

Caroline Kasay's Graduate Recital Program

Recitalist Name: Caroline Kasay

Principal Instrument: Voice

Event: Graduate Recital

Location: Massey Performing Arts Center

Date: March 28, 2020

Time: 12:00 P.M.

Song Title: I Can Only Imagine

Composer: Bart Miller

The Reason
Travis Cottrell

I Hope You Dance
Mark D. Sanders/Tia Sillers/Lee Ann Womack

Dance with Me
Chris DeStefano/Morgan Evans

White Horse
Liz Rose/Taylor Swift

Tiny Dancer
Elton John/Bernie Taupin

Conga
Gloria Estefan/Enrique E. Garcia

Tightrope
Benj Pasek/Justin Paul

Free to Be Me
Francesca Battistelli

Thank You For The Music
Benny Andersson/ Björn Ulvaeus

Support Musicians:

Sam Abbott: guitar

Laurence Freeman: bass

Denise Heard: guitar

Duncan King: drums

Patrick Monnius: violin

Katrien Vanderbeck: BGV

Joe Wandass: Piano/BGV

Teacher: Mr. Bruce Bennett

Degree: Masters of Music in Commercial Music

Emphasis: Performance

Program Notes

I Can Only Imagine

“I Can Only Imagine” was written by Bart Miller, lead singer of Contemporary Christian band MercyMe while touring in Oklahoma in 1999. Miller’s inspiring journey of faith and family follows an estranged relationship with his abusive father who was later diagnosed with stage four cancer bringing the two together in an unlikely father-son story of forgiveness. While his father was sick, Miller began to think about the realities of facing God at the end of his life, and his final thought was that he “can only imagine what it would be like.” Thus, the song was written in the backseat of a van, and it went on to gain the attention of the award-winning singer-songwriter Amy Grant who sought to purchase and record the song herself. Overwhelmed with conviction and emotion upon hearing Miller’s story and the power of the song, Grant made a spontaneous decision. When she debuted “I Can Only Imagine” in the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee in 2001, Grant surprised audiences by asking Miller to leave his seat in the audience to sing the lead vocal onstage. This small act launched MercyMe into the international spotlight and allowed them to reach millions of listeners. Today, “I Can Only Imagine” is the most played Contemporary Christian song ever recorded.

The Reason

Written by Belmont University alum Travis Cottrell, “The Reason” outlines Cottrell’s purpose and dream in being a worship leader. Cottrell is confident in partnering with other well-known worship teams such as Elevation Worship and Hillsong United, and he has performed with well-known theologians and singers such as Max Lucado, Beth Moore, Garth Brooks, and more. In 2013, he received the Encore Award given to accomplished alumni from Belmont University for his achievement of excellence in the field of music A Dove Award winner, worship leader, father, and devoted Christ-follower, Travis Cottrell wrote “The Reason” to share his love for worship and his heart in praising God. He details the purpose in praising God behind his musical giftedness in this song and understands “the reason” why he sings and lives his life the way that he does. He also wrote this album in collaboration with his daughter, Lily Cottrell, as a source of inspiration and exposure for her in performing with him. “The Reason” is the title track from his 2018 album project, and Cottrell felt it was the keystone song in connecting the covers, arrangements, and original songs completed in that album.

I Hope You Dance

The iconic anthem “I Hope You Dance” written by Lee Ann Womack, Mark D. Sanders, and Tia Sillers was released on May 3, 2000 and recorded by Lee Ann Womack. This song went on to become a heartfelt hymn for people going through a difficult time in life, and it relayed the wishful thoughts for the sake of another person. In a *Billboard Magazine* interview, Womack said, “It made me think about my daughters and the different times in their lives. As a parent, you just hope those are the kinds of things you will make your children think of. But it can be so many things to different people. Certainly, it can represent everything a parent hopes for their child, but it can also be for a relationship that's ending as a fond wish for the other person's happiness or for someone graduating, having a baby, or embarking on a new path. It fits almost every circumstance I can think of.” “I Hope You Dance” won the CMA, ACM, ASCAP, BMI, and NSAI Song of the Year Awards in 2001, and is considered Womack’s signature song.

