

**Date du récital/Date of recital:** April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019

**Nom/Name:** Sébastien Comtois

**Classe de/Class of:** John Mac Master

These program notes are written by the student performing and are presented by the student in partial fulfillment of the requirements of their course. Ces notes de programme sont écrites par l'étudiant-interprète et sont présentées en tant que réalisation partielle des critères de leur cours.

## **Great Opera Composers in Songs**

By Sébastien Comtois

Wagner, Verdi, Massenet, Gounod, Mozart. What comes up first in our mind when we mention these names? Is it *La traviata*? Or maybe *Le nozze di Figaro*? These composers are best known for their great operatic works that are still enjoyed and performed all over the world to this day.

Within the operas of these famous composers lies a wealth of well-known arias that you would recognize instantly. Today, the focus of this recital is not on these beloved arias but on the lesser-known repertoire that these great operatic composers wrote for the voice.

The songs chosen for this recital are not as well-known as the arias taken from operas, but they contain the characteristic style of each individual composer. You might distinguish Mozart's elegance in his lieder or Sullivan's distinct British style in his hymn *The Lost Chord* as well as Verdi's *bel canto* writing for the voice.

Sometimes you might even recognize musical elements that served as the basis for the composers' masterpieces. In Puccini's *Sole e amore* you will hear the finale of *La bohème*'s

third act when Rodolfo and Mimi agree to part from one another when spring arrives. Wagner's *Träume* is also a prime example of this. Composed between 1857 and 1858, the *Wesendonck Lieder* include two lieder that set the foundation of Wagner's masterpiece *Tristan und Isolde*. The lied *Träume*, which you will hear during this recital, was developed by Wagner to become the famous love duet found in Act 2.

The repertoire chosen for this recital includes many songs with contrasting emotional settings. Mozart's *Abendempfindung* and Massenet's *Les yeux clos* explore the subject of death whether it is of self or of a loved one. Love of course plays a large role in the recital. Torturous love can be found in Gounod's *Ô ma belle rebelle* and *Medjé* as well as in Massenet's *Élégie*. However, all is not bleak! Verdi's *Stornello* offers a charming setting in song of a lovers' quarrel and Mozart's *Dans un bois solitaire* is the amusing story of a man forced by Cupid to love a woman because of his clumsiness. The set includes many other musical gems and will end with the Wagner's beautiful and dreamlike *Träume*.

While not as grandiose in scale as their operatic counterparts, these songs retain the genius of their creators and present an opportunity for the performers to show a different aspect of these great opera composers.