Songs of Love & the Sea

Settings of
Die Nordsee, Erster Zyklus
by Heinrich Heine

Peter W. Shea, *tenor*

Monica Jakuc,
Gretchen Saathoff
and Susan Dedell, *piano*
Nordsee String Quartet

Tuesday, December 13, 2005, 8:00 pm
South Congregational Church,
Fiddler's Green, Amherst MA

Key

♪PDF = *link to complete score in PDF format;* ~~♪PDF~~) = *link to brief score excerpt in PDF format*
♪MP3 = *link to complete recording in MP3 format;* ~~♪MP3~~) = *link to brief recording excerpt in MP3 format*
= *link to notes, texts & translations in PDF format*

Program

Antoinette Kirkwood (go to her page on Bardic Edition website)

Krönung (Coronation), op. 17, no. 2 (1990) ~~♪PDF~~ ♪MP3
Gretchen Saathoff, piano

Max von Schillings (1868-1933)

Abenddämmerung (Evening twilight), op. 1a (1890, revised 1916) ♪PDF ♪MP3
Peggy Spencer, violin; Susan Dedell, piano

Leslie Crabtree

Sonnenuntergang (Sunset) (2004) first public performance ♪PDF ♪MP3
Gretchen Saathoff, piano

Martin Shaw (1876-1958)

from *Water folk* (1932)
Nordsee String Quartet (Peggy Spencer, Michelle Liechti, violins; Esther Hall-Reinhard, viola; Zon Eastes, cello); Susan Dedell, piano

I. The Stranger ~~♪PDF~~ ~~♪MP3~~

III. Poseidon ~~♪PDF~~ ~~♪MP3~~

Willis Bridegam

Erklärung (Declaration) (2005) first performance ♪PDF ♪MP3
Monica Jakuc, piano

Robert Franz (1815-1892)

Nachts in der Kajüte (Night in the cabin) ♪PDF ♪MP3
Gretchen Saathoff, piano

1. Auf dem Meere (On the ocean), op. 36, no. 1
2. Auf dem Meere, op. 6, no. 3
3. Auf dem Meere, op. 5, no. 3
4. Auf dem Meere, op. 9, no. 6
5. Auf dem Meere, op. 25, no. 6
6. Auf dem Meer, op. 11, no. 5

David Kidwell (go to his website to purchase score) ~~♪PDF~~ ♪MP3
Storm (Sturm) (2005) first performance
Monica Jakuc, piano

Zeke Hecker (go to his page on the Kalvos Domain website)

Meeresstille (Peace at sea) (2005) first performance ♪PDF ♪MP3
Monica Jakuc, piano

Kaeza Fearn (go to her website)

Seegespenst (An apparition in the sea) (2005) first performance ♪PDF ♪MP3
Peggy Spencer, violin; Zon Eastes, cello; Susan Dedell, piano

Catharinus Elling (1858-1942)

Reinigung (Purification), op. 12, no. 14 (188-?) ♪PDF ♪MP3
Monica Jakuc, piano

Samuel de Lange (1840-1911)

Frieden (Peace), op. 87, no. 4 (190-?) ♪PDF ♪MP3
Gretchen Saathoff, piano

Heine and *Die Nordsee*

Heinrich Heine (originally named Harry) was born on December 13, 1797 in Düsseldorf, Germany, of Jewish parents. Though his family preferred that he become a businessman, Heine eventually took a degree in law. In 1825, in order to make possible a civil service career, he resentfully converted to Protestantism, but was still was never able to find employment in Germany.

Heine's literary reputation had grown steadily with the publication of his poems throughout the early 1820's. Most of these were collected in 1827 into the Buch der Lieder (Book of songs), which has always been his most widely read collection, and the most popular with composers, with over 5000 musical settings made of its 245 poems. It may have been inspired by his youthful, unrequited infatuation with one, or possibly two, of his rich uncle Salomon's daughters. Most of these poems are a concentrated combination of lyrical perfection, over-the-top Romantic imagery, wry humor and bitter irony. Their seeming sentimental folk-song-like simplicity has been widely imitated, but seldom with any success.

