

The Graduate Center



The Ph.D./D.M.A. Programs in Music

September 24th, 2003

7:30 PM, Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall

Mary Thorne, *soprano*
Thomas Bagwell, *piano*

Quatre chansons de jeunesse
Pantomime
Clair de lune
Pierrot
Apparition

Claude Debussy
(1862-1924)

Elle était descendue au bas de la prairie
Un poète disait

Lili Boulanger
(1893-1918)

Strings in the earth and air

Israel Citkowitz
(1909-1974)

Let us walk in the white snow

Mary Howe
(1882-1964)

A Prayer to Saint Catherine

Virgil Thomson
(1896-1989)

Morning in Paris

John Duke
(1899-1984)

Intermission

The Graduate Center

La courte paille

Le sommeil

Quelle aventure!

La reine de coeur

Ba, be, bi, bo, bu

Les anges musiciens

La carafon

Lune d'avril

Francis Poulenc

(1898-1963)

For Poulenc

Ned Rorem

(b. 1923)

Puisque tout passe

Samuel Barber

(1910-1981)

Le Blaireau

Christopher Berg

(b.1949)

Chansons de Ronsard

A une Fontaine

A Cupidon

Tais-toi babillarde

Dieu vous gard'

Darius Milhaud

(1892-1974)

French Connection

Mary Thorne, soprano

Thomas Bagwell, piano

The Connection...

This program combines my interest in French and American song. In the many connections between French and American music I concentrate on two figures, Nadia Boulanger and Francis Poulenc.

Claude Debussy and Lili Boulanger were both influenced by symbolist poetry. Symbolist poets rejected naturalism and realism in favor of the mysterious and indefinite. Debussy's *Quatre Chansons de jeunesse* reflects the whimsical and mysterious quality of the poetry. Boulanger's songs come from the cycle *Clairières dan le Ciel*. This song cycle is based on Francis Jammes' *Tristesses*, poems describing the emotions of lost love.

Nadia Boulanger, older sister to Lili, profoundly influenced American music through her composition teaching. More than 600 American students studied with her. Israel Citkowitz studied with Boulanger from 1927 to 1931, Mary Howe in 1933, Virgil Thomson in 1921, and John Duke from 1929 to 1930. Her words are evidence of her dynamic teaching.

"But the essential condition of every thing you do, and not only in music, the touchstone, must be choice, love, passion. You do it because you consider that the marvelous adventure of being alive depends entirely on the atmosphere you yourself create, by your enthusiasm, your conviction, your understanding. But without a thorough technique, you cannot even express what you feel most intensely. And it is here that the teacher comes in."¹

Poulenc's *La Courte Paille* is dedicated to soprano Denise Duval and was to be sung to her six year old son. Poulenc calls them "melancholy and impish sketches."² These are the last songs he composed.

Poulenc is the connection between Americans Ned Rorem, Samuel Barber, and Christopher Berg. Alice Esty, a renowned supporter of new music, commissioned *For Poulenc* for a concert to honor Poulenc. Samuel Barber wrote *Mélodies passagères* for Poulenc and Pierre Bernac, a baritone and Poulenc's long-time collaborator. Christopher Berg wrote *Hommage à Francis Poulenc* in the style of Poulenc.

Milhaud's *Chansons de Ronsard*, composed in 1940 for soprano and orchestra, was dedicated to the coloratura Lily Pons. Milhaud describes his aesthetic... "it is only when inspiration is combined with intellect that art reaches its highest pinnacle."³

¹ Monsaingeon, Bruno. *Mademoiselle: Conversations with Nadia Boulanger*. trans. Robyn Marsack. Manchester: Carcanet, 1985.

² Bernac, Pierre. *Francis Poulenc: The Man and His Songs*. New York: Norton, 1977.

³ Milhaud, Darius. *Notes Without Music*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953.

I would like to thank my teacher Susan Gonzalez for lessons all summer, Tom Bagwell for his fabulous playing and support especially in the early stages, Randy Williams for catering, and my parents Gary and Margie Thorne, who have made this evening possible.

Please enjoy the music and join me in the reception to follow.

Mary Thorne

Quatre Chansons de jeunesse
Claude Debussy

Pantomime (Paul Verlaine)

Pierrot who is nothing like Clitandre
Empties a flask without much waiting
And, practical, slices into a paté.

Cassandre at the end of the avenue
Sheds a displeased tear
Over her disinherited nephew.

That rascal Harlequin
Plans the kidnapping of Colombine
And twirls around four times.

Colombine dreams,
Surprised to sense a heart on the breeze
And at hearing voices in her heart.

