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Cliburn Concerts

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Cliburn Concerts

C E L E B R I T Y S E R I E S

ED LANDRETH AUDITORIUM
SATURDAY, MAY 7, 1994 AT 8:00 PM

THOMAS HAMPSON

BARITONE

ARMEN GUZELIMIAN

PIANO

I

Songs to Poems by Robert Burns

FRANZ

Nun holt mir eine Kanne Wein

Die süsse Dirn von Inverness

LOEWE

Findlay

SCHUMANN

Niemand

Dem roten Röslein gleicht mein Lieb

Hochländers Abschied

II

GRIEG

Sechs Leider, Op. 48

Gruss

Dereinst, gedanke mein

Lauf der Welt

Die verschwiegene Nachtigall

Zur Rosenziet

Ein Traum

III

MAHLER

Songs from Des Knaben Wunderhorn

Der Schildwache Nachlied

Wer hat dies Liedlein gedacht?!

Wo die schönen Trompeten blasen

Das himmlische Leben

intermission

IV

IVES

The Housatonic at Stockbridge

Thoreau

The Children's Hour

Memories A & B

Canon

V

DUKE

Three Songs to Poems by Edwin A. Robinson

Richard Cory

Miniver Cheevy

Luke Havergal

VI

HOMER

Some More Old Songs

GIANNINI

General William Booth Enters into Heaven

DAMROSCH

Tell Me, Oh, Blue, Blue Sky

Danny Deever

The audience is kindly requested to withhold applause until the conclusion of each group.

Steinway Piano

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The Van Cliburn Foundation is deeply grateful to Texas Christian University
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THOMAS HAMPSON

Internationally acclaimed baritone Thomas Hampson divides his time among the worlds of opera, concerts, lieder, and recording, and still maintains an active interest in teaching and musical research.

The thirty-eight-year-old singer, who hails from Spokane, Washington, studied with Sr. Marietta Coyle, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Martial Singher, and Horst Günther before making his operatic debut in Düsseldorf in 1981. He then moved on to Zurich, where he participated in the Harnoncourt/Jean-Pierre Ponnelle Mozart cycle, performing the title role in *Don Giovanni* and the Count in *Le nozze di Figaro*. In addition to these signature parts, which Hampson has sung in places such as Salzburg, Vienna, Munich, Florence, and New York, the baritone's opera repertoire on stage and on disc includes Guglielmo and Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte*, Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Marcello in *La Bohème*, Valentin in *Faust*, Roland in Schubert's *Fierrabras*, the Dark Fiddler in Delius's *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, Posa in Verdi's *Don Carlo*, and the title roles in Monteverdi's *Il Ritorno di Ulisse in Patria*, Hans Werner Henze's *Der Prinz von Homburg*, Ambroise Thomas's *Hamlet*, and Britten's *Billy Budd*.

Hampson has appeared in concert as soloist under the baton of conductors such as Leonard Bernstein, James Levine, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Seiji Ozawa, Klaus Tennstedt, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Michael Tilson Thomas, and Daniel Barenboim in a wide range of repertoire from Monteverdi to Mahler. A committed song recitalist, the baritone has given special attention to the works of Mahler and Schumann, as well as to those of American composers such as Copland, Griffes, Ives, MacDowell, and Bernstein. Performing with Geoffrey Parsons, he made his 1989 recital debut recording for Teldec, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, which received four major international awards. Subsequent song recordings explored a diverse repertory and have continued to garner an array of international awards.

Besides giving master classes in St. Paul, Minnesota, Liberty, Missouri, and at Tanglewood and pursuing such projects as co-editing the new critical edition of Mahler songs (Universal 1993), re-examining Schumann's 20 *Lieder und Gesänge aus dem Lyrischen Intermezzo von Heine*, collecting settings of Walt Whitman, or unearthing neglected gems of American



Photo courtesy Columbia Artists Management, Inc.

song, the baritone spent the closing months of 1993 giving fourteen recitals and concerts in the United States and Canada, then debuted as *Chorèbe* in *Les Troyens* and sang Rossini's Figaro at the Metropolitan Opera in December.

