George Frideric Handel

(1685-1759)

G. F. Handel was born in Halle, Germany. He spent the first twenty years of his life in Germany, where he studied composition with his mentor, Friedrich W. Zachow. In 1703, he went to Hamburg to pursue larger musical opportunities where he premiered his first opera *Almira* in 1705. He spent five years touring Italy where he met several great composers by the names of Arcangelo Corelli, Alessandro Scarlatti, and his son Domenico Scarlatti. His time in Italy greatly influenced his compositional style. Handel is well known in the Baroque Era for his operas, oratorios, and instrumental compositions. *Messiah* being the most prolific work which he composed in 1741.

The opera *Orlando* was written for the King’s Theater and debuted in 1733 where it only had ten more performances and was not revived for a great deal of time. The first revival since Handel’s lifetime was given in Halle in 1922. *Orlando* is an opera seria in three acts. It is a story of a great soldier in Charlemagne’s army – Orlando (Roland). Orlando is in love with the pagan princess Angelica who is in love with another man, Medoro. The great magician Zoroastro casts a spell on Orlando to see a vision urging him to cast away Venus, the goddess of love, and embrace Mars, the god of war. Orlando is kept from his senses until the third act when Zoroastro transforms a grove of palm trees into a cave where he attempts to lift his spell (*Sorge infausta una procella*). Before he can do so, he burns a cottage down with Medoro in it. He then hurls Angelica into a cave, killing them both. After Orlando feels that he has defeated the “monsters” he lays down to rest where Zoroastro gives him a potion to end his madness. Orlando learns of his doings and begs for death himself, but Zoroastro saves Medoro and Angelica with his magic. Orlando sees that they are safe and wishes them a happy life together.

*Sorge infausta una procella*

Sorge infausta una procella
che oscurar fa il cielo e il mare,
splende fausta poi la stella
che ogni cor ne fa goder.

Può talor il forte errare,
ma risorto dall'errore,
quell che priog diè dolore
ciausa immenso il suo piacer.

Ominous a storm upsiring
Darkens all the sky and the ocean;
Then the evening star emerging
Fills with joy the hearts of men.

Translation by: Nathan Haskell Dole
Franz Schubert

(1797-1828)

Austrian composer, Franz Schubert, was very well known for his work in the classical world as a composer of German lieder. His father, also Franz Schubert, was a schoolmaster and taught music to the younger Franz along with his siblings. Franz received most of his early musical training from his father and older brother Ignaz until he began to study organ and music theory from the church organist. In 1808, he earned a scholarship to sing in the chapel choir in the imperial court where he also attended boarding school, Stadtkonvikt. While at boarding school he met the two main mentors that would mold Schubert into the composer we see him as today. The imperial court organist, Wenzel Ruzicka, and the composer Antonio Salieri, who was at the peak of his compositional career. In 1812, Schubert’s voice broke and he left the college, but still studied with Salieri for three more years. Schubert’s musical career did not take off until the years 1913-1815 where he produced one of his most famous songs Gretchen am Spinnrade (Gretchen at the spinning wheel). That piece of lied sprung his career into action where in the next year he would compose roughly 140 art songs. Later in his career, Schubert would write some of the most famous song cycles of German lieder. In 1823, Die schöne Müllerin (The pretty milkmaid) was debuted and noted as his most famous work of the year. In 1827, near the end of his life, Schubert produced the first twelve songs of the song cycle Winterreise. The reason he only released the first half was due to the highly significant death of a beloved composer, Ludwig van Beethoven. Later that year he released the final half of Winterreise. Schubert died shortly after in the spring of 1828. He struggled through the later parts of his life with syphilis, in eventually died from typhoid fever.

Der Doppelgänger was one of Schubert’s songs that were compiled into a set that were titled Schwanengesang (Swan song). It is a dark piece that depicts a person in their own dream. The night is still. The streets are quiet. The person sees the home of an ex-lover and a dark figure staring up at the house. As they get closer, the moon removes the shadow from the dark figures face to reveal that the dark figure is you.

