

From Poetry to Song with Improvisation

*A Project Based Experience
The Longy School of Music of Bard College*

November 22, 2020
7:30 PM

Sam Connell, soprano
Rachel Edwards, soprano
Joi Harper, composer, piano

Monica Rajan, soprano
Yiming Zhao (Amy), piano
Brian Moll, Project Leader, piano

Joi Harper

Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979)

I Am in Need of Music

I am in need of music that would flow
Over my fretful, feeling fingertips,
Over my bitter-tainted, trembling lips,
With melody, deep, clear, and liquid-slow.
Oh, for the healing swaying, old and low,
Of some song sung to rest the tired dead,
A song to fall like water on my head,
And over quivering limbs, dream flushed to glow!

There is a magic made by melody:
A spell of rest, and quiet breath, and cool
Heart, that sinks through fading colors deep
To the subaqueous stillness of the sea,
And floats forever in a moon-green pool,
Held in the arms of rhythm and of sleep.

Sam Connell

**Otto Julius Biermaum (18650-1910)
Richard Strauss (1864-1949)**

**Traum durch die Dämmerung/
Dream in the Twilight**

Dream in the Twilight

Wide meadows in grey twilight;
The sun has set, the stars come out,
I go now to the most beautiful woman,
Far over meadows in grey twilight,
Deep in the bush of jasmine.
Through grey twilight in the land of love;
I go not fast, I hurry not;
I am drawn by a soft velvet ribbon
Through grey twilight in the land of love,
In a gentle blue light.

Maurice Carême (1899-1978)
Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Le sommeil/Sleep

Sleep is on a voyage
My God! Where did it go?
I have rocked my little one in vain;
He is crying in his crib,
He has been crying since noon.
Where has sleep put
His sand and wise dreams?
I have rocked my little one in vain;
He tosses and turns perspiring,
He sobs in his bed,
Ah! Come back, come back, sleep,
On your beautiful race horse!
In the black sky, the Great Bear
Has buried the sun
And rekindled his bees.
If baby doesn't sleep well,
He will not say good morning,
He will not say anything tomorrow
To his fingers, the milk, the bread
That greet him in the day.

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)
André Previn (1929-2019)

As Imperceptibly as Grief

As imperceptibly as Grief
The Summer lapsed away –
Too imperceptible at last
To seem like Perfidy –
A Quietness distilled
As Twilight long begun,
Or Nature spending with herself
Sequestered Afternoon –
The Dusk drew earlier in –
The Morning foreign shone –
A courteous, yet harrowing Grace,
As Guest, that would be gone –
And thus, without a Wing
Or service of a Keel
Our Summer made her light escape
Into the Beautiful.

Monica Rajan

Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

A Letter to Anne

Since I left you, Anne,
I have seen nothing but you.
Every day
Has been your face,
And every night your hand
And every road
Your voice calling me.
And every rock and every flower and tree
Has been a touch of you.
Nowhere
Have I seen anything else but you.

Rachel Edwards

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)

The Cloths of Heaven

Ivor Gurney (1890-1937)

Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths
Enwrought with golden and silver light
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half-light,

I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

Robert Hillyer (1895-1961)

Morning in Paris

John Duke (1899-1984)

Early in the morning
Of a lovely summer day,
As they lowered the bright awning
At the outdoor café,
I was breakfasting on croissants
And café au lait
Under greenery like scenery,
Rue François Premier.

They were hosing the hot pavement
With a dash of flashing spray
And a smell of summer showers
When the dust is drenched away,
Under greenery like scenery,
Rue François Premier.
I was twenty and a lover
And in Paradise to stay,
Very early in the morning
Of a lovely summer day.

Joi Harper

Melvin Dixon (1950-1992)

Heartbeats

Work out. Ten laps.
Chin ups. Look good.

Steam room. Dress warm.
Call home. Fresh air.

Eat right. Rest well.
Sweetheart. Safe sex.

Sore throat. Long flu.
Hard nodes. Beware.

Test blood. Count cells.
Reds thin. Whites low.

Dress warm. Eat well.
Short breath. Fatigue.

Night sweats. Dry cough.
Loose stools. Weight loss.

Get mad. Fight back.
Call home. Rest well.

Don't cry. Take charge.
No sex. Eat right.

Call home. Talk slow.
Chin up. No air.

Arms wide. Nodes hard.
Cough dry. Hold on.

Mouth wide. Drink this.
Breathe in. Breathe out.

No air. Breathe in.
Breathe in. No air.

Black out. White rooms.
Head hot. Feet cold.

No work. Eat right.
CAT scan. Chin up.

Breathe in. Breathe out.
No air. No air.

Thin blood. Sore lungs.
Mouth dry. Mind gone.

Six months? Three weeks?
Can't eat. No air.

Today? Tonight?
It waits. For me.

Sweet heart. Don't stop.
Breathe in. Breathe out.

Monica Rajan

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

Will There Really Be a Morning?

Will there really be a "Morning"?
Is there such a thing as "Day"?
Could I see it from the mountains
If I were as tall as they?

Has it feet like Water lilies?
Has it feathers like a Bird?
Is it brought from famous countries
Of which I have never heard?

Oh some Scholar! Oh some Sailor!
Oh some Wise Men from the skies!
Please to tell a little Pilgrim
Where the place called "Morning" lies!

Sara Teasdale (1844-1933)
John Duke (1899-1984)

February Twilight

I stood beside a hill
Smooth with new-laid snow,
A single star looked out
From the cold evening glow.
There was no other creature
That saw what I could see
I stood and watched the evening star
As long as it watched me.

Texts spoken with the piano parts of two art songs

Rachel Edwards, Monica Rajan, Sam Connell, Joi Harper

Eduard Möricke (1804-1875)

Hugo Wolf (1860-1903)

Im Frühling/In Springtime

Monica Rajan

Jules Renard (1864-1910)

Maurice Ravel(1875-1937)

Le cygne/The Swan

Sam Connell, Rachel Edwards

Joi Harper, Amy Zhao, piano

Alfred Young Fisher (1903-1970)

Joi Harper (b. 1998)

Duet: April Rain (Premiere)

April rain in the wind-washed clover,
Sing melodies to ease deep pain, deep death.

Gently blow above her,

April rain.

If song nor wind nor wind-washed strain of song can comfort her,

O, then cover her with silence and never come again.

Silence and peace to those who love her,

Peace in the eyes of the windy plain,

Earth nor sky nor song can move her

Nor April rain.

Monica Rajan

W. H. Auden (1907-1973)
Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

When You're Feeling Like Expressing Your Affection

When you're feeling like expressing your affection
For someone night and day,
Take up the phone and ask for your connection,
We'll give it right away.

Eve or Adam, anyone you ask for
We'll find somehow.
Sir or Madam, if you get a taste for
Paris, Berlin, Moscow,
Enter any telephone kiosk O,
Have your say,
Press button A,
Here's your number now.