



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MUSIC

Megan O'Donnell, Soprano

Graduating Recital

Brahm Goldhamer, piano

This recital is in partial fulfillment of the Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance.
Megan O'Donnell is a student of Mark Daboll.

Wednesday, April 22, 2026 at 4:30 pm | Walter Hall, 80 Queen's Park

PROGRAM

Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson (1950)

Nature, the Gentlest Mother
There Came A Wind Like A Bugle
Why Do They Shut Me Out of Heaven?
Heart, We Will Forget Him
Sleep Is Supposed To Be
I Felt A Funeral In My Brain
Going to Heaven!
The Chariot

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

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 to learn more.

INTERMISSION

Trois Mélodies, op. 91 (1912)*

Mel Bonis (1858-1937)

Viola
Songe

Cinco Canciones Populares Argentinas (1943)*

Alberto Ginestera (1916-1983)

Triste
Zamba
Arrorró

Mignons Gesang (1815)

Gesänge aus Wilhelm Meister (1826)

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Lied der Mignon (Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt)
Lied der Mignon (Heiss mich nicht reden)
Lied der Mignon (So lasst mich scheinen)

Glitter and Be Gay (*Candide*, 1956)

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)

**Denotes fulfillment of the BIPOC/ Underrepresented Composer Requirement*

Canadian Repertoire Requirement previously fulfilled

PROGRAM NOTES

Curating and preparing this recital has been one of the most fulfilling experiences of my academic career, if not my life. In promoting this recital, I named it *Woman (Redefined)*. With every piece of repertoire I am presenting I strive to capture a different facet of what it means to exist as a woman, now and always. As a young woman of the current era, I recognize that I come from a place of privilege when compared to those who have paved the way for me, and I consider it an honor and a privilege to tell their stories alongside my own in this presentation.

The first half of this recital consists of eight out of the Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson by Aaron Copland. This is a cycle that has been in my sights for about eight years now, and I am delighted to finally have an opportunity to present it, especially in such a meaningful context. Emily Dickinson is one of the most prominent early female voices in literature. As a woman who notably did *not* meet the expectations of what it meant to be a “lady” in her era, her voice was one I considered important to include in this journey through the female experience. Aaron Copland curated and set this poetry with such care that it truly does feel like one is listening to the ramblings of her mind, yet it also seems like it moves very linearly through the narrator’s life. Right from *Nature*, *The Gentlest Mother* we are introduced to the world around us as a female entity, and this thread is weaved through the set whilst other themes are explored- how torrential one’s own circumstances can feel in the midst of life at large in *There Came A Wind Like A Bugle*, gender-based power imbalance and feelings of inadequacy in *Why Do They Shut Me Out Of Heaven*, heartbreak and grief in *Heart We Will Forget Him*, love and death in *Sleep Is Supposed To Be*, legacy and death in *I Felt A Funeral In My Brain*, the joy that comes with validation in *Going To Heaven*, and finding rest in *The Chariot*. This set truly does make one feel as though they have experienced a lifetime by the time this set has ended.

After the intermission, we will be exploring the music of Mel Bonis with her pieces *Viola* and *Songe* from her *Trois Mélodies*. These were supposedly written in 1912 but were published posthumously in 2001. Melanie Bonis was a female composer who, like many female creatives of her era, created under a more masculine moniker so as to be seen as more legitimate. A pupil of Caesar Franck, Melanie Bonis was a gifted composer who was truly a victim of the era she lived in. Through her studies in her youth at the Paris Conservatoire she met a poet and baritone, Amédée Landély Hettich, whom she frequently collaborated with and eventually fell in love with. Despite how she had excelled in her craft, her parents told her that she had to abandon it and the man she loved in order to marry an older man with wealth and social status. Later on she reunited with Hettich once more and started composing again. That journey is reflected in these two songs, composed to poems by Maurice Bouchor after Bonis had reunited with Hettich, about desperate longing for something that is seemingly only within reach in one’s dreams.

