



THE FIRM
2025

CONCERT 1

The Firm's annual concert seasons
are conceived, programmed, curated and directed by
composers Quentin Grant and Raymond Chapman Smith.

The Firm was founded in 1996.

This is our 141st concert.

Schubert's musical brain is a wonder of improbability,
even more so than the invertebrate's eye.

Richard Dawkins

Welcome to our first of two concerts for 2025, where we are
featuring songs from the repertoire alongside new songs from
the Firm.

The Firm

presents

Kim Worley

Yundi Yuan

Hymnen an die Nacht Raymond Chapman Smith

Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen
Gustav Mahler

--- interval ---

Winter Songs Quentin Grant

An die Ferne Geliebte L van Beethoven

Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen

Gustav Mahler

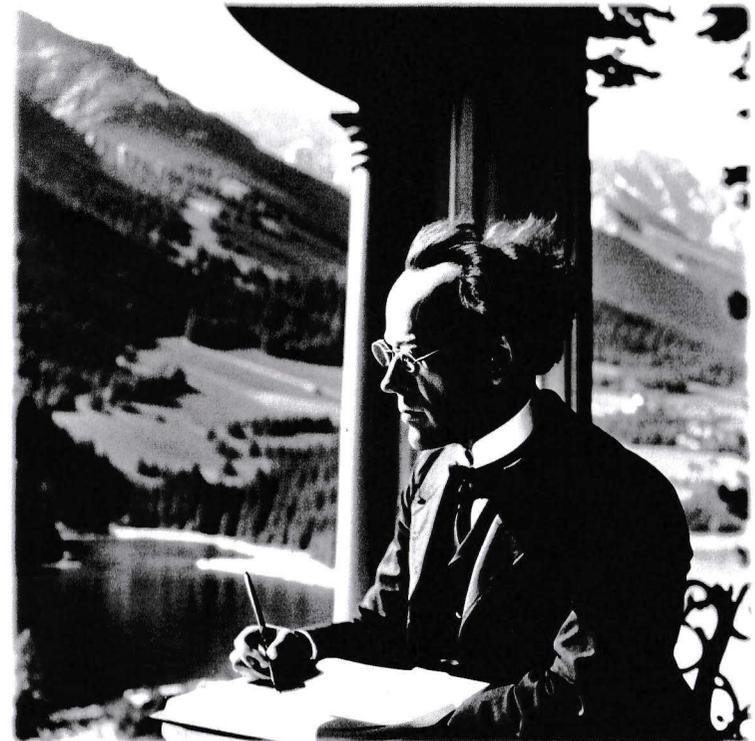
Although Schubert found that being known primarily as a composer of Lieder did not carry enough artistic significance to make him a "serious" composer on par with Beethoven, over the course of the 19th century public perception of both the composer and the genre shifted. What had begun as domestic music, meant to entertain or edify privately among family or a circle of friends, became emblematic of the Romantic era's preoccupation with integrating multiple art forms. The art song gained intellectual and spiritual gravitas as it developed. Linking multiple poems together in a song cycle allowed composers to trace complex emotional arcs; Schubert himself composed several song cycles, most famously *Die schöne Müllerin* (1823) and *Winterreise* (1827).

Also true to Romantic sensibilities, composers expanded the accompaniment beyond the intimacy of a single piano, opting for the diverse palate of tone color available from the ever-increasing orchestra. Yet with its continued emphasis on the realization of poetry, orchestral Lieder tended to display the contemplative spirit of its modest roots rather than the extravagance of other genres combining voice and orchestra, such as opera.

By the time Gustav Mahler started his career, Schubert was a long-acknowledged early master of a respected genre and an obvious model for the younger composer's early attempts at Lieder. Mahler had written several stand-alone songs for voice and piano, starting as a teenager, but around the end of 1883 (when he was in his mid-20s), heartbreak prompted him to attempt his first song cycle. He had become infatuated with soprano Johanna Richter while he conducted at the opera house in Kassel, but their relationship ended unhappily.

Mahler wrote the poetry for *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* ("Songs of a Wayfarer") himself, though he was heavily influenced by the folk verses in the collection *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* ("The Youth's Magic Horn," selections from which he would later set for voice and orchestra). His poems are almost certainly autobiographical; Mahler casts the protagonist/himself as "a travelling journeyman who has met with adversity, setting out into the world and wandering on in solitude."

He originally penned six poems but trimmed the cycle down to four, which he composed for voice and piano. (They are performed by either male or female singers.) Sometime around 1890 Mahler decided to orchestrate the accompaniment, bringing his symphonic sensibilities back to his first song cycle.



Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht

When my love has her wedding-day,
Her joyous wedding-day,
I have my day of mourning!
I go into my little room,
My dark little room!
I weep, weep! For my love,
My dearest love!

Blue little flower! Blue little flower!
Do not wither, do not wither!
Sweet little bird! Sweet little bird!
Singing on the green heath!
'Ah, how fair the world is!
Jug-jug! Jug-jug!'

Do not sing! Do not bloom!
For spring is over!
All singing now is done!
At night, when I go to rest,
I think of my sorrow!
My sorrow!

Ging heut' Morgen über's Feld

I walked across the fields this morning,
Dew still hung on the grass,
The merry finch said to me:
'You there, hey -
Good morning! Hey, you there!
Isn't it a lovely world?
Tweet! Tweet! Bright and sweet!
O how I love the world!'

And the harebell at the field's edge,
Merrily and in good spirits,

Ding-ding with its tiny bell
Rang out its morning greeting:
'Isn't it a lovely world?
Ding-ding! Beautiful thing!
O how I love the world!'

And then in the gleaming sun
The world at once began to sparkle;
All things gained in tone and colour!
In the sunshine!
Flower and bird, great and small.
'Good day! Good day!
Isn't it a lovely world?
Hey, you there?! A lovely world!'

Will my happiness now begin?
No! No! The happiness I mean
Can never bloom for me!

Ich hab' ein glühend Messer

I've a gleaming knife,
A knife in my breast,
Alas! Alas!
It cuts so deep
Into every joy and every bliss,
So deep, so deep!
It cuts so sharp and deep!

Ah, what a cruel guest it is!
Never at peace,
Never at rest!
Neither by day
Nor by night, when I'd sleep!
Alas! Alas! Alas!

When I look into the sky,
I see two blue eyes!
Alas! Alas!
When I walk in the yellow field,
I see from afar her golden hair
Blowing in the wind! Alas! Alas!
When I wake with a jolt from my dream
And hear her silvery laugh,
Alas! Alas!
I wish I were lying on the black bier,
And might never open my eyes again!

Die zwei blauen Augen von meinem Schatz

The two blue eyes of my love
Have sent me into the wide world.
I had to bid farewell
To the place I loved most!
O blue eyes, why did you look on me?
Grief and sorrow shall now be mine forever!

I set out in the still night,
Across the dark heath.
No one bade me farewell, farewell!
My companions were love and sorrow!

A lime tree stood by the roadside,
Where I first found peace in sleep!
Under the lime tree
Which snowed its blossom on me,
I was not aware of how life hurts,
And all, all was well once more!
All! All!
Love and sorrow, and world and dream!

Hymnen an die Nacht *Raymond Chapman Smith* *Novalis*

Novalis was the nom de plume of Friedrich Philip, Freiherr von Hardenberg (1772 - 1801). Since their publication in 1800 his Hymns to the Night have been recognised as the central masterpiece of the first phase of German Romanticism.

The intention to set this poem came into my head when, on a wintry Viennese day in 2004 my esteemed colleague Herr Doktor Grant and I visited the house in which Schubert died at Kettenbrückengasse 6. Schubert spent the last three months of his life in his brother's modest apartment which is maintained as a marvel of memorial restraint. In these simple, unadorned rooms Schubert completed, amongst many other works, his last three piano sonatas and the sublime String Quintet in C major. The experience of this place was deeply moving and its poignancy was only heightened when we realised that, quite by accident, we were there on November 19 - the day of Schubert's death. Schubert was familiar with Novalis's Hymns - he had set four of them in 1819 but, somewhat surprisingly, not the one I have chosen which has long been the most celebrated and anthologised of the sequence.

I have divided the text into three sections and have attempted to set the music in a manner that owes much to Schubert's 'Hymn' style.



Hymns to the Night

I.

I quest over there,
And each pain
Will someday be a sting
Of delight.
In a few moments
I shall be free,
And lie drunk
In Love's lap.

II.

Endless living
Wells up strongly in me,
I look
Down here after you.
At that mound
Your splendour pales -
A shade brings
The cooling wreath.

III.

O! Breathe me, Beloved,
Ravish me,
So I can pass on to sleep
And to love.
I feel death's
Rejuvenating tide
Transform my blood
To balm and ether -
I live by day
Full of faith and courage
And perish by night
In holy fire.

Trakl Songs (2003)

Quentin Grant

Three songs on poems of Georg Trakl, translated by Christopher Middleton (considerably adapted by the composer)

A contemporary of Berg and Webern the Salzburg-born poet Georg Trakl (1887 - 1914) produced his mature work - just over a hundred poems and prose works - between 1912 and 1914. A drug addict, his tragic vision of life was only made darker by the horrors he witnessed as a medical officer in the First World War; horrors he escaped when he overdosed.

