The CSB/SJU Music Department Presents the Senior Recital of
Reagan Hightower
Mezzo Soprano
Student of Dr. Marcie Givens

Lisa Drontle, Piano

Saturday, April 24, 2021
2:00pm
Stephen B. Humphrey Auditorium, Saint John’s University
Program

“An die Musik”  
Franz Schubert  
(1797-1828)

“Ständchen”  
Johannes Brahms  
(1833-1897)

“Liebeszauber”  
Clara Wieck Schumann  
(1819-1896)

“Crépuscule”  
Jules Massenet  
(1842-1912)

“Notre amour”  
Gabriel Fauré  
(1845-1924)

*5-minute intermission*

“El Majo Timido”  
Enrique Granados  
(1867-1916)

“Voi che sapete”  
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
(1756-1791)  
from le Nozze di Figaro

“Tired”  
Ralph Vaughn Williams  
(1877-1953)  
from Four Last Songs

“Silent Noon”  
Ralph Vaughn Williams  
(1877-1953)

“Let Me Be Your Star”  
Marc Shaiman  
(b. 1959)  
from SMASH  
featuring Emily Booth, mezzo soprano
Translations, Texts, and Notes

“An die Musik”

Du holde Kunst, in wieviel grauen Stunden,
Wo mich des Lebens wilder Kreis umstrickt,
Hast du mein Herz zu warmer Lieb
entzunden,
Hast mich in eine bessre Welt entrückt!

Oft hat ein Seufzer, deiner Harf entflossen,
Ein süsser, heiliger Akkord von dir
Den Himmel bessrer Zeiten mir erschlossen,
Du holde Kunst, ich danke dir dafür!

“To Music”

Beloved art, in how many a bleak hour,
when I am enmeshed in life’s tumultuous
round,
have you kindled my heart to the warmth of
love,
and borne me away to a better world!

Often a sigh, escaping from your harp,
a sweet, celestial chord
has revealed to me a heaven of happier times.
Beloved art, for this I thank you!

Despite his brief life, Franz Schubert composed over 600 lieder (German Art
Song). “An die Musik” sets a two-stanza poem thanking Music for brightening the world
and relieving sadness. The setting is simple, leaving the listener to question how Schubert
could so eloquently express such an inexpressible feeling. The accompaniment is chordal,
while the bass provides a melody that is interrupted by the singer’s entrance that both
echoes and extends it. The repetition of triads moves the song forward while also
encouraging contemplation.
Known for his expansive and soaring vocal phrases, Johannes Brahms showed interest in folk song and music which he couples with his respect for classical form. In doing so, Brahms composed in a style entirely his own and emotionally impactful. “Ständchen” sets the scene of three students standing beneath a window and serenading a beautiful blonde girl. As the music unfolds, Brahms allows the listener to hear each instrument (flute, violin, and zither), most obviously during the piano interlude between stanzas two and three. The melody is playful and shares rhythmic connections with the piano that can be heard in vocal phrases throughout the song.
Clara Wieck Schumann was arguably the most sought after pianist and instructor of the nineteenth century. A formidable composer in her own right, Schumann employed chromaticism in relation to text and to evoke mood. Her mastery of the piano manifests itself in her interesting accompaniment, especially heard in “Liebeszauber,” in which the piano plays in triplet eighth notes and the melody remains in duple. The intensity of the piano and vocal melody evoke as sense of urgency and wonder in the speaker as they describe the beautiful scene they witnessed. The vocal line ascends, seemingly unfolding with the scene, only to come to a contemplative and inexpressible “denouement” as they realize how truly precious was the moment they beheld, seemingly indescribable.

“Liebeszauber”

Die Liebe saß als Nachtigall
Im Rosenbusch und sang;
Es flog der wundersüße Schall
Den grünen Wald entlang.

Und wie er klang, - da stieg im Kreis
Aus tausend Kelchen Duft,
Und alle Wipfel rauschten leis’,
Und leiser ging die Luft;

Die Bäche schwiegen, die noch kaum
Geplätschert von den Höh’n,
Die Rehlein standen wie im Traum
Und lauschten dem Getön.

Und hell und immer heller floß
Der Sonne Glanz herein,
Um Blumen, Wald und Schlucht ergoß
Sich goldig roter Schein.

Ich aber zog den Wald entlang
Und hörte auch den Schall.
Ach! was seit jener Stund’ ich sang,
War nur sein Widerhall.

“Love’s Magic”

Love, as a nightingale,
Perched on a rosebush and sang;
The wondrous sound floated
Along the green forest.

And as it sounded, there arose a scent
From a thousand calyces,
And all the treetops rustled softly,
And the breeze moved softer still;

The brooks fell silent, barely
Having babbled from the heights,
The fawns stood as if in a dream
And listened to the sound.

Brighter, and ever brighter
The sun shone on the scene,
And poured its red glow
Over flowers, forest and glen.

