Robert and Clara Schumann

Widmung ('Dedication'), Op. 25, No. 1

You, my soul, my heart, my rapture, my pain, and my world. You are my heaven and my guardian angel. My love for you is without bounds, for it encompasses every aspect of my life. Robert Schumann encapsulated his love for Clara (née Wieck) in Friedrich Rückert's (1788–1866) poignant verse. His love is everything, from his rapture to his pain, yet it is nothing, for it is as formless as the heavens above and the angels which guard them. Perhaps the most striking feature of the lyrics is the series of consecutive appositives in the opening lines, comparing this love to everything in his life, both the good and the ill. It is only in the third line, *Du meine Welt, in der ich lebe* ('You my world, in which I live') that Rückert introduces the first verb of the poem, and Schumann uses this verb to set up a pivot modulation to D-flat, leading into the new world of his married life. Written as the opening piece for the *Myrthen* ('*Myrtles*') song cycle, *Widmung* is Robert's musical vow of fidelity to Clara, presented to her the day before their wedding on September 12, 1840. *Widmung* held a special place in Clara's heart among the twenty-six songs of the cycle as an earnest testament to their blossoming love.

Liebst du um Schönheit ('If You Love for Beauty'), Op. 12

A fitting response to *Widmung*, this next song was written the following year by Clara as part of a song cycle jointly composed by the couple: *Liebesfrühling* ('*The Spring of Love*'). Drawing on another of Rückert's poems, Clara's *Liebst du* warns the listener not to love her for her beauty, for the sun shines brighter, nor her youth, for the springtime brings with it renewed vigor each year. But if you love for love's sake, then love me, and I shall love you forevermore—a pragmatic admonition to her zealous lover to keep things real and not to be swept away in the passions of his fervor. The unadorned melody of the *lied* is brought to life by the call-and-response it engages in with the piano, turning this into a true conversation.

Frauenliebe und -leben ('Woman's Love and Life'), Op. 42

At around the same time that he composed *Myrthen*, Robert turned to a poem cycle by Adelbert von Chamisso (1781–1838). Soon after Clara Wieck sued her father for the right to marry the man of her choice and won the case, Robert sent her *Frauenliebe und -leben*, a set of eight songs (omitting one of Chamisso's original poems) that traced a woman's life in love from its beginnings to the grief and strength required of her during widowhood. A chillingly prescient engagement gift. Although they had secretly promised themselves to each other via letters three years prior, it was only in the summer of 1840 that Clara could truly resonate with the voice of Chamisso's bride in *Du Ring an meinem Finger*.

O ring upon my finger,
My golden little ring,

I press you devoutly to my lips,
To my heart.

Papillons ('Butterflies'), Op. 2

Clara Wieck's father disapproved of her union with Robert Schumann, not only because of their significant age gap of nine years, but also because he considered Robert an unworthy suitor. Clara, after all, was already a renowned pianist in her teens, while Robert had yet to make a name for himself as a composer. Yet their musical lives had been intertwined long before this marital drama. *Papillons*, a suite of piano dances Schumann wrote when he was barely into his twenties, was premiered by Clara herself. Inspired by a masquerade scene in Jean Paul's novel *Flegeljahre* ('The Awkward Age'), the suite brings a masked ball to life through its waltzes and polonaises, ending with a quotation of the old *Grossvatertanz* ('Grandfather's Dance'). Each is wrought with the delicate style for which Schumann would become famous, making the work at once a showpiece for the piano and an intimate musical narrative. Knowing how this story plays out, we might even hear in these masked dancers a hint of what was to come, a youthful fantasy that would one day blossom into something more as the butterflies twirled ever more wildly.

Manuel de Falla

Siete canciones populares españolas ('Seven Spanish Folk Songs')

In a striking departure from the intimate German lieder that began this program, this most beloved of Manuel de Falla's (1876–1946) vocal works launches us straight onto the Iberian Peninsula. Composed in 1914, the seven songs draw on traditional dances and song forms from across Spain, from the *seguidilla* of Murcia and the *jota* of Aragon to the Andalusian *polo* and a lullaby, gathering this diverse array of regional styles under a single "Spanish" banner. The result is a portrait of national identity built on plurality rather than uniformity, a vision of Spain that would sit uneasily with the rigid, exclusionary nationalism of Franco's regime decades later. Listening closely, we might notice Falla's idiosyncratic piano writing. Where the Schumanns explore the full range of the piano's textures, Falla pares it back to something closer to a guitar accompaniment. We might imagine the pianist strumming an ostinato chord, rolling arpeggios across the octaves, or flicking out short appoggiaturas, all gestures borrowed from the guitar. In Falla's hands, the piano casts off its concert-hall finery and takes up the role of Spain's most iconic instrument.

