

## Doctoral Recital No. 2 Program Notes

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### Erlafsee, D 586

Johann Mayrhofer (1787-1836) / Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Composed in 1817, Erlafsee captures the enchanting vista of Lake Erlaf, situated on the northern border of Styria, Austria. Set against a backdrop of forests and mountains, this picturesque setting provides an ideal canvas for Schubert to channel his extraordinary talent for creating intricate musical imagery. The melodies are infused with cascading octaves and sixths, conveying a sense of languid and contemplative repose by the lake. The grandeur of the pine trees inspires yet another majestic and ornamented melody, while the piano accompaniment maintains a serene stillness. The postlude is adorned with an embellished cadence, exemplifying the bel canto style that flourished during the 17th century.



*Lake Erlaf, Steiermark (Styria), Austria*

Mir ist so wohl, so weh  
Am stillen Erlafsee;  
Heilig Schweigen  
In Fichtenzweigen,  
Regungslos  
Der blaue Schoß,  
Nur der Wolken Schatten flieh'n  
Überm glatten Spiegel hin,

Frische Winde  
Kräuseln linde  
Das Gewässer  
Und der Sonne  
Guldne Krone  
Flimmert blässer.

Mir ist so wohl, so weh  
Am stillen Erlafsee.

I feel so well, such pain,  
By quiet Lake Erlaf.  
Sacred silence  
In the branches of the spruce trees.  
Without movement  
The blue womb;  
Only the shadows of the clouds are flying  
Away across the dark mirror.

Fresh winds  
Are gently ruffling  
The waters;  
And the sun's  
Golden crown  
Is shimmering more faintly.

I feel so well, such pain,  
By quiet Lake Erlaf.

Schubert composed "Frühlingsglaube" during the height of the Romantic era. The work reflects the thematic preoccupations of the time – nature, emotion, and the intertwining of the human spirit with the changing seasons.

The text, written by Johann Ludwig Uhland, vividly describes the awakening of nature in spring and explores the connection between external landscapes and the internal emotions of the human soul. The poet marvels at the renewal of life, using the image of a meadow in bloom as a metaphor for the flourishing of hope and faith.

Schubert translates Uhland's verses into music by infusing each line with emotional depth. The opening piano introduction sets a contemplative mood, and as the singer enters, the scene of a lush meadow bursts with life. The vocal line soars and dips, mirroring the highs and lows of the poet's emotional journey. The song is also enriched with dynamic contrasts, melodic intricacies, and harmonic nuances to convey the blossoming of nature and the narrator's profound connection to the season. The piano, often given an equal role to the voice, provides a rich and varied accompaniment, painting a vivid sonic landscape.

"Frühlingsglaube" is not merely a celebration of spring but a meditation on faith – a belief in the cyclical nature of life, where the renewal of the external world mirrors the renewal of the human spirit. The song unfolds like a personal journey, with moments of introspection and adoration. As the final chords gently fade away, the song leaves us with a sense of wonder and optimism. Schubert's ability to capture the essence of spring and the human experience in a compact yet emotionally charged musical form reaffirms his status as one of the greatest composers of lieder in the Romantic repertoire.

Die linden Lüfte sind erwacht,  
Sie säuseln und weben Tag und Nacht,  
Sie schaffen an allen Enden.  
O frischer Duft, o neuer Klang!  
Nun, armes Herze, sei nicht bang!  
Nun muss sich Alles, Alles wenden.

The soothing breezes have woken up,  
They are rustling and weaving day and night,  
They are creating things everywhere.  
Oh fresh fragrance, oh new sound!  
Now poor heart, do not be anxious!  
Now everything, everything has to change.

Die Welt wird schöner mit jedem Tag,  
Man weiss nicht, was noch werden mag,  
Das Blühen will nicht enden.  
Es blüht das fernste, tiefste Tal:  
Nun, armes Herz, vergiss der Qual!  
Nun muss sich Alles, Alles wenden.

The world is going to become more beautiful every day,  
Nobody knows what might still happen,  
The blossoming does not want to end.  
The most distant, deepest valley is coming into blossom.  
Now poor heart, forget your distress!  
Now everything, everything has to change.

### An Sylvia, D 891

### Eduard von Bauernfeld (1802-1890) / Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

"An Sylvia," one of Schubert's later lieder, exemplifies the composer's ability to infuse simplicity with profound beauty. Set to the timeless words of Shakespeare, this song captures the essence of love, joy, and splendor of the world. The text is a tribute to Sylvia, a character in Shakespeare's comedy, praised for her beauty and charm. The poet worships her virtues, comparing her to the wonders of nature. The verses are filled with vivid imagery, creating a pastoral scene where Sylvia's radiance is likened to the beauty of a summer's day.

Schubert's setting of the poetry is characterized by sparkling and buoyant melodies. The piano introduces a lively and rhythmic theme that is soon taken up by the voice, creating a dialogue between the two. Schubert employs a joyful and stately tempo, echoing the celebratory nature of the text. Throughout the piece, Schubert masterfully weaves together the vocal and piano lines, creating a seamless and harmonically rich texture. The melodic lines dance and soar, reflecting the exuberance of the poet's admiration for Sylvia.

Schubert's choice of Shakespeare's text adds an extra layer of depth to the composition. The music not only captures the essence of the Elizabethan era but also pays homage to the universality of Shakespeare's themes. The joyous celebration of love and nature transcends time and place. Schubert's musical interpretation of Shakespeare's words is a testament to the enduring power of both artists.