Rastlose Liebe was published in 1821 and was dedicated to Schubert’s mentor, Antonio Salieri. The piece was composed during a snowstorm and describes great passion. The singer is professing their love for someone and that they will go through anything to be able to show them how much they love them.
Der Doppelgänger

Still ist die Nacht, es ruhen die Gassen,  
In diesem Hause wohnte mein Schatz;  
Sie hat schon längst die Stadt verlassen,  
Doch steht noch das Haus auf demselben Platz.  

Da steht auch ein Mensch und starrt in die Höhe,  
Und ringt die Hände, vor Schmerzens Gewalt;  
Mir graust es, wenn ich sein Antlitz sehe –  
Der Mond zeigt mir meine eigne Gestalt.  

Du Doppelgänger! du bleicher Geselle!  
Was äffst du nach mein Liebesleid,  
Das mich gequält auf dieser Stelle,  
So manche Nacht, in alter Zeit?


Rastlose Liebe

Dem Schnee, dem Regen,  
Dem Wind entgegen,  
Im Dampf der Klüfte,  
Durch Nebeldüfte,  
Immer zu! Immer zu!  
Ohne Rast und Ruh!

Lieber durch Leiden  
Wollt’ ich mich schlagen,  
Als so viel Freuden  
Des Lebens ertragen.  
Alle das Neigen  
Von Herzen zu Herzen,  
Ach, wie so eigen  
Schaffet es Schmerzen!

Wie soll ich flieh’n?  
Wälderwärts zieh’n?  
Alles vergebens!  
Krone des Lebens,  
Glück ohne Ruh,  
Liebe, bist du!

Richard Wagner

(1813-1883)

Wilhelm Richard Wagner was born in Leipzig, Germany. His father was a police officer who died shortly after his birth. But his mother remarried in 1814 to a painter/actor whom Wagner still identified him as his stepfather. While attending primary school in Dresden, Germany Wagner did not have a strong aptitude for music. In fact, his teacher stated that he would “torture the piano in an abominable fashion.” This would not stop Wagner from becoming one of the most influential opera composers of all time, however. At age eleven he wrote his first drama and at age sixteen he completed his first musical composition. Wagner was so confident that most people saw him to be conceited. At age eighteen he attended Leipzig University and by age twenty he had his first symphony performed. A great inspiration of Wagner’s was Ludwig van Beethoven. He would even call him “that mystic source of my highest ecstasies.” After spending time in Russia, London, and Paris Wagner made his way back to Dresden. In 1843, The Flying Dutchman was release with critical acclaim and Wagner was given the Prussian order of the Red Eagle and was appointed as director of the Dresden Opera. By 1845, he had completed Tannhäuser and started working on Lohengrin. In 1848, a revolution broke out in Saxony and Wagner fled to Zurich due to him being a quite vocal leftist. He was unable to make his way back to Germany for eleven years. During this time, he wrote Jewishness in Music, an anti-Semitic piece that would later be by most as a notorious work. Adolf Hitler, on the other hand, was a big fan and it is said that Wagner’s music would be played in Dachau to “re-educate” prisoners, thus making Wagner’s legacy more controversial. Another work that he would start during his time away was the ever-popular Ring Cycle. It is an eighteen-hour collection of four operas that are connected by leitmotifs. Wagner’s use of leitmotifs was ahead of its time and influenced many great works we know today like Starwars, Lord of the Rings, and Harry Potter. The combination of literature, visual elements, and music would anticipate the future of the film.

Tannhäuser is an opera in three acts. In act one, Tannhäuser has been taken in by Venus for the last year. Although the lavish life was nice, he longed for a simpler life of marriage. He prayed to the Virgin Mary and was released back to the Earthly world. Tannhäuser had banished himself from the court after losing a singing competition, but some passing knights recognized him and wanted to bring him back to the Wartburg Castle of Eisenach. He was hesitant at first until Wolfram told him that his song had won over the heart of Elizabeth and Tannhäuser happily agreed to come with them. In act two, Elizabeth hears of Tannhäuser’s return and holds another singing competition. The winner gets her hand in marriage. Tannhäuser, still under Venus’s influence, sings a song of finding pleasure in the senses which horrifies the court. The knights draw their swords, but Elizabeth begs them to grant him pardon. They agree on the condition that he travel to Rome on a pilgrimage to receive forgiveness from the pope. In act three, Elizabeth seeks news about Tannhäuser from any passing pilgrim. She loses hope and prays to the Virgin Mary to send her to the afterlife. Wolfram, who has devoted himself to her, has a premonition of death and prays to the evening star to guide her in death (O du mein holder abendstern). Tannhäuser makes it back without receiving the Pope’s blessing. The Pope says that his staff is more likely to sprout a flower than for Tannhäuser to obtain absolution. On his return he finds out that Elizabeth is dead and prays for Venus to take him back. Wolfram calls out that he sees Elizabeth’s funeral procession and Tannhäuser throws his body over her. He dies of grief. Suddenly, a young pilgrim announces that the Pope’s staff has grown a flower.
O du, mein hold Abendstern

