Women’s Rights

***********

Selections from Preach Sister, Preach (Evan Mack) – Sophie Bougeois, soprano

Note from the composer:

I was inspired to write this cycle after witnessing the 1st Women’s March. After reading the Simone de Beauvoir quote, "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman," I started looking at hundreds of quotes by famous women about women. There were so many brilliant (and funny) quotes that I could have probably composed three more song cycles.

Simone de Beauvoir:
This has always been a man’s world, and none of the reasons that have been offered in explanation have seemed adequate! One is not born, but rather becomes a woman.

Mae West:
There are no good girls gone wrong, just bad girls found out.
When I’m good, I’m very good, but when I’m bad, I’m better.
Good girls go to heaven, bad girls go everywhere!

Gilda Radner:
I’d much rather be a woman than a man.
Women can cry, they can wear cute clothes, and they’re first to be rescued off sinking ships.
Do bah do bah do.

Lucille Ball:
A man who correctly guesses a woman’s age, maybe smart, but he’s not very bright.

***********

Raquel from Sueños de Esperanza “Dreams of Hope” (Henry Mollicone) – Tori Vilches, soprano

Twenty years old and
mother of five.
Twenty years old and
the only thing bigger
Than my sadness and my fear
Was my responsibility
to feed them. Abused continuously
by the coward,
I was hungry and
depressed all the time. I decided to come to the north. But I knew the risk of this trip was even riskier with kids. I’m going to make money and I’ll send for them when God wills. Crying, I said goodbye.

Crossing the border was a horrible nightmare. My strength abandoned me and I fainted three times. Only the memory of my children brought me to my feet again.

Finally, cleaning houses, baby sitting and caregiving, I was able to bring them. Oh my God, happy at last! But it was just a brief illusion.

Gangs, alcohol and drugs came into my life. Now alone, old and sad, I’m afraid of living. If I return, his vengeance awaits.

If I stay, my future is no better without a social security number or a license. Without papers, I’m just one more shadow in the dark night.

************

Hold Fast to Dreams (Florence Price) – text by Langton Hughes, Kathryn Piña, soprano

Hold fast to dreams For if dreams die Life is a broken-winged bird That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams For when dreams go Life is a barren field Frozen with snow.
Mental Health/Loss

***********
She Used to be Mine (Sarah Bareilles) from \textit{Waitress}, Emma Cave, soprano

It's not simple to say
That most days I don't recognize me
That these shoes and this apron
That place and it's patrons
Have taken more than I gave them
It's not easy to know
I'm not anything like I used to be
Although it's true
I was never attention's sweet center
I still remember that girl

She's imperfect but she tries
She is good but she lies
She is hard on herself
She is broken and won't ask for help
She is messy but she's kind
She is lonely most of the time
She is all of this mixed up
And baked in a beautiful pie
She is gone but she used to be mine

It's not what I asked for
Sometimes life just slips in through a back door
And carves out a person
And makes you believe it's all true
And now I've got you
And you're not what I asked for
If I'm honest I know I would give it all back
For a chance to start over
And rewrite an ending or two
For the girl that I knew

Who'll be reckless just enough
Who'll get hurt but
Who learns how to toughen up when she's bruised
And gets used by a man who can't love
And then she'll get stuck and be scared
Of the life that's inside her
Growing stronger each day
'Til it finally reminds her
To fight just a little
To bring back the fire in her eyes
That's been gone but it used to be mine

Used to be mine
She is messy but she's kind
She is lonely most of the time
She is all of this mixed up and baked in a beautiful pie
She is gone but she used to be mine

***********
Words Fail (Benj Pasek & Justin Paul) from *Dear Evan Hansen*, José Ruiz-Gonzalez, tenor

I never meant to make it such a mess
I never thought that it would go this far
So I just stand here sorry
Searching for something to say
Something to say
Words fail, words fail
There's nothing I can say

I guess I thought I could be part of this
I never had this kind of thing before
I never had that perfect girl
Who somehow could see the good part of me

I never had the dad who stuck it out
No corny jokes or baseball gloves
No mom who just was there
'Cause mom was all that she had to be

That's not a worthy explanation
I know there is none
Nothing can make sense of all these things I've done

