Program

Old Dominion University
Faculty Recital

Dr. Brian Nedvin, tenor
Dr. Bridgid Eversole, soprano
Dr. Stephen Coxe, piano

Diehn Center for the Performing Arts
Chandler Recital Hall

Tuesday, September 19, 2017  7:30pm
Leonard Bernstein is quoted as saying: “This will be our reply to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before.” In a time when there is such great uncertainty, when even Mother Nature seems to be more chaotic than before, musicians and their audiences have the opportunity to create something beautiful, to share in this communal event and leave the world of politics, mother nature, and all our other worldly problems behind. But sometimes, even this glorious cathedral – the recital hall – is not enough to cleanse away all the issues. It is often only after music has been chosen, learned, and polished that one sits down to write the program notes. When doing so, I am often surprised by what I learn. In this case, I learned that Paul Morand is not a person with whom I would like to associate, and now knowing this, I find myself in a dilemma. As I have learned, Morand believed in ethnic and anti-Semitic principles, and was an ambassador in Romania and Switzerland during World War II on behalf of the Vichy regime, who wilfully collaborated with Nazi Germany. Morand after visiting New York City, wrote: “the Jews own New York, the Irish run it, and the Negroes enjoy it...Italians hardly can be assimilated.” Now knowing the type of man Mr. Morand was, should I refuse to sing his words? If so, do I refuse to sing Wagner as well? What happens when I find other composers, or poets, who created great works of art, but were anti-Semitic, or anti-fill-in-the-blank? When I shared this with my friend, and collaborator, Dr. Stephen Coxe, he immediately let me know that he was okay with cutting these songs from the recital. For that, I am grateful, but I have chosen to share these songs with you, and will carefully consider whether to do so in the future.

The three songs portray three different aspects of Don Quichotte: the lover, the holy warrior, and the drinker. Since each song clearly focused on a different facet of the man, Ravel chose a different dance for each of the songs, starting with a quajira, a dance that alternates between 6/8 and 3/4. In this song, Quichotte, in a truly idealized manner, promises to stop the world from turning, remove the stars from the sky, or replace them if any of the aforementioned should offend the woman of his dreams, Dulcinée. The second song, a zortzico, is, as defined by Merriam-Webster, a Basque song or dance in 5/8 time and dotted rhythm. This song is actually written in 5/4, and the holy affect is wonderfully set up with the opening two measures. The accompaniment evokes a church organ, the backdrop to Quichotte singing the holy praises of his lady. According to Merriam-Webster, the jota, the style in which the third song is composed, is a Spanish folk dance in 3/4 time performed by a man and a woman to intricate castanet and heel rhythms. I promise not to dance, but you can imagine the heel rhythms on 1 and 3 throughout the song as Quichotte drinks to joy.

Chanson Romanesque

Si vous me disiez que la terre
À tant tourner vous offensés
Je lui dépécherais Pançá
Vous la verriez fixe et se taire.

Si vous me disiez que l’ennui
Vous vient du ciel trop fleuri d’astres,
Déchirant les divins cadastres,
Je faucherais d’un coup la nuit.

Si vous me disiez que l’espace
Ainsi vidé ne vous plaît point,
Chevalier dieu, la lance au poing.
J’étofferais le vent qui passe.

Mais si vous disiez que mon sang
Est plus à moi qu’à vous, ma Dame,
Je blêmirais dessous le blame
Et je mourrais, vous bénissant.

Ô Dulcinée.

“Er ist gekommen in Sturm und Regen”, “Liebest du um Schönheit” and “Warum willst du und’re fragen” are all from Opus 12. She and Robert used a series of Rückert poems to be set loosely as questions and answers (her Opus 12 and his Opus 37). Twelve Poems from F. Rückert’s Spring of Love for Voice and Piano by Robert and Clara Schumann was published for Clara’s birthday in 1841. “Die gute Nacht, die ich dir sage” was originally composed for this as well. However, it was not included in the final collaboration. The reason has nothing to do with its quality, but rather, it did not have an appropriate placement in the dramatic context of the cycle.

**Ich stand in dunklen Träumen**
**Heinrich Heine (1797-1856)**

Ich stand in dunklen Träumen
und starrte ihr Bildnis an.
Und das geliebte Antlitz
Heimlich zu leben begann.

