

Winterreise Ian Bostridge Thomas Adès



Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Winterreise, op. 89, D911 (1827)

Song cycle on poems by Wilhelm Müller

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Total playing time: 72. 26

Ian Bostridge, tenor

Thomas Adès, piano



Schubert's *Winterreise* has been a central part of my performing career and my musical life for at least three decades. I've recorded it twice before. Once, with Julius Drake, as part of a TV project, a documentary and a staged film of the piece (directed by David Alden) to celebrate the Schubert bicentenary in 1997. The second time was an album with Leif Ove Andnes as part of a larger Schubert recording project in the early years of the new century.

What makes this new recording so close to my heart is the partnership with Thomas Adès, whom I've worked with so much as composer, conductor and pianist. Touring the piece with him through Europe and the US was a revelation. He brings to the piece a deep searching musical intellect - going back to the manuscript and digging up new readings which the editors have missed - and an imagination which recreates sound and meaning in this, the greatest of all song cycles.

Ia Basthdye

With a heart filled with endless love for those who scorned me, I ... wandered far away. For many and many a year I sang songs. Whenever I tried to sing of love, it turned to pain. And again, when I tried to sing of pain, it turned to love.

— Schubert, “My Dream”,
manuscript, July 3, 1822

Winterreise – Winter Journey – a cycle of 24 songs for voice and piano based on poems by Wilhelm Müller, was composed by Franz Schubert towards the end of his short life. He died in Vienna in 1828 aged only 31. Piano-accompanied song is no longer part of everyday domestic life and has lost its one-time primacy in the concert hall. What Germans know as Lieder — is a niche product, even within the niche that is classical music; but *Winterreise* is an indispensable work of art that should be as much a part of our common experience as the poetry of Shakespeare and Dante, the paintings of Van Gogh and Picasso, the novels of the Brontë sisters or Marcel Proust.

The 24 songs are forerunners, in a sense, of all those songs of love and loss that have been the soundtrack of generation on generation of teenagers. But the loss of love, which is only sketched ambiguously in the first song, “Goodnight”, is just the beginning of it. Schubert’s wanderer embarks on a journey through a winter landscape that leads him to question his identity, the conditions of his existence – social, political and metaphysical – and the meaning of life. And it is all done with light and shadow, moving between sardonic humour and depressive longing. (Not surprisingly, Beckett was one of the cycle’s biggest fans.) The wanderer’s tears turn to ice; he sees flowers etched in the frost of the hut where he takes refuge; he is eyed from the sky by a carrion crow, his only faithful companion; and at the last, he sees a beggar musician playing in the street, ignored and unrewarded, the hurdy-gurdy man.

Der Leiermann (The Hurdy-Gurdy Man)

Drüben hinterm Dorfe
Steht ein Leiermann,
Und mit starren Fingern
Dreht er, was er kann.
Barfuß auf dem Eise
Wankt er hin und her;
Und sein kleiner Teller
Bleibt ihm immer leer.
Keiner mag ihn hören,
Keiner sieht ihn an;
Und die Hunde knurren
Um den alten Mann.
Und er läßt es gehen
Alles, wie es will,
Dreht, und seine Leier
Steht ihm nimmer still.
Wunderlicher Alter,
Soll ich mit dir gehn?
Willst zu meinen Liedern
Deine Leier drehn?

Over there behind the village
Stands a hurdy-gurdy man,
And with numb fingers
He grinds away, as best he can.
Barefoot on the ice
He sways back and forth,
And his little plate
Remains always empty.
No-one wants to hear him,
No-one looks at him,
And the dogs growl
Around the old man.
And he lets it go on,
Everything, just as it will;
Turns the wheel, and his hurdy-gurdy
Never stays still for a moment.
Strange old man,
Should I go with you?
Will you to my songs
Play your hurdy-gurdy?

There is a Romantic irony embedded in the title of this last poem. The German leier, or lyre, was the most Romantic of instruments, so how apt, poignant and poetic to have ended this cycle with a lyre song. This, however, is no ordinary lyre, but a vulgar, indecent hurdy-gurdy, a Drehleier (a rotating or turning lyre), the chosen instrument of the musically unaccomplished beggar, the lowest of the low. The hurdy-gurdy is the fiddler's version of the bagpipe. The sound box can be that of a fiddle, a guitar or a lute, but the strings are neither plucked nor bowed. Instead, a wheel in the middle sets the strings vibrating as it is turned by a crank. As a result, the hurdy-gurdy can seem mechanical and dissociating – the perfect instrument, at once ancient and modern, for the expression of alienation.

Styles of singing are bound by convention; it is the musical context in which listeners hear them that determines whether

they sound “natural” or “mannered”. The simple classical delivery of a folk song by a “trained” voice may sound uptight and artificial to an audience used to hearing “Barbara Allen” or “O Waly Waly” in the nasal twang that has become associated with an “authentic” folk voice. Crossing boundaries is perilous, and on the whole, opera singers sound as wrong in pop music as pop singers do in German song. At the same time, crossing boundaries, respectful borrowings and outrageous thefts do essential work in keeping any art form alive.

