

Program Notes

Henri Duparc: *L'invitation au voyage*

Baudelaire's poetry imagines an idealized paradise, and Duparc's music brings it alive with shimmering, dreamlike beauty. The canals stretching from Paris to Amsterdam once symbolized, in the European imagination, a pathway to paradise. For us, it recalls our first trip in 2021 to Puerto Rico's bioluminescent bay, where glowing waters felt like stepping into another world. Just as in the song's vision, Ben has been my protector and companion—supporting me through the trials of my doctoral journey. Our love, like this piece, is romantic, magical, and steadfast.

Henri Duparc: *Phidylé*

*This song embodies the uniquely French aesthetic of sensual romanticism. Poetry and music together depict the complete, free expression of love under nature, sunlight, breeze, grass, and earth witnessing the union of two souls and bodies. It is not concealed, but honest; not fleeting but elevated into a hymn of life and love. To me, *Phidylé* represents ultimate trust and fearless intimacy. With Ben, I discovered this freedom of union—meeting the truest love in the truest version of myself.*

Franz Liszt: *Liebesträume* No. 3

*Among the treasures of the Romantic imagination, few works gleam with such incandescent tenderness as Liszt's *Liebesträume* No. 3. Conceived in the spirit of Freiligrath's verse "Love as long as you can, until death," it is not merely a nocturne but a vision: a dream transfigured into sound. The melody rises like a voice from the heart, first clothed in murmurs of intimacy, then ascending toward a radiant outpouring of passion, before settling into a benediction of eternal repose. To us, its poetry speaks with a singular intimacy. It echoes the unfolding of our own love—what began as a quiet spark has deepened into devotion, and now flowers into a promise that stretches forward with luminous certainty. In this moment, *Liebesträume* becomes both a hymn and a witness, binding art and life into one gesture. May this dream of love, awakened through music, continue to bloom without end.*

Chinese Art Song: *At the Water's Edge* (在水一方)

Rooted in verses from the Book of Songs, this piece evokes the yearning across a river, gazing at the beloved on the far shore. For us, it represents not only love that transcends distance and culture, but also the challenges of coming to know and understand one another. Our journey together has not been easy, it has been full of twists and trials. Yet also marked by the wonder of fate that brought us together. Whether academic pressures, life's challenges, or long distances, we chose to walk side by side and overcome them. Like the poem's lines "the path may be long and winding", our story reflects resilience, hope, and the miracle of finding each other. Today, on our wedding day, we meet at last in the heart of the river, turning every hardship and every blessing into a new beginning—together, for life.

Robert Schumann: *Widmung* (Dedication)

*In 1840, the year of his marriage, Schumann presented *Widmung* to Clara as a wedding gift. It is a declaration of love and gratitude—a celebration of renewed life and belonging through love, with Rückert's words and Schumann's ardent music elevating that sentiment.*

For me, Ben is my anchor and my peace. He brings me serenity and inspires me to become a better self. *Widmung* is more than a confession of love; it is my vision of marriage—a sanctuary and a new beginning.

Artists:



Chinese baritone **Dongwei Shen** recently graduated with an Artist Diploma from The Juilliard School, where he studied with Elizabeth Bishop and Leah Crocetto. He earned his Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of Texas at Austin, performing roles such as the Kaiser in *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* and Belcore in *L'elisir d'amore*. Shen's recent performances include Escamillo in Stephen Wadsworth's *Carmen* project, Argippo in Cavalli's *Erismena* at Juilliard, and Moralès in *Carmen* at the Music Academy of the West. He has also sung Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*) and Dandini (*La Cenerentola*) at the Manhattan School of Music, and appeared at the Joye in Aiken Festival and Aspen Opera Theater and VocalARTS program. Dr. Shen earned his bachelor's degree from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music.



Nini Qiao is a soprano, voice instructor, and artistic consultant. She earned her Doctor of Musical Arts from The Ohio State University, where she pioneered an interdisciplinary research field integrating Chinese literature, linguistics, psychology, musicology, and voice science to enhance performance interpretation and revive traditional Chinese classical literature.

