

SUN, MOON, STARS & RAINBOWS Concert

PROGRAM NOTES

1st Set

1. Se tu m'ami, se sospiri, Alessandro Parisotti, P.A. Rolli (attributed to Pergolesi)

Alessandro Parisotti was an Italian composer and music editor who lived from 1853 to 1913. He was a composer, but is better known today as the original editor of a collection of songs known as *Arie antiche: ad una voce per canto e pianoforte* (in English, *Antique arias for solo voice and piano*), published in 1885. The original collection had three volumes of songs or arias published as a primer to study classical singing, but the three volumes have since been reduced to single-volume known as the *24 Italian Songs and Arias*.

Parisotti collected these songs in what was the 19th century vogue for discovering forgotten music from the classical and baroque eras. He found forgotten scores and arranged their arias (or duets) for solo singer and piano accompaniment.

Translation: *If you love me, if you sigh*

Se tu m'ami, se sospiri
Sol per me, gentil pastor,
Ho dolor de' tuoi martiri,
Ho diletto del tuo amor,
Ma se pensi che soletto
Io ti debba riamar,
Pastorello, sei soggetto
Facilmente a t'ingannar.

If you love me, if you sigh
Only for me, dear shepherd,
I am sorrowful for your sufferings;
yet I delight in your love.
But if you think that
I must in return love only you,
Little shepherd, you are subject
To easily deceiving yourself.

Bella rosa porporina
Oggi Silvia sceglierà,

The beautiful purple rose
Will Silvia choose today;

Con la scusa della spina	With the excuse of its thorns,
Doman poi la sprezzera.	Tomorrow, then, will she despise it.
Ma degli uomini il consiglio	But the advice of the men
lo per me non seguirò.	I will not follow -
Non perché mi piace il giglio	Just because the lily pleases me,
Gli altri fiori sprezzero.	I do not have to despise the other flowers.

2. Estrellita (Little Star), Manuel Maria Ponce

Manuel María Ponce Cuéllar was a Mexican composer who lived from 1882 to 1948. His work as a composer, music educator and scholar of Mexican music connected the concert scene with a usually forgotten tradition of popular song and Mexican folklore. He wrote music for solo instruments – mostly piano and guitar – and also for chamber ensembles and orchestra.

In 1912 Ponce composed his most famous work *Estrellita* (little star). As a result of his activity promoting the music of Mexico and writing melodies like *Estrellita*, Ponce was given the title “Creator of the Modern Mexican Song.”

He was also the first Mexican composer to project popular music onto the world stage: *Estrellita*, for example, has been part of the repertoire of the main orchestras of the world and countless singers.

3. Love’s Philosophy, Roger Quilter

Roger Quilter was an English composer known particularly for his songs and light music for orchestra. Quilter, who lived from 1877 to 1953, wrote more than a hundred songs. *Love’s Philosophy*, published in 1905, is among the most popular. It’s Quilter's musical setting of the poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Shelley, who lived from 1792 to 1822, was one of the major English Romantic poets and is regarded as among the finest lyric poets in the English language. Shelley didn’t achieve fame during his lifetime, but recognition for his poetry grew steadily following his death. Shelley was a key member of a close circle of

visionary poets and writers that included Lord Byron and Shelley's own second wife, Mary Shelley, the author of *Frankenstein*.

4. The Sun Whose Rays are All Ablaze, Arthur Sullivan, W.S. Gilbert

The Mikado is the 9th of 12 comic opera collaborations by Gilbert & Sullivan. *The Mikado*, which premiered in England in 1885, is set in Japan. The female heroin of the story, Yum-Yum being prepared by her friends for her marriage to Nanki-Poo, muses on her own beauty in *The Sun Whose Rays*.

5. Silver Aria, Douglas Moore (1893-1969)

This aria is from the American opera *The Ballad of Baby Doe*. It's one of the few American operas in the standard opera repertory. Set in the silver mining state of Colorado at the end of the 19th century, it's a tragic tale (as was the real one) of a girl who stakes everything on love, taking a wealthy mine owner away from his wife, only to see him die a ruined man, and to die in poverty herself. Based on the lives of actual historical figures Horace Tabor, Elizabeth "Baby" Doe Tabor, and Augusta Tabor, the opera tracks their lives from Horace and Baby Doe's meeting to the death of Horace. "Always Through the Changing" is a postscript ending foretelling Baby's death.

Moore was professor of composition and head of the music department at Columbia University for over 35 years and President of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. His leadership in founding the Columbia Opera Workshop established a model for college and university workshops throughout the country when there were few professional opera companies in the United States and almost no opera training opportunities for musicians and composers in America.

6. Zeffiretti, lusinghieri (Favorable zephyrs), W.A. Mozart (1756-1791)

Sung in the third act of Mozart's famous opera, *Idomeneo*, Ilia, the captured Trojan princess, has fallen in love with her captor's son, Prince Idamante, but she has never revealed her love to him. As she wanders through the palace gardens, she sings to the gentle breezes to carry her thoughts of love to Prince Idamante.