Admiring vocalism from Bob Dylan to Billie Holiday to Frank Sinatra, I have always thought that, in principle, one should be influenced by these extraordinary singers and their compelling way of bending melody to words and vice versa. Classical song and popular song should not be so far apart: they share a lot in their subject matter and in their aesthetic of intimacy. Mostly, however, the influence has to be a

subliminal one, for only then can it avoid self-consciousness or a certain archness.

One of the rare occasions on which I became conscious of channelling a different kind of musical expression was in a concert in Moscow. I've often reimagined “Der Leiermann” as a sort of Dylan song that doesn't conform to classical norms in singing, but it is hard to achieve the requisite vibe. On this occasion, however, it clicked: I felt a connection with the greatest Dylan love song performance on record, the bitter masterpiece “Don't Think Twice, It's All Right” on *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*. Schubert's “Hurdy-Gurdy Man” emerged as a song that was hardly sung, rasping and guttural by the standards of bel canto, but without sounding – I hope – like a ridiculous intrusion of pop singing into the classical world.

I have no idea if Dylan was aware of *Winterreise*. Given his eclectic influences in the 1960s – from Rimbaud to Brecht to

Elvis to the Beat poets – it is not such an outlandish suggestion. There is a definite kinship between Schubert's hurdy-gurdy player and Dylan's tambourine man. This weary but not sleepy poet-wanderer talks of how you might hear “laughin', spinnin', swingin' madly across the sun”; of disappearing “far past the frozen leaves / The haunted, frightened trees”. It's not a million miles from his jingle jangle to Schubert's hurdy-gurdy.

It is entirely appropriate that Schubert gave the wretched old hurdy-gurdy man “poor music”. Our wanderer's existential misery is for the first time confronted with real distress, unchosen and stoically borne. The world of Beckett here collides with that of Henry Mayhew, the Victorian cartographer and ethnographer of the London poor, or of Sebastião Salgado, the documentary photographer of contemporary Brazilian life; and as listeners we are taken aback. At the same time, we feel, and are meant to feel, pity and revulsion in equal measure



as we encounter this outcast fragment of humanity with his irritating little folksy tune, droning on and on.

Our compassion is complex, and what ultimately complicates it is the fear that this lonely, squalid figure could be us. There but for the grace of God go you or I. We are repelled and we are drawn in; we resist, but also admire the fortitude of one who can carry on in such circumstances. Could we do the same? If the poem resonated with Schubert it's because he, too, was a musician. Historically, he is the first of the canonical "great" composers to have made his living solely in the marketplace, without a patron, a position in the court or church, or a musical sinecure. He was by no means the unsuccessful unknown of legend and made plenty of money from his compositions. But his position was perilous. He led a bohemian life, financially insecure.

During the middle ages, instrumentalists had been viewed as incompetent in legal

matters: they were not allowed to be judges, witnesses, nor jurors; ineligible for land tenure; unable to serve as guardians or to hold civic office; not accepted by the trade guilds; and had no right to normal damages as plaintiffs in a civil case. Laws changed but the stigma remained, allied to the deep-rooted suspicion of the rootless and of those whose musical activities verged on the mystical, the magical, and the shamanic-demonic – the tale of the Pied Piper of Hamelin had cast a long shadow.

Müller's hurdy-gurdy player, then, must have seemed particularly appealing to a composer and musician living on the threshold of modernity, all too conscious of the dangers of falling into the terrifying state of indigence that the old man represents. Schubert's awareness of his own prognosis – the terrifying fate of the syphilitic, the inevitable physical and mental deterioration – can only have intensified these fears.

Up until “The Hurdy Gurdy Man” *Winterreise* has been a “monodrama”. Everything has been presented to us by the poetic voice, the wanderer; and neither Müller nor Schubert has played sophisticated games by suggesting shiftiness in the narration. The story may be incomplete, even reticent or teasing, but the narrator is not unreliable. Everything is filtered through the wanderer’s subjectivity, even if the harmonic transformations of the piano part sometimes seem to reflect more the unconscious than the conscious mind.

In this last song, however, a notional source of alternative subjectivity, however pinched and etiolated, presents itself: the hurdy-gurdy player. What is achieved, in the end, is a wonderful circularity, with the musical-poetical serpent biting its own tail, and the tantalising offer of narrative closure, an explanation for what has been going on. We now see the possibility that the hurdy-gurdy player may have been there all along, and have been the very occasion

for the wanderer singing his woes. “Will you play your hurdy-gurdy to my songs?” the wanderer asks. If the answer were to be a “yes”, then the crazy but logical procedure would be to go right back to the beginning of the whole cycle and start all over again. This could explore a notion of eternal recurrence: we are trapped in the endless repetition of this existential lament. Alternatively, the first sing-through could be the monodrama with pianistic imaginarium that we all experienced, but with the second, and subsequent, performances given to the accompaniment of the hurdy-gurdy. The cycle ends with a final cadence that, in its open-endedness, allows us the freedom to choose our own ending.

