

A musical staff with notes runs along the top and bottom edges of the poster. The background is a light beige, textured surface. A red heart is positioned in the lower right corner, and a red ribbon is draped across the bottom. The text is centered on the page.

Sounds on Oberlin Concert Series presents

Love through the Ages

A concert for voice and piano
on the nuanced, yet universal theme of love

Sunday | February 5 | 3:00 p.m. | Sanctuary

Soprano: Rush Dorsett
Pianist: Kirsten Homdom
Mezzo-soprano: Nora Burgard



A personal note about the music:

I've curated these selections in honor of this "month of love" of February. What a perfect time of year to explore the myriad ways love can be experienced, as reflected through the variety of languages, cultures, styles, and time periods that musically express this transcendent and universal theme.

My hope is that the heart and soul of these pieces touch a place within you and illuminate a deeper connection to love in your own life.

- Rush Dorsett

1. “Skylark,” Johnny Mercer (1941)

Hopeful love

You may have heard different versions of this song; I personally love Ella Fitzgerald’s and Aretha Franklin’s versions. In many cultures, the skylark is represented as a symbol of joy, hopefulness, good news, and freedom. In this song, the character asks the skylark, “Won’t you tell me where my love can be?...won’t you lead me there?” reflecting her desire and hope for love.

2. “Be Kind and Courteous” *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Op. 64, Benjamin Britten (1960)

Infatuated and spell-bound love

A direct contrast in style from the previous piece you heard, this aria is from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Britten’s opera based on Shakespeare’s play. Puck used a flower on Tytania in her sleep that causes her to fall in love instantly with the next creature she will see upon waking. It just so happens that she awakens to the sound of Bottom singing (and Puck has given Bottom the head of an ass!). Tytania, drunk with the flower’s spell, immediately falls in love with the ass, and tells her fairy attendants to take good care of him, and even bring him to her bed. The staccato style of singing reflects the humor and character of this piece.

3. “La Maja y el Ruiseñor,” (The Maid and the Nightingale) *Goyescas*, by Enrique Granados (1915)

Bittersweet and intense love

Granados originally wrote this music as a piano suite, and later added the vocal part to become an aria for his opera, *Goyescas*, which is based on a series of six paintings by Francisco Goya. In this scene, Lady Rosario sits on a bench in the palace garden, listening to the sad song of a nightingale under the light of the moon. She contemplates the mystery and intensity of love, reflecting that, “Love is like a flower at the mercy of the sea.” You’ll notice the romantic and intricate piano accompaniment, with bird-like trills to represent the song of the nightingale, which often represents themes of beauty, mystery and death. The nightingale also appears to be a sorrowful foreshadowing of an impending tragedy; in the next scene, her lover will die in a duel.

4. “Batti, batti o bel Masetto,” *Don Giovanni*, W.A. Mozart (1787)

Having arguments and making up

Now we travel back in time with themes of love in the 18th century. In this aria, Zerlina is accused of cheating by her fiancé, Masetto, and she responds by teasing him and asking—almost daring—him to punish her, beat her, and pull her hair if that’s what it will take for him to forgive her. Zerlina is not actually speaking literally, but rather is making a dramatic point to her lover that he is overreacting to the situation. When she sees that indeed he doesn’t have the heart to stay angry with her, she says “let’s make peace and pass our days in joy!”

5. “Presentation of the Rose,” *Der Rosenkavalier*, Richard Strauss (1911)

Falling in love

In this duet, a young man Octavian is appointed to be the ‘rose-bearer’ for the Baron. The Baron wishes to present the silver rose to the young Sophie as a traditional gesture to propose marriage to her. But, the Baron’s plans are thwarted when Octavian and Sophie meet and fall in love with one another.

6. Ode (Ballad)” and “Wed,” Andy Villemez (2014)

These two short pieces are tuneful and soulful in nature. A few words from the composer:

“Ode (Ballad)” is from a larger set of works called *Book of Odes*. This collection of preludes started as a way to look for inspiration in everyday ideas and events. Each work is a small expression of gratitude for whatever provided an initial spark of creativity. This movement is dedicated to various pop ballads that have remained a part of my listening rotation throughout the years.

When I got engaged to my wife, I knew one thing about my wedding day, and it was that I wanted to write the processional music for the ceremony. The result of that effort created the piece “Wed”. I made an attempt to capture some of the emotions of the big day while also creating something that sounded like “us.”

