CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

GRADUATE RECITAL IN VOICE

An abstract submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Music:

In Performance

By

Joseph Pleuss

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The abstract of Joseph Pleuss is approved:

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ABSTRACT

GRADUATE RECITAL IN VOICE

by

Joseph Pleuss

Master of Music in Performance

The repertoire for my recital ranged from baroque oratorio to twentieth century French mélodie and focuses on many non-operatic traditions in solo vocal literature. The four sets chosen for this recital represent the following four genres: baroque English oratorio, German lied, French mélodie, and early 1900 English art song. The selections were chosen in order to take an audience on an emotional journey encompassing many themes. Starting with the father’s aria from Handel’s Samson, we see the pain of a father’s love, which was followed by the vengeance of military pursuit in the second aria by Handel, See the Raging Flames Arise. The selections chosen from Schubert’s Schwanengesang gives the audience representation of some of his musical interpretations of both Rellstab’s and Heine’s poetry. The Ravel set allows the audience to enjoy his last completed composition as well as provide a light interlude between the more emotionally demanding segments of the program. The recital finishes with Ralph Vaughan Williams’ Songs of Travel, which is a poetic reflection of a man’s life from the first person point of view.
George Fredrick Handel is one of the foremost composers of baroque opera and oratorio; his transition to being primarily an oratorio composer occurred following the composition of *Saul* in 1739. Due to his background in opera, a genre in which he had composed over 40 works, this transition was a logical progression. The popularity of opera had begun to decline in England and, due to the significant economic advantage that oratorio had over operatic works, Handel found a niche in this neighboring art form.

Handel’s Oratorio *Samson* premiered February 18, 1743 at Covent Garden in London following the premier of his famed *Messiah*. The oratorio follows the life of Samson from his slavery, following betrayal, to the tearing down of the Dagon temple. The libretto of *Samson* was written by Newburg Hamilton, but was based on the dramatic poem *Samson Agonistes* by Milton. *Joshua* premiered on March 9, 1748 at Covent Garden and is based on the Biblical stories of Joshua; this was the fourth oratorio libretto by Thomas Morell that Handel chose to use. In both *Samson* and *Joshua*, Handel references a more traditional operatic format, which utilizes individual roles complete with recitative, arias, and duets; all of which are traditional attributes to opera. As a result, both productions can be performed in either a traditional oratorio setting or within the context of a fully staged production. The selected *Samson* aria comes from the role of Samson’s father Manoa who is grieved upon seeing the state of his enslaved and blinded son. The *Joshua* aria is from the role of Caleb in Act 2 who sings of the victory of Israel.

Composed in 1828, *Schwanengesang* is a posthumous collection of songs by Schubert, which contains his last lieder compositions. Schubert uses three different poets: Rellstab for songs 1-7, Heine for songs 8-13, and Seidl for *Taubenpost*, the last
piece of the set. The Heine series includes some of Schubert’s greatest explorations into the world of mixed-genre lieder, a style which incorporates traditional lied concepts with the dramatic/declamatory art song.

Schubert pioneered the world of lieder composition with the creation of full song cycles to encompass the complete poetic ideas of an author. His use of tone painting, a concept using the accompaniment to create an image such as a brook in *Liebesbotschaft* or a weather vane in *Die Wetterfahne*, along with the introduction of a variety of dramatic elements influenced contemporaries such as Schumann, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Liszt, Mahler, Wolf, and Loewe.

*Don Quichotte A Dulcinée* was the last completed work by Ravel, which was commissioned by G.W. Pabst for use in a film of Don Quichotte featuring the famous Russian Bass Feodor Chaliapin. The producers approached five different composers (Jaques Ibert, Marcel Delannoy, Manuel de Falla, Darius Milhaud, and Maurice Ravel) and led each to believe that they were the only contributors to the film. Unbeknownst to any of them, the producers set up a “competition” to determine who would get the contract. Due to Ibert finishing his compositions before Ravel, he ended up winning the contract. The entire episode proved to be very embarrassing to Ibert, who was a great admirer and close friend of Ravel. The pieces are a set of serenades from Don Quichotte to Dulcinée. The progression begins with noble offerings of Don Quichotte followed by a prayer. *Chanson a boire* is a drinking song that contains musical nuances such as hiccups to show the drunken state of Don Quichotte.
Ralph Vaughan Williams’ *Songs of Travel* is a set of nine songs drawn from the poetry of Robert Louis Stevenson. Originally written for piano and baritone voice, it was also orchestrated by Vaughan Williams and his assistant Roy Douglas. Written between 1901 and 1904, the cycle included only the first nine pieces; the last piece was believed to be found after Vaughan Williams death by his wife Ursula Wood.

