



**Tara Sperry**  
soprano  
**Ināra Zandmane, piano**

Graduate Recital

Friday, April 23, 2010

7:30 pm

Recital Hall, School of Music



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA  
**GREENSBORO**

*Program*

**L'abbandono**  
**Ma rendi pur contento**  
**Malinconia, Ninfa gentile**

**Vincenzo Bellini**  
(1801-1835)

**I strolled across an open field**  
**Clouds**  
**For Poulenc**

**Ned Rorem**  
(b. 1923)

**Bitte**  
**Die Elfe**  
**Selige Nacht**  
**Hat dich die Liebe berührt**

**Joseph Marx**  
(1882-1964)

*Intermission*

**La voix humaine (1958)**

**Francis Poulenc**  
(1899-1963)

Tara Sperry is a student of Dr. Robert Bracey

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In partial fulfillment of the degree requirements for the  
Master of Music in Performance

**Vincenzo Bellini:**

**L'abbandono**

Anonymous

Solitario zeffiretto,  
A che movi i tuoi sospiri?

Il sospiro a me sol lice,  
Chè dolente ed infelice,  
Chiamo Dafne che non ode  
L'insoffribil mio martir.

Langue invan la mammoletta  
E la rosa e il gelsomino;  
Lunge son da lui che adoro,  
Non conosco alcun ristoro  
Se non viene a consolarmi  
Col bel guardo cilestrino.

Ape industrie, che vagando  
Sempre vai di fior in fiore,  
Ascolta.

Se lo scorgi ov'ei dimora,

Di' che riedi a chi l'adora,

Come riedi tu nel seno  
Delle rose al primo albor.

**Ma rendi pur contento**

Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782)

Ma rendi pur contento  
Della mia bella il core  
E ti perdono, amore,  
Se lieto il mio non è.

Gli affanni suoi pavento  
Più degli affanni miei,  
Perchè più vivo in lei  
Di quell ch'io vivo in me.

**Malinconia, Ninfa gentile**

I. Pindemonte

Malinconia, Ninfa gentile,  
La vita mia consacro a te;  
I tuoi piaceri chi tiene a vile,  
Ai piacer veri nato non è.

Fonti e colline chiesi agli Dei;  
M'udiro alfine, pago io vivrò,  
Nè mai quel fonte co' desir miei,

Nè mai quel monte trapasserò,  
Nè mai trapasserò, no, no mai.

**The abandonment**

Lonely little breeze,  
to whom are you directing your sighs?

The sighing is granted to me only  
because, sorrowful and unfortunate,  
I call to Dafne, who does not heed  
my insufferable pain.

The little violet, and the rose and  
the jasmine, languish in vain;  
far away am I from him whom I adore.  
I know no comfort  
if he does not come to console me  
with his beautiful heavenly eyes.

Industrious bee, who is always  
roving from flower to flower,  
listen:

If you should recognize him wherever he is  
dwelling,  
say that he may return to the one who adores  
him,  
like you return to the bosom  
of the roses at the break of day.

**But please do make contented**

But please do make contented  
my beautiful one's heart  
and I will forgive you, love,  
if mine is not happy.

I dread her anxieties  
more than my anxieties,  
because I live more through her  
than I live for myself.

**Melancholy, gentle nymph**

Melancholy, gentle nymph,  
my life I consecrate to you;  
whoever considers your pleasures slight  
is not born to true pleasures.

Rivers and hills I asked of the gods.  
They heard me at last; I shall live satisfied.  
Not ever shall I cross that river with my  
desires,  
not ever cross that mountain.  
Not ever shall I cross – no, no, never.

**Ned Rorem:**  
**I strolled across an open field**  
Theodore Roethke (1908-1963)

I strolled across  
An open field;  
The sun was out;  
Heat was happy.

This way! This way!  
The wren's throat shimmered,  
Either to other,  
The blossoms sang.

The stones sang,  
The little ones did,  
And flowers jumped  
Like small goats.

A ragged fringe  
Of daisies waved;  
I wasn't alone  
In a grove of apples.

Far in the wood  
A nestling sighed;  
The dew loosened  
Its morning smells.

I came where the river  
Ran over stones:  
My ears knew  
An early joy.

And all the waters  
Of all the streams  
Sang in my veins  
That summer day.

**Clouds**  
Paul Goodman (1911-1972)

So effortlessly  
we are not given  
to move on earth  
as these in heaven  
clouds,  
nor without desire  
to tend whither  
the airs conspire.

The clouds exaggerate and pile  
into heights of mile on mile.  
In the breathing o' the universe  
they drift asunder  
and disperse.

**For Poulenc**  
Frank O'Hara (1926-1966)

My first day in Paris  
I walked from Saint Germain  
To the point Mirabeau  
In soft amber light and leaves  
And love was running out  
City of light and hearts  
City of dusk and dismay  
The Seine believed it to be true  
That I was unloved and alone  
How lonely is that bridge  
Without your song  
The Avenue Mozart,  
The rue Pergolese  
The tobaccos  
And the nuns  
All Paris is alone  
For this brief leafless moment  
And snow falls down  
Upon the streets  
Of our peculiar hearts.

**Joseph Marx:****Bitte**

Hermann Hesse (1877-1962)

Wenn du die Hand mir gibst,  
die so viel Ungesagtes sagt,  
hab' ich dich jemals dann gefragt,  
ob du mich liebst?

Ich will ja nicht, daß du mich liebst,  
Will nur, daß ich dich nahe weiß,  
und daß du manchmal  
stumm und leis' die Hand mir gibst.

**Die Elfe**

Joseph Eichendorff (1788-1857)

Bleib bei uns!  
Wir haben den Tanzplatz im Tal,  
bedeckt von Mondenglanze,  
Johanniswürmchen erleuchten den Saal,  
die Heimchen spielen zum Tanze.

