KSU School of Music presents

"Schubert and Fauré: Journeys of Love and Loss"

Ben Wadsworth PIANO

with Nathan Munson TENOR

FACULTY RECITAL

Tuesday, September 6, 2016 at 8 pm
Dr. Bobbie Bailey & Family Performance Center, Morgan Hall
Second Concert of the 2016-17 Concert Season
FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828)
Winterreise, D. 911, Op. 89

1. “Gute Nacht” (Good Night)
   A young man stands outside his fiancé’s house at night, in the cold, and dark. He has been rejected, and will leave on a journey. He inscribes “Good Night” on her gate.

2. “Die Wetterfahne” (The Weathervane)
   His attention is drawn to a shifting weathervane on top of her house that mocks him. He compares its unpredictable movements to the fickle hearts of his fiancé and her family.

3. “Gefrorne Tränen” (Frozen Tears)
   He chides himself for letting his tears freeze in the cold; his heart, meanwhile, burns with grief.

4. “Erstarrung” (Numbness)
   He searches for her image in the snow, but cannot find it; his heart is dead, but her image in his heart is also.

5. “Der Lindenbaum” (The Linden Tree)
   He walks by a linden tree on which he wrote words of love for her; the old wind blew his hat off his head, but he hears the tree still calling to him.
6. “Wasserfluth” (Flood Water)
   His tears are so many that they form a river that will flow by her house.

7. “Auf dem Flusse” (On the River)
   The river lies still and encased in ice. He inscribes her name and the date on the ice, and then notes a raging flood in his heart.

8. “Rückblick” (Backward Glance)
   He recalls how he fled from her house; he remembers when they were in together in love; he wishes he were still there.

9. “Irrlicht” (Will o’ The Wisp)
   He questions whether joy or sorrow, which lead him on as a will o’ the wisp, matter: in the end, he sees the grave.

10. “Rast” (Rest)
    He notices his fatigue when he stops in a coal-burner’s house. His arms ache and he feels the “serpent’s sting” in his heart.

11. “Frühlingstraum” (Dreams of Spring)
    He dreams of spring and reciprocated love, but awakes to darkness, cold, and shrieking ravens. When will he find love, he asks?

12. “Einsamkeit” (Loneliness)
    He is lonely although the world is bright and cheerful. He travels on.

intermission

GABRIEL FAURÉ (1845–1924)
La Bonne Chanson, Op. 61

1. “Une Sainte en un auréole” (A haloed saint)
   A portrait of a lady in her tower, isolated from the world.

2. “Puisque l’aube grandit” (Since dawn is growing)
   Her suitor is hopeful with the dawn and imagines their lives together.
3. “La lune blanche luit dans les bois” (The white moon shines in the woods)
   The lovers meet in the woods at night and consummate their love as a great calm descends from the sky.

4. “J’allais par des chemins perfides” (I was going along treacherous roads)
   The lovers are separated, but he sees her image in front on his path and can proceed onward; love has since brought them back together.

5. “J’ai presque peur en vérité” (In truth I am almost afraid)
   The lovers are again separated; he wants to see her; they confess their love for one another and are married.

6. “Avant que tu ne t’en ailles” (Before you go away)
   She is a pale star that will vanish in the morning; he sees her in aspects of nature during the day, such as singing quails and fields of corn and hay.

7. “Donc, ce sera par un clair jour d’été” (So it will be on a clear summer day)
   The lovers spend a day together, excited during the day and languorous at evening.

8. “N’est-ce pas?” (Is it not so?)
   The lovers resolve to walk on their path together even if others do not recognize their love, or shun them, or if fate is unkind to them.

9. “L’hiver a cessé” (Winter has ended)
   He is full of joy from a good year; he sees her in all nature; he is ready for all seasons of the year, and later events; he dedicates all of his thoughts and imaginings to her.
Winterreise by Franz Schubert

Schubert’s song cycle Winterreise, composed in 1827–1828, is one of the most extraordinary cycles composed in the 19th century. The overall cycle consists of 24 poems by Wilhelm Müller. Originally written for tenor voice, the cycle was composed for Schubert’s friend, the baritone Johann Michael Vogel. The first twelve songs were composed first in February 1827; the remaining ones were composed later in October 1827 (Schubert passed away in November 1828).

