

*You are Hereby Invited*

*to a*

*Senior Honors Recital*

*with*

*Laura Johnson*

*soprano*

*and Joy Fiala*

*piano*

*Saturday, December 14<sup>th</sup>*

*at*

*3:00 p.m. in Pruis Hall*

*Laura Johnson is a student of Joyce Bell*

LAURA E. JOHNSON  
soprano  
in a  
SENIOR HONORS RECITAL  
with  
Joy Fiala, piano

Bel piacere  
from *Agrippina*  
Lascia ch'io pianga  
from *Rinaldo*  
George Frideric Handel  
(1685-1759)

Auf dem Wasser zu singen  
Lied der Mignon  
Franz Schubert  
(1797-1828)

Vedrai carino  
from *Don Giovanni*  
Batti, batti o bel Masetto  
from *Don Giovanni*  
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
(1756-1791)

Willow Song  
from *The Ballad of Baby Doe*  
Monica's Waltz  
from *The Medium*  
Douglas Moore  
(1893-1969)  
Gian Carlo Menotti  
(b.1911)

Laura Johnson is a student of Joyce Bell  
and a member of Mu Phi Epsilon,  
International Professional Fraternity in the field of music.  
She is the Chamber Choir secretary.

PRUIS HALL  
Saturday, December 14, 1996  
3:00 p.m.

Series LI  
Number 87

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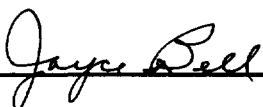
Senior Honors Voice Recital

by

Laura E. Johnson

student of

Joyce Bell

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

December 14, 1996

Expected date of graduation: December 21, 1997

## Thesis Abstract

I decided to do this Recital because of my love of music. I have an Endorsement in music, but majored in Elementary Education. I thought that doing a Recital now might be my only chance to do something meaningful with the music that I love. I know that once I start teaching, I will not have the time or the resources to undertake something like this again. Selfishly, I wanted to give myself the opportunity to perform and to be in the spotlight. Since I needed to complete an Honors Thesis, I thought that this would be the perfect opportunity to do a Recital.

The written portion of my thesis is my program notes. They are intended to be handed out along with the program and translations at my Recital. These program notes should help the audience learn more about each of the songs I am singing. For each song I have included background information on the composers, the style of music, and (in some cases) background information about the opera from which the song comes. Finally, I included what the song and the music are expressing, and what the singer is attempting to convey during each song.

## PROGRAM NOTES

Laura E. Johnson, soprano  
SENIOR HONORS RECITAL  
with Joy Fiala, piano

Pruis Hall - Saturday, December 14, 1996 - 3:00 p.m.

### **Bel piacere ('Tis great pleasure) from Agrippina** by George Frideric Handel

The opera Agrippina was written and first performed in 1711. The libretto was written by Domenico Scarlatti and Cardinal Vincenzo Grimani, whom Handel met in Venice in 1708. In December of 1711, Handel was back in Venice, basking in the success of his new opera, Agrippina. This opera was first performed on December 26, 1711, and had 27 additional performances throughout the carnival season that year. Agrippina, considered to be a masterpiece in its own right, was "in every sense the climax of his career up to the age of 25" (Sadie, ed., volume 8, p. 86).

"Bel piacere" is a song about the faithfulness of love. The singer is sharing her happiness with the one she loves. Her message is that it is a great pleasure to have a lover who is faithful, because this feeling makes one's heart content. However, the singer also warns to be careful when looking at a lover for beauty alone, because appearances are not important if your lover is not faithful.

### **Lascia ch'io pianga (Let me weep) from Rinaldo** by George Frideric Handel

The opera Rinaldo was also written in 1711, during Handel's first visit to London. The libretto was written by Aaron Hill, the manager of the Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket in London, and was then given to Giacomo Rossi, a theatre poet, to put into verse form. Rinaldo was the first Italian opera that was composed specifically for a London audience. It was first produced on February 24, 1711, and was performed 15 times before June, 1711. "It was a sensational success, and a decisive influence on Handel's subsequent career" (Sadie, ed., volume 8, p. 86).

In April of 1711, John Walsh the elder published the songs from Rinaldo. This was the first music of Handel to be in print (besides the music from The Alchymist, which was published anonymously in 1710). Although Rinaldo contained a lot of music that had previously been composed for other purposes in Italy, it is still impressive that Handel finished the score in a period of two weeks. Rinaldo had several revivals before 1719, and was performed more times in London than any of his other operas during his lifetime.

“Lascia ch’io pianga” is a song of great sadness. During the first section (the recitative), the singer is very angry at Armida, who has abducted her from Heaven, and now holds her in Hell. She asks the Lord for pity, so that she might be able to weep. She has reached the point where she is so angry about her fate that she could cry, and crying would be a tremendous relief. During the second section (the aria), the singer asks the Lord to give her the strength to weep so that she can be freed from her sorrow.

