

EASTERN

MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL *of* MUSIC & DANCE

Songs of Longing and Memory

Dr. Matthew Cook, Tenor
Kevin Bylsma, Piano

Online Premier
December 14, 2020

PROGRAM ORDER

Longing for love, far away

An die ferne Geliebte, Op. 98 Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

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Longing for past love

À Hélène, Op. 42, No.5 Louis Théodore Gouvy
À Olive, Op. 48, No. 1 (1819-1889)

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Longing for place

The Lake Isle of Innisfree Ben Moore
From *14 Songs* (b.1960)

The performers thank you for your virtual "presence" with us today and wish you a safe, pleasant, and peaceful end to 2020.

Dr. Cook also wishes to thank Dr. MeeAe Nam for her constant inspiration in the pursuit of artistry, even from far away in Seoul, South Korea.

PERFORMER BIOS

Matthew Cook, Ph.D. Second Bachelor's degree student in the Music B.A. program, fifth-year assistant professor in Historic Preservation and Cultural Geography at Eastern Michigan University, and chorister at the historic Mariners' Church in Detroit. He is a student of Dr. MeeAe Nam.

Kevin Bylsma, M.M. Accomplished pianist and vocal coach, well known throughout the Midwest for his work in art song, opera, and oratorio. He is Associate Teaching Professor at Bowling Green State University, head of music preparation for Toledo Opera, and assistant organist at Mariners' Church.

PROGRAM NOTES & TEXT TRANSLATIONS

***An die ferne Geliebte*, Op. 98**

Poet: Alois Isidor Jeitteles (1794-1858)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), born 250 years ago this year in Bonn, Germany, is among the most performed classical composers in history (Kerman et al. 2001). His musical compositions spanned the transition period from Classical to Romantic eras, and while he is most well-known for his instrumental works (in particular nine symphonies), he wrote vocal music on and off throughout his life. These include his only complete opera (*Fidelio*), major choral works with orchestra (beyond his Ninth Symphony, he wrote the oratorio *Christus am Ölberge*, and various cantatas and shorter works, and two masses including the *Missa Solemnis in D*), and dozens of German Lieder and arrangements of folksongs in other languages. Of these, one of the best known is his proto-song cycle (*Liederkreis*, in German, meaning literally "song circle") *An die ferne Geliebte*, Op. 98. Scholars consider this to be the first of what would become a major Romantic-era compositional device, with the song cycle as a form achieving tremendous success with compositions from Romantic composers such as Franz Schubert and Robert and Clara Schumann.

An die ferne Geliebte, Beethoven's only song cycle, differs from many later forms in that it is through-composed, with each of the six songs going directly on to the next. It also ends ("Dann vor diesen Liedern weichet") by returning to the same E \flat -major melody employed in the first song ("Auf dem Hügel"), thus bringing the piece full-circle. Beethoven wrote the work in 1816, which Henken (n.d.) describes as "a time of severe personal crises." A few years earlier in 1812, Beethoven wrote a famous letter to his "Immortal Beloved" expressing great despair at possibly never succeeding at achieving a desired love, and his hearing loss had accelerated to the point where he gave what was to be his last public piano concert performance in 1815. As was often the case, Beethoven translated his personal despair into musical brilliance, taking the poetry of Jeitteles—a Czech medical student who was studying in Vienna at the time—and constructing a musical architecture that weaves through major and minor tonalities flawlessly. The work proclaims, in the words of Henken (n.d.): "this beloved may be distant, but she is also immortal, as the end of this song cycle is also a beginning, a closing that is also an opening."

To the distant beloved, Op.98

I. Auf dem Hügel sitz ich spähend

I sit on the hill, gazing
 Into the misty blue countryside,
 Towards the distant meadows
 Where, my love, I first found you.
 Now I'm far away from you,
 Mountain and valley intervene
 Between us and our peace,
 Our happiness and our pain.
 Ah, you cannot see the fiery gaze
 That wings its way towards you,

And my sighs are lost
 In the space that comes between us.
 Will nothing ever reach you again?
 Will nothing be love's messenger?
 I shall sing, sing songs
 That speak to you of my distress!
 For sounds of singing put to flight
 All space and all time;
 And a loving heart is reached
 By what a loving heart has hallowed!

II. Wo die Berge so blau

Where the blue mountains
 From the misty grey
 Look out towards me,
 Where the sun's glow fades,
 Where the clouds scud by -
 There would I be!
 There, in the peaceful valley,
 Pain and torment cease.
 Where among the rocks

The primrose meditates in silence,
 And the wind blows so softly -
 There would I be!
 I am driven to the musing wood
 By the power of love,
 Inner pain.
 Ah, nothing could tempt me from here,
 If I were able, my love,
 To be with you eternally!

III. Leichte Segler in den Höhen

Light clouds sailing on high,
And you, narrow little brook,
If you catch sight of my love,
Greet her a thousand times.
If, clouds, you see her walking
Thoughtful in the silent valley,
Let my image loom before her
In the airy vaults of heaven.
If she be standing by the bushes
Autumn has turned fallow and bare,

Pour out to her my fate,
Pour out, you birds, my torment.
Soft west winds, waft my sighs
To her my heart has chosen -
Sighs that fade away
Like the sun's last ray.
Whisper to her my entreaties,
Let her, narrow little brook,
Truly see in your ripples
My never-ending tears!

