

Hopes, Dreams, & Realities: Program Notes and Translations

Thematic Background

During my graduate studies, I've found interest in exploring the aspects of life which truly hold meaning (in comparison to those which are given importance by society). The phrase "hopes and dreams" is conventionally understood as one's individual life aspirations, including those related to love, stability, and success. In this program, I have included pieces whose texts fit this definition as well as ones that examine "hopes" (longing, desires outside of oneself) and "dreams" (fantasies, images seen during sleep) on their own. In life, some of these hopes and dreams may turn into realities (perhaps with slight variation from their original conceptions, but realities nonetheless). To represent a well-rounded perspective of life, I have also included pieces which discuss some of life's harsh realities, including heartbreak, death, war, and mental illness. In combination, the pieces in this program reveal the intersections of these themes, allowing audience members to question the ways people (including themselves) move through and find fulfillment in life.

"Ch'amor sia nudo" - music and text by Francesca Caccini

Humans experience love in numerous ways, including familial, romantic, and platonic. But what even *is* love, and how can it be defined? Caccini's poetry examines several aspects of love and describes the ways that it may present itself in one's life. In each of the four verses, she makes clear distinctions between false and true love to tell us that love is attainable, intentional, serene, and real.

Ch'amor sia nudo, e pur con l'ali al tergo
Stia sotto il cielo e non procuri albergo
È vanità.

Ma che per gli occhi egli dicend' al petto
Et ivi posi et ivi abbia ricetto
È verità.

E ch'ei sia cieco, e che non mai rimiri
Ove percota, e così l'arco tiri
È vanità.

Ma ch'apra il guardo, e senz' alcuna benda
E' pigli mira, e quindi l'arco tenda
È verità.

Che fra mortali, e che fra cor celesti
Leggier sen voli, e non già mai s'arresti
È vanità.

Ma ch'ove posi un giorno sol le piume
Eternamente abbia di star costume
È verità.

Et io mel so, che s'egli avvien ch'io nieghi,
Cha suoi fier gioghi questo collo io pieghi
È vanità.

Ma s'io dirò, che 'n amorose tempre,
Et ardo, et arsi, et arderò mai sempre
È verità.

That love is naked, and even with wings on its back,
that it lives under the heavens and needs no shelter—
that is vanity.

But that, through the eyes, it descends into the breast,
and there it settles, and there it finds refuge—
that is truth.

And that it is blind, and that it never looks back
at what it strikes, and thus it aims its bow—
that is vanity.

But that it opens its eyes and, without blindfold,
takes aim, and then readies its bow to shoot—
that is truth.

That among mortals, and among heavenly hearts,
it flies lightly, and never rests—
that is vanity.

But that, wherever it rests its feathers, even for just one day,
it remains there forever out of habit—
that is truth.

And I know, that if it happens that I should refuse,
to bend my neck to its fierce yoke—
that is vanity.

But if I say that, in amorous tempers,
I burn, and have burned, and will always burn—
that is truth.

Translation by Sophie Berman

“Par la souveraine sagesse...Ah! Quelle affreuse image” from *Esther* – music by Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre, text by Antoine Houdar de La Motte

**Content warning: antisemitism, death*

Esther was a young Jewish woman in Persia during the fourth century B.C.E. She caught King Ahasuerus’ eye in his search to find a new wife, and so she became Queen of Persia. The King’s close confidant, Haman, sought to eradicate the Jews after Esther’s cousin, Mordechai, refused to bow down to him. Mordechai alerts Esther of this plan, pleading that she must use her royal power to save her people. However, Esther has concealed her Jewish identity from the King up to this point. In this piece, Esther is tormented as she imagines the horrible carnage that will ensue if she stays silent.

Esther goes on to further charm the King before revealing herself as a Jew and exposing Haman’s plan, and the King supports her and puts Haman to death. This concludes the story of Purim, a Jewish holiday which I grew up celebrating with my family. I’ve always admired Esther for standing up for her community, even though she could have suffered a terrible fate. Purim has taught me the importance of being yourself and standing up for what you believe in, no matter the cost. This lesson pops up in various contexts throughout life; in the most complex situations, I find comfort in its simplicity.

