

MEAD WITTER SCHOOL OF MUSIC



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN - MADISON

*Doctoral Lecture Recital:  
Songs of Ophelia*

*Amanda Lauricella, soprano  
Will Preston, piano*

Saturday, November 14, 2020, 2:30pm

Collins Recital Hall

## Program

### *Drei Lieder der Ophelia*

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Wie erkenn' ich mein Treulieb  
Guten Morgen, 's ist Sankt Valentinstag  
Sie trugen ihn auf der Bahre bloss

### La mort d'Ophélie

Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

### Selections from *Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia*

Jake Heggie (b. 1961)

Ophelia's Song  
Not in a silver casket cool with pearls  
Spring

## Notes & Texts

**Richard Strauss** (1864-1949) drew his texts for his *Drei Lieder der Ophelia* (1918) from German poet Karl Joseph Simrock (1802-1876). Simrock, in turn, drew his German texts from Shakespeare's original depiction of Ophelia's mad scene. This song cycle is perhaps the most famous musical setting of Ophelia. The three movements depict Ophelia's various musings, not spoken but sung in Act 4 Scene 5 after Ophelia's father's death and Hamlet's cruel rejection of her.

**"Wie erkenn' ich mein Treulieb"** offers vivid imagery of Ophelia's father, Polonius, at his own funeral. Ophelia is entranced by her memories, recalling in detail his clothing, his gravesite, and his burial shroud. **"Guten Morgen, 's ist Sankt Valentinstag"** describes a scene in which a man seduces his maid on Valentine's Day after promising to marry her. Here, Ophelia continues her musical musings, but abruptly switches from discussing her father's death to describing Hamlet's capricious behavior involving his seduction and abandonment of her. **"Sie trugen ihn auf der Bahre bloss"** is the last we hear from Ophelia before her death. Here, she leaves the subject of her relationship with Hamlet and returns to her own grief from her father's death, further recalling events from his funeral.

Strauss's use of frantic rhythms, strange and fickle harmonies, recurring melodic motives, and stark tempo changes all represent Ophelia's unraveling, while the beauty of the vocal line often ironically contrasts with Ophelia's sense of madness.

### Wie erkenn' ich mein Treulieb

Karl Joseph Simrock

Wie erkenn' ich mein Treulieb  
Vor andern nun?  
An dem Muschelhut und Stab  
Und den Sandalschuh'n.

Er ist tot und lange hin,  
Tot und hin, Fräulein.  
Ihm zu Häupten grünes Gras,  
Ihm zu Fuß ein Stein. O, ho!

Auf seinem Bahrtuch, weiß wie Schnee,  
Viel liebe Blumen trauern:  
Sie gehn zu Grabe naß, o weh!  
Vor Liebesschauern.

### How shall I know my true love

How shall I know my true love  
From others now?  
By his cockle hat and staff  
And his sandal shoes.

He is dead and long gone,  
Dead and gone, lady!  
At his head green grass,  
At his feet a stone. O, ho!

On his shroud, white as snow,  
Many dear flowers mourn.  
They go to the grave wet, oh woe!  
From the shower of love's tears.

**Guten Morgen, 's ist Sankt Valentinstag**

Karl Joseph Simrock

Guten Morgen, 's ist Sankt Valentinstag  
So früh vor Sonnenschein  
Ich junge Maid am Fensterschlag  
Will euer Valentin sein.

Der junge Mann tut Hosen an,  
Tät auf die Kammertür  
Ließ ein die Maid, die als Maid  
Ging nimmermehr herfür.

Bei Sankt Niklas und Charitas,  
Ein unverschäm't Geschlecht!  
Ein junger Mann tut's wenn er kann,  
Fürwahr, das ist nicht recht.

Sie sprach: Eh' ihr gescherzt mit mir,  
Verspracht ihr mich zu frein.  
Ich bräch's auch nicht bei'm Sonnenlicht,  
Wär'st du nicht kommen herein.

**Sie trugen ihn auf der Bahre bloss**

Karl Joseph Simrock

Sie trugen ihn auf der Bahre bloß,  
Leider ach leider den Liebsten!  
Manche Träne fiel in des Grabes Schoß—  
Fahr' wohl, meine Taube!

