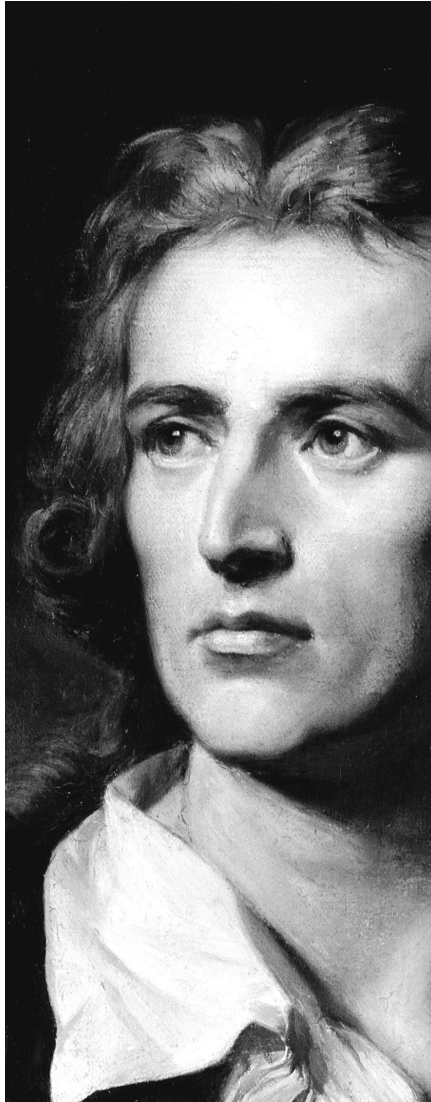


Beethoven



Schiller

# POETRY in MUSIC

Class 5: March 20, 2023

# POETRY in MUSIC

## Class 5: Conversations Among the Arts

*Poetry need not be set to music as song to have an impact on music, and music need not have words to be poetical. This class will consider various ways in which text, music, and sometimes other arts may enter into conversation with one another.*

### A. Rude Intrusion

Poetry invades the orchestra hall.

- **Ode to Joy.** The poem by FRIEDRICH SCHILLER (1759–1805) as used by LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827) in his *Symphony No. 9* (1824, the *Choral*). Eric Owens with the Chicago Symphony, conducted by Riccardo Muti.

### B. Dancing the Text

Two works involving dance as a conversation partner with text.

- **L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, ed il Moderato.** Two odes by JOHN MILTON (1608–74), as set to music by GEORG FRIEDERIC HANDEL (1685–1759) and subsequently choreographed by MARK MORRIS (1953–).
- **The Statement.** 2018 ballet by CRYSTAL PITE (1970– ) based on a play by JONATHON YOUNG (1973–). Performed by The Royal Ballet.

### C. Hidden Poetry

Although not containing any performed text, purely instrumental music may sometimes be informed by poetry, either translating it into “program music,” or imitating it in mood and form.

- **The Four Seasons.** This work by ANTONIO VIVALDI (1678–1741) was published in 1725 with a set of sonnets, presumably by Vivaldi himself. Played by Janine Jansen with the Amsterdam Sinfonietta.
- **Chopin, Ballade No. 2.** The *Ballades* of FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810–59) may or may not reflect the poetry of his contemporary ADAM MICKIEWICZ

(1798–1855). A comparison of the second in the set with Mickiewicz’s legend, *The Mermaid of Lake Switez*. Performed by Krystian Zimerman.

- **Song without Words.** The set of piano pieces by FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–47) is only one of numerous examples of 19th-century pieces whose titles and form reflect poetry or painting. We hear *Duetto*, performed by Emil Gilels.

## D. Different Dialogues

A comparison between the ways four different interpreters react to the same poem, and how they acknowledge its intrinsic music.

- **To a Skylark.** Poem by PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY (1792–1822). Read by Tony Britton, Glenn Close, and Paul Pavan Keetley .
- **To a Skylark.** Song for voices, harp, and strings by JULIE COOPER (1965?–), based on the Shelley poem. Written for and sung by the mother-son duo of Grace and Joshua Davidson.

## E. Writing About the Classics

Poets responding to works of classical music.

- **Sonata Mulattica.** Book-length collection by RITA DOVE (1952–) speculating on the life of GEORGE AUGUSTUS POLGREEN BRIDGETOWER (1780–1860), the mulatto violin prodigy to whom BEETHOVEN originally dedicated his *Kreutzer Sonata*. Performed by Randall Goosby and Zhu Wang.
- **Brahms’ Clarinet Quintet in B Minor, Op. 115.** Poem by JAN ZWICKY (1955–) about the first of the late works that JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–97) wrote for the clarinetist RICHARD MÜHLFELD. Performance by the Parker Quartet with Charles Neidich.

## F. Jazz Notes

Poets responding to, or taking part in, jazz performances.

- **Nightclub.** Part of a poem by BILLY COLLINS (1941–) about listening to a recording of the jazz singer JOHNNY HARTMAN (1923–83).
- **Music Swims Back to Me.** Poem by the confessional poet ANNE SEXTON (1928–74), read by the author in a nightclub, to the accompaniment of her own band, Her Kind.

## G. Two Singularities

Two works showing unique combinations of text and music, further extending the concept of “conversation.”

- **Partita for Eight Voices.** The opening of the 2012 Pulitzer Prize composition by CAROLINE SHAW (1982–), which uses random text fragment together with non-textual sounds as material for her work for a *cappella* octet. Performance by Roomful of Teeth, followed by a Facetime interview between the composer and Pablo Held.
- **Calisto Retold.** Narrative poem by ROGER BRUNYATE (1940–) written to prepare for a production of the opera *La Calisto* by FRANCESCO CAVALLI



Modern artists, by rows: Collins, Cooper, Dove; Morris, Pite, Sexton; Shaw, Young, Zwicky.