

University of Missouri School of Music

2021-2022 Series • Student Ensemble

Hitt Street Harmony

Jazz Not-So-Standards

Daniel Emerson Shafer, director

McCade Gordon, collaborative pianist

April 22, 2022 • 7:00pm

Whitmore Recital Hall

Program

I Am Alive..... Greg Jasperse

Jasperse was inspired to write “I Am Alive” in the wake of the Pulse Nightclub shooting in Orlando, FL. Prior to that tragedy, five cyclists lost their lives when they were hit from behind by a driver under the influence in Kalamazoo, MI. As a member of both the gay and cycling communities, Jasperse was moved to write a piece that would call groups together in solidarity. He wanted to write a work that embodied the joy of living, while also calling all people to sing together and embrace the gift of life!

Jasperse surrounds the only text in the piece, “I Am Alive”, with jazz scat syllables. Similar elements are found in other works by Jasperse such as “Voice Dance”, which solely uses scat syllables. Aside from the main homophonic refrain, “I Am Alive” is packed with syncopations, close harmonies, and a scat melody that travels between the soprano and bass voices. Following a series of bass-driven scat variations, a quadruplet rhythm in the alto and tenor voices deliver us to the final A major chord colored by the alto’s B-natural.

Autumn Leaves.....arr. Ryan O’Connell

Composed in 1945 by French-Hungarian composer Joseph Kosma with lyrics by Jacques Prévert, “Autumn Leaves” (originally “Les Feuilles mortes”) was originally written for the film *Les Portes de la nuit (Gates of the Night)*. The first commercial recordings of “Les Feuilles mortes” were released in early 1950, just a few months before the release of Johnny Mercer’s English translation recorded by American singer, Jo Stafford. Since then, this standard has been recorded by many artists including Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, Duke Ellington, Miles Davis, and Roger Williams whose piano rendition was the first instrumental record to reach number one on the U.S. charts.

O’Connell’s choral arrangement preserves the original melodic material while delaying the harmonic gratification with frequent chromatic passing tones. The dynamic ebb and flow of the opening phrase invoke the subtle rustling of leaves. Before being translated to English by Mercer, “Les Feuilles mortes” was a dark lament of lost love and regret. O’Connell encapsulates the original poetry by giving the melody to the dark-sounding bass section while the other voices swell and build intensity leading to the climax of the arrangement.

***A Million Miles*..... Ginny Carr**

Amanda Obeso, Soloist
Elizabeth Derner, Bass
William Thives, Guitar
Stephen Landy, Percussion

Ginny Carr is the leader/founder, musical director, alto voice, and principal songwriter/arranger for the internationally acclaimed Uptown Vocal Jazz Quartet (UVJQ). Press, radio, and celebrity artists have praised Ginny’s work as a standout for melding her creative originality with the swingin’ cadence of the old school style. Inspired by the great Broadway songwriters who merged intelligent lyrics with beautiful melodies and by the masters of vocalese and vocal harmony who ingeniously told stories while preserving the harmonic tapestry and groove of an instrumental jazz ensemble, Carr fuses these two loves into something unique with a harmonic pop and precision of a horn section.

Set in a gentle bossa groove, “A Million Miles” is just as smooth rhythmically as it is harmonically. The beginning of phrases features speech-like rhythms, while the endings of phrases are augmented to allow for harmonic motion and delayed resolutions. The velvety voice leading not only makes the extended harmonies accessible to ensembles of varying degrees of experience, but they allow the listener to be swept away by the lyrics rather than accosted by jarring vocal leaps. Throughout the work, the voices often will begin phrases in unison before venturing to fulfill their own harmonic duties, but the unison ending accentuates the timeless message that even a million miles can’t come between those who truly love each other.

***Chili Con Carne*.....Anders Edenroth**

During their 5 years at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, Anders Edenroth and his friends formed an *a cappella* quintet - The Real Group. They released their debut album in 1987 and have since released 20 albums and performed over 2000 concerts in over 40 countries. In addition to experimenting with new vocal textures and vocal percussion, Anders has also arranged music for other vocal groups, big bands, symphony orchestras, and stage shows. Their signature velvet blend combined with Edenroth’s ever-growing harmonic and rhythmic language has solidified The Real Group as a household name in musical circles.

“Chili Con Carne” is basically a rhythmically charged recipe! Chock-full of syncopation, rhythmic layering, extended harmonies, and spoken quips, each part brings something unique to the equation. Edenroth also uses voices to imitate other instruments such as string basses, or the sopranos and tenors imitating percussive shakers. With five written key changes and additional momentary key areas, Edenroth challenges the singers harmonically as well as rhythmically. If

you take detailed notes, you may have a new meal to add to your cookbook by the end of this song!

