

STUDENT PROJECT

*The Tale of a
Poet's Love*

A staged reimagining of Robert Schumann's *Dichterliebe*

Featuring additional works by Clara Schumann

Juan Angel Johnston-Chavez (MM '25, PS Candidate),
Director, Curator, Choreographer, and Baritone

Molly Ann Killough (BM '25), Choreographer

SUNDAY, MAY 17, 2026 | 7:30 PM

ALAN M. AND JOAN TAUB ADES PERFORMANCE SPACE

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Anthony Blatter, Fight Choreographer

Dylan Wilson, Visual Artist

PROGRAM

CLARA SCHUMANN
(1819–1896)

Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 7

II. *Romanze: Andante non troppo con grazia*

ROBERT SCHUMANN
(1810–1856)

Dichterliebe

I. *Im wunderschönen Monat Mai*

II. *Aus meinen Tränen sprießen*

III. *Die Rose, die Lilie, die Taube, die Sonne*

IV. *Wenn ich in deine Augen seh*

V. *Ich will meine Seele tauchen*

VI. *Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome*

VII. *Ich grolle nicht*

VIII. *Und wüßten's die Blumen, die kleinen*

IX. *Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen*

X. *Hör ich das Liedchen klingen*

XI. *Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen*

XII. *Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen*

XIII. *Ich hab' im Traum geweinet*

XIV. *Allnächtlich im Traume*

XV. *Aus alten Märchen winkt es*

XVI. *Die alten, bösen Lieder*

TEXT BY HEINRICH HEINE

CAST AND MUSICIANS

Liam, the writer

Juan Angel Johnston-Chavez, baritone

Kate, the beloved

Molly Ann Killough

Benjamin, Kate's husband

Jacob Davila

Lonely Knight

Marcus Cruz-Santiago

Fairy Bride

Gianna DiTucci

*Flower Spirits/
Wedding guests*

Sadie Margolis

Katerina Olekte

Estella Parr

Sophia Stark

Teyah Young

Julie Yaesol Lee and Keren Wang, piano

Brandon Jo, cello

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Robert Schumann's *Dichterliebe* is truly a master work of music and poetry that engenders vivid pictures and gritty reflections of humanity. The text consists of 16 poems taken from Heinrich Heine's *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, a set of 67 poems that includes a prologue, introducing the reader to a clumsy knight who lives in loneliness. In his dream one night, a fairy bride appears and takes him into her arms. Instantly, his once colorless life becomes that of a bold dreamer. They share a wonderful night together, dancing and singing like lovers; however, as morning comes, the Knight's senses begin to fade, and he finds himself once again, alone in his gloomy poet's room.

Our show takes the story established in Heine's poetry and expands upon it to fit and enhance Schumann's version. In this concept, a depressed writer, Liam, is in the midst of dealing with the aftermath of a past relationship while simultaneously writing his next story – a tale about a lonely poet-knight who dreams of falling in love with a fairy bride. This is set up, like Heine's *Intermezzo*, with a prologue number using the 2nd movement of Clara Schumann's Concerto in A Minor – the reason for this being that Robert's music was notably heavily influenced by the love he had for his wife, with many of his scores containing hidden motifs of 5 notes that symbolized her name. *Dichterliebe* is no exception. This concerto, written prior to Robert's cycle, actually originated the theme of *Im wunderschönen Monat Mai*, appearing about halfway through the movement. Robert also composed this cycle in 1840, the same year that he and Clara married, so it is reasonable to assume she was a major inspiration for what it became.

As the song cycle begins, Liam writes and demonstrates a perfect example of art imitating life, with his fairytale unfolding similarly to the real-life events he experienced with Kate (his former beloved). Liam goes on a tumultuous mental journey between the real and the fantastical as the scenes he writes remind him of memories from the relationship, beginning with the good but sinking into the bad after she leaves him for another man. Becoming lost in his writing, Liam starts believing his creations to be reality and experiences a spiraling rollercoaster of emotions that muddies truth with fantasy. Liam must learn to accept fate and move on in order to get out of his deep slump and finish his story.

