

PROGRAM NOTES EXAMPLE

"I pay no attention whatever to anybody's praise or blame. I simply follow my own feelings."
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791)

Representing the First Viennese School is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, a well-known, prolific composer of the Classical Era. A true child prodigy (he started composing at around age 5), Mozart wrote a huge amount of music over the course of his short life. He did not, unfortunately, live to see financial success during his lifetime. He died deeply in debt and was buried in a common grave, the site of which is now unknown.

Commissioned to Mozart by Emperor Josef II, *Così fan tutte* is an opera buffa (comic opera, with an interesting title. *Così* means "in this way" or "like this." *Fan* means "do." *Tutte* is the Italian feminine version for "all." So the title can be translated as, "In this way do all (women)", or "Like this do all (women)."

In this opera, Don Alfonso, a curmudgeonly philosopher, is determined to prove to his two young friends, Guglielmo and Ferrando, that their fiancées, Fiordiligi and Dorabella, are, like any other women, not to be trusted. Along with the quintessential crafty chambermaid, Despina, Alfonso hatches a plan. First he tells the sisters that, as officers, their lovers have been called up on duty. He then introduces the sisters to two Albanians, who are, of course, Guglielmo and Ferrando disguised. Despite personal conflicts, the two women do succumb to the advances of the men. However, Don Alfonso's plot is revealed and the sisters are reconciled with their original lovers.

Una donna a quindici anni is an aria sung by Despina to Fiordiligi and Dorabella in order to coax them into entertaining the two "Albanian soldiers." The mischievous exuberance of the song makes it one of my favorites. Despina is simply teaching the sisters what any girl of fifteen or older should already know: the art of flirting.

Una donna a quindici anni

Text and Translation:

Una donna a quindici anni
De'e saper ogni gran moda
Dove il diavolo ha la coda
Cosa e bene, e mal cos'e.
De'e saper le maliziette
Che innamorano gli amanti
Finger riso, finger pianti
Inventar i bei perche.

A woman of 15 years
Must know all the good methods,
Where the devil keeps his tail,
What's good and what's bad.
She must know the little malices
That enamour lovers:
To feign laughter, to feign tears,
And invent good reasons.

De'e in un momento dar retta a cento
Colle pupille parlar con mille
Dar speme a tutti, sien belli o brutti,
Saper nascondersi senza confondersi,
Senz'arrossire saper mentire.
E qual regina dall'alto soglio
Col posso e voglio farsi ubbidir
(Par ch'abbian gusto di tal dottrina,
Viva Despina che sa servir!)

She must pay attention to a hundred at a time
Speak through her eyes with a thousand
Give hope to all, be they handsome or ugly,
Know how to obfuscate without getting confused
And know how to lie without blushing.
And this queen from her high throne
Can make them obey with, "I can," and "I want."
(It seems they like this doctrine,
Long live Despina, who knows how to serve!)

"Without craftsmanship, inspiration is a mere reed shaken in the wind"
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Brahms' music is rooted in tradition. He has often been called the last of the great classical masters, the spirit of his music being closer to that of Beethoven's than any of his contemporaries. His aim seemed to be to show that new ideas could be communicated through traditional form. The meticulous, highly constructed nature of Brahms' works was a starting point and an inspiration for a generation of composers.

Both of the Brahms selections are vignettes of memories frozen in tableau. Neither of the texts reveals specifics, and neither need to.

The text for *Wie Melodien* is by the poet Klaus Groth (1819 – 1899), who was a personal friend of Brahms. The poem depicts of the elusiveness of a memory which resists being captured and reproduced on paper. Perhaps the thought is so finely nuanced that mere words cannot do it justice.

Wie Melodien

Text and Translation:

Wie Melodien zieht es
Mir leise durch den Sinn,
Wie Frühlingsblumen blüht es,
Und schwebt wie Duft dahin.

It moves like a melody,
gently through my mind,
it blossoms like spring flowers,
and wafts away like fragrance.

