FACULTY RECITAL

Songs and Chamber Works of Stella Lerner

Rachel Joselson, soprano
Chieh-Chun (Anna) Chen, piano
Jorge Montilla Moreno, clarinet/bass clarinet

Tuesday, May 11, 2021 at 7:30pm
Voxman Music Building Concert Hall
2. The Tree
3. Rainbow over the Field
4. The Cyclamen
5. Riddle
6. Bird
7. A Chant
8. Aged Moon

   from *Within My Heart, Twelve Songs by Leah Goldberg*

   - 30-minute intermission for air cleaning -

9. Three Days
10. The Angel
11. In the nights
12. Little Boat

   from *Within My Heart, Twelve Songs by Leah Goldberg*

2. Dialogue
3. Tomorrow Evening

   from *Three Songs by Leah Goldberg*

**Foreign Land** (text by Yaakov Barzilai)

Programs supported by the Elizabeth M. Stanley Fund for the Performing Arts.
**Translation**

**Foreign Land**
In my hometown,
The grass grows short,
Embarrassed and ashamed on the face of the earth
Terminally ill forests crowd her (the earth) from every direction
And the trees, their cover falls away (even) before they flower.
The church bells move in the wind,
Like two people, hanging, who have been forgotten in the city square.
The city is empty with no one around
And only a tormented conscience hurries into the darkness.
Streetlights shine for one another
But on the houses’ walls
Forgetfulness hyssops climb high.
And beyond the shutters
Black hits white,
It is possible that their time to be loved has come
And God will again count to ten and will bring down his wrath.

**Program Notes**

This recital presents songs by Stella Lerner — one of the unique and most fascinating voices heard in Israel for the past several years. The composer creates art-songs at the highest level of the classic Lied style.

I came upon Stella Lerner’s compositions while researching songs of the Holocaust. Through a colleague in Germany, I was connected to Professor Mira Zakai, who was a professor of Voice, and Lied and Oratorio at the Rubin Academy of Music, Tel Aviv University. Mira introduced me to Stella Lerner, who had composed several settings of Holocaust texts. As it turned out, I did not have the opportunity to include her works on my Holocaust CD but decided to dedicate my upcoming recording project to her works. The songs are very diverse — some folk-like, others dramatic and harmonically complex.

At the center of Lerner’s work with the art-song genre are her settings of poems by Leah Goldberg (1911–1970), whose place at the heart of the twentieth-century Hebrew poetry canon is indisputable. Lerner’s compositions are attentive to the emotional powers and rich texture of the poet’s crystallized texts and bestow on them a deep and sensitive interpretation, which is often surprising and subversive. These pieces combine harmonic and melodic compositional expertise, dramatic expressivity. Lerner’s songs have received been received by a wide embracing audience.
in Israel. The Israel Music Institute published her songs and produced an album of their recorded performances, which are often played both in live concerts and on the Israeli Broadcasting Corporation's classical channel. The recital will include all of Goldberg's settings in English translations by Dr. Avshalom Guissin.

Stella Lerner writes:
Leah Goldberg characterized poetry as “wholeness, an entire universe encapsulated within a few lines.” In her work I find an extraordinary fusion between elements of pure poetry, with all the mysterious and uncanny that this concept implies, on the one hand, and a lucid and rational approach to her art, on the other hand. Her work is personal and intimate, yet communicative: it speaks to everyone. She did not need to invent hitherto unknown forms and ways of expression in order to be genuinely new and unique. I feel that her relentless adherence to classical forms, like the sonnet or the Italian terza rima, is suited to the Lied form in music, which is the most minimalist, concise, subtle and profound form for a complete, rounded musical statement. The poems I have chosen are now fused with music to create a new work of art: the Lied, the VERBAL-MUSICAL POEM.

Life itself seems to have led me to compose music to Leah Goldberg's poetry. Both of us were born in Königsberg, the former capital of east-Prussia that has become part of Russia. Thus, her early life's landscapes are mine as well. I, too, fell in love with Israel’s Mediterranean sun and its language. Like Leah Goldberg, I never wanted to look back. My foreignness reinforces my longing for a different, genuine kind of connection to the very soul of Israeli culture. Maybe I know how to observe this culture from the margin, as it were, but to cling to it deeply and lovingly. My wish is to create a live and lyrical portrait of a poet, and to give her a kind of resonance that she had longed for throughout her entire life. In life and composition — I strive to remain true to myself, sanctify meaning, honesty and emotional depth ... My love for the human voice and written poetry led me to focus on the genre of art song as a minimalist form, but I treasure complexity and art song allows for dialogue with the text. Therefore, mental and physical truth unite in a lust for life.

