

Program Notes and Translations for Senior Recital: Riley Greer, soprano

Henry Purcell (1659–1695) was one of England’s most well-known Baroque composers, known for his ability to blend expressive vocal lines with intricate counterpoint and vibrant harmonies. **“Sound the Trumpet”** is a duet from *Come Ye Sons of Art* (1694), an ode composed to celebrate the birthday of Queen Mary II of England. “Sound the Trumpet” is a joyful and celebratory piece that praises the power of music. Purcell achieves a bright, fanfare-like quality through the interplay of the two vocal lines, mimicking trumpets. With its dance-like rhythms, bright imitations of brass, and jaunty energy, “Sound the Trumpet” remains a staple of Baroque literature.

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) was a French composer, teacher, pianist, and organist. He was known for his harmonic and melodic innovations, which shaped how later generations of French composers were taught harmony and helped develop the French *mélodie* as a genre. **“Au bord de l’eau”** is a song about love, and specifically, passionate true love that never passes away, fitting in the French *mélodie* themes. Its melodic line imitates that of a stringed instrument, and is echoed at the end of phrases by the piano. The singer praises love that stops all time and all things that change while spending precious moments with her lover. The slow melodic line of this *mélodie* reflects that as if time has stopped for a brief moment.

“Après un rêve” is the first of the three songs in his Op. 7, which was completed in 1878. It is adapted from an anonymous Italian poem, but was translated to French by Romain Bussine. The text is from the point of view of a lover who has woken up from a dream of flying with their love towards a light. The dreamer longs to fall back asleep into the night and their dreams, and laments that they cannot do so. The accompaniment is constant through the entire piece, which compliments the lyrical and slower melody.

Translation

S’asseoir tous deux au bord d’un flot qui passe,	To sit together on the bank of a flowing stream,
Le voir passer;	To watch it flow;
Tous deux, s’il glisse un nuage en l’espace,	Together, if a cloud glides by,
Le voir glisser;	To watch it glide;
À l’horizon, s’il fume un toit de chaume,	On the horizon, if smoke rises from thatch,
Le voir fumer;	To watch it rise;
Aux alentours si quelque fleur embaume,	If nearby a flower smells sweet,
S’en embaumer;	To savour its sweetness;
Entendre au pied du saule où l’eau murmure,	To listen at the foot of the willow, where water murmurs,
L’eau murmurer;	To the murmuring water;
Ne pas sentir, tant que ce rêve dure,	Not to feel, while this dream passes,
Le temps durer;	The passing of time;
Mais n’apportant de passion profonde	But feeling no deep passion,
Qu’à s’adorer,	Except to adore each other,
Sans nul souci des querelles du monde,	With no cares for the quarrels of the world,
Les ignorer;	To know nothing of them;
Et seuls, tous deux devant tout ce qui lasse,	And alone together, seeing all that tires,
Sans se lasser,	Not to tire of each other,
Sentir l’amour, devant tout ce qui passe,	To feel that love, in the face of all that passes,
Ne point passer!	Shall never pass!

Translation by Richard Stokes

Translation

Dans un sommeil que charmait ton image
Je rêvais le bonheur, ardent mirage,
Tes yeux étaient plus doux, ta voix pure et sonore,
Tu rayonnais comme un ciel éclairé par l'aurore;

Tu m'appelais et je quittais la terre
Pour m'enfuir avec toi vers la lumière,
Les cieux pour nous entr'ouvraient leurs nues,
Splendeurs inconnues, lueurs divines entrevues.

Hélas! hélas, triste réveil des songes,
Je t'appelle, ô nuit, rends-moi tes mensonges;
Reviens, reviens, radieuse,
Reviens, ô nuit mystérieuse!

In sleep made sweet by a vision of you
I dreamed of happiness, fervent illusion,
Your eyes were softer, your voice pure and ringing,
You shone like a sky that was lit by the dawn;

You called me and I departed the earth
To flee with you toward the light,
The heavens parted their clouds for us,
We glimpsed unknown splendours, celestial fires.

Alas, alas, sad awakening from dreams!
I summon you, O night, give me back your delusions;
Return, return in radiance,
Return, O mysterious night!

Translation by Richard Stokes

Henri Duparc (1848–1933) was a French composer who was known for his deep, emotional qualities of his music as well as the beautifully constructed melodies present within his art songs. Composed in 1884, *La vie antérieure* was Duparc's final completed song, since a nervous disease plagued him soon after. Ironically, the text of this piece, a poem by Charles Baudelaire, details nostalgic experiences and longings of a life well lived. The voice and piano work together to create the visions and dreams the text describes with ebbs and flows, as well as an ethereal quality that possesses a bittersweetness for listeners.

