

BAR D COLLEGE CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

DEGREE RECITAL:

Melanie Dubil, *mezzo-soprano*

with

Chewon Park, *piano*

Saturday, May 7, 2022, at 7 PM

László Z. Bitó '60 Conservatory Building

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Bard College Conservatory of Music expands Bard's spirit of innovation in arts and education. The Conservatory, which opened in 2005, offers a five-year, double-degree program at the undergraduate level and, at the graduate level, programs in vocal arts, conducting, and instrumental performance, as well as Chinese music and culture. Also at the graduate level, the Conservatory offers an Advanced Performance Studies Program and a two-year Post-graduate Collaborative Piano Fellowship. The US-China Music Institute of the Bard College Conservatory of Music, established in 2017, offers a unique degree program in Chinese instruments. The Conservatory Orchestra has performed twice at Lincoln Center, and has completed three international concert tours to China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan; Russia and six cities in Central and Eastern Europe; and to three cities in Cuba.

This year, the Conservatory has enrolled 175 undergraduate and graduate students from 20 different countries and 27 states. Many students hold named scholarships in recognition of their academic and musical excellence including the John Cage Trust Scholarship, Bettina Baruch Scholarship, Y. S. Liu Foundation Scholarship, Joan Tower Composition Scholarship, Alexander Borodin Scholarship, Robert Martin Scholarship, and Stephen and Belinda Kaye Scholarship, among others.

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Bard College Conservatory of Music
presents

A Degree Recital:
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with
Chewon Park, *piano*

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An die Musik

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)
text by Franz von Schober (1796–1882)

Is A Rose (2019)

I. The Edge

II. And So

III. Red, Red Rose

Caroline Shaw (b. 1982)
text by Jacob Polley (1975)
text by Caroline Shaw (1982)
text by Robert Burns (1759–96)

Nathaniel Sanchez, *oboe*
Laura Pérez-Rangel, *violin I*
Blanche Darr, *violin II*
Mercer Greenwald, *viola*
William Pilgrim, *cello*
Stan Legan, *bass*
Chewon Park, *harpsichord*

from *Craigslustlieder* (2009) anonymous *Craigslust* advertisements Gabriel Kahane (b. 1981)

I'm Sorry

Half a Box of Condoms

For Trade: Assless Chaps

Armenian Folk Song

Օրոր "Oror"

Չինարես "Chinar-es"

Բելեր, ցոլեր "Keler, Tsoler"

Լե, լե, Յաման "Le, le, Yaman"

Komitas Vardapet (1869–1935)

Funeral Blues

Der Abschiedsbrief

Complainte de la Seine

Klops Lied

Die Muschel von Margate, from *Konjunktur*

J'attends un navire, from *Marie Galante*

Benjamin Britten (1913–76)
text by W. H. Auden (1907–73)
Kurt Weill (1900–50)
text by Erich Kastner (1899–1974)
Weill
text by Maurice Magre (1877–1941)
Weill
traditional Berlin folk-rhyme
Weill
text by Felix Gasbarra (1895–1985)
Weill
text by Jacques Deval (1890–1972)

Originally from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, mezzo-soprano **Melanie Dubil** strives to contribute to experiences in which the world of classical vocal music can be relatable, accessible, and cathartic.

Melanie's most recent operatic credits include *Seven Deadly Sins* (Anna I), *The Medium* (Mrs. Nolan), and *The Cunning Little Vixen* (Lapák/Mrs. Paskova) with Bard College Conservatory's The Orchestra Now and the Graduate Vocal Arts Program.

Melanie is also recognized for her work in cabaret and musical theatre repertoire. In 2020, she was awarded an Emerging Artist Award in the Lotte Lenya Competition and starred in a virtual production of the musical *110 in the Shade* as Lizzie with the Chautauqua Institute.

In concert, Melanie appeared at Carnegie Hall as a soloist in Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music* under the baton of Leonard Slatkin at Manhattan School of Music's 2019 Centennial Gala, and sang the role of Historicus in Carissimi's *Jephthe* at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine under the baton of Kent Tritle (2018). Last December, Melanie made her Fisher Center debut as a soloist in Handel's *Messiah* under the baton of Leon Botstein with The Orchestra Now.

