Santa Fe CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

51ST SEASON

Wednesday
12 p.m.

JULY 24

St. Francis Auditorium in the
New Mexico Museum of Art

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM by Eric Bromberger

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828)
"Der Tod und das Mädchen" ("Death and the Maiden"), D. 531 (1817)

Schubert wrote this striking song in February 1817, just a few weeks after his 20th birthday. It's a setting of text by one of his favorite poets, Matthias Claudius (1740–1850), and it begins with a slow, almost static sequence of chords that forms the music associated with the character of Death. The music then rushes ahead as the song's other character, the young Maiden, pleads with Death to pass her by and let her live. Death descends upon her, however, and his voice (which may be heard in either spoken or sung words) is soothing, as he tells her that she'll find peace in his arms.

Many listeners will already know this music from Schubert's 1824 String Quartet in D Minor, known as the *Death and the Maiden* Quartet, in which Schubert uses Death's opening sequence of static chords as the basis for a set of variations in the second movement.

CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI (1567–1643)
"Tu se' morta" ("You Have Perished") from L'Orfeo, SV 318 (1607)

In 1600, the Duke of Mantua and his court saw a performance of Jacopo Peri's opera *Euridice*. It made a strong impression on the duke, and he told his young court musician, Claudio Monteverdi, that he should try to write something similar. Monteverdi was intrigued, so he turned to the same source material as Peri—the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice—and composed *L'Orfeo*, describing it as a *favolá in musica* ("fable in music").

With *L'Orfeo*, Monteverdi presented a complete reimagining of what an opera could be: a powerful synthesis of text, action, music (solo vocal, recitative, choral, instrumental), dancing, scenery, and stagecraft in one unified and dramatic presentation. He also imbued his characters with life, creating complex, conflicted subjects who displayed a range of emotions.

"Tu se' morta" ("You Have Perished") comes from a climactic moment in Act II of *L'Orfeo*. Eurydice had been out in a meadow, gathering flowers to make a garland, when she was bitten on the heel by "a treacherous snake." She turned pale, called out for Orpheus, and died. Shepherds conveyed this devastating news to Orpheus, who now, in this aria, sings of his grief and vows to either bring Eurydice back to life or remain with her in death. "Tu se' morta" begins as a lament, becomes a stirring resolution to defeat death, and concludes as a farewell to earth, sky, and sun, with Orpheus plunging into the underworld.

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828)
"Meeres Stille" ("Sea Silence"), D. 216 (1815)

"Meeres Stille," which sets a text by Goethe, brings an encounter with water, but the "sea silence" referenced here isn't reassuring—it's threatening: the text's worried sailor recognizes that he and his passengers are becalmed.

Schubert's setting is a masterpiece of understatement. The piano accompaniment

consists of a single arpeggiated chord in each measure, and over this the vocal line makes its wary, subdued way.

It should be noted that in the same year Schubert wrote this song, Beethoven used the same text for the first movement of his cantata *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*. Beethoven, however, used a chorus to shriek out the terror of being trapped at sea.

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–56)
Liederkreis, Op. 39 (1840)

In April 1840, Robert Schumann spent a couple of blissful weeks in Berlin with Clara Wieck, whom he would marry five months later. From Leipzig, he brought with him a collection of songs he'd sketched over the previous month, and in Berlin he played them for Clara and Mendelssohn. Both admired the songs greatly, and there's evidence that Mendelssohn, who had a fine voice, may have been the first to sing them, with Clara at the piano. In 1842, Schumann gathered 12 of these songs and published them under the title *Liederkreis* ("Song Cycle"). The songs are based on poems by the German poet Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff (1788–1857), and they touch on such Romantic subjects as nature, love, nostalgia, loneliness, mystery, ecstasy, beauty, and more.

Schumann's opening song, "In der Fremde" ("In a Foreign Land"), with its lonely wanderer making his way over a dark, rippling accompaniment, is reminiscent of Schubert's *Winterreise*. "Waldesgespräch" ("Forest Conversation") is a dialogue song that features a man riding confidently through the forest on the sound of hunting horns only to gradually realize he's been trapped by the legendary temptress Lorelei. "Mondnacht" ("Moonlit Night") is the longest and perhaps most famous song in this cycle. Schumann marks it "tender, secret," and the singer softly conveys images of night and unfolding love.

