



COLLEGE OF MUSIC

# University of North Texas College of Music

Doctoral Recital | Thursday, March 19, 2026 | 8:00 p.m. | Recital Hall

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## Yue Yuan, collaborative piano

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from 8 Lieder and Songs, Op. 59 (1873) ..... Johannes Brahms  
3. Regenlied (1833–1897)

Text by Klaus Groth

Tong Zeng, soprano

Brahms Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Major, Op. 78 (1879)..... Johannes Brahms

I. Vivace ma non troppo

II. Adagio

III. Allegro molto moderato

Hongrui Wang, violin

Fiançailles pour rire (1939) .....Francis Poulenc

I. La dame d'Andrée (1899–1963)

II. Dans l'herbe

Text by Louise de Vilmorin

III. Il vole

IV. Mon cadavre est doux

comme un gant

V. Violon

VI. Fleurs

Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia (1999) .....Jake Heggie

I. Ophelia's Song (b. 1961)

II. Women Have Loved Before

Text by Jake Heggie,

III. Not In a Silver Casket

Edna St. Vincent Millay

IV. Spring

Yuhui Yang, soprano

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**Program four hundred twenty of the 2025–2026 season**  
**Photography and videography are prohibited**

## Program Notes

### Regenlied, Op. 59 No. 3 (1873)

Composed by Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

**Johannes Brahms** (1833–1897), a mid-Romantic prolific German composer, occupies a unique place in the 19 century as both a synthesizer of past traditions and an innovator in Lied and chamber music. He fused contrapuntal mastery with folk-inspired idioms and the harmonic language of his own century. Brahms's songs from the early 1860s show operatic scale and dramatic intensity, but by the 1870s he had refined his style toward a more concentrated, lyrical voice, exemplifying the "volkstümliches Kunstlied".<sup>1</sup> Among the poets who inspired him, Klaus Groth held a special place as a close friend and creative partner.<sup>2</sup> Their collaboration resulted in several works, most notably the *Regenlied* and *Nachklang* of Op. 59, whose shared imagery of rain as both natural wonder and metaphor for memory deeply resonated with Brahms's musical imagination.

The **Regenlied** ("Rain Song"), composed in 1873 during Brahms's tenure as director of Vienna's *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* concerts, reflects a summit period in his career. Groth's poem recalls childhood awe of rainfall, with the recurring three-note dotted-rhythm motives and piano's continuous undulating running motion mimicking the gentle patter of raindrops, suggesting a deeper melancholy. This imagery returns in *Nachklang*, where raindrops are equated with tears, reinforcing the theme of wistful remembrance.<sup>3</sup> Brahms would later rework the rain motif in the finale of his *Violin Sonata No. 1 in G major, Op. 78*, often called the "Regenlied Sonata." Here the song's sense of longing evolves into a broader, transcendental narrative, in which anxiety yields to quiet release. Both the song and the sonata movements exceptionally demonstrate the continuity of Brahms' creative process, with musical elements interwoven together, exploring memories, disappointments and comfort.

### Brahms Violin Sonata No. 1 in G major, Op. 78 (1879)

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897) stands as one of the central figures of the Romantic era, the period that prized individual expression, lyricism, and freedom in the form. However, Brahms developed his own unique style in his constant dialogue with past traditions. He revered Beethoven and the Classical ideal of structural rigor, and he absorbed the contrapuntal richness of Renaissance and Baroque masters. At the same time, his music exhibits the hallmarks of Romantic expression—deep personal emotion, bold harmonic color, and a willingness to let music serve as a vehicle for memory, consolation, and intimacy. His first published *Violin Sonata in G major, Op. 78*, written in 1878–79, exemplifies this fusion: it is both lyrical and distinctly personal, while preserving the classical balance and conveying Brahms' Romantic sensibility.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> George S. Bozarth and Walter Frisch, "Brahms, Johannes," *Grove Music Online*, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Inge Bichel, Klaus Groth: Eine Bildbiographie (Heide, 1994), 108.

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Judd, "Brahms Rain Song and the First Violin Sonata," *The Listeners Club*, September 10, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Vivian D'Amelio, "Violin Sonatas: Johannes Brahms – Violin Sonata No. 1," *Vivian D'Amelio (blog)*, September 6, 2023.

