

Liberty University School *of* Music

presents

Aria Showcase

Blythe Condon, *director*

March 3, 2026

Macel Falwell Recital Hall

MUSIC 305

7:30 PM

Aria Showcase

Blythe Condon, *director*

Dr. Samuel Wellman, *piano accompanist*

Program

“Deh vieni non tardar”
from *Le Nozze di Figaro*

W.A. Mozart
(1756-1791)

Ruth Smirnov, *soprano*

“Si la rigueur et la vengeance”
from *La Juive*

Jacques Halévy
(1799-1862)

Aaron Webster, *bass*

“Gualtier Malde... Caro nome”
from *Rigoletto*

Giuseppe Verdi
(1813-1901)

Eunice Choi, *soprano*

“Schweig! Schweig! Damit dich niemand warnt”
from *Der Freishütz*

Carl Maria von Weber
(1786-1826)

Josiah Worsley, *bass*

“O mio babbino caro”
from *Gianni Schicchi*

Giacomo Puccini
(1858-1924)

Allison Davis, *soprano*

“Dearest Mama”
from *The Ballad of Baby Doe*

Douglas Moore
(1893-1969)

Sarah Bromke, *soprano*

“The Seguedilla”
from *Carmen*

Georges Bizet
(1838-1875)

Maria Douglas, *mezzo-soprano*

Aria Showcase

Program (cont.)

"Je dis que rien ne m'épouvante"
from *Carmen*

Georges Bizet
(1838-1875)

Ava Knight, *soprano*

"Ma se colpa io non ho...Batti, batti"
from *Don Giovanni*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Lydia Sutton, *soprano*

"A Hundred Thousand Stars"
from *Out of Darkness*

Jake Heggie
(1961-Present)

Ben Bowers, *baritone*

"Donde lieta uscì al tuo grido d'amore"
from *La Bohème*

Giacomo Puccini
(1858-1924)

Jordyn Stott, *soprano*

"Lonely House"
from *Street Scene*

Kurt Weill
(1900-1950)

Willie Dykes, *tenor*

"Salut à la France"
from *La fille du régiment*

Gaetano Donizetti
(1797-1848)

Blythe Condon, *soprano*

- PROGRAM NOTES -

“Deh vieni non tardar”

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart composed the comedic opera *Le Nozze di Figaro* in 1786. As the title suggests, the plot centers on Figaro’s marriage to Susanna, despite the married Count Almaviva’s attempts to seduce her. “Deh, vieni, non tardar” is an aria sung by Susanna in Act VI, she and the Countess carry out their scheme to catch the Count in an unfaithful act. Susanna attempts to trick the Count by appearing at the agreed-to place, while simultaneously singing to her fiancé, Figaro, to whom her heart truly belongs to. The aria showcases Susanna’s divided attention; on one hand, she is singing to trick the Count, while on the other, the empty words she sings to the Count are meant more truthfully for her beloved Figaro.

“Si la rigueur et la vengeance”

La Juive, (“The Jewess”) is a French grand opera composed by Fromental Halévy which premiered in 1835 at the Opéra de Paris. The libretto, penned by Eugène Scribe, tells the tragic story of a Jewish father and his adopted daughter whose lives are destroyed by intolerant religious zealotry that had overtaken the city of Constance in the early 15th century. In the act one aria, “Si la rigueur et la vengeance,” the local religious authority, Cardinal de Brogni, prays for divine guidance as he confronts a crowd of townsfolk passing judgment on the Jewish goldsmith, Eleazar, for working during a religious festival. In a moment of sincere faith amid the rest of the opera’s fervent hatred, the Cardinal pleads for God to temper the heat of His justice and asks that the crowd extend mercy to the man. Halévy sets the Cardinal’s inner conflict in a noble, hymn-like style: solemn orchestration, organ-like chords, and broad, arching vocal lines blend devotional humility with grandeur. The aria rises from quiet prayer to radiant affirmation, emphasizing the control, warmth, and dignity of the bass voice. The aria humanizes a world consumed by fanaticism and embodies the opera’s moral center of searching for compassion in the face of vengeance.