Another song titled "In der Fremde" almost perfectly embodies the spirit (and technique) of this cycle. The text is high Romantic poetry, with its lost, wandering speaker feeling alienated and nostalgic and pining for a dead lover. Schumann alternates tempos in a way that mirrors the rustling brook of the first stanza, the flickering moonbeams of the third, and the fluid emotions of the wanderer.

"Zwielicht" ("Twilight") is a warning about the murky depths of human nature, here symbolized by twilight. The two-part piano accompaniment remains linear rather than chordal, and the singer's voice conveys dark admonitions. The cycle concludes with the blissful "Frühlingsnacht" ("Spring Night"), and it's typical of *Liederkreis* that songs like this one and "Zwielicht" can exist so close together. Here everything is swept up in the giddy transport of love, as the beating wings of migrating birds make the air ring with the intensity of the speaker's love.

Fired by his own love for Clara and his burning pleasure in writing songs, Schumann found in Eichendorff's poems a mirror for his own emotions. The unifying features of *Liederkreis*, which Schumann called his "most romantic" cycle, may lie not in archetypal patterns or recurring musical motifs, but in the intensity of Schumann's response to the many faces of Eichendorff's world and in the depth of his feelings and the beauty of his settings.

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828)
"Der Einsame" ("Solitary"), D. 800 (1825)

"Der Einsame" is a setting of a poem by the German teacher and poet Karl Lappe (1773–1843). It presents a portrait of a solitary human soul but with a pleasant twist: rather than lament his loneliness, the speaker takes pleasure in his solitude and in the tranquility of his rustic environment, which includes his warm, glowing hearth and the sounds of friendly crickets—sounds that Schubert incorporates into the piano part.

HUGO WOLF (1860–1903)
"Wir haben beide lange Zeit geschwiegen" ("We Had Both Been Silent for a Long Time") from Italienisches Liederbuch (1890–91)
"Begegnung" ("Encounter") from Mörike-Lieder (1888)

"Verschwiegene Liebe" ("Silent Love") from Eichendorff Lieder (1880–88)

Hugo Wolf's brief, tormented life alternated between periods of white-hot creativity and long fallow episodes. Often his creative bursts centered around discovering the work of a particular poet, immersing himself in it, and composing songs based on it with incredible speed and facility. Each of the three songs on today's program comes from one of Wolf's sudden enthusiasms.

In 1890, Wolf became aware of a collection of anonymous old Italian love poems, which he read in a German translation by Paul Heyse. Wolf set 22 of these poems in 1890 and 1891, came back to the collection in 1896, and wrote a second book of 24 songs. These 46 songs were published as Wolf's two-volume *Italienisches Liederbuch*.

Almost every one of the *Italienisches Liederbuch* songs was written within the span of a day; "Wir haben beide lange Zeit geschwiegen," for example, was composed on December 16, 1891. This is a very quiet but intense song, with the intensity increasing at the mention of angels, who've brought peace to the poem's weary speaker. Wolf keeps the dynamic very low, reminding the performers repeatedly that the song should be presented either *piano* or *pianissimo*. The text concludes over the piano's gently rolled chords, and the piano's postlude draws the song to its *pianissimo* conclusion.

Though little-known to English-speaking audiences today, the German poet Eduard Mörike (1804–75) was considered second only to Goethe in 19th-century Germany. Trained in theology, Mörike was a rural Protestant pastor who taught literature at a girls' school. Beneath this quiet surface, however, he was tormented by religious doubts, dissatisfied with his role as a clergyman, and unhappy in his marriage. Mörike's best poetry rests on the tension between these poles, combining classical rigor with an underlying melancholy.

Wolf had known Mörike's poetry as a young man, but it wasn't until the spring of 1888, when he was 28, that Mörike's poems suddenly inflamed his imagination and drove him to set more than 50 of them. In "Begegnung" ("Encounter"), composed on March 22, 1888, the piano's syncopated accompaniment gives us the aftermath of a snowstorm, and soon two young lovers appear, fresh-faced and excited to greet each other. Their impassioned greeting energizes the song.

