

## Program Notes

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These program notes are written by the student performing, and are presented by the student in partial fulfillment of the requirements of their course. Ces notes de programme sont écrites par l'étudiant-interprète et sont présentées en tant que réalisation partielle des critères de leur cours.

### **In Monte Oliveti – Giovanni Battista Martini (n.d.)**

This is a short three-voice motet by Italian liturgical composer Giovanni Battista Martini (1706-1784) who worked mainly in Bologna and whose musical output bridges the Baroque and Classical periods. In this motet, Martini sets biblical text describing Jesus on the Mount of Olives from the Book of Matthew, Chapter 26 (verses 39 and 41). Against the backdrop of the Mount of Olives, Jesus enters into an intense prayer of hope. This chorale uses homophonic writing, beginning and ending in the key of G minor. Within this framework, Martini builds tension at the climactic point of the prayer by setting the voices in contrary motion, followed by the middle voice leading into the cadential material with added rhythmic intricacy.

### **Der Bräutigam, op. 44/2 - Johannes Brahms (1866)**

In this jovial piece, Brahms (1833-1897) brings to life a triumphant love story with the setting of a text by German poet Joseph von Eichendorff (1788-1857). The sweeping upward motion of the opening arpeggio sets the tone of excitement for this love story, and Brahms uses extensive word painting to launch the listener into this fairytale world. Listen for moments where he conjures up “a favorite Romantic image,” (Botstein 348) *Waldeseinsamkeit*, or forest solitude through a gentle slowing of the tempo and undulating melodic lines.

This is the second piece in Brahms' collection *12 Lieder und Romanzen (12 Lieder and Romances)*, for Women's chorus, Op. 44, written for the Hamburg Women's chorus (Botstein 347). Daniel Beller-McKenna categorizes these pieces as “pictorial expressions of naïve love or noble deeds” (347) which were original compositions meant to mimic melodies and themes appearing in folk music. For all its delight, von Eichendorff leaves us with the existential question: “the night murmurs do not ask, Where love goes to its end!” Brahms provides an answer in his musical choices by gently closing the piece as the sopranos hark back to the opening ascending arpeggio, this time singing a descending iteration, and come together with the other voices to offer

a sense of sweet repose. Brahms does not turn sour with this question, but rather, contemplates that it is with our beloved that we can face all things.

### **Klosterfräulein, op. 69/3 - Robert Schumann (1849)**

The third in a set of Robert Schumann's (1810-1856) *6 Romanzen für Frauenstimmen* (Romances for Female Voices), this three-verse romantic piece sets a heartbreaking poem by Justinus Kerner (1786-1862). In it, a young woman laments that she has been sent to a nunnery by her mother. She feels trapped by the bars that block her access to the outside world, and longs to be a lamb in the field breathing in spring for the first time, or a bird with the freedom to fly "to a better home."

Schumann chooses to start and end each verse of this poem on a unison pitch, emphasizing the singer's feelings of loneliness, and creates additional tension by finishing the opening phrase of each verse on a diminished chord. He also makes the unusual choice of placing the melody line in an inner voice to lend a richer tone colour to the haunting text.

### **La Nuit, op. 114 - Camille Saint-Saëns (1900)**

In Saint-Saëns' autobiography *Musical Memories*, he shares the following musings to open the chapter titled, "Art for Art's Sake.":

"What is Art? Art is a mystery - something which responds to a special sense. [Music] has line, modeling, color through instrumentation, all making up an ideal sphere, [...] it is the most mysterious of them all," (Saint-Saëns 76-77).

There are striking similarities between Saint-Saëns' heady reflections and the poet Georges Audigier's evocative text, which Saint-Saëns chose for his Opus 114, "La Nuit." The opening text softly declares "c'est un mystère de la nuit" (the night is a mystery), and goes on to explore the night sky. Four sections make up this ten-minute work, beginning with a piano introduction in E-flat major that primes the listener's ear for the musical exploration of the night sky. The second section opens with a flautist fluttering into the foreground as the musical embodiment of the nightingale. The flute begins a call and response with the Soprano soloists who extols the beauty of the night sky, and what begins as a gentle dance becomes increasingly intense as the piano accompaniment grows to a brilliant climax.

The choir then returns in an a cappella section as the embodiment of stardust, as the text traces the "sphères radieuses" (radiant spheres) of the galaxy. Saint-Saëns concludes his magical exploration with the choir adopting the role of accompanist, doubling the opening melodic material to provide additional warmth as the Soprano solo soars over top then comes to a gentle conclusion. He bookends this majestic piece with the same text as the opening and a final deceptive cadence to return to E-flat major.