But I made my way along the path
And also heard the sound.
Ah! all that I’ve sung since that hour
Was merely its echo.
“Crépuscule”

Comme un rideau sous la blancheur
De leurs pétales rapprochées,
Les lys ont enfermé leur cœur,
Les coccinelles sont couchées.

Et jusqu’au rayon matinal,
Au cœur même des llys cachées,
Comme en un rêve virginal
Les coccinelles sont couchées.

Les llys ne dorment qu’un moment;
Veux-tu pas que têtes penchées,
Nous causions amoureusement?
Les coccinelles sont couchées.

“Twilight”

Like a curtain beneath the whiteness
of their close-wrapped petals,
the lilies have closed in their hearts
and the ladybirds have gone to bed.

Until the morning light,
hidden like a virgin’s dream
in the heart of the lilies,
the ladybirds have gone to bed.

The lilies only sleep for a moment.
Shall we not speak of love,
heads bent together?
The ladybirds have gone to bed.

Best known for his operas, Jules Massenet was a French Romantic composer. Working with many opera singers, he deeply understood the voice and composed in a way that flattered the singer. An entirely peaceful song, the accompaniment of “Crépuscule” evokes the quality of a harp. While the piano provides gentle chords periodically, the melodic line is free to express, much like a recitative. With a lullaby quality, the melody gives rise to the “sighing” of twilight as the world falls. The gentle ascending and descending, as well as the graceful sets of sixteenth notes that crown phrases, transport the listener to the seen of ladybirds and lilies resting their heads and hearts.
Notre amour est chose légère
Comme les parfums que le vent
Prend aux cimes de la fougère
Pour qu’on les respire en rêvant.
- Notre amour est chose légère!

Notre amour est chose charmante,
Comme les chansons du matin
Où nul regret ne se lamente,
Où vibre un espoir incertain.
- Notre amour est chose charmante!

Notre amour est chose sacrée
Comme les mystères des bois
Où tressaille une âme ignorée,
Où les silences ont des voix.
- Notre amour est chose sacrée!

Notre amour est chose infinie,
Comme les chemins des couchants
Où la mer, aux cieux réunie,
S’endort sous les soleils penchants.

Notre amour est chose éternelle
Comme tout ce qu’un dieu vainqueur
A touché du feu de son aile,
Comme tout ce qui vient du cœur,
- Notre amour est chose éternelle!

Our love is something light
like the perfumes which the breeze
brings from the tips of ferns
for us to inhale as we dream.
Our love is something light.

Our love is something enchanting
like the morning’s songs
in which regrets are not heard
but uncertain hopes vibrate.
Our love is something charming.

Our love is something sacred
like the forests’ mysteries
in which an unknown soul quivers
and silences have voices.
Our love is something sacred!

Our love is something infinite
like the paths of the evening,
where the ocean, joined with the sky,
falls asleep under slanting suns.

Our love is something eternal
like all that has been touched
by the fiery wing of a victorious god,
like all that comes from the heart.
Our love is something eternal!

Along with Duparc and Debussy, Gabriel Fauré helped to perfect the French mélodie as a true art song form. With immediate melodic appeal and sweeping phrases, “Notre amour” seeks to present the feeling of getting caught up in love and elation. An almost heavenly setting of an expressive poem, the listener is enthralled by the accuracy of the music in describing such an indescribable emotion and commitment.
“El Majo Timido”                “A Timid Man”

Llega a mi reja y me mira                     Coming to my window grate to look at me
por la noche un majo                          In the evening is a gent
que, en cuanto me ve y suspira,               Who, when he has seen enough, sighs
se va calle abajo.                           And disappears down the road.
¡Ay qué tío más tardío!                     Ah, what a fleeting fellow!
¡Si así se pasa la vida estoy               If this is how life will go,
divertida!                                   some fun I’ll have!

Enrique Granados was an incredible, late nineteenth-century pianist; his accompaniments display an expert partnering with the voice. More often than not, his style incorporated the sounds of the national instrument of Spain, the guitar. Granados based melodic lines on Spanish vocal idioms, which can be heard in the playful and exasperated tune of “El Majo Timido.”

“Voi che sapete”                              “You Know What Love Is”

Voi che sapete che cosa e amor,           You who know what love is,
Donne, vedete, s’io l’ho nel cor,         Ladies, see if I have it in my heart.
Donne, vedete, s’io l’ho nel cor.

Quello ch’io provo, vi ridiro,              I’ll tell you what I’m feeling,
E per me nuovo capir nol so.               It’s new for me, and I understand nothing.
Sento un affetto pien di desir,             I have a feeling, full of desire,
Ch’ora e diletto, ch’ora e martir.         Which is by turns delightful and miserable.

