

Pittsburg State University
Pittsburg, Kansas

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

Graduate Recital

Kathleen Coffee, Soprano

assisted by

Steven Edmund, Pianist

Friday, February 5, 1993
McCray Recital Hall
7:00 p.m.

PROGRAM

I

Et exultavit spiritus meus (Magnificat) Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

II

Les Nuits d'Été Hector Berlioz
(1803-1869)
Villanelle
Le Spectre de la Rose
Sur les Lagunes
L'Absence
Au Cimetière
L'île inconnue

INTERMISSION

III

Auch kleine Dinge. Hugo Wolf
Bitt' ihn, o Mutter (1860-1903)
In dem Schatten meiner Locken
Das verlassene Mägdlein
Er ist's

over...

IV

Three Shakespeare songs Roger Quilter
Come away, Death (1877-1953)
O Mistress mine
Blow, blow, thou Winter Wind

V

Cuatro madrigales amorosos Joaquin Rodrigo
¿Con qué la lavare? (1901-)
Vos me matásteis
¿De dónde venís, amore?
De los álamos vengo, madre

This recital partially fulfills thesis requirements for the
Master of Music degree program for Ms. Coffee.

PROGRAM NOTES

Kathleen Coffee

I

Shortly after moving to Leipzig in 1723 to become Kantor of the Thomaskirche and civic director of music, JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750) wrote a Magnificat in E-flat. At this time, these Biblical words spoken by the Virgin Mary when she visited her cousin Elizabeth were frequently used in Protestant services at Vespers, particularly at Christmas and Easter. This Magnificat was composed for Christmas, and included four Christmas pieces inserted in the traditional text. Sometime between 1728 and 1731, Bach revised the Magnificat, changing the key to D and eliminating the Christmas text, so that the piece could be used for any major feast day. In this composition, the solos are generally short, with a variety of instrumental color. Each set of words has its own music, with significant words set conspicuously. This selection is the first solo of the work, immediately following the opening chorus.

Et exultavit spiritus meus (And my spirit has rejoiced)

And my spirit has rejoiced in God my savior.

II

HECTOR BERLIOZ (1803-1869) is now considered the leading French musician of his age, though full recognition of his talent did not come until the 20th century. His style was one of the most idiosyncratic of the 19th century. An inspired natural melodist, he was also a master of technique, experimenting with rhythm but using restrained harmonies. He wrote a treatise on orchestration in 1844, giving information on the best use of instruments in function and proportion, aiming for quality of sound and implicit chords. He was a great influence on the Russian composers of the late 19th century.

Les Nuits d'Été was originally composed from 1840 to 1841 for solo voice and piano. The cycle was later orchestrated, and this version is considered the more successful setting. This group of songs is not strictly a cycle, as the individual pieces do not interrelate, but there is an overall wholeness of feeling and emotional balance, with the first and last songs being outgoing and the others showing various aspects of disappointed love. The text is from poems of Théophile Gautier (1811-1872) a French poet, journalist, and novelist. He was an extreme Romanticist in the 1830s, writing fantastic novels and poems. The chief feature of his work is a love of visual palpable beauty.

Villanelle is a joyous spring song, with abrupt modulations giving freshness and a lilting swing to the strophic form. Each of the three verses has minor variations in rhythm and notes.

Villanelle

When the new season will come,
When the frosts will have vanished,
We two shall go, my lovely one,
To gather lilies-of-the valley in the woods.
Under our feet, picking the pearls
Which one sees trembling in the morn;
We shall go to hear the blackbirds,
We shall go to hear the blackbirds whistling.
Spring has come, my lovely one;
This is the blessed month for lovers;
And the bird smoothing its wings,
Says a poem on the rim of its nest.

Oh, come then to this mossy bank
To talk of our glorious love,
And tell me with your voice so sweet,
Forever!
Far, far away, straying from our path,
Putting to flight the hidden rabbit
And the buck, in the mirror of the springs
Admiring its bent antlers;
Then homeward, so happy, so at ease,
Entwining our fingers to make a basket,
Let us return, carrying wild strawberries.

Le Spectre de la rose has a theme later treated in ballet: the spirit of the rose carried by a young girl at a ball returns to her as she sleeps. This dramatic setting raises sentimental dalliance to passion, moving from a quiet opening to intensity in each of its three sections, ending with a recitative-like phrase.