After ringing in 1994 in New York with *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and making his Houston Symphony debut in January with Copland's *Old American Songs* and Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, Hampson appeared on the operatic stage in Munich as *Don Giovanni* and in Vienna as Figaro. He then returns to the recital platform, touring fourteen European cities in February and March and thirteen North American cities in the spring before heading west in September 1994 to create the leading role of Valmont in the San Francisco Opera's world premiere of Conrad Susa's opera, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*.

Hampson's recent recording projects have included a recital of Berlioz, Liszt, and Wagner songs, and the complete Mahler piano *Lieder* from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*—both with Geoffrey Parsons; Léhar's *Die Lustige Witwe* and Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* with Nikolaus Harnoncourt and the Amsterdam Concertgebouw; Bernstein's *Arias and Barcarolles* under Michael Tilson Thomas; and *Choral Works of Elinor Remick Warren* with Bruce Ferden conducting. Compact discs planned for the near future include recitals of songs set to Walt Whitman texts, an album of German arias, and Mozart's *Idomeneo*.

ARMEN GUZELIMIAN



Armen Guzelimian enjoys a distinguished and versatile international career. Aside from being a virtuoso soloist in his own right, he is acclaimed as a top-ranking collaborative pianist in the U.S. and

abroad. As soloist, Guzelimian has appeared with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra (playing the Khachaturian Piano Concerto in the presence of the late composer), the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the Sydney Symphony, the Nebraska Chamber

Orchestra, and the American Youth Symphony Orchestra. He has appeared at the San Luis Obispo Festival and the Santa Barbara Summer Festival, and has performed in the major concert halls of the world from Lincoln Center to the Musikvereinsaal in Vienna.

The pianist is a graduate of the University of California in Los Angeles, where he studied with Aube Tzerko. After some postgraduate work with the late Jacob Gimpel, he completed his studies at the Vienna Academy of Music.

Guzelimian's collaborations with great vocalists have included concerts with the late Lucia Popp, Peter Schreier, Thomas Hampson, Elisabeth Söderström, Jorma Hynninen, Leona Mitchell, Faith Esham, and Florence Quivar. His recordings appear on the EMI/Angel, Teldec, Nonesuch, Delos, Orion, and Crystal labels.

PROGRAM NOTES by Thomas Hampson and Carla Maria Verdino-Süllwold

"These English songs gravel me to death! I have not that command of the language that I have of my native tongue," complained Robert Burns to George Thomson, the editor of the folk music collection, *National Airs*, as he voiced his preference for the Scots dialect, of which he became the quintessential lyrical expression. This statement from Scotland's national poet was less an articulation of chauvinism (though, without a doubt, Burns' heart was in the Highlands) than it was an affirmation of one of the overriding concerns of the age: to find new modes of expression reflective of the changing dynamics of society. In the late 18th and 19th centuries, European and American thought was being forged in the crucible of revolution; incipient democracies struggled to remake their sociological, political, and cultural traditions and to find spokespersons who would give voice to the spirit of the age. Foremost of those oracles was the poet—the Bard—whose lyrical vision could articulate the aspirations and achievements of his people.

To create poetry in the language of the common man—of "man speaking to men" of the "truth carried alive into the heart by passion"—this was the mission Wordsworth and

Coleridge proclaimed in 1798 in that seminal romantic document, *Lyrical Ballads*. It was a *cri de coeur* that found resonance throughout the artistic movements of the 19th century in literature, painting, and especially in music, where creative minds turned increasingly to the Volk for their inspiration—to the traditions, myths, legends, and lyrics which in shaping a national heritage had, interestingly enough, also given birth to a more universal ethos. In Scotland Robert Burns, in Ireland Thomas Moore, in America Walt Whitman, in Germany Heinrich Heine all labored to create a new poetic speech that was both personal and democratic, a diction that frequently found song to be its most transcendent expression. Indeed, the marriage of poetry and song remains one of the finest achievements of the romantic age. The 19th century is the century of the development of the Lied as a genre of tremendous influence and expanding performance possibilities.