Adjoined with the set of pieces by Bonis is a set of three of the *Cinco Canciones Populares Argentinas*. The three selections I have chosen to present are told from the

female perspective. *Triste* recounts the story of a woman who has had to give her heart away to one that she does not love, and the conflict she feels because of it. *Zamba*, which literally translates to 'fraud' or 'falsehood' furthers that notion by describing how even though she is attempting to love the person she's married she cannot because she is not receiving said love in return. This culminates in *Arrorró*, a bit of a deceptive piece. By context of the lyrics alone one could assume that this is a simple lullaby, but when the piano accompaniment is added into the picture, it becomes clear that this is not a living baby that is being sung to. I considered it very important to highlight the darker realities of womanhood. Sometimes it's terrible- which is all the more testament to the strength it takes to be a woman.

My next segment is all settings of Mignon's songs and poems from von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprentice*, as set by Franz Schubert. Mignon is an iconic female figure in German literature. There are few stories of such pure tragedy, and in choosing which settings to use of these iconic texts I was instantly drawn to how intuitively Schubert captured the purity of emotion Mignon is expressing. In each of these texts Mignon expresses different facets of longing. In *Mignons Gesang*, she expresses longing for the home she was stolen from. In *Nur Wer Die Sehnsucht Kennt*, she expresses longing for the one she loves. In *Heiss Mich Nicht Reden*, she longs to be able to express herself freely even though she feels that she cannot, even to those she loves. In the final song of the set, *So Lasst Mich Scheinen*, as Mignon is dying she expresses her longing for the youth she was robbed of. These are sentiments that are so fundamentally human, *especially* with the standards we have held women to in every era- present included.

To end off my recital, I chose *Glitter and Be Gay* from the operetta *Candide*, composed by Leonard Bernstein. I would be lying if I said this wasn't partially self-indulgent. I have long wished for an excuse to program this aria, and it seemed a fitting send-off. But I also did not wish for anything to cheapen the message of this recital, and so the choice to include it was made with a lot of care. Ultimately, I decided that it wasn't an *entirely* indulgent decision- there is plenty of poignant truths about womanhood to be found in *Glitter and Be Gay*. Because among the plethora of joys and pains that encompass the mosaic we call womanhood, the most universal truth of being a woman is that sometimes you simply have to grin and bear it. That can be a hard reality to live with, but this aria approaches it with just the right amount of levity to make it the perfect note to end on.

To the women attending this recital- I hope you feel seen in some capacity by what is being presented today. Perhaps not by all of it, but at least by some. This is a recital of gorgeous music, but it is also a recital full of truths that can sometimes go unspoken. If this recital inspires even one woman to embrace *all* of herself, scars included, within her femininity, I will consider it to have been a great success.

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

Nature, The Gentlest Mother

Nature, the gentlest mother
Impatient of no child,
The feeblest or the waywardest, -
Her admonition mild

In forest and the hill
By traveller is heard,
Restraining rampant squirrel
Or too impetuous bird.

How fair her conversation,
A summer afternoon, -
Her household, her assembly;
And when the sun goes down

Her voice among the aisles
Incites the timid prayer
Of the minutest cricket,
The most unworthy flower.

When all the children sleep
She turns as long away
As will suffice to light her lamps;
Then, bending from the sky,

With infinite affection
And infiniter care,
Her golden finger on her lip,
Wills silence everywhere.

There Came A Wind Like A Bugle

There came a wind like a bugle,
It quivered through the grass,
And a green chill upon the heat
So ominous did pass

We barred the windows and the doors
As from an emerald ghost
The doom's electric moccasin
That very instant passed.

On a strange mob of panting trees,
And fences fled away,
And rivers where the houses ran

The living looked that day,

The bell within the steeple wild,
The flying tidings whirled.
How much can come and much can go,
And yet abide the world!

Why Do They Shut Me Out Of Heaven?

Why do they shut me out of Heaven?
Did I sing too loud?
But I can sing a little minor,
Timid as a bird.

Wouldn't the angels try me
just once more
Just see if I troubled them
But don't shut the door!

Oh if I were the Gentlemen
in the White Robes
and they were the little Hand that knocked
Could I forbid?

Why do they shut me out of Heaven?
Did I sing too loud?

Heart, We Will Forget Him

Heart, we will forget him
You and I, tonight.
You may forget the warmth he gave,
I will forget the light.

When you have done, pray tell me,
That I my thoughts may dim;
Haste! lest while you're lagging,
I may remember him!