Die Freude, das schöne leichtläub'ge Kind,  
es wiegt sich in Abendwinden;  
wo Silber über die Zweige rinnt,  
sollst du die Schönste finden.

**Selige Nacht**

Otto Erich Hartleben (1864-1905)

Im Arm der Liebe schliefen wir selig ein.  
Am offenen Fenster lauschte der Sommerwind,

und uns'rer Atemzüge Frieden  
trug er hinaus in die helle Mondnacht.

Und aus dem Garten tastete zagend sich  
ein Rosendurf, an uns'rer Liebe Bett  
und gab uns wundervolle Träume.  
Träume des Rauches so reich an Sehnsucht.

**Hat dich die Liebe berührt**

Paul Heyse (1830-1914)

Hat dich die Liebe berührt  
still unter lärmendem Volke,  
gehst du in gold'ner Wolke,  
sicher vom Gott geführt.

Nur wie verloren, umher,  
lässest die Blicke du wandern,  
gönnst ihre Freuden den andern,  
trägst nur nach einem Begeh.

Scheu in dich selber verzückt,  
möchtest du leugnen vergebens,  
daß nun die Krone des Lebens,  
strahlend die Stirn dir schmückt.

**Plea**

When you give me your hand,  
which says so unspeakably much,  
have I ever asked you, then,  
if you love me?

I do not want you to love me.  
I only want to know that you are with me  
and that you will sometimes  
silently and gently give me your hand.

**The Elf**

Stay with us!  
We have a dance floor in the valley,  
blanketed with the moon's radiance.  
Glow-worms brighten up the hall,  
the crickets play for the dance.

Joy, that lovely, gullible child,  
sways in the evening breezes.  
Where silver spills over the braches  
you will find the loveliest one!

**Blissful Night**

In the arms of love we fell blissfully asleep.  
The summer wind eavesdropped at the open  
window  
and carried the peace of our breathing into the  
brightly moon-lit night.

And from the garden a scent of roses  
cautiously found its way to our bed of love  
and gave us wonderful dreams,  
dreams of ecstasy, so full of desire.

**If Love has Touched You**

If love has touched you,  
quietly amid the noisy crowds,  
you move in clouds of gold,  
securely led by God.

As if lost,  
you look around;  
leaving others to their pleasures,  
you carry only one desire.

Shy even in your ecstasy,  
in vain you would deny it,  
that now the crown of life  
shining adorns your brow.

*La voix humaine* is the third and final opera by Francis Poulenc, composed between February and June of 1958 and premiered at the Opéra-Comique on February 6, 1959. The one-act opera is based on a 1930 play of the same name by Jean Cocteau and commissioned by Hervé Degardin, the Paris director of Ricordi. Degardin initially suggested Maria Callas to portray the opera's lone character, only to have his proposition rejected by Poulenc, who envisioned Denise Duval for the role.

Poulenc felt intense pressure in his collaboration with Cocteau to give the play an accurate musical setting, revealing:

"Cocteau's short phrases are so logical, so human, so charged with implications that I have had to write a rigorously ordered score full of suspense. I think I needed the experience of the spiritual and metaphysical anguish of *Les [Dialogues des] Carmélites* to avoid betraying the terribly human anguish of Jean Cocteau's superb text."

In order to provide Cocteau's text with the declamatory component it requires, Poulenc employs new compositional techniques foreign to his typical style. He achieves this with a substantial use of recitative resembling natural speech. The majority of the vocal line moves in a stepwise motion with a general absence of intervals exceeding a third. Larger intervals are uncommon and only utilized to express the woman's unstable, emotional state. Poulenc refrains from excessive lyrical segments, only including two such aria-like passages in the entirety of the piece. These lyrical lines resemble the musical style found throughout Poulenc's art songs, where a tonal stability is established to express dramatic development. This provides contrast with the opera's frequent tonal ambiguity containing dissonant harmonies, diminished chords, and chromatic progressions.

During the composition of *La voix humaine*, Poulenc experienced a mental crisis influenced by a complicated private affair involving a lover of his own. Lucien Roubert, died of tuberculosis in 1955 after having been involved with Poulenc for 8 years. Letters reveal that Poulenc felt *La voix humaine* was a reaction to his heartbreak, and a reflection of his relationship. Poulenc compares the tragedy of his opera to his own personal tragedy in a letter to Rose Dercourt-Plaut, labeling it "a musical confession!!!" Lucien's death plagued Poulenc for the remainder of his life, stifling his motivation to compose.

*La voix humaine* centers around the story of a woman and her telephone, her only means of communicating with her fleeing lover who has left her for another woman whom he plans to marry the following day. Throughout the course of their interaction, it becomes increasingly evident that this will be the former couple's final exchange. The woman's frantic feelings of abandonment and desperation are exacerbated through her frustration with the French telephone system, which continually interrupts and disconnects their conversation.

Although the solitary soprano is the only obvious character in the opera, additional characters are implied. The telephone objectifies her lover as the instrument through which they communicate. Additionally, the accompaniment serves as a character by supplying the lover's implied text, while also depicting the woman's moods and physical movements by creating imagery and lyricism under a dry vocal line. These musical suggestions provide the audience with context of the conversation, although only the woman's responses are heard.

Upon completion of *La voix humaine*, Poulenc described himself as, "quite definitely a man of the theatre," with aspirations to be like Verdi or Puccini. Before his death of a heart attack in 1963, Poulenc was contemplating composing a fourth opera based on another play by Cocteau, *La Machine Infernale*.

Poulenc considered *La voix humaine* a masterpiece finding incredible fulfillment in its compositional process despite its overwhelming challenges. It displays evidence of the developmental progress Poulenc nurtured late in his career.

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