

Lamont School of Music

Graduate Recital

Mackenzie Laun
Voice

Dr. Beth Nielson
Piano

Saturday, February 7, 2026
7:30 p.m.
Frederic C. Hamilton Family Recital Hall



UNIVERSITY OF
DENVER



Robert & Judi Newman Center
for the Performing Arts

Program

The Wider View

I. To the Road!
VI. The Wider View

H. Leslie Adams

(1932–2024)

Paul Laurence Dunbar
R.H. Grenville

Madrid

Pauline Viardot

(1821–1910)

Alfred de Musset

Les filles de Cadix

Pauline Viardot

(1821–1910)

Alfred de Musset

Sketches of Paris

Kathleen Lockhart Manning

(1890–1951)

II. Lamplighter
IV. In the Luxembourg Gardens
VI. Paris: An Ode

Kathleen Lockhart Manning

Torna a Surriento

Ernesto de Curtis

(1875–1937)

Giambattista de Curtis

Rondine al nido

Vincenzo de Crescenzo

(1915–1987)

Anonymous

Please silence your cell phones

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Cigánské Melodie

from *La traviata*

- I. Má píseň zas mi láskou zní
- II. Aj! Kterak trojhranec můj
- III. A les je tichý kolem kol
- IV. Když mne stará matka
- V. Struna naladěna
- VI. Široké rukávy
- VII. Dejte klec jestřábu

Antonín Dvořák

(1841–1904)

Adolf Heyduk

Sempre Libera

Giuseppe Verdi

(1813–1901)

Francesco Maria Piave

Goodnight Moon

Eric Whitacre

(b. 1970)

Margaret Wise Brown

Reception to follow
in the Spencer Reception Room

Text and Translations

To the Road!

Cool is the wind,
for the summer is waning,
Who's for the road?
Sunflecked and soft,
where the dead leaves are raining,
Who's for the road?
Knapsack and alpenstock
Press hand and shoulder,
Prick of the brier and roll of the boulder;
This be your lot
while the seasons grow older;
Who's for the road?

Up and away in the hush of the morning,
Who's for the road?
Vagabonds we, all conventions a-scorning,
Who's for the road?
Music of warblers so merrily singing,
Draughts from the rill from the roadside upspringing,
Nectar of grapes from the vines lowly swinging,
Who's for the road?

Now ev'ry house is a hut or a hovel,
Come to the road!
Mankind and moles
in the dark love to grovel,
But to the road.
Throw off the loads
that are bending you double;
Love is for life, only labor is trouble;
Truce to the town
whose best gift is a bubble:
Come to the road!

– Paul Laurence Dunbar

The Wider View

In my childhood I was wont
to see the horizon as a boundary,
The sky as roof, the wood as wall,
my world as intimate and small.
But as I learned of other places,
loftier heights and wider spaces,
The wonder in my spirit grew
to match the fresh,
unfolding view.

I used to think of life as breath,
a measured span from birth to death,
With Time the stern horizon line
to mark day's ending and decline.
But now I see beyond confusion,
all boundaries are but illusion;
That love's vast luminous creation
can tolerate no separation.

There is no barrier nor wall between us
and the All-in-All.
There's always more to do and be.
You can't exhaust infinity.

– R. H. Grenville

Madrid

Madrid, princesse des Espagnes,
Il court par tes mille campagnes
Bien des yeux bleus, bien des yeux noirs.
La blanche ville aux sérénades,
Il passe par tes promenades
Bien des petits pieds tous les soirs.

Madrid, quand tes taureaux bondissent,
Bien des mains blanches applaudissent,
Bien des écharpes sont en jeux.
Par tes belles nuits étoilées,
Bien des señoritas long voilées
Descendent tes escaliers bleus.

Madrid, Madrid, moi, je me raille
De tes dames à fine taille
Qui chaussent l'escarpin étroit;
Car j'en sais une par le monde
Que jamais ni brune ni blonde

N'ont valu le bout de son doigt!

