

University of Missouri School of Music

Voice Recital – 2020-2021 Series

## Michelle Peters, mezzo-soprano

## Ross Dryer, piano

February 20, 2021 – 2:00pm – Sinquefield Music Center

### Program

#### *Poème d'un jour*

**Rencontre**

**Toujours**

**Adieu**

**Gabriel Fauré**

**(1845–1924)**

Gabriel Fauré, a French composer is well known for popularizing the *Mélodie*, the French version of the German art song. Fauré's musical composition preferences include complex harmonies, competing meters, and colorful modulations. He started his professional music studies at Ecole Niedermeyer, under the influence of many of the world's greatest musicians, meeting with Franz Liszt on more than one occasion for mentorship, through his teacher Camille Saint-Saëns. After joining Société Nationale de Musique, an organization that brought together France's greatest composers, Fauré's music started being performed at salons, where he eventually met his first fiancée, Marianna Viardot. This engagement lasted only a few months, and some of Fauré's greatest works were composed during this emotional, post-breakup period, including *Poème d'un jour*. Meaning "poems for a day," this cycle follows a day in the life of a relationship, from the beginning to end.

#### **Rencontre**

J'étais triste et pensif quand je t'ai rencontrée,  
Je sens moins aujourd'hui mon obstiné tourment,  
Ô dis-moi, serais-tu la femme inespérée  
Et le rêve idéal poursuivi vainement?  
Ô passante aux doux yeux, serais-tu donc l'amie  
Qui rendrait le bonheur au poète isolé,  
Et vas-tu rayonner sur mon âme affermie  
Comme le ciel natal sur un cœur d'exilé?

Ta tristesse sauvage, à la mienne pareille,  
Aime à voir le soleil décliner sur la mer!  
Devant l'immensité ton extase s'éveille  
Et le charme des soirs à ta belle âme est cher.  
Une mystérieuse et douce sympathie  
Déjà m'enchaîne à toi comme un vivant lien,  
Et mon âme frémit, par l'amour envahie  
Et mon cœur te chérit sans te connaître bien.

#### **Toujours**

Vous me demandez de me taire,  
De fuir loin de vous pour jamais  
Et de m'en aller, solitaire,  
Sans me rappeler qui j'aimais!

Demandez plutôt aux étoiles

#### **Meeting**

I was sad and pensive when I met you,  
Today I feel less my persistent pain;  
O tell me, could you be the long hoped-for woman,  
And the ideal dream pursued in vain?  
O passer-by with gentle eyes, could you be the friend  
To restore the lonely poet's happiness,  
And will you shine on my steadfast soul  
Like native sky on an exiled heart?

Your timid sadness, like my own,  
Loves to watch the sun set on the sea!  
Such boundless space awakes your rapture,  
And your fair soul prizes the evenings' charm.  
A mysterious and gentle sympathy  
Already binds me to you like a living bond,  
And my soul quivers, overcome by love,  
And my heart, without knowing you well, adores you.

#### **Forever**

You ask me to be silent,  
To flee far from you for ever  
And to go my way alone,  
Forgetting whom I loved!

Rather ask the stars

De tomber dans l'immensité,  
À la nuit de perdre ses voiles,  
Au jour de perdre sa clarté!

Demandez à la mer immense  
De dessécher ses vastes flots  
Et quand les vents sont en démente,  
D'apaiser ses sombres sanglots!

Mais n'espérez pas que mon âme  
S'arrache à ses âpres douleurs  
Et se dépouille de sa flamme  
Comme le printemps de ses fleurs!

### **Adieu**

Comme tout meurt vite, la rose  
Déclose,  
Et les frais manteaux diapers  
Des prés;  
Les longs soupirs, les bienaimées,  
Fumées!

On voit dans ce monde léger  
Changer,  
Plus vite que les flots des grèves,  
Nos rêves,  
Plus vite que le givre en fleurs,  
Nos coeurs!

À vous l'on se croyait fidèle,  
Cruelle,  
Mais hélas! les plus longs amours  
Sont courts!  
Et je dis en quittant vos charmes,  
Sans larmes,  
Presqu'au moment de mon aveu,  
Adieu!