Robert Franz was later to declare that his masters of vocal compositions had been Bach, Handel, and Beethoven, though his lush romantic melodies, his willingness to explore even more radical harmonies and dissonances, and his insistence on close fusion of

PROGRAM NOTES *(Continued)*

text with music showed him to be a composer who had also assimilated well the lessons of his own generation—of Schubert, Schumann, Mendelssohn, and Liszt. Schumann, whose melodies Franz once said “took on a life of their own,” remains (with Schubert) at the center of the Romantic song tradition. Using the piano as a full partner in dialogue with the voice and lifting the Lied to new lyrical-dramatic heights, Schumann composed a body of vocal literature that helped to define and legitimize the art song genre. So, too, did Carl Loewe, foremost exponent of the ballad style, become a firm ally of Franz and Schumann in his use of the rich source material of the oral poetic tradition, in his concept of dramatic dialogue, and in his reliance on heightened poetic speech to motivate his songs.

From the twin central European traditions of *Lieder* and *Balladen* were born two of the most original voices of late romantic art song—those of Edvard Grieg and Gustav Mahler. Both relied heavily on their native folk traditions for inspiration, and both developed a musical language whose lush melody and poignant yearning defined the *fin de siècle* spirit of the art song. While tapping the wellsprings of Nordic myth and poetry, Grieg at the same time never lost complete touch with the influences of his youthful days in Leipzig, so that when he put pen to paper to create a song, one heard in it echoes not only of the starkly beautiful Scandinavian landscape with its vigorous Viking past, but also of a consciousness tempered by his conservatory and concert hall experiences in Germany. In Grieg one hears the influences of Rikard Nordraak and Ole Bull, to be sure, but one also cannot fail to note the lessons and language of Liszt, Wagner, and Schumann.

Mahler, too, had listened well to his predecessors, just as he had read with passionate interest Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano's anthology of romantic poems and folksongs, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, published between 1806 and 1808. Mahler turned to this collection in the years between 1892 and 1901, setting fifteen texts for piano and voice—songs which the composer later reworked into wholly different orchestral versions. It was the truthfulness and timelessness of these seemingly naive verses which fascinated the composer, and Mahler himself

took great pains to put his personal stamp on the songs they inspired, restructuring the verse as he felt it required, highlighting the ironies, and imbuing them with the same psychological perspicuity and grandeur of spirit which characterize all his works

By the time art song had become established in America in the late 19th century, it could trace its heritage not only to indigenous sources and popular composers like Stephen Foster, but also to European ancestors. Indeed, the entire romantic movement made a powerful impact on American music, one that has—in spite of atonalism, serialism, minimalism and other starker modernist strains—survived into the late 20th century. The American songmakers of the second half of tonight's program are all—Ives' bold harmonics notwithstanding—neo-romantics who have treasured the serious naiveté of their folk heritage and have creatively plumbed its rhythms and cadences, who have remained faithful to melody, and who have placed a high premium on the notion that feeling must flow from words.

The centrality of poetry to 19th century music was, in fact, a defining premise of the creative *Zeitgeist* and one of that century's most significant legacies to the next. In a recital program which alternates English, American, and German poets and which migrates linguistically back and forth across ocean and Channel, stopping to draw inspiration from Celtic and Gallic influences, the inter-relationships in Anglo-Saxon and German romantic thought are potently manifest. The history of the cross-pollination between English-speaking and German philosophers and poets is a potent one, highlighted by events like Coleridge's 1798-99 German tour, Freiligrath's English stay, or Carlyle's contribution to American romanticism in the form of his passionate proselytizing for Schiller, Goethe, Jean Paul, Hegel, and Teutonic myth, as well as for the Anglo-Scots-Celtic folk tradition and his favorite vernacular poet, Robert Burns!

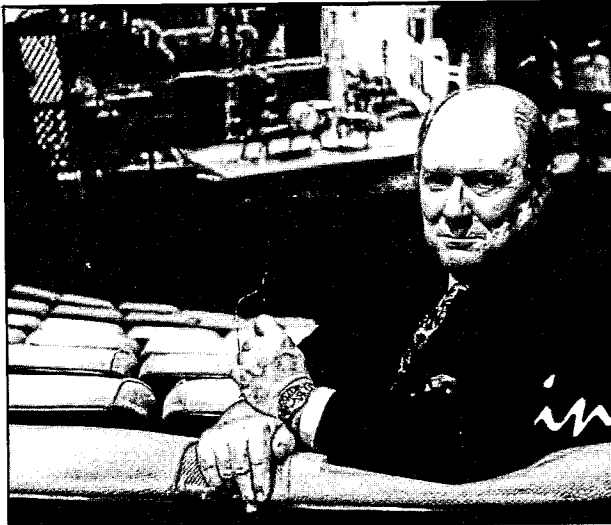
The dynamic exchange of ideas, books, and visits—the *Wanderjahr* had become a defining feature of the romantic poet's education—was, in fact, an offshoot of the French Revolution, born of the newfound democratic freedom to traverse physical and psychological barriers. This growing sense of universal citizenry combined with