Gelo e poi sento l’alma avvampar,           I freeze and then feel my soul go up in flames,
E in un momento torno a gelar.              Then in a moment I turn to ice.
Ricercò un bene fuori di me,               I’m searching for affection outside of myself,
Non so chi il tiene, non so cos’è.          I don’t know how to hold it, nor even what it is!

Sospiro e gemo senza voler,                I sigh and lament without wanting to,
Palpito e tremo senza saper,               I twitter and tremble without knowing why,
Non trovo pace notte ne di,                I find peace neither night nor day,
Ma pur mi piace languir così.              But still I rather enjoy languishing this way.

You who know what love is,
Ladies, see if I have it in my heart.

Donne, vedete, s’io l’ho nel cor,
Donne, vedete, s’io l’ho nel cor,
One of the quintessential operas, *Le Nozze di Figaro* tells the story of Figaro and Susanna’s success in getting married while working with Countess Rosina to teach the Count a lesson in fidelity. The Count’s page, Cherubino (a breeches character sung by a mezzo soprano), sings “Voi che sapete” during Act II. Infatuated with the Countess, Cherubino writes this song and performs it for Susanna and Countess Rosina; he begs them to confirm if the many tumultuous feelings he is experiencing are indeed love.

“Tired”  
Ursula Vaughn Williams

Sleep, and I’ll be as still as another sleeper  
holding you in my arms, glad that you lie  
so near at last.

This sheltering midnight is our meeting place,  
no passion or despair or hope divide  
me from your side.

I shall remember firelight on your sleeping  
face,  
I shall remember shadows growing deeper  
as the fire fell to ashes and the minutes passed.

“Silent Noon”  
Dante Gabriel Rossetti

Your hands lie open in the long fresh grass,  
The finger-points look through like rosy  
blooms:  
Your eyes smile peace. The pasture gleams and  
glooms  
‘Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass.

All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,  
Are golden kingcup fields with silver edge  
Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn  
hedgerow.  
‘Tis visible silence, still as the hour glass.

Deep in the sunsearched growths the dragon-fly  
Hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky:  
-  
So this winged hour is dropt to us from above.  
Oh! clasp we to our hearts, for deathless dower,  
This close-companioned inarticulate hour  
When twofold silence was the song of love.
One of the most important British composers of the twentieth century, Ralph Vaughan Williams worked to reclaim English folk music from extinction. Many of his rhythmic patterns are inspired by the rugged strength of the English countryside, and his melodic lines typically outshine his accompaniments. “Tired,” a setting of a poem by his esteemed wife, Ursula Vaughn Williams, employs an air of finality. The poem and this setting convey the suspended, and peaceful moments of resting close to someone that loves you, and gently falling into a care-free sleep. Not uncommon for Williams, the voice is the focus of the piece, especially as the speaker recalls the moment just before sleep overcomes them.

Much like an aria, Vaughn William’s “Silent Noon” features quasi recitative and moments when the voice is encouraged to showcase virtuosity through artistic expression of the poem. The accompaniment is luxurious and helps the listener to become enveloped in a scene of awe and natural beauty. The poem provides descriptive imagery, and Vaughn Williams further allows music to transport us to the English countryside as we hike just over the green hill to witness a blue dragonfly hovering over a sun-kissed flower.

“Let Me Be Your Star”

An awarding-winning, musical drama television series, SMASH tells the story of the development of a new broadway musical centered around the life of Marilyn Monroe. With subtle irony, “Let Me Be Your Star” showcases two women auditioning for the main role. Their harmonies and lyrics emphasize their competition to claim the spotlight.
Special Thanks

No words can describe how grateful I am for my parents, Kelly and Neal. Their generosity and support never cease to amaze me. Thank you for always encouraging my dreams and goals, and for teaching me how to be my best self. I am especially grateful for your presence here today. I love you.

In the last four years, Dr. Marcie Givens has become a wonderful teacher, mentor, and most importantly, a dear friend. She creates a sanctuary that promotes authentic artistry and vocal expression. I always found myself truly looking forward to my lesson time and feeling completely immersed while there. I left with a smile on my face and all the tools I needed to succeed in my studies for the week. Thank you for all that you have taught me. I will miss you deeply.

Dr. Axel Theimer has made an indescribable impact on me, as well as many others. His compassion, self-less character, ceaseless drive for knowledge, and zest for life have inspired me to nurture these same qualities. I will carry his wisdom with me, and I will hold all he has taught me very close to my heart.

Today I have the privilege of performing with Emily Booth, my roommate and best friend. She has been my family away from home as we’ve grown together over the last few years. The support, love, and genuine care she provides is rare and truly a gift. Most of all, I cherish the confidence that we will continue to grow as life-long friends throughout our life journeys.

Thank you to all of you in attendance and on the livestream! Each of you has played an integral role in helping me to become my full self. Your support is appreciated and deeply felt. It is my most sincere hope and intention that the music today moves, inspires, and comforts you.

“I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.”
Psalm 104:33