

The University of Michigan-Flint
Department of Music
presents

Jerry Vargo, bass baritone
Holly Richardson, piano
in
Senior Recital

March 30th, 2020; 7:30pm, French Hall 164

Program

Handel Arias

“O Ruddier than the Cherry” from *Acis and Galatea* George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

“Ombra Mai Fu” from *Serse* George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Selections from *Wintereisse*

22. “Mut!” Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

23. “Die Nebensonnen” Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

24. “Der Leiermann” Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

English Tales of Life

“Sea Fever” John Ireland (1879-1962)

“Fear No More the Heat o’ the Sun” from *Let Us Garlands Bring* Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)

“Come Away, Come Away, Death” from *Let Us Garlands Bring* Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)

Intermission

Selections from Gabriel Faure

“Les Berceaux” from <i>Trois Melodies Op. 23</i>	Gabriel Faure (1845-1924)
“Automne” from <i>Trois Melodies Op. 18</i>	Gabriel Faure (1845-1924)
“Mandoline” from <i>Cinq Melodies</i>	Gabriel Faure (1845-1924)

Musical Theater

“C’est Moi!” from <i>Camelot</i>	Frederick Loewe (1901-1988)
“If Ever I Would Leave You” from <i>Camelot</i>	Frederick Loewe (1901-1988)
“Some Enchanted Evening” from <i>South Pacific</i>	Richard Rogers (1902-1979)

In partial fulfillment of the Bachelor of Music Performance degree program

The University of Michigan-Flint is a fully accredited member of the National Association of Schools of Music.

Recital Program Notes

Handel Arias

“O Ruddier than the Cherry” from *Acis and Galatea*

“Ombra Mai Fu” from *Serse*

With its cascading melismas yet bouncy and playful melodic line, “O Ruddier than the Cherry” truly embodies the oafish character who sings this aria in *Acis and Galatea*. George Frideric Handel wrote this opera as his first in English, and it was a smashing success. It is the opera that was most performed during his lifetime! Polyphemus, a cyclops from Greek mythology, has fallen deeply in love with the sea nymph Galatea, but alas she only has eyes for the human Acis. The cyclops’ bombastic character makes for a thrilling ride through the aria, paired with a sturdy and sonorous accompaniment from the piano. English poet John Gay is credited with the libretto for the opera, and his colorful language creates even more of a vivid imagery of the desires of the lumbering cyclops.

Steadfast and true, the plane tree of “Ombra Mai Fu” is a strong symbol in Handel’s opera *Serse*. Based on the King of Persia and his castle, *Serse* was not a very popular opera of its time. It flopped after only five shows, mainly because it was too in between the lines of humor and serious content. However, the melody of “Ombra Mai Fu” has been nicknamed “Largo,” and is often performed due to its timeless beauty. The aria is very broad and powerful, nearly spilling over with sound from the performer. I liken this to the outward pouring of love of the king toward the things in his life he can trust. The accompaniment is very neat and tidy, but the melody’s leaps and dissonances create a very austere and almost jagged quality to the aria. I try to capture what I see as the drought of loneliness and a pained love to still be outwardly expressed.

Selections from *Wintereisse*, by Franz Schubert

“Mut!”

“Die Nebensonnen”

“Der Leiermann”

A slow and painful death is everyone’s worst nightmare. In the song cycle *Wintereisse*, by Franz Schubert, the nameless character has stranded himself in the woods to complete this very deed in the middle of winter. He has left a lover to be alone, and isolates himself to meet his fate as slowly and painfully as possible. “Mut!” – which translates to “confidence” – flies past with the fervor of the bone-chilling winds it describes. There is an ugly kind of resolve that manifests as pure glee, as these last three songs chronicle the end to what has been a gruesome journey into death. “Die Nebensonnen” is a strangely calm contrast to the sonorities in “Mut!” as the character compares the three aspects of his life to three “suns” he sees setting in the sky. The first two can be seen as the emotional and spiritual sides to his life. The last sun that refuses to set is his physical life, all he has left to wither. “Der Leiermann” brings the entire song cycle to a somewhat inconclusive close. The music swirls in hypnotic circles as the character begins to describe a strange musical man who is hovering outside his city. This song holds potent fear and a sense of madness, concluding the song cycle as the audience realizes that the man and the character are one in the same. This has been a transformative journey, but in the most horrific way possible. Wilhelm Muller, the German librettist, wrote this song cycle within a year of his

death, and Schubert composed the music within a year of his own death as well. The text is powerful, the music impassioned, and the lingering bite of *Wintereisse* makes for a very exhilarating sing.

