

# Silent Voices

## Part 1.

### A voice longing to be heard

|   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Für Elise & the Heiligenstadt Testament                   | Ludwig van Beethoven<br>(1770 - 1827) |
| All'afflitto è dolce il pianto<br><i>Roberto Devereux</i> | Gaetano Donizetti<br>(1797-1848)      |
| Ella di me sollecita<br><i>Anna Bolena</i>                | Gaetano Donizetti<br>(1797-1848)      |
| Deh vieni non tardar<br><i>Le nozze di Figaro</i>         | W.A Mozart<br>(1756-1791)             |

## Part 2.

### A voice of inspiration

|   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <i>My Poor Hearing Doesn't Trouble Me Here</i>  | Ludwig van Beethoven<br>(1770 - 1827) |
| <i>Du bist die Ruh</i><br>D. 776; Op. 59, No. 3 | Franz Schubert<br>(1797 - 1828)       |
| An die Musik<br>D. 547; Op 88, No. 4            |                                       |

## Artists

Christina Esser, mezzo-soprano, piano, and digital art  
Angel Riley, soprano  
Da Yoon Kang, cello

## Program Notes:

“Silent Voices” is a multi-media journey exploring voices that transcend beyond just verbal communication. The first half of the program focuses on voices that have been suppressed by physical disability, or by political and social circumstances that prevent them from speaking their truths. The second half focuses on the voice of nature as a healing and inspirational voice to artists.

### Part 1. A voice longing to be heard

#### I. Beethoven.

I have combined one of Beethoven’s most famous pieces, *Für Elise*, with an excerpt from his Heiligenstadt Testament to create a narrative about his gradual loss of hearing and decision to withdraw from society. This testament was written in 1802 to his brothers Carl and Johann, who resided in Heiligenstadt, Austria. In this excerpt, Beethoven expresses his frustration and anxiety over being misunderstood. In the full letter, Beethoven writes that his only reason for choosing to live, is because he feels he must communicate his music to the world.

I have focused on using colors in the text and art work to emphasize his anxiety, pain, and desire to communicate with others despite his decision to live in isolation. The blue text represents sadness, the red is anger, and the purple is anxiety. The text circulates from left to right to coincide with the two sides of the face (the left side being what one might perceive externally, juxtaposed by the internal chaos on the right.)

#### II. Sara

Sara, the duchess of Nottingham, conceals her tears as she reads the book of *Fair Rosamund*. Rosamund was King Henry II’s mistress who was eventually approached by his queen, Eleanor of Aquitaine. Eleanor forces Rosamund to choose her death by either stabbing herself with a dagger, or drinking a bowl of poison, in which she chooses the latter. Sara realizes this story is similar to her own situation. She is in love with her husband’s best friend, Roberto Devereux, and must keep silent about it; she is even forbidden from finding relief through her tears. Sara envies Rosamund for she was able to die, while Sara must live a living death in the absence of her true love.

The painting will reverse time-lapse, signifying her loss of life, and the grief and pain she feels within. The color from her life literally fades away to nothing while the outline of what she is (symbolized by the hands in this painting) remains in tact.

### **III. Giovanna Seymour**

Giovanna Seymour (Jane Seymour) is a lady in waiting to the Queen of England, Anna Bolena (Anne Boleyn). Giovanna is in love with Anna's husband, Enrico (King Henry VIII), and is filled with anxiety over her secret love for him. Anna, who has been noticeably down, has called for Giovanna, who anxiously wonders if Anna suspects her relationship with Enrico. Giovanna pleads to *Amor* or "Love" to make her deaf to regret or to extinguish her love for Enrico. The hand in the artwork represents Giovanna, the dagger is Enrico, and the heart is both Anna's and Giovanna's. This imagery foreshadows Anna's eventual beheading and how Giovanna's love for Enrico also causes her own heart to break for Anna.

### **IV. Susanna**

Throughout *Le nozze di Figaro*, Susanna, the Countess's maid, must cleverly navigate the politics of the palace with her intelligence and wit. Susanna and Countess Rosina have devised a plan to dupe Count Almaviva, who has been lusting for Susanna. Susanna is engaged to Figaro, who overhears their plan, but misunderstands it and believes Susanna to be cheating on him with the Count. Susanna enters Count Almaviva's garden, knowing that Figaro is hiding in the bushes listening. To get back at Figaro for believing she would cheat on him, she sings a seductive song into the darkness, commenting on how the earth and sky seem to echo her passions, and calls out to her lover, who Figaro believes to be the Count. This is yet another instance of Susanna using her wit, not just her voice to communicate her point.

The painting of a starry sky over a garden deceptively morphs into roses floating in a pond, referencing her final words "*Ti vo' la fronte incoronar di rose*", I want to crown you with roses, and the trick she is playing on Figaro.