Was ist Silvia, saget an,  
Dass sie die weite Flur preist?  
Schön und zart seh' ich sie nah'n,  
Auf Himmels Gunst und Spur weist,  
Dass ihr alles untertan.

Ist sie schön und gut dazu?  
Reiz labt wie milde Kindheit;  
Ihrem Aug' eilt Amor zu,  
Dort heilt er seine Blindheit,  
Und verweilt in süßer Ruh'.

Darum Silvia, tön', o Sang,  
Der holden Silvia Ehren;  
Jeden Reiz besiegt sie lang,  
Den Erde kann gewähren:  
Kränze ihr und Saitenklang!

Who is Silvia? what is she,  
That all our swains commend her?  
Holy, fair, and wise is she;  
The heaven such grace did lend her,  
That she might admirèd be.

Is she kind as she is fair?  
For beauty lives with kindness.  
Love doth to her eyes repair,  
To help him of his blindness;  
And, being helped, inhabits there.

Then to Silvia let us sing,  
That Silvia is excelling;  
She excels each mortal thing  
Upon the dull earth dwelling;  
To her let us garlands bring

**Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano in D minor, Op. 108**  
*Sonate pour violon et piano n° 3 en ré mineur, Op. 108*

**Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)**

Brahms' Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano in D Minor, Op. 108 is the last and perhaps the most dramatic of the composer's three sonatas for violin and piano. Completed in 1888 during the summer in Hofstetten, Switzerland, the sonata displays Brahms' rigorous structural skills and a vast emotive range that embraces both powerful, sweeping intensity and gentle tenderness.

The four-movement work starts with the stormy, dramatic *Allegro* that prominently displays the rhythmic irregularities and Brahms' mastery of structural unity and complexity. The violin and piano engage in a spirited dialogue, with the violin taking the lead in presenting the main themes. The movement displays rich harmonic language and rhythmic vitality, creating a sense of urgency and emotional intensity.

The ensuing *Adagio* stands as the heart of the work, its exquisite beauty captured through long, heart-rending, and lyrical lines. The placid second movement reflects Brahms' lyricism and reflective mood at its best. The piano provides a delicate and supportive accompaniment to violin's themes, creating a poignant atmosphere. This movement exemplifies Brahms' gift for crafting soulful melodies and his ability to evoke deep emotional resonance.

The third movement, marked *Un poco presto e con sentimento*, is a scherzo-like interlude that adds a touch of playfulness to the sonata. Brahms employs rhythmic intricacy and syncopation, infusing the music with dance-like qualities. The violin and piano engage in a lively exchange of motifs, creating a sense of spontaneity and charm. In addition, Brahms' playful side shines through with bursts of liveliness contrasted with sudden lyrical interludes.

The last movement, *Presto agitato*, propels the sonata to a fierce, vigorous finish. Filled with fervent energy, the fiery finale provides an arresting and satisfying end to this masterwork. This rhapsodic and virtuosic finale unfolds with relentless energy, showcasing Brahms' mastery of counterpoint and thematic development. The movement builds to a thrilling climax, bringing the sonata to a triumphant and exhilarating close.

Brahms' Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano in D Minor is considered a pivotal composition of the violin sonata repertoire, illuminating the profound emotional depths of Brahms' late period of creativity. Its four movements together create a captivating journey, offering performers and listeners alike a glimpse into the rich tapestry of Brahms' musical genius.

Piano Trio No. 4 in E minor, Op. 90 “Dumky”  
*Trio pour piano et cordes n° 4 en mi mineur op. 90 “Dumky”*

Antonín Dvorak (1841-1904)

Antonín Dvorak stands as one of the most celebrated Czech composers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and his chamber music, in particular, displays his exceptional deep connection to folk traditions. The fourth trio, composed between 1890 and 1891, are not traditional in form; rather, they are a series of contrasting sections ranging from introspective and lyrical to lively and dance-like. The absence of a strict, traditional structure allows Dvorak to express a wide range of emotions.

The first movement opens with a solemn, slow introduction that sets the stage for the ensuing *Allegro*. Dvorak’s melodic prowess is immediately evident in the lyrical lines of all the instruments. The movement alternates between moments of reflection and bursts of rhythmic energy, creating a dramatic yet emotional contrast.

The second movement opens with a contemplative and expressive melody in the cello, set against delicate piano arpeggios. The contrasting *Vivace* section brings forth a joyful, almost rustic atmosphere, highlighting Dvorak’s ability to blend melancholy and exuberance.

The third movement explores contrasting emotions, such as a wistful and lyrical andante to the lively and playful vivace. Dvorak masterfully weaves these distinct elements, creating a rich tapestry of moods.

The fourth movement begins with a graceful *Andante Moderato*, evolving into a playful *Allegretto Scherzando*. Dvorak skillfully integrates dance-like elements, creating a lively and rhythmic atmosphere. The juxtaposition of these contrasting sections adds to the overall dynamism of the trio.

The penultimate movement is a spirited *Allegro*, filled with rhythmic drive and exuberance. Dvorak draws on the folk dance traditions of his native Bohemia, infusing the trio with infectious energy and vitality. The movement culminates in a triumphant conclusion, setting the stage for the final movement.

The sixth and final movement returns to the solemnity of the opening movement, with a majestic *Lento Maestoso*. The mood, however, shifts as the movement progresses, leading to a lively *Vivace*. This concluding Dumka is a synthesis of the various moods explored throughout the trio, bringing the work to a brilliant and exultant finale.