Heine spent several holidays in northern Germany, on the North Sea shore. His sojourn on the island of Norderney in August and September of 1825, just after his "conversion" to Christianity, was a gift of his uncle's upon the successful completion of his law examinations. The sea's bleak beauty haunted him the rest of his life, and he wrote of another visit the following summer:

> "I stayed at Norderney until the middle of September; from the beginning of the month until my departure I was virtually the only remaining bathing-visitor. I hired a wherry and two boatmen and spent whole days rowing about the North Sea. The Sea was my only companion, and I have never had a better. Nights by the sea--magnificent, grand!"

While at Norderney he was inspired to write sea poems that were something new in German poetry, both in their free verse form and subject matter. They are now considered among the finest sea poems in the German language. Heine combined rich descriptions of the natural scene with fanciful and ironic mock-epic depictions of gods, goddesses and heroes that reflected his conflicted moods and ambivalent attitudes toward himself, his art and his society. Most of these poems were collected into the two cycles of *Die Nordsee,* the final section of Buch der Lieder. *Nachts in der Kajüte* (Night in the cabin) was probably the first poem to be written in this collection, although it became the seventh and centerpiece poem of the first cycle. In its six brief sections, and in *Meeresstille* one can see the progression from his earlier style of short, lyric, metric stanzas to the longer free-verse form of the other *Nordsee* poems.

Heine was supposedly reading Homer during his vacation, but the Greco-Roman gods are haphazardly mixed in with Norse and even Judeo-Christian deities, all of them serving as convenient sources of mythological ornament. This was of course seen as blasphemous by many critics, which was probably intentional on Heine's part. On closer examination, the "seascapes" of *Die Nordsee* reveal themselves more truly as "mindscapes" in which various aspects of the poet's contradictory and difficult personality find rich expression. Although they are ostensibly free verse odes, Heine himself admitted they had more the aspect of "colossal epigrams," a paradox worthy of this most elusive of poets.

In 1831 Heine moved to Paris, where his political and social concerns found outlet in his prolific critical and satirical prose writings. He became acquainted with many prominent figures of the age, including Karl Marx. Heine's pro-revolutionary views were unacceptable to the German governments, and by 1835 his voluntary exile in France became an imposed one, and his

works were banned throughout Germany. He continued to write poetry as well, much of it with satirical elements of social and literary commentary. After 1844 Heine suffered financial reversals and painful physical deterioration from what may have been syphilis, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or some other neuropathy. He spent the last several years of his life in his "mattress-grave" in a Paris apartment, although his poetic and observational powers never left him. He died in Paris on February 17, 1856.

Other than the works by Martin Shaw and Robert Franz, which I have performed before, all of the music on today's program is almost certainly receiving either its regional or world premiere performance. Although Heine's poetry has probably been set to music more than any other poet, except perhaps King David, his *Die Nordsee* poems have generally not been very popular with song composers, especially as compared with the earlier parts of *Buch der Lieder*. This is easily explained by the greater length of the *Nordsee* poems, and their use of free and blank verse. The only exception is the first part of *Nachts in der Kajüte*, "Das Meer hat seine Perlen", which has been set to music over 100 times, chiefly due to its translation into English by the popular nineteenth-century American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

When I first conceived the idea of doing a concert performance of musical settings of all of the poems in the first cycle of *Nordsee*, I immediately realized I would have to do some serious digging. Even so, for some poems I was unable to find copies of any of the few settings I knew about, most of them by extremely obscure nineteenth-century European composers. And when I was able to find music, I sometimes found that it was incomplete, that the composer had not set all of the lines in Heine's poem. This led me to begin asking composer friends of mine, and other composers with whom I came into contact, if they would like to try their hands at writing a Heine setting. I am deeply gratified and honored to have found five gifted composers who have written some wonderful music for me in the past year.

