

BENNINGTON COLLEGE MUSIC DIVISION

Presents

LAURA COOK, Mezzo Soprano

Assisting Artists

Jacob Glick, viola

Marianne Finckel, piano harpsichord

Edith Bicknell-Finckel, oboe

Wednesday
September 17, 1980

8:15 p.m.
Greenwall Mini-Theatre

- I. Mad Bess
voice and harpsichord
Henry Purcell (1658-1695)
- II. Five Songs, opus 135
voice and piano
Robert Schumann (1810-1856)
(Texts by Mary Stuart)
- Abschied von Frankreich
Nach der Geburt ihres Sohnes
An die Konigin Elisabeth
Abschied von der Welt
Gebet
- III. Two Songs, opus 91
voice, viola, piano
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
(Texts Ruckert, Lope de Vega)
- Gestillte Sehnsucht
Geistliches Wiegenlied
- I n t e r m i s s i o n -
- IV. Songs
voice and oboe
Ralph Vaughan Williams
(1872-1958)
(Texts by William Blake)
- V. Quatre Poemes, opus 5
voice, piano, viola
Charles M. Loeffler
(1861-1935)
(Texts by Paul Verlaine
Beaudelaire)
- La Cloche Felee
Dansons La Gigue
Le son du cor s'afflige vers les bois
Serenade

TEXTS

Five Songs, Opus 135 by Robert Schumann
to words of Queen Mary Stuart (1542-87)
Translated into German by Gisbert Freiherrn Vincke

I. On Leaving France

The young queen stands on the deck of a ship which is bringing her from a happy childhood at the French Court to her cold, isolated kingdom in Scotland. As the shoreline recedes, she reflects on this land that had sheltered her and pledges a part of her soul to it, forever. Schumann's setting captures the waves and the slow rocking of the boat, while clothing the text harmonically with emotion.

II. After the birth of her son

Mary, a Catholic ruler, is in this song at the height of her power during a brief and turbulent reign. She has produced a male heir -- eventually James I of England and Scotland - stabilizing the succession to the Scottish throne. In this prayer, she chooses to stress Christ's crown of thorns as she asks a blessing from God upon the House of Stuart.

III. To Queen Elizabeth

One year after the birth of her son, Mary was imprisoned by her nobles and accused of the murder of her consort, Lord Darnley. She eventually escaped and fled to England, hoping for the aid of her cousin, Queen Elizabeth. This was not a hope founded in political reality. Mary's allegiance to catholicism posed a continuing threat to the protestant forces of Elizabeth I. Again she was imprisoned under conditions that became, as the years dragged on, less and less queenly. This song, whose text is a letter from Mary to Elizabeth, conveys a flood of ambivalent emotions, hope and fear, gratitude and anger, as Mary asks for an audience with her "dear sister". The setting is extremely agitated..

IV. On Leaving the World

Almost two decades after her imprisonment, Mary was brought to trial for plotting Elizabeth's murder. She was found guilty on questionable evidence and sentenced to death. After an interval of vacillation on Elizabeth's part the order of execution was finally given. Mary and her small retinue had barely twelve hours warning. Accounts indicate that she made careful provision from her small estate for her servants, and bid them farewell with calm and gracious demeanor.

V. Prayer

Schumann's settings to the Mary Stuart texts were composed 4 years before his death near the onset of the distressing symptoms which forced his commitment to the asylum where he died. This set of songs is quite different from the earlier and more popular cycles, *Dichterliebe* and *Frauenliebe -und Leben*, yet the musical examination of a soul is still as precise. Schumann matched the subtle, charismatic, emotional, and finally tortured soul of Queen Mary Stuart to his talents, and produced a masterpiece.

In this final prayer, penned in the small hours of the morning on which she went to the block, Mary calls on God, her judge, and on Jesus, her beloved, to save her. "In the crying of my cry, sunken in the dust, hear me, I beseech you, and help me."

TWO SONGS

Johannes Brahms,

I. Gestillte Sehnsucht
(Appeased Desire)

Steeped in the golden light of evening,
How solemnly the forests stand!
In the soft voices of birds breathes
The gentle stirring of the evening wind.
What whisper the wind and the birds?
They whisper the world to sleep.
Desires which always arise
In the heart that is without peace or rest,
Longings that trouble the soul,
When will you rest, when will you cease?
To the sounds of whispering wind and the birds,
You longing desires, when will you be lulled to sleep?
When no longer into golden distances
My spirit hastens on wings of dreams,
No longer on the external distant stars
My eyes are fixed with a longing gaze;
Then the winds, the birds shall lull
My life and my longings.

