We’re off! Classes started back last week and we’re already looking forward to our first recital of the semester. Next weekend we’ll be hosting The LeBaron Trio from the University of Montevallo. The trio is composed of Lori Ardovino on clarinet, Laurie Middaugh on piano, and Melanie Williams, a soprano. Besides original compositions by Dr. Ardovino and a setting of Emily Dickinson poetry, the trio will be tackling Franz Schubert’s Shepard on the Rock.

Shepard on the Rock is notable for a host of reasons. The most overt may well be its setting for piano, soprano, AND clarinet. Schubert has only two songs that include a second obbligato instrument and each unfold almost more like operatic scenes than art songs.

The variety of tone in Shepard on the Rock may be due to the belief that it was composed for the soprano Anna Milder-Hauptmann. Milder-Hauptmann was no small name at the time. She was a former student of Salieri’s, created the role of Leonore in Beethoven’s Fiedlio, and was Mendelssohn’s choice to sing the soprano arias in his famous revival of Bach’s St. Matthew Passion. And she specifically requested a song from Schubert in which “several emotions can be represented.”

Regardless of its origin, Shepard on the Rock relays the charming narrative of a shepherd whose echoing voice (often portrayed by the clarinet) reminds him of the distance between he and his lover in the valley below. The poignancy of that echo only deepens when we are reminded that Shepard was one of, if not the, last composition of Schubert’s before he died at the age of thirty-one.

See you there or, well, here!