

JOYCE DIDONATO

SONGPLAY



# SONGPLAY

- |   |   |   |      |
|---|---|---|------|
| 1 | <b>ALESSANDRO PARISOTTI</b> 1853–1913<br>Se tu m'ami —<br>Steve Barnett <i>shaker</i>   | <b>SALVATOR ROSA</b> 1615–1673 (attrib.)<br>Star vicino | 6.31 |
| 2 | ? <b>GIUSEPPE TORELLI</b> 1658–1709<br>Tu lo sai  |   | 4.44 |
| 3 | Music: <b>ALLIE WRUBEL</b> 1905–1973<br>Lyrics: <b>HERB MAGIDSON</b> 1906–1986<br>(I'm Afraid) The Masquerade Is Over                 |   | 7.20 |
| 4 | Music: <b>GEORGE SHEARING</b> 1919–2011<br>Lyrics: <b>GEORGE DAVID WEISS</b> 1921–2010<br>Lullaby of Birdland                         |   | 4.15 |
| 5 | Music: <b>JERRY BOCK</b> 1928–2010<br>Lyrics: <b>SHELDON HARNICK</b> b.1924<br>Will He Like Me? from the musical <i>She Loves Me!</i> |   | 3.56 |
| 6 | <b>GIULIO CACCINI</b> 1551–1618<br>Amarilli, mia bella from the collection of songs and madrigals <i>Le nuove musiche</i>             |   | 3.24 |
| 7 | <b>GENE SCHEER</b> b.1958<br>Lean Away (piano arrangement: Andrew Thomas)   |   | 4.38 |
| 8 | <b>ANTONIO VIVALDI</b> 1678–1741<br>Col piacer della mia fede from the opera <i>Arsilda, regina di Ponto</i> RV 700                   |   | 5.00 |
| 9 | <b>ANTONIO VIVALDI</b> 1678–1741<br>Vedrò con mio diletto from the opera <i>Giustino</i> RV 717                                       |   | 5.27 |

- Music: **DUKE ELLINGTON** 1899–1974  
Lyrics: **EDDIE DELANGE** 1904–1949 and **IRVING MILLS** 1894–1985
- 10 (In My) Solitude 5.19
- FRANCESCO CONTI** c.1681/2–1732
- 11 Quella fiamma from the cantata *Doppo tante e tante pene* 4.05
- ? **GIUSEPPE GIORDANI** 1751–1798
- 12 Caro mio ben 3.40
- GIOVANNI PAISIELLO** 1740–1816
- 13 Nel cor più non mi sento from the opera *La Molinara (L'amor contrastato)* R1.76 3.07
- Music: **RICHARD RODGERS** 1902–1979  
Lyrics: **LORENZ HART** 1895–1943
- 14 With a Song in My Heart from the musical *Spring Is Here* 8.27

**TT: 70.51**

**JOYCE DIDONATO** *mezzo-soprano*

**CRAIG TERRY** *piano (1–14) & harpsichord (8)*

**CHARLIE PORTER** *trumpet (1, 3, 8, 10, 11) & flugelhorn (2, 4)*

**LAUTARO GRECO** *bandoneon (5, 11, 14)*

**CHUCK ISRAELS** *bass (1–6, 8–11, 14)*

**JIMMY MADISON** *drums (1–4, 8, 10, 11, 14)*

# PLAY WITH THAT SONG

Every beginning voice student knows the routine: you walk through the austere door – trepidatiously, mind you, and often questioning your very existence – and the skeptical teacher hands you their copy of the yellowed, overly-used “singer’s bible”, the *Twenty-Four Italian Songs and Arias*. The cover, usually torn and hanging by a thread, aims to end the suspense of whether your vocal fate will be forever sealed as belonging to the “high” or “low” categories. Regardless, this feels like “IT”.

And then we dive in, ready to summon both Callas and Pavarotti, all in one, and we let ‘er rip...