Par la souveraine Sagesse	By sovereign wisdom,
Esther fut amenée au trône des Persans;	Esther was brought to the throne of the Persians;
Seule, par ses charmes puissans,	alone, using her powerful charms,
Du cœur d’Assuerus elle avoit la tendresse:	she won the heart of King Ahasuerus with her tenderness:
Mais que luy sert l’éclat d’un si haut rang?	But what use, to him, is such abundant brilliance?
Dans ce moment fatal quel danger la menace?	In this fatal moment, what danger threatens?
Elle apprend que des Juifs	She learns that the Jews
on a proscrit la race,	have been outcast from the kingdom,
Et le fer dans dix jours doit verser tout leur sang.	and, in ten days, the iron blade must shed all their blood.

Ah! Quelle affreuse image	Ah! What a terrible image
Se trace à ses esprits?	is drawn in her mind?
Que de pleurs! Que de cris!	One of tears! One of cries!
Quel horrible carnage!	What horrible carnage!

Le barbare courroux	The wrathful barbarian
Opprime l’innocence;	oppresses the innocent;
La Vieillesse et l’Enfance	The old and the young
Expirent sous vos coups:	die by your hand:
Ciel! prenez leur deffense,	Heaven! Come to their defense,
Les abandonnez-vous?	Do you abandon them?
	<i>Translation by Sophie Berman</i>

“Le coup est achevé” from *Judith* – music by Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre, text by Antoine Houdar de La Motte

**Content warning: death*

Judith was a Jewish woman who lived in the town of Bethulia, which was overtaken by Assyrian troops in the first century B.C.E. She was upset by her leaders who were doing little to fight off these troops, so she decided to take matters into her own hands. She goes to the tent of the Assyrian general, Holofernes, where she successfully seduces and murders him - this piece celebrates her victory.

Before discovering this piece, I was unfamiliar with the story of Judith (as it is removed from the Hebrew canon). Like Esther, Judith is willing to make great sacrifices for her community. However, Judith's behavior is more daring and impulsive, and she seems unafraid at the thought of doing some dirty work. Judith's unapologetic pride in her achievements is commendable to say the least. As I am often plagued with overthinking and self-doubt in my musical career and other parts of my life, I've learned from Judith to trust my abilities and go with my gut instincts.

Le coup est achevé,
Quelle gloire éclatante,
Judith est triomphante,
Israël est sauvé!

The blow is dealt,
what dazzling glory,
Judith is triumphant,
Israel is saved!

Pour ce Guerrier trop tendre,
Il n'est plus de reveil,
La mort vient de le prendre
Dans les bras du sommeil.

For this too-tender warrior
there is no more waking,
Death has taken him
into the arms of slumber.

Translation by Veronika Anissimova

Selections from **Mörike Lieder** – music by Hugo Wolf, text by Eduard Mörike

In this set of songs, I imagine a single character who is going through heartbreak. She begins with “Er ist’s” as a flashback to a time when she was happy and full of life – before *he* showed up and ruined everything. In “Das verlassene Mägdlein,” she is brought back to her present reality and is reminded of why she is so sad. “Verborgenheit” allows her to settle into a depressed state, even after experiencing a brief moment of joy. She then falls asleep and has a series of weird dreams, described in “Elfenlied” and “Nixe Binsefuss.” She is woken up by an intruder in “Abschied,” who criticizes her looks and tells her a bunch of nonsense. Our protagonist eventually finds the will to kick the intruder down the stairs (and finds great joy in doing so).

In combination, these pieces touch on each aspect of this recital's theme: there is hope in the promise of spring, there are dreams in the worlds of little elves and mermaids, and there are cruel realities in the despair of a broken heart. These songs have taught me several lessons: it is okay to be sensitive and feel your feelings, progress is not linear, and joy can be found in unexpected circumstances, to name a few. The main character undergoes a sea of emotions in response to just one life event, and it is crucial to process such feelings in our own time. Taking the time to process emotions allows us to keep moving through life with clarity and purpose.

“Er ist’s”

“Spring is here”

Frühling lässt sein blaues Band
Wieder flattern durch die Lüfte;
Süße, wohlbekannte Düfte
Streifen ahnungsvoll das Land.

Spring lets its blue banner
flutter through the air again;
sweet, well-remembered scents
ominously streak across the land.

Veilchen träumen schon,
Wollen balde kommen.

Violets, already dreaming,
wish to bloom soon.

