

Occidental College Music Department
Junior Recital



Lulu Wiesemann

voice

piano accompaniment provided by
William Schmidt

Saturday, April 3, 2021

4:45 PM

Online

PROGRAM

- The Skye Boat Song
Traditional Scottish
(2014; originally late 19th century)
- When Sweet Ann Sings
Michael Head
(1938)
- Star of the County Down
Traditional Irish
(1989; originally late 19th century)
- Colder Weather
Wyatt Durette, Zac Brown,
Coy Bowles, & Levi Lowery
(2010)
- Ain't That Love
Ray Charles
(1957)
backing vocals by Karen Hogle-Brown
- Believe
Ronnie Dunn & Craig Wiseman
(2005)
- Always On My Mind
John Christopher, Mark James, &
Wayne Carson Thompson
(1972)
- Daddy Lessons
Beyoncé Knowles, Wynter Gordon,
Kevin Cossom, & Alexander Delicata
(2016)
- Anthem
from *Chess*
Benny Andersson, Tim Rice, &
Björk Ulvaeus
(1984)
- Tell My Father
from *Civil War*
Frank Wildhorn
(1998)
- Moving Too Fast
from *The Last Five Years*
Jason Robert Brown
(2001)
piano accompaniment by Jim Blackett

PROGRAM NOTES

English baronet Sir Harold Boulton wrote the original lyrics to **“The Skye Boat Song”** in the 1870s to recount the tale of Prince Charles Edward Stuart’s escape from the 1746 failed Battle of Culloden to the Isle of Skye. This battle marked the end of the Jacobite effort to reinstate the House of Stuart to the British, but the story remained an integral part of Scottish folklore and has inspired various pieces of art and fiction, including this tale. In 1892, Robert Louis Stevenson rewrote the words of the tale to Boulton’s tune in an attempt to do the story more justice, and Bear McCreary adapted this poem in 2014 to arrange the theme song for the television show *Outlander*. McCreary preserves the slow rocking 6/8 time in the style of a rowing song, further emblematic of the song’s use as a lullaby for Scottish children.

An English twentieth-century piece in folk song style, **“When Sweet Ann Sings”** is Michael Head’s setting of a poem by Margaret Rose. Though Rose lived only a short life (1936-1958), Head was inspired by her poetry, leading to his setting of multiple Rose pieces to musical compositions. Head was known for composing both pleasant, simple diatonic music and captivating chromatic pieces; **“When Sweet Ann Sings”** represents the former, elegantly portraying Rose’s beautiful and entrancing character Ann so that listeners can easily remember and sing the song themselves. Head’s composition manifests the words of Rose’s poem into musical elements, illustrating a delicacy that follows Ann’s “soft” and “sweet” singing voice.

“Star of the County Down” is one of many poems set to this traditional Irish melody. In writing this particular set of lyrics, Cathal McGarvey (1866-1927) followed the lead of **“My Love Nell,”** a separate Irish folk song set to the same tune that relates only in Nell’s origin from the County Down. This ballad, or song narrating a story in short stanzas, narrates the experience of young love at first sight. After seeing a beautiful girl pass by, the narrator grows increasingly

infatuated in each verse with her beauty and demeanor and is filled with passion that leads to a desire to find and marry her. Among many to be inspired by this tale, singer-songwriter Van Morrison arranged this version as a part of the *Irish Heartbeat* album (1988) collaboration with the traditional Irish band the Chieftains in a search for his Irish roots.

In the words of primary writer Wyatt Durrette, **“Colder Weather”** is “a story of impossible love, where geography or timing gets in the way of it, and it's just not possible.” Though based on Durrette’s personal struggles maintaining a connection with his then girlfriend, each of the four writers contributed components of the song, such as Levi Lowry crafting the majority of the verses and Coy Bowles writing the bridge, revealing the struggle of distanced love to be a powerful shared message amongst these traveling artists. The relatability of the message - fielding the emotional war between love and distance - brought the song its success. Though branded as country, the “old-school country-ballad feel,” to use the words of critic Eric R. Danton, embodies a genre-transcendent soulfulness that inspired this entire “Bridge” crossover set.