“Gualtier Malde... Caro nome”

Verdi’s *Rigoletto*, which premiered in 1851, remains one of Verdi’s most celebrated operas. The opera tells the story of Rigoletto, a court jester whose bitterness and cynicism contrast with the innocence of his daughter Gilda. Her sheltered life leaves her especially vulnerable to the Duke of Mantua’s charm and deception. “Caro nome” occurs after Gilda’s first encounter with the Duke, who has introduced himself under the name “Gualtier Maldè.” As she gently repeats the name of her supposed beloved, the aria captures her sense of wonder, joy, and tender anticipation. The moment reveals her youthful sincerity and the dreamlike excitement of first love. Verdi’s music beautifully mirrors Gilda’s emotional state. The flowing melodic lines and delicate ornamentation create an atmosphere of lightness and radiance, suggesting innocence, hope, and romantic idealism. The graceful, lyrical character of the aria allows the voice to convey both warmth and innocence, as if Gilda is absorbed in her own thoughts. This scene offers a striking contrast to the darker themes of the opera, highlighting Verdi’s ability to express character and emotion through elegant and expressive musical writing.

“Schweig! Schweig! Damit dich niemand warnt”

This dramatic aria is from Carl Maria von Weber’s *Der Freischütz*. Sung by the evil antagonist and forester, Kaspar, he invokes dark forces in the woods, the Wolf’s Glen. Kaspar has already sold his soul to the demon Samiel and is now planning to lure the protagonist, Max, to the Wolf’s Glen in hopes of sacrificing him as a replacement victim. Snarling and conspiratorial, the music bristles with menace as Kaspar urges silence so that no one may interfere with his pact. Weber paints the night with growling horns and trembling strings, while the vocal line leaps and hisses with demonic intensity. Jagged orchestral figures, ominous harmonies, and sudden dynamic contrasts create an atmosphere of supernatural dread. The aria exemplifies early German Romantic opera, fusing folklore, psychological tension, and vivid orchestration into a chilling theatrical moment of haunting, unforgettable dramatic power.

“O mio babbino caro”

Giacomo Puccini composed the comic opera *Gianni Schicchi* in 1918 for the Metropolitan Opera in New York as the third panel of *Il trittico*, alongside *Il Tabarro* and *Suor Angelica*. The story was derived from an excerpt in Dante’s *Inferno*. The opera tells the story of the greedy relatives of the recently deceased Buoso Donati, who discover his fortune has been left to a monastery. Desperate to secure the inheritance, they enlist the clever Gianni Schicchi. When his daughter Lauretta’s marriage to Rinuccio is threatened, she pleads with her father in the famous aria “O mio babbino caro.” Though often performed lyrically and tenderly, the aria is humorously exaggerated within the opera’s fast-paced comic drama, heightening both its charm and theatrical wit.

- PROGRAM NOTES -

“Dearest Mama”

American composer Douglas Moore’s renowned opera, *The Ballad of Baby Doe* premiered at the Central City Opera in Colorado in 1956. The English libretto by lyricist John Latouche combined with the simple yet impactful melodies of Moore capture the love story of central characters Elizabeth Baby Doe Tabor and Horace Tabor. In the aria, Baby Doe is drafting a letter to her mother, confessing her love for Horace, a married man. Her complex feelings of deep distress and loneliness emerge in the piece’s opening lines, as she does everything that she can to gain her mother’s sympathy as opposed to condemnation for going against societal expectations regarding divorce. Listeners can sense the fear and hesitation concealed in the gradual revelation of her split with her unfeared husband, ‘Harvey’. Yet, as Baby Doe approaches the end of her letter, listeners are met with conviction, yearning, and grief. She knows that despite the mutual love that is shared between her and Horace, she must permanently give him up to avoid any circulations of a scandal. Baby Doe’s aria successfully illustrates Moore’s attention to American lyricism, supported by consistently conversational melodies, a warm corresponding tone, underscoring harmonic shifts, and frequent use of accidentals.