Wie Todesahnung Dämmerung deckt die Lande,
umhüllt das Tal mit schwärzlichem Gewande;
der Seele, die nach jenen Höhn verlangt,
vor ihrem Flug durch Nacht und Grausen bangt.
Da scheinest du, o lieblichster der Sterne,
dein sanftes Licht entsendest du der Ferne;
die nächt’ge Dämmerung teilt dein lieber Strahl,
und freundlich zeigt du den Weg aus dem Tal.

Dusk covers the land like a premonition of death,
Wraps the valley in her dark mantle;
The soul that longs for those heights
Dreads to take its dark and awful flight.
Then you appear, O loveliest of stars,
And shed your gentle light from afar;
Your sweet glow cleaves the twilight gloom,
And as a friend you show the way out of the valley.

O du, mein holder Abendstern,
wohl grüsst’ich immer dich so gern:
vom Herzen, das sie nie verriet,
grüsse sie, wenn sie vorbei dir zieht,
wenng sie entschwebt dem Tal der Erden,
ein sel’ger Engel dort zu werden!

O you, my fair evening star,
Gladly have I always greeted you:
Greet her, from the depths of this heart,
Which has never betrayed her,
Greet her, when she passes,
When she soars above this mortal vale
To become a holy angel there!

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Reynaldo Hahn

(1874-1947)

Reynaldo Hahn was born in Caracas, Venezuela, but was naturalized French. By age eleven he had proven himself to be very musically talented and was enrolled into the Paris Conservatoire’s preparatory courses. While there he studied piano with French pianist Émile Decombres. Other notable musicians of his class were Maurice Ravel and Alfred Cortot. His composition teachers were Charles Gounod and Jules Massenet. Massenet would eventually become Hahn’s lifelong friend and mentor. Through his great mentor, Hahn met Camille Saint-Saëns, another renowned French composer. Saint-Saëns would privately instruct Hahn outside of his education at the Conservatoire. Hahn is most well-known for his mélodie (French art song). By age fourteen, Hahn had a large success when he wrote *Si mes vers avaient des ailes* which was published by Hartmann et Cie, the leading music publisher in 1890. In 1896, Hahn would finish his studies at the Conservatoire with average marks. On Hahn’s completion of his courses, Massenet resigned from his position at the Conservatoire. Hahn was beginning to receive praise as a conductor and would split his conducting time at the Salzburg Festival with Gustav Mahler who is extremely well-known for his symphonies. Mahler would conduct *Le nozze di Figaro* and Hahn would conduct *Don Giovanni* which he was praised for having a “flexible and light touch”. In 1914, a war broke out and even though Hahn was outside of the mandatory age limit, he volunteered anyway. When he returned, his old classmate Alfred Cortot would hire him as the professor of interpretation and singing at the school he founded called École Normale de Musique de Paris. Hahn died from complications during surgery after a blasting shell that was fired at a German warship by a British submarine which had missed and was launched towards his room in Monte Carlo. Throughout his career, Reynaldo Hahn would go on to write over 100 songs for voice and piano and is a well-loved composer of French art song.

À Chloris is a song that expresses the love that the singer has for Chloris. I like to envision someone walking down the aisle during the beautiful intro that Hahn writes. I dedicate this song to Lauren Craig for always believing in me and pushing me to become a better person.

**À Chloris**

S’il est vrai, Chloris, que tu m’aimes,
Mai j’entends, que tu m’aimes bien,
Je ne crois point que les rois mêmes
Aient un bonheur pareil au mien.
Que la mort serait importune
De venir changer ma fortune
A la félicité des cieux!
Tout ce qu’on dit de l’ambroisie
Ne touche point ma fantaisie
Au prix des grâces de tes yeux.

