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Junior Recital: Parker Otwell Roe

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JUNIOR RECITAL

Parker Otwell Roe, tenor

assisted by
Joanne Kong, harpsichord
Megan Smith, mezzo-soprano
Karen Adam, piano

APRIL 8, 2003, 7:30 PM
PERKINSON RECITAL HALL
Vittoria, mio core!  
Gian Giacomo Carissimi  
(ca 1604-1674)

Come raggio di sol  
Antonio Caldara  
(ca 1671-1736)

Son tutta duolo  
Alessandro Scarlatti  
(1660-1725)

from Four Duets, op. 20  
Antonín Dvořák  
(1841-1904)

Rozloučení (The Parting)  
Chudoba (The Silken Band)  
Vuře, šohaj, vuře (The Last Wish)

On Wenlock Edge  
Ralph Vaughan Williams  
(1872-1958)

I. On Wenlock Edge  
II. From Far, From Eve and Morning  
III. Is My Team Ploughing  
IV. Oh, When I Was in Love with You  
V. Bredon Hill  
VI. Clun

Parker Otwell Roe, tenor  
Ilan McNamara, violin  
Lauren Kim, violin  
Katherine Dixon, viola  
Davis Massey, cello  
Gita Massey, piano

Don't worry about it,  
I got it... just chill It  
help me break down
The most important composer in mid-17th-century Rome, Carissimi established the characteristic features of the Latin oratorio and was a prolific composer of motets and cantatas. By the time Carissimi began composing cantatas, the years of experimentation were past but the rigidity of the mature Baroque had not set in: no longer a madrigal or a simple monody, the cantata was not yet a formalized succession of recitatives and arias. The combination of self-assurance and unpredictability gives the cantata of the mid-17th century a special charm. Together with his slightly older contemporary, Luigi Rossi, Carissimi was responsible for defining the characteristic features of the emergent genre. A great choral composer, he was also known for his solo cantatas, which were sung by professional singers who entertained in the homes of the wealthy. *Vittoria, mio core* is one of about 150 cantatas by Carissimi, most of which are much longer and more complex.

*Vittoria, mio core* is, at its core, a song of triumph and joyful freedom. The narrator, having broken the age-old bonds of love that had tied him to a less than happy relationship, is now free once again to enjoy the carefree life of the bachelor. So enraptured is he at his freedom that he repeatedly sings of his victory, vittoria, and the end of his slavery, *servitù*, during the refrains. His elated emotion is directly reflected in the ascending eighth-note vocal runs at the end of each refrain. The verses, more recitative-like, are filled with the back-story of his hateful lover and their doomed love affair. The tone of the verses is more of righteous indignation as the narrator explains why his freedom is so sweet. This tone is displayed in the conversational mode of the voice and the solid, supportive chords of the harpsichord that serve to bolster his argument.
Come raggio di sol  
Antonio Caldara

Nothing is known about the origin of this piece, which appeared in published collections in the 1800s. Antonio Caldara was one of the most prolific among an unusually productive generation of composers and contributed to the rapid evolution of Italian vocal music. Until his music has been completely researched, one cannot say with certainty whether this is a genuine composition of Caldara’s or a Romantic period forgery.

The text of the song speaks of a lover’s façade – a placid and serene
surface that hides the anguish and torture inside. The poetry of the piece compares this to the way the surface of the ocean hides the currents and tempest beneath. In this manner, the slow and steady rhythm of the harpsichord represents the current of the sea over which the vocal melody lightly rests, like a ray of sunshine.

Son tutta duolo  
Alessandro Scarlatti

Scarlatti has often been referred to as “the founder of Neapolitan opera,” but it is only with strong reservations that this and similar epithets can be justified. As a composer he was brought up in Rome, and it was for Rome that his earliest operas, and many of his later ones, were composed. Despite Scarlatti’s central position as an opera composer, he seems to have had little influence on the course of operatic history. Most of the “innovations” with which he has at times been credited – the da capo aria, accompanied recitative, the introduction of French horns into the opera pit, the creation of the Italian overture – can be shown to predate him, while the music itself is seen now more as a refinement of 17th-century styles than as a harbinger of the Classical period.