I have chosen to present this cycle with 9 dancers, all playing the different characters in Liam's mind. Dance, in my opinion, is poetry in the form of movement and can easily work in tandem with the words of poets and composers such as Heine and Schumann to help realize their messages in a new way. This

project is a follow up to a smaller staged production I did last year with excerpts from Schubert's *Winterreise* which helped me realize my passion for executing interdisciplinary collaborations, specifically with art song due to its poetic and malleable nature. I hope to grow from this experience to further develop new projects that present classical art song in a unique light and expand its possibilities, as well as continue to collaborate with artists of all kinds to tell relevant stories.

-Juan Angel Johnston-Chavez

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Juan Angel Johnston-Chavez (MM '25, PS '26), Director, Curator, Choreographer, Baritone

Juan Angel Johnston-Chavez is a baritone, actor, dancer, and director from San José, California. At Manhattan School of Music Juan has performed as Dancaïro in Bizet's *Carmen*, Brother in Kurt Weill's *Die Sieben Todsünden*, and Grégorio in Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*. Other roles include Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* (Lyric Opera Studio Weimar) and Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte* (Utah Vocal Arts Academy). This summer he will join Ohio Light Opera for their summer season as a Cockney in *My Fair Lady* and The Duke of Ephesus in *The Boys from Syracuse*, among others.

As a director, he has worked on numerous opera scene showcases and helmed promotional short films for Lyric Theater of San José. He also served as the choreographer for *Trial by Jury* (San Jose State University) and *New American Songbook Cabaret* (MSM) in 2024 and 2025. Most recently, Juan Angel conceptualized, directed, and choreographed a staged excerpt of Schubert's *Winterreise* which he sung alongside four dancers in the spring of 2025. This project inspired him to further explore the idea of combining classical art song with dance in order to help it reach larger audiences, leading him to develop "The Tale of a Poet's Love." Juan holds a Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Performance and Music Education from San José State University and a Master of Music degree in Vocal Arts from Manhattan School of Music. He is currently a Professional Studies candidate at MSM and studies under the tutelage of Sidney Outlaw.

Molly Ann Killough (BM '25), Choreographer, Kate (the beloved)

Molly Ann Killough is an actor, singer, and dancer based in NYC. A recent graduate of MSM, Molly Ann's choreography credits include three Alpha Psi Omega (APO, MSM's theatrical honor society) Dance Shows, as well as several community theatre productions, including *Peter Pan Jr.* and *Bye Bye Birdie*. Molly Ann served as the music director for APO's production of *Godspell*, and she recently co-produced *The Startup* Off-Broadway. Her recent performing credits include *Almost, Maine* (Ginette), *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* (Lucy), a reading of *Frozen* with Disney Theatricals (young Anna), *Ice World* (ensemble, u/s Abby), and The Jolly Holidays a cappella group. She has also originated several roles, including Bill Able in *Princess Ida: The Glowup* and Stevie in *For Madmen Only: An Immersive Rock Musical*.

Anthony Blatter (MM '27), Fight Choreographer

Anthony Blatter is a multifaceted performing artist and fight choreographer originally from St. Louis, Missouri, now based in New York City. He holds a Master of Fine Arts in Acting and is currently pursuing his Masters of Music in Opera at Manhattan School of Music. Anthony holds SAFD certified fight choreographer who recently worked on a Silver Glass Production of *Hucka*. He also is nationally recognized for his work in musical theatre, having won the National Association of Teachers of Singing Musical Theatre Vocal Competition in 2018 and the John Alexander National Vocal Competition's Musical Theatre category in 2021. His diverse talents span vocal coaching, theatre instruction, and stage combat choreography.

Select fight choreography credits include asst. FC for Palm Beach Opera's production of *The Tales of Hoffmann* and FC for *One Man, Two Guvnors*. On stage, Anthony has portrayed a wide range of characters across genres. Select theatre credits include Frank in *The Impossible Task of Today*, Danny in *Xanadu*, Booker T. Washington in *Ragtime*, King Julien in *Madagascar the Musical*, Flick in *Violet*, Brucie in *Sweat*, Roger Hopewell in *MCM1940*, Wangel in *The Lady from the Sea*, and Francis in *One Man, Two Guvnors*. Operatic roles include Dulcamara in *L'elisir d'amore*, The Prophet in *Dark Sisters*, Figaro in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, Falstaff in Verdi's *Falstaff*, and Sarastro in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Anthony believes in the power of storytelling to change the world for the better