Disaster. Week after week we pay to return to the torture chamber for the humiliating attempt to NOT be flat this week. (Except that we went *sharp* last week and can’t quite figure out how to split the difference!) Even if it says “Italian” on the cover, we may as well be attempting to sing in Swahili, and the questioning of your existence has now been fully answered: you are the epitome of utter dejection and have single-handedly failed the entire human species.

How we grow to *hate* these songs for challenging our musical souls! How could something that looks so benign on the page be the cause of such wretched anguish? Most of these poor pieces, which have been battered around over the centuries patiently allowing many of us to sort out basic technique through them, have no real ownership – they are listed as anonymous or wrongly attributed to this one or that one. Perhaps they are a match for our misfit vocals?

So returning to them years later (ok, even decades later!) I’m overwhelmed by the charm and the sweetness and the innocence that exudes from their stained, yellowed pages! They call me back again – but this time with a bold invitation to play, to invent, to celebrate a great song. Their overarching theme defiantly bridges the centuries and lines up with the eternal motif we’ve all been singing of through the years: LOVE.

Enter the ever-playful Craig Terry, who had long envisioned these songs being given a slightly different “treatment”. At the first chords of his “Caro mio ben” I was sold, and we were off and running. Playing with the old Italian melodies gave birth to the desire to also play with some of our favorite American classics, letting love and heartfelt music-making be our platform.

Our playground has joyously expanded to include an extraordinary gathering of instrumentalists across all genres, each bringing a particular sound and expertise, and yet we’ve all fused into something that is unique to this singular project. And it has been some of the most joyous music making of my life.

When last I saw you “here”, I was singing on the theme of war and peace, hoping to lead you to a peaceful state of mind by the end. If you’ve managed to stay there, I suppose love and joy are the next obvious steps: so throw your friends a fabulous, old-fashioned dinner party (perhaps Italian cuisine is in order?), press play and revel in the joy of meeting some old standards as we frolic away. (You *know* you want to sing along!)

But if you do sing along (come on, make your old voice teacher proud!) just keep in mind what the great Louis Armstrong said:

“You got to love to be able to play.”

# WHAT MAKES A GREAT SONG?

Love is a red, red rose. Love is heaven, love is hell. Still, all the world loves a lover, even if love is blind.

And so the list of clichés goes on. However much we try to pin love down in metaphors, poetry, and greeting cards, nobody has ever yet found a satisfactory definition. The same might be said of what it is that makes a good song. Is it the melody? The words? The performer? A combination of all the above?

Perhaps it is because of their inherent elusiveness that ‘love’ and ‘great songs’ make such a good combination. Yes, there *are* songs about railway stations, stately homes and double-decker buses – but they are dwarfed by the number of songs about the pleasures and pains of love. Every one of the songs Joyce DiDonato sings here tackles the subject, whether it be from the perspective of an 18th-century swain or a 20th-century dame.

But if writing a great song were just a case of flinging a few ideas about love onto a tune then – as the saying goes – we’d all be doing it. There also has to be a feeling of freshness and spontaneity, something that keeps the song alive no matter how many times it is heard. This aspect of a work’s greatness is rooted in an idea that Joyce explores here: that of improvisation. In the Baroque era improvisation was a highly-prized skill for all musicians, but especially for singers. Composers wrote a type of aria (the “da capo” aria) which repeated an initial section of music, simply in order to give singers a chance to embellish it on the repeat. Performers were expected to display fresh invention night after night – and a face full of rotten fruit awaited the singer who dared to use the same tricks twice. Baroque songs and arias later became notated and fixed in aspic, so to speak, so it’s exciting to hear them returned to their roots in the way that Joyce does here.