Lea Goldberg was born in 1911 in the city of Königsberg, Prussia. She spent her childhood years in Kovno, Lithuania. During World War I, her family was exiled to Russia, returning afterwards to Lithuania. There, Goldberg studied at the Hebrew high school and later at the University of Kovno. In 1930, she continued her studies at the University of Berlin and later attended the University of Bonn, studying Semitic languages, history, and pedagogy. At around the age of twelve, Goldberg began to write poems — most of them in Hebrew and a small number in Russian — and it was not long before some of her works were published. In 1935, she immigrated to Palestine, settling in Tel Aviv.

Author Yaakov Barzilai survived the Holocaust in Bergen Belsen concentration camp to tell the stories of his father, his school friends, and the neighborhood children he used to play with. He escaped a death sentence to go from door to door and see who returned, and who did not. He went on to become a writer and poet, and his every word educates us to commemorate his people. Yaakov has written fifteen books, and the songs he has written are played and sung in orchestras and choirs in Israel and beyond. He has made the commemoration of the Holocaust his life’s work.
“Stella Lerner — one of the most unique and fascinating voices to emerge in Israel in recent years. These songs, which have already struck a sympathetic chord with listeners and performers alike, bear a close affinity to the romantic Lieder tradition, thereby making an exceptional contribution to the musical treatment of Hebrew poetry. This combination of lyricism and poetic insight is central to the attractive power of Lerner’s music, whose sensuous beauty can be appreciated even without comprehending the texts. The composer draws us to the words through melodic richness and profound expressiveness, ranging from powerful restraint to theatrical drama; she lends her attentive ears to the poems — and thereby paves roads into the listeners’ hearts.” - Uri Golomb (Ph.D. Cambridge University)

**STELLA LERNER** is a Russian-born Israeli composer. Lerner’s works have been performed and recorded by Israel’s finest artists, received critical acclaim, and presented in major concerts of the Israeli Music Festival (which commissioned and premiered orchestral versions of her songs) and in Lieder and chamber music recitals in Israel and abroad. Her music was published by the Israel Music Institute and forms part of the repertoire in vocal departments in music academies around the world, in masterclasses, and in international singing competitions; and it is frequently played on Israeli classical radio.

In 2016, the Israel Music Institute released the album *Stella Lerner: Poetic Songs* (https://itunes.apple.com/us/album/stella-lerner-poetic-songs/id1222845626), presenting a selection of her Hebrew Lieder sung by the internationally renowned soprano Sharon Rostorf-Zamir. Stella Lerner’s work appears on the CD *Forever to Remember* by the record label American Romeo Records. Reviews of the CD appeared in professional journals in London and New York, where Lerner’s work received positive attention alongside other works.

Lerner’s music also received international acclaim. In 2018, Oxford University dedicated a special event to her songs (as part of the University’s “Oxford Song Network: Poetry and Performance” series), including a recital of her Goldberg Lieder, sung both in Hebrew and in English, and a symposium with literary scholars.

Lerner’s songs also received a prominent role in three concerts in the international festival “KOL – Jüdische Musik” in Germany and in a series of recitals in Lithuania with soprano Asta Kriksciunaite, among others.

While Lieder remain central to her output, her music encompasses a variety of styles and genres ranging from jazz standards and Jewish liturgical music to musical monodramas for actress and piano. Lerner’s monodramas receive unique interpretations by actress Michal Bat-Adam and singer-pianist Hagai Yodan in their joint project *If I were Music.*
RACHEL JOSELSON

While still a university student in voice performance, Rachel Joselson performed with the Indianapolis Symphony and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Robert Shaw. After completing her master's degree at Indiana University, she moved to Europe and pursued private voice study with Mario and Rina del Monaco in Lancenigo, Italy. Her first full-time operatic contract was in Darmstadt singing roles Rosina, Dorabella, Cherubino, Adalgisa, and Idamante, before transitioning to soprano repertory during her years at Hamburg. Hamburg roles include Mireille, Mimi, Micaela (Carmen), Méisande, Marjènka (Bartered Bride), Donna Elvira (Don Giovanni), Leonore (Fidelio), and Eva (Die Meistersinger).

