

Program

Lisa Figel, soprano Susan Azaret Davies, piano

The Choice of Hercules	Georg Friedrich Händel (1689-1759)
Idomeneo, K. 366Zeffiretti lusinghieri	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)
Il Zeffiro	Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835)
Gretchen am Spinnrade	Franz Schubert (1797-1828)
Lieder und Gesänge Frühlingsmorgen	
Des Knaben Wunderhorn	Mahler
Intermission	
Intermission Les Huguenots Parmi les pleurs	Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791-1864)
Les Huguenots	(1791-1864)
Les Huguenots	(1791-1864) Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Texts and Translations

There the Brisk, Sparking Nectar

There the brisk sparkling nectar drain, Cool'd with the purest summer snows, There, tir'd with sporting on the plain, Beneath the woodbine's shade repose. There, as serene thou liest along, Soft warbling voices melting lays Shall sweetly pour the tender song To love or beauty's rapt'rous praise.

Zeffiretti lusinghieri

Zeffiretti lusinghieri, Deh volate al mio tesoro, E gli dite, ch'io l'adoro, Che mi serbi il cor fedel.

E voi piante, e fior sinceri, Che ora in affia il pianto amaro, Dite a lui, che amor più raro, Mai vedeste sotto al ciel

Il Zeffiro

Venticel, che l'ali d'oro,
Vai battendo a me d'appresso,
Se vedesti il mio tesoro,
Dimmo, o, caro, dimmi o'vè.
Ah! Se il loco ov'ei soggiorna,
Penetrar non m'è concesso,
Zeffiretto, a lui ritorna
E favellagli per me.

Gretchen am Spinnrade

Meine Ruh' ist hin, mein Herz ist schwer, Ich finde sie nimmer und nimmermehr.

Wo ich ihn nicht hab, ist mir das Grab, Die ganze Welt Ist mir vergällt. Mein armer Kopf ist mir verrückt, Mein armer Sinn ist mir zerstückt.

Meine Ruh' ist hin, [etc.]

Nach ihm nur schau ich zum Fenster hinaus, Nach ihm nur geh ich aus dem Haus. Sein hoher Gang, sein' edle Gestalt, Seine Mundes Lächeln, seiner Augen Gewalt, Und seiner Rede Zauberfluß, Sein Händedruck, Und ach, sein Kuß!

Meine Ruh' ist hin, [etc.]

Mein Busen drängt sich nach ihm hin Ach, dürft ich fassen und halten ihn, Und kűssen ihn, so wie ich wollt, An seinen Kűssen vergehen sollt!

Meine Ruh' ist hin, [etc.]

Gently Blowing Breezes

Gently blowing breezes, Oh, fly to my beloved, And tell him that I adore him, That he should stay faithful.

And you plants, and sincere flowers, Which my bitter tears now drench, Tell him that a love more rare, You have never seen under the skies

The Breeze

Little breeze, with wings of gold, Beating all around me, If you should see my treasure, Tell me, oh dear, where he is. Ah, if the place where he is staying I am not allowed to enter, Little breeze, to him return And speak to him for me.

Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel

My peace is gone, my heart is heavy, I will find it never and never more.

Where I do not have him, that is my grave, The whole world is bitter to me. My poor head is driving me crazy, My poor mind is torn apart.

My peace is gone, [etc.]

For him only, I look out the window, Only for him do I go out of my house. His tall walk, his noble figure, His mouth's smile, his eyes' power, And his mouth's, magic flow, His handclasp, and ah! His kiss!

My peace is gone, [etc.]

My bosom urges itself toward him Ah, might I grasp and hold him! And kiss him, as I would wish, At his kisses I should die!

My peace is gone, [etc.]

Frűhlingsmorgen

Es klopft an das Fenster der Lindenbaum. Mit Zweigen blütenbehangen: Steh' auf! Steh' auf! Was liegst du im Traum? Die Sonn' ist aufgegangen! Steh' auf! Steh' auf!

Die Lerche ist wach, die Büsche weh'n! Die Bienen summen und Käfer! Steh' auf! Steh' auf!

Und dein munteres Lieb': hab ich auch schon geseh'hn.

