

Devlan Taylor Graduate Recital Program Notes

Chansons de Don Quichotte

Jacques Ibert (1890-1962)

Jacques Ibert developed an interest in classical music, especially songs, at an early age. His mother was a pianist, and encouraged him to study classical music, accompany singers, and play piano for silent movies. After he served briefly in World War I, his career as a composer took off. He composed many operas, ballets, songs, and orchestral music. In 1931, he dived into the world of writing music for movies.

In 1933, director Georg Wilhelm Pabst filmed 3 separate versions of *Don Quixote*, one in English, one in French, and another in German with the Russian bass Feodor Chaliapan as Don Quixote. Pabst asked multiple composers to write songs to fit the film, and Ibert submitted 4 songs for Don Quixote and 1 for Sancho titled, *Chanson de Sancho*. They were intended for performance by a small ensemble, full orchestra, or piano. Thus, *Chansons de Don Quichotte* was born.

I. *Chanson du départ*

Poet: Pierre de Ronsard (1524-1585)

Ibert loved the rustic nature of Ronsard's poem so he set it with sparse accompaniment filled with Spanish flourishes to set the scene. We can imagine Don Quixote admiring a castle and talking about his deep admiration for it while feeding his sense of duty for his coming adventures. Ronsard's poetry and Ibert's musicality breathe life into the beginnings of a new, exciting adventure.

Ce château neuf, ce nouvel édifice,
Tout enrichi de marbre et de porphyre,
Qu'amour bâtit château de son empire,
Où tout le ciel a mis son artifice,
Est un rempart, un fort contre le vice,
Où la vertu maîtresse se retire,
Que l'œil regarde, et que l'esprit
admire,
Forçant les cœurs à lui faire service.
C'est un château, fait de telle sorte
Que nul ne peut approcher de la porte
Si des grands Rois il n'a sauvé sa race,
Victorieux, vaillant et amoureux.
Nul chevalier, tant soit aventureux
Sans être tel ne peut gagner la place.

This new castle, this new edifice,
Enriched with marble and porphyry,
That love built for his empire,
And to which all heaven lent its skill.
It is a rampart, a fortress against vice,
In which the virtuous maiden takes refuge,
Whom the eye beholds and the spirit
admires,
Forcing hearts to do her service.
It is a castle, built in such a way
That none can approach its gate
Unless he has saved his people from tyrants
Victorious, valiant, and amorous.
No knight, however bold,
Without such traits, can enter this place.

II. *Chanson à Dulcinée*

Poet: Alexandre Arnoux (1884-1973)

Chanson à Dulcinée is a beautiful representation of how grand being in love can be. We hear some Spanish musical influences in the elegant motion of the vocal line and the lively, although at times somber, accompaniment. Don Quixote decides that he can't live another moment without seeing his beloved Dulcinée, and then recalls moments that reminds him of his undying love for her.

Un an me dure la journée
Si je ne vois ma Dulcinée.

Mais, Amour a peint son visage,
Afin d'adoucir ma langueur,
Dans la fontaine et le nuage,
Dans chaque aurore et chaque fleur.

Un an me dure la journée
Si je ne vois ma Dulcinée.

Toujour proche toujours lointaine,
Étoile de mes longs chemins.
Le vent m'apporte son haleine
Quand il passe sur les jasmins.

Un an me dure la journée
Si je ne vois ma Dulcinée.

The day lasts a year to me,
If I do not see my Dulcinea.

But love has painted her visage,
To ease my longing,
In the fountains and the clouds,
In each dawn and each flower.

The day lasts a year to me,
If I do not see my Dulcinea.

Always near and always far,
Star of my long path,
The wind brings me her breath
When it passes through the jasmine.

The day lasts a year to me,
If I do not see my Dulcinea.

III. *Chanson du Duc*

Poet: Alexandre Arnoux (1884-1973)

Chanson du Duc is a declaration of love. Don Quixote says that he will go through any adventure no matter the difficulty for Dulcinée. He will vanquish enchanters and defend against knights to protect Dulcinée. One of this song's unique features in comparison to the rest of the cycle is the busy, rhythmic accompaniment pattern. This paired with a lively vocal line create a lively scene of Don Quixote professing his love.

Je veux chanter ici la Dame de mes songes
Qui m'exalte au dessus de ce siècle de
boue.

