Creating Community Through Great Music 2023-2024

Chamber Music Amici

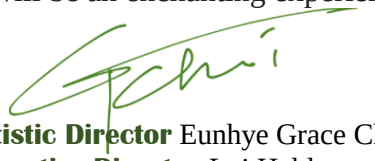
Mt. Pisgah Arboretum's White Oak Pavilion

Tuesday, August 1 & Wednesday, August 2

The Shepherd on the Rock

Welcome to the Chamber Music Amici's Summer Concert series! It has been quite a wait since we launched a very successful summer series last year. I surely missed the beautiful pavilion and the park, seeing the families' and friends' happy faces, the breathtaking sunset accompanied the summer breeze, and even this slightly warm weather!

I am happy to share today's program. Both Shepherd on the Rock by Schubert and Mozarts's *Kegelstatt* Trio may be instantly recognizable as many people's favorites. Spohr's Six German Songs may be relatively unfamiliar, but they are exceptionally beautiful and emotionally charged master pieces. Please welcome the Soprano Jocelyn Thomas's debut with Chamber Music Amici. It will be an enchanting experience to hear her stunning voice tonight in this magical setting.



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Program

Six German Songs, Op. 103, for soprano, clarinet, and piano — Louis Spohr
(Sechs deutsche Lieder)

I. Be still, my heart (Sei still mein Herz)
II. Duet (Zwiegesang)
III. I look in my heart and I look at the world (Sehnsucht)
IV. All is still in sweet repose (Wiegenlied)
V. The secret song (Das heimliche Lied)
VI. Awaken! (Wach auf!)

Eunhye Grace Choi, piano; Wonkak Kim, clarinet; Jocelyn Claire Thomas, soprano

Trio in E-flat Major for Clarinet, Viola, and Piano, K. 498 — Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

I. Andante
II. Menuetto - Trio
III. Rondeaux. Allegretto

Eunhye Grace Choi, piano; Wonkak Kim, clarinet; Lillie Manis, viola

The Shepherd on the Rock, D. 965 — Franz Schubert
(Der Hirt auf dem Felsen)

Eunhye Grace Choi, piano; Wonkak Kim, clarinet; Jocelyn Claire Thomas, soprano

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This project is made possible in part by a grant from Lane Arts Council with support from City of Eugene Cultural Services.

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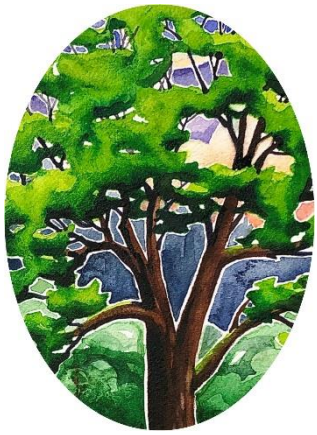
Program Notes

by Dr. Terry McQuilkin

Louis Spohr: Six German Songs, Op. 103, for soprano, clarinet, and piano



In 1837, Louis Spohr received a letter from his friend, clarinetist Simon Hermstedt, a musician in the court of Prince Günther Friedrich Carl II of Sondershausen, inviting the composer to write a set of songs for soprano with clarinet and piano accompaniment. The request came from Prince Günther's wife, Princess Mathilde, to whom the works were to be dedicated. Within a few weeks, Spohr composed a set of six songs, and for his efforts he received from the Princess a valuable ring.

Hermstedt was perhaps the most technically proficient clarinetist on the continent, and Spohr had already written four concertos for him. To capitalize on his virtuosity, the composer wrote dramatic, florid obbligatos for the odd-numbered songs in the group; the even-numbered ones display the instrument's lyrical qualities. The piano, on the other hand, is largely relegated to providing harmonic and rhythmic support.

The first five lieder are strophic in form – successive stanzas are set to the same music – while the last one is through-composed. Each lied has text by a different poet.

The stanzas of "Sei still mein Herz" ("Be Still My Heart"), alternate between gleeful and despondent moods, as the love-struck narrator tells of joy and anticipation, only to see all hopes vanish. Spohr illustrates the narrator's contrasting emotions by setting stanzas one and three in F major, and stanzas two and four in F minor. "Zwiegesang" ("Duet") is a musical dialogue between a bird and a maiden. While the bird sings of the sunshine in spring, the maiden sings of love's joy. The lovely vocal line has a folk-like simplicity, while the clarinet imitates birdsong, to great effect. In "Sehnsucht" ("Longing"), which begins with a bravura clarinet figure, the singer expresses sadness at the impossibility of reaching a "distant world, effused with golden light." In "Wiegenlied" ("Lullaby"), a gentle rocking piano accompaniment supports a vocal line that is confined to a mere three pitches.

