

TEXAS A&M INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES DEPARTMENT OF FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS



Kyung-Eun Na, Piano
Jiyeon Hwang, Soprano



Echoes of Joy:
Baroque to Contemporary

VOICE AND PIANO DUO RECITAL
Thursday, March 26, 2026
7:30 p.m.

Voice & Piano Duo Recital

Dr. Jiyeon Hwang, Soprano
Dr. Kyung-Eun Na, Pianist
Texas A&M International University
FPA Recital Hall, April 13, 2026 | 6:00 PM

PROGRAM

The Eighteenth Century: Sacred and Operatic Brilliance

<i>Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion</i> (from <i>Messiah</i>)	G.F. Handel	1685–1759
<i>Piangerò la sorte mia</i> (from <i>Giulio Cesare</i>)		
<i>Exsultate, jubilate</i> , K. 165 (Allegro)	W.A. Mozart	1756–1791

Intermission

21st Century Contemporary American Art Song from *Genius Child*

<i>Genius Child</i>	Ricky Ian Gordon	b.1956
<i>Winter Moon</i>		
<i>To Be Somebody</i>		
<i>Strange Hurt</i>		
<i>Prayer</i>		
<i>Joy</i>		

ARTIST BIO



Jiyeon Hwang, Soprano

Korean lyric leggero soprano **Jiyeon Hwang** has been praised for her radiant timbre, expressive artistry, and captivating stage presence. She has thrilled audiences across the United States, Europe, and South Korea in leading roles in opera, recitals, and concerts.

Dr. Hwang currently serves as Assistant Professor of Voice/Choir at Texas A&M International University and was recently appointed Vice President of the NATS International Korea Chapter and an adjudicator for the International Grande Music Competition.

Her career highlights include her Carnegie Hall debut at Weill Recital Hall and The Estate Theatre in Prague, the William Vernard Award (NATSAA) and Midwest representative, the Gold Award from the Forte International Vocal Competition, and First Prize at the Kenwood Symphony Orchestra Competition. She began her formal music studies in South Korea, earning a Bachelor of Music (B.M.) in Voice from Chung-Ang University. She continued her training in New York, where she received a Master of Music (M.M.) in Voice Performance from the Manhattan School of Music. She later completed her Doctor of Musical Arts (D.M.A.) in Voice Performance at the University of Minnesota, where she was awarded the prestigious Harvey V. Berneking Opera Fellowship.

On stage, she has brought to life beloved roles such as Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*), Adele (*Die Fledermaus*), Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Lakmé (*Lakmé*), and Berta (*The Barber of Seville*), Papagena, and Pamina (*The Magic Flute*). She also collaborated in the innovative Webpera project with Camerata New Jersey, bringing opera to global audiences online. Equally at home in opera, oratorio, Korean art songs, and contemporary works, Dr. Hwang continues to inspire audiences and students alike with her artistry, vision, and dedication to the vocal arts.



Kyung-Eun Na, Piano

Pianist **Kyung-Eun Na** enjoys a multifaceted international career as a performer, educator, opera coach, chorus master, and music director. She currently serves as Associate Professor of Opera Coaching at the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music and as Faculty Coach at the Prague Summer Nights Young Artists Music Festival. Deeply committed to cultivating artistry, collaboration, and professional readiness, Na

integrates rigorous traditional training with innovative, interdisciplinary approaches that prepare young artists for today's evolving musical landscape.

Na has held faculty appointments at the Purchase College Conservatory of Music (SUNY), Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Montclair State University, Seoul Arts High School, and Sungshin Women's University in South Korea. She has served on the music staffs of leading opera companies, festivals, and institutions, including the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Arizona Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Virginia Opera, Ravinia Steans Music Institute, Music Academy of the West, Aspen Opera Theater Center, the International Music Academy in Siena (Italy), and Prague Summer Nights Young Artists Music Festival.

A winner of the Marilyn Horne Foundation Competition (2007), Na appeared in a national recital tour with soprano Nadine Sierra and has collaborated with many of today's leading singers. Presented by Juilliard's Vocal Arts, she made her Lincoln Center debut at Alice Tully Hall with soprano Brenda Rae. Her chamber music collaborations include Matthew Lipman (viola), Jasmine Choi (flute), Wonki Lee (saxophone), and Soovin Kim (violin). Her performances have taken her to major venues throughout the United States, Central and South America, Europe, and Asia, including Carnegie Hall, Steinway Hall, Seoul Arts Center, Lotte Concert Hall, Yamaha Hall, Estate Theatre in Prague, Teatro Amazonas in Manaus, and Teatro Nacional de San Salvador.

Born and raised in Seoul, South Korea, Kyung-Eun Na holds a Doctor of Musical Arts in Collaborative Piano from the Manhattan School of Music, a Master of Music from The Juilliard School, an Artist Diploma from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, and a Bachelor of Music from Yonsei University.

PROGRAM NOTES

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

Born in Germany and later naturalized as a British citizen, **George Frideric Handel** was one of the most influential composers of the Baroque era. After early success in Italian opera, he settled in London, where he became famous for both Italian operas and English oratorios. His music is known for its dramatic intensity, virtuosic vocal writing, and profound emotional expression.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion

from *Messiah* (1741)

Messiah is an English oratorio based on biblical texts compiled by Charles Jennens. Unlike opera, it has no staged action, costumes, or scenery. The work meditates on the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

“Rejoice greatly” appears in Part I and celebrates the coming of the Messiah. The text proclaims joy and triumph:

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion;
Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem:
behold, thy King cometh unto thee.”

