

# HOUGHTON COLLEGE

GREATBATCH SCHOOL OF MUSIC

presents

## A Century in Song



Alessio Tranchell, baritone

Sharon Johnson, piano

Graduate Voice Recital

Recital Hall

Center for the Arts

Tuesday May 2, 2017

6:30 p.m.

# Program

## **Old American Songs (selections)**

- I. Zion's Walls
- II. At the River

**Aaron Copland**

(1900-1990)

## **Four Monologues**

- I. Fragment
- II. What's In My Name?
- III. Deep in Siberian Mines
- IV. Farewell

**Dmitri Shostakovich**

(1906-1975)

## **Cuatro Canciones Argentinas**

- I. Desde que te conoci
- II. Viniendo de Chilecito
- III. En los surcos del amor
- IV. Mi garganta

**Carlos Guastavino**

(1912-2000)

## *Intermission*

## **Three Odes of Solomon**

- I. No Way Is Hard
- II. As The Wings of Doves
- III. The Work of the Husbandman

**Alan Hovhaness**

(1911-2000)

## **Banalites**

- I. Chanson D'Orkenise
- II. Hotel
- III. Fagnes de Wallonies
- IV. Voyage A Paris
- V. Sanglots

**Francis Poulenc**

(1899-1963)

## **Lean Away**

**Gene Scheer**

(b. 1958)

# Program Notes

## *A note from the performer*

I like to think that there is something for everyone in classical music when it comes to the twentieth century. When I crafted this evening's program, I wanted the listener to get a true taste of what was written around the world during this century of renewal and discovery. The first half of the program features three nationalist composers who express the musical representations of their countries in vastly different ways. The second half juxtaposes perhaps the two most important ideas of the twentieth century - merging new styles into traditional music, and reinventing old music within current mediums. I hope you will enjoy this small introduction to this wonderful century of composition, impossible to properly represent in an hours time.

## **Old American Songs**

Aaron Copland, one of the better known American composers of the twentieth century, is known for his incorporation of folk melodies into his works. These songs of gathering come from Book II of Copland's collection of Old American Songs. In *At The River*, Copland takes the simple American hymn tune and places it above a flowing piano accompaniment. *Zion's Walls* is marked by open fourths and fifths, emphasizing octaves against a pentatonic melody. Copland used an old folk melody and composed his own counter melody heard in the higher octave of the opening piano line - a tune he borrowed from his own opera *The Tender Land*.

## **Four Monologues**

Dmitri Shostakovich was a Russian composer during one of the most terrifying fifty year span in his country's history. While many composers fled the Soviet Union during Joseph Stalin's reign, Shostakovich felt a strong need to stay with his people - to communicate and express whatever he could through his music. *Four Monologues*, with text by Pushkin, was written after Stalin's death and is therefore more expressive and intentionally dark than some of his earlier works as it was not as closely censored for its content. Each piece leaves a similar melancholic after-taste within familiar styles of traditional art song.

## **Cuatro Canciones Argentinas**

Argentine composer Carlos Guastavino is known as the Schubert of South America. A prolific pianist and composer, Guastavino wrote hundreds of art songs during his lifetime which, similar to Schubert's interest in German poets, put Argentine poetry on a pedestal. His songs are marked by difficult piano accompaniment and rhythmic accents. These four poems are written by an anonymous poet as each reveals a vignette of unrequited love.

## **Three Odes of Solomon**

Alan Hovhaness is an American composer not well known outside of circles of organists and symphonists. Similar to many 20th Century composers, Hovhaness had an obsession with the music of the past, specifically medieval modality. *Three Odes of Solomon*, written in 1926, is chalk-full of planing fourths, with the piano accompaniment often playing in organum with the voice. The text was translated by Hovhannes himself from the original Aramaic. These texts are taken from *The Book of Odes* - a book included in the Septuagint and earlier Eastern Orthodox Bibles. Perhaps Hovhannes was trying to aim at a more distant familiarity of the text, and possibly a more accurate depiction of these extra-biblical poems through his neo-medieval composition style.

