



Bard College Conservatory of Music

20 Years of Music, Vision, and Excellence

Faculty Spotlight Series

SILENT AWAKENINGS

Guest Artist Martha Guth, *soprano*
Erika Switzer, *piano*
with Raman Ramakrishnan, *cello*

Sunday, September 21, 2025 at 7:00 pm
László Z. Bitó '60 Conservatory Building, Performance Space

Nähe des Geliebten, D. 162 Franz Schubert (1797-1828)
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)

Penelope (2014) Cecilia Livingston (b. 1984)

Suleika I, D. 720 Schubert
Marianne von Willemer (1784-1860)

Still, from *Silent Awakenings* (2009) Iman Habibi (b. 1985)

Auflösung D. 807 Schubert
Johann Mayrhofer (1787-1836)

Love, Loss, and Exile (2022) Juhi Bansal (b. 1984)
Pashto Landay, trans. Juhi Bansal

Love
The Stoning Ground
Grief
Exile
Tuli

Raman Ramakrishnan, *cello*

So lasst mich scheinen "Lied der Mignon" Schubert
D. 877/3 Goethe

An Echo, An Ending (2020) Shawn E. Okpebholo (b. 1981)
Marcus Amaker (b. 1976)

Lob der Tränen, D. 711 Schubert
August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767-1845)

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Juno nominated soprano **Martha Guth's** interpretations have been called “Magical” (Opera Now); “Truly amazing” (Montreal Gazette) and “Thrilling” (Globe and Mail). Her concert schedule has included performances at Wigmore Hall, Lincoln Center, The National Cathedral, Ravinia, Oxford International Song Festival, Chamber Fest (Ottawa), and Leeds Lieder. Orchestral and Operatic engagements have included The Toronto Symphony Orchestra, The Chicago Philharmonic, The Santa Fe Opera, The Canadian Opera Company, Charleston Symphony, and The Vancouver Symphony, and she has worked under the batons of Maestro’s Seiji Ozawa, Robert Spano, Helmut Rilling, John Nelson, and Alan Gilbert among others.

Her career in song was launched after winning first prize at both the Wigmore Hall International Song Competition and the Concours Musical International de Montréal, and it is in this repertoire where she truly feels at home. Her deep interest in the genre led her to co-found Sparks & Wiry Cries with long time friend and recital partner Erika Switzer. A non-profit dedicated to art song, it spans publication, live performance, and commission of new works, and is the force behind the popular regional *songSLAMs*. Sparks also hosts its larger *sparksLIVE* events in partnership with organizations like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Duke University, The Philadelphia Chamber Music Society and more. Her discography includes *Summer Night*, a Juno nominated disc of songs by Healy Willan on Centrediscs; *Das Ewig Weibliche* a solo disc of Schubert songs with Penelope Crawford on a Graf fortepiano; Roberto Sierra’s *Beyond the Silence of Sorrow* with the Orquesta Sinfonica de Puerto Rico for Naxos (nominated for a 2016 Latin GRAMMY) and more. Her concerts have been recorded and broadcast by the CBC Radio/Radio Canada, the BBC and the WDR in Germany.

Martha is Associate Professor of Voice at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. She has held faculty positions at the Vocal Academy of the Collaborative Piano institute, and at Opera Seme in Arezzo, Italy, and past appointments include both Co-Artistic Director of SongFest and Director of its Composer/Mentorship program and Ithaca College. Martha has presented recitals, masterclasses, lectures, and residencies at dozens of major academic institutions across North America, many of those alongside long time recital partner, Graham Johnson. She looks forward to many new projects, partnerships and performances this year which will take her to NYC, Bard, Oxford, Luxembourg, Pensacola, Minneapolis, Ann Arbor, and back again for more in Oberlin.

Erika Switzer is an accomplished pianist who collaborates regularly in major concert settings around the world, including at New York’s Weill Hall (Carnegie), Geffen Hall, Frick Collection, and Bargemusic, at the Kennedy Center, the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, the Spoleto Festival (Charleston, SC). Her performances have been called “precise and lucid” by the New York Times, and Renaud Machart of Le Monde described her as “one of the best collaborative pianists I have ever heard; her sound is deep, her interpretation intelligent, refined, and captivating.”

