Hugh Hodgson School of Music
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

presents a
Graduate Recital

Xiaohan Chen, mezzo-soprano
Greg Hankins, piano

November 30, 2022 5:30 pm, Ramsey Recital Hall

“Oh dischiuso è il firmamento” from Nabucco
Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

Browning Songs, Op.44
The Year’s at the Spring
Ah, Love, but a Day
Send my Heart up to Thee
Amy Beach (1867-1944)

Rückert Lieder
Ich atmet’ einen linden Duft
Liebst du um Schönheit
Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder!
Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen
Um Mitternacht
Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

“Per questa fiamma indomita” from Anna Bolena
Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848)

That is me!
Jianfen Gu (b. 1935)

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the degree Doctor of Music Arts in Performance.
Xiaohan Chen is a student of Professor Frederick Burchinal.

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DMA Recital
PROGRAM NOTES & TRANSLATIONS

“Oh dischiuso è il firmamento” from Nabucco

Giuseppe Verdi
(1813-1901)

Italian composer, Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901), was born into a poor family in northern Italy during a period of national crisis, both internal and external. His talent was recognized at an early age, but when, at the age of eighteen, he applied to the Milan Conservatory he was rejected. Because of his country’s historical struggles, and Verdi’s personal struggles, his works are imbued with sympathetic and repressed emotions. Nabucco, an opera in four acts written in 1841, and premiered at La Scala in 1842, is Verdi's first major success. The opera describes the captivity of the Hebrews in Babylon, their oppression far from home, and their desire for freedom. The famous chorus "Va, pensiero (Fly, thought, on golden wings)," represents Verdi’s patriotic feelings, and it’s still sung today to express love of country. At this time, Italy was occupied by Austria, and Italians adopted this opera to represent their deep feelings for their country and their strong hatred for the Austrian occupation. Into the music of this opera. The music of the entire opera is passionate, powerful, melodic, and majestic, and is filled with the spirit of patriotism from the beginning to the end. In the final scene of this opera, Fenena is to be sacrificed at the altar of the Baal, but goes to her death, singing an aria in which the sky has opened its doors to her, and God awaits her. The lyrics and music are full of indomitable spirit and calmness in the face of death. The aria ends with the repeated phrase "fugge l'alma e vola al ciel! (my soul escapes and flies to heaven)", rising in pitch until the final climax.

Oh dischiuso è il firmamento!
Al Signor lo spirto anela …
Ei m'arride, e cento e cento
gaudi eterni a me disvela!
O splendor degl'astri, addio!
Me di luce irradia Iddio!
Già dal fral, che qui ne impiomba,
fugge l'alma e vola al ciel!

Text: Temistocle Solera
Translation: Christina O’Flynn

Oh, the firmament is opened up!
My soul longs for the Lord ...
He smiles upon me and reveals to me
hundreds upon hundreds of joys everlasting!
Oh, splendor of the stars, farewell!
God floods me with His holy light!
From this mortal body that, heavy as lead, detains us here,
my soul escapes already and wings its way to heaven!
Amy Beach was born in 1857 in New Hampshire. The first American woman to achieve a successful career as an art song composer, Beach was both a pianist and a composer, showing musical talent from an early age, starting her musical journey at the age of five. By the age of seven she had already given several concerts of Chopin and Beethoven, and at the age of 18 she began performing with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. After her marriage to H.H.A. Beach, a prominent physician of the time, she turned from performance to composition. She composed about 120 art songs, which are among her best works, and her art songs include singable melodies, and elaborate solistic piano accompaniments. Liszt and Wagner were her major influences, and her scores feature a large number of chromatically shifted chords and expressive modulations. The Browning Society of Boston commissioned Beach to compose a piece for Browning's birthday celebration, based on a section from his well known work *Pippa Passes* is a long dramatic monologue that tells several short stories. In this poetry, Pippa is a young, innocent person used to represent God's messenger. For this assignment, Beach composed "The Year's at the Spring." This art song would become one of her most frequently studied and performed songs by amateurs and professionals around the world. Eventually, she dedicated two other pieces to the Browning Society and published them as *Three Browning Songs, Op. 44* in 1900. It is interesting to note that Beach always felt that music was associated with color, as "The Year's at the Spring" would be violet, "Ah, Love, But a day" would be blue, and "I Send my Heart up to Thee" would be pink.

1. **The Year's at the Spring**

   Robert Browning, who was raised a Christian, includes in this little poem the singer looking at the world around her, and the presence of God like the spring, the lark, and the snail. Even in the closing lines, he repeatedly emphasizes that God observes everything, and makes all right. When Beach composed this piece, she was sitting on a train and inspiration came quickly. She finished the piece in just a few minutes, inspired by the rhythm of the train on the tracks, which can be heard in the triplets of piano accompaniment. The piece is short, but in such fleeting time it is extremely dramatic. It builds and constantly intensifies, quickly reaching the climax at the end.

