

2020

## Graduate recital: Taylor Dengler, soprano

Taylor Anne Dengler  
*University of Northern Iowa*

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GRADUATE RECITAL: TAYLOR DENGLER, SOPRANO

An Abstract  
Submitted  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Music

Taylor Anne Dengler  
University of Northern Iowa  
May 2020

This Study by: Taylor Anne Dengler

Entitled: Graduate Recital: Taylor Dengler, Soprano

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the  
Degree of Master of Music

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Date

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Dr. Jean McDonald, Chair, Thesis Committee

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Date

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Dr. Korey Barrett, Thesis Committee Member

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Date

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Dr. Suzanne Hendrix-Case, Thesis Committee Member

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Date

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Dr. Jennifer Waldron, Dean, Graduate College

This Recital Performance by: Taylor Anne Dengler

Entitled: Graduate Recital: Taylor Dengler, Soprano

Date: March 5, 2020

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the

Degree of Master of Music

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Dr. Jennifer Waldron, Dean, Graduate College

## ABSTRACT

On March 5, 2020, soprano Taylor Dengler and pianist Dr. Korey Barrett presented a recital of song literature in Davis Hall at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, Iowa. The first half of the program comprised three sets of Italian music. It opened with Ilia's aria, "Zeffiretti lusinghieri" from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's (1756 - 1791), *Idomeneo*, and was followed by two song sets by Gaetano Donizetti and Giacomo Puccini. The second half of the recital consisted of "Bester Jüngling," another Mozart aria, from *Der Schauspieldirektor*, a selection of four Felix Mendelssohn songs, and Libby Larsen's song cycle "Cowboy Songs."

The opening aria, "Zeffiretti lusinghieri," by Mozart (1756 - 1791), takes place during the first scene of the third act in *Idomeneo* (1781). Mozart set Giambattista Varesco's enchanting text to long and florid melodic lines. At this point in the opera, Ilia sings to the breezes and wishes for them to carry her love to Idamante, who she recently learned has been sent away with Elektra, a Greek princess who is in love with the same man. Typical of Mozart, the da capo aria is introduced with a short recitative in which Ilia addresses the trees and breeze. To begin the aria, the text, "Zephyrs flattering, breezes amorous; oh carry my love all the way to my beloved," is introduced with florid eighth note passages in both piano and voice, set in 3/4 meter, effectively portraying the breeze rocking back and forth. The B section, while remaining in E major, consists of non-resolute harmonies and non-chord tones; it is further characterized by increased melodic leaps and accidentals, displaying the "bitter tears" Ilia bestows upon the plants to carry her

love. Upon return to the A section, ornamentation is added to the previously iterated text and melody, and the word “fedel,” which translates to “faithful,” is held longer each time it is sung as she pleads her beloved’s faithfulness, signaling that her love has remained steady throughout the piece.

Following the aria was Donizetti’s (1797 - 1848) *Inspirazione Viennesi*, which consists of three songs set to text by Carlo Guaita. These exciting texts provide apt material for vocal displays characteristic of the bel canto style, and therefore fully epitomize this musical tradition. “La zingara” tells a tale of a girl describing her birth, youth, and the gypsy magic experienced throughout her life. Set in A minor, the piece contains dance rhythms, augmented fourths, and occasional raised second scale degrees. All these traits are characteristic of “exotic” music, and in turn create the exciting gypsy character. Various passages portray the gypsy girl’s reflections on different phases of her life. The narrator sings of youthful memories in sensual legato passages, alternating with playful melismas on “ah” that sound as if she is prancing through a field, enjoying the twists and turns of life. To represent the mature phases in life, the singer uses legato, sustained pitches rather than staccato, melismatic melodies of youth.

“Il sospiro” departs from the lighthearted mood of “La zingara” in a melancholy song that portrays a woman who has grown tired of love and mundane life. Having grown weary, she pleads for the excitement found in Heaven and for the rejuvenation of “new spring.” “Il sospiro” consists of long, sustained pitches in the lower range of the voice, offering further contrast to “La zingara” with accented

dotted quarter notes rather than sprightly sixteenth notes. This contrast is also created through an initial D minor setting as the singer wallows in lamentation of lost love to the text “unhappy woman, tired of love; the eternal sleep you wish to have.” After the first two stanzas of similar melodic material, the song modulates to D major. This new section is preceded by a victorious accompaniment of consecutive eighth notes in the piano as the singer expresses that she would rather die and ascend to Heaven than remain on earth without her love. Upon repetition of two lines from the first stanza, “unhappy woman, tired of love, ... ah! Don’t remember that here is a heart,” accidentals are added and the piano texture calms into accompanimental doubling for two measures, providing opportunity for the singer to catch her breath and reflect. After this brief shift, the text ascends to “heart,” and continues on in the victorious accompaniment of consecutive eighth notes until slowing into the final arrival at “sigh,” representing her final breath, on the final pitch.

