

Music to me is not just dots and lines on paper. Music brings disparate people together in ways that nothing else can by sharing experiences they can relate to. Music has no restrictions, barriers, or prejudices that makes it for everyone. As a performer, I have the opportunity to evoke an emotional response from an audience through my own interpretation of music. Sharing these types of experiences is how people can relate and learn to understand more about each other and the world.

Molly Bass

Honors Creative Thesis

Senior Vocal Recital: Love, Loss, and Tears

"Music is meaningless noise unless it touches a receiving mind." This quote, by Paul Hindemith, well-known composer, musician, and teacher, touches on what it means to be a true musician. Musicians understand that music is about making a statement or telling a story that causes the audience to feel something. I have come to understand that music is more than notes on a page; you have to be willing to be vulnerable enough to allow people to see your most intimate thoughts and emotions. When you do this, the musician as well as the audience experiences something magical that cannot be put into words. This unique aspect is what makes music a universal language, understood by anyone. Every culture has music as part of a creative outlet for expressing human emotions and this connects people to each other. This recital has taught me to delve deeper into why I want to be a musician and how I can accomplish this.

Ever since I was young, I have loved to make music. Even as a baby without understanding, I would stop crying when my dad played guitar. Growing up, music was an outlet for me when words could not help me handle my emotions or the world around me. I got lost for hours just playing piano. I learned to love the repertoire and the work involved in order to make it performance ready. Sometimes the learning process was easy and at other times it was difficult and discouraging. However, great joy and frustration only further enrich the journey. It has taught me that progress can only be made through hard work and discipline. I have learned to set and work towards my goals in order to gain a deeper understanding, passion, and enjoyment of Classical music. More importantly, I have learned to be humble. The work is never done and there is always room for improvement. Music is a very personal experience and when I invest myself in it, the rewards can be amazing.

The human voice is the most personal of instruments because it is physically part of you and something that is uniquely yours. Because the voice is so personal, I feel that it is more closely tied to emotions. I went through an emotional transformation while studying voice that caused me to experience my emotions in a new way. I went from crying after performing to being able to sing a full-length program without tears. There were many struggles that took place as I learned to appreciate my own voice and what I have to offer. I lacked confidence whenever I sang in front of my colleagues, which resulted in getting myself so worked up that I would cry. It was tough to recognize my own progress at first, which made learning difficult. Some technical difficulties included learning how to sing with correct vowels, how to use good breath support, and how to find the most resonance my instrument can produce. Working through these problems has helped me to gain a confidence in myself that I have never had before and to know that I am capable of more than I ever thought.

I draw inspiration and learn to correct my own problems from watching my professors and peers perform. For example, in a studio class I can observe different performers and how they address their own technical issues. This offers new insights I can later apply to myself. Most of my problems have been solved in the practice room where I attempt to work on vocal issues through the use of exercises and experiments. Some experiments include trying different vowel shapes to see how they work, experimenting with my posture, and exercises that make me focus on correct breathing. I gained confidence in performing in front of people through taking as many opportunities to perform in studio class and performance lab as possible. By facing my performance anxiety head on, I learned to accept what others said about my voice and to be less hard on myself. Through attempting new techniques and pushing my own limits, I discovered that I actually have a higher voice than I thought before, making me not a contralto, but a soprano. This realization has led me in a new direction along with the guidance and support of my instructors.

Once I started to feel successful in my singing, I was able to delve deeper into the meaning within the music. My emotions used to embarrass me until I saw how they can be used to communicate the story I want to tell more clearly. I found that how I interpret different pieces and invest myself in the music is unique to me, which led to a realization; I will not perform a piece in the same way that someone else will. What makes a musician worth watching, is one that tells a unique story to the listener no matter the language they speak. This is something I want to get across when I perform; I want the audience to feel something from the music so that it is not just noise. Music lives on throughout time because musicians

keep bringing new and personal perspectives that touch people. I discovered that my voice does touch people through performing in my own recital.