Son cœur de diamant est vierge de
mensonges,
La rose s'obscurcit au regard de sa joue.

Pour elle j'ai tenté les hautes aventures:
Mon bras a délivré la princesse en servage,
J'ai vaincu l'enchanteur confondu parjures

Et ployé l'univers à lui rendre l'hommage.

Dame par qui je vais seul dessus cette
terre,

Qui ne soit prisonnier de la fausse
apparence,

Je soutiens contre tout Chevalier téméraire
Votre éclat non pareil et votre précellence.

I want to sing now of the lady of my dreams,
Who lifts me above this century of squalor.

Her heart of diamond is untainted by deceit,

The rose fades beside her cheek.

For her I have undertaken high adventures:
My arm to deliver the princess from servitude,
I have vanquished enchanters, confounded
perjurers

And compelled the universe to pay her
homage.

Lady, for whom I go alone across the earth,

Who is not prisoner of false appearances,

I defend against any temerarious knight
Your unparalleled brilliance and your
preeminence.

IV. *Chanson de la mort*

Poet: Alexandre Arnoux (1884-1973)

Chanson de la mort is the most somber and saddest sounding song of the set. Don Quixote is saying his final goodbye to his dear friend Sancho. The driving force of this song lies in the lavish accompaniment and chilling vocal line. The text is sung in an almost recitative style which perfectly reflects a state of dying. *Chanson de la mort* is a perfect send off for Don Quixote's last few moments of life.

Ne pleure pas Sancho,
Ne pleure pas, mon bon.
Ton maître n'est pas mort.
Il n'est pas loin de toi.
Il vit dans une île heureuse
Où tout est pur et sans mensonges,
Dans l'île enfin trouvée
Où tu viendras un jour,
Dans l'île désirée,
O mon ami Sancho.
Les livres sont brûlés
Et font un tas de cendres.
Si tout le livre m'ont tué,
Il suffit d'un pour que je vive;
Fantôme dans la vie
Et réel dans la mort—
Tel est l'étrange sort
Du pauvre Don Quichotte.

Do not weep Sancho,
Do not weep, my friend.
Your master is not yet dead.
He is not far from you,
He lives on a happy isle,
Where all is pure and without deceit,
On the isle finally found,
Where you will come one day.
On the isle you've hoped for,
O my friend Sancho.
The books are burnt
And make a heap of ashes.
If all the books have led to my death,
It suffices that through one I will live;
A phantom in life
And real in death—
Such is the strange fate
Of poor Don Quixote

Translations © Andrew Robert Munn, 2018

Quatre chansons pour voix grave, H. 184

Arthur Honnegger (1892-1955)

Although he was born in Switzerland, Arthur Honnegger identified with France because of his long residency in Paris. His family noticed and encouraged his musical abilities from a young age and gave him violin and harmony lessons. Honnegger stated his compositional mission this way:

"My desire and my endeavor have always been to write music which would be attractive to the large masses of listeners and which would, at the same time, be sufficiently devoid of banalities to interest music lovers."

Quatre chansons pour voix grave have an overarching theme of new love, self-doubt, and curiosity. Each song stands uniquely on its own to create an inviting atmosphere that engages the listener.

I. *La douceur de tes yeux*

Poet: Archag Tchobanian (1872-1954)

La douceur de tes yeux can be interpreted as finding love when you are healing and may not be ready for a new adventure yet. The character keeps reiterating that they are injured and that the prospective lover can heal any injury but theirs. The accompaniment is a mixture of offbeats and triplets which can, at times, create an unstable environment when paired with the vocal line.

La douceur de tes yeux peut gérer
la plus mortelle des blessures.
Mais moi, hélas! à ma terrible
blessure où trouverai-je un remède.
Puisqu'en mon cœur
elle fut ouverte,
ô cruelle! par la douceur
même de tes yeux.

The sweetness of your eyes can heal
The most deadly of injuries
But mine, alas! To my terrible injury,
Where will I find a cure.
Since in my heart
It was opened,
O cruel! By the sweetness
Even of your eyes.

Translation © Devlan Taylor, 2021

II. *Derrière Murcie en fleurs*

Poet: William Aguet (1892-1965)

The most interesting aspect of *Derrière Murcie en fleurs* is that it is sung mainly *a cappella*. This feature highlights the curiosity and lack of confidence of the speaker. He knows a path that leads to his beloved, but wonders why she is alone and so far away. Insecurity sets in when he questions why he left her in the first place. The vocal line follows almost a recitative style that gets paired with accompaniment when the character is asking, "why are you alone?"

