

Liederabend LXXIV

The White Light Project

Curated and coached by J.J. Penna

Wednesday, November 20, 2024

6:00 p.m.

Williams Hall

PROGRAM

Olivier Messiaen
(1908–1992)

Paysage
La maison

Kevin Puts
(b. 1972)

Canyon

Sydney Pexton, soprano
Pualina Lim, piano

LUNA

Franz Schubert
(1797–1828)

Nachtviolen

Sydney Pexton, soprano
Doris Wang, piano

An den Mond

Yejin Jang, soprano
Doris Wang, piano

EROS

Leonard Bernstein
(1918–1990)

Extinguish my eyes

Robert Schumann
(1810–1856)

Mein schöner Stern!

Richard Hundley
(1931–2018)

*O My Darling Troubles Heaven with her
Loveliness*

John Harbison
(b. 1938)

Don't Go

Florence B. Price
(1887–1953)

Songs to the Dark Virgin

Maklyn Baley, mezzo-soprano
Ashly Zhang, piano

Xiaofeng Hou, tenor
Hyojeong Ham, piano

MELANCHOLIA

Lili Boulanger
(1893–1918)

Reflets

Nadia Boulanger
(1887–1979)

Cantique

Alexander Zemlinsky
(1871–1942)

Vöglein Schwermut
Empfängnis

Kamala Sankaram
(b. 1978)

The Far Shore

Ricky Ian Gordon
(b. 1956)

Peonies at Dusk, from *Huits chansons de fleurs*

Yejin Jang, soprano
Doris Wang, piano

Melissa Pereyra, soprano
Shalun Li, piano

Kevin Puts

Evening

Sydney Pexton, soprano
Pualina Lim, piano

Upcoming Liederabend concert
Liederabend LXXV
Wednesday, December 11, 2024 at 6:00 p.m., Williams Hall

The White Light Project presents writers and musicians engaging with images of light in pursuit of emotional and spiritual transcendence. These songs celebrate bright matter both celestial and terrestrial, light approaching and receding, and states of illumination and transport from across the human experience. Many of the works display the visible world by day and night while others chart more unconscious forces of illusion, fantasy, and dream.

Paysage

*Le lac comme un gros bijou bleu.
La route pleine de chagrins et de fondrières,
Mes pieds qui hésitent dans la poussière,
Le lac comme un gros bijou bleu.
Et la voilà, verte et bleue comme le paysage!*

*Entre le blé et le soleil je vois son visage:
Elle sourit, la main sur les yeux.
Le lac comme un gros bijou bleu.*

La maison

*Cette maison nous allons la quitter:
Je la vois dans ton oeil.
Nous quitterons nos corps aussi:
Je les vois dans ton oeil.
Toutes ces images de douleur qui s'impriment dans
ton oeil,
Ton oeil ne les retrouvera plus:
Quand nous contemplerons la Vérité,
Dans des corps purs, jeunes, éternellement
lumineux.*

Olivier Messiaen

Landscape

The lake like a big blue jewel.
The road full of sorrows and pot-holes,
My feet faltering in the dust,
The lake like a big blue jewel.
And there she is, green and blue like the
landscape!

Between corn and sun I see her face:
She smiles, one hand shading her eyes.
The lake like a big blue jewel.

The House

We shall be leaving this house:
I can see it in your eye.
We shall be leaving our bodies too:
I can see them in your eye.
All these images of pain imprinted on your
eye,
Your eye shall not find them again:
When we come to gaze on Truth
In bodies pure, young, and ever luminous.

*Translations © Richard Stokes, author of A
French Song Companion (Oxford University
Press), provided via Oxford International Song
Festival (www.oxfordsong.org).*

Canyon

Tonight I walked into the sunset.
The whole sky was just blazing
and grey blue clouds were riding
all through the holiness of it
and the whole thing lit up with flashes of lightning

I walked out past the last house
past the locust tree
and sat on a fence for a long time looking
you see there was nothing but sky and flat prairie land
land that seems more like ocean than anything else I know.

It is absurd the way I love this country.
And the sky, Anita
you have never seen SKY.
It is wonderful.

Excerpt from a letter from Georgia O'Keefe to her lifelong friend, Anita Pollitzer

Nachtsviolen

*Nachtsviolen, Nachtsviolen,
Dunkle Augen, seelenvolle,
Selig ist es, sich versenken
In dem samtne Blau.*

*Grüne Blätter streben freudig,
Euch zu hellen, euch zu schmücken;
Doch ihr blicket ernst und schweigend
In die laue Frühlingsluft.*

*Mit erhabnen Wehmutsstrahlen
Trafet ihr mein treues Herz,
Und nun blüht in stummen Nächten,
Fort die heilige Verbindung.*

Johann Mayrhofer

An den Mond

*Füllest wieder Busch und Tal
Still mit Nebelglanz,
Lösest endlich auch einmal
Meine Seele ganz.*

Dame's Violets

Dame's violets,
dark, soulful eyes,
it is blissful to immerse myself
in your velvety blue.