Um ihre Lippen zog sich
Ein Lächeln wunderbar,
Und wie von Wehmutstränen
Erglänzte ihr Augenpaar.

Auch meine Tränen flossen
Mir von den Wangen herab,
Und ach, ich kann’s nicht glauben,
Dass seine Bahnen
Mein Herz entgegen.

**Er ist gekommen**
**Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866)**

Er ist gekommen
In Sturm und Regen,
Ichm schlug bekloommen
Mein Herz entgegen.

Wie komst’ ich ahnen,
Daß seine Bahnen,
Sich einen sollten meinen Wegen?

Er ist gekommen
In Sturm und Regen,
Er hat genommen
Mein Herz verwegen.

Nahm er das meine?
Nahm ich das seine?
Die beiden kamen sich entgegen.

**Liebest du um Schönheit**
**Friedrich Rückert**

Liebest du um Schönheit,
O nicht mich liebe!
Liebe die Sonne,
Sie trägt ein gold’nes Haar!

**Warum willst du und’re fragen**
**Friedrich Rückert**

Warum willst du und’re fragen,
Die’s nicht meinen treu mit dir?
Glaube nicht, als was dir sagen
Diese beiden Augen hier!

Glaube nicht den fremden Leuten,
Glaube nicht dem eignen Wahn;
Nicht mein Tun auch sollst du deuten,
Sondern sieh die Augen an!

Schweigt die Lippe deinen Fragen,
Oder zeugt sie gegen mich?
Was auch meine Lippen sagen,

**Die gute Nacht, die ich dir sage**
**Friedrich Rückert**

Die gute Nacht, die ich dir sagen
Was auch meine Lippen sagen,
Oder zeugt sie gegen mich?
Schweigt die Lippe deinen Fragen,
Oder zeugt sie gegen mich?

**Die gute Nacht, die ich dir sage**
**Friedrich Rückert**

Die gute Nacht, die ich dir sage,
Freund, höarest du!

Er bringt sie dir und hat mir wieder
Den Gruß gebracht:
Dir sagen auch des Freundes Lieder

Program notes by Chris Boyes (see footnote): The overall theme of Winter Words seems to be “the loss of innocence through the birth of consciousness.” Britten was haunted by this idea for most of his adult life. Other important themes presented in the work are age, growing old, and life and death. The first poem used in the song collection is At day close in November. This song describes the condition of the earth at the end of a late autumn day. The next song, “Midnight on the Great Western,” has drawn many comparisons to Schubert’s most famous Lied, Erlkönig. In this Hardy poem, an orphan boy rides a train, alone, to an unknown city and an unknown future. “Wagtail and Baby,” a satire, is about a small baby’s observation of a dog drinking water. Britten musically conveys the sound of the creaking of The Little Old Table, in the fourth poem. “The Choirmaster’s Burial” is an amusing song depicting a church official who bans string-band music, the Choirmaster’s favorite, at his funeral. Then, the Choirmaster, upon entering heaven, is welcomed with his most-liked song. The next song is a frantic piece among somber ones, titled “Proud Songsters.”
The next-to-last poem is At the Railway Station, Upway. Here, we are introduced to a convict, whose heart is overjoyed at the fiddle playing of a small boy at the station. "Before Life and After" is the final song, in which the main theme of "the loss of innocence" is most strongly projected.²

At day-close in November
The ten hours' light is abating,
A late bird wings across,
Where the pines, like waltzers waiting,
Give their black heads a toss.

Beech leaves, that yellow the noon-time,
Float past like specks in the eye;
I set every tree in my June time,
And now they obscure the sky,
And the children who ramble through here
Conceive that there never has been
A time when no tall trees grew here,
That none will in time be seen.

Midnight on the Great Western (or The Journeying Boy)
In the third-class seat sat the journeying boy,
And the roof-lamp's oily flame
Played down on his listless form and face,
Bewrapt past knowing to what he was going,
As he looked at me with a thought
By the choirmaster's grave.
Such the tenor man told
When he had grown old.

Proud Songsters (Thrushes, Finches and Nightingales)
The thrushes sing as the sun is going,
And the finches whistle in ones and pairs,
As if all Time were theirs.

And earth, and air, and rain.

Before Life and After
A time there was - as one may guess
And as, indeed, earth's testimonies tell -
Before the birth of consciousness,
When all went well.

None suffered sickness, love, or loss,
None knew regret, starved hope, or heart-burnings;
None cared whatever crash or cross
Brought wrack to things.