To fall into infinity,  
The night to lose its veils,  
The day to lose its light!

Ask the boundless sea  
To drain its mighty waves,  
And the raging winds  
To calm their dismal sobbing!

But do not expect my soul  
To tear itself from bitter sorrow,  
Nor to shed its passion  
As springtime sheds its flowers!

### **Farewell**

How swiftly all things die, the rose  
In bloom,  
And the cool dappled mantle  
Of the meadows;  
Long-drawn sighs, loved ones,  
all smoke!

In this fickle world we see  
Change,  
More swiftly than waves on the shore,  
Our dreams,  
More swiftly than frosted flowers,  
Our hearts!

To you I thought I would be faithful,  
Cruel one,  
But alas! the longest loves  
Are short!  
And I say, taking leave of your charms,  
Without tears,  
Almost at the moment of my avowal,  
Farewell!

Poetry by Charles Grandmougin  
English translations by Richard Stokes

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### **Trois Mélodies**

**La statue de bronze**

**Daphénéo**

**Le chapelier**

**Erik Satie**  
**(1866–1925)**

An eccentric French composer and pianist, Erik Satie was described as lazy by his professors. He befriended Claude Debussy on his journey and influenced the early works of his friend Maurice Ravel. Broke and unemployed, Satie continued to compose

for piano and voice, adapting hundreds of popular works for piano. His compositional work remained unpopular until later in his life, when his short piano works became a source of ironic, witty, and humorous amusement which are now beloved by many. Completed in 1916 during World War I, the cycle was written for mezzo-soprano Jane Bathori in preparation for a “Ravel-Satie Festival,” sponsored by the Société Lyre et Palette, and “La statue de bronze” was dedicated to her. With poetry by Satie’s friend and niece of one of his best patrons, Marie Anne “Mimi” Godebska, “Dapheneno” was dedicated to tenor Pierre-Émile Engel, Bathori’s husband. Reviewer Virginia Sublett noted that the song “depends... on an untranslatable pun: eliding a final “n” turns “un oisetier” (a nonexistent word meaning “bird-tree”) into “un noisetier,” or “hazel-nut tree.” “Le chapelier” was dedicated to Igor Stravinsky, one of the few composers Satie had an unconditional admiration for. The note at the top of this final piece, “Genre Gounod,” was a nod to Charles Gounod (1818-1893). Satie admired his operas and even contributed to one of his works, writing recitatives to replace the original spoken dialogue in *Le Médecin malgré lui*.

### **La statue de bronze**

La grenouille  
Du jeu de tonneau  
S'ennuie, le soir, sous la tonnelle...  
Elle en a assez!  
D'être la statue  
Qui va prononcer un grand mot: Le Mot!

Elle aimerait mieux être avec les autres  
Qui font des bulles de musique  
Avec le savon de la lune  
Au bord du lavoir mordoré  
Qu'on voit, là-bas, luire entre les branches...

On lui lance à coeur de journée  
Une pâture de pistoles  
Qui la traversent sans lui profiter

Et s'en vont sonner  
Dans les cabinets  
De son piédestal numéroté!

Et le soir, les insectes couchant  
Dans sa bouche...

### **The bronze statue**

The frog  
Of the barrel game  
Grows weary at evening, beneath the arbor...  
She has had enough!  
Of being the statue  
Who is about to utter a great word: The Word!

She would love to be with the others  
Who make music bubbles  
With the soap of the moon  
Beside the lustrous bronze tub  
That one sees there, shining between the branches...

At midday one hurls at her  
A feast of discs  
That pass through without benefit to her

And will resound  
In the chambers  
Of her numbered pedestal!

And at night, the insects go to sleep  
In her mouth...

Poetry by Léon-Paul Fargue

### **Daphénéo**

Dis-moi, Daphénéo, quel est donc cet arbre  
Dont les fruits sont des oiseaux qui pleurent?

Cet arbre, Chrysaline, est *un oisetier*.

Ah! Je croyais que les noisetiers  
Donnaient des noisettes, Daphénéo.

