



Avan Yu

**2012 Sydney
International
Piano Competition**

**LISZT
Schubert Song
Transcriptions:
Winterreise
Schwanengesang**

Franz Liszt (1811–1886) Schubert Song Transcriptions

Winterreise (Winter Journey), S561/R246		Schwanengesang (Swansong), S560/R245	
1 No. 1 (1) Gute Nacht: Andantino	5:08	9 No. 1 (11) Die Stadt: Mässig geschwind	2:49
2 No. 2 (23) Die Nebensonnen: Non troppo lento	3:54	10 No. 2 (10) Das Fischermädchen: Etwas geschwind	3:07
3 No. 3 (22) Mut: Animato energico	1:20	11 No. 4 (12) Am Meer: Sehr langsam	4:36
4 No. 4 (13) Die Post: Un poco vivo	2:42	12 No. 5 (7) Abschied: Mässig geschwind	4:28
5 No. 5 (4) Erstarrung: Animato	3:05	13 No. 6 (6) In der Ferne: Lento patetico	6:49
6 No. 8 (24) Der Leiermann: Andantino –	2:16	14 No. 7 (4) Ständchen: Tempo rubato. Mässig	5:39
7 No. 9 (19) Täuschung: Un poco animato	1:37	15 No. 9 (3) Frühlingssehnsucht: Presto	2:40
8 No. 10 (21) Das Wirtshaus: Lento assai	4:51	16 No. 11 (8) Der Atlas: Etwas geschwind	2:36
		17 No. 13 (14) Die Taubenpost: Andante con sentimento	4:36
		18 No. 14 (2) Kriegers Ahnung: Non troppo lento	6:45

(Numbers in parentheses are Schubert's original movements)

Born at Raiding, in Hungary, in 1811, the son of Adam Liszt, a steward in the service of Haydn's former patrons, the Esterházy Princes, Franz Liszt had early encouragement from members of the Hungarian nobility, allowing him in 1822 to move to Vienna, for lessons with Czerny and a famous meeting with Beethoven. From there he went to Paris, where Cherubini refused him admission to the Conservatoire. Nevertheless he was able to impress audiences by his performance, now supported by the Erard family, piano manufacturers whose wares he was able to advertise in the concert tours on which he embarked. In 1827 Adam Liszt died, and Franz Liszt was now joined again by his mother in Paris, while using his time to teach, to read and benefit from the intellectual society with which he came into contact. His interest in virtuoso performance was renewed when he heard the great violinist Paganini, whose technical accomplishments he now set out to emulate.

The years that followed brought a series of compositions, including transcriptions of songs and operatic fantasies, part of the stock-in-trade of a virtuoso. Liszt's relationship with a married woman, the Comtesse Marie d'Agoult, led to his departure from Paris for years of travel abroad, first to Switzerland, then back to Paris, before leaving for Italy, Vienna and Hungary. By 1844 his relationship with his mistress, the mother of his three children, was at an end, but

his concert activities continued until 1847, the year in which his association began with Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, a Polish heiress, the estranged wife of a Russian prince. The following year he settled with her in Weimar, the city of Goethe, turning his attention now to the development of a newer form of orchestral music, the symphonic poem, and, as always, to the revision and publication of earlier compositions.

It was in 1861, at the age of fifty, that Liszt moved to Rome, following Princess Carolyne, who had settled there a year earlier. Divorce and annulment seemed to have opened the way to their marriage, but they now continued to live in separate apartments in the city. Liszt eventually took minor orders and developed a pattern of life that divided his time between Weimar, where he imparted advice to a younger generation, Rome, where he was able to pursue his religious interests, and Pest, where he returned now as a national hero. He died in 1886 in Bayreuth, where his daughter Cosima, widow of Richard Wagner, lived, concerned with the continued propagation of her husband's music.

Liszt transcribed over fifty of Schubert's songs, largely between 1833 and 1846. His version of *Winterreise* (Winter Journey) was published in 1840 and contained only half of the songs in Schubert's original cycle. Liszt's transcriptions were made during the year preceding publication and are in

an order that differs from that followed by Schubert in his setting of the poems by Wilhelm Müller. Only twelve of the twenty-four songs were transcribed, although a second album completing the cycle had been announced. In 1823 Schubert had set the poems of Müller's *Die schöne Müllerin* (The Fair Maid of the Mill) and *Winterreise* dates from 1827, with Müller's *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen* (The Shepherd on the Rock) in 1828, the year of Schubert's death. Three years Schubert's senior, Müller himself had died in 1827.

