

Písň Lásky a Naděje – Songs of Love and Hope Personal Notes – Set Info for Website/Recital Page

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

Písň milostné, Op. 83

Love Songs

Text by Gustav Pflieger-Moravský (1833-1875) Moravian writer, poet and playwright

Translations by David Beveridge

When you think of Czech music, you first think of Antonín Dvořák. One of my favorite composers in any genre or language, Dvořák wrote these songs (Op. 83) after falling in love with his piano student, Josefina Čermáková. These songs were very personal for Dvořák: they were the first songs he ever wrote, and they illustrate feelings of deep, passionate, all-consuming love with plaintive melodies and luscious accompaniments.

Zdeněk Fibich (1850-1900)

From *Jarní paprsky*, Op. 36

Spring Rays/Flashes of Spring

Translations by Mirka Zemanová

Zdeněk Fibich was much more international in his composition style than Smetana and Dvořák, the other leading composers of his day. Although all Czech and Slovak music is rooted in native folk song, Fibich's works are less nationalistic and more cosmopolitan. His works are somewhat neglected today, but I wanted to present a wide variety of Czech and Slovak repertoire on this recital program.

Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884)

Och, jaký žal!...Ten lásky sen from *Prodaná nevěsta* [The Bartered Bride]

Text by Karel Sabina (1813-1877) Czech writer and journalist

Translation by Timothy Cheek

Czech composers are all very proud of their native folk songs, and they have used them throughout their music - even in opera arias. Arguably no greater opera which celebrates Czech culture and life than *Prodaná nevěsta* [The Bartered Bride] by Bedřich Smetana.

In a somewhat complex plot of mistaken identities and false contracts, the heroine Mařenka finds herself alone and heartbroken by the supposed betrayal of her beloved Jeník. She sings this powerful recitative and aria, where she expresses her grief for lost love and the sadness of her new fate.

Vítězslava Kaprálová (1915-1940)

Sbohem a šáteček, Op. 14

A Waving Farewell

Text by Vítězslav Nezval (1900-1958)

Translation by Timothy Cheek

Jablko s klína, Op. 10

An Apple from the Lap

Text by Jaroslav Seifert (1901-1986)

Vítězslava Kaprálová was an outstanding female composer, conductor, and pianist who is now receiving renewed international acclaim. Though she tragically died at the young age of 25, Kaprálová's body of work remains extremely impressive.

Kaprálová wrote the song *Sbohem* – “waving farewell” –as a farewell to Prague when she left to study in Paris. This is one of my favorite pieces on the program, as it explores such a range of emotion and dynamics, both musically and dramatically.

Jablko s klína, Op. 10 – “An Apple from the Lap” features the text of Jaroslav Seifter, one of the world’s greatest poets of the 20th century. His works encompass many themes, including national subjects, longing for childhood and home, and death.

Bohuslav Martinů (1890-1959)

From *Nové slovenské písně*

New Slovak Songs

Text – Volkslieder/Folksongs

Translation by Timothy Cheek

My grandfather, Joseph Karaffa, was born in Slovakia, and I am able to honor my Slovak family heritage with these two charming songs by Bohulav Martinů.

Martinů was one of the most prolific composers of the 20th century, writing more than 400 works for many different genres, including over 150 songs for the voice.

Sylvie Bodorová (b. 1952)

From *Jabloňový vlak*

Apple Train

Text – Traditional Prayer

Translation by Timothy Cheek

It is always important to me to perform modern works, particularly those of female composers, while honoring the classics. Sylvie Bodorová is a leading Czech contemporary composer, and makes her living entirely from commissions of her music. She always writes tonally, but she uses complex rhythms, which can be heard in this captivating set of two songs.

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

Měsíčku na nebi hlubokém from *Rusalka*

Text by Jaroslav Kvapil [1868-1950]

I can think of no better way to end this beautiful program of Czech and Slovak music, than with the haunting, and enchanting aria “Song to the Moon” from Dvořák’s opera *Rusalka*.

Rusalka is a water nymph, and she has just confessed to her father, *Vodník*, that she has fallen in love with a mortal prince. *Rusalka* also desires to become human, and she pleads to the moon for help and guidance.