Lyrics of Love: 
A Junior Recital

An Honors Thesis (MUSP 401A)

by

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Abstract
Love is such a prevailing subject not only in the American culture, but in many cultures across the world and throughout history. Love is such a major concept that it has served as inspiration for musical composers for hundreds of years. This junior recital explores the concept of love in its many forms with repertoire that features four different languages, numerous composers, and a variety of genres including art songs, opera, and musical theater. The following author’s statement provides a brief explanation of the preparation process as well as a rationale and commentary on each selected piece.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I have to thank my wonderful voice teacher Meryl Mantione. Without her guidance and support I could have never become the performer I am today. The countless hours spent in lessons over the last three years have not only helped me to become a better musician, but a more confident individual overall. My recital could have never been possible without her.

Another huge thank you goes out to my piano accompanist, Yoonsung Yeo who spent countless hours practicing with me both during and outside of my weekly voice lessons.

I must also thank my friends Katie Naville, Jerico Hughes, Jabrael Armstrong, and Travis Bird for taking the time to practice and perform pieces with me in my recital. Having the opportunity to perform with all of you was an honor.

Lastly, thank you to all of my friends and family who were always there for me to provide encouragement. I could not have been so successful without your love and support.
Author’s Statement

The road to my recital performance was a long, yet worthwhile process. Growing up, most of my singing experiences were in a choral setting where I had to adjust my sound and technique to match the people around me. Once I began taking voice lessons, it suddenly became hard for me to break those habits. I had to learn how to better project my voice, expand my range, and convey the story of the song to the audience. My voice teacher, Dr. Meryl Mantione, really pushed me to go outside of my comfort zone each semester and as a result my vocal abilities grew exponentially. In my junior year, the decision to do a recital was easy. I was very proud of my accomplishments and I wanted to show my friends and family how much I had grown over the last three years.

Once I made the choice to do a full-length recital, the next step was to decide what pieces to perform. Right away I knew I wanted to follow a theme. After some careful consideration, I decided on the title “Lyrics of Love” knowing that I could take this theme in a variety of directions. Once that was decided, the song selection process became a lot easier. Some pieces such as “Alma del Core” and “Into the Night” were pieces that I had already learned in previous semesters of lessons; however, more than half of my repertoire was chosen specifically for this recital. Most of the pieces I chose myself, but Dr. Mantione also provided me with several suggestions for my German and French selections. From there, I just needed to learn and memorize each piece in time for my recital hearing that would determine if my recital would actually happen or not. I could not wait to get started. Each piece was carefully considered based on its meaning, genre, language, time period, and my level of interest in it, which will be discussed in the following pages.
The first set of my recital consisted of two Italian pieces titled “Alma del core” and “Nel cor più non mi sento”. I made it a priority to include a variety of foreign languages in my performance for a couple of reasons. First of all, I spent a lot of time learning how to sing in the languages of Italian, French, and German and I wanted to showcase my growth in this area. The other reason is that I wanted to provide as much variety within my chosen theme as possible and adding other languages would certainly contribute to this. “Alma del core” is an Italian art song composed in the 1720s in which the singer is expressing their undying love and adoration to their “true love”. All they ask from this person in return is a simple kiss. I felt that this piece was a sweet song about true love and the passion that ensues from a new relationship. Because of this and the fact that this is the earliest composition in my line-up, I thought that this would be a perfect way to begin my recital.

Composed almost a hundred years later in 1821, my second selection “Nel cor più non mi sento” is quite the opposite. Instead of a sweet song about undying love, this piece features a woman who is complaining about the fact that three different men are all fighting for her affections at the same time. As a result the piece becomes quite sarcastic as the woman expresses her “despair” in the situation and indecision about what to do next. I have always really enjoyed performing this piece and thought that its comical qualities made this piece another great selection to start my performance.