Clair de lune (Paul Verlaine)
Moonlight

Your soul is a choice landscape
Where charming maskers and bergamaskers go
Playing the lute and dancing and almost
Sad in their fantastic disguises.

They sing the while in the minor mode
Of conquering love and the easy life,
They do not seem to believe in their happiness
And their song mingles with the moonlight,

With the calm moonlight, sad and beautiful,
That makes the birds dream in the trees
And the fountains sob with ecstasy,
Those tall, svelte fountains among the marbles.

Pierrot (Théodore de Banville)

Good Pierrot, contemplated by the crowd,
Having done with Harlequin's wedding
Wanders dreamily along the Boulevard du
Temple.

A young girl with a supple blouse
Vainly importunes him with her roguish glance;
And meanwhile, mysterious and polished,
Making him her most precious delight,
The white moon with horns like a bull
Casts a sideways glance
At his friend Jean Gaspard Debureau.

Apparition (Stéphane Mallarmé)

The moon grew sad.
The seraphim in tears, dreaming,
Their bows in hand,
Drew from dying violets,
In the calm of misty flowers,
White sobs that slipped across blue corollas.

That was the blessed day of your first kiss.
My dreaming, fond of making me a martyr,
Has grown drunk on the perfume of sadness,
--Without regret or disappointment—
On the harvest a dream leaves in the heart that
has reaped it.

Thus I wandered,
My eyes fixed on the aged paving stones,
When, with sun-touched hair,
You appeared on the street, in the evening,
Laughing before me,
And I seemed to see the fairy
With the halo of light
Who long ago in my lovely spoiled-child's
dreams passed by,
Leaving to snow down
Ever from her half-opened hands
White bouquets of scented stars.

Elle était descendue au bas de la prairie...
From *Clairières dans le ciel* (Francis Jammes)
Lili Boulanger

She had gone down to the bottom of the meadow
And that flowered meadow was covered in plants
Whose stems love to grow in water,
Those watery plants I had picked.

Soon, having gotten wet, she reached the top of
the flowered meadow.
She laughed and shook with the awkward grace
of young girls who are too tall.
Her look resembled a lavender flower.

Deux ancolies...
From *Clairières dans le ciel* (Francis Jammes)
Lili Boulanger

Two columbines swayed on the hill.
One columbine said to her sister,
I tremble before you and remain confused.
The other replied:
In the rock worn by water, drop by drop,
Looking at my reflection,
I see my trembling, and I am confused like you.
The wind blew stronger filling the two with love,
Mingling their hearts of blue.

Strings in the earth and air (James Joyce)
Israel Citkowitz

Strings in the earth and air
Make music sweet;
Strings by the river
Where the willows meet.

There's music along the river
For love wanders there,
Pale flowers on his mantle,
Dark leaves on his hair.

All softly playing,
With heads to the music bent,
And fingers straying
Upon an instrument.

Let us walk in the white snow (Elinor Wylie)
Mary Howe

Let us walk in the white snow
In a soundless space;
With footsteps quiet and slow,
At a tranquil pace,
Under veils of white lace.

I shall go shod in silk,
And you in wool,
White as a white cow's milk,
More beautiful
That the breast of a gull.

We shall walk through the still town
In a windless peace;
We shall step upon white down,
Upon silver fleece,
Upon softer than these.

We shall walk in velvet shoes:
Wherever we go
Silence will fall like dews
On white silence below.
We shall walk in the snow.

A Prayer to Saint Catherine (Kenneth Koch)
Virgil Thomson

If I am to be preserved
From heartache and shyness
By Saint Cath'rine of Siena,
I am praying to her that she will hear my pray'r
And treat me in ev'ry way with kindness.

I went to Siena to Saint Cath'rine's own church
(It is impossible to deny this)
To pray to her to cure me
Of my heartache and shyness,
Which she can do, because she is a great saint.

Other saints would regard my pray'r as foolish.
Saint Nicholas, for example.
He would chuckle,
"God helps those who help themselves,
Rouse yourself! Get out there and do something
about it!"

Or Saint Joanna. She would say,
"It is not shyness that bothers you. It is sin. Pray
to Cath'rine of Siena."
But that is what I have done.
And that is why I have come here to cure my
heartache.

Saint Cath'rine of Siena,
If this song pleases you,
Then be good enough to answer the pray'r it
contains.
Make the person that sings this song less shy
than that person is,
And give that person some joy
In that person's heart.

Morning in Paris (Robert Hillyer)
John Duke

Early in the morning
Of a lovely summer day,
As they lowered the bright awning
At the outdoor café
I was breakfasting on croissants
And café au lait.
Under greenery like scenery
Rue Francois Premier.

