

Oklahoma State University  
Michael and Anne Greenwood School of Music

## Master Class with Johnnie Bankens, DMA

2:30 pm in the McKnight Center for the Performing Arts Recital Hall

“Who is Silvia?” from *Let Us Garlands Bring* Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)  
Jacob Diaz, baritone, Studio of André Chiang, DMA  
Pi-Ju Chiang, piano

“Connais-tu le pays?” from *Mignon* Ambroise Thomas (1811-1896)  
Hayley Steele, mezzo-soprano, Studio of April Golliver-Mohiuddin  
Megan Barth Argo, piano

“Che beltà, che leggiadria” from *La finta giardiniera* W. A. Mozart (1756-1791)  
Brennan Lacy, tenor, Studio of Steve Sanders  
Elena Lyalina, piano

“Funny Girl” from *Funny Girl* Jule Styne (1905-1994)  
Jenna Hooper, soprano, Studio of André Chiang, DMA  
Megan Barth Argo, piano

“Lydia” Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)  
Dawson Royse, baritone, Studio of Julie McCoy  
Megan Barth Argo, piano



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On the concert stage, Johnnie has performed the solos in *Beethoven's Symphony No. 9*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem*, Handel's *Messiah*, Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass*, and Saint-Saëns' *Christmas Oratorio*, as well as in numerous cantatas by J.S. Bach. As an avid recitalist, Bankens has been a featured performer all over the nation. He has made professional appearances with San Diego Opera, Nevada Opera, Opéra Louisiane, Blue Lake Opera, Louisiana Philharmonic, Starkville Symphony, New Orleans Symphony Chorus, West End Collegiate Singers, The Stonewall Chorale, The Lied Society, and Louisiana Choral Foundation.

In the Fall of 2019, Johnnie joined the music faculty of Southeastern Louisiana University as an Assistant Professor of Voice. He teaches Applied Voice, Graduate Teaching Practicum, Voice Pedagogy, and Song Literature. Other teaching engagements include Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp and Festival of International Opera in Italy.

McKnight Center Recital Hall – January 23, 2022 at 2:30pm

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## Faculty and Guest Recital

Johnnie Bankens, DMA, bass  
André Chiang, DMA, baritone  
Megan Barth Argo, piano

“Now finally a love song” (3’)

André Chiang, DMA, baritone

Tamika Sterrs-Howard (b. 1942)

from *Fêtes galantes II* (10’)

“Les ingénus”

“Le Faune”

“Colloque sentimental”

Johnnie Bankens, DMA, bass

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

from *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (18’)

“Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit mach”

“Gieng heut’ Morgen über’s Feld”

“Ich hab’ ein glühend Messer”

“Die zwei blauen Augen”

André Chiang, DMA, baritone

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

“O, net, molju, ne ukhodi!” Op. 4 No. 1 (2’)

“Utro” Op. 4 No. 2 (3’)

“V molchan’ji nochi tajnoj” Op. 4 No. 3 (3’)

“Siren” Op. 21 No. 5 (2’)

Johnnie Bankens, DMA, bass

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

from *I Puritani* (5’)

“Suoni la tromba, e intrpido”

Johnnie Bankens, DMA, bass

André Chiang, DMA, baritone

Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835)

from *A Little Night Music*

“Now” (4’)

“In praise of women” (3’)

“It would have been wonderful” (5’)

Johnnie Bankens, DMA, bass

André Chiang, DMA, baritone

Stephen Sondheim (b. 1930)

## PROGRAM NOTES and TRANSLATIONS

(Information from “lieder.net”, Nico Castel, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* by Carol Kimball, and “mtishows.com”)

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“Now, finally a love song” is a poem by American poet Joyce Sutphen. During the 2021 Source Song Festival, Tamika Howard wrote an art song using the poetry. Megan Barth Argo and André Chiang were involved as MN Duo participants, and the pieces came into fruition with collaborative input from the performers and composer. Howard’s song also included a line for a flute accompaniment as well.

