Presents

My Spirit Sang All Day

Performed by the

TCU
Graduate Recital Choir

Voces Ranarum

Nikolaos Myrogiannis-Koukos & Annika Stucky, conductors

Dr. Cecilia Lo-Chien Kao, collaborative pianist

Recorded March 28, 2021
ROBERT CARR CHAPEL
Fort Worth, TX
PROGRAM

“Sanctus” from *Mass in C Major, K. 66*  
W.A. Mozart

Nikolaos Myrogiannis-Koukos, conductor  
Dr. Cecilia Lo-Chien Kao, collaborative pianist

T’amo Mia Vita  
Vittoria Aleotti

Verleih’ uns Frieden  
Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy

Annika Stucky, conductor  
Dr. Cecilia Lo-Chien Kao, collaborative pianist

Cantate Domino  
Giuseppe Ottavio Pittoni

Nikolaos Myrogiannis-Koukos, conductor

Afternoon on a Hill  
Eric Barnum

Annika Stucky, conductor  
Dr. Cecilia Lo-Chien Kao, collaborative pianist

Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit  
Johannes Brahms  
from *Ein Deutsches Requiem*

Nikolaos Myrogiannis-Koukos, conductor  
Annika Stucky, soprano  
Dr. Cecilia Lo-Chien Kao, collaborative pianist

Sure on this Shining Night  
Samuel Barber

Nikolaos Myrogiannis-Koukos, conductor  
Dr. Cecilia Lo-Chien Kao, collaborative pianist

My Spirit Sang All Day  
Gerald Finzi

Annika Stucky, conductor
CONDUCTOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Nikolaos Myrogiannis-Koukos

It’s been a very long journey, yet I found out a long time ago that I would never be ready for its conclusion. To formally acknowledge Dr. Christopher Aspaas as my mentor and teacher with words on a piece of paper is not enough to include all the moments of growth that he generously offered me from day one. To express my gratitude to my colleague, Annika Stucky, and every friend and colleague that has sung with and for us in every ensemble, is not a mere acknowledgement; it is the way we have been communicating with each other for the past eight months, it is our _credo_. It is our honor and our duty to speak from the heart, with honesty and kindness.

We did this together. We survived, we gathered again, we sung, we celebrated, we thrived. We succeeded: doing the things we love together is nothing less than success. Our comrades in this journey committed to something bigger than themselves, and we conductors committed to something bigger than a conducting recital. Our friends in the choirs are our inspiration; their selfless and relentless devotion to our cause has been our strength, our source of power, our reason to keep going no matter what.

Dr. Aspaas trusted me with leading his students and has always been there for everything we needed. Dr. Cecilia Lo-Chien Kao trusted me and my colleague with her fathomless talents and exceptional collaboration. Annika trusted me with leading her voice in performing a highly demanding piece. I am humbled, and honored, and grateful to all those people that taught me what it is to be a teacher, an educator, a leader and an artist. They all contributed to a concert which I will remember forever.

When I first arrived here from a faraway land, I was a nobody. A brave but clueless sailor. A discomforted and naïve explorer of the unknown. I had left my family and my friends behind. I am more than excited to share that I have found a new family here. I have found people that are kind, generous, loyal and passionate. I could not ask for anything more. Who have I become after two years? I should let the voices of my friends give the answer. This music is dedicated to my TCU family. After all, it is their achievement. Graduate students come and go, same for conductors. It is the music that endures the test of time, and it is the countless hours that we spend together that will live in eternity.

It’s been a very long journey, yet it’s almost over. I am still not ready to say goodbye, I will never be. The ship is now sailing to find new adventures, to explore new oceans – but my heart will be always be anchored here. No land and no sea can separate us, friends. No distance will ever make me forget what we achieved together. Until we meet again.
CONDUCTOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Annika Stucky

I would like to express my deepest gratitude and warmest affection to the many artists who contributed to this evening’s program. Choral singing is a special kind of music that not only is a beautiful means of expression and connection as all musicians hope to do through their art; it is the harmonious collaboration of many souls unifying around a purpose that is beyond self.

