

PROGRAM NOTES

Vainement, ma bien-aimée is a 19th century French aria by Lalo. The piece is from the Opera *Le Roi d'Ys*, an opera about love, loss, fighting and sacrifice. In this aria, the male character Mylio is singing to the female character Rozenn. He really wants to see her, but he isn't allowed to because she is up in a tower with a bunch of guards around her. He sings about seeing her soon, and says he will die if he doesn't see her - a very interesting persuasion method. This piece starts with a recitative, modulates, and goes into the aria. It also is strophic so the melodic lines that are heard are similar.

Vaghissima sembianza is an Italian aria by Stefano Donaudy. It is a part of a book of songs entitled 36 Arie Di Stile Antico (Arias of Ancient Style). The book contains 36 different arias that Donaudy composed in a deliberately old-fashioned style. This piece was written in the early 1900s. Donaudy wrote this piece when he was about 13 years old. This piece is one of those slow lyrical pieces about love. In English it means "very vague semblance" or "very lovely resemblance". The story behind the piece follows a man looking at a portrait of this beautiful woman, and it reminds him of his past lover. It is unclear if the lover is dead and/or if they were broken up, but it just talks about a past lover. Interesting enough, this piece is considered to be one of Donaudy's most popular pieces. It's been performed hundreds of times. It has been performed by artist such as Enrico Caruso, Andrea Bocelli, and Beniamino Gigli and many more. This piece is also strophic so the melody that is heard are vaguely similar.

Sit down you're rocking the boat is a song from the 20th century, golden age musical *Guys and Dolls*, composed by Frank Loesser. It follows the character Nicely-Nicely Johnson as he sings about a dream he had invented "last night". He was saved from hell so he could bring the people of the prayer meeting together. He hasn't really had that dream, but he needs the prayer meeting to succeed, because of a complicated situation in which he lost an important bet. This piece is high energy and on the comedic side.

Proud of your boy is a piece by Alan Menken and Howard Ashman. This duo is known for their countless catchy Disney numbers such as, *Tangled*, *The Little Mermaid*, as well as many other Broadway shows. This heartwarming tune comes from *Aladdin*, a 21st century musical about a "street rat boy" who meets a noble princess and has to jump through hoops to get the opportunity to be with her. Originally this song was performed by Adam Jacobs but has been performed by my others in its Broadway run. Interestingly enough it was one of the first pieces they wrote for the musical. It was theorized that Ashman actually wrote this song because of his own relationship with his mother. With that being said, Proud of your boy is a song of hope. It is a song of dreaming and longing. In musical order it follows "One Jump Ahead(reprise)", where Aladdin is singing about how he is not only a street rat and a poor boy, but he has so much more to him. So, he has this song where he sings to his mother about how he will make her proud one day.

Harry Thacker Burleigh (1866-1949) was an African American baritone and composer who studied under Antonin Dvorak. He became well known for his singing and for his arrangements of over 200 spirituals, such as “Deep River,” “Go Down Moses” and “Steal Away,” just to name a few.

Hard Trials is a Negro spiritual written by Harry T Burleigh in 1917 for his collection of spirituals. This piece seems like it is supposed to be sad, but the piece is rather upbeat and when reading through the lyrics it talks mostly about the religious hard trials. For example, one of the verses says, “foxes have holes in the ground and birds have nest in the air and everything has a hiding place, but us sinners ain’t got nowhere.” Each verse gets funnier than the one before: another strophic/comedic piece that you just have to sit back and enjoy the ride.

Steal Away, an African American Spiritual, was originally composed in 1862 by Wallace Willis, is widely believed to have a double meaning: one in which the singer professes their faith in Jesus; the other referring to slave codes where slaves would “steal away” (escape and hide) from slave owners along the Underground Railroad. Steal Away has been performed thousands of times around the world. It is one of those pieces that has stood the test of time. This spiritual has been rearranged at least 20 times and has been performed thousands of times all over the world.

Sittin’ on the Dock of the Bay was written by Otis Redding and Steve Cropper. This was Redding’s last song that was recorded before he passed in 1967. This soul piece is literally about Sitting on the dock of the bay relaxing and having a good time. This piece is fast enough for you to tap your foot or snap your finger, but slow enough that you could listen to it while relaxing on a day off. I really enjoy the tonality of this piece, because most of it is diatonic but the small chromaticism’s really makes this piece pop!

Gratitude is a contemporary worship song written by Brandon Lake in 2020. This piece explores Lake’s thoughts on how much Gratitude he has towards God. Musically speaking the song is pretty simple. The chord structure pretty much stays the same throughout, which helps highlight these infectious lyrics. The bridge of this song says, “oh come on my soul, oh don’t you get shy lift up your song cause you’ve got a lion inside of those lungs get up and praise the lord.” This song turns an inward thought into an encouraging outward expression.