Moving on in chronological order, my second set included two nineteenth century French pieces by Gabriel Fauré entitled “Au bord de l’eau” and “Chanson d’amour”. These were two of the pieces that Dr. Mantione recommended and were also two of the more challenging pieces for me due to the difficult French diction. For those that have never sung in French before, this language is more challenging than most because of its nasal
vowels. My entire life I have been told to eliminate all nasality from my singing voice, so I really struggled when asked to put that quality back into my voice. Another major challenge of this piece was the memorization of the lyrics. Both of these pieces are what music theorists would describe as strophic—as in, the same musical material is used over and over just with different words. Strophic pieces are always the hardest for me to memorize as it is easy to mix up words and the order of the verses. As a result, “Au bord d’leau” and “Chanson d’amour” took much longer than all my other pieces to memorize. However, once I did finally master these pieces, I grew to love and appreciate them all the more.

“Au bord de l’eau” contains beautiful poetic lyrics both in French and English. Here, the singer is describing how everything in the world from the flowers to the smoke rising from a nearby chimney becomes more beautiful with her love by her side. Once again, the singer is describing the feeling of a new romantic relationship filled with passion and a sense of stopped time when they are together. “Chanson d’amour” on the other hand, comes from the point of view of someone who has been with his love for a while. The entire piece consists of this person describing all the aspects he loves best about his lover including her eyes, face, lips, and even her voice. This particular piece has an absolutely beautiful melody and eventually became my favorite of all my selected foreign pieces.

Staying within the nineteenth century, my German set featured “Der Nussbaum” by Robert Schumann and “Vergebliches Ständchen” by Johannes Brahms. I was more than happy to not only perform pieces in one of the major languages in the School of Music, but to also feature two of the world’s greatest nineteenth century composers. “Der Nussbaum” represents a crucial genre in music history known as the German Lied. These pieces were art songs composed for piano and voice that typically told a story or had a romantic theme.
I actually learned this piece in my freshman year, but I brought it back because it fits my love theme in a unique way. Instead of singing from a lover’s point of view, this piece talks about blossoms on a walnut tree that gossip about the maiden who lives in a nearby house. This maiden spends a significant amount of time under the walnut tree dreaming about her true love and the day that they will eventually find each other. I chose this piece because not only does it have a beautiful legato melody, it also tells a story that is very relatable. People fall in love all the time, however, most of us also find ourselves in love with the idea of being in love. Much like the maiden in this art song, many people, myself included, have admitted to daydreaming about that one special person whether they know who that person is yet or not. It is a common love story that has and will continue to stand the test of time and was a perfect fit for my recital.

My second German piece, “Vergebliches Ständchen”, puts love and courtship in a more humorous light. In this piece, the singer must take on the role of both a man and a woman who are having a conversation at the woman’s window. The man is trying to convince the woman to let him inside her room for the night and when she refuses, he tries to make the argument that he will freeze outside in the cold. In response to his pitiful plea, she once again sends the lad away saying that if he could be extinguished so easily, then he does not deserve her love anyway. This piece was a real challenge for me to learn as well. German diction is always tough to master as it requires the use of mixed vowels and strong consonants. This piece, however, was at a quick tempo forcing me to get out a lot of these consonants in a short period of time. Additionally, since the piece is a conversation between two people, I had to find a way to clearly portray this in my movements and facial expressions. This concept really took me outside of my performance comfort zone;
however, once I finally overcame it I realized that it was a lot easier to be expressive in all of my other repertoire as well.

To conclude the first half of my recital I chose to perform a couple of my English pieces including “Into the Night” by Clara Edwards and “Fair Robin I Love” from the opera Tartuffe, both of which were written in the twentieth century. “Into the Night” is a simple, classic song that discusses the journey that comes with finding the one you love. This is a piece that I learned in a previous semester that I have always enjoyed both hearing and performing making the decision to include it in my recital a simple one. The second piece of this English set, “Fair Robin I Love” is a piece that I first encountered in studio class when another student performed it. I instantly fell in love with the piece and requested that I include it in my repertoire. This is another aria that is intended to be comical. In this case, the singer is trying to convince her boss, Mariane, that love is a fleeting experience and should not be taken so seriously. Instead, she suggests that Mariane follow her example and have an “open relationship” with her lover when the two must be away from each other. Fair Robin was easily the most challenging aria I had ever taken on, as it was full of fast-paced runs, high notes, powerful dynamic levels, and included a challenging recitative. As a result, this short piece took me almost a year to fully master. Once I did, however, I felt a greater sense of accomplishment than I have with any other vocal piece and knew that it would make the perfect conclusion to the first half of my recital.

