

The New Criterion

Poems

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Three songs for Franz Schubert

by [Leslie Norris](#)

1.

The young man sings
of love and winter
with the snow of his voice
and his passionate breath.

When it was summer
she gave flowers and welcome
but now it is winter
his sweetheart's door is closed.

His tears are frozen.
Dense flocks of starlings
thicken and darken
against the gray clouds

and a wisp of blown smoke
is frailer than snowflakes.
Her summer footprints
soft on the warm grass

are flattened and buried
in the death of paths.
The bright ways of love
are lost in snowdrifts.

Now he must leave
the roofs of his happiness.
Only his shadow
moves on the white snow.

2.

He has left behind him
the fountains of romance
and love's clean initials
cut in the lime tree.

Winter has s ...

Leslie Norris' latest book is *Albert and the Angels* (Farras, Straus & Giroux).

[more from this author](#)

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