Horch, von fern
ein leiser Harfenton!
Frühling, ja du bist's!
Dich hab ich vernommen!

Listen, from afar,
a quiet harpnote!
Spring, yes it's you!
It's you I've heard!

“Das verlassene Mägdlein”

“The forsaken servant-girl”

Früh, wann die Hähne krähn,
Eh' die Sternlein schwinden,
Muss ich am Herde stehn,
Muss Feuer zünden.

Early, when the roosters crow,
before the stars fade,
I must stand at the fireplace,
I must light the fire.

Schön ist der Flamme Schein,
Es springen die Funken;
Ich schaue so darein,
In Leid versunken.

The flames' glow is beautiful,
the sparks fly;
I gaze at them,
sunk in sorrow.

Plötzlich, da kommt es mir,
Treuloser Knabe,
Dass ich die Nacht von dir
Geträumet habe.

Suddenly, I realize,
faithless boy,
that I, in the night,
dreamed of you.

Träne auf Träne dann
Stürzt hernieder;
So kommt der Tag heran—
O ging' er wieder!

Tear after tear
then falls down;
so the day dawns—
oh, there it goes again!

“Verborgtheit”

“Seclusion”

Lass, o Welt, o lass mich sein!
Locket nicht mit Liebesgaben,
Lasst dies Herz alleine haben
Seine Wonne, seine Pein!

Let, oh world, oh let me be!
Tempt me not with love-gifts,
let this heart alone have
its bliss, its pain!

Was ich traure, weiss ich nicht,
Es ist unbekanntes Wehe;
Immerdar durch Tränen sehe
Ich der Sonne liebes Licht.

What I mourn, I know not,
it is unknown woe;
always through a veil of tears
I see the sun's loving light.

Oft bin ich mir kaum bewusst,
Und die helle Freude zücket
Durch die Schwere, so mich drückt
Wonniglich in meiner Brust.

Often, I am lost in thought,
and bright joy erupts
through the heaviness, which presses me
delightfully in my breast.

Lass, o Welt, o lass mich sein!
Locket nicht mit Liebesgaben,
Lasst dies Herz alleine haben
Seine Wonne, seine Pein!

Let, oh world, oh let me be!
Tempt me not with love-gifts,
let this heart alone have
its bliss, its pain!

“Elfenlied”

Bei Nacht im Dorf der Wächter rief: “Elfe!”
Ein ganz kleines Elfchen im Walde schlief –
Wohl um die Elfe –
Und meint, es rief ihm aus dem Tal
Bei seinem Namen die Nachtigall,
Oder Silpelit hätt ihm gerufen.

Reibt sich der Elf die Augen aus,
Begibt sich vor sein Schneckenhaus,
Und ist als wie ein trunken Mann,
Sein Schläflein war nicht voll getan,
Und humpelt also tippe tapp
Durchs Haselholz ins Tal hinab,
Schlupft an der Mauer hin so dicht,
Da sitzt der Glühwurm, Licht an Licht.

“Was sind das helle Fensterlein?
Da drin wird eine Hochzeit sein:
Die Kleinen sitzen beim Mahle,
Und treibens in dem Saale;
Da guck ich wohl ein wenig ‘nein!’”

– Pfui, stösst den Kopf an harten Stein!
Elfe, gelt, du hast genug?
Gukuk! Gukuk!

“Nixe Binsefuss”

Des Wassermanns sein Töchterlein
Tanzte auf dem Eis im Vollmondschein,
Sie singt und lachet sonder Scheu
Wohl an des Fischers Haus vorbei.

“Ich bin die Jungfer Binsefuss,
Und meine Fisch wohl hüten muss;
Meine Fisch, die sind im Kasten,
Sie haben kalte Fasten;
Von Böhmerglas mein Kasten ist,
Da zähl ich sie zu jeder Frist.

Gelt, Fischer-Matz? gelt, alter Tropf,
Dir will der Winter nicht in Kopf?
Komm mir mit deinen Netzen!
Die will ich schön zerfetzen!
Dein Mägdlein zwar ist fromm und gut,
Ihr Schatz ein braves Jägerblut.

“Elf-song”

At night, in the village, the watchman shouted: “Eleven!”
A very little elf slept in the forest—
around 11:00pm!—
And thinks the nightingale called him from the valley
by his name,
or Silpelit had sent for him.