The theme for my recital is "Love, Loss, and Tears" which accurately represents my process of learning how to perform without tears. The theme represents the many ups and downs of life and how all the joys and sorrows we encounter come together to give us the human experience. Throughout my process of learning, there were high and low moments and successes and failures that taught me about myself. The pieces in my program were organized using these three words; each set consisted of the themes love, water/tears, and loss. Music is an expression of shared life experiences, which makes people feel connected to each other. This recital is a representation of my college experience that has been one of great growth. It has allowed me to stand on my own in order to continue with music long after my education is complete. I have had to deal with misdirection and times where nothing I tried seemed to work. I had to learn to see the improvements I was making in order to grow and reflect on the successes as well as the failures. Self-reflection is key for the future and will allow me to continue to grow and improve in the future and help others through music.

Certain pieces in my program were chosen to help me solve specific vocal issues. In "Ridente la Calma" by Mozart, my issue was finding resonance and focus throughout my range. I learned to approach singing all vowels with equal resonance in order to sing more smoothly. "All that Gold" by Menotti helped me to realize how to open up in my high range and to stay consistent throughout. This piece was also a challenge tonally as it was written in the 1950's during a time when composers experimented away from classic harmonies. This piece helped me to work on singing intervallically and listening to where my notes fit into the larger harmonic structure. Out of all of the pieces in my program, "Ach, ich fühl's" by Mozart was the most challenging and the most rewarding. Because of this piece, I realized that I am a soprano. I struggled at first to sing the high notes and to finish the long phrases, but after hard work, I was able to perform it successfully. This piece also showed me that there are always ways to improve. Even after my recital I will be able to keep improving this piece and make it even better each time.

This recital is a culmination of all that I have learned at Bemidji State University including academics and music. I learned to dig deeper in order to find meaning and think beyond words and notes on a page. I gained tools to help me continue into the future so that I can become more self-aware. My teachers have taught me to be aware of little successes along the way; to not only be aware of problems, but to see progress and to be proud of your accomplishments.

This process is learning how to be a critical thinker. It cultivates self-reliance and prepares a person for a lifetime of learning. After performing this recital, I felt amazing even though there were some mistakes. I saw how much I had improved and where I could grow from there. Sharing myself through singing gave me a kind of joy that I have never had before. Because of this experience performing, I have begun to think about more education, possibly graduate school. Ultimately, I have learned more about myself through this process of development and that I do have a voice worth sharing.

Ridente la Calma by W.A. Mozart (1756- 1791)

Mozart set these lyrics to the music of an aria entitled "Il caro mio benne" from the opera *Armida* by Mysliveček during the mid- 1770s. Mozart fell in love with this aria and used the melody for this piece. Mysliveček was a Czech composer and a good friend of Mozart's (Wakin, 2007). The lyrics involve a women speaking to her lover, whom she wants to calm and reassure of her love.

Ridente la calma nell'alma se desti  
Né resti più segno  
Di sdegno e timor  
Tu vieni, frattanto  
A stringer mio bene  
Le dolce catene sí  
Grate al mio cor.

May a happy calm arise in my soul  
And may neither a bit of anger  
Nor fear survive in it.  
In the meantime you are coming,  
My beloved, to grasp  
Those sweet chains that make  
My heart so grateful.

Les Berceaux by Gabriel Fauré (1845- 1924)

Fauré composed this piece during a time of trouble for him as his fiancé had broken their engagement and to distract him, the composer Saint-Saens took him on travels. Sully Prudhomme, who was awarded the Noble Prize in Literature 1901, wrote the lyrics. Prudhomme sought philosophical ideas in his works, especially "love and knowledge" (Encyclopedia Britannica). These lyrics speak of women rocking their babies, as their men must leave to work on the sea with the idea of love and family.

Le long du Quai  
Les grands vaisseaux,  
Ne prennent pas  
Garde aux berceaux,  
Que la main  
Des femmes balance.  
Mais viendra le jour  
Des adieux,  
Car il faut que  
Les femmes pleurent,  
Et que les  
Homes curieux  
Tentent les horizons qui leurrent!  
Et ce jour-là les grands vaisseaux,  
Fuyant le port  
Qui diminue,  
Sentent leur masse retenue  
Par l'âme des  
Lointains berceaux.

Far down the quay  
The great vessels lie,  
On the tide so silently swinging;  
As yet unaware of cradles there,  
Rocked by the  
Hands of the women.  
But there comes  
The day of goodbye,  
For, they say,  
Women must be crying,  
And men must go,  
Restless to know,  
Tempting horizons outward lying!  
And as the ships all sail along,  
Leaving the port,  
So quickly paling,  
Strangely, their mass seems  
To be trailing, held back now,  
By the distant cradles.

