

SPRING: A VOICE RECITAL

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8:00 P.M. SUNDAY, MAY 2, 2021

MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE, CHAPEL OF THE CHRIST

Spring: A Voice Recital

I

From *Six Elizabethan Songs*

Dominick Argento

1. Spring
2. Sleep
3. Winter

II

Das verlassene Mägdlein

Hugo Wolf

Ich hab' in Penna einen Liebsten wohnen

III

"I Know that My Redeemer Liveth"
from *Messiah*

George Frideric Handel

IV

From *Airs chantés*:

Francis Poulenc

1. Air romantique
2. Air champêtre

Intermission

V

"*Sous le Dôme épais*"
from *Lakmé*

Léo Delibes

with Kathryn Wurster, soprano

VI

"Green Finch and Linnet Bird"
from *Sweeney Todd*

Steven Sondheim

"Far from the Home I Love"
from *Fiddler on the Roof*

Jerry Bock

Poisoning Pigeons in the Park

Tom Lehrer



Program Notes and Translations

Dominick Argento (1927-2019) was an American composer best known for his operas and choral works. His song cycle, *Six Elizabethan Songs*, features lyrics by English poets of the 16th century. The first three songs, "Spring," "Sleep," and "Winter," incorporate text written by Thomas Nash, Samuel Daniel, and William Shakespeare respectively. These three men are uniquely connected: Daniel was a contemporary to Shakespeare, while Nash was married to Shakespeare's granddaughter. Each song takes on the unique mood of the poetry, but their authors tie them together.

Spring

Spring, the sweet Spring, is the year's pleasant king;
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring,
Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing,
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The palm and may make country houses gay,
Lambs frisk and play, the shepherd pipes all day,
And we hear aye birds tune this merry lay,
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The fields breathe sweet, the daisies kiss our feet,
Young lovers meet, old wives a-sunning sit,
In every street these tunes our ears do greet,
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!
Spring! The sweet Spring!

Sleep

Care-charmer Sleep, son of the sable Night,
Brother to Death, in silent darkness born,
Relieve my anguish and restore thy light,
With dark forgetting of my cares, return;

And let the day be time enough to mourn
The shipwreck of my ill-adventured youth:
Let waking eyes suffice to wail their scorn,
Without the torment of the night's untruth.

Cease, dreams, the images of day-desires
To model forth the passions of the morrow;
Never let rising sun approve you liars,
To add more grief to aggravate my sorrow.
Still let me sleep, embracing clouds in vain;
And never wake to feel the day's disdain.

Winter

When icicles hang by the wall
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail;
When blood is nipped and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl:
Tu-who! Tu-whit! Tu-who! A merry note!
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian's nose looks red and raw;
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl
Then nightly sings the staring owl:
Tu-who! Tu-whit! Tu-who! A merry note!
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

Hugo Wolf (1860-1903) was an Austrian composer most known for his art songs, or *lieder*. These two selections bring out different expressive characteristics of his late-Romantic compositional style. The first, "Das verlassene Mägdlein," is serious and reflective with a still piano accompaniment and eerie harmonies. This builds to the climax of the song when the maiden has a sudden realization. The other, "Ich hab' in Penna," is exuberant with a fast-paced piano part and playful, lighthearted lyrics and melodies.

Das verlassene Mägdlein The Forsaken Maiden

Early, when the cocks crow,
Before the tiny stars recede,
I must be at the hearth,
I must light the fire.

Suddenly I realise,
Faithless boy,
That in the night
I dreamt of you.

The flames are beautiful,
The sparks fly;
I gaze at them,
Sunk in sorrow.

Tear after tear
Then tumbles down;
So the day dawns –
O would it were gone again!

Ich hab' in Penna einen Liebsten wohnen

I have one lover living in Penna,
Another in the plain of Maremma,
One in the beautiful port of Ancona,
For the fourth I must go to Viterbo;
Another lives over in Casentino,
The next with me in my own town,
And I've yet another in Magione,
Four in La Fratta, ten in Castiglione.

George Frideric Handel (1685-1789) was a Baroque composer known primarily for his work in writing oratorios. His most famous oratorio, *Messiah*, uses selected Biblical texts to take the listener through the story of Christ's saving work in three parts. The soprano aria "I Know that My Redeemer Liveth" begins part three, the section dealing with Christ's resurrection and second coming, by joyfully proclaiming that Jesus has risen and we, too, someday will rise.

I Know that My Redeemer Liveth

I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.
And though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.
For now is Christ risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep.

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963) was a French composer with output in many different musical areas. His compositions for solo voice feature tuneful melodies and complex piano accompaniments with modern harmonizations. He also incorporates text painting at different points in the songs, especially in “Air romantique,” with the vocal line mimicking footsteps echoing in the puddles and the howling wind.