TWO SONGS

Johannes Brahms

II. Geistliches Wiegenlied
(Sacred Lullaby)

Joseph, my good Joseph,
Help me to rock my darling child,
God will be the one to reward you
In the Heavenly Kingdom of the Virgin's Son,
Maria, Maria.
You who fly above these palm trees
In the night and the wind,
You holy angels, silence the treetops!
My child is asleep.
You palms of Bethelhem, in the raging wind,
How can you rustle so angrily today,
Do not sigh thus, be silent,
Sway softly and gently.
Silence the treetops! My child is asleep.
The Child of Heaven suffers pain;
He was so weary of the sorrows of the earth.
Now gently soothed in sleep,
The agony leaves him.
Silence the treetops, my child is asleep.
Bitter cold descends,
With what can I cover my child's limbs!
All you angels, who on wings
Hover in the air,
Silence the treetops, my child is asleep.

QUATRE POEMES, Opus 5

Charles M. Loeffler

1. THE RIVEN BELL

How sad it is, yet sweet, on winter's night to sit
Beside the flickering fire, and watch the smoke a-climbing;
Old recollections then will through one's memory flit,
Awakened by the bells, that in the mist are chiming.

Ah! happy is the bell whose throat is strong and sound,
Bell that, in spite of age, keeping its strength and beauty,
Flings ever steadfastly its sacred voice around,
Like some brave warrior old, forever there on duty.

Ah! riven is my soul; and when in its distress
I would people with its songs the cold night's loneliness,
There often will be times, when its voice, weak and shaken,

Sounds like the wounded groans of one who lies forsaken
Beside a pool of blood, with corpses heaped above,
And in an awful struggle dies, -- yet does not move.

QUATRE POEMES

Charles M. Loeffler

2. / "ON WITH THE DANCING!"

On with the dancing!

Above all else I loved her eyes,
That shone like stars in midnight skies;
No malice in them you'd surprise.

On with the dancing!

She had a way with her, I swear,
To drive poor lovers to despair,
That was delightful, I declare.

On with the dancing!

But now I know that what was best,
Was when her flower-like mouth she pressed
To mine. She died upon my breast.

On with the dancing!

I mind them well, I mind them well --
Those hours, and many a happy spell:
Best luck that ever me befell.

On with the dancing!

3. "THE HORN'S NOTE SOBS AND STRUGGLES TOWARD THE WOOD"

The horn's note sobs and struggles toward the wood,
Filled with the sadness of an orphaned cry
That flies away, among the hills to die,
Pressed by the winds, sharp-baying for its blood.

The wolf's soul wailing, in the cry you hear,
That at the sunset rises in distress;
An anguish that is well-nigh a caress--
The charms, yet fills you with a sickening fear.

As tho't' enhance that plaintive dying call,
In ribband rifts the snow begins to fall
Across the incarnadined occident.

And all the air seems like an autumn sigh,
So soft it is, 'neath the dull evening sky,
Along the peaceful landscape somnolent.

QUATRE POEMES

Charles M. Loeffler

4. SERENADE

As tho'it were the voice of one that cries
From where he lies buried,
Hear, lady, to thy chamber window rise
My voice harsh and wearied.

My mandolin thine ear a moment long,
Thine heart, too, surrender.
For thee it was, for thee I made this song,
So cruel, so tender.

I'll sing thine eyes that onyx are and gold,
Clear and unclouded,
Thy Lethe breasts that Stygian tresses hold
In darkness enshrouded.

As tho' it were the voice of one that cries
From where he lies buried,
Hear, lady, to ~~thy~~ chamber window rise
My voice harsh and wearied.

Then will I greatly praise, as is their right,
Beauties without number,
Whose mem'ries still come to me on a night
Deserted of slumber.

And then, to end, I'll tell thee of thy kiss,
All red-lipped and human,
Thy sweetness, with its agonizing bliss;
My angel -- My demon!

My mandolin thine ear a moment long,
Thine heart, too, surrender.
For thee it was, for thee I made this song,
So cruel, so tender.