



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
FACULTY OF MUSIC

**Helena Webster, soprano**

MMus Recital 2

**Suzy Smith, piano**

**Katie Kirkpatrick, alto flute**

**Shawn Boulet, electronics**

This recital is in partial fulfilment of the Master of Music Performance in Voice Pedagogy.

Helena Webster is a student of Professor Lorna MacDonald.

Saturday, March 21, 2026 at 7:30 pm | Walter Hall, 80 Queen's Park

**PROGRAM**

Tanzer Lieder (2004)

Ana Sokolović (b. 1968)

II. Stimmen

IV. Wishing Well

Meadow Song (2013)

Iris Szeghy (b. 1956)

Ophelia's Mad Scene (2021)

Gloria Coates (1933-2023)

composed for the bicentenary celebrations  
at the Royal Academy of Music

I. How should I your true love know?

II. To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day

III. By Gis and by Saint Charity

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*We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.*

As part of the Faculty's commitment to improving Indigenous inclusion, we call upon all members of our community to start/continue their personal journeys towards understanding and acknowledging Indigenous peoples' histories, truths and cultures. Visit [indigenous.utoronto.ca](http://indigenous.utoronto.ca) to learn more.

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- IV. They bore him barefaced on the bier
- V. You must sing a-down a-down
- VI. For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy
- VII. And will he not come again?

## INTERMISSION

Lonh (1996)

Kaija Saariaho (1952-2023)

(Sage) Songs About Life! (and Thyme...) (1992)

Priscilla McLean (b. 1942)

- III. is Life Just One Big --?
- V. Life is a Merry-go-round...
- VI. ...and the Music Continues to Sound!

## PROGRAM NOTES

### Abstract

This lecture-recital, "Building a Toolbox for Learning: Extended Vocal Techniques," introduces a difficulty index for vocal repertoire which utilizes extended vocal techniques (EVT), suggested exercises and routines for building necessary practice and performance skills, and song examples. The index will assist teachers in selecting contemporary classical repertoire for students of all skill levels. Currently, few standard exercises or pedagogical principles have been proposed explicitly for the instruction of EVT.

Based on the Ralston Repertoire Difficulty Index<sup>1</sup>, the author proposes a seven-element index categorizing the difficulty of various types of EVT which singers and teachers may encounter. It is not an exhaustive list.

Several musical selections (selected entirely from the works of women composers of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries) and associated exercises at various difficulty levels are showcased as examples of how to use the index and how a student may progress from one difficulty level to the next in the learning of repertoire.

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<sup>1</sup>Ralston, Janette. 'The Development of an Instrument to Grade the Difficulty of Vocal Solo Repertoire'. *Journal of Research in Music Education* 47, no. 2 (1999): 163–73. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3345721>. Updated language from Boyes, Anna Caroline. *A Pedagogical Guide to Selected Vocal Works by Reena Esmail, Kamala Sankaram, and Naresh Sohal*. n.d. RRDl inspired the structure and inclusion of certain categories in the author's EVT index.

Further research may more fully develop vocal exercises in line with categories of the EVT Difficulty Index, and further repertoire should be tested with the Index to ensure its relevance and broad applicability, given the many unique uses of the voice to be found in contemporary classical vocal music.

### Tanzer Lieder

The texts set by contemporary Canadian composer Ana Sokolović were written by Austrian-born German poet Francisco Tanzer. Not all of his poetry was written in German; the texts Sokolović selected for this cycle appear in and were originally written in French, German, and English. *Stimmen* uses a “sprechgesang” style, very similar to Sprechstimme, well known from Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912), to capture the extra-musical expressiveness of the voice while the speaker muses on the connection between voice and identity.

### Meadow Song

*Meadow Song* is based on the “trávnica” folk song tradition of Eastern Slovakia, in the Carpathian Mountains. This is a uniquely local type of melody sung by working women raking hay in the mountains and traditionally uses a bright and strident vocal styling sometimes translated as “white voice” (also sometimes as full, open, or natural voice) used to carry the voice across the mountain pastures. This song setting was recalled from composer Iris Szeghy’s childhood growing up in the region.

### Ophelia’s Mad Scene

*Ophelia’s Mad Scene* takes place near the end of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, in Act IV Scene V. Throughout the play, Ophelia is dragged into various roles in her father’s, brother’s, and lover’s plotting. In this scene, Ophelia’s father Polonius has recently been killed (by her former beau Hamlet, though she does not know this), and her brother Laertes has yet to return from his travels. Aggrieved and alone, she seeks an audience with Hamlet’s mother, the Queen, who turns her away. She channels her intense feelings of grief, abandonment, and rage through the little songs – perceived as nonsense and madness by the other characters – and which are here set by American composer Gloria Coates.