7. Non so piu, W.A. Mozart

This aria is from *Le Nozze di Figaro* (my favorite opera). The story is from Beaumarchais trilogy about the character Figaro, a barber and a charismatic, clever jack of all trades. It's sung by Cherubino, a 13-year old boy whose hormones are raging. He writes songs about he feels, and he sings this one to Susanna, Figaro's wife-to-be.

I dedicated my performance of this aria to my favorite mezzo soprano, Frederica von Stade and my favorite Cherubino, who I had the pleasure of taking a lesson with when she was on Orcas Island in 2012.

Translation:

I do not know anymore what I am, what I do,
One moment I'm on fire, the next moment I am cold as ice,
Every woman changes my color,
Every woman makes me tremble.
At the very mention of love, of delight,
I am greatly troubled, my heart stirs within my chest,
It compels me to speak of love
A desire I cannot explain.
I do not know anymore what I am, what I do,
One moment I'm on fire, the next moment I am cold as ice,
Every woman changes my color, every woman makes me tremble.
I speak of love while I'm awake, I speak of love while I'm dreaming,
Water, shade, mountains, flowers, grass, fountains, echo, air, and the winds,
The sound of my hopeless words are taken away with them.
And if I do not have anyone near to hear me, I speak of love to myself!

8. I Shall Not Live in Vain, Jake Heggie

The song was written in 1995, and then expanded and arranged for mezzo-soprano solo with girls' chorus in 1998. The first performance of the new arrangement featured mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade. Jake Heggie was the composer-in-residence for the OICMF in 2012, and Frederica von Stade sang in the Festival. I was lucky enough to take a lesson with her, and she recommended the song to me.

Emily Dickinson died in 1886 at the age of 55. She was Virtually unknown in her lifetime. Although fewer than a dozen of her nearly eighteen hundred poems were published during her lifetime, she has come to be regarded as one of the greatest American poets of the 19th century. Since 1890, her poems have remained continuously in print. The first complete and mostly unaltered collection of her poetry became available for the first time in 1955.

Emily Dickinson had an affinity for music and a particular talent for the piano. During her lifetime, Emily Dickinson was probably known more widely as a gardener than as a poet. Her niece, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, remembered carpets of lily-of-the-valley and pansies, sweetpeas, hyacinths, peony hedges, daffodils, and marigolds. Dickinson would often send her friends bunches of flowers with verses attached, but "they valued the posy more than the poetry".

9-12. Beethoven's settings of Scottish & Irish folk songs

Between 1809 and 1820 Ludwig van Beethoven, produced over 160 arrangements of folk songs, commissioned by George Thomson, secretary of the Board of Trustees for the Encouragement of Art and Manufacture in Scotland. Thomson devoted all his available time and energy to compiling and publishing anthologies of songs from the British Isles. He induced Beethoven, among others, to undertake the arrangements as a way of saving Scottish and Welsh songs from oblivion.

Thomson asked for the instrumentation to be a piano trio, piano, violin and cello. Beethoven is said to have tackled the commission enthusiastically, although not without some grumbling regarding his fee. Thomson did not find Beethoven an easy man to deal with. He was always concerned about the technical demands of the arrangements, as he insisted they should be within the abilities of the drawing-room pianist, usually a genteel young lady. Beethoven had his own standards and was unwilling to compromise.

The Napoleonic wars were responsible for delaying the arrival to Thomson of the first and second batches of songs. Sent in 1810, the first batch didn't arrive until mid-1812.

These three Scottish songs, *Sunset*, *O! thou art the lad of my heart*, *Willy*, and *Music, Love and Wine*, are from *25 Schottische Lieder mit Begleitung von Pianoforte, Violine und Violoncello*, published in 1815.

The one Irish song, *I'll Praise the Saints with Early Song*, is from a volume of 20 Irish songs.

The poem in the song *Sunset* was written by Sir Walter Scott, a contemporary of Beethoven's. The texts of the other three songs were written by William Smyth, also a contemporary of Beethoven's, though he outlived Beethoven by more than 20 years.

The composers of the accompaniments had no knowledge of the texts, and the writers of the poetry no knowledge of the accompaniments. The poets, in many cases, had a stanza of the original song as a model for the meter and rhythm; in all others, they and the composers alike received the bare melody, with nothing to guide them in their work but Italian musical terms like *allegro* and *andante*. This explains why the names of then contemporary poets, like Sir Walter Scott, Robert Burns and the like, appear as lyricists.

2nd Set

1. Sing, Smile & Slumber

Charles Gounod composed the song in 1863. The poem is by Victor Hugo, who first became known for his poetry, and then also for his novels. He wrote *Les Misérables* and *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* in the early 1860s. The song is in French – here is the English translation:

When you sing, rocked in the evening in my arms,
Do you hear my thought answering you very softly?
Your sweet song reminds me of the most beautiful of my days.
Sing, sing, my beauty, sing, sing always.

