



MUSIC IN THE AFTERNOON

Women's Musical Club of Toronto

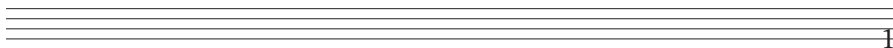
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We acknowledge the land on which this Music in the Afternoon concert is performed is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land. We acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Andrew Haji, tenor,
with
Stéphane Mayer, piano

Canadian tenor **Andrew Haji** has become one of the most sought-after voices on both the operatic and concert stages. Winner of the Grand Prix at the 50th International Vocal Competition in 's-Hertogenbosch and the Montreal International Music Competition's Oratorio Prize, Haji recently debuted with Calgary Opera as Pollione in *Norma* and performed Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy* with the Orchestra of St. Luke's at Carnegie Hall.

The Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern winner was heard as Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore* for the Canadian Opera Company, Almaviva in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with Opéra de Québec, Alfredo in *La traviata* for Vancouver Opera, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 for the Toronto Symphony, and Bach's *Matthäus Passion* with the National Arts Centre Orchestra. The 20/21 season also saw Andrew engage in digital productions, include starring as Satyavan in *Against the Grain's* acclaimed stream of Holst's *Savitri*.

Recent and upcoming engagements include *La Traviata* for Calgary Opera, *La bohème* for Edmonton Opera, returning to Orchestra of St. Luke's for the Mozart *Requiem*, and Handel's *Messiah* with both the National Arts Centre Orchestra and the Houston Symphony.

He is a graduate of the COC Ensemble Studio, during which he appeared in leading roles including Almaviva in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*. This season Andrew returns to the COC for their digital *Gianni Schicchi* and Mozart's *Requiem* in a co-production with *Against the Grain Theatre*.

Pianist and composer **Stéphane Mayer** has served as a rehearsal pianist and member of music staff for numerous productions at the Canadian Opera Company as part of their Ensemble program. Mayer has worked on numerous productions across Canada with Opera Victoria, Opera de Québec, Opera Nuova, Opera

on the Avalon, Opera McGill, Tapestry Opera and the National Art Centre. A champion of new music, Mayer has helped mount many world premieres such as Gould's Wall, The Rocking Horse Winner and Ours. A graduate of McGill University's Schulich School of Music, Stéphane has also worked as a vocal coach and accompanist at Western University.



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PROGRAM

Oliver Cromwell
The Ash Grove
The Salley Gardens
The Foggy Foggy Dew

Benjamin Britten
(1913-1976)

S'il est un charmant gazon
Comment disaient-ils
Oh! Quand je dors
Enfant si j'étais roi

Franz Liszt
(1811-1886)

Ciel e terra armi di sdegno
Total Eclipse
Waft her, angels

Georg Friederich Händel
(1685-1759)

INTERMISSION

I canti della sera
L'assiole canta
Alba di luna sul bosco
Tristezza crepuscolare
L'incontro

Francesco Santoliquido
(1883-1971)

Botschaft
Wie bist du meine Konigin
Dein blaues Auge
Meine Liebe ist grun

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Thy hand in mine
Where she lies asleep
Love went a-riding

Frank Bridge
(1879-1941)

See accompanying document for song translations.

Watch the [*Tuning Your Mind*](#) lecture on Andrew Haji
with Opera Educator Iain Scott

Today's concert is being recorded by CBC Radio 2, broadcast date TBA.

NOTES

In the spring of 1939, Benjamin Britten and his partner, Peter Pears, left England for a two year period in America. These years were a prolific time for the composer but were also, as Philip Brett says, marked by emotional turmoil. Alongside some major works, he began what was to become a substantial collection of folksong arrangements. At the time he seemed somewhat ambivalent about English folksong. In 1941 he wrote an angry, polemical article in which he said, "the chief attractions of English folksongs are the sweetness of the melodies, the close connection between words and music and the quiet uneventful charm of the atmosphere. This uneventfulness however is part of the weakness of the tunes." Nonetheless he wrote three of today's arrangements, plus four others in the same year with *The Foggy Foggy Dew* being part of a second collection in 1947. The arrangements in the first collection are each dedicated to a different friend from the American stay: 'Oliver Cromwell' and 'The Ash Grove' to Christopher and Beata Mayer, son and daughter of Britten's hosts on Long Island and *The Salley Gardens* to Clytie Mundy, an Australian soprano with whom Pears had lessons.

