

The Second Frontier, a senior recital

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George Fredric Handel

“V’adoro Pupille” from *Giulio Cesare*

(1685-1759)

George Fredric Handel was born on February 23rd, 1685, in Halle, Brandenburg (Germany). The German-Born English composer quickly became popular through the late Baroque era for his operas, oratorios, and instrumental compositions. In 1706, after Handel spent time in the Violin Section of the Hamburg Opera Orchestra, he traveled to Italy where he met many of the greatest Italian musicians such as Arcangelo Corelli and Alessandro Scarlatti, who greatly influenced his works. He continued to travel and write music in Italy until 1710. The result was his mastery of the Italian opera style which made him an international figure. In 1713, he won favorability amongst the British nobility by composing his *Ode for the Queen's Birthday* and he was granted the annual allowance of £200 or \$31,784,74 in 2023. This is significant to note because it was equivalent to the purchasing power of the wage of 2222 days' worth of skilled labor during the same time period. From 1720 until 1728, the operas at the King's Theater in London were mostly composed by Handel. Among those were *Floridante* (1721), *Ottone* (1723), *Giulio Cesare* (1724), *Rodelinda* (1725), and *Scipione* (1726). After John Gay's *Beggar's Opera*, satirized the Italian style, the popularity of opera began to decline along with a variety of other reasons. Handel still composed operas until 1741 and composed more than 40 works. In 1741, Handel was at the height of his career after composing the *Messiah*. Handel passed away on April 14th, 1759, in London, England.

“V’adoro Pupille” opens the second act of Handel’s opera *Giulio Cesare*. The aria is sung by the character Cleopatra who was originally performed by Francesca Cuzzoni in 1724. The scene takes place in Cleopatra’s palace where Cleopatra is disguised as “Lidia” using her charms to seduce Cesare by singing the praises of Cupid’s Darts. Through the second act, Cleopatra and Cesare fall in love with each other.

Maurice Ravel
(1875-1937)

5 *Mémoires populaires grecques*

- I. Chanson de la mariee
- II. Là-bas, vers l'église
- III. Quel galant m'est comparable
- IV. Chanson des cueilleuses de lentisques
- V. Tout gai!

Maurice Ravel is often noted for his musical craftsmanship and perfection of form and style. Born on March 7th in 1875 Ciboure, France to an artistic family who cultivated his musicianship from a young age. In 1889, he enrolled in the Paris Conservatoire when he was 14 years old. Ravel would remain at the Conservatoire until 1905. Ravel had three failed attempts at winning the prestigious award, Prix de Rome, as the works he submitted were deemed too mature by the ultraconservative judges which caused a bit of a scandal. As a result, Theodore Dubois was forced to resign as director from the Conservatoire- Gabriel Fauré took his place. Additionally, Ravel studied composition with Fauré. The content of Ravel’s work is mostly confined to the formal and harmonic conventions of the day, being firmly rooted in tonality. He developed his own style through using different modes beyond the Western diatonic scale. He wrote a variety of different music from orchestral works, art songs, operas, and piano works. He served in WWI as a truck driver until he was discharged in 1917. Ravel embarked on a tour of the United States and Canada as well as England in 1928 where he received an honorary Doctor of Music from Oxford. Ravel passed on December 28th, 1937, after an unsuccessful surgery. Igor Stravinsky compared Ravel to “the most perfect Swiss watchmaker.”

Ravel’s friend M.D. Calvocoressi gathered the folk melodies of *5 Mémoires populaires grecques* during a trip to the Greek Islands and translated them into French. Ravel then harmonized the tunes keeping the distinct Folk melody intact. The musical settings capture the colorful scenes of Greek peasant life. Songs 1st, 3rd, and 5th contrast from 2 and 4 as they use props such as ribbons, pistols and crockery. The 2nd and 4th songs focus on poetic elements

Chanson de la mariée. (The song of the marriage). The first song outlines the morning of a young Greek peasant on his wedding day. He is calling out to his bride on his wedding day exclaiming that he has brought her

a gold ribbon for her hair. The song is in G minor though the accompaniment is buoyant and grounded with the G pedal tone reflecting the sunny happiness of the scene.

Là-bas, vers l'église. (Yonder, Near The Church). The second song begins with the piano accompaniment representing a procession being heard in the distance. The character of this song can be described as a narrator describing the scene as well as the heroes that are buried at the ancient church. As the procession becomes closer, the dynamics of the increase as the rhythm remains steady.