Oui, Chrysaline, les noisetiers donnent des noisettes,  
Mais les oisetiers donnent des oiseaux qui pleurent.

Tell me, Dapheneo, what is that tree  
The fruit of which is weeping birds?

That tree, Chrysaline, is a bird-tree.

Ah! I believe that hazelnut trees  
Produce hazelnuts, Dapheneo.

Yes, Chrysaline, hazelnut trees give hazelnuts,  
But bird-trees give weeping birds.

Ah!...

Ah!...

Poetry by Mimi Godebska as M. God

**Le chapelier**

Le chapelier s'étonne de constater  
Que sa montre retarde de trois jours,  
Bien qu'il ait eu soin de la graisser  
Toujours avec du beurre de première qualité.  
Mais il a laissé tomber des miettes  
De pain dans les rouages,  
Et il a beau plonger sa montre dans le thé,  
Ça ne le fera pas avancer davantage.

**The Hatmaker**

The hatmaker is surprised to note  
That his watch is three days slow,  
Though he has taken care to grease it,  
Always with first-quality butter.  
But he allowed crumbs of bread  
To fall into its gears,  
And though he plunged his watch in tea,  
This will not advance it any further.

Poetry by René Chalupt

Adapted from work by Lewis Carroll

English translations by Shawn Thuris

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**“Se bramate d’amar, chi vi sdegnna”**

**from *Serse***

**George Frideric Handel**

**(1685–1759)**

Best known for his operas, oratorios, and instrumental concertos, the German composer George Frideric Handel, was most influenced by the composers of the Italian Baroque style and the German polyphonic choral tradition. He completed over forty opera series, but stopped composing in Italian after the success of his *Messiah*. The opera *Serse* was completed on February 14, 1738, in less than two months. The libretto was adapted from that by Silvio Stampiglia (1664-1725) used for Giovanni Bononcini's opera of the same name, which is loosely based on the life of Xerxes I of Persia. The role of Serse was originally cast as a castrato mezzo-soprano but is now performed by a mezzo-soprano or counter-tenor. Its first performance was rated a disaster by critics, as this was one of the first opera series performed in London to have comic elements mixed in, however, it remains one of his most famous operas. Set in Abydos, Persia around the time of 470 BC, King Serse has just intercepted a love letter sent to the woman he wishes to marry, Romilda, but the letter is from Serse's brother. Serse is enraged because he believed that his brother was in love with a different woman. He feels betrayed by his brother and is furious that Romilda does not love him, the king, in return. Entitled and enraged, he sings “Se bramate d’amar chi vi sdegnna” in a fit to express his anger.

Se bramate d'amar, chi vi sdegnna,  
vuò sdegnarvi, ma come, non sò.

If you desire to love those who disdain you,  
I want to disdain you, but how, I do not know.

La vostra ira crudel me l'insegna,  
tento farlo, e quest'alma non può.

Your cruel anger teaches me  
to attempt to do it, and this soul cannot.

Libretto by Silvio Stampiglia

English translation by Michelle Peters

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***Gedichte der Königin Maria Stuart***

**Abschied von Frankreich**

**Nach der Geburt ihres Sohnes**

**An die Königin Elisabeth**

**Abschied von der Welt**

**Gebet**

**Robert Schumann**

**(1810–1856)**

Robert Schumann was a German composer of the Romantic era well known for his Lieder, piano, and instrumental works. He spent a short time pursuing a career as a pianist under the direction of Friedrich Wieck, his future father-in-law, until a hand injury shifted his focus to composition, at which time he came under the influence of Franz Schubert. After marrying the successful concert pianist Clara Wieck in 1840, many of his works, especially for piano, were dedicated to her. *Gedichte der Königin Maria Stuart*, written in 1852, was the last of Robert Schumann's song cycles; it was presented to Clara around Christmastime and the work emulates, in a way, the few remaining depressing years of his life in which he was unable to compose for months at a time. All in minor keys, the five songs journey through the life of Mary, Queen of Scots (1542-1587) with text taken from her own letters. Living a woeful life, Mary was exiled from France, the country in which she grew up, at the age of 19 and after the death of her first husband. The opening song is a farewell to France, her true home as she embarks on her journey to Scotland, with the accompaniment mimicking the waves of the ocean as she departs. The second is set not too long after the first, after the birth of her firstborn son. Knowing he is to be the next King of England, she prays that her son may lead a God-pleasing life after he is taken from her to be groomed in society. The third song is a letter to Queen Elizabeth of England, her captor, in the middle years of her life, not with a tone of anger as one would expect, but with an uncomfortable sadness. The fourth is a letter of defeat from a prisoner sentenced to life with no hope left in sight. The fifth and final piece is a calm, quiet prayer to God as she is led to her death after twenty years of wrongful imprisonment, asking for eternal peace.

