

University of British Columbia School of Music  
6361 Memorial Road, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2 | music.ubc.ca

Doctoral Recital at Barnett Hall  
Monday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
10:30 a.m.

**Letizia Pent, Piano**

From the cycle *Songs of Travel*

Ralph Vaughan Williams  
(1872-1958)

*“Let Beauty Awake”*

*“In Dreams”*

*“The Infinite Shining Heavens”*

Neil Craighead, baritone

*Märchenbilder* (Fairy Tales) for piano and viola op. 113

Robert Schumann  
(1810-1856)

- i. Nicht schnell
- ii. Lebhaft
- iii. Rasch
- iv. Langsam, mit melancholischem Ausdruck

Caroline Olsen, viola

Sonata for cello and piano L. 135

Claude Debussy  
(1862-1918)

- i. Prologue: *Lent, sostenuto e molto risoluto*
- ii. Sérénade: *Modérément animé*
- iii. Finale: *Animé, léger et nerveux*

Yiyang Xue, cello

~ intermission ~

Elegiac Trio no. 1 in G minor

Sergei Rachmaninoff  
(1873-1940)

Conor Stuart, violin

Yiyang Xue, cello

Trio op. 63 for piano, flute, and double bass

Carl Maria von Weber  
(1786-1826)

- i. Allegro moderato
- ii. Scherzo. Allegro vivace (G minor)
- iii. Schäfers Klage (Shepherd's Complaint or Shepherd's Lament). Andante  
espressivo
- iv. Finale. Allegro

Peiyi Guan, flute

Yueming Xia, double bass

This recital is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Doctorate of Musical Arts degree with a major in Piano Performance.

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Program notes

## R.Vaughan Williams- Songs of travel

Songs of travels is a song cycle composed between 1901 and 1904 and it includes nine art songs based on the poems from British poet Robert Louis Stevenson homonymous collection. Like in Schubert's *Die Schöne Mullerin* and *Winterreise* and Mahler's *Lieder Eines Fahrenden Gesellen*, this is another interpretation of the wayfarer's romantic journey. Those songs tell, in first-person, the story of a nomadic existence; a lonely, resolute individual, who is sometimes seized by nostalgia, bitterness, and regret toward distant memories. Despite that, the traveller continues their journey as a curious individual amazed and overwhelmed by the sublime, and at the same time, simple beauty of nature.

### *Let Beauty Awake*

This song recalls the genre of a folk song, that was a prominent element of Vaughan Williams production, with a metre of 9/8, and in the key of Dorian F-sharp minor. Second in the cycle, it is characterised by two similar verses, one about the day and the other about the night. The word “Beauty” is capitalised in the original poem by Stevenson as it is referred to a person, but at the same time it can refer to the abstract concept of beauty present in the observed surroundings. The text is painted with the melody and in the soft arpeggios of the piano part, remains in a limited range at the beginning, representative of the slumbering day at the awakening; then the melody opens up and the piano texture becomes more definite with a decrease in the amount of notes per bar, from four per half-beat, to just three notes per half-beat at the end of that bar, giving the illusion that the music is slowing down. The melody gently falls back down again toward the end, to represent the day now fully awakened. The song is a constant admiration for the sky and nature, the stars, the birds, the dusk.

*Let Beauty awake in the morn from beautiful dreams,  
Beauty awake from rest!  
Let Beauty awake  
For Beauty's sake  
In the hour when the birds awake in the brake  
And the stars are bright in the west!  
Let Beauty awake in the eve from the slumber of day,  
Awake in the crimson eve!  
In the day's dusk end*

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*When the shades ascend,  
Let her wake to the kiss of a tender friend,  
To render again and receive!*

### *In Dreams*

After the braveness and the enthusiasm expressed in the song *The Vagabond*, the admiration of nature and dreams of love in *Let Beauty Awake* and *The Roadside Fire*, the boldness and the desire to always move forward of *Youth and Love*, in the fifth song of the cycle feelings of remorse appear. The narrator has fallen in love, but has abandoned “left with a smile” to proceed in their journey, and now in their dreams, shadows from the past are emerging. This struggle is described with the use of chromaticism and by the syncopated rhythm of the piano part. This feature could be interpreted as an endeavour to find anchorage to the present, and in order to not get caught up in the past, but also as a heavy feeling that stays and somehow stops the protagonist from moving on in their journey. The lack of finality in this song in its ending represents the inability to forget.

