

VERLUST & PÉRDIDA

Loss of love and innocence

Sonny Capaccio, *Baritone*
Erika Switzer and Emily Han, *Piano*

NOVEMBER 13th, 2019
7:15 P.M.
BITÓ CPS

THE PROGRAM

Richard Strauss (1864 - 1949)

Der Nachtgang, op. 29, no. 3

Ach Lieb, ich muß nun scheiden, op. 21, no. 3

Erika Switzer, *piano*

Robert Schumann (1810 - 1856)

Liederkreis, Op. 24

1. Morgens steh' ich auf und frage
2. Es treibt mich hin, es treibt mich her
3. Ich wandelte unter den Bäumen
4. Lieb' Liebchen, leg's Händchen aufs Herze mein
5. Schöne Wiege meiner Leiden
6. Warte, warte, wilder Schiffmann
7. Berg' und Burgen schau'n herunter
8. Anfangs wollt' ich fast verzagen
9. Mit Myrten und Rosen

Erika Switzer, *piano*

TEN MINUTE INTERMISSION

Silvestre Revueltas (1899 - 1940)

Cinco canciones de niños

1. El caballito
2. Las cinco horas
3. Canción tonto
4. Canción de cuna
5. El lagarto

Emily Han, *piano*

Manuel de Falla (1876 - 1946)

Siete canciones populares Españolas

1. El paño moruno
2. Seguidilla murciana
3. Asturiana
4. Jota
5. Nana
6. Canción
7. Polo

Emily Han, *piano*

Notes on the program:

Richard Strauss was quoted to have said, "the human voice is the most beautiful instrument of all, but it is the most difficult to play." By the time he was only 18 years old, Strauss had composed more than 140 works, 59 of which were *Lieder* (art songs). However, with that extensive amount of songs that he had composed within the first quarter of his life, ironically neither of the songs featured in this program were written during that time. *Der Nachtgang*, written in 1895 alongside two other songs set to poems of Otto Julius Bierbaum, truly encapsulates the Romantic style that Strauss developed over his years as a composer. With intense chromaticism and captivating modulations, his setting of Bierbaum's poetry not only depicts the passion of the text, but also reflects his own passion for his wife, success as a composer, and the post he had just acquired as the conductor of the Munich Court Opera. *Ach Lieb, ich muß nun scheiden*, the third in a set of five songs written between 1887 and 1888, is far more harmonically standard, yet still hints at the Romanticism that Strauss would eventually come to epitomize. This set of songs uses text by poet Felix Dahn from his *Schlichte Weisen* (Simple Tunes), which were based on ancient folk songs that Dahn had seen in a museum. With only their incipits translated, Dahn imagined what the rest of the original texts might have looked like, and thus gave new life to the ancient songs - as did Strauss.

In 1839, the year before Robert Schumann produced his tremendous outpouring of more than one hundred songs (later termed his *Liederjahr*, or year of song), Schumann claimed, "all my life I have considered vocal music inferior to instrumental music...But don't tell anyone this!" Despite his affinity for instrumental music, Schumann is regarded as one of the greatest composers of *Lieder*. His gift for writing vocal music stemmed from his love for the written word (undoubtedly influenced by his father, a book seller), and thus Schumann founded his own music journal which propelled his career as a music critic in 1834. Schumann's love for literature bloomed into his writing of *Lieder*, which brilliantly highlight the poetry in a lyrical and often delicately understated way. Among the first of his compositions from 1840, *Liederkreis op. 24* sets the poetry of Heinrich Heine from his collection, *Buch der Lieder*; Schumann masterfully sets the typically bitter and ironic tone of Heine's poetry in this cycle. Opening in the first song with the quotidian hope that his loved one will return, the narrator sits in a state of half-consciousness, always disappointed when his love does not return. This song sets the tone for the rest of the cycle, which centers on the loss of his love. "*Es treibt mich hin, es treibt mich her*" details the excitement the narrator feels about the possibility of seeing his beloved, yet again ends with disappointment and rage as the hours mock him for his haste. The third song finds the grieving narrator wandering through the woods alone, where he hears the birds singing a word that brings back his sorrow; they tell him that a young woman taught the word to them. Embracing his pain, in "*Lieb' Liebchen, leg's Händchen aufs Herze mein*" the narrator compares his heartbeat to the hammering of a carpenter (reflected in the syncopated chords of the piano), who is building a coffin so that the narrator might sleep. In the fifth song, he bids farewell to the city where he first met his love, lamenting that he met her at all; if he hadn't, he wouldn't be as miserable as he now finds himself. The narrator in the next song beckons a boatman so that he might leave Europe and his beloved, comparing her to Eve and Eris who brought flames and death. In "*Berg' und Burgen schaun herunter*" the narrator looks upon the Rhine, peaceful from above, yet harboring death and night below - like his love. Next, the narrator begs that he isn't asked how he has borne his pain and sorrow, which sets up the final song of the cycle, "*Mit Myrten und Rosen.*" Here, he adorns his book of songs for its burial, wishing that he could also bury his love, hoping that one day this book will find his beloved.

