreaking work with no pause between songs and featuring cyclical musical development, is part story and partially a collection of songs within the story. Vaughan Williams' *Songs of Travel* is almost a story, but not quite; gaps must be filled by the fantasy of the performer.

Indeed, *Winterreise* stands alone. These two dozen songs, written in the last year of Schubert's all-too-short life, are searing milestones in the systematic dismantling of the protagonist's spirit, his very soul perhaps. Yes, the cycle does begin with romantic betrayal — nothing so unusual there — which seems to cause the hero to set off on his journey. But he has no destination, and it is surely the wrong season of

## THE GIRL SPOKE OF LOVE...

by Joyce DiDonato

The word “masterpiece” appears often in my line of business, and while the majority of works in which I participate unquestionably fall into that category, there still remain THE Masterpieces: those holy relics of unparalleled genius that have changed the course of the art form entirely. *Winterreise* is this singular, crowning achievement in song.

And yet, as much as I have always loved the great recital repertoire, it never once occurred to me to personally tackle this mammoth undertaking until just over a year ago, when Yannick approached me with the bold idea of performing Schubert’s masterful journey together. Naturally, I was compelled to give it great consideration: “But it must really speak to you,” he warned. “You must feel deeply called to enter into this world and live there for some time.”

And so naturally I dove in. Completely. And yet, diligent as I was, I couldn’t quite find my way into the protagonist’s world, despite the utterly compelling journey in front of me. It wasn’t a question of gender — I’m used to donning pants on the stage. No. Instead, a persistent question took hold of me and simply wouldn’t let go: “But what about her?” my heart kept asking. In most writings about this cycle, authors gloss over her involvement dismissively: “We don’t know much about her,” the papers reveal, and the discussion promptly closes.

Perhaps it’s my identification with Charlotte in Massenet’s *Werther* that kept this question front and center

in my mind. (I’ve always wondered what happens to her when the curtain comes down. Does she cave in to her passion and follow Werther into his fate of suicide? Does she obediently return to her life with Albert, dutifully, yet completely hollowed-out?) This girl — this catalyst — that prompts our protagonist to flee his life, to embark on his pilgrimage of sorrow and despair, and to journey into oblivion, presumably must know of his departure. She must feel it. She must surely wonder about him...after all, she “spoke of love.” Has she mourned his loss? Has she simply gone about her life as is expected of a girl of her stature? How has she moved forward in her life?

This lingering question provided no resolution in Müller’s poetry, and so I set out to create my own story: what if He sent His last journals to Her before he parted? A tormented and painful a scenario to face, what if His final words arrived to Her as a kind of suicide note? What if He wanted Her to understand Him? To feel His pain? To experience His torment and despair? To force Her to wander alongside Him? And what if She reads the writings? Word for word. Over and over. (“*Ces lettres...ces lettres,*” Charlotte screams out.)

What happens to the winter’s journey when we feel it through the heart of the one who was the impetus of such agony and despair? The survivor. The one left behind. What does a singular event look like through the differing eyes of two separate people, two separate perspectives?

The lives that have entwined so closely cannot be separated or disregarded so easily.

Perhaps one element of a true masterpiece is that it invites itself to be experienced in new light.

So what about she who spoke of love? This can also be her journey...

## **WINTERREISE AT UMS**

*Winterreise* is conventionally thought of as the high-water mark of German *lieder*. Traditional performance practice also leads most to think of its story as a male narrative offered by a male singer. But live performances and recordings of the cycle by women are not completely uncommon.

The cycle's performance history at UMS is limited and this afternoon's recital marks only the third time in 140 years that it has been programmed. Ironically, the women come out on top in the UMS annals with two of these three rare UMS performances going to female interpreters. *Winterreise* was first performed by the British mezzo-soprano Sarah Walker in 1997 in the Lydia Mendelssohn Theater followed by last February's interpretation by Ian Bostridge, with this afternoon's offering being the third.

*Winterreise* recordings by women offer a notable history as well. Among the most memorable are accounts by sopranos Lotte Lehmann (1941) and Margaret Price (1997); mezzo-sopranos Christa Ludwig (1986) and Brigitte Fassbaender (1988); and contralto Nathalie Stutzmann (2003).

the year for such a trip. Is this truly the cause for his decision? “Gute Nacht,” the cycle’s first and longest song tells us: “I came in as a stranger; I depart as one.” Thus the themes of alienation, withdrawal, and loneliness are set, whether love was ever required or not.