If it be true, Chloris, that you love me,
(And I’m told you love me dearly),
I do not believe that even kings
Can match the happiness I know.
Even death would be powerless
To alter my fortune
With the promise of heavenly bliss!
All that they say of ambrosia
Does not stir my imagination
Like the favour of your eyes!

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Maurice Ravel

(1875-1937)

Joseph-Maurice Ravel was born in Cibourne, France, a Basque town eleven miles from the Spanish border. His mother Marie was Basque but had grown up in Madrid and his father Pierre-Joseph Ravel was born in Versoix near the Franco-Swiss border. Ravel’s father was highly educated and worked as an engineer and inventor. His mother was born out of wedlock and was barely literate, but the two parents lived a happy marriage. Pierre-Joseph also like music and art so when Maurice was seven years old, he started piano lessons with Henry Ghys. Five years later, Ravel would begin studying harmony, counterpoint, and composition. His teacher, Charles-René, had described him as a natural musician who did not have to rely on effort and that it came naturally. At age thirteen, Ravel met Ricardo Niñes, a young pianist who would become a lifelong friend and a link to the interpretation of Ravel and his love for Spanish music. At age fourteen, Ravel began studying piano with Émile Decombres with the likes of Reynaldo Hahn and Alfred Cortot. The next year he would join the Paris Conservatoire to study piano. Ravel did not stand out during his studies. In 1891, he won first prize in the Conservatoire’s piano competition, but other than that, he was an average student. His time spent there, however, was time well spent in the development of his compositional style. Ravel had a problem with being “only teachable on his own terms” which was stated by musicologist Barbara L. Kelly. His later teacher Gabriel Fauré was understanding of this, but the conservative faculty of the Conservatoire felt differently. Ravel was expelled in 1895. After accepting the fact that he would never reach the level of his peers at the piano, he decided to dive deeper into composition. In 1897, Maurice was readmitted into the Paris Conservatoire, this time in composition under the tutelage of Gabriel Fauré. Ravel responded well to Fauré’s teaching style and his teacher remarked that he saw “a distinct growth of maturity.” Although his progression was substantial, the director Théodore Dubois did not like Ravel’s musical and political progressiveness. Ravel would compose some solid works but won no prizes in his second round of the Conservatoire and was expelled again. As a former student, Ravel could audit Faure’s classes free of charge but would resign from all teachings of the Conservatoire in 1903. Ravel and Debussy were two composers who were lumped together as impressionistic. Both composers disagreed with the statement. Ravel was extremely tedious in his crafting of his compositions. This meant the output would be much smaller, but still as significant as earlier composers. In 1932, Ravel suffered a blow to the head during a taxi accident. It is believed that this event led to his developing of aphasia. His last work was the song set Don Quichotte à Dulcinée. He started writing these songs for the film Don Quichotte but could not keep up with the production schedule and the job was given to Jaques Ibert. In December of 1937, Ravel died while in a coma due to progression of his aphasia.

*Don Quichotte à Dulcinée* was originally written for piano and voice but was later set to orchestra. The three pieces that make up the set are independent from each other. The three songs are all based on Spanish dances. *Chanson romanesque* uses the rhythmic style of the quajira with an alternating 3/4 and 6/8 meter. *Chanson épique* uses the asymmetrical dance rhythm of the zortzico in 5/4 where there is a sence of urgency in an unusually slow song. This song is a prayer for the saints to watch over his beloved whom he regards higher than anyone else. The final selection, *Chanson à boire*, is a drinking song. Ravel uses the manic style of the jota to encompass the excitement of this song. The keyboard provides flourishes to paint the picture of hiccups and the vocal line provides the same as well as laughter to bring a joyful ending to the set.
Chanson Romanesque

Si vous me disiez que la terre
À tant tourner vous offensa,
Je lui dépècherais Pança:
Vous la verriez fixe et se taire.

Si vous me disiez que l'ennui
Vous vient du ciel trop fleuri d'astres,
Déchirant les divins cadastres,
Je faucherais d'un coup la nuit.

