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Nom/Name: Nicole Chan

Classe de/Class of: Ms. Dominique Labelle

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This program explores the theme of “searching for one’s identity through the forces in nature”. Three selections from *Neun Deutsche Arien* (Nine German Arias) by George Frideric Händel (1685–1759) outline the theme. The first section begins with *Süße Stille, sanfte Quelle* by Händel, followed by lieder of mystical creatures by Hugo Wolf (1860–1903), then weaving into a Shakespearean part of Richard Strauss’s (1864–1949) Ophelia Lieder and ending with Juliet’s opening aria from *Romeo and Juliet* by Vincenzo Bellini (1801–1835). In the second section, Händel’s aria of jubilating one’s soul is heard, followed by Danish composer Rued Langgaard’s (1893–1952) song cycle, bringing light in moments of despair through the reflecting dewdrops, roses, moths, and wisteria in female poet Jenny Blicher-Clausen’s (1865–1907) texts. The recital ends with Händel’s *Flammende Rose* (Flaming Rose), the last of the nine German arias, Darius Milhaud’s (1892–1974) *Chansons de Ronsard*, describing a fountain, cupid, an annoying bird, and spring.

From *Neun Deutsche Arien*

Süße Stille, sanfte Quelle

Meine Seele hört im Sehen

Flammende Rose, Zierde der Erden

George Frideric Händel was a German composer in the Baroque period best known for his opera *Giulio Cesare* and oratorio *Messiah*.¹

Neun deutsche Arien was composed in 1724–26 and was first published by Herman Roth in the *Musikalische Stundenbücher* in 1921.² The texts are from *Irdisches vergnügen in Gott* (Earthly Delight in God), published in 1721 by German poet Barthold Heinrich Brockes (1680–1747).³ They refer to Pietism in Lutheran thinking. All arias except for one are in *da capo* form. The aria is scored for soprano solo, flute, violin, or oboe and basso continuo. *Süße Stille, sanfte Quelle* (Sweet quiet, gentle source) illustrates the peaceful serenity that awaits us in our eternal afterlife. *Meine Seele hört im Sehen* (My soul hears through seeing) jubilates the blossoming of spring. The same melody is taken from his earlier composition, the aria

¹ English National Opera, “The Life of George Frideric Handel: Operas & Music | ENO,” English National Opera, accessed April 15, 2024, <https://www.eno.org/composers/george-frideric-handel/>.

² Baerenreiter Germany, “Nine German Arias (HWV 202-210),” Baerenreiter UK Music Shop, accessed April 15, 2024, <https://www.baerenreiter.co.uk/nine-german-arias-hwv-202-210.html>.

³ Andrew Benson-Wilson, “Georg Friedrich Händel: Neun Deutsche Arien,” Andrew Benson-Wilson: Early Music Reviews + (blog), October 14, 2020, <https://andrewbensonwilson.org/2020/10/14/georg-friedrich-handel-neun-deutsche-arien/>.

“Date certa” in the motet *Silete venti*. Händel reuses motifs from this aria in his Trio Sonata in B flat major Op. 2 No. 3 (HWV388) and also in a Sonata in F for two violins (HWV392). The protagonist in *Flammende Rose, Zierde der Erden* (Flaming rose, earth’s adornment) admires divinity and describes a splendid garden with the beauty of roses and earth. Written in 3/8 meter, Händel concludes the Nine German Arias with a light-hearted waltz in Flaming Rose.