Steh' auf, Langschläfer! Langschläfer, steh' auf! Steh' auf! Steh' auf!

Lob des hohen Verstands

Einstmals in einem tiefen Tal Kukuk und Nachtigall Täten ein Wett' anschlagen, Zu singen um das Meisterstück, Gewinn' es Kunst, gewinn' es Glück, Dank soll er davon tragen.

Der Kukuk sprach, "So dir's gefällt, Hab' ich den Richter wählt", Unt tät gleich den Esel ernennen. "Denn weil er hat zwei Ohren groβ, So kann er hőren desto bos Und, was recht ist, kennen!"

"Sie flogen vor den Richter bald. Wie dem die Sache ward erzählt, Schuf er, sie sollten singen. Die Nachtigall sang lieblich aus! Der Esel sprach: "Du machst mir's Kraus! Du macht mir's Kraus! I-ja! I-ja! Ich kann's in Kopf night bringen!"

Der Kukuk drauf fing an geschwind
Sein Sang durch Terz und Quart und Quint.
Dem Esel g'fiels, er sprach nur
"Wart! Wart! Wart! Dein Urteil will ich sprechen,
Wohl sungen hast du, Nachtigall!
Aber Kukuk, singst gut Choral!

Und hältst den Takt fein innen! Das sprech' ich nach mein' hoh'n Verstand! Und kost' es gleich ein ganzes land, So laß ich's dich gewinnen!"

Parmi les pleurs

Parmi les pleurs, mon rêve se ranime, C'est à lui seul qu'appartiennent mes jours, Ces doux regrets, y penser est un crime, Je veux les fuir, hèlas! Et j'y pense toujours!

De loin encor sa voix chérie, oui même ici, Fait taire en moi la voix des cieux. Et son image, quand je prie, sur les autels, Hélas! S'offre à mes yeux.

Spring Morning

The linden tree taps at the window Branches heavy with blooms: Get up! Get up! Why do you lie dreaming? The sun is overhead! Get up! Get up!

The lark is up, the bushes blow!
The bees buzz, and the beetles!
Get up! Get up!
And I've already seen your jolly lover.

Get up, lazybones! Lazybones, get up! Get up! Get up!

In Praise of Higher Understanding

Once in a deep valley,
The cuckoo and the nightingale
Had a contest,
To sing the masterpiece,
To win by art or to win by luck,
Fame would the victor gain.

The cuckoo said, "If it pleases you, I will nominate the judge."
And he named the donkey right away. "Since he has two huge ears, He can hear so much better
And will know what is correct!"

They soon flew before the judge, And when the was issue was explained to him, He told them they should sing. The nightingale sang out sweetly! The donkey said, "You make me dizzy! You make me dizzy! Eee-yah! Eee-yah! I can't get it into my head!"

The cuckoo then quickly started His song through thirds and fourths and fifths: The donkey found it pleasing, and only said "Wait! Wait! Wait! I will pronounce judgment, Well have you sung, Nightingale!" But, Cuckoo, you sing a good chorale!

And you keep the rhythm finely and internally! Thus according to my sublime understanding! And although it may cost an entire land, I will let you win!"

Covered with Tears

Covered with tears, my visions reawaken, To him alone all my days yet belong, But it is wrong, by regret I am shaken, I would forget but the memory is too strong.

Always I hear his voice implore me, yes always, Silencing Heav'n till I despair, For his image, when I pray, over the altar, Alas! It offers itself to my eyes.

Chanson de la mariée

Réveille-toi, réveille-toi, perdrix mignonne,

Ouvre au matin tes ailes.

Trois grains de beauté, mon coeur en est brûlé!

Vois le ruban d'or que je t'apporte,

Pour le nouer autour de tes cheveux.

Si tu veux, ma belle, viens nous marier!

Dans nos deux familles, tous sont alliés!

Chanson des cueilleuses de lentisques

O joie de mon âme,

Joie de mon coeur,

Trésor qui m'est si cher;

Joie de l'âme et du coeur,

Toi que j'aime ardemment,

Tu es plus beau qu'un ange.