After returning to the United States in the late 1990s, the Metropolitan Opera engaged her for Kurt Weill's Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny. She has performed with symphony orchestras in Madison, Oshkosh, and Johnson City, Tennessee, and was featured with the Utah Festival Opera in Logan and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra in Salt Lake City for its International Sunday broadcast. She sang Madame Euterpova in the 1998 CD recording of Menotti's Help!Help! The Globolinks, with the Madison Symphony Opera and Orchestra under the baton of John DeMain. Her first solo CD The Songs of Arthur Honegger and Jacques Leguerney with pianist Réne Lecuona was released in 2003 by Albany Records. Joselson coached this repertoire in France with pianist and coach Mary Dibbern and debuted these in concert at the American Cathedral in Paris. Her CD, Songs of the Holocaust with pianist Réne Lecuona, cellist Hannah Holman, and violinist Scott Conklin, was released by Albany Records in July 2016. She presented this program at the annual commemoration of the liberation of Auschwitz concentration camp for the United Nations General Assembly in January 2017. Ich denke dein: Songs and Chamber Works of Nikolai Medtner was recently released by Albany records. Joselson and pianist Bo Ties recorded Je Donnerai Mes Jours: Complete Songs of Gabriel Dupont, released in the spring of 2019 by Centaur Records.

Joselson has branched out into musical theater, having performed Desirée in Sondheim's A Little Night Music with Middlebury Opera, Golde in Fiddler on the Roof, Glinda/Auntie Em in The Wizard of Oz, and Mama Morton in Kander and Ebb's Chicago, the Musical with Iowa City's Old Capitol Opera. Joselson received her Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Rutgers University. She has been on the faculty at the University of Iowa since 1997. Joselson lives in Iowa City with her husband, Michael, and their three cats Harry, Estelin, and Carlino.

Chieh-Chun (Anna) Chen was born in Kaohsiung City, Taiwan, and is currently studying for her Doctoral Degree in piano performance at the University of Iowa with Dr. Uriel Tsachor. She received her bachelor’s degree from National Taiwan Normal University studying with Dr. Jia-wei Zhong, and she also studied at National Chiao-Tung University with Dr. Hsing-Chwen Hsin. In 2016, she gave a solo performance at Taiwan's National Concert Hall in Taipei, and in 2017, attended the World Piano Meeting festival in Coimbra, Portugal. In February 2019, she performed Eric Moe's Grande Etude Brillante in the Red Note Festival at Illinois State University (ISU). She is the winner of the 2019 ISU Concerto-Aria Competition and performed Liszt's Piano Concerto No.1 with the university Symphony Orchestra. She also won the first prize of Illinois State Music Teacher Association Collegiate Piano Solo South Competition in 2019.
Jorge Montilla is internationally considered one of the best clarinetists in Latin-America and one of the world’s best E-flat clarinet players. He has an extensive repertoire including the major works for the clarinet, and he has been appointed to premiere solo works by important composers such as Paul Desenne, Diana Arismendi, Roberto Cedeño Laya, Fidel Rodríguez, Mischa Zupko, Alfred Prinzhorn, Ken Froelich, Alexandre Eisenberg, Víctor Varela, and Efrain Amaya. Former principal clarinet of the Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra, Montilla has appeared as a soloist with the most important Venezuelan orchestras, the Indiana University Chamber Orchestra, the Vale Veneto Festival Orchestra in Brazil, the Youth Orchestra of Peru, the Longwood Symphony Orchestra, the Nuevo Mundo Festival Orchestra, the Ecuador National Symphony Orchestra, and the Longy School of Music Conservatory orchestra.

Jorge Montilla, Assistant Professor of clarinet at the University of Iowa, represents Rossi Clarinets, D’addario Reeds, Clarinetclassics, Gao’s bells, and Lefreque sound bridges. His compositions and arrangements are published by Woodwindiana Editions, USA, and Montilla Brothers Editions, USA.
**UPCOMING EVENTS**

For the most up to date listing of concerts and recitals please visit arts.uiowa.edu
All events are FREE unless otherwise indicated.

View livestreamed concerts at [https://music.uiowa.edu/about/live-stream-concert-schedule](https://music.uiowa.edu/about/live-stream-concert-schedule)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAY</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td>7:30 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td>1:30 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td>3:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Livestream