Car c'est ma princesse andalouse,
Mon amoureuse, ma jalouse !
Ma belle veuve au long réseau!
C'est un vrai démon, c'est un ange!
Elle est jaune, comme une orange,
Elle est vive comme l'oiseau!

Or, si d'aventure on s'enquête
Qui m'a valu telle conquête,
C'est l'allure de mon cheval,
Un compliment sur sa mantille
Puis des bonbons à la vanille
Par un beau soir de carnaval.

– Alfred de Musset

Madrid

Madrid, Princess of Spanish lands,
Many blue eyes, many dark eyes
Can be seen on your thousand fields.
Many dainty feet tread each evening
Along the walks of your white town,
Famed for its serenades.

Madrid, when your bulls rampage,
Many a white hand applauds,
Many scarves are waved.
On your beautiful starry nights,
Many a señora with long veils
Descends your blue stairs.

Madrid, Madrid, I mock
Your slim-waisted ladies
Who wear narrow dancing shoes;
For there's no brunette or blonde
In all the world who's worth the finger-
tips
Of a lady I know!

For she is my Andalusian princess,
My lover, my jealous one!
My beautiful, well-connected widow!
She's a real demon, she's an angel!
She's as yellow as an orange,
She's as lively as a bird!

Now, if by chance people wonder
How I achieved such a conquest,
I reply: because of my handsome horse,
The way I praised her mantilla,
The vanilla sweets I gave her
On a beautiful carnival evening.

Trans. Richard Stokes

Les filles de Cadix

Nous venions de voir le taureau,
Trois garçons, trois fillettes.
Sur la pelouse il faisait beau,
Et nous dansions un boléro
Au son des castagnettes :
« Dites-moi, voisin,
Si j'ai bonne mine,
Et si ma basquine
Va bien, ce matin.
Vous me trouvez la taille fine ?...
Ah! ah!
Les filles de Cadix aiment assez cela. »

Et nous dansions un boléro
Un soir, c'était dimanche.
Vers nous s'en vint un hidalgo
Tout cousu d'or, plume au chapeau,
Et le poing sur la hanche:
« Si tu veux de moi,
Brune au doux sourire,
Tu n'as qu'à le dire,
Cet or est à toi. »
« Passez votre chemin, beau sire...
Ah ! Ah !
Les filles de Cadix n'entendent pas
cela. »

– Alfred de Musset

The Girls of Cadiz

We'd just left the bullfight,
Three boys, three girls,
The sun shone on the grass
And we danced a bolero
To the sound of castanets.
'Tell me, neighbour,
Am I looking good,
And does my skirt
Suit me, this morning?
Have I a slender waist?...
Ah! Ah!
The girls of Cadiz are fond of that.'

And we were dancing a bolero
One Sunday evening.
A hidalgo came towards us,
Glittering in gold, feather in cap,
And hand on hip:
'If you want me,
Dark beauty with the sweet smile,
You've only to say so,
And these riches are yours.'
'Go on your way, fine sir.
Ah! ah!
The girls of Cadiz don't take to that.'

Trans. Richard Stokes

Lamplighter

When the night falls, I hear a voice, a song:
"Au clair de la lune, mon ami Pierrot,
Prête-moi ta plume pour écrire un mot."
'Tis the old lamplighter:
A magic turn or two, just where, he knows!
And lo! the street is filled with stars!
Then on his way he goes:
"Au clair de la lune, mon ami Pierrot,
Prête-moi ta plume pour écrire un mot.

–Kathleen Lockhart Manning

In the Luxembourg Gardens

When shadows fall
I wander thro' the gardens,
Among the flowers and grass,
I linger on the beauty all around me:
Then two lovers pass.
The autumn leaves are falling
thro' the gardens,

But in their heart is spring!
I hear him murmur: "Ah! je t'aime!"
As she answers low: "Cher ami!"

I linger on the beauty all around me,
As the hours pass.