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By breaking free from traditional harmonic and rhythmic structures, **Claude Debussy** created an atmosphere of suspended time. Debussy utilized non-functional harmony, complex and non-metrical rhythms, chromaticism, whole-tone and pentatonic scales, and tonal ambiguity in his song compositions. His highly refined sense of literary taste significantly influenced his musical language. The words of **Paul Verlaine** proved to be more influential. Verlaine was a French symbolist poet during the late Romantic period. Symbolism was an artistic movement that favored dreams, visions, and the associative powers of the imagination. Symbolists used subtle suggestions to evoke moods and feelings.

***Fêtes galantes II*** – Paul Verlaine

### 1. Les ingénus (The Inexperienced Ones)

The high heels struggled with the long skirts,  
so that, depending on the ground and the wind,  
one caught an occasional glimpse of lower legs, too often intercepted!  
— and we loved this foolishness.

Sometimes also the sting of a jealous insect  
Troubled the neck of the fair ones under the branches,  
And there were sudden flashes of white necks,  
and this was a feast for our foolish young eyes.

The evening descended, and uncertain Autumn evening:  
The fair ones, dreamily hanging on our arms,  
Softly murmured then such superficial words  
That our souls ever since tremble and are amazed.

## 2. Le faune (The Faun)

An old terra-cotta faun  
Laughs in the center of the lawns,  
Predicting no doubt an unhappy sequel  
to these calm moments.

Which have led me and you,  
--melancholy pilgrims—  
To this hour that flits away,  
Twirling to the tambourines.

## 3. Colloque sentimental (Sentimental Dialogue)

In an old park, deserted and frozen,  
Two shapes have just passed by.

Their eyes are dead and their lips are lifeless,  
And their words can hardly be heard.

In the old park, deserted and frozen,  
Two ghosts recall the past.

--Do you remember our past rapture?  
--Why would you have me remember?

-- Does your heart still beat at my name?  
Do you still see my soul when you dream?  
--No.

--Ah, the beautiful days of inexpressible bliss  
When our lips joined together!  
--This is possible.

--How blue the sky, how great our hopes!  
--Hope has fled, vanquished, to the black sky.

So they walked on through the wild grasses,  
And the night alone heard their words.

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Gustav Mahler is known for his conducting as much as his compositions. Many of his art songs were composed for orchestra and as a result have a much fuller accompaniment. *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (*Songs of a Wayfarer*) is often noted as one of the first orchestral song cycles. The poetry was written by Mahler with influences from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (*The Youth's Magic Horn*), a collection of folk poems edited by Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano. The four songs uniquely pull from the folk influences and provide melodies and tone-scapes that inundate the audience in atmospheric ambiance. Detailing the travels and loves of the wayfarer is a common trope in art songs for baritone (like Vaughan Williams' *Songs of Travel*), but Mahler takes the trope and uniquely situates the voice and orchestra, or piano, as partners in the story telling.

### **1. Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht (When my darling has her wedding-day)**

When my darling has her wedding-day, her joyous wedding-day,  
I will have my day of mourning! I will go to my little room, my dark little room,  
and weep, weep for my darling, for my dear darling!

Blue flower! Do not wither! Sweet little bird - you sing on the green heath!  
Alas, how can the world be so fair? Chirp! Chirp!  
Do not sing; do not bloom! Spring is over.  
All singing must now be done. At night when I go to sleep, I think of my sorrow, of my sorrow!

### **2. Ging heut morgen übers Feld (I walked across the fields this morning)**

I walked across the fields this morning; dew still hung on every blade of grass.  
The merry finch spoke to me: "Hey! Isn't it? Good morning! Isn't it?  
You! Isn't it becoming a fine world? Chirp! Chirp! Fair and sharp! How the world delights me!"

Also, the bluebells in the field merrily with good spirits tolled out to me with bells (ding, ding)  
their morning greeting: "Isn't it becoming a fine world? Ding, ding! Fair thing!  
How the world delights me!"

And then, in the sunshine, the world suddenly began to glitter;  
everything gained sound and color in the sunshine! Flower and bird, great and small!  
"Good day, is it not a fine world? Hey, isn't it? A fair world?"

Now will my happiness also begin? No, no - the happiness I mean can never bloom!

### **3. Ich hab' ein glühend Messer (I have a red-hot knife)**

I have a red-hot knife, a knife in my breast.  
O woe! It cuts so deeply into every joy and delight.  
Alas, what an evil guest it is! Never does it rest or relax,  
not by day or by night, when I would sleep. O woe!

