

Spring 4-26-2010

Marshall University Music Department Presents a
Senior Recital, Adam C. Stephenson, voice,
accompanied by, Mark Smith, piano, assisted by,
Callie Huff, flute

Adam C. Stephenson
Marshall University

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DEPARTMENT of MUSIC

presents a

Senior Recital

Adam C. Stephenson, voice

accompanied by

Mark Smith, piano

assisted by

Callie Huff, flute

Monday, April 26, 2010
Trinity Episcopal Church,
Huntington, WV
8:00 p.m.

This program is presented by the College of Fine Arts through the Department of Music, with the support of student activity funds. For more information about this or other music events, please call (304) 696-3117, or view our website at www.marshall.edu/cofa/music.

Program

Hier steht der Wand'rer, nun
from Die Jahreszeiten Franz Joseph Haydn
(1732-1809)

Phillida, mia piu ch'i ligustri bianca
Amor, che di mortal ogni cor vede Jhan Gero
(fl. 1540-1555)
Callie Huff, Flute

Una Aura Amorosa Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
from Cosi fan Tutte (1756-1791)

Befreit Richard Strauss
Allerseelen (1864-1949)

Three Songs from the Tibetan Book of the Dead Zack Merritt
Body of Emanation (b. 1987)
I take refuge in the compassionate ones
...Draw near to me at this very moment

Intermission

En ferment les yeux Jules Massenet
from Manon (1842-1912)

Pokiniem, Melaia Sergei Rachmaninoff
Pred Ikonoj (1873-1943)

Gde Ty, Zvozdoichka? Modeste Mussorgsky
(1839-1881)

From The Yellow Cake Revue Peter Maxwell Davies
Tourist Board Song (b. 1934)

Patriotic Song
Atlantic Breezes
Triumph of the Cockroach

Notes

Franz Joseph Haydn
Hier steht der Wand'rer, nun
from Die Jahreszeiten

Franz Joseph Haydn was born in Rohrau, Austria in 1732. Little is known about his early life, but it is known that he spent several years as a chorister in Rohrau, until he was noticed by Johann Franck around 1737. Franck was the principal of a nearby school in Hainburg. It is said that Franck took Haydn under his wing and taught him both effectively and with a stern disposition. Haydn is recorded as having said often that he would always be grateful to Franck, though "in the process [he] received more beatings than food". His life as a composer began in the most common way for his time: through the patronage system. Working through a line of wealthy patrons, (most notably the Esterhazy estate), Haydn's fame grew as his repertoire expanded. By the year 1780, Haydn had liberated himself entirely from the patronage system, and enjoyed both international renown and individual independence. He continued to write until 1803, after which he primarily kept to himself, not even penning any letters after 1805. In 1809, Haydn died.

Die Jahreszeiten was written in 1799, around the time of his wife's decline (she passed away later in 1800). It is an Oratorio, or sacred opera, depicting the wonders of seasonal life and glorifying the perfection in God's creation. Unlike most Oratorios, this work does not draw upon biblical text for the most part. Rather, it is a view of the changing seasons as they affected humanity and nature through the perspectives of four main characters.

Lukas, played by a tenor, presents the story of "Hier steht der Wand'rer, nun" which tells of a woodsman who has lost his way in a wintry forest. Through brilliant word painting, we hear the perilous sounds of a wooded scene: the treacherous storm, a huntsman's horn, and distant barking dogs. As the story unfolds, Haydn uses stark dynamic contrast paired with a key change to the relative minor to give the audience an intimate moment with the wanderer, as he abandons his hopes. Then, suddenly, a quaint melody reminiscent of the warmth of a holiday gathering weaves in. The hunter has finally found a relief from the storm, spotting a cottage not far off. With extensive melodic runs classically associated with Haydn, the wanderer leaps and runs joyfully to his happy refuge, finally arriving at a boisterous cadence and a happy ending to this suspenseful, vivacious tale.

