

A Benefit Concert for Quad Cities Area Flood Victims  
Donations benefit the Quad Cities Chapter of the American Red Cross for flood relief.

Lily Arbisser, soprano  
Dr. Marian Lee, Pleyel double grand piano

Friday, August 30th, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.

PROGRAM

<i>Mes longs cheveux</i> , selection from Act III of <i>Pelléas et Mélisande</i> , 1902 <i>Clair de lune</i> , 1882 <i>Apparition</i> , 1884	Claude Debussy (1862-1918)
<i>L'isle joyeuse</i> , 1904	
<i>Si mes vers avaient des ailes</i> , 1888 <i>Clair de lune</i> , 1887 <i>Après un rêve</i> , 1878	Reynaldo Hahn (1874-1947) Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)
A selection from Act I of <i>Antar</i> , * 1914 *including Laura Crumbleholme at the Pleyel	Gabriel Dupont (1878-1914)

INTERMISSION

<i>Cinq Mélodies "de Venise,"</i> 1891 "Mandoline" "En Sourdine" "Green" "À Clymène" "C'est l'extase"	Gabriel Fauré
<i>Sonatine</i> , 1 <sup>st</sup> Movement - Modéré, 1903	Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
<i>Siete Canciones populares Españolas</i> , 1914-1915 "El Paño Moruno" "Seguidilla Murciana" "Asturiana" "Jota" "Nana" "Canción" "Polo"	Manuel de Falla (1876-1946)

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS



**Lily Arbisser** possesses an “individual-timbred soprano” (Opera News) that “floats effortlessly” ([www.feastofmusic.com](http://www.feastofmusic.com)) over the orchestra. In 2019, Lily joined Ravinia’s Steans Music Institute in Chicago as a vocal fellow. She also won first prize in the National Federation of Music Club’s Young Artist Competition, was a semi-finalist in the Kurt Weill Foundation’s prestigious Lotte Lenya Competition, and made her debut at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall as Suzu in Riyoichi Saito’s chamber opera *Dojoji*.

During the summer of 2018, Lily was an Apprentice Artist at Teatro Nuovo studying Ilia in Mozart’s *Idomeneo*. Other select performance credits include Monica in Menotti’s *The Medium* at the Phoenicia International Festival of the Voice, Pamina in Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* with Opera Seabrook, as well as Elle in Poulenc’s *La voix humaine*.

Lily is a frequent concert soloist with choral groups in and around New York City, most recently singing in *Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9* and Vaughan Williams’ *Serenade to Music*, both with Princeton Pro Musica of Princeton, NJ. She joins Pro Musica again in March 2020 as the soloist in James Whitbourn’s “Annelies,” a cantata set to text translated from Anne Frank’s diary. Other select concert credits include Haydn’s *Lord Nelson Mass* with Ars Choralis of Woodstock, NY and the title role in Handel’s *Theodora* with the Columbia University Bach Society.

Lily also demonstrates great enthusiasm for art song performance and frequently sings salon-style house concerts in addition to traditional recitals. Her vast recital repertoire includes beloved Spanish, German, French, Italian, and Russian songs, music of contemporary American composers, 12-tone compositions, and cabaret and tango music.

A native of Davenport, Iowa, where public schools champion the arts, Lily was an avid instrumentalist from an early age, distinguishing herself on cello, French horn, and piano. At the age of seventeen, under the tutelage of her piano teacher Marilyn Mitchem, Lily was featured as the piano soloist in a performance of Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* with the Quad City Wind Ensemble. Lily graduated in 2004 from Davenport Central High School, then attended Princeton University, graduating *summa cum laude* and Phi Beta Kappa with a Bachelor of the Arts in Art and Archaeology and a Certificate in Vocal Performance. She holds a Master of Music degree from Mannes College. [www.lilyarbisser.com](http://www.lilyarbisser.com)

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**Marian Lee** made her New York City debut at Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall as winner of the Artists International Award and has appeared as soloist and with orchestra internationally in Austria, Belgium, Italy, France, Norway, Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Poland, Brazil, Byelorussia, Estonia, Hong Kong, and Thailand, as well as in Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center’s Millennium Stage, Seattle’s Benaroya Hall, Moscow’s Tchaikovsky Hall and Rachmaninoff Hall, and the Hermitage Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, Russia. In liaison with the U.S. State Department, Lee also received numerous grants in support of performances of American contemporary music abroad and is a former Fulbright and International Research and Exchange (IREX) scholar.