O lorsque tu parais,

Ange si doux devant nos yeux,

Comme un bel ange blond,

Sous le clair soleil,

Hélas! tous nos pauvres coeurs soupirent!

Tout gai!

Tout gai! gai, Ha, tout gai!

Belle jambe, tireli, qui danse; Belle jambe, la vaisselle danse,

Tra la la la . . .

The Year's at the Spring

The year's at the spring,

And day's at the morn;

Morning's at seven;

The hill-side's dew-pearl'd;

The lark's on the wing;

The snail's on the thorn:

God's in His heaven -

All's right with the world!

Ah, Love, but a Day!

Ah, Love, but a day,

And the world has changed!

The sun's away,

And the bird estranged;

The wind has dropped,

And the sky's deranged;

Summer has stopped.

Meine Lippen, sie küssen so heiß

In meinen Adern drin,

da rollt das Blut der Tänzerin

Denn meine schöne Mutter war

Des Tanzes Knigin im gold'nen Alcazar.

Sie war so wunderschön,

ich hab' sie oft im Traum geseh'n.

Schlug sie das Tamburin, zu wildem Tanz,

dann sah man alle Augen glühn!

Sie ist in mir aufs neu erwacht,

ich hab' das gleiche Los.

Ich tanz' wie sie um Mitternacht

Und fühl das eine blos:

Meine lippen sie küsen so heiß!

The Awakening of the Bride

Awake, awake, my darling partridge,

Open to the morning your wings.

Three beauty marks; my heart is on fire!

See the ribbon of gold that I bring

To tie round your hair.

If you want, my beauty, we shall marry!

In our two families, everyone is related!

The Song of the Girls Collecting Mastic

O joy of my soul,

joy of my heart,

treasure which is so dear to me,

joy of my soul and heart,

you whom I love ardently,

you are more handsome than an angel.

O when you appear,

angel so sweet before our eyes

Like a fine, blond angel,

under the bright sun,

Alas! all of our poor hearts sigh!

Everyone is joyous!

Everyone is joyous, joyous!

Beautiful legs that dance,

Beautiful legs; even the dishes are dancing!

Tra la la la . . .

I Send My Heart Up to Thee!

I send my heart up to thee, all my heart

In this my singing,

For the stars help me, and the sea, and the sea bears part;

The very night is clinging

Closer to Venice's streets to leave on space

Above me, whence thy face

May light my joyous heart to thee, to thee its dwelling place.

Look in my eyes!

Wilt thou change too?

Should I fear surprise?

Shall I find aught new

In the old and dear,

In the good and true,

With the changing year?

On My Lips Every Kiss is Like Wine

I have a dancer's blood,

That rules me like a throbbing flood, My mother was the dancing star,

Without a rival at the golden Alcazar!

How great she must have been!

In dreams I have so often seen

The raptures when she danced;

She held each heart enthralled and ev'ry eye entranced.

Her spirit wakes me again,

My fortune wills it so,

At night I dance as she did then

And this is all I know:

On my lips every kiss is like wine!

Program Notes

"There the Brisk, Sparkling Nectar" - Georg Friedrich Händel

If Georg Friedrich Handel's non-musical family had had its way, we probably would have never heard of him today—since they wanted him to become a lawyer, not a musician. Thankfully, talent won out and Handel got his first job at age seventeen as an organist in Halle; he is most famous for his oratorio, *The Messiah*.

Even though *The Choice of Hercules* is appealing today, Handel's 1750 oratorio itself did not have an auspicious start; it was not well-received. It has been referred to as a musical interlude, for it is the shortest of Handel's English works in dramatic form, first performed as an "Additional New Act" to *Alexander's Feast*. The plot involves a simple allegory: Hercules, a youth at the start of his career, is approached by Pleasure and Virtue. Pleasure offers him a characteristic eighteenth-century bower of bliss (i.e., feasting, music, cool fountains, and shady groves), whereas Virtue thinks he should put his energies elsewhere.

