



AMHERST GLEBE ARTS RESPONSE, INC.

in collaboration with

The Sweet Briar College Janet Lowrey Gager Community Concert Series  
present

# “Sounds of the Seasons”



*Anna Billias, piano & Gregory Parker, baritone*

**Free Virtual Concert**

**3 p.m., Sunday, Sept. 27, 2020**

**Memorial Chapel**

# “Sounds of the Seasons”

*Gregory Parker, baritone*

*Anna Billias, piano*

## **Spring**

Spring is a time of renewal and is often symbolic of hope. “To Spring” was chosen as the opening for this recital for its gentle and clear beauty. You can almost hear how nature awakens, how the melting icicles nurture the new sprouts. This piece reminds us of how fragile, and yet how beautiful, the process of birth (and rebirth) is. While the Argento and Bizet songs are paens of spring joy, “Der Nussbaum” gently reveals the anticipation of an impending marriage and “If it’s ever spring again” is a wistful reflection on a spring that was and may never be again.

To Spring .....	Edvard Grieg
from <i>Lyric Pieces</i> , Op. 43, No. 6	(1843-1907)
Spring.....	Dominick Argento
from <i>Six Elizabethan Songs</i>	(1927-2019)
Der Nussbaum .....	Robert Schumann
from <i>Myrthen</i> , Op. 25	(1810-1856)
Chanson d’Avril .....	Georges Bizet
	(1838-1875)
If it’s ever spring again.....	Benjamin Britten
from <i>Winter Words</i>	(1913-1976)

## **Summer**

In these unprecedented times, and amidst the quarantine, “Summerland” serves as a perfect piece for our disturbed souls. It is written by African American composer William Grant Still, who, according to his daughter Judith Anne Still, often used this piece as a form of music therapy. As noted by Mark Boozer, an advocate of Still’s music, “Summerland lacks in pretension, and does not strive for artificial exuberance, unnecessary complexity, or self importance. It merely seeks to be what it is: a gem of pianistic poetry.”

Floyd’s “Two Stevenson Songs” capture the innocence of children at play on a summer afternoon just as Brahms’ “O komme, holde Sommernacht” reveals the passionate naughtiness of a nighttime triste. James Agee’s poem, “Sure on this Shining Night” lays the old year in its winter grave as the world basks in the warm radiance of the summer sun. Under the vast starlit summer night of a global pandemic, we long to exclaim, “All is healed, all is health.”

Summerland.....	William Grant Still
from <i>Three Visions</i>	(1895-1978)
Two Stevenson Songs.....	Carlisle Floyd
Rain	(b. 1926)
Where Go the Boats?	
O komme, holde Sommernacht, Op. 58, No. 4 .....	Johannes Brahms
	(1833-1897)
Sure on this shining night .....	Samuel Barber
from <i>Permit Me Voyage</i>	(1910-1981)

## ***Autumn***

“Autumn Moon Over the Calm Lake” invites the audience to enjoy the beautiful scenery of the famous ‘West Lake’ in Hangzhou, China. Lü Wencheng generously shares his heritage through an oriental folk tune beautifully woven into the intricate texture of this piece. One can almost feel the tranquil waters of the lake reflecting the shimmering colors of the golden moon above it as this piece gently flows through the notes.

I decided to include “Melody” in the fall season repertoire for a very special reason. Fall is not only associated with beauty in foliage, peace and tranquility, but often with the fading colors that signal the end of the seasonal life cycle. On June 1 of this year the immense talent who wrote this piece, Myroslav Skoryk, has left this earth for the land of eternity. I am playing his work to pay a tribute to this great Ukrainian composer and the legacy he left behind in his numerous compositions. Over time, “Melody” has become one of his nation’s spiritual anthems, and is beginning to be known worldwide.

“Linden Lea” is a nostalgic recollection of the simple pleasures of home in an autumnal countryside and is cast in the form of the folk songs that Vaughan Williams loved to collect. “Automne” describes the melancholy of regret that can descend on the soul like so many dead, dry leaves and “Im Herbst” paints a bleak scene of withered flowers and leafless trees as the poet cries, “My love is false, O, that I were dead”. The chill of autumn can be welcomed or dreaded.