What happens after a performance of *Winterreise* is a little mysterious but usually follows a pattern. Silence emerges as the last hurdy-gurdy phrase dissipates into the hall, a silence that is often extended and forms part of the shared experience of the piece; a silence performed as much by the

audience as it is by singer and pianist. A mute, stunned applause usually follows, which can swell into noisier acclaim.

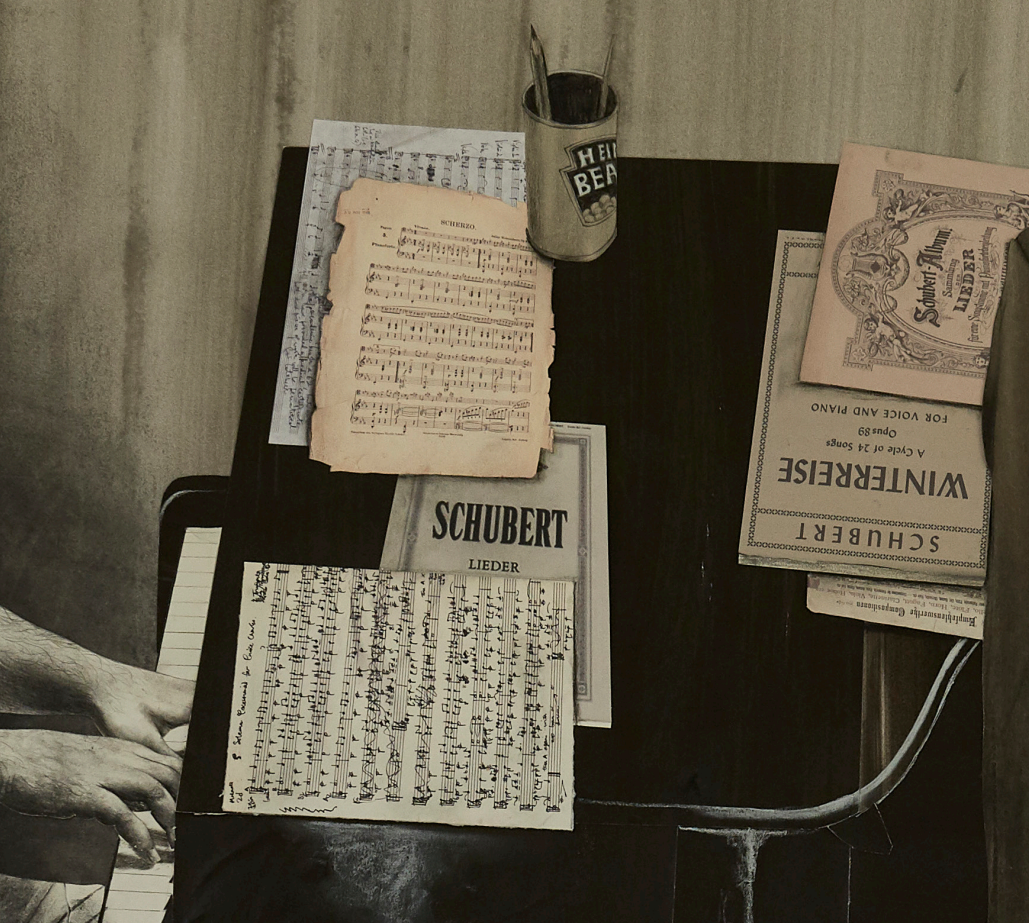
Acclaim? Acclaim for what? For the composer? For the music? For the performance? Is applause, and the performers’ acceptance of it, somehow impertinent? It sometimes, indeed often, feels that way. The normal rules of the song recital are in abeyance. No encores are prepared or expected and, however enthusiastically the audience respond, none will be forthcoming.

Winterreise can seem a little intimidating. Its 24 gloomy songs are to be taken in one, extended, 70-minute dose. It shouldn’t be like that. The music of the cycle is varied and engagingly weird – Schubert’s friends were shocked when they first heard it. It is full of energy, despair, passion, sensuality and gallows humour. It is a drama, too, a piece of theatre, with its own rhythm, and a crucial role for the confrontation between

singer and audience. Not to forget the piano, which turns sonic imagery – rustling leaves, posthorns, a falling leaf – into a psychological landscape. Singer as ego, piano as id. By placing the piece in as broad a context as possible – exploring its roots in the 1820s, its resonances now, its personal meaning for Schubert and for others, listeners and performers – I hope I’ve provided a way in to one of the great creations of the western musical tradition.

Ian Bostridge

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Gute Nacht

Fremd bin ich eingezogen,
Fremd zieh' ich wieder aus.
Der Mai war mir gewogen
Mit manchem Blumenstrauß.
Das Mädchen sprach von Liebe,
Die Mutter gar von Eh', –
Nun ist die Welt so trübe,
Der Weg gehüllt in Schnee.