   The year's at the spring,
   And days at the morn;
   Mornings at seven;
   The hill-side's dew-pearl'd;
   The lark's on the wing;
   The snail's on the thorn;
   Gods in His heaven—
   All is right with the world!
2. Ah, love, but a day

The second song in the set is from Browning's larger work, James Lee's Wife, about a woman at the window. The poem has three stanzas, the first two of which Beach uses. The first stanza is the wife's observation of the way the seasons change, causing the birds to leave and the weather to change from sweltering summer days to chilly breezes. The second stanza returns to the theme, wondering if lovers are as vulnerable to change as the weather? It has been speculated that this poem is semi-autobiographical for the Browning couple, since Robert Browning's wife Elizabeth was also a well known poet whose poems describe much of her disdain for love and the damage it brings. So it seems that Robert Browning intended to change this view, and love appears much more optimistic in his poems.

Ah, Love, but a day,
And the world has changed!
The sun's away,
And the bird estranged;
The wind has dropped,
And the sky's deranged;
Summer has stopped.
Look in my eyes!
Wilt thou change too?
Should I fear surprise?
Shall I find aught new
In the old and dear,
In the good and true,
With the changing year?

I Send My Heart Up to Thee

The last of this set is taken from the first verse in Browning's larger work titled Love's Power, which has a sweet beginning but a tragic end. A man falls in love with a married woman, and they end up dying with a last kiss, killed by the woman's husband. However, Beach chose only the very beginning of the entire work, where the man expresses his love for the woman. The entire piece is a very straightforward and passionate expression of love, with no foreshadowing of the tragic end. Beach uses this section to record the conversation between the lovers while riding in a Venetian gondola, and the swaying rhythm of the piano accompaniment makes it sound like they are on the rocking boat. The music is very romantic, and rises to a passionate conclusion, just like the couple’s indomitable love.

I send my heart up to thee,
al my heart
In this my singing,
For the stars help me,
and the sea,
and the sea bears part;

The very night is clinging
Closer to Venice’ streets
to leave on space above me,
whence thy face may light my joyous heart to thee,
to thee its dwelling place.

**Text:** Robert Browning
Rückert Lieder

1. Ich atmet’ einen linden Duft (“I breathed a gentle fragrance!”)
2. Liebst du um Schönheit (“If you love for beauty”)
3. Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder! (“Do not look into my songs!”)
4. Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen (“I am lost to the world”)
5. Um Mitternacht (“At midnight”)

Gustav Mahler was born in Kaliszte, Bohemia, and graduated from the Vienna Conservatory of Music. Rückert Lieder are five songs, set to texts by German poet Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866). They are not written as a cycle, but collected by his publisher later. Mahler was a composer who spent his life without a homeland. To the Germans, he was an Austrian; whereas in the Austrian mind, Mahler was a Bohemian; throughout the world, he was a Jew without a homeland. The pursuit of a spiritual home inevitably led to religious faith, and the Kingdom of Heaven became Mahler's pursued dream. All his life, Mahler explored life, death, and eternity in his work. Most of Mahler's works are full of mysterious religious feelings, profound philosophies of life, as well as anguish, despair and fear of death and reflection on life. The structure of these five songs is liberal and free; Mahler's art song writing is distinctive among the late Romantic composers. He orchestrated many of his art songs, and often his vocal works have a dark and delicate tone, exuding sensitivity, grief, mockery, pleasure, and melancholy, allowing him to portray lonely sorrow, fear of death, helpless retreat, and longing for life, while the power of irony, fleeting joy, and great changes of mood expressed in these poems also allow him to express excitement and relief in the midst of sorrow. Much of Mahler's music is melody driven, and one of Mahler's most extraordinary gifts is his ability to express complex emotions in simple melodic lines.

1. Ich atmet’ einen linden Duft (“I breathed a gentle fragrance!”)
   The gorgeous melodic setting brings to life the "linden Duft (gentle fragrance)" described in the first line, and we can almost smell the soft fragrance wafting by as the poet associates his love of the fragrance of the tree, with his love for the absent person who brought the branch into the room, repeatedly expressing his love in the soft flow of the accompaniment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ich atmet’ einen linden Duft!</td>
<td>I breathed a gentle fragrance!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Im Zimmer stand</td>
<td>In the room stood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ein Zweig der Linde,</td>
<td>A spray of lime,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ein Angebinde</td>
<td>A gift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Von lieber Hand.</td>
<td>From a dear hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wie lieblich war der Lindenduft!</td>
<td>How lovely the fragrance of lime was!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wie lieblich ist der Lindenduft!</td>
<td>How lovely the fragrance of lime is!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Das Lindenreis</td>
<td>The spray of lime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brachst du gelinde;</td>
<td>Was gently plucked by you;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich atme leis</td>
<td>Softly I breathe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Im Duft der Linde</td>
<td>In the fragrance of lime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Der Liebe linden Duft</td>
<td>The gentle fragrance of love.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Liebst du um Schönheit (“If you love for beauty”)

Presented as a gift from Mahler to his wife Alma, this song is his only public expression of his love for her. Each of the four traditional verses begins with a similar line, but each approaches the subject in different ways. The repeated “Liebe” emphasizes the theme around which the song revolves, indicating that love must be for the person themselves, not for external beauty, youth, or wealth.

