



The Holy See

CONCERT OFFERED IN HONOUR OF THE HOLY FATHER

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

*Hall of the Swiss, Papal Summer Residence, Castel Gandolfo
Sunday, 24 August 2008*

Your Eminences

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,

Dear Friends,

We have had a beautiful evening during which we have been granted to hear once again certain famous pieces of music that awakened within us emotion and profound spiritual images. I address my greeting with sentiments of warm cordiality to all of you who are gathered here and I express deep gratitude to those who sponsored and organized this musical event. In conveying my grateful and admiring appreciation to Miss Yvonne Timoiianu and Mr Christoph Cornaro who played, respectively, the cello and the piano with praiseworthy talent, I am certain that I am expressing the common sentiments. Thanks to their masterful performance we have been able to enjoy the multiform riches of the language of music that characterizes the passages offered to us. I am pleased to recall that my acquaintance with Mr Cornaro dates back to the time when he was Ambassador of Austria to the Holy See. I am delighted to meet him here once again today as pianist.

This concert has given us the opportunity to see the felicitous pairing of Wilhelm Müller's poetry with Franz Schubert's music in a melodic genre that was dear to him. In fact Schubert left us more than 600 lieder. The great composer, not always understood by his contemporaries, was, as is well known, the "Prince of *Lied*". As his epitaph says, "he made poetry resound and music speak". We have just been able to savour Schubert's lieder masterpieces: *Die Winterreise* (Winter Journey). This cycle includes 24 lieder composed on lyrics by Wilhelm Müller, in which Schubert expresses an intense atmosphere of sad loneliness which he felt particularly, given his mental

state, caused by his long illness and a string of emotional and professional disappointments. It is a wholly inner journey, which the famous Austrian composer wrote in 1827, just a year before his premature death when he was only 31 years old.

When Schubert introduces a poetical text into his universe of sound, he interprets it through a melodic weave that penetrates the soul with sweetness, bringing listeners too to feel the same anguishing lament as the musician, the same reminder of those truths of the heart that go beyond all reasoning. Thus a fresco comes into being that speaks of ordinary daily life, of nostalgia, of introspection, of the future. Everything resurfaces in the process: the snow, the countryside, objects, people, events in a heartrending flow of memories. It was a new and beautiful experience for me to hear this work in the version offered to us, that is, with the cello instead of the human voice. We did not hear the poem's words but their reflection and the sentiments contained in them rippled through the cello's almost human "voice".

In presenting the *Winter Journey* to his friends, Schubert said: "I shall sing you a cycle of lieder which have involved me more than I have ever been involved before. I like them better than all the others, and you will like them too". These are words with which we can agree as well, having heard them in the light of the hope of our faith. The young Schubert, spontaneous and exuberant, has succeeded in communicating also to us this evening what he himself lived and experienced. The recognition universally attributed to this distinguished musical genius who honours the European civilization and the great culture and spirituality of Christian and Catholic Austria is therefore well deserved.

Inwardly comforted by this evening's splendid musical experience, let us renew our thanks to those who sponsored it and who performed it magnificently. I therefore offer my cordial greeting to everyone who is present here and impart my Blessing to you all with affection.

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