Gero, Jhan
Phillida mia piu ch'i ligustri bianca
Amor, Che di Mortal Ogni Cor Vede

Not much is known about Jhan Gero in comparison to most composers. There is no solid evidence of his date of birth or death, only the locations and years in which he published tie him to any place or time in history. James Haar writes in his New Grove Dictionary article on Gero that he was in contact with the Venetian publishers Antonio Gardane and Girolamo Scotto, and may have in fact worked for them. Gero published various sacred and secular works for madrigal ensembles (utilizing any combination of lutenists and vocalists) in Venice between 1541 and 1563.

To this day, Gero's works remain largely unstudied, though a collection of his French and Italian Renaissance duets edited by Leonard Bernstein and James Haar was published in 1980 under the same title Gero had used, *Il primo libro de madrigali italiani et canzoni francese*. This helped to spur interest in the largely unheard-of composer, but much remains to be discovered.

Amor, Che di Mortal Ogni Cor Vede and *Phillida mia piu ch'i ligustri bianca* come from this revisited collection. Unlike most music after the Renaissance, Gero's duets are intended for any combination of instrumentalists and singers. This presentation features the use of the flute in the upper voice, while the tenor sings the lower part.

In these duets, Gero creates harmony through interweaving two independent melodic lines, also known as early polyphony. He commonly echoes themes from one voice to another, yet somehow ends up with works which sound as if they are a constantly-morphing string of new ideas. In context of the singer's repertoire after the Renaissance, this music provides some unique challenges. There is little frame of reference when it comes to the tonality of these works. The two players must work in tandem with one another, paying close attention to the tuning of the raw consonances which emerge, while focusing on displaying the isolated features of the solo lines which they individually perform.

All-in-all, Gero shows brilliance worthy of further study. These duets give the performer a chance to create music in a way that is very much alien in many ways to the paradigm of the generic modern musical experience, which endorses a canon of works not necessarily inclusive of the alternative or the antique.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

"Una Aura Amorosa" from *Così fan tutte*

W. A. Mozart is among the most widely-known composers in western music. His many works, and especially his operas, are considered evolutionarily essential to their genres. *Così fan tutte* was written and premiered in 1790, just a year prior to his death.

Dramatic as it is witty, the opera tells the tale of two men, Ferrando and Guglielmo, who acquiesce to participating in a ploy to test the faithfulness of their lovers, the sisters Dorabella and Fiordiligi. After hearing the men proclaim the unbending loyalty of their companions, a man called Don Alfonso wagers that he can devise a plan that will reveal the unfaithfulness of the sisters.

This plan involves the two men dressing as strangers, and attempting to seduce the other's fiancée. As the opera unfolds, the sisters are at first quite resistant to the seductive efforts of the disguised men. This inspires Ferrando, in the aria "Un'Aura Amorosa" to celebrate the joy of fidelity, certain in the steadfastness of his love.

Un'Aura Amorosa is considered a Dal Capo aria because it features an A-B-A form. This form introduces a particular stylistic section, then a second, sharply-contrasting section, only to then return to the original material. It features recognizable, quintessential stylistic markers of Mozart, including many melodic appoggiatura and embellishments, as well as entertainingly varying piano lines which utilize scalar runs and Alberti bass figures. This aria tests the vocal acrobatics of the tenor performing it. It lies in a rather high tessitura, or "average range," but requires a gentle tone to express the gentle nature of the text.

Richard Strauss

Allerseelen; Befreit

Strauss was born in 1864 to a father, Franz, who was an esteemed horn player, and Josephine Pschorr, a wealthy heiress. Franz Strauss was known for what Grove authors Bryan Gilliam and Charles Youmans call "his dogged tenacity," which served him as he strove for an education, rising diligently from an unknown to a respected Kammermusiker of the Bavarian court.

Strauss was raised in a wealthy, musical environment. His family was very strictly supportive of his musical aspirations, enlisting him in piano lessons as early as four years old. His father scrutinized Richard's work thoroughly, and ensured that he appreciated the classic German composers to whom the young boy would one day be called successor. He took to training immensely well, writing his first piece at the age of six, and was by age 11 an accomplished pianist and violinist studying composition with Friedrich Wilhelm Meyer.