Reynaldo Hahn

A Chloris, Chanson d'automne, L'Heure exquise

From the fiery dances of Spain we cross the Pyrenees to Paris, where the *mélodie* reigns supreme. Reynaldo Hahn (1874–1947) composed over a hundred *mélodies* for voice and piano, very often setting the verse of contemporaries such as the Symbolist poet Paul

Verlaine. For *A Chloris*, however, Hahn reaches much further back, to a poem by Théophile de Viau (1590–1626), and matches it with musical language to suit. The piano's steady walking bass echoes one of the most famous in history, that of the *Air* from J. S. Bach's *Orchestral Suite No. 3* (c. 1730). From the first measure we are swept into this familiar soundworld, as a filigreed right-hand melody entwines with the singer's serene rapture at reciprocating the love of the nymph Chloris. Though the song dates from 1916, Hahn's deft use of Baroque gestures in both voice and piano could easily convince us that it was centuries older.

Chanson d'automne and *L'Heure exquise* both come from an earlier song cycle, *Chansons grises*, composed between 1891 and 1892. The cycle sets the poetry of Paul Verlaine, renowned for his experiments with both sound and metaphor in verse. *Chanson d'automne* opens with a vivid image that immediately conjures a sonic world: *Les sanglots longs / des violons / de l'automne* ('The long sobs of the violins of autumn'). This sound then wounds the poet's heart, summons a rush of memories, and leaves him lifeless, buffeted to and fro like a fallen leaf. The restless rise and fall of piano and voice, swelling from verse to verse, becomes the autumn wind itself, breathing a hollow life into the dead foliage. *L'Heure exquise* takes a more impressionistic approach, painting a moonlit nocturne in strokes of color and light: the white moon, the black silhouette of a willow, the iridescent sky. Hahn captures the hush of this nighttime scene with a strikingly static melody, circling the same few notes line after line before leaping upward at the close of each stanza.

Paul Bowles

Blue Mountain Ballads

From Paris we cross the Atlantic to the United States, though our next composer would spend much of his life abroad. Paul Bowles (1910–1999) was an American composer and writer whose work spanned both musical and literary realms. His career began with a series of false starts. His parents enrolled him in humanities courses at the University of Virginia, but he dropped out and escaped to Paris, where he worked at a newspaper; he had already published his own poetry in a Parisian magazine at the tender age of 17. He eventually gravitated toward music, studying with Aaron Copland in New York and Paris. The *Blue Mountain Ballads*, published in 1946, brought together two literary voices: Bowles and the playwright Tennessee Williams, who wrote the texts. Each song takes a distinct approach to narration and musical style, but perhaps the most playful is *Sugar in the Cane*, in which the singer compares herself to a series of kitchen ingredients, all to proclaim that she is, in fact, ready for love. The following year, Bowles settled in Tangier, Morocco, where he devoted himself to recording Moroccan folk music, translating Moroccan storytellers into English, and writing the novels for which he is best remembered today, beginning with *The Sheltering Sky* (1949).

Jake Heggie

Paper Wings

Jake Heggie (b. 1961) is perhaps best known for his opera *Dead Man Walking* (2000), which remains one of the most widely performed contemporary operas in the world. Three years before its premiere, Heggie composed *Paper Wings* for the celebrated mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade, who premiered the cycle with Cal Performances at Zellerbach Hall in 1997. The texts are von Stade's own, written for her daughter, and across all four songs ("Bedtime Story," "Paper Wings," "Mitten Smitten," and "A Route to the Sky") they conjure a mother's tender, playful love for her child. Heggie keeps the piano largely in the background, letting the voice shine as the primary carrier of melody.

Leonard Bernstein

One Hundred Ways to Lose a Man, I Am Easily Assimilated

Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990), the beloved "Lenny" of American music, hardly needs an introduction. Two centuries after Voltaire skewered Leibniz's optimism in his satirical novella *Candide* (1759), Bernstein joined forces with playwright Lillian Hellman to turn the tale into a comic operetta (1956). In *I Am Easily Assimilated*, for which Bernstein wrote both music and lyrics, Candide and his companions have fled to Cádiz when the Old Lady, a worldly survivor with Eastern European roots, proudly declares how effortlessly she has adapted to her new home. She dances a sultry tango and boasts of her flawless Spanish, yet her "native" phrases come out as a comic jumble of Spanish, French, and the languages of her past, a gentle send-up of the immigrant's eagerness to belong.

In 1952, Bernstein was called upon to write the score for a new musical in a matter of weeks. *Wonderful Town*, with lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, was adapted from Joseph Fields and Jerome Chodorov's play *My Sister Eileen* (1940), itself drawn from Ruth McKenney's autobiographical stories of two sisters from Ohio who came to seek fame and fortune in the Big Apple in the 1930s. In composing the show's numbers, Bernstein set out to recreate the swinging sound of that era, and *One Hundred Easy Ways* is a clear nod to the times: a brassy, wisecracking catalogue of all the ways a clever woman can scare off a man.

—All notes by Saagar Asnani, UC Berkeley