7. Songs by Sergei Rachmaninoff “Siren” & “Zdes’ Khorosho”

op. 21, (no. 5 & 7) (1902) “Daisies” op. 38 (1916)

Love of nature

Rachmaninoff wrote his op. 21 during a summer at his country home of Ivanovka, where he often worked outside amid spacious fields and nature. “Zdes’ Khorosho” “(how fair is this place)” is set to a poem by G.Galina. “Siren,” (Lilacs) is set to a poem by Ekaterina Krasnova. The romantic style and passion in these pieces is palpable in describing the majesty of nature and one’s own sense of self in relation to its grandeur.

Op. 38 was the last lieder Rachmaninoff composed before he fled his home country during the Russian Revolution. During this year, Rachmaninoff had been gloomy and unable to write due to tiredness, pain in the wrist, and being treated at a sanatorium. A friend visited him and gave him a notebook with suggestions of poems to be set to music, and this spurred his creativity once again. The song “Daisies,” is one of several he wrote for this series, with the poem by Igor Severyanin.

8. “No word from Tom,” *The Rake’s Progress*, Igor Stravinsky (1951)

Courageous love

In this scene, Anne wonders why she has not heard from her fiancée, Tom, since he left for London. She senses there might be something wrong. She decides to leave for London to find Tom, assuring herself, “Love hears, love knows, Love answers him, across the silent miles and goes.” With courage, and perhaps a good amount of naivety, Anne declares, “If love be love, it will not alter.” It is later revealed that Tom, tempted by the devil in disguise, has become involved in shady business in London.

9. “The Flower Duet,” *Lakmé*, Léo Delibes, (1883)

Familial love, and appreciation of beauty

Set in British India in the mid-19th century, a Brahmin high priest secretly leads a group of his people to the temple to worship, despite being forbidden to do so by British troops. The priest's daughter, Lakmé, stays behind with her servant, Mallika, gathering flowers to prepare for a bath in the river. They describe the beauty of the white jasmine, roses, and other flowers that adorn the riverbanks. During the duet, Lakmé shares that she worries for the safety of her father, but Mallika reassures her. Later in the opera, Lakmé will fall in love with a British officer, resulting in a tragic fate.

10. “Think of me,” *Phantom of the Opera*, A.L. Weber (1986)

Remembering love

In this scene, Christine sings this piece for a gala performance at the Opera house. She is a little-known soprano, but has been called upon to sing in place of the Opera's leading soprano, and her performance is an astonishing success. In the audience is Vicomte Raoul, who recognizes Christine as his childhood playmate and recalls his love for her. Raoul attempts to visit Christine backstage, but does not find her. Their love is later rekindled; although they must endure a series of tumultuous events with “the phantom” before they can be together.



About Rush Dorsett

Rush Dorsett is a soprano singer who specializes in opera, chamber music and contemporary music. She has performed across the U.S. and internationally, including in Canada, Austria, Colombia, Italy, San Francisco, and Spain.

She received her Master degree in Voice from New England Conservatory in Boston, where she held several leading roles in opera productions and premiered several new works for soprano on the main stage. Recently, she has performed with the New Music on the Point Festival, and has sung as soloist with Duke Chapel chamber concerts. She performs at weddings, corporate events, and ceremonies in the NC Triangle. Rush received her B.A. in Psychology and Music from Washington University in St. Louis, and is a certified YogaVoice® instructor. In addition to her performance career, Rush is Founder of the online voice studio, EmbodiedVoice Coaching, where she teaches singing and performance for group classes and individualized lessons. She resides in Durham, NC, where she enjoys teaching voice, recording music, performing, and spending time with her beloved family and community.

About Kirsten Homdrom

American keyboardist Kirsten Homdrom's performances span both the solo and collaborative realms, with repertoire ranging from the 1600's to the present. She has premiered new works by composer Keane Southard for both piano and organ, and enjoys playing standards in the classical repertoire as well as hidden gems both old and new. Homdrom has performed in venues throughout the United States, as well as in England and the Czech Republic.

Equally at home in the world of sacred music, Homdrom is committed to sharing the gift of music with others through education and worship. She served as Trinity Scholar at Christ Church Episcopal in Hudson, Ohio, Director of Music at Venice Presbyterian Church in Ross, Ohio, and currently serves as Associate Director of Music at White Memorial Presbyterian Church in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Homdrom holds a Bachelor of Music degree in Piano Performance, Magna Cum Laude, from Baldwin-Wallace University Conservatory of Music, and Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees in Piano Performance from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. Primary teachers include pianists Eugene and Elisabeth Pridonoff, Robert Mayerovitch, Sungeun Kim, and Carla McElhaney; and organists Michael Unger, Roberta Gary, and Margaret Scharf.