Marian Lee has given numerous world and U.S. premieres by contemporary composers from Russia, France, the Baltic republics and the United States. Notable professional activities include violin and piano duos with Philadelphia Orchestra concertmaster David Kim, Frank Almond, concertmaster of the Milwaukee Symphony and Naha Greenholz, concertmaster of Madison and Quad City Symphony Orchestras. She has also held master classes in Hong Kong, Delaware, Louisiana, Alabama, Illinois and Iowa.

Marian Lee made her initial concert debut in high school performing with Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra and Flint Symphony Orchestra in Michigan. She entered The Juilliard School as a scholarship student receiving a Bachelor of Music under the guidance of Gyorgy Sandor. She went on to receive a Master of Music degree in piano performance with Seymour Lipkin and was subsequently awarded the coveted Fulbright Grant to study with Naum Shtarkman at the Moscow Conservatory in what was then the Soviet Union. During her three-year stay, Dr. Lee witnessed the fall of the Soviet Union and toured extensively within the former USSR. Upon her return to the United States, Dr. Lee completed her doctoral degree at the Peabody Conservatory of Music at The Johns Hopkins University with Boris Slutsky.

Dr. Lee previously taught at the University of Iowa and the University of Delaware before moving to Davenport, Iowa where she is currently an associate professor in piano and serves as head of the keyboard area at St. Ambrose University. An active teacher and frequent adjudicator, Dr. Lee is a proud member of the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA), National Federation of Music Teachers (FMTA), the Iowa Music Teachers Association (IMTA), Quad City Music Teachers Association (QCMTA), and was past president of the Delaware Music Teachers Association (DSMTA).

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## ABOUT THE PLEYEL

For over forty years, Marguerite de Saint-Marceaux (a.k.a Marguerite Baugnies from her first marriage) hosted Friday evening salons in her home on the boulevard Malesherbes in Paris. Guests included socialites, musicians, composers, artists and authors — Proust, Colette, Isadora Duncan, Fauré, Debussy, and Ravel were among the many important personages in attendance. Marguerite was an accomplished musician herself, studying the piano and voice with renowned teachers of her time. In 1904, Marguerite acquired a new instrument, a double grand piano made by Pleyel, the very instrument you'll hear this evening.

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Tonight's concert features music of composers Marguerite admired and promoted in her years as a *salonnière* and many of this evening's selections were premiered at Marguerite's salon. Thanks to the efforts of the Federation of Music Teachers Association, the late John Duda

and Joe and Thea Leclair, the crew from Premier Pianos in Walker, IA and many other dedicated music-lovers, Marian and I are privileged to perform with this amazing and historically significant Pleyel. It is an instrument that may very well have sounded the first and last notes of some of the most iconic music of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

*Mes longs cheveux descendants* is a brief selection from Act III, scene I of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902) with a libretto adapted from the play by Maurice Maeterlinck.

At the outset of Act III, the otherworldly Mélisande sits at her window singing to herself as she combs her long hair, unaware that she is being observed from below by Pelléas. The much-discussed inscrutability of score and libretto reflects Debussy's artistic sensibilities. As Debussy said in 1889:

I imagine a kind of drama...in which music would begin where the words are powerless as an expressive force. Music is made for the inexpressible; I would like it to

seem to emerge from the shadows and go back into them from time to time, and it should always be discreet.<sup>1</sup>

*Pelléas* was first heard at Marguerite's salon in 1894 and then again on April 25<sup>th</sup>, 1902, five days before its world premiere at the Opéra-Comique in Paris. Of that evening, Marguerite commented in her diary:

In the evening Messager [composer and pianist] plays us a large part of the score of *Pelléas et Mélisande*. It is an enchantment.

