



Graham Johnson Schubert Class Series

Celebrating Franz Schubert and the publication of Graham Johnson's monumental book:

A Companion to Schubert Song

Schubert Master Class Series

Schubert's Austrian Friends

The Women Songs I

A Winter's Journey

The Poetry of Johann Mayrhofer

The German Poets

The Goethe Songs

Die Schöne Müllerin

The Women Songs II

Concert

June 16 • 3:00 p.m - Thayer Hall

A Journey through Schubert Lieder

Devised and narrated by Graham Johnson

Performed by SongFest singers and pianists

Within the vast repertoire of piano-accompanied song the lieder of Franz Schubert, over six hundred are a world in themselves – songs in every mood and tempo and of every length, songs with texts by over a hundred different poets and on scores of different themes. The plays of William Shakespeare, whether tragedies, comedies or histories, occupy a similar place in the theatrical realm where the reputation of any actor is immeasurably enhanced by his or her ability to enter confidently into the world of the Bard. Hundreds of playwrights followed Shakespeare, developing and changing drama, while never excelling him; hundreds of song composers, inspired by Schubert's example, have taken music into new phases of harmonic modernity but they have never overtaken his genius. As Johannes Brahms wrote of Schubert: "he enters into regions where the rest of us cannot go." Schubert occupies an exactly parallel position in the history of art song and in the lives of singers and their pianists. The singer's art, no matter how virtuosic and entertaining, is neither complete nor entirely convincing if he or she fails to confront the depth and range of this life-changing music. In fact, bearing in mind all the other music available to the song recitalist, it can seem very tempting to avoid the confrontation altogether. The technical and emotional challenges of grappling with Schubert are no less formidable than mastering the intricacies of Shakespearian verse, but the rewards are enormous. Once the key is found to Schubert's style, his heart and his soul, the remainder of the art song repertoire falls into place precisely because it has all derived, in one way or another, from his example. Singers when first approaching Schubert feel an initial diffidence and uncertainty - exactly like actors with Shakespeare. This soon gives way to the kind of reverence and admiration that is reserved for only the very greatest of artists, the sense of wonder that a human being. Someone just like us, *and yet not at all like us*, could have achieved so much in a single short lifetime. For the true Schubertian even the sound of the composer's name prompts overwhelming feelings of gratitude.

–Graham Johnson, SongFest 2019