

Pacific Lutheran University  
School of Arts and Communication / Department of Music present

SENIOR RECITAL

**Benaiah Axlund, *bass***

Jeff Andersen, *piano*  
Jessa Delos Reyes, *trumpet*

Saturday, May 1, 2021 at 8pm  
Lagerquist Concert Hall, Mary Baker Russell Music Center

**Program**

**Grosser Herr und starker König.....J. S. Bach (1685-1750)**  
from *Weihnachtsoratorium, BWV 248*

**Quia fecit mihi magna**  
from *Magnificat, BWV 243*

**What if I never speed?.....John Dowland (1563-1626)**  
**Come again**  
**Stay, time, awhile thy flying**

**Già risonar d'intorno al campidoglio io sento.....G. F. Handel (1684-1749)**  
from *Ezio*

*Intermission*

**Hat Man nicht auch Gold daneben.....Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)**  
from *Fidelio*

**Vecchia zimarra, senti.....Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)**  
from *La Bohème*

**Ho capito, signor, sì.....W. A. Mozart (1756-1791)**  
from *Don Giovanni*

**Le Bestiaire.....Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)**

*Le dromadaire*  
*La chèvre du Thibet*  
*Le sauterelle*  
*Le dauphin*  
*L'écrevisse*  
*La carpe*

**Sonntag.....Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)**

**Dein blaues Auge**  
**Die Mainacht**

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*This recital is presented by Mr. Axlund in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance. Mr. Axlund is a student of Barry Johnson.*

## Program Notes

**Johann Sebastian Bach**'s *Weihnachtsoratorium*, or "Christmas Oratorio," is a work written for the Christmas season 1734, and was intended to be performed over six days. *Grosser Herr und starker König* is one bass aria out of twenty pieces included in the oratorio. Unfortunately, Bach would only hear *Weihnachtsoratorium* performed once in his lifetime, with the second performance being over 100 years after his death. *Quia fecit mihi magna* is a sacred text written for the *Magnificat*, or the "Song of Mary," taken from the Gospel of Luke. This work marks Bach's first liturgical composition of a Latin text, with German being Bach's primary compositional language. Bach is known as one of the most intellectual composers of his time, with his work not only sounding beautiful, but also showing an astonishing complexity when analyzed. Listeners recognize themes introduced and reiterated in new ways countless times throughout both pieces.

**John Dowland** was most well-known for his composition of slow, evocative songs in the Renaissance, originally intended for voice and lute. Many of his songs feature themes of unrequited love, such as *What if I never speed?* in which the singer laments his unfortunate lack of satisfaction. The song lifts in the second half, however, with a hopeful melody and a fantasy that the beloved might one day return the love given. Though Dowland's songs were written for a courtly setting, even nobles were not above their baser needs. As such, *Come again* is a thinly veiled reference to the physical encounter. *Stay, time, awhile thy flying* is one of a small portion of Dowland's songs that does not mention love at all, and just as the lyrics eschew the common them, so does the meter of the song obscure any clear sense of the strong beat.

**George Frideric Handel**'s *Ezio* is known as his greatest operatic failure, receiving only five performances during its premier in King's Theater, London. The reasons for its lack of popularity are unknown, but it is certainly not due to a lack of good music. *Già risonar* is a monument to Handel's creative and evocative power, with the beautifully declarative trumpet setting the tone for a triumphant moment in which love and loyalty win over all. Though this aria maintains some very traditional elements of the Baroque period and *opera seria*, it has some very untraditional chromatic elements in the B section which demonstrate Handel's creativity even within the bounds of tradition.

