

# For the Love of Song: Tracing the Scholarship of Graham Johnson

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Graham Johnson is one of the most highly regarded art song specialists in the world, internationally known for his performances as well as for his innovative recital programming. His breadth of experience in the repertoire serves as a unique model for current and future generations of artists. In May 2024, the authors interviewed Johnson about his scholarship, and clear themes emerged throughout the conversation: the importance of curiosity and constant education, as well as the value and power of knowledge in the work of pianists, coaches, and performers.

**I**N JUNE 1971, a twenty-one year old pianist attended a performance of *Winterreise* given by Peter Pears and Benjamin Britten at the Aldeburgh Festival. The pianist later said of that event: “The electricity generated by Pears and Britten stunned everyone there that day, but it ignited a flame in me that changed my life.”<sup>1</sup>

The pianist, who had come to England four years earlier to study piano and composition, would go on to devote his illustrious and prolific career to art song, becoming an unparalleled advocate for the art form through his programming, performing, recording, and articulate scholarship. That pianist is Graham Johnson.

## THE PIANIST AS SCHOLAR

One of the most highly regarded art song specialists in the world, Johnson is internationally known for his performances with some of the classical world’s most important artists, as well as for his innovative recital programming.<sup>2</sup> Johnson’s refined and informed performances are documented on the Deutsche Grammophon, BMG, EMI, and harmonia mundi labels, among others. His extensive discography for the Hyperion Records label, begun in 1980, includes the complete songs of Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Fauré, and Poulenc, as well as various other boxed Hyperion sets containing selections from the songs of such composers as Gounod and Hahn. As a companion to these recordings, Johnson authored “phenomenally thorough, informative, and eminently readable notes.”<sup>3</sup>



Graham Johnson  
(Photo by Brandon Velarde)

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On page after page, he brings a performer's insight, a scholar's meticulousness and a connoisseur's enthusiasm . . . So exhaustive are his efforts that Hyperion had to design a new jewel box just to accommodate the bulging booklets.<sup>4</sup>

Books—similarly authoritative and interesting—followed the booklets. The books *The Songmakers' Almanac: Twenty Years of Song Recitals in London: Reflections and Commentaries* (1996) and *Britten, Voice & Piano: Lectures on the Vocal Music of Benjamin Britten* (2003) are based on recital series curated by Johnson and contain treasures of fascinating information for the reader. *The French Song Companion* (2000) offers biographical sketches and repertoire guides for over 150 composers and texts for over 700 songs, with translations by Richard Stokes. Three later publications each focus on a single composer: *Gabriel Fauré. The Songs and Their Poets* (2009, translations by Stokes), which covers the composer's 60-year song composition career—nearly spanning the bulk of the history of *mélodie*—and *Poulenc: The Life in the Songs* (2020, translations by Jeremy Sams) which “reveals in historical and psychological depth the profound emotional struggles that lay behind the composer's songs.”<sup>5</sup> The impressive three-volume encyclopedia, *Franz Schubert: The Complete Songs* (2014, translations by Richard Wigmore), includes, as the title implies, commentary on nearly 700 works, as well as biographies of 120 poets and intriguing illustrations. Like all of Johnson's writings, it is a definitive, thorough, and lovingly curated source on the subject.

Johnson, International Professor of Art Song Performance at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, is also a gifted teacher and speaker. Even the most casual of YouTube searches will offer the seeker not only a wealth of masterclasses, but also lecture-demonstrations on a variety of topics, such as *Overseen and Underheard: Reflections on the Accompanist's Art* (for the Leeds Lieder 2022 Festival) or the *Unacclaimed Accompanist*, the title of which refers to the book (and later recording of) *The Unashamed Accompanist* by the legendary Gerald Moore, who was Johnson's mentor.<sup>6</sup>

Johnson's scholarship delves deeply into the lives of the creators of song—composers, poets, performers—and his own biography has intersected with some of the most important musicians of the twentieth century.

He shares this experience and personal insight generously. One example is his Wigmore Hall talk, *Britten: The Sorcerer's Apprentice-Accompanist*, offered on what would have been the composer's 110th birthday; it lovingly describes Johnson's relationship with Britten and Peter Pears, those artists who ignited Johnson's interest in song, which, in turn, fueled his vast output of scholarly work.<sup>7</sup>

The authors spoke with Johnson about his art song scholarship, how it took shape in his life and how it has informed his work. Clear themes emerged in the conversation: the importance of curiosity and constant education, as well as the value and power of knowledge in the work of pianists, coaches, and performers.