The order of the songs in Liszt's transcription is based on key relationships rather than the narrative content of the verse. Both the cycle and the transcriptions start with *Gute Nacht* (Good Night) [1], as the traveller sets out on his journey. Schubert groups the stanzas of the song in pairs, and the second pair, which repeats the setting of the first pair, is transformed by Liszt with syncopated octaves in the right hand, marked *capricciosamente* and further chromatic embellishment. There is a change of mood as the key shifts from D minor to D major at the last pair of stanzas, *Will dich im Traum nicht stören* (I will not disturb you in your dream), where the traveller steals away, leaving a farewell message pinned to the door. The transcription moves from the softest *dolcissimo* to a dynamic climax, before returning to the original minor key in an extended postlude.

Liszt places the penultimate song of the original cycle in second place. *Die Nebensonnen* (The Phantom Suns) [2], transposed by Liszt from A major to B flat major, proposes the idea of three suns that were his but the best two of which have gone. The first two couplets are treated directly, while calling for wide stretches in the left hand. A recitative leading to a passage marked *con passione* is followed by a version of the song accompanied by dotted triplets, leading to a more elaborate outburst and a final return to the dotted triplet accompaniment.

Mut (Courage) [3], immediately preceding *Die Nebensonnen* in the original cycle, was originally in A minor and transposed by Schubert to G minor, the key of Liszt's transcription. The song urges courage, in the face of snow and bad weather, its later verses treated with increasing elaboration.

Die Post (The Post) [4], originally the thirteenth song, opening the second part of the cycle, like the original song, is suddenly silent, after the expectation at first aroused by the sound of the post-horn, followed by a minor passage as the

poet realises there is no message for him from his beloved.

In the fourth of Schubert's cycle, *Erstarrung* (Numbness) [5], the poet seeks traces of his beloved in the snow, where once they had walked together. With its melody often in the centre of the texture, the accompanying triplet figuration follows the piece throughout, as it does in the original song.

Liszt links *Der Leiermann* (The Hurdy-Gurdy Man) [6], originally the last song of the cycle, with *Täuschung* (Illusion) [7], originally the nineteenth, forming a joined eighth and ninth transcription. The mood of the first of the two songs, with its drone bass and sinister implications, is lifted by the major key and gentle lilt of the second, with its moment of respite.

The present excerpts from Liszt's transcription end with *Das Wirtshaus* (The Inn) [8], the twenty-first song in the original cycle. Here the poet seeks rest in a graveyard, but finds he must travel on. The transcription increases in complexity as it reaches a climax, before the stillness of the final bars.

Schubert's *Schwanengesang* (Swansong) appeared posthumously in 1829 and contains settings of verses by Heinrich Heine, Ludwig Rellstab and Johann Gabriel Seidl. The published order of the songs was by Schubert's brother Ferdinand and Liszt's transcriptions were published in 1840 with a new order, based on key relationships. These start with Heine's *Die Stadt* (The Town) [9], the foreboding of the poem, with its lonely oarsman and awareness of loss reflected in the sinister prelude and the following elaboration of the transcription.

Das Fischermädchen (The Fisher Maiden) [10], a setting of Heine, is gently evocative, as the poet invites the girl not to fear him, his heart like the sea, concealing depths and pearls below. The transcription initially keeps the melody in a middle part, before elaborating the material further.

Heine's *Am Meer* (By the Sea) [11] recalls an evening sitting with his beloved by the sea, watching her tears that have poisoned him. The transcription makes much of the tremolo accompaniment of the original, which it largely follows.

Abschied (Farewell) [12] sets a poem by Rellstab in which the poet bids farewell to his happy city, its gardens, its girls, its sun and stars, and his beloved, for now he must ride away. The pace of the horse is echoed throughout in the song and in its transcription.

Rellstab's *In der Ferne* (Far Away) [13] evokes a particular romantic predicament, as the poet wanders, separated from his beloved. Liszt develops and elaborates the song, with the melody emerging from swirling arpeggios and tremolo figuration to make a piece of passionate intensity.

In *Ständchen* (Serenade) [14], another poem by Rellstab, the poet sends messages to his beloved during the night, conveyed through the tree-tops and the nightingales, as he waits for her. The transcription moves gently forward to delicate echo effects in the later verses of the song.

With *Frühlingssehnsucht* (Spring Longing) [15] Rellstab is led who knows where, by the breezes, the flowing streams, the warming sun and the budding foliage, but only his beloved can set free the springtime in his heart. A strophic song, each stanza ends with a question, delicately posed in the transcription.