Dance with Me

“Dance With Me” was released in 2018 as a part of the album “Things That We Drink To” where each track was written and produced by artist Morgan Evans and producer Chris DeStefano. Even more than producing and writing all of the songs, Evans and DeStefano also played every instrument heard on each track. “Dance With Me” includes duet vocals done by Evans’ wife, country recording artist Kelsea Ballerini. Morgan Evans moved to Nashville, Tennessee from Australia in 2016, and after writing hundreds of songs and connecting with the top names in the country music industry, he and DeStefano embarked on a project that Evans feels is “honest and tells [his] story.” The song “Dance With Me” is an ode to Evans’ wife and the relationship that they share, and it speaks to the future that they hope to share together.

White Horse

Winner of the 2010 Grammy Awards for Best Female Country Vocal Performance and Best Country Song, “White Horse” was written in 2010 by Taylor Swift and Liz Rose about one of Swift’s ex-boyfriends. Rose acted as a mentor to Swift in her early songwriting days and helped Swift to finish writing “White Horse” when she hit a creative block in its composition. Rose and Swift collaborated on many of Swift’s early songs. “White Horse” went on to premiere in TV shows, movies, and live performances, and helped in launching Swift’s solo career. Today, Taylor Swift is one of the top charting pop artists in the world.

Tiny Dancer

Born on March 25, 1947, British singer, songwriter, musician, producer, and pop icon Elton John premiered his song “Tiny Dancer” in his fourth album in 1972. It was certified triple platinum on April 26, 2018, and it is only one of many raging successes recorded by John. “Tiny Dancer” was written in conjunction with Bernie Taupin, and although neither of them ever physically wrote sitting in the same place, they co-wrote numerous hits. “Tiny Dancer” is centralized around Taupin’s first impression of American women when he traveled to California for the first time. John and Taupin have a long history of collaborations, and they have gone on to be inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame, sell more than 300 million records, and have more than fifty top 40 hits.

Conga

Written by Enrique E. Garcia (born 1955) and Gloria Estefan (born 1957), “Conga” was released in 1985 and quickly became Gloria Estefan’s signature song. It was certified Gold by the RIAA and reached number ten in the *Billboard Hot 100* list in 1986. “Conga” acted as Estefan’s breakout hit and launched her onto an international stage. She has gone on to achieve numerous accolades including a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, Kennedy Center Honors, BMI Songwriter of the Year, and has been inducted into the Songwriter Hall of Fame. Estefan continues to contribute her musical talents and performs “Conga” in her solo performances.

Tightrope

From the 2017 breakout film *The Greatest Showman*, “Tightrope” was written by Benj Pasek (born June 9, 1985) and Justin Paul (born January 3, 1985). It was recorded for the movie by the actress portraying P.T. Barnum’s wife Charity (played by Michelle Williams) and occurs when she discovers her husband’s supposed infidelity. The song details the agreement she made

in marrying Barnum and how difficult it has been to remain married to him. Pasek and Paul are a well-known composition team for musical theater, film, and television. Pasek and Paul studied music together at the University of Michigan and wrote a song cycle in 2005 entitled *Edges* that went on to open doors for them in composing musicals on Broadway. They are known for the 2012 musical *Dogfight*, the 2012 musical *A Christmas Story: the musical*, and the 2016 Broadway musical *Dear Evan Hansen* which went on to win the Tony Award for Best Original Score in the 71st Annual Tony Awards in 2017. Together they composed the music for the 2016 critically acclaimed motion picture *La La Land* and later in 2017, *The Greatest Showman*. They both continue to work closely and compose music for Disney and other production companies.

Free to Be Me

Written and recorded by Francesca Battistelli, “Free to Be Me” was released as the second single in her debut album *My Paper Heart* in 2009. The song follows her inner struggle and eventual release of pressure to attempt at “being what someone else wants [her] to be.” It was nominated for three Dove Awards in 2009, and Battistelli has gone on to win numerous Grammy and Dove Awards. Now a mother of five children, Battistelli continues to tour and write music in the Contemporary Christian genre.

Thank You For The Music

“Thank You for The Music” was featured in the Swedish band ABBA’s fifth studio album, *The Album* released in 1983. It was written by band members Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus, recorded and released by the band, and was later also recorded in Spanish in 1980. The song and many others such as “Dancing Queen,” “Our Last Summer,” “Mamma Mia,” “Super Trouper,” and more went on to feature in the Broadway Musical *Mamma Mia!* (1999) and later the major motion picture in 2008 with the same name. ABBA continues to perform, tour, and release new music and remastered tracks.