The poetry, written from a first person point of view, looks back on the life of a man and focuses on elements such as childhood homes, solitary roads, love, and death. The final piece *I have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope* contains musical themes found in other pieces throughout the cycle and metaphorically speaks of death as the closing of a door.
Joseph H. Pleuss, Baritone
In his Masters of Music Recital
Student of Dr. David Sannerud

John Rogers, Piano

Friday, February 10, 2012, 7:30 PM
Cypress Recital Hall

In partial fulfillment of the Masters of Music degree in Vocal Performance
Program

I. Oratorio Selections
   G.F. Handel (1685-1759)
   I. How Willing My Paternal Love – *Samson*
   II. See the Raging Flames Arise – *Joshua*

II. *Schwanengesang*
    Franz Schubert (1797-1828)
    I. Liebesbotschaft
    II. Ständchen
    III. Der Atlas
    IV. Ihr Bild
    V. Der Doppelgänger

Intermission

III. *Don Quichotte A Dulcinée*
     Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
     I. Chanson romanesque
     II. Chanson épique
     III. Chanson à boire

IV. *Songs of Travel*
     R. Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)
     I. The Vagabond
     II. Let Beauty Awake
     III. The Roadside Fire
     IV. Youth and Love
     V. In Dreams
     VI. The Infinite Shining Heavens
     VII. Whither Must I Wander
     VIII. Bright is the Ring of Words
     IX. I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope
Translations

Schwanengesang (Swan song)

_Liebesbotschaft (Love’s Message)_

Murmuring brooklet,  
So silvery bright,  
Hurry to my beloved  
So fast and light,  
Oh friendly brooklet,  
Be my messenger fair,  
Bring my distant greetings  
to her.

All the flowers  
She tends in her garden,  
Which she sweetly  
Bears on her bosom,  
And her roses  
In a purple glow,  
Brooklet, refresh them  
With cooling flow.

When on the bank,  
Immersed in dreams,  
Remembering me,  
She hangs her head,  
Comfort my sweetheart  
With a friendly glance,  
For her beloved  
Will soon come back.

When the sun sets  
With reddening glow,  
Rock my loved one  
To slumber,  
Murmur for her  
Sweet sleep,  
And whisper dreams  
Of Love to her.

_Ständchen (Serenade)_

My songs beckon softly  
through the night to you;  
below in the quiet grove,  
Come to me, beloved!

The rustle of slender leaf tips whispers  
in the moonlight;  
Do not fear the evil spying
Of the betrayer, my dear

Do you hear the nightingales call?
Ah, they beckon to you,
With the sweet sound of their singing
They beckon to you for me.

They understand the heart's longing,
Know the pain of love,
They calm each tender heart
With their silver tones.

Let them also stir within your breast,
Beloved, hear me!
Trembling I wait for you,
Come, please me!

**Der Atlas (The Atlas)**

I, unblessed Atlas!
I carry a world, the entire world of pain,
I bear the unbearable,
And the heart within me wants to break.

Proud heart, you have wanted it thus!
You wanted to be happy, eternally happy,
Or eternally miserable, you proud heart,
And now you are miserable.

**Ihr Bild (Her Portrait)**

I stood in darkened daydreams
And stared at her portrait long
As that beloved face was
Secretly coming to life.

Around her lips there blossomed
A wondrous laughing smile,
And melancholy teardrops -
They glittered in her fair eyes.

Likewise my teardrops welled up
And flowed down mournful cheeks
Alas, I can't believe it,
That I am deprived of you!

**Der Doppelgänger (The Double)**

The night is calm, the avenues are quiet,
My sweet one lived in this house;
She has already left the city long ago,
The house certainly still stands, in the same place.

A man is standing there, too, staring up into space,
And powerfully wringing his hands in torment.
It horrifies me, when I see his countenance,
The moon shows me my own form.

You my fearful double, you pale partner!
Why do you ape the pain of my love,
That has tortured me here in this spot
So many a night, in times long ago?

Don Quichotte A Dulcinée (Don Quichotte to Dulcinée)

Chanson romanesque (Romantic Song)

If you told me the eternal turning
Of the world, offended you.
I would send Panza:
You would see it motionless and silent.

If you told me you were bored by
The number of stars in the sky.
I would tear the heavens apart,
Erase the night in one swipe.

If you told me that the now-empty
Space doesn't please you,
Chivalrous, with a lance at hand
I would fill the wind with stars.

But, my Lady, if you told me
That my blood is more mine than yours.
That reprimand would turn me pale
And, blessing you, I would die.

Oh, Dulcinée.

Chanson épique (Epic Song)

Good Saint Michael, who gives me the chance
To see my Lady and to hear her.
Good Saint Michael who deigns to choose me
To please and defend her.
Good Saint Michael will you descend
With Saint George to the altar
Of the Virgin in the blue mantle.

With a beam from heaven, bless my sword
And his equal in purity
And his equal in piety
As in modesty and chastity:
My Lady.

O Great Saint George and Saint Michael
The angel who guards my watch
My sweet Lady, so much like you
Virgin in the blue mantle.
Amen.

**Chanson à boire (Drinking Song)**

Fig for the bastard, illustrious Lady
Who, for losing me in your sweet eyes
Tells me that love and old wine
Put my heart and soul in mourning.

I drink to pleasure!
Pleasure is the only goal,
To which I go straight...
When I’ve drunk!

Fig for the jealous, dark-haired mistress
Who moans, who cries and swears
Always being the pallid lover,
Watering down his intoxication

I drink to pleasure!
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My Siblings – Jim and Aly, David and Erin, Luke, and my honorary older brother Jeff who has been a great role model for me all of these years. I am the luckiest person alive to have you guys as brothers.

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Kristy Katzenmeyer – I am very excited about our future together.

I want to Dedicate this recital to my great friend Moses Altsech. Your financial contribution enabled me to finish this degree. Words cannot express how grateful I am. You are an incredible friend, thank you.