SONGS OF LOVE AND NATURE

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For the degree of Master of Music
In Performance

By

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ABSTRACT

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Master of Music in Vocal Performance

*Songs of Love and Nature*, is a recital program made of songs and art songs in various languages for soprano with piano accompaniment. Song is composition that made of music and lyrics; art song is a unique blend of high quality poem and high quality music. Melody, harmony, rhythm, accompaniment and texts all were together to communicate the composers’s vision of the poem. This program is unified by the topics of love and nature which provides an aesthetically pleasing experience throughout the recital.

A group by Italian Bel Canto opera composers Rossini and Bellini begin the program. The Bellini and Rossini songs are not art songs, rather they are songs written in the style of operatic arias. The text and accompaniment patterns are not as sophisticated as art song text and accompaniment. *La Promessa, Almen se non poss’io* and *La pastore delle’*
Alpi are songs about Love and nature. All of the three songs have beautiful and simple melodic lines, and sustained phrases. La Promessa is about a lover who will never stop his love, the song sings “I will ever be able to stop loving you.” The music is playful and lively in 6/8 rhythm, ABA form, and chordal piano accompaniment. Nature is captured in the song La pastorella delle’Alpi’s as the text and music describes a lively shepherdess’ happy life in the Alps. The rhythm of the vocal line imitates yodeling in the Alps. Almen se non poss’io displays the sad feeling of separating lovers. The song has long phrase, simple broken chord piano accompaniment and is set in binary form.

The German Lied, Der Hirt Auf Dem Felsen by Schubert is an extended song with clarinet and piano accompaniment. The clarinet reflects the emotional state of a lonely shepherd. The voice, piano and clarinet interact with each other in a manner which expresses the shepherds emotional state. The piece is multi-sectional, alternating between a moderate tempo, a slower tempo and then a very fast tempo. Section A sets the scene as the shepherd and clarinet share musical lines. It has long sustained vocal lines, reflecting the sadness of longing for a lover. At the end of this section, the tonality changes to a bright
G major, which indicates that the shepherd is feeling hopeful as he looks to spring. Section B has a very florid ornamentation to express the spring is coming.

Melodie is the French form of the art song. Three songs by Gabriel Faure, *Ici-bas*, *Romance* and *Beau Soir* by Claude Debussy represent the mature Melodie. Faure captures the meaning of the poetry with simple but atmospheric accompaniment. The text of *Ici-bas* expresses the dream of keeping love of life forever. The accompaniment pattern creates this feeling with broken chord patterns in a lyrical nature. The text of the Melodie, *Romance* presents the desire to have a pure and peaceful soul. The brief piano introduction creates a supernatural atmosphere to support the poem. The title of the third Melodie, *Beau soir* translates “beautiful evening.” The arpeggiate piano accompaniment reflects the beautiful evening. The rhythm set in triple meter creates the feeling of wonder. French romantic poetry often speaks of both love and nature together.

Two songs from a song cycle by Arnold Cooke, *Songs of Innocence* make up the last art song group of the program. *Piping Down the Valleys Wild* and *The Shepherd* depict lively and cheerful country life with clarinet as accompaniment to express the emotional
state of the shepherd in each song, much the same as the clarinet did in *Der Hirt Auf Dem Felsen*. In the first song, *Piping Down the Valleys Wild* has a cheerful broken chord accompaniment in the piano sets the mood. The melody is simple and easy to sing and the vocal line is energetic, but lyrical. The second song *The Shepherd*, is a typical pastoral setting. The shepherd is used as a metaphor for God and the sheep are a metaphor for God’s children. A sweet, lyrical, vocal long line in a slow rhythm and stable triple meter expresses the serenity of an appropriate relationship with God. Love (this time Love of God) and nature come together again in these songs as they did in earlier groups.

*Saper vorreste* is the only aria of the recital, which is from three act opera *Un ballo in ma schera* by Giuseppe Verdi. *Saper vorreste* is sung by Oscar at the ball in the third act. Oscar is a Riccardo’s page, and a humorous, lively and witty boy. Oscar defiantly refuses a request from the character Renato singing the refrain “tra la la la” as if playing a trick. Human nature is reflected in the sassy nature of this character.

The recital program is rounded off with a Mongolian folk song *Hong Yan*, reflects the nostalgia feeling from a person far away from home. The folk music is an oral
tradition, so we do not know who composed it. The melody uses the pentatonic mode which represents the Chinese traditional national mode. It is a strophic song made up of four stanzas which use nature as a metaphor for the beloved homeland. The first two stanzas are in G major, then the later two stanzas modulate B flat major. The increasingly intensive arpeggiated piano accompaniment reveals intense homesickness.

Art song is a synthesis of music and poetry as equal partners. The composer begins with a poem which gives him a vision for vocal line and accompaniment patterns. The accompaniment and the voice line work together to express the meaning of the poetry. When art songs are performed in a recital with other songs and arias of similar aesthetic, and a unified topic such as one about love and nature, it is possible to enlarge the composer’s vision by crafting a satisfying performance.
PROGRAM

I

La Promessa.............................................................................. Rossini Antonio Gioacchino
(1792-1868)
Pietro Metastasio
(1698-1782)
Almen se non poss’io................................................................. Vincenzo Bellini
(1801-1835)
Pietro Metastasio
(1698-1782)
La pastorella delle Alpi.......................................................... Rossini Antonio Gioacchino
(1792-1868)
Count Carlo Pepoli
(1796-1881)

II

Der Hirt Auf Dem Felsen......................................................... Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)
Willhelm Müller
(1794-1827)
Wilhelmine Christiane von Chézy
(1783-1856)

INTERMISSION

III

Ici-bas........................................................................... Gabriel Fauré
(1845-1924)
Sully Prudhomme
(1839-1907)
Romance…………………………………………………………..Claude Debussy
                          (1862-1918)
                          Paul Bourget
                          (1852-1935)

Beau Soir…………………………………………………………..Claude Debussy
                          (1862-1918)
                          Paul Bourget
                          (1852-1935)

IV

Songs of Innocence……………………………………………………..Arnold Cooke
                          (1906-2005)
                          William Blake
                          (1757-1827)

1. Piping Down the Valleys Wild
2. The Shepherd

V

Saper vorrest - Un ballo in maschera……………………………….Giuseppe Verdi
                          (1785-1867)
                          Antonio Somma
                          (1809-1864)

VI

Hong Yan (Swan Geese)……………………………………………..Mongolian Folk Song