—Kathleen Lockhart Manning

Paris: An Ode

City of charm,
City of desire!
City of immortal dreams!
of eternal fire!

Burn into the hearts of men,
that thy light may never fade!
Give of thy beauty,
Of thy hope inspired, passion-made!

Youth, Joy, and Love, are knocking at thy gates;
Let them in!
To dream their rarest dreams
In thy fair arms!

City of charm,
May they ever linger among thy shadows!
City of desire!

—Kathleen Lockhart Manning

Torna a surriento

Vide 'o mare quant'è bello!
Spira tantu sentimento,
Comme tu a chi tiene mente,
Ca scetato 'o faje sunnà.

Guarda, guà chistu ciardino;
Siente, siè 'sti sciure 'arancio:
'Nu prufumo accussì fino
Dinto 'o core se ne va.

E tu dice: "Io parto, addio!"
T'alluntane da 'stu core.
Da 'sta terra de ll'ammore
Tiene 'o core 'e nun turnà?

Ma nun me lassà,
Nun darmè 'stu turmiento!
Torna a Surriento,
Famme campà!

—Giambattista de Curtis

Come Back to Surriento

Look at the sea, how beautiful it is,
it inspires so many emotions,
like you do with the people you look at,
who dream while they are still awake.

Look at this garden
and the scent of these oranges,
such a fine perfume,
it goes straight into your heart,

And you say: "I am leaving, goodbye."
You go away from this heart of mine,
away from this land of love,
And have you the heart not to come
back?

But do not leave me,
do not give me this torment.
Come back to Surriento,
make me live!

Trans. Claude Aveling

Rondine al nido

Sotto la gronda della torre antica
Una rondine amica,
Allo sbocciar del mandorlo é tornata.
Ritorna tutti gli anni,
Sempre alla stessa data;
Monti e mare essa varca per tornar.
Solo amore
Quando fugge e va lontano
Speri in vano e non torna piú.

Nella penombra dolce della sera
passa la primavera.
Cinguettano le rondini nel volo,
Ebbre di luce e d'aria.
Ed io son triste e solo;
Monti e mare tu non varchi per tornar.

Amor mio, fosti tutta la mia vita;
Sei fuggita e non torni piú.

—Anonymous

Má píseň zas mi láskou zní

Má píseň zas mi láskou zní,
když starý den umírá;
a chudý mech kdy na šat svůj

si tajně perle sbíra.

Má píseň v kraj tak toužně zní,
když světem noha bloudí;
jen rodné pusty dálinou
zpěv volně z hader proudí.

Má píseň hlučně láskou zní,
když bouře běží plání;
když těším se, že bídý prost
dlí bratr v umírání.

—Adolf Heyduk

Swallow to the Nest

Under the roof of the ancient tower
A friendly swallow has returned
When the almond-tree is in blossom.
It returns every year
Always in the same day.
It flies across mounts and sea to return.
Only love
When it disappears and goes away,
It's vain to hope,
It will not come back anymore.

In the pleasant evening twilight
The spring passes.
The swallows chirp in flight,
Intoxicated with light and air.
And I'm sad and alone;
You don't return across mounts and
seas.
My love, You were my whole life;
You disappeared
And now you don't come back
anymore.

Trans. Natalie Chernega

My Song Sounds of Love

My song resounds, a psalm of love,
When day begins to fade,
And when the moss and withered
grass
Secretly drink in pearls of dew.

My song resounds full of wanderlust
In the green of lofty forests,
Only on the puszta's wide plains
Can I sing out happily.

My song is also full of love,
As storms rage across the heath;
When the breast of my friend heaves,
As he breathes his last!

Trans. Richard Stokes

Aj! Kterak trojhranec můj

Aj! Kterak trojhranec můj přerozkošně
zvoní,
jak cigána píšeň, když se k smrti kloní!

Když se k smrti kloní, trojhran mu
vyzvání.

Konec písni, tanci, láisce, bědování.

Konec písni, tanci, láisce, bědování.