The elf rubs his eyes,
steps out of his snail-shell house,
and looks like a drunk man—
for his little nap was not fully done—
and hobbles down, tippety tap,
through the hazelwoods into the valley,
slips right up against the wall,
where the glow-worm sits, shining bright.

“What are these bright little windows?
there must be a wedding inside:
the little guests are sitting at the feast
and dancing in the ballroom;
I’ll take a little peek inside!”

Oof! He hits his head on hard stone!
Elf, don’t you think you’ve had enough?
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!

“The Mermaid Reedfoot”

The water spirit’s little daughter
dances on the ice in the full moonlight,
she sings and laughs without fear
past the fisherman’s house.

I am the maiden Reedfoot,
and I must guard my fish;
my fish, they are in this casket,
having a cold fast;
my casket’s made of Bohemian glass,
and I count them whenever I can.

Not so, fisherman? Not so, old rascal,
you cannot understand it’s winter?
If you come at me with your nets,
I’ll tear them all to shreds!
Your little girl indeed is devout and good,
and her darling’s a brave huntsman.

Drum häng ich ihr, zum Hochzeitsstrauss,
Ein schilfen Kränzlein vor das Haus,
Und einen Hecht, von Silber schwer,
Er stammt von König Artus her,
Ein Zwerger-Goldschmieds-Meisterstück,
Wers hat, dem bringt es eitel Glück:
Er lässt sich schuppen Jahr für Jahr,
Da sinds fünfhundert Gröschlein bar.

Ade, mein Kind! Ade für heut!
Der Morgenhahn im Dorfe schreit."

"Abschied"

Unangeklopft ein Herr tritt Abends bei mir ein:
"Ich habe die Ehr, Ihr Rezensent zu sein!"
Sofort nimmt er das Licht in die Hand,
Besieht lang meinen Schatten an der Wand,
Rückt nah und fern: "Nun, lieber junger Mann,
Sehn Sie doch gefälligst mal Ihre Nas so von der Seite an!
Sie geben zu, daß das ein Auswuchs is."
– Das? Alle Wetter – gewiß!
Ei Hasen! ich dachte nicht,
All' mein Lebtag nicht,
Daß ich so eine Weltsnase führt im Gesicht!!

Der Mann sprach noch Verschiedenes hin und her,
Ich weiß, auf meine Ehre, nicht mehr;
Meinte vielleicht, ich sollt ihm beichten.
Zuletzt stand er auf; ich tat ihm leuchten.
Wie wir nun an der Treppe sind,
Da geb ich ihm, ganz froh gesinnt,
Einen kleinen Tritt
Nur so von hinten aufs Gesäße mit –
Alle Hagel! ward das ein Gerumpel,
Ein Gepurzel, ein Gehumpel!
Dergleichen hab ich nie gesehn,
All mein Lebtag nicht gesehn,
Einen Menschen so rasch die Trepp hinabgehn!

That's why I'll hang this wedding bouquet—
a reed wreath in front of her house;
and a pike of solid silver,
from King Arthur's time—
a dwarf-goldsmith's masterpiece,
which brings its owner good luck:
it sheds its scales each year,
that's worth five hundred groshen in cash.

Farewell, my child! Farewell for today!
The morning rooster shouts in the village."

Without knocking, a man enters my room one evening:
"I have the honor to be your critic!"
He immediately takes my lamp in his hand,
inspects my shadow on the wall,
moves back and forth: "Now, dear young man,
look kindly at your nose from the side, like this!
You'll admit that it's a monstrosity."
– What? Good heavens – you're right!
Bless my soul! I never thought,
not once in all my life,
that I had such a huge nose lodged in my face!!

The man said yet more random things,
I know, on my honor, no more;
Maybe he thought I should confess to him.
At last he stood; I lit his way.
As we stood at the top of the stairs,
I gave him, quite happy-minded,
A wee little kick
from behind, on his butt –
Goodness me! What a rumbling,
a tumbling, a stumbling!
I've never seen anything like this,
Never in all my life have I seen
a man go downstairs so quickly!
Translations by Sophie Berman

Six Romances, Op. 38 – music by Sergei Rachmaninoff

Like the Caccini piece, these six romances examine love in various configurations. However, Rachmaninoff incorporates several different poets' works to explore love not only between humans, but also within individuals and within nature. Each song's text incorporates symbolism to portray the fine lines between good and bad, as well as those between reality and delusion:

“In My Garden at Night” describes unrequited love through the metaphor of a weeping willow.