About Nora Burgard

Nora Burgard has performed in a variety of operas and concerts as a soloist over the past ten years, and has been a member of several elite chamber ensembles in the Detroit, Philadelphia, Boston and Raleigh/Durham areas. Most recent roles include the Mother in Menotti's The Consul and Mme de Croissy in Poulenc's Dialogues of the Carmellites, both with Boston Conservatory Opera. She is a current member of Duke University's Vespers and Evensong ensembles, and has been teaching in the triangle for 2 years. Nora holds her master's degree from the Boston Conservatory and her bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan.

Text and Translations

1. "Skylark," Johnny Mercer (1941)

Skylark

Have you anything to say to me?

Won't you tell me where my love can be?

Is there a meadow in the mist

Where someone's waiting to be kissed?

Skylark

Have you seen a valley green with spring?

Where my heart can go a journeying

Over the shadows and the rain

To a blossom covered lane

And in your lonely flight

Haven't you heard the music of the night?

Wonderful music

Faint as a will o' the wisp

Crazy as a loon

Sad as a gypsy serenading the moon

Skylark

I don't know if you can find these things

But my heart is riding on your wings

So if you see them anywhere

Won't you lead me there?

2. "Be Kind and Courteous" *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Op. 64, Benjamin Britten (1960)

Be Kind and Courteous to this gentleman

Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes;

Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,

With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;

The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,

And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs

And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,

To have my love to bed and to arise...

(Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies)

3. “La Maja y el Ruiseñor,”
(The Maid and the Nightingale)
Goyescas, by Enrique Granados (1915)

English Translation:

Why in the shadows does the nightingale
Sing its harmonious song?
Perhaps it bears a grudge against the Sun, King of the Day?
Or wants to avenge some grievance?
Perhaps she keeps hidden in her breast such grief
That she hopes to find relief in the shadows,
Sadly singing her songs of love.
Or maybe some flower, trembling with the blushes of love,
Is the love-lorn slave of her song.

Mysterious is the song
Which the nightingale chants, wrapped in the shadows!
Ah! Love is like a flower
At the mercy of the sea.
Love! Love!
Ah, there is no singing without love!
Ah! Nightingale: this your singing is
A hymn of love.

Spanish text:

¿Por qué entre sombras el ruiseñor
entona su armonioso cantar?
¿Acaso al rey del día guarda rencor?
¿Y de él quiere algún agravio vengar?
Guarda quizás su pecho oculto tal dolor,
que en la sombra espera alivio hallar,
triste entonando cantos de amor. ¡Ay!
¡Y tal vez alguna flor temblorosa del pudor de amor,
es la esclava enamorada de su cantor!...
¡Misterio es el cantar
que entona envuelto en sombra el ruiseñor!
¡Ah! Son los amores como flor
a merced de la mar.
¡Amor! ¡Amor!
¡Ah, no hay cantar sin amor!
¡Ah! ruiseñor: es tu cantar
himno de amor.

4. “Batti, batti o bel Masetto,”
Don Giovanni, W.A. Mozart (1787)

Beat me, dear Masetto, beat your poor Zerlina. I'll stand here as meek as a lamb and bear the blows you lay on me. You can tear my hair out, put out my eyes, yet your dear hands gladly I'll kiss. Ah! I see you've no mind to: let's make peace, dearest love! In happiness and joy let's pass our days and nights.	Batti, batti, o bel Masetto, La tua povera Zerlina; Starò qui come agnellina Le tue botte ad aspettar. Lascierò straziarmi il crine, Lascierò cavarmi gli occhi, E le care tue manine Lieta poi saprò baciar. Ah, lo vedo, non hai core! Pace, pace, o vita mia, In contento ed allegria Notte e dì vogliam passar,
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5. “Presentation of the Rose,” *Der Rosenkavalier*,
Richard Strauss (1911)

Octavian

To me has fallen the honor
of presenting to the highborn bride,
in the name of my cousin
of Lerchernau,
the rose of his love.

Sophie

I am most obliged to your Lordship
-I am eternally obliged to your Lordship-
...It has a strong scent of roses: real ones!

Octavian

Yes, there's a drop of Persian attar of roses in it.

Sophie

Like roses of heaven, not of earth – like roses of holy paradises,
don't you think so?
It's like a greeting from heaven. 'Tis already too strong to bear.
It draws one as though there were reins around one's heart
Where and when have I been so happy?

Octavian

Where and when have I been so happy?

Sophie

I must return there, yes, even if I should die on the way!
But I shall not die. That is far away. There's time and eternity
In this moment of bliss, and I'll not forget it til I die.

Octavian

I was boy, and did not know her yet.
Who am I then? How is it that I come to her?
How is it that she comes to me?
Were I not a man, then I should lose my senses.
And I'll not forget it til I die.