*In dreams unhappy, I behold you stand  
As heretofore:  
The unremember'd tokens in your hand  
Avail no more.  
No more the morning glow, no more the grace,  
Enshrines, endears.  
Cold beats the light of time upon your face  
And shows your tears.  
He came and went. Perchance you wept awhile  
And then forgot.  
Ah me! but he that left you with a smile  
Forgets you not.*

### *The Infinite Shining Heavens*

This song features rolled chords on the piano recalling perhaps the appearance and twinkling of the stars. The single note on the piano that gradually flowers to two, three and four notes to become an “uncountable” amount. The music continues through these static chords, the harmony goes through several, often abrupt modulations, such as a sudden E-flat minor chord, echoing the key in the song “The Vagabond” where the texts says “Give the jolly heaven above, And the byway nigh me. Bed in the bush with stars to see...”. The upcoming song “Whither Must I Wander” home key is foreshadowed

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moving to the parallel E-flat major, representative of the desire of the narrator to always look ahead, and with this song, concludes the cycle.

*The infinite shining heavens  
Rose, and I saw in the night  
Uncountable angel stars  
Showering sorrow and light.  
I saw them distant as heaven,  
Dumb and shining and dead,  
And the idle stars of the night  
Were dearer to me than bread.  
Night after night in my sorrow  
The stars looked over the sea,  
Till lo! I looked in the dusk  
And a star had come down to me.*

### **R.Schumann- Marchenbilder op. 113**

The four pieces op. 113 for viola and piano *Märchenbilder*, bearing the date 1851, was written during the composer's stay in Düsseldorf, and was dedicated to German violinist and conductor Wilhelm Joseph von Wasielewski.

As in the *Märchenerzählungen* op. 132 for clarinet and piano, the *Fairy tales* take up the theme of childlike imagination, which in the past had already characterised some of Schumann's piano compositions (*Kreisleriana*, *Kinderszenen*, *Waldszenen* and others). In each of the four tempos different moods are punctuated intimate and pensive in the first, folkish, and whimsical in the second, quivering and sentimental in the third, and a sweet lullaby with some moment of lyrical expression to conclude.

Through the warm timbre of the viola, one finds the spirit of the "fantastic stories" of German taste, full of symbols and allegories related to folk legends, enhanced in literature by Goethe, Eichendorff, Tieck and Novalis, who claimed that their tales were simply dreams, symbols of a world projected toward an ideal celestial harmony. What matters in these literary tales is the poetic atmosphere mysteriously evoked, almost in a mediumistic relationship between the individual and nature. Schumann didn't specify which fairy tales this music referred to, and that leaves it up to the artists and the listeners to create their own story. Like a thread that flows around the musical pages, as in a lucid dream where characters speak in the background painted by the rich and intense colour of both instruments.

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## C. Debussy- Sonata for cello and piano L. 135

In the last years of his life, Debussy wrote a group of piano and chamber music compositions that present a very significant sense of aesthetic renewal. The total number of these works was to be six, but only three Sonatas were composed of this project: the one for cello is the first in the series, followed by the *sonata pour flûte, alto et harpe (1915) pour piano et violon (1917)*. The term "Sonata" should be returned to its pre-classical formal meaning, indicating a "Sonata" reconstructed on the level of the ancient Suite.

Debussy initially intended to give it a title laden with curious symbolism, *Pierrot fâché avec la lune*, recalled Watteau's imaginative painting, with its melancholic and ironic overtones, the Sonata is a magnificent, exemplary anthology of Pierrot's bewildered and sullen world, of the mischievous and smiling masks of the *commedia dell'arte*, of the quotations from the unsurpassed French harpsichord masters, of the nebulous and evocative atmospheres, of the ambient use of modality, of the reference to ancient instrumental timbres. Nonetheless the composer abolished any external reference and relied exclusively on the values of sonorous discourse and at times seems to lean towards the pure neo-classical bareness that distinguishes these later Debussy works from his specifically 'impressionist' works. The Sonata is all about a nocturnal aura, lunar, harmonic colour always prevails over design, so that the linear conducting of the voices proves to be more 'graphic' in nature than real.

The Prologue resembles an austere overture in the old style, 'French-style', in the manner of one of Couperin's solemn, melancholic suites; the piano sketches a declamatory theme in a theatrical, improvisatory manner, completed by the cello that sketches its own assumption like a lament. With the Serenade, the cello *pizzicati* recreates the atmosphere of a guitar playing and the minimalist line seems to allude, from time to time, to weeping, to smiling, to the moody and fantastic atmospheres of Pierrot. The Finale is marked by a joyful and unstoppable rhythmic momentum, with references to Spanish sonorities and at one point interrupted by an episode indicated on the score with these words: "*Molto rubato e con morbidezza*", like an echo of the old harpsichord *voltas*, so beloved to the late Debussy.

