

Great words from great writers about lost love

*I came here a stranger,
As a stranger I depart.
May favored me
With many a bunch of flowers.*
Wilhelm Müller

*Ever has it been that love knows not
its own depth until the hour of
separation.*
Kahlil Gibran

*Though lovers be lost, love shall not;
And death shall have no dominion.*
Dylan Thomas

*'Tis better to have loved and lost
than never to have loved at all.*
Alfred Lord Tennyson

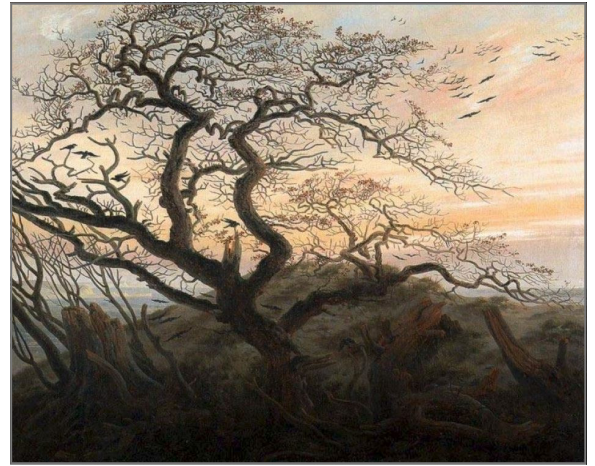
*Let no one who loves be called
altogether unhappy. Even love
unreturned has its rainbow.*
J.M. Barrie

*Why then, O brawling love!
O loving hate!
O any thing,
of nothing first create!
O heavy lightness, serious vanity,
Misshapen chaos
of well-seeming forms,
Feather of lead, bright smoke,
cold fire, sick health,
Still-waking sleep,
that is not what it is!
This love feel I,
that feel no love in this.*
William Shakespeare

*A Cloud withdrew from the Sky
Superior Glory be
But that Cloud and its Auxiliaries
Are forever lost to me*

*Had I but further scanned
Had I secured the Glow
In an Hermetic Memory
It had availed me now.*

*Never to pass the Angel
With a glance and a Bow
Till I am firm in Heaven
Is my intention now.*
Emily Dickinson



"Tree of Crows" (ca. 1822) by Caspar David Friedrich
Property of the Louvre, Paris, France

Love, Lost and Unrequited

Ashes & Snow is a contemporary retelling of the text from Schubert's *Winterreise* (*Winter Journey*), a setting of 24 poems by Wilhelm Müller. The German song cycle is not simply a collection of anguished songs about the single theme of unrequited love, but one single dramatic monologue. Each song builds upon the level of the lover's sorrow as he departs his beloved's house secretly at night, leaves the town, follows the river, and crosses the bleak, snow-covered hills to the village. As the lonely traveler journeys through the barren winter landscape, the contents of the songs mirror his melancholy emotions.

Set in the present day, *Ashes & Snow* unfolds in a run-down motel room in the desert of the American West. The Protagonist must confront his demons and all that he has lost in his life. Why are stories about lost or unrequited love prevalent in literature and the arts? Because the quest for love makes a great story. Happy endings give us an emotional boost, but fiction more often mimics the real world, when mutual love doesn't always happen. Reflecting on love lost and love unreciprocated may just force us to face the mirror and discover insights about ourselves.

Ashes & Snow Song Summaries

One Protagonist, a tenor, sings all 24 songs, accompanied by electric trumpet, piano (keyboards), guitar, and electronics.

1. **Gute Nacht (Good Night)** “A stranger I arrived; a stranger I depart.” In May he won the love of a girl and hoped to marry her. But now the world is dreary, and he must leave, in winter, in the dead of night, finding his own way in the trackless snow. “Love loves to wander—from one person to the next.” He writes “Good Night” on her gate as he passes to show he thought of her.

2. **Die Wetterfahne (The Weathervane)** The weathervane on her house creaks in the shifting winds, mocking him and showing the inconstant hearts inside. “What do they care about my suffering? Their child is a wealthy bride!”

3. **Gefrorne Tränen (Frozen Tears)** He notices he has been crying and chides his tears for being only lukewarm so that they freeze. They come out of his heart hot enough to melt all the winter’s ice!