### Lonh

The title *Lonh*, meaning ‘far away’ or ‘distant’, comes from Occitan, the Old Provençal language in which the text is sung. The text itself, a poem about love from afar, famous among scholars of medieval poetry, is attributed to the medieval troubadour Jaufré Rudel. The work loosely follows the form of the poem in structure, and is divided into nine sections. Symmetrical and repeating elements may be found in the solo soprano part, which uses fragments from the original poem quite freely, so that the resulting text is really a collage based on Rudel’s song.

In the electronic part used for this performance, the text may be heard in three languages: Occitan, French, and English. The texts in Occitan were read by the poet Jacques Roubaud – who has studied the poem extensively, and also translated it into French – and by Julie Parsillé, a young French girl. The Modern French version was read by Jean-Baptiste Barrière, and the English text by Dawn Upshaw, whose recorded singing voice is also included in the sound material heard in the electronic part.<sup>2</sup>

(Sage) Songs About Life! (and Thyme...)

The *Sage Songs* were written shortly after the death of composer Priscilla McLean's mother in 1992, and they contain musings of a variety of moods on the nature and experience of life, death and mortality. Whimsical in approach, these selections nonetheless utilize a wide variety of vocal sounds that pull from the depth of human emotional experience, particularly the complex and often contradictory experience of coping with grief.

## TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

### Tanzer Lieder

#### II. Stimmen

Stimmen, immer wieder  
Stimmen, hören, sehen, sich fragen  
  
ob außen und innen übereinstimmen  
Stimmen, jedes einzelnen anders und  
gleich  
zu messen am sein Ich und Du  
Stimmen, das Leben  
Stimmen, verstummen

*Francisco Tanzer (1921-2003)*

### Tanzer Songs

#### II. Voices

Voices, again and again  
Voices, you hear and you see, ask  
yourself  
whether outer and inner agree  
Voices, each one different and the  
same,  
measure them against your Me and You  
Voices, like life  
Voices, silenced

*trans. Helena Webster*

#### IV. Wishing Well

After twenty years of fears,  
of cheers, of tears, of joy and sorrow  
we wish continuum to continue  
tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow.  
Would Shakespeare be living today,  
hearing continuum play,  
he would surely find ways  
to have the ensemble excel in his plays.

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<sup>2</sup> Introduction to *Lonh*, provided by composer Kaija Saariaho in the score.

Sweet music has gone through many stages,  
having its rages and sages  
continuum, shunning fashions with passion,  
is fulfilling its aims regardless of names.  
After playing all over the states  
and part of the globe  
continuum, with pieces in and out of tune,  
is about to bring music to the moon.

*Francisco Tanzer (1921-2003)*

### **Meadow Song**

Hrabala, hrabala, nič ňenahrabala,  
od veľ'keho žal'u hrabl'e polamala.

She raked, raked, raked nothing  
together,  
she broke the rake out of great sorrow.

*traditional*

*trans. Iris Szeghy*

### **Ophelia's Mad Scene**

I. How should I your true love know?

How should I your true love know from another one?  
By his cockle hat and staff, and his sandal shoon.  
He is dead and gone, lady;  
At his head a grass green turf,  
At his heels, a stone.  
White his shroud as the mountain snow, larded with sweet flowers,  
Which bewept to the grave did not go with true-love showers.

II. To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day

Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's day, all in the morning betime,  
And I a maid at your window, to be your Valentine.  
Then up he rose, and donn'd his clothes, and dupp'd the chamber door;  
Let in the maid, that out a maid never departed more.

III. By Gis and by Saint Charity

By Gis and by Saint Charity,  
Alack, and fie for shame!  
Young men will do it, if they come to it;  
By cock, they are to blame.  
Quoth she, "Before you tumbled me, you promised me to wed."

He answers, "So would I ha' done, by yonder sun,  
an thou hadst not come to my bed."

**IV.** They bore him barefaced on the bier

They bore him barefaced on the bier;  
Hey non nonny, hey nonny;  
And in his grave rain'd many a tear.  
Fare you well, my dove!

**V.** You must sing a-down a-down

You must sing a-down, an' you call him a downa.  
O how the wheel becomes it!  
It is the false steward, that stole his master's daughter.