When I gaze up into the sky I see two blue eyes there.  
O woe! When I walk in the yellow field, I see from afar her blond hair  
waving in the wind. O woe!

When I start from a dream and hear the tinkle of her silvery laugh,  
O woe! Would that I lay on my black bier - Would that I could never again open my eyes!

#### 4. Die zwei blauen Augen von meinem Schatz (The two blue eyes of my darling)

The two blue eyes of my darling - they have sent me into the wide world.  
I had to take my leave of this well-beloved place! O blue eyes, why did you gaze on me?  
Now I will have eternal sorrow and grief.

I went out into the quiet night well across the dark heath.  
To me no one bade farewell. Farewell! My companions are love and sorrow!

On the road there stands a linden tree, and there for the first time I found rest in sleep!  
Under the linden tree that snowed its blossoms onto me -  
I did not know how life went on, and all was well again!  
All! All, love and sorrow and world and dream!

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**Sergei Rachmaninoff** was particularly sensitive to the inherent musicality of the Russian language. Although his songs have a strong similarity with the Russian classical *romance*, the composer's own voice can be heard in the breadth and eloquence of the vocal melody, the expressivity of harmony, and the rich pianistic texture.

#### 1. Utro (Morning) – M.L. Yanov

"I love you!" Daybreak whispered to day  
And, while enfolding the skies,  
Blushed from that confession,  
And a sunbeam, illuminating nature,  
With a smile sent her a burning kiss.

And the day, as if still doubting  
The fulfillment of his most cherished dreams,  
Descended over the land, and with a smile dried  
Her glittering tears like rows of diamonds.

#### 2. V molchanyi nochi tajnaj (In the Silence of the Secret Night) – A.A. Fet

Oh, long will I, in the silence of the secret night,  
Chase from my thoughts and then call up again  
Your artful chatter, your smile, your casual glance,  
The thick tresses of your hair, so pliant in my fingers;

Breathing fitfully, alone, unseen by anybody else,  
Burning with the glow of vexation and of shame,  
I shall seek out the slightest hint of mystery  
In the words you uttered;

I shall whisper and improve upon the past expressions  
Of things I once said to you, things full of bashfulness,  
And intoxicated, against all reason,  
I shall wake night's darkness with your cherished name

### 3. Siren' (Lilacs) - Ekaterina Andreyena Beketova

In the morning, at dawn,  
Through the dew-clad grass,  
I shall walk, breathing in the freshness of morning;  
And to the fragrant shade,  
Where lilacs cluster,  
I shall go in search of my happiness...

In life there is but one happiness  
That I am fated to find,  
And that happiness lives in the lilacs;  
On their green branches,  
In their fragrant clusters  
My poor happiness blooms...

### 4. O, net, malju, ne ukhadi! (Oh, no, I Beg do not Leave!) – Dmitry Merezhkovsky

Oh no, I beg you, do not leave!  
All my pains are nothing compared to separation  
I am only too fortunate  
With that torment,  
Press me tightly to your bosom  
And say you love me.

I came anew  
Full of pain, pale and exhausted.  
See how poor and weak I am,  
How I need your love...

The new torments ahead  
I await like a caress or kiss,  
And again I beg you in anguish:  
Oh stay with me, do not leave!

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The duet "Suoni la tromba" end Act II of Vincenzo Bellini's *I Puritani* (*The Puritans*) with libretto by Carlo Pepoli. The story takes place in England around 1650 with tensions rising between the Puritans and the Royalists. Giorgio, a Puritan, is the uncle of Elvira who loves Arturo, a Royalist, but is promised to Riccardo, a Puritan. Because this is a *bel canto* drama, Elvira goes mad and prior to this duet, she believes Riccardo to be Arturo. Arturo has been sentenced to death, but Giorgio convinces Riccardo to help save him through this duet.

GIORGIO  
Riccardo! Let the grief that so afflicts me win over your beautiful soul.

RICCARDO  
Your tears have won... see how my eyes are brimming.

GIORGIO, RICCARDO  
The man who loves his country well knows how to honor mercy.

RICCARDO

Perhaps at the break of dawn the army will attack us... If he is with them...

GIORGIO

If he is there, he will perish!