## **Banalites**

Francis Poulenc, the best remembered member of Les Six (a group of avant-garde composers in Paris), had a perfect partnership with baritone Pierre Bernac. His song cycle "*Banalites*" was written with Bernac's voice in mind during the fall of 1940. Poulenc often tried to emulate the cubist artistic movement heralded by Pablo Picasso. It is no wonder then, that Poulenc chose to set the text of Guillaume Apollinaire, a good friend of Picasso's who is credited with coining the term "cubism". *Banalites* is a prime example of this cubist movement making its way into the musical world. Poulenc uses small motives repeated every so often throughout each piece, changing keys nearly every four measures (often less!). These repeated phrases and intervals travel through many key areas, yet seamlessly give the listener a coherent tonality to grasp onto. The poems themselves adhere to the title of the set - they are simple poems that are not meant to express anything beyond the text that is written.

Lord, You alone are my portion and my cup;

You make my lot secure.

The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;

Surely I have a delightful inheritance.

I will praise the Lord who counsels me;

Even at night my heart instructs me.

I keep my eyes always on the Lord;

**With Him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.**

Psalm 16:5-8

**We would like to thank the Houghton College administration for its faithful support of the Greatbatch School of Music.**

*Shirley A. Mullen*, President  
*Jack Connell*, Provost and Dean of the Faculty  
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Alessio Tranchell, a student of Nick Kilkenny, is performing this recital in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Music degree in Voice Performance.

As a courtesy to the performer and your fellow audience members, please be certain that all cell phones, watch alarms, and pagers are either turned off or set for silent operation. Flash photography can be very disconcerting to performers and is not permitted during the performance. Are you still reading this? Wow! I wonder how long I can make this paragraph before you give up. Am I singing right now? Pay attention! Stop reading this! Be blessed.

## **Shostakovich**

### **I. Fragment**

A small lamp in a cabin in Judea  
An old man reading a bible in front of the lamp  
A young woman is hovering by the Bible  
Another is crying as a young man is lost in thought  
An old wife is preparing a late dinner  
She puts the Bible in a copper box and calls to all the family to come to the table  
But no one complies, nobody comes  
They fall asleep under the watch of the Bible  
But a good sleep is not coming to this Jewish cabin  
The bells of the church in the city tell them of morning  
And suddenly a heavy knock at the door -  
A family awakens, and opens the door gingerly...

### **II. What's in My Name?**

What means for you my simple name?  
It soon will die as voice of grief --  
A wave splash at a distant reef,  
A stir in wilderness untamed.  
In pray-for-dead despondent rolls  
It will leave just the lethal trace  
That likes the epitaph in lace,  
Which nobody discerns at all.  
What does it hold? Forgotten whole  
In new and rebel agitation,  
It will not give to your young soul  
The clear and gentle commemorations.  
But in the sad and silent day  
You will repeat this name with fervor;  
There is in whole world, you say,  
The heart in which I live forever...

### **III. Deep in Siberian Mines**

Deep in Siberian mines  
hold your proud endurance high,  
Your woe-filled work will not be lost  
nor the striving of your mind.

Misfortune's stalwart sister,  
Hope, lurks in dungeon's' gloom,  
she'll waken and you'll jump for joy,  
so know the wished-for day will come:  
Love and friendship will overrun you  
through the sombre, shackled gates,  
As my free voice now comes to you  
through these craggy grates

Your lead chains fall to the floor,  
your prison will collapse -  
as freedom greets you at the door -  
your brothers hand you a sword.

### **IV. Farewell**

It's the last time, when I dare  
To cradle your image in my mind,  
To wake a dream by my heart, bare,  
With exultation, shy and air,  
To cue your love that's left behind.  
The years run promptly; their fire  
Changes the world, and me, and you.  
For me, you now are attired  
In dark of vaults o'er them who died,  
For you -- your friend extinguished too.  
My dear friend, so sweet and distant,  
Take farewell from all my heart,  
As takes a wid in a somber instant,  
As takes a friend before a prison  
Will split those dear friends apart.

