GRACE RYAN

Senior Recital

Murray and Michele Allen Recital Hall
2330 North Halsted Street • Chicago
Sunday, April 28, 2024 • 3:00 PM
Allen Recital Hall

Grace Ryan, mezzo soprano
Senior Recital

Jennifer McCabe, piano

Program

Florence Price (1887-1953)
An April Day (1949)

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)
Selections from Polish Songs Op. 74 (C. 1829)
Życzenie
Gdzie lubi

Ambroise Thomas (1811-1896)
Connais-tu le pays? (1866)

Hugo Wolf (1860-1903)
Kennst du das land? (1891)

Friedrich von Flotow (1812-1883)
Teure Lady! ... Das is traurig, ach, und trübe (1847)
Cristina Rosheger, soprano

- Intermission -

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)
I. A Cradle Song
II. A Highland Balou
III. Sephestia’s Lullaby
IV. A Charm
V. The Nurse’s Song

Grace Ryan is from the studio of Scott Ramsay. This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the degree Bachelor of Music.

As a courtesy to those around you, please silence all cell phones and other electronic devices. Flash photography is not permitted. Masks are recommended, but not required inside the Holtschneider Performance Center.
Al Hoffman (1902-1960); Mack David (1912-1993); Jerry Livingston (1909-1987)
A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes (1950)

Jules Massenet (1842-1912)
Enfin, je suis ici (1899)

Stephen Sondheim (1930-2021)
On the Steps of the Palace (1987)

Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)
Nacqui all’affanno.. Non più mesta (1817)

ABBA: Benny Andersson (b. 1946); Björn Ulvaeus (b. 1945); Frida Lyngstad (b. 1945); Agnetha Fältskog (b. 1950)
Thank You for the Music (1977)
PROGRAM NOTES

Florence Price (1887-1953)
An April Day (1949)
Duration: 3 minutes
Throughout her lifetime, Florence Price made strides as a Black female composer, making history as the first Black woman to have her symphony performed by a major orchestra, here in Chicago. Born in Arkansas in 1887, Price grew up surrounded by music, and pursued organ and piano performance in college. She found great inspiration in African American folk songs and spirituals that she would integrate with neo-Romantic style. Price and her family joined the Great Migration in 1926 due to race riots in the South and settled in Chicago, where she was surrounded by a vibrant music community. By the time of her death, she had created a name for herself as one of the best composers of her generation, despite the racial and gendered discrimination she faced. An April Day is one of Price’s art songs. Written in 1949 and using text from famous American poet Joseph Seamon Cotter, Jr., Price paints an image of a beautiful spring day with lush piano accompaniment, representing a gentle April breeze that feels like a sigh of content.

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)
Selections from Polish Songs Op. 74 (C. 1829)
Duration: 3 minutes
Frédéric Chopin was a Romantic composer and gifted pianist who wrote primarily solo works for his own instrument. He grew up in Warsaw, and although he later moved to Paris, his love for Poland remained in his life and music. Though he enjoyed opera, Chopin never composed any operatic works and only produced 19 total songs, none of which were published in his lifetime. Many of his first songs for voice and piano were casual collaborations with friends. Among these was poet Stefan Witwicki, with whom Chopin shared an interest in Polish nationalism. Zyczenie and Gdzie Lubi were two songs he set to Witwicki’s poetry.

Zyczenie, translating to “A Maiden’s Wish”, is a clear example of the mazurka, a lively folk dance that first became popular in rural Poland before spreading to European salons in the 19th century. The sweet and loving text of the poem is met with a simplistic and delicate melodic line representing the maiden’s heartfelt and tender wish to be always with her love. Gdzie Lubi, or “Where She Loves”, is a flirtatious text (with the alternate title of “The Fickle Maid”) in which a young girl wonders where she can find love, or a place for her heart to be at home, as she declares she is ultimately powerless in where she is being led. Here, we also hear a triple meter folk influence, creating a playful and lighthearted setting of the text.
Ambroise Thomas (1811-1896)
Connais-tu le pays? (1866)
Hugo Wolf (1860-1903)
Kennst du das land? (1891)

Duration: 10 minutes

These two arias use the same text set by two different composers in their own respective languages—French and German. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) is regarded as one of the greatest German poets and novelists in history. Though Gounod’s beloved opera Faust is perhaps the best-known operatic setting of Goethe’s work, many European composers were drawn to another of his novels, Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship, and in particular, the young female character named “Mignon”. In the novel, a young and handsome merchant, Wilhelm, rescues Mignon, who had been kidnapped. Mignon grows close with her rescuer but dies of a broken heart when she learns that Wilhelm does not love her in return. This tragic story has inspired countless settings by various composers of works categorized as Mignon Leider.

“Connais-tu le pays?” is an aria from Ambroise Thomas’ opera Mignon. Premiered at the Paris Opéra-Comique, Thomas’ retelling of the famous story surprisingly featured a happy ending (at that time, tragic operas were only allowed to be performed at the Paris Opéra), and met with great success, with over 1,500 performances, despite German critics who were unhappy with its departure from Goethe’s original text. “Connais-tu le pays?” has remained its most popular excerpted aria, as the entire opera is seldomly performed today. “Kennst du das land?” is an art song from Wolf’s Goethe Lieder cycle, which features many dramatic settings of Goethe’s text. The setting is much darker than Thomas’ aria, which feels like a wistful memory and longing. Instead, Wolf’s art song evokes feelings of desperation, deep pain, and sorrow. Mignon cries out as her heart aches to find her way home, completely powerless and lacking control of her own situation.