Melanie is passionate about exploring the art of song, especially in contemporary idioms by composers that best represent her. Growing up in an Armenian- and Ukrainian-American household, Melanie has always been curious about her ancestry and how she can learn more about it through her music-making. In 2018, she appeared alongside Vira Slywotzky at Opera America's Marc A. Scorca Hall in a recital highlighting Ukrainian art and folk song, and on this evening's recital Melanie is thrilled to share the work of iconic Armenian composer and ethnomusicologist Komitas Vardapet as part of this personal exploration and study.

A graduate of the Manhattan School of Music (BM), Melanie is a candidate for her master's degree from the Bard College Conservatory's Graduate Vocal Arts Program under the tutelage of Richard Cox. This summer, Melanie is excited to make her role debut as Edka in Heggie's *Two Remain* as a Studio Artist with Central City Opera.

Pianist **Chewon Park** is in her second year as a collaborative piano fellow. A graduate of Yeungnam University (BM, MM), where she studied with Gyula Kiss, Junie Cho and Vladimir Shakin, and the New England Conservatory (MM, GD), Chewon pursued advanced study of chamber music and collaboration with Pei-Shan Lee, Lisa Saffer, Bradley Williams and Ayano Ninomiya. She has also given numerous performances in the United States, Japan, China and Korea. For several years, she was a fellow at the Bowdoin International Music Festival, and a staff pianist at the Conservatory Audition Workshop. She participated in SongFest and the Tokyo International Vocal Arts Academy as well as serving as a core pianist at the New England Conservatory Preparatory School, staff pianist at Boston Conservatory at Berklee, and Boston Symphony Orchestra's Project "STEP." She also played for masterclasses with Max Levinson, Renée Fleming, Paul Katz, Augustin Hadelich, Jeff Irvine, and Amit Peled, among others.

Violinist **Blanche Darr** grew up in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, and has been studying violin since age nine. She is co-leader of the Musical Mentorship Initiative, a project making music education more accessible by providing free private music lessons with Conservatory students for children. Recent notable performances include the 2021 premiere of “Four Yiddish Folksongs” by Derek David. In past summers, Blanche has studied at Aria International Summer Academy, Green Mountain Chamber Music Festival, and Encore Chamber Music’s Summer Academy. She is in her second year at the Bard College Conservatory, where she studies with Carmit Zori. Her second major is anthropology.

Mercer Greenwald is a fifth-year violist studying with Marka Gustavsson at the Bard Conservatory of Music. She will receive a BM degree in viola performance and a BA degree in German Studies this month. Last semester, she finished her senior project titled “*Fort! Da!*: Thinking Death in Freud and *Faust*.” In addition to the Bard Conservatory Orchestra, Mercer has played with the Youth Orchestra of Niederösterreich in Austria and the Orchestra of Ramallah in Palestine. She was principal violist of the Prague Summer Nights Orchestra and the Vienna Summer Music Festival Orchestra. She has played in numerous chamber music festivals, including Bad Leonfelden in Austria, Domaine Forget in Quebec, Bowdoin International Music Festival in Maine, and Kinhaven Young Artists Festival in Vermont.

Stan Legan studies double-bass with Jeremy McCoy in his first year at the Bard College Conservatory.

Violinist **Laura Pérez-Rangel** is a fifth-year student in the Bard Conservatory where she studies with Carmit Zori. Her second major at Bard is Human Rights. Laura transferred to Bard from Venezuela, where she studied musicology and was part of the El Sistema program. Laura has performed with several orchestras of El Sistema, including the Orquesta Nacional Infantil de Venezuela, Orquesta Nacional Juvenil de Venezuela, and Sinfónica de la Juventud Zuliana Rafael Urdaneta. She holds the Conservatory’s George Martin-Hans Thatcher Clarke Scholarship awarded to a gifted string player who combines a love of music with concern for social justice.

