‘HER VOICE, HER STORY’:

RECITAL HONORS FEMALE MUSICIANS

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On the evening of Sunday, Mar. 1, the University of Connecticut Music Department held a recital called “Her Voice, Her Story.”

The recital took place at the Von der Mehden Recital Hall, featuring UConn students Haritha Subramanian on vocals and Sangwoo Park on piano.

Their performance featured eight different songs. The songs were mostly emotional, and they were centered around the lives of women.

“Povera ma!” is an Italian tune that describes relationships and death. The song was short, but its melodies and vocals were absolutely beautiful. Subramanian’s Italian was amazing, and her vocals blended in with the piano’s emotional music, creating a heart-tugging sound for the audience.

“How Do I Love Thee” is a song about different scenarios where someone expresses their love. It’s not popular, but it’s glorious. Subramanian’s voice remained powerful throughout the performance, and Park’s piano melodies added a lovely touch to it.

“In the Springtime” is from the 1970s and is based on a poem by William Shakespeare. It’s dedicated to Barbara Wright-Pryor, a charter member from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra African American Network. The tune has an uplifting tone that remained prevalent throughout the performance, which was done beautifully. Like the preceding songs, Subramanian’s vocals were strong, and they fit nicely with the piano.

A set of German songs by Robert Schuman featured four different tunes that told the love story of a woman and her lover.

The first of the set, “Seit ich ihn gesehen,” describes the moment the woman first falls in love with a man and begins seeing him in her dreams. The second tune, “Er, der herrlichste von allen,” is about a woman who praises the man she loves but begins to devalue herself. The lack of self-love the woman feels continues in the third tune, “Ich kann’s nicht fassen, nicht glauben.” While continuing to feel a lack of self-love, the man promises the woman to love her for the rest of her life. In the fourth tune, “Du Ring an meinem Finger,” the woman marries the man and receives a golden ring on her finger. When she marries him, she realizes her life’s internal value.

The entire set was cohesive. Subramanian’s German was flawless, and her emotional vocals and Park’s powerful piano melodies made a lovely sound that matched the story told in the songs.

“I Feel Pretty” is a song featured in the musical “West Side Story.” It discusses the pleasure of being a stunning and attractive woman. Compared to the other songs, the song was energetic.

“I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart” is a 1930s piece describing breakups. The singer wants their lover back, and they wonder whether it’s too late to fix the relationship. The song had an emotional and charming appeal that was well-performed by Subramanian and Park.

The final song, “My Favorite Things,” is a tune featured in “The Sound of Music,” a well-known musical film. The film’s main character, Maria, sings the song to describe the many things she adores and relishes. At the end of the song, she mentions that whenever a bad day comes, the singer thinks of her favorite things to feel better.

The song’s not only remarkably performed by Maria in the film, but it was brilliantly performed by Subramanian in the recital as well. Her vocals sounded as beautiful as Maria’s, and the music sounded as excellent as the film.

Subramanian reflected on her final recital after the show concluded.

“It was a lot of work,” Subramanian said. “Picking out the songs crafted the vision I wanted it to be. I’m also a political science major and women’s reproductive health major, so I’m really passionate about representation and music, and I wanted that to be represented in what my senior recital was, so talking about centering voices that were often marginalized and not really performed.”

The audience was very small. However, they all gave applause at the end of each song.

Sahana Ganesh, an eighth-semester student majoring in computer science, said the recital was wonderful.

“I enjoyed it very much,” Ganesh said. “Haritha’s my roommate, so I got to see a lot of her practice runs behind the scenes. And just to see her visions out on the stage was very enjoyable to watch.”



Close up of a microphone on a stand. Sunday, Mar. 1, the University of Connecticut Music Department held a recital titled “Her Voice, Her Story.”

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‘Reality Check: Inside America’s Next Top Model’ and The Question of Accountability

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Netflix aired a documentary on Friday, Feb. 16, titled “Reality Check: Inside America’s Next Top Model” where past models, judges and “ANTM” insiders, including Tyra Banks, look back at the reality show’s complicated legacy.

