

Ladies and gentlemen,  
*Chère* Artemis Cooper,

I am very pleased to welcome you to the Residence today, and honoured to be hosting the **Pol Roger Duff Cooper Prize**. This is such a special moment each year, when we celebrate, through this prize, the best in non-fiction writing published in the past year. This year's shortlist included five wonderful books, just described to us by Artemis Cooper: Claire Harman's biography of Charlotte Brontë, Ian Bostridge's tribute to Schubert, Noel Malcolm's tale of intertwined Mediterranean destinies in the sixteenth century in *Agents of Empire*, Ferdinand Mount's vivid chronicle of the eighteen-fifty-seven uprising in *The Tears of the Rajas*, and Paul Strohm's new biography of Chaucer, *The Poet's Tale*.

So, thanks to the legacy of the great British diplomat Duff Cooper, we are gathered tonight for a prize to be handed over by a French ambassador, to a British interpreter of songs written by a composer in Vienna, to the words of a German poet, for a book published here in the UK by Faber & Faber, and soon to be translated into Dutch, Italian, and Spanish! The book is based on Schubert's *Winterreise*, one of the most powerful masterpieces in our shared European heritage. It reminds us how deeply European the world of music is today, and indeed already was in the eighteen-twenties.

As one of the work's finest interpreters, Ian Bostridge has performed Schubert's song cycle many, many times, I believe. Not only did he make his Purcell Hall debut in nineteen-ninety-four with the *Winterreise* to much acclaim, he also went on to make a film of it in nineteen-ninety-seven, directed by David Alden. Ian Bostridge [*présent dans la salle*], over the last two decades you have done much to make that repertoire of nineteenth-century song – and in particular the *Lieder* tradition – familiar to a wider audience, and so to make these pieces of music more democratic: not quite the folk songs Wilhelm Müller originally took his inspiration from, but something of a shared musical culture.

This book, as generous as it is expert, is yet another way into that shared culture. After having lent his voice to Schubert's *Winterreise* for so many years, in this beautiful, dense

book Ian Bostridge goes on to lend his own words and knowledge to the cycle, interwoven with the personal joys and challenges of performing each of its songs. He writes in many voices: that of the historian, that of the performer, that of the musician. And one feels privileged to follow his footsteps, as *A Winter's Journey* takes us into each of the twenty-four songs of the cycle, revealing the mysteries of those seventy minutes of musical wandering and despair.

Ian Bostridge quotes Schubert's prophecy, thus inviting us into his world: "I like these songs more than all the rest, and you will come to like them as well". "We are drawn in", he writes, "by an obsessively confessional soul, apparently an emotional exhibitionist who won't give us the facts; but this allows us to supply the facts of our own lives, and make him our mirror". A conscientious historian, Bostridge describes the cycle as a "coded lament for the reactionary climate at large in Germany and Austria in the eighteen-twenties". He wants to tease out "what it might mean for us now, as a message in a bottle set afloat in the cultural ocean of eighteen-twenty-eight". "When we hear the social protest embedded in the cycle," he asks, "are we just playing with the idea of a retreat to the woods, or the embrace of the outsider? If the point of philosophy is not only to interpret the world but to change it, what is the point of art?"

The power of music, the strength of our shared culture, the pleasure of words and a beautiful book: I could not think of better reasons to reward Ian Bostridge today, and I have the great pleasure of presenting him with the Pol Roger Duff Cooper prize twenty-sixteen, with many congratulations.