Schubert only chose to set 12 of Müller’s poems to music. The composer knew nothing of a second set of texts; indeed they had not been written when he began what we now call Part I of the whole cycle (the first 12 songs). Schubert was aware of how mortally ill he was, that his days were numbered, yet 12 songs still seemed possible. Then only three months before his death, having discovered the second dozen poems, he worked feverishly to create what we know today as *Winterreise*.

(A tiny anecdote here: Schubert chose to omit the definite article in the title of the cycle. This departure from traditional German grammar renders the title more arresting, certainly increasing its dramatic effect before one even proceeds to open the book’s cover. *The Winter Journey* could be any story; *Winter Journey* is bold and unique, and as lonely without its article as is the cycle’s leading man.)

Composers often change a word here or there, and in some cases — Schumann’s *Dichterliebe* comes to mind — they may even omit two or three entire poems. They know their craft; they are concerned with public performance after all, and its inherent theatricality as well as the technical necessities of singing and playing the piano, whereas poets may not necessarily anticipate a public reading of their words. Schubert completely

re-ordered Müller’s texts in Part II of the cycle, beginning with the song “*Die Post*,” and when he discovered that the poet had himself re-ordered the texts in Part I after publishing them, Schubert declined to alter what he had already created. These changes in the order of the poems have no effect on the story, for I would remind you: there is no linear tale told here. Susan Youens, the well-known musicologist devoted to song repertoire, is of the opinion that “Schubert’s order is better than the poet’s.”

Let us remember that as he wrote this cycle, Schubert had 600 songs to his credit already. There was no form he had not explored, and so with *Winterreise* we have strophic songs: pieces which are rondos as well as through-composed examples. There was no accompanimental or pianistic device he had not already created to paint the scene. He had invented Gretchen’s spinning wheel and the silent entrance of Death in *Der Tod und das Mädchen*. For this cycle, he serves up the sound of dogs growling, wind howling, the inexorable circling overhead of a crow, and of course, the ultimate example of the hurdy-gurdy in the cycle’s last song.

Schubert had pioneered ways to manipulate shifting modes of major and minor which served as a textbook for future composers. Obviously with *Winterreise*, most of the songs are in minor keys. The subject demands this. But along this terrible path there are waystations which offer our protagonist some relief from the darkness, from the cold, and in the process, wring our hearts as we listen. The celebrated “*Der Lindenbaum*” (the fifth song) and “*Frühlingstraum*”

(the 11th song) are excellent examples. Even in the midst of dark minor tonalities, Schubert will give us tender moments which he feels call out for a shift to a major mode. Texts such as “Where might I find a single blade of grass?” or “What have I done that makes me shun others so?” — these are momentary oases of tenderness, warmth, and vulnerability dropped here and there in this 80 minutes of bleak, snowy landscape.

What does our wanderer encounter on this terrible journey? The only living beings are unfriendly dogs and a solitary crow. When he finds the hut of a coal laborer, there is no one inside to welcome him. The sole exception to this bleak loneliness is the hurdy-gurdy man of the cycle’s last song. He too has churlish dogs around him, no shoes, and not one coin on his plate despite his musical offering. He might easily be seen as a mirror image of the protagonist of the cycle.

It is also interesting to catalogue the wanderer’s discards as he proceeds on his journey. He does not abandon thoughts of the girl he loved until after the 19th song. He gives up hope only in the 16th song, as the last leaf falls from a branch. He discards his desire to see only in the penultimate song with “I would be better off in the dark.” The desire to die runs throughout Part II, climaxing in “Das Wirtshaus” (the 21st song) with a request to avail himself of a place in the cemetery; this pathetic plea is, of course, denied.

Whenever I have performed *Winterreise*, I have felt I have officiated at the destruction of a psyche. There is inevitably a deafening silence when the cycle ends, and applause

seems not only unnecessary, but downright inappropriate. I don’t think the performers need it or seek it. The work itself is the star, and if applause is to ensue, it must be for Schubert’s courage in writing such a masterpiece, particularly so close to his own end.