“The Seguedilla”

Georges Bizet’s wildly famous *Carmen* premiered in 1875 at the Opéra-Comique in Paris. In the “Seguidilla,” Carmen, a fiery, independent and seductive woman, attempts to entice Don José, a young soldier, to release her from custody and abandon his duties to follow her. A Seguidilla is a type of Spanish dance, and Bizet uses the playful rhythms and characteristics of the dance form to highlight her charm, wit, and audacity. Carmen’s words are both challenging and inviting, blending flirtation with urgent persuasion, as she promises pleasure and freedom to the hesitant soldier. Through both word and melody, Carmen asserts her freedom and allure, offering excitement while testing Don José’s courage. The aria is a dramatic turning point, showcasing her magnetic personality and providing a lively, technically demanding highlight for a mezzo-soprano. The aria captures her character’s magnetic charm and establishes the tension between desire and duty that drives much of the opera’s narrative, while musically providing a showcase for mezzo-soprano agility, nuance, and theatrical presence.

"Je dis que rien ne m'épouvante"

In 1875, Georges Bizet’s opera *Carmen* premiered to mixed reviews. Today, *Carmen* stands as one of the most performed operas in history, capturing hearts with its intense drama, heated romance, and memorable melodies. The story, inspired by Prosper Mérimée’s novella, revolves around Carmen, a free-spirited woman that works in a cigarette factory. She seduces a naïve soldier, Don José, and the plot follows the two’s passionate and erratic relationship. The aria “Je dis que rien ne m’épouvante” is sung by Micaëla, José’s childhood sweetheart, in Act 3. She has entered the wild mountains by herself, looking to rescue Don José from the temptress Carmen. Bizet’s use of sweeping melodies, undulating arpeggios, and expressive meter changes all exemplify Micaëla’s prayerful struggle to gather the courage to face Carmen.

"Ma se colpa io non ho...Batti, batti"

Don Giovanni or *Il dissoluto punito*, composed by Mozart, premiered in 1787 at the Estates Theatre in Prague. From a sung-through Italian opera, “Batti, batti” is translated to “Beat me beat me”. This is sung by Zerlina a young woman recently engaged to Masetto. Masetto had caught her flirting with the wealthy womanizer Don Giovanni and declares their trust is broken. In the recitative before the aria, “Ma se colpa io non ho”, Zerlina cries in frustration “Masetto listen to me!” before coyly manipulating him to win back his trust. She claims he can beat her, hit her and vent his frustration so that they can make amends and reunite. *Don Giovanni* is a compelling social commentary on power, lust, morality and the consequences of bad choices showcasing Mozart’s ability to blend words and music to create a powerful show and convey each character’s emotional turmoil.

“A Hundred Thousand Stars”

Composed by Jake Heggie, “A Hundred Thousand Stars” is a somber and weighted remembrance of individuals who endured persecution under the Nazi regime. The opera *Out of Darkness*, created in collaboration with librettist Gene Scheer and *Music of Remembrance*, is set in 1930 and centers on preserving stories that oppressive systems attempted to erase. “A Hundred Thousand Stars,” was drawn from Heggie’s earlier song cycle *For a Look or a Touch* and reflects on the imprisonment and death of thousands of people targeted under Nazi rule. The aria contains an intimate lament: a Holocaust survivor grieving the loss of the one he loved. He repeatedly remarks at the numerous stars that once burned bright, each representing an individual life; now snuffed out. This aria is one of remembrance for those countless that suffered and died unjustly, and one of the kinds of pain and heartbreak that loss can bring.

- PROGRAM NOTES -

“Donde lieta uscì al tuo grido d’amore”

Puccini’s *La Bohème*, which premiered in 1896, is a story of art, comradeship, and love in the midst of poverty. In this aria, a seamstress called Mimi falls in love with a poet named Rodolfo. It is revealed later in the opera that Mimi has tuberculosis. This aria, “Donde lieta uscì” is Mimi’s attempt at trying to end their relationship amicably, for she knows that Rodolfo cannot provide for her in his poverty. Puccini’s use of dynamics, portamenti’s, and sustained phrases communicate Mimi’s barely concealed longing for Rodolfo.

"Lonely House"

Kurt Weill composed *Street Scene* in 1947, blending operatic writing with elements of Broadway and jazz in what he called an “American opera.” Set in a New York City tenement during a hot summer, the opera portrays the daily lives, struggles, and dreams of its residents. In the aria “Lonely House,” the young student, Sam Kaplan, reflects on his deep sense of isolation. Though surrounded by people in the crowded city, he feels detached and longs for a place where he truly belongs. This introspective aria highlights Sam’s sensitivity and poetic nature, while Weill’s lyrical vocal lines and expressive harmonies capture the quiet melancholy of his loneliness. The transparent orchestration and sustained melodic phrases allow the singer to convey both vulnerability and longing, making the aria one of the opera’s most reflective moments.