Sleep Is Supposed To Be

Sleep is supposed to be,
By souls of sanity,
The shutting of the eye.

Sleep is the station grand
Down which on either hand

The hosts of witness stand!

Morn is supposed to be,
By people of degree,
The breaking of the day.

Morning has not occurred!
That shall aurora be
East of Eternity;

One with the banner gay,
One in the red array, -
That is the break of day.

I Felt A Funeral In My Brain

I felt a funeral in my brain,
And mourners, to and fro,
Kept treading, treading, till it seemed
That sense was breaking through.

And when they all were seated,
A service like a drum
Kept beating, beating, till I thought
My mind was going numb.

And then I heard them lift a box,
And creak across my soul
With those same boots of lead, again.
Then space began to toll

As all the heavens were a bell,
And Being but an ear,
And I and silence some strange race,
Wrecked, solitary, here.

Going To Heaven!

Going to Heaven!
I don't know when,
Pray do not ask me how, -
Indeed I'm too astonished
To think of answering you!
Going to Heaven! -
How dim it sounds!
And yet it will be done
As sure as flocks go home at night
Unto the shepherd's arm!

Perhaps you're going too!
Who knows?
If you should get there first
Save just a little place for me
Close to the two I lost!
The smallest "robe" will fit me,
And just a bit of "crown";
For you know we do not mind our dress
When we are going home.

Going to Heaven! I'm glad I don't believe it
For it would stop my breath,
And I'd like to look a little more
At such a curious earth!
I am glad they did believe it
Whom I have never found
Since the mighty autumn afternoon
I left them in the ground.

The Chariot

Because I would not stop for Death --
He kindly stopped for me --
The carriage held but just ourselves --
and Immortality.

We slowly drove -- he knew no haste,
And I had put away
My labour, and my leisure too
For His Civility --

We passed the school, where children played,
Their lessons scarcely done
We passed the fields of gazing grain,
We passed the setting sun.

We paused before a house that seemed
a swelling of the ground;
The roof was scarcely visible,
The cornice but a mound.

Since then 'tis centuries; but each
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horses' heads
Were toward eternity.

Viola

Viola ! Ton sourire et tes yeux caressants
Où le ciel curieux et ravi se reflète
Ton sourire et tes yeux, ma fraîche Violette,
Chantent l'inaltérable amour que je pressens

toi, que j'entrevis à peine, ton sourire
Me parle de tendresse et d'immortalité
Je veux t'aimer, je t'aime et me voici hanté
Par tes yeux où le ciel émerveillé se mire.
J'évoque en ce moment tes cheveux blonds et
fins,
Tes yeux, ta joue en fleur que je n'ai point baisée
Ton sourire et, dans la lumière irisée,
J'abandonne mon âme à des songes divins.

*Behold! Your smile and your caressing eyes,
Where the curious and delighted heavens are reflected—
Your smile and your eyes, my fresh young Violette,
Sing of the unchanging love I already sense.*

*You—whom I have scarcely glimpsed—your smile
Speaks to me of tenderness and immortality.
I long to love you; I love you—and here I am haunted
By your eyes, where the astonished sky gazes at itself.*

*Now I call to mind your fine blond hair,
Your eyes, your blossoming cheek I have never kissed,
Your smile—and in the iridescent light
I surrender my soul to divine dreams.*

Songe

Guidé par de beaux yeux candides,
Dans ma barque féérique aux reflets d'argent fin,
Vers l'amour, je voudrais faire voile sans fin
Sur des rêves bleus et splendides,
Vers l'amour dont le souffle frais
Berce des champs de fleurs dans une île enchantée
Et qui, pour apaiser mon âme tourmentée,
M'ouvrira de saintes forêts.

Et plus tard, quand, loin de la terre,
O Viola ! Guérie des brûlantes langueurs,
Nous irons caresser les songes de nos cœurs
Dans l'île heureuse du mystère.

Dans le libre ciel des esprits,
Quand nous aurons quitté la nature mortelle,

Ne goûterons-nous pas une paix éternelle ?
Rêveusement, tu me souris.