The documentary seemed to promise honest reflection, growth and amongst all, clarity about a show that changed beauty standards, reality television and the lives of countless young women. At the center of the transformations stands Tyra Banks, poised and seemingly very self-aware. She makes precautious comments throughout the documentary.

Banks speak carefully. She acknowledges discomfort. She even admits mistakes.

Yet, by the end of the documentary, things feel unresolved. What emerged through the documentary was not accountability, but a masterclass of being respectfully disrespectful. Or as I like to say “nice-nasty.”

The documentary frames Banks as someone who is looking back with maturity, shaped by both time and perspective. She starts by reflecting upon an era, where if you were not skinny and white, you were not pretty. She talks about the pressure and lack of diversity that was present in modeling back then.

Her explanations were presented calmly, almost too gentle as if her calm self was a form of care. But respect is not in composure, nor is it in tone. Respect is not how softly harm is discussed, but it is whether that harm is accounted for at all.

To respect someone is to acknowledge their experience without defensiveness or explanation. It is to accept that impact outweighs intention. It allows for the people who were harmed to name the damage, rather than reframing it through your own personal growth narrative. And by that definition, the documentary consistently falls short.

Banks was not simply the host — she was the mentor, the judge, the authority and an executive force behind the scenes. The contestants were young, naive and dependent on her approval. The power imbalance seen throughout the show framed as “preparing girls for the industry” or “tough love” often crossed into humiliation, control and both psychological and physical harm.

The documentary acknowledges these moments but only briefly before contextualizing them anyway.

As a viewer we are constantly told that controversies from the show were “normal for the time.” We are told that the fashion industry was in fact brutal. Those explanations may be true, but normalization is not absolution. What becomes very striking is how the documentary subtly refrains from responsibility.

Harm starts to become something that “happened,” rather than something that was done. Banks is a powerful figure. Most people are well aware of the impact she had on the modeling world but in the documentary, she is not just that figure; she is someone who was also learning in real time. The result is a strange emotional imbalance as the people who were hurt are asked to remain vulnerable and open, but the person with the most power is positioned so that she can receive grace and understanding.

At its end, the documentary feels less like a full reckoning and more like calculated and managed reflection. The trauma of the contestants is only validated enough to be recognized, then gently brushed over in favor of Banks’s emotional journey. We are guided to empathize with Banks and try to understand how hard it was for her to be misunderstood and criticized. Meanwhile, the people who lived with the consequences of her poor management are frozen in time, still hurt, still explaining and still asking to be believed.

That is where the disrespect sharpens. Not through cruelty but through control. The documentary invites viewers to feel that continuous criticism is excessive, and that because Banks is “reflecting”, discomfort should be resolved. And with doing that, it makes the audiences and contestants feel unreasonable for still being affected.

Real respect would have meant allowing the former contestants to speak fully and truthfully without reframing or interruption. It would have meant apologizing without explanation, justification, without the history of lesions or without grace in return.

It would have meant sitting in the reality that if Banks truly built “America’s Next Top Model” with good intentions, it should not have created real damage.

After rewatching this documentary a second time, I found myself pondering an important question: What does it truly mean to look back responsibly? And is that enough to recognize that something wouldn’t be done the same way today, or does respect just only require a softer tone?

The documentary doesn’t answer that but rather leaves viewers in an odd paradox between nostalgia and discomfort, and intention compared to impact. With being overly calculated, the documentary missed the opportunity to let the messiness speak for itself. Because sometimes respect is not about making peace with the past, but it is about letting the past remain unresolved.



Promotional image for Netflix documentary series “America’s Next Top Model” starring Tyra Banks and former contestants. The docu-series was released Feb. 16, 2026 aiming to reflect on the harsh realities of the modeling industry in the early 2000s.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF @ALLCINEMAVERSE ON INSTAGRAM

RATING: ★☆☆☆☆