On April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1902, Marguerite wrote of *Pelléas*:

... a novelty in everything. Poem and music... The musical work is an absolute masterpiece. The audience does not understand anything.

And then, in anticipation of *Pelléas*'s premiere, Marguerite writes:

I am going to hear *Pelléas et Mélisande*, hidden at the back of an opera box, and to enjoy the purest art ever written in music.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Clair de lune*, Debussy, 1882**

The young Debussy set poetry of Paul Verlaine for his mistress and patron, the soprano Marie-Blanche Vasnier. The poem recalls courtly life and the spirit of the rococo where the surface intentionally decorates and thereby obscures the intensity of what lies beneath. Debussy's minuet nearly contradicts the melancholy of the poetry, "triste et beau [sad and beautiful]," and it's possible he wasn't completely satisfied with this first setting, as he composed a second song to this poem in 1891.

### ***Apparition*, Debussy, 1884**

*Apparition* is one of Stéphane Mallarmé's earliest poems, written in 1862 at the age of twenty very soon after he met his future wife, Maria Gerhard. The complex metaphors and torturous syntax of Mallarmé's poetry push at the boundaries of that which can be expressed in words, so the poem lends itself beautifully to Debussy's musical conjuring. Mallarmé's mother passed away when he was quite young

and one intuits the conflation of the beloved Maria with the memory of Mallarmé's mother allowing petals to snow from her hands while standing over the young Mallarmé.

### ***L'isle joyeuse*, Debussy, 1904**

This ebullient piano piece was first heard January 13<sup>th</sup>, 1905 at Marguerite's salon performed by the Catalan pianist Ricardo Viñes. Allegedly inspired by a Rococo painting of Jean-Antoine Watteau entitled *L'Embarquement pour Cythère* (The Embarkation for Cythera), the piece captures the revelry of a party of aristocrats on this island, the birthplace of Venus, the goddess of love.

### ***Si mes vers avaient des ailes*, Hahn, 1888**

Venezuelan born composer Reynaldo Hahn spent his life working in Paris. This was his first song, written at the age of thirteen. It is a tender setting of Victor Hugo's poetry. An undulating piano line supports the delivery of text with a simple, yet deeply melodic vocal line. Hahn's first premiere at Marguerite's salon was his opera *La Carmélite* performed in 1902.

### ***Clair de lune*, Fauré, 1887**

Fauré — like Debussy and a number of composers of the era — was taken with the poetry of Paul Verlaine. Fauré sets the same poem we heard in the young Debussy's hands earlier in our program. Today's scholars consider Fauré's song one of the perfect examples of a French *melodie*. The vocal line comments on the wandering, yet tightly controlled musical world in the piano, just as the speaker in the poem stands apart from the revelers of the party in judgment of their courtly activities. These partygoers, as Verlaine's poem says, are "singing as they go, in a minor key, of conquering love and life's flavors. They do not seem to believe in their fortune."

This *Clair de lune* was dedicated to Emmanuel Jadin, an amateur painter and a good friend of both Fauré's and of Marguerite de Saint-Marceaux's.

<sup>1</sup> Macdonald, Hugh, liner notes to "Debussy: Pelléas et Mélisande: An Introduction," Chandos, English National Opera, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Saint-Marceaux, Marguerite, quoted in "Interior Time: Debussy, 'Fêtes galantes', and the Salon of Marguerite de Saint-Marceaux." by Emma Adlard in *The Musici Quarterly* Vol. 92: NO. 2 (summer 2013); p. 207.