An intense lament on the death of a lover, “E morta,” completed the set. In contrast to “La zingara,” “E morta” is set in E minor and accompanied by constant, repeated eighth notes that evoke suspense and dread in the 12/8 meter. Octave portamenti, legato phrasing, and melodic repetitions grow in intensity during each iteration through heightened dynamic and pitch in the portrayal of this bittersweet text. While the piano provides steadily pulsing eighth note chords, the vocal line contains short snippets of phrases, illustrating the loss for words that can overcome a person when experiencing emotions surrounding death. At the end of the A



section of the piece, which ends with “she is dead,” it modulates to a major key for the B section. The piano changes from the pulsing eighth notes into a 6/8 meter of lullaby rhythms harmonized in legato thirds. After four bars of introduction to this material, the voice joins in singing the piano’s melody on the text, “He lives on as an angel in heaven.” This brief, hopeful section of joy in the afterlife is followed by another section of “morta” portamenti and similar melodic and piano material. The piece concludes with a return to the “heaven” theme, this time decorated with new ornamentation to resemble a da capo aria of the baroque era.

The first half of the recital concluded with three songs by Puccini (1858 - 1924), a composer known for his portrayal of immense emotion and memorable vocal lines. “E l’uccellino,” which begins the set, is a lullaby written by Puccini for the child of a dear friend. The folk-like text and playful piano accompaniment set in D Major provide refreshing contrast to the darker character of the Donizetti songs. “E l’uccellino” is narrated by a bird that describes its resting place on a branch. Each stanza begins with the carefree motive, “And the little bird sings on the branch,” and is followed by the bird speaking to the little child in lullaby language such as, “Sleep, my treasure here upon my breast.” The piece calls for rubato throughout, which accurately depicts a mother putting her child to sleep, not minding a steady tempo, yet providing a calming sound.

The next piece, “Terra e mare,” returned to the subject of love and death, although this time as a metaphor for intimacy. A dense, pulsating accompaniment underlays a text that refers to trees swaying in the breeze, and the voices of the

crashing sea. The singer longs for the trees and the sea to wake her from slumber; rushing wind and crashing seas are depicted from the outset in arc shaped melodic contour. Pulsating rhythm between voice and piano heightens the effect of the ocean's ebb (voice, on the beats) and flow (piano, "and" of the beats). When the singer refers to "dreaming of the profound voice of the sea," the texture is unified by melodic doubling in the piano. However, when the wind returns, the arc shaped melody returns, although the height of the arc is higher. The climactic point of the piece is met with thick texture in the piano and the return of off-beat eighth notes representing crashing waves.

The final piece in the set, "Canto d'Anime," was composed when Puccini was commissioned to write a piece for the gramophone, a newly available music playing device similar to the phonograph. Resembling melodic material from his opera *Madama Butterfly*, the song portrays the freedom of living a life full of light, hope, and optimism. The piece opens with broad ascending quarter note triads, supporting dotted, militaristic rhythms in the voice. Set in Bb major, the piece instantly creates a mood of joy through ascending lines and sprightly rhythms. Adhering to the style of the period, the songs are characterized by liberal use of rubato, dynamic contrast, and varied tempi.

The second half of the recital opened similarly to the first with the presentation of another Mozart aria, "Bester Jüngling," from *Der Schauspieldirektor* (1786). A lesser known librettist, playwright Johann Gottlieb Stephanie wrote this text based on experiences he encountered while owning his own theatre. Set in Eb

major, the piece begins with a tonic chord in the bass and is followed by buoyant rhythms of proclamation. The lack of dissonance in this piece in both piano and voice creates a joyous, inviting atmosphere for the character of the auditionee as she declares, "Good youth, with delight, I accept your love. For in your dear glances, I find happiness." By the last phrase of this section, "I give to you my heart as pledge," Mozart introduces melismatic phrases in the stratosphere all occurring on the final word. This virtuosity appears in an effort to impress the judges during Mademoiselle Silberklang's audition.

A set of four Mendelssohn (1809 - 1847) songs collected from various opuses followed the aria. The text of "Hexenlied," written by Ludwig Heinrich Hölty, translates to "Witches Song," and tells a tale of mortals attending a witches' dance or gathering. The piece is set in G minor in a modified strophic form. The poem is a vivid characterization that begins with the mortals getting ready for the dance and darting out the door. When they arrive at the dance, which takes place on top of Brocken Mountain, Beelzebub is dancing around them, and they are then surrounded by a group of ghosts. The suspenseful tale continues with visions of ghostly trickery described in persistent and quick scalar rhythmic patterns in the piano, minor stepwise scales that mostly ascend, and an allegro tempo that suits the mood.

Mendelssohn set Emanuel Geibel's text "Der Mond," which translates to "The Moon," in  $\frac{3}{4}$  meter and E major. This text is set syllabically, and blossoms through arc-shaped, four measure phrases. Consistent, pulsating eighth notes alternating

between right and left hand in the piano represent the heartbeat and unite with the vocal line in dynamic and tonal consonance. In subsequent verses, Geibel states “my heart is as the darkest night, when all the treetops ruffle,” and uses vivid musical imagery and uses vivid imagery through major harmonies, legato eighth notes, and legato phrases in *messa di voce*.