### **Domine Dominus Noster - Lucrezia Vizzana (1623)**

At only 8 years old, Lucrezia Orsina Vizzana (1590-1662) entered into the convent of Santa Cristina in Bologna, a place where her musical talents would blossom. Breaking with tradition, Vizzana chose to compose in the new *stile moderno* (modern style) that prioritized textual expression over rigid compositional procedures (Monson 60). Continuo instruments including the viola da gamba were used to accompany singing in convent settings at this time, and as such, we have invited a viola da gamba player to accompany the singers.

In 1623, aged 33, Vizzana published a collection of twenty motets called *Componimenti musicali*, and dedicated it to the nuns of Santa Cristina. *Domine Deus Noster* (*O Lord, O Lord How Admirable is thy Name*), the penultimate motet in the collection, was likely composed for an important occasion, perhaps the Feast of the Ascension, or in homage to the Altarpiece at the Santa Cristina painted by Ludovico Caracci (Monson 73). Setting biblical text from the eighth Psalm that exalts the Lord's creation of the stars and the heavens, Vizzana passes phrases between different voice parts before switching to imitative passages led by the altos. Early music scholar Craig Monson asserts that Vizzana's music is the "best window into the spiritual world she inhabited" (72), and we invite you to contemplate the soundscapes of seventeenth-century Italian convents with this piece.

### **Limu Limu Lima/Lova Leini - Trad., arr. Emma Björling (2017)**

This piece is a combination of two folk songs arranged by Swedish singer and composer Emma Björling. She paired these two pieces because they are both prayers to the Gods to let the sun shine during dark days. Björling sets *Limu Limu Lima*, first, in unison, then in canon, and finally with three voices taking on accompaniment roles as they build tension with cluster chords. She transitions directly into the second song *Lova Leini*, using a different compositional approach. She uses homophonic writing and contrasting dynamics to create a dramatic ending to the arrangement, returning surprisingly to a unison on the final chord.

### **Amethyst and Chrysoprase - Megan Batty (2022)**

Amethyst and Chrysoprase are a set of two short pieces I wrote for Choeur Adleisia. The genesis of these pieces sprung directly from the poetry of Susie Frances Harrison (1859-1935), a Canadian composer, writer, and pianist. In reading her work, these two poems stood out as a contrasting pair: Amethyst works from the outside in, describing where we find the hue in the natural world around us, ultimately naming the stone at the end of the poem. Chrysoprase on the other hand begins with the most lively description of the colour itself, "Sea-foam fast frozen to an emerald cream," as Harrison sweeps the reader into a frenzied excitement.

I sought to mirror the emotional qualities of both poems. In *Amethyst*, we explore a mysterious sense of wonder driven by the opening melodic motif in C minor that

brings to life the “shadows of distant pines.” From there the piece expands and contracts with the text, coming to a climax with the chorale-inspired strength of the “field of fire” that ultimately gives way to a graceful wisp of a final chord.

*Chrysopraxe* embodies pure joy at the discovery of a new colour, offering energy and excitement that builds with each vivacious descriptor. I open with a bounding first theme in E-flat major that is then transformed into a brief, Britten-esque canon. This is the world premiere of this set of pieces and it is my hope that they offer you a sense of escapism into a world of enchantment.

### **Dirait-on - Morten Lauridsen (1993)**

American composer Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943) is known for his lush choral writing, creating rich harmonies that use the entire range of the human voice. However, in “Dirait-on,” he offers us something altogether different. This fifth and final movement of his *Chansons des roses* requires a gentle simplicity, driven by a folk-like melody underscored with sweeping piano lines. Adopting the words of Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke, the text explores the beauty of a rose in all its strength and tenderness. Featuring sinuous vocal lines punctuated by moments of stretching tempo, Lauridsen brings into focus the ephemerality of the natural world.

### **In Her Image - Katerina Gimon (2019)**

Written by award-winning Canadian composer Katerina Gimon (b. 1993) for the PEI-based *Sirens Choir*, this magnificent piece takes us on an unexpected quest for self-discovery. She sets Canadian poet Lauren Peat’s striking text with nuance and subtlety, vividly conveying the “curiosity, longing, and at times uneasiness,” (Gimon par. 3) that guides the poetry.

Gimon opens the piece with a rhythmic motif in E-flat major that’s passed between voice parts, as the poet catches fleeting glimpses of her image, but cannot root herself anywhere in life. Gimon then introduces an aleatoric section sparked by feelings of hopelessness as the poet convinces herself that “you will *never* reach her.” We then launch into an intense section in F minor, as the poet frantically searches for her image, and comes to the brink of collapse with the realization that she had “almost lost her image.” Gimon mirrors the self-doubt in this passage by overlaying a short melodic motif in canon at increasingly smaller intervals to amplify feelings of confusion.

It is not until there is stillness in the music, where the singers come together on a unison pitch, that we hear hope. The poet needed patience to find her true image and feel rooted where she is. It is here that Gimon finally brings us back to the original motif, this time modulated up to F major, and from this place of quiet confidence, she allows the singers to bloom into the final chord of the piece to gently bring the journey to a close.

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