Autumn Moon Over the Calm lake .....	Lü Wencheng (1898-1981)
Melody .....	Myroslav Skoryk (1938-2020)
Linden Lea: A Dorset Song .....	Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)
Automne, Op. 18, No. 3 .....	Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)
Im Herbst, Op. 17, No. 6 .....	Robert Franz (1815-1892)

## ***Winter***

Debussy’s piano miniatures welcome the winter season in a contrasting way. The first composition “Footprints in the Snow” is quite eerie and emotionally heavy. Being only 36 measures long, it lasts for almost four minutes. Various indications, such as, “this rhythm should have the sonorous value of a sad and frozen landscape,” assist the pianist in finding the proper colors in this ominous journey. The three-note motive that opens the prelude will reappear throughout the piece. Debussy employs unique scales, such as Lydian, Dorian, Phrygian and whole-tone. Melodic layers allow the pianist to explore far registers as if going to the depth of the woods in a cold evening of loneliness.

“The snow is dancing.” is written in D minor, yet the effect is in contrast to “Footprints in the Snow.” The feeling of immobility in the first prelude is juxtaposed to the airy, free-moving snowflakes of this miniature. Perhaps the source of its light and cheerful mood could be ascribed to Debussy’s only child, Claude-Emma. The composer devoted his piano suite to her, who, according to Marcel Dietschy, “...was the only one who inspired him in 1906...and gave him the quality of feeling to which we owe the Children’s Corner of 1908.”

With its lush harmonies, “Snow towards Evening” beautifully captures the tranquility of a snowy winter night while “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” describes the traveler’s thoughts of suicide as he pauses on a lonely road, commenting, “the woods are lovely, dark, and deep,” no one would notice if he ended his life here. However, he continues, “but I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep.” Life will go on. We come full-circle with Schumann’s brief but magnificent “Schneeglöckchen” in which the snowflakes of winter, hanging like tiny bells, herald the return of spring and the renewal it brings.

Footprints in the Snow.....	Claude Debussy
from <i>First Book of Preludes</i>	(1862-1918)
The snow is dancing .....	Claude Debussy
from <i>Children's Corner</i>	
Snow towards Evening .....	Elinor Remick Warren
	(1900-1991)
Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening .....	Ned Rorem
	(b. 1923)
Schneeglöckchen, Op. 79, No. 27	Robert Schumann

## Texts

### *Spring*

Spring, the sweet spring, is the year's pleasant king;  
 Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring  
 Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing  
 Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The palm and may make country houses gay  
 Lambs frisk and play, the shepherd pipes all day  
 And we hear aye birds tune this merry lay  
 Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The fields breathe sweet, the daisies kiss our feet  
 Young lovers meet, old wives a-sunning sit  
 In every street these tunes our ears do greet  
 Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!  
 Spring! The sweet spring!

### Der Nussbaum

Es grünet ein Nussbaum, vor dem Haus,  
 Duftig,  
 Luftig  
 Breitet er blättrig die Blätter aus.

Viel liebliche Blüten stehen d'ran,  
 Linde  
 Winde  
 Kommen, sie herzlich zu umfahn.

Es flüstern je zwei zu zwei gepaart,  
 Neigend,  
 Beugend  
 Zierlich zum Kusse die Häuptchen zart.

Sie flüstern von einem Mägdlein, das  
 Dächte  
 Die Nächte  
 Und Tagelang, wüsste ach! selber nicht was.

Sie flüstern—wer mag verstehen so gar  
 Leise

Weis'?'  
Flüstern von Bräut'gam und nächstem Jahr.

Das Mägdli horchet, es rauscht im Baum;  
Sehnend,  
Wähnend  
Sinkt es lächelnd in Schlaf und Traum.

### ***The Walnut Tree***

A nut tree blossoms outside the house,  
Fragrantly,  
Airily,  
It spreads its leafy boughs.