“Ночью в саду у меня” - text by Alexander Blok

“In My Garden at Night”

Ночью в саду у меня
Плачет плакучая ива,
И безутешна она
Ивушка, Грустная ива.

In my garden at night
a weeping willow cries,
and she is inconsolable—
weeping willow, sad willow.

Раннее утро блеснет,
Нежная девушка Зорька
Ивушка, плачущей горько,
Слёзы кудрями сотрет.

When early morning shines,
tender maiden dawn
will dry weeping willow’s bitter
tears with her curls.

In “To Her,” we hear bitter conflict and confusion in the loss of a romantic partner, noted when the underworldly river of forgetfulness, Lethe, “washes years away.”

“К ней” - text by Andrey Bely

“To Her”

Травы одеты перлами.
Где-то приветы
Грустные слышу,
Приветы милые . . .
Милая, где ты,
Милая!

The grass is dressed with pearls.
From somewhere,
I hear mournful greetings,
cherished greetings...
Darling, where are you?
Darling!

Вечера светлые ясные,
Вечера светлые красные
Руки воздеты:
Жду тебя,
Милая, где ты,
Милая?

The evening lights are clear,
the evening lights are red,
my arms raised,
I await you;
Darling, where are you?
Darling?

Руки воздеты:
Жду тебя,
В струях
Леты смытую
Бледными Леты
струями...
Милая, где ты,
Милая!

My arms raised,
I await you;
in the streams,
the Lethe washes years away,
pale Lethe,
in the streams...
Darling, where are you?
Darling!

Flowers bloom together in “Daisies,” bringing beauty and vibrancy to the Earth.

“Маргаритки” - text by Igor Severyanin

“Daisies”

О, посмотри, как много маргариток—
И там, и тут.
Они цветут, их много; их избыток;
Они цветут.

Oh, look, how many daisies —
and here, and there.
They are blooming – so many, so abundant.
They are blooming.

Их лепестки трёхгранные—как крылья,
Как белый шёлк.
В них лета мощ! В них радость изобилья,
В них слетлый полк.

Their petals are triangular — like wings,
like white silk.
They have summer's power! They have the joy of abundance,
they are a radiant regiment.

Готовь, земля, цветам из рос напиток,
Дай сок стеблю . . .
О, девушки! о, звезды маргариток!
Я вас люблю . . .

Earth, prepare the flowers a dew drink,
give the stems juice...
Oh maidens, oh starry daisies,
I love you!

In “Pied Piper,” a musician aims to lure in a girl with the sounds of his magical bagpipe.

“Крысолов” - text by Valery Yakovlevich Bryusov

“Pied Piper”

Я на дудочке играю,—
Тра-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля,
Я на дудочке играю,
Чьи-то души веселя.

I play upon my bagpipe —
tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
I play upon my bagpipe,
making people's souls merry.

Я иду вдоль тихой речки,
Тра-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля,
Дремлют тихие овечки,
Кротко зыблются поля.

I walk along a quiet stream,
tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
the sheep doze quietly,
the fields wave softly.

Спите, овцы и барашки,
Тра-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля,
За лугами красной кашки
Стройно встали тополя.

Sleep, sheep and lambs,
tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
beyond the meadows of red clover
slender poplars rise.

Малый домик там таится,
Тра-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля,
Милой девушке приснится,
Что ей душу отдал я.

A small house is hidden there,
tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
a sweet girl dreams
that I gave her my soul.

И на нежный зов свирели,
Тра-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля,
Выйдет словно к светлой цели
Через сад через поля.

And at the gentle call of my flute,
tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
she will come out as if to a radiant goal,
through the garden, through the fields.

И в лесу под дубом темным,
Тра-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля,
Будет ждать в бреду истомном,
В час, когда уснет земля.

And in the forest under a dark oak,
tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
she will wait in dazed delirium,
during the hour when the Earth falls asleep.

Встречу гостью дорогую,
Тра-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля,
Вплоть до утра зацелую,
Сердце лаской утоля.
И, сменившись с ней колечком,
Тра-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля,
Отпущу ее к овечкам,
В сад, где стройны тополя.