Thank you always to the TCU School of Music for continually promoting an environment of musical excellence within this spirit of collaboration. To Dr. Christopher Aspaas, thank you for your shining example of leadership, your personal mentorship, and for the selfless generosity of your time, creative suggestions, and desire to see your students succeed and grow. Through your guidance, you have inspired so many of your students, myself included, to work authentically and intentionally for a good greater than music. Thank you to Dr. Cecilia Lo-Chien Kao who has the lovely spirit of a true collaborator, and without whom the magic of musical synergy and unity would surely dissipate.

The student musicians you see before you this evening are also more than generous, for they volunteered their precious time and energy to make music together and mount tonight’s program. Without these brilliant individuals, this evening would quite literally be impossible. Their enthusiasm for rehearsal each week was inspiring and refreshing. It was an honor and joy to both lead and sing with such high-caliber musicians and people, and I am extremely proud of the meaningful, profound music they have created.

I would especially like to thank Twyla Robinson, Assistant Professor of Professional Practice in Voice at TCU, with whom I have the absolute pleasure and honor of studying voice. Her gracious encouragement is only matched by her immeasurable skill in teaching and coaching, all of which allowed me to sing with love and confidence the ambitious and exquisite Brahms Requiem.

Finally but certainly not least of all, I wish to extend thanks and congratulations to my magnificent colleague and friend, Nikos. As my first year at TCU is nearing a close, I am ever thankful for his warm welcome to campus, his kindness and helpfulness, and for all that I have learned from his own pursuit and achievement of excellence. Next year he continues his studies pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts in Choral Conducting at James Madison University; they are so lucky to receive a such a driven, talented, and thoughtful leader.

Thank you so many friends and family for your support of music and singing. We hope that tonight, your spirit sings with us.
“Sanctus” from *Mass in C Major, K. 66*  
*Nikolaos Myrogiannis-Koukos, conductor*

_Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth._  
_Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria Tua._  
_Hosanna in excelsis._

_Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord Got of Hosts._  
_Full are the heavens and earth of Thy glory._  
_Hosanna in the highest._

If there is one composer in this program who is not in need of an introduction, that is definitely Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791). The “Sanctus” performed is the fourth movement of the composer’s *Mass in C Major, K. 66* (sometimes classified as Mass No. 3) for SATB soloists, SATB choir and a small orchestra with basso continuo accompaniment. Composed in 1769 by the 13-year-old child prodigy for the ordination of Cajetan Hagenauer -a family friend of the Mozarts’ -it premiered in Salzburg on the 15th of October of that same year. Since Hagenauer was ordained as Peter Dominicus, the Mass was nicknamed after his new name (Dominicusmesse). Due to its substantial length, the Mass is classified as a *missa* *solemnis*. The “Sanctus,” however, is considerably shorter than the three movements that precede it. It is divided into three separate and contrasting sections, each one with its own meter and temporal indication. The movement opens with a grandiose statement (Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth) in a majestic Adagio which employs a powerful homophonic texture for the choir and a highly vigorous bassline accompaniment. It quickly gives its place to a fast-paced, jubilant middle section (Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria Tua) in 3/4 time. This section presents a more elaborate juxtaposition of vertical and horizontal structures, while the harmonic language becomes significantly richer as well, until it reaches a breathtaking climax. The piece concludes with a Moderato gesture in common time (Hosanna in excelsis); there, two solo voices are briefly interwoven with a brief homophonal choral sonority, which in turn becomes more contrapuntal and, as per the aesthetical trends of the mid-Nineteenth century, increasingly joyful and sublime until it reaches a pompous final cadence.
“T’amo mia vita!”
la mia cara vita
dolcemente mi dice
e in questa sola si soave parola
par che trasformi
lietament’ il core.

O voce di dolcezza e di diletto!
Prendila tost’ Amore,
stampala nel mio petto,
spirì dunque per lei
l’anima mia.
“T’amo mia vita!”

“I love you, my life!”
says to me sweetly
my beloved life,
and through this single sweet word
seems to merrily
transform the heart.

Ah, voice of sweetness and delight!
Catch it quickly, Love,
imprint it in my chest,
so that my soul may
breathe only for her.
“I love you, my life!”