By the late 1870s, Brahms was at the height of his career. He had premiered his first symphonies, received an honorary doctorate from the University of Breslau, and was established as one of Europe's leading composers. However, behind this public acclaim, the G major Sonata lay a work born of private grief. In 1879, Clara Schumann, Brahms's lifelong confidante and source of inspiration, mourned the death of her son Felix. Brahms offered this sonata as a gesture of consolation, weaving into it musical material from two of his earlier songs, *Regenlied* ("Rain Song") and *Nachklang* ("Distant echo"), both settings of texts by his friend Klaus Groth. These songs meditate on the imagery of falling rain as both natural wonder and metaphor for memory and tears. Clara's particular fondness for *Regenlied* further deepened the personal significance of this musical gift.<sup>5</sup>

The Sonata itself unfolds as a seamless fusion of instrumental lyricism and song-like expression. The **first movement, Vivace ma non troppo**, with its transparent piano textures and dotted-rhythm motive derived from *Regenlied* written in sonata form, sets a mood of gentle reminiscence before yielding to more stormy passages in the development.<sup>6</sup> The **second movement, an expansive Adagio** in A–B–A form, recalls the solemn tread of a funeral march. Its expressive weight reflects deep sorrow, yet Brahms quietly guides the music into the major key, offering consolation rather than despair. The **third movement, Allegro molto moderato**, a rondo in G minor, returns explicitly to the raindrop motives of *Regenlied* and *Nachklang*, now transformed into a flowing dialogue between violin and piano. Its coda shifts to G major, ending not in tragedy but in luminous calm.<sup>7</sup>

In this work, often nicknamed the "Regenlied Sonata," Brahms demonstrates his ability to weave intimate song into the fabric of chamber music, creating a piece at once private and universal. The violin assumes a vocal character, leading the way with long, singing lines, while the piano provides both rhythmic foundation and painterly detail. Listeners may not immediately hear the raindrops without knowing the songs, but the emotional arc—from nostalgia to grief to comfort—is unmistakably clear. For Brahms, the fusion of song and sonata created not only a homage to Romantic ideals but also a deeply human expression of memory, loss, and healing.

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<sup>5</sup> Vivian D'Amelio, "Violin Sonatas: Johannes Brahms – Violin Sonata No. 1."

<sup>6</sup> Midori, "Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Major, Op. 78 by Johannes Brahms," LA Phil.

<sup>7</sup> Vivian D'Amelio, "Violin Sonatas: Johannes Brahms – Violin Sonata No. 1."

## **Fiançailles pour rire (1939)**

**Composed by Francis Poulenc (1899 – 1963)**

**I. La dame d'Andrée**

**II. Dans l'herbe**

**III. Il vole**

**IV. Mon cadavre est doux comme un gant**

**V. Violon**

**VI. Fleurs**

**Francis Poulenc** (1899–1963), one of the most distinctive French voices of the twentieth century, is regarded as the most distinguished composer in *mélodie* after Fauré. He was deeply influenced by Catholic faith, while also having a particular fondness for wit, irony and sensuality.<sup>8</sup> He developed a musical language that was straightforward, lyrical and emotionally transparent. Although early critics dismissed his apparent simplicity as lightweight, his mature works exhibit extraordinary refinement: a commitment to tonal-modal system, a melodic gift comparable to Schubert, and an ability to express profound feeling without technical ostentation. Poulenc's *mélodies* demonstrate continual refinement rather than radical stylistic change. It reflects his attempt to say more and more with less and less, seeking for the pure melodic line he highly values in Matisse.<sup>9</sup>

***Fiançailles pour rire* ("Betrothals for Laughs")** sets six poems by Poulenc's close friend Louise de Vilmorin, whose writing blends wit, elegance, fantasy, and obscure emotional complexity.<sup>10</sup> Though often labeled as a song cycle for soprano, some scholars argue it more like a set without a strictly unified narrative framework. Composed in 1939 at the onset of World War II, during a period of personal and global uncertainty, the songs explore various forms of love—infatuation, loss, irony, nostalgia, and death—often being expressed implicitly by symbolism and playful wordplay. Poulenc's settings illuminate the poetry through rhythmic vitality, melodic contour, harmonic nuance, and abrupt and sharp dynamics, often using characteristic intervals such as the augmented fourth or diminished fifth to underscore ambiguity.<sup>11</sup> These songs effectively illustrate Poulenc's viewpoint: "Poetry and music should complement each other."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Myriam Chimènes and Roger Nichols, "Poulenc, Francis," Grove Music Online, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Myriam Chimènes and Roger Nichols, "Poulenc, Francis," Grove Music Online, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Caprio and Dana Carton, *Columbia Dictionary of Modern European Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 853, GALILEO.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Elizabeth Gasson, *A Poetic and Musical Analysis of Fiançailles Pour Rire By Francis Poulenc with Poems by Louise De Vilmorin*, CSU ePress, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2006), 225.

