

SPECULATING ON ETERNITY

A Degree Recital for the Graduate Vocal Arts Program

Andrew Robert Munn, *bass*

Jingwen Tu, *piano*

with Alex Bonus, *organ* and Xing Gao, *harp*

Bard College Conservatory of Music

8 PM Saturday May 14, 2016

László Z. Bitó Conservatory Performance Space

AB AETERNO ORDINATA SUM

Proverbs 8:23-31 via Claudio Monteverdi

TIERKREIS / ZODIAC — Work Nr. 41.6

Karlheinz Stockhausen

Stier / Taurus	April 21 – May 21
Zwillinge / Gemini	May 21 – June 21
Krebs / Cancer	June 22 – July 23
Löwe / Leo	July 23 – August 22

INFERNO CANTO XXXIII: IL CONTE UGOLINO

Dante Alighieri via Gaetano Donizetti

INTERMISSION

GRUPPE AUS DEM TARTARUS

Friedrich Schiller via Franz Schubert

TIERKREIS / ZODIAC

Jungfrau / Virgo	August 23 – September 23
Waage / Libra	September 23 – October 22
Skorpion / Scorpio	October 23 – November 21

PROMETHEUS

Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe via Schubert

TIERKREIS / ZODIAC

Schütze / Sagittarius	November 22 – December 21
Steinbock / Capricorn	December 21 – January 20
Wasserman / Aquarius	January 21 – February 19

AUF DER DONAU

Johann Mayrhofer via Schubert

TIERKREIS / ZODIAC

Fische / Pisces	February 20 – March 20
Widder / Aries	March 21 – April 21
Stier / Taurus	April 21 – May 21

GRENZEN DER MENSCHHEIT

Goethe via Schubert

Time eludes and encapsulates us. In our sensory experience we ask, “where has the time gone?” or “when will this end?” as the time we share flies by or drags on. An objective understanding of time escapes us as well. Though we can glance at our phones and agree that it is 7:53 PM on May 14, 2016, the phenomenon that we measure with our clocks and calendars defies definition. Theorists of time differ—is time a dimension of physical reality in which events occur in measurable sequence, or is that which we call time a cognitive effect of the mind that enables us to organize reality into discrete events, an aspect of a user interface our brains generate for us to navigate physical reality? Whether time is real or cognitively generated, both theories posit an eternity beyond human knowledge. Time as reality offers unthinkable expanses that precede and follow our brief existences. If indeed time is cognitively generated, then what is reality beyond the veneer created by our senses?

This evening’s program deals with our relationship to time, particularly to eternity and eternal realms in the Western imagination. In Claudio Monteverdi’s *Ab aeterno ordinate sum*, divine wisdom speaks to us of her origins before the world came into being and rejoices in the advent of humanity. Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *Tierkreis* (Zodiac) winds through the program as a circular journey through the Zodiac’s archetypal characters. Gaetano Donizetti set Dante Alighieri’s visceral painting of eternal damnation in *Canto XXXIII: Il Conte Ugolino*, in which Dante’s theological imagination and the power struggles between medieval Italian city-states intertwine in a grisly tale. Four lieder of Franz Schubert flow from the underworld of classical antiquity in Friedrich Schiller’s poem *Gruppe aus dem Tartarus*, to the contest for power between humanity and the gods in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Prometheus*, to Johann Mayrhofer’s meditation on the ephemerality of human achievement in *Auf der Donau*, and conclude with Goethe’s *Grenzen der Menschheit*, a meditation on the ways in which humanity is both exiled from and fundamentally bound to the fabric of eternity.

The ways in which we imagine eternity, and the forces that govern it, shape the way in which we navigate our individual and collective lives. In these poems and the compositions they inspired, we find distinct ideas of the humanity’s relationship to eternity, each deeply embedded and continuing to shape the cultural imagination. Meditating on scales of time beyond our existence is not merely an exercise in humility. In time’s expanse we are small, yet we also live in an era that human activity is setting in motion processes that will unfold for millions of years: climate change, nitrogen cycles, radioactive half-lives, to name a few. Time dwarfs us, but we cannot claim insignificance. Perhaps in the past, wrestling with the human relationship to the eternal was strictly an intellectual or spiritual practice. Today, it is a materially necessary practice as we come to understand humanity’s power to shape the course of time far into the future.

Music exists on a canvas of time, and is uniquely suited for its exploration: its subdivision, its suspension, its cyclical nature. Perhaps in moments of writing, composing, and performing we each tear away little scraps of time from the canvas of eternity, scribble our messages on them, and toss them back onto the metacanvas of time, hoping they stick in our collective memories. It is a sacred privilege to be in this time and place with you.