Doch kommt das Wort und faßt es
Und führt es vor das Aug,
Wie Nebelgrau erblaßt es
Und schwindet wie ein Hauch.

But when in words it is captured
and placed before my eyes,
like a gray mist it pales
and disappears like a breath.

Und dennoch ruht im Reime
Verborgen wohl ein Duft,
Den mild aus stillem Keime
Ein feuchtes auge ruft.

And yet resting in rhymes
hides still a fragrance,
which mildly from the quietest bud
my moist eyes call forth.

In Waldeseinsamkeit is a picture of nature as a source of solace. The song expresses a palpable, intimate longing that is at once beautiful and heartrending. The poem is by Karl Von Lemcke, (1831-1913), from *Lieder und Gedichte*, Hamburg, published 1861.

In Waldeseinsamkeit

Text and Translation

Ich saß zu deinen Füßen
In Waldeseinsamkeit;
Windesatmen, Sehnen
Ging durch die Wipfel breit.

I sat at your feet
In the solitude of the forest;
The breath of the wind, like longing
went through the treetops broad.

In stummen Ringen senkt' ich
Das Haupt in deinen Schoß
Und meine bebenden Hände
Um deine Knie ich schloß.

In silent struggle I sank
my head into your lap,
And my trembling hands
I clasped about your knees.

Die Sonne ging hinunter,
Der Tag verglühte all,
Ferne, ferne, ferne
Sang eine Nachtigall.

The sun set
The day lost its glow,
Far, far, far
Sang a nightingale.

**"Your ears will always lead you right, but you must know why."
Anton Webern (1843-1918)**

Representing the second Viennese School is Anton Webern. Best known as a student of Arnold Schoenberg, Webern became one of the best-known exponents of the twelve-tone serial technique.

He was well-educated and he had a deep love of nature, often outlining ideas for compositions in his sketchbooks by associating movements with alpine flowers and mountain retreats. He had an appreciation for the lieder of Hugo Wolf and Richard Strauss. In a journal entry on November 29, 1900, Webern mentioned Brahms' *In Waldeseinsamkeit* for particular praise.

Webern's later composition style has been linked with Pointillism, and his new ideas regarding organization of pitch, dynamics, timbre and rhythm paved the way for total serialism. On September 15, 1945, during the Allied occupation of Austria, he was accidentally shot dead by an American Army soldier when, despite the curfew in effect, he stepped outside the house to enjoy a smoke.

The group of songs I've chosen was not written using twelve-tone technique, which Webern did not begin to use until the early 1920s. Rather, *Vier Leider Op. 12* are stunning examples of expressionist atonality written between 1915 and 1917. The songs are characteristically succinct, yet penetratingly haunting.

The first in the set, *Der Tag ist Vergangen*, is labeled a folksong. The text is by the Austrian poet, Peter Rosegger (1843-1918).

Der Tag ist Vergangen

Text and Translation:

Der Tag ist vergangen,
Die Nacht ist schon hier;
Gute Nacht, o Maria,
Bleib ewig bei mir.

The day is gone,
the night is soon here;
Good night, o Maria,
Stay always by me.

Der Tag ist vergangen,
Die Nacht kommt herzu;
Gib auch den Verstorbenen
Die ewige Ruh.

The day is gone,
the night comes soon;
Give also to the dead
eternal rest.

The second in the set, *Die Geheimnisvolle Flöte* (the secret-full flute), is a setting of a Chinese poem by the great Tang period poet, Li-Tai-Po (701-762). Translation was by a Hans Bethge German poet who is best known for his versions of Tang Dynasty poetry. The rhythm of Bethge's language and his free versification inspired settings by more than 180 composers, among them Anton Webern and Gustav Mahler, who was said to have been the most influential composer to Webern's work other than Arnold Schoenberg. Mahler had, in *Das Lied von der Erde* (1908), set poetry by Li-Tai-Po from Hans Bethge's *Die Chinesische Flöte*, the same volume from which *die Geheimnisvolle Flöte* is taken.