The first song “**La Dame d’Andre**” portrays a youthful infatuation filled with uncertainty. The poem unfolds in the form of a narrator, suggesting an questionable attachment between an adolescent boy to an older woman, which was thought hinting at scandal and emotional naïveté. Poulenc mirrors this ambiguity through harmonic instability: the opening introduction ends in A major chord, but the song proceeds mainly in A minor, creating tonal unease. The constant eighth-note motion suggests restlessness and emotional searching. The repetition in both vocal and piano lines may reflect the cyclical nature of youthful romantic obsession. The transition back toward A major in the postlude briefly suggests a resolution, but the appearance of a dominant ninth chord disrupts certainty, reflecting that the emotional question have not yet been resolved.<sup>13</sup> Poulenc employed classical counterpoint in the piano section, creating multiple voices with contrasting articulation, namely detached left hand and legato right hand.

“**Dans l’herbe**” functions as a mock-elegy. On the surface, it seems to be lamenting death, but symbolizes the end of a romantic relationship.<sup>14</sup> The song set in C-sharp minor at a slow tempo, unfolding with solemn gravity. The usage of dissonances and chromatic alternates depict emotional conflict, while a descending diminished fifth on the words “dans l’herbe” musically paints both burial and loss. The chorale-like middle section evokes a hymn of memorial remembrance, intensifying the tone of lament. The dynamic gradually diminish to pianissimo in the returning section, corresponding to the fading of love. The restrained ending reinforces the peaceful and compromising sentiment contained in the Vilmorin’s poem.<sup>15</sup>

The title of the third song, “**Il vole,**” has a dual meaning— “he flies” or “he steals”—which introduces playful ambiguity. The poem deals with flight, fable, and romantic betrayal, blending humor with heartbreak. The poem is believed to have been written by Vilmorin based on the breakdown of her initial romance with pilot Antoine de Saint-Exupery. Marked *presto implacable*, Poulenc employed the relentless sixteenth-note accompaniment to propel the music forward with breathless energy, vividly depicting a flight scene and hinting at the panic of love loss. Repetition of questioning phrases (“Mais où est...?”) intensifies the sense of searching. He notes the song is one of his most difficult songs in his diary.<sup>16</sup> Though the tonal center is E-flat major, frequent modulation disrupts the harmonic stability and mirrors the emotional uncertainty. The music does not slow down until the last measure but gradually fades, which suggests the lover and happiness have flown irretrievably away.

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<sup>13</sup> Mary Elizabeth Gasson, *A Poetic and Musical Analysis of Fiancailles Pour Rire* By Francis Poulenc with Poems by Louise De Vilmorin, CSU ePress, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2006), 229.

<sup>15</sup> Mary Elizabeth Gasson, *A Poetic and Musical Analysis of Fiancailles Pour Rire* By Francis Poulenc with Poems by Louise De Vilmorin, CSU ePress, 2017.

<sup>16</sup> Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2006), 230.

The fourth song “**Mon cadavre est doux comme un gant**” is a surreal meditation piece about death. The Vilmorin’s text set the speaker as the protagonist, in which she describes her physical state as a corpse, blending whimsical with longing. Similar to “Dans l’herbe,” the death depicted here is not a true death, this might be the psychological monologue of a woman who has lost her ability to perceive emotions, yearns to be touched and loved again. Poulenc set the song in E minor at an intense tempo. The song contains chromatic lines and subito dynamic contrasts that heighten psychological tension. The alternation between piano and forte dramatizes emotional fluctuation. The ascending and descending stepwise motion contribute to the somber atmosphere. Unexpectedly, the Picardy third at the end—shifting to E major—brings a fragile hope, suggesting emotional rebirth or transcendence despite the imagery of lifelessness.<sup>17</sup>

The fifth song “**Violon**” is the most well-known, which depicts an elegant woman traveling to a Parisian café with Hungarian style and is deeply captivated by the music played on the violin. The poem was set on a both literal and emotional charged scene of intoxication, based on a Vilmorin’s memory.<sup>18</sup> Poulenc used rhythm patterns reminiscent of gypsy style, including dotted figures and quick ornamental notes, to evoke the violin’s timbre. The descending melodic lines and portamento effects evoke the swaying of his body and emotional fluctuations when he is drunk. Although the music begins and ends with A minor chords, the tonality is not clearly defined, which reflects instability and intense sensation. The *sforzando* and accents and vivid articulation convey the sensual immediacy of the scene, blending theatricality with subtle irony.