**VI.** For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy

There's rosemary, that's for remembrance; pray, love, remember:  
And there are pansies. That's for thoughts. There's a daisy:  
I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died:  
They say he made a good end,--  
For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.

**VII.** And will he not come again?

And will he not come again?  
No, no, he is dead.  
Go to thy death bed:  
He never will come again.  
His beard was as white as snow, all flaxen was his poll:  
He is gone,  
And we cast away moan:  
God ha' mercy on his soul!  
And of all Christian souls, I pray God,  
God be wi' ye.

*William Shakespeare (1564-1616)*

## Lonh

I. Lanqand li jorn son lonc en mai  
m'es bels douz chans d'auzels de loing

e qand me sui partitz de lai  
remembra-m d'un'amor de loing  
vauc de talan enbroncs e clis  
si que chans ni flors d'albespis

no-m platz plus que l'inverns gelatz.

II. Ja mais d'amor no-m gauzirai  
si no-m gau d'est'amor de loing  
que gensor ni meillor non sai  
vas nuilla part ni pres ni loing  
tant es sos pretz verais e fis  
que lai el renc dels sarrazis

fos eu per lieis chaitius clamatz.

III. Iratz e gauzens m'en partrai

qan veirai cest'amor de loing  
mas non sai coras la-m veirai  
car trop son nostras terras loing  
assatz i a portz e camis  
e per aisso non sui devis  
mas tot sia cum a Dieu platz.

IV. Be-m parra jois qan li qerrai  
per amor Dieu l'amor di loing  
e s'a lieis plai albergarai  
pres de lieis si be-m sui de loing  
adoncs parra-l parlamens fis  
quand drutz loindas er tant vezis

c'ab bels digz jauzirai solatz.

V. Ben tenc lo Seignor per verai  
per q'ieu veirai l'amor de loing  
mas per un ben que m'en eschai  
n'ai dos mals car tant m'es de loing

## From afar

I. When the days are long in May  
The sweet songs of birds from afar  
seems lovely to me  
And when I have left there  
I remember a distant love  
I walk bent and bowed with desire  
So much so that neither song nor  
hawthorn flower  
Please me more than the icy winter.

II. Never will I enjoy love  
If I do not enjoy this distant love  
For a nobler or better one I do not know  
Anywhere, neither near nor far  
So high is its true, real price  
That there, in the kingdom of the  
Saracens  
I wish to be proclaimed her captive.

III. Sad and joyous I will separate from  
her  
When I see that distant love  
But I know not when I will see her  
For our lands are too far away  
There are so many passages and paths  
And in this I am no seer  
But let everything be according to God's  
will.

IV. I will feel joy for sure when I ask her  
For the love of God the distant love  
And if it pleases her I will live  
Near her even if I am from far away  
Then will come our faithful meeting  
When I, the faraway lover, will be so  
near  
That I will console myself with her  
beautiful words.

V. I really trust in the Lord  
Through whom I will see the distant love  
But for something that fails me  
I have two sorrows for she is so far  
away

ai car me fos lai peleris  
si que mos fustz e mos tapis  
fos pelz sieus bels huoills remiratz.

**VI.** Dieus qe fetz tot qant ve ni vai

e fermet cest'amor de loing  
me don poder qe-l cor eu n'ai  
q'en breu veia l'amor de loing  
veraiamen en locs aizis  
si qe la cambra e-l jardis  
mi resembles totz temps palatz.

**VII.** Ver ditz qui m'apella lechai  
ni desiran d'amor de loing  
car nuills autre jois tant no-m plai  
cum jauzimens d'amor de loing  
mas so q'eu vuoill m'es tant ahis  
q'enaissi-m fadet mos pairis  
q'ieu ames e non fos amatz.

Mas so q'ieu vuoill m'es tant ahis  
totz sia mauditz lo pairis  
qe-m fadet q'ieu non fos amatz.

*Jaufré Rudel (fl. c.1100-1147)*

Ah, if only I were a pilgrim there  
So that my stick and my bundle  
Could be seen by her lovely eyes.

**VI.** God who made everything that  
comes and goes

And formed this distant love  
Grant me the power of my heart  
Soon to see the distant love  
Truly in a propitious place  
And that the room and garden  
Always appear as palaces to me.

**VII.** He speaks true who says I am avid  
And longing for the distant love  
For no joy gives me pleasure  
Like the pleasure of the distant love  
But what I want is forbidden to me  
So my godfather endowed me  
That though loving I will not have been  
loved.

