

## Padmore and Uchida bring the emotional essence of Lieder to Reinberger Hall (Mar. 6)

by Stephanie Manning



For Mark Padmore and Mitsuko Uchida, the idea to perform a recital together came about naturally — starting with making music together simply for the pleasure of it. That natural transition from practice to performance was evident on March 6, when The Cleveland Orchestra presented the tenor and pianist in an afternoon of earnest music making.

Divided evenly into two halves, the first part of the program was dedicated to Beethoven — who composed quite the collection of Lieder in addition to his symphonic works. In the opening “An die Hoffnung,” the up-close acoustic of Reinberger Chamber Hall allowed for every nuance to shine through, with Padmore’s precise diction imbuing each stanza with a different feeling. And even without words of her own, Uchida remained fully engrossed in the emotions and phrasing of the music, often mouthing along with the German lyrics in the expressive “Resignation” and the stirring “Abendlied unterm gestirnten Himmel.”

Padmore then introduced one of the two song cycles featured in the program: Beethoven’s *An die ferne Geliebte*. The musicians approached each of the six movements with poise, every section smoothly connecting into the next to maintain the feeling of an overarching work. Padmore’s performance stood out for his convincing delivery. He sang engagingly, with an attractive tone and the confidence that everyone would understand him — it was clear that the audience was eager to do just that, frequently turning the pages of the translated lyrics in unison.

After intermission, the collaborators turned their focus to a composer greatly inspired by Beethoven and his contributions to the song cycle: Schubert, whose fourteen-part *Schwanengesang* rounded out the program. The musical evolution between these two collections is evident in Schubert’s denser piano textures and more dramatic tonal shifts,

but Padmore and Uchida skillfully brought out all the ways in which both song cycles are connected.

*Schwanengesang* shifts rapidly between moods, and the duo transitioned swiftly from the sentimental “In der Ferne” to the playful “Abschied” and then to the delicate “Ihr Bild,” where they took their time luxuriating in both the words and music. Perhaps these emotional swings weren’t Schubert’s original intent — the song cycle was assembled after his death — but nevertheless, Padmore and Uchida approached them convincingly.

The piece arrived at its emotional climax in “Der Doppelgänger,” where Padmore was unafraid to bring out the song’s anguish, reaching both the peak and trough of his dynamic range. Rather than leave the audience with this dark mood, the pair chose the option of ending with “Die Taubenpost,” a much lighter piece that still retains the essence of “*Sehnsucht*” — longing — that connects the song cycle together. The inclusion of this song, Schubert’s final composition, in *Schwanengesang* has long been up for debate, and this performance was a strong argument in favor.

It also felt like a full-circle moment. Padmore explained to the audience earlier in the program that the choice of “An die Hoffnung” (To Hope) as the opening piece was a deliberate one, fitting for our current times. Ending the recital with a message of longing, then, felt equally fitting — mirroring our collective longing for happiness, for love, and for peace.

*Published on ClevelandClassical.com March 14, 2022.*

*Click here for a printable copy of this article*

[Return to the Front Page.](#)