The final song “**Fleurs**” offers nostalgic reflection as the speaker watches flowers left by a former lover burn in the fireplace. Set in D-flat major, it is the most consonant song of the set with the least dissonant, with an atmosphere of distance and memory. The repetition of word *fleurs* reinforces its symbolic weight. The doubling in the piano and continuous block chords evoke floating recollection.<sup>19</sup> The entire piece is dominated by soft dynamics, mirroring the sense of introspection, with a brief climax marking emotional peaks.<sup>20</sup> The gentle, luminous ending provides a unfulfilling conclusion, balancing resignation with tenderness.

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<sup>17</sup> Mary Elizabeth Gasson, *A Poetic and Musical Analysis of Fiançailles Pour Rire* By Francis Poulenc with Poems by Louise De Vilmorin, CSU ePress, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Pierre Bernac, Francis Poulenc: *The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 141-42.

<sup>19</sup> Mary Elizabeth Gasson, *A Poetic and Musical Analysis of Fiançailles Pour Rire* By Francis Poulenc with Poems by Louise De Vilmorin, CSU ePress, 2017.

## Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia (1999) Composed by Jake Heggie (b. 1961)

### I. Ophelia's Song

### II. Women Have Loved Before

### III. Not In a Silver Casket

### IV. Spring

**Jake Heggie** (b. 1961), contemporary American composer and pianist, is celebrated especially for his operas and art songs. After studying composition with Ernst Bacon during his adolescence, his passion for text was ignited, starting with the poetry of Emily Dickinson.<sup>21</sup> To date, he has composed nearly 300 art songs, setting poetry by figures including Emily Dickinson, A. E. Housman, and Maya Angelou. Influenced by jazz standards, American musical theater, and composers such as Leonard Bernstein and Samuel Barber, Heggie describes himself first and foremost as a melodist and “an ardent champion of writers.”<sup>22</sup> His musical language blends tonal lyricism with modal color, sustained pedal textures, extremes of register, and expressive harmonic gestures, often inflected by gospel, jazz, and popular idioms.<sup>23</sup> Whether in opera or song, Heggie's works are grounded in storytelling; his music serves the text, illuminating the authenticity of characters and emotions with textual sensitivity.

Since her first appearance in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (c. 1600), **Ophelia** has fascinated artists, composers, and audiences alike. Though her role in the play is relatively small, she has become one of literature's most enduring archetypes: the innocent young woman driven to madness and death. Defined by the men around her—her father Polonius, her brother Laertes, and Prince Hamlet—Ophelia possesses little agency of her own, and her descent into madness has long been interpreted as the psychological result of rejection, betrayal, and patriarchal control.

Over centuries, her image has evolved: Romantic painters depicted her as a fragile maiden absorbed into nature; nineteenth-century opera—especially Ambroise Thomas's *Hamlet* (1868)—embraced the “mad scene” as a virtuosic spectacle; early twentieth-century composers, such as Richard Strauss, explored her fractured psyche through modern harmonic language in his song set *Drei Lieder der Ophelia*. In the late twentieth century, feminist scholarship reclaimed Ophelia as a symbol of rebellion and self-definition, interpreting her madness not only as victimhood but as resistance—a breaking of imposed constraints.<sup>24</sup> Through each transformation, Ophelia has remained a powerful symbol of innocence, sexuality, vulnerability, and rebirth.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Melanie Feilletter, “Heggie, Jake,” Grove Music Online, 2015.

<sup>20</sup> “Biography,” jakeheggie.com, (accessed February 20, 2026).

<sup>21</sup> Melanie Feilletter, “Heggie, Jake,” Grove Music Online, 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Elizabeth Frazer, *Ophelia as Archetype: Jake Heggie's Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia*, UNCG, 2012.

<sup>23</sup> Melanie Feilletter, “Heggie, Jake,” Grove Music Online, 2015.

<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth Frazer, *Ophelia as Archetype: Jake Heggie's Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia*, UNCG, 2012.