RICCARDO

He will perish!

GIORGIO

My hand still recalls how to brandish a sword! With you, it will fight, yes!

RICCARDO

If armed he then will come, by this hand he shall perish.

GIORGIO

Be terror voice: Fatherland, victory, victory, honor.

Sound the trumpet, and intrepid I will punch as loud;

It is beautiful to face death shouting: freedom!

Love of fearless homeland, it burns the sanguine laurels,

Then wipe the good sweats and pity.

RICCARDO, GIORGIO

At dawn!

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*A Little Night Music* is a 1973 musical with music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim. Based on Ingmar Bergman's, *Smiles of a Summer Night*, the musical explores the interactions of the upper and lower class and their romantic entanglements. "Now" has Fredrik Egerman debating how he would like to consummate his marriage. "In praise of women" has Count Carl Magnus determining whether his mistress is cheating on him. "It would have been wonderful" is a duet between the two men about Desiree Armfeldt, the woman who isn't their wife. They know something is amiss but are still swayed by their attraction to Desiree.



## BIOGRAPHIES OF PERFORMERS



**Megan Barth Argo** is Opera Répétiteur and Vocal Coach for the Michael and Anne Greenwood School of Music at Oklahoma State University. She is a rising collaborative artist who has performed and studied throughout the United States and Barcelona, Spain. She has participated in numerous festivals including Brevard Music Festival, Kent Blossom Music Festival, Songfest, Baldwin Wallace Art Song Festival, Source Song Festival, and Atlantic Music Festival where she was both a pianist and apprentice coach under Arlene Shrut. In the summer of 2016, Ms. Argo served as a Collaborative Piano Fellow and Faculty for the Hawaii Performing Arts Festival. Some of the artists she has had the pleasure of working with in masterclasses and coachings include Roger Vignoles, Warren Jones, Graham Johnson, Susanne Mentzer, Libby Larsen, William Bolcom, Jake Heggie, and many others. Ms. Argo is an accomplished music director

who has music directed over 30 opera and music theater productions. She has also collaborated in multiple recitals. Some her most renowned performances include a complete performance of Franz Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* with tenor Jeffrey Picòn in March 2014, the Oklahoma premiere of Kurt Erickson's *Here, Bullet* with baritone André Chiang in September 2020, and a recital titled *Music and Humanity* featuring works of Jake Heggie with mezzo-soprano April Golliver-Mohiuddin in August 2021. She is an active member of National Association of Teachers of Singing, the International Keyboard Collaborative Arts Society, and the College Music Society.



Baritone **André Chiang** was described as “vocally commanding” (*Oregonian*), “handsome of voice” (*Opera News*), and lauded with “let’s hear more from this singer” (*Washington Post*). Mr. Chiang’s recent engagements include **Dandini** (*La cenerentola*) with Dayton Opera, **The Pirate King** (*The Pirates of Penzance*) with Tulane Summer Lyric Theatre, and **Older Thompson** (*Glory Denied*) with Painted Sky Opera. Previous credits include **Young Galileo/Salviati** (*Galileo Galilei*), for which he was commercially recorded, and **Ford** (*Falstaff*) with Portland Opera; **Anthony Hope** (*Sweeney Todd*) with Virginia Opera; and

**Lancelot** in the Young Artist Matinee of *Camelot* at the Glimmerglass Festival. Honors include Regional Finalist for the MONC Auditions, Winner of the 59<sup>th</sup> NFMC 2017 Biennial Young Artist Award, and Winner of the 45<sup>th</sup> NATS Artist Awards Competition. In concert, Chiang made his Carnegie Hall debut as the **Baritone soloist** in the World Premiere of Martin Palmeri’s *Gran Misa*. Upcoming engagements include **Charlie cover** (*Three Decembers*) with Virginia Opera, **Silvio** (*Pagliacci*) with Painted Sky Opera, and **Baritone Soloist** with the Canterbury Voices’ “Duo Lumina” Concert. As an educator, Chiang was a 2018 NATS Intern, designated a “National Center for Voice and Speech trained Vocologist” in 2019, and is on faculty at the Interlochen Summer Arts Camp. [www.andrechiangbaritone.com](http://www.andrechiangbaritone.com)



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