### THE NEED FOR SELF-EDUCATION

Johnson affirms that, in art song, “the preparatory work required of singers and pianists is as multilayered as winter clothing.”<sup>8</sup> The reason for this is that art song combines vast traditions of poetry and music, what Carol Kimball refers to as “sister arts.”<sup>9</sup> In order to truly collaborate in this art form, singer and pianist partners must explore the language and meaning of the poem, the imagery in both the vocal and piano parts, and the integration of all musical details that make up the unified whole. If they are enrolled in a song intensive with several classes and mentors, the partners may be led through that process in a curricular way. But those situations are rare and specialized; in most situations, the singer and pianist must invest their own time and skills to explore the many aspects of the piece.

That personal investment, fueled by passionate curiosity, has shaped Johnson's life. He grew up in Rhodesia, a former British colony in southern Africa that is now known as Zimbabwe. His father played piano and saxophone, and Johnson received early training in music. Although he always had a love of literature, poetry and languages, Johnson acknowledges that he did not come from a singing culture, but an instrumental chamber music culture. His life changed suddenly when he won a biennially awarded scholarship to study at The Royal Academy of Music (RAM). Before finishing high school, just barely seventeen, Johnson left home in Africa and arrived in London without knowing anybody there. He was there to study piano and composition at the RAM,

but there was no formal degree-based curriculum. What there was, however, was a culture rich with live musical performances and abundant access to source materials across Western classical genres.

Over fifty years later, Johnson still talks enthusiastically of his early time in London with a palpable sense of discovery and wonder. The richness of repertoire available in libraries matched his urgent curiosity about all the music he hadn't yet heard. He read books about composers, heard recordings of symphonies and operas that he hadn't known, and, wanting to demonstrate that the scholarship awarded to him was merited, did all he could to prove he was "good enough to come to England."<sup>10</sup>

I always had a huge appetite and curiosity for information. I never saw an opera until I came to England, I never heard much live music. So there was a lot of catching up to do . . . Can I tell you that the library system that I found when I was seventeen years old and came to London was the most extraordinary thing! You could go to a local library around the corner from the hostel where I was and borrow scores and LPs (in those days) of a vast range of music, and take them home and listen to them and follow with the scores. The complete operas of Benjamin Britten were available on the shelves, free for anybody in the country to walk in and borrow. And that was also true of the symphonies of Beethoven and chamber music, and all the things I hadn't heard.<sup>11</sup>

It was after four years of studying piano and chamber music at the RAM, combined with his immersion in this "self-initiated and autodidactic course of self-improvement," that he attended the Pears-Britten performance of *Winterreise* referenced above; it was a "Damascene moment" and a catalyst for Johnson's career as an accompanist and song specialist.<sup>12</sup> After that concert, Johnson says "the only way forward to me seemed to just find out everything there was to know."<sup>13</sup>

I emerged from this experience a convert but a neophyte; the first thing I needed to do was to listen to how everyone else interpreted the cycle. If I were doing this today, I would be spoiled for choice, but in the early '70s one felt lucky to have, as well as the prized Pears-Britten LP, the recordings of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Hans Hotter, both with Gerald Moore, and Gérard Souzay with Dalton Baldwin.<sup>14</sup>

After hearing *Winterreise*, he says that he knew it was "the tip of the iceberg"; if that cycle was so wonderful,

imagine the other 650 *lieder* that Schubert wrote!<sup>15</sup> With passionate and total dedication, as well as a hunger for primary source material, Johnson began a journey beyond the immediate notes and words of the repertoire. In addition to listening and score study, he taught himself German because "I just knew that I had to do it."<sup>16</sup> But Johnson's journey—listening to records and buying all the scores he could afford—was not complete until many years later: he gradually tracked down and acquired the texts of *lieder* in the editions in which Schubert had first encountered them, while applying the same bibliophile sleuthing to the poetic sources of the other great German, French and English song composers. His library even has a shelf which is, he says, "far less complete," of American song sources.<sup>17</sup>

When I was finally able to leaf through and read the same editions that Schubert had used for his musical settings, I felt I had arrived at the heart of the music. At last, I could retrace Schubert's voracious reading, the journeys of his mind. My own journey was on two tracks: to play the music as well as to write about it.<sup>18</sup>

Johnson has followed those tracks to prolific achievements that embrace the realms of performance, recording, and writing publications. All three of those categories exist side-by-side in his historic involvement with the artists' collective, The Songmakers' Almanac, which stands as evidence of Johnson's education, his insatiable enjoyment of song programs, and his profound love for singers.