**Ludwig van Beethoven** originally dedicated his third symphony to Napoleon Bonaparte, who, having lived through the time of the French Revolution, Beethoven looked up to as a paradigm of the democratic way. It was in 1804, however, the same year that Napoleon declared himself Emperor, that Beethoven began his work on *Fidelio*, which concerns the tyranny of a nobleman

whose crimes are revealed. Perhaps Beethoven saw some of Napoleon in this nobleman, and saw fit that he should fall. *Hat Man nicht auch Gold daneben* asserts quite clearly that it is impossible to be happy without money, and uses decisive, final cadences to convey the confidence of such an assertion. At times, the music shifts into an upbeat three pattern, representing the lighthearted happiness and love one attains through the power of money.

**Giacomo Puccini**'s *La Bohème* turns the statements of *Hat Man nicht auch Gold daneben* on its head, however, exploring the ideas of finding love and happiness even in the face of poverty. Puccini had lived through extreme poverty in his years as a student, frequently having to skip meals and pawn his belongings to pay expenses, so he likely saw much of himself in the characters of *La Bohème*. *Vecchia zimarra* is the farewell song of a man, Colline, to his much-loved coat, since he must pawn it to help pay for a friend's medicine. Throughout the aria, lamenting phrases rise out of a single note, like fits of crying that come and go. The steady, yet dissonant pulse in the accompaniment sets a dark mood for Colline to say his final "addio" to his beloved possession.

Finally, **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**'s *Ho capito, signor, sì* is the sardonic reaction of a man with no status, Masetto, when the titular nobleman Don Giovanni (a murderer, rapist, and renowned sleaze-ball) attempts to seduce his new wife. Masetto's lowly position offers him no leverage against the wealth and power of his adversary, and the frustration in this aria is palpable. Explosive outbursts and quickly shifting focus express the futility of Masetto's rage as he is led away by the Don's servant, Leporello. The pounding finality of Masetto's last curses are heightened by the repeated outlining of the tonic chord, leading up to a final cadence. If Masetto must go, he will not go quietly.

**Francis Poulenc** was originally inspired to compose *Le bestiaire* upon seeing the book of poems of the same name, by Guillaume Apollinaire, who in turn took inspiration from a series of woodcuts by Picasso. These short and often quaint pieces from the late 1910's, which retain much of the "snapshot" quality of a painting, have also gained new dimensions through the expressive qualities of the voice and piano. Each animal can be heard if one listens closely, with the heavy plod of the camels in *Le dromadaire*, the fretful skittering of the crayfish in *L'écrevisse*, or the exuberant jumping of the dolphins in *Le dauphin*. The delicate balance between melancholy and exuberance is maintained through the constant tension between the piano and the voice. The complete acceptance of both light and dark is expressed through songs that contain both sonority and dissonance, and through text that can change from joy to sorrow in an instant.

**Johannes Brahms** is perhaps most famous for his ability to blend complexity and beauty seamlessly together. As a master of counterpoint, and a disciple of more traditional styles, Brahms composed music that was not only academically stimulating, but was also accessible and intuitive, and incredibly moving. His decades-long crush on Clara Schumann was likely an endless source of inspiration for his music, and music likely became a necessary outlet for such powerful emotions. *Sonntag* is relentlessly optimistic, presenting a schoolgirl-like crush through the fluttering heart of the accompaniment and rising and falling sighs of the singer. In this piece, Brahms presents something beautiful in its simplicity, especially through the understated yet sweet postlude in the piano. *Dein blaues Auge* expresses the gravity of a lover's need for his beloved, and represents the relief the lover feels through the alternating dissonance and resolution in the piano. Throughout the piece, Brahms makes use of natural imagery to represent the beloved's calming eyes, calling them "cool" like the sea, even as the lover's desperation grows. *Die Mainacht* is by far the moodiest song of this set, and makes use of natural imagery in a much darker way. In German lieder, the heart is often represented as a forest, dark before the bright rays of love shine in. This song describes someone searching out the darker places of their heart, where dreams of love, represented as nightingales and rays of sunlight, only cause torment. The quickening of the music in the third verse can be seen as the rising desperation of the character, who consistently turns away from the major tonality of positive emotions, into the minor, chromatic tonality of dark emotions.



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