The Blessed Virgin's Expostulation by Henry Purcell (1659- 1695)

The poet Nahum Tate, who also wrote the text for *Dido and Aeneas*, wrote these words about "The Finding of Jesus in the Temple" where the twelve-year-old Jesus is lost to Mary and Joseph upon the family leaving the temple. Purcell's piece was published within the *Harmonia Sacra* that included other composer's works. It is thought that this piece was intended for small elite audiences as Tate and Purcell only worked on two sacred pieces

together (Holman, 1994). This piece captures many of the emotions that Mary would have felt at losing her son and the thought of what could happen to him. Purcell uses text painting to emphasize certain words, such as tyrant and depicts the emotions through the use of harmony. Throughout the piece there seems to be a sense of urgency and anxiety, yet with the ultimate fear of the unknown concerning the future of her child.

#### Romance by Claude Debussy (1852- 1935)

During the composition of this piece, Debussy had been involved with a singer by the name of Madame Vasnier. Her husband supported Debussy and even encouraged him to enter the Prix de Rome, which he won in 1884. Debussy wrote many pieces that he dedicated to Madame Vasnier, which he gifted to her and near the end of her life she sold them in order to survive (Briscoe, 1984). This piece speaks of confusion that goes on with love.

L'âme évaporée et souffrante,  
L'âme douce, l'âme odorante  
Des lis divins  
Que j'ai cueillis  
Dans le jardin de ta pensée,  
Où donc les vents  
Lont-ils chassée,  
Cette âme adorable des lis?  
N'est-il plus  
Un parfum qui reste  
De la suavité celeste  
Des jours ou  
Tu m'enveloppais  
D'une vapeur sumaturelle,  
Faites d'espoir, d'amour fidèle,  
De béatitude et de paix?

The vanishing and suffering soul,  
The sweet soul, the fragrant soul  
Of the divine lilies  
That I have picked  
In the garden of your thoughts,  
Where, then, have  
The winds chased it,  
This charming soul of the lilies?  
Is there no longer a  
Perfume that remains  
Of the celestial sweetness  
Of the days when  
You enveloped me  
In supernatural haze,  
Made of hope, of faithful love,  
Of bliss and of peace?

#### Lied Maritime by Vincent d'Indy (1851- 1931)

Vincent d'Indy was a famous teacher and author who is not well known for his composing, but for his love of old music. He helped to form a school that worked to preserve sacred church music and French folk music that fit his love of the old style of composing (Encyclopedia Britannica). This piece depicts an overly dramatic man reacting to his lover by comparing his emotions to the sea.

Au loin, dans la mer, s'éteint le soleil,  
Et la mer est calme et sans ride;  
Le flot diapré  
S'étale sans bruit,  
Caressant la  
Grève assombrie;  
Tes yeux, tes traîtres  
Yeux sont clos, et mon coeur  
Est tranquille comme la mer.

Far away the sun fades into  
The ocean and the sea is calm  
And without movement  
The iridescent tide flattens  
Soundlessly caressing  
The dark shore  
Your eyes, your treacherous  
Eyes are closed and my heart  
Is calm like the sea.

Au loin, sur la mer,  
L'orage est levé,  
Et la mer s'émeut et bouillonne;  
Le flot jusqu'aux cieux  
S'érige superbe,  
Et croule en hurlant vers les abîmes.  
Tes yeux, tes traîtres  
Yeux si doux,  
Me regardent jusqu'au fond de l'âme,  
Et mon cœur torturé,  
Mon cœur bienheureux s'exalte  
Et se brise comme la mer!

In the distance over the ocean  
A thunderstorm is risen  
And the sea rages and foams  
The tide rises magnificently  
To the sky  
And falls howling into the abyss.  
Your eyes, your treacherous  
Eyes so soft  
Gaze into the bottom of my soul  
And my tortured heart  
My blissful heart is excited  
And broken like the sea!