From 2000-2007, Switzer performed and studied in Germany, an experience that profoundly inspired and shaped her work. During that time, she appeared at Festspielhaus Baden-Baden and in the Munich Winners & Masters series and won numerous awards, including best pianist prizes at the Robert Schumann, Hugo Wolf, and Wigmore Hall International Song Competitions.

Switzer has long been a leader in envisioning and promoting the future of art song performance. In 2009, in collaboration with soprano Martha Guth, she founded the organization Sparks & Wiry Cries, which curates opportunities for song creators and performers, commissions new works, presents the *songSLAM* festival in New York City, and publishes *The Art Song Magazine*. She is also devoted to new music, and has recently premiered new compositions in the 5 Boroughs Music Festival Songbook II; at the Brooklyn Art Song Society; and at Vancouver’s Music on Main.

Switzer collaborates with a range of top singers and instrumentalists. A frequent collaborator is baritone Tyler Duncan, and as a duo, Switzer and Duncan have performed in major concert halls and music festivals around the world. She is also an active teacher, serving on the music faculty at Bard College and the Bard Conservatory of Music. Switzer holds a doctorate from The Juilliard School, and lives in New York’s Hudson Valley.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Cellist **Raman Ramakrishnan** enjoys performing chamber music, old and new, around the world. For two decades, as a founding member of the Horszowski Trio and the Daedalus Quartet, he toured extensively through North and South America, Europe, and Asia, and recorded for Bridge Records and Avie Records, including the complete piano trios of Robert Schumann and the complete string quartets of Fred Lerdaahl. Mr. Ramakrishnan is currently an artist member of the Boston Chamber Music Society, and is on the faculty of the Bard College Conservatory of Music.

Mr. Ramakrishnan has given solo recitals in New York, Boston, Seattle, and Washington, D.C., and has performed at Caramoor, at Bargemusic, with the Chicago Chamber Musicians, and at the Aspen, Bard, Charlottesville, Four Seasons, Kingston, Lincolnshire (UK), Marlboro, Mehli Mehta (India), Oklahoma Mozart, Portland, Skaneateles, and Vail Music Festivals. He has toured with Musicians from Marlboro and has performed, as guest principal cellist, with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. As a guest member of Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble, he has performed in New Delhi and Agra, India and in Cairo, Egypt. He has served on the faculties of the Kneisel Hall, Norfolk, and Taconic Chamber Music Festivals, as well as in the Music Performance Program of Columbia University.

Mr. Ramakrishnan was born in Athens, Ohio and grew up in East Patchogue, New York. His father is a molecular biologist and his mother is the children's book author and illustrator Vera Rosenberry. He holds a Bachelor's degree in physics from Harvard University and a Master's degree in music from The Juilliard School. His principal teachers have been Fred Sherry, Andrés Díaz, and André Emelianoff. He lives in New York City with his wife, the violist Melissa Reardon, and their son. He plays a Neapolitan cello made by Vincenzo Jorio in 1837.

PROGRAM NOTE

Love, Loss, and Exile:

We don't often think of poetry as rebellion, but the women of Afghanistan have built a tradition out of artistic defiance, of speaking in rhyme words they are forbidden in prose. In the Pashtun culture from the mountainous regions near Pakistan, girls and women share, compose, and speak landays – an oral tradition of short poems by and for women, passed down for generations from woman to woman and tribe to tribe. The anonymous nature of these poems allows them to speak the unspeakable – to talk frankly of sensual love and desire, of yearning to make choices, of girls wanting to be more than an adjunct to their fathers, brothers, and husbands. In a society where young girls are bartered to old men, where to choose where to love is to risk death, where girls are forbidden from education, the landays tell women's stories in their own words, unfiltered and unchecked by the men's voices that surround them. The texts chosen for this song cycle are only the tiniest smattering of a powerful tradition, but were chosen to highlight recurrent themes that appear in landays - love and desire, grief, exile, war, and yearning. While set for classical soprano with western instruments, the music pays homage to the origins of the poetry by calling for each musician to use a variety of timbres, modes and ornamentation that come from this style.

–Juhi Bansal