Andrew Robert Munn, May 2016

Ab aeterno ordinate sum

Proverbs 8:23-31

Ab aeterno ordinata sum	From eternity I was ordained:
Et ex antiquis antequam terra fieret	From primordial times, before the earth was made.
Nondum erant abyssi	There were not yet depths.
Et ego iam concepta eram	And I was conceived
Necdum fontes aquarum eruperant	Before fountains abounded with water;
Necdum montes gravi mole constiterant	Before mountains of heavy bulk had stood together.
Ante colles ego parturiebar	Before there were hills, I was born.
Adhuc terra non fecerat	Still, the earth was not made,
Et flumina et cardines orbis terrae	Nor rivers, nor the principle points of the round earth.
Quando praeparabat caelos aderam	When He prepared the heavens, I was there
Quando certa lege et gyro vallabat abyssos	When firm laws and a circle enclosed the abyss,
Quando aethera firmabat sursum	When the skies were raised above,
Et librabat fontes aquarum	And water sprang from the fountains;
Quando circumdabat mari terminum suum	When He enclosed the sea in its borders
Et legem ponebat aquis, ne transirent fines suos	And dictated that water would not transgress its limits;
Quando appendebat fundamenta terrae	When He weighed out the foundations of the Earth.
Cum eo eram cuncta componens	With Him I was composing all things
Et delectabar per singulos dies	And was delighted by each day,
Ludens coram eo omni tempore	Playing openly through all times,
Ludens in orbem terrarium	Playing in the round Earth.
Et deliciae meae esse cum filiis hominum	And my delight was to be with the children of men.

Claudio Monteverdi's (1567-1643) compositions bridge the development of late Renaissance to early Baroque musical styles. He composed *Ab aeterno ordinata sum* for solo bass and basso continuo.* It was published in 1641 in *Selva morale e spirituale*, a collection of sacred works he had written for San Marco in Venice. The text is from the Old Testament Book of Proverbs, which was compiled over the course of the first millennium BCE. In it, Wisdom is personified as a female voice that extolls the way to live in accordance with God. In *Ab aeterno ordinata sum* (From eternity I was ordained), divine wisdom is a seed in the expanse of eternity that precedes existence. From this seed, divine wisdom embeds herself as an ordering force in all things made by God, and finds joy in the advent of humans.

Monteverdi's setting is one of two settings of this text for solo bass voice from the early Baroque. His setting makes use of the extreme lower register of the bass voice, descending to low C to illustrate the depths of the abyss and the solid foundations of the earth. Each image provided by the text is illustrated in the contours of the voice line—it ascends a mountain of rising fifths and octaves and descends to communicate their heavy bulk—water springs forth as the voice leaps in syncopation with the organ and harp's bass line—rivers and water flow in long florid passages—and divine wisdom dances to the piece's conclusion in a vocal fanfare at the arrival of humanity.

*Basso continuo is a Baroque harmonic innovation in which implied harmony is notated through a bass line, realized this evening by organ and harp.

TIERKREIS / ZODIAC

Music and Text Karlheinz Stockhausen

Over his long career, German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928-2007) pioneered the use of space and distance in music, electronics, serialism, and scale in music. His works explore mystical themes through music composed according to rational musical systems of his own design. The interplay between reason and spirituality is encapsulated in his term “Das Geistig Geistliche,” which translates to “The intellectual spiritual.” *Tierkreis* embodies this union of logical methods and spiritual subject matter in a kaleidoscopic journey through the Zodiac. A cyclical notion of time runs throughout his work, from the musical miniatures of *Tierkreis* (a literal English translation is animal-circle) to the megalithic opera cycle *Licht* (Light).

Tierkreis is a distillation of many of Stockhausen’s musical ideas. It was originally composed for music boxes in 1974-75 and later made into editions for each voice type and chordal instruments. It is a set of twelve pieces, one for each of the Zodiac’s twelve signs. Stockhausen constructed the melodies and the relationships between them using serial methods. Each melody is an ornamented tone row that balances around a central pitch. This central pitch traverses the twelve tones of the chromatic scale, rising by half step over each of the twelve melodies. Each piece moves at a tempo prescribed by Stockhausen’s chromatic scale of twelve tempos.* Stockhausen has created a musical windup clock of sorts that operates according to logical systems to evoke spiritual ideas.

The Zodiac is an ever-returning cycle of constellations, first delineated by Babylonian astronomers early in the first millennium BCE. Stockhausen’s texts, sung both in German and English, paint playful and profound images of each constellation’s astrological characteristics, giving a beautiful subjective dimension to his systematically constructed cyclical music.