Quel galant m'est comparable! (What Gallant Can Compare with Me?). In this piece, the vocal line is highlighted by a declamatory, acapella introduction. The character is a confident young man, eager to impress his bride. Dynamics also play a key role in this piece and can be heard clearly in the piano line.

Chanson des cueilleuses de lentisques. (Song of the Lentisk Gatherers). The legato line of this piece paints an homage to the women who sang this song working in the fields. It is composed in the Lydian mode which varies from the traditional harmonic sounds found in Western music. The fourth scale degree is sharpened which gives this piece a mystical quality.

Tout gai! (Be Merry). The last song is an exciting dance that has an overwhelming carefree quality. It sustains 2/4-time signature which drives the rhythmic nonstop dance provided by the piano accompaniment. Much of the text is composed of "tra-la-las" which supports the joyousness of the piece

Richard Strauss
(1864-1949)

Zueignung	Opus 10	Number 1
Breit Über Mein Haupt	Opus 19	Number 2

Richard Strauss was born in 1864 in Munich, Germany, and passed away in 1949 in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. He was known for writing operas, symphonies, tone poems, lieder, concertos, solo and chamber works. He was the successor of Richard Wagner and Franz Liszt and chiefly composed music during the later portion of the romantic period. Strauss' output spanned almost 80 years starting when he was 6 years old. He was also a prolific conductor and worked at companies such as Staatskapelle Berlin, in addition, was the editor of *Die Musik* a music publication. Strauss used his status to uplift other contemporaries like Gustavo Mahler. He met his wife, Pauline de Ahna, an opera singer, in 1887. She was a source of inspiration for him throughout his life as he wrote many pieces for Soprano voice. While writing operas, he collaborated with Hugo von Hofmannsthal who was an Austrian writer. Their collaborations included *Elektra*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Ariadne auf Naxos* among others. In 1905, Strauss's opera, *Salome*, began to explore more dissonant harmonies that ultimately led to the composition of *Elektra*, in 1909, which furthered the dissonant harmonies to the Elektra chord which is regarded as a polychord. This opera's timbre can be described as metallic that veered towards atonality. After this opera, Strauss began to temper his harmonic language in later operas that represented the opulent, melodic style of the late romantic period that was characterized by chromatic harmonies. Additionally, due to the way that Strauss was able to capture everyday life through his music, his works inspired the development of film music in the 20th century. The flourishing sound with an expanded harmonic language was compatible with the growing industry of film music. He also inspired musicians such as Bela Bartok and English composers such as Benjamin Britten

Zueignung! (Dedication). This song was composed in 1882 as Strauss' first collection of songs at age 18 and is one of his most popular songs. The poem was composed by Hermann von Glim. The piano line is a driving force of triplets and is emphatically played with dense chords throughout the piece. The three stanzas of the piece are nearly identical building to the last line "Heilig (holy)" which is the pinnacle of the piece. Each stanza repeats "Habe Dank!" which was the original title of the poem used which is illustrating the solemn dedication to one's beloved. This is highlighted by the broad vocal phrases throughout the piece.

Breit Über Mein Haupt It was composed in 1888 apart of *6 Lieder aus 'Lotosblätter.'* "Breit über mein haupt," was a poem written by Adolf Friedrich von Schack. It describes feelings of love and passion which are reflected through the melodic line and texture. The vivid imagery of the poem was able to inspire Strauss to develop a tactful harmonic structure as well as melodic lines. This song was written in Gb minor and began with dense block chords that blossomed into a driving rhythmic motive through the second verse. There is no instrumental introduction to the song, and it feels as though it suspends in time. The instrumental outro reflects the vocal line through imitation. However, it does not continue to build as the vocal line did- it delicately fades to the last chord. The dramatic range of dynamic in the piece also gives the performer the liberty to interpret the piece in addition to contributing to the overall structure of the piece.

Lee Hoiby

"Where the Music Comes From"

(1926-2011)

Lee Hoiby was a prolific, American composer and classical pianist through the end of the 20th century. He was born in 1926, in Madison, Wisconsin. He was a child prodigy and began playing the piano at the age of 5. Hoiby started his studies at the Curtis Institute of Music where he was mentored in composition by Gian Carlo Menotti who introduced him to opera and involved him in Broadway productions. The first opera that Hoiby wrote was called *The Scarf*, which was produced by Menotti and premiered in 1957. Popular American Soprano, Leontyne Price made many of Hoiby's songs and arias popular. He is known for drawing inspiration from a variety of cultures and time periods. He has written more than 100 songs, to texts from a variety of poets including his partner, Mark Shulgasser. Hoiby's style was sophisticated and timeless- never overtly sentimental yet always emotional. He drew inspiration from a diverse range of sources from Monteverdi to American Blues. Hoiby passed away on March 28th, 2011, in New York City, New York.

