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Faculty Recital: Music for Dessert - 19th Century American Parlor Songs

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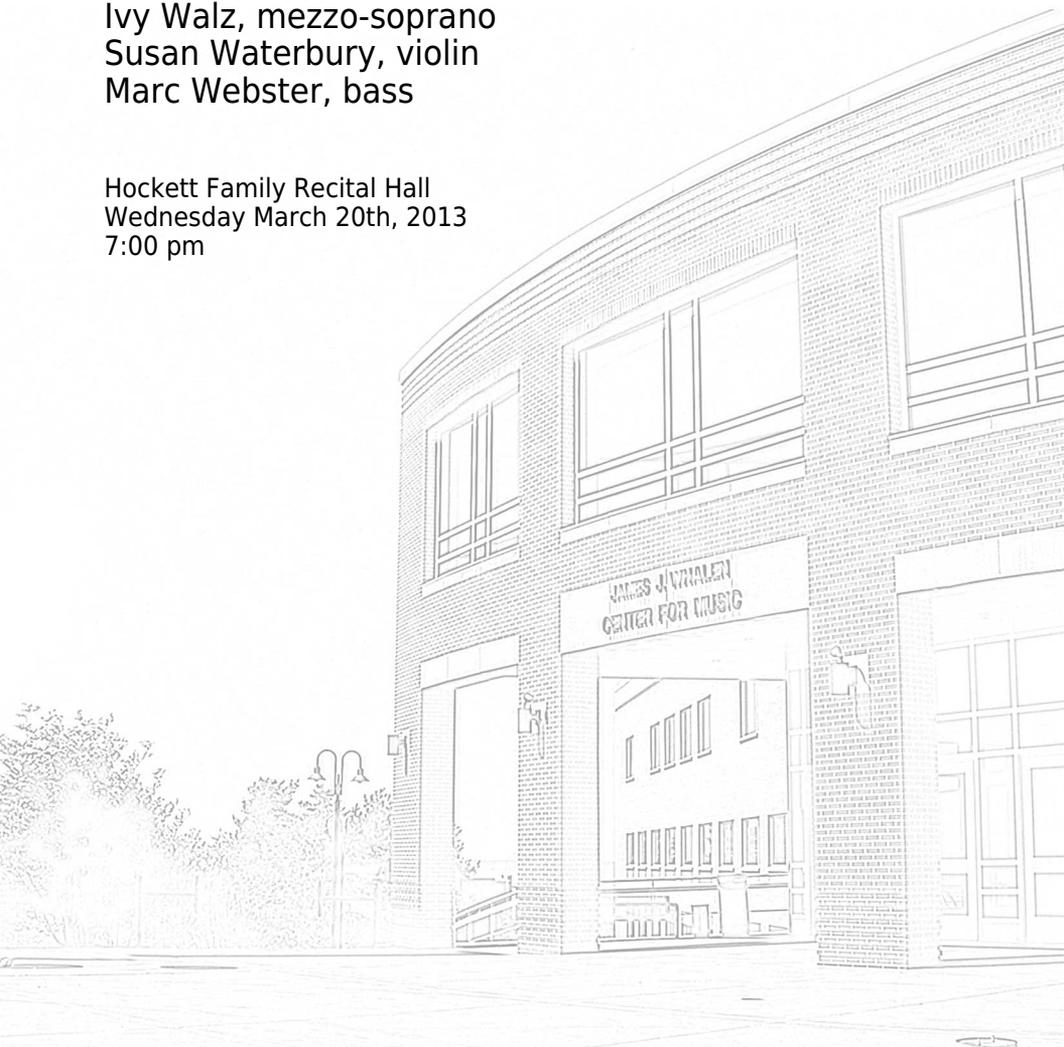
Authors

Blaise Bryski, Michael Caporizzo, Lorilyn Light, David Parks, Ivy Walz, Susan Waterbury, and Marc Webster

Music for Dessert 19th-Century American Parlor Songs

Blaise Bryski, piano
Michael Caporizzo, guitar
Loralyn Light, soprano
David Parks, tenor
Ivy Walz, mezzo-soprano
Susan Waterbury, violin
Marc Webster, bass

Hockett Family Recital Hall
Wednesday March 20th, 2013
7:00 pm



ITHACA COLLEGE

School of Music

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Program

Political Commentary

My Love He Is a Mormonite
AND He's got the Money TOO.
Money Talks
The World Is Topsy Turvy

Harry Miller
C.T. Lockwood
J.F. Zimmermann
Sep. Winner

Social Concerns: PROHIBITION

Don't Marry a Man If He Drinks
Turn the Crank
Please Sell No More Drink To My Father
The Hallelujah Band

Mrs. E. A. Parkhurst
Edward F. Edwards
C. A. White
Chas. J. Miers

A Journey of Love

I Will Meet You In the Twilight
Half a Heart
Kissable Lips
Don't Be Angry With Me Darling
A Voice In My Heart, Love, Is Calling for You
In Dreamland Far Away
Silver Threads Among the Gold
You Are Always Young To Me

H. P. Danks

Popular Tunes

Listen To The Mocking Bird
Patchwork
The Spelling Bee

Alice Hawthorne
Sep. Winner
Sep. Winner

Program Notes

Reviving 19th - Century American Parlor Songs

During the summer of 2012, professors Dr. David Parks and Ivy Walz were awarded a summer research grant from Ithaca College that funded a project involving the research, musical preparation, rehearsal and recording of selections from the vast repertoire of nineteenth century American Parlor Songs. Very soon Professors Marc Webster, Blaise Bryski, Pablo Cohen and Susan Waterbury as well as soprano Lorilyn Light agreed to join them for this collaboration. We are truly thankful to Professor Patrice Pastore who was the producer of the recording.