Following a short intermission, my recital briefly moves back to the eighteenth century as I return to the stage with my friend Katie Naville for the first of my two duets. We discovered early on in our vocal studies that our voices blended well together and that
performing a piece together was a must before we graduated. However, finding a duet about love for two sopranos was not a simple task. It took a lot of thinking and research before we were able to decide on “Sull’ aria” from Mozart’s Le Nozze di Figaro. In this piece, I portray a Countess who suspects that her husband may be cheating on her. In order to figure out if my suspicions are correct, I ask my servant, Katie, to write my husband a letter, enticing him to meet her. Katie and I really enjoyed working on this piece together. However, it did come with its own challenges. Because our schedules were so tight, most of our practicing had to happen individually, so when we had a chance to put the entire thing together the other person would sometimes throw us off. Once we got our bearings though, we were able to really let go and just enjoy the opportunity to perform together.

After my duet, I performed my last Italian piece “O mio babbino caro” from Puccini’s Gianni Schicchi written in the nineteenth century. I knew that my college career in vocal music could never be complete without having the chance to sing this iconic aria. Once I had determined my “Lyrics of Love” theme, this aria seemed like an obvious choice. While many have heard this aria several times, they often are unaware of the piece’s meaning. Gianni Schicchi is a comedic opera in which the characters are frantically searching for the will of their rich relative, Buoso Donati. The opera is quite fast-paced except for the one scene in which this aria takes place. The English translation of the title equates to “Oh my Daddy Dearest” and is sung by the character Lauretta as she tries to convince her father to let her marry the man she loves. Like many of the other pieces, this aria presented me with some new opportunities for growth. The general nature of Puccini pieces is that there is a lot of push and pull with the tempo (otherwise known as rubato) and this aria was no exception. It took a lot of experimentation and practice before I was
able to find that proper balance, however, once I did, I was able to transfer this new skill over to my other pieces making them more musically expressive. I truly love this piece and I was so grateful to have a chance to perform it for all of my friends and family.

After “O mio babbino caro”, my recital took a shift from classical music to modern day musical theater when I returned to the stage with a few more of my vocal music friends for a quartet from *The Little Mermaid* on Broadway. “If Only” is a new song written solely for the Broadway production that features Ariel, Prince Eric, Sebastian, and King Triton expressing their worries and concerns for the future at the end of Ariel’s second day on land. This piece was by far my favorite of the entire recital and I never would have known about its existence if my friend Kelsey Coram had not suggested it. I was also fortunate enough to find three wonderful men who were more than happy to perform it with me. We had so much fun preparing this piece, however, the process was not always easy. Because it is a twentieth century composition, the harmonies within the song were sometimes unusual and took some time for us to properly tune. Additionally the vocal technique used for musical theater is usually quite different from classical vocal music, therefore, we all had to make adjustments in our technique in a healthful way. Lastly, there were several long pauses between our lines in the music so we had to learn how to stay in character during the silence without looking or feeling awkward in the process. It took a lot of collaboration and practice, but the piece really came together in the weeks prior to the performance. After my recital, it was clear that impressed the audience with our performance as it was the piece that I received the most compliments on in the days that followed.
Following the quartet, I performed a set of two solo musical theater pieces. My first selection, "Home" from *The Beauty and the Beast*, may seem like a strange choice for a love-themed recital, however, upon closer analysis the song actually fits my theme in a few unique ways. First of all, I have always had a deep love for all things Disney and I really wanted to incorporate that into this monumental performance of my college career. Secondly, the lyrics of the song express Belle’s love for her father given that she is willing to sacrifice her freedom for his. Lastly, as the title suggests, the song also describes Belle’s love and longing for her home, which she thinks she will never see again. Similar to “If Only”, this piece forced me to explore the idea of balancing a classical technique with a musical theater sound through the use of chest voice and glottal strokes. The nature of the piece also forced me to dig deeper into the character as well as myself to convey a variety of complex emotions. I learned so much from preparing this piece and my performance of it was quite a rewarding experience.