–Adolf Heyduk

A les je tichý kolem kol

A les je tichý kolem kol,

jen srdce mír ten ruší,
a černý kouř, jenž spěchá v dol,
mě slze v lících, mé slze suší.

Však nemusí jich usušit,
necht' v jiné tváře bije.

Kdo v smutku může zapívat,
ten nezhynul, ten žije, ten žije!

–Adolf Heyduk

Když mne stará matka

Když mne stará matka zpívat, zpívat
učívala,
podivno, že často, často slzívala.
A ted' také pláčem snědě líce mučím,

když cigánské děti hrát a zpívat učím!

–Adolf Heyduk

Struna naladěna

Struna naladěna,
hochu, toč se v kole,
dnes, snad dnes převysoko,

zejtra, zejtra, zejtra zase dole!

Pozejtrí u Nilu
za posvátným stolem;
struna již, struna naladěna,
hochu, toč, hochu, toč se kolem!

–Adolf Heyduk

Hey! How My Triangle Rings Out

Hey! How my triangle rings out in
splendour!

How easy to approach death with such
a sound!

One can approach death to the sound
of the triangle!

No more singing, loving and dancing!

As he breathes his last!

Trans. Richard Stokes

All Around the Woods Are So Still and Silent

All around the woods are so still and
silent,

My heart beats so fearfully;
The black smoke sinks ever deeper
And dries the tears on my cheek.

Ah, my tears do not dry,
You must seek out other cheeks!
He who can praise his pain in song,
Will not curse death.

Trans. Richard Stokes

Songs My Mother Taught Me

W hen my old mother taught me songs
to sing,

Tears would well strangely in her eyes.
Now my brown cheeks are wet with
tears,

When I teach the children how to sing
and play!

Trans. Richard Stokes

Take Your Bow and Strike Up

Take your bow and strike up!
Come and join the round dance, lad!
Be happy today! But what of the
morrow?

Sad tomorrow – it was ever thus!

Next day on the banks of the Nile,
At the table of our fathers,
Take your bow and strike up,
Hasten to the dance and mingle!

Trans. Richard Stokes

Široké rukávy

Široké rukávy a široké gatě

volnější cigánu nežli dolman v zlatě.
Dolman a to zlato bujná prsa svírá;
pod ním volná píšeň násilně umírá.

A kdo raduješ se, tvá kdy píšeň v květě,
přej si, aby zašlo zlato v celém světě!

–Adolf Heyduk

Dejte klec jestřábu

Dejte klec jestřábu ze zlata ryzého;

nezmění on za ni hnízda trněného.

Komoni bujnemu, jenž se pustou žene,
zřídka kdy připnete uzdy a třemene.

A tak i cigánu příroda cos dala:
k volnosti ho věčným poutem,
k volnosti ho upoutala.

–Adolf Heyduk

Follie... Sempre Libera

Follie! Follie!

Delirio vano è questo!

Povera donna,
Sola, Abbandonata,
In questo popoloso deserto
che appellano Parigi,
Che spero or più?
Che far degg'io!
Gioire,
Di voluttà nei vortici perire.

Sempre libera degg'io folleggiare
di gioia in gioia,
Vo' che scorra il viver mio
Pei sentieri del piacer,
Nasca il giorno, o il giorno muoia,

Sempre lieta ne' ritrovi
A diletti sempre nuovi
Dee volare il mio pensier.

– Francesco Maria Piave

In My Loose-Fitting and Airy Linen Clothes

In his loose-fitting and airy linen clothes

The gypsy feels freer than when dressed in silk and gold!

Yes! The golden dolman constricts his breast,
Smotheres the happily wandering strains of his free song.

Trans. Richard Stokes

Give a Hawk a Cage

As long as the falcon can fly above the Tatra mountains,
He will never exchange his rocky nest for a cage.

If the wild foal can race across the heath,
He'll find no pleasure in bridle and reins.

If, O gypsy, nature has given you something,
She has given me freedom all my life.