Words fail, words fail
There's nothing I can say
Except sometimes, you see everything you wanted
And sometimes, you see everything you wish you had
And it's right there, right there, right there
In front of you
And you want to believe it's true
So you... make it true
And you think maybe everybody wants it
And needs it... a little bit... too

This was just a sad invention
It wasn't real, I know
But we were happy
I guess I couldn't let that go
I guess I couldn't give that up
I guess I wanted to believe
'Cause if I just believe
Then I don't have to see what's really there

No, I'd rather pretend I'm something better than
These broken parts
Pretend I'm something other than
This mess that I am
'Cause then I don't have to look at it
And no one gets to look at it
No, no one can really see

'Cause I've learned to slam on the brake
Before I even turn the key
Before I make the mistake
Before I lead with the worst of me
I never let them see the worst of me

'Cause what if everyone saw?
What if everyone knew?
Would they like what they saw?
Or would they hate it too?
Will I just keep on running away from what's true?

All I ever do is run
So how do I step in
Step into the sun?
Step into the sun

***********
Bessie Bobtail (Samuel Barber), Hayden Ponder, baritone

As down the road she wambled slow,
She had not got a place to go:
She had not got a place to fall
And rest herself – no place at all!
She stumped along, and wagged her pate;
And said a thing was desperaste.

Her face was screwed and wrinkled tight
Just like a nut – and, left and right,
On either side, she wagged her head
And said a thing; and what she said
Was desperate as any word
That ever yet a person heard.

I walked behind her for a while,
And watched the people nudge and smile:
But ever, as she went, she said,
As left and right she swung her head,
“O God He knows: And, God He knows!
And, surely God Almighty knows!”

***********

Sleep (Ivor Gurney), Andy Stellar, baritone

Come, Sleep, and with thy sweet deceiving
Lock me in delight awhile;
Let some pleasing dream beguile
All my fancies; that from thence
I may feel an influence
All my powers of care bereaving

Though but a shadow, but a sliding
Let me know some little joy!
We that suffer long annoy
Are contented with a thought
Through an idle fancy wrought:
O let my joys have some abiding!

***********

I’ll Be Here (Adam Gwon) from Ordinary Days, Olivia Garza, soprano

We met, of all places,
In front of Gristedes some freakishly cold winters day.
I had on several unflattering layers of wool.
He slipped on the ice with his grocery bags full,
So I rescued some Fruit Loops he dropped by the curb
And he made some remark that my smile was superb
I thought that was sweet and I started to go and he said
"Hey, whatcha doing tomorrow?"

'Because I'll be here
At the corner of Bleaker and Mercer tomorrow at 7.
If you want to meet up, I'll be waiting right here,
And in case there are two fellas waiting for you, my name's John."
He waved and then he was gone.

Needless to say I went back there to meet him
Mostly to see if he'd show, and there he was
Out in the cold with his jacket pulled tight.
He took me to dinner and kissed me goodnight.
The next week we went to this terrible play.
And the week after that drank hot chocolate all day.
And suddenly, eight or nine months had flown by when he said
"Hey, whatcha doing the rest of your life?"

'Because I'll be here
Right beside you as long as you want me to be.
There's no question.
There is nothing I've wanted so much in my life.
This might sound immature but I'm totally sure you're the one."
And we had just begun.

We got hitched in September, our favorite month,
With a rock band that played in this old synagogue.
And we bought an apartment on West 17th street and talked about children and getting a dog.
Our first anniversary came in a flash
And we promised to take the day off.
He had to stop into his office that morning,
And so I went walking uptown to this bakery I know.
When I heard on the street what I thought was a joke
Till I noticed the sirens and saw all the smoke.
So I'm running back home with this feeling of dread
To the voicemail he left with the last words he said.

I'm sorry, I don't mean to ruin your evening by bringing up all of this stuff.
You're probably wondering why I even called you tonight.
Well today something happened that spooked me alright.
I saw this storm cloud of papers fall down from the sky,
And I thought of that day and I started to cry.
When as sure as I breath I heard John clear as day saying
"Hey, you're allowed to move on. It's okay."

'Because I'll be here
Even if you decide to get rid of my favorite sweater.
Even if you go out on my birthday
This year instead of staying at home letting all of life's moments pass by.
You don't have to cry.'

