



PRESENTS

LOVE'S JOYS, LIFE'S SHADOWS:
SONGS AMONG FRIENDS

MELISSA GIVENS, SOPRANO
GENEVIEVE FEIWEN LEE, PIANO
JOTI ROCKWELL, MANDOLIN
SARA PARKINS, VIOLIN
MAGGIE PARKINS, CELLO



Department of Music
Faculty and Guest Artist Recital

Mabel Shaw Bridges Hall of Music
Streaming Sunday, April 18, 2021 at 3:00 P.M.

Love's Joys, Life's Shadows: Songs Among Friends

Melissa Givens, soprano
Genevieve Feiwen Lee, piano; Joti Rockwell, mandolin
Sara Parkins, violin; Maggie Parkins, cello

Quarantine Miniatures, No. XVI: "Joysongs" (2020)

Mark Buller
(b. 1986)

- I. Sister Bird
- II. The Wind Sings
- III. The Laughter of Light

Deità Silvana (1917)

Ottorino Respighi
(1879–1936)

1. I fauni
2. Musica in horto
3. Egle
4. Acqua
5. Crepuscolo

Ich und Du: A Set of Three Lieder (2014)

Kurt Erickson
(b. 1970)

1. Dein blaues Auge hält so still
2. Ich und Du
3. Mondnacht

Love Sweet (2013)

Jennifer Higdon
(b. 1962)

- Apology
The Giver of Stars
Absence
A Gift
A Fixed Idea

From *Chansons Créoles* (2006)

John L. Cornelius, II
(b. 1966)

1. Couplet (Contre une demoiselle sur qui on avait tiré un coup de pistolet)
8. Vers écrits sur l'Album de Mademoiselle
9. Mon vieux chapeau

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Pomona College is grateful to its alumni and friends whose continuing generosity makes this
and other programs presented by the Department of Music possible.*

❧ PROGRAM NOTES ