

Four Songs, Opus 27 by Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Four Songs was a set that Strauss composed in 1894 as a wedding present for his wife Pauline. (All but the third are being performed tonight) The first (Ruhe, Meine Seele!) was written specifically as a wedding present for his wife, and the second (Cäcilie) was written the day before his wedding. The fourth (Morgen!) was written around the same time in May as the first one. Using poems written by Karl Henckell (Ruhe, meine Seele!), Heinrich Hart (Cäcilie) and John Henry Mackay (Morgen!), Strauss turned these poems into statements about love and setting aside all troubles and worries and looking forward to a brighter day. 'Ruhe, meine Seele!' speaks of how in tumultuous times, love is the thing that steadies all sufferings and pains. The text of "Cäcilie" speaks about the level of internal anguish cause by separation from a lover and a longing to be reunited. "Morgen!" speaks of how the sun will shine again tomorrow, reminding listeners that there is always hope in the future.

Zueignung by Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

One of the first works published by Richard Strauss, he uses a poem by German poet Hermann von Glim. The text speaks of remembering days gone by and how the poet is tortured by lack of love in their life, but also finding comfort in his own soul.

5 Canciones Negras by Xavier Montsalvatge (1912-2002)

Xavier Montsalvatge grew up in Spain in the Catalan region. Born into a family of bankers, Montsalvatge started to study music in 1921 after his father's passing and he was sent to live with his grandmother. He studied under such names as Eduardo Toldra, Enric Morera, and Juame Pahissa in private lessons and at universities. He had to flee to France during the Spanish Civil War and returned to help rebuild his home region of Catalonia through his music. For twenty years after 1939, Montsalvatge started to infuse his music with Caribbean styles. These pieces were created due to a request by Spanish soprano Mercedes Plantada, a close family friend, for a recital she was to give in Barcelona. The full set was performed for the first time on June 14, 1945. These pieces were intended by Montsalvatge as a deliberate statement for how Spain and the former Spanish colonies could be represented alongside the questions of identity brought about by the Spanish Civil War.

The poetry for the first song , Cuba dentro un piano (Cuba in a Piano) was written by Rafael Alberti as an underground poem because the Spanish government was censoring literature written by or about Blacks and/or Native Americans. Montsalvatge's choice of using such a forbidden piece showed that he wanted to give a voice to those who could not speak for themselves. The poem is written in free verse, with fragments of text that Montsalvatge interpreted as if they were fragments from an old Cuban song the singer was recalling. This piece is important in establishing the character and location for the remaining pieces.

The poetry for Punto de habanera (Habanera Rhythm) was penned by Nestor Lujan, a lifelong friend and collaborator of Montsalvatge's. Lujan portrays a Creole girl walking past a group of sailors, showing some of the oppression that the Creoles would face. This song is a smooth transition between the first piece, where the racial and sometimes sexual tensions around Blacks were merely suggestive, to the third, where these themes are more overt.

The third song, Chevere (or the Bully), was penned by Nicolas Guillen, a Mulatto. Guillen is considered one the most important and influential Afro-Cuban poets of the twentieth century due to his contributions to the development of the style known as poesia Negra, a style that attempted to synthesize Black and White cultural elements. This piece explores the experience of a person who is of high standing lashing out at all around them and finally letting out their frustrations on an unfortunate Black woman. The maliciousness of the person is shown in how Montsalvatge frames the text, often causing the stressed syllable of a word to fall on a weak beat, making parts of the text almost seem off balance.

Song four, Cancion de Cuna Para Dormir a un Negrito (Lullaby for a Little Black Boy) was written by Uruguayan poet Ildelfonso Pereda Valdes, who was well known as a poet and essayist and served as a professor of African-American literature at the Universidad de Santiago y Concepcion in Chile. This poem starts to dive into the advantages of being mixed race, particularly how it could be soothing for a young child, but also has underlining tones of how the situation came about in the first place.

The final song, Canto Negro (Negro Song), was also written by Guillen. He makes many uses of the Congolese onomatopoeias, which are meant to imitate the different Afro-Cuban rhythms of both dance and instruments. While this piece

does follow the overall theme of the set, it does have a slightly more positive view of those who were given freedom and a chance to make something of their life.

Près des Remparts de Séville by Georges Bizet (1838-1875)

Georges Bizet was a French Romantic era composer known best for his operas. This work, *Près des Remparts de Séville*, comes from his most famous work, *Carmen*, and is sung by the title character. In this piece, which uses flamenco-style material to portray the Spanish countryside, Carmen sings to persuade her captor to let her go free. The complex structure and slower tempo of the piece sets it apart from the traditional *seguidilla*, which is an old Castilian folksong and dance.

Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix by Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)

This piece is from Saint-Saëns opera *Samson et Dalila* and comes in the second act where Delilah is attempting to seduce Samson into giving to her the secret to his strength. The text speaks of opening the heart, how Delilah longs for Samson to trust her with his secret, and how pleased she will be when he finally does. Saint-Saëns shows this by having the vocal line be light and flowing, while the accompaniment keeps a steady movement forward using constant sixteenth notes between both hands. The song ends with a flowing accompaniment reminiscent of a harp, as Delilah appeals to Samson's heart and tenderness to give her what she wants.

Voi lo Sapete by Pietro Mascagni (1863-1945)

Voi lo Sapete is from the opera *Caballeria Rusticana*. The singer has been scorned by her lover who is now having an affair with a married woman. The scorned woman is speaking to her lover's mother, explaining the story of the affair to her, and asking the mother to pray for her, while she will plead with her lover to end the affair. Mascagni uses extensive use of the minor key and sighing phrases in the first half to show the sorrow of the singer, while the accompaniment in the beginning of the second half becomes more tumultuous showing the feelings of jealousy and betrayal. The song ends with a mix of calm quickly giving way to passion, as the singer repeats how she has been betrayed and scorned.

Sence You Went Away by H. Leslie Adams (b.1932)

H. Leslie Adams began studying music at an early age, beginning with violin lessons at the age of four. He has studied under various composers and earned his Ph.D. from Ohio State University in 1973. He continues to make music that reflects his African-American heritage, including an opera that he wrote in the 1980s about the lives of African-American slaves right before the civil war called *Blake*. This piece, *Sence You Went Away*, uses a poem written by James Weldon Johnson. The text speaks of how life does not seem the same since the person who the song is being sung to left. The song itself is the fifth of six in Leslie Adams' song cycle "Nightsongs: Six Afro-American Songs". All the songs in this set speak of night activities; this piece describes the stars and how they shine, as well as the feeling of loneliness at night.

My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord by Florence Price (1887-1953)

Florence B. Price was the first African American woman composer to achieve national recognition. She grew up in Little Rock, Arkansas, studied at the New England Conservatory, and spent her professional career in Chicago (1927-53), where her Symphony in E Minor was premiered by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1933 under the direction of Frederick Stock; this performance marked the first large-scale work by an African American woman composer (and the second work by an African American composer) to be performed by a major American orchestra. A prolific composer, she wrote more than 300 works in all genres: orchestra music (symphonies, orchestral suites, and concerti), vocal music, art songs and arrangements of spirituals, piano music (including teaching pieces), organ music, chamber music, and music for chorus. Her compositions reflect not only her cultural heritage, but also the romantic nationalist style of the period in which she was most active (beginning in the 1920s). Brown discusses Price in the context of the Harlem Renaissance and deals with issues of race, gender, and class. She draws on interviews with Price's colleagues, on music manuscripts located in major repositories of African American material and in private collections, on contemporary black newspapers and journals, on census records, and on archival materials as well as the relevant published sources.

"Give Me Jesus" a Traditional Spiritual Arr. Moses Hogan (1957-2003)

Moses Hogan was an American composer who spent much of his music career working on bringing the Negro spirituals back into the mainstream music world. While he did study at such places as the Juilliard School of Music and the Oberlin

Conservatory of Music, he did much of his work through the *New World Ensemble*, which he founded in 1980, and the *Moses Hogan Singers* which he created in 1997. The text of “Give Me Jesus” speaks about waiting for Jesus at all times and speaks about how nothing in this world is as important as Jesus.