4. **Erstarrung (Frozen)** He looks in vain for her footprints beneath the snow where she once walked with him through the green meadow; he wants to melt away the snow and ice with his tears. He has nothing to remember her by except his pain. She is frozen in his heart; if it thaws, her image will flow away.

5. **Der Lindenbaum (The Linden Tree)** The tree, a reminder of happier days, seems to call him, promising rest. But he turns away, into the cold wind. And now, miles away, he still hears it calling him: “Here you would find peace.”

6. **Wasserflut (Flood)** The cold snow thirstily sucks up his tears; when the warm winds blow, the snow and ice will melt, and the brook will carry them through the town to where his sweetheart lives.

7. **Auf dem Flusse (On the Stream)** The gaily rushing stream lies silent under a hard crust. In the ice he carves a memorial to their love. The river is an image of his heart swelling up powerfully beneath the frozen surface.

8. **Rückblick (Backwards Glance)** He recounts his headlong flight from the town and recalls his springtime arrival in the “city of inconstancy,” and two girlish eyes that captivated him. When he thinks of that time, he would like to go back and stand silently in front of her house.

9. **Irrlicht (Will o’ the Wisp)** The false light of the will-o’-the-wisp has led him astray, but he’s used to that. Every path leads to the same goal. Our joys and sorrows are but a trick of the light. Every stream reaches the sea, every sorrow its grave.

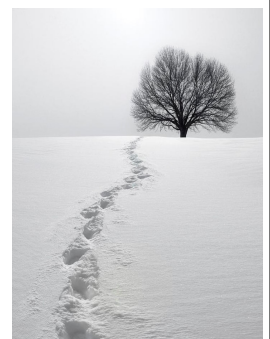
10. **Rast (Rest)** Only now that he has stopped to rest does he realize how tired and sore he is. And in the quiet he feels for the first time the “worm” that stings him inwardly.



11. **Frühlingstraum (Dreams of Spring)** He dreams of springtime and love, but wakes to cold and darkness and the shrieking of ravens. He sees frost leaves painted on the window. When will they turn green? When will he again embrace his beloved?



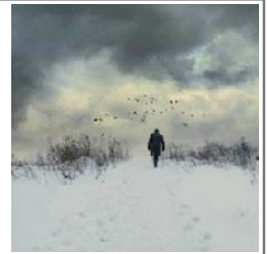
http://www.franzpeterschubert.com/die_winterreise.html



12. **Einsamkeit (Loneliness)** He wanders, like a sad and lonely cloud, through the bright and happy life around him. "Even when the storms were raging. I was not so miserable."

13. **Die Post (The Post)** He hears a post horn. "Why does my heart leap up so? There's no letter for you! But maybe there's some news of her?"

14. **Der greise Kopf (The Gray Head)** Frost has turned his hair gray and he rejoices at being an old man. But when it thaws, he is horrified to be a youth again: "How far it is still to the grave."



15. **Die Krähe (The Crow)** A crow has been following him. It has never left him, expecting to take his body as its prey. "It won't be much longer now. Crow, show me constancy unto death!"

16. **Letzte Hoffnung (Last Hope)** He gambles on a leaf quivering in the wind. If it falls from the tree, all his hopes are dashed. He falls to the ground himself and weeps over the "grave" of his hopes.

17. **Im Dorfe (In the Village)** Dogs bark, and all the people are asleep, dreaming of success and failure, finding on their pillows what eluded them in life. "I am done with all dreaming. Why should I linger among the sleepers?"

18. **Der stürmische Morgen (The Stormy Morning)** The storm is an image of his heart, wild and cold like the winter.

19. **Täuschung (Deception)** A dancing light wants to lead him astray, and he is glad to go along. "Behind ice and night and horror" it shows him a warm, bright house and a loving wife within. Illusion is all he has to go on.



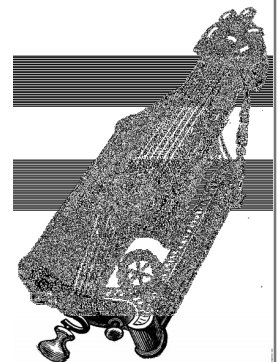
20. **Der Wegweiser (The Signpost)** "Why do I take secret ways and avoid the other travelers? I've committed no crime. What foolish desire drives me to seek the wastelands?" He journeys endlessly, seeking peace and finding none. A signpost points the way: "I must travel a road where no one has ever yet returned."

