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Music of nature—and human nature—by Dartmouth alumnae duo

HANOVER, NH—Two Dartmouth alumnae who made vibrant music while students and have gone on to flourishing musical careers post-college return to their alma mater for an evening of art songs especially focused on nature and forests.

Deirdre Brenner, piano, and Sarah Nelson Craft, mezzo soprano, performs on Wednesday, March 6, 7 pm in Spaulding Auditorium of the Hopkins Center for the Arts, in an intimate setting with performers and audience together on the stage. The performance is part of a Music Department residency by the two in which they will visit classes and coach student musicians.

Brenner and Craft both boast celebrated music careers. Brenner has performed throughout the US, Europe and Asia and co-founded music festivals in Ireland and Vienna. Craft has received wide acclaim for solo and operatic performances in such venues as Carnegie Hall, Paris’s Opéra Bastille and with opera companies around the country. Their Hop program brings together German Lieder, American art songs and other works.

Critics have praised Craft for “fluid, robust singing” (Parterre), “her warm, rich voice” (Opera News), her “soft-grained mezzo” (The New York Times), her “warmly romantic vocalism” (New York Observer) and her “droll face [that] can convey any emotion, often two or three at once” (Musical America).

Writing about Craft’s January 2016 recital at Carnegie Hall, Opera News wrote: “Craft’s slim, silvery mezzo gained color and security over the course of the one-hour program, with Debussy’s Chansons de Bilitis the highlight of the evening. The weight and timbre of her voice perfectly suited Debussy’s sinuous caresses. Especially in ‘La chevelure,’ Craft fully inhabited the music with intensity and focus, but she was exquisite in all three songs... specificity and confidence [was] displayed here... [She] dug deeper in three Schubert songs, with a touchingly bereft ‘Heimliches Lieben,’ a glowing, focused ‘An die Sonne’ and an affecting, genuine ‘Gretchen am Spinnrade.’ Her wry humor informed Mahler’s ‘Rheinlegendchen,’ and she found richer notes alternating longing and determination in ‘Scheiden und Meiden.’ Ginastera’s Cinco canciones populares argentinas revealed still more hues, with the frenzied mating call of ‘Chacarera,’ the gentle lull of ‘Arrorró,’ and the mournful ‘Triste,’ in which Craft unleashed solid, impassioned high notes.”

Wrote Voce di Meche of that recital: “It would be impossible to have heard her hour-long Spotlight Recital last night without being swept along in a tidal wave of affection for the art of the song. It is rare to hear a recital without a single moment of boredom... Ms. Craft really knows how to get a song across and employs facial expression and gesture as well as vocal coloring. It is never excessive but always tasteful. She is a born
storyteller and one can readily visualize the scenes about which she is singing. She truly inhabits the song and makes it hers, as if she were making it up on the spot... the use of vocal color and dramatic expressiveness brought the songs to vivid life... We felt as if we were living this scene along with her.”

MORE ABOUT...

Deirdre Brenner is a musician with a passion for chamber music and art song who has appeared in venues including the Wiener Musikverein, Wiener Kozetheraus, The Kennedy Center (Washington, DC), Teatro Real (Madrid), Philharmonie Essen, Stadthalle (Bayreuth), the National Concert Hall (Dublin), St. Martin-in-the-Fields (London) and the Hollywell Music Room (Oxford).

Brenner has performed at festivals including the Seoul Spring Festival of Chamber Music, Oxford Lieder Festival, Aix-en-Provence Festival, LOISIARTE, Rhodes Chamber Music Festival, Gustav Mahler Festival, Stimmen Festival Freistadt, and Portogruaro International Music Festival. She has given recitals with artists including Wolfgang Holzmair, Birgid Steinberger, Layla Claire, John Chest, Tara Erraught, Sophie Junker, Matthew Rose and Klemens Sander, and has performed as soloist with numerous ensembles including the Arnold Schoenberg Chor. She has recorded for broadcasts on ORF, NPR and BR-Klassik, among others.

Also in demand as a teacher and coach, Brenner is currently on the faculty of the Anton Bruckner Privatuniversität in Linz, and the Institute for European Studies in Vienna, Austria. She has accompanied vocal masterclasses given by Bernarda Fink, Wolfgang Holzmair, Birgid Steinberger, Linda Watson, Michaela Schuster, Ulrike Sych, Rudolf Jansen and Elly Ameling, among others. Additional musical projects have taken her to Venezuela, Egypt, Israel, the West Bank, Samoa and the Kingdom of Tonga.

Originally from Massachusetts, Brenner earned a bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College in Engineering Sciences and Music, and Master's degrees from both the Royal Academy of Music in London and the Konservatorium Wien (MUK). She studied with pianists including Carolyn Hague, Susan Manoff, John O'Conor, Julius Drake, Colin Stone, Sally Pinkas and Loretta Slovak.

Brenner is co-founder of the Boyne Music Festival in Drogheda, Ireland as well as the innovative concert series Mosaïque in Vienna.