### **Abschied von Frankreich**

Ich zieh' dahin!  
Ade, mein fröhlich Frankenland,  
Wo ich die liebste Heimat fand,  
Du meiner Kindheit Pflegerin!  
Ade, du Land, du schöne Zeit.  
Mich trennt das Boot vom Glück so weit!  
Doch trägt's die Hälfte nur von mir:  
Ein Teil für immer bleibet dein,  
Mein fröhlich Land, der sage dir,  
Des andern eingedenk zu sein!  
Ade!

### **Nach der Geburt ihres Sohnes**

Herr Jesu Christ, den sie gekrönt mit Dornen,  
Beschütze die Geburt des hier Gebor'nen.  
Und sei's dein Will', lass sein Geschlecht zugleich  
Lang herrschen noch in diesem Königreich.  
Und alles, was geschieht in seinem Namen,  
Sei dir zu Ruhm und Preis und Ehre, Amen.

### **An die Königin Elisabeth**

Nur ein Gedanke, der mich freut und quält,  
Hält ewig mir den Sinn gefangen,  
So dass der Furcht und Hoffnung Stimmen klangen,  
Als ich die Stunden ruhelos gezählt.

Und wenn mein Herz dies Blatt zum Boten wählt,  
Und kündet, Euch zu sehen, mein Verlangen,  
Dann, teure Schwester, fasst mich neues Bangen,  
Weil ihm die Macht, es zu beweisen fehlt.

Ich seh' den Kahn im Hafen fast geborgen,

### **Farewell to France**

I am going away!  
Farewell, my happy France,  
Where I found the loveliest homeland,  
You the guardian of my childhood!  
Farewell, O land, O happy time,  
The ship bears me far away from joy!  
Yet it takes but half of me:  
One part will be for ever yours,  
My happy land, recalling to you  
The memory of that other self!  
Farewell!

### **After the Birth of her Son**

Lord Jesus Christ, whom they crowned with thorns,  
Protect this new born boy,  
And, if it be Thy will, let his race  
Long rule in this realm.  
And let all that is done in his name  
Be to Thy glory, praise and honor, Amen.

### **To Queen Elizabeth**

One thought alone gladdens and grieves me  
And dominates my mind,  
So that the voices of fear and hope resound,  
When sleepless I count the hours.

And when my heart chooses this letter as messenger,  
Revealing how I long to see you,  
Then, dear sister, a new anguish seizes me,  
Because the letter lacks the power to prove it.

I see the boat half hidden in the harbor,

Vom Sturm und Kampf der Wogen festgehalten,  
Des Himmels heit' res Antlitz nachtumgraut.  
So bin auch ich bewegt von Furcht und Sorgen,  
Vor euch nicht, Schwester. Doch des Schicksals  
Walten zerreisst das Segel oft, dem wir vertraut.

### **Abschied von der Welt**

Was nützt die mir noch zugemess'ne Zeit?  
Mein Herz erstarb für irdisches Begehren,  
Nur Leiden soll mein Schatten nicht entbehren,  
Mir blieb allein die Todesfreudigkeit.

Ihr Feinde, lasst von eurem Neid:  
Mein Herz ist abgewandt der Hoheit Ehren,  
Des Schmerzes Übermass wird mich verzehren;  
Bald geht mit mir zu Grabe Hass und Streit.