In 1999, Jake Heggie composed ***Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia***, a song cycle for soprano and piano that reimagines Ophelia's voice rather than quoting her Shakespearean mad scenes. The cycle opens with a poem written by Heggie himself—an unusual choice, as he rarely sets his own texts—establishing an Ophelia-like image whose emotional world unfolds in the subsequent songs. He then turns to set the poetry of Edna St. Vincent Millay, a writer renowned for her Bohemian independence and defiance of social conventions, making her an especially compelling interpreter of Ophelia's story.<sup>25</sup> Sonnets, traditionally a male-dominated poetic form, become in Millay's hands vehicles for articulating female vulnerability, desire, and resistance.<sup>26</sup> By combining Millay's bold, emotionally charged language with his own lyrical and dramatic musical style, Heggie gives Ophelia a renewed voice—one that reflects both historical archetype and modern reinterpretation. The result is not a literal retelling of Shakespeare's tragedy, but a psychological portrait that merges vulnerability, rebellion, and poetic introspection.

The opening piece "**Ophelia's Song**" functions as both pastoral reverie and ominous prelude. Heggie's simple, childlike poem that characterized by regular meter and gentle repetition captures Ophelia's innocence, but each stanza darkens at its close, foreshadowing the tragedy. Musically, a flowing, folk-inspired vocal line in Mixolydian mode (with leading tone absence) creates tonal ambiguity and quiet unease beneath the surface lyricism. The piano at the beginning introduces a shimmering, widely spaced arpeggiated "water" motif that recurs throughout the cycle, suggesting the ripples caused by her fall. Moreover, metric shifts, cross-rhythms, and sudden contrasts of motion and silence mirror the instability of Ophelia's mind, while descending harmonies at moments of textual clarity evoke her physical sinking. The return of the opening motif and a lowered tonal center at the close confirm her fate, portraying Ophelia's drifting consciousness between innocence, illusion, and death.

The second song, "**Women Have Loved Before,**" the Ophelia-like heroine sheds dramatically from Ophelia's earlier pastoral innocence and turned into pursuing an enhanced sensuality. Drawing on Millay's sonnets from *Fatal Interview*, the poem compares Ophelia's love to that of Isolde and Helen of Troy, in which Millay unsentimentally defined the love as invasion, suffering, and cost rather than bliss. The image of this heroine alternates between that of a victim and a villain, an innocent maiden and a treacherous queen.

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<sup>25</sup> Jane Stanbrough, "Edna St. Vincent Millay and the Language of Vulnerability." In *Shakespeare's Sisters: Feminist Essays on Women Poets*, edited by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Guber, 183. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979.

<sup>26</sup> Stanbrough, *Edna St. Vincent Millay and the Language of Vulnerability*, 199.

Heggie captures this duality with a “bright and nervous” opening in 6/8, started from ascending staccato thirds and fluctuating triplets that create restless energy. The sudden cries of “Ah!” punctuate the texture like bursts of uncontrollable passion. Meanwhile, the alternations between sparse, recitative-like passages and surging, storm-like piano writing mirrors Ophelia’s psychological swings between clarity and madness. The rapidly running scales, and flowing triplet figures also paint the water imagery. As references to mythic lovers increase, the accompaniment transforms from stormy seas into shimmering “flames,” underscoring the text “like a burning city in the breast.” A brief stately section in 4/4 suggests a moment of fatal awareness, marked by descending scales that evoke a march toward death, following by the nervous motifs return to seal her descent into ecstatic madness. Through extreme dynamics, tonal ambiguity, recurring motifs, and refined text painting, Heggie depicts a heroine who embraces both the destructive power and intoxicating ecstasy of love.<sup>27</sup>

In “**Not in a Silver Casket**,” the third song of the cycle, the Ophelia-like heroine returns to the voice of the innocent maiden, declaring her love with childlike directness rather than seductive artifice as text from Millay’s sonnet shows “Love in the open hand, no thing but that.” Musically, Heggie portrayed figure’s fragile innocence through constantly changing meters (4/4, 3/4, 2/4) and recurring patterns of rising thirds, while the clear sense of folk style is weakened by the continuous metric change and tonal ambiguity. The brief silence in the piano part—especially at “I give my love to you”—highlights the purity and vulnerability of her offering. However, as the song progresses, tonal ambiguity, sudden accelerations, surging triplets, and a brief intrusion of asymmetrical meter break this innocence, driving to an ecstatic vocal climax. The music finally returns into the tonal center E major with the opening motif recurring, but it sounds ambiguous. The song depicts a picture of a pure yet extremely insecure love, presenting an absolute innocence, almost delirious, which indicates her further delusion.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth Frazer, *Ophelia as Archetype: Jake Heggie’s Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia*, UNCG, 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth Frazer, *Ophelia as Archetype: Jake Heggie’s Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia*, UNCG, 2012.