### *Après un rêve*, Fauré, 1878

Fauré dedicated this song to Marguerite in 1878. The poetry is by Romain Bussine who, in addition to his activities as a poet, was also a baritone and Marguerite's voice teacher. It's interesting also to note that Fauré and Marguerite shared a long-standing friendship as proven by some hundred exchanged letters over many years. Marguerite played a large role in the young composer's personal life as well, playing matchmaker and introducing him to his wife. By all accounts the marriage was an unhappy one, but regardless, Fauré did ask Marguerite to be the godmother of his second son, Philippe.

### A selection from *Antar*, Dupont, 1914

Dupont's last work — not well known in our time — was inspired by the play of the same name by the Syrian poet Chekri-Ganem. "Antar." Both relate the story of an Arabic epic saga set in the seventh century B.C. Antar is a black slave and shepherd who saves the tribe leader's daughter, Abla, from an attack. Having loved Abla since his youth, he asks for her hand in marriage, but is informed of the conditions a suitor must fulfill: to aid in the conquering of Persia and to return home with great wealth. This excerpt comes at the end of Act I when Antar vows he will complete the tasks within six years. Abla enters just as he is leaving, singing a beautiful, melismatic line that perfectly captures an Orientalist-obsessed early twentieth century Parisian persuasion. Abla learns Antar must depart and swears to wait for him, placated by his promise that her love makes him strong and that he will return. As he disappears into the desert, which the women's chorus describes as undulating like tawny fields of corn, a young shepherdess sings a wistful tune from afar. The chorus then simulates the wind, which we have the pleasure of hearing this evening from the Pleyel's second keyboard, performed by Laura Crumbleholme. Dupont finished this opera at Cap Ferret—a small refuge for tuberculosis patients—in the year of his death, 1914. The opera premiered in March of 1921, having first performed at Marguerite's salon on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1921.

### *Cinq mélodies "de Venise,"* Fauré, 1891

Fauré spent the summer of 1891 in Venice visiting one of his patrons, Winnaretta Eugénie Singer, heiress to the sewing machine fortune and another *salonnière*:

"What a country!" Fauré wrote to Marguerite de Saint-Marceaux in a letter in June 1891, "and what a life we're leading!"

One day after his return to Paris, *Mandoline* was premiered at Marguerite's salon.<sup>3</sup> The entire set premiered elsewhere in 1892.

*Mandoline* offers the backdrop against which the other more intimate love songs of *Cinq mélodies* might be played out. Verlaine's poetry conjures a landscape, undoubtedly inspired by paintings of Antoine Watteau, filled with groupings of characters, some of them from the Italian comic opera, others literary figures from the pastoral tradition. The vocal melody provides a sweet serenade as the piano strums along, imitating the precise plucking of a mandolin player.

*En Sourdine* received its first private performance by Marguerite herself on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 1891.<sup>4</sup> The song is saturated in the languorous moments of a stolen, intimate encounter. Enveloped by the atmospheric haze developing out of arpeggiated chords in the piano line, the lovers lie in each other's arms. One of them wills the other to remain there with him forever. Only the nightingale, symbol of disillusioned and unrequited love,<sup>5</sup> can interrupt their ecstasy, sounding the arrival of night and the necessary return to society.

In *Green* Fauré captures the youthful exuberance and confusion of young love and sexual experience present in Verlaine's poetry. The composer juxtaposes the constancy of the eighth-note texture in the piano with a breathless and capricious vocal line, revealing the speaker's naiveté, eagerness and insecurity.

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<sup>3</sup> Nectoux, Jean-Michel, *Gabriel Fauré: A Musical Life*, Cambridge University Press, p. 178.

<sup>4</sup> "," 178.

<sup>5</sup> Kimball, Carol, *Song: A Guide to Art Song, Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 195.