**Auf dem Wasser zu singen (To be sung on the Waters)**  
by Franz Schubert

“Auf dem Wasser zu singen” is known as German lieder, or a German song. It was written in 1823, and was the 774<sup>th</sup> song Schubert composed. “Auf dem Wasser zu singen” is a great example of the strophic style of lieder. Strophic songs have several verses in which the words change, but the accompaniment remains the same.

“Auf dem Wasser zu singen” has three verses which are all about comparing the human soul to nature. The first verse says that the soul glides like a boat on the shimmering waters. The second verse says that the soul breathes in the rosy glow of the forest. The third verse says that time will vanish like dew on the wings of birds, and that the singer herself will one day vanish from the changing time.

**Lied der Mignon (Mignon’s Song)**  
by Franz Schubert

“Lied der Mignon” is a German song written in January of 1826. It was one song in a series of four songs about Mignon, three of which are entitled Lied der Mignon. This series of songs is Schubert’s 877<sup>th</sup> song composition. “Lied der Mignon” is a song of Scena type. A Scena type of song has “separate episodes of different tempo and mood” (Sadie, ed., volume 16, p. 774).

“Lied der Mignon” follows a traditional ABA pattern. The beginning and end of the song use the same words and slightly modified melodic line, but the B section is very different. The B section has different text, and suddenly increases tempo and has a hurried, frenzied feeling. The moods between the somber, bewailing A section and the frenzied B section are completely contrasting.

“Lied der Mignon” is a song about yearning for something that one cannot have. The singer is saying that only those who have yearned for something that they cannot have would understand how she suffers. She is inwardly inflamed, but her love is far away, and she is left alone with her sorrow.

**Vedrai carino (You will see, dearest) from Don Giovanni**  
by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Don Giovanni was written in 1787, and the libretto was written by Lorenzo da Ponte. The opera was almost complete when Mozart left on October 1<sup>st</sup> for Prague, where the premiere was to take place. However, it was not ready for performance on the original premiere date, October 14<sup>th</sup>, so The Marriage of Figaro was performed in its place. Don Giovanni opened on October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1787. Constanze, Mozart's wife, recalled later that the Overture was the last thing to be finished, and it was completed two days before the performance. The public in Prague loved Don Giovanni, and Mozart was "greeted with threefold cheers" (Sadie, ed., volume 12, p. 709). Three additional songs were written for the premiere of Don Giovanni in Vienna on May 7, 1788. The opera had 15 performances in Vienna, but the audience appeared to have mixed feelings about it. "Some of the audience [regarded] the work as prolonged, contrived and over-elaborate" (Sadie, ed., volume 12, p. 710).

Don Giovanni is based on the story of Don Juan, and seems to be a parody of a work done by Gazzaniga entitled Il Convitato di Pietra. According to the score, Don Giovanni is "a licentious young nobleman" (Don Giovanni, pub. by Schirmer, p. III). One of the most popular arias in Don Giovanni (which proves Don Giovanni's promiscuity) is "Madamina! Il catalogo e questo," also known as "The Catalog Aria." In this aria, Leporello, Don Giovanni's servant (and sidekick), lists the number of women his master has seduced, including "one thousand and three" in Spain.

As a nobleman during this time period (the 17<sup>th</sup> Century), Don Giovanni was given the right to sleep with brides-to-be on the night before their wedding. When Don Giovanni meets Zerlina, a peasant girl betrothed to Masetto, he decides that he would like to exercise this right. Although nothing actually happens between Zerlina and Don Giovanni, he does charm her and lead her away with the intention of seducing her. The score is ambiguous about the reason why nothing happens between them, but that understandably makes Masetto much happier. At the end of the opera, a statue from the graveyard comes to visit Don Giovanni in his home. The statue asks Don Giovanni to repent his sinful ways, but he refuses, and his soul is taken to Hell.

"Vedrai, carino" is from scene one of the second act of Don Giovanni. Zerlina is singing this song for her fiancée, Masetto. Before Zerlina arrived on the scene, Masetto told Don Giovanni, who was disguised as his servant, Leporello, that he wanted to kill Don Giovanni. Little did he know that he was actually telling the man he wanted to kill that he wanted to kill him, and how he was planning to do it. Don Giovanni then beat up Masetto and left him there alone. A short time later, Zerlina finds him lying there in great distress, complaining of aching bones and muscles. She sings this song to him to assure him that she has a balm for curing all of his ails, and it is found in her heart.