The last song "**Spring**," written in free verse, breaks the structural order of the cycle, reflecting the heroine breaks free from the constraints that confined her. Heggie mirrors this release through fragmented phrasings, shifting meters, and abrupt tonal changes. This Ophelia-like figure is no longer innocent or passionate; she is weary, resigned, and bitter, declaring that "Life in itself is nothing." The song opens with slow, tolling, bell-like sonorities that suggest a death knell. As the text moves between bitterness and detachment, the music alternates between harmonic minor darkness and modal ambiguity, with recurring motifs from earlier songs—especially rising and falling thirds and the "water" arpeggios—making the narrative together. Heggie used sudden meter changes (4/4 to 6/8 to 4/8), whole-tone fragments, and disconnected textures to mirror heroine's desperate psyche, while the silent moments and stark descending scales evoke misfortune and surrender. In the final measures, the rolled "water" chords from the opening of the cycle return, enharmonically recalling the ripples after she fell. With a fading, whispered "Ah," the cycle closes that Ophelia suspends between clarity and oblivion, surrendering herself to the water and to death.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth Frazer, *Ophelia as Archetype: Jake Heggie's Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia*, UNCG, 2012.

## Texts and Translations

### Regenlied

German source: Klaus Groth

Walle, Regen, walle nieder,  
Wecke mir die Träume wieder,  
Die ich in der Kindheit träumte,  
Wenn das Nass  
im Sande schäumte!

Wenn die matte Sommerschwüle  
Lässig stritt mit frischer Kühle,  
Und die blanken Blätter taufen  
Und die Saaten dunkler blauten,

Welche Wonne, in dem Fliesen  
Dann zu stehn mit nackten Füßen!  
An dem Grase hinzustreifen  
Und den Schaum  
mit Händen greifen,

Oder mit den heissen Wangen  
Kalte Tropfen aufzufangen,  
Und den neu erwachten Düften  
Seine Kinderbrust zu lüften!

Wie die Kelche, die da troffen,  
Stand die Seele atmend offen,  
Wie die Blumen, düftetrunken,  
In dem Himmelstau versunken.

Schauernd kühlte jeder Tropfen  
Tief bis an des Herzens Klopfen,  
Und der Schöpfung heilig Weben  
Drang bis ins verborgne Leben.—

Walle, Regen, walle nieder,  
Wecke meine alten Lieder,  
Die wir in der Türe sangen,  
Wenn die Tropfen draussen klangen!

Möchte ihnen wieder lauschen,  
Ihrem süssen, feuchten Rauschen,  
Meine Seele sanft betauen  
Mit dem frommen Kindergrauen.

### Rain song

English translation © Richard Stokes

Cascade, rain, cascade down,  
Wake for me those dreams again,  
That I dreamed in childhood,  
When water foamed  
on the sand!

When oppressive summer heat  
Contended idly with cool freshness,  
And shiny leaves dripped with dew  
And crops turned a darker blue,

How blissful then it was to stand  
With naked feet in the flow!  
Or to brush against the grass  
Or grasp the foam  
in both hands,

Or to catch the cold drops  
On my glowing cheeks,  
And to bare my boyish breast  
To fresh-awakened scents!

Like the dripping chalices,  
My breathing soul stood open,  
Like the flowers drunk with fragrance,  
Drowned in heaven's dew.

Each shuddering drop seeped through  
And cooled my beating heart,  
And creation's sacred weaving  
Penetrated our secret lives.—

Cascade, rain, cascade down,  
Wake in me those old songs  
That we sang in the doorway  
When outside the drops resounded!

I'd love again to listen  
To their sweet, moist murmuring,  
And softly bedew my soul  
With innocent childlike awe.

## Fiançailles pour rire (1939) | Betrothal for laughs

**French source: Louise de Vilmorin**

**English translation: Laura Claycomb**

### **Pantomime**

André ne connaît pas la dame  
Qu'il prend aujourd'hui  
par la main.

A-t-elle un coeur à lendemains,  
Et pour le soir  
a-t-elle une âme?

Au retour d'un bal campagnard  
S'en allait-elle en robe vague  
Chercher dans les meules  
la bague  
Des fiançailles du hasard?

A-t-elle eu peur, la nuit venue,  
Guettée par  
les ombres d'hier,  
Dans son jardin, lorsque l'hiver  
Entrait par la grande avenue?

Il l'a aimée pour sa couleur,  
Pour sa bonne  
humeur de Dimanche.  
Pâlira-t-elle aux feuilles blanches  
De son album des temps meilleurs?