William Pilgrim is a cellist studying with Peter Wiley in the Bard College Conservatory. After beginning cello lessons with Tom Austin in Minnesota at the age of 5, he moved to New York in 2010 and studied with cellist David Gibson. He also took lessons from Astrid Schween (cellist of the Julliard Quartet) during the 2019-20 year. He attended the New England Conservatory Preparatory School for two years where he played in the Youth Philharmonic Orchestra, and enrolled in the chamber music program and music theory classes. William won second place at the 2019 Uel Wade Music Scholarship competition.

Nathaniel Sanchez is an oboist and heckelphone specialist studying oboe performance at Bard College Conservatory with Elaine Douvas, Ryan Roberts, and Alexandra Knoll. Nathaniel frequently appears as principal oboist with the Bard College Conservatory Orchestra. In 2019 Nathaniel graduated from the Interlochen Arts, and performed with the Interlochen Orchestra, Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra, and Central Illinois Youth Symphony, and was a member of the Ventus Quintet. His second major at Bard is economics.

on “An die Musik”

Likely one of **Franz Schubert**'s most famous *lied*, “An die Musik” (To Music) was an early collaboration of Schubert and his close colleague, Franz von Schober. The friends (and speculated lovers) deeply admired each other's work and bonded over their love of music and literature, making this particular song setting uniquely meaningful. Schubert maintained a life-long friendship with von Schober, and the two young men would frequently stay together, often sleeping in the same room. “An die Musik” was composed in 1817, but not published until 1827, the year before Schubert's death.

Is A Rose (2019)

Composer, singer, and violinist **Caroline Shaw** is described as a musician who moves among roles, genres, and mediums as she tries to imagine a world of sound that has never been heard before but has always existed. She is the youngest recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Music and her compositional fluidity has led to the creation of music for a wide range of performing artists, spanning from Anne Sofie von Otter, Renée Fleming, and Dawn Upshaw, to Kanye West, Beyoncé, and Rosalía.

In *Is A Rose*, Shaw evokes an array of musical styles by uniquely incorporating historic instruments (such as the harpsichord) in a quasi-Baroque setting, while using the voice in a more contemporary vernacular. For instance, in the instrumental accompaniment, Shaw quotes the music of Handel's aria “Lascia ch'io pianga” (“Let Me Weep”) to create an atmosphere of longing in the first movement. Shaw has a knack for fusing together seemingly disparate sound-worlds to birth an interestingly rich sound-scape. The three poems in this work, by contemporary poet Jacob Polley, the composer herself, and Robert Burns, mentions the rose.

Craigslitlied (2009)

In 2006, pianist, vocalist, and composer **Gabriel Kahane** set eight texts to music taken from personal ads on Craigslist, thus birthing his now best-known work: the *Craigslitlied*. Often described as “indie-classical”, Kahane has released four solo albums as a singer-songwriter in addition to his collaborative work with other performers, and has worked with an array of artists including Paul Simon, Sufjan Stevens, Andrew Bird, Phoebe Bridgers, and Caroline Shaw. Kahane's penchant for melodrama shines in these song settings as he juxtaposes everyday happenings (with colloquial language) against an operatic musical setting. For instance, in “Half a Box of Condoms”, the whole piece sounds and feels like a *recitativo accompagnato*: there is stark dynamic and rhythmic contrast throughout the song, the voice is often speech-like and flows independently from the piano part, and the piano accompaniment is being utilized as a direct response to text, much like we see in these types of recitatives.

Armenian Folk Song

Komitas Vardapet (birth name: Soghomon Soghomonian) was an Armenian priest, ethnomusicologist, and composer who collected and compiled over 4,000 folk songs from many cultures, and he is considered to be one of the most impactful ethnomusicologists in Armenian folk music discovery. Originally from the town of Kütahya (also known as Koutina) in the Ottoman Empire, his father was a shoemaker and his mother was a carpet weaver, although they both had musical talents which they passed down to Komitas. Sadly, Komitas lost his mother when he was just one year old and his father when he was eleven.