Many lovely blossoms it bears,  
Gentle  
Winds  
Come to caress them tenderly.

Paired together, they whisper,  
Inclining,  
Bending  
Gracefully their delicate heads to kiss.

They whisper of a maiden who  
Dreamed  
For nights  
And days of, alas, she knew not what  
.  
They whisper—who can understand  
So soft  
A song?  
Whisper of a bridegroom and next year.

The maiden listens, the tree rustles;  
Yearning,  
Musing  
She drifts smiling into sleep and dreams.

### ***Chanson d'Avril***

Lève-toi! lève-toi! le printemps vient de naître!  
Là-bas, sur les vallons, flotte un réseau vermeil!  
Tout frissonne au jardin, tout chante et ta fenêtre,  
Comme un regard joyeux, est pleine de soleil!

Du côté des lilas aux touffes violettes,  
Mouches et papillons bruissent à la fois  
Et le muguet sauvage, ébranlant ses clochettes,  
A réveillé l'amour endormi dans les bois!

Puisqu'Avril a semé ses marguerites blanches,  
Laisse ta mante lourde et ton manchon frileux,  
Déjà l'oiseau t'appelle et tes soeurs les pervenches  
Te souriront dans l'herbe en voyant tes yeux bleus!

Viens, partons! au matin, la source est plus limpide;  
Lève-toi! viens, partons! N'attendons pas du jour les brûlantes chaleurs;  
Je veux mouiller mes pieds dans la rosée humide,  
Et te parler d'amour sous les poiriers en fleurs.

### ***April Song***

Get up! Get up! Spring has just been born!  
Over those valleys a rosy mist is floating!  
Everything in the garden trembles and sings; your window  
is full of sunshine, like a joyful gaze.

Around the bunches of purple-flowering lilac  
butterflies and bees flutter and hum together,  
and the little shaking bells of lily-of-the-valley  
have woken up Eros who was sleeping in the woods.

Now that April has scattered its white daisies,  
go without your heavy cloak and cold-weather muff!  
The birds are already calling you, and the periwinkles (your sisters)  
will smile in the grass when they see your blue eyes.

Let's get going! The stream is clearer in early morning.  
Get up! Let's not wait for the day's burning heat.  
I want to wet my feet in the moist dew  
and talk to you of love under the blossoming pear-trees.

### ***If it's ever spring again***

If it's ever spring again,  
Spring again,  
I shall go where went I when  
Down the moor-cock splashed, and hen,  
Seeing me not, amid their flounder,  
Standing with my arm around her;  
If it's ever spring again,  
Spring again,  
I shall go where went I then.

If it's ever summer-time,  
Summer-time,  
With the hay crop at the prime,  
And the cuckoos - two - in rhyme,  
As they used to be, or seemed to,  
We shall do as long we've dreamed to,  
If it's ever summer-time,  
Summer-time,  
With the hay, and bees achime.

### ***Rain***

The rain is raining all around,  
It falls on field and tree,  
It rains on the umbrellas here,  
And on the ships at sea.

### ***Where Go the Boats?***

Dark brown is the river,  
Golden is the sand.  
It flows along for ever,  
With trees on either hand.

Green leaves a-floating,  
Castles of the foam,  
Boats of mine a-boating -  
Where will all come home?

On goes the river  
And out past the mill,  
Away down the valley,  
Away down the hill.

Away down the river,  
A hundred miles or more,  
Other little children  
Shall bring my boats ashore.

O komme, holde Sommernacht  
O komme, holde Sommernacht,  
Verschwiegen;  
Dich hat die Liebe recht gemacht  
Zum Siegen!

Da brechen manche Knospen los,  
Verstohlen,  
Da öffnen ihren süßen Schoß  
Violen;

Da neigt ihr Haupt im Dämmerchein  
Die Rose,  
Da wird mein Liebchen auch noch mein,  
Das lose!

### ***O come, lovely summer night***

O come, lovely summer night,  
Yet secretly;  
Love has justly made you  
A time for conquest!