Vittoria Aleotti, believed to be the same as Raffaella Aleotta (c1570-after 1646) was an Italian nun, composer, and organist. She was the daughter of prominent architect Giovanni Battista Aleotti, and according to him, became interested in music after her older sister began music lessons. Within only one year, the young girl had mastered many instruments, including harpsichord, trombone, and other wind instruments, and sang so well that she was sent to Ferrara’s San Vito, a convent famous for fostering musical talents. Aleotti chose to enter the convent and dedicate her life to service, where she was praised for her skills as the convent Maestra, often leading an ensemble of over twenty nuns. Her music was usually complex, using harmony and dissonance to heighten text. Aleotti was often criticized for this complexity, as it was thought the holiness of the music disappeared and gave way to pleasure. In 1591, she published a single madrigal entitled *Di pallid viole*; two years later, she set eight poems to music which were printed in a book entitled *Ghirlandaio de Madrigal it a Quattro Voci*. She was the first of many composers to set this poem, *T’amo mia vita*, the most famous of whom would later be Monteverdi in 1605. It is special and interesting that Aleotti, a nun in dedication to all that is sacred, would set music to this secular poem by G.B. Guarini about the love of life. She reveals the genius and complexity of her writing throughout this ever-changing madrigal. Beginning with a short alto intonation, the choir begins in a lilting yet minor homophonic idea with a brief episode of polyphonic entrances. Aleotti presents a delightful shift to triple meter only for four measures as the text describes transformation, returning to a beautiful extended cadence. The choir continues to paint images of sweetness and pleasure before spinning into polyphonic breathless entreats to “catch it, quickly, Love!” Rhythmically, the piece comes alive in a stunning moment of abrupt homophony, calling to imprint this wonderful moment upon the chest. Aleotti brings her composition to a close by restating the first words, “I love you, my life!” with the same lilting motion, this time cresting upwards before resting on a final open cadence.
Verleih’ uns Frieden

Verleih’ uns Frieden gnädiglich,
Herr Gott, zu unsern Zeiten.
Es ist doch ja kein ander nicht,
der für uns könnte streiten,
denn du, unser Gott, alleine.

In these our days so perilous,
Lord, peace in mercy send us;
No God but Thee can fight for us,
No God but Thee defend us;
Thou our only God and Savior.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) wrote this delightful chorale cantata in 1831 along with several other sacred works during a period of traveling on his Grand Tour. Verleih’ uns Frieden sets Martin Luther’s text from 1529: a prayer for peace paraphrased from its original Latin, Da pacem Domine, which was still used regularly in church services of the time. A key development in Mendelssohn’s compositional life was his study with Carl Friedrich Zelter. Here he was exposed to many Lutheran hymns and intensely studied the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. Bach’s motets, cantatas, and oratorios greatly influenced Mendelssohn’s eight chorale cantatas all based on Lutheran hymns. From these cantatas, Mendelssohn selected only Verleih’ und Frieden for publication. Interestingly, Mendelssohn did not use the melody usually associated with Luther’s text, but wrote a melody more clearly in the major mode, a style feature of contemporary-to-the-era hymns. While this performance is accompanied by piano, Mendelssohn’s original scoring requires violins, viola, two cellos, clarinets, flutes, and bassoons. He begins the piece with a beautiful, flowing instrumental introduction, originally scored with a tender cello duet rising above the accompaniment. His crafted melody is presented in unison tenor and bass voices, complementing the sonorous cellos. Mendelssohn then restates the melody with the soprano and alto voices while the tenors and basses duet in elegant counterpoint. The final iteration of the melody is harmonized by a four-part chorale, extended by layered entrances on the last phrase which build to a captivating, suspended close. Robert Schumann said of this cantata, “A singularly lovely composition….The little piece is worthy of being world-famous and will become just that in the future; Madonnas by Raphael and Murillo cannot remain hidden very long.”
The case of Italian composer Giuseppe Ottavio Pitoni (1657-1743) is a peculiar one in music history: despite being born roughly 50 years after the end of the Renaissance era and being active as a musician as late as the 1730s, the texture and style of his output alludes to genres and compositional techniques that were at the pinnacle of their popularity amongst artistic circles in the Italian peninsula during the lifespan of composers such as G. P. da Palestrina and T. L. de Victoria. His stylistic approach to sacred music belongs to a trend called stile pieno (“full” or “solid” style) and derives from his meticulous and life-long study of Palestrina’s music. His Cantate Domino fits convincingly with the description of this “full” style: quasi-modal harmonic language, fast-paced homophonic texture and small notions of word-painting scattered in many corners of the piece. This motet is a compact yet firm musical moment that employs the first two verses of Psalm 149 in Latin -as the Catholic church in Rome would require for ceremonial and liturgical instances. It was not until 1854 that Pitoni’s music and Cantate Domino specifically was discovered by scholars and published for the first time -yet its jubilant and triumphant temper, as well as its expressive simplicity, are those features that kept it relevant for a very long time since. And it was those expressive means of the stile pieno that eventually inspired renewed interest for artistic values which were not in fashion during the middle of the Eighteenth century but have otherwise proven to be timeless.
Afternoon on a Hill

Annika Stucky, conductor

I will be the gladdest thing
    Under the sun!
I will touch a hundred flowers
    And not pick one.

