Mahina Johnson
Soprano

Master of Music Recital

with
Michelle Lee, piano
Josie Robinson, cello
Lenka Hajkova, violin

Sunday, October 18, 2009
2.00pm
Doc Rando Recital Hall
Beam Music Center
PROGRAM

Sommi dei
from Radamisto

George Frideric Handel
(1685-1759)

Josie Robinson, cello

Oh, vieni al mare!

Gaetano Donizetti
(1797-1848)

L’abbandonata

Saverio Mercadante
(1795-1870)

La zingara

Giuseppe Verdi
(1813-1901)

L’Invitation au Voyage
Le Manoir de Rosamonde
Lamento
Chanson Triste

Henri Duparc
(1848-1933)

INTERMISSION

What If...
Insomnia
Jabberwocky

Lee Hoiby
(b. 1926)

Höre ich Zigeunergeigen
from Gräfin Mariza

Emmerich Kálmán
(1882-1953)

Spieß auf deiner Geige
from Venus in Seide

Robert Stolz
(1880-1975)

Hör ich Cymbalklänge
from Zigeunerliebe

Franz Lehár
(1870-1948)

Lenka Hajkova, violin
Violin transcriptions by Dennis Deovides A. Reyes III

Macht nichts! Hol’s der Teufel!
Macht nichts! Ohne Zweifel!
Kann der Mensch nicht immer traurig sein!
Lies ich Schatz mich nimmer,
Find’t man and’re immer,
Schad um jede trüne, die ich wein’!
Will nicht ohne Küsse leben, nein, nein!
Keine Stunde ohne Liebsten sein!
Ja, ja, hol’s der Teufel! Ja, Ja!
Ohne Zweifel immer kann der Mensch nicht
Traurig sein! Ja, Ja, Ja!

Text: Alfred Maria Willner and Robert Bodanzky

When I Hear the Cymbals Clang
When I hear the cymbals clang,
It pulls at my heart,
Sweet land of my mothertongue, Homeland!
Sighing for your forests,
For the golden fields,
I long for you, my sweet Hungary!
When you travel far away,
Out into the world,
Everywhere is beautiful,
And yet it is most beautiful at home.
When I hear the cymbals clang,
It pulls at my heart,
Sweet land of my mothertongue, Homeland!

Doesn’t matter! Devil take it!
Doesn’t matter! Without a doubt,
People cannot always be sad!
If my darling no longer loves me,
I’ll always find another,
Pity for every tear that I cry.
I will not live without kisses, no, no!
Not an hour without a lover!
Yes, yes, devil take it! Yes, yes!
Without a doubt, people cannot always
Be sad! Yes! Yes! Yes!
Höre ich Zigeunergeigen
Höre ich Zigeunergeigen,
Bei des Cymbals wildem Lauf,
Wird es mir um's Herz so eigen,
Wachen alle Wünsche auf.

Klingt ein heisser Csárdástraum
Sina betörend durch den Raum,
Klingt ein toller, sehnsuchtsvoller,
Heißer, wilder Csárdástraum!

Winkt im Gläser der Tokajer,
Rot wie Blut und heiß wie Feuer,
Kommn' und mach' die Seele freier,
Spiel' dazu, Zigeuner!

Willst du toll der Freude leben,
Soll das Herz vor Lust erheben,
Jauchzend sich zum Himmel heben,
Spiel' dazu, Zigeuner!

Willst du wild die Nacht durchziehen,
Wollen wir von Liebe sprechen,
Willst das arme Herz auch brechen,
Spiel' dazu, Zigeuner!

Spiel! Spiel! Spiel! Spiele mit Gefühl!
Alles kannst du mit uns machen,
Weinen müssen wir und lachen,
Wie es deine Geige will!

Wo wohnt die Liebe, wer kann's mir sagen,
Wo wohnt die Liebe, wen soll ich fragen?
Einmal das Herz in toller Lust verschenken
Küssen, küssten und nicht denken!
Einmal nur glücklich sein!

Wo wohnt die Liebe, wer kann's ergründen,
Wo wohnt die Liebe, wer kann sie finden?
Nur einmal küssten bis die Liebe Flammen
Schlagen über mir zusammen,
Einmal nur glücklich sein!

Text: Julius Brammer and Alfred Grünwald

When I Hear the Gypsy Violins
When I hear the Gypsy violins
And the wild sounds of the cymbals
Something strange in my heart
Awakens my desires.

There sounds the fiery Csárdas dream
Bewitching senses through the room;
There sounds a burning, yearning,
Hot and wild Csárdas dream!

The Tokaj ripples in the glass
Red as blood and hot as fire,
Come and make the soul even more free,
Play on, Gypsy!