It is then that many buds are broken off,  
Stealthily;  
It is then that their sweet shoots are opened  
By violets;

It is then that in the afterglow,  
The roses incline their heads;  
It is then that my sweetheart surely shall be mine,  
The loose girl!

Sure on this shining night  
Sure on this shining night

Of starmade shadows round,  
Kindness must watch for me  
This side the ground.  
The late year lies down the north.  
All is healed, all is health.  
High summer holds the earth.  
Hearts all whole.  
Sure on this shining night  
I weep for wonder  
Wandering far alone  
Of shadows on the stars.

### ***Linden Lea***

Within the woodlands, flow'ry gladed  
By the oak tree's mossy moot;  
The shining grass blades, timber shaded,  
Now do quiver under foot;  
And birds do whistle overhead,  
And water's bubbling in its bed;  
And there for me, the apple tree  
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

When leaves that lately were a-springing  
Now do fade within the copse,  
And painted birds do hush their singing,  
Up upon the timber tops,;  
And brown leaved fruit's a-turning red,  
In cloudless sunshine overhead,  
With fruit for me, the apple tree  
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

Let other folk make money faster  
In the air of dark roomed towns;  
I do not dread a peevish master,  
Though no man may heed my frowns.  
I be free to go abroad,  
Or take again my homeward road,  
To where, for me, the apple tree  
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

### ***Automne***

Automne au ciel brumeux, aux horizons navrants,  
Aux rapides couchants, aux aurores pâlies,  
Je regarde couler, comme l'eau du torrent,  
Tes jours faits de mélancolie.

Sur l'aile des regrets mes esprits emportés,  
– Comme s'il se pouvait que notre âge renaisse! –  
Parcourent, en rêvant, les coteaux enchantés,  
Où jadis sourit ma jeunesse.

Je sens, au clair soleil du souvenir vainqueur,  
Refleurir en bouquet les roses déliées,  
Et monter à mes yeux des larmes, qu'en mon cœur,  
Mes vingt ans avaient oubliées!

### ***Autumn***

Autumn of misty skies and heartbreaking horizons,  
Of swift sunsets and pale dawns,  
I watch flow by, like torrential water,  
Your days imbued with melancholy.

My thoughts, borne away on the wings of regret,  
– As though our time could come round again! –  
Roam in reverie the enchanted hills,  
Where long ago my youth once smiled.

In the bright sun of triumphant memory  
I feel untied roses reflower in bouquets,  
And tears rise to my eyes, which in my heart  
At twenty had been forgotten!

### ***Im Herbst***

Die Heide ist braun, einst blühte sie roth,  
Die Birke ist kahl, grün war einst ihr Kleid;  
Einst ging ich zu zwein, jetzt geh' ich allein  
Weh über den Herbst und die gramvolle Zeit!  
O weh, o weh,  
Weh über den Herbst und die gramvolle Zeit!

Einst blühten die Rosen, jetzt welken sie all',  
Voll Duft war die Blume, nun zog er heraus;  
Einst pflückt' ich zu zwein, jetzt pflückt' ich allein,  
Das wird ein dürrer, ein duftloser Strauß!  
O weh, o weh,  
Das wird ein dürrer, ein duftloser Strauß!

Die Welt ist so öd', sie war einst so schön,  
Ich war einst so reich, so reich,  
Jetzt bin ich voll Not;  
Einst ging ich zu zwein, jetzt geh' ich allein;  
Mein Lieb ist falsch, o wäre ich tot!  
Mein Lieb ist falsch, o wäre ich tot!

### ***In Autumn***

The heather is brown, once it bloomed red,  
The birch is bare, its garb was green once;  
Once I walked as a twosome, now I walk alone,  
Woe to autumn and the sorrowful times!  
Oh woe, oh woe,  
Woe to autumn and the sorrowful times!

Once the roses bloomed, now they have all withered,  
Full of fragrance was the flower, now it has been carried off;  
Once I picked as a twosome, now I pick alone,  
That shall be a withered, a scentless bouquet.  
Oh woe, oh woe,  
That shall be a withered, a scentless bouquet!