In short, “Son tutta duolo” is an aria characterized by grief and despair. The narrator, alone and left to the cruel hand of Fate, cries out to the world and to the heavens full of self-pity and desperation. The nature of the melody and accompaniment, however, suggests an idea of statement and recognition of situation on the part of the narrator.
rather than sniveling or complaining. In the beginning of the song, the narrator seems sad and reflective, however, at the end he seems to think on his earlier words and grow a bit angry towards his lot in life. The dynamically different repeated lines of text as well as the interludes of the piano serve to add emphasis to the narrator’s words.

from Four Duets, op. 20
Rozloučení (The Parting)
Chudoba (The Silken Band)
Vuře, šohaj, vuře (The Last Wish)

Antonín Dvořák (1841 - 1904)

Today, Antonín Dvořák is regarded as one of the Czech Republic’s great nationalist composers. Dvořák grew up in the countryside of Nelahozeves in a musical environment, learning to play the violin and studying organ in Prague. Since his death, his prestige as a composer has grown for his distinctive Czech music. Throughout his life, Dvořák wrote more than 100 solo songs and duets, drawing the texts from several poets of many nationalities, from Czech and Moravian to Greek and Irish. The Moravian Duets, opp. 20, 32, and 38, were written between 1875 and 1876. Dvořák was in his thirties at the time and full of creative energy, but was unfortunately still struggling to gain both recognition and esteem. While teaching private piano lessons for a modest income, Dvořák was commissioned by a wealthy Moravian merchant to write some duets for the merchant and his wife to sing. This began a very productive period of duet writing, and in the fall of 1877 Dvořák sent them all to Johannes
Brahms, who promptly sent a glowing letter to his German publisher directing that they be published. These works represent a high point in Dvořák’s song composition, due to their emotional expression, charismatic simplicity, and their attractive melodies and rhythms.

The first selection, “Rozloučení,” is a simple and touching conversation between two young country lovers. The young man is reluctant to part for the night, however, his maiden plays the coquette, remarking that she needs to be alone. Steadfast, the young man begs her in earnest to stay and dance for him – his promise being that of eternal fidelity. The overall playfulness of the piece is directly reflected in Dvořák’s setting of the two voices. Each verse begins with the tenor’s seemingly insistent romantic lines to which the soprano replies, feigning modesty. Then the two continue together framing the rest of the story with rich harmonies. The piano directly reflects the overall emotion of the piece: lively and vivacious. At several points throughout the song, the piano accompaniment resembles light and airy music for dancing, musically reinforcing the young man’s request for his lover to dance for him.

“Chudoba,” the second selection, is as different from the first song in emotion and text as it is in mood. Again we have a conversation taking place, however, this time all is not happy in the Moravian countryside. Our young maiden, poorer than her lover who mocks her, pleads for understanding and acceptance despite her station in life. The setting, therefore, is both melancholic and imploring, with a darker tone supplied, in part, by the minor key. The piano supports the beautiful harmonic interplay of the voices with deep and brooding chords and moving interludes. Towards the end of the song, Dvořák very adeptly highlights the maiden’s anguish in the traded movement of the tenor and soprano lines. This pattern creates a powerful emotive quality for an otherwise simple duet.

The final selection, “Vuře, šohaj, vuře,” is a poignant song, given the current state of world affairs, as words such as this are most likely being spoken every day now. This final conversation between betrothed country youth takes place before the lad is sent off to fight for his country in war. While a sad parting, they pledge their
unfaltering love for one another even to the grave. Even with this small light supplied by love, the listener cannot escape the overall desolation and gloom illustrated perfectly in both the accompaniment and voices. The richness of the underlying chords of the piano juxtaposed with the close harmonic movement of the tenor and soprano creates a very identifiable feeling of despondent emotion.
Ralph Vaughan Williams

On Wenlock Edge

I. On Wenlock Edge
II. From Far, From Eve and Morning
III. Is My Team Ploughing
IV. Oh, When I Was in Love with You
V. Bredon Hill
VI. Clun

On Wenlock Edge is a cycle of six songs by English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams. The texts are drawn from individual poems of English poet A.E. Housman’s A Shropshire Lad. This collection of verse is Housman’s signature work, in which he mixes the styles of the traditional English ballad and classical verse. The poems themselves were inspired by the country life around Shropshire, England (to include Wenlock), which was near Housman’s boyhood home. His collection attracted an enormous following among composers of the English musical revival, largely because the discovery of folksong had served to foster awareness of the English landscape, and these poems were imbued with the spirit of the countryside of the west of England. Vaughan Williams composed the cycle in 1908-09, soon after he had completed a period of study with Ravel. His time in Paris with Ravel was the most important and influential episode in the whole of Vaughan Williams’ long creative career. Apart from what he learned and absorbed technically, it seems to have liberated his imaginative inspiration. Of all the works he composed and revised after his return to England, “On Wenlock Edge” is considered the most Ravel-like of all, being a cycle for tenor, string quartet, and piano. The blowing of a gale, church bells, a cemetery — these Ravel-like images are here, yet drawn from English pastoral and lyric poems uncannily evoked in English pastoral and lyric music.