*Guided by your beautiful, innocent eyes,
In my fairy-like boat with its shimmering silver reflections,
Toward love I would set sail forever
Across blue and splendid dreams.*

*Toward love, whose fresh breath
Rocks fields of flowers on an enchanted isle,
And which, to soothe my troubled soul,
Will open sacred forests to me.*

*And later, when far from the earth—
O Viola! Healed of burning longings—
We shall go to caress the dreams of our hearts
On the happy island of mystery.*

*In the free sky of spirits,
When we have left mortal nature behind,
Shall we not taste an eternal peace?
Dreamily, you smile at me.*

Triste

Ah!
Debajo de un limón verde
Donde el agua no corría
Entregué mi corazón
A quien no lo merecía.

Ah!
Triste es el día sin sol
Triste es la noche sin luna
Pero más triste es querer
Sin esperanza ninguna.

Ah!

*Ah!
Beneath a green lemon tree,
Where no water used to flow,
I gave away my heart
To one who didn't deserve it so.*

*Ah!
Sad is the day without sun,
Sad is the night without moon,
But sadder still is to love
With no hope coming soon.*

Ah!

Zamba

Hasta las piedras del cerro
Y las arenas del mar
Me dicen que no te quiera
Y no te puedo olvidar.
Si el corazón me has robado
El tuyo me lo has de dar
El que lleva cosa ajena
Con lo suyo ha de pagar
Ay!

*Even the stones on the hill,
And the sands along the sea,
Tell me I should not love you—
Yet I cannot set you free.*

*If you have stolen my heart,
Then yours you must give to me;
For the one who takes another's
Pays with their own, you see.*

Ay!

Arrorró

Arrorró mi nene,
Arrorró mi sol,
Arrorró pedazo
De mi corazón.

Este nene lindo
Se quiere dormir
Y el pícaro sueño
No quiere venir.

*Hush now, my baby,
Hush now, my sun,
Hush now, dear piece
Of my heart, little one.*

*This lovely baby
Is longing for sleep,
But that mischievous slumber
Won't come, won't keep.*

Mignons Gesang

Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühen,
Im dunklen Laub die Gold-Orangen glühen,
Ein sanfter Wind vom blauen Himmel weht,
Die Myrte still und hoch der Lorbeer steht,
Kennst du es wohl?
Dahin! Dahin
Möcht' ich mit dir, o mein Geliebter, ziehn.

Kennst du das Haus? Auf Säulen ruht sein Dach,
Es glänzt der Saal, es schimmert das Gemach,
Und Marmorbilder stehn und sehn mich an:
Was hat man dir, du armes Kind, getan?
Kennst du es wohl?
Dahin! Dahin
Möcht' ich mit dir, o mein Beschützer, ziehn.

Kennst du den Berg und seinen Wolkensteg?
Das Maultier sucht im Nebel seinen Weg;
In Höhlen wohnt der Drachen alte Brut;
Es stürzt der Fels und über ihn die Flut,
Kennst du ihn wohl?
Dahin! Dahin
Geht unser Weg! o Vater, lass uns ziehn!

*Do you know the land where the lemon blossoms grow,
Where golden oranges gleam through shadowed leaves?
A gentle breeze drifts down from skies of blue,
The myrtle stands in stillness, tall the laurel rises—
Do you know it well?
There! Oh there
I long to go with you, my love.*

*Do you know the house? Its roof rests on tall columns,
Its halls shine bright, its chambers softly gleam,
And marble statues stand and gaze at me:
"What have they done to you, poor child?"
Do you know it well?
There! Oh there
I long to go with you, my protector.*

*Do you know the mountain and its misty path?
The mule feels blindly through the foggy way;
In caves there dwells the ancient brood of dragons,
The rocks crash down, the flood roars over them—
Do you know it well?
There! Oh there
Our path leads on—O father, let us go!*

Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt

Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt
Weiss, was ich leide!
Allein und abgetrennt
Von aller Freude,
Seh' ich an's Firmament
Nach jener Seite.
Ach! der mich liebt und kennt
Ist in der Weite.
Es schwindelt mir, es brennt
Mein Eingeweide.
Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt
Weiss, was ich leide!