Liebst du um Schönheit,  
O nicht mich liebe!  
Liebe die Sonne,  
Sie trägt ein goldnes Haar.

Liebst du um Jugend,  
O nicht mich liebe!  
Liebe den Frühling,  
Der jung ist jedes Jahr.

Liebst du um Schätze,  
O nicht mich liebe!  
Liebe die Meerfrau,  
Sie hat viel Perlen klar.

Liebst du um Liebe,  
O ja, mich liebe!  
Liebe mich immer,  
Dich lieb’ ich immerdar.

If you love beauty,  
O love not me!  
Love the sun,  
She has golden hair.

If you love youth,  
O love not me!  
Love the spring  
Which is young each year.

If you love riches,  
O love not me!  
Love the mermaid  
Who has many shining pearls.

If you love for love,  
Ah yes, love me!  
Love me always,  
I shall love you ever more.

3. Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder! (“Do not look at my songs!”)

As the first line of the song describes “Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder!” (Do not look at my songs!), Mahler has a strong aversion to anyone prying into unfinished works. The song uses this unusual theme to warn the listener not to be too curious about the creative process, as only the finished work matters most. The second verse draws an analogy between the habits of bees and the process of creating a work, making his point with the comic touch.

Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder!  
Meine Augen schlag’ ich nieder,  
Wie ertappt auf böser Tat.  
Selber darf ich nicht getrauen,  
Ihrem Wachsen zuzuschauen.  
Deine Neugier ist Verrat!

Bienen, wenn sie Zellen bauen,  
Lassen auch nicht zu sich schauen,  
Schauen selbst auch nicht zu.  
Wenn die reichen Honigwaben  
Sie zu Tag gefördert haben,  
Dann vor allen nasche du!

Do not look at my songs!  
I lower my gaze,  
As if caught in the act.  
I dare not even trust myself  
To watch them growing.  
Your curiosity is treason.

Bees, when they build cells,  
Let no one watch either,  
And do not even watch themselves.  
When the rich honeycombs  
Have been brought to daylight,  
You shall be the first to taste it!

4. Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen (“I am lost to the world”)

Regarding the text of the song, Mahler tells us that he is describing himself. In the poem, Rückert skillfully portrays the Romantic artist, a solitary figure, removed from the world, free from all earthly concerns, destined to be alone and forgotten. It is also one of Mahler’s most beautiful and moving songs, a poetic thematic evocation of his retreat from the turmoil of the world to his paradise, the peace he has achieved in his life, and his song.

Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen,  
Mit der ich sonst viele Zeit verdorben,  
Sie hat so lange nichts von mir vernommen,  
Sie mag wohl glauben, ich sei gestorben!

I am lost to the world  
With which I used to waste much time;  
It has for so long known nothing of me,  
It may well believe that I am dead.
Es ist mir auch gar nichts daran gelegen,
Ob sie mich für gestorben hält,
Ich kann auch gar nichts sagen dagegen,
Denn wirklich bin ich gestorben der Welt.
Ich bin gestorben dem Weltgetümmel,
Und ruh’ in einem stillen Gebiet!
Ich leb’ allein in meinem Himmel,
In meinem Lieben, in meinem Lied!

Nor am I at all concerned
If it should think that I am dead.
Nor can I deny it,
For truly I am dead to the world.
I am dead to the world’s tumult
And rest in a quiet realm!
I live alone in my heaven,
In my love, in my song!

5. Um Mitternacht (“At Midnight”)

The grandest song in the entire suite, Um Mitternacht (At Midnight), takes us on a profound journey of the soul, transitioning from the brightest of days to the deepest of nights, a change that is evident in its musical color. Mahler takes advantage of the poem’s symmetrical structure, using repeated phrases to draw us deeper and deeper into the night. The entire song begins and ends with the same phrase in five short passages. In the first four stanzas, the song describes the constant spreading of one’s thoughts upward into the dark sky, without any answers to life’s struggles and sorrows. Then at the end of each passage these melodic motives produce subtle changes and incorporate new melodies. The final passage culminates in a moment of transcendence and hymn like splendor, in which Mahler finds the answer by surrendering to a supreme power.

Um Mitternacht
Hab’ ich gewacht
Und aufgeblickt zum Himmel;
Kein Stern vom Sterngewimmel
Hat mir gelacht
Um Mitternacht.