Derrière Murcie en fleurs
je connais un chemin
qui mène jusqu'à toi
parmi les orangers.
Que fais-tu toute seule si loin.

Pourquoi t'ai-je quittée.
Ah! si tu me voyais tu t'assiérais
en pleurs parmi les grenadiers.
Que fais-tu toute seule si loin.

Behind Murcia in bloom
I know a path
Which leads to you among the orange trees
What are you doing all alone so far so far so far
[away]...
Why did I leave you
Ah! if you saw me you would sit down
In tears among the pomegranate trees
What are you doing all alone so far so far so far
[away]...

Translation © Garret Medlock, 2019

III. *Un grand sommeil noir*

Poet: Paul Verlaine (1844-1896)

The self-doubt and anxiety of the poem is paired effectively with a chromatic accompaniment and vocal line, providing a stark contrast from the previous song. The speaker has lost hope and descends into a deep well of silence. They are filled with anxiety, making it difficult to sleep. Trying to remember good and bad memories increases their uneasiness. In reality, they want their mind to be silent and filled with no thoughts of the past.

Un grand sommeil noir
Tombe sur ma vie:
Dormez, tout espoir,
Dormez toute envie!
Je ne vois plus rien,
Je perds la mémoire
Du mal et du bien...
O la triste histoire!
Je suis un berceau
Qu'une main balance
Au creux d'un caveau:
Silence, silence!

A long black sleep
Descends upon my life:
Sleep, all hope,
Sleep, all desire!
I can no longer see anything,
I am losing my remembrance
Of the bad and the good...
Oh, the sad story!
I am a cradle
That is rocked by a hand
In the depth of a vault.
Silence, silence!

Translation © Corinne Orde, 2008

IV. *La terre les eaux va buvant*

Poet: Pierre de Ronsard (1524-1585)

Curiosity links this song to the first, closing the circle. The poem is an invitation to drink deeply of life; everything in nature drinks of something, so shouldn't they, too, drink? This is the most vibrant song of the set filled with fast chromatic lines in the accompaniment and an extensive, disjunct vocal line.

La terre les eaux va buvant,
L'arbre la boit par sa racine,
La mer éparsé boit le vent,
Et le Soleil boit la marine;
Le soleil est bu par la Lune;
Tout bois, soit en haut ou en bas:
Suivant cette règle commune
Pourquoi donc ne boirons-nous pas?

Earth goes on by drinking the rain,
The tree drinks from the earth through its roots
The scattered seas drink the wind,
And the sun drinks the ocean;
The sun is drunk by the moon.
All things drink, high or low;
Following this common rule
Why then should we not too?

Translation © David Wyatt, 2012

Zwei Gesänge, Op. 51

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

The work of German composer Richard Strauss spans the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He delved into many different compositional genres but is best known for his symphonic poems such as *Don Quixote* (1898) and *Ein Heldenleben* (1899) and his operas such as *Der Rosenkavalier* (1910). Undying passion is the overarching theme of Opus 51; whether that passion is the love for one's homeland or for a recently deceased loved one.

I. *Das Thal*

Poet: Ludwig Uhland (1787-1862)

Das Thal shows how rambunctious one's love for nature can truly be. Strauss, already fluent in symphonic poems at the time of this composition, paints an elegant picture of what it is like to be in love with mother nature. The character goes through a multitude of emotions that are tied with each part of the valley, and when the world is treating them poorly, they at least have the valley to turn back to.

Wie willst du dich mir offenbaren,
Wie ungewohnt, geliebtes Tal?
Nur in den frühesten Jugendjahren
Erschienst du so mir manches Mal.
Die Sonne schon hinabgegangen,
Doch aus den Bächen klarer Schein;
Kein Lüftchen spielt mir um die Wangen,
Doch sanftes Rauschen in dem Hain.
Es duftet wieder alte Liebe,
Es grünet wieder alte Lust;
Ja, selbst die alten Liedertriebe
Beleben diese kalte Brust.
Natur, wohl braucht es solcher Stunden,
So innig, so liebevoll,
Wenn dieses arme Herz gesunden,
Das welkende genesen soll.
Bedrängt mich einst die Welt noch
bänger,
So such' ich wieder dich mein Tal,
Empfange dann den kranken Sänger
Mit solcher Milde noch einmal.
Und sink' ich dann ermattet nieder,
So öffne leise deinen Grund
Und nimm mich auf und schließ' ihn
wieder
Und grüne fröhlich und gesund.