Her recent performance highlights include Dafne (*Dafne & Sour Angelica*), Micaëla (*Carmen*), and Musetta (*La Bohème*) with Mannes Opera, as well as Papagena (*The Magic Flute*) and Susanna (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) as a Miami Music Festival Fellow. She trained with Diana Soviero at the Mannes School of Music, where she earned her Master's degree.

As founder of Nini's Music and Arts Dumbo LLC, Qiao has guided students to admission and scholarships at leading institutions such as the Manhattan School of Music, Mannes, NYU, and Columbia University. In 2025 alone, her six students all earned high scholarships to prestigious music conservatories, including the MSM and Mannes.

Beyond music, Dr. Qiao is also a bespoke jewelry designer, known for creating unique, heirloom-quality pieces at accessible fine jewelry prices. Her designs reflect her distinctive artistic aesthetic and her commitment to exceptional, enduring craftsmanship.



Wei Dai is a distinguished Chinese pianist, organist, and educator based in New York City. He holds a Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance from the Mannes School of Music and pursued his Master of Music under the tutelage of Dr. Vladimir Valjarević.

As a soloist, Wei has performed extensively at prominent venues throughout New York City, including Carnegie Hall, Steinway Hall, Opera America, the DiMenna Center for Classical Music, and the Gerald W. Lynch Theater. His refined technique and interpretive depth have earned him a reputation for delivering compelling performances.

In addition to his solo work, Wei is an accomplished chamber musician, having collaborated with notable artists such as Peixin Chen and Meigui Zhang. His versatility as a performer extends to both collaborative and solo settings, showcasing a broad repertoire that spans from Baroque to contemporary music. In 2024, Wei began collaborating with Pinease, a New York-based nonprofit dedicated to fostering cultural exchange through intimate, high-quality performances. Within his

first year, he headlined three completely sold-out shows, each featuring thoughtfully curated programs that blended classical piano with storytelling, thematic exploration, and cross-disciplinary dialogue. His performances for Pinease not only showcased his technical mastery and expressive range but also created a uniquely immersive experience that resonated deeply with audiences. Recognizing both his artistry and his commitment to Pinease's mission, the organization named him its first resident artist—a role through which he continues to shape Pinease's musical identity.

Wei also maintains a strong presence as a dedicated educator, providing comprehensive piano instruction and fostering his students' musical growth through tailored pedagogical approaches.

Lyric and Translation:

L'invitation au voyage

Mon enfant, ma sœur,
Songe à la douceur
D'aller là-bas vivre ensemble!
Aimer à loisir,
Aimer et mourir
Au pays qui te ressemble!
Les soleils mouillés
De ces ciels brouillés
Pour mon esprit ont les charmes
Si mystérieux
De tes traîtres yeux,
Brillant à travers leurs larmes.

Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
Luxe, calme et volupté!

Vois sur ces canaux
Dormir ces vaisseaux
Dont l'humeur est vagabonde;
C'est pour assouvir
Ton moindre désir
Qu'ils viennent du bout du monde.
-Les soleils couchants
Revêtent les champs,
Les canaux, la ville entière,
D'hyacinthe et d'or;
Le monde s'endort
Dans une chaude lumière.

Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
Luxe, calme et volupté!

Invitation to journey

My child, my sister,
Think how sweet
To journey there and live together!
To love as we please,
To love and die
In the land that is like you!
The watery suns
Of those hazy skies
Hold for my spirit
The same mysterious charms
As your treacherous eyes
Shining through their tears.

There - nothing but order and beauty dwell,
Abundance, calm, and sensuous delight.

See on those canals
Those vessels sleeping,
Vessels with a restless soul;
To satisfy
Your slightest desire
They come from the ends of the earth.
The setting suns
Clothe the fields,
Canals and all the town
With hyacinth and gold;
The world falls asleep
In a warm light.

There - nothing but order and beauty dwell,
Abundance, calm, and sensuous delight

Translation by Richard Stokes

Phidylé

L'herbe est molle au sommeil sous les frais
peupliers,
Aux pentes des sources moussues,
Qui, dans les prés en fleur germant par mille
issues,
Se perdent sous les noirs halliers.