English Set:

“Sea Fever” by John Ireland

“Fear No More the Heat o’ the Sun” from *Let Us Garlands Bring* by Gerald Finzi

“Come Away, Come Away, Death” from *Let Us Garlands Bring* by Gerald Finzi

Much different than the hypnotic rocking of “Les Berceaux,” “Sea Fever” by John Ireland gives a very different interpretation to a life at sea. The music sends broad waves of sound as the singer follows lines that sound akin to a folk song sailors would’ve sung together. The free and lightweight melody is contrasted by dark and luscious chords in the accompaniment, adding a very reminiscent quality to the work. John Masfield, the librettist, served time as a merchant mariner before becoming a writer, and wrote the stories of his adventures in *Salt-water Ballads*. The text of “Sea Fever” comes from one of these poems. John Ireland was also a lover of the sea, and would’ve lived near the Channel Islands had it not been for the outbreak of World War II. Very understanding of the darkness that surrounds the open ocean, Ireland creates the kind of stormy atmosphere that allows both the singer and audience to feel the cascading and raw power of the sea, and how – for the character singing – it is a life he wishes he could embrace again.

Boasting powerful Shakespearean text, *Let Us Garlands Bring* is a song cycle which breathes music into the questions of life Shakespeare intended to provoke through his writings. “Fear No More the Heat o’ The Sun” is a message of reassurance to those who have passed and to those having the pain of that loss. Each new stanza of text receives a melodic motif that almost makes it hymn-like to sing. The piano accompaniment is broad and grounded. This creates a sense of “home” to further comfort the listener that all is tied to something warmer and stronger than we ever imagined. The short recitative section grants a prayer-like blessing over the deceased, but the piece is closed with the original hymn to give one last warmth of heart. Gerald Finzi dedicated this song cycle to his fellow English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams for his birthday, and it was known that Vaughan Williams highly admired the work. In “Come Away, Come Away, Death,” a very disjunct yet flowing melody is paired with powerful blows of chords. The text speaks of wanting to die, and one can hear how the grief throbs through this seemingly strange music. The recurrent piano “stomps” presented at the beginning and restatement of the theme are evidence that Finzi wanted to create a very hopeless, marching gait for the singer to communicate. In doing so, he captures some of the darkest and forlorn feelings that we can have looming over our heads.

French Set:

“Les Berceaux” from *Trois Melodies Op. 23* by Gabriel Faure

“Automne” from *Trois Melodies Op. 18* by Gabriel Faure

“Mandoline” from *Cinq Melodies* by Gabriel Faure

In the selection “Les Berceaux” dark minor chords rocking in the piano create a very vivid image of a dark port at night, where a sailor is contemplating the love of voyaging but how it takes him away from his life and family. The piano lines rock in a pattern similar to waves

against a shore, no doubt crafted from the excellent pianist mind of Gabriel Faure, who was a gifted pianist throughout his life. The hypnotic motion of the music builds and swells to a very powerful passion he feels chasing his dreams. The work is full of love and longing, and the vocal lines swell in a very exciting and powerful way. “Automne,” also by Faure, is just as robust and strong. The work has a much more austere and solid motion, creating the swirling of leaves and change of time that is characteristic to “autumn.” The song tells of remembering a time of youth and love, and how the world is not so bright anymore. The vocal lines swell in an upward climb that tells of the overflowing emotion that comes with change and losing things you once held dear. In “Mandoline,” however, the accompaniment is light and bouncy to begin. This playful tune never loses its momentum, and I believe that the satirical content of its verse becomes much more potent when disguised in a dance. The lines bounce and spin as if in feigned laughter, adding to the quality of mocking the subject of the piece. Paul Verlaine, the librettist for “Mandoline,” had already hidden sentiments about society’s highest and most “normal” citizens within the lines of his poetry. Faure’s genius setting of the text brings the poet’s words to life, speaking to us about his most inner feelings about the world around him.