In Fauré's own words it is a "melancholy, country scene...happy and miserable, eager and discouraged."<sup>6</sup>

He also tells Marguerite:

I can't insist too strongly that it mustn't be sung *slowly*. It has to be *lively*, passionate, almost *out of breath!* And above all, sing it as if to yourself. I've no desire to intrude my personal *accents* into other people's reveries."<sup>7</sup>

*A Clymène's* vocal line weaves in and out of the swaying barcarolle present in the fluid piano line. Both the strange harmonies and somewhat ethereal poetry leave us feeling unanchored. Perhaps this is why Fauré described the piece as "lynair et lynatique" (lunar and lunatic).<sup>8</sup>

In *C'est l'extase* we "hear motival echoes of *Green* and *En sourdine*."<sup>9</sup> Heard once more, the song of the nightingale lingers in the ear of the listener.

### **Sonatine, 1<sup>st</sup> Mvmt. - Modère, Ravel, 1903**

Ravel composed the first movement of his *Sonatine* in response to a competition in the Paris "Weekly Critical Review." He signed his composition with a pseudonym (a requirement of the competition) "par Verla" — an anagram for Ravel — so that the prominent French composers and musicians judging the competition would be impartial. One of those judges was Vincent D'Indy who also premiered works at Marguerite's salon. This first movement was performed at Marguerite's home on January 8<sup>th</sup>, 1904. The *Sonatine* became one of Ravel's most popular piano works and led to an exclusive publishing contract with the Durand publishing house.

### **Siete canciones populares españolas, Falla, 1914**

Falla completed the *Siete canciones populares españolas* at the end of a particularly fruitful seven-year stint in Paris following the critical triumph of his opera *La vida breve* in 1913. While in Paris, the composer encountered Paul

Dukas, Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel and Igor Stravinsky among others. Although true to the florid and sensual music of his native Spain, his musical sensibility was also greatly influenced by these new mentors. While this set was not among those premiered at Marguerite's salon, it is probable she would have heard the songs in her lifetime and other Falla compositions premiered at her home, including *L'Amour sorcier* and *Nuits dans les jardins D'Espagne*, both in 1920.

A collection of proverbs and stories employing melodies and texts culled from late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century printed sources, *Siete canciones* are a paean to Spain and its multitudinous culture. From the seguidilla and flamenco rhythms heard in *Seguidilla murciana* and *Polo* to the Andalusian cradle-song *Nana* and the Aragonese dance-song form exemplified in *Jota*, de Falla draws from a variety of regional styles and traditional genres.

Given that the texts are proverbs, they are very abstract; it is the performer's work to mine for specificity of interpretation and to honor Falla's detailed notation. My own interpretive journey led me to the discovery of alternating feminine and masculine voices from one song to the next. I imagine a female protagonist recounting the fate of the stained cloth (*El paño moruno*), a moralizing tale. A male counterpart among friends, jokes about the ill-fated existence of those who live under glass roofs but his laughter soon turns to derision, targeting a certain someone in the crowd (*Seguidilla murciana*). A woman tells a close acquaintance about an inconsolable grief and her futile search for solace (*Asturiana*). A male suitor serenades his beloved from beneath her window (*Jota*) and a mother coos her baby to sleep (*Nana*). A proud man chides his unfaithful lover in an attempt to regain his masculine honor (*Canción*) and finally, a fiery gypsy woman condemns love and its treacherous purveyor (*Polo*).

-Lily Arbisser

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<sup>6</sup> Johnson, Graham, *Gabriel Fauré: the Songs and Their Poets* (London: Guildhall School of Music and Drama), 212.

<sup>7</sup> " " 212.

<sup>8</sup> " " 213.

<sup>9</sup> " " 214.

WITH DEEPEST GRATITUDE TO:



Rev. Tom Carver and the staff of Asbury United Methodist Church, Bob Mattison, Greg and Judy Gackle, Donald Mitchem, Dr. Perry Mears, Drs. Amir and Lisa Arbisser, Dave Meuman, Jacki O'Donnell, the Pleyel Restoration Committee: Laura Crumbleholme, Marilyn Mitchem, Richard Sessler, Judy Hyland, Dorene Van Fossen, Marian Lee.