After a longstanding professional relationship with famous Mexican composer-conductor Carlos Chavez, Silvestre Revueltas and he had quite a falling out which led Revueltas to leave his position at the Orquesta Sinfónica de Mexico in 1936. He founded the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional shortly thereafter to assert himself as a worthy rival; his endeavor failed miserably. Revueltas left the country the next year to tour Spain, as he was now an accomplished violinist, conductor, and composer. It is in Spain, however, that Revueltas wrote some of his most well-known works - mostly orchestral tone poems. It is also perhaps in Spain that Revueltas acquainted

himself with the literary works of Federico Garcia Lorca, which Revueltas would later set in *Cinco canciones de niños* in 1938. These “children’s songs” all have a true sense of earnestness and innocence to them that one can find only in childhood, set forth beautifully by Lorca and supported wholly by Revueltas. The poetry itself, particularly evident in the second, third, and fifth poems, has a certain “off” quality – a bizarre sort of tone that was perhaps influenced by Lorca’s love for surrealism. Lorca even exchanged letters and had a relatively intimate relationship with Spanish surrealist painter, Salvador Dalí. From the intentionally incorrect grammar of the title of the third poem to the uncanny narrative of the fifth, the whole cycle has a distinct strangeness, to which Revueltas contributes as well. Especially in the second and fourth songs, the music itself lends an unsettling atmosphere to the sincerity of the poetry. Both Lorca and Revueltas had rather short lives, and even shorter careers – Lorca had dedicated himself to the written word for a mere 19 years before he was executed at the age of 38 during the Spanish Civil War. Revueltas died at age 40, shortly after his trip to Spain; while on record he died of complications with pneumonia, the reality is that he had suffered from alcoholism for most of his life, which eventually caught up to him.

Manuel de Falla claimed that he could remember the lullaby his mother sang to him “before he was old enough to think,” and so began his musical journey to becoming the greatest Spanish composer of his century. He began his music studies as a pianist, eventually studying with the distinguished José Tragó in Madrid when Falla was only 20 years old. He then went on to study composition while his teacher, Felipe Pedrell, helped to lead the revival of Spanish music at the end of the 19th century. With the intense musical stirrings in Spain during Falla’s development as a composer, he was undoubtedly influenced by the folk styles that were reemerging in the culture. His melody writing was heavily influenced by folk songs that were published in Barcelona in 1874 (some bits of the melodies are actually identical, as in the sixth song of the cycle), but they were also influenced by his study of the harmonic overtone series, which he had studied in relation to ancient Greek folk melodies. He was so pleased with his findings that he eventually applied it to his *Siete canciones populares Españolas* in 1914. Furthermore, while the harmonic structure and melodies were based on the overtone series, he drew rhythmic inspiration from traditional Spanish dance rhythms and guitar playing techniques. Very often in this collection the piano part will imitate the style of a guitar, for instance in the first song where he emulates techniques typical of the flamenco style. Also present in the second song, “*Seguidilla murciana*” (literally, “the dance song of the province of Murcia”) uses guitar-like arpeggiations to convey the spirit of the dance, almost as a horse’s gallop. The third song, set to a beautifully empathetic poem, is far more relaxed, giving Falla a chance to explore the consequences of his studies on the harmonic series in this song; the consistency of the repeated octaves and the pedal points in the piano part reflects this. “*Jota*” is another dance, followed by a beautiful lullaby. Finally, the sixth and seventh songs conclude in an energetic flurry, combining the use of guitar and dance rhythms that Falla so loved.

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