4. Stier

Taurus Stier – erdhaft, schwer, und weiblich
aus Venus formend,
unbewußt sinnlich,
Besitz festlatend,
genießend,
geduldige Liebe

Taurus Stier – Mitte des Frühlings,
Farben Gestalten bildend,
Malerei, Architektur, Musik
unbeugsam bewahrend, das Schöne

4. Taurus

Taurus bull – earthy, heavy, feminine,
formed by Venus,
unconscious sensual,
property holding,
enjoyment,
and patient love

Taurus bull – middle of spring
Colors, shapes, crafting,
Painting, architecture, and music
Unbendingly keeping the beauty

*The chromatic scale of pitches is fundamental to western music. It divides the octave into twelve equally spaced pitches, called semitones. To complement this structure of pitch with a system for music in time, Stockhausen defined a chromatic scale of tempos that move from sixty to one-hundred-twenty beats per minute in twelve equally spaced steps, like the twelve semi-tones of the chromatic scale.



5. Zwillinge

Gemini – Zwillling!
 luftig, beweglich wie Merkur,
 im Wechselspiel Beschleunigung,
 und Verinfachung,
 liebt Vernünftiges,
 der Rede Fluß,
 alles Schnelle,
 des Geistes Blitz,
 den Witz, den Sprung,
 das Neue als Bote

5. Gemini

Gemini – twins, twins!
 airy, agile as Mercury,
 in the interplay accelerates,
 and simplifies,
 loves common sense,
 the flow of talk,
 all that's fast,
 the stroke of genius,
 joke, the leap,
 the new as messenger



6. Krebs

Cancer, Cancer –
 Wasser
 Mond
 Weib und Frau
 Mittag
 südliche Sonnenglut
 Quellbäche Ströme
 Meer und Wellen
 Sommer blüte
 innerlich, empfindsam
 träumrisch
 zart
 Krebs

6. Cancer

Cancer, Cancer –
 water
 moon
 woman and wife
 midday
 southern glowing Sun
 headwater flowing stream
 sea and ebb and flow
 summer blossom
 inward, tender
 dreamy
 fine
 crab



7. Löwe

Leo Löwe feuriger Sonnengeist,
 Herzkönig Beherrscher der Welt
 Hochherzig Stoltz und standhaft,
 Großmütig schenkend
 liebt das Spiel
 liebt die Kunst
 die Liebe
 das Hohe

7. Leo

Leo lion fiery sun-spirit,
 King of hearts ruling the world;
 Noble and proud and steadfast,
 Generously giving,
 Loves the play
 Loves the Arts
 The love
 The grand

From *Inferno* Canto XXXIII
Music by Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848)
Poem by Dante Alighieri (1265-1321)

Gaetano Donizetti is best known for his prolific output of seventy-five operas. *Il Conte Ugolino* is a stand-alone dramatic piece written for Luigi Lablache, a leading Italian bass of Donizetti's time, to perform at a benefit for the Naples Opera in 1828. Donizetti set Canto XXXIII from Dante Alighieri's *Inferno* from the epic poem *Divina Comedia*. The penultimate canto of *Inferno* finds Dante in the ninth circle of hell, the domain of traitors. In Dante's vision, the deepest recesses of hell are encased in ice, so far removed are they from the warmth of God's love, and the traitors are frozen together in pairs of those who wronged one another in life. Dante encounters one such pair, the Count Ugolino gnawing upon the skull of his betrayer, the Archbishop Ruggieri, and inquires who he is and why he endures this eternal torment. Donizetti set the entirety of Ugolino's monologue and Dante's sympathetic, politically-charged reaction to the his story.

Count Ugolino is a historic figure whose life interweaves with that of Dante Alighieri. The two were on opposite sides of the factional conflict between those loyal to the Papacy and those loyal to the Holy Roman Emperor in the checkerboard of medieval Italian city-states. Ugolino was a political and military leader of the faction that upheld the Holy Roman Emperor's rule. In 1289, he fell from power in internecine conflict in Pisa, and he and his sons were subsequently imprisoned and was starved to death on the orders of Archbishop Ruggieri. That same year Dante fought for Papal loyalists in the Battle of Compalidino as a twenty-four year-old. The young Dante was politically ambitious, and in Ugolino's centrality to Canto XXXIII we see that *Divina Comedia* is as much a political commentary as it is theological work. Dante puts the weight of eternal damnation on rival powers, invoking the power of the eternal to comment on worldly affairs.

La bocca sollevò dal fiero pasto
quel peccator, forbendola a' capelli
del capo ch'egli avea di retro gauasto,

Poi cominciò: "tu vuoi ch'io rinnovelli
disperato dolor che 'l cuor mi preme,
già pur' pensando, pria ch'io ne favelli.

Ma se le mie parole esser den seme,
che frutti infamia al traditor ch'io rodo,
parlare e lagrimar vedrai insieme.

Io non so chi tu sie, nè per che modo
venuto se' quaggiù, ma Fiorentino
mi sembri veramente, quand'io t'odo.