PROGRAM NOTES *(Continued)*

the indigenous *Volk* movements to produce a unique phenomenon in 19th century art. At the same time that musicians and poets were delving deep into their collective ethnic consciousness, they were also becoming acutely aware of the vanishing barriers in humanistic thought. Collecting, improvising on, altering, or refashioning new musico-poetic material from traditional sources became the *métier* not only of composer-poets of this mindset like Robert Burns and Thomas Moore, but also inspired subsequent generations to respond to the *Ur*-material with further refinements and variations that began to constitute the first shapings of the bridge from traditional/popular song to art song. By definition, folk song captures the sounds of an oral tradition, fitting words to music; *Lieder*, in contrast, use words to dictate song: the poem is a formal element to be set, the language in which it is set—and this was certainly a sticking point for Grieg, who disliked performances of his songs in any language other than that in which he wrote them) inseparable from its musical line.

Thus, tonight's recital program offers not only a study of the peripatetic wanderings of the art song across the 19th and 20th century maps, but also an insight into the processes by which naive tradition is transformed into high art, by which language in its unvarnished dialect form can gradually be crafted into poetry, and by which poetry, even imported into another language, can remain communicative because of the essentiality of the poetic idea.

All of the compositions on tonight's program reflect the prevailing pan-romantic themes: an idealistic optimism tinged by a melancholic longing that recognizes the dichotomy between reality and aspiration; a reverence for the simple, honest common man in all his dignity and fullness (what Carlyle called in Burns's work "words for every mood of man's heart"); agrarian sensibilities that find their highest articulation in a mystic perception of Nature; an almost socialist humanism; a faith in the power of spontaneous feeling to uplift and inspire; a belief in the sanctity of the individual



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PROGRAM NOTES *(Continued)*

experience elevated to the larger representative one. They share, too, stylistic traits: the openness to speak feelings frankly and explore hidden psyches, as well as the mastery of lyrical and anecdotal means to dramatize these personal experiences with a freshness, economy, and—as with Heine, Burns, Robinson, Duke, Schumann, Mahler, and Grieg—frequent irony. Perhaps it is not all that surprising that drama figures so significantly in the romantic songs of these poets and their composers. The 19th century with its other musical offspring, Wagner's music-dramas and Liszt's programme works, as well as the ensuing 20th century with its proclivity for interior monologue and confessional epiphanies, could not fail to find in the *Lied* the perfect format in miniature for the creation of psychological characterization and for the transformation of silent desires into spoken passions. In fact, transformation is really what romantic art is about—"the art of transition," as Wagner once called it—the reshaping of nature into poetry, of folk tune into art song, of intangible into permanent.

ROBERT FRANZ

(1815-1892)

"Nun holt mir eine Kanne Wein"

"Die süsse Dirn von Inverness"

CARL LOEWE

(1796-1869)

"Findlay"

ROBERT SCHUMANN

(1810-1856)

"Niemand"

"Dem roten Röslein gleicht mein Lieb"

"Hochländers Abschied"

Born in Dumfries on January 25, 1759, Bobby Burns was the son of a poor tenant farmer who believed in a strict Calvinist upbringing. He credited the nurturing of his romantic imagination to his nurse, Betty Davidson, who, he said, "cultivated in me the latent seeds of Poesy with her tales of ghosts, warlocks, and giants." Having scribbled his first love lyric at fourteen, Burns began to compose verse seriously in 1780, reaching his *annus mirabilis* in 1786 when he finished the great satirical poems and composed 59 others.

A major contributor to the two landmarks of the English Antiquarian Movement, James Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum* and George

Thomson's *National Airs*, he traveled through his native land gathering folk-song fragments, setting them down, then altering them by making additions or by completely refashioning them into original songs with lyrics of his own. The process, which was the same one that Thomas Moore used to create his influential *Irish Melodies*, made Burns a household name.