The world is so desolate, once it was so beautiful,  
I was once so rich, now I am full of misery;

Once I walked as a twosome, now I walk alone,  
My love is false, oh that I were dead!  
My love is false, oh that I were dead!

### ***Snow towards Evening***

Suddenly the sky turned gray,  
The day,  
Which had been bitter and chill,  
Grew soft and still.  
Quietly, quietly,  
From some invisible blossoming tree  
Millions of petals cool and white  
Drifted and blew,  
Lifted and flew,  
Fell with the falling night.

### ***Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening***

Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.

### ***Schneeglöckchen***

Der Schnee, der gestern noch in Flöckchen  
Vom Himmel fiel,  
Hängt nun geronnen heut als Glöckchen  
Am zarten Stiel.  
Schneeglöckchen läutet, was bedeutet's  
Im stillen Hain?

O komm geschwind! Im Haine läutet's  
Den Frühling ein.  
O kommt, ihr Blätter, Blüt' und Blume,  
Die ihr noch träumt,  
All zu des Frühlings Heiligtume!  
Kommt ungesäumt!

## ***Snowbells***

The snow that only yesterday fell in flakes  
From the sky,  
Hangs now, frozen, as a little bell  
From a delicate stem.  
A bell of snow rings in the silent wood,  
What can it mean?

O come quickly! The wood is ringing  
Springtime in.  
Come quickly, leaves, blossom and flowers,  
You who still dream,  
Into spring's sanctuary!  
Come without delay!

## **The Performers**

**Anna Billias** is an adjunct instructor and accompanist at Washington & Lee University, and was formerly Assistant Professor and Director of Piano Studies and Collaborative Performance at Sweet Briar College. She was trained as a concert pianist at the Prokofiev State Academy of Music in Donetsk, Ukraine, and graduated with advanced degrees in both performance and instruction for piano, and completed her doctoral studies at Shenandoah Conservatory in Winchester, VA.

Dr. Billias has performed in numerous concerts at Sweet Briar College; Hampden Sydney College; Lynchburg College; Liberty University; Randolph College; Eastern Mennonite University, Shenandoah Conservatory; James Madison University; in London, England; and in Paris, France with Gregory Parker; Crimea, Russia; and Donetsk, Ukraine. She has performed in Lynchburg for fundraising events for the Forte Chamber Music Festival, Opera on the James and for the Lynchburg Symphony Orchestra. She has served as a jurist for musical events in Amherst, Lynchburg and Charlottesville, and regularly volunteers her time performing at local retirement communities.

In her spare time, she is the music director at a local church in Lynchburg, VA and runs a growing private piano studio. Dr. Billias enjoys serving as an accompanist for the Rockbridge Youth Chorale in Lexington, VA and giving concerts in the Shenandoah Valley. She is the proud mother of three children, and her husband, Christopher, is a Judge in the 25th Judicial District of Virginia.

**Gregory Parker**, Professor of Music and Head of the Department of Music at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia, has performed as a baritone soloist in numerous oratorio and recital presentations as well as with opera companies in Alabama, Texas, Missouri, North Carolina and Virginia. In June 2018, he performed a recital of contemporary American art songs on the *Dimanches Musicaux* concert series at the American Cathedral in Paris with pianist, Anna Billias. In addition to studying with James McKinney, author of *The Diagnosis and Correction of Vocal Faults*, he has worked with internationally acclaimed pedagogues Horst Günter and Richard Miller.

He holds the Bachelor of Music degree and the Performer's Certificate in Voice from Samford University, the Master of Music degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and the Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. He is a member of the National Association of Teachers of Singing, the American Choral Directors Association, Phi Kappa Phi, Omicron Delta Kappa, Pi Kappa Lambda, and Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia.

His wife, Lori, is a realtor with James Wm. Moore Real Estate in Lexington, Virginia. They are the parents of two children, Alex and Brianna.