Ich kann zu meiner Reisen
Nicht wählen mit der Zeit,
Muß selbst den Weg mir weisen
In dieser Dunkelheit.
Es zieht ein Mondenschatten
Als mein Gefährte mit,
Und auf den weißen Matten
Such' ich des Wildes Tritt.

Was soll ich länger weilen,
Daß man mich trieb hinaus?
Laß irre Hunde heulen
Vor ihres Herren Haus;
Die Liebe liebt das Wandern –

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As a stranger I arrived here,
as a stranger I go forth.
Maytime was good to me
with many a bunch of flowers.
The girl spoke of love,
her mother even of marriage.
Now the world is dismal,
the path veiled in snow.

For my journey I cannot
choose my own time;
I must pick the way myself
through this darkness.
My mooncast shadow acts
as my companion
and on the white meadow
I look for deer's footprints.

Why should I stay longer
until they drive me out?
Let stray dogs howl
outside the master's house.
Love loves to wander—

Gott hat sie so gemacht –
Von einem zu dem andern.
Fein Liebchen, gute Nacht!

Will dich im Traum nicht stören,
Wär schad' um deine Ruh',
Sollst meinen Tritt nicht hören –
Sacht, sacht die Türe zu!
Ich schreibe nur im Gehen
An's Tor noch gute Nacht,
Damit du mögest sehen,
An dich hab' ich gedacht.

Die Wetterfahne

Der Wind spielt mit der Wetterfahne
auf meines schönen Liebchens Haus.
Da dacht ich schon in meinem Wahne,
sie piff den armen Flüchtling aus.

Er hätt' es ehr bemerken sollen,
des Hauses aufgestecktes Schild,
so hätt' er nimmer suchen wollen
im Haus ein treues Frauenbild.

God made it so—
from one to the next.
Sweetheart, goodnight!

I will not disturb your dreams:
that would spoil your rest.
You must not hear my footsteps—
soft, softly shut the doors!
As I leave I shall write
'Goodnight' upon the gate for you,
so that you may see
I have been thinking of you.

The wind plays with the weather-vane
on my fair sweetheart's house.
In my confusion I just thought
its whistling mocked this poor fugitive.

He should have noticed sooner
the emblem set upon the house;
then he would never have tried to look
for faithful womanhood within.

Der Wind spielt drinnen mit den Herzen
wie auf dem Dach, nur nicht so laut.
Was fragen sie nach meinen Schmerzen?
Ihr Kind ist eine reiche Braut.

Indoors the wind plays with hearts
as on the roof, but not so loudly.
What do they care for my sorrows?
Their child is a rich bride.

Gefror'ne Tränen

Gefror'ne Tränen fallen
von meinen Wangen ab:
Ob es mir denn entgangen,
daß ich geweinet hab'?

Ei Tränen, meine Tränen,
und seid ihr gar so lau,
daß ihr erstarrt zu Eise
wie kühler Morgentau?

Und dringt doch aus der Quelle
der Brust so glühend heiß,
als wolltet ihr zerschmelzen
des ganzen Winters Eis!

Frozen tears are falling
off my cheeks:
did I not notice, then,
that I have been crying?

O tears, my tears,
are you so tepid then
that you turn to ice
like cold morning dew?

Yet you spring from your source
in my breast so burning hot
that you should melt
all winter's ice!

Erstarrung

Ich such' im Schnee vergebens
nach ihrer Tritte Spur,
wo sie an meinem Arme
durchstrich die grüne Flur.

Vainly I search in the snow
for the footprint she left
when arm in arm with me she
rambled over the green meadow.

Ich will den Boden küssen,
durchdringen Eis und Schnee
mit meinen heißen Tränen,
bis ich die Erde seh'.

I want to kiss the ground,
pierce through ice and snow
with my hot tears
until I see the soil beneath.

Wo find' ich eine Blüte,
wo find' ich grünes Gras?
Die Blumen sind erstorben
der Rasen sieht so blaß.

Where shall I find a blossom,
where find green grass?
The flowers are dead,
the grass looks so pale.

Soll denn kein Andenken
ich nehmen mit von hier?
Wenn meine Schmerzen schweigen,
wer sagt mir dann von ihr?

Can there be no keepsake, then,
to carry away with me?
When my sorrows fall silent,
what shall tell me of her?

Mein Herz ist wie erfroren,
kalt starrt ihr Bild darin:
Schmilzt je das Herz mir wieder
fließt auch das Bild dahin.

My heart is as good as frozen;
within it her image gazes coldly.
If ever my heart thaws again,
her image too will melt away.

Der Lindenbaum

Brunnen vor dem Tore,
da steht ein Lindenbaum:
Ich träumt in seinem Schatten
so manchen süßen Traum.

By the well at the town gate
stands a lime tree;
in its shadow I have dreamed
so many a sweet dream.

Ich schnitt in seine Rinde
so manches liebe Wort;
es zog in Freud' und Leide
zu ihm mich immer fort.