My second musical theater solo selection was “Till There Was You” from Meredith Wilson’s *The Music Man*. This sweet ballad describes Marian’s elation at discovering love for the first time. Because *The Music Man* has more of a classical quality to it, my classical vocal training was a nice fit for this piece. The main challenge I faced here was that I had learned other versions of this song prior to seeing the arrangement I used in my performance. This particular arrangement has a unique piano accompaniment that took me a long time to get used to as far as entrances and establishing the tempo. However, once I finally adjusted to the new arrangement, I discovered that I liked this version better than any other I have encountered in the past as its jazzy accompaniment added more variety to my performance.
Once I had finished my solo musical theater set, the time had come for my grand finale in which I sang Andrew Lloyd Weber's "All I Ask of You" from *The Phantom of the Opera*. I have always been a huge fan of this musical, so I knew right away that I needed to include one of these iconic pieces in my recital. For a while I debated between this piece and "Think of Me" which I had learned in a previous semester. Ultimately I decided to go with "All I Ask of You" for the chance to learn something new and for the opportunity to sing with Jerico Hughes, yet another good friend of mine. We had a lot of fun preparing this piece. We knew right away that its big nature would make it a perfect ending to my recital. Perhaps our biggest challenge with this song was our stage blocking especially during the long piano interlude near the end. Thankfully with Dr. Mantione's direction and Jerico's choreography experience, we were able to come up with some fantastic blocking for this piece including a simple slow dance during the interlude making this piece an even better choice for my grand finale.

Putting this recital together took a lot of hard work and dedication such as choosing a theme and literature, recruiting others to sing with me, and actually learning and memorizing all of the music. I had so much fun throughout this entire process and learned much more than I ever expected along the way such as how to sing musical theater repertoire properly as well as how to tell the story through my expression. Overall I would say that my recital was a great success. I was incredibly pleased with the results of my performance and I am so thankful to Dr. Mantione and my friends that helped me make this recital a reality.
Sources


School of Music
Junior Recital
Friday, March 22, 2013
Choral Hall, 5:30pm

JESSICA BISCELLA, soprano
with
Yoonsung Yeo, piano  Katie Naville, soprano
Travis Bird, tenor  Jerico Hughes, baritone
Jabrael Armstrong, baritone

Antonio Caldara
(1670-1736)
Alma del core

Giovanni Paisiello
(1740-1816)
Nel cor più non mi sento

Gabriel Fauré
(1845-1924)
Au bord de l’eau
Chanson d’amour

Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)
Der Nussbaum

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)
Vergebliches Ständchen

Clara Edwards
(1880-1974)
Into the Night

Kirke Mechem
(b. 1925)
“Fair Robin I Love” from Tartuffe

-----Intermission-----

W.A. Mozart
(1756-1791)
“Sull’ aria” from Le Nozze di Figaro

Katie Naville, soprano
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<tr>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Piece</th>
<th>Collaboration</th>
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<tr>
<td>Giacomo Puccini</td>
<td>“O mio babbino caro” from Gianni Schicchi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alan Menken</td>
<td>“If Only” from <em>The Little Mermaid</em></td>
<td>Travis Bird, tenor Jabrael Armstrong, baritone Jerico Hughes, baritone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meredith Willson</td>
<td>“Till There Was You” from <em>The Music Man</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Andrew Lloyd Webber</td>
<td>“All I Ask of You” from <em>The Phantom of the Opera</em></td>
<td>Jerico Hughes, baritone</td>
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<td>Jessica Biscella is a student of Meryl Mantione.</td>
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**COMING EVENTS**

- **Festival of New Music**
  - Friday, March 22, Sursa Hall, 7:30pm
  - Saturday, March 23, Sursa Hall, 3:00pm, 7:30pm