Tu dei saper ch'io fui'l Conte Ugolino,
e questi l'Arcivescovo Ruggieri:
or ti dirò perch' i son tal vicino.

The sinner raised his mouth from the cruel meal,
cleansing his lips upon the hair atop the head
that he had ravaged in his bitter feast.

Then he began: "You want me to recount
the despairing grief that crushes my heart
at its very thought, before even speaking of it.

But, if my words are to be seeds that bear
fruits of infamy to the traitor upon whom I gnaw,
You will see me speak through my tears.

I do not know who you are, nor for what purpose
you have come down here; but when you speak,
to me you truly seem to be a Florentine.

You then know that I was the Count Ugolino,
And this man is the Archbishop Ruggieri;
Now, I will tell you why we are in such proximity.

Che, per l'effetto de' suo' ma' pensieri,
fidandomi di lui, io fossi preso
e poscia morto, dir non è mestieri.

Però quel che non puoi avere inteso,
cioè come la mort mia fu cruda,
udirai, e saprai, se m'ha offeso.

Breve pertugio dentro da la Muda,
la qual per me ha il titolo della fame,
e'n che conviene ancor ch'altri si chiuda,

m'avea mostrato per lo suo forame
più lune già, quand' io feci'l mal sonno,
che del futuro mi squarciò 'l velame.

Questi pareva a me maestro e donno,
cacciando il lupo e i lupicini al monte,
per che i Pisan veder Lucca non ponno.

Con cagne magre, studiose, e conte,
Gualandi, con Sismondi, e con Lanfranchi,
s'avea messi dinanzi dalla fronte.

In picciol corso mi pareano stanchi
lo padre e i figli, e con l'agute sane
mi pareva lor veder fender li fianchi.

Quand'io fui desto innanzi la dimane,
pianger senti' fra'l sonno i miei figliuoli,
ch'erano meco, e dimandar del pane.

Ben se' crudel, se tu già non ti duoli,
pensando ciò ch'al mio cuor s'annunziava:
e se non piangi, di che pianger suoli?

Già eran desti, e l'ora s'appressava
che'l cibo ne solea essere addotto,
e per suo sogno ciascun dubitava;

Ed io senti' chiavar l'uscio di sotto
all' orribile torre: ond' io guardai
nel viso a' miei figliuoi senza far motto.

That by the cause of his ill intentions,
I, having trusted him, was captured
and later died, takes no expertise to say;

But that which you could not have understood
is just how harsh my death was:
You will hear and know whether the offense is his.

A narrow slit in the walls of the Muda,*
which to me bears the name "Famine"
and in which still others may be imprisoned,

had already shown me many moons
through its opening, when I had the nightmare
that ripped the veil of the future from me.

This man appeared as master and lord,
hunting the wolf and its whelps on the mountain
that blocks the Pisan's view of Lucca.

Hounds, lean, observant and cunning –
named Gualandi, Sismondi, and Lanfranchi –**
he had sent ahead to lead the chase.

In swift course the father and sons seemed
to tire and slow, and it looked to me
as if sharp fangs had ripped into their flanks.

When I awoke before the dawn
I heard my sons, who were with me,
crying in their sleep, pleading for bread.

You are cruel-hearted if you do not lament
at the thought of what my heart has recounted;
And if you do not cry, then at what will you cry?

My sons were already awake when the hour arrived
at which our food used to be brought,
And this dream caused each to lose hope;

And below us I heard the door
to the horrible tower close; I looked
into the faces of my sons without a word.

*The Muda is the name of the tower in Pisa in which the Count Ugolino was imprisoned with his sons and grandsons by his political rivals and Archbishop Ruggieri.

**Gualandi, Sismondi, and Lanfranchi are the names of powerful families who opposed Ugolino's rule of Pisa, and who were on the opposite side of the factional conflict from Dante Alighieri.

Io non piangeva, si dentro impietrai:
piangevan elli; ed Anselmuccio mio
disse: 'tu guardi sì, padre, che hai?'

Però non lagrimai, nè rispos' io
tutto quel giorno, nè la notte appresso,
infin che l'altro sol nel mondo uscìo.

Come un poco di raggio si fu messo
nel doloroso carcere, ed io scorsi
per quattro visi il mio aspetto stesso,

ambo le mani per dolor mi morsi;
e quei pensando ch' io 'l fessi
per voglia di manicar, di subito levorsi,

e disser: 'Padre, assai ci fia men doglia
se tu mangi di noi; tu ne vestisti
queste misere carni, e tu le spoglia.'

Quetàmi allor, per non farli più tristi:
quel dì e l'altro stemmo tutti muti.
Ahi dura terra, perchè non t'apristi?

