



# *Schumann Song Cycles*



## *Ad Astra Music Festival*

July 15 ~ 31, 2016

*Russell, Kansas*

This concert is underwritten by William Farmer & Stewart Rahtz

# Schumann Song Cycles

A recital by Aani Bourassa, César Cañón  
& Michael Davidson



Deines Cultural Center  
Sunday, July 17 | 2:00pm

# Program

*Dichterliebe*, Op. 48

Robert Schumann

(1810-1856)

Michael Davidson, tenor

César Cañón, piano

————— Intermission —————

*Frauenliebe und Leben*, Op. 42

Schumann

Aani Bourassa, soprano

César Cañón, piano

## Program Notes

While the German art song, or *Lied* (plural, *Lieder*), had many champions in the nineteenth century, the name of Robert Schumann continues to loom large in its legacy. An innovative musical and literary spirit, Schumann felt strongly that a *Lied* should not be just a poem buoyed by piano accompaniment. Instead, his songs espoused a nuanced balance of words and music that sought to embody a highly expressive—but not overly effusive—response to the poem in question. Composers of the nineteenth century frequently grouped songs with strong thematic or narrative ties together into larger collections called song cycles. Like his predecessor Franz Schubert, Schumann was highly adept in this regard, and nowhere is this better evinced than in two important cycles from 1840, *Dichterliebe* (*The Poet's Love*) and *Frauenliebe und Leben* (*A Woman's Love and Life*). Together, these works possess the highest of poetic pedigrees, even though Schumann made his own revisions to several of the texts. *Dichterliebe* presents sixteen selections from the *Lyrisches Intermezzo* of Heinrich Heine, part of the poet's larger *Buch der Lieder* (*The Book of Songs*). (In its original 1840 version, *Dichterliebe* comprised twenty texts from Heine. Schumann later revised the cycle for publication in 1844, and this is the version usually performed today.) For *Frauenliebe und Leben*, the poetry collection of the same name by Adalbert von Chamisso served as Schumann's source, albeit with one of the original nine poems omitted.

*Dichterliebe* presents a truly lyrical kaleidoscope of small and substantial moments. Though formerly considered a reflection on Schumann's contemporaneous courtship with his future wife Clara Wieck, scholarship has now come to discourage such autobiographical readings. Though a genuine interpretation of the cycle is (and should be) the prerogative of the individual listener, certain key threads are worth pointing out. In the first three numbers, "Im wunderschönen Monat Mai," "Aus meinen Tränen sprießen," and "Die Rose, die Lilie," the protagonist of the cycle, the eponymous and ambiguous "poet," expresses his infatuation with his distant beloved through various metaphors of nature. The symbols of water and human tears persist through the next three songs, "Wenn ich in deine Augen seh'," "Ich will meine Seele tauchen," and "Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome," the latter of which culminates in the erotic contemplation of an altar painting. The next four songs, "Ich grolle nicht," "Und wüßten's die Blumen, die kleinen," "Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen," and "Hör' ich das Liedchen klingen" show the poet bitterly—and very selfishly—licking his emotional wounds after the beloved spurns his affections. By the eleventh and twelfth songs ("Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen" and "Aus leuchtenden Sommermorgen"), the poet's pain has putrefied into grief and anguish. He then retreats into the world of dreams in "Ich hab' im Traum geweinet" and "Allnächtlich im Traume." The penultimate movement "Aus alten Märchen winkt es" recalls the figurative "fairy tale" naivety of the poet's earlier verses before the entirety is consigned to the grave in the valedictory dirge "Die alten, bösen Lieder."

The legacy of nineteenth-century gender politics has brought *Frauenliebe und Leben* some rightly-justified criticism in recent years, but it is at present undergoing a mini-renaissance thanks to many accomplished and sensitive singers, among them Renée Fleming and Dorothea Röschmann. Like *Dichterliebe*, *Frauenliebe und Leben* follows an arch of "life to death" through the lens of "love," and in this aspect, the two cycles serve as mutual complements. Unlike *Dichterliebe*, however, the progress in *Frauenliebe und Leben* encompasses strong and concrete domestic sentiments, reflecting the "life" or "Leben" of the title, a life that is far away from the idealized musings in *Dichterliebe*. Each song in *Frauenliebe und Leben* presents a self-contained vignette within the larger timeline, moving first from the raptures and confusions of young love to the conceit of what might be gingerly termed "wedded bliss." In the seventh song, this sensation is crowned by the delights of motherhood. Yet even here, security walks the knife's edge of tragedy. Like the self-absorbed love of the poet in *Dichterliebe*, the love in *Frauenliebe und Leben* ostensibly leads to devastation. By the end of the final song, the bride's wedding garland has been transmuted into a widow's weeds, a bereavement burgeoned by Schumann's reprise of the melody of the opening song, a truly wistful bookend.