Strauss published the collection of lieder including *Allerseelen* in 1885. By this time, he was growing in renown all over Europe, and had

even visited the United States to perform the year prior. This was right around the time that the composer began to turn his focus on tone poems: orchestral works that depicted an experience much like written poetry. Strauss would become well-known for his use of extreme chromaticism, which developed concordantly with his exploration of the new genre. This change in style is evident in his lieder as well.

By the time Strauss published the volume containing *Befreit*, the composer had seen the apex of his days as a tone poet. The stylistic differences in *Allerseelen* and *Befreit*, such as their varying degrees of tonal shifting and the elaboration of dissonances reveal a composer who, through his exploration of the tone poem, had developed an unprecedented style of Lieder capable of extraordinary expression.

These pieces both provide challenges in the overall 'tonal uneasiness' of Strauss' unique style. *Allerseelen* requires a strong sense of melodic direction, as the singer is required to present what sounds like a very angular and awkward line out-of-context, but what comes across as sounding perfectly natural to the listener's ear. *Befreit*, on the other hand, requires the finessing of very lengthy tones that change melodically at a very minute level. In addition to this, the piece features chords which are resolved by the accompanist rather than the singer, requiring a steadfastness and confidence in pitch on the part of the vocalist. This technique was almost never used prior to Strauss, and is a classical feature of his style.

Zack Merritt

Three Songs from "The Tibetan Book of the Dead"

Zack Merritt is a third-year Marshall University composition student whose love affair with sounds has lasted his entire life. Merritt began taking on composition as a serious life pursuit during middle school, premiering his first work in the 10th grade.

Merritt is interested in modifying the spatial dimensions in which music is created and listened to. Never a fan of the polarity created between audience and performer in a traditional recital setting, many of his works, such as "Iris", a work for clarinet sextet, "please, don't clap before the enxaneta makes the little wing" for saxophone quartet, and "... and the Lord spoke" challenge the spatial relationships between listener and performer, even going so far as to incorporate the audience as performers themselves.

I approached Zack Merritt in the spring of 2008 to set some religious passages which I had come across while studying *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The text is a collection of religious prayers and stories from Tibetan Buddhism which are meant to provide guidance to the souls of the dead as they journey from one life to the next. At first, he struggled to develop a concept for the piece, as he normally does not compose art song. However, he then drew inspiration from the chanting of monks.

Three Songs restricts the singer to four pitches per song, which are chanted melodically. Each song uses a different set of four pitches, so

that by the piece's end, the singer has utilized all 12 tones in the chromatic scale. In many ways, this mirrors the migration of the soul according to the Tibetan Book of the Dead. In the first song, "Body of Emanation", the tenor hypnotically describes the serene sight of a Buddha Body of Emanation: a powerful spiritual representation of the spiritual sojourner. The apex of this text is a bold request for spiritual liberation. The second song, "I take refuge in the compassionate ones", is a prayer offered up by the loved ones of the dying, but is also recited on some holy days or in times of individual spiritual crisis. The text is a celebration of the infinite Buddha nature of spiritual teachers and beings, and in many ways, the joy of having a firm spiritual grounding in the universe, devoid of anger and filled with creativity and compassion. Finally, "...draw near to me at this very moment" is a fast-paced, celebratory song in which the soul first describes the terrifying encounter with the lord of death, Yama, who reveals to the traveler his wrongful past actions. In order to progress to spiritual reincarnation, the soul must overcome the guilt of these actions and accept the nature of all things. At this time, the music moves to indicate the rushing sensation of overcoming the burdensome guilt of past action. The piece ends with a sincere call to the Buddha to draw near to the deceased as an immediate source of strength.

Jules Massenet

En ferment les yeux from Manon

Massenet was born in the rural French province of St. Etienne on May 12 in 1842. At age five, his family was prompted by his father's retirement to move to Paris. Five years later, Massenet began to take lessons in piano and solfège at the Paris Conservatoire, while also keeping up with a rigorous non-musical education. Massenet began in 1861 to study composition with Ambrose Thomas, whom he had always held in high regard. He made money on the side by playing piano, as well as playing timpani at the *Theatre Lyrique*, where he frequently encountered the operas of his contemporaries, including Gounod (who was particularly influential), as well as the works of Gluck, Beethoven, and Weber.