I'll meet my dear guest,
tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
I'll kiss her until morning—
my heart is caressed with kisses.
And when I've exchanged a ring with her,
tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
I'll let her go to the sheep,
to the garden, with the slender poplars.

“Dream” tells of the beauty of sleep, exploring how its calmness gives freedom to the imagination.

“Сон” - text by Fyodor Sologub

“Dream”

В мире нет ничего
Дожделеннее сна,
Чары есть у него,
У него тишина,
У него на устах
Ни печаль и ни смех,
И в бездонных очах
Много тайных утех.

There is nothing in the world
better than sleep,
it is enchanting,
it is silent,
it has on its lips
neither sadness nor laughter
and, in bottomless eyes,
many secret pleasures.

У него широки,
Широки два крыла,
И легки, так лёгки,
Как полночная мгла.
Не понять, как несёт,
И куда и на чем
Он крылом не взмахнет
И не двинет плечом.

It has wide,
wide two wings,
and they are light, so light,
like a midnight haze.
How it carries you is unknown,
and where, and on what,
it won't flap its wing
and won't move its shoulder.

We hear the outcry “A-oo!” during a frantic chase through the mountains, in hopes of reconnecting with a lover.

“Ау” - text by Konstantin Dmitrevich Bal'mont

“A-oo!”

Твой нежный смех был сказкою изменчивою,
Он звал как в сон зовёт свирельный звон.
И вот венком, стихом тебя увенчиваю,
Уйдём, бежим вдвоем на горный склон.

Your gentle laugh was like a volatile fairytale,
calling like a flute in a dream.
Now I crown you with a wreath of poetry verse,
let's go, let's run together to the mountainside.

Но где же ты?
Лишь звон вершин позванивает.
Цветку цветок средь дня зажег свечу.
И чей-то смех все в глубь меня заманивает.

But where are you?
Only the sound of the peaks is ringing.
a flower, for another flower, lit a candle in midday.
And someone's laughter deeply lures me.

Пою, ищу,
Ау!
Ау!
кричу.

I sing, I search,
“A-oo!”
“A-oo!”
I shout.

Translations by Sophie Berman

Selections from *Ba— poems from Ocean* – music by Dylan Trăn, text by Ocean Vuong

**Content warning: war, gun violence, death, profanity, generational trauma*

Notes on the set (from Trăn):

Ba— poems from Ocean explores the dualities of the father figure. This is conveyed through constant shifts between expressions of admiration, fear, anger, judgment, confusion, care, etc. towards the father. Lines describing gentle caresses are pressed up against descriptions of violent acts. In a given song, the singer both condemns and nurses, both emulates and rejects, runs both from and toward their father.

The songs are from a child’s perspective, taking place in present moments between father and son, in the son’s memory, or in the recollection of second-hand stories. Often the narration will shift between present, past, and future tenses, conveying temporal scale. The piece culminates in a statement near the end of the final song, “I am chasing my father the way the dead chase after days—”. To me, this is not just a literal description of a child running towards their father, but a later-in-life realization of the impact their father had on their life. The realization that perhaps, through all of their striving for success, their efforts to be known, their bids for closeness, part of them has always been chasing their father.

Notes on each piece (from Sophie):

“Threshold”

“Threshold” explores a child’s reaction to the sounds of water and singing in a shower, sparking their interest in music. When discussing the poem in interviews, Vuong describes how his continuous learning about poetry and language brings him into another world, while simultaneously disconnecting him from his loved ones who are unable to read and understand his work. This made me think of music in a new way, as if I am in another world which only my fellow musicians can understand. The more I delve into my studies and refine my craft, the more I am separated from my non-musical friends and family. It is a strange, specific kind of exile, but ultimately one that we musicians must all endure – because the way we move through our craft not only makes us better musicians, but also allows us to better understand ourselves.

In the body, where everything has a price,
I was a beggar. On my knees,

I watched, through the keyhole, not
the man showering, but the rain

falling through him: guitar strings snapping
over his globed shoulders.