How do you want to present yourself to me,
so unexpectedly, [my] beloved valley?
Only in my early youth
I often saw you like today.
The sun has already descended,
Yet there's a glitter off the stream;
No breath of wind caresses my cheek,
Yet there's a soft rustle in the green.
It smells again of past love,
Past desire sprouts again;
Yes, even the old creativity
Comes back to revitalize this old body.
[Mother] nature, it takes her hours,
so tender, so lovingly,
to nurse this poor heart back to health,
to brush out Life's creases.
And if one day the world is harassing me even
worse,
I'll again turn to you my valley,
For you to embrace the ailing herald
With such inherent kindness once again.
And when I finally weakly sink down,
Do open up quietly for me
And take me in and close above me
And go on blossoming, as cheerful and robust as
before.

Translation © Linda Godry, 2008

II. *Der Einsame*

Poet: Heinrich Heine (1797-1856)

Der Einsame takes a darker turn in the two-song set. This song centers around a loved one dying and the struggles of not knowing what to feel or do and can be interpreted as having the desire to join them. As the song continues, the character recalls brief moments of happiness as they remember the once vibrant eyes of their loved one, which is met by a beautiful representation in the accompaniment.

Wo ich bin, mich rings umdunkelt
Finsterniß so dumpf und dicht,
Seit mir nicht mehr leuchtend funkelt,
Liebste, deiner Augen Licht.

Mir erloschen ist der süßen
Liebessterne goldne Pracht,
Abgrund gähnt zu meinen Füßen.
Nimm mich auf, uralte Nacht.

Where I am, all around me
there is darkness, gloomy and dense,
because the light of your eyes, dearest,
no longer sparkles before me.

Extinct for me is the golden splendor
of those sweet stars of love.
An abyss gapes at my feet.
Receive me, ancient night.

Translation © Emily Ezust, 2008

The Peculiar Case of Dr. H.H. Holmes (2009)

Libby Larsen (b. 1950)

Libby Larsen is one of the most performed living composers of our time having written over 500 works in virtually every genre ranging from vocal and chamber music to massive orchestral works and operas. She was commissioned in 2009 by Dickinson College for The Florestan Recital Project to compose *The Peculiar Case of Dr. H.H. Holmes*. It premiered on March 5th, 2010 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania by Aaron Engebret, baritone, and Alison d'Amato, piano.

This song cycle is not for the faint of heart due to its horrifying subject material. It deals with Herman Webster Mudgett (1861-1896) or better known as Dr. H. H. Holmes, who was one of the first American serial killers. The libretto was adapted from Holmes' own confessions and Detective Robert Corbitt's accounts of his investigation into the murder and insurance fraud charges.

From the composer's notes:

"During the 1893 Chicago World Exposition, Holmes, already numbering several murder victims, opened a hotel which he had designed and built for himself specifically with murder in mind, and which was the location of many of his murders. While he confessed to 27 murders, of which nine were confirmed, it is estimated that he could have committed 250 such crimes."

I. I State My Case

The text is a list of evidence that led to the conviction of Dr. Holmes to a death sentence. Each item holds its own weight in a murder that is tied to him. Dr. Holmes is a confident, charismatic individual, and he feels he did no wrong. He simply adapted to make his living situation better for him. He sees himself as nothing more than a person making it through life any way he can, even at the expense of the people around him. This song starts off with a daunting *a cappella* section as Dr. Holmes lists every time that holds a special bond to him.

A room, unused since I ceased to reside there.

In it a stove that still bears the traces of fire.

a little spinning top and a tin man

a topcoat

a trunk with a strip of blue calico mending a seam

a woman's shoe

an ink bottle

a handful of pearl dress buttons

A gentleman – I am - the kind you want for a companion

A civic-minded man – the kind you want in your circle

A business man – the kind you want for your partner

Doctor, Pharmacist , Land development,

Glass bending, Gas refinery, Hotelier

HUMANUS INTELLIGENCIUS ARACHNOIDUS

My business – profit

My resources – people

ANIMA, ANIMUS, ANIMATO

My products

a little spinning top and a tin man

a topcoat

a trunk with a strip of blue calico mending a seam

a woman's shoe

an ink bottle

a handful of pearl dress buttons

..... bones

II. *As A Young Man*

In this song we learn Holmes' origin story that started him down the horrid path of murder and insurance fraud. The light-hearted waltz rhythm belies the dark nature of this killer's tale. Musically, this song is difficult because of the chromatic patterns mixed with leaps and skips in the vocal line. Larsen expertly sets the words to convey an engaging and truly terrifying atmosphere.