Air romantique Romantic Air

I wandered through the countryside
with the thunderstorm's wind,
in the pale morning, under low clouds.
A gloomy raven escorted
me on my journey,
and my steps echoed in the puddles.

The lightning on the horizon
made its flame run
and Boreas redoubled
his persistent howling;
yet the tempest was too
flaccid for my soul
which sounded above the
thunder with its pounding.

From the ash's and
maple's golden garment
Autumn gathered its
glistening harvest,
and evermore the raven,
with an inexorable flight,
followed me without
changing my destiny.

Air champêtre Pastoral Air

Lovely spring,
I shall never cease to remember
That on a day,
guided by entranced friendship,
I gazed on your face, O goddess,
Half hidden beneath the moss.

Had he but remained,
this friend whom I mourn,
O nymph, a devotee of your cult,
To mingle once more with
the breeze that caresses you,
And to respond to your hidden waters

Léo Delibes (1836-1891) was a French Romantic composer known for his ballets and operas. “Sous le Dôme épais,” commonly referred to as the Flower Duet, comes from his opera *Lakmé*, which tells the story of an Indian girl and a British soldier falling in love in British India. This famous duet is sung by the main character and her servant as they go down to the river to bathe and sing about the beautiful nature that they see along the way. Since then it has gained popularity through its use in TV shows, films, and advertisements. Perhaps you will recognize it!

Sous le Dôme épais

A dense dome of jasmine and roses
clings together, flowery waterside
and fresh morning together call us.

Ah! Let us glide as we follow
the fleeting current

among the trembling waves.

Blithely steering, let us gain the shore
where a bird is singing.

The dense dome, the white jasmine
together call us!

But a strange fear
suddenly grips me
when my father goes alone
into their accursed town
I tremble with fright!

So that the god Ganesh may protect him,
let us go down to the pool
where the swans splash joyfully,
their wings white as snow,
to gather blue lotus blossoms

Steven Sondheim (b. 1930) is one of the most influential composers and lyricists of musical theater from the 20th century. He was involved in the creation of several popular shows including *West Side Story*, *Into the Woods*, and *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* and has won eight Tony awards for his work. "Green Finch and Linnet Bird" is sung by the character Johanna in *Sweeney Todd* as she reflects on how trapped she feels in her life by using the metaphor of a bird in a cage.

Green Finch and Linnet Bird

Green finch and linnet bird

Nightingale, blackbird

How is it you sing?

How can you jubilate sitting in cages

Never taking wing?

Outside the sky waits

Beckoning, beckoning, just beyond the bars

How can you remain staring at the rain

Maddened by the stars?

How is it you sing anything?

How is it you sing?

Green finch and linnet bird

Nightingale, blackbird

How is it you sing?

Whence comes this melody constantly flowing?

Is it rejoicing or merely hallowing?

Are you discussing or fussing

Or simply dreaming?

Are you crowing?

Are you screaming?

Ringdove and robinet

Is it for wages

Singing to be sold?

Have you decided it's safer in cages

Singing when you're told?

My cage has many rooms

Damask and dark

Nothing there sings

Not even my lark

Larks never will, you know

When they're captive

Teach me to be

More adaptive. Ah!

Green finch and linnet bird

Nightingale, blackbird

Teach me how to sing

If I cannot fly

Let me sing

Jerry Bock (1928-2010) was an American musical theater composer. His most well-known production is *Fiddler on the Roof*, which tells the story of a Jewish father struggling to hold to traditions against the outside influences of society on his family. In "Far from the Home I Love," his daughter Hodel tries to explain to him why she must marry the man she has fallen in love with and move to far-away Siberia, even though she still loves her family as well.

Far from the Home I Love

How can I hope to make you understand
Why I do what I do?
Why I must travel to a distant land
Far from the home I love

Once I was happily content to be
As I was, where I was
Close to the people who are close to me
Here in the home I love

Who could see that a man could come
Who would change the shape of my dreams?
Helpless now I stand with him

Oh, what a melancholy choice this is
Wanting home, wanting him
Closing my heart to ev'ry hope but his
Leaving the home I love

There where my heart has settled long ago
I must go, I must go
Who could imagine I'd be wand'ring so
Far from the home I love?

Yet there with my love, I'm home

Tom Lehrer (b. 1928) is a humorous and witty American songwriter. His songs are influenced by musical theater but often take on a sense of dark humor. Lehrer's musical career only lasted about 20 years, during which time he performed 109 shows and wrote 37 songs, but he still gathered a significant number of followers before his retirement. According to Lehrer, his pianist literally fell off the bench when he heard the song title "Poisoning Pigeons in the Park" for the first time. The lyrics have not been printed here because the song is most enjoyable when the lyrics come as a surprise!

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I thank MLC AVCO for their work with the live stream, making sure that my off-campus friends and family can view my recital as well.



MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE

Thank you for attending!

You are welcome to greet the performers after the recital in the chapel gathering space.