Si vous me disiez que l'espace
Ainsi vidé ne vous plaît point,
Chevalier dieu, la lance au poing.
J'étoilerais le vent qui passe.

Mais si vous disiez que mon sang
Est plus à moi qu'à vous, ma Dame,
Je blêmirais dessous le blâme
Et je mourrais, vous bénissant.

Ô Dulcinée.

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Chanson épique

Bon Saint Michel qui me donnez loisir
De voir ma Dame et de l'entendre,
Bon Saint Michel qui me daignez choisir
Pour lui complaire et la défendre,
Bon Saint Michel veuillez descendre
Avec Saint Georges sur l'autel
De la Madone au bleu mantel.

D'un rayon du ciel bénissez ma lame
Et son égale en pureté
Et son égale en piété
Comme en pudeur et chasteté:
Ma Dame.
(Ô grands Saint Georges et Saint Michel)
L'ange qui veille sur ma veille,
Ma douce Dame si pareille
À Vous, Madone au bleu mantel!
Amen.

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Chanson à boire

Foin du bâtard, illustre Dame,
Qui pour me perdre à vos doux yeux
Dit que l'amour et le vin vieux
Mettent en deuil mon coeur, mon âme!

Je bois
À la joie!
La joie est le seul but
Où je vais droit... lorsque j'ai bu!

Foin du jaloux, brune maîtresse,
Qui geint, qui pleure et fait serment
D'être toujours ce pâle amant
Qui met de l'eau dans son ivresse!

Je bois
À la joie!
La joie est le seul but
Où je vais droit...
Lorsque j'ai bu!

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Steven Kohn

(b. 1957)

Steven Kohn was born in a suburb east of Cleveland, Ohio. He was introduced to music in the 1960’s by his older sister and mother who were lovers of musical theater and folk rock. He would come home and sound out how to play whatever he learned in school that day. At age eighteen, he finally learned where middle C was when he enrolled in his first piano lessons. He would continue in music at Kent State University where he started as a piano major but quickly changed to composition. He dove into his work and graduated with his undergraduate degree in composition. He pursued his master’s degree in composition in 1982 at the Cleveland Institute of Music. Some of his teacher during his time in Cleveland were Donald Erb and Eugene O’Brien. He also studied with Charles Jones during his time spent at the Aspen Music Festival. Steven Kohn is well-known for his vast contribution in films, commercials, and my favorite collection of American folk songs. He has also written lyrics for four operas and 2 musicals.

The three songs that I chose to put into my recital are 10,000 miles away, Ocean burial, and Farmer’s crust wife. 10,000 miles away is a song about their beloved who is obviously 10,000 miles away. The vocal line is quite robust, and the piano encompasses the voice with its full and forward moving sixteenth-notes. One thing I have always found that Kohn was great at is writing a beautiful accompaniment. Farmer’s crust wife tells a hilarious story of a farmer whose wife is stolen by the devil and is far too much to handle. This song tells a story very well and is a joy to sing. Ocean burial is a tragic song about a sailor who dies at sea far before his time. Most people will know someone who dies before they should. This song is very important to me and I am singing it for my uncle Joe, and my cousins Mallie and Ryan who were all taken before their time was up.
Ben Moore

(b. 1960)

Born in Syracuse, New York, Ben Moore’s compositional history spreads through opera, musical theater, cabaret, chamber music, choral music, and comedic material. His artistic abilities do not stick only to music. He is also a painter and teaches at New York’s Guggenheim Museum and Morgan Library. Moore’s music and art have been seen across the country in places like Minnesota Opera, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Carnegie Hall, and the Metropolitan Opera to name a few.

I’m glad I’m not a tenor is one of Ben Moore’s comedic songs. The piece is about a baritone who is distraught because all everyone wants to hear is Nessun dorma from Turandot. The singer tries to captivate the audience with great arias from the baritone canon. Music to be heard includes Avant de quitter ces lieux from Faust, Il balen from Il Trovatore, O du mein holder Abendstern from Tannhäuser, Largo al factotum from Il barbiere di Siviglia, and Votre toast from Carmen. Each time the singer tries to embrace a beautiful baritone music, but the piano keeps trying to interrupt and lead the singer back into Nessun dorma. Will the singer be strong and stick to the baritone ballads, or will he crumble under the weight of the tenor tunes?