*Program note by Martin Katz.*



## ARTISTS

Multi-Grammy Award-winner and 2018 Olivier Award winner for “Outstanding Achievement in Opera,” Kansas-born **Joyce DiDonato** (*mezzo-soprano*) entrances audiences across the globe, and has been proclaimed “perhaps the most potent female singer of her generation” by the *New Yorker*. With a voice “nothing less than 24-carat gold” according to the *Times*, Ms. DiDonato has soared to the top of the industry both as a performer and a fierce advocate for the arts, gaining international prominence in operas by Handel and Mozart, as well as through her wide-ranging, acclaimed discography. She is also widely acclaimed for the bel canto roles of Rossini and Donizetti.

Much in demand on the concert and recital circuit, she has recently held residencies at Carnegie Hall and at London’s Barbican Centre, toured extensively in the US, South America, Europe, and Asia and appeared as guest soloist at the BBC’s Last Night of the Proms. Recent highlights include the Rotterdam Philharmonic under Yannick Nézet-Séguin, the Berlin Philharmonic under Sir Simon Rattle, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Riccardo Muti, extensive touring with Il Pomo d’Oro under Maxim Emelyanychev, and recitals with the Brentano Quartet at Wigmore Hall and with Sir Antonio Pappano at The Royal Opera.

In opera, her recent roles include Sister Helen in *Dead Man Walking* at the Teatro Real Madrid and London’s Barbican Centre; her first Didon in *Les Troyens* under John Nelsons in Strasbourg; her first *Semiramide* in a new production at the Bavarian State Opera; the title role in *Ariodante* on tour with the English Concert and Harry Bicket; *Semiramide* and Charlotte in *Werther* under Pappano at The Royal Opera; the title role in

*Cendrillon*, Adalgisa in *Norma*, and Elena in *La donna del lago* at the Metropolitan Opera; and the title role in *Maria Stuarda* for the Metropolitan Opera, The Royal Opera, and the Liceu Barcelona.

Ms. DiDonato’s current season sees her first staged Didon in *Les Troyens* at the Vienna State Opera, her Sesto at the Metropolitan Opera, and *Agrippina* in concert with Il Pomo d’Oro. She will also perform at the BBC Proms and in Hamburg with the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique under Sir John Eliot Gardiner, with the Philadelphia Orchestra at Carnegie Hall under Nézet-Séguin, with Il Pomo d’Oro under Maxim Emelyanychev on tour to Moscow and Asia, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Muti, and the Accademia Santa Cecilia Orchestra under Pappano. The season also sees the release of her latest major album on Warner entitled *SongPlay* which will tour the US, Schubert’s *Winterreise* in recital in Kansas City and Ann Arbor with Nézet-Séguin at the piano, and culminates in a tour of the US and Europe with the National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America under Pappano.

An exclusive recording artist with Erato/Warner Classics, her most recent release *Les Troyens* won the Recording (Complete Opera) category at the 2018 International Opera Awards, the Opera Award at the 2018 *BBC Music Magazine Awards*, and is nominated in the Opera category at this year’s *Gramophone Awards*. An extensive recording artist, her other recent albums include *In War & Peace* which won the 2017 “Best Recital” *Gramophone Award*, *Stella di Napoli*, her Grammy Award-winning *Diva Divo*, and *Drama Queens*. Other honors include the *Gramophone* “Artist of the Year” and “Recital of the Year” awards, and an induction into the *Gramophone* Hall of Fame.

In August 2018, Montreal-born **Yannick Nézet-Séguin** (*piano*) began his tenure as music director of the Metropolitan Opera in New York. In 2012, he added the music directorship of The Philadelphia Orchestra to his role as artistic director and principal conductor of the Orchestre Métropolitain (Montreal), where he has served since 2000. He also became an honorary member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe in 2016–17. 2017–18 was his 10th and final season with the Rotterdam Philharmonic.

Mr. Nézet-Séguin has worked with many leading European ensembles and enjoys close collaborations with the Berliner Philharmoniker, Wiener Philharmoniker, Bayerischer Rundfunk Sinfonieorchester, and Chamber Orchestra of Europe; between 2008 and 2014 he was also principal guest conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. He has appeared three times at the BBC Proms and at many festivals in Europe and North America. Mr. Nézet-Séguin made his Salzburg Festival opera debut in 2008 with a new production of *Roméo et Juliette*, and returned in 2010 and 2011 for *Don Giovanni*. In the 2009–10 season, he made his Metropolitan Opera debut with a new production of *Carmen*. He has conducted at Teatro alla Scala, Royal Opera House – Covent Garden, Netherlands Opera, and Vienna State Opera, and in 2011 began a cycle of seven Mozart operas for Festspielhaus Baden-Baden, all recorded live by Deutsche Grammophon.