### THE SONGMAKERS' ALMANAC: A "SYLLABUS" FOR SONG

Johnson speaks frankly and poignantly about the impact that singers had on his life. He describes his younger self as a bookish pianist who loved to read. He was brought up on solo piano practice, remarking that one of the thrills of going to concerts in London was experiencing the distinction between reading about music and hearing it in live performance. Attending operas and recitals allowed all of Johnson's interests to fall into place, as vocal music synthesized all of the literature, histories, and music that he loved. It also introduced him to a world of singers, who would become his closest friends, collaborators, and community.

The singers were everything that I wasn't. They didn't read extra things, they didn't particularly want to read around the literature. Everything was about, "I'm doing this piece. What can I actually do for it? Is it good for me? Will it suit me? Is it in my vocal range?" etc. . . . which was a world of immediate, visceral, emotional here-and-now, living in the present music-making. The freedom for me was to learn from singers how one might liberate oneself. You know, they went to the pub and had a few drinks at the end of the evening. It was a matter of contentious gossip about who was sleeping with who, exactly like the seductively feisty actress Philine in *Wilhelm Meister*. It was in a sense like coming home, someone who was living in Idaho coming to Armistead Maupin's San Francisco and suddenly discovering they have a place. They have comrades. And that people who were singing had a life-force that actually was such fun to be around.<sup>19</sup>

Being accepted into this community of singers led to two important occupations for Johnson that have, in turn, led to his influence as accompanist and mentor. This first was the formation of The Songmakers' Almanac, the group who presented a series of song recitals in London that Johnson curated from 1976–1996. The foundational members of the group were singers Felicity Lott, Ann Murray, Anthony Rolfe Johnson, and Richard Jackson, with Graham Johnson as the perennial accompanist and anthologist-deviser of programs. Still very much in the mode of self-education, Johnson refers to this series as his "syllabus," a living and collaborative song anthology that inspired investigation of repertoire across countries, languages, and generations.<sup>20</sup>

The Songmakers' Almanac is a song anthology come to life, a flexible singing repertory group which aims to celebrate anniversaries, outstanding events, and special subjects in unusual and vital programs which will depart from the long-established song recital format. More conventionally, recitals will also be devoted to certain composers, poets or historical periods which are relevant to the development of song. The songmakers themselves (the composers and poets whose songs have something of importance to say on a wide variety of issues) are the *raisons d'être* and the heroes of this almanac.<sup>21</sup>

In that paragraph from the printed prospectus for the seven recitals of the group's opening season (1976–77), the words "celebrate" and "heroes" are noteworthy in the description because they embody the spirit of Johnson's

engagement with song repertoire. A spirit of enthusiasm, reverence, and discovery for the genre runs through the programs, and Johnson went to great lengths to contextualize each song and set. In addition to scripted introductions for the audiences, Johnson composed program notes for each concert that were "written in the heat of the moment when printing deadlines loomed and when I was still somewhat frantically rehearsing with the singers."<sup>22</sup> Thus began his musicological approach to the repertoire.

Another significant detail in The Songmakers' Almanac mission is the idea of revolutionizing recital traditions. Johnson did not study for esoteric knowledge of the songs, but to bring the world of each piece into immediate and expressive focus. He had found friends with whom he could play in the vast landscape of emotions, from the joys and pains of love to religious ecstasy to bacchanalian exploits. Bernard Palmer, a former BBC World Service producer, was present at the groundbreaking debut concert, and describes it being received with "instant acclaim"<sup>23</sup>:

Overtly light-hearted, this debut was devoted to "The Ruling Passions"—typically a quotation from Alexander Pope. Before the interval the first two sections were headed "To Bacchus and Tobacco" and "Sloth, Humbug, Greed, Snobbery, Dodgin' and Duplicity." Thank God the tide had turned—not an *aria antica* in earshot, unless one counts that this gig began with Arne, who was instantly followed by Wolf, succeeded by Bach, Poulenc, and Liszt and segued in the second set by Haydn, Mozart, Strauss, Copland and Coward. And this was only the interval: at this point one realized that a final notice had been irrevocably served on the song recitals of our youth.<sup>24</sup>