There is a well-known painting of Liszt that will serve admirably as a backdrop for the songs on today's program. It shows Liszt improvising at the piano surrounded by his friends and was painted by Josef Danhauser for a commission from Conrad Graf, the piano manufacturer - the piano, shown in great detail, is a Graf. Liszt would appear to be getting inspiration from a bust of Beethoven that is prominent on the piano and possibly from his mistress, Marie d'Agoult, who is draped at his feet. Behind is a very distinguished group of listeners: Paganini and Rossini, and George Sand, Dumas père and Victor Hugo. It is doubtful that all these people were ever in the same room together, but the picture does represent certain important strands of the burgeoning Romantic movement, especially the intermingling of music and literature that we find in the art songs of the period. The picture was actually painted in 1841 shortly before he wrote today's songs and while he was still a travelling virtuoso. A few years later he made a very decisive change in his career, and these Hugo songs are a small representation of his different circumstances.

In 1848, now with a new mistress, Princess Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein, he moved to Weimar as Kapellmeister, gave up his concert tours and devoted himself to composition. Installed in a large house, the Altenburg, the couple set out to create an “Athens of the North,” and the guest list was a catalogue of the most prominent cultural figures of the age. Another version of Danhauser’s painting could easily have been produced there. Much of his output from that period consists of large-scale orchestral works, but he also wrote a number of songs. At the same time he returned to some of his earlier songs, including the ones on today’s program and re-wrote them, thinning out the piano textures and revealing a new understanding of the subtle interplay between voice and piano that was needed; in a letter to a friend, the composer acknowledged that the accompaniments in the earlier version were too full.

Handel's aria *Ciel e terra armi di sdegno* is sung by the defeated Ottoman Emperor Bajazet in the first act of the 1724 opera *Tamerlano*. The role of Bajazet was written for the tenor Francesco Borosini, the first time Handel had written a starring role for this voice. The novelty of this, at a time when heroic roles were the preserve of castrati, was underlined by the satiric reference in a news sheet of the day that Signor Borosini had never been "cut out for a Singer."

The oratorio *Samson* was first performed in the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden in 1743; the composer had turned to this genre after the collapse of various operatic efforts in London. Although they proved generally successful there were still a few who missed the international stars that had graced the operatic stage. In a letter to a friend, Horace Walpole wrote "The Oratorios thrive abundantly – for my part, they give me an idea of heaven, where everybody is to sing whether they have voices or not." Years later, after Handel went blind, the audience was always particularly moved when the composer was seen listening to this aria. *Jephtha* was the last oratorio that Handel wrote. He began it in January 1741 and there is poignant evidence in the score of his increasing blindness. On a page in the second half he wrote in German, "got as far as this on Wednesday, unable to go on owing to the weakening of the sight of my left eye."

The Italian composer Francesco Santoliquido was born in Naples in 1883 and studied at the Liceo di S Cecilia in Rome. According

to John Waterhouse, he then lived mostly as a freelance composer, which suggests either a very frugal lifestyle or some independent source of income. He wrote in a broad range of genres, but the only works that remain in the repertoire today are some of his songs. His early works – including the songs on today's program which date from 1907, the year before he graduated – are, as Waterhouse points out, influenced by Debussy and Wagner and show a "sensitive talent". They are also free from the subsequent political and musical beliefs that he expounded in the late '30s for Mussolini's newspaper *Il Tevere*. It was this latter activity as much as purely musical consideration that led to his disappearance from concert programs. Besides being a composer he was also a poet and the texts for today's songs are his own.

In contrast with Schumann, Brahms often set poems by minor literary figures and a comment he made about the poetry of Goethe may explain his choices: his verses are, he said 'so perfect in themselves that no music can improve them.' In other words a poem for a song had to leave space for the music to be relevant; thus the frequent choice of lesser writers. The poets of today's songs are an eclectic mix. *Botschaft* and *Wie bist du meine Königin* are both by Georg Friedrich Daumer but are free adaptations of poems by the 14th century Persian poet Hafiz; *Dein blaues Auge* is by Klaus Groth, a professor at the University of Kiel who was a close friend of Brahms; *Meine Liebe ist grün* is by Felix Schumann, the most talented of Robert and Clara Schumann's children who, although he showed distinct artistic gifts, was hampered by ill health and died at the age of 25. Brahms was his godfather.

A recent article on Frank Bridge tells us that his "position in 20th-century music is difficult to sum up, as he is in many ways an isolated figure." It might also be said that he suffers under the burden of having been Britten's teacher so that his music is often listened to for hints of its influence rather than on its own merits. He was a prolific song writer mostly setting poetry by the English romantics and some notable German poets. He turned to the relatively unknown Mary Coleridge in 1914 and set two of her poems – *Where she lies asleep* and *Love went a-riding*. He returned to her poetry again in 1917 when he set a third poem, *Thy hand in mine*. For Paul Hindmarsh these songs mark out a "new expressive territory" for the composer.

-John Mayo

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WMCT

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