American Parlor Songs are from the genre of popular song, which author Charles Hamm defines as songs "written for, and most often performed by a single voice or small group of singers, accompanied by either a single chord-playing instrument or some sort of band, ensemble, or small orchestra; usually first performed and popularized in some form of secular stage entertainment, and afterward consumed (performed or listened to) in the home." During the 19th-century, parlor songs became very fashionable as importance was increasingly placed on musical proficiency as a hallmark of good taste and moral reputability. Musical prowess, particularly keyboard playing, was highly prized. It was a commonly-held value that a proper education was only complete if it included the study of music.

Following the Civil War, parlor organs, also known as reed organs and cabinet organs, became particularly popular in American homes. Dr. David Parks went to great lengths to build a 19th-century parlor song setting in his 21st-century recording studio as well as on the stage this evening. He purchased an 1886 Weaver organ as well as an 1871 Knabe square grand piano, which is in original condition. The square piano is a small horizontal piano with a rectangular case that allows for horizontal string arrangement. From the time of its invention in the mid-18th century, and throughout most of the 19th century, the square piano was the most common domestic keyboard instrument. Many 19th-century families owned smaller instruments such as a violin or a guitar, and this evening you will hear these instruments as well.

This evening you will hear a sampling of Parlor Songs written during the post Civil War years. These songs follow a clear musical prescription. The texts typically depict a nostalgic, cautionary, pathetic or tragic situation. The form of the songs usually includes a piano introduction of 4-8 measures, often stating the main tune. This introduction is followed by a verse for a solo voice, 16 measures long, divided into 4 equal phrases. The solo verse is followed by a refrain that is very often arranged for a quartet of singers and often melodically and textually identical to the first verse. The song will usually conclude with a piano postlude of 4 or 8 measures, sometimes melodically identical to the introduction. The refrain commonly arranged for a quartet was ideal for music making in the home, as it was customary for the whole family to make music together. Part of the entertainment would be found in singing in four-part harmony. This also enabled the stronger singer(s) to take the verses and for the rest of the family to join in on the refrain.

As we combed through the vast collection of American Parlor Songs available, we were stuck by the similarity of political issues, even with the passing of time. This became particularly apparent in that 2012 was an election year.

Many American popular songs of the 19th century were based on social or moral messages. One of the biggest moral messages of the time was temperance. Depicted in the large number of published temperance songs is usually a family who deals with one (usually the husband) who drinks too much. This leads to financial hardship, hunger, and even physical abuse. These temperance songs spawned a trend of sequel or reply songs, in which the husband would repent, give up the drink and become a model parent or husband. Temperance Songs also invited the writing of anti-temperance songs in which the text declared warnings for a world that took away a man's right to drink.

Mrs. E.A. Parkhurst (1836-1918), author of "Don't Marry a Man if He Drinks", gained most recognition for her temperance and abolition songs. Some of her very popular songs were performed with her daughter ('Little Effie') and herself at concerts and temperance meetings in New York. Parkhurst's work was publicized and promoted by the same publisher for the songs of Stephen Foster. Her songs use a sophisticated harmonic language and tend to be quite imaginative.

H.P. Danks (1834 -1903) was a singer and a conductor as well as a composer. He was the single most popular composer of American popular song in the 19th century. Two of his most famous songs include "Don't be Angry with me, Darling" (1870), and the ballad "Silver Threads among the Gold" (1872), which sold more than three million copies and was perhaps the most widely sold song of its day. The romantic sentimentality of this group of songs illustrates America's demand for an escape from the grim truths of the post Civil War period through romantic love ballades.

"Listen to the Mocking Bird" was written by composer Septimus Winner, under his pseudonym, Alice Hawthorne (1855). It was an enormous success selling around 20 million copies and was contemporary with Stephen Foster's minstrel songs. "Patchwork" is an interesting pastiche by Winner made up of famous tunes. Many of the tunes included in this medley-song are listed in author Charles Hamm's list of "The Top-Selling Foreign Songs in America in 1870". These songs include "Five O'Clock in the Morning", "The Last Rose of Summer", "Oft in the Stilly Night, and "Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines". "The Spelling Bee" is a song written to entertain those joining in to sing, with a tongue-twister chorus that most likely sent the whole family into raucous laughter around the piano.

Ivy Walz