The contrast of major and minor modes in "Das heimliche Lied," ("The Secret Song") conveys the narrator's shifting emotions: The first half of each verse is in G minor (the poet tells of "secret sorrows" and "quiet dying"), while the second part of each verse is in the parallel major ("peaceful meadows" and "gentle sleep"). In "Wach Auf," ("Awaken"), the narrator urges the listener to cease brooding and enjoy the sounds of nature. As in "Zwiegesang," Spohr uses the clarinet to evoke birdsongs.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Trio in E-flat Major for Clarinet, Viola, and Piano, K. 498

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart completed the Trio for Clarinet, Viola and Piano on August 5, 1786. The nickname, "Kegelstatt Trio" emerged from a notation that Mozart had written on a manuscript: "Vienna 27 July 1786 while playing skittles." (Skittles is a type of bowling popular at the time, and "Kegelstatt" translates to "skittles alley.") The manuscript bearing the inscription, however, was in fact for of a set of horn duets he had written a week earlier, and later publishers misapplied the moniker, either in error or to promote an endearing narrative.

The Trio was first heard at the home of the acclaimed botanist Nikolaus von Jacquin, whose son Gottfried was a close friend of Mozart's and whose daughter Franziska was a favorite pupil of his. The trio is dedicated to Franziska, and she almost certainly played piano at the first performance. Mozart probably played the viola, and his friend and fellow freemason Anton Stadler, another frequent guest at the Jacquin residence, was most likely the clarinetist. (It was Stadler for whom Mozart would later write his Clarinet Quintet and Clarinet Concerto.)

The three instruments are more or less equal partners in the Trio. Rather unusually, all three movements are played at moderate tempos. The opening *Andante*, in 6/8 meter, is rather brief (a mere 129 measures) and in sonata form, with the secondary theme a derivative of the opening theme. In the very brief development and in the recapitulation, we hear a fair amount of four-part counterpoint with the clarinet, viola and each hand of the piano playing imitative passages.

The second movement is a minuet, with a stately opening section in B-flat contrasting with a pensive middle section in G minor in which the clarinet's four-note chromatic motive is answered by a triplet figure played by the viola. Following the usual restatement of the B-flat major section, we hear a 15-measure coda that reprises those gestures from the middle section.

The final movement, marked *Allegretto*, is a buoyant rondo in E-flat. At the heart of the movement is an episode in C minor that begins with the viola delivering a rhythmically distinct figure composed of a minor-scale descent from G to C, a figure that is found – in major, not minor – in earlier Mozart works, specifically, the third movement of the Sonata, K. 485 and the Quartet, K. 169.

Franz Schubert: The Shepherd on the Rock, D. 965

The Shepherd on the Rock, possibly Franz Schubert's last work, was completed in October 1828, a few weeks before his death. It was written for soprano Anna Milder, whose singing Schubert had admired ever since he heard her sing the title role in Gluck's *Iphigenia* in 1813. She in turn grew to admire his music and asked the composer to write a piece for her that had considerable variety "so that several emotions can be represented," specifying that the piece should have "a brilliant ending" and be "suitable for a large audience." (She was, according to pianist and Schubert specialist Graham Johnson, "a *prima donna assoluta*.")

Milder had suggested a Goethe text, but Schubert instead gleaned texts from three different sources: The outer sections of the tripartite work use poems by Wilhelm Müller; the words of the middle section are presumed to be by Helmina von Chézy. The work's length, its sectional nature and the inclusion of a clarinetist – whose role is as central as that of the singer – make *The Shepherd on the Rock* sui generis among Schubert's works.

The narrative voice is that of a young shepherd (the use of a female voice to depict a male character is not at all inconsistent with Schubert's past practice), who stands on a high crag, viewing the expansive valley and bemoaning the great distance separating him and his beloved. In the middle section, he bemoans his fate, but with the anticipation of spring, his joy returns.

Schubert had effectively used the clarinet as an obbligato instrument in earlier works, including his offertory, *Totus in corde langueo* (1815), and some of his operatic arias. In *The Shepherd on the Rock*, the clarinet's role is decidedly central. (The piano's role is largely supportive.) Following the piano's foreboding six-bar introduction in G minor, the clarinet flips the harmony to B-flat major to introduce a cheerful melody that the singer soon takes up. The major arpeggios that are the building blocks of this expansive melody are unmistakably akin to yodeling. In the doleful middle section in G-minor, the singer's compass is much more constrained, and the clarinet moves to the background. In the final section – the homage to spring – both singer and clarinetist have a chance to display their technical bravura.