Sarah Nelson Craft is a mezzo-soprano who has received wide acclaim for her solo and operatic performances. In 2016 Carnegie Hall presented her in a solo Spotlight Recital with renowned pianist Warren Jones, a triumphant performance that Opera News described as “exquisite... glowing... charming... affecting, genuine... Craft fully inhabited the music with intensity and focus.” Voce di meche hailed her as “a born storyteller... extraordinary.” Craft and Jones performed their recital again in Santa Barbara the following season, and Carnegie Hall invited her back for another solo recital in 2018 for their Neighborhood Concerts Series. Her recent performance as Dorabella in LoftOpera’s Così fan tutte drew universal acclaim as well; the New York Times praised her “soft-grained mezzo” while Parterre Box called her performance “excellent... pliant and luminous” with “fluid, robust singing.” Upcoming engagements include Joseph Canteloube’s Chants d’Auvergne with the Brooklyn Symphony Orchestra and the role of Piramo in Johann Adolph Hasse’s Piramo e Tisbewith The Little Opera Theatre of NY.

Passionate about art song and chamber music, Craft participated in “The Song Continues: Paris Residency” presented by Carnegie Hall at the Opéra Bastille. She has been invited for Guest Artist residencies and recitals at institutions including Colorado State University and Dartmouth College, and she is a member of Con Vivo chamber ensemble. Her love of both new music and early music is reflected in her multiple appearances in readings of new works with American Opera Projects and in regular concerts with Amor Artis chorus and New York Baroque Incorporated.
Craft’s operatic roles have included Cherubino, Dorabella, Dido, Rosina, Hansel, Orfeo, Hermia, Annio in La clemenza di Tito, Nancy in Albert Herring, Giunone in Agrippina, Ninetta in Les vêpres siciliennes, and the title role in Cendrillon, working with companies such as the Caramoor International Music Festival, Opera North, dell’Arte Opera Ensemble, operamission, and the Macau International Music Festival. She has performed the title role in La cenerentola with both Fargo-Moorhead Opera and Opera at Florham, and appeared in Matt Aucoin’s mini-opera for NPR’s This American Life live at BAM.

Highly sought after as a concert soloist, Craft made her Lincoln Center debut at Avery Fisher Hall 2012 as both the alto and soprano II soloist in Bach’s Mass in B minor with the National Chorale, joining them again that year for Handel’s Messiah. She has since made her debuts at Alice Tully Hall as alto soloist with the American Classical Orchestra in Mozart’s Coronation Mass and at Carnegie Hall in Vivaldi’s Gloria with the Masterworks Festival Chorus. Other notable performances have included Mendelssohn’s Elijah and Mahler’s Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen, both with Princeton Pro Musica, and Mahler’s Symphony No.2 with the New Jersey Festival Orchestra. Favorite concert roles include Bach’s Saint Matthew Passion and Magnificat, Mozart’s Requiem, Copland’s In the Beginning, and Duruflé’s Requiem.

A native of Brooklyn, New York, Craft holds a Bachelor’s Degree (cum laude) in Italian and music from Dartmouth College and a Master’s Degree in vocal performance from the University of North Texas College of Music. She trained as a Young Artist with Bel Canto at Caramoor as well as at the Music Academy of the West where she worked with Marilyn Horne who continues to be a mentor. She has been a first prize and audience choice award winner at the district level of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, a semifinalist in the Opera Columbus Irma M. Cooper International Vocal Competition, and won third place in The American Prize in Art Song and Oratorio 2016.

The Hopkins Center for the Arts

Founded in 1962, “the Hop” is a multi-disciplinary academic, visual and performing arts center dedicated to uncovering insights, igniting passions, and nurturing talents to help Dartmouth and the surrounding Upper Valley community engage imaginatively and contribute creatively to our world. Each year the Hop presents more than 300 live events and films by visiting artists as well as Dartmouth students and the Dartmouth community, and reaches more than 22,000 Upper Valley residents and students with outreach and arts education programs. After a celebratory 50th-anniversary season in 2012-13, the Hop enters its second half-century with renewed passion for mentoring young artists, supporting the development of new work, and providing a laboratory for participation and experimentation in the arts.

CALENDAR LISTINGS

Deirdre Brenner, piano, and Sarah Nelson Craft, mezzo soprano

These two 2001 Dartmouth graduates made vibrant music while students. Now they boast celebrated music careers. Brenner has performed throughout the US, Europe and Asia and co-founded music festivals in Ireland and Vienna. Craft has received wide acclaim for solo and operatic performances in such venues as Carnegie Hall, Paris’s Opéra Bastille and with opera companies around the country. This intimate program, performed to an audience seated on the Spaulding stage, brings together German Lieder and American art songs that reflect on human nature and the beauty of the natural world.

Wednesday, March 6, 7 pm
Spaulding Auditorium, Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College, Hanover NH
$25, 18 & under $17, Dartmouth students $10, General admission
Information: hop.dartmouth.edu, 603.646.2422