Improvisation is also at the very heart of the hits of the *Great American Songbook*. These works are all rooted in the idioms of jazz, and written in such a way as to encourage performers to make them their own with new accompaniments and surprising melodic twists. Who would want to sacrifice Lotte Lenya’s “Mackie Messer” for Ella Fitzgerald’s “Mack the Knife”, for example, or vice versa? (Ella Fitzgerald actually forgot the words in her famous live Berlin version – so she really *was* improvising.)

Which brings us to the lyrics. Divorced from their melodies, lyrics can often seem clichéd, banal, or even downright ridiculous. Who could possibly imagine the greatness of “She loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah” just from reading the lyrics? As Stephen Sondheim has written, “it’s usually the plainer and flatter lyric that soars poetically when infused with music. Poetry doesn’t need music; lyrics do.” So, for a great song that can stand the test of time, the lyrics should ideally be simple and deal with universal situations (or, to employ songwriting jargon, “be relatable”). And, ideally, they should rhyme too. “A perfect rhyme snaps the word, and with it the thought, vigorously into place.” That’s Sondheim again. It’s a bugbear for English-language songwriters, of course, that the only useable rhymes for *love* are *dove*, *glove*, *shove* and *above*.

There’s an ineffable mystery about the way words link to turns of melody. Sometimes it’s witty and imitative. Handel often employs ascending melodies on the word *rise* for example, and in “With a song in my heart” you can hear how the accompaniment broadens on the phrase “as the music swells”. But sometimes there’s simply a feeling of melodic *rightness* to a word that’s impossible to explain or analyse.

There are a few other common points which great songs share. Length is one of these: most songs are about four minutes long, stretching to five. This brevity means that a good song has to hook the listener in quickly and establish the mood immediately. Is this going to be a happy or sad song? Ironic or heartfelt? Silly or scabrous? The songwriter has to let the audience know immediately, and then either intensify the atmosphere or play with the expectations it sets up.

And last, but by no means least, there's the performer. It's wonderful when you hear an artist who has something to say and who can transform song with their energy. Piaf singing "La Vie en rose", Bobby McFerrin singing "Be Happy..." – they're perfect examples of the sublime mystery of singer-meets-song. And on that note (pun intended) we come back to the very great artist who is making these songs her own too. Great songs, with a great singer – what could be better?

**WARWICK THOMPSON**

1 **SE TU M'AMI**, se tu sospiri  
Sol per me, gentil pastor.  
Ho dolor de' tuoi martiri,  
Ho diletto del tuo amor,  
Ma se pensi che soletto  
lo ti debba riamar,  
Pastorello, sei soggetto  
Facilmente a t'ingannar.

Bella rosa porporina  
Oggi Silvia sceglierà,  
Con la scusa della spina  
Doman poi la sprezzerà.

Ma degli uomini il consiglio  
lo per me non seguirò.  
Non perché mi piace il giglio  
Gli altri fiori sprezzero.

Se tu m'ami, ecc.

*Paolo Antonio Rolli*

**STAR VICINO** al bell'idol che s'ama  
È il più vago diletto d'amor.

Star lontano dal ben che si brama  
È d'amore il più vivo dolor.

Star vicino ecc.

Kind shepherd, if you love me,  
If you sigh for me alone,  
I am sorry for your suffering,  
And am pleased by your love.  
But if you think that I should  
Love only you in return,  
Shepherd boy,  
You are easily deceived.

One day Silvia will choose  
A lovely scarlet rose,  
The next day she will scorn it  
Because of its thorn.

But I shall not follow  
Men's advice.  
I shall not scorn other flowers  
Simply because I like lilies.

To be near to one's fair, beloved idol  
Is love's most thrilling delight.

To be far from one's dearest, so longed for  
Is love's most vivid torment.

2 **TU LO SAI** quanto t'amai  
Tu lo sai, lo sai crudel!  
Io non bramo altra mercè  
Ma ricordati di me  
E poi sprezza un infedel.

Tu lo sai ecc.