**Batti, batti, o bel Masetto (Hit, hit, oh handsome Masetto)**  
from Don Giovanni by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

“Batti, batti, o bel Masetto” is from the first act of the opera, Don Giovanni. Just before this song, Don Giovanni has met Zerlina, and made his attempt to seduce her. He does this in front of Masetto, who becomes very angry, but can do nothing to stop Don Giovanni from exercising his right to sleep with a bride-to-be on the night before her wedding. In this song, Zerlina is trying to cajole Masetto back into a good mood. He is angry because he thinks that something did happen between Zerlina and Don Giovanni. She is trying to tease him into good humor again by saying that he should vent his anger on her by hitting her. The song is meant to be sung “tongue in cheek,” because she does not actually mean for Masetto to hit her. She is simply trying to baby him and be silly enough so that he will forget why he was angry, and then they can live happily ever after together in peace.

**Willow Song** from The Ballad of Baby Doe  
by Douglas Moore

The Ballad of Baby Doe was written in 1956, about the real life events of Elizabeth (Baby) Doe and her husband Horace Tabor. Tabor became a millionaire in the late 1800's due to his investments in the silver mining industry. Baby Doe met Tabor right after she left her husband, Harvey Doe, in Central City and moved to Leadville, Colorado. She knew there was a great deal of money in Leadville from the silver mining business, and she hoped to better her fortunes. Baby Doe met and fell in love with Horace Tabor, who was already married. Tabor also fell in love with Baby Doe and divorced his wife to marry her. They lived quite happily, spending all of Tabor's money until they had none left. Ironically, they died penniless, only feet away from the Matchless Mine, which he owned and thought was worthless, but was full of silver.

The “Willow Song” is sung by Baby Doe right after she arrives in Leadville. In the opera, Baby Doe is seated behind a piano in the parlor of the hotel in which she is staying. She is singing a simple folk song for her own enjoyment. Tabor is outside and hears Baby Doe singing, and is immediately taken with her. He is silent while she sings, and she does not realize that he is standing outside the window listening to her. After the song is over, Tabor makes his presence known by clapping for her, and that is how their love affair begins.



**Monica's Waltz from The Medium**  
by Gian Carlo Menotti

The Medium was written in 1945, and was commissioned by the Alice M. Ditson Fund. It is a tragedy in two acts for five singing roles and a dance-mime role. "The melodramatic story is the tragedy of a person caught between two worlds, the world of reality which she [the medium, Madame Flora] cannot comprehend, and the supernatural world in which she cannot believe. The work is theatrically effective and the music, often quite dissonant, conveys an eerie, morbid atmosphere" (Sadie, ed., volume 12, p. 165). The Medium had 211 performances at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre on Broadway during the 1947-1948 season. In 1951, a successful film version was made of the opera, which Menotti also directed.

"Monica's Waltz" is at the beginning of the second act. Monica and Toby are the two characters involved in this song. Toby, who is a mute, lives with Monica and her mother, Baba, who is the medium. Monica helps her mother by pretending to be the voices of the spirits that she conjures up during her seances with her clients. Toby stands in the puppet theatre, hidden by a curtain, and does the special effects, such as levitating the table with strings and manipulating lights.

"Monica's Waltz" begins with a very whimsical and frolicking accompaniment. Monica is watching Toby's puppet show. She applauds Toby's show, and then begins play-acting a scene for him. She vividly describes the evening, what Toby is wearing, and the waltz they are dancing together. She stops as Toby seizes her by the arm. Knowing that Toby is frustrated because he wants to say something but cannot speak, but not understanding what Toby wants to say, she continues play-acting, attempting to speak for him. She exaggerates the emotions, professing his undying love for her, but does not realize that what she is saying is actually true. As Monica gets more and more involved in the story, she finally sings, "Monica, Monica, fold me in your satin gown. Monica, Monica, give me your mouth, Monica, Monica, fall in my arms." At this moment, Toby cannot bear to listen any longer, and hides his face in his arms. As Monica looks at Toby, she finally realizes that all she has been saying is true. She comforts him, and sings, "Toby, I want you to know that you have the most beautiful voice in the world!" This is her way of saying that she understands, and that she feels the same way.

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## Acknowledgements

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Thank you especially to God, who so graciously gave me the ability and the desire to sing. How boring life would be without song! I sing for Him that gave me life and breath, always.

### *The Singer*

(a section)

by Warren Fremling

"I am a Singer.  
That is my consummate definition.  
It is the sole intent of my design  
either in this world or the next.  
I have been a Singer  
since the moment of conception.  
It wasn't my choice.  
It wasn't a conscious decision at all.  
But since the beginning of time,  
and until eternity's conclusion,  
it is my Joyous Occupation.  
I am a Singer..."