Die Geheimnisvolle Flöte

Text and Translation:

An einem Abend,
da die Blume dufteten
und alle Blätter an den Bäumen,
trug der Wind mir das Lied einer entfernten
Flöte zu.
Da schnitt ich ein Weidenzweig vom Strauche,
und mein Lied flog, Antwort gebend,
durch die bluhende Nacht.
Seit jenem Abend hören,
wenn die Erde schläft,
die Vogel ein Gespräch in ihrer Sprache.

One evening,
when the flowers sent out their fragrance
and all the leaves on the trees
the wind carried to me the song of a distant flute.
Then I cut a willow branch from the bush,
and my song flew, giving answer
through the blossoming night.
Every evening hear,
when the earth sleeps,
the birds (a) chat in their own language.

The text for the third song, *Schein mir's, als ich sah die Sonne*, is from a 1908 expressionist chamber play by Swedish author and playwright, August Strindberg (1849-1912), entitled *Gespensersonate*, or Ghost Sonata. Strindberg created *The Ghost Sonata* with Beethoven's *Geistertrio*, Opus 70, No. 1, in D Major in mind, and the play echoes the style of the music. It creates an atmosphere by repeating various themes, rather than developing a story through conventional portrayals of character and a linear plot. The characters in *The Ghost Sonata* speak, move and act as if they are part of a dream—or a nightmare. One sees glimpses of the future; another embodies tragedies from the past. There are literal ghosts and vampires in the play, as well as a mysterious woman known as the Mummy, who lives in a closet.

Schien mir's, als ich sah die Sonne,
daß ich schaute den Verborgnen:
jeder Mensch genießt die Werke,
selig, der das Gute übet.
Für die Zornestat, die du verübtest,
büße nicht mit Bosheit;
tröste den, den du betrübtest,
gütig, und es wird dir frommen.
Der nur fürchtet,
der sich hat vergangen:
gut ist schuldlos leben.

Seemed to me, as I saw the sun,
I also saw the Hidden One:
every man enjoyed the work,
blessed, he that does good.
For the anger that you committed,
answer not with evil;
comfort them that you have wronged,
and be kind, for it will benefit you.
They only are afraid,
those who have passed:
good is guiltless living.

The last song in the group, *Gleich und Gleich*, is a setting of one of Goethe's later, "nature-philosophical" poems. It is the first work Webern wrote after spending nearly two years in the Austrian army. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), was a German poet, playwright, novelist, and natural philosopher. Over 700 of his verses have been set as solo lieder by almost 600 composers.

Gleich und Gleich

Text and Translation:

Ein Blumenglockchen vom Boden hervor
war früh gesprosset in lieblichem Flor;
da kam ein Bienchen und naschte fein:
Die müssen wohl biede für einander sein.

A little bell flower from the ground sprang up
was early blooming in lovely bloom:
then came a bee and nibbled fine:
They must have been made for one another.

"Unable are the Loved to die, for Love is Immortality."
Jean Pierre Claris de Florian (1755-1794).

Plaisir D'Amour is a well-known romance by Johann-Paul Martini (1741-1816). Martini was a German composer who moved to France in 1760 and spent most of his career there. The song echoes a bittersweet, popular theme of the time: attachment to unfaithful love. Incidentally, *Plaisir D'Amour* shares many elements with, and was presumably the inspiration for, Elvis Presley's *I Can't Help Falling in Love with You*. Text is by the poet, Jean Pierre Claris de Florian.

Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un moment:
Chagrin d'amour dure toute la vie.

The pleasure of love lasts only one moment;
The regret of love lasts one's whole life.

J'ai tout quitté pour l'ingrate Sylvie;
Elle me quitte et prend un autre amant.

I left everything for ungrateful Sylvie;
she leaves me and takes another lover.

"Tant que cette eau coulera doucement
Vers ce ruisseau qui borde la prairie,
Je t'aimerai," me répétait Sylvie,
L'eau coule encor, elle a changé pourtant.

