

The Red Bank
Chamber Music Society

presents

Avery Amereau, mezzo-soprano

Bryan Wagorn, piano

Music by

Brahms • Clara & Robert Schumann

Chausson • Ravel

American Songbook

Sunday Afternoon

April 10, 2016 • 4:30 PM

Trinity Church Auditorium

Red Bank, NJ

PROGRAM NOTES

PROGRAM

Three Songs

Johannes Brahms

1. Meine Liebe ist grün, Op.63 No.5
2. Wie Melodien zieht es mir, Op.105 No.1
3. Von ewiger Liebe, Op.43 No.1

Quatre pièces fugitives, Op.15 for piano

Clara Schumann

1. Larghetto
2. Un poco agitato
3. Andante espressivo
4. Scherzo

Gedichte der Königin Maria Stuart, Op.135

Robert Schumann

1. Abschied von Frankreich
2. Nach der Geburt ihres Sohnes
3. An die Königin Elisabeth
4. Abschied von der Welt
5. Gebet

INTERMISSION

Four Songs

Ernest Chausson

1. Sérénade italienne, Op.2 No.5
2. Le Charme, Op.2 No.2
3. Les Papillons, Op.2 No.3
4. Le temps des lilas, Op.19 No.3

Valses nobles et sentimentales

Maurice Ravel

1. Modéré - très franc
2. Assez lent - avec une expression intense
3. Modéré
4. Assez animé
5. Presque lent - dans un sentiment intime
6. Assez vif
7. Moins vif
8. Epilogue: lent

Golden Age Medley

1. If You Feel Like Singing, Sing
2. Do It Again
3. But Not For Me
4. In the Still of the Night
5. I Am Loved

Gordon & Warren
Gershwin & DeSylva
George & Ira Gershwin
Cole Porter
Cole Porter

Notes on the Program

Today's program presents a marvelously varied range of vocal and solo music that traverses the span of a century, from 1845 to 1950, and includes the music of Germany, France, and the United States.

The first half of the program features music of the close-knit trio of composer-pianists who were present at the birth of the Romantic Movement in music: Robert Schumann, his wife Clara Wieck Schumann, and their intimate friend Johannes Brahms.

The second half is given over to two masters who spanned the range of French Impressionism: Ernest Chausson and Maurice Ravel. The program concludes with a medley of classic American songs from the Gershwins, Cole Porter, and the team of Mack Gordon and Harry Warren.

Lyrics to all the foreign-language songs are printed in a separate brochure, with texts both in their original language and in English translation.



Johannes Brahms (1833 – 1897)

Three Songs (1864-1886)

Better known as a composer of symphonies, concertos, and large-scale chamber works, Brahms was also a prolific creator of smaller works for solo and mixed voice and piano, writing more than 200 such vocal pieces between 1853 and 1896.

We hear three of his songs on today's program:

- *Meine Liebe ist grün (My Love is as Green as a Lilac Bush)* comes from a set of nine songs that Brahms published in 1873.
- *Wie Melodien zieht es (It Moves Like a Melody)* is from a set of five lieder he wrote in 1886.
- *Von ewiger Liebe (On Eternal Love)* is the first of four songs written between 1857 and 1864 and published in 1868.

All three express brightly optimistic outlooks on life and love, with the piano part perfectly supporting the lyrically poetic sentiment.



Clara Schumann (1819 – 1896)

Quatre pièces fugitives, Op.15 for piano (1845)

Four Fugitive Pieces

Clara Schumann was one of the great concert pianists of her era, as well as the first world-famous woman to claim that title, with a career spanning more than sixty years. She was also a composer of serious music that remains in the chamber music repertoire today. She married composer Robert

Schumann in 1840 over her father's strenuous objections, and together they forged an extraordinary musical life together that lasted until Robert's early death 16 years later. Following his death she ceased composing, though she continued her concert performance career until late in life.

She and Robert met the young Brahms in 1853, and the three musicians quickly became the closest of friends. Clara became Brahms's lifelong muse; she premiered many of Brahms's works as well as Robert's only piano concerto.

Four Fugitive Pieces is a set of four brief compositions for solo piano, written shortly after her marriage, published in 1845, and dedicated to her half-sister Marie Wieck. They are character pieces, much like Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words* (1829-1845), with distinct songlike movements of contrasting moods rather than an integrated four-movement sonata. It is thought that she wrote them separately over the first years of their marriage, and that she selected these four as among the best and most worthy of publication.



