

Program Notes

Amy Rosine, soprano

Let the Bright Seraphim from *Samson* – George Frederic Handel

The oratorio *Samson* was first performed in London in 1743, shortly after *Messiah*. The libretto is based on *Samson Agonistes*, a dramatic play by John Milton (1608-1674) of the biblical story of Samson from the Book of *Judges*. You might be familiar with the epic poem *Paradise Lost*, also by Milton. In “Let the Bright Seraphim,” an Israelite woman calls upon the heavenly hosts to commemorate Samson’s heroic death and triumph over the Philistines. The brilliant interplay between trumpet and soprano, together with the aria’s virtuosic melismatic writing, has made this one of Handel’s most enduring and beloved *da capo* arias.

“Hat Box Trio” from *Postcard from Morocco* - Dominick Argento (1927-2019)

Dominick Argento is widely regarded as one of America’s foremost composers of vocal music. In 1975, his song cycle *From the Diary of Virginia Woolf* received the Pulitzer Prize for Music, and his operas are considered among the significant works of his generation. He taught composition and theory at the University of Minnesota for nearly 40 years.

Postcard from Morocco (1971) is a one-act opera set in a railway station where strangers converge each day. The story unfolds through a series of vignettes in which the characters reveal their lives, hopes, and dreams. Each character carries a trinket or box that holds deep personal meaning, yet they remain reluctant to reveal its contents.

The “Hat Box Trio” features three women: one carrying a mirror, another a cake box, and the third a hat box. The first two women are particularly curious about what the hat box contains, creating an intriguing and playful dynamic among the three characters.

***Cuatro madrigales amoroso* (1947) Joaquin Rodrigo (1901-1999)**

2026 is the 125th anniversary of the birth of Spanish composer Joaquin Rodrigo. Blinded at age three by diphtheria, Rodrigo credits this with his journey into music. His most famous work is *Concierto de Aranjuez* for guitar and orchestra. He had much success in writing for many types of instruments, yet he “considers the voice to be the perfect instrument, and his most favorite is the soprano voice.” (Draayer, 7) *Cuatro madrigales amoroso* is arguably his most popular song cycle. The texts are Renaissance love poems from the collection *Recopilacion de sonetos y sonatos y villancicos a quatro y a cinco* (1560) by Juan Vasquez (c.1510-1560). In the music you will hear a nod to the Baroque, which is one of the first things that jumped out when I began studying the songs. The chord structures and rhythms are simple and typical of Baroque Spanish folk music. (Draayer, 166)

¿Con qué la lavaré
la tez de la mi cara?
¿Con qué la lavaré,
Que vivo mal penada?

Lávanse las casadas
con agua de limones:
lávome yo, cuitada,
con penas y dolores.
¿Con qué la lavaré,
que vivo mal penada?

Vos me matásteis,
niña en cabello,
vos me habéis muerto.

Riberas de un río
ví moza vírgo,
Niña en cabello,
vos me habéis muerto.
Niña en cabello
vos me matásteis,
vos me habéis muerto.

¿De dónde venís, amore?
Bien sé yo de dónde.
¿De dónde venís, amigo?
Fuere yo testigo!
¡Ah!
Bien sé yo de dónde.

De los álamos vengo, madre,
de ver cómo los menea el aire.

De los álamos de Sevilla,
de ver a mi linda amiga,
de ver cómo los menea el aire.

De los álamos vengo, madre,
der ver cómo los menea el aire.

With what shall I wash
the skin of my face?
With what shall I wash it?
I live in such sorrow.

Married women
wash in lemon water:
in my grief I wash
in pain and sorrow.
With what shall I wash it?
I live in such sorrow.

You killed me,
girl with hair hanging loose,
you have slain me.

By the riverbank
I saw a young maiden.
Girl with hair hanging loose,
you have slain me.
Girl with hair hanging loose,
you have killed me,
you have slain me.

Where hast thou been, my love?
I know well where.
Where hast thou been, my friend?
Were I a witness!
ah!
I know well where.

