

Kansas State College of Pittsburg

Pittsburg, Kansas

Department of Music

Graduate Recital

JANICE GORDON, Soprano

KARLA NORTON, Soprano

Assisted by

Pamela Gaston, Mezzo-Soprano

Henry Hendricks, Tenor

Erma Rose, Piano

Wednesday, July 9, 1975

McCray Auditorium

8:00 p.m.

PROGRAM

I

Mozart "Io sono felice" (COSI FAN TUTTE)
(1756-1791)

Miss Gordon, Mrs. Norton, Miss Rose

The theme of the test of true love can be traced back to medieval poetry; and Mozart's librettist, Lorenzo da Ponte, took the question of woman's faithfulness in particular for his treatment. The hardened cynic Don Alfonso is engaged in argument with his young and newly-betrothed officer friends Guglielmo and Ferrando, maintaining that all women are by nature unfaithful. "Women are all the same" ("Cosi fan tutte"), and he wants to prove this to them with a wager that even their own fiancées, the sisters Fiordiligi and Dorabella, would be no exception. Alfonso eventually wins his wager, though one would not think it possible when listening to this first-act duet between the two sisters! They staunchly profess love and devotion to their betrotheds, singing "If ever my heart changes its affection, may love make me live in pain!"

II

Puccini "Tu che di gel sei cinta" (TURANDOT)
(1858-1924)

Miss Gordon, Miss Rose

TURANDOT was Puccini's last opera; he labored over it for many years and died before he was able to complete it. Even in its unfinished form it makes a valid claim to be considered his master piece. There are two major soprano roles, the slave girl Liu and the Princess Turandot. Liu secretly loves Calaf, exiled prince of Tartary. She meets the prince again in the city of Peking--to where she has helped the Prince's old father and de-throned Tartar king escape. In Peking, Liu suffers the agony of seeing Calaf fall under the spell of the cruel Princess Turandot. When Calaf successfully answers three riddles Turandot puts to all her suitors (he would have been beheaded had he failed) the Princess is obliged to marry him, unless she can discover his name. Turandot's ministers of state find out that Liu knows who the Unknown Prince is and subject her to torture, but she refuses to reveal his name. Then with her last strength she addresses Turandot with the words, "Tu che di gel sei cinta" ("You who are encircled with ice"). She predicts (correctly) that the princess, too, will know what it is to love Calaf. "I close my eyes wearily", she sings, "so that he can win once more." Then, at the close of her aria, fearing she may speak his name under further torture, Liu seizes a dagger from a soldier and kills herself.

III

Puccini "Un bel di vedremo" (MADAMA BUTTERFLY)

Mrs. Norton, Miss Rose

At the beginning of the second act, Butterfly sings this most famous aria from the opera, in which she imagines that one fine day she will see her husband's ship sail up to the dock. She will not go to meet him, but will see him coming up the path calling her name. She will hide to tease him a little and "so as not to die at our first meeting." And he will call, "Dear baby-wife of mine, dear little orange blossom" as he did before. "Banish your idle fears," she tells her skeptical maid, Suzuki, "for he will return. I know it."

IV

Puccini "Tutti fior" (MADAMA BUTTERFLY)

Mrs. Norton, Mrs. Gaston, Miss Rose

Near the end of the second act of the opera, Butterfly and Suzuki, her maid, sing the lovely duet "Tutti Fior", more commonly called the flower duet. In the song, Butterfly tells Suzuki to gather many beautiful flowers to decorate the house as they await the arrival of Butterfly's husband, Pinkerton.

V

Puccini "La Canzone di Doretta" (LA RONDINE)

Miss Gordon, Miss Rose

LA RONDINE (THE SWALLOW) is the least frequently revived opera of Puccini's maturity, though it contains some of the most immediately appealing music Puccini ever wrote. In Act I, the heroine, a kind of latter-day Violetta, is entertaining a large party of guests in the sumptuous apartments provided her by her wealthy lover. One of the guests, the poet Prunier, begins to sing his newest poem, the story of an innocent maiden named Doretta and a king who sued for her favors. When he hesitates half way through his narrative, Magda smilingly offers to finish it for him and launches into the lovely "Song of Doretta". The maiden, she sings, turned from the king and his riches when a student kissed her on the lips one day. What is the importance of riches, she concludes her song, if at last happiness and love should bloom again.

VI

Verdi "Libiamo" (LA TRAVIATA)
(1813-1901)

Miss Gordon, Mr. Hendricks, Miss Rose

LA TRAVIATA was the third of the group of operas, produced between 1851 and 1853, which confirmed Verdi's international reputation and won a lasting popularity. LA TRAVIATA, or the fallen woman, is Violetta Valery, a demi-mondaine, who is, at the opening of the opera, the mistress of a wealthy nobleman. The curtain rises on a room in her Paris house where a party is in progress. Among the guests is a young man, Alfredo Germont, who has long been Violetta's admirer from afar and now meets her for the first time. She coquettishly asks him to propose a toast, which he does in "Libiamo". He sings of the pleasure of wine and praises the love he finds in the eyes of his hostess. Her reply expresses her frivolous attitude toward the subject of love.

VII

Verdi "Un di felice" (LA TRAVIATA)

Miss Gordon, Mr. Hendricks, Miss Rose

When the party moves into the ballroom, Violetta, feeling faint (she suffers from consumption) remains behind. Alfredo joins her and declares that he has loved her secretly for a year. Violetta responds with cynical banter, saying that friendship is all she can offer him, so he should find another and forget her.

VIII

Verdi "E strano! Ah, fors' e lui" - "Sempre Libera" (LA TRAVIATA)

Mrs. Norton, Miss Rose

As dawn breaks, everyone leaves, Violetta meditates on the young man's declaration of passion. She finds, to her surprise, that she has been strangely affected by Alfredo's declaration. She is at heart an unhappy woman, deriving little satisfaction from her life of pleasure and gaiety and having no real friends. In "Ah, fors' e lui" she soon dismisses her thoughts as complete folly - and in the brilliant "Sempre Libera" she decides to throw herself once more into the continuous round of pleasure her life has always been.

IX

Mozart "Sull' Aria" (LE NOZZE DI FIGARO)

Miss Gordon, Mrs. Norton, Miss Rose

LE NOZZE DI FIGARO remains one of Mozart's most popular masterpieces. In this duet from the opera, the Countess and her maid Susanna are plotting a scheme through which the Countess hopes to regain her unfaithful Count's wandering attentions. The Countess dictates as Susanna writes a letter to the Count fixing exactly the time and place of the little rendezvous--supposedly to take place between the Count and Susanna. The Countess, however, plans to go in Susanna's place, disguised as her maid. It is hoped that through ridicule the Count will be persuaded to remain faithful to his Countess.