Translation

J'ai longtemps habité sous de vastes portiques
Que les soleils marins teignaient de mille feux,
Et que leurs grands piliers, droits et majestueux,
Rendaient pareils, le soir, aux grottes basaltiques.

Les houles, en roulant les images des cieux,
Mêlaient d'une façon solennelle et mystique
Les tout-puissants accords de leur riche musique
Aux couleurs du couchant reflété par mes yeux.

C'est là que j'ai vécu dans les voluptés calmes
Au milieu de l'azur, des vagues, des splendeurs,
Et des esclaves nus, tout imprégnés d'odeurs,

Qui me rafraîchissaient le front avec des palmes,
Et dont l'unique soin était d'approfondir
Le secret douloureux qui me faisait languir.

For a long time I lived beneath the immense porticoes
That the sea-suns dyed with a thousand rays,
And whose great columns, erect and majestic,
At night seemed just like basalt grottoes.

The rolling waves tossing the celestial images
Blended in a solemn and mystic way
The all-powerful chords of their rich music
Coloured like the sunset reflected in my eyes

It is there, there that I lived in tranquil luxury
In the midst of the azure, the waves and the wonders,
And the nude slaves imbued with fragrance

Who refreshed my brow with palm leaves,
And whose sole purpose was to understand in depth
the agonising secret that made me suffer

Translation by Dann Mitton

Vincenzo Bellini (1801–1835) was a prolific composer who was praised for his melancholic and dramatic melodic lines, for which he earned the nickname “the Swan of Catania.” His final grand opera he wrote was *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, which premiered in 1830 in France. The libretto is loosely based on Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, but has major differences. For example, the Montagues and the Capulets function as political factions instead of families, and Romeo has killed Giulietta’s brother, which incites a war. “Oh! Quante volte” takes place as Giulietta laments for Romeo, as she has just been betrothed to her father’s prodigy, Tebaldo. She longs for his presence, claiming “the sky weeps with the passion of my waiting.”

Translation

Oh! quante volte, Oh! quante ti chiedo
 Al ciel piangendo
 Con quale ardor t'attendo,
 E inganno il mio desir!
 Raggio del tuo sembiante
 Parmi il brillar del giorno:
 L'aura che spira intorno
 Mi sembra un tuo respir.

Oh! How many times, oh, how many,
 did I ask the heavens for you, crying!
 With such fervour I wait for you,
 but my desire is in vain!
 The light of your presence
 shines for me like daylight:
 ah! The air that dances around me
 reminds me of your breath.

Translation by Nika Kožar

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) was a defining composer of the Baroque period. His genius performance skills combined with his creative prowess cemented his legacy as one of the greatest musicians and composers of all time. His song, *Bist du bei mir*, was an aria from a lost cantata. The piece overall is elegant and intimate, with lyrics portraying constant and loyal devotion to a lover or a higher power.

Translation

Bist du bei mir, geh ich mit Freuden
 Zum Sterben und zu meiner Ruh.

Be thou with me and I'll go gladly
 To death and on to my repose.

Ach, wie vergnügt wär so mein Ende,
 Es drückten deine schönen Hände
 Mir die getreuen Augen zu.

Ah, how my end would bring contentment,
 If, pressing with thy hands so lovely,
 Thou wouldst my faithful eyes then close

Translation by Z. Philip Ambrose

Franz Schubert (1797–1828) was a prominent composer of the late Classical period and pioneer of the Romantic period. Schubert composed over 600 *Lieder*, seven symphonies, operas, sacred music, chamber music, and more in his lifetime. He composed “Gretchen am Spinnrade” three months before his eighteenth birthday. The song’s text is taken from the larger work *Faust* by Goethe. Gretchen sits at her spinning wheel, which is represented by the movement of the right hand in the piano accompaniment and thinks of Faust. She is taken to and from reality through the song, with the text that grounds her: “Meine Ruh’ ist hin, mein Herz ist schwer. Ich finde sie nimmer und nimmermehr.”

Translation

Meine Ruh' ist hin, Mein Herz ist schwer,
Ich finde sie nimmer Und nimmermehr.
Wo ich ihn nicht hab' Ist mir das Grab,
Die ganze Welt ist mir vergällt.

My peace is gone, My heart is heavy;
I shall never Ever find peace again.
When he's not with me, Life's like the grave;
The whole world is turned to gall.

Meine Ruh' ist hin, Mein Herz ist schwer,
Ich finde sie nimmer Und nimmermehr.

My poor head Is crazed,
My poor mind Shattered.