Green leaves strive joyously
to brighten you, to adorn you;
but you gaze, solemn and silent,
into the mild spring air.

With sublime shafts of melancholy
you have pierced my faithful heart,
and now, in silent nights,
our sacred union blossoms.

To the Moon

Once more you silently fill wood and vale
with your hazy gleam
and at last
set my soul quite free.

(The text continues on the following page. Please turn the page quietly.)

Breitest über mein Gefild
Lindernd deinen Blick,
Wie des Freundes Auge, mild
Über mein Geschick.

Jeden Nachklang fühlt mein Herz
Froh- und trüber Zeit,
Wandle zwischen Freud and Schmerz
In der Einsamkeit.

Fliesse, fliesse, lieber Fluss!
Nimmer werd ich froh;
So verrauschte Scherz und Kuss,
Und die Treue so.

Rausche, Fluss, das Tal entlang,
Ohne Rast und Ruh,
Rausche, flüstre meinem Sang
Melodien zu,

Wenn du in der Winternacht
Wütend überschwillst,
Oder um die Frühlingsspracht
Junger Knospen quillst.

Selig, wer sich vor der Welt
Ohne Hass verschliesst,
Einen Freund am Busen hält
Und mit dem genießt,

Was, von Menschen nicht gewusst
Oder nicht bedacht,
Durch das Labyrinth der Brust
Wandelt in der Nacht.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

You cast your soothing gaze
over my fields;
with a friend's gentle eye
you watch over my fate.

My heart feels every echo
of times both glad and gloomy.
I hover between joy and sorrow
in my solitude.

Flow on, beloved river!
I shall never be happy:
thus have laughter and kisses rippled away,
and with them constancy.

Murmur on, river, through the valley,
without ceasing,
murmur on, whispering melodies
to my song,

When on winter nights
you angrily overflow,
or when you bathe the springtime splendour
of the young buds.

Happy he who, without hatred,
shuts himself off from the world,
holds one friend to his heart,
and with him enjoys

That which, unknown to
and undreamt of by men,
wanders by night
through the labyrinth of the heart.

*Translations © Richard Wigmore, author of
Schubert: The Complete Song Texts (Schirmer
Books), provided via Oxford International Song
Festival (www.oxfordsong.org).*

Extinguish My Eyes

Extinguish my eyes, I still can see you:
Close my ears, I can hear your footsteps fall:
And without feet I still can follow you:
Voiceless I can still return your call.

Break off my arms, and I can embrace you:
Enfold you with my heart as with a hand:
Hold my heart, my brain will take fire of you,
As flax takes fire from a brand!

And flame will sweep in a flood:
Through all the singing currents of my blood.

Rainer Maria Rilke

Mein schöner Stern!

*Mein schöner Stern!
Ich bitte dich,
O lasse du
Dein heitres Licht
Nicht trüben durch
Den Dampf in mir,
Vielmehr den Dampf
In mir zu Licht,
Mein schöner Stern,
Verklären hilf!*

*Mein schöner Stern!
Ich bitte dich,
Nicht senk' herab
Zur Erde dich,
Weil du mich noch
Hier unten siehst,
Heb' auf vielmehr
Zum Himmel mich,
Mein schöner Stern,
Wo du schon bist!*

Friedrich Rückert

My lovely star!

My lovely star!
I beg of you,
O do not let
Your serene radiance
Be dimmed by
Dark clouds in me,
Rather help,
My lovely star,
To transfigure the dark
Into light!

My lovely star!
I beg of you
Not to descend
To earth,
Because you still
See me down here,
Rather lift me
Up to heaven,
My lovely star,
Where you already are!

*Translation © Richard Stokes, author of The
Book of Lieder (Faber) provided via Oxford
International Song Festival (www.oxfordsong.org)*

O My Darling Troubles Heaven with Her Loveliness

O my darling troubles heaven with her loveliness
She is made of such cloth
That the angels cry to see her
Little gods dwell where she moves
And their hands open golden boxes for me to lie in.
She is built of lilies and candy doves
And the youngest star wakens in her hair.
She calls me with the music of silver bells
And at night we step into other worlds
Like birds flying through the red and yellow air of childhood.
O she touches me with the tips of wonder
And the angels cuddle like sleepy kittens at our side.

Kenneth Patchen

Don't Go, Don't Go

Don't go, don't go.
I touch your soles, I'm sold to you.
Show me where to find the bhakti path,
Show me where to go.
I would like my body to turn into a heap of incense and sandalwood
And you set a torch to it.

When I've fallen down to grey ashes,
Smear me on your shoulders and chest.
Mira says: You who lift the mountains,
I have some light,
I want to mingle it with yours.

Mirabai, translated by Robert Bly and Jane Hirshfield

Songs to the Dark Virgin

I.
Would that I were a jewel,
A shattered jewel,
That all my shining brilliants
Might fall at thy feet,
Thou dark one.

II.
Would that I were a garment,
A shimmering, silken garment
That all my folds might wrap about thy body,
Absorb thy body,
Hold and hide thy body,
Thou dark one.

III.

Would that I were a flame,
But one sharp, leaping flame
To annihilate thy body,
Thou dark one.