Musicians

Eunhye Grace Choi is an active pianist and chamber musician and is currently Artistic Director of Chamber Music Amici. She has performed extensively throughout the United States, France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and South Korea, and has recorded for Naxos, Emeritus, and Origin Classical. A versatile keyboardist, she was harpsichord soloist for J. S. Bach's Brandenburg Concerto cycle and collaborated with Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg in Vivaldi's Four Seasons at the Eastern Music Festival. She is frequently invited as a resident pianist at competitions and conventions, including the International Clarinet Association's ClarinetFest and the Meg Quigley Vivaldi Competition and Bassoon Symposium. Grace served as collaborative piano faculty for six years at Eastern Music Festival, where she was the principal keyboardist of the Festival Orchestra under the baton of Gerard Schwarz. She served as music faculty and collaborative pianist at the University of Oregon (2017-2018) and Tennessee Tech University (2013-2017) in addition to summer faculty positions at the Chapel Hill Chamber Music Workshop and Interlochen Summer Arts Camp. Choi received collaborative piano degrees from Florida State University (MM) and University of Minnesota (DMA).

Lillie Manis is widely recognized for her work as a Suzuki educator and is currently completing her doctorate at Teachers College, Columbia University, where her research focuses on studio teachers' holistic strategies for cultivating expressive performance in young violinists. From 2009-2020, she was a faculty member at the University of Oregon School of Music and Dance, where she mentored graduate violin and viola pedagogy students and served as the Assistant Director of the Community Music Institute. Lillie is currently on the faculty at the Willamette Violin Academy in Eugene. In the first decade of her teaching career, both the members of her vibrant pre-college studio and her graduate student mentees have achieved noteworthy musical and professional success, including competition wins, full scholarships to major music schools and summer programs, and college teaching appointments. Active as a clinician, master class presenter, adjudicator, and conference presenter at both the regional and national levels, she enjoys performing chamber music alongside some of the Northwest's finest players, and recently joined the editorial committee of the American String Teacher.

Korean clarinetist **Wonkak Kim** has captivated audiences around the world with his "excellent breath control" (*The Washington Post*) and "exuberant musicianship" (*Fanfare*). Kim appeared as a soloist and chamber musician in major venues and festivals throughout North and South Americas, Asia and Europe, including numerous performances at NYC's Carnegie Hall. A Naxos Recording Artist, he has garnered international acclaim through his extensive discography. *Gulfstream*, a collection of new American chamber music, received many distinctions, including "Music US Choice" (*BBC Music Magazine*). *The International Clarinet Association Journal* lauded Kim's "lovely sound and consummate facility" in *François Devienne: Clarinet Sonatas*. *American Record Guide* praised Kim's "seamless blend and excellent legato" on his *Stephen Krehl: Clarinet Quintet.* His most recent album with enhakē, *Prepárense: The Piazzolla Project* (MSR) was prominently featured by *The Gramophone:* "The playing throughout is sublime…The intensity is real, the sounds gorgeous, the rhythm infectious…this version strides proudly alongside the legendary recording by Piazzolla himself." Dr. Kim is Associate Professor of Clarinet at the University of Oregon, where he received the 2020 Presidential Fellowship in Humanistic Studies. He is a Buffet Crampon, Vandoren and Silverstein Performing Artist and regularly invited as guest clinician at world learning institutions, including the Juilliard, Yale, and Manhattan School of Music.

Jocelyn Claire Thomas, praised for her "staggeringly brilliant…ethereal soprano" (The Source), has engaged audiences with her haunting sound, musical intelligence, and unusual versatility. Recent solo highlights include Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* with the Salem Philharmonia Orchestra, "Susanna" in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Tacoma Opera, "Amore" in *Orpheus and Eurydice* with Inland Northwest Opera, and "Nedda" in *Pagliacci* with Opera Bend. Ms. Thomas was a featured soloist in Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with Portland's Bach Cantata Choir, about which Oregon ArtsWatch said, "Ms. Thomas shone brightly as the angel." Other highlights include Mozart's *Exsultate Jubilate* with the Central Oregon Symphony, "Marzelline" in *Fidelio* with the Astoria Music Festival, and Soprano Soloist in Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9,* Mendelssohn's *Elijah,* and Handel's *Messiah* with Bravo Northwest. Originally from Columbia, MO, Jocelyn holds a B.M. from the Oberlin Conservatory, a M.M. and a Graduate Performance Diploma from the Peabody Conservatory. Currently based in Portland, Oregon, Jocelyn maintains a private studio in voice, piano, and flute. For more information, please visit: www.jocelynclairethomas.com

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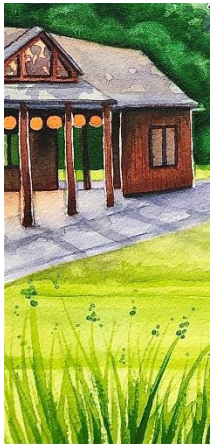

Next: Outdoor Salon Party
6:45 PM Tuesday, September 5
6:45 PM Wednesday, September 6
Mt. Pisgah Arboretum's White Oak Pavilion

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