Ihr Freunde, die ihr mein gedenkt in Liebe,  
Erwägt und glaubt, dass ohne Kraft und Glück  
Kein gutes Werk mir zu vollenden bliebe.

So wünscht mir bess're Tage nicht zurück,  
Und weil ich schwer gestraft werd' hienieden,  
Erfleht mir meinen Teil am ew'gen Frieden!

### **Gebet**

O Gott, mein Gebieter,  
Ich hoffe auf Dich!  
O Jesu, Geliebter,  
Nun rette Du mich!  
Im harten Gefängnis,  
In schlimmer Bedrängnis  
Ersehne ich Dich;  
In Klagen, Dir klagend,  
Im Staube verzagend,  
Erhör', ich beschwöre,  
Und rette Du mich!

Held back by the storm and warring waves,  
And heaven's serene face blackened by night.  
So am I likewise beset by cares and fear,  
Not of you, my sister. But the force of fate  
Often lacerates the sail in which we trust.

### **Farewell to the World**

What use is the time still allotted me?  
My heart is dead to earthly desires,  
My spirit is severed from all but sorrow,  
The joy of death alone remains.

Cease envying me, O enemies:  
My heart abjures all honor and nobility,  
Excess of anguish will devour me,  
Hatred and schism will soon be buried with me.

O friends, who will remember me with love,  
Consider and believe that without power or fortune  
There is nothing good I can achieve.

So do not wish for the return of happier days,  
And because I've been sorely punished here on earth,  
Pray that a share of eternal peace might be mine!

### **Prayer**

O Lord God,  
I put my trust in Thee!  
O beloved Jesus,  
Rescue me!  
In my harsh prison,  
In dire affliction  
I long for Thee;  
Lamenting I cry to Thee,  
Despairing in the dust,  
Hearken, I implore Thee,  
And rescue me!

German translations by Gisbert, Freiherr von Vincke  
English translations by Richard Stokes

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## **INTERMISSION**

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**The Worst Pies in London**  
from *Sweeney Todd*

**Stephen Sondheim**  
b. 1930

Perhaps the greatest musical theatre composer of all time, Stephen Sondheim boasts many awards, including more Tony Awards than any other composer. A Jewish composer born in New York City and with little family to speak of, he was

influenced by Oscar Hammerstein II, who became a father-figure to him. After college, he started writing scripts and incidental music for television series until he came to work with Leonard Bernstein. Sondheim wrote the lyrics to accompany Bernstein's music for what is now considered Sondheim's first Broadway success, *West Side Story*. Based on Christopher Bond's *The String of Pearls*, rooted in British myth, *Sweeney Todd* is set in Victorian London, where the barber from Fleet Street, Sweeney Todd, kills his customers with a straight razor, and disposes of their bodies with Mrs. Lovett, his partner in crime and a poor baker, who uses them in her meat pies.

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**On the Steps of the Palace**

**Stephen Sondheim**

**from *Into the Woods***

Intertwining plots from the Grimm Brothers' fairy tales, *Into the Woods* follows the characters from "Rapunzel," "Cinderella," "Little Red Riding Hood," and "Jack and the Beanstalk." Towards the end of the first act, Cinderella starts running from the prince's festival for a third night in a row but is suddenly caught between two options: running away or living happily ever after with her prince.

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**Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend**

**Jule Styne**

**from *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes***

**(1905–1994)**

A Jewish and British-American composer, Jule Styne was best known for his works on Broadway, such as *Gypsy*, with lyrics by Stephen Sondheim. He was gifted with a great talent for piano and had performed with the Chicago, St. Louis, and Detroit symphonies by the age of ten. He worked with jazz bands and as a vocal coach for Hollywood stars, like Shirley Temple. Set in the 1920s, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* is about the journey of two young performers on their way to a club in Paris. In the second act, Lorelei sings "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend" at the Parisian club, after which her rich beau declares his undying love for her. Made popular by Marilyn Monroe, "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend" claims that though love and beauty may change, diamonds are forever.

*This recital is given as a Capstone Project for the Bachelor of Arts degree in Music (Voice).  
Michelle is a student of Christine Seitz.*