Where the Music Comes From. This song was written in 1974, later revised in 1986 and is revered as one of Hoiby's most popular songs. The piano line is based on a chordal motive that is expanded to create a blossoming rhythmic structure to propel the vocal line to the end. Each stanza that is highlighted in the song modulates to a higher key creating an overall exciting atmosphere.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

"Porgi Amour" from *Le nozze di Figaro*

(1756-1791)

"Ach ich fühls" from *Die Zauberflöte*

Mozart was born in 1756 in Austria and is known as one of the greatest composers of Western music of all time. It is said that his musical talent began when he was 3 years old and by 5, he was writing his first concerto. In 1763, his family set out on a prolonged tour around Europe where they visited all the major musical centers. In Paris, Mozart met several German composers- in London, he met Johann Christian Bach, Johann Sebastian Bach's youngest son who was a leading musical figure. With this influence, Mozart composed his first symphonies, three that survive include, K16, K19, K19a. In 1769, Mozart was appointed honorary Konzertmeister at the Salzburg court. For a successful international career, mastery of the Italian operatic style was a prerequisite. Mozart went on three tours to Italy to study music and to absorb the Italianate style. Mozart was a significant musician at this time, not only because he was a brilliant composer who popularized opera, but because he was able to work outside of court musicianship. This meant that he was not bound to the music taste of the ultra-wealthy of the time like Joseph Haydn or George Fredric Handel who both supported themselves through working as court musicians. Mozart went on to compose three significant operas- *Così fan tutte* (1790), *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786), and *Don Giovanni* (1787) with librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte. These works are all considered Opera Buffa in the operatic catalog or comedies that often satirize the daily life of all people living at that time. This aspect makes them applicable to society even today. Da Ponte's life was quite scandalous which provides a certain amount of irony when examining the plots of these master works. Ultimately, He immigrated to the United States, bringing opera with him. *Die Zauberflöte* (1789) is an example of one of the Singspiels composed by Mozart. A singspiel is considered another genre of opera and incorporates both sung as well as spoken dialogue. The volatility of Mozart's career proved to be mentally and physically taxing as he reached the end of his life at age 35. The last work that he was commissioned to compose was a requiem that was never completed as he passed away late 1791 due to rheumatic inflammatory fever.

Porgi Amor. (O Love). Porgi Amor begins the second act of *Le nozze di Figaro*. The Countess is coping with some difficult feelings as she is often disregarded by the people around her, especially her husband the Count. In this piece, one can see her remembering the beautiful moments of her life and their relationship, however, she is still overwhelmed by sadness. This is the audience's first introduction to her as a character and she communicates her sorrow through four lines of text.

Ach, Ich fühls (Ah, I feel it). This aria is from the opera *Die Zauberflöte*. It comes at a moment when it appears that Tamino rejects Pamina. Pamina does not know that Tamino took a vow of silence which is why he is not talking to her. This is the second time that they have met after falling in love with each other and she believes that his silence means that he no longer loves her. Through the song, Pamina expresses immense sadness and despair as she announces suicide at the end.

Libby Larsen

The Cowboy Songs

(1950-)

I. Bucking Bronco

II. Lift me into Heaven Slowly

III. Billy the Kid

Libby Larsen was born on December 24th, 1950, in Wilmington, Delaware and is a contemporary American Classical Composer. At age 3, she moved with her family to Minneapolis Minnesota. She comes from a musical family, having her first musical experience at the same age imitating her sister's piano lessons. Her father was a musician with her formal music education commencing at St Joseph of Carondelet where she learned Gregorian Chant. All these experiences inspired her as she grew into one of America's most performed living composers. Larsen completed her undergraduate and graduate studies at the University of Minnesota earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in Theory and Composition and a PhD in Theory and Composition. There she studied with Dominick Argento, Paul Fetler and Eric Stokes. In 1973, her and colleague Stephen Paulus founded the Minnesota Composers Forum which later became the American Composers Forum in 1996. In 1993, she won a Grammy Award for producer of Best Classical Vocal Performance, "The Art of Arlene Augér," featuring her song cycle *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. Larsen's style and approach to music is rooted in her own philosophy and comes from sounds in her everyday life. Her catalogue of over 500 works spans every genre from vocal and chamber music, orchestral music, and 15 operas. She also has over 50 CDs of her work.