When you laugh, on your lips love blooms,
And suddenly the annoyed sigh disappears.
Ah, your faithful laugh proves a straight forward heart.

When you sleep, peaceful and pure,
In the shade beneath my eyes,
Your breath murmurs harmonious words.
Your beautiful body reveals itself without veils or adornments.

2. Sweet Bird, G.F. Handel

Sweet Bird is an aria from *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, a pastoral ode by George Frideric Handel based on the poetry of John Milton. Handel composed the music in 1740. (He composed the Messiah in 1741.) Handel and Bach were born one month apart in 1685.

Sweet bird, that shun'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy!
Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among,

I woo to hear thy even-song.

3. Sure on This Shining Night, Samuel Barber, James Agee

American composer Samuel Barber is one of the most celebrated composers of the 20th century. He lived from 1910-1981, and received the Pulitzer Prize twice for his music.

James Agee was an American author, journalist, poet, screenwriter and, in the 1940s, one of the most influential film critics in the U.S. His autobiographical novel, *A Death in the Family* (1957), won the author a posthumous 1958 Pulitzer Prize. Agee published only one volume of poetry, *Permit Me Voyage* in 1934. *Sure On This Shining Night* is from that volume of poetry.

4. Wife & Man Duet, W.A. Mozart

This duet from *The Magic Flute* is sung by the heroine Pamina and her mother's (the Queen of the Night) bird catcher, Papageno, as both are in search of their lovers.

5. Pa Pa Pa, W.A. Mozart

This duet from *The Magic Flute* is sung by Papageno and his beloved Papagena when they finally find each other. They sing of their love, how they want to have lots of dear little children, and what a blessing they will be.

6. Si, mi chiamano Mimi (Yes, my name is Mimi), Giacomo Puccini

This is Mimi's Act I aria from *La Boheme*. She introduces herself to Rodolfo as the two begin falling in love. She tells him that she embroiders fake flowers for a living. That she is tranquil and happy, she lives alone, doesn't always go to mass but she always prays to the Lord. She loves poetry, and tells him that when the first thaw comes in spring, the first sun and kiss of April are hers.

7. The Dragons Are Singing Tonight, Sharon Abreu, Jack Prelutsky

Jack Prelutsky is a most clever and whimsical poet. His poetry is delightful for both children and adults. Jack was a guest artist in the 2012 Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival. I (along with a few co-conspirators) sang this setting for him that summer. He granted me permission to sing my setting of his poem in this concert.

8. Song to the Moon, Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904)

From *Rusalka*, an opera, or lyric fairy tale, by Czech composer Antonin Dvorak, which premiered in Prague in 1901. A Rusalka is a water sprite from Slavic mythology, usually inhabiting a lake or river. Rusalka has fallen in love with a human prince. She asks a witch to cast a spell on her so that she can become human and walk on the Earth. The witch casts the spell with the condition that Rusalka will be unable to speak. So she has to find a way of telling the prince that she loves him. She sings to the moon asking for its help.

9. The Flower Duet, Leo Delibes (1836-1891)

This duet from the opera *Lakme* is perhaps one of the most famous pieces of music today – the kind of piece that people know even if they don't know its name or what it's from. The opera takes place in India and is sung in French. In a time when life is not equal for women, the princess Lakme and her handmaiden, Mallika, are enjoying a relaxing afternoon by themselves in the garden.

English translation:

Under the thick dome where the white jasmine
With the roses entwined together,
On the river bank covered with flowers laughing in the morning,
Let us descend together!
Gently floating on its charming risings,

On the river's current, on the shining waves,
One hand reaches, reaches for the bank,
Where the spring sleeps, and the bird, the bird sings.

10. Look to the Rainbow, Burton Lane, E.Y. Harburg

Finian's Rainbow premiered on Broadway in 1947. It's a satirical story about an Irish family adjusting to life in the U.S., in the mythical state of Missitucky.

Composer Burton Lane is credited with discovering the 13-year-old Frances Gumm, better known as Judy Garland.

E.Y. (Yip) Harburg, wrote the lyricist for many well-known songs, including *It's Only a Paper Moon*, *Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?*, and all of the songs in *The Wizard of Oz*, including *Over the Rainbow*.

I first sang *Look to the Rainbow* as part of a Broadway musicals lecture presentation in New York in 2011, and fell in love with the song.

O mio babbino caro (O my dearest daddy), Giacomo Puccini

Like *The Flower Duet* from *Lakme*, this aria from Puccini's one-act comic opera *Gianni Schicchi* is a piece that people know even if they don't know its name or what it's from. It's been used in television commercials and in the movie *A Room with a View*.

A young woman, Lauretta, wants to marry her beloved Rinuccio. But Rinuccio has no money, so Lauretta's father, Gianni Schicchi, refuses to let her marry him. She begs him in this aria. She knows she has her father wrapped around her little finger, and she gets her way.