21. **Das Wirtshaus (The Inn)** He comes to a graveyard and wants to enter. But all the rooms in this "inn" are taken; he resolves to go on his way with his faithful walking-stick.

22. **Mut! (Have Courage!)** He shakes the snow from his face and sings cheerfully to silence his heart's stirrings, striding into the world, against wind and weather: "If there's no God on earth, then we ourselves are gods!"

23. **Die Nebensonnen (The Mock Suns)** He sees three suns staring at him in the sky. "You are not my suns! Once I too had three, but the best two have now set. If only the third would follow, I'll be happier in the darkness."

24. **Der Leiermann (The Hurdy-Gurdy Man)** Back of the village stands a hurdy-gurdy man, cranking his instrument with frozen fingers. His begging bowl is always empty; no one listens, and the dogs growl at him. But his playing never stops. "Strange old man. Shall I come with you? Will you play your hurdy-gurdy to accompany my songs?"



Meet the inspiration and the creator



AUSTRIAN COMPOSER

Franz Schubert (1797–1828), who worked as a schoolmaster like his father, studied with Antonio Salieri at the *Stadtonvikt*.

Schubert's piano pieces, string quartets, symphonies, and songs are notable for their memorable melodies and rich harmony. He is considered the last of the classical composers and one of the first romantic ones, and is credited with creating the German Lied form.

Late in life, he battled health

problems and strained finances, but he used Müller's poems to create one of the most revered song cycles in history. Schubert said about *Die Winterreise*: "I like them all more than any of the other songs, and the day will come when you will like them too." franzpeterschubert.com



GERMAN POET

Wilhelm Müller (1794–1827), who volunteered in the Prussian uprising against Napoleon, wrote lyrics to support the Greek struggle for independence from the Turks.

Müller is known for his folk lyrics, poems, translations, and for verse cycles that were set to music by Schubert—*Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*. britannica.com



AMERICAN COMPOSER

Douglas J. Cuomo (1958–), whose musical palette includes jazz, world music, classical, and popular styles, has composed highly acclaimed and original music for concert, television, theater, and film. His works range from television themes (*Sex and the City*) to operas (*Doubt* and

Arjuna's Dilemma.) As a teen, he toured the U.S. with a Las Vegas show band. After earning a jazz performance degree at the University of Miami, he played jazz guitar on the road for two years, and then began to focus on composition in New York City. The world premiere of *Ashes & Snow* at Pittsburgh Opera will display his eclectic style and setting of the same Wilhelm Müller text that Schubert used for his songs. douglasjcuomo.com

Franz Schubert in 1825, by Wilhelm August Rieder, 1875 oil painting after a watercolor

Pittsburgh Opera Education thanks our generous supporters:

James and Electra Agras
Allegheny Regional Asset District
Anonymous
The Olga Barry Fund
The Frick Fund of the Buhl Foundation
The Jack Buncher Foundation
Davis Vision
Eat'n Park Hospitality Group, Inc.
EQT Foundation
Dr. Donald R. and Nora Barry Fischer
Dr. Freddie and Hilda Fu
The Grable Foundation
Hefren-Tillotson, Inc.
Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield
Roy A. Hunt Foundation
The Huntington National Bank
Intermediate Unit #1, Pennsylvania
Department of Education
The Christian A. Johnson
Endeavor Foundation
Kerr Engineered Sales
Levin Furniture
McCune Foundation
McKinney Charitable Foundation
through The PNC Charitable Trust
Grant Review Committee
OPERA America: The Opera Fund
Mr. and Mrs. Willie M. Owens
Pennsylvania Council on the Arts
The Pittsburgh Foundation
PNC
UPMC & UPMC Health Plan
Vincent Lighting Systems
The Hilda M. Willis Foundation

For more information on Pittsburgh Opera's education programs, please contact:

Marilyn Michalka Egan, Ph.D.
Director of Education
megan@pittsburghopera.org
412-281-0912 ext 242

Pittsburgh Opera
2425 Liberty Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
www.pittsburghopera.org