I will look at cliffs and clouds
    With quiet eyes,
Watch the wind bow down the grass,
    And the grass rise.

And when lights begin to show
    Up from the town,
I will mark which must be mine,
    And then start down!

Eric Barnum (b. 1979) is an in-demand choral conductor and composer, and is currently the Director of Choral Activities at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. Afternoon on a Hill was co-commissioned in 2007 by the American Choral Directors and Music Educators Associations of Minnesota. It sets a popular and poignant text by Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950), the first woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. Millay’s poems remain renowned for their lyrical beauty and sensitivity while still communicating intensely. The text ponders one of Millay’s most frequent themes: renewal through experiencing the beauty and charm of nature. Barnum’s music complements the imaginative and surreal themes through lush, lyrical choral phrases and delicate, contemplative piano lines. It begins with a dreamy piano introduction that gathers momentum until the choir burst forth as the sun from behind a cloud, declaring the joy of the day. The dreamlike piano ripples underneath as the choir melts away into a hushed and introspective section: I will touch a hundred flowers and not pick one. As the piano begins a new melody atop rolling eighth notes, each voice of the choir enters in waves that grow in intensity until all voices are singing; the sopranos and altos sing the opening thoughtful theme in expansive octaves while the tenors and basses deliver the poem, depicting not the speaker’s inner thoughts as before, but the vast sight of cliffs and clouds. Once again, the intensity dissipates as if caught on a breeze, moving toward an aleatoric section that transports the listener to an airy, grassy hillside to simply enjoy the moment and be full. The moment passes, and the breeze subsides as the sun begins the slip below the horizon. While the speaker’s thoughts return to home in the distance, the music begins its final swell. The choir and piano unite in soaring melodies with the same text from the beginning of the piece: I will touch a hundred flowers and not pick one, demonstrating the emotional fullness of the speaker having been refreshed through the afternoon spent on the hillside experiencing the beauty of nature. The piece closes with the same dreamy contemplation from both choir and piano, this time with the satisfaction of rejuvenation.
Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit
Johannes Brahms

Nikolaos Myrogiannis-Koukos, conductor
Annika Stucky, soprano

John 16:22

Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit;
aber ich will euch wieder sehen
und euer Herz soll sich freuen
und eure Freude
soll neimand
von euch nehmen.
Sehet mich an:
Ich habe eine kleine Zeit
Mühe und Arbeit gehabt
und habe großen
Trost funden.
Ich will euch trösten,
wie Einen seine
Mutter tröstet.

And ye now therefore
have sorrow;
but I will see you again,
and your heart shall rejoice,
and your joy no man taketh
from you.
Ye see
how for a little while
I labor and toil,
yet have I found
much rest.
As one whom his
mother comforteth,
so will I comfort you.

Ecclesiastes
51:27

Isaiah
66:13
German composer Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) started composing his large choral-orchestral work *Ein Deutsches Requiem* (A German Requiem) in the late 1865. Up until that point, Brahms was well-known in Germany and Vienna as a talented pianist and a prolific composer of the solo piano and chamber music genres. His “Requiem” reintroduced him to the vigorous audiences of Nineteenth-century Western Europe as an innovator and pioneer in the choral-orchestral genre as well. The work’s initial completion and Vienna premiere consisted of six movements. Shortly afterwards, however, the composer added one more, placing it fifth, between the initial fourth and fifth (now sixth) movements. As the *German Requiem* employs texts extracted and handpicked from the Bible by Brahms himself in order to discuss the impact of loss and the importance of comfort for the ones that are left behind, his fifth movement could be very well described as the epitome of this rhetorical *topos*. The narrative of the fifth movement implies a dichotomy between sorrow and comfort, grief upon realization of human frailty and yet, reconciliation with all things human. In terms of musical expression, Brahms brings into the spotlight this wide variety of emotions with an overall slow and extravagantly lyrical piece for solo soprano (the only place in the entire work asking for one), mixed choir and orchestra. Many scholarly discussions have been made regarding the subliminal message of the unique presence of such a voice: as many researchers point out, the movement that uses a female voice talking about motherly comforting love was completed shortly after the death of Brahms’ own mother. The presence of the soprano voice dominates the piece, while the chorus functions as an echo, constantly intervening to also comment and support her statement, verifying that comfort is, indeed, grief’s inevitable resolution. Structurally, the movement is structured in a ternary A-B-A’ form, with the A sections functioning as a statement of the initial situation (sorrow) with the promise of comfort being made right away. The middle section travels away from the initial key of G major to that of Bb major in order to narrate a more personal story, only to arrive back to the initial idea, now re-interpreted as the final and sole answer to discomfort and anxiety.
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
Wandering far alone
Of shadows on the stars.