The tone of his work is expressionist and though a mood of pessimism generally dominates the surface a deep, lyrical spiritual order is always affirmed.

The great poet Rilke wrote of Trakl: "In his work...falling is the pretext for the most continuous ascension."

Winter Walk in A-Minor

Red spheres often emerge from branches,
Snowed under softly and black by a long snowfall. The priest
escorts the dead person.
The nights are fulfilled by celebrations of masks. Then
tousled crows glide over the village;
In books fairy tales are written miraculously.
At the window an old man's hair flutters.
Demons go through the old, ill soul.
The well freezes in the courtyard. Decayed stairs fall in the
darkness and a wind blows
Through old shafts which are buried.
The palate tastes the frost's strong spices.

In Winter

The acre shines white and cold.
The sky is lonely and immense. Jackdaws circle over the pond
And hunters climb down from the forest. A silence dwells in black treetops. Firelight flits from the huts.

Sometimes a sleigh rings far away
And slowly the gray moon rises.
A deer bleeds to death softly at the field's edge And ravens splash in bloody gutters.
The reeds tremble yellow and upraised.
Frost, smoke, a step in the empty grove.

Silence

Over the forests the moon
Gleams pale, makes us dream, The willow by the dark pond
Weeps soundlessly in the night.
A heart extinguishes - and placidly The fogs flood and rise -
Silence, silence!

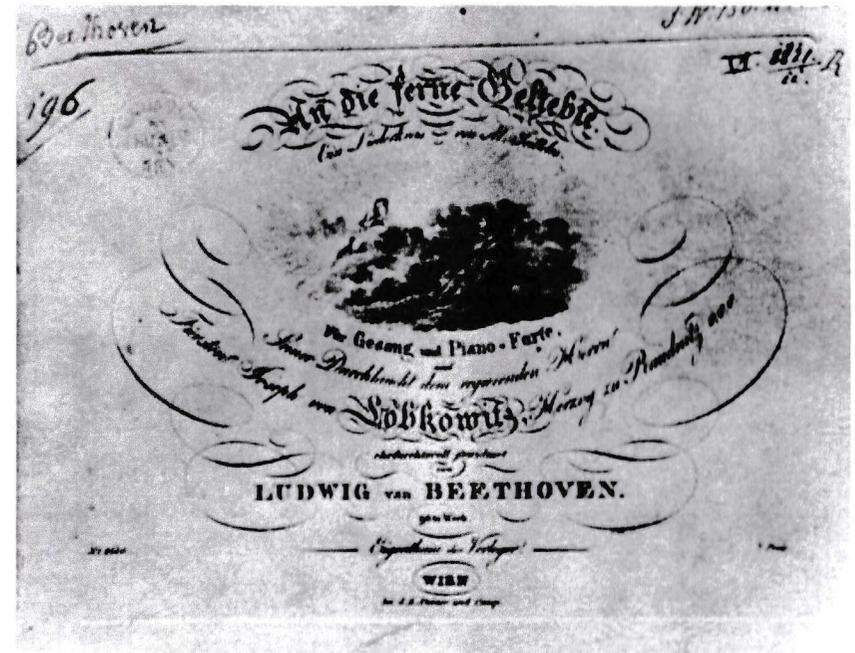


Georg Trakl having a moody moment

An Die Ferne Geliebte To the distant beloved

Ludwig van Beethoven April 1816

Poems by Alois Jeitteles



Title page of the first edition of An die ferne Geliebte

Beethoven finished the song cycle "To the distant beloved" op. 98, in April 1816. A hard year lay behind him. Around 1814/15 the composer was at the peak of his public success, celebrated by the leaders of the European courts during the Vienna Congress. 1815, however, turned into a bad year. Beethoven fell into a deep depression, both in a psychic and artistic way. His health was in a poor state and his hearing deteriorated. On January 25th, 1815, he gave the last concert where he played the piano. His bad hearing made any further performances together with other musicians and even solo performances impossible. The awareness of not being able to

partake in public music life led to a depression which he expressed in a letter to his friend Brauchle written in September 1815: "Annoyed and more sensitive than all others and burdened with my bad hearing, I find human contact very painful.". Furthermore and despite his success, Beethoven's financial situation worsened due to worries about his dying brother whose family the composer supported since his brother had become unemployed.