"As long as the water flows softly
toward this brook that borders the plain,
I will love you," repeated Sylvie to me,
The water still flows, but she has changed.

Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un moment:
Chagrin d'amour dure toute la vie.

The pleasure of love lasts only one moment;
The regret of love lasts one's whole life.

"As a musician I tell you that if you were to suppress adultery, fanaticism, crime, evil, the supernatural, there would no longer be the means for writing one note."

Georges Bizet (1838 -1875)

Georges Alexandre César Léopold Bizet is best known for his controversial-for-the-time opera, *Carmen*. However, *Ouvre ton Coeur* first appeared in *Vasco da Gama*, a symphonic ode based on Luís Vaz de Camões' epic poem, *The Lusiad*. Though *Vasco da Gama* is rarely heard, *Ouvre ton Coeur* is often performed. Its lively Spanish flair makes this song as much fun to sing as it is to hear.

Ouvre ton Coeur

Text and Translation:

La marguerite a fermé sa corolla.
L'ombre a fermé les yeux du jour.
Belle, me tiendras-tu parole?
Ouvre ton coeur à mon amour.

The daisy has closed its petals,
The shadow has closed its eyes for the day,
Beauty, will you speak with me?
Open your heart to my love.

Ouvre ton coeur, ô jeune ange,
à ma flamme
Qu'un rêve charme ton sommeil.
Je veux reprendre mon âme,
Comme une fleur s'ouvre au soleil!

Open your heart, o young angel,
to my flame
so that a dream may charm your sleep
I wish to reclaim my soul,
as a flower turns to the sun!

"I was meant to be a composer and will be I'm sure...Don't ask me to try to forget this unpleasant thing and go play football--please."

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

When you hear the name, "Samuel Barber," it's likely you automatically think of his *Adagio for Strings*. While that stirring piece is arguably Barber's most famous, his art songs are exquisitely composed with insightful skill. I think that part of what makes Barber's songs so brilliant is his choice of texts. The pianist, John Browning, who premiered Barber's Pulitzer Prize-winning Piano Concerto, said that Barber was never without a volume or two of poetry at his bedside.

The two Barber songs on the program are interestingly connected. The first selection, *The Secrets of the Old*, is a setting of a section of a William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) poem. Yeats was involved in the Celtic Revival movement in Ireland and his poetry reflects his nationalistic ideas. His recurrent themes are the contrast of art and life, masks, cycles of life, and the image of beauty and ceremony contrasting with the mundane racket of everyday life. The second selection, *My Lizard*, is a setting of a poem by Theodore Roethke (1908-1963). An American metaphysical poet, Roethke longed to achieve the mastery of Yeats, whom he idolized. It is said that if he'd lived longer, he may have even surpassed Yeats with his visionary lyricism.

The Secrets of the Old comes from an 11-section poem called *A Man Young and Old*. The poem is full of possible meanings. The phrase, "When my blood was strong," is often associated with sexuality or youth. The last two lines, "Stories of the bed of straw/ Or the bed of down," could refer to the point in a young woman's life when, literally, she got a down mattress instead of a straw one; a sort of rite of passage. The lines could also be a reference to the women of the poem having seen both the best and worst of times.

I appreciate this song for its comical, but never disrespectful presentation of three ladies who see themselves as sages of a sort. I suspect we have all known people who, upon reaching a certain age, grant themselves permission to say and do as they please. I am reminded, with love, of my maternal grandmother.

Text:

I have old women's secrets now
That had those of the young;
Madge tells me what I dared not think
When my blood was strong,
And what had drowned a lover once
Sounds like an old song.
Though Margery is stricken dumb
If thrown in Madge's way,
We three make up a solitude;
For none alive to-day
Can know the stories that we know
Or say the things we say:
How such a man pleased women most
Of all that are gone,
How such a pair loved many years
And such a pair but one,
Stories of the bed of straw
Or the bed of down.