### **Dans l'herbe**

Je ne peux plus rien dire  
Ni rien faire pour lui,  
Il est mort de sa belle  
Il est mort de sa mort belle  
Dehors

Sus l'arbre de la Loi  
En plein silence  
En plein paysage  
Dans l'herbe.

Il est mort inaperçu  
En criant son passage  
En appelant  
En m'appelant.

Mais comme j'étais loin de lui  
Et que sa voix ne portait plus  
Il est mort seul dans la bois  
Sous son arbre d'enfance.  
Et je ne peux plus rien dire  
Ni rien faire pour lui.

### **Andre's lady**

Andre does not know the lady  
whose hand he takes today  
in marriage.

Does she have a heart for tomorrows  
And in the evening  
does she have a soul?

Coming back from a country dance  
did she go off in a light dress  
to look in the grinding stones  
for the ring  
of a chance engagement?

Was she afraid once the night came,  
threatened by  
the shadows of yesterday,  
in her garden, when the winter  
entered through the grand avenue?

He had loved her for her complexion,  
for her good  
Sunday humor.

Will she pale at the white leaves  
of her album of better times?

### **In the grass**

I can not say anything more  
nor do anything else for him.  
He is dead from his beautiful one  
He is dead from his beautiful death.  
Outside

On the tree of the Law  
In total silence  
In the middle of the landscape  
in the grass.

He died, unnoticed  
Crying out his passage  
Calling out  
Calling out to me.

But because I was far away from him  
And his voice didn't carry any more  
He died alone in the forest  
under the tree of his youth.  
And I can not say anything more  
Nor do anything else for him.

*continued on following page*

## Il vole

En allant se coucher le soleil  
Se reflète au vernis de ma table :  
C'est le fromage rond de la fable  
Au bec de mes ciseaux de vermeil.  
Mais où est le corbeau ?  
Il vole.

Je voudrais coudre mais un aimant  
Attire à lui toutes mes aiguilles.  
Sur la place les joueurs de quilles  
De belle en belle passent le temps.  
Mais où est mon amour ?  
Il vole.

C'est un voleur que j'ai pour amant,  
Le corbeau vole et mon amant vole,  
Voleur de cœur manque à sa parole  
Et voleur de fromage est absent.  
Mais où est le bonheur ? Il vole.

Je pleure sous le saule pleureur  
Je mêle mes larmes à ses feuilles  
Je pleure car  
Je veux qu'on me veuille  
Et je ne plais pas à mon voleur.  
Mais où donc est l'amour ? Il vole.

Trouvez la rime à ma déraison  
Et par les routes  
du paysage  
Ramenez-moi mon amant volage  
Qui prend les cœurs  
et perd ma raison.  
Je veux que mon voleur me vole.

## He steals away

Along with the setting of the sun,  
it reflects on the varnish of my table:  
It's the round cheese of the fable  
at the beak of my ruby scissors.  
But where is the crow?  
He steals away.

I'd like to sew but a magnet  
attracts all my needles.  
On the square the lawn bowlers  
pass their time flirting.  
But where's my lover?  
He steals away.

It's a thief that I have for a lover,  
The crow flies and my lover steals,  
Heart-stealer doesn't keep his word  
and the cheese stealer is absent.  
But where's happiness? He steals it.  
But where's happiness? It flies  
away.

I weep under the weeping willow;  
I mix my tears with its leaves.  
I cry because  
I want someone to want me,  
but I don't please my thief.  
But where then is love? It flies away.

Find the reason in my rhyme  
And from the routes  
of the countryside  
Bring me back my flighty lover  
Who steals hearts  
and loses my mind.  
I want my thief to steal me away..

*continued on following page*

**Mon cadavre est doux  
comme un gant**

Mon cadavre est doux  
comme un gant  
Doux comme un gant  
de peau glacée  
Et mes prunelles effacées  
Font de mes yeux  
des cailloux blancs.

Deux cailloux blancs  
dans mon visage  
Dans le silence deux muets  
Ombres encore d'un secret  
Et lourds du poids  
mort des images.

Mes doigts tant de fois égarés  
Sont joints en attitude sainte  
Appuyés au creux de mes plaintes  
Au noeud de mon coeur arrêté.

Et mes deux pieds  
sont des montagnes,  
Les deux derniers monts que j'ai vus  
À la minute où j'ai perdu  
La course que les années gagnent.

Mon souvenir est ressemblant,  
Enfants emportez-le bien vite,  
Allez, allez, ma vie est dite.  
Mon cadavre est doux  
comme un gant.