A major figure of pre-romanticism, Burns enjoyed a widespread fame in his lifetime and throughout the 19th century, falling into neglect only in the more cynical climate of the 20th, when his lyrics, like those of Moore, were often berated as being the "facile expressions of a singer of the parish." Although he was sometimes criticized for being no more than "a peasant rhymster," most modern scholars acknowledge his undeniable gifts: his unerring instinct for marrying words and music, his partiality to the particular rhythms of his native dialect, his tenderness of lyrical expression, and his delight in the simple pleasures of his folk roots as well as his insistence on championing the common man—traits that made Burns a harbinger of 19th century romanticism and one of the most translated and influential lyrical voices of that century.

Burns in translation, one might suspect, could be a problematic thing. The idiosyncratic rhythms of the Scots dialect are hard to reproduce in other tongues. And yet there is something so intensely musical about the verse itself that it pulsates through the language barrier, impelling, as Robert Franz once wrote, the composer to find in "every genuinely lyric poem the corresponding melody [that] lies hidden." Franz came to know Burns through Ferdinand Freiligrath's translations, while Schumann used texts translated by Gerhard or Herder. But whichever the rendition, what is of paramount interest is that German poets were fascinated with the songs and verses of the Scotsman. They saw in him, as they did in Moore, a voice of fresh national liberation, a courageous spokesman for the downtrodden, a witty and unabashed poet of physical passion, and a supremely singable wordsmith whose folk roots and exotic dialect qualified him to be the *Ur*-romantic inspiration.

Robert Franz, who was born in Halle on June 28, 1815, to a salt-manufacturing family,

PROGRAM NOTES *(Continued)*

brought to his chosen work as a song composer his early training as a church musician. Organist of Halle's *Ulrichkirche* and conductor of the Singakademie in that city, Franz claimed as his models Mozart, Haydn, and Bach and the entire tradition of Protestant chorales and oratorios with their clarity of structure and emphasis on melodic expression. The editor of a critically esteemed edition of Bach's works, a friend of Liszt, and an associate of Mendelssohn, Schubert, and Schumann, Franz looked to these as well as to Beethoven for his initial inspiration in song writing. Though Wagner was an early admirer of the composer, Franz felt uncomfortable being associated with the "Music of the Future," just as he rebelled a bit at "the excessive use of declamation" in Schumann's songs.

"I compose feelings, not words," Franz was to insist, describing his musical idiom, which was marked first and foremost by melody coupled with fluid tonality, rich harmonic language, and associative key structures. Very much the pure lyricist whose songs have a delicacy, melancholy, and rich palette of inner emotion, he had a temperament and style that drew him naturally to the poetry of Burns—to those miniature gems of subtle song that seemed to beg for the kind of understated beauty of detail present in Franz's compositions.

A potent emphasis on dramatic dialogue also characterizes the style of Carl Loewe's ballads. His Findlay, a setting of Burns's wickedly teasing, bawdy song "Wha Is That at My Bower Door?" challenges the performer to create two distinct dramatic voices without the intervention of a third-person narrator (other than in the perfunctory "quo' Findlay"). The incorrigibly amorous Burns must have sympathized with the sweet-talking seducer-protagonist of this tale!

The three Schumann settings all date from the composer's year of songs, 1840, when in the fulfillment of his marriage to Clara Wieck (after the long years of separation and battles with her father) and just three years before his first mental collapse, he set down more than 100 of his finest *Lieder*.

EDVARD GRIEG

1843-1907

Sechs Lieder, Op. 48

In his more than 140 songs, Edvard Grieg set only eighteen German texts. Of these

both Opus 2 and Opus 4 are early efforts, written when he was a student at the Leipzig Conservatory.

Born in Bergen, but with Scots ancestry, Grieg was a passionate partisan of Norwegian nationalism. The period from 1858-1862, which Grieg spent in Germany, seemed rather like an enforced exile to the frail and sensitive youth. He would later disparage the stuffy academicism of his training there. But the German *Bildungsjahre*, as well as his subsequent visit to Liszt in Rome in 1870, was to color permanently his perceptions of romanticism. He also grafted onto his developing nationalistic sensibilities a patina of lush lyricism that forever marked his debt not only to the great German *Lieder* composers, especially Schumann, but even more importantly, to the poetic voices of German literature.