- **Graduate Recital: Lauren Walker, voice**
  - Sunday, March 23, Choral Hall, 5:30pm

- **Harp Ensemble**
  - Sunday, March 24, Sursa Hall, 3:00pm

- **Graduate Recital: Chenchen Wei, voice**
  - Sunday, March 24, Choral Hall, 5:30pm

- **Doctor of Arts Performance Recital: Snow Shen, violin**
  - Sunday, March 24, Sursa Hall, 5:30pm

- **Doctor of Arts Performance Recital: Angelina Acquaviva, voice**
  - Sunday, March 24, Sursa Hall, 7:30pm

- **Sophomore Recital: Dominic Gaietto, trombone and Adam Marchand, trumpet**
  - Monday, March 25, Choral Hall, 5:30pm

- **Junior Recital: Gwanhee Park, clarinet**
  - Tuesday, March 26, Choral Hall, 5:30pm

- **Women’s Week Choral Concert**
  - Tuesday, March 26, Sursa Hall, 7:30pm

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Lyrics of Love
Program Translations

Alma del Core
Alma del core
Spirto dell’alma
Sempre costante t’adorerò!

Sarò contento
Nel mio tormento
Se quel bel labbro baciarm potro

Nel cor piu non mi sento
Brillar la gioventù.
Cagion del mio tormento,
Amor, ci hai colpa tu.

Mi stuzzichi, mi mastichi,
Mi pungichi, me pizzichi;
Che cosa è questa, ohime?

Pietà, pieta, pieta!
Amor è un certo cho,
Che delirar mi fa!

Au bord de l’eau
S’asseoir tous deux au bord du flot que passe,
Le voir passer;
Tous deux s’il glisse un nuage en l’espace,
Le voir glisser;
A l’horizon s’il fume un toit de chaume,
Le voir fume,
Aux alentours, si quell que fleur embaume,
S’en embaumer;
Entendre au pied du saule où l’eau murmurer,
L’eau murmurer;

Soul of my Heart
Soul of my heart,
Spirit of my soul,
Always constant, I will adore you.

I shall be happy
In my torment
If I shall be able to kiss that beautiful
lip!

Why Feels my Heart so Dormant?
Why feels my heart so dormant
No fire of youth divine?
Thou cause of all my torment
O love, Thou fault is thine!

He teases me, he pinches me
He squeezes me, he wrenches me
What tortures I must bear!

Pity!
Thou, love, art surely one
That will drive me to despair!

At the Water’s Edge
To sit together on the bank of the stream
that passes,
To watch it pass;
Together when a cloud floats in space,
To see it float;
When a cottage chimney is smoking on
the horizon,
To see it smoke;
If a nearby flower spreads its
fragrance,
To absorb its scent;
To hear at the foot of the willow, where
water murmurers
The water murmurers
Ne pas sentir tant que ce rêve dure
Le temps durer,
Maison n'apportant de passion profonde
Qu'a s'adorer,
Sans nul souci des querelles du monde,
Les ignorer,
Et seuls tous deux devant tout ce qui lasse,
Sans se lasser;
Sentir l'amour devant tout ce qui passe,
Ne point passer!

Chanson d'Amour

J'aime tes yeux, j'aime ton front,
O ma rebelle, ô ma farouche,
J'aime tes yeux, j'aime ta bouche
Où mes baisers s'épuisent.

J'aime ta voix, j'aime l'étrange
Grâce de tout ce que tu dis,
O ma rebelle, ô mer cher ange,
Mon enfer et mon paradis!

J'aime tes yeux, j'aime ton front,
J'aime tout ce qui te fait belle,
De tes pied jusqu'à tes cheveux
O toi vers qui montent mes voeux!

Der Nussbaum

Es grünet ein Nussbaum vor dem Haus,
Duftig, Luftig breitet
Er blättrig die Äste aus.

Viel liebliche Blüten stehen d'ran;
Linde Winde kommen,
Sie herzlich zu umfahen.

Es flüstern je zwei zu zwei gepaart,
Neigend, beugend zierlich
Zum Küssen die Häuptchen zart.