Recent Deutsche Grammophon releases include Rachmaninoff's Second and Fourth Piano Concertos with Daniil Trifonov and The Philadelphia Orchestra, and *Le nozze di Figaro* with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, which won the 2017 Echo Klassik for "Best Opera Recording" and a Grammy nomination. The discography also includes Bernstein's *Mass* recorded live with

The Philadelphia Orchestra; an album of French and Italian opera duets recorded with Rolando Villazón, Ildar Abdrazakov, and the Orchestre Métropolitain; works of Bartók, Dvořák, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Turnage, Bruckner, and Mahler with the Rotterdam Philharmonic; the complete Schumann symphonies; *The Rite of Spring* and Rachmaninoff's *Variations* with Daniil Trifonov and The Philadelphia Orchestra; Tchaikovsky with the Rotterdam Philharmonic and Lisa Batiashvili; and recordings with the Rotterdam Philharmonic (EMI Classics, BIS, and DG), London Philharmonic (LPO label), and Orchestre Métropolitain (ATMA Classique).

Mr. Nézet-Séguin studied piano, conducting, composition, and chamber music at the Conservatoire de musique du Québec in Montreal and choral conducting at the Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey before going on to study with renowned conductors, most notably the Italian maestro Carlo Maria Giulini. His honors include Musical America's 2016 "Artist of the Year," Echo Klassik's 2014 "Conductor of the Year"; and additional awards including the Virginia-Parker (2000), Royal Philharmonic Society (2009), National Arts Centre (2010), Denise-Pelletier (2015), Medal of Honor of the Quebec National Assembly (2015), and Oskar Morawetz (2017). He holds six honorary doctorates from the Université du Québec à Montreal (2011), Curtis Institute in Philadelphia (2014), Westminster Choir College of Rider University (2015), McGill University in Montreal (2017), Université de Montreal (2017), and University of Pennsylvania (2018). He was appointed a Companion of the Order of Canada (2012), Companion of the Order of Arts and Letters of Québec (2015), Officer of the Order of Québec (2015), and Officer of the Order of Montreal (2017).

## UMS ARCHIVES

This afternoon's recital marks **Joyce DiDonato's** second appearance under UMS auspices, following her UMS debut in April 2017 with the English Concert and Harry Bicket in an opera-in-concert performance of Handel's *Ariodante* in Hill Auditorium. **Yannick Nézet-Séguin** makes his third UMS appearance this afternoon following his UMS debut in February 2015 conducting the Rotterdam Philharmonic in Hill Auditorium. He most recently appeared under UMS auspices earlier this season in September 2018, conducting The Philadelphia Orchestra in Hill Auditorium.

THIS AFTERNOON'S VICTOR FOR UMS:



# Susan B. Ullrich Endowment Fund

*Supporter of this afternoon's performance by Joyce DiDonato and Yannick Nézet-Séguin.*

## MAY WE ALSO RECOMMEND...

- 1/20 Los Angeles Master Chorale: *Lagrime di San Pietro*
- 2/16 Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra and UMS Choral Union: Britten's *War Requiem*
- 3/16 Eric Owens and Lawrence Brownlee

*Tickets available at [www.ums.org](http://www.ums.org).*

## ON THE EDUCATION HORIZON...

- 1/18 Post-Performance Artist Q&A: *The Great Tamer*  
(Power Center, post-performance)  
*Must have a ticket to that evening's performance of The Great Tamer to attend.*
- 1/26 You Can Dance: Camille A. Brown & Dancers  
(Ann Arbor Y, 400 W. Washington Street, 1:35 pm)  
*Registration opens 45 minutes prior to the start of the event.*
- 1/26 Post-Performance Artist Q&A: Camille A. Brown & Dancers  
(Power Center, post-performance)  
*Must have a ticket to that evening's performance by Camille A. Brown & Dancers to attend.*

*Educational events are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.*