

St. Norbert College

Digital Commons @ St. Norbert College

Music Performances

Music

Spring 4-16-2023

Faculty Vocal Recital: Dr. Yi-Lan Niu (2023)

St. Norbert College Music Department

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.snc.edu/performances>

Biography

Mr. Warren Gerds

Warren Gerds is a lifetime resident of Wisconsin. He holds a degree in journalism from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He is most known as a critic at large, first with the Green Bay Press-Gazette and then at WFRV-TV in Green Bay. Gerds has written 10 nonfiction and fiction books held by the Library of Congress. The manual typewriter his parents gifted him in college is held by the Neville Public Museum. During the 2018 bicentennial of Brown County, Gerds' typewriter was among 200 notables of the county's history. The display included his father's instruction for his career: "Get it right."

Mrs. Elaine Moss

Mrs. Elaine Moss is staff accompanist at St. Norbert College. She has pursued extended studies at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, UW-Milwaukee, and the Universite de Louis Pasteur in Strasbourg, France. She enjoys a varied career collaborating and concertizing with guest artists and numerous singers and instrumentalists.

Dr. Yi-Lan Niu

Dr. Yi-Lan Niu has been acclaimed for her performances of major works including "Gloria" by Antonio Vivaldi, "Messiah" by George Frideric Handel, "Carmina Burana" by Carl Orff, "Lord Nelson Mass" by Joseph Haydn and *Magnificat* by John Rutter. Her numerous operatic roles include Clorinda in *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*, Costanza in *La Griselda*, Serpina in *La Serva Padrona*, Sandman from *Hansel & Gretel*, Diane from *Orpheus in the Underworld* and Papagena in *The Magic Flute*. Collaborating frequently with classical guitarist Dr. Christopher Cramer, Niu promotes a wide range of music written for voice and guitar. The Niu-Cramer Duo has performed throughout North America and Asia, including the United States, Canada, Taiwan and Singapore. Niu also actively premieres vocal pieces written for her, including *Requiem* by New York-based composer Alexander Nohai-Seaman and the contemporary song cycle *Yuan Songs* by Dr. Chi-Wei Hui from Hong Kong, song cycle titled *Depárt* by Dr. John Hennecken and *Flower Theme* by Ms. Shing-Ying Lin. Her vocal album, "*Chante et Souffrir -Sacred Music by Gounod*," was released by Centaur Records globally in spring 2020. Her other professional recordings include R. Strauss' *4 Lieder, No.21* and *Quattro Canzoni d'Amaranta* by F.P.Tosti.

Program Notes

(In the Order of the Performance)

“Serenata” by Pietro Mascagni (1863-1945)

Mascagni was known for his operatic works. His opera *Cavalleria Rustica* became one of the most famous dramatic pieces of the Italian Realism (Verismo). His characters are often drawn from everyday life and the vocal lines are flexible with key changes to express sensitive feelings.

Come col capo sotto l'ala bianca
dormon le palombelle innamorate,
Così tu adagi la persona stanca
sotto le coltri molli e ricamate.

La testa bionda sul guanciale riposa
lieta de' sogni suoi color di rosa
e tra le larve care al tuo sorriso
una ne passa che ti sfiora il viso.

Passa e ti dice che bruciar le vene,
che sanguinare il cor per te mi sento.
Passa e ti dice che ti voglio bene,
che sei la mia dolcezza e il mio
tormento.

Bianca tra un nimbo di capelli biondi
lieta sorridi ai sogni tuoi giocondi.
Ah, non destarti, o fior del Paradiso,
ch'io vengo in sogno per baciarti in
viso!

With the head buried under the white
wings,
Loving doves fall asleep,
Like a tired person, you lay down
On the soft and embroidered pillow.

Your blond head rests on the pillow,
Happy rose-colored dreams,
As you smile, a fairy passes and
touches your face.

It passes and tells you that my blood is
burning in my veins, that my heart
bleeds for you.
It passes and tells you that I want you
That you are my sweetness and my
torment.

White, among the blond hair,
Happy smile in your playful dreams,
Ah, don't wake up, oh, flower of
paradise, because I am coming to your
dream, for a kiss on your face!

“Sure on this shining night” Op.13, No.3 by Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

The music scholar Carl Kimball characterized Barber’s songs as *the* American songs because of their directness and simplicity. Although they are appealing and easy to understand, they never lose their depth and sophistication. “Sure on this shining night” is one of Barber’s most loved and performed songs. The vocal phrases are long and lyrical and maintain the dramatic intention throughout the entire piece.