I come from the poplars, mother,
from seeing the breezes stir them.

From the poplars of Seville,
from seeing my sweet love,
from seeing the breezes stir them.

I come from the poplars, mother,
from seeing the breezes stir them.

Days and Nights by Lori Laitman (b. 1955)

One of the most celebrated living American composers, Lori Laitman has composed operas, choral works, and more than 300 songs. Her music “is praised for its uniqueness, craft and beauty...” (Laitman website). *Days and Nights* was commissioned by soprano Melissa Coombs in celebration of her 10th wedding anniversary. As a mother of young adults and married for more than 28 years, I find a personal connection to the themes throughout this cycle. I especially enjoy “They might not need me,” which speaks not only to the changing relationship between parents and their grown children, but also resonates with me as a voice teacher who has helped students make the transition from college into the “real” world.

1. Along With Me

Text: Robert Browning

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith “A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor
be afraid!”

2. They Might Not Need Me

Text: Emily Dickinson

They might not need me — yet they might
I’ll let my Heart be just in sight —
A smile so small as mine might be
Precisely their necessity —

3. The Night has a Thousand Eyes

Text: Francis W. Bourdillon

The night has a thousand eyes,
And the day but one;
Yet the light of the bright world dies
With the dying sun.
The mind has a thousand eyes,
And the heart but one:
Yet the light of a whole life dies
When love is done.

4. Over the Fence

Text: Emily Dickinson

Over the fence —
Strawberries — grow —
Over the fence —
I could climb — if I tried, I know —
Berries are nice!
But — if I stained my Apron —
God would certainly scold!

Oh, dear, — I guess if He were a Boy —
He’d — climb — if He could!

5. Song

Text: Christina Rossetti

When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember,
And if thou wilt, forget.
I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on, as if in pain:
And dreaming through the twilight
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget.

6. Wild Nights

Text: Emily Dickinson

Wild Nights — Wild Nights!
Were I with thee
Wild Nights should be
Our luxury!
Futile — the Winds —
To a Heart in port —
Done with the Compass —
Done with the Chart!

Rowing in Eden —
Ah, the Sea!
Might I but moor — Tonight —
In Thee!

Casta diva from *Norma* (1830) by Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835)

A leading example of opera from the *bel canto* era, *Norma* is a *tragedia lirica* (opera) in two acts to a libretto by Felice Romani. The title role in *Norma* is considered one of the most difficult in the soprano repertoire and the aria “Casta diva” has been sung by many legends of the craft including Giuditta Pasta, for who the role was created, Joan Sutherland and Maria Callas, who is considered one of the very best to have performed the role. In the aria *Norma*, high priestess of the druids, is pleading with the goddess of the moon (Casta diva) to bring peace to earth.

Casta Diva, che inargenti
Queste sacre antiche piante,
Al noi volgi il bel sembiante,
Senza nube e senza vel!

Chaste goddess, who dost bathe in silver light
These ancient, hallowed trees,
Turn thy fair face upon us,
Unveiled and unclouded...

Tempra, o Diva,
Tempra tu de' cori ardenti,
Tempra ancora lo zelo audace.
Spargi in terra quella pace
Che regnar tu fai nel ciel.

Temper thou the burning hearts,
The excessive zeal of thy people.
Enfold the earth in that sweet peace
Which, through Thee, reigns in heaven....

Translation <https://www.opera-arias.com/bellini/norma/casta-diva/>

Sources:

“Argento, Dominick, Postcard from Morocco,” accessed 8/5/2026

<https://www.boosey.com/pages/opera/moredetails?musicid=514>

Laitman, Lori. *Days and Nights*. Enchanted Knickers Music, BMI

Lori Laitman “press-kit, abbreviated bio”. Accessed 8/5/2026.

<https://www.artsongs.com/press/press-kit/>

Draayer, Suzanne Rhodes. *A Singer's Guide to the Songs of Joaquin Rodrigo*. Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1999.

Oxford Music Online. “Norma” by Simon Maguire and Elizabeth Forbes, 2002.