He was singing, which is why

I remember it. His voice –
it filled me to the core
like a skeleton. Even my name
knelt down inside me, asking
to be spared.
He was singing. It is all I remember.
For in the body, where everything has a price,
I was alive. I didn't know
there was a better reason.
That one morning, my father would stop
– a dark colt paused in downpour –
& listen for my clutched breath
behind the door. I didn't know the cost
of entering a song – was to lose
your way back.
So I entered. So I lost.
I lost it all with me eyes
wide open.

“Telemachus”

The original Greek myth of Telemachus tells the story of a son finding his long-lost father, Odysseus, and fighting alongside him in battle. In Vuong's “Telemachus,” this story is recreated in the context of the Vietnam War, but the son finds his father dead in this version. This means they were never able to meet, and the son must mourn all the things he never got to experience with his father. Although they will never know each other, the son is horrified by the idea of becoming his father and inheriting violence.

Like any good son, I pull my father out
of the water, drag him by his hair
through white sand, his knuckles carving a trail
the waves rush in to erase. Because the city
beyond the shore is no longer
where we left it. Because the bombed
cathedral is now a cathedral
of trees. I kneel beside him to see how far

I might sink. *Do you know who I am,*
Ba? But the answer never comes. The answer

is the bullet hole in his back, brimming
with seawater. He is so still I think

he could be anyone's father, found
the way a green bottle might appear

at a boy's feet containing a year
he has never touched. I touch

his ears. No use. I turn him
over. To face it. The cathedral

in his sea-black eyes. The face
not mine – but one I will wear

to kiss all my lovers good-night:
the way I seal my father's lips

with my own & begin
the faithful work of drowning.

"In Newport I Watch My Father Lay His Cheek to a Beached Dolphin's Wet Back"

During "In Newport...", a child describes their father experiencing war-related PTSD. The child analyzes the patterns and triggers in their father's behavior, and they also reflect on how the father's actions affect their family dynamic. The child struggles to understand how their father can give such care and compassion to an unfamiliar dolphin, but yet treats his own loved ones with rage and violence. Furthermore, this piece serves as a larger commentary on the treatment of war veterans and victims of gun violence in America.

In Newport I Watch My Father Lay His Cheek to a Beached Dolphin's Wet Back

& close his eyes. His hair the shade

of its cracked flesh.

His right arm, inked with three falling

phoenixes – torches

marking the lives he had

or had not taken – cradles

the pinkish snout. Its teeth

gleaming like bullets.

Huey. Tomahawk. Semi

-automatic. I was static

as we sat in the Nissan, watching *the* waves

brush over our breaths

when he broke for the shore, hobbled

on his gimp leg. Mustard

-yellow North Face jacket
smeared into ours. Shrapnel
I saw him run like that, he had
a nail-length out of reach.
flickering on his whiskey
screaming down Franklin Ave.
says the sniper. Fuck you
through palm leaves. Confetti
Green despite the red despite
in ink-black mud, he guides
blowhole. Ok. Okay. AK
as he kneels to gather the wet refugee
swallowing
gasping like a newborn's
I am swinging open
toward a rusted horizon, running
to run out of. I am chasing my father
days – & although I am still
by the way his neck tilts
that he is singing
to his empty hands.

diminishing toward the grey life
-strapped. Bushwhacker. The last time
a hammer in his fist, mother
America. America a row of streetlights
-lips as we ran. A family
ADD. PTSD. POW. Pow. Pow. Pow
says the father, tracers splashing
green, how I want you green.
the rest. His knees sunk
a ribbon of water to the pulsing
-47. I am eleven only once
into his arms. Waves
his legs. The dolphin's eye
mouth. & once more
the passenger door. I am running
out of a country
the way the dead chase after
too far to hear it, I can tell,
to one side, as if broken,
my favorite song

Thank You :)

to my family: Mom, Dad, and David - for always supporting me and cheering me on in all of my musical endeavors.

to my voice teacher: Carol Mastrodomenico – for taking the time and care to nurture my voice as it has grown over the past two years.

to my collaborators: Noah, Dr. Dudas, Noriko, Guinevere, Brian, and those up in the booth + backstage – for helping me bring this recital to life.

to my Longy colleagues and mentors - for giving me a multitude of opportunities to expand my craft and make music with other artists who share my love for this art form.

to my former teachers and fellow musicians from DePauw and Sachem – for helping me find this path and guiding me to where I am today.

to everyone in the audience, both in person and online – for spending this time with me, and for allowing me to share these stories with you.