Repose, ô Phidylé! Midi sur les feuillages
Rayonne, et t'invite au sommeil.
Par le trèfle et le thym, seules, en plein soleil,
Chantent les abeilles volages.

Un chaud parfum circule au détour des sentiers,
La rouge fleur des blés s'incline,
Et les oiseaux, rasant de l'aile la colline,
Cherchent l'ombre des églantiers.

Mais, quand l'Astre, incliné sur sa courbe
éclatante,
Verra ses ardeurs s'apaiser,
Que ton plus beau sourire et ton meilleur baiser
Me récompensent de l'attente!

在水一方

绿草苍苍 白雾茫茫
有位佳人 在水一方
绿草萋萋 白雾迷离
有位佳人 靠水而居
我愿逆流而上
依偎在她身旁
无奈前有险滩
道路又远又长
我愿顺流而下
找寻她的方向
却见依稀仿佛

Phidylé

The grass is soft for sleep beneath the cool poplars
On the banks of the mossy springs
That flow in flowering meadows from a thousand
sources,
And vanish beneath dark thickets.

Rest, O Phidylé! Noon on the leaves
Is gleaming, inviting you to sleep.
By the clover and thyme, alone, in the bright
sunlight,
The fickle bees are humming.

A warm fragrance floats about the winding paths,
The red flowers of the cornfield droop;
And the birds, skimming the hillside with their
wings,
Seek the shade of the eglantine.

But when the sun, low on its dazzling curve,
Sees its brilliance wane,
Let your loveliest smile and finest kiss
Reward me for my waiting!

Translation by Richard Stokes
from *A French Song Companion*

At the Water's Edge

Upon the meads where verdant grasses throng,
'Neath ghostly mists that drift and linger long,
There dwells a maid, fair as the morning's song,
She bides beside the waters, pure and strong.
The reeds grow thick, the vapors veil the skies,
A gentle vision lures my longing eyes.
By river's edge her dwelling place doth be,
Yet fate hath set a gulf 'twixt her and me.
I strive against the stream with heart aflame,
To sit beside her, whispering her name.
Yet rocks and shoals my weary course delay,
The road is rough, the current bears away.

她在水的中央
我愿逆流而上
与她轻言细语
无奈前有险滩
道路曲折无已
我愿顺流而下
找寻她的踪迹
却见仿佛依稀
她在水中伫立
绿草苍苍 白雾茫茫
有位佳人 在水一方

Widmung

Du meine Seele, du mein Herz,
Du meine Wonn', o du mein Schmerz,
Du meine Welt, in der ich lebe,
Mein Himmel du, darein ich schwebe,
O du mein Grab, in das hinab
Ich ewig meinen Kummer gab!
Du bist die Ruh, du bist der Frieden,
Du bist vom Himmel mir beschieden.
Dass du mich liebst, macht mich mir wert,
Dein Blick hat mich vor mir verklärt,
Du hebst mich liebend über mich,
Mein guter Geist, mein bess'res Ich!

Then down the tide I bend my soul's desire,
To seek the star that doth my breast inspire.
But lo! as shadows shift and visions part,
She stands midstream, a dream that mocks my heart.
Once more against the flood I dare to go,
To breathe soft words the gentle winds might know.
Yet still the torrent bars the path to bliss,
A winding way, all peril and abyss.
Again I drift, my hope a fleeting flame,
To chase her semblance, evermore the same.
And there she waits, as if in dream profound,
A figure shining on the waters was found.
Where grasses flourish, where the pale mists throng,
There dwells a maid, by the river's breast along.

Dedication

You my soul, you my heart,
You my rapture, O you my pain,
You my world in which I live,
My heaven you, to which I aspire,
O you my grave, into which
My grief forever I've consigned!
You are repose, you are peace,
You are bestowed on me from heaven.
Your love for me gives me my worth,
Your eyes transfigure me in mine,
You raise me lovingly above myself,
My guardian angel, my better self!

Translations by Richard Stokes
from *The Book of Lieder*