Trans. Richard Stokes

Always Free

Folly! Folly!

This is vain delirium!

Poor woman,
Alone, abandoned,
In this crowded desert
that they call Paris,
What more can I hope for now?
What must I do!
Enjoy myself,
And perish in the whirl of pleasure.

Always free I want to have a good time
From joy to joy,
I want to glide my life
Along the pathways of pleasure.
Whether the day be beginning or dying,
Always happy at parties,
To new delights
Must my thoughts fly.

Trans. Nico Castel

Goodnight Moon

In the great green room,
There was a telephone and a red balloon
And a picture of the cow jumping over the moon.

And there were three little bears sitting on chairs
And two little kittens and a pair of mittens
And a little toy house and a young mouse
And a comb and a brush and a bowl full of mush
And a quiet old lady who was whispering "hush"

Goodnight room
Goodnight moon
Goodnight cow jumping over the moon
Goodnight light and the red balloon

Goodnight bears
Goodnight chairs
Goodnight kittens and
Goodnight mittens

Goodnight clocks
And goodnight socks
Goodnight little house
And goodnight mouse

Goodnight comb and goodnight brush
Goodnight nobody
Goodnight mush
And goodnight to the old lady whispering "hush"

Goodnight stars
Goodnight air
Goodnight noises everywhere

—Margaret Wise Brown

Program Notes

The Wider View

Travel: something most folks aspire to, save for, and dream about. While the reasons for this can be varied depending on the person, most people would say that they value travel for the exploration, for the freedom they feel while not tied to their daily activities, and for the beauty they can experience through other cultures and other landscapes. In this recital, we will explore all of the above ideas. We will pass through cultures and explore landscapes, and we will reflect on the human experience of yearning for freedom and identity. After our travels, we will arrive home.

We open with two selections from H. Leslie Adam's song cycle, *The Wider View*. "To the Road!" is an invitation to travel and adventure, speaking of all the beauty and magic a traveler will find once on the road. It is declamatory, infectious, and exciting in both the text and the dense, dramatic musical writing. The poet for this text is Paul Laurence Dunbar, a black American poet that lived in the late 19th century and wrote prolifically about his experience as a Black American that was raised by former slaves. "To the Road!" comes from his poetry collection entitled *Lyrics of Love and Laughter*. "The Wider View" presents a more introspective view of travel, reflecting on the process of growing up and widening one's own horizons both figuratively and literally. It is a beautiful and complex ode to personal growth. R. H. Grenville, a pseudonym for the Canadian poet Beatrice Rowley, wrote the text for "The Wider View". H. Leslie Adams is a living American composer (b. 1932) that often fuses jazz and black folksong styles with 20th century compositional techniques. It is easy to hear the influence of jazz on these pieces, both in harmony and melodic ideas. "Come to the road" and join me on our journey!

Spain

Our travels begin in Madrid, Spain with two pieces from French-Spanish composer and singer, Pauline Viardot. "Madrid" sings the praises of all the city's charms, from the serenades to the bulls, and the beauty of a lover found there. The bolero feel of the accompaniment sets the scene for the poetry of Alfred de Musset to transport the listener to the heart of Madrid. Musset was a prominent French poet in the early to mid-nineteenth century, during the Romantic movement. "Madrid" appears in Musset's collection of poetry entitled *Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie*, published in 1830. "Les filles de Cadix" follows with a bubbly and flirtatious count of a night out dancing in Cádiz, Spain, a city in Andalusia, in the Iberian Peninsula. The night is full of fun, flirtation, dancing, bullfights, and a man who thinks more of himself than the girl he is speaking to does. This poem, also by Musset, was originally titled "Chanson" and appeared in Musset's *Poésie posthumes*. Pauline Viardot came from a family of musicians and herself was a composer and beloved mezzo-soprano. Due to her experience with and exposure to opera, Viardot's composition is very theatrical, and these poems would have appealed to Viardot's Spanish upbringing. Viardot and Musset were contemporaries, and Musset was an admirer of her singing career, so the collaboration of the two on these two works was meant to be.