"There the Brisk, Sparkling Nectar" has two distinct sections, the first with a bouncy "staccato" feeling, and the second calling for a smoother, "legato" approach. Handel used as many musical strategies as he could to convey the meaning of the text. For instance, the brisk tempo aids the choppy, dotted rhythms and syncopation for an effective delivery of the cheerful mood. The piece stays in a major key throughout, and the accompaniment incorporates the use of imitation, in which the piano mimics the singer. Using a mixture of many different text settings, Handel keeps the listener guessing as to what is going to come next.

"Zeffiretti lusinghieri" - Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

For such an influential man, it is ironic that the end of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's life consisted merely of a cheap funeral, followed by a burial in an unmarked grave in a small Viennese suburb. Nevertheless, the substantial impact of Mozart on the musical world began from the day he was born; he was beginning to compose at age five and playing before Austrian royalty at age six. In 1772, Archbishop Colloredo appointed Mozart as concertmaster (at a token salary), and in this capacity Mozart composed a large number of sacred and secular works. After taking a few years off to travel, he returned as the court organist in Salzburg, and began to compose opera seria as well. In general, he excelled in every genre current in his time, and thus some regard him as the most universal composer in the history of Western music.

Mozart's *Idomeneo* set the standard for opera seria. Commissioned in 1780 by Karl Theodor, elector of Bavaria, Mozart premiered it the following year for a court carnival. It was well-received and demonstrated Mozart's mastery of orchestral color, accompanied recitatives, and melodic lines.

In Ilia's lyrical and graceful "Zeffiretti lusinghieri" aria, she asks the breezes to carry her love to Idamante, who is in danger. Despite the gently restrained major key of this piece, Mozart employs various musical techniques to paint an image of Ilia's true feelings of worry and hopelessness. The general structure of this piece can be labeled as ternary, or ABA. The A section is in the pleasant key of E major, whereas the contrasting B section moves to E minor, reflecting the reality of despair and sadness. Although written in the early classical period, Mozart uses decorative Baroque elements such as melismatic

phrasing, in which many notes are sung on the same syllable, and word-painting. In particular, Mozart "paints" the breezes Ilia frequently mentions by using quickly moving sixteenth notes in a traditional arc-shaped motion. In addition, Mozart includes long, high sustained notes and intricate rhythms to add an element of complexity (and challenge for the singer!).

"Il Zeffiro" - Vincenzo Bellini

It has been reported that the infant Vincenzo Bellini sang an aria at the age of eighteen months, took over for his grandfather as conductor during a church service at three, and played the piano expertly by the age of five. In 1819, he was granted a scholarship to study at the Real Collegio di Musica in Naples, where he graduated in 1825. Throughout his life, he was a leading figure in early nineteenth-century opera, noted for his expressive melodies and sensitive approach to text-setting in the *bel canto* style, meaning "beautiful singing."

The song *Il Zeffiro* is a prime example of Bellini's *bel canto* approach, although much of the song's origin remains a mystery. Both its publication date and purpose for being written are unknown. Within the text, however, the singer asks the gentle breezes to find her love and tell her where he is. The first nine notes of this piece resemble an aria in Bellini's opera *La Straniera*, although the song and aria are completely different otherwise; it is not clear whether the song was composed before or after the aria.

The catchy opening line of this arietta is not the only attractive factor, as Bellini inserts many other musical embellishments to keep the listener engaged. The piece's structure consists of two verses, requiring a graceful approach, to express the singer's hope and wishful thinking. However, Bellini uses a lot of syncopation through this piece, by inserting unexpected rhythms to reflect frustration and uncertainty. The piece stays at a fairly quiet dynamic level throughout, except at the very end, where the singer cries out in a final melismatic outburst, hoping to find her love.

"Gretchen am Spinnrade" - Franz Schubert

Although his life was cut short at the age of thirty-one, Franz Schubert built quite an impressive resume. He produced more masterpieces by that age than almost any other composer in history, making seminal contributions to the areas of orchestral music, chamber music, piano music, and especially German Lieder. His talent was evident at the age of six, when he began to receive musical training from his father in violin and in piano from his brother. After attending a music conservatory and graduating at age sixteen, Schubert composed his first symphony, even while teaching at his father's school. He attained his "first masterpiece" in 1814, with *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, one of his 600 German Lieder.