September of my 20th year.

I study medicine in Ann Arbor – hundreds of miles from friends and relatives.

Wife and child in New York,

Sixty dollars in my pocket

Nine months of work ahead.

I need money – HUMANUS

And a plan - INTELLIGENCIUS

It is well known

That in the state of Michigan - if one studies medicine –

All the materials needed for dissection

Are supplied by the State.

The State needs materials – HUMANUS

For which they pay handsomely – ARGENTUS
I supply the materials with the help of my classmate – BUSINESS
We graduate, and find that doctoring is not PROFITUS
We devise a plan for doing BUSINESS
Fraud in the form of a little waltz -
..... a trusted friend, of modest means, already insured for life,
increases his policy to protect his child and wife.
Later on, the trusted friend begins to drink quite heavily
And kills his wife, and kills his child, and blames it on insanity
Some months later, a body is discovered, badly decomposed
With the body, is a letter, a suicide note.
A relative collects the money, we split it into three -
The relative, the trusted friend, my classmate and me.
We need three bodies - RIGOR MORTUS
Hidden in three cities - HIDE-US SEEK-US
The plan is too complicated
I kill my classmate instead
I use his insurance
To bide my time.

Songs for the Aching Soul

David Fehr (b. 1996)

Songs for the Aching Soul was born of an idea that there was not much repertoire in the classical world that dealt with anxiety and depression in a raw way. These songs are a perfect representation of the highs and lows experienced by those who suffer from depression and anxiety. The songs were written for a bass/baritone voice, thus adding to the somber heaviness of the subject.

This is a direct collaboration between David and I, and I couldn't be happier with the end result. I would like to dedicate these songs to anyone who is personally struggling with depression and anxiety.

I. *I'm Fine*

Poets: David Fehr (b. 1996)
Jane Kenyon (1947-1995)

This song's text is a combination of both Fehr's and Kenyon's words. The melody demands an extensive range from the singer and is coupled with difficult piano rhythms and patterns that encapsulate the uneasiness of depression. Depression is not pretty and neither are the feelings that accompany it. It is tough, destructive, and can completely turn someone into a shadow of their former self. There are many highs and lows and it is different for everyone. *I'm Fine* is a distinctive representation of those feelings both musically and poetically.

I'm fine. I'm really fine, really.

Please, please don't worry about me.

I hate myself.

When I was born, you waited behind a laundry pile in the nursery

And when we were alone you lay down on top of me,

Pressing the bile of desolation into every pore.

I only appeared to belong to my mother

I was already yours, the anti-urge, the mutilator of souls.

II. *On Edge*

Poet: Kaitlyn Fox (n/a)

On Edge portrays anxiety caused by remembering moments from the past along with intrusive thoughts at night. Anxiety can force someone to be uncomfortable even in a completely "normal" situation. The accompaniment has intense dissonance that is paired with a scurried singing pattern. As the song continues, there is a brief moment of relaxation before the anxiety seeps back in. *On Edge* represents anxiety in a uniquely real manner.

This is what it feels like to have your heart racing

And not knowing when or if it will ever slow down.

Your fatigued body cannot keep up with its rapid thumping against your chest.

You're winded after climbing a couple of flights of stairs.

Just the thought of tomorrow leaves you gasping for air

Only it's not refreshing, it's tight and sharp

This is being a day ahead of your calendar

Never learning to live in the moment

And letting your life slip under your shaking feet.

This is remembering the time you fell off your bike in the fourth grade

Or when you were tongue-tied in front of your crush at age thirteen.

This is living in a dream state

One you wish you'd wake from.

This is long nights staring at a dark ceiling

not knowing what is keeping you from rest.

This is trembling hands.

This is stuttered words.

This is being the enemy and survivor.

This is telling yourself "it's going to be okay,"

But not believing in the words you choose.