Le Spectre de la rose (The Spectre of the rose)

Open your closed eyelid
Gently touched by a virginal dream!
I am the spectre of the rose
That you wore last night at the ball.
You have taken me still covered with the
pearls
Of the sprinkler's silvery tears,
And amidst brilliant festivities,
You carried me through the night.
Oh you, who were the cause of my death,
Without your being able to escape him,
My rose-colored spectre will come
Every night to dance at your bedside.

But have no fear at all; I do not ask
Either a mass or De Profundis.
This fragrant perfume is my soul,
And I come from paradise.
My destiny could be envied,
And to have so beautiful a fate,
More than one would have given his life;
For on your breast I have my tomb,
And on the alabaster where I repose,
A poet wrote with a kiss:
"Here lies a rose
Which all kings might envy.

Sur les lagunes (which is not the same as the poem so titled by Gautier) is a gloomy expression of despair at the loss of a loved one, with a recurring refrain on the bitterness of fate. Memories of happier times try to break through, but are immediately crushed by present misery.

Sur les lagunes (On the lagoons)

My fair friend is dead,
I will mourn forever;
She has taken with her into the tomb
My soul and my love.
Without waiting for me
She has returned to heaven;
The angel who led her away
Did not wish to take me.
How bitter is my fate!
Oh! To go to sea without love!
The white form
Is lying in the coffin;
How all of nature
Seems gloomy to me!

The forgotten dove
Weeps and dreams of the absent one;
My soul weeps and feels
That it is left alone!
How bitter is my fate!
Oh! To go to sea without love!
The immense night over me
Spreads like a shroud;
I am singing my song
That heaven alone can hear.
Oh! How fair she was
And how much I loved her!
I will never love
A woman as much as I loved her.
How bitter is my fate!

L'Absence is considered the highlight of this cycle. Written as a rondo and using only part of the original poem, this song repeats the opening refrain after each episode. There is no seeking for effect, but simply the call of the forlorn lover to one who once shared the loneliness, now made more bitter by absence of the loved one.

L'Absence (Absence)

Come back, come back, my beloved!
Like a flower far from the sun,
The flower of my life is closed
Far from your rosy smile!
What distance between our hearts!
What space between our kisses!
Oh bitter fate, oh cruel absence!
Oh great unappeased desires!
Come back, come back, my beloved!
Like a flower far from the sun,
The flower of my life is closed

Far from your rosy smile!
From here to where you are, how wide the
country;
How many cities and hamlets,
How many valleys and mountains,
To tire the hoofs of the horses!
Come back, come back, my beloved!
Like a flower far from the sun,
The flower of my life is closed
Far from your rosy smile.

Au cimetière (titled Lamento by Gautier) is an elegant and melancholy expression of a lost love. The serene but sad opening leads to a more intense middle section as memories become stronger, but calm returns in an ending that echoes, but does not repeat, the opening and gives an assurance that the loved one will come back.

Au cimetière (At the cemetery)

Do you know the white tomb
Where, with a plaintive sound, floats
The shadow of a yew-tree?
On the yew-tree a pale dove,
Sad and alone in the setting sun,
Sings its song,
An air so morbidly tender,
Both pleasing and ominous
Which causes you pain
And which one wishes to hear eternally;
An air like the sigh in heaven
Of an angel in love.
One would think that an awakened soul
Cries out under the earth in unison
With this song.
And, grieving of being forgotten,
Complains by cooing
Very softly.

On the wings of music
One feels quietly reappearing
A reminiscence
A shadow, an angelic form,
Passes in a trembling light,
In a white veil.
The Marvels of Peru half-closed,
Spread their faint and sweet perfume
Around you.
And the tender form of a ghost
Murmurs, stretching her arms to you:
You will come back!
Oh, nevermore near the tomb
Shall I go, when night descends
With its dark mantle,
To hear the pale dove
Sing on on the branch of the yew-tree
Its plaintive song!

L'île inconnue (titled Barcarolle by Gautier) offers a vision of a lotus land of eternal love and perpetual delight in life. Again there is a recurring refrain, but one more cheerful than in previous songs (and one which occurs in the poem). The phrases are generally repeated and the mood is light.

L'île inconnue (The Island uncharted)

Tell me, young fair one,
Where do you wish to go?
The sail swells its wing,
The wind will blow!
The oar is of ivory,
The flag of silk,
The rudder of pure gold;
For ballast I have an orange,
For sail an angel's wing,
For foam I have a seraph.
Tell me, young fair one,
Where do you wish to go?
The sail swells its wing,
The wind will blow.