But if something ceased, no tongue bewailed,
If something winc'd and waned, no heart was wrung;
If brightness dimmed, and dark prevailed,
No sense was stung.

But the disease of feeling germed,
And primal rightness took the tint of wrong;
Ere nescience shall be reaffirmed
How long, how long?²

The poetry of Paul Verlaine (1844-1896) resisted the move toward realism and held firmly to the romantic poetry of earlier poets. Verlaine's poetry was set to music by Fauré, Debussy, Hahn, and now by Stephen Coxe. To get a feel for the world of Verlaine's poetry, William Gaunt translates Verlaine's words in The Aesthetic Adventure: "I love this word decadence, all shimmering in purple and gold. It suggests the subtle thoughts of ultimate civilization, a high literary culture, a soul capable of intense pleasures. It throws off bursts of fire and the sparkle of precious stones. It is redolent of the rouge of courtesans, the games of the circus, the painting of the gladiators, the spring of the wild beaste, the consuming in flames of races exhausted by their capacity for sensation, as the tramp of an invading army sounds."³


La lune blanche [Verlaine]

Les grands jets d'eau sveltes parmi les marbres.
Et sangloter d'extase les jets d'eau,
Au calme clair de lune triste et beau,
Ils n'ont pas l'air de croire à leur bonheur,
L'amour vainqueur et la vie opportune.

Tout en chantant sur le mode mineur
Tristes sous leurs déguisements fantasques!
Jouant du luth et dansant, et quasi
Que vont charmant masques et bergamasques,
Le rossignol chantera.

Des chênes noirs tombera
Et quand, solennel, le soir
Les ondes des gazons roux.
Qui vient, à tes pieds, rider
Au souffle berceur et doux
Laissons
Chasse à jamais tout dessein.
Et de ton cœur
Croise tes bras sur ton sein,
Ferme tes yeux à demi,
Des pins et des arbousiers.
Parmi les vagues langueurs
Et nos sens extasiés,
Fondons nos âmes, nos cœurs
De ce silence profond.
Que les branches hautes font,
Le firmament 
Semble descendre
Voix de notre désespoir,
The nightingale will sing.

En sourdine [Verlaine]
Calme dans le demi-jour
Que les branches hautes font,
Pénétrons bien notre amour
De ce silence profond.

Fondons nos âmes, nos coeurs
Et nos sens extasies,
Parmi les vagues languereurs
Des pins et des arbousiers.

Fermez vos yeux à demi,
Croisez vos bras sur ton sein,
Et de ton cœur endormi
Chassez à jamais tout désespoir.

Laissons-nous persuader
Au souffle berceur et doux
Qui vient, à tes pieds, rider
Les ondes des gazons roux.

Et quand, solennel, le soir
Des chênes noirs tombera
Voix de notre désespoir,
The nightingale will sing.

Clair de lune [Verlaine]
Votre âme est un paysage choisi
Que vont chantant masques et bergamasques,
Jouant du luth et dansant, et quasi
Tristes sous leurs déguisements fantasques!

Tout en chantant sur le mode mineur
L'amour vainqueur et la vie opportune.
Ils n'ont pas l'air de croire à leur bonheur,
Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune,

Au calme clair de lune triste et beau,
Qui fait rêver, les oiseaux dans les arbres,
Et sanguiner d'exacts les jets d'eau,
Les grands jets d'eau velues parmi les marbres.

La lune blanche [Verlaine]
La lune blanche
Luit dans les bois ;
De chaque branche
Part une voix
Sous la ramée...

O bien-aimée.
L'étang reflète,
Profond miroir,
La silhouette
Du saule noir
Où le vent pleure...
Rêvons, c'est l'heure.

Un vaste et tendre
Aisement
Semble descendre
Du firmament
Que l'autre irise...

C'est l'heure exquise.
Le firmament 
Semble descendre
Ah l'astre irise...
Le rossignol chantera.

La lune blanche
La lune blanche
Shines in the trees;

De chaque branche
Part une voix
Sous la ramée...

O beautiful lover
The pond reflects
Profound mirror,
The sillhouette
Of the black willow
Where the wind weeps...
Let us dream. It is the hour.