Dylan Wilson (BM '26), Artwork

Singer, model, actress, Dylan Wilson is a triple threat. She has performed on renowned stages including Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. She walked in 4 New York Fashion Weeks and just participated in the MET Gala. Some of her highlight opera roles include Barbarina from *Le Nozze di Figaro* (New York Lyric Opera), Papagena from *Die Zauberflöte* (International Lyric Academy), and Echo from *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Berlin Opera Academy). This past summer, she performed in a month-long concert tour along the Black Sea with New York Productions under Valentin Peytchinov. In January of 2025, she earned multiple accolades at the IMTA (International Modeling and Talent Assosiation) competition in LA including Singer of the Year, 2nd Place Songwriter, Excellence in Acting, and Excellence in modeling. Originally from Texas, Ms. Wilson began performing in NYC from the age of 15 where she received her first role with the New York Lyric Opera. She continued to perform with them until the company's decline in 2020 amidst the pandemic. Dylan held the Presidential Award Scholarship at Manhattan School of Music, and studied Vocal Performance under the tutelage of Chris Nomura.

Julie Yaesol Lee (BM '25, MM '27), Piano

Julie Yaesol Lee is a Korean American pianist based in New York. She began her musical studies at the age of four. Julie appeared as a soloist with the LaGuardia Symphonic Orchestra and the Santa Monica Orchestra. Julie is a winner of numerous competitions, including the Redlands Bowl Young Artist Concerto Competition, the New York Laureate International Music Competition, the National YoungArts Foundation, the New York Artists Guild International Music Competition, and more. She has received guidance from renowned artists during masterclasses with Gary Graffman, Pavel Nersessian, Andrew Tyson, and Renana Gutman. Julie is a graduate student at the Manhattan School of Music, pursuing a Master's degree in classical piano performance under the guidance of Professor Inesa Sinkevych.

Keren Wang (BM '29), Piano

Keren started learning piano at the age of five, she displayed innate talent and passion when studying with Prof. Min Fang of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. She has performed in major venues such as Paul Recital Hall in Juilliard School and Carnegie Hall. She was also invited to play Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1 with the orchestra in Italy. Beyond practicing, Keren is also deeply committed to volunteering. She actively participated in Shenzhen's "Salute to the Classics-Youth Classical Music Advancement program" which was organized by the Futian government, and served as an advancement ambassador. She held a lecture recital at Shenzhen Tianjian Primary School, with the aim of introducing classical music to younger students. Her performance was also enriched by Prof. Danwen Wei from the Central Conservatory of Music. During 2022-2025, Keren was studying in Juilliard Preparatory Division with Dr. Veda Kaplinsky. Since 2025, Keren has been attending Manhattan School of Music in the studio of Dr. Inesa Sinkevych.

Marcus Cruz-Santiago (BM '25), *Lonely Knight*

Marcus Cruz-Santiago is a 2025 graduate of the Manhattan School of Music, Musical Theatre Program. He is very excited to be part of this production, working with Juan Angel again! Marcus previously worked on a similar student project Juan lead in 2025. Marcus thanks his friends and family for the constant support and love. Recent credits include: Fedya Dolokhov in *Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812* (Lenfest Center for the Arts,) Tribe Member in *Hair* (Vanguard Theatre), Filch in *The Threepenny Opera*, and "Steam Heat" Dancer in *The Pajama Game* (Manhattan School of Music).

Gianna DiTucci (BM '26), Fairy Bride

Gianna DiTucci (Fairy Bride) is a senior musical theatre major at MSM and is elated to be a part of this project as one of her last endeavors at MSM. For the past two summers, Gianna worked regionally with Sceneworks Studios in *Legally Blonde* (Chutney/Dance Ens.) and *Anastasia* (Maria Romanov/Ens.). Her past MSM credits include *Pippin* (Berthe), *Into the Woods* (Jack's Mother), *The Hills Are Alive* (Swing), APO's *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* (Linus), and APO's *Trap* (Real Kenosha/Melissa Tengue). She also has performed in the annual APO dance show and various MSM MT Lab Series: *The Real Gemma Jordan* (Cathy), *The Little Mermaid* (Flounder), *Mary Poppins* (Winifred Banks), *Beauty and the Beast* (Mrs. Potts), *Frozen* (Ensemble), *The Hills Are Alive* (Mountain).