Sure on this Shining Night is one of the most iconic and well-known American art songs of the Twentieth century. It was composed by Samuel Barber (1910-1981) and was included in his Four Songs, Op. 13. While the collection was published in 1940, the song in question was composed two years earlier in 1938. Barber himself prepared a choral arrangement of the piece almost immediately. Both the art song and the choral versions exemplify the composer’s Neo-Romantic harmonic vocabulary and lyricism, as well as his contrapuntal craftsmanship. In the original art song, the beautiful words of James Agee’s poem are echoed or even foreshadowed by the piano. In the choral arrangement, the piano maintains a vigorous role by providing a highly rhythmic accompaniment of vertical, not horizontal sonorities, but at the same time the call and response effect is shared almost exclusively between the soprano and tenor lines. The song is structured in ternary A-B-A’ form, highly indicative of the composer’s aesthetic identity regarding form and the early Twentieth-century art song overall. As the content of the piece explores a mesmerizing palette of landscapes, both physical and emotional, a stretched perception of musical time and space should be expected: after all, it seems quite reasonable that many performers often seek extravagant dynamic and temporal fluctuations to bring into life an art song that explores the deepest and most sensitive regions of the human soul.
My spirit sang all day
    O my joy.
Nothing my tongue could say,
    Only My joy!
My heart an echo caught
    O my joy
And spake,
    Tell me thy thought,
Hide not thy joy.
My eyes gan peer around,
    O my joy
What beauty hast thou found?
    Shew us thy joy.
My jealous ears grew whist;
    O my joy
Music from heaven is't,
    Sent for our joy?
She also came and heard;
    O my joy,
What, said she, is this word?
    What is thy joy?
And I replied,
    O see, O my joy,
'Tis thee, I cried, 'tis thee:
    Thou art my joy.
Our final piece on this program is a sparkling English part song by Gerald Finzi (1901-1956). “My Spirit Sang All Day” is the third song in Seven Poems of Robert Bridges. The work was inspired by his wife Joyce, as he made a special connection to the repeating line “O my joy” in Bridges’ poem. While the entire cycle was completed after his marriage, this piece was composed while the couple was still courting. His wife would continue to be a source of inspiration and encouragement. Finzi’s life was dedicated to music as a composer, concert attendee, lecturer, writer, collector of music, friend of famous composers Gustav Holst and Ralph Vaughan Williams, and teacher at the royal Academy of Music. He wrote both orchestral and choral music, as well as many solo songs. His teacher, Ernest Farrar, a former pupil of Charles Villiers Standard, described Finzi as “very shy, but full of poetry.” Finzi is heralded for his vocal music and the brilliant way he sets texts by finding the essence of their meaning without over-embellishment. Much of Finzi’s vocal music is set syllabically, and My Spirit Sang All Day is a shining example of communicating meaning in this way. The piece begins with a lively unison upward motive that bursts into four-part harmony on the first iteration of “O my joy.” It continues with a brief duet between the sopranos and altos and tenors and basses, culminating in a modulatory cadence on “joy!” Finzi reveals his talent with texts through quick solo alto and tenor moments, framed by homophonic declarations of joy. In the middle section, Finzi brings all four parts together through mysterious harmonies and whispering words, asking the all-important question, “What is thy joy?” The piece ends with the same unison climbing motive that is slightly extended until the final explosion of harmony declaring, “Thou art my joy!”
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