Sure on this shining night
Of star made shadows round,
Kindness must watch for me
This side the ground.
The late year lies down the north.
All is healed, all is health.
High summer holds the earth.
Hearts all whole.
Sure on this shining night I weep for wonder wand’ring far alone
Of shadows on the stars.

“The Evening Prayer” by Modest Moussorgsky (1839-1881)

“The Evening Prayer” is a child’s prayer in which Moussorgsky demonstrates his ability to instantly create drama from a child’s point of view. As one of the members of the “Russian Five,” he stood out as being innovative, controversial and creative. His music, which exemplifies the concept of Realism, was well received because it conveyed the emotions and experiences of common people.

Child:
Bless, O, Lord, I pray Thee,
Daddy and Mummy,
Bless them and take care of them; O, Lord, I pray Thee,
Brother Vasenka and Brother Mishenka.
Bless, O, Lord, I pray Thee,
Darling Old Grand-ma-ma,
And let her be ill no more, but well again.
Grand-ma-ma is so kind, Grand-ma-ma is so old,
Please O Lord!
Please, O Lord, bless also,
Auntie Katie, Auntie Natasha, Auntie Masha, Auntie Paresha!
Auntie Liouba, Varia, and Sasha and Olia, and Tania and Nadia,
Uncle Petia and Kolia, Uncle Voldia and Grisha and Sasha,
Have mercy, Lord, on all of these and take care of them,
And Filia, and Vania, and Mitia and Petia and Dasha, Sonia, Dounioushka!
Nanny, dear Nanny,
Now, what else, Nanny?

Nurse:

You really are a little monkey!

How many times I've told you! Pardon, I beseech Thee, Lord, all my trespasses.

Child:

Pardon, I beseech Thee, Lord, all my trespasses.

There, is that all?

“Der Lindenbaum” by Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Schubert composed over 600 songs which are considered the cornerstone of 19th century German Lieder. His song cycles *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise* were very influential and set the standard for generations of composers. In Schubert's songs, the piano always serves the vocal part actively as a text painter and an atmosphere creator. “Der Lindenbaum” is the fifth piece from the melodrama *Winterreise*. The character in this song cycle travels while being tortured and haunted by their own memories and dreams. Their soul feels peaceful and wants to rest peacefully as the linden tree appears.

Der Lindenbaum

Am Brunnen vor dem Tore,
Da steht ein Lindenbaum;
Ich träumt' in seinem Schatten
So manchen süßen Traum.

Ich schnitt in seine Rinde
So manches liebe Wort;
Es zog in Freud' und Leide
Zu ihm mich immer fort.

Ich musst' auch heute wandern
Vorbei in tiefer Nacht,
Da hab' ich noch im Dunkel
Die Augen zugemacht.

Und seine Zweige rauschten,
Als riefen sie mir zu:
Komm her zu mir, Geselle,
Hier findest du deine Ruh'!

Die kalten Winde bliesen
Mir grad' in's Angesicht,
Der Hut flog mir vom Kopfe,
Ich wendete mich nicht.

Nun bin ich manche Stunde
Enfernt von jenem Ort,
Und immer hör' ich's rauschen:
Du fändest Ruhe dort!

The Linden Tree

By the well, before the gate,
stands a linden tree;
in its shade I dreamt
many sweet dreams.

In its bark I carved
many a word of love;
in joy and sorrow
I was ever drawn to it.

Today, too, I had to walk
past it at dead of night;
even in the darkness
I closed my eyes.

And its branches rustled
as if they were calling to me:
'Come to me, friend,
here you will find rest.'

The cold wind blew
straight into my face,
my hat flew from my head;
I did not turn back.

Now I am many hours' journey
from that place;
yet I still hear the rustling:
“There you would find rest.”

Translated by Richard Wigmor

秋夜 “Autumn Night” by Shen-Shi Lin (1914-1991)

Lin was accepted by the Shanghai Music Academy in 1931. He started his music training as a pianist, later becoming a music theorist and composer. Lin was best known as a composer and a music educator during WWII in mainland China. “Autumn Night” describes how the silence of an autumn night is broken by the plants, living creatures and a singing human who is inspired by nature.

晴空氣爽，
明月秋宵，
更看那淡淡的銀河，
襯托著，星兒多少。

西風陣陣，
吹過了芭蕉，
蕉葉響蕭蕭，
吹過了梧桐，
桐葉落飄飄。

花容消瘦，
柳影苗條，
露冷欄干，
架上的鸚哥睡了，
苔荒石徑，
塔下的秋蟲在叫。

這般的秋光，
我正好撫琴吟嘯，
且聽歌聲琴韻，
把情懷傳向水遠山遙。

Clear skies, light breezes,
the moon in the autumn night
Gazes upon the Milky Way
where hides the shining stars.