My Lizard is subtitled, *Wish for a Young Wife*, but upon reading it I was at once reminded of my daughter, who, like a curious lizard, is seldom still. Barber extraordinarily illustrates this perpetual motion in the accompaniment. Meanwhile, the vocal line floats above as if to bear witness to, and finally contain the carefree activity.

Text:

My lizard, my lively writher,
May your limbs never wither,
May the eyes in your face
Survive the green ice
Of envy's mean gaze;
May you live out your life
Without hate, without grief,
And your hair ever blaze,
In the sun, in the sun,
When I am undone,
When I am no one.

"There is a feeling of recognition, as of meeting an old friend, which comes to us all in the face of great artistic experiences. I had the same experience when I first heard an English folksong, when I first saw Michelangelo's Day and Night, when I suddenly came upon Stonehenge or had my first sight of New York City – the intuition that I had been there already."

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1908-1963)

Ralph Vaughan Williams was an influential English composer of symphonies, chamber music, art songs, operas, choral music, and stage music. Vaughan Williams was also a highly respected teacher, conductor, and collector/researcher of English art songs. His musical career spanned more than six decades.

Vaughan Williams' *The Sky Above the Roof* is a setting of a poem by Paul Verlaine (1844 - 1896), "*Le ciel est pardessus le toit*". Verlaine, a great symbolist poet, wrote this poem while imprisoned at Mons for the non-fatal shooting of his lover, another great poet, Arthur Rimbaud. The translation is by Mabel Dearmer, wife of the Rev. Percy Dearmer, who co-edited the *English Hymnal* with Vaughan Williams in 1904 - 1906. Mrs. Dearmer asked him to do the setting for her play, *Nan Pilgrim*. Vaughan Williams reluctantly did so.

The song's chordal accompaniment conveys a compelling, introspective sadness. To me, it is the song's simplicity that makes it so moving.

Text:

The sky above the roof
is calm and sweet.
A tree above the roof
bends in the heat.

Ah, God! A life is here.
Murmurs of strife are here,
lost in the air.
Why dost thou weep,
O heart poured out in tears?
What hast thou done, O heart,
with thy spent years?

"Nature has bigger things than even-vibration-ratios for man to learn how to use. Consonance is a relative thing (just a nice name for a nice habit). It is a natural enough part of music, but not the whole, or only one. The simplest ratios, often called perfect consonances, have been used so long and so constantly that not only music, but musicians and audiences, have become more or less soft. If they hear anything but do-mi-so or a near cousin, they have to be carried out on a stretcher."

Charles Ives (1874-1954)

Charles Ives was the son of George Ives, a cornet player, band director, theater orchestra leader, choir director, and teacher in Danbury, Connecticut, "the most musical town in Connecticut." Ives told the story of his introduction to music: his father came home one day to find the five-year old banging out the Ives Band's drum parts on the piano, using his fists. George Ives's response gave the first impetus to his son's career as a musical innovator. Rather than correcting him, George told his son, "It's all right to do that, Charles, if you know what you're doing," and sent the boy down the street for drum lessons. Thus the invention of tone clusters.

George Ives was fond of musical experiments such as playing an accompaniment in one key while having Charles sing in another key, setting two bands off marching in different directions playing different tunes so that Charles could hear what it sounded like when they approached and passed one another. Given such a colorful musical background, it makes sense that Charles Ives would compose diverse and experimental, yet familiar and nationalistic music.

Charles Ives began composing at thirteen, simple fiddle tunes and marches and church songs. Ives' adult works are innovative masterpieces. Ives quoted his father as saying, "What has sound got to do with music?!" To Charles Ives, music was not simply notes on a page and pretty sounds. Music was life itself.

Even so, Ives' music was not always understood during his lifetime. His affinity for dissonance, bi-tonality, quotations and rhythmic quirks was not shared by everyone and so he kept a job as an insurance clerk. Nonetheless, many musicians admired him: Henry Cowell, Nicolas Slonimsky, and Lou Harrison among them. Aaron Copland, Harrison, and pianist John Kirkpatrick gave performances of his music in the 30s and 40s, earning Ives a Pulitzer Prize in 1947.