**Violon**

Couple amoureux  
aux accents méconnus  
Le violon et son joueur me plaisent.  
Ah! j'aime ces gémissements tendus  
Sur la corde des malaises.  
Aux accords  
sur les cordes des pendus  
À l'heure où les Lois se taisent  
Le coeur  
en forme de fraise  
S'offre à l'amour  
comme un fruit inconnu.

**My cadaver is soft  
like a glove**

My cadaver is soft  
like a glove  
Soft like a glove  
of frozen skin  
and my erased pupils  
make white pebbles  
out of my eyes.

Two white pebbles  
in my face  
In the silence, two deaf-mutes  
shadowed still by a secret  
and heavy with the  
dead weight of images.

My oft-wandering fingers  
press together in a saintly pose  
on the hollow of my laments  
at the knot of my stopped heart.

And my two feet  
are mountains  
the last hills that I saw  
in the minute that I lost  
the race that the years had gained.

My memory is life-like,  
Children, carry it away quickly.  
Go on, Go on, my life is spoken for.  
My cadaver is soft  
like a glove.

**Violin**

Amorous couple  
of unknown accents,  
The violin and his player please me.  
Ah! I love these taut moanings  
on the chord of malaises.  
To the chords [played]  
on the cords of the hanged,  
in the hour where the Law hushes,  
the heart,  
in the form of a strawberry  
offers itself to love  
like an unknown fruit.

*continued on following page*

## Fleur

Fleurs promises,  
fleurs tenues dans tes bras,  
Fleurs sorties  
des parenthèses d'un pas,  
Qui t'apportait  
ces fleurs l'hiver  
Saupoudrées  
du sable des mers ?

Sable de tes baisers,  
fleurs des amours fanées  
Les beaux yeux sont de cendre  
et dans la cheminée  
Un coeur en rubanné de plaintes  
Brûle avec ses images saintes.

## Flower

Flowers promised,  
flowers held in your arms,  
Flowers issued  
from the parenthesis of a step,  
Who brought you  
these flowers in winter  
Powdered with  
the sand of the seas?

Sand of your kisses,  
flowers of withered loves,  
Beautiful eyes are made of ashes  
and in the chimney  
a heart beribboned in complaints  
burns with its sainted images.

## Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia

### Ophelia's Song

Text by Jake Heggie

The hills are green, my dear one,  
and blossoms are filling the air.  
The spring is arisen and I am a prisoner there.

In this flowery field I'll lay me  
and dream of the open air.  
The spring is arisen and I am a prisoner there.

Taste of the honey. Sip of the wine.  
Pine for a chalice of gold.  
I have a dear one and he is mine.  
Thicker than water. Water so cold.

In this flowery field I'll lay me  
and dream of the open air.  
The spring is arisen and I am a prisoner there.

### **Women Have Loved Before**

Text by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Women have loved before as I love now;  
At least, in lively chronicles of the past—  
Of Irish waters by a Cornish prow  
Or Trojan waters by a Spartan mast  
Much to their cost invaded—here and there,  
Hunting the amorous line, skimming the rest,  
I find some woman bearing as I bear  
Love like a burning city in the breast.  
I think however that of all alive  
I only in such utter, ancient way  
Do suffer love; in me alone survive  
The unregenerate passions of a day  
When treacherous queens, with death upon the tread,  
Heedless and willful, took their knights to bed.

### **Not In a Silver Casket**

Text by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Not in a silver casket cool with pearls  
Or rich with red corundum or with blue,  
Locked, and the key withheld, as other girls  
Have given their loves, I give my love to you;  
Not in a lovers'-knot, not in a ring  
Worked in such fashion, and the legend plain—  
Semper fidelis, where a secret spring  
Kennels a drop of mischief for the brain:  
Love in the open hand, no thing but that,  
Ungemmed, unhidden, wishing not to hurt,  
As one should bring you cowslips in a hat  
Swung from the hand, or apples in her skirt,  
I bring you, calling out as children do:  
"Look what I have! —And these are all for you."

## Spring

Text by Edna St. Vincent Millay

To what purpose, April, do you return again?  
Beauty is not enough.  
You can no longer quiet me with the redness  
Of little leaves opening stickily.  
I know what I know.  
The sun is hot on my neck as I observe  
The spikes of the crocus.  
The smell of the earth is good.  
It is apparent that there is no death.  
But what does that signify?  
Not only underground are the brains of men  
Eaten by maggots.  
Life in itself  
Is nothing,  
An empty cup, a flight of uncarpeted stairs.  
It is not enough that yearly, down this hill,  
April  
Comes like an idiot, babbling and strewing flowers.

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