Will you live the good life,
Should your heart tremble with desire,
Shout to the highest heaven,
Play on, Gypsy!

Will you wildly drink all night,
Will we speak of love,
Will you break my poor heart,
Play on, Gypsy!

Play, play, play! Play with feeling!
Do anything you want,
We must cry and laugh
Just as your violin wishes!

Where love lives, who can say
Where love lives, who should I ask?
Once I give my heart with abandon,
Kissing, kissing without thinking,
Only to be happy!

Where love lives, who can tell me,
Where love lives, who can find it?
Only to kiss until love's flames
Engulf me,
Only to be happy!

German Translations: Mahina Johnson

When George Frideric Handel arrived in England in 1710, he was the first composer to bring newly-written Italian operas to London. Rodelist was first performed on 27 April 1720 for the opening season of the Royal Academy founded by King George I, to whom the opera was later dedicated. This dedication was very unusual as it came from Handel himself instead of the librettist, as was the custom. Sommi Dei opens the opera as a plea from Polissena, the wife of Tiridate, King of Armenia. He is lasting after her sister-in-law, and Polissena asks the gods for comfort.

Sommi Dei
Sommi Dei,
Che scorgete i mali miei,
Proteggete un mesto cor!

Translation: Anthony Hicks

Italian opera dominated vocal music in the 19th century, but opera composers also wrote songs for voice and piano called romanze da camera. These songs were very similar to opera arias but with folk rhythms and dance forms usually using text from familiar folk songs.

Well-known for his operas, Gaetano Donizetti composed over 170 songs. Oh, vieni al maret is a romanze from a volume entitled Matinée musicale published in 1841. It invokes a typical Neapolitan folk song and paints a harbor scene with its flowing melody and waltzing accompaniment, which imitates the sound of an accordion.

Saverio Mercadante wrote his first opera in 1819 and quickly began his international career. His musical style was influenced by Rossini and Bellini, but he also kept the way for later composers like Verdi. L'abbandonata was published in 1869 in an Album per canto and is dedicated to Giuseppina Verdi, Verdi's second wife. The melodic line is melancholic and Neapolitan with long phrases. Although a very sorrowful song of love lost, it ends in major as the abandoned woman longs for Heaven.

Giuseppe Verdi was a prolific opera composer by the time he wrote his second set of 6 Romanze in 1845. La zingara is the second song from this collection and his ability to match text with music intensifies the drama. This song depicts the life of a gypsy as carefree and spirited with declamatory passages and ornamentation. The accompaniment changes with every mood of the text and seems to dance with the melody.
Oh, come to the Sea!
Come, the boat is ready,
A little breeze is blowing.
Everything whispers of love,
The sea, the earth, the sky!

Look how the silvery moon
Shines with pleasure on the lovers,
And seems to tell you:
Hurry to your beloved!

Come to me, oh my sweet one,
Let me lay my head on your breast,
And be like the wave
That kisses the sky and then dies.

I'd like to have as many kisses
As the sea her floodtides,
Oh that I could leave, like them,
The impression of my lips on your heart!

Translation: Patricia Adkins Chiti

Jabberwocky
'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my Son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jumblie bird,
And shun the frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in a slumber then he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And buried as it came!

One! two! One, two!
And through and through
The vorpal blade went snickersnack!

Snickersnack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"

He chortled in his joy.

Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

Text: Lewis Carroll

Emmerich Kálmán, Hungarian born, also intended to be a concert pianist, but an early onset of arthritis turned him to composition. He began composing operetta in 1908 in Budapest, but soon found himself in Vienna composing alongside Franz Lehár. His compositional style combined Viennese waltz and the Hungarian czardas as in Hör ich Zigeunergeigen from Gräfin Mariza, which premiered in Vienna on 28 February 1924. This gypsy song sung by the Countess herself has a wide range for the soprano and also varied tempi, which is typical of gypsy music.

Robert Stolz was born in Graz to a musical family. He worked in Vienna until 1910 and then served in the Austrian Army in WWI. His compositions are widely known throughout Austria and often excerpted and concertized. A famous tune from Venus in Seide is Spiel auf deiner Geige. It is about a gypsy reminiscing about her life as a vagabond, constantly on the move unable to call anywhere her home. She speaks of love and wine in a sultry fashion with low tones slipping around in stepwise motion and then leaping up passionately.

