

Occidental College Music Department  
*Junior Recital*



**Anna Gray**

voice

piano accompaniment provided by  
William Schmidt unless otherwise indicated

**Saturday, April 10, 2021**

**4:00 PM**

**Online**

## PROGRAM

- Le Violette Alessandro Scarlatti  
(1660-1725)  
piano accompaniment provided by Héctor Valls
- Les Papillons Ernest Chausson  
(1855-1899)
- Mandoline Gabriel Fauré  
(1845-1924)
- Nuit d'Étoiles Claude Debussy  
(1862-1918)
- Three Browning Songs* Amy Beach  
(1867-1944)  
The Year's At the Spring  
Ah, Love, But A Day  
I Send My Heart Up To Thee
- Siren Sergei Rachmaninoff  
(1873-1943)  
Oni Otvechali  
Jeshchjo v poljakh belejet sneg  
piano accompaniment for Siren provided by Héctor Valls
- I'm Not Afraid of Anything Jason Robert Brown  
b.1970  
piano accompaniment provided by Joshua Watkins

## PROGRAM NOTES

### **Scarlatti, “Le Violette”**

Alessandro Scarlatti’s mastery of placing equal emphasis on music and text is shown in “Le Violette” (“The Violet”). This playful and upbeat aria tells the story of Mario, a young man who ponders if he is too ambitious to love a woman above his rank. During the period in which it was written, Scarlatti’s patron and admirer, the Duke of Medinaceli, took control of the Teatro S Bartolomeo in Naples, Italy. At the Teatro S Bartolomeo, Scarlatti composed many works, including the operas *Il Pirro e Demetrio* (1694) and *La caduta de’ Decemviri* (1697). *Il Pirro e Demetrio* enjoyed widespread success, including in Rome, Siena, Livorno, Florence, and London.

### **Chausson, “Les Papillons”**

In late 19<sup>th</sup> century France, impressionist painting, with its concern for capturing the visual impression of the moment, found its complement in so-called impressionist music, where harmonic and orchestral effects prevailed over structure and theme. During this period, Ernest Chausson began studying at the Paris Conservatory with Jules Massenet, a devotee of the music of Richard Wagner. Written during his time at the Conservatory, Chausson’s setting of Théophile Gautier’s “Les Papillons” depicts the fluttering of butterfly wings in its piano accompaniment, which, when rising into the upper register, evokes the ascent of butterflies.

### **Fauré, “Mandoline”**

While staying with his dear friend Winnaretta Singer at the Palazzo Volkoff in Venice, Gabriel Fauré turned to setting the poetry of the symbolist Paul Verlaine, composing the first two songs of what would become the song cycle *Cinq mélodies “de Venise”*, “Mandoline” (“Mandolin”) and “En sourdine.” Fauré composed them at a local café, inspired by the busy Venetian crowds. Verlaine’s poem was inspired by a series of paintings by Antoine Watteau that depict the emotional and financial problems of 18th-century nobility. Fauré’s setting is quick and nimble, with a piano accompaniment reminiscent of a mandolin.

### **Debussy, “Nuit d’Étoiles”**

From an early age, Claude Debussy was drawn to the symbolist poetry of Théodore de Banville. His settings of de Banville’s poems show him to be alert to both the overall effect of a poem as well as the poem’s semantic details. Listen for these skills in Debussy’s setting of “Nuit d’Étoiles,” with its expansive bittersweet melody unfolding over the piano’s hushed rolled chords.

### **Beach, “The Year’s at the Spring”**

Thanks to her outsized talent and ambition, Amy Beach was a trailblazer: she was the first American woman to compose a symphony performed professionally. She was also an accomplished song composer. The Browning Society of Boston commissioned Beach to compose “The Year’s At the Spring,” a poem that appears in one of Robert Browning’s most recognized works, the play *Pippa Passes*. Outside of this dramatic context, the poem seems innocent. Browning’s play is a darker story where the character Ottima tries to convince her lover Sebald to help kill her husband. Upon hearing Pippa sing this song, Sebald becomes deeply ashamed and murders Ottima. Beach composed this piece while on a train, inspired by the rhythm of the train moving on the tracks. Beach captures that sound in the triplets in the piano accompaniment. An immediate hit, “The Year’s at the Spring” became the opening piece of Beach’s *Three Browning Songs* song cycle.

### **Beach, “Ah, Love, But A Day”**

“Ah, Love, But A Day” is the second piece from *Three Browning Songs*, taking as its text the first two verses of Browning’s *James Lee’s Wife*. Browning’s poem depicts a wife’s marital struggles, and the speculation is that the wife in question is Browning’s own wife, the acclaimed poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who was believed to have had trouble with love before meeting him. Beach’s setting of the text omits and repeats lines from the Browning poem and varies the dynamics and tempo, all to emphasize the storyteller’s agitated state, her worries and desires.