Mein junger frischer Hansel ist's der mir gefällt—  
Und kommt er nimmermehr?  
Er ist tot, o weh!  
In dein Todbett geh,  
Er kommt dir nimmermehr.

Sein Bart war weiß wie Schnee,  
Sein Haupt wie Flachs dazu:  
Er ist hin, er ist hin,  
Kein Trauern bringt Gewinn:

Mit seiner Seele Ruh  
Und mit allen Christenseelen! Darum bet ich!  
Gott sei mit euch!

**Good morning, it's St. Valentine's Day**

Good morning, it's St. Valentine's Day  
So early before sunrise.  
I, young maid at the window,  
Shall be your valentine.

The young man put trousers on,  
Opened up the chamber door,  
Let in the maid, who as a maid  
Departed nevermore.

By St. Nicholas and Charity,  
What a shameless sex!  
A young man does it when he can,  
Indeed, that is not right.

She said: Before you trifled with me,  
You promised to marry me.  
I would not have broken my promise by sunlight,  
If you had not come in.

**They carried him uncovered on the bier**

They carried him uncovered on the bier,  
Alas, alas, the dearest!  
Many tears dropped in the grave—  
Farewell, farewell, my dove!

My young fresh Hansel it is who pleases me—  
And will he come nevermore?  
He is dead, oh woe!  
To your deathbed go,  
He will come to you nevermore.

His beard was white as snow,  
His hair like flax what's more.  
He is gone, he is gone,  
Nothing comes of mourning:

May his soul rest in peace  
And with all Christian souls! That is my prayer!  
God be with you!

**Hector Berlioz** (1803-1869) drew his texts for his “**La mort d’Ophélie**” (1842) from French poet and dramatist Ernest Legouvé (1807-1903). Legouvé wrote “La mort d’Ophélie” as a ballade, which is, in turn, based on Queen Gertrude’s description of Ophelia’s drowning in Act 4 Scene 7. In the original Shakespearean text, Gertrude’s description of Ophelia’s death is almost cinematic:

*There is a willow grows aslant at brook,  
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream.  
There with fantastic garlands did she come  
Of crowflowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,  
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,  
But our cold maids do dead men’s fingers call them.  
There are pendant boughs her coronet weeds  
Clamb’ring to hang, an envious sliwer broke,  
When down her weedy trophies and herself  
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide  
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up;  
Which time she chaunted snatches of old tunes,  
As one incapable of her own distress,  
Or like a creature native and indued  
Unto that element; but long it could not be  
Till that her garments, heavy their drink,  
Pull’d the poor wretch from her melodious lay  
To muddy death.*

—Queen Gertrude, *Hamlet*

As Shakespeare’s text is cinematic, Berlioz’s musical setting is as well. Berlioz uses the opening piano accompaniment to set the scene, representing the gently rippling water of the stream which later drowns Ophelia. Berlioz’s use of cinematic composition is particularly evident when the branch of the willow tree breaks and sends Ophelia into the water depicted by a dramatic *sforzando*, as well as when the weight of her dress pulls her under depicted by the final descending vocal line.

## La mort d'Ophélie

Ernest Legouvé

Après d'un torrent, Ophélie  
Cueillait, tout en suivant le bord,  
Dans sa douce et tendre folie,  
Des pervenches, des boutons d'or,  
Des iris aux couleurs d'opale,  
Et de ces fleurs d'un rose pâle  
Qu'on appelle des doigts de mort.

Puis élevant sur ses mains blanches  
Les rians trésors du matin,  
Elle les suspendait aux branches,  
Aux branches d'un saule voisin.  
Mais, trop faible, le rameau plie,  
Se brise, et la pauvre Ophélie  
Tombe, sa guirlande à la main.

Quelques instants sa robe enflée  
La tint encor sur le courant,  
Et, comme une voile gonflée,  
Elle flottait toujours chantant,  
Chantant quelque vieille ballade,  
Chantant ainsi qu'une naiade,  
Née au milieu de ce torrent.

Mais cette étrange mélodie  
Passa, rapide comme un son.  
Par les flots la robe alourdie  
Bientôt dans l'abîme profond  
Entraîna la pauvre insensée,  
Laissant à peine commencée  
Sa mélodieuse chanson.