***The Nearness of You*..... arr. Kirby Shaw**
Henry Braeske, Soloist

Debuted in the 1938 movie *Romance in the Dark*, “The Nearness of You” has been recorded by Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Barbra Streisand, Bing Crosby, and even was on Norah Jones’ 2002 Grammy-Award winning album, *Come Away With Me*. The most notable recording, dating back to 1940, features vocals from Ray Eberle backed by Glenn Miller and his orchestra.

The solo that begins the arrangement establishes the effortless melody that pervades throughout. Shaw emphasizes harmonic deviation, suspensions, retardations, and chromatic passing tones rather than intricate rhythms or complex polyphony. The image of a lover held fast in your arms is rendered clearly within the rise and fall of phrases, moments of silence, and dramatic leaps into new emotive lyrics.

***Lover, Come Back To Me*.....arr. Jennifer Barnes**
Carrick O’Bleness and Victoria Shore, Soloists
Elizabeth Derner, Bass
William Thives, Guitar
Stephen Landy, Percussion

Oscar Hammerstein, the winner of eight Tony Awards, two Academy Awards for Best Original Song, and mentor of Stephen Sondheim, combined his lyrics with Sigmund Romberg’s music creating “Lover, Come Back To Me” for the Broadway show *The New Moon*. Recordings by Billie Holiday, Nat King Cole, Barbra Streisand, and Ella Fitzgerald all topped the charts solidifying this song as a standard for generations.

Transforming this 1927 ballad into a jazz swing tune, Barnes sets it at a blazing pace and turns the original solo melody into a duet. Split into two sections, the first presents all the text for the song by the duet and is promptly reiterated homophonically by the choir. The return of the same material in the second section gives opportunities for riffing by the duet and a choral variation with the lower voices acting as a string bass. A quick pace, close harmony, and syncopations permeate this duet-driven reimagination of a Broadway musical love song.

***No One Is Alone*..... arr. Drew Lewis**

Ben Roker and Emma Rowden, Soloists

Stephen Sondheim, the lyricist and composer of *Into the Woods* from which “No One Is Alone” is excerpted, was one of the most important figures in twentieth-century musical theater. His shows addressed darker, more painful elements of the human experience with songs often tinged with ambivalence about various aspects of life. His best-known works include: *Company* (1970), *A Little Night Music* (1973), *Sweeney Todd* (1979), and *Sunday in the Park with George* (1984). Theater closures due to COVID-19 in 2020 delayed a Broadway revival of his show, *Company*, but on November 15, 2021 Sondheim finally was able to attend the revival of *Company* at the Jacobs Theater; this would be his last appearance as he passed away just a couple weeks later.

In *Into the Woods*, the song takes place as the four remaining leads (Baker, Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack) try to understand the consequences of their wishes, and begin to decide to place community wishes over their own. This song demonstrates that even when life throws its greatest challenges, you don’t have to face them alone and there are still people who love you. Drew Lewis preserves the framework of the original with the tenor solo that begins the arrangement, supported by a host of swaying upper harmonies and a bass line that anchors the harmony. The crucial lyric, “Witches can be right, giants can be good, you decide what’s right, you decide what’s good”, is emphasized by the addition of a voice to the solo line. The conversion of the solo line into a duet, with the choir underscoring important words, drives home the values of the lyrics; in essence, together, hope can be found in the face of even the most daunting challenges.

***Come Fly With Me*..... arr. Cameron Wilson**

Elizabeth Derner, Bass
Stephen Landy, Percussion

Written for Frank Sinatra by Jimmy Van Heusen with lyrics by Sammy Cahn, “Come Fly With Me” has now been recorded by the likes of Michael Buble, Kurt Elling, The Four Freshmen, Luis Miguel, Frankie Avalon, and many more. The song sets the tone for the rest of Sinatra’s album of the same name, describing adventures in exotic locales, in Bombay, Peru and Acapulco Bay as the Jet Age began.

Wilson shares the tune among the upper and lower voices and adds short text reiterations like conversational quips. The bass line that begins with the first appearance of the melody is soon adopted by the bass voices that pluck up and down the staff before rejoining the ensemble and relinquishing their duties back to the string bass. The final invitation to ‘fly away’ is garnished with parallel chromatic descending lines under the floating soprano voice holding steady on the tonic.

Personnel

Soprano

Lydia Kelly
Amanda Obeso
Victoria Shore

Tenor

Paul Hemingway
Benjamin Roker
Sam Varnon

Alto

Miranda Frankenbach
Emily Rolands
Emma Rowden

Bass

Henry Braeske
Wesley Nichols
Carrick O'Bleness

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