On its bark I have carved
so many a loving word.
In joy and sorrow it drew
me to it again and again.

Ich muß' auch heute wandern
vorbei in tiefer Nacht,
da hab' ich noch im Dunkel
die Augen zugemacht.

Just now my journey took me
past it at dead of night,
and even in the darkness
I had to close my eyes.

Und seine Zweige rauschten,
als riefen sie mir zu:

And its branches rustled
as if they were calling to me:

Komm her zu mir, Geselle,
hier find'st du deine Ruh'!

Die kalten Winde bliesen
mir grad ins Angesicht;
der Hut flog mir vom Kopfe,
ich wendete mich nicht.

Nun bin ich manche Stunde
entfernt von jenem Ort,
und immer hör' ich's rauschen:
Du fändest Ruhe dort!

"Come here to me, lad,
here you will find your rest"!

The chill winds blew
straight in my face:
my hat flew off my head.
I did not turn back.

Now I am many hours
away from that place;
yet still I hear the rustling:
"There you would have found rest".

Wasserflut

Manche Trän' aus meinen Augen
ist gefallen in den Schnee;
seine kalten Flocken saugen
durstig ein das heiße Weh.

Wenn die Gräser sprossen wollen
weht daher ein lauer Wind,
und das Eis zerspringt in Schollen
und der weiche Schnee zerrinnt.

Many a tear from my eyes
has dropped into the snow.
Its chilly flakes suck
thirstily up my burning woe.

When the grass begins to shoot,
a warm breeze will blow there,
and the ice will melt in torrents
and the snow will dissolve.

Schnee, du weißt von meinem Sehnen,
Sag' mir, wohin doch geht dein Lauf?
Folge nach nur meinen Tränen,
nimmt dich bald das Bächlein auf.

Wirst mit ihm die Stadt durchziehen,
munt're Straßen ein und aus;
Fühlst du meine Tränen glühen,
da ist meiner Liebsten Haus.

Snow, you know of my longing:
say, which way will you flow?
Just follow my tears:
their stream will soon carry you away.

You will course the town with them,
in and out of lively streets.
When you feel my tears grow warm,
that will be my sweetheart's house.

Auf dem Flusse

Der du so lustig rauschtest,
du heller, wilder Fluß,
wie still bist du geworden,
gibst keinen Scheidegruß.

Mit harter, starrer Rinde
hast du dich überdeckt,
liegst kalt und unbeweglich
im Sande ausgestreckt.

In deine Decke grab' ich
mit einem spitzen Stein

You who so merrily murmured,
clear, wild stream,
how silent you have become:
you give no greeting as we part.

With hard, stiff hoar
you have covered yourself;
you lie cold and motionless,
stretched out in the sand.

On your crust I carve
with a sharp stone

den Namen meiner Liebsten
und Stund und Tag hinein:

Den Tag des ersten Grußes,
den Tag, an dem ich ging;
um Nam' und Zahlen windet
Sich ein zerbrochener Ring.

Mein Herz, in diesem Bache
erkenntst du nun dein Bild?
Ob's unter seiner Rinde
Wohl auch so reißend schwillt?

the name of my beloved
and the hour and the day.

The day of first hello,
the day I went away;
round name and figures winds
a broken ring.

In this brook, my heart,
do you now recognize your likeness?
How under its crust
there is a roaring torrent too?

Rückblick

Es brennt mir unter beiden Sohlen,
Tret' ich auch schon auf Eis und Schnee,
Ich möcht' nicht wieder Atem holen,
Bis ich nicht mehr die Türme seh'.

Hab' mich an jeden Stein gestoßen,
so eilt' ich zu der Stadt hinaus;
die Krähen warfen Bäll' und Schloßen
auf meinen Hut von jedem Haus.

It is burning hot under both my feet,
though I am walking on ice and snow;
I would rather not draw breath again
until the towers are out of sight.

I bruised myself on every stone,
so did I hurry out of the town.
The crows threw snowballs and hailstones
onto my hat from every roof.

Wie anders hast du mich empfangen,
du Stadt der Unbeständigkeit!
An deinen blanken Fenstern sangen
die Lerch' und Nachtigall im Streit.

Die runden Lindenbäume blühten,
die klaren Rinnen rauschten hell,
und ach, zwei Mädchenaugen glühten. –
Da war's geschah'n um dich, Gesell'!

Kömmt mir der Tag in die Gedanken,
möcht' ich noch einmal rückwärts seh'n,
möcht' ich zurücke wieder wanken,
vor ihrem Hause stille steh'n.

How otherwise did you welcome me,
you volatile town!
At your bright windows sang
the lark vying with the nightingale.

The plump lime trees were in bloom,
the clear streams babbled brightly,
and alas, two girlish eyes were glowing!—
then you were done for, my friend!

Whenever that day comes to mind,
I long to look back once more,
long to stumble back again
and stand in silence outside her house.