Franz Lehar, also a Hungarian composer, is best known for his operettas such as Die Lustige Witwe (1905) and Land des Lächelns (1929). Zigeunerliebe (1910) is a romantic operetta about gypsy magic. Hör ich Cymbalkänge is found right before the finale of the operetta as the disenchantment crumbles and we are left with the gypsy saying, "If my darling no longer loves me, I’ll always find another." The score is marked "Lied und Csardas," but the lied is full of rubato making it more of a recitative and then a fiery csardas.
Lee Hoiby began his career as a pianist, but found his love in composing sonatas, concertos, chamber works, oratorios and operas; although, he is best known for his songs. His first composition teacher was Gian Carlo Menotti, and he also worked with Darius Milhaud and Samuel Barber. The songs chosen for this recital have whimsical texts allowing for a freer compositional style. The melodies are “singsable,” for the most part, but are enveloped by a complex harmonic structure; Hoiby always wrote a challenging part for the pianist.

The first song, What If..., is a dreamlike sequence that begins and ends with a question. The flowing accompaniment keeps the listener in that dreamlike state through the entire piece. Insomnia from Three Stages of Woman was written for a mezzo-soprano, but the poem grabbed me and the slow blues melody locked me in. This is the third piece of the song cycle that speaks of a woman in her later years scorned by love who personifies herself in the moon. Jabberwocky, a poem from the stories of Alice, has always been a favorite of mine. The singer narrates the epic battle between a young man and the beast. The accompaniment acts as the second narrator depicting the battle and the beast’s death. The piece ends with an eerie sense that nothing has really changed.

What If...
What if you slept?
And what if in your sleep you dreamed?
And what if in your dream
You went to heaven
And there plucked
A strange and beautiful flower?
And what if when you awoke,
You had the flower in your hand?
Ah! What then?

Text: Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Insomnia
The moon in the bureau mirror
Looks out a million miles (and perhaps with pride, at herself, but she never, never smiles)
far and away beyond sleep, or perhaps she’s a daytime sleeper.
By the Universe deserted,
She’d tell it to go to hell,
And she’d find a body of water, Or a mirror, on which to dwell.

So wrap up care in a cobweb And drop it down the well Into that world inverted Where left is always right, Where the shadows are really the body, Where we stay awake all night, Where the heavens are shallow As the sea is now deep, And you love me.

Text: Elizabeth Bishop

La zingara
Chi padre mi fosse,
Qual patria mia sia,
Invano la gente chiamando mi va;
Del primo mai seppi ed è patria mia
La terra che un Fiore, che un frutto mi dà.
Domandicile il destino m’addita un sentiero,
Io trovo un sorriso, io trovo un amor;
Perché del passato darommi pensiero,
Se l’hora presente è lieta al mio core?
Pùh, è vero, il domani un torbido velo
Dell’aure serene l’aspetto turba;
Ma s’aggiunge risplende azzurro il mio cielo,
Perché rattristarsi
D’un dubbio avvenire?
Io sono una pianta
Che ghiaccio non spoglia,
Che tutto disfida del vero il rigor;
Se fonda qui cade, Là un’altra germoglia,
In ogni stagione non sarca di fior.

Text: S. Manfredo Maggioni

The Gypsy Woman
Who would be my father, What country be mine, Those who ask me do so in vain; Nothing know I of the first, and my country Is the ground that yields me a flower, a fruit. Wherever destiny directs my path, I find reason to smile, to love; Why turn to thoughts of the past If the present brings my heart happiness? True, tomorrow a veil of gloom may trouble The courtenance of this golden serenity. But if today my sky shines a splendid blue, Why must I be saddened By a doubtful day to come? I am a plant that surrenders Nothing to the icy cold. That resists every winter hardship: If here a branch falls, there another takes root. In every season I am laden with bloom.

Translation: unknown

Henri Duparc composed only sixteen mélodies between the years of 1868 and 1885, but his small contribution to vocal music leaves us wanting more. His songs are full of beautiful melodies and complex harmonies directly influenced by the poet’s texts.

L’Invitation au Voyage is a vision of a happy life in an exotic country full of luxuriousness, calm, and sensuous delight. The voice and piano work together to depict the hazy skies, sleeping ships, and a glorious sunset (‘Dans une chaleur lumière!’).

Le manoir de Rosamonde is a fiery tale of lovesickness and death. The voice is declamatory and the accompaniment agitated with a driving energy until the tempo slows down. As the lover dies, he is remorseful of time wasted with an echo of the struggle to the goal that was never reached.

Lamento is a somber song recalling the plaintive coo of a dove found in the cemetery. The melody moves in stepwise motion with a recurring 4-note theme played first by the piano and echoed in the voice. One can hear the sadness in the singer’s subdued tones, and then as the accompaniment becomes agitated, the melody explodes in desperation and we know that their loved one is buried there.

