

Program Notes and Translations

Richard Strauss, one of the last great German composers of the Romantic period, began composing at the age of six and continued for another 80 years. *Vier letzte Lieder*/Four Last Songs, written in 1948 at the end of his life, offer a grand and sumptuous operatic compositional style of lush sounds and sweeping melodies, pushing the boundaries of the traditional harmonic language of the earlier 19th century German art song composers. To the gratitude of singers and audiences, Strauss provided many of his songs with both piano and orchestra accompaniments, as is the case with these two songs.

Frühling – Spring (poem by Hermann Hesse)

*In dusky vaults I have long dreamt of your trees and blue skies, your scents and bird songs.
Now you lie revealed in glistening splendor, flushed with light, a blissful wonder before me.*

Cäcilie – Cecily (poem by Heinrich Hart)

*If you only knew what it's like to dream of burning kisses, of resting with one's beloved,
you would incline your heart to me!*



Gabriel Fauré's songs are masterful contributions to the French *mélodie* genre and considered core repertoire for singers. His early compositional style, represented by the two songs on the program, is characterized by arching melodies and an accompaniment that plays an essential dramatic role in portraying restless, frustrated love. Paul-Armand Silvestre's poem "Fleur jetée" is aptly set to dramatic and technically challenging repetitions in the piano not unlike those of Schubert's song "Erlkönig" composed some 60 years earlier.

Henri Duparc published only 14 songs in his long life, all before the age of 40. Sadly, his overly critical assessments of his own compositions kept him from publishing songs in the latter part of his career. In "Extase" Duparc captures Lahor's exquisite text by evoking pure bliss without over emphasizing the text, as if to invite the audience into a world of dreams and ecstasy.

Toujours – Always (Poem by Charles-Jean Grandmougin)

You ask me to go my way alone, forever. Rather, ask the stars to fall into infinity, the boundless sea to drain its mighty waves, but do not expect my soul to shed its passion for you.

Extase – Ecstasy (Poem by Jean Lahor)

*My heart sleeps against your pale breast, a sleep like an exquisite death,
perfumed with the breath of the beloved.*

Fleur jetée – Discarded Flower (Poem by Paul-Armand Silvestre)

Love dies, like flowers, once so fresh, now scythed down. The hand that once touched you now shuns my hand forever. May the wind that withers you, wither my heart.



Tacea la notte placida / Il trovatore

Verdi's opera takes place in 15th century Spain. In this aria, the noblewoman Leonora confesses to her confidant Ines that she has fallen in love with a mysterious troubadour who has been serenading under her window. As she steps out on the balcony to see who this man is, she discovers that he is the knight with whom she fell in love when he was a tournament victor, before the civil war separated them.

Je marche sur tous les chemins...Obéissons (Manon's Gavotte)

In Manon's third act aria, she has reached the height of riches and glamour—a curious idea since the gavotte form used in the aria was typically a French peasant dance. Having rejected life in the convent and her love for the Chevalier des Grieux, she boasts of wealth and beauty, the welcome attention of adoring men and says that youth should be enjoyed while it lasts.



Duetto buffo di due gatti/Cat Duet

M e o w!

Hermit Songs

In Barber's cycle of ten songs, he used translated texts by Irish monks and scholars from the 8th to the 13th centuries. These short poems expressed the monks' thoughts and observations in simple, witty and sometimes surprisingly modern language given the monastic life they led. The texts show their connection to nature, animals and God. Seán Ó Faoláin and W.H. Auden, among others, translated the original poems and the cycle premiered in 1953 at the Library of Congress with the renowned soprano Leontyne Price and Barber at the piano.

Two Emily Dickinson Songs

André Previn had an extensive and varied career as a pianist, conductor and composer. Born in Berlin in 1929, he fled Nazi Germany when he was a child and settled in Los Angeles. His early compositions were influenced by his collaborations as a pianist with some of America's greatest jazz players. For Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios he composed scores for over 50 films and won 4 Academy Awards. His classical compositions explore nearly every genre of classical music and earned him Emmy and Grammy nominations and awards. As a conductor, he had long, successful relationships with a number of world-renown orchestras. A renaissance man!



Vissi d'arte from Tosca

Scarpia, the corrupt Chief of Secret Police in Rome is obsessed with the celebrated singer Tosca and invites her to his apartment to strike a bargain: he will set her lover Cavaradossi free if she submits to him. Tosca continually rejects his advances, singing of her dedication to art and love, praying to God not to abandon her. Emotionally spent, Tosca agrees to his proposition, but in turn demands his signature on a document that will guarantee safe passage from Rome for her and Cavaradossi. He signs the document, and as he approaches her to 'collect' on his proposition, she fatally stabs him. In the end, Scarpia's word was meaningless--Cavaradossi is executed.

Sempre libera from La traviata

Verdi's masterpiece, *La traviata*, which translates to "the fallen woman," is based on the novel *La Dame aux Camélias* by Alexandre Dumas. Violetta is a courtesan who has never known or allowed herself to experience true love--until she meets the young, handsome Alfredo. He attends one of her salon parties and tells her that when she was ill, he visited her every day. When he declares his love for her, she is charmingly dismissive. Upon his departure, she is torn by the feelings he stirred in her, finding herself unable to *completely* resist his charms. In the aria, she chides herself for entertaining the notion that he could truly love her, a courtesan, that loving one person is foolish, and it would be much better to live as one pleases.

La danza (text by Conte Carlo Pepoli)

Dear ladies come to me--this handsome smiling fellow wants to dance with all of you!