The Cowboy Songs. The overall theme for the Cowboy Songs is energy as well as the relationship between text and music. It was composed in 1979 and is an example of Larsen's effort to capture the relationship between text, rhythm and music. They represent three-character songs as each piece communicates a distinctly different scenario.

"Bucking Bronco." "Bucking Bronco" poetry by Belle Starr tells the story of a cowgirl in love with a cowboy. She is younger through the freedom that is displayed in the vocal line. The piano is the driving force as it is playful and paints the picture of the bucking bronco. It appears throughout the piece that she is telling her friends about the affair. Additionally, the piece often uses the Lydian mode throughout the piece in the melodic line. This mode is most common in Gregorian Chant and is an example of how Larsen's development as a musician impacts her compositions.

"Lift Me Into Heaven Slowly." The text is by Robert Creely who was a poet through the 20 century and was also associated with jazz and blues styles. This inspiration can be seen in the cyclical lamentation of the rhythm felt throughout the song. The harmonic support is a source of emotional conflict throughout the piece as the character apprehends the prospect of ultimately letting go.

"Billy the Kid." The final piece of this set was a setting of an anonymous text that describes the life of the outlaw, Billy the Kid. It projects the image of a mystical character with a fearsome reputation. Larsen drew inspiration from a popular cowboy song from the 1937 film *Sing Cowboy Sing*, called "Goodbye Old Paint (Cowboy Song theme). The melodic line of this piece is very similar to the opening of "Billy the Kid." Larsen incorporates the use of invertible counterpoint to bring the piece to life and uses it as a theme throughout the rest of the piece. The rhythm and tempo of the song communicates the rushing and violence that is Billy the Kid. The phrases flow conversationally so it enables effective story telling as the performer conveys a lot of information through this short piece.

Antonín Dvořák

"Měsíčku na nebi hlubokém" from *Rusalka*

(1841-1904)

Antonín Dvořák was born in 1841, in Nelahozeves, Bohemia, Austrian Empire [now Czech Republic.] He is famous for incorporating folk material into 19th century Romantic works which resulted in him being the first Bohemian composer to achieve international recognition. Dvořák was the eldest of nine other children and played violin in his father's inn often accompanying dances. When he was 12, he moved in with his aunt to pursue formal music education in Zlonice. By 1864, he had composed two symphonies, an opera, chamber music and numerous songs. Through the early part of his career, he drew inspiration from Ludwig van Beethoven and Franz Schubert. As his style developed, he became increasingly influenced by Richard Wagner and Franz Liszt. In 1875, Dvořák was awarded an Austrian state grant which introduced him to Johannes Brahms, a prolific German composer of the time. Their friendship blossomed and Brahms brought Dvořák into contact with an influential publisher. 1884 was a significant year for Dvořák, he made the first of 10 visits to England and by 1890 he made a personal triumph where two concerts were arranged for him by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. In 1891, the following year, he was granted an honorary Doctor of Music degree by the University of Cambridge. Dvořák came to the United States to accept the role as the director of the National Conservatory of Music located in New York, in 1892. While in the United States, he was exposed to a variety of music, including African American spirituals that influenced a variety of works including *Symphony No. 9 in E Minor* (1893.) He returned to his homeland, Bohemia, three years later to spend the last years of his life composing his last three operas, string quartets, and symphonic poems. Opera was the medium that challenged Dvořák's genius although he wrote 10, most notably *Rusalka* (1900.) He passed away 4 years later in 1904.

Měsíčku na nebi hlubokém (The Moon Song). This aria is from the opera *Rusalka* which is based on Slavic folklore. Rusalka is a water nymph that turns to a witch so that a human will fall in love with her. In this aria, she is pleading to the moon to tell him how she feels. Dvořák uses the piano line to illustrate the water and the waves that often imitate the vocal line. There are homages to folk melodies throughout the piece's ornamentation that often blossoms off the melodic line. Each phrase builds and flows together to the end as Rusalka continues to plead with the moon. During the more chaotic piano interludes, the moon disappears or is covered by clouds. This imagery is also painted through returning to the main motive after the interlude, except the last time when Rusalka ultimately casts a spell through a chant like phrase that differs from the rest of the piece.