Gretchen am Spinnrade encompasses such a broad array of emotions and action that some may view this Romantic art song as somewhat of a "mini-opera." It was based on Schubert's musical interpretation of a scene from Goethe's tragic play, Faust. Gretchen, sitting at her spinning wheel, is love-sick, thinking about Faust and how much she longs to be with him, even though she knows it's clearly not good for her. This piece's great success made a tremendous impact, marking the birth of the great Schubert Lied.

In this masterpiece, Schubert incorporates rapid tempo changes, dynamics, and articulation marks to make a lasting impression. Set in rondo form (ABACADA), the

Lied opens with a recurring A section of desperation and despair, sandwiched between three contrasting emotions that sidetrack Gretchen from her work—being madly and obsessively in love, delusional, and agitated. The text is expressed by harsh melodic lines in the times of frustration and sweet, melodic lines in loving moments and day-dreaming. The driving force behind this dark, minor-mode piece is not just the vocal line, but the piano accompaniment as well, as it is meant to portray the erratic spinning wheel. The musical highlight of this piece is during the climactic C-section, when Gretchen describes Faust's physical attributes, ending in the exclamation of "sein Ku β !", or "His kiss!," bringing the accompaniment to a complete halt for the first and only time in this dramatic piece.

"Frühlingsmorgen" and "Lob des hohen verstands" - Gustav Mahler

Through the street songs of the day, dance tunes, folk melodies, trumpet calls, and marches from the local military band, Gustav Mahler was introduced to a large array of music at a very young age. All of these elements would contribute to his energetic, powerful effect on the music world. An avid pianist from an early age and playing his first solo recital at age ten, he began studying at the Vienna Conservatory. He distinguished himself as a pianist, but turned to composition as his primary subject. Mahler was particularly known as an excellent conductor, famed throughout Europe and the United States.

Written in 1892, "Frühlingsmorgen" is an accomplished example of German song, as audiences response indicates. It is the first piece in the collection *Lieder und Gesänge*, and resembles the memories of someone's younger days. The plot playfully teases a late sleeper, each verse ending with a call to get up out of bed at last. Evidently, Mahler had the dreaming sleeper rather than the ironic "knocker-up" in mind, and yet it is the latter who speaks throughout the whole poem.

Many musical techniques add sophistication and charm to this delightful piece. The text drives the song forward, although "Steh auf!" recurs as a refrain. The verses use long, connected lines and a quiet dynamic level, whereas the refrain of "Steh auf" uses a more accented, syllabic emphasis and a higher sense of assertiveness. The piece is spirited and energetic, although the score cautions the singer and accompanist not to feel hurried or rushed. The recurring trill in the piano accompaniment signifies the chirping morning birds, adding an element of warmth and serenity.

In 1896, Anna Bahr-Mildenburg, an eminent Wagnerian soprano who worked closely with Mahler in the Hamburg State Opera, unintentionally inspired one of his most memorable Romantic Lieder, "Lob des hohen verstands." Bahr-Mildenburg had lent him *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, a collection of German folk-poems, from her grandfather's library, and Mahler was motivated to write this merry little Lied in 1896. This satirical song deals with a competition between an old cuckoo and a nightingale, with the donkey as the referee. Of course, he awards the prize to the cuckoo, with an air of great importance.

Mahler uses specific musical strategies to exaggerate the satirical nature of this piece and add an element of humor. The first two verses set up the contest between the two birds, filled with bouncy melodies at a moderately loud dynamic level. The third verse depicts the different animals as they compete and judge one another (most notably the

donkey, exclaiming "I-ja! I-ja!"). The final verse resembles the first two, as the donkey proclaims the winner. The tempo of this piece is indicated as "lustig," or "funny," in German, and can be seen through the various large leaps, phrases beginning on off-beats and sudden dynamic changes. The light-hearted key of D major illustrates the spoofing nature of this piece.