Jacob Davila, Benjamin

Originally from San Antonio Texas, Jacob is a NYC-Based performer and proud graduate of AMDA's Dance Theatre program. Since graduating, he has since collaborated with Jenifer Dillow as an assistant at Broadway Dance Center both in-person and online, sang in the "Dancers Who Sing" cabaret at the Green Room 42, made his Off-Broadway debut as choreographer and performer in *Collisions* at the Jerry Orbach Theater here in NYC, and will be performing in Jenny Oehlwein's piece for this years Black Box Movers Showcase.

Sadie Margolis (MM '27), Flower Spirit/Wedding Guest

Sadie Mae Margolis, soprano, graduated summa cum laude from Elon University in 2025 with a B.A. in Vocal Performance and minors in Dance and Communications. She now pursues her Master of Music in Vocal Arts at Manhattan School of Music, studying with Christopheren Nomura. At Elon, Sadie served as the 2025 Commencement Singer, received the Effie Mae Wicker Johnston Music Scholarship, worked as a music theory tutor and department assistant, and served as music director for the Shirley Tempos a cappella group. Originally from Hartford, CT, she has performed with Barrington Stage Company, the Barn Theatre, Compagnia d'Opera Italiana di Firenze, and has worked with the education staff at Hartford Stage.

Katerīna Olekte (BM '27), Flower Spirit/Wedding Guest

Katerīna is a junior in Manhattan School of Music's Musical Theatre program and studies voice with Janeece Freeman Clark. She is very excited to be part of this production and work with Juan Angel! MSM MT productions: *Pippin* (Ensemble/ Mansion Trio/ U/S Berthe/ Dance captain), *Into The Woods* (Granny), *The Pajama Game* (Swing). Alpha Psi Omega: *Dance Show* (Dancer), *12 Angry Man* (Juror nr. 7). MSM MT Lab Series: *The Dark Lady* (Production Assistant), *Fatty* (Production Assistant), *The Turning* (Production Assistant).

Estella Parr, Flower Spirit/Wedding Guest

Estella Parr began dancing at age 3 on Vancouver Island, Canada, training in various styles and performing in competitions. Before college, she gained professional experience performing with a contemporary ballet company in traveling shows as well as appearing in music videos. In June 2025, Stella graduated with her BFA in Dance Theatre from AMDA, where training in both New York and Los Angeles deepened her passion for dance, singing, and acting. Stella made her NYC debut as a lead dancer in *Hats Off To Liza* in the Fall of 2025 and her choreography debut with Needs More Work Productions early this year. She's thrilled to continue growing her career as an artist in the city.

Sophia Stark (BM '26), Flower Spirit/Wedding Guest

Born and raised in Honolulu, Hawai'i, Sophia Stark is about to graduate from Manhattan School of Music! Their favorite performing credits include Rosa Bud in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* and Claudia in *Nine*. Sophia has trained in jazz, ballet, tap, contemporary, hula, and Tahitian dance. They also enjoy playing piano and organ in their spare time. Sophia loves good food, reading, frolicking around the city, and appreciating art in all forms.

Teyah Young (MM '26), Flower Spirit/Wedding Guest

Teyah Young is a soprano hailing from Memphis, Tennessee. Her recent credits include being a soloist and Anna II cover in *Die Sieben Todsünden* and the accompanying Weill cabaret, as well as a soloist in the New American Songbook with Manhattan School of Music. She is completing her MM under the tutelage of Sidney Outlaw.

Additional Credits

Patrick St. John, Production Coordinator

David Philyaw, Lead Technician

Evelyn Lehmann, Stage Manager

Kayla Thomas, Publicity and Marketing

Ian Harris, Supertitles

Ramon Tenefrancia, Student Projects Manager

Special Thanks (in alphabetical order)

Carleen Graham, Nicolas Gonzalez, Daniel Isengart, Kenneth Merrill, Nils Neubert, Christòpheren Normura, Sidney Outlaw, A. Scott Parry, Shane Schag, and Inesa Sinkevych

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