

## **Fourth Year Recital: Reflections**

*Talia Pirron, Miller Arts Scholar in Music*

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### **I. Project Background**

First and foremost, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the J. Sanford Miller Arts Scholars Foundation for the support which has allowed me to fulfill my long-time dream of giving a solo voice recital. I have been singing since the age of six and, though I absolutely love music and performance is such an important aspect of being a musician, I have struggled with stage fright throughout my music career. When I was fourteen, I auditioned for high school for the arts which would allow me to pursue a music concentration, and one of the opportunities for vocal and instrumental students was to give a half-recital at the conclusion of their senior year. This felt like an insurmountable challenge at the time, but I remember promising myself that I would give a senior recital by the time I graduated as proof that I could overcome my stage fright. By the time senior year rolled around, I felt that I had found my footing and confidence as a solo performer, and finally felt ready to take on the challenge of giving a recital – and then COVID hit and my recital was, of course, canceled. When I started at UVA, I decided to follow my heart and major in music, and quickly became involved in all of the music organizations and opportunities I could. I started taking private lessons, declared a music major in my first year, joined University and Chamber Singers, FYP, and Miller Arts. I told myself that I would continue honing my craft, and had my heart set on doing a DMP in the music major, giving a recital in my fourth year. I actually ended up applying for this award originally as a supplement to the DMP recital, after getting into the program, but for personal complications ended up having to drop the major and DMP. I am endlessly grateful to Miller Arts for still giving me the opportunity to pursue this project and finally achieve my goal of giving a recital, despite having to drop the DMP program. This recital meant so much to me, not only as a culmination of the music experience I have had at UVA, but also as proof of the immense personal and musical growth I have worked towards since being that terrified high school freshman. I know she would be so proud of this project.

### **II. Project Overview and Timeline**

As I mentioned above, the final project ended up being slightly different based on the reallocation of my budget that needed to happen after dropping the DMP program. I did not end up taking private lessons over the summer nor participating in master classes, as those funds needed to be used towards private instructor and hall rental fees. I did, however, begin planning over the summer as I originally proposed, starting by doing my own personal research. Being a bit of a perfectionist, one of the most difficult parts of this recital was choosing the program; in my original proposal, I included many pieces that I've worked on in the past but, after some reflection, I decided I wanted to challenge myself by drafting a program comprised almost entirely of new music. I spent the summer researching, testing, and learning the repertoire for the recital, deciding on what languages, eras, composers, etc. I wanted to be included in the final program. I ended up with a program of 17 individual pieces, running at about 55 minutes total,

split into five sets. On the final program, I included Italian, French, German and Czech art songs as well as a Mozart aria and a musical theater set. Upon return to grounds in August, Professor Beasley and I began working through my repertoire in lessons, scheduling out every lesson from the beginning of the year to my (very early) recital date of February 18th. I knew I wanted to collaborate with some of my fellow musicians, and ended up singing duets with fellow fourth-year arts scholars Jack Kehoe and Elise Ebert, as well as featuring my sister Eliana Pirron on the violin as an accompaniment to a Dvorak melody. Getting to work with these talented musicians, alongside my brilliant collaborative pianist John Mayhood, was so special, and I learned so much through the collaborative process. I began weekly rehearsals with Professor Mayhood in late Fall semester, and continued those, alongside rehearsals with him in my private lessons, through my recital date. During this time period, I also had meetings with Joel Jacobus in the Music Office about renting Old Cabell Hall, filled out contracts for the space, the piano tuning, and the live-streaming form, as well as finding and booking a photographer to take headshots.

I spent the winter break working on memorization, honing technique and working through final touches on all of my pieces, as well as researching and writing my program notes. Though Miller Arts doesn't stipulate specific requirements for program notes, I really wanted to produce this recital at the level of the DMP recitals, as that was my original plan, and so I took a lot of time to properly translate, research, and write extensive program notes for each of my 17 pieces. Doing this enriched not only my own personal understanding of each piece I was singing, but also allowed me to convey what I found beautiful and exciting about each piece to my audience members, and I found this part of the process incredibly rewarding. With only one month before my recital, I had to hit the ground running with final recital preparations upon returning to Grounds in the Spring. I spent this month formatting my program, (with the help from the wonderful Leslie Walker in the Music Office), designing posters (also with the help of Marcy Day in the Music Office), scheduling rehearsals with my collaborative musicians, working on final vocal and performance techniques in lessons, and sorting out final details such as setting up the live-stream and website information. When the day finally came on February 18th, I was overwhelmed with emotions; I was, of course, extremely nervous to sing a full, hour-long recital for all of my friends and family, but was mostly proud of myself for having the courage, the determination, and the commitment to taking on such a difficult project. I stepped out onto the stage of Old Cabell Hall and, with my heart beating out of my chest, sang the first notes of my Donizetti aria *Amiamo*, trying to have fun and just think about the performance after the months of preparation and organization that it had taken to get to that point.

### **III. Project Outcome**

Giving this recital has made me feel so much more confident as a performer, but has also proven to me my ability to adapt, to problem-solve, to learn quickly, and to be organized. While I understood that giving a full recital would require an immense amount of musical practice and preparation, I didn't originally realize the full weight of this project in terms of administrative planning and organization; I had to learn, on the spot, how to make and print posters and programs, how to research and write program notes, how to format standardized recital programs, how to set up live-streaming, and a whole host of other administrative details that I

was not initially anticipating. I learned how to be organized and a clear communicator, as I had to manage not only my own schedule and rehearsals, but those of my collaborative musicians, my private instructor, my photographer, the wonderful music office faculty which I coordinated through the year, and many others. Musically, this recital was definitely the biggest challenge I've faced; to learn that much music, across five different languages, over two centuries of stylistic difference, and a wide range of thematic content and interpretation, took a level of dedication and artistry that I hadn't before experienced. Working on vocal stamina to sing for such an extended period of time forced me to hone my technique, and I now feel that I sing with so much more strength, confidence, and agility. I have learned so much from this experience, and am so grateful to have had the opportunity to challenge myself and grow as a performer in this way.

#### IV. Final Budget

Expense	Amount	Details
Private instructor fee	\$300	Payment to my private instructor for extra lessons, research, and general guidance for the recital that would normally be paid by the department for DMP recitals.
Renting Old Cabell Hall	\$980	The final price for renting the Hall + piano use + piano tuning fees
Live Streaming fee	\$120	
Printing posters	\$96.50	
Headshots for posters	\$100	
Printing programs	\$65	
Appcompanist Subscription	\$150	
Miscellaneous fees	\$300	Used to pay for sheet music, extra accompanist time, photography editing, design software for making programs and posters, etc.)
<b>Total awarded:</b>	<b>\$2250</b>	
<b>Total used:</b>	<b>\$2,111</b>	
Total remaining:	\$139*	*The remaining funds are to be used towards extraneous music fees through the end of the semester (rehearsals with accompanists, sheet music, etc) in preparation for juries.

## V. Pictures



Pictured: me about to take a bow with Professor Mayhood and my sister, Eliana Pirron, after performing our Dvorak song.

Pictured below: my recital programs