All that Gold by Gian Carlo Menotti (1911- 2007)

This is an aria from the one-act opera titled *Amahl and the Night Visitors* set in the time before the birth of Christ in the Middle East. This was the first opera composed for television and it premiered in 1951 (Green, 2016). Menotti got inspiration for the opera from the painting, *The Adoration of the Magi* by Hieronymus Bosch done in the 1500s (Patmore, 2016). At this point in the opera, the three kings have stopped at the house of a young crippled boy, Amahl, on their way to gift the Christ child. Amahl's mother sings this aria after she sees gold that the kings brought for the Messiah.

Ach, ich fühl's by W.A. Mozart (1756- 1791)

*The Magic Flute* was written in 1791 near the end of Mozart's life during a time of great struggle for him, especially financially. This was his attempt at a more popular opera form including dialogue in the show. However, Mozart was never able to revel in its success, as he died a few months after it premiered (Grad, 2009). Pamina who is in love with the prince Tamino, sings this aria. Tamino is silent at this moment as he is undergoing trials from the sorcerer Sarastro. Pamina attempts to speak to Tamino and due to his silence, she believes that he no longer loves her. Pamina assumes the worst and sings this aria in despair.

Ach, ich fühl's,  
Es ist verschwunden  
Ewig hin der Liebe Glück.  
Nimmer kommt  
Ihr Wonnestunde  
Meinem Herzen mehr zurück.  
Sieh, Tamino, diese Tränen,  
Fliessen trauer dir allein.  
Fühlst du nicht  
Der Liebe Sehnen  
So wird Ruh' im Tode sein.

Ah, I feel it,  
it has disappeared  
Forever gone love's happiness.  
Nevermore will come  
The hour of bliss  
Back to my heart.  
See, Tamino, these tears,  
Flowing, beloved, for you alone.  
If you do not feel  
The longing of love  
Then there will be peace in death.

Verlust by Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel (1805- 1847)

Fanny Hensel is known for her unique approach to harmony and her “avoidance of the tonic” throughout a number of her pieces. She is also interesting for publishing her own works as a woman during a time where few women were able to publish their own works. Her own father stated, “music will perhaps become Felix’s profession, while for you it can and must be only an ornament” (Blumenthal and Robbins, 2010). This is one piece of about 460 that Fanny Hensel wrote and here she uses text painting to depict a woman’s heartbreak.

Und wüßten's die Blumen,  
Die kleinen,  
Wie tief verwundet mein Herz,  
Sie würden mit mir weinen,  
Zu heilen meinen Schmerz.  
Und wüßten's die Nachtigallen,  
Wie ich so traurig und krank,  
Sie ließen fröhlich erschallen  
Erquickenden Gesang.  
Und wüßten sie mein Wehe,  
Die goldnen Sternelein,  
Sie kämen aus  
Ihrer Höhe,  
Und sprächen Trost mir ein.  
Die alle können's nicht wissen,  
Nur einer kennt meinen Schmerz;  
Er hat ja selbst zerrissen,  
Zerrissen mir das Herz.

And if the flowers knew,  
The little ones,  
How deeply wounded my heart is,  
They would weep with me,  
To heal my pain.  
And if the nightingales knew it,  
How sad and sick I am,  
They would joyfully  
Let ring forth reviving song.  
And if they knew my suffering,  
The little golden stars,  
They would come down  
From the heights  
And speak comfort to me.  
All of them could not know it,  
Only one knows my pain,  
Indeed he himself has shredded,  
Shredded my heart.

Der Tod und das Mädchen by Franz Schubert (1797- 1828)

This song written in 1817 was later used in the second movement of Schubert’s *String Quartet No. 14 in D Minor* to represent his own coming death (Clarkson, 2009). It starts off with the theme of death in D minor before proceeding into a more frantic mood portrayed by a young maiden. The girl is frightened and wishes death to pass by her, while the death theme slowly creeps back with a different mood in the end.

Vorüber! ach, vorüber!  
Geh, wilder Knochenmann!  
Ich bin noch jung, geh, Lieber!  
Und rühre mich nicht an.

Pass me by! Oh, pass me by!  
Go, fierce man of bones!  
I am still young. Go, rather,  
And do not touch me.

Gib deine Hand, du schön  
Und zart Gebild',  
Bin Freund und  
Komme nicht zu strafen.  
Sei gutes Muts! Ich bin nicht wild,  
Sollst sanft in meinen Armen schlafen.