For Opus 2 and Opus 4 the young Grieg chose the works of Chamisso, Uhland, and Heine, and crafted songs especially designed for the pristine lyric soprano of his bride, Nina Hagerup. By the time he returned to German poetry as an inspiration for his songs in 1889 in the "Sechs Lieder" that constitute Opus 48 a quarter of a century had passed. In the intervening years he had discovered Norwegian folk music. He had also been introduced to Norwegian political and artistic nationalism by his friend, the musician Rikard Nordraak (whose untimely death from pleurisy in 1866 left Grieg feeling obligated to complete Rikaard's mission), and had become acquainted with the great literary voices of Scandinavia, among them Andersen, Ibsen, and the landsmål poet Vinje. However, he had also absorbed some of Liszt's cosmopolitan idiom, and been invigorated by the first Bayreuth Festivals. But beside the fact that Grieg's mature style reflected a blend of cross-cultural influences, the voice for which he composed these six songs to texts by Heine, Geibel, Uhland, von der Vogelweide, Goethe, and Bodenstedt was not that of his wife. It was that of the Swedish-born Wagnerian soprano, Ellen Gulbransen, whose more expansive, dramatically colored voice, while it recognized the differences between opera and song so essential to Grieg, nevertheless possessed a ripe lushness intimately suited to the passionate poems he set.

Thus, Opus 48 remains a fascinating work in the Grieg song canon and one that speaks

PROGRAM NOTES *(Continued)*

eloquently to the personal style the composer developed—a style that blended the melodic inspiration of German romanticism with recognizable folk idioms and a distinctly Nordic harmonic scheme marked by frequent open fourths and fifths.

GUSTAV MAHLER

(1860-1911)

Songs from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*

Text: Mahler after Achim von Arnim & Clemens Brentano

The four Mahler songs are performed here in their original versions for piano and voice, dating from 1892-1901, which have recently been issued in a new critical edition, published by Universal, edited by Dr. Renate Hilmar-Voit with the active collaboration and sponsorship of Thomas Hampson, and recorded by Teldec with Mr. Hampson and Geoffrey Parsons. These notes have been based upon and partially extracted from the prefatory article by Dr. Hilmar and Mr. Hampson.

The single greatest influence on Gustav Mahler's vocal output in the years leading up to 1901 was the great collection of German Romantic folksongs published by Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano between 1806-1808. Although *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* had proved popular with previous composers, Mahler rightly regarded his own relationship with these poems something special.

Not only did he compose them in these original piano-vocal forms, but he went on to create entirely new orchestral settings for them—settings which are not at all mere transcriptions, as they were long supposed to be, but rather compositions with significantly differing dynamics, phrasing, time signatures, metronome markings, pitches, note values, and even words themselves.

The performance of the songs in their original piano-vocal versions is illuminating in eradicating a number of misconceptions about the works. Mahler did not, for example, intend these songs for any gender-specific voice category, nor did he prescribe a performing order, instead urging singers to determine the latter on their own. Indeed, listening to a group as richly varied and full of narrative-dramatic possibilities as this selection of four songs, one immediately recognizes the composer's ability to translate human sympathies into song and to plumb all

the nuances and possibilities inherent in the genre not only with affection, but also with more than a hint of self-irony.

Among the fifteen *Wunderhorn* texts which Mahler set between 1892-1901, "Der Schildwache Nachtlied," "Wer hat dies Liedlein erdacht?!", and "Das himmlische Leben" were described by the composer as "humoresques." The tender pleading of "Wer hat dies Liedlein erdacht?!" has a touch of gentle whimsy, while "Das himmlische Leben" takes on a sharper edge. This latter composition remained unpublished in its piano-vocal version for one hundred years, even though Mahler himself prepared it for publication. The song is most closely associated with the soprano solo form it took on when Mahler later incorporated it into his Fourth Symphony, but the piano version sung here by a baritone has an even more pungent, more abrasive, and more dissonant character.

Irony is present in the carefully juxtaposed metaphors of "Wo die schönen Trompeten blasen" as well, but it is especially vivid in "Der Schildwache Nachtlied," which closes with the music earlier associated with the cajoling voice of the sentinel's girlfriend now sung by a narrator who comments, "*Verlorne Feldwacht sang es um Mitternacht*" ("The solitary field sentinel sang it at midnight"), thereby suggesting that the entire accusation and, indeed, the entire scene goes unheard and is lost.