### **Guastavino**

#### **I. Desde que te conoci**

Since I met you, you made yourself my owner,  
I do not offer great things,  
life and only the love that I gave you.  
Love with love,  
Disdain with disdain,  
And the ingratitude is paid.  
Life with ingratitude too.

And when nothing, I owed you all of my soul, which  
you robbed.

And I remember that you sinned, thief of my soul.  
And until another day, what comfort can I give you?  
And at the time of my parting,  
I leave you my heart, I leave you all of my life,  
until another day.  
I also leave you my palm -  
With a sign that says: goodbye little life of my soul,  
until another day.

### **II. Viniendo de Chilecito**

Coming from Chile, on the journey I found  
The River Jana, it loved me and I fell in love.  
The River Jana, it loved me and I fell in love.  
Chilecito, flower of my home,  
Wherever I go, the River Jana, it makes me remember,  
Chilecito, Chilecito,  
To forget the hardships that have already killed me in  
Tabacal.

### **III. En los surcos del amor**

In the furrows of love, where jealousy is sown,  
I have collected hardships born of my sleepless  
nights.  
In which court have you been, bad singer,  
To condemn an innocent, beautiful traitor  
In the furrows of love, where jealousy is sown.

### **IV. Mi garganta**

My throat isn't made of sticks,  
Ay, poor me, poor and meek.  
Nor is it made by a carpenter.  
Where that traitor walks,  
Singing and dancing like that.  
Ay, poor me, poor and meek.  
Little lady, I come and I will win you,  
Where that traitor walks.

## **Poulenc**

### **I. Chanson D'Orkenise**

By the gates of Orkenise  
A cart driver wants to enter.  
By the gates of Orkenise  
A tramp wants to leave:  
And the guards of the town  
Rushing upon the tramp:  
"What are you taking from the town?"  
"I am leaving my entire heart there."  
And the guards of the town  
Rushing upon the cart driver:  
"What are you bringing into the town?"  
"My heart to be married."  
'What a lot of hearts in Orkenise'.  
The guards laughed.  
'Tramp, the way is grey,  
Love is grey, cart driver.'  
The handsome guards of the town  
Walked together proudly,  
Then, the gates of the town Were slowly closed.

### **II. Hotel**

My room has the form of a cage  
The sun reaches its arm through the window  
But I, who want to smoke  
To make mirages  
I light my cigarette in the fire of the day  
I do not want to work; I want to smoke

### **III. Fagnes de Wallonie**

So much complete sadness seized my heart in the  
desolate marshes  
When weary I rested the weight of kilometres  
In the forest of fir trees while the wind breathed the  
death rattle  
I had left the pretty wood  
The squirrels remained there  
My pipe tried to make clouds in the sky  
Which remained obstinately pure,

I did not confide any secret except one mysterious  
song to the damp turf-moors  
The heather smelling of honey enticed the honey-bees  
And my aching feet crushed underfoot the  
whortleberries and blueberries  
Tenderly united, the north and life are twisted in  
large and crooked trees  
Life bites death there with beautiful teeth  
As the wind howls.

### **IV. Voyage A Paris**

Ah, what a charming thing  
To leave the dismal countryside  
For Paris, lovely Paris  
That love must have created one day  
Ah, to leave the dismal countryside,  
What a charming thing.

### **V. Sanglots**

Our love is ruled by the calm stars  
But we know that in us many men live  
Who came from far away and are one under our faces  
It is the song of dreamers who had torn out their  
heart  
And carried it in their right hand  
Remember the dear pride of all these memories of  
sailors who sang as conquerors  
Of the gulfs of Thule, of the delicate skies of Ophir  
Of the accursed ill ones, of those who flee their  
shadow  
And of the joyous return of the happy emigrants  
From this heart blood flowed,  
and the dreamer went thinking of his delicate and  
painful wound saying to us  
You will not break the chain of these causes  
Which are the effects of other causes  
My poor heart, my broken heart, the same as in the  
hearts of all men  
Here, here are our hands made slaves by life  
Dead from love, it all comes to the same thing  
Dead from love, and here it is as all things happen

Tear, then, yours out, also  
And nothing will be free until the end of time  
Let's leave all to the dead and hide our sobs