The first selection by Charles Ives is *The New River*. Here, Ives set his own text expressing frustration over ever-increasing modernization. You can hear the banging and clanking of industrialization in the

accompaniment at the beginning, followed by the raucous skip of ragtime, and finally the mournful concession that "the river gods are gone."

Text:

Down the river comes a noise!
It is not the voice of rolling waters.
It's only the sound of man;
photographs and gasoline,
dancing halls and tambourine.
Killed is the blare of the hunting horn.
The river gods are gone.

Again, Ives uses his own text for *The Things Our Fathers Loved*. The song is subtitled, *and the greatest of these is Liberty*. This song contains many quotes, from *Nettleton* to *Dixie* to *My Old Kentucky Home*; these quotes create an air of nostalgia. Even if you can't readily name each tune represented in this song, you will sense a familiarity immediately. To me, this song represents lifting beloved memories up out of the past and holding fast to them so that they may be brought into the present and future where they will live forever.

Text:

I think there must be a place in the soul
all made of tunes, of tunes of long ago.
I hear the organ on the main street's corner,
Aunt Sarah humming gospels,
Summer evenings.
The village cornet band playing in the square;
the towns red, white, and blue,
all red, white, and blue.
Now, hear the songs!
I know not what are the words,
but they sing in my soul
of the things our Fathers loved.

"Making up pieces seemed the most natural thing in the world; it was the title that caused me difficulty."

Richard Hundley (b. 1931)

American composer Richard Hundley is an expert songwriter. His knack for composition was evident in his childhood. From his earliest memories, he was always singing and making up melodies and accompaniments. He was raised around fine singers and has been singing his whole life. It is this intimate relationship with singing that has provided him such sensitivity when writing vocal music. Hundley memorizes the text before setting it to music. He then pairs it with a melodic line that reflects the feeling of the text. The melodic line and rhythm are then worked until a balance between the emotional meaning and textual clarity is attained. Virgil Thomson said that his songs could stand by their vocal lines alone.

The Astronomers is an epitaph from a headstone found in Allegheny, PA. Hundley dedicates the song to the memory of his grandmother. For me, the free flowing accompaniment and soaring end to the vocal line conjure up images of an expansive, summer nighttime sky; heavy with stars. I saw many breathtaking nights like that growing up in rural Oklahoma.

Text:

Susan Campbell
eighteen sixty-three – nineteen ten
Brian Campbell
eighteen sixty-two – nineteen nine
Astronomers
We have loved the stars too deeply to be afraid of the night.

The final selection for tonight is Hundley's *Seashore Girls*. The song is from a 1990 song cycle, *Octaves and Sweet Sounds*, which was commissioned by Art Song Minnesota. Once again, Hundley's accompaniment perfectly reflects each shift in character and mood. The text comes from one of my favorite poets of all time, Edward Estlin Cummings,

The poem, maggie and milly and molly and may, is taken from a collection called *95 Poems*. It has been referred to as a collection that continues along the lines of the Transcendental tradition. Transcendentalism celebrates nature, intuition, and the belief we all possess within ourselves all the knowledge we will ever need; and our experiences will bring that knowledge out. This poem represents Transcendentalism in the way that the natural world (the beach, starfish, shells, crabs, and stones) is a catalyst that prompts self-reflection. The last lines of the poem, "For whatever we lose (like a you or a me) / it's always ourselves we find in the sea," remind us that no matter what happens, no matter what we become caught up in, we can always find ourselves if we are but willing to stop and look.

Text:

maggie and milly and molly and may
went down to the beach (to play one day)

and maggie discovered a shell that sang
so sweetly she couldn't remember her troubles, and

milly befriended a stranded star
whose rays five languid fingers were;

and molly was chased by a horrible thing
which raced sideways while blowing bubbles: and

may came home with a smooth round stone
as small as a world and as large as alone.

For whatever we lose (like a you or a me)
it's always ourselves we find in the sea.