

# *DREAM VARIATIONS*

## About the Program

When Karen Slack initially invited me to play a recital with her, I asked her to send me her program. What I received was a model program which had been very successful in the 1980s. She teases me to this day about my response of “No, try again.” The repertoire was fine, but it did not reflect the interests of her life and music today. Twenty songs on one program is a challenge, and when she eventually asked me to curate it, I jumped at the possibility.

I have known for years that the legendary Jessye Norman was a role model for Karen, and I had the privilege to work with this great singer for twenty years. One of our programs, *The Five Seasons* which debuted in 2007, caught Karen’s imagination as she searched for a way to honor Ms. Norman in her programming. When she shared this with me, I went back to the original program and worked on updating it to fit Karen’s artistic and vocal abilities.

The program that Norman created was her first foray into mixing traditional classical compositions with those of more popular composers, such as Michel Legrand, George Gershwin and Johnny Mercer. Audiences around the world loved the combination. When designing the program for Karen, I worked hard to make sure that every song was the perfect fit. *DREAM VARIATIONS* might be modeled on a program by Jessye Norman, but it is completely original in its conception for Karen Slack.

Once I had chosen the twenty songs and arranged the program, I invited Karen to my home to hear them. I used nine songs from Ms. Norman’s recital to show the connection, but the others were truly for Karen. Instead of playing the songs for her, I read each poem out loud, and asked her to jot down ideas about the texts. There was a story from the first to the last song, and she understood my plan. The opening song, which gives the program its title, *DREAM VARIATIONS*, is on a text by Langston Hughes set by Undine Smith Moore. Its first line tells us everything we need to know - “To fling my arms wide in some place of the sun.” It sets the tone for a program of love, loss and dreams, with the seasons as a backdrop.

The journey includes songs by Mahler, Berg, Wolf, Berlioz, Brahms, Schubert, Strauss, Hahn, Marx, del Tredici and Wagner. We also have Gershwin and Legrand, but there is a special tribute to Nina, Lena, and Tina. Yes, Ms. Simone, Ms. Horne, and Ms. Turner. It just might be the first time that a Tina Turner hit is heard on a classical voice recital, but it works, and Karen Slack is the perfect singer to deliver it.

~ Mark Markham



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## Program

Karen Slack, soprano  
Mark Markham, piano

Dream Variation (Langston Hughes)  
Ich atmet einen linden Duft (Friedrich Rückert)  
Sommertage (Paul Hohenberg)  
The Summer Knows (Marilyn and Alan Bergman)  
Er ist's (Eduard Mörike)

Undine Smith Moore  
Gustav Mahler  
Alban Berg  
Michel LeGrand  
Hugo Wolf

Villanelle (Théophile Gautier)  
Love walked in (Ira Gershwin)  
Lob des Leidens (Adolf Friedrich von Schack)  
Stormy Weather (Ted Koehler)

Hector Berlioz  
George Gershwin  
Richard Strauss  
Harold Arlen

Und gestern hat er mir Rosen gebracht (Thekla Lingens)  
Bedeckt mich mit Blumen (Emanuel von Geibel)  
L'Heure exquise (Paul Verlaine)  
Lyric for True Love (Florence Hynes Willette)

Josef Marx  
Hugo Wolf  
Reynaldo Hahn  
Undine Smith Moore

## INTERMISSION

Es träumte mir (Georg Friedrich Daumer)  
What's love got to do with it?  
Die Liebe hat gelogen (August von Platen)  
Les Chemins de l'amour (Jean Anouilh)

Johannes Brahms  
Graham Lyle/Terry Britten  
Franz Schubert  
Francis Poulenc

Acrostic Song (Lewis Carroll)  
Cotton-eyed Joe (traditional folk song)  
Träume (Mathilde Wesendonck)

David Del Tredici  
Arranged by Nina Simone  
Richard Wagner