Poscia chè fummo al quarto dì venuti,
Gaddo mi si gittò disteso a' piedi,
dicendo, 'padre mio, chè non m'aiuti?'

Quivi morì; e come tu mi vedi,
vid' io cascar li tre ad uno ad uno
tra'l quinto dì e'l sesto; ond'io mi diedi

già cieco, a brancolar sovra ciascuno,
e due dì li chiamai poi chè fur morti:
poscia, più che 'l dolor potè 'l digiuno.'

Quand'ebbe detto ciò, con gli occhi torti
riprese 'l teschio misero co' denti,
che furo all'osso, come d'un can, forti.

Ahi Pisa, vituperio delle genti
del bel paese là, dove 'l *si* suona;
poi chè i vicini a te punir son lenti,

muovansi la Capraia e la Gorgona,
e faccian siepe ad Arno in su la foce,
sì ch'egli annieghi in te ogni persona.

I did not cry, though inwardly I was petrified:
They cried; and my little Ansel
Said: "You watch us so, father! What is it?"

So as not to show my dread, I did not weep
nor answer all that day and the following night,
until the sun came back into the world.

As if it were a messenger, a slender ray of sun
entered the painful jail, and I caught sight
of four faces of my own likeness,

I bit both of my hands from the anguish;
and they, thinking that I did so from need
of sustenance, rose up suddenly

and said: 'Father, truly it would pain us less
if you ate us: you vested us with this
miserable flesh, so you strip it from us.'

I calmed myself, so as not to deepen their sadness:
that day and the next I was entirely mute.
Aye! Hard earth, why did you not open?

After we had come to the fourth day,
Gaddo threw himself outstretched at my feet,
saying: 'My father, why don't you help me?'

There he died; and as you see me,
I saw the other three fall one by one
over the fifth and sixth days; overcome, I gave in,

already blind, groping over each, and
for two days I called to them, after they had died:
finally starvation proved more powerful than grief."

When he had said this, with contorted eyes,
he retook the miserable skull in his teeth
that were forceful upon the bone, like a dog's.

Aye! Pisa, shame upon the people
of that beautiful land where "si" resounds,
since your neighbors are slow to punish you,

may the isles of Capraia and Gorgona move
to seal up the mouth of the Arno,
so that every last person drowns in its flood.

Gruppe aus dem Tartarus

Music by Franz Schubert (1797-1828)
Poem by Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805)

Franz Schubert's setting of Friedrich Schiller's *Gruppe aus dem Tartarus* (Group from Tartarus) is an iconic work from the song canon. Schiller's poem is based on Virgil's (70-19 BCE) description of Tartarus in the sixth book of *Aeneid*. Tartarus is the subterranean fortress in which the Olympian Gods imprisoned the Titans after they were overthrown, and place of eternal torment for wicked mortals. The poem describes a vivid soundscape of moans echoing through the underworld's caverns, and a crowd of the damned following the course of the subterranean Kocytus river to their eternal torment beneath the broken scythe of the imprisoned Titan Kronus. Schiller's representation of classical antiquity's underworld bears a close resemblance to Dante's description of Christianity's hell in *Inferno*. Dante's *Inferno* is populated by demons and characters who originated the world of classical antiquity. Dante's guide to the underworld is none other than the poet Virgil, author of the *Aeneid*, upon which Schiller based his 18th century poem.

Schubert frequently set poems inspired by classical antiquity. Though he grew up in a Christian household and his musical studies were in seminary, the friends with whom he surrounded himself were largely secular intellectuals and artists. Many shared an interest in classical antiquity, following in the tradition of Schiller and Goethe's fusing of classical ideals with German romanticism. The classical imagery of *Gruppe aus dem Tartarus* inspired Schubert to stretch the norms of song composition as he crafted this highly chromatic song that builds in tension as it follows the poem from the soundscape of moans, into the crowd of damned souls, and finally releases into the sweep of eternity, illustrated by the awe-evoking octave leaps Schubert writes for the voice in the song's conclusion.

Horch— wie Murmeln des empörten Meeres,
Wie durch hohler Felsen Becken weint ein Bach,
Stöhnt dort dumpftief ein schweres, leeres,
Qualerpreßtes Ach!

Schmerz verzerrt
Ihr Gesicht! Verzweiflung sperret
Ihren Rachen fluchend auf.
Hohl sind ihre Augen – ihre Blicke
Spähen bang nach des Kocytus Brücke,
Folgen tränend seinem Trauerlauf.

Fragen sich einander ängstlich leise,
Ob noch nicht Vollendung sei? —
Ewigkeit schwingt über ihnen Kreise,
Bricht die Sense des Saturns entzwei.

Hark— as the muttering of the raging sea,
As a brook weeps through hollow stone pools,
There moans a dull and low, heavy, empty,
Tortured cry!