## S. Rachmaninoff- Elegiac trio no. 1 in G minor

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The Piano trio no. 1 was published posthumously in 1947, but it belongs to Rachmaninoff's early compositions; it was composed in 1892 when the composer was 19 years old and performed in the same year. This early composition shows a young and not yet mature composer, nonetheless, shows the strongly passionate, expressive, and poignant harmonic cores of future Rachmaninoff music.

It is possible to see an affinity to Tchaikovsky's Trio in A minor, both in the structure of the first movement and in conclusion. Another link to the composer is the fact that the trio seems to quote the Bb minor piano concerto subject played backwards.

The Trio no. 1 opens with a *Lento Lugubre* where the strings play a hushed, frosty figure that seems to grow out of the darkness, then the piano enters with a broad but distinctly sorrowful theme piano. The elegiac main theme is repeated through a single movement in sonata form by the cello and the violin and recalled as a funeral march in the conclusive page, as it happens in the aforementioned a minor trio by Tchaikovsky. A year later Rachmaninoff will compose a second piano trio op. 9, that bears the same title as the first one.

### **C.M.v. Weber- Piano Trio op. 63**

The Trio op. 63 for cello, flute and piano was completed in the summer of 1819, while Weber was spending a vacation in the Pillnitz countryside: the rustic serenity and the pastoral inspiration various pervades its four tempos, in the airiness of its instrumental writing and in the luminous transparency of its timbral colour. Among the other four Trios composed by Weber, the first was destroyed in the Munich fire, and the others were lost. The trio is in line with the spirit of Mozart's Divertimenti, with which they share the elegant ease of speech, lively rhythmic vitality, levity of expression, versatility of gimmickry and subjugating charm. The texture of the three instruments recalls the virtuosity of the Biedermeier style. The first movement showcases the three instruments in a piece of understated expressiveness and terse writing. The lively Scherzo, recalls and anticipates in the first part a certain Schumannian rhythmic while it stylises the cheerfulness of a country dance in the second part. The Andante espressivo paints the bucolic pastoral character: the movement itself brings subtitle "The Shepherd's Lament", and it derives from an original *Adagio con variazioni* for cello and piano. The main theme of this movement probably derives from a lied from Gesänge mit der Begleitung der Chitarra by Wilhelm Ehler, *Shaffers Klagelied*, whose words belong to a poem by Goethe. Another allusion is in the Finale, where some motifs have similarities to those belonging to Weber's most famous opera "*Freischütz*", written also in the same year as the trio.

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### **Schäfers Klagelied**

*Da droben auf jenem Berge,  
Da steh' ich tausendmal,  
An meinem Stabe hingebogen,  
Und schaue hinab in das Tal.  
Dann folg' ich der weidenden Herde,  
Mein Hündchen bewahret mir sie.  
Ich bin herunter gekommen  
Und weiss doch selber nicht wie.  
Da steht von schönen Blumen  
Da steht die ganze Wiese so voll.  
Ich breche sie, ohne zu wissen,  
Wem ich sie geben soll.  
Und Regen, Sturm und Gewitter  
Verpass' ich unter dem Baum,  
Die Türe dort bleibt verschlossen;  
Doch alles ist leider ein Traum.  
Es stehet ein Regenbogen  
Wohl über jenem Haus!  
Sie aber ist fortgezogen,  
Und weit in das Land hinaus.  
Hinaus in das Land und weiter,  
Vielleicht gar über die See.  
Vorüber, ihr Schafe, nur vorüber!  
Dem Schäfer ist gar so weh.*

### **Shepherd's Lament**

*On yonder hill  
I have stood a thousand times,  
leaning on my staff  
and looking down into the valley.  
I have followed the grazing flocks,  
watched over by my dog,  
I have come down here  
and do not know how.  
The whole meadow is so full  
of lovely flowers;  
I pluck them, without knowing  
to whom I shall give them.  
From rain, storm and tempest  
I shelter under a tree.  
The door there remains locked;  
for, alas, it is all a dream.  
There is a rainbow  
above that house!  
But she has moved away,  
to distant regions.  
To distant regions and beyond,  
perhaps even over the sea.  
Move on, sheep, move on!  
Your shepherd is so wretched.*

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