Later in 1888, Wolf turned to the poetry of Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff (the same poet Schumann turned to for his *Liederkreis*). Eichendorff's poems appealed to many composers, and among those who set them to music were Mendelssohn, Bruch, Brahms, and Richard Strauss. Wolf wrote 20 songs on Eichendorff's poems, almost all of them in September 1888. "Verschwiegene Liebe" ("Silent Love") was composed on August 31, 1888. It sets a gentle poem in which a man is hoping that his unspoken thoughts of love will travel across fields and forests and reach the one he's been unable or unwilling to address in person. Wolf marks the song as "Moving softly and always very tender." Particularly effective here is the quietly rippling piano accompaniment, whose subtle shifts of harmony mark the speaker's shifting moods.

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828)
"Der Doppelgänger" from Schwanengesang, D. 957 (1828)

In early 1829, a few months after Schubert's death, publisher Tobias Haslinger brought out a collection of the composer's last songs in two books, advertising them as "the final fruits of his noble genius." These songs, which show Schubert's mastery at its most refined, are overpowering in their impact. "Der Doppelgänger," a setting of text by Heinrich Heine (1797–1856), is the penultimate song in the cycle, and it's one of Schubert's most famous. The speaker in Heine's poem is standing outside the former home of his former lover one night when he sees another man there, too. The speaker shudders in fear when he realizes that the man is him, and he tries to understand what that means.

JAMES MACMILLAN (b. 1959)
"The Children" (1995)

Scottish composer James MacMillan studied composition at the University of Edinburgh, received his doctorate from Durham University, and taught briefly. He might have been headed for an academic career, but the sudden success of his 1990 orchestral piece *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*—which MacMillan described as a requiem for a woman who was executed for witchcraft in 17th-century Scotland—brought him worldwide attention and launched his career as a composer.

MacMillan's *The Children* was given its world premiere on July 23, 1995, by mezzo-soprano Sandra Porter and pianist Graeme McNaught on BBC Radio 3. In a program note for the work, MacMillan wrote:

> William Soutar (1898–1943) was a Scottish poet who wrote in two languages: English and Scots. I have set a number of his Scots-language poems ("The Tryst" and "Ballad") in a style which relies on traditional folk song. *The Children* is an English-language poem and was inspired by Soutar's anguish at the Spanish Civil War. The song for medium voice and piano is very simple but in a significantly different way from the other folk-inspired Soutar songs. The vocal line employs only a few basic intervals and is reminiscent of a child's song. As it progresses repetitively, the sparse piano accompaniment provides a more threatening contrast to the song's basic innocence and tranquillity. Some of this material was also drawn upon in my opera *Inés de Castro*.

RICHARD STRAUSS (1864–1949)
"Morgen!" ("Tomorrow!"), Op. 27, No. 4 (1894)

It has been said that Richard Strauss had a lifelong love affair with the sound of the soprano voice, but it should also be noted that he had a lifelong love affair with a particular soprano. The young composer married the singer Pauline de Ahna on September 10, 1894, and they would go on to have an often stormy but very sound marriage that would last until his death 55 years later, in 1949. As a pianist, Strauss frequently accompanied his wife in her recitals, and as a composer, he wrote songs with her voice in mind. On the eve of their wedding, Strauss completed a set of four songs and presented them to Pauline as a wedding gift. He later published the four songs as his Opus 27, and they've all become some of his best-loved songs.

The last of the four, "Morgen!," sets a text by John Henry Mackay (1864–1933). This is a song full of rapture, but here that rapture manages to be calm and intense at the same time. In Strauss's delicate orchestral version of this song, he gives the central melodic line to the solo violin as the soprano's song leads to a peaceful close in a vision of unclouded love beneath a sunny sky.

ERIC BROMBERGER earned his doctorate in American literature at UCLA and for 10 years taught literature and writing courses at Bates College and San Diego State University. Then he quit teaching to devote himself to his first love, music. Bromberger, a violinist, writes program notes for the San Diego Symphony, the La Jolla Music Society, San Francisco Performances, the University of Chicago Presents, Washington Performing Arts at The Kennedy Center, and many other organizations. He was a pre-concert lecturer for the Los Angeles Philharmonic for more than 20 seasons.

JENNIFER RHODES (supertitle translations) holds a PhD in Italian and comparative literature. Her research focuses on sites of interchange between literature, music, and the visual arts. Her current book project explores the influence of Richard Wagner on the modern novel. Rhodes teaches literature at Columbia University and has been a member of the Santa Fe Opera Titles Department since 2000.