France

Next, we venture to France, where Kathleen Lockhart Manning provides us charming little glimpses into her own experience of Paris. Each text provides a look into a small snapshot of the time that Manning spent in France studying composition. "The Lamplighter" describes a lamplighter's work while humming to himself, "In the Luxembourg Gardens" observes a couple whispering sweet nothings to each other while walking through the famous gardens together, and "Paris: an Ode" is a love song to the city of Paris as a hub for culture and love. The texts were all penned by Manning herself, and set musically in a way that harkens a bit to the style of a turn-of-the-century nightclub crooner. Manning was a singer and composer, with a short career in performing both in London and her native US, but mostly was the composer of almost exclusively vocal music.

Italy

Next, we venture to the heart of Italy. One of the most popular styles of music that is completely unique to Italy is the Neapolitan song. This genre of music, sometimes referred to as "spaghetti music" for its commonplace occurrence in the soundtracks of Italian restaurants, stems from the Italian opera/operetta tradition and is often composed in an arioso style with a lyrical melody. Famous Neapolitan songs include "O Sole Mio" and "Funiculí, Funiculá." The two we hear in this section to represent our travels to Italy are Ernesto De Curtis's "Torna a Surriento" and Vincenzo de Crescenzo's "Rondine al nido." Both texts speak of love experienced and lost, and the longing that inevitably follows lost love. "Torna a Surriento" praises the beauty of the sights and smells of Sorrento, Italy, a city on the coast of the bay of Naples in southern Italy. In the text, a person begs their lover to return to Sorrento and enjoy the beauty of the sea, the town, and the scent of oranges. Meanwhile, the lover in "Rondine al nido" laments a love that left and never returned, unlike the sparrows that return to the same place each year at the same time. Not much is known about either composer, other than that they composed prolifically in this genre, lived in the late 1800's-early 1900's and were natively from Naples. Personally, this adds to the credibility of these pieces as snapshots into the Italian culture at the time, written by normal people as a form of expression of the culture. I love these pieces, and I hope you enjoy the lush, beautiful sounds of Italy.

Cigánské Melodie

Antonín Dvořák was a prolific composer of both instrumental and vocal works, and in the vocal music world is perhaps best known for his opera *Rusalka*. He has been identified over time as one of the most authentic composers of Czech music, alongside the likes of Janáček and Smetana. This song cycle was written originally at the request of Dvořák's friend and singer, Gustav Walter. Dvořák selected a set of seven poems from Adolf Heyduk's *Poems*. Due to the politico-social pressures of the time, Dvořák requested Heyduk create a German translation of the poems' original Czech texts, keeping the syllabic structure and meaning as close as possible to the original Czech.

continued.

While the melodies of the songs are not based on actual Romani melodies, Dvořák compositionally evoked the Romani dances and the instrumentation of typical Romani music, while using texts that expressed themes that were often associated with the Romani people: love, nature, freedom, wandering, singing, and dancing. The first piece of the set, “Má píseň zas mi láskou zní” is a lamenting and emotional song about singing, admiring nature, and yearning for freedom from the oppression that can take our most valued possessions—in this case a brother or close friend—away. “Ajl! Kterak trojhranec můj” evokes a Romani dance, speaking of the ring of the triangle and the joy and freedom that it brings to the dance. This joy is infectious, and as the song states, can lead us easily into death with freedom and joy. Following this, “A les je tichý kolem kol” reflects the beauty of nature at sunset, and about the strength that comes when we cry and let our tears flow, because if we can cry about our hardships, at least we know that we are alive. The most famous of the Cigánské Melodie is next, “Když mne stará matka” or “Songs my mother taught me.” This song is an intimate reflection on the passing of time and on becoming a parent, speaking of the naïveté of a young child seeing their mother cry while singing songs to her children, but then reflecting that now, as a parent, they understand fully the weight behind their mother’s tears. Another song of dance and invitation follows: “Struna naladěna”. This song serves as a call to join the music and dance, for we know that tomorrow might be bad, but we can at least enjoy ourselves today. One of the more distinctive visual aspects of the Romani culture is the flowy clothing they wear, and in “Široké rukávy” we praise the freedom of the clothing, and how the Romani would never trade even the most beautiful gold for their own freedom and identity. To conclude this beautiful set, “Dejte klec jestřábu” states plainly what has been hinted at through the previous songs: the Romani people have made a covenant with nature and their freedom and cannot and will not be contained.