Song of Love

I love your eyes, I love your face,
O my rebellious, o my fierce one,
I love your eyes, I love your lips
Where my kisses will exhaust themselves.

I love your voice, I love the strange
Gracefulness of everything that you say,
O my rebellious one, o my dear angel,
My inferno and my paradise!

I love your eyes, I love your face,
I love everything that makes you beautiful,
From your feet to your hair,
O you, to whom ascend all my desires!

The Walnut Tree

There grows a green walnut tree in front of the house,
Fragrantly, airy it spreads
Its leafy branches out.

Many lovely blossoms stand on it;
Gentle winds come,
Them warmly to the fan.

They whisper, each two by two paired,
Gracefully, they incline
Their delicate heads for a kiss.
Sie flüstern von einem Mägdlein,
Das dachte, die Nächte
Und Tage lang, wusste ach selber nicht was.

Sie flüstern, wer mag verstehn so gar leise
Weis?
Flüstern von Bräut’gam und nächstem Jahr.
Und nächstem jahr.

Das Mägdlein horchet,
Es rauscht im Baum;
Sehnend, während,
Sinkt es lachelnd in Schlaf und Traum.

**Vergebliches Städtchen**

Er:
Guten Abend, mein Schatz
Guten Abend, mein Kind!
Ich komm aus Lieb’ zu dir
Ach, mach mir auf die Thür!

Sie:
Mein’ Thür ist ver schlossen,
Ich lass’ dich nicht ein;
Mutter, die rath’ mir klug,
Wärst du herein mit Fug,
Wär’s mit mir vorbei!

Er:
So kalt ist die Nacht,
So eisig der Wind,
Dass mir das Herz er friert,
Mein Lieb er löschen wird,
Öffne mir mein Kind!

Sie:
Löschet deim’ Lieb,
Lass sie löschen nur,
Löscht sie immerzu
Geh heim zu Bett zur Ruh’
Gute Nacht, mien Knab’!

**The Vain Suit**

He:
Good evening, my treasure,
Good evening, my child!
I come out of love to you,
Ah, open your door for me!

She:
My door is locked,
I will not let you in;
Mother, who advises me wisely,
Were you in here with permission,
It would be over with me!

He:
So cold is the night,
So icy the wind
That it will freeze my heart,
My love will be extinguished;
Open for me, my child!

She:
If your love will be extinguished,
Then just let it be extinguished!
If it continues to be extinguished,
Go home to bed to rest!
Good night, my boy!
**Canzonetta Sull' Aria**

Susanna:
Sull' aria

Countess:
Che soave zeffiretto...

Susanna:
Zeffiretto...

Countess:
Questa sera spirerà...

Susanna:
Questa sera spirerà...

Countess:
Sotto i pini del boschetto.

Susanna:
Sotto i pini... del boschetto...

Countess:
Ei già il resto capirà.

Susanna:
Certo, certo il capirà.

**O mio babbino caro**

O mio babbino caro,
Mi piace e bello;
Vo’ andare in Porta Rossa
A comperar l’anello!

Si, si, ci voglio andare!
E se l’amassi indarno,
Andrei sul Ponte Vecchio,
Ma per buttarmi in Arno!

Mi struggo e mi tormento!
O Dio, vorrei morir!
Babbo, pietà, pietà!

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**Little Song on the Breeze (The Letter Duet)**

Susanna (writing):
To the breeze...

Countess (dictating):
What a gentle little breeze...

Susanna:
Little breeze...

Countess:
This evening will blow...

Susanna:
This evening will blow...

Countess:
Beneath the pine trees of the little grove.

Susanna:
Beneath the pine trees...of the little grove

Countess:
He will understand the rest.

Susanna:
Certainly, certainly he will understand.

**Oh my Daddy Dearest**

Oh my daddy dearest,
He pleases me, he is handsome
I want to go to Porta Rosa
To buy the ring!

Yes, yes, I want to go there!
And if I love him in vain,
I would go to Ponte Vecchio,
But to throw myself into the Arno!

I suffer and I am tormented!
O God, I want to die!
Daddy, pity, pity!