

BENNINGTON COLLEGE MUSIC DIVISION

Presents

A CONCERT OF VOCAL MUSIC WITH PIANO

By ANNA GABRIELI and JOHN BALME

Wednesday  
March 21, 1984

8:15 p.m.  
Greenwall Music Workshop

I

La Promessa  
Il Rimprovero  
L'Invito

Gioacchino Rossini  
(1792-1868)

II

Settings of Petrarchan Sonnets

Quel rosignuol  
Levommi il mio pensier

Ildebrando Pizzetti  
(1880-1968)

Pace non trovo  
I' vidi in terra

Franz Liszt  
(1811-1886)

III

Capriccio - Final Scene

Richard Strauss  
(1864-1949)

INTERMISSION

IV

The Poet's Echo, op. 76  
(poems by Pushkin)

Benjamin Britten  
(1913-1976)

Echo  
My Heart...  
Angel  
The Nightingale and the Rose  
Epigram  
Lines Written During a Sleepless Night

V

How Fair This Spot  
Midsummer Nights  
Oh Never Sing to me Again  
Sorrow in Springtime  
Spring Waters

Sergei Rachmaninoff  
(1873-1943)

(Parts IV and V. sung in Russian)

## TRANSLATIONS

### I

#### La Promessa (Rossini)

That I could ever stop loving you!  
No, never believe it, dearest heart;  
Not even in jest could I deceive you!

You alone are my most precious thing,  
And always will be, dearest one,  
My great ardor as long as I live.

#### Il Rimprovero

I will suffer my bitter fate silently;  
Ah, but not to love you, my dear,  
Don't hope for that from me!  
Cruel one, why do you make me suffer so?

#### L'Invito

Come, Ruggiero, your Eloisa  
Cannot stay separated from you:  
You have already responded to my tears;  
Come and answer my prayer.

Come, beautiful angel;  
Come, my delight,  
Come to rest on my breast!

Feel if it palpitates,  
If love invites you...  
Come, my life, make me die of love.

Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868) began his career as an enormously prolific operatic composer, producing thirty-eight operas, the last of which was Guillaume Tell, written in 1829. After that he lived in virtual retirement in Paris, but he occasionally wrote short pieces to be performed at social gatherings in Parisian salons. These three songs are taken from his "Soirees Musicales," published in 1835.

## TRANSLATIONS

### II

#### Quel rosignuol (Pizzetti)

That nightingale that so sweetly weeps, perhaps for his children  
or for his dear consort, fills the sky and the fields with sweetness  
in so many grieving, skillful notes,

and all night he seems to accompany me and remind me of my  
harsh fate; for I have no one to complain of save myself, who  
did not believe that Death reigns over goddesses.

Oh how easy it is to deceive one who is confident! Those two  
lights much brighter than the sun, who ever thought to see them  
become dark clay?

Now I know that my fierce destiny wishes me to learn, living  
and weeping, how nothing down here both pleases and endures!

#### Levommi il mio pensier (Pizzetti)

My thought lifted me up to where she was whom I seek and do  
not find on earth; there, among those whom the third circle encloses,  
I saw her more beautiful and less proud.

She took me by the hand and said: "In this sphere you will be  
with me, if my desire is not deceived; I am she who gave you so  
much war and completed my day before evening.

"My blessedness no human intellect can comprehend: I only  
wait for you and for that which you loved so much and which  
remained down there, my lovely veil."

Ah, why did she then become still and open her hand? for at the  
sound of words so kind and chaste, I almost remained in  
Heaven.

#### Pace non trovo (Liszt)

Peace I do not find, and I have no wish to make war; and I fear  
and hope, and burn and am of ice; and I fly above the heavens  
and lie on the ground; and I grasp nothing and embrace all the  
world.

One has me in prison who neither opens nor locks, neither keeps  
me for his own nor unties the bonds; and Love does not kill and  
does not unchain me, he neither wishes me alive nor frees me from  
the tangle.

I see without eyes, and I have no tongue and yet cry out; and I  
wish to perish and I ask for help; and I hate myself and love another.