Friedrich von Flotow (1812-1883)
Teure Lady! … Das is traurig, ach, und trübe (1847)

Duration: 5 minutes

German composer Friedrich von Flotow wrote over 30 operas, but gained most fame through his comic opera, Martha, which premiered in Vienna in 1847. Though its popularity has sadly diminished, it was once one of the most frequently performed German operas. With a Cosi fan tutte-like plot (with the gender dynamics reversed), the story centers around two women—Lady Hariette and her lady-in-waiting, Nancy. Both are tired of court life and decide to visit a local fair disguised as villagers for fun, where they play tricks on farmers Plumkett and Lyonel, who fall head over heels for the women. Mischief and chaos ensue, and while the men are shocked, each of the couples reveal their true identities, and celebrations of love arise. The result is a comedic, feel-good love story. “Teure Lady!” is the first duet between Lady and Nancy. Lady is depressed and bored with her
royal high life, and Nancy encourages her to have fun and explore new adventures that will excite her.

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)
*A Charm of Lullabies, Op. 41 (1947)*

*Duration: 11 minutes*

Benjamin Britten wrote his song cycle *A Charm of Lullabies* for English mezzo-soprano Nancy Evans, for whom he also created the role of Nancy in *Albert Herring* (1947). Britten selected five different poems from a British anthology of lullabies, setting each text to music that represented the stories, many of which are frightening and not what we may think of as lullabies. Poet and painter William Blake's "A Cradle Song" is perhaps the lightest and most traditional—reminiscing on soft smiles and desires, the caretaker paints beautiful images to put the baby to sleep, while wishing for sleep herself. "The Highland Balou" is somewhat darker and odder, with a Scottish text by Robert Burns speaking of wishing the baby success in stealing and conning people. Britten keeps the music lighthearted, using Scottish folk song influence to mimic an "oed sook" (a cattle-calling song).

The text of "Sephestia’s Lullaby" is by Robert Greene, a popular novelist and playwright who abandoned his wife and child for his mistress. The poem speaks of a mother trying to quiet a child she did not want but was forced to have by the baby’s father; perhaps reflective of the Greene’s real-life family dynamic, the text and music are filled with a panicked despair. “A Charm”, with text by Thoms Randolph, shouts threats to a crying child to go to sleep and be quiet. Its quick and contrasting changes of dynamic and tempo exemplify different fits of anger and frustration.

The final piece, “Nurse’s Song”, by John Philip is that of a nurse singing to a child who has woken up in the middle of the night. Much of it is sung without accompaniment, reflecting the silence of the night and the isolation of the baby and its caretaker, who are the only ones awake. Britten’s song cycle serves a tradition of our perception of women, particularly as they enter motherhood, while also paying tribute to nurseries run by servants of the upper class, single women who dedicated their lives to bringing up children.

Al Hoffman (1902-1960); Mack David (1912-1993);
Jerry Livingston (1909-1987)
*A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes (1950)*

Jules Massenet (1842-1912)
*Enfin, je suis ici (1899)*

Stephen Sondheim (1930-2021)
*On the Steps of the Palace (1987)*

Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)
*Nacqui all’affanno.. Non più mesta (1817)*

*Duration: 16 minutes*

The next set of pieces features four different settings of the classic tale of Cinderella, which derives from French novelist Charles Perrault in 1697.
Disney’s classic 1950 film Cinderella was one of its biggest hits, and received several Academy Award nominations for its music, including the optimistic tune “A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes” sung by Cinderella at the beginning of the movie. Massenet’s “Enfin, je suis ici” comes from his 1899 opera, Cendrillon. Translating to “at last, I am here”, Cendrillon returns home from the ball after midnight, frightened and alarmed. Riddled with guilt and fear, she recalls her journey home and reminds herself to have courage. “On The Steps of the Palace” comes from Stephen Sondheim’s famous Broadway musical, Into the Woods, which draws its inspiration from the slightly darker and more gruesome retelling of the Cinderella story by the Grimm Brothers in 1812. And lastly, “Non più mesta” is the closing aria of Rossini’s bel canto masterpiece, La Cenerentola. Translating to “No longer sad”, Cenerentola has found her prince charming, and will soon get to marry him. With soaring coloratura, her excitement is uncontainable.

ABBA
Thank you for the music (1977)
Duration: 3 minutes
The famous Swedish pop group ABBA was formed in 1972, and has developed into one of the most successful music groups of all time, boasting record sales of over 300 million sold worldwide. “Thank You For the Music” is a song released on their fifth album, which was originally written as an encore for a mini-musical, “The Girl With Golden Hair”. However, it grew to become one of the group’s most famous songs through the musical, Mamma Mia. Mamma Mia was one of the first successful jukebox musicals, using music from a popular band to create a fictional story of a mother and daughter, Donna and Sophie. In the musical, Sophie seeks to find her dad, whom she has never met, and invites three of Donna’s old summer flings to her wedding, hoping that she will be able to recognize her real dad so he can give her away. She sings “Thank You For the Music”, a tribute to a beautiful childhood filled with song and dance, expressing her gratitude for the arts. As she reflects on what has truly mattered the most to her throughout her life, she has found an incomparable joy in music.

As I finish my undergraduate studies, I am so endlessly grateful for the support of my loved ones as I pursue my dreams. My family has given me the gift of music, and I don’t know where I would be without them.

Notes by Grace Ryan
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