At Midnight
I kept watching
And looked up to heaven;
Not a star in the galaxy
Smiled on me
At midnight.

Um Mitternacht
Hab’ ich gedacht
Hinaus in dunkle Schranken.
Es hat kein Lichtgedanken
Mir Trost gebracht
Um Mitternacht.

At Midnight
My thoughts went out
To the dark reaches of space;
No shining thought
Brought me comfort
At midnight.

Um Mitternacht
Nahm ich in acht
Die Schläge meines Herzens;
Ein einz’ger Puls des Schmerzes
War angefacht
Um Mitternacht.

At Midnight
I paid heed
To the beating of my heart;
A single pulse of pain
Was set alight
At midnight.

Um Mitternacht
Kämpft’ ich die Schlacht,
O Menschheit, deiner Leiden;
Nicht konnt’ ich sie entscheiden
Mit meiner Macht
Um Mitternacht.

At Midnight
I fought the battle,
O Mankind, of your afflictions;
I could not gain victory
By my own strength
At midnight.

Um Mitternacht
Hab’ ich die Macht
In deine Hand gegeben!
Herr! über Tod und Leben
Du hältst die Wacht
Um Mitternacht!

At Midnight
I gave my strength
Into Thy hands!
Lord over life and death,
Thou keepest watch
At midnight.

Text: Friedrich Rückert
Translation: Richard Stokes
Domenico Gaetano Maria Donizetti (1797-1848), whose works include about 70 operas, was adept at writing elegant and pleasing tunes that could fully utilize the singing skills of a vocalist. He was one of the leading composers of the Bel Canto period, and a probable influence on Verdi. In 1830, Anna Bolena was successfully performed in Milan, and later in Paris and London, making him well known in Europe. Anna Bolena is a “tragedia lirica (tragic opera)” in two acts, based on the life of King Henry VIII. The central themes of the play involve betrayal, ambition, love, hatred, guilt, and friendship. Jane Seymour's affair with Henry leads to Anna's terrible fate. When Henry decides to execute Anna, Jane is full of guilt and begs Henry not to make her add to her remorse and sin. The transition from a calm plea at the beginning to a forceful plea later is evident in the music. Although the play is based on historical facts, there is still a fabricated element to the plot, which provides room for free play in the performance of the characters and the presentation of the plot in the emotional drama for the stage.

That is me!

Jianfen Gu, native to Weihai, China. Born in Osaka, Japan, she returned to China from Japan as a child. She composed the song "That's Me" in 1982, combining her own experiences, to express the longing of overseas wanderers for their motherland. The whole song is mainly in the southern Chinese minority key, written as a declarative melody, representing the homeland as mother. The prelude is permeated with major and harmonic minor elements, as if bringing the listener to a foreign country, representing the overseas life of the composer. On the other hand, the song is characterized by a freedom of expression and a wide range of tones, without the constraint of rhythm and beat, and with the general simplicity of the national vernacular to reveal the longing for home. Throughout the song, the musical motive is repeated several times in different octaves, and the word "Ma MA" (mother) appears repeatedly, expressing not only musically but also linguistically the longing for the homeland and relatives.
nà jiù shì wǒ
那就是我
That is me

wǒ sī liàn gù xiāng de chuī yān
我思恋故乡的炊烟
I miss the smoke from my hometown

hái yǒu xiǎo lù shàng gǎn jí de niú chē
还有小路上赶集的牛车
And the bullock carts on the lane to the market

ō mā mā rú guǒ yǒu yī zhī zhú dì xiàng nǐ chuī xiǎng
噢妈妈 如果有一只竹笛 向你吹响
Oh mother if there is a flute blowing to you

nà jiù shì wǒ
那就是我
That is me

wǒ sī liàn gù xiāng de yú huǒ
我思恋故乡的渔火
I miss the fishing flames of my hometown

hái yǒu shā tān shàng měi lì de hǎi luó
还有沙滩上美丽的海螺
And the beautiful conch on the beach

ō mā mā rú guǒ yǒu yī yè fēng fān xiàng nǐ shǐ lái
噢妈妈 如果有一叶风帆 向你驶来
Oh mother if there is a single sail coming to you

nà jiù shì wǒ
那就是我
That is me

wǒ sī liàn gù xiāng de míng yuè
我思恋故乡的明月
I miss the bright moon in my hometown

hái yǒu qīng shān yìng zài shuǐ zhōng de dào yǐng
还有青山映在水中的倒影
And the reflection of the green hills in the water

ō mā mā rú guǒ nǐ tīng dào yuǎn fāng piāo lái de gē shēng
噢妈妈 如果你听到远方 飘来的歌声
Oh mother if you hear a song coming from far away

nà jiù shì wǒ
那就是我
That is me