

PITTSBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

Pittsburg, Kansas

Department of Music

RECITAL

KATHLEEN COFFEE, SOPRANO

assisted by

Lori Kehle, Pianist

Thursday, November 30, 1989

McCray Recital Hall

1:30 p.m.

PROGRAM

I

Ouvre ton coeur..... Georges Bizet
(1838-1875)
Chère nuit..... Alfred Bachelet
(1864-1944)

II

"Vissi d'arte" (TOSCA)..... Giacomo Puccini
"Signore, ascolta!" (TURANDOT) (1858-1924)
"Tu che di gel sei cinta" (TURANDOT)

III

Before my window..... Sergei Rachmaninoff
The lilacs (1873-1943)
To the children
Vocalise
Oh, never sing to me again
Sorrow in springtime
Harvest of sorrow

PROGRAM NOTES

Kathleen Coffee

I
GEORGES BIZET (1838-1875) began his career as a pianist. His first important opera, Les pêcheurs de perles, was presented in 1863. Although it was uneven, it was far superior to contemporary French opera. Of course, his best-known opera is Carmen (1875). This song was originally written for the ode-symphony Vasco de Gama, in which it was to be sung by Leonard, a soprano. Later it was revised for his opera Ivan IV, in which it was to represent a Bulgarian national song. The text is Bizet's revision of Louis Delâtre's translation of Luiz Vas de Camões' Lusiad.

Ouvre ton cœur (Open your heart)

The daisy has closed its crown; the shadow has closed the eyes of day. Beautiful one, will you keep your word? Open your heart to my love; o young angel, to my flame. May a dream charm your sleep. Open your heart; I want to recover my soul. Open your heart, o young angel, to my flame, like a flower opens itself to the sun.

ALFRED BACHELET (1864-1944) was primarily a theatrical composer, whose first success, Scemo, was produced at the Paris Opéra in 1914. Two other music dramas, even more successful, were produced in 1922 and 1931. All show a striking sense of dramatic power and expression. His music is elaborate, richly orchestrated, and vivid, with strong harmonic color and a tendency to violence in declamatory passages.

Chère nuit (Dear night)

Behold the present hour. Behind the hill I see the sun which sinks and hides its jealous rays. I hear the soul sing of things and the narcissus and roses bring me a very sweet perfume. Dear night of calm lights, you who recall the tender lover, ah, descend and veil the earth with your mystery, peaceful and charming. My happiness is reborn under your wing. Oh more beautiful than the beautiful days, ah, raise yourself to make the dawn of my love shine again.

II

GIACOMO PUCCINI (1858-1924) was Italy's most successful opera composer after Verdi. His concept of opera included the whole stage apparatus--singing, acting, declamation, expression, gesture, movement, costume, scenery, and lighting, engaged to create the maximum effect. His opera plots develop clearly and logically, with most subplots of the source material eliminated, so that the dramatic material is compressed. The heroine is central to his operas, with males acting as catalysts.

Tosca is based on Victorien Sardou's play, La Tosca. Illica's adaptation eliminates most of the subplot, several characters, and much background information on the principals, and makes the story even more melodramatic.

Floria Tosca, a singer, loves the artist Cavaradossi, who has been arrested for aiding a revolutionist. Scarpia, the chief of police, has Cavaradossi tortured in Tosca's hearing, and she betrays the revolutionist's hiding-place. Scarpia, however, condemns Cavaradossi to death unless Tosca yields to him. In this aria Tosca tries to understand why this is happening to her.

"Vissi d'arte" (I have lived for art)

I have lived for art; I have lived for love. I have never wronged a living soul. Secretly whatever misery I knew of I relieved. Always, with sincere faith, I raised my prayers to the holy tabernacle. Always, with sincere faith, I gave flowers for the altar. In the hour of my sorrow, why, O Lord, why do you repay me thus? I gave jewels for the Madonna's cloak and I gave my songs to the stars and to heaven which smiled more beautifully. In the hour of my sorrow, why, why, O Lord, why do you repay me thus?

Turandot is based on Carlo Gazzi's dramatic fable Turandotte, one of several with an oriental setting but commedia d'arte characters. The librettists unified the episodic construction and changed the princess's rival from another princess to a slave-girl. This opera shows the use of the chorus as a dynamic agent.

In Peking, in legendary times, Timur, the banished king of the Tartars, and his slave-girl companion, Liù, meet Timur's son Calaf, after a long separation. Calaf has fallen in love with Princess Turandot, who has had all her suitors killed when they fail to answer her riddles. Liù tries to persuade Calaf not to become one of the princess's suitors.

"Signore, ascolta!" (Listen, sir)

Listen, sir. Liù can bear no more. How weary her heart, alas! How long the road. With your name in her soul; with your name on her lips. However, if your destiny will be decided tomorrow, we will die on the road of exile. He will lose his son; I, the shadow of a smile. Liù can bear no more. Ah, have pity.

In Act III, Calaf has solved Turandot's riddles, but gives her a chance to win the contest if she can learn his identity. Turandot is about to have Timur tortured, but Liù says she is the only one who knows the answer, and that she will never tell.

"Tu che di gel sei cinta" (You who are enclosed in ice)

You who are enclosed in ice, conquered by such a flame, you too will love him. At dawn's first light, I will close my tired eyes, so that he will conquer again. Never to see him again! At dawn's first light I will close my tired eyes, never to see him again.