Palmer further remarks on the unprecedented amount of information that was presented to the audience:

The first shock those early Songmakers' audiences had to contend with was that they were being read at almost as much as they were being sung to. Not only were there three or four singers bobbing up and down, they were each in turn declaiming letters, diaries, biographies and press cuttings by and about the very people who write the poems and the songs featured in the recital. It was all very extraordinary—even the hitherto silent accompanist seemed to have found a voice and a voluble one at that. The curly, strawberry-blonde head bobbing, weaving and ducking over the keyboard, ever urging on his singers with glances both tense and tender, belonged to Graham Johnson.<sup>25</sup>

The four compact discs issued by Hyperion of the Songmakers' Almanac in the 1980s were thematic (night-pieces, animals, songs about Venice, and so forth), and in a format that was almost unknown at the time. Johnson recalls:

Record shops complained because with such a varied anthology of composers it was impossible to file discs under a single letter in the stacks. Forty years later, in a world of streaming, this kind of programming has become universal.<sup>26</sup>

## KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

When asked about his extensive scholarship and upcoming projects, Johnson ascribes his ongoing productivity to an endless curiosity, one of his defining traits. "My temperament is to be very curious, and it's not something I've seen replicated in a lot of other people. So I can't go around advocating that as a way of life because, frankly, it's not in everybody's temperament or mindset."<sup>27</sup>

While he doesn't expect every pianist to share that characteristic, Johnson models an approach for coaches and pianists to take ownership of their work at the keyboard and beyond. As he says, "knowledge is power," and it feeds a sense of confidence "that you own something, a sense that you have a right to think this because you've put the work in. That's a different sense of confidence from having your fingers prepared."<sup>28</sup>

Know the repertoire. I would encourage young pianists particularly to do early surveys by listening to what Brahms wrote, and Schumann, and Schubert, because this is possible. Take three weeks out with a notebook putting down your impressions. The things you like, the things you notice. You have to survey the land before you can conquer.

I'm interested in biography because the more I know about a man the more his music appears accessible to me, as if I'm sitting in his seat. Because remember all the great song composers were piano accompanists in their own work, so every time you sit down and play any of these composers you are *in loco compositoris*, you are in their seat and you are their plenipotentiary.

If I'm going to tell people "No, that's wrong; let's do it this way" and I'm going to have half a hope of them listening to me, I've got to have a full weight of knowledge behind me. Knowing about music and everything about the song, knowing what the songs are about in detail,

knowing why the composers wrote them. That's what I meant by 'power.'<sup>29</sup>

Since Johnson's early days of self-education, the internet has made information instantly accessible to musicians, with biographical materials, diction/translation aids, song analyses, and recordings instantly available to the seeker. This initial gathering of data is not the endgame of study and preparation, however, as Johnson insists:

You've got to get beyond the readable in books. I think that's an important lesson. There's just nowhere where you can instruct yourself in the University of Life, because the song repertoire remains—although you would think it ridiculous to say—unexplored. [Uncovering] many details and getting into a deeper understanding of what's actually happening in the songs, and *then* finding a means that your physical performance can actually reflect that . . . [this] is the biggest challenge that you can have.<sup>30</sup>

## UNITING LOVE AND SCHOLARSHIP

Johnson has never stopped seeking insights into repertoire, even songs that he's known and performed for decades.<sup>31</sup> He relates a story about discovering the answer to a longstanding question he had regarding Schubert's well-known *lied* "Die junge Nonne," an 1825 setting of a poem by Nicolaus Craigher de Jachelutta. The text tells of a young novice, fearful of a nighttime storm that reminds her of the darkness of the grave. She describes it as a reflection of her inner storm, which is later transformed into a feeling of peace and reconciliation to being freed from earthly bonds. Schubert begins the song in F minor to characterize the storm, and the piano depicts bells in the accompaniment as the story unfolds. The repeated "alleluia," the singer's final words, is set within a *pianissimo* dynamic in F major, and the piano's bell sounds are sounded in a lower register from the early verses. Johnson explains his discovery:

No one could ever explain to me *why* the *pianissimo* [at the end of] Schubert's "Die junge Nonne" . . . When I played "Die junge Nonne," I had always imagined it as a spiritual journey, a metamorphosis of a person who was having a crisis of faith. And at the end the "alleluias" meant that she had come through it to some element of understanding. It took me years and years . . . I have a book there [he points to a bookshelf behind him] which

is the 1828 Viennese edition of the poetry of Craigher—the title is *Poetische Betrachtungen in freien Stunden von Nicolaus*. I read the whole of this collection. The two songs that Schubert set, “Totengräbers Heimwehe” and “Die junge Nonne,” are on pages 58 and 59. On page 56 there is a poem about the death of a singer, on page 58 the death of a girl at the spinning wheel. The poems in this section are all about death. And then I realized that the *pianissimo* in “Die junge Nonne” is because she’s very ill. That the “alleluias” at the end are very quiet rather than exultant because she is dying as she says her final words. From the beginning of the song Schubert has illustrated the music of a passing bell, the death knell, that is mentioned only in the third verse of the poem.<sup>32</sup>

In those days in Austria the bell rang as someone was in the process of dying and the terminally ill could sometimes hear the bell tolling for themselves. (As in Donne and quoted by Hemingway: “Do not ask for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee.”) At the beginning of the song the sound of the bell adds to the terrified young nun’s awareness of her own impending death. In the middle of the song she somewhat implausibly suddenly recovers her faith; at the end she owns that the bell is showing her the way to meet her heavenly bridegroom. If the piece had been called “Die sterbende Nonne” [The Dying Nun] we would understand it a lot more.<sup>33</sup>

What Johnson has done over years of his own studies and mentoring in song repertoire is to magnify the accompanist’s role while exalting the singer’s gifts. He exhorts pianists to appreciate their vantage point in repertoire and to live in the emotion, wit, eloquence and innovation that exists in song collaborations.

There is a sense of make-believe, role-play, imagination, fantasy . . . being enough of an actor, enough of a participant to actually take part in the content of the song and—should I tell you?—The only point of doing that is because the energy felt at the keyboard is miraculously somehow transferred to the ambit of the singer’s performance. It’s like wildfire. There is this spontaneous lobbing and a tennis game of a kind. If you give the energy, they’ll take the energy, they’ll give you the energy back and you throw the energy back, and magical things can happen!<sup>34</sup>

The excitement of that description reveals Johnson’s boundless love for song repertoire, its authors, and the performers who bring it to life. That love runs through Johnson’s legacy, and it is manifested in generations of pianists that are devoted to song. Johnson acknowledges that special feeling as essential to the song pianist’s role:

It depends if [the pianist] is in love with it. What can I say? If you are in love with the first *Suleika* [by Schubert] as one of the most beautiful love songs ever written, you’ll want to find out everything about it, just like if you love a person and want to find everything out about them . . . If it doesn’t particularly grab you, there’s no word I can say to make you have that response.

Human beings are made as vast reservoirs of untapped potential. One’s got to find a way of maximizing the cards that are dealt to you. When I saw Britten, I thought “I can’t compose like Britten” (although I’d had lessons; I’d wanted to be a composer), “maybe, *maybe* I can play like him.” And you see, doing the same isn’t going to *be* the same. . . .

I feel supremely happy in my seventies to look back on my life with the greatest gratitude for having found a vocation that suited every part of me—the practical piano-playing musician, the musicologist, the enthusiast of singing and of languages, the actor (I was on stage acting before I had piano lessons), the lover of poetry, the historian, the bibliophile. And studying art song has enriched my detailed understanding of all these things in an unending way—it has been a generous stream of inspiration that has flowed through an entire lifetime.<sup>35</sup>

## NOTES

1. Graham Johnson, “Schubert: lieder of the pack,” *The Guardian*, March 10, 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2011/mar/10/schubert-lieder-graham-johnson>.
2. Mr. Johnson’s career accomplishments are vast. This article focuses on his scholarship. Please see <https://askonasholt.com/artist/graham-johnson> for a full biography.
3. David Vernier, review of *The Songs of Robert Schumann*, vol. 6, Hyperion Records, *ClassicsToday.com Music Reviews*, April 12, 2002, accessed August 26, 2024, <https://www.classicstoday.com/review/review-7619/>.
4. David Mermelstein, “An Accompanist Steps to the Fore,” *The New York Times*, January 24, 1999, [https://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/24/arts/an-accompanist-steps-to-the-fore.html?unlocked\\_article\\_code=1.C04.dTbE.ugGxbNjFXnCs&smid=url-share](https://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/24/arts/an-accompanist-steps-to-the-fore.html?unlocked_article_code=1.C04.dTbE.ugGxbNjFXnCs&smid=url-share).
5. Jon Tolansky, “Graham Johnson–Poulenc: The Life in the Songs,” *Hampsong Foundation*, May 2020, accessed August 26, 2024, <https://hampsongfoundation.org/resource/graham-johnson-poulenc-the-life-in-the-songs/>.
6. *Overseen and Underheard: Reflections on the Accompanist’s Art* can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWrN1U3XNsl>; *Unacclaimed Accompanist* can