Vier Duette für Sopran und Tenor, op.78

These program notes were written by John Palmer (see footnote) The Vier Duetten (Four Duets), Op. 78 employs a triplet pattern in the piano accompaniment, linking the pieces. The only song that does not have the triplet pattern is the first, which is in triple meter.

"Tanzlied" (Dance Song), by Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866), is the most cheerful of the four. The text is a conversation in which a woman begs her sweetheart to join her in a dance with other couples, but the man, whose heart is pounding, would rather not. As the man offers his objections, the harmony slips into G minor, conveying his dread of dancing in public. Through-composed, the song develops unity through repeated fragments of melody. It is the most adventurous of the set and was probably too difficult for the average amateur.

"Er und Sie" (He and She), by Justinus Kern, is another conversation, but in this one the man and woman think along the same lines. Perhaps because of this they sing together more often than in "Tanzlied." In E flat major, the song features unusual passages of contrapuntal writing separated by a refrain, "Tret' ich mein Fenster," which is always set to the same melody.

In contrast to the first two songs of Op. 78, "Ich denke dein" (I Think of You) contains voice parts that move in exactly the same rhythm, and set the same words, from beginning to end. This is appropriate for Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's (1749-1832) text, in which numerous aspects of the world make each person think of the other. Throughout, contrast between the triptentials in the piano part and duplets in the voice parts create forward energy in the varied strophic setting that begins in E minor and closes in G major.

"Wieneglied" (Lullaby), setting a poem by Friedrich Hebbel (1813-63), is framed by a refrain that juxtaposes the constant triplet motion of the bulk of the song with an eighth-note triplet rhythm in the piano. The refrain, "Schlaf, Kindlein, schlaf" (Sleep, little child, sleep), also separates the two, strophically set verses. As in "Ich Denke dein," the voice parts move together and in duplets that contrast with the triplets in the accompaniment. "Wieneglied" closes the set in G major.1

Vier Duette
Tanzlied [Rückert]

Er:
Eia, wie flattert der Kranz,
Trauter, komm mit mir zum Tanz!
Wollen uns schwingen,
Rasch uns erspringen
Mitten im wonnigen Glanz,
Trauter, komm mit mir zum Tanz!

Sie:
Eia, wie flattert der Kranz,
Trauter, komm mit mir zum Tanz!
Wollen uns schwingen,
Rasch uns erspringen
Mitten im wonnigen Glanz,
Trauter, komm mit mir zum Tanz!

He:
Kann ich es erschauen.
Im Vergißmeinnicht voll Tau
Jetzt auch auf die Auen;
Ach! es blickt ihr Auge blau
Wo im Sonnenscheine
Seh' ich in das stille Tal,
Heute für alle im Tanz!

She:
Eia, look how the ribbons flutter on the wreath -
Come dance with me, my dear!
Let's swing,
Let's leap quickly
Into the middle of this delightful brilliance!
Come dance with me, my dear!

Ich denke dein [von Goethe]

Ich denke dein, wenn mir der Sonne Schimmer
Vom Meer strahlt;
Ich denke dein, wenn sich des Mondes Flimmer
In Quellen mächt.

Ich sehe dich, wenn auf dem fernen Wege
Der Staub sich hebt;
In tiefer Nacht, wenn auf den schmalen Stegen
Der Wanderer hebt.

Ich hör dich, wenn dort mit dumpfem Rauschen
Die Welle steigt.
Im stillen Haine geh' ich oft zu lauschen,
Wenn alles schweigt.

Ich bin bei dir, du seyst auch noch so ferne,
Du bist mir nah!
Die Sonne sinkt, bald leuchten mir die Sterne.
O wärst du da!

Wiegenlied [Hebbel]

Schlaf, Kindlein, schlaf!
Wie Du schläfst, so bist Du brav.

Draußen, roth im Mittags scheine,
Glüht der schönsten Kirschen eine,
Wenn Du aufwachst, gehen wir,
Und mein Finger pflickt sie Dir.

Lullaby

Sleep, little child, sleep!
As you sleep, you are so good.

Outside in the midday sun
There glows one of the finest cherries.
When you awaken, we shall go,
And my finger will pluck it for you.

Sleep, little child, sleep!
As you sleep, you are so good.

Ever sweeter the sun ripens
Your cherry, for your delight;
Sleep, then little child, lightly covered,
Until you awake with an appetite for it.

Sleep, little child, sleep!
As you sleep, you are so good.

-translated by David K. Smyth