"Parmi les pleurs" - Giacomo Meyerbeer

In the peak of Giacomo Meyerbeer's career, his immense wealth and adherence to his Jewish religion set him apart from many of his musical contemporaries. Malicious rumors began to appear that his fortune was due to bribing musical critics, and that he was interested only in money. Meyerbeer, however, was a deeply serious musician and philosophically resigned himself to being a victim of his own success. Born Jacob Liebmann Beer, he was a successful piano prodigy, but knew that he wanted to be a composer. After moving to Italy to gain a better understanding of opera, he changed his name from Jakob to Giacomo. He later added "Meyer" to his last name, in remembrance of his maternal grandfather. In moving to Paris, he became a superstar with *Robert le Diable*, and is regarded as the founder of modern French grand opera.

Les Huguenots was the first opera to be performed more than one thousand times. Premiering in 1836, the fashionable subject matter featured the period of confrontation between Huguenots (French Protestants) and Catholics in the late sixteenth century.

In the aria, "Parmi les pleurs," Valentine sings about her continuing love for Raoul, a Huguenot whom she is forbidden to see, and Meyerbeer's directions depict her emotions. Although most of this piece is sung in a dolce ("sweet") manner, there are sporadic outbursts where the tempo picks up, the intensity deepens, and the dynamics fluctuate quickly. These agitated melodic lines, supported by complex harmonies, mirror Valentine's emotional state. Towards the end, a vigorous ascending chromatic line takes the singer drastically higher in tempo and dynamics, reaching a very powerful intensity. An "ad lib" cadenza follows, giving the singer freedom to sing the high, fast-moving notes at her discretion, and producing a dramatic, high-energy finale.

Cinq mélodies populaires grecques - Maurice Ravel

Ravel's early career was not marked by instant success or fame. It was not until he left his Parisian home and toured North America for four months that his name became internationally recognizable. In his youth, Ravel was expelled twice from the Conservatoire de Paris after failing to meet certain requirements of the program, but in 1902, Ravel joined "Les Apaches," a group of literary, musical and artistic contemporaries who shared ideas on literature, music, and art. Soon after, he published numerous successful piano compositions and started work on the famous ballet, *Daphnis et Chloé*. Sadly, after the North American tour, Ravel began suffering from a neurodegenerative disorder (perhaps Pick's Disease), and died shortly after a promising operation a few years later. Ravel left a lasting impression and proved to be one of the most original and sophisticated musicians of the early twentieth century.

Some of Ravel's most original (yet hastily written!) music can be seen in his collection of folk songs, *Cinq mélodies populaires grecques* (Five Popular Greek Melodies). The cycle was written in thirty-six hours (although it was later revised). Pierre Aubrey, a

French musicologist, planned a lecture on songs of the Greeks and Armenians. He asked Michael Calvocoressi, a critic who was a good friend of Ravel, to select some songs to illustrate his lecture. The singer, Louise Thomaset, requested piano accompaniments, so Calvocoressi turned to his friend Ravel.

"Chanson de la mariée" features an unsophisticated young peasant singing exuberantly before the house of the bride. The piano plays an arpeggiated rustle to illustrate the song's joyful yet restless nature. Although set in a minor key, which normally portrays sadness, Ravel often omits the central note of the chord, producing a brighter, open sound. Ravel keeps the piece rhythmically complex by putting the piano accompaniment in a triple meter and the melody line in a duple meter, but to the listener's ear, it sounds effortless.

In "Chanson des cueilleuses de lentisques," girls sing as they gather lentisks (cultivated shrubs from the Mediterranean region), but are troubled when a handsome young man appears. The slow tempo produces an endearing, trance-like setting, accompanied by gentle, yet unstable harmonies. The piece also uses unusual rhythmic devices to add a transcendental element.

"Tout gai!" is no more than a simple depiction of dancing around, being joyful, and having a good time with others. This is a "nonsense" song, in that the festive, carefree mood and strong musical pulse are the important factors. Nevertheless, the piece is sung at a fairly quiet dynamic level, and can be described as "hushed excitement" about the delightful day.