Irrlicht

In die tiefsten Felsengründe
lockte mich ein Irrlicht hin:
Wie ich einen Ausgang finde,
liegt nicht schwer mir in dem Sinn.

Into deepest clefts of rock
a will o' the wisp enticed me.
How I shall find my way out
does not weigh heavily on my mind.

Bin gewohnt das Irregehen,
's führt ja jeder Weg zum Ziel:
Unsre Freuden, unsre Wehen,
alles eines Irrlichts Spiel!

Durch des Bergstroms trock'ne Rinnen
wind' ich ruhig mich hinab,
jeder Strom wird's Meer gewinnen,
jedes Leiden auch ein Grab.

Rast

Nun merk' ich erst, wie müd' ich bin,
da ich zur Ruh' mich lege:
das Wandern hielt mich munter hin
auf unwirtbarem Wege.

Die Füße frugen nicht nach Rast,
es war zu kalt zum Stehen;
der Rücken fühlte keine Last,
der Sturm half fort mich wehen.

In eines Köhlers engem Haus
hab' Obdach ich gefunden;

I am used to going astray:
every path leads to its destination.
Our joys, our sorrows
are all the toys of a will o' the wisp!

Along the mountain stream's dry bed
I calmly tread downward.
Every stream will reach the sea;
every sorrow too its grave.

Now I finally realize how tired I am,
as I lie down to rest.
Walking kept my spirits up
along an inhospitable road.

My feet did not ask for rest—
it was too cold to stand still;
my back felt no burden,
the storm helped to blow me along.

In a charcoal-burner's tiny hut
I have found shelter.

doch meine Glieder ruh'n nicht aus:
So brennen ihre Wunden.

Auch du, mein Herz, in Kampf und Sturm
so wild und so verwegen,
fühlst in der Still' erst deinen Wurm
mit heißem Stich sich regen!

Frühlingstraum

Ich träumte von bunten Blumen,
So wie sie wohl blühen im Mai;
Ich träumte von grünen Wiesen,
Von lustigem Vogelgeschrei.

Und als die Hähne krächten,
Da ward mein Auge wach;
Da war es kalt und finster,
Es schrieten die Raben vom Dach.

Doch an den Fensterscheiben,
Wer malte die Blätter da?
Ihr lacht wohl über den Träumer,
Der Blumen im Winter sah?

But my limbs will not rest,
their wounds are burning so.

You too, my heart, in struggle and storm
so wild and so untamed,
now in the stillness feel the serpent within
rear up with its searing sting.

I dreamed of bright flowers
such as blossom in May;
I dreamed of green meadows
and the calling of birds.

And when the cocks crew,
I opened my eyes;
it was cold and dark,
on the roof the ravens croaked.

But on the window panes
who had been painting leaves?
Well may you laugh at the dreamer
who saw flowers in winter.

Ich träumte von Lieb' um Liebe,
Von einer schönen Maid,
Von Herzen und von Küssen,
Von Wonn' und Seligkeit.

Und als die Hähne krächten,
Da ward mein Herze wach;
Nun sitz ich hier alleine
Und denke dem Traume nach.

Die Augen schließ' ich wieder,
Noch schlägt das Herz so warm.
Wann grünt ihr Blätter am Fenster?
Wann halt' ich mein Liebchen im Arm?

Einsamkeit

Wie eine trübe Wolke
durch heit're Lüfte geht,
wenn in der Tanne Wipfel
ein mattes Lüftchen weht:

So zieh ich meine Straße
dahin mit tragem Fuß,

I dreamed of love for love,
of a fair maiden,
of hearts and kisses,
of bliss and felicity.

And when the cocks crew
my heart opened:
now all alone I sit here
and ponder my dream.

I close my eyes again:
my heart still beats as warmly.
When will you leaves at the window be green?
When will I hold my darling in my arms?

Like a mournful cloud
passing through clear sky
when through the fir tops
a gentle breeze blows,

so I wend my way
onward with halting step

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durch helles, frohes Leben,
einsam und ohne Gruß.

Ach, daß die Luft so ruhig!
Ach, daß die Welt so licht!
Als noch die Stürme tobten,
war ich so elend nicht.

Die Post

Von der Straße her ein Posthorn klingt.
Was hat es, daß es so hoch aufspringt,
mein Herz?

Die Post bringt keinen Brief für dich.
Was drängst du denn so wunderbarlich,
mein Herz?

Nun ja, die Post kommt aus der Stadt,
wo ich ein liebes Liebchen hatt',
mein Herz!

Willst wohl einmal hinüberseh'n
und fragen, wie es dort mag geh'n,
mein Herz?

through bright, happy life
lonely and ungreeted.

Pity the air is so calm,
pity the world is so bright!
When the storms still howled
I felt less miserable.

Up from the street a post horn blows.
What is it that makes you beat so fast,
my heart?

The post-coach brings you no letter;
then why do you throb so strangely,
my heart?

Well, the post comes from the town
where I had a best beloved,
my heart!