You know well how much I loved you  
Well you know it, o cruel one!  
I crave no other mercy,  
Only that in remembering me  
You might scorn one unfaithful.

### (I'M AFRAID) THE MASQUERADE IS OVER

3 My blue horizon is turning grey  
And my dreams are drifting away  
Your eyes don't shine like they used to shine  
And the thrill is gone when your lips meet mine  
I'm afraid the masquerade is over  
And so is love and so is love.

Your words don't mean what they used to me  
They were once inspired, now they're just routine  
I'm afraid the masquerade is over *etc.*

I guess I'll have to play Pagliacci and get myself a clown's disguise  
And learn to laugh like Pagliacci with tears in my eyes  
You look the same; you're a lot the same  
But my heart says "No, no, you're not the same"  
I'm afraid the masquerade is over *etc.*

### † LULLABY OF BIRDLAND, that's what I

Always hear when you sigh  
Never in my wordland  
Could there be ways to reveal  
In a phrase how I feel

Have you ever heard two turtle doves  
Bill and coo when they love  
That's the kind of magic  
Music we make with our lips  
When we kiss

And there's a weepy old willow  
He really knows how to cry  
That's how I'd cry on my pillow  
If you should tell me farewell and goodbye

Lullaby of Birdland whisper low  
Kiss me sweet and we'll go  
Flyin' high in Birdland  
High in the sky up above  
All because we're in love

5 **WILL HE LIKE ME** when we meet?  
Will the shy and quiet girl he's going to see  
Be the girl that he's imagined me to be?  
Will he like me?

Will he like the girl he sees?  
If he doesn't, will he know enough to know  
That there's more to me than  
I may always show?  
Will he like me?

Will he know that there's a world of love  
Waiting to warm him?  
How I'm hoping that his eyes and ears  
Won't misinform him

Will he like me, who can say?  
How I wish that we could meet another day  
It's absurd for me to worry so this way  
I'll try not to  
Will he like me?  
He's just got to  
When I am in my room alone and I write  
Thoughts come easily, words come fluently then  
That's how it is when I'm alone  
But tonight, there's no hiding behind  
my paper and pen

Will he know that there's a world of love  
Waiting to warm him?  
How I'm hoping that his eyes and ears  
Won't misinform him

Will he like me? I don't know  
All I know is that I'm tempted not to go  
It's insanity for me to worry so  
I'll try not to  
Will he like me?  
He's just got to  
Will he like me?

6 **AMARILLI, MIA BELLA,**  
Non credi, o del mio cor dolce desio,  
D'esser tu l'amor mio?

Credilo pur: e se timor t'assale,  
Dubitar non ti vale.  
Aprimi il petto e vedrai scritto in core:

Amarilli, Amarilli, Amarilli  
È il mio amore.

*Giovanni Battista Guarini*

Amaryllis, my beloved,  
You are my heart's sweet desire,  
Don't you believe that I love you?

Believe it, and if you are afraid,  
It is not worth doubting.  
Open my breast and you will see  
written on my heart:  
Amaryllis, Amaryllis, Amaryllis  
Is my love.

## LEAN AWAY

7 I let my sail out slowly, taking pains to find the wind.  
But until I turned my boat away, the sail could not be trimmed.  
Tacking towards the wind, but never face to face.  
I feel what I don't see: an invisible embrace.  
Lean away, lean away. Some things can't be known,  
Like the wind that takes you home.

I remember hearing a melody, but when I started to describe  
All the things it made me feel, its spirit slowly died.  
Now I choose to hum the things I cannot explain.  
And feel my roots spread out like a tree that drinks the rain.  
Lean away, lean away. Some things can't be known,  
Like the wonder of a melody, how it makes you feel home.

I remember when I saw you. It was a cold winter night.  
The moon was hidden by the clouds. All I remember was the light.  
I have searched to find a way love to understand.  
But I finally gave up trying. It's enough to hold your hand.  
Lean away, lean away. Some things can't be known,  
Like the love I feel for you, how it makes me feel home.