Three Browning Songs, Op. 44 - Amy Beach

Amy Beach has always stood apart from the rest. By the age of one, Beach was already showing signs of a genius by singing forty tunes accurately and always in the same key. Before the age of two, she improvised alto lines against her mother's soprano melodies, taught herself to read at age three, and at age four, she mentally composed her first piano pieces and later played them. Her mother, a pianist and singer, encouraged her to perform and compose, and she made her debut with the Boston Symphony in 1883, at age sixteen, performing a piano concerto. Beach is known mostly for large-scale orchestral works, chamber music, and works for piano and vocal music. Surprisingly, she never espoused any kind of feminist ideas regarding women composers' due place, and proudly stated that she never felt limited because she was a woman.

An indication that others viewed her as an equal is the fact that the Boston Browning Society commissioned Beach to set text from Robert Browning's *Pippa Passes* for a celebration of the poet's birthday, which led to 3 *Browning Songs*, published in 1900. Each of the three pieces conveys a different feeling through its rhythmic structure, melodic organization, and diverse piano accompaniment. The first of these art songs, "The Year's at the Spring," proved to be very popular, and the most successful of the set. This piece was the first wire transmission of music across the continent; it has been made into choral, violin, and duet versions. The text was inspired by Robert Browning's first view of the small hilltop village of Asolo during a visit to Italy. This piece is short and sweet, consisting of a single verse. Written on a train, the relentless rhythm of the train wheels is heard through the entire piece in the piano accompaniment. Although this piece contains very short phrases, the emotional and poetic movement sweeps through the piece in an upward arc from beginning to end in a single motion.

Perhaps correlating to the dark subject matter of the poem, the second piece, "Ah, Love, but a Day!," lacks any clear structure or form, relying solely on the text to drive it forward. The text is a passage from James Lee's Wife, a poem by Browning, which focuses on unfulfilled love. Beach's setting begins in a minor key but ends in a major key, which may indicate coming to terms with the subject matter. The meter and rhythm changes highlight the singer's insecurity and mild desperation as she questions her future. Wavering melodies are used that feature recurring motifs and a mixture of simple and complex harmonies.

Although it is the least musically explored in the set, the third piece, "I Send My Heart Up to Thee!," contains many musical subtleties to create a beautiful illustration of Browning's heartfelt text. Drawn from the poem *In a Gondola,* Browning speaks of his captivation with Venice and a divine painting that inspired him. This piece is unique within Beach's set in that the meter stays the same throughout the piece, although it is a complex meter of 9/8 that encompasses many duplets. The score calls for a tranquil, calm effect, but the accompaniment moves quickly between harmonies and tonal centers, challenging the listener to keep up with its rapid diversions.

"Meine lippen, sie kűssen so heiβ" - Franz Lehár

In the midst of his career, Franz Lehár was completely wrapped up in music-making. Because of his unwillingness to become involved in politics to protest against Nazi atrocities (unlike his Jewish wife and friends), his single-minded devotion to music made him an object of suspicion outside of Germany. Nevertheless, Lehár quickly became the leading operetta composer of the twentieth century; he revitalized the genre. From a young age, Lehár began to play violin in his town's orchestra, where his uncle was the music director, and he entered the Prague conservatory at age twelve, studying violin and theory. Upon graduation, he discovered a talent for writing and conducting operettas. His great success prompted him to found his own publishing house to protect the rights to many of his works, including the famous musical comedy, *Giuditta*.

It is ironic that *Giuditta* achieved so much success—mostly because Lehár initially had no desire to have anything to do with it. To his surprise, it turned out to be one of his favorites and the most satisfactory of his later works. With a *Carmen*-like story, *Giuditta* was written in 1934 for the Vienna Opera, with 120 radio stations relaying the performance. The best-known song in the work, "Meine lippen, sie küssen so hei β ," is an aria sung by Giuditta (a soprano) in the fourth scene. Giuditta is a dancer in a North African night club, where her charms prove irresistible to the wealthy customers; her song is very bewitching, yet self-absorbed.

The aria encompasses all of the traditional characteristics of a twentieth-century Viennese waltz, with a few added surprises. The waltz characteristics include a triple meter, a quick-paced tempo, and long sweeping notes, with an alternation between a verse and the chorus. However, the verses are set in E minor, whereas the choruses are in the key of E major, signifying Giuditta's changes in mood. Without a doubt, the musical highlight is the dramatic, resonant ending, featuring long, sustained high B's.

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