Ray Charles’s self-titled first album (1957), originally published with the title *Hallelujah I Love Her So*, pioneered the genre of soul music. Charles later broke the boundaries and restrictions on who could and could not participate in certain parts of the music industry. His music expanded into pop and country, and he became one of the first Black musicians to receive artistic control in their recording contract. This achievement is emblematic of both Charles’s talents independently writing and composing much of his own music and his ability to reach a relatability that could bridge the divide between people. A part of this first released album, **“Ain’t That Love”** declares a love of the simplest actions of the subject, everything from their sigh to their cry to their walk to their talk, a love that makes the singer want to just be there to do all those simple things with them. Unlike many popular love songs,

“Ain’t That Love” does not focus at all on the physical beauty of the subject as a source of love, which could be attributed to Charles’s blindness since the age of 7. Instead, it was the essence of the person, their actions, that makes the singers desperate to be with them.

The next song is a transcendent lesson in strength and finding hope. **“Believe”** tells of the narrator’s exposure to religion as a place to deal with pain through a childhood connection to “Old Man Wriggley,” a kind and resilient soul. Inspired by the gospel feel of the song and after having sung the song for Brooks & Dunn at their farewell tribute concert, soul and R&B singer Jennifer Hudson covered “Believe” to complete her album *I Remember Me*. In multiple interviews, Dunn has cited “Believe” as the most rewarding and meaningful song he has ever written, and Brooks has acknowledged it as Dunn’s most difficult vocal.

Though Willie Nelson recorded the most renowned version of this song in 1982, **“Always On My Mind”** was released for the first time in 1972 by R&B artist Gwen McCrae under the title “You Were Always On My Mind.” Since then, the song has been recorded over 300 times by artists of every genre, especially gospel, country, and soul. However, the song was written primarily by Wayne Carson, with help completing the bridge by Johnny Christopher and Mark James. Carson crafted this universal tale of failing to appreciate and respect a loved one the way that they deserve. The intimacy and vulnerability of the piece allows for the message to shine, allowing anyone to see themselves from the perspective of the narrator. As Carson put it, it “happens to be one of those things that, universally, everybody on the planet has been there, you know.” With this, “Always On My Mind” has been a timeless source of unified expression for folks of all backgrounds.

The country song **“Daddy Lessons”** portrays female strength and empowerment born from harsh parental teachings. This piece allowed Beyoncé to engage with her Texan country foundation in a way never seen before in her career. Though she was not a primary writer of the

song, this is the only track on the *Lemonade* album with Beyoncé listed as sole primary producer, which validated the artist's ability to authentically engage with the genre, despite its rejection from consideration in the Country category of the Grammy Awards. The political fuel of the piece continued with the collaborative performance and subsequent recording of the piece with controversial country group the Chicks. Despite arguments surrounding its genre, the high energy and excitement of the piece champions Beyoncé's message of boldly claiming one's own strength and autonomy.

The musical *Chess* serves as an allegory of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union as portrayed through an international chess rivalry. Despite common misconceptions of the piece as promoting nationalism, the song "**Anthem**" in fact illustrates a love of one's homeland in spite of the flawed and destructive nations that may claim that land. This meaning is critical to the story of *Chess*, as the first Act ends with the character Anatoly Sergievsky fleeing the Soviet Union while singing "**Anthem**" to the press who question the love Anatoly has for his homeland. This song is directed to those reporters, specifically in relation to lines such as "You ask me why I love her" and "You wonder will I leave her."

The Civil War was conceived for the purpose of re-humanizing all of the different perspectives and experiences of individuals during the American Civil War. Because of this, the musical was based on real historical material and figures, and it resulted in a show widely considered to be more a staged song cycle in contrast to a traditional musical due to its lack of consistent storyline. This instead left a priority on solo-driven specific storytelling. "**Tell My Father**" is presented by the character Private Sam Taylor, a soldier in the War. Private Taylor sings in recognition of his forthcoming death in battle, with the sole purpose of making his father proud before he dies.

Jason Robert Brown took inspiration from his own failed

marriage to Theresa O'Neill to write and compose *The Last Five Years*. This musical tells the story of the five year relationship of the main characters Cathy and Jamie. The two characters share their perspectives in opposite linear time directions, in which Jamie moves forward from the beginning of their relationship while Cathy backtracks from its end. The two only interact on stage only once in a middle scene, which allows for each scene to truly represent the view of the character at focus. **"Moving Too Fast"** is told from Jamie's perspective, sharing the profoundly fortunate components that have built his newfound success and happiness. This joy- and excitement-driven scene finds power in contrast to Cathy's proceeding apparent lack of success.