“Salut à la France”

Premiering in 1840, *La fille du régiment* by Gaetano Donizetti is a sparkling opéra comique filled with patriotic spirit, vocal brilliance, and heartfelt charm. The story follows Marie, a spirited young woman raised by a regiment of French soldiers, who later discovers she was born into nobility, but ultimately remains deeply loyal to the men who brought her up. “Salut à la France” is sung by Marie in Act II as she joyfully reunites with her beloved regiment. Overcome with pride and affection, she declares her devotion to France and to the soldiers she considers her family. Donizetti’s bright orchestration, triumphant rhythms, and soaring melodic lines capture Marie’s exuberance and unwavering loyalty, while the vocal writing showcases both her virtuosity and her heartfelt sincerity. The aria serves as a triumphant affirmation of identity, belonging, and love of country.

- DIRECTOR -



Blythe Condon

Soprano, Blythe Condon is a Graduate Student Assistant for the opera and opera workshop at Liberty University. During her time at Liberty, she performed Contessa (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*), and Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*). Recently, Blythe placed 1st in the 2026 Liberty University School of Music Aria Concerto Competition. Recent highlights include her role debut as Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) with Vienna Opera Academy, with performances in Vienna’s famous Musikverein. She was selected as an AAMS Emerging Young Artist at The Kennedy Center with Washington National Opera, as well as a selected member of the Honors Choir at Carnegie Hall, a Young Artist with Opera Lucca (Italy) and Trentino Music Festival (Italy).

This opportunity has been such a pleasure to embark on, I want to thank both Mr. and Mrs. Dr. Miller as well as Dr. Müller for trusting me with this wonderful teaching experience. The opportunity to coach these young artists has been has reminded me why I love this art form so much. Thank you for supporting these students and for celebrating their hard work. I am so proud of what they have accomplished and look forward to seeing where their musical journeys lead. Because of their passion, discipline, integrity, and remarkable talent, I am deeply excited and hopeful for the opera program Liberty is building, and I have no doubt these students will be an essential part of shaping its future.

Liberty University School of Music Upcoming Events

*LU Symphony Orchestra Concerto & Aria Concert	<i>Center for Music and the Worship Arts, Concert Hall Thu, March 5, 7:30 PM</i>
*University Chorale, Women's Choir, & Concert Choir	<i>Center for Music and the Worship Arts, Concert Hall Tue, March 10, 7:30 PM</i>
*Chamber Singers Home Tour Concert	<i>Center for Music and the Worship Arts, Concert Hall Tue, March 24, 7:30 PM</i>
Piano Showcase	<i>Center for Music and the Worship Arts, Concert Hall Thu, March 26, 7:30 PM</i>
Woodwind Chamber Ensembles	<i>Center for Music and the Worship Arts, Macel Falwell Recital Hall (M305) Mon, March 30, 7:30 PM</i>
*Jazz Ensemble	<i>Center for Music and the Worship Arts, Concert Hall Tue, March 31, 7:30 PM</i>
Brass Chamber Ensembles	<i>Center for Music and the Worship Arts, Oldham Recital Hall (M170) Thu, April 2, 7:30 PM</i>
Jazz Combos	<i>Center for Music and the Worship Arts, Instrumental Rehearsal Room (M160) Thu, April 7, 7:30 PM</i>
Clarinet Ensemble	<i>Center for Music and the Worship Arts, Oldham Recital Hall (M170) Thu, April 9, 7:30 PM</i>
Night of Worship	<i>Thomas Road Baptist Church 1971 University Blvd. Sun, April 12, 7:00 PM</i>

**Ticketed Event. Tickets can be purchased at www.liberty.edu/tickets.*

**We would like to thank the
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their faithful support of the School of Music.**

Dr. Dondi Costin, President
Dr. Scott Hicks, Provost and Chief Academic Officer
Dr. Stephen Müller, Dean, School of Music
The School of Music Administration, Faculty, and Staff

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