They were hosing the hot pavement
With a dash of flashing spray
And a smell like summer showers
When the dust is drenched away
Under greenery like scenery
Rue Francois Premier.
I was twenty and a lover
And in Paradise to stay
Very early in the morning
Of a lovely summer day.

La Courte Paille (Maurice Carême)
Francis Poulenc

Le sommeil
Sleep

Sleep is on a voyage,
Mon Dieu! Where has it gone?
I have rocked my little one;
He cries in his crib,
He has been crying since noon.

Where has sleep put
His sand and his good dreams?
I have rocked my little one;
He turns, bathed in sweat,
He sobs in his bed.

Ah! Come back, sleep,
On your fine race horse,
In the dark sky, the Great Bear
Has buried the sun
And rekindled its bees.

If baby doesn't sleep well,
He will not say good morning,
He will not say anything tomorrow,
To his fingers, to the milk, to the bread
That greet him in the morning.

Quelle aventure!
What an adventure!

A flea, in a carriage,
Pulled a little elephant
Looking at the shop windows
Where there were sparkling diamonds.
Mon Dieu! What an adventure!
Who will believe me when they hear it?

The elephant, with an absent minded air,
Sucked a pot of jam.
But the flea didn't take notice,
She pulled with a smile.
Mon Dieu! If this goes on
I will believe I am going mad!

Suddenly, along a fence,
The flea disappeared in the wind
And I saw the young elephant
Escape by breaking through the walls.
Mon Dieu! The thing is sure,
But how will I tell mom?

La reine de coeur
Queen of hearts

Gently leaning
At her windows of moon,
The queen waves to you
With a flower of an almond.

It is the queen of hearts.
She can, if she pleases,
Lead you in secret
To strange dwellings

Where there are no more doors,
Nor rooms, nor towers,
And where the young dead
Come to speak of love.

The queen waves to you;
Hasten to follow her
To her castle of frost
With sweet windows of moon.

Ba, Be, Bi, Bo, Bu

Ba, Be, Bi, Bo, Bu
The cat has put on his boots,
He goes from door to door,
Playing, dancing, dancing, singing.

Pou, chou, genou, hibou.
"You must learn to read,
to count, to write,"
They cry to him on all sides.

But, ricketikketou,
The cat bursts out laughing
On return to the castle:
He is the Puss in Boots!

Les anges musiciens
Angel musicians

On the threads of the rain,
The Thursday angels
Play all the time on the harp.
And under their fingers,
Mozart tinkles, deliciously,
In drops of blue joy.

For it is always Mozart
That repeats without end
By the angel musicians
Who, all day Thursday,
Sing on the harp
The sweetness of rain..

Le Carafon
The carafe

Why, complained the carafe,
Can't I have a baby carafe?
At the zoo, Madame giraffe,
Has she not a baby giraffe?
A sorcerer, who was passing
On horseback, by a phonograph
Recorded the beautiful soprano voice
Of the carafe
And had Merlin listen to it.

"Very good," said he, "Very good!"
He clapped his hands three times
And the lady of the house
Still asks herself why
She found that morning,
A pretty little carafe
Nestled against the carafe.
Like in the zoo, the little giraffe
Lays his fragile, long neck
On the pale side of the giraffe.

Lune d'Avril
April Moon

Moon, beautiful moon, April moon,
Make me see in my sleep
The peach tree with the saffron heart,
The fish that laughs at hail,
The bird, who, faraway like a horn,
Gently wakes the dead
And especially, especially the country
Where there is joy, where there is light,
Where in the sunshine of spring,
They have broken all the guns.
Moon, beautiful moon, April moon,
Moon.

For Poulenc (Frank O'Hara)
Ned Rorem

My first day in Paris
I walked from the Saint Germain
To the Pont Mirabeau
In soft amber light
And leaves and love
Was running out
City of light and hearts
City of dusk and dismay
The Seine believed it to be true
That I was unloved and alone
How lonely is that bridge
Without your song
The Avenue Mozart,
The rue Pergolese
The tobaccos and the nuns
All Paris is alone
For this brief leafless moment
And snow falls down
Upon the streets of our peculiar hearts.

Puisque tout passe... (Rainer Maria Rilke)
From *Mémoires passagères*
Samuel Barber

Since all things pass,
Let's make a passing melody;
The one to quench our thirst
Will be the one to win us.

What leaves us, let us sing
With love and art
And swifter let us be
Than the swift departure.

Le Blaireau (Robert Denos)
The Badger
From *Hommage a Francis Poulenc*
Christopher Berg

When I was shaving I saw a badger,
Seed of rhubarb, seed of leek.
Through the hair of my beard!
The badger wrote,
Seed of rhubarb, seed of leek.
You will do the shaving with the leek,
Seed of rhubarb,
You will have stepped on my skin.