## The death of Ophelia

Near a stream, Ophelia  
Gathered, while following the shore,  
In her sweet and tender madness,  
Periwinkles, buttercups,  
Irises with colors of opal,  
And those flowers of pale rose  
That are called fingers of death.

Then raising in her white hands  
The smiling treasures of the morning,  
She hung them on the branches,  
The branches of a nearby willow tree.  
But too weak, the branch bends,  
Breaks, and poor Ophelia  
Falls, her garland in her hand.

For some moments her inflated robe  
Supported her yet upon the current,  
And, like a swollen veil,  
She floated ever singing,  
Singing some old ballad,  
Singing like a water-nymph,  
Born in the middle of this torrent.

But this strange melody  
Passed, quickly as a sound.  
In the waves the heavy robe  
Soon into the deep abyss  
Carried off the poor insane girl,  
Leaving behind scarcely begun  
Her melodious song.

American composer **Jake Heggie** (b. 1961) set his ***Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia*** (1999) using poems by American poet Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950), as well as his own poetic composition. Unlike many other composers, Heggie does not use texts from Ophelia's famous mad scene, but instead chooses poetry that ties together to tell Ophelia's untold narrative.

“**Ophelia's Song**” juxtaposes blossoming images of spring with Ophelia's sense of powerlessness and imprisonment, while the faster tempo and joyous text of the B section represents Ophelia recalling the joy she once felt from life's simple pleasures before her suffering. “**Not in a silver casket cool with pearls**” takes us back in time to before Ophelia's heart was broken by Hamlet. Here, Ophelia is carefree, pure, and not yet jaded by love. The poem's text expresses a kind of unadorned, openhearted love that is not hidden behind tokens or gifts, but is rather shouted plainly from the rooftops. “**Spring**” returns to the present, just before Ophelia's suicide. Here, Ophelia feels insulted by April's beauty amidst her own

powerlessness. This present-day version of Ophelia is someone who is not stricken with madness but is deeply attuned to reality and the suffering it brings.

While Shakespeare's Ophelia lacks a voice of her own in *Hamlet*, Heggie attempts to give Ophelia a voice through the telling of her narrative. She is no longer pegged as the pitied victim, but rather as a wise and multi-dimensional character who ultimately decides to kill herself as an act of exuding her power. The rolled chords in the piano during the final measures of the entire cycle represent the ripples of the water created by Ophelia's body, and the final "hum" of the vocal melody suggests that she ended her life with grace and beauty—an ending that is perhaps missing from Shakespeare's original tale.

### **Ophelia's Song**

Jake Heggie

The hills are green, my dear one,  
and blossoms are filling the air.  
The spring is arisen and I am a prisoner there.

In this flowery field I'll lay me  
and dream of the open air.  
The spring is arisen and I am a prisoner there.

Taste of the honey. Sip of the wine.  
Pine for a chalice of gold.  
I have a dear one and he is mine.  
Thicker than water. Water so cold.

In this flowery field I'll lay me  
and dream of the open air.  
The spring is arisen and I am a prisoner there.

### **Not in a silver casket cool with pearls**

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Not in a silver casket cool with pearls  
Or rich with red corundum or with blue,  
Locked, and the key withheld, as other girls  
Have given their loves, I give my love to you;  
Not in a lovers'-knot, not in a ring  
Worked in such fashion, and the legend plain—  
*Semper fidelis*, where a secret spring  
Kennels a drop of mischief for the brain:  
Love in the open hand, no thing but that,  
Ungemmed, unhidden, wishing not to hurt,  
As one should bring you cowslips in a hat  
Swung from the hand, or apples in her skirt,  
I bring you, calling out as children do:  
"Look what I have!—And these are all for you."

## **Spring**

Edna St. Vincent Millay

To what purpose, April, do you return again?  
Beauty is not enough.  
You can no longer quiet me with the redness  
Of little leaves opening stickily.  
I know what I know.  
The sun is hot on my neck as I observe  
The spikes of the crocus.  
The smell of the earth is good.  
It is apparent that there is no death.  
But what does that signify?  
Not only underground are the brains of men  
Eaten by maggots.  
Life in itself  
Is nothing,  
An empty cup, a flight of uncarpeted stairs.  
It is not enough that yearly, down this hill,  
April comes like an idiot, babbling and strewing flowers.

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