Robert Schumann (1810 – 1856)
Gedichte der Königin Maria Stuart, Op.135 (1852)
Poems of Queen Mary Stuart

Robert Schumann was present at the dawn of Romanticism, born within a year of Mendelssohn (1809), Chopin (1810), and Liszt (1811). Once a virtuoso pianist, he was forced to retire from concert performance as a result of a hand injury brought about through ill-advised practice. Thereafter, his wife Clara took on the job of premiering and performing his works, along with those of their intimate friend Brahms.

More than perhaps any other composer of his day, Schumann expressed through his music an inner turmoil between the outgoing and the introverted aspects of his emotional life. His song collection *Mary Stuart Songs* was his last work for solo voice, written when his physical health was rapidly deteriorating and he was suffering from deep depression. The mood throughout the five songs is of a pervasive gloominess and a sense of impending and unavoidable doom, such as Mary Queen of Scots may have felt when her fate was sealed.

The texts, attributed to Mary herself, were translated into German and versified by Gisbert Vincke. Each of the five songs expresses the intense emotions at turning points in Mary's life: her departure from France where she had lived since childhood, the birth of her son James after her return to Scotland, her plea to her sister Queen Elizabeth to grant her an audience during her imprisonment, her farewell to life in expectation of her execution for treason, and her final desperate plea for salvation. They bear the following titles:

1. *Abschied von Frankreich* (Farewell to France)
2. *Nach der Geburt ihres Sohnes* (After the Birth of Her Son)
3. *An die Königin Elisabeth* (To Queen Elizabeth)
4. *Abschied von der Welt* (Farewell to the World)
5. *Gebet* (Prayer)



Ernest Chausson (1855 – 1899)

Four Songs (1879 – 1893)

Chausson was an important bridge in the history of French music between the late Romanticism of his teacher, César Franck, and the liquid Impressionism of Debussy. Born into a wealthy middle-class Parisian family, he began the serious study of composition at the rather late age of 24, entering the Paris Conservatory to attend the classes of Jules Massenet, at the time the most popular operatic composer in France.

His compositional output was quite small, including only 39 opus-numbered works. This was due in part to a life-long self-doubt that made it difficult for him to complete any work to his satisfaction. No doubt the catalog of his works would be larger had he not died in early middle age in a bicycle accident, a sad ending to a promising career.

The first three songs on today's program come from his collection *Seven Melodies*, one of his earliest published works:

- *Sérénade italienne* (Italian Serenade) is a courting song inviting the beloved to come out for a night on the sea under the stars, where no one will understand their words but the night, the sky, and the waves.
- *Le Charme* (Charm) is another love song, this time expressing how the singer was at first drawn by a smile and a glance, but the charm that ultimately conquers is the first tear in the beloved's eye.
- In *Les Papillons* (Butterflies) the singer longs to join the snow-white butterflies on a flight across the sea to alight on his lover's lips.

The fourth song, *Le temps des lilas* (The Time of Lilacs) comes from a work that took Chausson ten years to complete. Titled *Poème de l'amour et de la mer* (Poem of Love and the Sea), it was originally composed for voice and orchestra and consisted of two voice/orchestra sections separated by an orchestral interlude. The *Lilacs* song was arranged for voice and piano from the final section, entitled *The Death of Love*, and was strongly influenced by Chausson's early encounter with the music of Wagner.



Maurice Ravel (1875 – 1937)

Valses nobles et sentimentales (1911)

Maurice Ravel was a pivotal figure in the history of serious music, a powerful force in the movement away from the introverted Impressionism of Debussy forward to the extroverted Modernism of Stravinsky.

In 1909 the Russian impresario Sergei Diaghilev founded the Ballets Russes in Paris and presented a season of new productions that were an immediate sensation. That year he commissioned the then-unknown Igor Stravinsky to write the score to *Firebird*, and he commissioned the untested Ravel to compose the score for the ballet *Daphnis and Chloë*. Ravel's ballet score was his first major composition and is generally considered to be his masterpiece.