Is it to the Baltic Sea?
To the Pacific Ocean?
Towards the island of Java?
Or is it to Norway,
To gather the snow flowers,
Or the flowers of Angsoka?
Tell me, young fair one,
Tell me, where do you wish to go?
Lead me, says the fair one,
To the faithful shore,
Where one loves always!
This shore, my fair one,
Is not known at all,
In the land of loves!

III

HUGO WOLF (1860-1903) is widely accepted as one of the world's greatest composers of songs, intensifying the expression of the Lied to a never-surpassed pitch. He was extremely sensitive to words, and studied a poet and his poems deeply before setting the text so that the mood and meaning are shown clearly. Wolf was able to immerse himself in the poem and reflect subtle nuances with variations in rhythm, melody, and harmony. For him, the piano is not merely accompaniment, but shares in the expression of the song's meaning. The texts he selected are generally of high quality; slighter poems have slighter settings. Most of his composition took place in short, intense periods of time, and he generally set all he wished of one poet's texts before moving to another poet.

Auch kleine Dinge is the opening song in the Italienische Liederbuch. These anonymous poems were translated by Paul Heyse (1830-1914), a leading figure in the Munich group of poets, who also wrote tragedies and novels. He was a fluent writer, devoted to an ideal of beauty detached from everyday reality, and won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1910. This famous song uses a simple style for a moving effect. The vocal line is delicate and restrained, and the melody is instantaneously appealing. The quiet closing is typical of Italian love songs.

Auch kleine Dinge (Even little things)

Even little things can enchant us. Even little things can be expensive. Consider how happily we bedeck ourselves with pearls. They are dearly bought but still are small. Consider how small the olive fruit is, yet its goodness is still sought out. Just think of the rose, how small it is; yet how delightful it smells, as everyone knows.

Bitt' ihn, o Mutter is from the Spanisches Liederbuch, again a translation of Heyse, this time from an anonymous Spanish text. This song is not considered one of Wolf's best, but can be an effective tour de force for a soprano, with its fiery impetus and strong feeling. It has unusual key changes and harmonies, with a great deal of chromaticism in the accompaniment.

Bitt' ihn, O Mutter (Beg him, O mother)

Beg him, O mother, beg the boy [Cupid] not to take aim any more, because he is killing me. Mother, oh mother, the most capricious love scorns and attracts me; flees me and pulls me. I saw two eyes last night, a wonder of the heavens, a disaster to earth. What people say, mother, about basilisks, my heart experienced when I saw them. Beg him, O mother, beg the boy not to take aim any more, because he is killing me.

In dem Schatten meinen Locken is also from the Spanisches Liederbuch, and it was later included in Wolf's opera Corregidor. The song has many shifts of mood, from mischief to affection to tenderness, all shown by key changes. Though the poem is not considered particularly attractive, the setting is full of melodic enchantment and harmonic subtlety.

In dem Schatten meinen Locken (In the shadow of my curls)

In the shadow of my curls my beloved sleeps. Should I wake him now? Oh no. Carefully I arrange my curly tresses in the morning, but my care is in vain, since the wind disarranges them. Hair shadows, wind rustles, lull my beloved to sleep. Should I wake him now? Oh no. I must listen to how he complains that he has languished for so long; that my brown cheeks give him life and take it. And he calls me his snake, yet he sleeps here at my side. Should I wake him now? Oh no.

Das verlassene Mägdlein is a setting of a poem by Eduard Mörike (1804-1985), a Swabian Protestant pastor whose poetry is sometimes emotionally intense, sometimes classical, and sometimes sensual. Responsive to nature, he showed an observant eye and sense of humor. This poem was also set by Schumann, but Wolf's setting is considered superior. It is a recreation of an early morning scene, the music with its descending vocal line showing the despair and pain, momentarily lightened by the fire and memory of a dream, but returning again to an expression of overwhelming loss.

Das verlassene Mägdlein (The forsaken maiden)

Early, when the rooster crows, when the stars disappear, I must stand at the hearth and kindle the fire. The firelight is beautiful; the sparks fly up. I merely look, sunk in grief. Suddenly, I remember the false boy, you whom I dreamed of last night. Tear after tear then runs down. Thus the day begins; would it were over!