Sélections / Selections

Nixe Binsefuss

Zitronenfalter im April

Der Knabe und das Immelein

Elfenlied

Hugo Wolf, an Austrian composer, elevated the Lieder artform with his intricate musical narration and sporadic creativity. Eduard Mörike (1804–1875) was a German poet, who became a Lutheran pastor before being a professor of German literature at the Katharinenstift in Stuttgart.⁴ Wolf set 53 of Mörike’s texts into song between February and May of 1888.⁵ Mörike complemented Wolf’s setting of his text, matching his humor with word painting.⁶ In *Nixe Binsefuss* (Nixie Sedgefoot), the chromatic ascending scales in the piano introduction sets the scene of a mermaid’s tail gliding underwater. The enchanted dream sees a fisherman and a mermaid negotiating to protect their surrounding fish. The protagonist, a starving butterfly in *Zitronenfalter im April* (Brimstone Butterfly in April), has been woken up early in spring, wishing for help by a sweet girl. The postlude modulation to a major key suggests its wishes have been heard. *Der Knabe und das Immelein* (The Boy and the Bee) is a dialogue of a boy’s crush between two characters, a girl with a garden and a beehive. The piano starts by voicing the singer, painting an ambiguous and tranquil atmosphere before the innocent debate on love. *Elfenlied* (Elf-song) plays on the German word “Elfe”, meaning the number eleven, and the mythical creature, elf. After the elf is woken up by a watchman crying out the number eleven, the piano plays the motif of F octaves eleven times until the elf stumbles up from his nap.

Drei Lieder von Ophelia, Op. 67

Wie erkenn’ ich mein Treulieb

Guten Morgen, ’s ist Sankt Valentinstag

Sie trugen ihn auf der Bahre bloß

Richard Strauss was a German composer known for his post-Wagnerian tonality. His famous operas include *Salome*, *Elektra* and *Der Rosenkavalier*.⁷

Strauss composed *Drei Lieder von Ophelia* to fulfill a hated contract with Bote and Bock.

Ophelia sings these Lieder in Act IV, Scene V of Hamlet. She has gone mad because Prince

⁴ “Eduard Mörike | Poet,” Oxford International Song Festival, 2024, <https://oxfordsong.org/poet/eduard-morike>.

⁵ “Mörike-Lieder,” Harmonia Mundi, January, 2013, <https://www.harmoniamundi.com/en/albums/morike-lieder/>.

⁶ “Hugo Wolf (1860-1903),” Mahler Foundation, January 6, 2015, <https://mahlerfoundation.org/mahler/contemporaries/hugo-wolf/>.

⁷ “Richard Strauss - Biography,” Deutsche Grammophon, accessed April 17, 2024, <https://www.deutschegrammophon.com/en/composers/richardstrauss/biography>.

Hamlet showed romantic interest in her but has been acting cruel and mean, killing her father by mistake. *Wie erkenn' ich* features syncopated dissonances in the piano's left hand, symbolising Ophelia's wandering mind. *Guten Morgen* features Ophelia chatting lively in contrast with the piano's disoriented harmonies. Using abrupt changes in tempo and styles, *Sie trugen ihn* expresses Ophelia's unstable state of mind grieving her father's death.

Eccomi in lieta vesta...Oh! quante volte from *I Capuleti e I Montecchi*

Vincenzo Bellini is considered one of the three greatest Italian *Bel Canto* composers. He is known for his long beautiful melodies setting the singer's psychological state with a seemingly improvised dramatic state. His other famous operas include *La Sonnambula*, *Norma*, and *I Puritani*.⁸

Inspired by the Shakespeare Goes to the Opera! seminar at school, I designed part of this recital to be Shakespearean-themed. Bellini set Romeo and Juliet in Italian, centring around the tension of the family feud between the Capulets and the Montagues. In this opera, Giulietta (Juliet) enters in her wedding dress alone, expressing her struggle of being forced by her family to marry Paris, though her heart is with Romeo. "Ove sei tu, Romeo?" in the lyrics is an Italian translation of Shakespeare's iconic "Wherefore art thou Romeo?". This scene tugs my heartstrings every time because as a harp player myself, the original orchestration featured a harp.