The aria’s brilliant coloratura passages paint the overflowing joy of the text. In contrast, the middle section (“He is the righteous Saviour”) becomes more lyrical and tender, emphasizing grace and salvation before returning to jubilant celebration.

Piangerò la sorte mia

from *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* (1724)

Giulio Cesare in Egitto is one of Handel’s greatest Italian operas. The drama tells the story of Julius Caesar’s involvement in the Egyptian civil war between Cleopatra and her brother Tolomeo.

In this aria, Cleopatra has been captured and believes all hope is lost. She sings:

“I shall weep over my fate,
so cruel and so bitter...”

The aria begins as a lament, expressing despair and resignation. However, in the contrasting middle section, Cleopatra vows that even as a ghost she will haunt her enemies—revealing strength beneath sorrow. Handel masterfully contrasts grief and defiance, making this aria one of the most psychologically complex moments in Baroque opera.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

A child prodigy who toured Europe from a young age, **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** became one of the defining composers of the Classical period. His operas, symphonies, and sacred works combine clarity of form with extraordinary emotional depth.

***Exsultate, jubilate*, K. 165 (1773)**

(Allegro)

Mozart composed *Exsultate, jubilate* in Milan for the castrato Venanzio Rauzzini. Although often mistaken for an operatic scena, it is actually a sacred motet in Latin.

The opening “Allegro” bursts with joy:

“Exult, rejoice, O happy souls,
and let sweet songs resound!”

The music is radiant and virtuosic, reflecting operatic brilliance within a sacred setting. Mozart combines sacred devotion with theatrical exuberance, creating a work that feels both devotional and celebratory. The florid vocal lines and buoyant orchestration embody divine joy.

Ricky Ian Gordon (b. 1956)

One of America’s most distinctive living composers of vocal music, Ricky Ian Gordon is celebrated for his deeply lyrical style and his profound sensitivity to text. His works bridge art song, opera, and American musical theater, combining classical craftsmanship with a distinctly American emotional immediacy. Gordon has frequently set poetry by major American writers, allowing literature and music to merge in intimate storytelling.

Genius Child

Text: Langston Hughes

The poem comes from Hughes's 1925 collection *The Weary Blues*. It reflects on a child who is misunderstood, isolated, and “different,” yet possesses an inner artistic brilliance:

“This is a song for the genius child.
Sing it softly, for the song is wild.”

The poem addresses themes of alienation, identity, and creative individuality—subjects that resonated strongly in Hughes's exploration of the African American experience during the Harlem Renaissance.

Gordon's setting emphasizes vulnerability and quiet intensity. The piano often moves in subtle, unsettled harmonies, creating a fragile emotional atmosphere. The vocal line alternates between introspective lyricism and moments of restrained passion, mirroring the tension between isolation and artistic strength.

Winter Moon

Text: Langston Hughes

This short, atmospheric poem paints an image of moonlight reflecting on snow:

“How thin and sharp is the moon tonight!
How thin and sharp and ghostly white...”

The imagery is spare and visual. Rather than narrative, it offers mood and stillness. Hughes's language suggests solitude and a quiet kind of beauty tinged with melancholy.

Gordon responds with delicate textures. The piano often evokes shimmering light or icy stillness, while the vocal line floats gently above it. The song's restraint requires refined breath control and tonal clarity, making it especially effective in an intimate recital space.

To Be Somebody

Text: Emily Dickinson

This setting comes from Dickinson's famous poem beginning:

“I’m Nobody! Who are you?
Are you—Nobody—too?”

The poem playfully critiques public ambition and fame, contrasting the joy of private authenticity with the absurdity of “being Somebody” and being constantly observed.

Gordon’s setting highlights the wit and irony of Dickinson’s text. Rhythmic vitality and light articulation reflect the poem’s conversational tone. Yet beneath the humor lies a subtle sincerity: a celebration of inner truth over public recognition. Musically, the song demands agility and clarity of diction, allowing the text’s humor and irony to shine.

Strange Hurt

Text: Langston Hughes

This poem reflects emotional pain and lingering attachment:

“There is this strange hurt in my heart,
And it does not go away...”

Hughes’s language is direct and unadorned, intensifying its emotional impact. The “strange hurt” suggests love, memory, and psychological vulnerability.

Gordon’s setting is harmonically richer and more emotionally expansive than some of the other songs. The piano often carries sustained harmonic tension, while the vocal line unfolds in long, expressive phrases. The song builds toward moments of emotional openness, then returns to introspection. It is one of the most deeply felt pieces in the set.

Prayer

(Various performances attribute this text to contemporary poetry sources; it is often associated with reflective, devotional poetry.)

The text functions less as formal liturgy and more as a personal meditation—an intimate conversation rather than a public declaration. The focus is surrender, hope, and quiet spiritual searching.

Gordon’s musical language here is restrained and luminous. The vocal line tends toward simplicity, allowing sincerity to emerge without theatrical display. The piano supports gently,

often with transparent textures that create a contemplative atmosphere. This song provides a moment of stillness within the set.

Joy

In contrast to the introspection of earlier songs, *Joy* is radiant and expansive. The text celebrates renewal, vitality, and emotional awakening. Rather than naïve happiness, it suggests joy that emerges after struggle.

Gordon often uses sweeping melodic gestures and broader harmonic motion to create a sense of uplift. The piano writing becomes more animated, and the vocal line opens into fuller resonance. As a closing piece, it provides emotional resolution and release.



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