The performers

(current as of performance date, 12/13/2005)

Peter W. Shea has sung professionally since 1972 throughout New England and the Hudson Valley. He studied voice with Arthur Koret at the Hartt School, University of Hartford, librarianship at Southern Connecticut State University, and historical musicology at the University of Connecticut, Storrs. He is a frequent soloist with groups such as Arcadia Players, Hampshire Choral Society, Commonwealth Opera, and the Brattleboro Community Chorus. He also performs regularly with vocal and instrumental chamber ensembles including the vocal sextet Cantabile, with western New England choral groups such as Singers' Project and Novi Cantori, and as soloist in music series like the New England Bach Festival and the Mohawk Trail Concerts. He is a member of the board of directors of Arcadia Players, and served as the baroque orchestra's co-Artistic Director for the 2003-2004 season. He is cataloger of music and Western European languages at the W.E.B. DuBois Library, University of Massachusetts, and is developing an online guide to musical settings of Heine's poetry: Ihr Lieder! Ihr meine guten Lieder! He is currently on his second Heine-related sabbatical, which, in addition to a program in October and this concert, will include several more concerts, the next one at the National Yiddish Book Center in Amherst on February 18, 2006, a day after the sesquicentennial of Heine's death. See http://people.umass.edu/shea/.

Gretchen Saathoff, pianist, was a fellowship student at the Aspen and Tanglewood Music Festivals. She has degrees from the University of Massachusetts and Westminster Choir College, where she studied accompanying and coaching with Martin Katz and graduated first in her class. Her teachers have included Joseph Fuchs, Joan Dornemann, Kenneth Cooper, Joel Krosnick and Harvey Shapiro. In addition to performing as a soloist, she has collaborated often with both singers and instrumentalists in recitals, as well as in numerous prestigious competitions in New York, Boston and Philadelphia.

Susan Dedell received her B.A. in piano from the University of Michigan, where she studied with Charles Fisher and was a staff accompanist in the voice department. She joined the Brattleboro Music Center piano faculty in 1983. She also is on the faculty at Marlboro College and the Putney School, is the Director of Music at St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Brattleboro, and is also the director of the Brattleboro Music Center's Community Chorus.

Monica Jakuc is the Elsie Irwin Sweeney Professor of Music at Smith College, where she has taught since 1969. An accomplished artist on both modern and early pianos, she often gives lecture-recitals on women composers. She has released several CDs, including Francesca LeBrun's complete *Opus 1 Sonatas for Fortepiano and Violin* with violinist Dana Maiben on Dorian Discovery, and fortepiano sonatas by Marianne von Martinez, Marianna von Auenbrugger, and Joseph Haydn on Titanic Records. She is also a frequent performer on fortepiano with Arcadia Players, most recently presenting Schubert's *Winterreise* with Peter Shea, and has recently joined that organization's board of directors.

Peggy Spencer, violin, studied at the Mannes College of Music and Manhattan School of Music with Raphael Bronstein, Louis Bagger, and David Wells. She has coached chamber music and taught violin at the Putney School, the Brattleboro Music Center, the Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music, and the Bennington Chamber Music Conference. She is concertmistress of the New England Bach Festival, and has performed with Arcadia Players, the Springfield and Vermont Symphonies, the New England Camerata, the Mohawk Trail Concerts, and the Handel and Haydn Society.

Zon Eastes, cello, is Managing Director of the Brattleboro Music Center. He also conducts the Windham Orchestra. He is President of the Brattleboro Arts Initiative, is on the board the Arts Council of Windham County, as well as the Windham Regional Commission. In 2004, he facilitated the establishment of the Alliance for the Arts, a rolling collective of 15-20 arts organizations in southeast Vermont. Eastes has taught cello and coached chamber music at Amherst, Dartmouth, and Keene State Colleges, and at the Brattleboro Music Center. He holds degrees from University of New Mexico and State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Heartfelt thanks to:

Ruthie Ireland, for the reception
Brit Albritton, Leslie Schaler and Emily Silverman, for publicity
Willis Bridegam, for recording, and helping with the piano
Peggy Spencer, for organizing musicians and rehearsals
Beth Hart and Grace Church, for rehearsal space
The Brattleboro Music Center, for rehearsal space
South Congregational Church, for the use of its facilities
Sexton Augie Tidlund, for his helpfulness
The W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst, for my 2nd Heine sabbatical