I feed on pain, weeping I laugh; equally displeasing to me are  
death and life. In this state am I, Lady, on account of you.



I' vidi in terra (Liszt)

I saw on earth angelic qualities and heavenly beauties unique in the world, so that the memory pleases and pains me, for whatever I look on seems dreams, shadows, and smoke.

And I saw those two beautiful lights weeping that have a thousand times made the sun envious; and I heard amid sighs words that would make mountains move and rivers stand still.

Love, wisdom, worth, piety, and sorrow made, weeping, a sweeter music than any other to be heard in the world;

and the heavens were so intent upon the harmony that no leaf on any branch was seen to move, so much sweetness filled the air and the wind.

(Petrarchan translations by Robert M. Durling)

III

Capriccio - Final Scene (Richard Strauss): Synopsis

In the chateau of the Countess Madeleine, the poet Olivier and the composer Flamand are writing an opera about which is more important: the words or the music. Both men separately declare their love to the Countess, and in the final scene she hears that each will be in her library at 11 the following morning for her answer to his suit and for her decision as to how the opera should end. In her monologue the Countess sings the sonnet of Ronsard that Flamand has set to music and realizes that the words and music are indeed inseparable. So also has she fallen in love with both men and cannot decide between them.

IV

The Poet's Echo (Britten):

Echo

From leafy woods the savage howl,  
A distant horn, the thunder's roll,  
A maiden singing up the hill,  
To every sound  
Your answering cry the air doth fill  
In quick rebound.

You listen for the thunder's voice,  
The ocean wave's wild stormy noise,  
The distant mountain-shepherd's cries  
You answer free;  
To you comes no reply. Likewise  
O poet, to thee!

## The Poet's Echo (continued)

### My Heart...

My heart, I fancied it was over,  
That road of suffering and pain,  
And I resolved: 'Tis gone for ever,  
Never again! never again!  
That ancient rapture and its yearning,  
The dreams, the credulous desire...  
But now old wounds have started burning  
Inflamed by beauty and her fire.

### Angel

At Eden's gate a gentle angel  
With lowered head stood shining bright,  
While Satan sullen and rebellious  
O'er Hell's abysses took his flight.

Soul of negation, soul of envy,  
He gazed at that angelic light,  
And warm and tender glowed within him  
A strange confusion at the sight.

"Forgive," he said, "now I have seen thee,  
Not vainly didst thou shine so bright:  
Not all in heaven have I hated,  
Not all things human earn my spite."

### The Nightingale and the Rose

The garden's dark and still; 'tis spring; no night wind blows.  
He sings! the nightingale, his love song to the rose.  
She does not hearken, his rose beloved, disdainful,  
And to his amorous hymn, she dozes, nodding and swaying.  
With such words would you melt cold beauty into fire?  
O poet, be aware how far you would aspire!  
She is not listening, no poems can entrance her;  
You gaze; she only flowers; you call her; there's no answer.

### Epigram

Half a milord, half of a boss,  
Half of a sage, half of a baby,  
Half of a cheat; there's hope that maybe  
He'll be a whole one by and by.

(The subject of this epigram was Count M.S. Vorontsov,  
Pushkin's chief in Odessa. He was brought up in England - "Half  
a milord" - and had financial interests in Odessa - "half of a boss".)

The Poet's Echo (conclu.)

Lines Written During a Sleepless Night

Sleep forsakes me with the light;  
Shadowy gloom and haunting darkness;  
Time ticks on its way relentless  
And its sound invades the night.  
Fateful crones are at their mumbling,  
Set the sleepy night atrembling,  
Scurrying mouse-like, life slips by...  
Why do you disturb me, say?  
What's your purpose, tedious whispers?  
Do you breathe reproachful murmurs  
At my lost and wasted day?  
What is this you want to tell me?  
Do you prophesy or call me?  
Answer me, I long to hear!  
Voices, make your meaning clear...