6. "Ode (Ballad)" and "Wed," Andy Villedomez (2014)

7. Songs by Sergei Rachmaninoff

"Siren" & "Zdes' Khorosho" op. 21, (no. 5 & 7) (1902)

"Daisies" op. 38 (1916)

No. 5: Siren (Lilacs)

In the morning, at dawn,
Through the dew-clad grass,
I shall walk, breathing in the freshness of morning;
And to the fragrant shade,
Where lilacs cluster,
I shall go in search of my happiness...
In life there is but one happiness
That I am fated to find,
And that happiness lives in the lilacs;
On their green branches,
In their fragrant clusters
My poor happiness blooms...

No. 7 Zdes' khorosho (How fair is this place)

All is well here...
Look, in the distance
The river glows like a fire;
The meadows are like a colourful carpet,
And there is the whiteness of clouds.
There is nobody here.
All is quiet...
Here I am alone with God.
And the flowers, and the old pine,
And you, my dream...

Daisies op. 38

Just look! See how many daisies there are
Here and there...
They are in flower, so many of them, in abundance.
They are in flower.
Their three-faceted petals are like wings,
Like white silk.
They are the summer's might, the joy of plenty,
A radiant army!
Prepare, oh earth, a drink of dew drops,
To refresh the flowers' stems...
Oh maidens fair! Oh little daisy starlets!
How I love you

8. "No word from Tom," *The Rake's Progress*, Igor Stravinsky (1951)

Aria:

Quietly, night, oh! find him and caress.
And may thou quiet find his heart,
although it be unkind. nor may its beat confess,
although I weep, it knows of loneliness.
Guide me, oh! moon, chastely
when I depart.
And warmly be the same
he watches without grief or shame.
It can not be thou art a colder moon
upon a colder heart.

Cabeletta:

I go to him.
Love can not falter, can not desert.
Though it be shunned, or be forgotten,
though it be hurt., if love be love,
it will not alter.
Should I see my love in need,
it shall not matter what he may be.

9. “The Flower Duet,” *Lakmé*, Léo Delibes, (1883)

Under the thick dome where the white jasmine
With the roses entwined together
On the river bank covered with flowers laughing in the morning
Let us descend together!
Gently floating on its charming risings,
On the river’s current
On the shining waves,
One hand reaches,
Reaches for the bank,
Where the spring sleeps,
And the bird, the bird sings.
Under the thick dome where the white jasmine
Ah! calling us
Together!
Under the thick dome where white jasmine
With the roses entwined together
On the river bank covered with flowers laughing in the morning
Let us descend together!
Gently floating on its charming risings,
On the river’s current
On the shining waves,
One hand reaches,
Reaches for the bank,
Where the spring sleeps,
And the bird, the bird sings.
Under the thick dome where the white jasmine
Ah! calling us together!

10. “Think of me,” *Phantom of the Opera*, A.L. Weber (1986)

Think of me, think of me fondly
When we’ve said goodbye
Remember me every so often
Promise me, you’ll try
On that day, that not so distant day
When you are far away and free
If you’ll ever find a moment
Spare a thought for me
And though it’s clear
Though it was always clear
That this was never meant to be
If you happen to remember
Stop and think of me
Think of August
When the trees were green
Don’t think about the way
Things might have been
Think of me, think of me waking
Silent and resigned
Imagine me trying too hard
To put you from my mind
Think of me, please say you’ll think of me,
Whatever else you choose to do
There will never be a day
When I won’t think of you
Flowers fade, the fruits of summer fade
They have their seasons, so do we
But please promise me that sometimes
You will think of me



2022-23 Concert Series

Admission is free.

Sunday | October 16 | 2022 | 3pm | Main Hall

Ariel Pocock with Keith Ganz on Guitar

Sunday | December 11 | 2022 | 4:30 pm | Sanctuary

Music Ministry Carol Fest

Sunday | February 5 | 2023 | 3pm | Sanctuary

Rush Dorsett, soprano

Songs of Love Through the Ages

Sunday | May 21 | 2023 | 3pm | Sanctuary

Nicole Keller, concert organist

Those Americans; featuring works of American composers or works inspired by American music.

The Sounds on Oberlin concert series is a musical outreach endeavor of White Memorial Presbyterian Church that seeks to spiritually engage, vitally enrich, musically educate, and gloriously entertain the community through a set of high-quality, wide-reaching musical offerings. We believe that exposure to the unlimited joy of music will lift our spirits to soar above worldly concerns, with the ambition that these concerts will be both a benevolent and transformative experience. All donations are greatly appreciated.

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