“On Wenlock Edge,” the first song, talks about the ceaseless historical drama of nature and man in Wenlock and the forest surrounding
it. From the time of prehistory to Roman occupation and from feudal England to the turn of the 20th century, this ancient region has withstood the rages of nature and tempests, which are reflected at several points in both the melody and the accompaniment. Therefore, Wenlock remains, though all who have gone before are memory.

The second song, “From Far, From Eve and Morning,” is a marked statement of being. Amidst all the turmoil of life (and due to much of it), the speaker has arrived in the present moment, heralded in by the majestic chords of the piano. A man of purpose, he pauses only to question the substance of another, and even life itself, anxious and urgent to find answers before he is doubtless carried away again. The almost wistful tone of the middle section is directly reflected in the strings, which give way to the piano once more as the piece draws to a pensive close.

“Is My Team Ploughing,” the third song, is a stirring and mysterious conversation between good friends, although one of them speaks from beyond the grave. Our departed speaker still lingers near to life wondering if all he left behind is still the same, such as his team of horses and his love. Each time, his living friend answers him that all is well and that he should merely take his rest in the grave, full of a hinted anxiety which the piano and cello make clear. Finally, the dead man asks the climactic question concerning his love and his best friend, hoping against hope that his suspicions aren’t true. The living man, clearly agitated, answers in a vague way, earnestly desiring to protect his friend from the truth, finally pleading with him to ask no more questions.

The fourth song, “Oh When I Was in Love With You,” is light and playful in both music and text. The speaker talks of what his life was like when he was in love – full of wonder and good behavior. Alas, however, the feelings passed away as such things do, leaving our speaker back to his old self, and seemingly proud of it.

The fifth song, “Bredon Hill,” tells the story of the happiest of memories amidst acute anguish. The piece begins with the strings and piano creating an air of idyllic peace and quiet beauty in the area
surrounding Bredon, England. The countryside is both warm and inviting and provides the backdrop for the innocent love of two young people, engaged to be wed. Steeple bells ring in the distance, which can be heard in the sometimes gentle, sometimes insistent chords of the piano. However, not all young lovers live happily ever after, for the unthinkable happens in the winter following their wedding: our hero’s new bride goes “to church alone,” into death without her husband. The agony felt by the narrator is exquisitely reflected in the strings combined, with the first violin and piano tolling the untimely death knell of the poor young woman. The man continues speaking of how life around Bredon remains unchanged for all save he – the bells still ring from churches miles around. However, now he hears such ringing as a call to join his beloved. Resigned to his fate, he declares to the bells that he will come in a poignant and powerful final statement heralded in by subtle, sweet strings and piano recalling the original peaceful, bucolic mood.

The final song, “Clun,” is a nostalgic glance into the youth of the narrator. A country lad, he remarks first upon the pastoral setting of his childhood, noting that amidst the beauty and seemingly carefree lifestyle, the worries that plague us all were very present as well. Next he speaks on his life in London as young man awed by the cosmopolitan aspects of the big city. However, now he seeks to discard the griefs and sorrows that still weigh on his mind. Here we see a great poetic balance constructed by Housman about the very nature of life itself – a dichotomy of happiness and sadness, the good in life and the bad. Vaughan Williams illustrates this balance musically through the use of a gently driving piano line underlying each verse, which represents the forward movement of time for our narrator as well as a feeling of precarious teetering on a sharp fulcrum. Throughout the verses, the strings provide a gentle feeling of wistfulness to accompany and accent our narrator’s stroll down memory lane. The middle agitato section, in the piano, strings, and voice, poignantly reflects the narrator’s desperation to throw off life’s cares. The movement closes with a tranquil molto piu lento section wherein the narrator finally realizes that he will only be free of such burdens in death. As such, he finds solace and peace in his acceptance of fate that is firmly displayed in both the text and the soft ringing chords of the piano. At the very end, the strings join the piano softly and sweetly, building instrument by instrument to herald a lush ending chord, providing closure for the entire cycle.