

Winterize

Winterize is a reimagining of Franz Schubert's 1828 monumental song cycle *Winterreise*, designed to take place in a park or botanical garden in the winter. The performance, led by a singer, migrates throughout the garden, passing through locations that reflect the vivid imagery of Wilhelm Müller's poetry and Schubert's music. Audience members walk alongside the singer and provide musical accompaniment using hand-held radios. The result is a creative hybrid between a traditional concert and a participatory parade.

This performance has become an annual highlight of Make Music Winter in New York. In order to make it happen for your own Make Music Winter, you will need a capable classical singer, a garden or park, and a modest budget for materials.

“ The rain let up by midmorning on Friday, leaving a raw, gray noon. The Brooklyn Botanic Garden had a gloomy feel, with bare trees and windswept lawns.

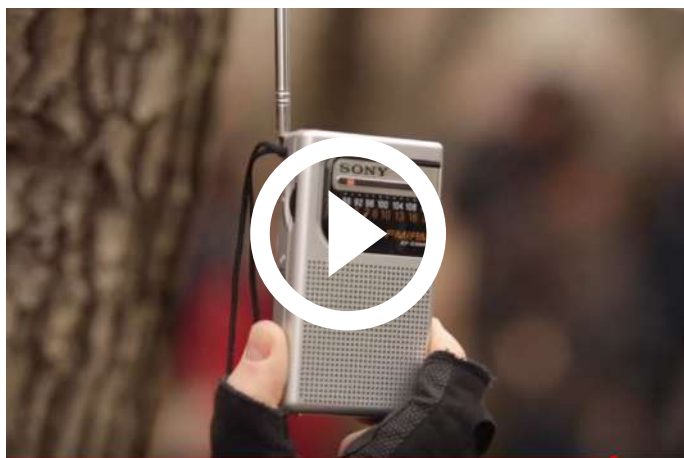
Only lack of snow kept it from being the ideal scene for the baritone Christopher Dylan Herbert's brave and, in all senses, chilling outdoor performance of Schubert's "Winterreise." Part of Make Music Winter, Mr. Herbert's "Winterreise" — or "Winterize," as the organizers called it — found a bleak setting that seemed conjured out of Wilhelm Müller's despondent poems.

A crowd followed Mr. Herbert to locations around the garden, from a sundial to a quiet brook, as he gave an elegantly lean performance that would have been impressive in any context but was remarkable under these conditions. The audience members carried hand-held radios tuned to Timothy Long's piano

accompaniment, which had been electronically altered by Jonathan Zalben, sometimes made to sound like a forte-piano, sometimes like a celesta, sometimes like strings. (J. J. Hudson was the production's director.)

The static of the radios, like surface noise from an old LP, added to the melancholy, as did the juxtaposition of their scratchy faintness and Mr. Herbert's hearty yet poignantly isolated presence. Near the end of the cycle, in front of a still fountain, he flung out the final word of "Der Wegweiser" with a quiet disgust that was startling, given the performance's intimacy. You have not truly experienced "Winterreise" until you have stood three or four feet from the singer, his breath visible in the cold.

— "On a Solstice, Music Can Pop Up Anywhere," by Zachary Woolfe, *New York Times*, December 23, 2012



THE CONCEPT

Franz Schubert's famous *Winterreise* song cycle depicts a man who, upon being rejected by his lover, sets off on a depressing winter journey. Along the way, he sings about what he sees on his walk: a weathervane on a house, the snow and ice, a linden tree, a river, a dry stream-bed, a colored leaf, dogs barking, a signpost, and a graveyard.

Winterize takes the singer off of the recital stage, and into an environment where he can take a real winter's journey, passing by (and pointing out) a real weathervane, a linden tree, a river, and so on as he sings about them.

Of course, Schubert's song cycle includes piano accompaniment, too. In *Winterize*, it is the participating audience's job to provide that music, using handheld radios that surround the singer and emit the piano music (recorded by Timothy Long and shaped by sound designer Jonathan Zalben). Handheld posters with German-to-English paraphrased supertitles, designed by illustrator Irene Rinaldi, translate Müller's ideas for the crowd.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

1. A singer who is up for a challenge. The singer will need to be comfortable singing outdoors in December for over an hour, while walking between songs and staying in character. And he or she will need to memorize the music, if the piece is not already in his or her repertoire. The original singer for the project was a baritone who used the Peters Edition middle voice version; any singer using the prerecorded tracks will need to perform in these keys.

2. A botanical garden or park, large enough to walk around in, and some features that correspond to the text (such as a stream, a linden tree, or a weathervane).

3. MP3s with the musical accompaniment, loaded onto a volunteer's iPod or phone – [download them here](#).



4. Sheet music for the singer in the same key as the MP3s – [download it here](#).

5. The 24 illustrated supertitles for each song – [download them here](#). These can be printed onto large, 18” x 24” pieces of foamboard (about \$16 each at a print shop) or to save money you can print them on regular paper with a large format printer and carefully glue them onto poster board yourself.

6. About 50 portable pocket FM radios (\$10-\$15 each), and a large portable boombox, with fresh batteries for all devices. We recommend a digital radio that indicates specifically which station the user is tuned to. A dial radio is frequently incorrect and can create confusion.

7. A low-power FM radio transmitter, with an antenna and portable power source (such as a battery pack). The Source 1.2W Low Power FM Transmitter costs \$160 on Amazon, and is easy to set up. Due to FCC regulations, more powerful transmitters must be shipped disassembled, and they require soldering skills to put together. Stick with the low-power options to avoid the hassle, or see if you can rent a transmitter from a drive-in movie theater. (In New York an outdoor film festival rents them out for \$125 for two days.)