III

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF (1873-1943) was a Russian composer, pianist, and conductor. One of the finest pianists of his day, he was the last great representative of Russian late Romanticism. In composing for the piano, he fully explored its expressive possibilities. His predilection for sumptuous harmonies and broadly lyrical and passionate melodies allows for tone painting. In his songs, the piano echoes the sentiments of the text.

U moyevo okna is a purely lyrical song, in which the accompaniment takes over part of the vocal melody and develops independently almost as a piano study of the vocal sentiment.

U moyevo okna (Before my window)

Before my window stands a flowering cherry tree
And blossoms dreamily in robes of bridal whiteness.
Its silvery branches bend their brightness and rustling call to me.
The slight and trembling blooms I draw down from above
And lost in rapture, breathe their perfumes fresh and healing,
Until their heady sweetness sets my senses reeling.
The cherry blossoms sing a wordless song of love.

Siren' is another simple lyrical song, and is considered one of Rachmaninoff's finest mature settings. It was later transcribed as a piano solo. The piano accompaniment is prominent, but more subtly than in earlier songs.

Siren' (The lilacs)

At the red of the dawn, o'er the dewspangled lawn,
Where I meet the new day like a kiss,
In the sweet fragrant shade by the lilac trees made,
There I wander in search of my bliss.
For one joy, one alone, fate has given as my own,
And it dwells in yon fair lilac bower.
In its bright branches green, in its thick perfumed screen,
There my one poor lost joy breaks in flower.

K detyam is uncharacteristic of Komiakov, who was best known for his political poems. This lullaby-like piece displays a mother's nostalgia at the growing-up of her family.

K detyam (To the children)

How often at midnight in days long since fled, dear children,
I've watched with deep joy by your bed.
How often your brows have I signed with the cross,
And prayed there: God keep you from sorrow and loss;
The love of the Father protect you.
While calmly you slumbered, to keep you in sight,
To watch you and know that your souls were snow white,
To wish for you gladness and long happy years,
Untainted by evil, unbroken by fears.
How sweet, and how dear were those vigils!
But now, in the nursery reigns stillness and gloom.
Gone, gone the glad voices; no sound in the room;
No lamp lights the icon that hangs by the door.
My heart aches; the children are children no more.
What anguish to lose them forever!
Oh, children!
At midnight to old days be true;
And pray then for one who prays nightly for you.
Who oft on your brows made the sign of the cross;
And asked God to keep you from sorrow and loss.
The love of the Father protect you.

Vocalises are textless exercises or concert pieces to be sung on one or more vowels. They stem from two traditions: 1) solfeggi and exercises written in the early 19th century to be performed to piano accompaniment in the hope of a more artistic performance; and 2) existing songs used as vocal exercises by being sung without words. In the early 20th century composers began to write vocalises as concert pieces. This vocalise is one of those most frequently performed.

Ne poy. krasavitsa was written by one of Russia's best-known poets, Alexander Pushkin. He was credited with creating the language of modern Russian poetry. This setting echoes Russian Georgia's local coloring through vocal melismata and augmented intervals in the piano part.

Ne poy. krasavitsa! (Oh, never sing to me again)
Oh, never sing to me again the songs of Georgia, fair maiden.
Their tones recall to me in vain far distant shores with sorrow laden.
Alas! Those songs remembrance stir.
Full many memories round me gather.
The steppes at night in vision clear; the form and features of another!
This image, fatal yet so true, at sight of thee will surely vanish.
But at thy voice to rise anew, that all my striving fails to banish.
Oh, never sing to me again those songs of Georgia, fair maiden.
Their tones recall to me in vain far distant shores with sorrow laden.

Kak' mne bol'no is a dramatic setting of a poem by G. Galina. The agitated accompaniment emphasizes the singer's intensity.

Kak' mne bol'no (Sorrow in springtime)
How my heart aches, and yet I would live,
Now that spring with its fragrance is here!
No! I have not the strength to seek death once for all in the sleepless blue night.
Would that age could come swiftly to me.
Would that my brown locks were silvered with time!
Were I deaf to the laugh of the breeze,
To the nightingale's passionate voice as he pours out his heart in a song.
Far away, where the lilac trees bloom!
Would to Heaven that the silence and dusk were not filled with such pain and despair!

Uzh ti. niva moya was written by Alexei Tolstoy, a Russian aristocrat and distant cousin of Leo Tolstoy. He is chiefly known for his lyrics and ballads written in folk style. This setting uses modality and frequent time changes to evoke Russian folk music. The simple accompaniment becomes more agitated when describing the destruction of the crop.

Uzh ti. niva moya! (The harvest of sorrow)
Thou, my field, my beloved harvest field,
Who could hope to reap thee at one sickle sweep?
Who could bind thy riches in a single sheaf?
O my visions, o my cherished dreams,
Could one effort avail to drive you forth?
Could your meaning in one brief word be told?
Cruel winds have swept over my harvest field;
Low upon the soil lies the ruined corn.
All the ripened grain is scattered far!
Scattered too, my dear and cherished dreams of life!
Where they drifted, and fell again to earth,
Springs a crop of wild and unlovely weeds,
Springs the bitter growth of my sorrowing.
Ah! Ah!