### **Beach, “I Send My Heart Up To Thee”**

The third and final piece of *The Browning Songs*, “I Send My Heart Up To Thee,” is taken from Browning’s poem *In a Gondola*. The original poem has a tragic tone, while Beach’s rendition is romantic. What explains this

is that Browning, in writing the poem, drew inspiration from Daniel Maclise's painting "Serenade," which Browning first interpreted as tragic. Browning later revised his interpretation of the painting, seeing it in a positive light, an interpretation that Beach, who also admired Maclise's painting, shared. Beach thus limits herself to Browning's first verse, where a man sings to his lover on a Venetian gondola, declaring his love.

### **Rachmaninoff, "Siren"**

"Siren" ("Lilacs") is the fifth piece in Sergei Rachmaninoff's *12 Romances* (op. 21). In 1900, Rachmaninoff was so depressed that he was unable to compose. He thus began daily hypnotherapy and psychotherapy sessions. But it wasn't until 1902, when he married Natalia Satina, that he began seeing notable improvements in his mental state and was able to return to composing. It was then that he composed "Lilacs," a flower that represents renewal and confidence. Setting the poem by Eketrina Beketova, Rachmaninoff's melody captures the serenity of walking through a lilac-filled meadow at daybreak.

### **Rachmaninoff, "Oni Otvechali"**

Also from *12 Romances* is "Oni Otvechali," a setting of Victor Hugo's poem about the inevitability of suffering and loneliness and how peace can result from it. Rachmaninoff was likely drawn to the poem because of his religious upbringing and lifelong struggle with depression. In Russian Orthodox teachings, salvation and peace derive from Christ's suffering on the cross. Hugo's poem poses questions about success in life, happiness, and love. Rachmaninoff slows the tempo for the posing of these questions, emphasizing that it's the questions we ask that matter more than the answers we give to them.

### **Rachmaninoff, "Jeshchjo v poljakh belejet sneg"**

Also from *12 Romances*, "Jeshchjo v poljakh belejet sneg" ("Spring Waters") is one of Rachmaninoff's most popular songs and has remained a staple in the Russian vocal repertoire since it was published in 1896. A setting of Fyodor Tyutchev's poem, the song celebrates the arrival of spring. Its virtuosic rippling and chordal accompaniment--characteristic of the pianist-composer Rachmaninoff--portrays the crashing of water. The piece is dedicated to

Anna Ornatskaya, one of his first teachers, who also lived with the Rachmaninoff family.

### **Brown, “I’m Not Afraid Of Anything”**

“I’m Not Afraid of Anything” is from Jason Robert Brown’s musical revue *Songs for a New World*. When writing *Songs for a New World*, Brown was inspired by Richard Maltby, Jr.’s revue *Closer Than Ever*, which he saw at age 19 on a trip to New York City. Every song in *Songs for a New World* tells a story of how disaster strikes when everything seems to be going perfectly and we are forced to create a new path for ourselves. “I’m Not Afraid of Anything” portrays a young woman who tries to convince herself that she’s not afraid by building a metaphorical wall around herself. Brown builds momentum across the verses with driving rock then funk rhythms.

# TRANSLATIONS

## Le Violette

Rugiadose  
Odorose  
Violette graziose,  
Voi vi state  
Vergognose,  
Mezzo ascose  
Fra le foglie,

E sgridate  
Le mie voglie,  
Che son troppo ambiziose.

## Les Papillons

Les papillons couleur de neige  
Volent par essaims sur la mer;  
Beaux papillons blancs, quand pourrai-je  
Prendre le bleu chemin de l'air?

Savez-vous, ô belle des belles,  
Ma bayadère aux yeux de jais,  
S'ils me pouvaient prêter leurs ailes,  
Dites, savez-vous où j'irais?

Sans prendre un seul baiser aux roses  
À travers vallons et forêts,  
J'irais à vos lèvres mi-closes,  
Fleur de mon âme, et j'y mourrais.

## The Violet

Dewy  
Scented  
Violets pretty,  
You stand  
Shy  
Half hidden  
Among the leaves

And you scold  
My desires  
That are too ambitious.

## The Butterflies

Snow-coloured butterflies  
swarm over the sea;  
beautiful white butterflies, when might I  
take to the azure path of the air?

Do you know, O beauty of beauties,  
my jet-eyed bayadère—  
were they to lend me their wings,  
do you know where I would go?

Without kissing a single rose,  
across valleys and forests  
I'd fly to your half-closed lips,  
flower of my soul, and there would die.

## Mandoline

Les donneurs de sérénades  
Et les belles écouteuses  
Échangent des propos fades  
Sous les ramures chanteuses.

C'est Tircis et c'est Aminte,  
Et c'est l'éternel Clitandre,  
Et c'est Damis qui pour mainte  
Cruelle fait maint vers tendre.