## **Part II. A voice of inspiration**

### **V. My Poor Hearing Does Not Trouble Me Here**

#### **VI. Du bist die Ruh**

*My poor hearing does not trouble me here* is a poem Beethoven wrote while in the woods outside of Vienna. He expresses how the forest allows him to feel at peace with his hearing loss, and often uses the forest as an analogy to God's voice. I have created a video depicting an artist walking through the woods, eventually sitting on a log to begin a painting. It is as if the forest has provided inspiration for what is to come next, a painting of a forest with *Du bist die Ruh* (You are repose) playing in the background. I have chosen to interpret Rückert's text as the inspiring, healing voice of the forest.

The digital sketch of the forest was coincidentally based on a recent trip to Payerbach, Austria, a small town outside of Vienna. I began this sketch in January as I reflected upon a peaceful memory of hiking up one of the mountains in Reichenau,

meditating within the safety and solitude of the woods. Connecting this painting and my experience to Beethoven's poem truly felt serendipitous.

## **VII. *An die Musik***

*An die Musik* furthers the forest narrative by thanking art for its divine role in healing, love, and inspiration. This choice is also a personal one based on my own love for a variety of different art forms. This whole recital has encompassed many forms of artistic expression that I am passionate about such as both visual arts and music. I remember first hearing this song as a student at UCSB, and instantly breaking down into tears. I felt a sincere and powerful voice of love echo within my heart, and in this moment, I knew music was going to play a very special role in my life.

### **Translations**

#### **“All'afflitto è dolce il pianto”, from *Roberto Devereux*, by Donizetti Libretto by Salvatore Cammarano**

To those who suffer, how sweet it is to weep...  
It is the only joy that remains to them...  
An ill-omened star  
also forbids that I may weep.

Oh, how much more harsh,  
Rosamonda, is my fate than yours!  
You perished from a death,  
mine will be a living death!

#### **“Ella di me sollecita”, from *Anna Bolena*, by Donizetti Libretto by Felice Romani**

She has asked for me  
more urgently than usual  
She...why?...What trembling!  
What doubt is awakened in me!

In front of my victim  
my heart loses all courage.  
Oh love, make me deaf to regret,  
or be extinguished in my heart.

**“Deh vieni non tardar”, from *Le nozze di Figaro*, by Mozart  
Libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte**

The moment has arrived at last  
that I'll enjoy without worry  
in the arms of my beloved.  
Timid anxieties, leave my heart,  
do not come to disturb my delight!

Oh, how the earth, the sky,  
this comfortable place,  
seem to echo my passion,  
as the night is good for my deception!

Ah, come! Do not delay, my handsome lover,  
come where love calls you to enjoyment,  
before the moon, the torch of the night sky rises,  
while the air is still dark, and the world is quiet.

Here murmurs the stream, here plays the breeze,  
which with sweet whispering the heart restores.  
Here, little flowers laugh, and the grass is cool,  
Here, everything entices one, to love's pleasures.

Come, my dear, among these sheltering trees.  
I want to crown your brow with roses.

***Du bist die Ruh* by Franz Schubert**  
**Poetry by Friedrich Rückert**

You are peace,  
the gentle peace.  
You are longing  
and what stills it.

Full of joy and grief  
I consecrate to you  
my eyes and my heart  
as a dwelling place.

Come in to me  
and softly close  
the gate  
behind you.

Drive all other grief  
from my breast.  
Let my heart  
be full of your joy.

The temple of my eyes  
is lit  
by your radiance alone:  
O, fill it wholly!

***An die Musik* by Franz Schubert**  
**Poetry by Franz von Schober**

Beloved art, in how many a bleak hour,  
when I am enmeshed in life's tumultuous round,  
have you kindled my heart to the warmth of love,  
and borne me away to a better world!

Often a sigh, escaping from your harp,  
a sweet, celestial chord  
has revealed to me a heaven of happier times.  
Beloved art, for this I thank you!

## **Special Thanks To**

### **Jonathan Tompkins**

For so generously giving me a crash course on audio mixing, editing, and for shooting some of the video footage. I couldn't have even attempted this project without you!

### **Lucy Tucker Yates**

for playing my encore piece and helping me better understand the nuances of poetic structure.

### **Lucy Tucker Yates and Vicki Kirsch**

for so kindly guiding me through the process of creating a unique recital.  
i'm so grateful to continue learning from you both!

### **Olga and Vladimir Chernov**

for being such a strong support system and for your continuing guidance. I'm so grateful for your mentorship and for the technique you are teaching me.

### **Sassoon Artists Management and Lily Sassoon**

for always supporting me and for guidance in the process of producing this recital.