8. A cart to wheel around your supplies (including the transmitter and extra radios), a **Phillips head screwdriver** for adjusting the transmitter, **electrical tape or duct tape** to secure the transmitter to the cart, and **umbrellas** in case of snow or rain.

9. Three or four volunteers to carry and display the supertitles, manage the radio transmitter, and play/pause the music.



HOW TO ORGANIZE

Location Scouting

The first step is to map out your route. Think about locations in the park that match the words or the feeling of the text for each song. The singer may stay in the same place for a few songs before moving to the next location. Make a sketch for where the singer will stand, where the audience will be, and where the supertitles will be held.

Technical Rehearsal

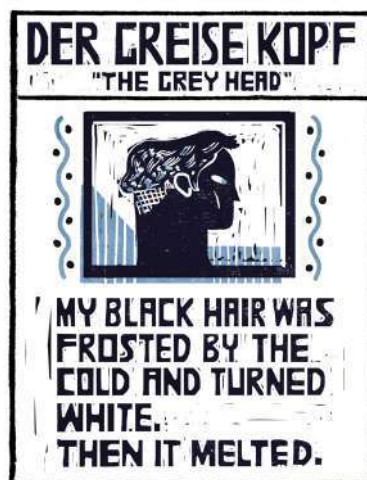
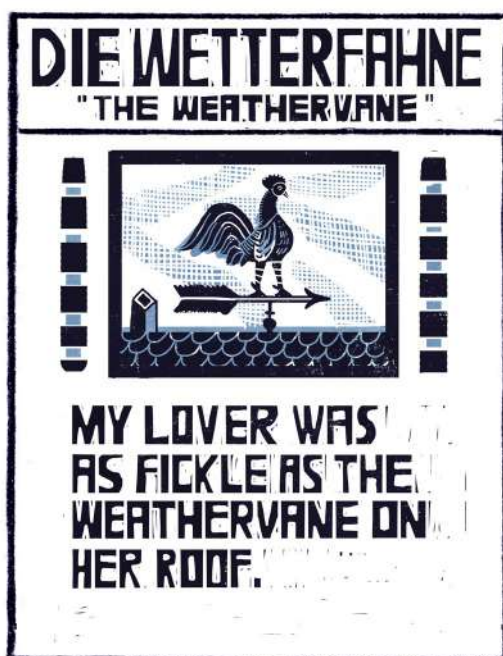
Once you have a route and a singer, hold one or two rehearsals in advance to make sure the tech works properly. Put the accompanying MP3s on your iPod,



plug into the FM transmitter with a 3.5mm cable, and experiment with transmitting on different radio frequencies, until you find one with minimal interference from other stations. A frequency that works in one spot may pick up interference when you walk 100 yards away; when you find a frequency that comes in clearly, test it along the entire route. Also, use a surge protector for the transmitter to keep it from being damaged by fluctuating power from your battery pack.

Marketing and Recruiting Participants

- *Winterize* participants don't need to have any musical skills at all. The only requirement is to hold a portable radio to create a cloud of sound around the singer. Accordingly, you can market the event to the most general public.
- Your best promotional partner may be the park or garden's marketing department. Winter is generally an off-season for these spaces, when nothing is in bloom, and they will be eager to have something to promote and bring people back in.
- Since the event is in a park or garden, where there may not be a street address, make sure to specify exactly where everyone should meet.
- Consider asking people to RSVP. You can let people know that if they are not one of the first 50 to sign up, they will need to bring their own battery powered FM radio along with them.



- Somewhere on your website or printed program, please include the acknowledgment: “Winterize was first performed at Make Music Winter in New York City on December 21, 2012, in a production by Christopher Dylan Herbert, J.J. Hudson, Timothy Long, and Jonathan Zalben.”
- Send your event details to aaron@makemusicday.org as soon as possible for inclusion on the national Make Music Winter website and in press outreach.



WHAT TO DO ON DECEMBER 21

1. Arrive with your volunteers 90 minutes before the performance begins. You'll want to have plenty of time to set up and test everything.

2. Make sure all of the radios are working, with fresh batteries. Turn the dials to the frequency on which you will be broadcasting. Test the radio transmitter one more time, and attach it with the battery pack and antenna on the luggage cart, so you can wheel the whole thing around as one unit.

3. Gather the supertitles and put them in the correct order.

4. When people arrive, hand out the radios and explain they may need to change the way they hold their radio, or adjust the dial, in order to get the clearest possible sound. This is also the time to give any choreographic instructions, and ask the audience to surround the singer with the radios, or form two rows for the singer to walk through at some point in the performance. Test the radios with the audience and make sure that they are on the correct frequency, and that their volume is turned up.

5. When it's time to begin, connect the iPod with the MP3s to the radio transmitter, and start broadcasting the first song. After each track, pause and wait for the singer to give a nod that it's time to start the next one. When it's time to move to the next location in the park, wheel your luggage cart along with the group, so you stay close to the radios. The music should not play while people walk from one location to the next.





If disaster strikes and the transmitter is not working, use your large portable boombox as a backup, plugging your iPod directly into it, and holding it above your head. This is a lot less magical than using the radios but at least the show will go on.

6. Meanwhile, one volunteer should be in charge of carrying around the foamboard supertitles. Before each song, he or she hands the correct poster to a second volunteer to hold up high, and then takes it back at the end of the song.

7. After the final song, collect all of the radios and thank everyone for coming.