'Because I'll be here
When you start going back to the places we went to together.
When you take off my ring and you let yourself smile.
When you meet some handsome and patient and true.
When he says that he wants to be married to you.
When you call him one night and he meets you downtown.
When you finally answer him yes."
Yes.
Jason, I will marry you.
I will give you my heart.
It has taken so long, but I'm ready to start.
Right now John's whispering 'Congrats' in my ear cause I finally let myself tell you
That I will be here.

***********

Lacrymosa (Howard Goodall) from Eternal Light – A Requiem, Jacob Brown, baritone

Lacrymosa, dies illa
That day will be one of weeping

Do not stand at my grave and weep,
I am not there, I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow,
I am the softly falling snow.
I am the gentle showers of rain,
I am the fields of ripening grain.
I am in the morning hush,
I am in the graceful rush
Of far-off birds in circling flight.
I am the starshine of the night.

I am in every flower that blooms,
I am in still and empty rooms.
I am the child that yearns to sing,
I am in each lovely thing.

Do not stand at my grave and cry,
I am not there – I did not die.

Race/Racial Justice

***********

It’s Hard to Speak My Heart (Jason Robert Brown) from Parade, Andrew Walters, baritone

It's hard to speak my heart.
I'm not a man who bares his soul.
I let the moment pass me by -
I stay where I am in control.
I hide behind my work,
Safe and sure of what to say:
I know I must seem hard,
I know I must seem: cold.
I never touched that girl –

You think I’d hurt a child, yes?
I'd hardly seen her face before -
I swear - I swore we'd barely met.
These people try to scare you
With things I've never said.
I know it makes no sense.
I swear I don't know why:
You see me as I am - You can't believe I'd lie -
You can't believe I'd do these deeds -
A little man who's scared and blind,
Too lost to find the words he needs.

I never touched that child -
God - I never raised my hand!
I stand before you now:
Incredibly afraid.
I pray you understand.

************

Little Song (Robert Owens) from Mortal Storm, text by Langston Hughes, Isaak McGuire, baritone

Lonely people
In the lonely night
Grab a lonely dream
And hold it tight

Lonely people
In the lonely day
Work to salt
Their dream away

************

Litany (John Musto) from Shadow of the Blues, text by Langston Hughes, John Dubois, tenor
Gather up
In the arms of your pity
The sick, the depraved,
The desperate, the tired,
All the scum
Of our weary city.

Gather up
In the arms of your pity.
Gather up
In the arms of your love—
Those who expect
No love from above.

***********

Drums of Tragedy (H. Leslie Adams) from Night Songs, text by Langston Hughes, Jesus De Hoyos Jr, tenor

Beat the drums of tragedy for me.
Beat the drums of tragedy and death.
And let the choir sing a stormy song
To drown out the rattle of my dying breath.

Beat the drums of tragedy for me.
And let the white violins whir thin and slow,
But blow one blaring trumpet note of sun
To go with me to the darkness where I go.

LGBTQIA+

***********

Love Who You Love (Stephen Flaherty) from Man of No Importance, Kayden Burns, baritone

I'm not one to lecture
How could I dare
Someone like me who's been mainly nowhere
But in my experience be as it may
You just have to love who you love
You just have to love who you love

Your common sense tells ya best not begin
But your fool heart cannot help plungin in
And nothing and no one can stand in your way
You just have to love who you love
You just have to love who you love

People can be hard sometimes
And their words can cut so deep
Choose the one you choose love
and don't lose a moment's sleep
Who can tell you who to want
Who can tell you what you were destined to be
Take it from me

There's no fault in lovin
No call for shame
Everyone's heart does exactly the same
And once ya believe that, you'll learn how to say
I love who I love who I love
So just go and love who ya love

***********

O, Lord, Thou Has Searched Me (Carlisle Floyd) from Pilgrimage, Dr. Rodriguez, baritone

O Lord, Thou has searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising. Thou compassest my path and my lying down and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue but lo, O Lord, Thou know'st altogether. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is too high. I cannot attain unto it.

Whither shall I go from the spirit, or wither shall I flee from thy presence? If I asked up into heaven, Thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me.

Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.