Sange af Jenny Blicher-Clausen

Det rinder med Dug
Alle de smaa Klokke (Morgen)
Du Natsværmerdronning fine
Alle de smaa Klokke (Aften)
Og det var den mørke Blaaregn

Rued Langgaard began his musical studies on the organ in Copenhagen, Denmark. At age 19, he reached the highest point of his career when his works were performed by the *Berliner Philharmoniker* in 1913.⁹ However, his composition talents were not acknowledged and he remained an outcast for most of his life. His compositions are inspired by nature, an example being the minimalistic piano suite, *Insektarium*, influenced by the compositional styles of Robert Schumann (1810–1856), Richard Wagner (1813–1883), and Richard Strauss (1864–1949).¹⁰ Jenny Blicher-Clausen was a Danish female poet published under her pseudonym "John Bentsen."¹¹ She is best known for writing about the Romantic philosophy of suffering and women's rights.¹²

⁸ Fabrizio della Seta, "Biography," Bellini: Fondazione Bellini & Centro Studi Bellini, 2021, <https://www.studibelliniani.eu/biografia?lang=en>.

⁹ Volker Tarnow, "Bizarre, Ingenious, Forgotten: Portrait of Rued Langgaard," 2024, <https://www.berliner-philharmoniker.de/en/stories/rued-langgaard/>.

¹⁰ Bendt Viinholt Nielsen, "Rued Langgaard (1893-1952)," Rued Langgaard, 1998, <http://www.langgaard.dk/litt/om/brochure99eng.htm>.

¹¹ Jesper Düring Jørgensen and Fred. Nørgaard, "Jenny Blicher-Clausen | lex.dk," Dansk Biografisk Leksikon, October 28, 2011, https://biografiskeleksikon.lex.dk/Jenny_Blicher-Clausen.

¹² Syddansk Universitet, "Blicher-Clausen, Jenny Frederikke," Nordic Women's Literature, accessed April 17, 2024, <https://nordicwomensliterature.net/writers/blicher-clausen-jenny-frederikke/>.

Det rinder med Dug (It runs with Dew) describes the glistening dew drops flowing on the wild rose's leaves, a metaphor of the protagonist's despair, screaming for happiness. The postlude ends with sustained octaves, reflecting Langgaard's earlier organ training. *Alle de smaa Kokker* (Morgen) (All the Little Bells, Morning), the second song in this cycle shares the same text as the fourth song, with the difference being Langgaard's indication of the time of day: morning and evening. The protagonist sits in the valley and hears the cattle bells disappearing in the far distance. *Du Natsværmerdronning fine* (You Moth Queen Fine) is a song of friendship with a moth. The piano has an unsettling motif illustrating the fluttering of the moth's wings. The last song *Og det var den mørke Blaaregn* (And there was the Dark Wisteria) illustrates an ill female protagonist gathering wisteria petals to pray for recovery. Her prayer is answered: the scent of the rosebed scatters out into the night like a thousand small bells. Langgaard returns to the bell theme as heard in the second and fourth songs at the end of his song cycle.

Chansons de Ronsard

À une Fontaine

À Cupidon

Tais-toi, Babillarde Arondelle

Dieu vos gard'

Darius Milhaud is known as a part of *Les Six*, a group of young composers led by Jean Cocteau, with Francis Poulenc (1899–1963) participating.¹³ With only eight sets or cycles popular or known in vocal repertoire, Milhaud is rarely heard in the realm of art song. His Pierre de Ronsard (1524–1585) songs are written in a high tessitura with polytonality. The first song, *À une Fontaine* (To a Fountain), is a playful waltz describing the airy, dancing quality of the text. *À Cupidon* (To Cupid) changes the colour of the chords and long, sustained high notes to paint the atmosphere while capturing the painful exclamations of the voice. *Tais-toi, Babillarde Arondelle* (Hush Yourself, Babbling Swallow), focuses on two characters arguing with each other: a chirping bird and an annoyed suitor who wants to sleep in. The bird has the final word, ending with a legato coloratura line, seemingly winning the argument. The last song *Dieu vous gard'* (God You Protect) is a joyous anticipation of welcoming the beauty of nature during springtime. In the last line, the protagonist expresses that the winter storms were worth it for the beauty and joy of spring.

¹³ Dr. Hannah Chan-Hartley, "Darius Milhaud | Biographies," National Arts Centre Centre National des Arts, February 19, 2021, <https://nac-cna.ca/en/bio/darius-milhaud>.