CHARLES IVES

(1874-1954)

"The Housatonic at Stockbridge"

Text: Robert Underwood Johnson

Composed 1921

"Thoreau"

Text: Ives after Henry David Thoreau

1817-1862, Composed 1915

"The Children's Hour"

Text: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

1807-1882, Composed 1901

"Memories A—Very Pleasant and Memories

B—Rather Sad"

Text: Ives, Composed 1897

Charles Ives was a Danbury-born, Yale-educated, confirmed New Englander. His family history included his father's service to the Union cause as a Civil War bandmaster, his grandparents' intimacy with Emerson and

PROGRAM NOTES *(Continued)*

Margaret Fuller, and his in-laws' friendship with Mark Twain. Writing songs was his way of keeping a diary. Each of the diverse compositions in Ives's vocal catalogue represents a spiritual jotting, an almost impressionistic attempt to transfix a moment, a memory, an echo from the depths of his wholly American subconscious. Essentially a melodist, whose innovations in polytonality, polyrhythm, and polytexture gave his work a dissonant modern cast, he incorporated many native folk tunes (over 150 have been identified) into his compositions. These tunes, drawn from hymns, psalms, camp meetings, spirituals, band music, as well as from earlier American composers like Stephen Foster, form the particularly rich texture of the art song tapestries he wove.

When Ives published his 114 Songs at his own expense in 1922, he frankly admitted that "some of the songs in this book ... cannot be sung." "The Housatonic at Stockbridge," with its lushly romantic mood, is one of Ives's masterpieces of tone painting. Originally composed as a movement in a series of pieces for orchestra, the piano accompaniment in its eventual format retains vestiges of orchestral coloring.

The portrait sketch "Thoreau," together with Ives's songs to Whitman and Emerson, speaks of the composer's profound, life-long sympathy for the transcendental movement. A fervent admirer of Thoreau's prose, Ives once said that few poems could capture the spontaneity and wildness that "Walden" had. The theme used in this short setting comes from Ives's own "Concord Sonata." Ives does not permit the interpreter to sing in the opening measures, creating instead a quietly sublime dialogue between spoken voice and hushed piano that accentuates the serenity of Thoreau's prose, which then organically flowers into song at the climactic moment. The entire tone is one of rapt reverie that creates a microcosm of the sounds and sensations of Thoreau's epic experiment.

In setting Longfellow's "Children's Hour," Ives turned to one of the most metrical and accessibly musical of the New England poets. The rhyming line and nostalgic sentiments of the poem evoke a father's tender amusement at the intrusion into his study of his three daughters, each given her own music. The same juxtaposition of wistful humor and melancholy appears in the two-part contrasting piece, "Memories A & B." The allegro first section, in which the com-

poser recalls the naive excitement of a young boy just before curtain-rise at the opera, is a tongue-in-cheek parody of a Gilbert and Sullivan patter song, while the second half with its recalled snatch of a sad tune speaks of Ives's assimilation of the nostalgic melancholy of Stephen Foster.

JOHN DUKE

(1899-1984)

"Richard Cory"

"Miniver Cheevy"

"Luke Havergal"

Text: Edwin Arlington Robinson 1869-1935

Composed 1945

With his passion for American poetry it was not surprising that John Duke should find a kindred spirit in Edward Arlington Robinson. Both Duke and Robinson had strong New England roots, living out most of their professional years in the small Yankee towns that form the spiritual climate of these songs.

Robinson grew up in Gardiner, Maine, to which he returned after a brief stint at Harvard. There he passed his days in quiet industry, working as a poet and journalist, nursing a long and unrequited flame for his brother's widow, and observing with subtle irony and considerable compassion the myriad of miniature dramas that played themselves out in the confines of rural America. Duke, on the other hand, was born in Cumberland, Maryland and raised with a southern heritage. He acquired his love of song from his mother, Mathilda Hoffmann, a singer of some accomplishment, and his passion for literature from a household where reading poetry and Shakespeare was part of the daily fabric of life. After studies at the Peabody Conservatory and with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, he migrated to the Berkshires in 1923, and took a post at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. Here he remained until 1967, making a significant reputation for himself as a teacher, composer, and pianist who premiered many of his own works.