Give me your hand, you beautiful  
And tender form.  
I am a friend, and  
Come not to punish.  
Be of good cheer. I am not fierce,  
Softly shall you sleep in my arms.



Cara Sposa by G. F. Handel (1685- 1759)

This aria is from the opera *Rinaldo*, which was Handel's first opera composed for London in 1711. Handel used text by Giacomo Rossi to create the first opera in Italian for the London stage. The character Rinaldo is a crusader-knight based from the story *Gerusalemme liberata* (Jerusalem Liberated) by Tasso who sings this aria as he laments over losing his love to an evil sorceress named Armida (Mangum, 2015).

Cara sposa, amante cara,  
Dove sei?  
Deh! Ritorna a' pianti miei.  
Del vostro  
Erebo sull'ara  
Colla face del mio sdegno  
Io vi sfido o spirti rei!

Beloved spouse, dearest heart  
Where art thou?  
Woe! Return to him who weeps.  
O guilty spirits  
From thy Erebus altar  
My face on of complete contempt,  
I defy thee, wicked spirits!

Sea Pictures by Edward Elgar (1857- 1934)

This song cycle was written during a time when Elgar's compositions began to take off and be recognized by the public. He was asked to write a work for the Norwich Festival to be sung by the famous British contralto Clara Butt that premiered in 1899. Elgar drew inspiration from the composer Berlioz and his idea of composing around a central theme, so Elgar chose the sea (Cooper, 2014). The poems speak of the fear and strength of the sea, which can represent faith and life it self with the ultimate triumph of love in the end.

Resources:

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday - January 30, 2016 - 6:00 PM  
**Wind Ensemble/Honor Band Concert**  
Main Theatre - FA

Tuesday - February 2, 2016 - 7:30 PM  
*Faculty Recital*

**Dr. Kyle Hutchings**  
Thompson Recital Hall - FA

Friday - February 5, 2016 - 7:30 PM  
**Jazz Fest- Guest Artists/Bemidji Jazz Quartet**  
Main Theatre - \$

Saturday - February 6, 2016 - 7:30 PM  
**Jazz Fest- Guest Artists/Blue Ice**  
Main Theatre - \$

Wednesday - February 10, 2016 - 6:00 PM  
**Guest Artist: Dr. Ann Bradfield**  
Thompson Recital Hall - FA

Sunday - February 14, 2016 - 3:00 PM  
**Bemidji Symphony Orchestra**  
Bemidji High School- \$

### **Department of Music**

The Department of Music has a long and distinguished reputation for musical performance and academic training. BSU students, regardless of major, may participate in a wide variety of performance settings including concert band, jazz bands, orchestra, choirs, operas, musicals, solo and chamber music experiences. Accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music, the Department of Music offers the Bachelor of Arts degree in music and the Bachelor of Science degree in music education. Many graduates have distinguished themselves and the Department by the measure of success they have experienced in the field of music.

Bemidji State University  
Department of Music

Presents

A Senior Recital

***Molly Bass***

Soprano

With

Allison Laughlin

Piano

January 23rd, 2016  
3:00 PM

Carl O. Thompson Recital Hall  
Bangsberg Fine Arts Complex



**BEMIDJI**  
STATE UNIVERSITY

## Love, Loss, and Tears

### I.

Ridente la Calma  
Les Berceaux  
W. A. Mozart (1756-1791)  
Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

### II.

The Blessed Virgin's Expostulation  
Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

### III.

Romance  
Lied Maritime  
All that Gold  
Claude Debussy (1852-1935)  
Vincent d'Indy (1851-1931)  
Gian Carlo Menotti (1911-2007)

### *Intermission*

### IV.

Ach ich Fuhl's  
Verlust  
Der Tod und das Mädchen  
W. A. Mozart (1756-1791)  
Fanny Mendelssohn (1805-1847)  
Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

### V.

Cara Sposa  
G. F. Handel (1685-1759)

### VI.

Sea Pictures:  
Where Corals Lie  
The Swimmer  
Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

I want to thank everyone that has come out to support me at my recital. I have learned a great deal over the past four years that have helped me to become a better musician and a better person. My professors and colleagues have gone above and beyond to help me whenever I have needed it so that I can succeed. I am so grateful for the time here at BSU where I have gotten the chance to grow with many wonderful people.