Er ist's is another of Mörike's poems. This setting seems far more exuberant than the text might indicate, but expresses the fervor one can feel at the return of spring. It is a tour-de-force for both voice and piano, with its ongoing and unending momentum.

Er ist's (He it is)

Spring lets its blue banner flutter again in the air. Sweet well-known scents, full of presentiments, brush the countryside. Violets are still dreaming; they will come soon. Listen! From afar a faint harp note. Spring, yes, it is you. I have heard you; yes, it is you!

IV

ROGER QUILTER (1877-1953) was an English composer best known for his songs. His seemingly effortless style concealed great sensitivity and a difficulty in composition. He had a gift for inventing facile tunes. He composed several settings to Shakespeare texts, including this collection of 1905 (Op. 6), using the strophic form to reflect the different poetic meanings of stanzas of the poems. He showed a particular sensitivity to word accents and a high standard in choice of verse.

Come away, Death is a setting of Feste's song to Duke Orsino in Twelfth Night. It establishes the atmosphere of the play (a man forsaken by his mistress) and reflects the Duke's melancholy character. The form is strophic with an embellishment of the final phrase.

Come away, Death

Come away, come away, death,
And in sad cypress let me be laid.
Fly away, fly away, breath.
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.
My shroud of white stuck all with yew,
O, prepare it.
My part of death no one so true
Did share it.

Not a flower, not a flower sweet,
On my black coffin let there be strown.
Not a friend, not a friend greet
My poor corse where my bones shall be
thrown.
A thousand, thousand sighs to save,
Lay me o where
Sad true lover never find my grave,
To weep there.

O mistress mine is likewise from Twelfth Night, and is also sung by Feste, this time to Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek. This cheerful love song initiates the action of the scene. It is also in strophic form, with minor variations in notes and rhythm and a repetition of the final phrase.

O mistress mine

O mistress mine, where are you roaming?
O stay and hear, your true love's coming,
That can sing both high and low.
Trip no further, pretty sweeting;
Journeys end in lovers' meeting,
Every wise man's son doth know

What is love? 'Tis not hereafter.
Present mirth hath present laughter.
What's to come is still unsure.
In delay there lies no plenty;
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty.
Youth's a stuff will not endure.

Blow, blow, thou winter wind is sung by Amiens to the Duke in As you like it, and reflects Orlando's circumstances. It contains a mixture of cynicism and jollity. (Holly is an emblem of mirth.) Again, the form is strophic, but with strong contrasts between verse and refrain, in character and tempo. There are minor variations in notes between verses, and a big finale.

Blow, blow, thou winter wind

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude.
Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen;
Although thy breath be rude.
Heigh ho, sing heigh ho, unto the green
holly.
Most friendship is feigning; most loving
mere folly.

Then heigh ho, the holly.
This life is most jolly.
Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky.
Thou dost not bite so nigh
As benefits forgot.
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp,
As friend remembered not.
Heigh ho, etc.

V

JOAQUIN RODRIGO (1901-) is a contemporary Spanish composer whose generally traditional style, reminiscent of the Golden Age of Spanish poetry and song, is heavily influenced by 18th century composers such as Domenico Scarlatti and Padre Soler. His music creates a Spanish ambiance with color and agreeable tunes. He is seen by some as a transitory influence, but also as the supreme representative of this particular phase of Spanish music.

The cycle Cuatro madrigales amatorios (1948) contains skillful and attractive arrangements of well-known Spanish songs of the 16th century. As might be expected from folk music, the words are simple and repetitive. The melodies are likewise repetitive, but also contain variety and typically Spanish embroidery. The first two songs are melancholy and in minor keys; the last two are fast and cheerful.

¿Con qué la lavaré? (With what shall it be washed?)

With what shall it be washed, my body's complexion? With what shall it be washed, since I live evilly punished? The married women wash with lemon water. I wash myself with woe, with pain and sadness.

Vos me matásteis (You have slain me)

You have slain me, girl with the hair. You have killed me. By the riverside I saw a young virgin, a girl with hair. You have slain me, girl with the hair; you have killed me.

¿De dónde venís, amore? (Whence do you come, love?)

Whence do you come, love? I know very well whence you come. Whence do you come, my friend? I have been a witness. Ah, I know very well whence.

De los álamos vengo, madre (I come from the aspens, mother)

I come from the aspens, mother, to see how they stir in the air. From the aspens of Seville, to see my pretty friend.