Chanson triste is Duparc’s first mélodie. It speaks of love and hope. Duparc artfully weaves the melody from the vocal line into the accompaniment to echo the text in two key places. Near the end of the song, we modulate to the major key. This signifies the hope that in our loved one we may find the key to our happiness.
L'Invitation au Voyage
Mon enfant, ma sœur,
Songe à la douceur
D'aller là-bas vivre ensemble,
Aimer à loisir,
Aimer et mourir
Au pays qui te ressemble.
Les soleils mouillés
De ces ciels brouillés
Pour mon esprit ont les charmes
Si mystérieux
De tes traits yeux,
Brillant à travers leurs larmes.

Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
Luxe, calme et volupté.

Vois sur ces canaux
Dormez ces vaisseaux
Dont l'humeur est vagabonde;
C'est pour assouvrir
Ton moindre désir
Qu'ils viennent du bout du monde.
Les soleils couchants
Revètent les champs,
Les canaux, la ville entière,
D'hyacinthe et d'or;
Le monde s'endort
Dans une chaleur lumière!

Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
Luxe, calme et volupté.

Text: Charles Baudelaire

Le manoir de Rosamonde
De sa dent soudaine et vorace,
Comme un chien l'amour m'a mordu...
En suivant mon sang répandu,
Va, tu pourras suivre ma trace...

Prends un cheval de bonne race,
Pars, et suis mon chemin ardu,
Fondrière ou sentier perdu,
Si la course ne te harasse!

En passant par où j'ai passé,
Tu verras que seul et blessé
J'ai parcouru ce triste monde.
Et qu'ainsi je n'en fus mourir
Bien loin, bien loin, sans découvrir
Le bleu manoir de Rosamonde.

Text: Robert de Bonnères

Invitation to the voyage
My child, my sister,
Dream of the sweetness
Of going yonder to live together!
To love at leisure,
To love and to die
In a country that resembles you!
The humid suns
Of these lazy skies,
Have for my spirit the charm
So mysterious
Of your betraying eyes
Shining through their tears.

There, all is order and beauty,
Luxuriously, calm and sensuous delight.

See on these canals
These sleeping ships
Whose nature is to roam;
It is to fulfill
Your least desire
That they come from the ends of the earth.
The setting suns
Invest the fields,
The canals, the whole town,
With hyacinth and gold;
The world falls asleep
In a warm light!

There, all is order and beauty,
Luxuriously, calm and sensuous delight.

French Translations: Pierre Bernac

The Manor of Rosamund
With its sudden and voracious fang,
Like a dog, love has bitten me.
By following the blood I have shed,
Go! You will be able to follow my trail.

Take a thoroughbred horse,
Set out, and follow my arduous way,
Bog or hidden path,
If the ride does not exhaust you!

In passing where I have passed,
You will see that alone and wounded,
I have raged this sad world,
And that thus I went to die
Far away, far away, without discovering
The blue manor of Rosamund.

Lamento
Connaissiez-vous la blanche tombe,
Où flotte avec un son plaintif
L'ombre d'un amant?
Sur l'épitaphe de la tombe,
Triste et seule au soleil couchant,
Chante son chant.

On dirait que l'âme éveillée
Pleure sous terre à l'unisson
De la chanson,
Et du malheur d'être oubliée
Se plaint dans un roucoulement
Bien doucement.

Ah! jamais plus près de la tombe,
Je n'irai, quand descend le soir
Au manteau noir,
Écouter la pile collombe
Chanter, sur la branche de l'if,
Son chant plaintif !

Text: Pierre-Jules-Théophile Gautier

Lament
Do you know the white tomb
Where sways with a plaintive sound
The shadow of a yew tree?
On the yew a pale dove,
Sed and alone in the setting sun,
Sings its song.

One would say that the awakened soul
Weeps under earth in unison
With the song,
And the distress of being forgotten
Laments in a cooing
Very softly.

Ah! Nevermore near to the tomb
Shall I go, when evening descends
In its dark cloak,
To listen to the pale dove
Singing on the branch of the yew tree
Its plaintive song!

Text: Jean Labor

Sorrowful Song
In your heart moonlight sleeps,
Gentle summer moonlight,
And to escape from the stress of life
I will drown myself in your radiance.

I will forget past sorrows,
My love, when you cradle
My sad heart and my thoughts
In the loving peacefulness of your arms.

You will take my aching head
Oh! Sometimes upon your knee,
And will relate a ballad
That seems to speak of ourselves.

And in your eyes full of sorrows,
In your eyes then I will drink
So deeply of kisses and of tenderness
That, perhaps, I shall be healed...

Text: Jean Labor