Der Atlas (Atlas) [16] brings a return to Heine. Atlas bears the burden of the world and would have been happy but, instead, is condemned to misery. Taking his lead from the

original setting, Liszt creates an even more massive and monumental work.

Johann Gabriel Seidl published a volume of his poems in 1826, when he was twenty-two. Schubert set eleven of Seidl's poems, the last, *Die Taubenpost* (The Pigeon Post) [17], not included in the 1826 volumes. Written in October 1828, this was Schubert's last song. The bird of the title represents the poet's longing, conveying messages from his mind to his beloved. The song and its increasingly elaborate transcription offer a gentler contrast with the stormy preceding work.

The present recording ends with *Kriegers Ahnung* (Warrior's Premonition) [18], a poem by Rellstab. The song treats each of the four stanzas individually, with Liszt's transcription increasing in intensity until the final *Bald ruh' ich wohl und schlafe fest, / Herzliebste! gute Nacht!* (Soon shall I rest well and sleep sound, / Best beloved! Good night!)

Keith Anderson

Avan Yu

One of Canada's most exciting young pianists, Avan Yu achieved international recognition when he triumphed at the Sydney International Piano Competition in 2012, winning First Prize along with nine special awards. He has appeared as soloist with orchestras and conductors around the world, including Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos and the Dresden Philharmonic, Pinchas Zukerman and the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa, and Christian Arming and the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. In addition, he has performed with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Morocco Philharmonic, Real Filharmonica de Galicia, Slovak Radio Orchestra, Victoria Symphony, Windsor Symphony, and the Nova Scotia Symphony Orchestra. In recital, Avan Yu has performed at the Weill Recital Hall in Carnegie Hall, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Konzerthaus in Berlin, the Salle Cortot in Paris, and the Nacional Auditorio de Música in Madrid, and, as a chamber musician, has collaborated with celebrated musicians including Yo-Yo Ma, Cuarteto Casals, Armida Quartett, Johannes Moser, and Geoff Nuttall. Born in Hong Kong, Avan Yu moved at the age of nine to Vancouver with his family. He studied with Kenneth Broadway and Ralph Markham in Vancouver, before moving to Berlin to study with Klaus Hellwig at the Berlin University of the Arts. At the age of seventeen he won the Gold Medal at the Canadian Chopin Competition and in 2008 the Silver Medal and People's Choice Award at the Santander International Piano Competition. His performances have been broadcast on WQXR Radio in New York, Bayerischer Rundfunk, the CBC, the Australian Broadcasting Network, China Central Television and Radio, RadioTelevisión Española (RTVE), NDR Kultur, Hamburg and Südwestrundfunk (SWR).

Liszt had a particular affection for the music of Schubert whom he considered to be “the most poetic musician who ever lived”. Ordered according to key relationships rather than the narrative content of the verse, his transcriptions of Schubert’s two great song cycles, *Winterreise* and *Schwanengesang* are outstanding examples of the genre and formed a popular part of his concert programmes during his years as a travelling virtuoso. Avan Yu, one of Canada’s most exciting pianists, won the Gold Medal at the Canadian Chopin Competition at the age of seventeen.

**Franz
LISZT**
(1811–1886)

Schubert Song Transcriptions

**Winterreise (Winter Journey),
S561/R246 – Excerpts 24:58**

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|--------------------------------|-------------|
| 1 No. 1 Gute Nacht | 5:08 |
| 2 No. 2 Die Nebensonnen | 3:54 |
| 3 No. 3 Mut | 1:20 |
| 4 No. 4 Die Post | 2:42 |
| 5 No. 5 Erstarrung | 3:05 |
| 6 No. 8 Der Leiermann – | 2:16 |
| 7 No. 9 Täuschung | 1:37 |
| 8 No. 10 Das Wirtshaus | 4:51 |

**Schwanengesang (Swansong),
S560/R245 – Excerpts 44:06**

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|------------------------------------|-------------|
| 9 No. 1 Die Stadt | 2:49 |
| 10 No. 2 Das Fischermädchen | 3:07 |
| 11 No. 4 Am Meer | 4:36 |
| 12 No. 5 Abschied | 4:28 |
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| 16 No. 11 Der Atlas | 2:36 |
| 17 No. 13 Die Taubenpost | 4:36 |
| 18 No. 14 Kriegers Ahnung | 6:45 |

A detailed track list will be found in the booklet

Avan Yu, Piano

Recorded at Wyastone Concert Hall, Monmouth, UK, 3–4 December 2013
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 Piano: Steinway (technician Phil Kennedy) • Cover photo of Avan Yu: Irène Zandel



8.573349

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Playing Time
69:11



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