

## ***Winterreise* – "Winter's Journey"**

**Op. 89, D. 911 - Franz Schubert - 1827**

**Poetry by Wilhelm Müller**

Wilhelm Müller's poems, later called "Die Winterreise," were originally published in scattered groups over a two-year period between 1823 and 1824. Müller reorganized the whole cycle in late 1824 and published the poems as a set, which he dedicated to the composer Carl Maria von Weber. Thus, *Winterreise* is a lyric cycle (a cycle of poems by one author), as well as a song cycle

Judging from the autograph score, Schubert began work on *Winterreise* in equally piecemeal fashion. In February 1827, he set the first 12 poems, which had been published as a group. He wrote 'Finis' at the end of No. 12, so evidently he was initially unaware that other poems had been written. By summer, however, he had gotten a complete copy of the cycle, and decided to set the remaining poems. He made a fair copy in October, and several early biographers assert that the last musical task that Schubert completed was to correct the proofs for Part II on his deathbed (he died on November 19, 1828). Schubert called them a cycle of 'horrid' songs, referring not to their quality, but to their affect.

*Winterreise* acts as a sort of companion-piece to Schubert's earlier song cycle, *Die schöne Müllerin*, which has the vague plot of a young man who loves a miller's daughter, who is later rejected by her and commits suicide. In *Winterreise*, a young man disappointed in love wanders the frozen countryside; everything he sees reminds him of his bitter experiences and despair. The dark mood of *Winterreise* may well reflect Schubert's own dismay at his failing health.

There are several texts on reserve in Kennedy Library that may assist you in discovering the highlights and/or special features of your Lied from this cycle.