His singing skills, ultimately, saved his life; twelve-year old Soghomon was selected out of 20 other boys at his orphanage to study and sing at the Echmiadzin Seminary

in Vagharshapat, Armenia. He did not speak or understand Armenian because in the 19th century the authorities of Kütahya had banned the use of the language in everyday life; only Ottoman Turkish, along with Arabic and Farsi, were allowed to be spoken publicly. Likely because of the musical abilities passed down from his parents, Komitas did know a few Armenian folk songs, and when initially greeted at the seminary, he replied, “I don’t speak Armenian, but if you wish, I will sing”. Then, with his ringing soprano voice, he sang an Armenian *sharakan* (a church hymn) without understanding the words. Soghomon soon became a fluent speaker of Armenian.

In 1890, he was ordained a monk, and in 1893 upon completion of his studies at the seminary, he was ordained a “Vardapet” (priest) and acquired his new name “Komitas” after the 7th-century Armenian hymn-writer. At the seminary, Komitas was assigned to teach music, and also organized a choir, an orchestra of folk instruments, arranged folk songs, and extensively researched Armenian Church music. Komitas folk-song “harmonizations” (as he preferred to call it) have captured the sound of the Armenian soul, further enhancing the pre-existing melodies that have rung throughout the hills and valleys of Armenia for centuries.

This harmonization is in the song “Le, Le, Yaman”, where he repeats the first four notes of melody over and over again in the piano accompaniment, making it sound like a call-and-response. Although originally a love song, it became identified with the Armenian Genocide of the early 20th century, and as an outcry and eternal questioning for all that was lost.

Cabaret

According to renowned cabaret performer Daniel Isengart, cabaret is about “collaboration and the many traditions of the performing arts fusing together at a specific time and place that continues to evolve...it is risqué within the artistic lens!” Cabaret was created by artists for artists; it was music with subject matter *about* the working class *for* the working class, and it was exclusively for the artist community at its inception.

I’ve had a personal connection with cabaret music, specifically **Kurt Weill’s**, since I was introduced to him through his musical theatre repertoire. Another genre-bending musician, like Shaw and Kahane, Weill’s vocal compositions range from art song, operetta, musical theater, and cabaret. Cabaret music lends itself to the use of wide ranging vocal techniques such as straight-tone, *sprechstimme*, less conventionally “pretty” sounds, and its subject matter never shies away from the nitty-gritty of life’s dark undersides.

The cycle begins with a setting of **Benjamin Britten’s** “Funeral Blues”; likely the rawest depiction of grief in comparison to the rest of this program’s cabaret set. Britten sets W.H. Auden’s text to a blues groove, using rhythm and the power of a steady beat to add intensity to this piece. Weill is particularly evocative in painting the scenes in these layered texts he sets; for example, you can hear a calm river flowing in the piano part of “Complainte de la Seine” as the text describes the sordid images of what might be at the bottom of the Seine river in Paris. We then take a turn in Weill’s “Klops Lied” (The Meatball Song), where the piano and voice seemingly play tag with each other, responding to the way Weill has hilariously written-in a Berlin dialect to this traditional folk-rhyme. The variety and contrast within the cabaret repertoire world alone is cast, which brings me back to the question Daniel Isengart poses, “life is a cabaret!...but what does that mean? Is life a game, a show, a fantasy, an illusion? Or is life just plain mad?”

*Thank you so much to all that are here this evening. Thank you to my incredible teachers Richard, Stephanie, Kayo, Erika, and Lucy, for your guidance, care, and curiosity. An enormous thank you to Chewon for being one of the most caring and generous collaborators a singer could ask for. Thank you to my mom, my sisters, my partner Andrew, and the rest of my family for cheering me on throughout this wild (and often strange) journey of classical singing. Thank you to Emile for generously guiding me through these beautiful Armenian texts. Thank you to Nate, Laura, Blanche, Mercer, William, and Stan for dedicating energy + time to music that is so dear to me. A special thank you to my VAP colleagues Alexis, Joanne, Sam, Kirby, Micah, and Sarah for their endless love, compassion, and inspiration –
I love you kids forever!!!*