Pain contorts
Their faces, desperation opens wide
Their cursing throats.
Hollow are their eyes – their gazes
Fearfully peer to the Bridge of Cocytus,
Tearfully, they follow their sorrowful path.

Anxious and faint, they ask one another,
If this is not yet the end? —
Eternity swings above them in circles,
The Scythe of Kronos breaks in two.

TIERKREIS / ZODIAC



8. Jungfrau

Virgo— Jungfrau, Klarheit, aus Merkur,
Spätsommer, Reife
Klugheit,
Vorsicht, Kühle
gewissenhaft,
hilfsbereit

Virgo— Jungfrau, erdhafte ordend,
Schönheit des Denkens,
der Vernunft und Symmetrie
Du goldener Mittelweg

8. Virgo

Virgo— virgin, Mercury, clear
late summer, mellow;
sensible,
cautious and aloof
conscientious,
serving,
modest

Virgo— earthy, ordering,
beauty of thinking,
reason and symmetry
you golden middle way



9. Waage

Libra— Waage
Luft Winde
Venus
Freund, Geliebte;
West, Abend,
Herbstfrucht,
lieblich, harmonisch, ausgleichend;
tanzend, wiegend verliebt

9. Libra

Libra— balance
air winds
Venus,
friend, beloved, lover;
west, evening,
autumn ripened fruit,
lovely, harmonious, peaceful;
dancing, swaying in love



10. Skorpion

Scorpio—
Wasser im Sturm
Mars Pluto
Kämpfer, stark
zerstörernde Gewalt
unermeßlich tief,
brennt, beißt, sticht, jagt,
sucht den Kern aller Dinge,
Selbstüberwindung als Sieger

10. Scorpio

Scorpio—
water in storm
Mars Pluto
fighter, strong
destroying, frightening force,
infinitely deep,
burns, bites, stings, hunts
seeks to find the core of life,
conquest of self as victor

Prometheus

Music by Franz Schubert
Poem by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote the poem *Prometheus* as a dramatic monologue for a planned theatrical work about the renegade Titan. Schubert's setting of Prometheus' diatribe against Zeus and his Olympian brethren is a scena that alternates arioso and recitative sections, following the emotional contours of Prometheus' blasphemous rant. Though he is subservient to Zeus, King of the gods, in the cosmic order, his power is comparable to that of the gods. He is of an older generation of divinities, the Titans, and perhaps when he compares Zeus's arbitrary use of authority to a boy beheading thistles, he remembers Zeus as an arrogant youth. Prometheus escaped the fate of his fellow Titans whom Zeus had imprisoned in Tartarus, yet ran afoul of Zeus and the Olympian gods for creating humans and empowering them with the use of fire. Here we find Prometheus at the moment of his decision to forge the first humans, an action that will bring us into a world populated by gods and powers beyond our own that we choose honor or reject according to our own free will.

Bedecke deinen Himmel, Zeus,
Mit Wolkendunst
Und übe, dem Knaben gleich,
Der Disteln köpft,,
An Eichen dich und Bergeshöhn:
Mußt mir meine Erde
Doch lassen stehn
Und meine Hütte, die du nicht gebaut,
Und meinen Herd,
Um dessen Glut
Du mich beneidest.

Shroud your heavens, Zeus
With hazy clouds
And practice, like a boy
Beheading thistles,
On oak trees and mountain peaks;
But you must leave my earth
Intact for me to stand upon,
And my hut, that you did not build,
And my hearth,
For whose glow
You envy me.

Ich kenne nichts Ärmeres
Unter der Sonn' als Euch, Götter!
Ihr nährt kümmerlich
Von Opfersteuern
Vom Gebetshauch
Eure Mäjestät
Und darbtet, wären
Nicht Kinder und Bettler
Hoffnungsvolle Toren.

I know nothing more pitiful
Under the sun than you, Gods!
Meagerly, you feed
Your power
Upon sacrificial offerings
And exhaled prayers,
And would waste away
Were it not for children and beggars,
Those hopeful fools.

Da ich ein Kind war,
Nicht wußte, wo aus noch ein,
Kehrt ich mein verirrtes Auge
Zur Sonne, als wenn drüber wär
Ein Ohr, zu hören meine Klage,
Ein Herz wie meins,
Sich des Bedrängten zu erbarmen.

When I was a child,
Not knowing one thing from another,
I turned my straying eye
To the sun, as if beyond there was
An ear to hear my complaints,
And a heart, like mine,
That would offer mercy to the afflicted.

Wer half mir
Wider der Titanen Übermut?
Wer rettete vom Tode mich,
Von Sklaverei?
Hast du nicht alles selbst vollendet,
Heilig glühend Herz?
Und glühtest jung und gut,
Betrogen, Rettungsdank
Dem Schlaffenden da droben?