Hugh MacDonald writes in his New Grove article on Massenet that his "impulse to compose was relatively late in manifesting itself." It was not until he was in his twenties, around 1862, that he began to shift his focus toward composition. Prior to this period from as early as 1859, Massenet had written a few operas, but none boosted his career as much as the work for which he was commissioned by Georges Hartmann, *La grand'tante*. This opera, premiered in April 1867, was to be the first of many great successes in the genre.

Manon came at the apex of this career in opera. In March 1882, Massenet began work on what was to be a comic opera with spoken dialogue. The work premiered in January 1884, and was a roaring success both in France and abroad. MacDonald cites this work as the piece which gave Massenet his "unchallenged position as the leading

opera composer of his generation in France." From this point on, Massenet was able to live comfortably, composing operas, ballet, and other staged works.

The opera tells of the dramatic, on-and-off relationship between Manon, a woman who is nigh on becoming a nun, and le Chevalier des Grieux, the son of a local nobleman. At the opera's inception, Manon and Des Grieux immediately fall in love upon meeting one another. They decide to flee to Paris in order to escape Manon's inception into the church sisterhood.

They move into the apartment, and all is well until Des Grieux discovers a bouquet sent by a man named Bretigny to Manon. Manon assures her lover that she is indeed loyal, but eventually succumbs to Bretigny due to his enormous wealth. The aria *En ferment les yeux* takes place after this has happened, upon Des Grieux' return to the couple's apartment. In it, he describes a dream he has had in which the two of them lived happily in a far-off forest, ending by telling her that such a life is possible, if only she will allow it. After delivering the aria to an unreceptive Manon, officers burst into the room and take Des Grieux away.

In this aria, Massenet captures simultaneously the soft imagery of Des Grieux' beautiful dream as well as his blissful naiveté toward his lover's unfaithfulness. The strophic aria requires a relaxed, legato approach, but challenges the singer in that it also requires a sustained but gentle tone in something of a high tessitura.

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Pred Ikonoi; Pokiniem, Melaia

Serge Rachmaninoff's exact time and place of birth are debated, though his tombstone states he was born on April 2nd, 1873 and he always considered himself a native of Oneg. The Rachmaninoffs were a wealthy, land-owning family with multiple estates, but Rachmaninoff's father spent the family fortune, reducing their properties to one home at Oneg. In 1882, however, even this property had to be sold to keep up with his father's debts, and the family was moved to St. Petersburg, where Rachmaninoff began study at the Conservatory in piano performance. Rachmaninoff's parents separated in 1885, the emotional strain caused by this, as well as his mother's inability to assist him with his studies ended in his failure of all general subjects at the conservatory that year.

As a result of this, Rachmaninoff was sent to live with the disciplinarian Zverev at the Moscow Conservatory. For Rachmaninoff, this meant beginning each day with rigorous practice at 6 a.m., followed by lessons in musicianship. Though Zverev tutored young Rachmaninoff in basic part-writing and harmonic relationships, he was discouraging toward a career in composition. As Rachmaninoff progressed in the conservatory, other teachers encouraged him more and more toward composition. Rachmaninoff found it difficult, however, to compose in the workroom of Zverev's apartment while other pupils practiced their

instruments, but when he aired a complaint about this, Zverev kicked him to the curb unsympathetically, neglecting to speak to him for over three years after.

Rachmaninoff remained in Moscow, despite his mother's advice to return to St. Petersburg. When his piano instructor resigned a year prior to Rachmaninoff's planned graduation, the university allowed him to take his finals in piano and composition, rather than move to a new teacher. For his composition finals, he submitted his first Opera, a one-act work entitled *Aleko*. This won him the Great Gold Medal, an honor bestowed on only two prior graduates of the conservatory.

Rachmaninoff's career had some bumpy starts, but he eventually became among the most successful of musicians, both as performer and composer. Two of his earlier songs, *Pred Ikonoj* and *Pokiniem, Melaia* highlight both the struggle and jubilation Rachmaninoff experienced while pursuing his musical destiny.

