

Civic Morning Musicals

Wednesday Recital Series

Alison Wahl, soprano
Vadim Serebryany, piano

Wednesday, June 2, 2021
12:15 pm, [CMM on YouTube](#)

I Told My Love to the Roses
The Awakening

Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954)

Night

Florence Price (1887-1953)

So Little There

Libby Larsen (b. 1950)

A Winter Twilight

Rosephanye Dunn Powell (b. 1962)

with Vadim Serebryany, piano

Meditation for the Inner Storm

Stacy Garrop (b. 1969)

Wisconsin

Alison Wahl (b. 1986)

Turning Point

Morning Comes Anyway

Song of the Satellite

Mother Confucius

Alison Wahl, vocals and guitar

Upcoming Events with Civic Morning Musicals

Sun., Jun. 13 – [CMM Live! Young Artists](#)



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About the Composers, Poets, and Music

J. Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954) was an American composer and singer of the Harlem Renaissance. His collaborations with Bob Cole and his brother James Weldon Johnson garnered high acclaim in the realms of opera, musical theater, Hollywood, and hymnody, including most notably the vital hymn “Lift Every Voice and Sing.” Johnson sang in the original production of *Porgy and Bess*, edited several volumes of African-American music in various genres, and contributed to causes related to the NAACP as an activist and musician. Many of his art songs and musical numbers for voice and piano, including those on this program, were published by Ricordi and can now be found on IMSLP. The songs on this program hold poetry by James Weldon Johnson.



Florence Price (1887-1953) was the first Black woman to gain recognition as a symphonic composer. She began her life and career in the American south, but like many Black families moved north in the Great Migration to escape unjust Jim Crow conditions. Her relationship with Margaret Bonds, Langston Hughes, and Marian Anderson shaped her work and career. Much of her work was overshadowed or lost after her early death, but robust scholarship and due appreciation is growing for her and her music since a discovery of her papers and manuscripts was found in an abandoned house in Illinois in 2009, including concerti and symphonies. Price’s rightful place in the musical canon has begun to be restored. Her music is published by Schirmer, and at least two biographies of her life and work are available. Many of her songs for voice and piano are available on IMSLP and other online sources.



This song, “Night,” is a setting of a poem by **Louise C. Wallace** (1902-1973). Wallace’s life and work has received too little scholarship, but ongoing research is bringing this crucial artist to the public eye. Wallace, a schoolteacher, lived in Knoxville TN and won first place in the 1929 News-Sentinel Poetry Contest. The News-Sentinel Literary Review from Sunday, June 2 of that year includes her poem “World Schoolroom.”



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Libby Larsen (b. 1950) is an American composer and co-founder of the American Composers Forum. She has held positions and residencies at the Minnesota Orchestra, Charlotte Symphony, Colorado Symphony, and through the Library of Congress. She is the recipient of a Grammy Award and the George Peabody Medal, among other notable honors. Her operatic, symphonic, instrumental, art song, and choral works are extensively recorded and published. The piece on this program comes from *Margaret Songs*, a set of three songs of Margaret Elliot from Larsen's chamber opera, *Eric Hermansson's Soul*. The text in this song was formatted and generated by Larsen from a short story by Willa Cather.



Willa Cather (1873-1947) was an outspoken, eccentric, and satirical American novelist and member of the Algonquin Round Table. Her stories about frontier and pioneer life dealt with themes of nostalgia, exile, and belonging. She was awarded the American Academy Gold Medal and the Pulitzer Prize.



Rosephanye Dunn Powell (b. 1962) is an American composer, singer, professor, and researcher based in Auburn, Alabama. She is a prolific composer of secular and sacred works for chorus as well as solo voice, and weaves together traditions of European, American Gospel, and Spiritual musical worlds. Her research on African-American music and performance practice has been published by *Showchoir* and *The National Association of Teachers of Singing*. The piece on this program is from her set *Miss Wheatley's Garden*, published by Gentry Publications in 2015.



The poem "A Winter Twilight" was written by **Angelina W. Grimké** (1880-1958). Grimké's paternal grandfather was born enslaved, and her father was a lawyer and executive director of the NAACP. Her 1916 play *Rachel* is considered "the first attempt to use the stage...to enlighten the American people relative to the lamentable condition of the millions of Colored citizens in this free republic," and was the first production of a play by a Black author with a Black cast to be produced for an integrated audience. The text of Dunn Powell's *Miss Wheatley's Garden* is written by Black women. The set is named for Phillis Wheatley (1754?-1784), the first African-American woman poet. It is tantalizingly subtitled "Volume 1" and is available through Hal Leonard, J.W. Pepper, Sheet Music Plus, and other online and brick-and-mortar sheet music retailers.



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Stacy Garrop (b. 1969) is a Chicago-based composer and served as the first Emerging Opera Composer of Chicago Opera Theater’s Vanguard Program. She has written works for orchestra, opera, oratorio, wind ensemble, choir, art song, various chamber ensembles, and solo instruments. Garrop has received awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Detroit Symphony, New England Philharmonic, Boston Choral Ensemble, and Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble. The piece on this program is a premiere arrangement. It was originally composed for baritone and singing wine glass. The piece follows the performer’s anxiety and calm in real time, as she uses the music to calm herself after intrusive moments of angst.



Alison Wahl – Songs

I have been writing songs since I was school-aged, encouraged by my music teachers and my literarily-minded mother. I wrote “Wisconsin” when I was feeling misplaced living in the Midwest, and missing Lake Ontario. In the Wyandot (Huron) language, Ontario means Shining Water. “Morning Comes Anyway” is about missed connection, lack of control, and frustration about the linear flow of time. “Turning Point” takes its name from the park in Rochester, NY, where the Genesee River gets wider and large vessels have room to turn around and head back up the river. The alternative to turning at this point is facing Lower Falls and High Falls. “Song of the Satellite” was inspired by the Moon, Earth’s original satellite, and is about the balance of freedom and relationship. “The Reservoir” is inspired by the rich biodiversity of the Death Valley desert, which thrives despite the overwhelming heat and meager rainfall because of springs, snowmelt, and water systems that persist even in the desert conditions. The song is about the need to connect to deep, obscured wells of hope, and hold a belief in the promise of a bloom during times of drought, pain, and isolation.

Special Thanks

Thanks to Carole Brzozowski and Robbie Padilla, and Civic Morning Musicals for organizing and sponsoring this performance. I’m grateful to Brian Dozoretz, Carleigh Strange, Jules Cavallo, and Becca Emery for their assistance and support in recording today.



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