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Junior Recital: Water Songs: Mierka Ross, mezzo-soprano

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

Presents

Water Songs

Mierka Ross
Mezzo Soprano

JUNIOR RECITAL

Assisted by
Dr. Joanne Kong
piano

Saturday, April 25, 2009
7:30 p.m.
Perkinson Recital Hall
**Water in Music**

When choosing pieces for my recital I wanted an underlying theme to connect the works. Having previously sung Schubert and knowing that he wrote many songs about water, I decided to look for pieces by other composers that also mentioned the element. German lieder and poetry from Schubert’s time frequently also include the theme of death, but not being an extremely morose individual I chose the lighter topic.

Water is represented in greatly diverse ways because it has counteracting properties. While it is the substance of life and redemption (symbolized in Albinoni’s *Son Qual Tantalo Novello*, and Ives’s *At the River*) it is also a disturbing cause of death (as implied in Schubert’s foreboding *Meeres Stille*). Representing water, therefore, requires the composer to have particular attention for the context and reflect the context through the musical form.

This mysterious duality of water keeps me continuously fascinated by these songs. We take the liquid for granted in our everyday lives when clearly it is something deserving of more thought. If you take nothing else from my recital please, think about water. Turn the faucet off when brushing your teeth and remember that you are respecting one of the world’s most versatile resources.

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_Thanks to my mom, dad, and brothers for helping me reach this achievement and listening for days on end as I practiced fumbling through German pronunciation while simultaneously attempting to remain in tune._

_You really are a great support system and I love you._

_I also want to thank Dr. Cable, Dr. Kong, Ms. Barbara Melton, and the rest of the music department for guiding me in my studies._

_Thank you to my peers in the music department for spending late nights in the music tech lab and the music library with me. Root to the root._
# Water Songs

**Mierka Ross**  
Mezzo Soprano

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Tomaso Albinoni (1671-1750)

Albinoni was a prolific instrumental composer. During his lifetime he was known for his ornamental melodies. *Son Qual Tantalo Novello* is made up of two arias surrounding a recitative. Tantalus, the character mentioned in this cantata, was the son of Zeus who brought nectar and ambrosia to earth. As punishment, he was forced to spend the rest of his days up to his neck in water, which would escape from his lips when he tried to drink. In English, we get the word “tantalize” from this character. The narrator in this cantata creates a self comparison to Tantalus. While love is present, the captivating emotion of love eludes him/her.


*Son qual Tantalo novello*

I am a new Tantalus, who, on the bank of a beautiful wandering stream, follows the water that flees from his lips. I languish every moment even though I am near the beautiful semblance and it is that which destroys me.

Of extravagant lasting affliction and of a strange pain my soul suffers with tyrannical rigor. Others go through pains for inconstant beauty; Others see themselves as unfortunate lovers of a cruel idol who hates and flees them; and some others try the iciness and poison of jealousy.

The pain of my heart is larger than all pains that cause it torment. I hold my love tight and sigh, and those lips, it’s true that I kiss them: but then that happiness never comes.

Translation: Mierka Ross
Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

Franz Schubert was a Viennese composer known for his German art songs, or lieder, of which he composed over 600 throughout his career. In this set I will be performing both through-composed and strophic lieder. The former has different musical lines for each strophe, the latter has uses the same music for each verse. I chose Schubert for this concert because of the many ways he includes water into his works. Along with the nineteenth-century German fascination with death in art, there was also a fascination with water, a dual element that can symbolize both the fluid of life and the cause of death. The passage of water can also signify the passage of time. Throughout his lieder, Schubert explores all of these possibilities.


Auf dem Wasser zu singen
In the middle of the shimmer of reflecting waves
Glides, as a swan, the wavering boat
Ah, on joy's soft shimmering waves
Glides the soul along the boat.
Then from the heavens down to the waves
Dances the sunset around the boat

Over the treetops of the Western groves
The reddish gleam joyously waves
Under the branches of the Eastern groves
The reeds murmur in the reddish light
Joy of the sky and peace of the groves
Are breathed by the soul in this reddening light.

Ah, time vanishes on dewy wing
For me on the rocking waves of time
Morning vanishes on shimmering wing
Again like yesterday and today
Until on a higher more radiant wing
I will vanish in the changing time.

Translation: Mierka Ross
**Auf dem See**

I soak in fresh sustenance, new blood
From the wide world.
How sweet and good nature is
Holding me to her bosom!
The waves rock under our boat
In time with the oars
And cloud-capped mountains
Meet our heavenward course.

Eyes, my eyes why do you sink down?
Do you come again, golden dreams?
Away, you dreams! However gold you may be,
This is the way to love and life.

On the waves flash a thousand hovering stars;
Soft mists fill the surrounding towering distance;
Morning wind wings about the shadowed bay,
And in the lake reflects the ripening fruit.

*Translation: Mierka Ross*

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**Charles Ives**

(1874-1954)

Ives was incredible. When he had started establishing himself as an organist and composer, he took a thirty year break and established the foundations for modern insurance practice. He explored all types of composition and tonality and he had a particular fascination with American music. Ives rarely dated his pieces correctly and the confusion leads some people to believe that he may have been using the principles of the post-tonal and atonal systems simultaneously with his European contemporaries, who are credited with it. I chose Ives primarily because of my fascination with his individual life, and I became even more drawn in by the way he treats water in his work. He addresses it with musical imagery through rhythm, tempo, and melodic line.

*Continued...*