Around 1815/16 he managed to overcome his creative and psychic crisis and his will to live returned. Cello sonatas op. 102, piano sonata op 101 and the song cycle op. 98. A new era of his life and work began. Does the title "To the distant beloved" mirror Beethoven's feelings? In 1812 the composer wrote the famous letter to the so-called Immortal Beloved. In September 1816 he admitted to his friend Cajetan Giannatasio del Rio an intense five year long love. In this regard, the song cycle also marks a period: Overcoming an old dream, a fervid hope.

1. Auf dem Hügel sitz ich spähend

On the hill I sit, gazing
Into the blue, hazy land,
Toward the far away pastures
Where I you, beloved, found.

Far am I, from you, parted,
Separating us are hill and valley
Between us and our peace,
Our happiness and our sorrow.

Ah! The look can you not see,
That to you so ardently rushes,
And the sighs, they blow away
In the space that separates us.

Will then nothing more be able to reach you,
Nothing be messenger of love?
I will sing, sing songs,
That to you speak of my pain!

For before the sound of love escapes
every space and every time,
And a loving heart reaches,
What a loving heart has consecrated!

2. Wo die Berge so blau

Where the mountains so blue
Out of the foggy gray
Look down,
Where the sun dies,
Where the cloud encircles,
I wish I were there!

There is the restful valley
Stilled are suffering and sorrow
Where in the rock
Quietly the primrose meditates,
Blows so lightly the wind,
I wish I were there!

There to the thoughtful wood
The power of love pushes me,
Inward sorrow,

Ah! This moves me not from here,
Could I, dear, by you
Eternally be!

3. Leichte Segler in den Höhen

Light veils in the heights,
And you, little brook, small and narrow,
Should my love spot you,
Greet her, from me, many thousand times.

See you, clouds, her go then,
Meditating in the quiet valley,
Let my image stand before her
In the airy heavenly hall.

If she near the bushes stands,
Now that autumn is faded and leafless,
Lament to her, what has happened to me,
Lament to her, little birds, my suffering!

Quiet west, bring in the wind
To my heart's chosen one
My sighs, that pass
As the last ray of the sun.

Whisper to her of my love's imploring,
Let her, little brook, small and narrow,
Truly, in your waves see
My tears without number!



Josephine von Brunswik - Most likely candidate for the "Immortal Beloved"



4. Diese Wolken in den Höhen

These clouds in the heights,
These birds gaily passing,
Will see you, my beloved.
Take me with you on your light flight!

These west winds will play
Joking with you about your cheek and breast,
In the silky curls will dig.
I share with you this pleasure!

There to you from this hill
Busily, the little brook hurries.
If your image is reflected in it,
Flow back without delay!

5. Es kehret der Maien, es blühet die Au

May returns, the meadow blooms,
The breezes they blow so softly, so mildly,
Chattering, the brooks now run.

The swallow, that returns to her hospitable roof,
She builds, so busily, her bridal chamber,
Love must dwell there.

She brings, so busily, from all directions,
Many soft pieces for the bridal bed,
Many warm pieces for the little ones.

Now live the couple together so faithfully,
What winter has separated is united by May,
What loves, that he knows how to unite.

May returns, the meadow blooms,
The breezes they blow so softly, so mildly,
Only I cannot go away from here.

When all that loves, the spring unites,
Only to our love no spring appears,
And tears are our only consolation.

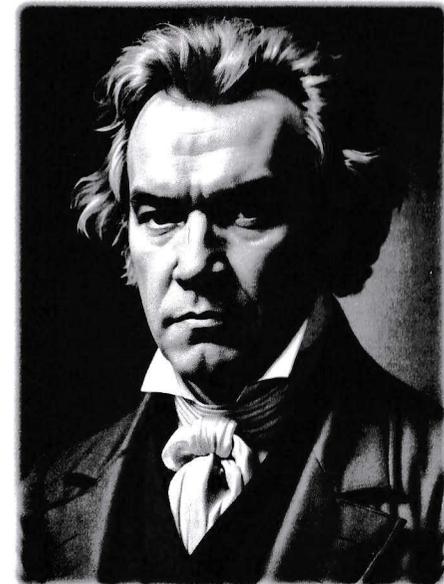
6. Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder

Take, then, these songs,
That I to you, beloved, sang,
Sing them again in the evenings
To the sweet sounds of the lute!

When the red twilight then moves
toward the calm, blue lake,
And the last ray dies
behind that hilltop;

And you sing, what I have sung,
What I, from my full heart,
Artlessly have sounded,
Only aware of its longings.

For before these songs yields,
What separates us so far,
And a loving heart reaches
For what a loving heart has consecrated.



An A.I. LvB

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**Next concert:
Songs and duets:**

Emma Horwood

Kate McFarlane

Jamie Cock

N.B. Two performances:

Monday, October 27

Tuesday, October 28

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