West wind blows through
the banana trees
and the leaves shiver through
the buttonwood.

Flowers fade away
as the willow tree stands alone.
The fence is covered by the dew
while the birds fall asleep.
Under the mossy, stony path, the
insects chirp.

In such an Autumn night,
I play my instrument and sing.
Through the rhythm of my songs,
I am sending my inspiration to the
mountains and rivers far away.

In the Fields by John Duke (1899-1984)

Duke attended Peabody Conservatory at the early age of sixteen as a scholarship student in both the piano and composition programs. After 1920, he presented his debut as a concert pianist in New York. He later published his songs through G. Schirmer Company (the most famous music publisher at the time) and joined the faculty at Smith College until his retirement. His teachers included the pianist Arthur Schnabel in Berlin and the composer Nadia Boulanger in Paris. With his distinguished craftsmanship and genuine expression, Duke composed nearly 265 songs. However, due to the lack of recordings, his pieces were not as well known as his contemporaries like Barber and Menotti. Duke later admitted that he never imagined becoming a composer even though his songs represent a major contribution to the American song literature.

Lord when I look at lovely things which pass,
Under old trees the shadow of young leaves
Dancing to please the wind along the grass,
Or the gold stillness of the August sun on the August sheaves;
Can I believe there is a heavenlier world than this?
And if there is
Will the heart of any everlasting thing
Bring me these dreams that take my breath away?
They come at evening with the home-flying rooks and the scent
of hay,
Over the fields. They come in spring.

“A Nun Takes the Veil (Heaven Haven)”, Op. 13, No.1 by Samuel Barber

I have desired to go
Where springs not fail,
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail
And a few lilies blow.

And I have asked to be
Where no storms come,
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,
And out of the swing of the sea.

“The Trees on the Mountains” from *Susannah* by Carlisle Floyd(1926-2021)

The opera *Susannah* was first performed in 1955 at Florida State University and finally received its premiere by the Metropolitan Opera in 1999. The character Susannah is a gentle woman with a humble background. She is betrayed by the people in her community and decides to leave her town to create a new life.

The trees on the mountains are cold and bare.

The summer jes' vanished an' left them there.

Like a false-hearted love jes' like my own,
Who made me love him, then left me alone.

The coals on the hearth have turned gray and sere,
The blue flame jes' vanished an' left them there.

Like a false-hearted lover jes' like my own,
Who made me love him, then left me alone.

Come back, O summer, come back, blue flame,
My heart wants warmin', my baby a name.
Come back, O lover, if jes' for a day,
Turn bleak December once more into May
The road up ahead lies lonely an' far,
There's darkness around me an' not even a star.

To show me the way or lighten my heart,
Come back, my lover, I fain would start.

The pore baby fox lies all cold in his lair,
His mama jes' vanished an' left him there.
Like a false-hearted lover jes' like my own,
Who made me love him, then left me alone.

Come back, O summer, come back, blue flame,
My heart wants warmin', my baby a name.
Come back, O lover, if jes' fer a day,
Turn bleak December once more into May.
Come back, O summer, come back, blue flame,
My heart wants warmin', my baby a name.

Come back, O lover, if jes' fer a day,
Turn bleak December once more into May!
Come back!

“A Green Lowland of Pianos”, Op.45, No.2 by Samuel Barber

In the evening as far as the eye can see herds of black pianos,

Up to their knees in the mire they listen to the frogs.

They gurgle in water with chords of rapture, they are entranced
by froggish, moonish spontaneity.

After the vacation, they cause scandals in a concert hall.

During the artistic milking...suddenly, they lie down like cows.

Looking with indifference at the white flowers of the audience at the gesticulating
of the ushers.

Black piano, black piano!

“Vocalise” by Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Unlike his other Russian contemporaries, Rachmaninoff’s compositions do not reflect strong nationalistic characteristics, but a sensitive and collaborative treatment between the piano and voice. As a pianist and a composer, his pieces often represent rich harmony and texture. People often compare him to the German pianist-composer Robert Schumann because of their similar approach to poetic subjects of nature and romanticism. A “vocalise” is a vocal passage without words. This type of piece showcases the singer’s vocal agility and breath support. “Vocalise” was composed in 1915 and dedicated to the Russian and Soviet opera singer Antonina Nazhdanova.