Ich dich ehren? Wofür?
Hast du die Schmerzen gelindert
Je des Beladenen?
Hast du die Tränen gestillet
Je des Geängsteten?
Hat nicht mich zum Manne geschmiedet
Die allmächtige Zeit
Und das ewige Schicksal,
Meine Herrn, und deine?

Wähtest du etwa,
Ich sollte das Leben hassen,
In Wüsten fliehen,
Weil nicht alle
Blümenträume reiften?

Hier sitz ich, forme Menschen
Nach meinem Bilde,
Ein Geschlecht, das mir gleich sei,
Zu leiden, zu weinen,
Zu genießen und zu freuen sich,
Und dein nicht zu achten,
Wie ich!

Who helped me
Against the Titans' revolt?
Who saved me from death,
From slavery?
Have you not done it all yourself,
My holy, glowing heart?
And you glow, so youthful and robust,
Though you were deceived and beholden
To the slumbering one above?

I honor you? For what?
Have you ever softened the pain
Of the burdened?
Have you ever stilled the tears
Of the anguished?
Was I not forged in the likeness of Man
By all-mighty Time
And eternal Fate,
My lord and yours?

Do you somehow imagine
That I should hate life
And flee to the wastes,
Because not all
Flowering dreams bloomed?

Here I sit, forming humanity
In my own image,
A species that are identical to me,
To suffer, to weep,
To delight and enjoy themselves,
And not to attend on you,
As I!

TIERKREIS / ZODIAC



11. Schütze

Schütze Pfeil:
Sagittarius,
feurig als Jupiter's Ritter zu Pferd;
Zentaurus, halb Tier halb Mensch—
liebt die Natur,
optimistisch zur Welt
frei und offen,
wahr geistig,
Blick ins Jenseits
über den Tod hinaus,
lebensfroh vertrauend,
Hoffnung

11. Sagittarius

Archer, arrow:
Sagittarius,
fiery, as Jupiter's mounted knight;
Centaurus, half horse, half man—
loves nature,
optimistic outlook
free and open,
true,
spiritual—sees the beyond
reaching past the gate of death,
cheerfully trusting,
hope



12. Steinbock

Capricornus—Steinbock, mit Saturn,
Erde Mensch aus Erde, Mann;
Nacht, ich, Winternacht zeig
das Himmels firmament Sternenzelt.
Same, verschlossen, langsam, aufhaltsam,
stetig kelternd zur Höh;
stur und starr,
strebend zum liht,
Sohn der Ursonne Sirius.

12. Capricorn

Capricornus— Seagoat, with Saturn,
Earth, son of Earth, the man;
night, I, winternight show
the Heaven's firmament starry tent.
Seed, withdrawn, slow tenacious,
steadily climbing heights;
stubborn stiff,
striving for light,
son of mothersun Sirius.



1. Wasserman

Wassermann, Aquarius,
luftig geistig,
hell und scharf und klar,
in di Ferne dringen,
forschend;
blitzesschnell wechselnd;
hoffend, vereint in Brüderlichkeit.

1. Aquarius

Bearer of water, Aquarius,
airy spirit,
bright sharp and clear,
reaching for the distant,
delving;
lightning fast changing;
hopeful, unites in peaceful brotherhood.

Aquarius, Wintergeist
bewegt durch Uranus Saturn
kühn erfindend,
Janus gleich, Vergangenheit,
Zukunft durchschauend,
okkult;
sucht Freundschaft, Freiheit.

Aquarius, feel of winter,
influenced by Uranus Saturn
bold discovering,
sees through past,
through the future,
like Janus, occult;
seeks friendship, freedom.

Auf der Donau

Music by Franz Schubert

Poem by Johann Mayrhofer (1787-1836)

In Johann Mayrhofer's poem *Auf der Donau* (On the Danube) we return to the human realm. Mayrhofer and Schubert were friends and collaborators in Vienna. Schubert set forty-seven of his poems to music. In *Auf der Donau*, Mayrhofer meditates on the ephemerality of human achievement as he floats down the Danube in a boat beneath the ruins of castles, long abandoned and overgrown. Schubert conjures the gentle motion of the Danube in the motion of the piano writing. Schubert's waves grow darker as the poem moves from describing the pastoral scene to the monuments of human impermanence that dominate the landscape. The music breaks into a clattering march of long dead knights storming forth from their forgotten castles and resettles into waves and with a deep chromatically descending undertow in the bass that draws the poem to its inexorable conclusion.

Auf der Wellen Spiegel schwimmt der Kahn,
Alte Burgen ragen himmelan,
Tannenwälder rauschen geistergleich,
Und das Herz im Busen wird uns weich.