## 8 COL PIACER DELLA MIA FEDE

Alzerò al tuo regio piede,  
Bel trofeo d'illustre onor;

Lo splendor di sì bel giorno  
Vincitor il crine adorno  
Ti vedrà di nuovo allor.

*Domenico Lalli*

With pleasure, in my loyalty  
Shall I erect at your regal feet  
A fair monument to glorious honour;

The splendour of so glorious a day,  
O victor, crowned,  
Shall then look down on you anew.

## 9 VEDRÒ CON MIO DILETTO

l'alma dell'alma mia  
Il core del [mio / questo] cor pien di contento.

E se dal caro oggetto  
Lungi convien che sia  
Sospirerò penando ogni momento...

Vedrò con mio diletto ecc.

*Nicolò Beregan*

I shall see, to my delight,  
The soul of my soul,  
The heart of [my / that] heart,  
full of contentment.

And if I must remain  
Far from that thing so dear  
I'll sigh, lamenting every minute...

10 **IN MY SOLITUDE**

You haunt me  
With reveries  
Of days gone by

In my solitude  
You taunt me  
With memories  
That never die

I sit in my chair  
I'm filled with despair  
There's no one could be so sad  
With gloom everywhere  
I sit and I stare  
I know that I'll soon go mad

In my solitude  
I'm praying  
Dear Lord above  
Send back my love

11 **QUELLA FIAMMA** che m'accende

Piace tanto all'anima mia  
Che giammai s'estinguerà.

E se il fato a voi mi rende,  
Vaghi rai del mio bel sole,  
Altra luce ella non vuole.  
Nè voler giammai potrà.

12 **CARO MIO BEN,**

Credimi almen,  
Senza di te  
Languisce il cor.

Il tuo fedel  
Sospira ognor.  
Cessa, crudel,  
Tanto rigor!

13 **NEL COR PIÙ NON MI SENTO**

Brillar la gioventù;  
Cagion del mio tormento,  
Amor, sei colpa tu.

Mi pizzichi, mi stuzzichi,  
Mi pungichi, mi mastichi;  
Che cosa è questo ahimè?  
Pietà, pietà, pietà!  
Amore è un certo che,  
Che disperar mi fa.

*Giuseppe Palomba*

The fire that burns in me  
Is so dear to my heart  
That it can never be put out.

And if fate gives me to you,  
O pretty eyes of my beloved,  
It will never desire  
Any other light.

My dear beloved,  
At least believe me,  
That without you  
My heart languishes.

Your faithful one  
Sighs constantly.  
O cruel one, put an end  
To such severity!

I no longer feel  
The sparkle of youth in my heart;  
Love, it is your fault,  
You are the cause of my torment.

You sting me, poke me,  
Pinch me and bite me.  
Alas, what is this?  
Have pity!  
Love is a certain something  
That brings me to despair.

## WITH A SONG IN MY HEART

11 Though I know that we meet every night  
And we couldn't have changed  
Since the last time  
To my joy and delight  
It's a new kind of love at first sight

Though it's you and it's I all the time  
Every meeting's marvellous pastime  
You're increasingly sweet  
So whenever we happened to meet  
I greet you

With a song in my heart  
I behold your adorable face  
Just a song at the start  
But it soon is a hymn to your grace  
When the music swells  
I'm touching your hand  
It tells that you're standing near and

At the sound of your voice  
Heaven opens its portals to me  
Can I help but rejoice  
That a song such as ours came to be?  
But I always knew  
I would live life through  
With a song in my heart for you

Oh, the moon's not a moon for a night  
And these stars will not twinkle and fade out  
And the words in my ears  
Will resound for the rest of my years

In the morning I find with delight  
Not a note of our music is played out  
It will be just as sweet  
And an air that I'll live to repeat  
I greet you

With a song in my heart *etc.*

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