Do you just want to peep across
and ask how things are going there,
my heart?

13

Der greise Kopf

Der Reif hatt' einen weißen Schein
mir übers Haar gestreuet;
da glaubt' ich schon ein Greis zu sein
Und hab' mich sehr gefreuet.

There was a white coat of frost
spread over my hair.
It made me think I was already old,
which made me very glad.

Doch bald ist er hinweggetaut,
hab' wieder schwarze Haare,
daß mir's vor meiner Jugend graut –
wie weit noch bis zur Bahre!

But soon it thawed away
and my hair is black again.
Now my youthfulness appals me:
how far still to the funeral bier!

Vom Abendrot zum Morgenlicht
ward mancher Kopf zum Greise.
Wer glaubt's? und meiner ward es nicht
auf dieser ganzen Reise!

Between dusk and dawn
many a head has turned white.
Can you believe that mine has not
this whole journey through!

Die Krähe

Eine Krähe war mit mir
Aus der Stadt gezogen,
Ist bis heute für und für
Um mein Haupt geflogen.

A crow was with me
coming out of town.
Back and forth till now it
has flown above my head.

Krähe, wunderliches Tier,
Willst mich nicht verlassen?
Meinst wohl, bald als Beute hier
Meinen Leib zu fassen?

Crow, curious creature,
will you not forsake me?
You probably soon expect,
to seize my lifeless body?

Nun, es wird nicht weit mehr geh'n
An dem Wanderstabe.
Krähe, laß mich endlich seh'n,
Treue bis zum Grabe!

Well, there is not far to go
for me and my walking stick.
Crow, let me at last behold
fidelity to the grave!

Letzte Hoffnung

Hie und da ist an den Bäumen
manches bunte Blatt zu seh'n,
und ich bleibe vor den Bäumen
oftmals in Gedanken steh'n.

Here and there on trees
a colored leaf can be seen.
And I stand in front of the trees
often, sunk in thought.

Schaue nach dem einen Blatte,
hänge meine Hoffnung dran;
spielt der Wind mit meinem Blatte,
zitt'r' ich, was ich zittern kann.

I gaze at one leaf,
hang my hopes upon it;
if the wind toys with my leaf
I tremble as much as I can.

Ach, und fällt das Blatt zu Boden,
fällt mit ihm die Hoffnung ab;

Ah! if the leaf falls to the ground,
my hopes tumble with it.

fall' ich selber mit zu Boden,
wein' auf meiner Hoffnung Grab.

I fall to the ground myself,
weep at the tomb of my hopes.

Im Dorfe

17

Es bellen die Hunde, es rascheln die Ketten;
es schlafen die Menschen in ihren Betten,
träumen sich manches, was sie nicht haben,
tun sich im Guten und Argen erlaben:

Dogs are barking, their chains are rattling.
People are asleep in their beds.
They dream of plenty that they have not,
Sate themselves to both good and evil:

Und morgen früh ist alles zerflossen.
Je nun, sie haben ihr Teil genossen
und hoffen, was sie noch übrig ließen,
doch wieder zu finden auf ihren Kissen.

and next morning it has all vanished.
But then, they have enjoyed their share
and hope some of it will be left
to be found back on their pillows.

Bellt mich nur fort, ihr wachen Hunde,
laßt mich nicht ruh'n in der
Schlummerstunde!
Ich bin zu Ende mit allen Träumen —
was will ich unter den Schläfern säumen?

Bark me away, you watchdogs!
Let me not rest in these hours of slumber!
I am done with all dreaming;
why linger among those asleep?

18

Der stürmische Morgen

Wie hat der Sturm zerrissen
des Himmels graues Kleid!
Die Wolkenfetzen flattern
umher im matten Streit.

How the storm has torn
the grey mantle of heaven!
The wisps of cloud flutter
about, jostling feebly.

Und rote Feuerflammen
zieh'n zwischen ihnen hin;
Das nenn' ich einen Morgen
so recht nach meinem Sinn!

And tongues of red fire
flicker among them.
I reckon this a morning
to match my frame of mind!

Mein Herz sieht an dem Himmel
gemalt sein eig'nes Bild –
es ist nichts als der Winter,
der Winter, kalt und wild!

My heart sees in the sky
its own painted portrait.
It is nothing but winter,
winter, chill and savage.

19

Täuschung

Ein Licht tanzt freundlich vor mir her,
ich folg' ihm nach die Kreuz und Quer;
ich folg' ihm gern und seh's ihm an,
daß es verlockt den Wandersmann.

A friendly light dances in front of me;
I follow it hither and thither.
Follow it gladly and watch its course
as it lures the wanderer onward.

Ach! wer wie ich so elend ist,
gibt gern sich hin der bunten List,
die hinter Eis und Nacht und Graus
ihm weist ein helles, warmes Haus.
und eine liebe Seele drin –
nur Täuschung ist für mich Gewinn!