(Translations of Pushkin's poems by Peter Pears)

IV

Rachmaninoff:

How Fair This Spot

How Fair this spot!  
I gaze to where the golden brook runs by.  
The fields are all inlaid with flowers.  
The white clouds sail on high.  
No step draws near, such silence reigns.  
Alone with God I seem;  
With Him, and with the hoary pines,  
And thee, my only dream! (Translation by Rosa Newmarch)

Midsummer Nights

Oh these midsummer nights all in splendour set,  
Steeped in wonder of moonlight that reigns serene,  
They awaken the promise of ecstasy,  
And rekindle the passion of love's desire.

From this sorrowful heart, they will lift the load,  
Weight of woe unto mortals by life decreed,  
And the borders of happiness open wide,  
The spell obeying, that silent its work is weaving.

And the gates of the spirit are barred no more,  
For its regions are flooded with waves of love,  
Oh these midsummer nights all in splendour set,  
Clad in magic of moonlight that reigns supreme.

(Translation by Edward Agate)



Rachmaninoff (continued)

Oh, Never Sing to Me Again

Oh, never sing to me again  
The songs of Georgia, fair maiden;  
Their tones recall to me in vain  
Far distant shores with sorrow laden.

Alas! those songs remembrance stir,  
Full many memories around me gather,  
The Steppes at night, in vision clear  
The form and features of another!

This image, fatal yet so true,  
At sight of thee will surely vanish,  
But at thy voice to rise anew  
That all my striving fails to banish.

Oh, never sing to me again, etc.

(Translation by Edward Agate)

Sorrow in Springtime

How my heart aches, and yet I would live...  
Now that spring with its fragrance is here!  
Nay! I have not the strength to seek death  
Once for all in the sleepless blue night.  
Would that age could come swiftly to me,  
Would that my brown locks were silvered with time,  
Were I deaf to the laugh of the breeze,  
To the nightingale's passionate voice,  
As he pours out his heart in a song  
Far away where the lilac trees bloom!  
Would to Heaven that the silence and dusk  
Were not filled with such pain and despair!

(Translation by Rosa Newmarch)

Spring Waters

Though still the fields are white with snow,  
The rushing of springfloods draws near,  
The banks are sunny where they flow,  
They sparkle as they run more clear.

Their voice the icebound fallow stirs:  
"The spring is here! The spring is here!"  
We are the young spring's messengers,  
The heralds, we of her advance.

"The spring is here! The spring is here!"  
The bright, soft Maydays come again,  
And moving in a rosy dance  
They gladly haste to join Spring's train.

(Translation by Rosa Newmarch)

## PROGRAM NOTES

### II

Ildebrando Pizzetti beautifully captured the flavor of Petrarch's poems in his "3 Sonetti del Petrarca -- In morte di Madonna Laura" (1922). Two of these songs appear here; the third, "La vita fugge," is composed for baritone. Pizzetti wrote some 25 songs, along with choral and instrumental works, but he is best known for his operas, which have been performed regularly through the years at La Scala. His opera Murder in the Cathedral achieved international fame.

Franz Liszt fashioned two different settings of three Petrarchan sonnets: one for baritone (1883) and an earlier one for high voice (1847), which is performed here, omitting the second sonnet ("Benedetto sia 'l giorno e 'l mese et l'anno").

### III

In the final scene of Richard Strauss's last opera Capriccio (1942) another sonnet, one by Ronsard, is of crucial importance, for it inspires the composer Flamand to set it to music, engendering then the discussion of which is more important in opera: the words or the music. As the Countess sings this sonnet she realizes that, in fact, they are inseparable.

### IV

Benjamin Britten composed "The Poet's Echo" in 1965 for his friends Galina Vishnevskaya and her husband Mstislav Rostropovich to six poems by Pushkin in the original Russian.

### V

Best known for his piano concertos, Sergei Rachmaninoff also wrote over 70 songs, of which these are a representative selection. Only the text "Oh Never Sing to Me Again" (op. 4, no. 4) is by Pushkin. "How Fair This Spot" (op. 21, no. 7) and "Sorrow in Springtime" (op. 21, no. 12) are by G. Galina, while "Midsummer Nights" (op. 14, no. 5) is by D. Rathaus and "Spring Waters" (op. 14, no. 11) is by F. Tioutchev.