“Der Blumenstrauss” is set to a text by Karl Klingeman about a woman who, while strolling through a flower garden, decides to arrange a bouquet for her love. Set in 6/8 meter and A major, the piece contains lyrical phrases that seem to paint the text with “blooming” climaxes. The piece begins with an ascending pitch from solfege pitch *sol*, which naturally drives into the tonic and is doubled in the accompaniment. Rising scalar passages begin the verses, and are followed by varying phrase shapes until the final line of the stanza is repeated, both times ending on the tonic.

“Neue Liebe” completed the Mendelssohn set, featuring a poem by well-known poet Heinrich Heine. The mystical text composed of frequent octave leaps and text repetition is “in the forest, in the moonlight, I recently saw the elves riding; I heard their bells sounding, the horns of their hearts ringing.” Set in f-sharp minor, the mysterious picture of elves as they ride through the night is created with arpeggiated phrases. These magical, sprightly staccato arpeggiations in the piano create excitement and curiosity of a fairytale. “Neue Liebe” is iconic among Mendelssohn’s songs for its driving eighth note accompaniment paired with a thrilling tempo as prescribed by the *presto* tempo indication.

The recital closed with *Cowboy Songs*, a cycle by Libby Larsen (b. 1950) consisting of three stories from the wild west. Taking place on a ranch, the cycle opens with “Bucking Bronco,” showcasing a text by American outlaw Belle Star. Opening with the unaccompanied declaration “My love is a rider,” she reminisces on her first love. Unaccompanied freedom returns at the end of the piece, but this time with an unfortunate twist: the cowgirl tells of her love leaving disappearing after acting in false courtship. Set in A-flat major, Larsen sets this western tale in mixed meters... 3/4, 4/4, and 6/4, which serve to punctuate both the bumpy road on horseback and the phases of falling in and out of love. Throughout the piece, unaccompanied sections reappear, in which the singer slows down to change the mood, prefacing each story with an introductory statement such as, “Now all young maidens, wherever you reside...” Once the piano enters again, the singer continues into the warning statement, “Beware of the cowboy who swings rawhide!” Larsen’s setting effectively communicates this text with lazy, swung off-beat grace notes that display cowgirl, speech-like rhythms combined with a contemporary melody.

“Lift Me into Heaven Slowly,” with text by Robert Creeley, contrasts the energetic freedom of “Bucking Bronco” with worn-out, lazy gestures. In this portrayal, the character describes fatigue at the end of the day. Her feet can hardly hold her and, unable to mount her horse, she walks alongside while holding the reins. Set in 6/4, with many sustained pitches and triplet rhythms, the song unfolds in three variations of the repeated text, each time with different chromaticism and varied rhythmic duration on the word, “slowly.”

Ending the set and the recital is “Billy the Kid,” set to an anonymous text. This tale provides contrast to the previous texts, telling of “a bad man” named Billy, who is the town criminal, always out to find his next kill. Tension in the storyline is often communicated through offbeat and unpredictable rhythms paired with unresolved harmonies. Although appearing in C major, chromaticism throughout the piece seems to move from F major sounds, almost towards C Phrygian, which includes lowered scale degrees 2, 3, 6, and 7. The phrase, “He kept folks in hot water, stole from every stage, when he was full of liquor he was always in a rage” begins with a leap to a Db and ends with a chromatic arpeggiation that ends on a high Bb. At the end of the piece, after telling stories of his crime, Billy comes across a man who is “a whole lot badder,” who kills Billy. The last line of the piece exclaims “and we ain’t none the sadder,” and is echoed with a short fragment of the piano motive that introduces the piece.

School of Music  
University of Northern Iowa

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presents

Taylor Dengler, Soprano  
In a Graduate Recital

assisted by:

*Dr. Korey Barrett, piano*

In partial fulfillment of the requirement  
for the M.M. degree in Vocal Performance  
From the Studio of Dr. Jean McDonald

Zeffiretti lusinghieri

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
(1756 – 1791)

La zingara  
Il sospiro  
È morta

Gaetano Donizetti  
(1797 – 1848)

E L'uccellino (Ninna-Nanna)  
Terra E mare  
Canto D'anime

Giacomo Puccini  
(1858 – 1924)

**Intermission**

Bester Jüngling

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
(1756 – 1791)

*Opus 8 No. 8, Hexenlied*  
*Opus 86 No. 5, Der Mond*  
*Opus 47 No. 5, Der Blumenstrauß*  
*Opus 19a No. 4, Neue Liebe*

Felix Mendelssohn  
(1809 – 1847)

Cowboy Songs  
*Bucking Bronco*  
*Lift Me into Heaven Slowly*  
*Billy the Kid*

Libby Larsen  
(b. 1950)

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Davis Hall, at 8:00 P.M.

Thursday, March 5, 2020