

Sage Williams, Voice and Composition Recital

December 2nd, 2021

7:30pm

Kirmser Hall, Kansas State University

PROGRAM

Stages of Grief..... Sage Williams

Songhwa Chae, Piano

Old Mother Hubbard..... Victor Hely-Hutchinson

Sweet Suffolk Owl..... Richard Hundley

Lusinghe più care..... George Handel

Sage Williams, Soprano
Songhwa Chae, Piano

Tis the eye of childhood / That fears a painted devil..... Sage Williams

Jenna Dominguez, Flute
Songhwa Chae, Piano

Gretchen am Spinnrade..... Franz Schubert

Why Do They Shut Me Out of Heaven?..... Aaron Copland

Sage Williams, Soprano
Songhwa Chae, Piano

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Program Notes

Stages of Grief

"Stages of Grief" came to me at a time when I was grieving for many reasons, and trying to find the strength to validate these feelings inside of myself. It's not a compositionally complex piece of music by any means, but rather emotionally complex. The main aspect that I wanted to explore while writing this are the deep, rich chords that are allowed to ring throughout the piece, heightening the repetitive melodic line that can be recognized throughout. There are many open sections in this piece of music, that I feel were moments where I wanted to breathe, I wanted to take a break and just absorb all of these emotions I was feeling, before moving on and building further.

Old Mother Hubbard

Composed by Victor Hely-Hutchinson in 1928, "Old Mother Hubbard" is the familiar nursery rhyme, set in the style of Handel. This light-hearted piece presents a sense of nostalgia with the familiar text, while being reimagined in the jovial yet dramatic spirit of the 17th century operatic charm. It certainly is a piece that can make you smile, and jokingly takes itself too seriously. At many points throughout the piece, the text will pause in order to allow the performer a moment to show off their vocal range, with a lengthy melisma. As the nursery rhyme continues, the tone of the music shifts to become more serious, desperately building to the end, where it is discovered that the poor dog would in fact, receive none.

Sweet Suffolk Owl

"Sweet Suffolk Owl," is an anonymously published poem that was later set to music by Richard Hundley in 1979. This piece contains two characters, the narrator and the owl, and switches between the two and is quite endearing in its style. Its melody moves in and out of key, and its rhythm is quick and light, as though Hundley is trying to capture the essence of an owl's movements through the musical motion. All the while, the poetry depicts a beautiful, yet lonely owl, flying through the night, screeching its song of death as it hunts for mice. The most striking aspect of this piece are the moments where the performer begins to imitate an owl, a bit of a quirky quality that makes the piece rather fun to both sing and listen to.

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Lusinghe Più Care

Composed by Handel, "Lusinghe Più Care" was written for one of the two female leads of his opera, *Alessandro*. *Alessandro* is a very charming opera, written in 1726. It depicts Alexander the Great's journey to India, showing him as less heroic, and instead rather indecisive. Lead Soprano, Rossane, sings this aria in an attempt to woo Alessandro heart, after being captured by him. This aria is quite flirtatious in nature, containing many impressive and flourishing runs throughout that seem to tease Alessandro, to grab his attention. About halfway through the piece, the tone shifts, the music becoming minor and intense, and the words discussing jealousy and suspicion that Rossane is feeling. At this point it is made clear of Rossane's possessive nature, and that she desires all of Alessandro's romantic attention.

Tis the eye of childhood / That fears a painted devil

"Tis the eye of childhood / That fears a painted devil " is a bit of a long winded title that I feel sums up the narrative that this piece conveys. This piece is based on the story of Lady Macbeth, and the arc which her character goes through, from the start of the play, through, until her death. The opening of this piece is based on the sound of a train whistle, replicated by a solo flute which plays this long, free section of music, to match the tone of Lady Macbeth's opening monologue. This puts forth the idea that Lady Macbeth is the one in control of this train that the other characters are about to ride.

Gretchen am Spinnrade

"Gretchen am Spinnrade," or "Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel," is a lied composed by Franz Schubert in 1814, the poetry taken from Goethe's *Faust*. The main character in this piece is Gretchen, who is thinking about Faust, and her utter heartache and despair over him, as she works at her spinning wheel. The music to accompany this somber lyricism is so expertly crafted, the turning piano accompaniment mimicking the perpetual movement of a spinning wheel, and the melody building up over three distinct sections leading to a grand climax that ultimately leaves Gretchen, and thus the performer, physically and emotionally exhausted.

Why Do They Shut Me Out of Heaven?

"Why Do They Shut Me Out of Heaven?" is poetry created by Emily Dickinson, and was set to music by Aaron Copland in 1951. The third in Copland's song cycle *12 Poems of Emily Dickinson*, this piece is about being accepted into Heaven, and offering the questions, "Why do they shut me out of Heaven? Have I misbehaved? Did I bother the angels? Did I sing too loud?" The poetry then goes on to say "If I were the one letting people into Heaven, how could I forbid them?" and again in the conclusion, offering the question, but rather with more acceptance and defiance, "Did I sing too loud?" Copland matches Dickinson's confused text, with an equally confusing melody and harmonic progression that explores the ranges of tonality, almost like the music is a question as well as the text.