"Before the Icon" is a song from Rachmaninoff's Twelve Romances (Op. 21), published first in 1900. The year prior, he made his first major international appearance in London, and he received generally favorable reviews. Rachmaninoff was also beginning a family; he was engaged to his cousin Natal'ya Satina (whom he had met during his time spent with family in Moscow).

The text of this song depicts a young woman fervently in prayer before an Orthodox Christian Icon. This woman continues throughout her lifetime returning to the icon of Christ, the poetry ending with the description of the icon reaching forth his hand, watching the woman, but being ultimately unable to grant her secret plea.

During this time, the composer was making every attempt to grow in status as a composer, but was stifled somewhat by a botched performance of his Symphony No. 1 in D Minor, conducted by the infamous St. Petersburg professor Glazunov, who purportedly later admitted to being drunk during the show.

The text comes from the now obscure Russian poet Arsenic Golinischev-Kutuzov, a close friend of the composer Modest Mussorgsky, tended to focus on themes hardship with a stark approach. It is no surprise, considering the greater body of Kutuzov's work, that he is perhaps most well-known for writing the texts to Mussorgsky's *Sunless* (which details the descent of a scorned lover to depression, and then suicide) and *Songs and Dances of Death*, whose title is self-explanatory as to the piece's nature.

This piece utilizes speech-rhythms that imitate the flow of spoken Russian text. Like many of Rachmaninoff's vocal works, the melodic line moves the singer through a broad range, interplaying with the accompaniment in often complex mixtures of duplet and triplet-based meters. In addition to these more general traits of the composer, *Pred Ikonoj* also challenges the singer with its modal structure. The piece is written in a melodic minor scale, often challenging the singer's ability to correctly engage the undulating lines that give the piece its sense of mystery and depth.

Pokiniem, Melaia was published in 1906 as part of Fifteen Songs (Op. 26). While it is not known if this particular song was composed there, Rachmaninoff spent much of his time at the Ivanovka estate, a property of his wife's family, the Satins. Ivanovka was an estate of several homes located in the densely-wooded, rural Tambov region, one of which had been gifted to Rachmaninoff and his wife, Natal'ya on the event of their marriage.

If this piece was composed amidst the forest at Ivanovka, it is perfectly fitting. This setting, again of a Golinischev-Kutuzov poem, urges a loved one to abandon the tumult of city living in order to observe and absorb the fullness of nature. A countermelody found in the accompaniment intertwines with the vocal line to create seamless transitions between the undulating forest sounds of the piano and the singer who is describing them.

Modeste Mussorgsky

Gde ty, Zvyozdoichka?

Modeste Mussorgsky was born in 1839 in Karevo, Russia to an aristocratic family. He attended Cadet school in his youth, dabbling in piano, which his mother had taught him from an early age, but never pursuing the career of composer seriously. Mussorgsky wrote compositions for the piano while at Cadet school, but had no formalized training. A review of anecdotes and accounts of Mussorgsky's days at the academy reveal a socially-polite young gentleman, with an air of esoteric intelligence, and a hint of flamboyance. He was known for being eccentric; giving commonplace names phonetic flairs, forging ridiculous correspondences under even more ridiculous surnames, and speaking with pursed lips were all common behaviors of his.

After leaving the academy, Mussorgsky pursued a livelihood as a military officer. He intensely pursued history and German philosophy, but never abandoned music. Around 1867, Mussorgsky was introduced to Dargomizhsky, an established Russian composer of his time. Through this social connection, Mussorgsky would meet Aleksandr Borodin, Cesar Cui, Mily Balakirev, and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, fellow composers who with publicist Vladimir Stasov would form a group known as the *Moguchaya Kuchka*, or "mighty pile," a group dedicated to the creation of a Russian nationalistic music, free of the formalist influence coming from Western Europe.

Mussorgsky was always something of a distant figure to those who knew him. Recollections will reveal that, despite his very warm and sociable nature, Mussorgsky was relatively emotionally distant. Considering what could be described as his odd-ball behaviors, it is easy to imagine Mussorgsky as something of a social isolate, particularly in his earlier years.

This changed dramatically, however, with the success of his opera "Boris Godunov." This work has become commonly known as Mussorgsky's greatest composition, and its success in its own time

brought to Mussorgsky wealth and attention to which he clung desperately.