Leurs courtes vestes de soie,  
Leurs longues robes à queue,  
Leur élégance, leur joie  
Et leurs molles ombres bleues

Tourbillonnent dans l'extase  
D'une lune rose et grise,  
Et la mandoline jase  
Parmi les frissons de brise.

## Nuit d'Étoiles

Nuit d'étoiles,  
Sous tes voiles,  
Sous ta brise et tes parfums,  
Triste lyre  
Qui soupire,  
Je rêve aux amours défunts.

La sereine mélancolie  
Vient éclore au fond de mon cœur,  
Et j'entends l'âme de ma mie  
Tressaillir dans le bois rêveur.

Je revois à notre fontaine  
Tes regards bleus comme les cieux;  
Cette rose, c'est ton haleine,  
Et ces étoiles sont tes yeux.

## Mandolin

The men who give serenades  
And the lovely ladies who listen to them  
Exchange insipid remarks  
Under the singing branches.

It is Tircis and it is Aminte,  
And it is the eternal Clitandre,  
And it is Damis who for many a cruel  
woman writes many a tender poem.

Their short silken jackets,  
Their long dresses with trains,  
Their elegance, their joy  
And their soft blue shadows

Are swirling in rapture  
Of a pink and gray moon,  
And the mandolin is chattering  
Amidst the shiverings of the breeze.

## Night of Stars

Night of stars,  
Beneath your veils,  
Beneath your breeze and fragrance,  
Sad lyre  
That sighs,  
I dream of bygone loves.

Serene melancholy  
Now blooms deep in my heart,  
And I hear the soul of my love  
Quiver in the dreaming woods.

Once more at our fountain I see  
Your eyes as blue as the sky;  
This rose is your breath  
And these stars are your eyes.



## Siren

Po utru, na zare,  
Po rosistoj trave,  
Ja pojdu svezhim utrom  
dyshat';  
I v dushistuju ten',  
Gde tesnitsja siren',  
Ja pojdu svoje schast'e iskat'...

V zhizni schast'e odno  
Mne najti suzhdeno,  
I to schast'e v sireni zhivjot;  
Na zeljonykh vetvjakh,  
Na dushistykh kistjakh  
Mojo bednoje schast'e cvetjot...

## Oni Otvechali

Sprosili oni: "Kak v letuchikh chelnakh  
Nam beloju chajkoj skol'zit' na  
volnakh,  
Chtob nas storozha nedognali?"  
"Grebite!" oni otvechali.

Sprosili oni: "Kak zabyt", navsegda,  
Chto v mire judol'nom jest' bednost',  
beda,  
Chto jest' v njom groza i pechali?"  
"Zasnite!" oni otvechali.

Sprosili oni: "Kak krasavic privlech  
Bez chary: chtob sami na strastnuju  
rech  
Oni nam v ob'jatija pali?"  
"Ljubite!" oni otvechali.

## Lilacs

In the morning, at dawn,  
Through the dew-clad grass,  
I shall walk, breathing in the freshness of  
morning;  
And to the fragrant shade,  
Where lilacs cluster,  
I shall go in search of my happiness...

In life there is but one happiness  
That I am fated to find,  
And that happiness lives in the lilacs;  
On their green branches,  
In their fragrant clusters  
My poor happiness blooms...

## The Answer

They asked: 'How, in swift boats,  
Are we to glide across the waves,  
like a white seagull,  
Lest the guards should catch us?'  
"Row!" they answered.

They asked: "How are we to forget for  
ever  
That there is poverty and misfortune in  
this vale of tears,  
That there is enmity and sorry?"  
"Sleep!" they answered.

They asked: "How are we to win beautiful  
girls  
Without spells: so that our passionate  
words  
Will make them fall into our embraces?"  
"Love!" they answered.

## **Jeshchjo v poljakh belejet sneg**

Jeshchjo v poljakh belejet sneg,  
A vody uzh vesnoj  
shumjat –  
Begut i budjat sonnyj  
breg,  
Begut, i bleshchut, i glasjat...

Oni glasjat vo vse koncy:  
"Vesna idjot, vesna idjot!  
My molodoj vesny goncy,  
Ona nas vyslala vperjod.

Vesna idjot, vesna idjot,  
I tikhikh, teplykh majskikh dnei  
Rumjanyj, svetlyj khorovod  
Tolpitsja veselo za nej!..."

## **Spring Waters**

The fields are still white with snow,  
But already there is the sound of spring in  
the waters –  
They run along and wake the sleepy  
banks,  
They run, and glitter, and proclaim...

They proclaim in every direction:  
"Spring is coming, spring is coming!  
We are the heralds of youthful spring,  
Who sends us on ahead.

Spring is coming, spring is coming,  
And the quiet, warm days of May,  
Like some rosy, radiant round-dance,  
Hurry along in its wake..."