

Dr. Ann Marie Daehn

Judith Enyeart Reynolds College of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities Research

Symposium

Time and Date of Talk: November 30, 12:15-1:15 PM, C. Minor

Title of Talk: East Wing Songs: History through Art Song

Speaker Biography:

Professor of Voice and Opera, mezzo soprano **Ann Marie Wilcox- Daehn** thrives on a performing career that includes oratorio, opera, art song, and musical theater. She has over 50 opera roles to her credit and multiple world premieres. She is a past winner of the American Prize for her research and performance of music by Sergius Kagen.

Dr. Daehn enjoys researching a variety of pedagogical and repertoire interests and is working on a book about legendary mezzo soprano and teacher, Jan de Gaetani. She is a frequent master class clinician nationally and internationally, most recently for the National Opera Association National Conference.

Dr. Daehn is thrilled to be joined today by new assistant professor of collaborative piano, Dr. Perry Mears. Dr. Mears performs regularly across the country as a vocal accompanist, piano soloist and chamber musician. He has a particular passion for the music of living composers and has done many, many world premieres.

Abstract of Talk (150-250 words):

The East Wing Songs project seeks to humanize the first ladies of the United States through song and to use music to share their stories and memorialize their achievements and challenges as women. Art song is the marriage of the written word, then elevated by a musical setting. The inspiration was taken from Jake Heggie's set, *Iconic Legacies: First Ladies at the Smithsonian*. His set addresses objects at the Smithsonian for Eleanor Roosevelt, Mary Todd Lincoln, Jacqueline Kennedy, and Barbara Bush. With the support of a Missouri State University Faculty Research Grant, Dr. Daehn commissioned composer Leanna Kirchoff to write songs for

Martha Washington, Margaret Taylor, Ida McKinley, Frances Cleveland, and Rosalynn Carter. Texts have been adapted from primary sources including letters, speeches, published writings, interviews and diaries. For women who were more reclusive, or destroyed their correspondence and personal effects, we created a “historical fiction” dialogue as the text based on what we know from first-hand accounts of the women as witnessed by their families, friends, president spouses, and the staff of the White House. Volume 2 had its world premiere in October of 2023 and was written by Linda Lister and included songs for Louisa Adams, Lady Bird Johnson, Ellen and Edith Wilson, Hillary Clinton, & Michelle Obama. The lecture recital format provides context to the music and the poetry through the lecture, the songs and words take on a greater power and connect more deeply on a personal level with listeners of all ages.

Interdisciplinarity:

This project evolved from the music department, but American History, Women Studies, and Poetry are integral parts of its intent, creation, and presentation.

Briefly describe why your research would be of interest to faculty across RCASH.

These pieces reflect an important part of our history that has received limited attention. Our first ladies are mostly known for the men they married, but their lives and experiences reflect the American experience, and how our democracy impacts the humans who live in the center of power.