Whether the opera's success was truly to blame or not, Mussorgsky soon took to heavy bouts of drinking. Friends and relatives reported Mussorgsky spiraling away, and portraits of the composer in his youth juxtaposed with his last portrait reveal a dramatic transformation from a lively, sophisticated youth to a despondent, rotund man whose desires in life went unfulfilled.

Just a few days after this infamous portrait's creation, Mussorgsky died. A perfect storm of severe alcoholism paired with epilepsy brought this young genius to the grave in March of 1881.

This song, written in the years prior to the formation of the *Moguchaya Kuchka*, gives the listener a lens into Mussorgsky's experiences. The composer sought through his life to achieve *Pravda* or "Truth" in music; that is, he sought a way in which he could arrange a text melodically that coincided with the natural manner of speaking it.

This work, while not most exemplary in this regard, works within the limitations of its strophic form to imitate the speech of a scorned *Yurodivo* (roughly translated, "a Holy Fool," pacing the streets, questioning the destination of a cloud, a star, and a young woman.

The piece begins in a slow walking tempo, the accompaniment symbolically intoning the setting of the poetry. One can only speculate as to the meaning of the poetic symbols, perhaps the cloudy mists obscuring the glimmering apex of the Kremlin, or a love lost. Whatever the case, the experience of the text surpasses any translation through the setting of Mussorgsky. The curiosity, leading to despair, which leads to anguish all ring through perfectly in this setting, give Mussorgsky a route of expression which can be neither denied nor ignored.

Peter Maxwell Davies

The Yellow Cake Revue

In the 1960s and 70s, Margaret Thatcher proposed Uranium mines be opened in Orkney, a group of sparsely-populated islands in the north of England. This was met by a great deal of opposition, but perhaps most visibly by the composer and inhabitant of the island of Hoy, Peter Maxwell Davies.

His song cycle, *The Yellow Cake Revue*, was created as a means to protest the planned mines. "Yellow Cake" is a nickname for processed uranium, and the piece is intentionally humorously-toned with the use of "revue."

Indeed, Davies' style pays tribute to this humor. From the very first movement, a portrayed representative of the Orkney tourist department lulls potential residence and vacationers to the allure of the relaxing, breathtaking sights of Orkney—taking special care to note several real locations within the islands. Even this tourist-board representative is taken aback by the planned uranium mines, as he or she asks the question, "But help, what can have happened to Wharbeth's sandy

shores? How heaven to hell can transform so fast, God only knows," then launching into a spoken diatribe that lays out the potential side-effects of such mining endeavors.

In addition to the six sung works, there are three poetry recitations that depict illicit job interviews spoken from the perspective of the interviewer which are to be performed in a dramatic style, creating a challenge for the forum recitalist who is typically discouraged from stage acting while performing art songs.

The piece is, altogether, quite musically "normal" for Mr. Davies, whose compositional style typically pushes the envelope in avant-garde vocal music. This normality functions as an effective comparison, however, to the extraordinarily atypical textual content of the piece, whose grievances range from the possibility of economic exploit, to environmental ruin, to terrorist plots that culminate in the only reasonable outcome—the cockroach's triumph over humanity.

Throughout the piece, Davies uses images of three entities which seem to be in constant conflict with one another concerning mining for uranium; the government, the church, and the mining corporation reinforce one another, much to the dismay of the residents of Orkney, who are depicted as standing in constant defiance of this practice, while simultaneously being unable to withstand the environmental trauma of the devastating plot that unfolds.

The piece was first performed in June, 1980 at the St. Magnus Festival of the Arts, (which had been founded three years previously by Davies) in Orkney by the soprano Eleanor Bron, with Davies accompanying on piano.

In the end, Mr. Davies and all those who protested with him were successful, and all plans to mine uranium in Orkney were abandoned by the early 1980s. To this day, uranium is neither mined nor processed in Orkney.

Knighted in 1987, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies now serves as Master of the Queen's Music, a prestigious title held by only one British musician, as well as the Composer Laureate of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. He currently lives in Orkney with his partner Colin Parkinson.