*Only those who know longing
Know what I suffer!
Alone and cut off
From every joy,
I search the sky
In that direction.
Ah! he who loves and knows me
Is far away.
My head reels,
My body blazes.
Only those who know longing
Know what I suffer!*

Heiss mich nicht reden

Heiss mich nicht reden, heiss mich schweigen,
Denn mein Geheimnis ist mir Pflicht;
Ich möchte dir mein ganzes Innre zeigen,
Allein das Schicksal will es nicht.

Zu rechten Zeit vertreibt der Sonne Lauf
Die finstre Nacht, und sie muss sich erhellen;
Der harte Fels schliesst seinen Busen auf,
Missgönnt der Erde nicht die tiefverborgnen Quellen.

Ein jeder sucht im Arm des Freundes Ruh,
Dort kann die Brust in Klagen sich ergiessen;
Allein ein Schwur drückt mir die Lippen zu
Und nur ein Gott vermag sie aufzuschliessen.

*Do not bid me speak; bid me be silent,
for my duty is to keep my secret;
I long to reveal my whole soul to you,
but fate does not permit it.*

*At the appointed time the sun in its course
drives away the dark night, and day must break;
the hard rock opens its bosom
and ungrudgingly bestows on the earth its deep-hidden springs.*

*Every man seeks peace in the arms of a friend;
there the heart can pour out its sorrows.
But an oath seals my lips,
and only a god can open them.*

So lasst mich scheinen

So lasst mich scheinen, bis ich werde,
Zieht mir das weisse Kleid nicht aus!
Ich eile von der schönen Erde
Hinab in jenes dunkle Haus.

Dort ruh' ich eine kleine Stille,
Dann öffnet sich der frische Blick;
Ich lasse dann die reine Hülle,
Den Gürtel und den Kranz zurück.

Und jene himmlischen Gestalten
Sie fragen nicht nach Mann und Weib,
Und keine Kleider, keine Falten
Umgeben den verklärten Leib.

Zwar lebt' ich ohne Sorg' und Mühe,
Doch fühlt' ich tiefen Schmerz genug.
Vor Kummer altert' ich zu frühe;
Macht mich auf ewig wieder jung!

*Thus let me seem till thus I become.
Do not take off my white dress!
I shall swiftly leave the fair earth
for that dark dwelling place below.*

*There, for a brief silence, I shall rest;
then my eyes shall open afresh.
Then I shall leave behind this pure raiment,
this girdle and this rosary.*

*And those heavenly beings
do not ask who is man or woman,
and no garments, no folds
enclose the transfigured body.*

*True, I lived free from care and toil,
yet I knew much deep suffering.
Too soon I grew old with grief;
make me young again for ever!*

Glitter And Be Gay

Glitter and be gay,
That's the part I play;
Here I am oh sorry chance...
Forced to bend my soul
To a sordid role,
Victimized by bitter, bitter circumstance.
Alas for me! Had I remained
Beside my lady mother,
My virtue had remained unstained
Until my maiden hand was gained
By some Grand Duke or other.
Ah, 'twas not to be;
Harsh necessity
Brought me to this gilded cage.
Born to higher things,
Here I droop my wings,
Ah! Singing of a sorrow nothing can assuage.
And yet of course I rather like to revel,
Ha ha!
I have no strong objection to champagne,
Ha ha!
My wardrobe is expensive as the devil,
Ha ha!
Perhaps it is ignoble to complain...
Enough, enough
Of being basely tearful!
I'll show my noble stuff
By being bright and cheerful!
Ha ha ha ha ha! Ha!
Pearls and ruby rings...
Ah, how can worldly things
Take the place of honor lost?
Can they compensate
For my fallen state,
Purchased as they were at such an awful cost?
Bracelets... lavalieres
Can they dry my tears?
Can they blind my eyes to shame?
Can the brightest brooch
Shield me from reproach?
Can the purest diamond purify my name?
And yet of course these trinkets are endearing,
Ha ha!
I'm oh, so glad my sapphire is a star,
Ha ha!
I rather like a twenty-carat earring,
Ha ha!
If I'm not pure, at least my jewels are!

Enough! Enough!
I'll take their diamond necklace
And show my noble stuff
By being gay and reckless!
Ha ha ha ha ha! Ha!
Observe how bravely I conceal
The dreadful, dreadful shame I feel.
Ha ha ha ha!