The cycle begins with the protagonist outside the house of his fiancé, who has rejected him. It is night, he is standing outside her house in the cold, she or her family have had a “change in heart” about him, and he prefers to wander away instead of confronting her family. Details, however, are sketchy: what happened in their courtship the May before? Did he reject her? Did she reject him? Was the rejection grounds to wander away, especially in winter? These questions are all suggested in the first two songs, “Gute Nacht” (Good Night) and “Die Wetterfahne” (The Weather Vane). We do not know the answers to them, although the tenth song, “Rast” (Rest), suggests a “serpent” inside his heart: perhaps he was compelled to flee from illness?

The vagueness of the cycle’s plot and setting mirrors Schubert’s psychological state toward the end of his life, and perhaps allows us to construct our own stories and details, thereby appreciating more deeply the cycle’s mood of despondency and catharsis. Schubert himself struggled with poverty, and he was never successful as a suitor. In 1822 he was diagnosed with syphilis, which had progressed by 1827 and put Schubert into a melancholy state, as reported by his friends Spaun and Mayrhofer. During this time in Schubert’s life, one suspects that he was forced to confront his mortality. Schubert is thus the “wanderer,” in the night, in winter, and one who suffers and is redeemed through suffering. Winterreise thus is a meditation upon all types of suffering: tears, forgetting, cold, darkness, wind, footprints in the snow, hallucinations such as the will o’ the wisp, circling ravens, fatigue, and clouds.

Tonight, we are performing the first half of Winterreise, or the original songs composed in 1827. This half has songs that tell why the protagonist was rejected (“Gute Nacht” and “Die Wetterfahne”). Listen for the equal interaction between singer and piano. The cycle also abounds in text-painting techniques: the plodding march in “Gute Nacht” (Good Night); the tired shufflings in “Rast” (Rest); the headstrong running in “Erstarrung”
La Bonne Chanson by Gabriel Fauré

Gabriel Fauré’s song cycle, La Bonne Chanson, Op. 61, was written in 1892–1894. The cycle is based on poems by Paul Verlaine’s cycle of the same name. Fauré composed the cycle mainly during the summers of 1892 and 1893 at Bouvigal (now a suburb of Paris, France), the guest of Sigismond and Emma Bardac, him a wealthy banker, her a singer and socialite. Fauré was infatuated with Emma, with whom he had an affair lasting about three years: Emma read through each song, and then gave him feedback. The cycle is (unsurprisingly) dedicated to her. The cycle initiates Fauré’s second style period, as noted by Robert Orledge (1979). Its degree of chromaticism and polyphonic complexity is unusual in Fauré’s music up to this point. Fauré’s friends were generally unfavorable toward the new cycle: in a representative opinion, Saint-Saëns declared that his student had gone mad! Proust was in the minority in loving it.

Outwardly, the cycle tells the story of the romance of a couple leading to a happy marriage. In a later interview with Louis Aguettant for La Courrier Musical (1902), Fauré reluctantly admitted the cycle was about Emma. Aguettant also got Fauré to admit that there were five repeated themes in the cycle: one representing Emma (the “Carolignian” theme), one quoting Fauré’s earlier song “Lydia,” a passionate theme representing the couple’s marriage in the fifth song, a “bird” theme from the sixth song, and a “sun” theme from the seventh. With the exception of the marriage theme, all other ones are combined in the ninth, and final song. Emma’s theme tends to depict the lady in the story. The “Lydia” theme represents moments of love, and a unifying of past, present, and future. The marriage theme, depending on the expression in the harmony, shows the changing relationship between the couple. The bird and sun themes, as Nectoux has stated, are more descriptive. Fauré’s five themes resemble Wagner’s Leitmotives (themes that refer to different objects, such as a sword or spear), a technique he was familiar with from visits to Bayreuth (Wagner’s festival hall), and one that was highly prestigious in France in the 1890s.

Despite its happy exterior, La Bonne Chanson has undercurrents of darkness as well. Most commentators on the cycle have proclaimed that it radiates love and happiness. As Jean-Michel Nectoux has noted (1991), however, there is a constant alternation between sunlight and moonlight: all of the love scenes occur at night. Also, if we take the last song at its word, the
entire cycle takes place within a year, thus peaking in summer and ending in winter. Finally, there are recurrent quotations of Wagner’s Tristan, especially in the third and final songs. Since Tristan tells the story of forbidden love, could it be that La Bonne Chanson expresses Fauré’s wish for marriage with Emma, but his acknowledgement that it is not possible in this world? Or is it a celebration of their affair? Or, alternatively, could it be the story of a happy marriage with realistic ups and downs? As you listen to our performance, think about which scenario the music suggests.

meet the artists

NATHAN MUNSON, tenor

“Munson was excellent in Pagliacci but especially so in Carmina, when he had his major solo… Munson’s murderously high “roasted swan” song was the most striking.”