Ah, anybody as wretched as I
gladly falls for such colorful trickery
as, beyond ice and night and misery,
it shows him a cheerful, warm house,
and within it a soul dear to him—
Only delusion brings me success!

Der Wegweiser

Was vermeid' ich denn die Wege,
wo die ander'n Wand'rer gehn,
suche mir versteckte Stege
durch verschneite Felsenhöhn?

Why do I avoid the highways
that other travelers take,
to seek out hidden tracks
through snowbound rocky heights?

Habe ja doch nichts begangen,
daß ich Menschen sollte scheu'n, –
welch ein törichtes Verlangen
treibt mich in die Wüstenei'n?

As I have done no wrong
that I should shun mankind.
What senseless craving
drives me into the wilderness?

Weiser stehen auf den Strassen,
weisen auf die Städte zu,
und ich wand're sonder Maßen
ohne Ruh' und suche Ruh'.

Signposts stand on the roads,
point towards towns.
Yet I wander on and on,
restless, in search of rest.

Einen Weiser seh' ich stehen
unverrückt vor meinem Blick;
eine Straße muß ich gehen,
die noch keiner ging zurück.

One signpost I see stand there,
steadfast before my gaze.
One road I must travel
from which there is no way back.

Das Wirtshaus

Auf einen Totenacker
hat mich mein Weg gebracht;
Allhier will ich einkehren,
hab' ich bei mir gedacht.

To a graveyard
my path has brought me.
Here I will lodge,
I thought to myself.

Ihr grünen Totenkränze
könnt wohl die Zeichen sein,
die müde Wand'rer laden
ins kühle Wirtshaus ein.

You verdant funeral wreaths
could well be signs
that invite exhausted travelers
into the cool inn.

Sind denn in diesem Hause
die Kammern all' besetzt?
Bin matt zum Niedersinken,
bin tödlich schwer verletzt.

But in this house
all rooms seem occupied already?
I am tired enough to drop,
I am hurt to death.

O unbarmherz'ge Schenke,
doch weisest du mich ab?

Pitiless tavern,
do you turn me away?

Nun weiter denn, nur weiter,
mein treuer Wanderstab!

Onward, then, lead me onward,
my faithful walking stick!

Mut!

Fliegt der Schnee mir ins Gesicht,
schüttl' ich ihn herunter.
Wenn mein Herz im Busen spricht,
sing' ich hell und munter.

When the snow flies in my face,
I brush it away;
when my heart exclaims in my breast,
I sing bright and cheerful.

Höre nicht, was es mir sagt,
habe keine Ohren;
fühle nicht, was es mir klagt,
Klagen ist für Toren.

Don't heed what it tells me,
have no ears for that,
don't feel its complaining—
Only fools complain.

Lustig in die Welt hinein
gegen Wind und Wetter!
Will kein Gott auf Erden sein,
sind wir selber Götter!

Merrily off into the world,
spite all wind and weather!
If we can't have gods on earth,
then we are gods ourselves.

Die Nebensonnen

Drei Sonnen sah ich am Himmel steh'n,
hab' lang und fest sie angeseh'n;
und sie auch standen da so stier,
als könnten sie nicht weg von mir.
Ach, meine Sonnen seid ihr nicht!
Schaut Andren doch ins Angesicht!
Ja, neulich hatt' ich auch wohl drei;
nun sind hinab die besten zwei.
Ging nur die dritt' erst hinterdrein!
Im Dunkeln wird mir wohler sein.

I saw three suns stand in the sky.
I watched them long and fixedly.
And they stood there as blank and bright
as if they would not leave my sight.
Alas, you cannot be my suns!
Turn then, and gaze at other ones!
Not long ago I had three of my own;
but now the best two have gone down.
Would that the third might disappear!
In darkness I would rather dwell.

Der Leiermann

Drüben hinterm Dorfe
steht ein Leiermann
und mit starren Fingern
dreht er, was er kann.

Over there behind the village
stands a hurdy-gurdy man,
and with numb fingers
he grinds away, as best he can.

Barfuß auf dem Eise
wankt er hin und her
und sein kleiner Teller
bleibt ihm immer leer.

Barefoot on the ice
he sways back and forth,
and his little plate
remains always empty.

Keiner mag ihn hören,
keiner sieht ihn an,
und die Hunde knurren
um den alten Mann.

Und er läßt es gehen
alles, wie es will,
dreht und seine Leier
steht ihm nimmer still.

Wunderlicher Alter,
soll ich mit dir geh'n?
Willst zu meinen Liedern
deine Leier dreh'n?

No-one wants to hear him,
no-one looks at him,
and the dogs growl
around the old man.

And he lets it go on,
everything, just as it will,
Turns the wheel, and his hurdy-gurdy
never stays still for a moment.

Strange old man,
should I go with you?
Will you to I my songs,
play your hurdy-gurdy?

Acknowledgments

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PENTATONE

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PENTATONE believes in the power of classical music and is invested in the philosophy behind it: we are convinced that refined music is one of the most important wellsprings of culture and essential to human development.

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