During the two years he was working on *Daphnis*, Ravel extended his love of dance by composing a set of eight waltzes for solo piano. Its title is drawn from two sets of waltzes by Franz Schubert – *34 Valses Sentimentales* (1823) and *12 Valses Nobles* (1827) – and Ravel’s work alternates the two moods from one movement to the next. Other than its title, its waltz form, and Ravel’s self-avowed homage to Schubert, this work is entirely and unmistakably Ravel. Each movement is meticulously crafted, with as much attention paid to structural detail as to emotional and sensual impact.

The work was premiered in May 1911 as an anonymous entry in a music society concert. Audience members, including leading composers and critics of the day, were invited to guess the composer(s) of the waltzes; Debussy was one of the few who correctly identified Ravel as the work’s sole creator.



Golden Age Medley

The concert concludes with a medley of classic American popular songs by some of our greatest composers and lyricists.

- *If You Feel Like Singing, Sing* (1950) comes from the movie “Summer Stock”, and was performed by its star Judy Garland. The music is by Harry Warren, the lyrics are by Mack Gordon. Both men have a huge catalog of famous songs from movies and Broadway shows.
- *Do It Again* (1922), with music by George Gershwin and lyrics by Buddy DeSylva, premiered in the 1922 Broadway show “The French Doll”. Gershwin recalled its inspiration:

I was in the office of Max Dreyfus, my publisher, one day when Buddy DeSylva walked in. DeSylva said jokingly to me, “George, let’s write a hit!” I matched him by saying, “O.K.!” I sat down at the piano, and began playing a theme which I was composing on the spot... Buddy listened for a few minutes and then began chanting this title – “Oh, Do It Again!,” which he had just fitted to my theme.
- *But Not For Me* (1930) was written by George and Ira Gershwin for their 1930 musical “Girl Crazy” and introduced by its star Ginger Rogers.
- *In the Still of the Night* (1937) was written by Cole Porter for the MGM film “Rosalie”.
- *I Am Loved* (1950) is a Cole Porter song from the 1950 musical “Out of This World”. Probably the best-remembered version of it was sung by Judy Garland.

Lawrence Bein

ARTISTS

The mezzo-soprano **AVERY AMEREAU** is a native of Jupiter, Florida. Ms Amereau has garnered much attention for the unique quality of her voice and sensitivity to interpretation, having been praised by the New York Times as “achingly perfect,” “sensual,” and singing with “excellent body and clarity.” Last season at The Juilliard School, Ms Amereau made her operatic debut as Olga in Eugene Onegin, followed by Mme. de la Haltière in Cendrillon and the title role in The Rape of Lucretia. A proud recipient of a Kovner Fellowship, she will continue at Juilliard next fall for an Artist Diploma in Opera Studies. Ms Amereau also has an extensive concert repertoire, and is equally at home in the world of song, having performed recitals in New York, Miami, and in Bavaria as a participant in the Internationale Meistersinger Akademie. She has worked with many prominent artistic collaborators, including Helmut Rilling, William Christie, Joyce DiDonato, Elly Ameling, and Eve Shapiro.

Pianist **BRYAN WAGORN** serves as Assistant Conductor at the Metropolitan Opera, and regularly performs throughout North America, Europe, and Asia as pianist, chamber musician, and recital accompanist.

In the 2013-2014 season, he made his Metropolitan Opera debut as Assistant Conductor in their new production of Falstaff, conducted by James Levine. In the 2014-2015 season served as Assistant Conductor to James Levine in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, and *The Rake's Progress*. Other recent projects include concerts with the Met Chamber Ensemble at Carnegie Hall and recitals for the George London Foundation and Richard Tucker Foundation.

A participant at the Marlboro Music Festival, Mr. Wagorn has also been engaged as staff coach at the Ravinia Steans Music Institute, has served on faculty of the National Arts Centre Orchestra's Summer Music Institute directed by Pinchas Zukerman, and the Manhattan School of Music. He made his solo recital debut at New York's Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall in 2009, and has performed under the auspices of the Marilyn Horne Foundation, and the Jeunesses Musicales de Canada. He has appeared with members of The Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, and regularly accompanies the world's leading instrumentalists and singers in recital.

Mr. Wagorn graduated from the Royal Conservatory of Music and holds degrees in piano performance from the University of Ottawa (BMus), the Mannes College of Music (MMus), and the Manhattan School of Music (DMus). He is a graduate of The Metropolitan Opera Lindemann Young Artist Development Program.