Along with the beautiful melodies, engaging texts, and beautiful dance-like accompaniments, I love these pieces for the way that they explore freedom and identity in the context of nature and wandering. When I travel, I always reach the part of any trip where my mind is clear enough of my day-to-day activities that I can create space to consider my own identity and place in this world, while surrounded by the beauty of another place and culture. And so tonight, we have reached that very place on our shared journey.

Home

While songs with texts based on the idea of home are plentiful, I wanted to take a slightly different approach to this idea. On my own life journey, my physical home has not always been an indicator of the feeling of home, but rather the people that surround me become my home. In putting together this last set, this is the idea upon which I wanted to expound. Going to graduate school is certainly an accomplishment, but I would posture that going to graduate school to change careers as a mom in my early thirties has been

a special kind of commitment that has required a literal village's worth of people around me to accomplish. However, if I picked a song for each of these people, the recital would be another hour long. For this set, I decided to set my focus on the two people in this world who feel the most like home to me: my husband Cody and our son, Jackson. So, for these two boys, the next set was curated.

My husband Cody is also a singer and opera nerd, and tonight I have chosen to perform his favorite aria in the operatic repertoire, "Sempre Libera" from *La traviata* by Giuseppe Verdi. Verdi is one of the most famous and performed operatic composers in all classical music, partially for the sheer volume of works that he put out, but also because by the time of his death, Verdi had become analogous with the Italian national identity. *La traviata* was initially a flop when it was first performed, but over the years it has become one of the most performed operas in the repertoire. The opera is based on Alexandre Dumas's play *La Dame aux camélias*, and tells the story of Violetta, a young woman dying of consumption, and her love story and eventual death from the disease. "Sempre Libera" comes at the end of Act 1, after Violetta had thrown a big party, but asked all her guests to leave following a coughing fit and dizzy spell. While recovering, she meets Alfredo Germont, and after trying to turn him away decides to give him a chance. He leaves, and Violetta considers whether he could be the love of her life, and whether she even deserves to have a "love of her life". In the cabaletta section which I will be singing, Violetta decides to let herself enjoy her life while it lasts and pursue her love of Alfredo.

For my son, Jackson, I have opted to perform a piece of music written to the text of a children's book we have been reading at bedtime since the early days of his life: *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown. This setting of "Goodnight Moon" is written by modern composer Eric Whitacre, most known for his distinctive style of composing choral music. Whitacre is the first granted permission by HarperCollins to set this classic children's book to music and writes on his website that musical fragments of the piece started to form in his head while reading the book 500+ times to his son in the first six years of his life. Whitacre composed the song originally for his son's mother, to be performed by a soprano singer and orchestra. Tonight, you will hear Whitacre's piano/voice version, one of only three vocal solos that he has published to date. As you listen, I encourage you to reflect on the comfort and simplicity of childhood and home, and to imagine me reading this to my dear, sweet blond boy by the light of a lamp in our cozy home.

Upcoming Events

Sunday, February 8, 2026

Faculty Recital Series: Tatiana Mayfield Brown

Hamilton Recital Hall

\$12, free for students & faculty

Thursday, February 12, 2026

Lamont Choirs

Gates Concert Hall

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Friday, February 13, 2026

Faculty Recital Series: Heidi Melton, soprano & Sahar Nouri, piano

Hamilton Recital Hall

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