The boat glides upon the wave's mirror,
Old castles rise heavenward,
Pine forests rustle, ghostly,
And the heart in the breast grows weak.

Denn der Menschen Werke sinken all',
Wo ist Turm, wo Pforte, wo der Wall,
Wo sie selbst, die Starken, erzgeschirmt,
Die in Krieg und Jagden hingestürmt?

For humanity's works all decline,
Where are the tower, the fort, the wall,
Where are they, the strong, metal-clad,
Who stormed forth to war and hunt?

Trauriges Gestüppe wuchert fort,
Während frommer Sage Kraft verdorrt:
Und im kleinen Kahne wird uns bang,
Wellen drohn wie Zeiten Untergang.

Miserable undergrowth overtakes all,
While the power of pious sages recedes:
And in the small boat we become fearful,
Waves roll like times downfallen.

TIERKREIS / ZODIAC



2. Fische

Pisces— zwei Fische in Bewegung,
Planeten Jupiter Neptun,
wasserweich anschmiegend,
formlos,
vorwärts rückwärts unentschieden
zerfließend,
hingebungsvoll, sanft und gütig,
plötzlich Eigensinn,
Intuition Träume,
Weisheit Kindlichkeit.

2. Pisces

Pisces— two fishes in movement,
planets Jupiter Neptune,
water softly clinging,
formless,
forward backward undecided,
dissolving,
devoted, gentle and kind,
sudden willfulness,
intuition, dreams,
wisdom, innocence.



3. Widder

Aries— Feuer, feurig,
Mars
Jüngling Jugend
Sonnenaufgang, Morgenrot
Osten
Frühling Knospensprung:
schnell und impulsive gespannt
und liebt die Gefarr
Eigensinn scharf
übermut!
Phoenix

3. Aries

Aries— fire, fiery,
Mars
adolescent
sunrise, morning red
eastern,
springtime bursting bud:
fast, impulsive and alert
and loves the risk
abstinence, sharp
wantonness!
Phoenix



Grenzen der Menschheit

Goethe via Schubert

Grenzen der Menschheit (Limitations of Humanity) is Goethe's mediation on the human relationship to the divine and eternal—that which divides us from it and that which connects us to it. Schubert's setting is equal to Goethe's poem in philosophical depth. The massive chordal piano writing traverses a harmonic universe and settling into the elevating key of E Major for the first and final stanza's hymn-like settings. The song, originally composed for bass, employs the full extent of the bass vocal range to articulate the limits of humanity within the cosmic order Goethe envisions. It is an order that offers balance between Prometheus' over-striving, cautioning us against overstepping our role in the world, and Mayrhofer's despair in *Auf der Donau*. It promises no salvation nor damnation but articulates an inextricable bond to the unending chain of eternal existence. Its wisdom does not come to us through commandments, but is instead a poetic transcription of the essentially human striving to understand our relationship to the world and one another.

Wenn der uralte
Heilige Vater
Mit gelassener Hand
Aus rollenden Wolken
Segnende Blitze
Über die Erde sät,
Küß' ich den letzten
Saum seines Kleides,
Kindliche Schauer
Tief in der Brust.

Denn mit Göttern
Soll sich nicht messen
Irgendein Mensch
Hebt er sich aufwärts
Und berührt
Mit dem Scheitel die Sterne,
Nirgends haften dann
Die unsichern Sohlen,
Und mit ihm spielen
Wolken und Winde.

Steht er mit festen,
Markigen Knochen
Auf der wohlgegründeten,
Dauernden Erde;
Reicht er nicht auf,
Nur mit der Eiche
Oder der Rebe
Sich zu vergleichen.

Was unterscheidet
Götter von Menschen?
Daß viele Wellen
Vor jenen wandeln,
Ein ewiger Strom:
Uns hebt die Welle,
Verschlingt die Welle,
Und wir versinken.

Ein kleiner Ring
Begrenzt unser Leben,
Und viele Geschlechter
Reihen sich dauernd
An ihres Daseins
Unendliche Kette.

When the ages old
Holy father,
With a gentle hand
From rolling clouds
Sows blessed lightning
Over the Earth,
I kiss the outermost
Hem of his garment,
A child-like shiver
Deep in my breast.

One ought not
Compare any man
To the gods.
If he rises up
To make contact
With the apex of the stars,
Then there is nowhere to secure
His uncertain soles,
And clouds and winds
Toy with him.

Stand with solid
Strong knees
Upon the well-grounded
Enduring Earth,
And do not reach up,
Only compare oneself
With the oak
Or the vine.

What distinguishes
Gods from humanity?
That for them
Many waves proceed
In an eternal river:
For us, the waves rise up
The waves engulf us,
And we sink.

A small ring
Limits our lives
And many generations
Link themselves continuously
In existence's
Never-ending chain.