The three Robinson texts that comprise this triptych all deal with individuals living lives of silent despair, and each has an autobiographical parallel in the poet's own existence. The outwardly successful Richard Cory, who one day surprises his townsfolk by putting a bullet through his head, is a thinly

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8:00 p.m.

Kevin Conn, host

- | | |
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| April 13 | Joaquín Achúcarro, <i>piano</i> |
| April 20 | Yefim Bronfman, <i>piano</i> |
| April 27 | Marvis Martin, <i>soprano</i> |
| May 4 | José Feghali, and Vladimir Viardo, <i>duo-pianos</i> |
| May 11 | Evgeny Kissin, <i>piano</i> |

See local listings for the concerts of
Cecilia Bartoli, Simone Pedroni, and Thomas Hampson

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PROGRAM NOTES *(Continued)*

veiled portrait of Robinson's brother Herman, who effectively committed suicide with alcohol after a series of disastrous business investments. Miniver Cheevy, with his fatal romanticism and self-destructive drunken passivity, again reminds us of Herman, but also suggests the poet himself in his perennial sense of being unappreciated and misunderstood as an artist and intellectual. Luke Havergal's mourning of a dead love and his epiphany that only through the western gate of death can there be true union of souls is an aching hymn to Robinson's passion for his sister-in-law, Emma Shepherd.

Duke limns each of these miniature portraits with a clarity and sympathy that correspond precisely to the blend of cynicism and romanticism in Robinson's verse. Two distinct voices can be heard in "Richard Cory": that of the blunt narrator with his square 2/4 rhythm and that of the polished Cory with his fluttering piano accompaniment and many grace notes to suggest the "glitter" of his presence. "Miniver Cheevy" is a masterpiece of Duke's musical characterization and

biting humor: as the title suggests, it is a satire in the form of eight variations. Appropriate to its theme, "Luke Havergal" is the most unabashedly romantic setting of the three, with a quasi-operatic dimension to its melody that speaks of Duke's faith in the mystery of music that "causes time to lose the character of successive moments and become an ever-expanding present."

SIDNEY HOMER

(1864-1953)

"General William Booth Enters into Heaven"

Text: Vachel Lindsay 1879-1931

VITTORIO GIANNINI

(1903-1966)

"Tell, Me, Oh, Blue, Blue Sky"

Text: Karl Flaster

WALTER DAMROSCH

(1862-1950)

"Danny Deever"

This group of American concert songs evokes a time when American musical life

PROGRAM NOTES *(Continued)*

was rich in radio broadcasts of "serious" song programs and when the song recitals performed by well-known personalities were major and much appreciated events in every smaller city in the nation. Today these nostalgic compositions are often relegated to encore material or—even worse—neglected altogether, despite the fact that they speak eloquently for an era and an ethos that are neither forgotten nor irrelevant. Drawn from the folk roots of an eclectic American culture and set or arranged by serious composers of the past and present, these three compositions have an emotional spontaneity that strikes an immediate response: they are direct, unforced, sometimes simple, obvious, heart-on-sleeve, yes, even naive, but they are also always eminently singable and entertaining.

Sidney Homer, husband of the contralto Louise Homer (for whom he wrote many of his vocal compositions) and uncle of composer Samuel Barber, was a prolific song writer whose works are all but unknown today. Like Ives, he turned frequently to American texts,

inspired in this instance by Vachel Lindsay's jazz poetry. With its rousing cadences and meaty, characterful depiction of the evangelical founder of the Salvation Army, "General William Booth Enters into Heaven" is a fascinating musical-poetic portrait of the Revivalist Movement.

As it was for Homer, singing was very much part of Philadelphia-born Vittorio Giannini's daily life. His father Feruccio had been an operatic tenor in Italy and his sister Dusolina enjoyed an international career as a soprano, so it was not at all surprising that he should turn to the rich melodic, romantic tradition of the 19th century to shape songs such as the expressive love lament, "Tell Me, Oh, Blue, Blue Sky."

And as this haunting ballad segues into the powerful, idiomatic Damrosch setting of Kipling's "Danny Deever," one is struck not only by the range of inspiration, thematic material, and vocabulary of these American songs, but also by the ability of their composers and poets to tap directly the complex pulse of a pluralistic society.



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