Langston Hughes

Reflets

*Sous l'eau du songe qui s'élève
Mon âme a peur, mon âme a peur.
Et la lune luit dans mon coeur
Plongé dans les sources du rêve!*

*Sous l'ennui morne des roseaux.
Seul les reflets profonds des choses,
Des lys, des palmes et des roses
Pleurent encore au fond des eaux.*

*Les fleurs s'effeuillent une à une
Sur le reflet du firmament.
Pour descendre, éternellement
Sous l'eau du songe et dans la lune.*

Cantique

*A toute âme qui pleure,
A tout péché qui passe,
J'ouvre au sein des étoiles
Mes mains pleines de grâces.*

*Il n'est péché qui vive,
Quand l'amour a parlé,
Il n'est âme qui meure,
Quand l'amour a pleuré.*

*Et si l'amour s'égare
Aux sentiers d'ici-bas,
Ses larmes me retrouvent
Et ne s'égarent pas.*

Maurice Maeterlinck

Reflections

Beneath the water of the dream that rises,
My soul is afraid, my soul is afraid.
And the moon shines into my heart
That is bathed in the dream's source!

Beneath the sad tedium of the reeds,
Only the deep reflection of things,
Of lilies, palms and roses,
Still weep on the water's bed.

One by one the flowers shed their leaves
Upon the firmament's reflection
To descend, eternally,
Beneath the dream's water and into the moon.

Canticle

To all weeping souls,
To all fleeting sins,
I open, cradled by stars,
My hands full of grace.

No sin can live
When Love has spoken,
No soul can die
When Love has wept.

And if Love goes astray
On terrestrial paths,
Its tears will find me
And not go astray.

*Translations © Richard Stokes, author of A
French Song Companion (Oxford University
Press), provided via Oxford International Song
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Vöglein Schwermut

*Ein schwarzes Vöglein fliegt über die Welt,
das singt so todestraurig...
Wer es hört, der hört nichts anderes mehr,
wer es hört, der tut sich ein Leides an,
der mag keine Sonne mehr schauen.
Allmitternacht ruht es sich aus
auf dem Finger des Tods.
Der streichelt's leis und spricht ihm zu:
"Flieg, mein Vögelein! flieg, mein Vögelein!"
Und wieder fliegt's flötend über die Welt.*

Christian Morgenstern

Empfängnis

*Du weiche Nacht, o komm mich zu umfassen,
Mein Sehnen rundest du und reifst den Wein.
.
Ein seliges, ein stummes Heiland-Bangen
Schwellt meine Seele, zur Empfängnis rein.*

*Und wie ich sehrend meine Arme breite,
Da ringt sich von des Himmels Früchten los
Ein heller Keim und fällt aus Gottes Weite*

In meiner Seele betend bängen Schoß.

Paul Wertheimer

The Far Shore

Ah, this life waxes and wanes.
It does not last long. The leaf that falls does not return to the branch.
But behold, behold the ocean of rebirth.
Behold its irresistible tide.
Oh, pilot of my soul, swiftly guide my ship.
Guide my ship to the far shore, the far shore.

Meera Bai

A Melancholy Bird

A black-bird flies across the world,
singing so sorrowfully of death . . .
Whoever hears it, hears nothing else,
whoever hears it, hears such sadness,
they fear the sun may shine no more.
All thru' the night it rests
on the finger of death.
He caresses the bird solemnly and urges it:
Fly, my little bird! Fly, little bird!
And again it flies soaring over the world.

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Conception

You, soft night, O come and embrace me.
You round out my yearning and mature the
wine.
A blissful, mute awe for the Redeemer
swells my soul, pure and ready for
conception.

And as I open my arms with longing,
there fights free from heaven's fruit
a bright seed, and it falls from God's
firmament
into the womb of my soul, so devout and full
of awe.

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LiederNet Archive, <https://www.lieder.net/>*

Peonies at Dusk

White peonies blooming along the porch
send out light
while the rest of the yard grows dim.

Outrageous flowers as big as human
heads! They're staggered
by their own luxuriance: I had
to prop them up with stakes and twine.

The moist air intensifies their scent,
and the moon moves around the barn
to find out what it's coming from.

In the darkening June evening
I draw a blossom near, and bending close
search it as a woman searches
a loved one's face.

Jane Kenyon

Evening

Moonlight pours down
without mercy, no matter
how many have perished
beneath the trees.

The river rolls on.

There will always be
silence, no matter
how long someone
has wept against
the side of a house,
bare forearms pressed
to the shingles.

Everything ends.
Even pain, even sorrow.

The swans drift on

Reeds bear the weight
of their feathery heads.
Pebbles grow smaller,
smoother beneath night's
rough currents. We walk

long distances, carting
our bags, our packages.
Burdens or gifts.

We know the land
is disappearing beneath
the sea, islands swallowed
like prehistoric fish.

We know we are doomed,
done for, damned, and still
the light reaches us, falls
on our shoulders even now,

even here where the moon is
hidden from us, even though
the stars are so far away

Dorianne Laux

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