IV. Diese Wolken in den Höhen

These clouds on high,
This cheerful flight of birds
Will see you, O gracious one.
Take me lightly winging too!
These west winds will playfully
Blow about your cheeks and breast,

Will ruffle your silken tresses. -
Would I might share that joy!
This brooklet hastens eagerly
To you from those hills.
If she's reflected in you,
Flows directly back to me!

V. Es kehret der Maien, es blühet die Au

May returns,
The meadow blooms.
The breezes blow
So gentle, so mild,
The babbling brooks flow again,
The swallow returns
To its rooftop home,
And eagerly builds
Her bridal chamber,
Where love shall dwell.
She busily brings
From every direction
Many soft scraps
For the bridal bed,
Many warm scraps for her young.

Now the pair lives
Faithfully together,
What winter parted,
May has joined,
For May can unite all who love.
May returns,
The meadow blooms.
The breezes blow
So gentle, so mild;
I alone cannot move on.
When spring unites
All lovers,
Our love alone
Knows no spring,
And tears are its only gain.

VI. Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder

Accept, then, these songs	From a full heart
I sang for you, beloved;	With no display of art,
Sing them again at evening	Aware only of longing:
To the lute's sweet sound!	Then, at these songs,
As the red light of evening draws	The distance that parted us shall
Towards the calm blue lake,	recede,
And its last rays fade	And a loving heart be reached
Behind those mountain heights;	By what a loving heart has hallowed!
And you sing what I sang	

Text Translation © Richard Stokes, author of *The Book of Lieder*, published by Faber, provided courtesy of Oxford Lieder (www.oxfordlieder.co.uk)

À Hélène, Op. 42, No.5

Poet: Pierre de Ronsard (1524–1585)

À Olive, Op. 48, No. 1

Poet: Joachim du Bellay (1522–1560)

Composer **Louis Théodore Gouvy** was born into a complex European geopolitical situation in the early 19th century. National borders in the Lorraine region shifted due to the Napoleonic Wars in the 19th century (Nam 2019). This resulted in Gouvy being a German citizen by birth although his family of steel mill owners/managers had mixed citizenship—for example, his three brothers were technically French despite also being born in the Lorraine region. Gouvy was quickly identified as having a love of the arts and humanities, particularly music and language. Despite being “encouraged” (i.e., *forced*) by his family to pursue a career in law, he failed the bar and was finally permitted by his mother to study music at the legendary Paris Conservatoire. Alas, Gouvy was then rejected by the Conservatoire because of his German citizenship. He nevertheless persisted, moving to Paris and studying with many French musical greats, who he paid “off the books.” Focusing on piano and composition, he eventually made professional connections with many leading composers of his day including Mendelssohn, Brahms, Liszt, and Rossini (Nam 2019). Given his personal history and citizenship question (despite heartily viewing himself as French, particularly in his correspondence), Gouvy was wonderfully situated to write music that drew upon the best of the French and German musical elements in his compositions, eventually leaving Paris for more fertile grounds in Germany, Austria and other countries.

Poets Ronsard and du Bellay's writings are amazingly florid and full of stunning visuals. **À Hélène** and **À Olive** both reflect back on love from happier times, but ultimately love that seems to have been spurned or that never truly developed. Though both women are described in detail as physically beautiful, the poets find that their subjects *do* have their cruelties, for example, by no longer being in the poet's life or because they have a "heart of marble."

To Hélène

The year was rejuvenating in its green youthfulness,
When I was enamoured of you, my cruel Hélène;
Sixteen years were the flower of your young age,
And your complexion was still showing its childhood.
You still had the countenance of a child,
Speech and gait, your mouth was beautiful,
Your brow and your hands, worthy of an immortal,
Your eye that makes me die, when I think of it.
Love, which that day there such great beauties saw,
On marble in my heart with a stroke inscribed them.
And if for today your beauties so perfect
Are not as in the past, I am no less enraptured by them;
Ah! I have no image of what you now are,
But only the sweet memory of the beauties that I saw.

To Olive

Give back to gold that colour which gilds
Your blond hair, give back a thousand other things:
To the Orient so many pearls enclosed,
And to the sun those beautiful eyes that I adore.
Give back those hands to beautiful ivory again,
That brow to marble, those lips to roses,
Those sweet sighs to little blooming flowers,
And that beautiful complexion to the vermillion dawn.
Give back as well to Love all its traits,
And to Venus her grace and her charms.
Give back still that sweet name to its tree,
And to the rocks give back that heart of marble,
Give back, give back, that heart of marble.

Text Translations by Thomas Vosteen, Eastern Michigan University (reprinted from Nam 2017: 108, 201)

The Lake Isle of Innisfree

From *14 Songs*

Poet: William Butler Yeats (1865–1939)

American composer and painter **Ben Moore** (b. 1960) was born in Syracuse, New York, and studied at Hamilton College. He holds an MFA from The Parsons School of Design in painting and is an educator at New York's Guggenheim Museum. He has written extensively across many musical genres, including art songs (like this concert's feature, *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*), musical theatre, cabaret, opera, and instrumental chamber works. He is particularly noted for writing opera appropriate for younger voices (see youthopera.org and www.mooreart.com.)

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