But what I want is forbidden to me  
So may my godfather be cursed  
Who made me not to be loved.

*trans. anonymous*

**(Sage) Songs about Life! (and Thyme...)**

**III.** is Life Just One Big --?

Where do we go when we die?  
Do our molecules get up and fly?  
Do they dance in the air?  
then scatter here and there?  
Is our life just one big sigh?

**V.** Life is a Merry-go-round...

**VI.** ...and the Music Continues to Sound!

Life is a merry-go-round.  
Sometimes you win a brass ring,  
Other rounds have a painful sting.  
Then there are the beautiful horses bobbing,

And the faces -, some lit with fire, some sobbing -  
 The world whirls by, Not Noticing!  
 You cling to the poles, wanting to spring  
 While the music continues to sound.

*Priscilla McLean*

## APPENDIX – EXTENDED VOCAL TECHNIQUE DIFFICULTY INDEX

<b>Speech elements</b>	Introductory	Speaking, whispering, sighing; usually in independent sections from sung lines, and of limited duration.
	Intermediate	Addition of shouting, crying; speech elements are interspersed with sung lines, generally consistent with sung register and dynamic.
	Advanced	Addition of screaming; speech elements make up significant portions of the piece or alternate rapidly with sung. Wide differences in range and dynamic.
<b>Pitch bending</b>	Introductory	Use of occasional and explicit glissandos or portamentos between notes.
	Intermediate	Use of pitch bends or quarter tones with some regularity; composer's instruction may be verbal and/or reference a particular style, rather than explicit in pitch language.
	Advanced	Use of microtonality; pitch bending elements occur with great frequency; composer instructions are graphic/drawn or otherwise vague.
<b>Body sounds</b>	Introductory	May include one or two elements of body percussion (i.e. clapping, stomping, chest thumping), with clear and regular rhythm. Or, may include phonemes/mouth sounds not found in typical classical canon (i.e. ɾ/ ʀ, clicks, popping, bubbling, aspirates).
	Intermediate	Includes a combination of body percussion and mouth sounds interspersed with singing.
	Advanced	Includes frequent and/or rhythmically complex body percussion and mouth sounds, alternating with singing, and with variety of dynamics, range, timbre.
<b>Phonatory strategies</b>	Introductory	Explicit registration or resonance instructions such as breathiness, extreme brightness, sharpness, or nasality occur periodically. May include familiar quotidian strategies such as humming, whistling.
	Intermediate	Addition of "rough" vocal effects, such as growl, ventricular fold phonation, or inhaled phonation. Atypical phonation is demanded frequently, but not consistently, and for relatively short durations.
	Advanced	Addition of overtone singing. Non-classical phonation is demanded often and for extended durations.

<b>Accompaniment</b>	Introductory	Accompaniment provides singer's pitches or frequent consonant harmonies as support. Texture is relatively thin, and/or accompanying instruments are not using extended/prepared techniques.
	Intermediate	Accompaniment occurs in extreme registers compared with vocal line, and has increasing dissonance/thickness of texture. May also be pre-recorded, or for solo voice. Instruments may use some extended techniques.
	Advanced	Accompaniment is distinct from vocal line in range, register, pitch, and/or articulation; an independent character providing minimal reference points for the voice. Instruments are prepared or using extended techniques in most of the composition.
<b>Staging and Instrumentation Considerations</b>	Introductory	Basic staging, movement, or gestures are provided. Singer is working alone or in collaboration with a familiar ensemble (i.e. piano-singer duo, or with string quartet).
	Intermediate	More complex or frequent staging, movements, or gesture instructions are provided. Singer may be required to play another instrument, and is accompanied by or performing within a non-traditional ensemble.
	Advanced	Extremely strict staging, movement, gesture, and expression instructions are given throughout the piece. Singer is working with a non-traditional ensemble, possibly in addition to playing a second instrument.
<b>Notation</b>	Introductory	Notation is standard to genre – i.e. classical score, or lead sheet. Any extended techniques are written using relatively standardized notation, such as 'x' noteheads for speech and lines for glissandi. Some improvisation suggested.
	Intermediate	Notation is unique to composer (such as preparation, unusual noteheads, drawn out glissandi) Composer guide to notation is included. Scores may be handwritten or unclear. Durations of effects are improvisatory.
	Advanced	Notation is unique to composer, and instructions are not provided. Scores may be completely graphic.

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