- be viewed here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQ35CL2j\\_nA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQ35CL2j_nA). Moore first published *The Unashamed Accompanist* in 1943. The 1984 reprint (Julia MacRae Books) includes a new final chapter by Johnson titled “Letter to Gerald Moore on his 85th Birthday.”
7. This talk, and several others, can be found here: <https://www.wigmore-hall.org.uk/watch-listen>.
  8. Johnson, “Schubert: lieder of the pack.”
  9. Carol Kimball, *Art Song: Linking Poetry and Music* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2013), 6.
  10. Graham Johnson, personal interview by Alison d’Amato and Elvia Puccinelli, May 8, 2024.
  11. Ibid.
  12. Ibid.
  13. Ibid.
  14. Ibid.
  15. Ibid.
  16. Ibid.
  17. Ibid.
  18. Ibid.
  19. Ibid.
  20. Ibid.
  21. Graham Johnson, *The Songmakers’ Almanac: Twenty Years of Song Recitals in London: Reflections and Commentaries* (London: Thames Publishing, 1996), iii.
  22. Ibid., 1
  23. Ibid., 6
  24. Ibid.
  25. Ibid., 7
  26. Johnson, personal interview by d’Amato and Puccinelli, May 8, 2024.
  27. Ibid.
  28. Ibid.
  29. Ibid.
  30. Ibid.
  31. In the interview by the authors, Johnson states that the liner notes for his Hyperion Records discography formed the basis for his three-volume encyclopedia *Franz Schubert: The Complete Songs*. While those notes are available online, for the encyclopedia he “went well beyond and changed opinion,” making further changes for the electronic version about to be released because “nothing stands still in Schubert scholarship.”

32. Schubert devotes an entire song to a depiction of the passing bell in his setting of Seidl’s “Das Züggelöcklein,” D871 (1827).
33. Johnson, personal interview by d’Amato and Puccinelli, May 8, 2024.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.

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Pianist **Alison d’Amato** (she/they) is associate professor of vocal coaching at Eastman School of Music. She has been working in vocal and instrumental genres for more than twenty-five years as a collaborative pianist, teacher, and music director. Known as a trailblazer in the field of art song, she directs her passion for song’s rich history towards generating new music and merging its past with its present.

d’Amato’s breadth of artistic experience has made her a valued partner in creative projects and an effective leader in several organizations. In 2003, she became artistic co-director of Florestan Recital Project, one of the earliest organizations to champion art song performances, recordings, and mentoring. She is program co-director of (art) Song Lab, which brings together writers, composers, and performers to create new art songs. In 2022, she assumed the role of artistic director for Artsbridge Summer ArtSong.

d’Amato has enjoyed devising interdisciplinary recitals, as well as residency projects that feature student collaborations in semi-staged song works. In all her activities, d’Amato is dedicated to energizing relationships in music and bringing student’s love for their art to the forefront of their projects.

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Deeply committed to nurturing a collaborative and inclusive culture in our world by fostering the collaborative ideals of partnership, participation and presence, pianist **Elvia L. Puccinelli** is a recognized leader in connecting collaborative pianists, supporting their needs and elevating their voices. Founder and President of the International Keyboard Collaborative Arts Society, a professional association for collaborative pianists ([www.ikcas.org](http://www.ikcas.org)), she is also the founder and artistic director of CollabFest, a professional conference devoted exclusively to collaborative piano.

A dedicated educator in the field of collaborative arts and a specialist in vocal literature, she is vocal coach and director of the Collaborative Piano program at the University of North Texas College of Music, where she has served on the faculty since 2004. A published author on topics of song literature and collaborative piano techniques, the Tanglewood alumna has served as faculty or clinician at universities and training programs throughout the world, including over a dozen years with Ann Baltz’s OperaWorks. Currently also serving on the NATS *Journal of Singing* Editorial Board, Elvia holds the MM and DMA in collaborative piano from USC, under the mentorship of Alan Smith.