- Ruth Bingham, Honolulu Star-Advertiser, March 30, 2014

Nathan Munson, a native of Kalamazoo, Michigan, has been praised for his vocal beauty, and proven to be a versatile presence on the concert and operatic stage. Recent roles include Beppe in I pagliacci with both the Sarasota Opera and the Hawaii Opera Theatre. Also with HOT, he debuted as the tenor soloist in Carmina Burana, as Tom Snout in Britten’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, and in performances of the Steersman in Wagner’s Der fliegende Holländer. With the Atlanta Opera, he has performed the Camera Man in The Golden Ticket, Normanno in Lucia di Lammermoor, and Rodolfo in La bohème (as a cover and in a touring production). Other recent performances include Bastien in Bastien und Bastienne and Alberto in La Curandera with Opera Piccola San Antonio, Valére in Tartuffe with Capitol City Opera (“Munson sang an appealing
Valère, with an Italianate gleam in his tone.” - artscriticatl.com), El Dancaïre in Carmen with Opera North, and Dr. Baglioni in a world premiere revision of Daniel Catán’s La Hija di Rappaccini with the Illinois Opera Theater. He has appeared as Roméo in Roméo et Juliette, Ferrando in Così fan tutte, and Cassio in Verdi’s Otello. For dell’Arte Opera, he has sung Laurie in Adamo’s Little Women, and Pedrillo in Die Entführung aus dem Serail. As a Young Artist at Opera North, he appeared in various venues in semi-staged scene performances as Brighella in Ariadne auf Naxos and Lippo Fiorentino in Street Scene.

In addition to his operatic appearances, Mr. Munson has been a frequent visitor to the concert stage. His recently made his Carnegie Hall debut as the tenor soloist in Haydn’s Lord Nelson Mass with Manhattan Concert Productions. In December of 2014 he made his debut with the Helena Symphony Orchestra as the tenor soloist in Handel’s Messiah. He has been a featured soloist in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony with the Bryan Symphony Orchestra, Bruckner’s Te Deum with the Augusta Choral Society, Bach’s B-minor Mass with the Atlanta Sacred Chorale, Handel’s Messiah, with the Michael O’Neal Singers, Bach’s Magnificat with the Georgia Symphony Orchestra, and Mozart’s Requiem with the Dartmouth College Glee Club. Other concert appearances for the tenor include Respighi’s Laud to the Nativity, Saint-Seans’ Christmas Oratorio, Schubert’s Mass in G, Schumann’s Requiem, Bach’s G-minor Mass and Johannes-Passion (aria soloist), and Handel’s Alexander’s Feast.

Mr. Munson can be heard on the world premiere recording of The Golden Ticket (Albany Records). He has also been a featured soloist in a Christmas Concert with the Atlanta Opera, which was recorded live for broadcast by WABE-Atlanta.
Ben Wadsworth, after a childhood spent in Connecticut, attended Oberlin College, where he studied piano with Sanford Margolis and organ with Haskell Thomson. He graduated in 1998 with a Bachelor of Music with majors in Piano Performance, Music Theory, and a minor in Organ. In 1999, he moved to Rochester, New York, where he completed a PhD in Music Theory in 2008. After graduating from the Eastman School of Music, Ben taught at Louisiana State University for one year, then moved to the Atlanta area in 2009. He is now Assistant Professor of Music Theory at Kennesaw State University, where he oversees the Aural Skills area.

Ben is a regular presenter on topics of musical analysis at national and local conferences. In the 2012-2014 academic years, his presentations included: “Music Theory Rudiments for Music Majors: A Report from Kennesaw State University,” presented in San Diego in November; and “Parallel Forms in Robert Schumann’s Music: A Reconsideration; which was given at Appalachian State University and Charlotte, North Carolina. He has two published articles. The first, “A Model of Dialectical Process in Berg’s Opus 1 Piano Sonata,” examines the interaction of differing musical languages in a problematic work. The second, “Directional Tonality in Schumann’s Early Works,” studies early works by Robert Schumann that begin and end in different keys. His research interests include music of the early 20th century, the music of J. S. Bach, and early Romantic music by composers such as Schumann. He has also given lecture-recitals on piano music of Arnold Schoenberg (February, 2009) and Robert Schumann (October, 2011) at KSU.

Ben is also active as an accompanist and organist in the Atlanta area. In addition to his musical interests, Ben enjoys spending time at home with his wife, Kelly, and their two children, Sophie and Peter.
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Stephen W. Plate, DMA
Director, KSU School of Music

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