Mein armer Kopf Ist mir verrückt
Mein armer Sinn Ist mir zerstückt.
Nach ihm nur schau' ich Zum Fenster hinaus, Nach
ihm nur geh' ich Aus dem Haus.

My peace is gone, My heart is heavy;
I shall never Ever find peace again.
It's only for him I gaze from the window,
It's only for him I leave the house.

Sein hoher Gang, Sein' edle Gestalt,
Seines Mundes Lächeln, Seiner Augen Gewalt.
Und seiner Rede Zauberfluss.
Sein Händedruck, Und ach, sein Kuss!

His proud bearing His noble form,
The smile on his lips, The power of his eyes,
And the magic flow Of his words,
The touch of his hand, And ah, his kiss!

Meine Ruh' ist hin, Mein Herz ist schwer,
Ich finde sie nimmer Und nimmermehr.

My peace is gone My heart is heavy;
I shall never Ever find peace again.

Mein Busen drängt sich Nach ihm hin.
Ach dürft' ich fassen Und halten ihn.

My bosom Yearns for him.
Ah! if I could clasp And hold him,

Und küssen ihn So wie ich wollt'
An seinen Küssen Vergehen sollt'!

And kiss him To my heart's content,
And in his kisses, Perish!

Translation by Richard Stokes

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Don Giovanni* is one of his most beloved operas, blending comedy, drama, and supernatural elements. It follows the infamous womanizer Don Giovanni as he deceives and manipulates those around him, ultimately facing a fiery downfall. "Ah! fuggi il traditor!" is sung by Donna Elvira, a noblewoman who has been seduced and abandoned by Don Giovanni. Throughout the opera, she oscillates between anger, heartbreak, and an almost obsessive desire to save him from his own wickedness. This aria appears early in Act I, shortly after she warns the peasant Zerlina about Don Giovanni's deceitful ways. When Zerlina hesitates to believe her, Elvira bursts into this passionate warning, urging her to flee from the treacherous seducer before it is too late. The melody is agitated, with rapid leaps and dramatic phrasing that convey her desperation.

Translation

Ah, fuggi il traditor!
Non lo lasciar più dir!
Il labbro è mentitor,
fallace il ciglio.
Da' miei tormenti impara
A creder a quel cor,
E nasca il tuo timor
Dal mio periglio.

The traitor means deceit!
His flatt'ry heed thou not,
While yet there's time, retreat,
Or woe befall thee.
From wrong unjust and cruel,
From long remorse and tears,
From wasted lonely years
I would recall thee.

Carlisle Floyd (1926–2021) was a prominent composer of American opera during the 1950's and 1960's. One of his most successful operas written in 1955 during McCarthyism, *Susannah* became the model for American opera itself. *Susannah* follows the biblical story of “Susannah and the Elders” and is set in a mountain valley town in Tennessee. “Ain’t it a Pretty Night” is Susannah’s first aria, in which she confides in her friend that what she wants most is to go see the world beyond their small community but is afraid she might grow homesick in the process of leaving what she knows behind. The constantly changing meter and keys symbolize her different thoughts and desires as she sings them.

“Trees on the Mountain” is Susannah’s second aria in the larger work. Because she is now the town’s social pariah, and is blamed for the community’s problems. After fleeing from her church, the local reverend visits her house to prod her to make a confession and repent of a sin she has not committed. She sings this melancholy folk tune, “Trees on the Mountain,” to express her sorrow that she has been abandoned. The simplistic yet haunting melody displays Susannah’s desire for acceptance, but also her longing for something more.

Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990) was the first American-born conductor to receive international acclaim and was one of the most important musical figures of his time. Known widely for his musical theatre works such as *West Side Story* and *On the Town*, Bernstein also dipped his toes into writing operettas, such as *Candide*. Dubbed a box-office failure in 1957, the operetta’s score has been re-vitalized and popularized over the last few decades, keeping the work alive. “Glitter and be Gay” is a song sung by Cunegonde, the main love interest. After being made a courtesan for a noble house, Cunegonde realizes that her situation could be much worse. She laments that though her virtue is no longer intact, she at least is being very well taken care of.

“The Audition” is one of the final songs of the award-winning movie *La La Land* from 2016. The song, composed by Justin Hurwitz with lyrics by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, portrays the struggles, dreams, experiences, and aspirations of Hollywood and Broadway actors. It raises a toast to “the fools who dream,” and makes the overwhelming statement that the glory and the outcome always justify the struggles of the climb to achieve them. After moving through multiple keys and tempos, the emotional climax of the piece happens when Mia exclaims that one must pursue one’s passion in the face of adversity.