Ryan M. Prendergast  
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Artist-in-residence and American soprano **Aani Bourassa** is a versatile actress of emotional depth, praised for her “brilliant, yet sparkling high notes”. In addition to her artist-in-residency at the Ad Astra Music Festival, noteworthy engagements this season include Gianetta in *L’elisir d’amore* with Bel Cantanti Opera and a world premiere performance with the Marquette Symphony Orchestra of works by composer Griffin Candey. She is found frequently performing with a variety of ensembles in the DC-Metro Area. Aani trained at the Capital University Conservatory of Music and the University of Illinois: Urbana-Champaign. Her repertoire includes: Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*), Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*), Female Chorus (*The Rape of Lucretia*), and Juliette (*Roméo et Juliette*). Equally comfortable in recital and concert settings she has performed the soprano solos in Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9*, Bach’s *Magnificat*, Haydn’s *Lord Nelson Mass*, Bach’s *Cantata 140*, Schubert *Mass in G*, Vivaldi’s *Gloria*, George Crumb’s *Madrigal 2* and Steve Reich’s *So-drumming*. Aani is a champion of new and undiscovered music, and is currently involved in a

collaborative project to rediscover and record the vocal works of composer Carl Czerny with pianist Samuel Gingher. In addition to her busy performing schedule, Ms. Bourassa works as the project manager for Acis Productions. She lives in Alexandria, Virginia with her husband. Aani will sing *Frauneliebe und Leben* on the Schumann Song Cycle program, sing in the Ad Astra Chamber Choir, and Baroque Consort.



Artist-in-residence **Michael Davidson** holds a Bachelor’s of Music degree in Voice from Loyola University New Orleans and a Master’s of Music degree in Voice from the University of Kansas. While at the University of Kansas, he was on stage in several operas including playing the role of Ferando in Mozart’s *Così Fan Tutte*. Professionally, he has sung with both the New Orleans Opera and The Kansas City Lyric Opera choruses, as well as the Eutin Summer Opera Festival in Eutin, Germany. Michael has performed now in two choruses accompanying Plácido Domingo, and has worked with some of the nation’s foremost vocal coaches including John Wustman, Martin Katz, Russell Miller, and Leonardo Vordoni. Currently Michael teaches vocal music at Russell High School and Ruppenthal Middle School. Michael’s most recent projects include directing/producing *Cinderella* at RHS and directing music for *Godspell* at Barton County Community College. Michael has performed a recital each season collaborating with Leann Hillmer and Janie Brokenicky. This year, he’ll sing *Dichterliebe* with César Cañón at the piano, perform with the Ad Astra Chamber Choir, and Baroque Consort.

# Acknowledgments

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# Ad Astra Music Festival

## Main Stage Performances

### **The Mass Unordinary**

July 15 | 7:30pm

St. Mary Queen of Angels Catholic  
Church

### **Chamber Music at the Deines**

July 23 | 7:30pm

Deines Cultural Center

### **Jazz at the Barn**

July 16 | 7:30pm

Granny Mae's Barn

### **#humansofrussell**

July 24 | 2:00pm

Deines Cultural Center

### **Schumann Song Cycle**

July 17 | 2:00pm

Deines Cultural Center

### **Handel's *Jephtha***

July 30 | 7:30pm

Trinity United Methodist Church

### **Duruflé and His Organ**

July 22 | 7:30pm

Trinity United Methodist Church

### **Encore: Handel's *Jephtha***

July 31 | 7:30pm

First Presbyterian Church in Hays, KS

## Liturgical Music Series

### **Byrd Mass for 3 Voices**

July 17 | 10:30am

St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Hays, KS

### **Bach Cantata 94**

July 24 | 10:30am

St. John Lutheran Church

### **Josquin Missa De beata virgine**

July 31 | 10:30am

Basilica of St. Fidelis, Victoria, KS