Musical Theater Set

“C’est Moi” from *Camelot* by Frederick Loewe and Alan Jay Lerner

“If Ever I Would Leave You” from *Camelot* by Frederick Loewe and Alan Jay Lerner

“Some Enchanted Evening” from *South Pacific* by Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein

With the bright and shining splendor of Camelot ahead, Sir Lancelot of France is sure his skill and virtue will win the heart of yet another successful allegiance. In “C’est Moi,” from the musical *Camelot*, we first view what appears to be the perfect and most confident man of his time. He has never failed, and yet his biggest failure is just on the horizon. For now, however, it is a thrill to bring this very unshielded and gawdy character to life. A theme song of sorts, “C’est” Moi has very defined verses of silly text, followed by a laid back chorus akin to a drinking song. This truly creates a storybook kind of mood in the air and gets us excited set to see how the rest of this story will unfold. Falling madly in love with soon-to-be Queen Guinevere, Lancelot’s charm and swagger cause not only her infatuation with him, but her infidelity to King Arthur as well. After a stolen night together, Guinevere attempts to shun Lancelot in attempts to save what little morals she has left. “If Ever I Would Leave You” is Lancelot’s charisma at full strength, and is absolutely overflowing with emotion in its lines. The song is Lancelot proclaiming the fullness of his love for Guinevere, and so spins and builds upward into gorgeous sustained high notes. The splendor of the seasons in the text help the singer imagine lush backdrops full of romance, and the beauty of the piece is in its ability to sweep you off your feet in conviction. How could she not love a man so sure?

Love in a rather unexpected way, the musical *South Pacific* explores the island romance between a French planter Emile and a small-town American Naval nurse Nellie. The song “Some Enchanted Evening” tells of Emile’s falling in love with a complete stranger at first sight. The melody unravels itself in the same way that feelings may rush unexpectedly when you feel love’s pull. The piano accompaniment is warm but full of motion, as the text explains all the wonderful things that are suddenly happening as Emile falls in love. This piece conveys much more than just romantic love, but a type of ease and reassurance that are only from the chance of a lifetime. Although the love of these two will be challenged throughout the musical, it is the steadfast calm

over “Some Enchanted Evening” that leads their undeniable feelings back home for a very happy ending.

Works Cited

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Foreign Language Translations: Poetic

Ombra Mai Fu (from aria-database.com)

Recitative:

Tender and beautiful fronds
of my beloved plane tree,
Let Fate smile upon you .
May thunder, lightning, and storms
never bother your dear peace,
Nor may you by blowing winds be profaned.

Aria:

Never was made
A vegetable (a plant)
more dear and loving
or gentle.

Selections from *Wintereisse* (taken from lieder.net)

Mut!

Should the snow fly in my face
I'll just shake it from me.
Should my heart speak from my breast
I'll sing bright and cheerful.

Hearing not what it may say,
That is not for my ears.
Feeling not that it protests,
Protest is now foolish.

Merry in the world I go
Swept by wind and weather!
Want no God to be on earth:
We ourselves are gods now.

Die Nebensonnen

I saw three suns in the sky,
I stared at them long and hard;
And they, too, stood staring
As if unwilling to leave me.
Ah, but you are not my suns!
Stare at others in the face, then:
Until recently I, too, had three;
Now the best two are gone.
But let the third one go, too!
In the darkness I will fare better.

Der Leiermann

There, behind the village,
stands a hurdy-gurdy-man,
And with numb fingers
he plays the best he can.

Barefoot on the ice,
he staggers back and forth,
And his little plate
remains ever empty.

No one wants to hear him,
no one looks at him,
And the hounds snarl
at the old man.

And he lets it all go by,
everything as it will,
He plays, and his hurdy-gurdy
is never still.

Strange old man,

shall I go with you?
Will you play your hurdy-gurdy

Les Berceaux (from lieder.net)

Along the quay, the great ships
that the sea-swells tilt in silence,
take no notice of the cradles
rocked by the hands of women.

But the day of parting will come,
because women must weep
and curious men must be tempted
toward horizons that will delude them!

And that day, the great ships,
fleeing from the port that grows small,
will feel their mass restrained
by the soul of distant cradles.

Automne (from lieder.net)

Autumn, time of misty skies and heart-breaking horizons,
of rapid sunsets and pale dawns,
I watch your melancholy days
flow past like a torrent.

My thoughts borne off on the wings of regret
(as if our time could ever be relived!)
dreamingly wander the enchanted slopes
where my youth once used to smile.

In the bright sunlight of triumphant memory
I feel the scattered roses reblooming in bouquets;
and tears well up in my eyes, tears which my heart
at twenty had already forgotten!

Mandoline

The givers of serenades
And the lovely women who listen
Exchange insipid words
Under the singing branches.

There is Thyrsis and Amyntas
And there's the eternal Clytander,
And there's Damis who, for many a
Heartless woman, wrote many a tender verse.

Their short silk coats,
Their long dresses with trains,
Their elegance, their joy
And their soft blue shadows,

Whirl around in the ecstasy
Of a pink and grey moon,
And the mandolin prattles
Among the shivers from the breeze.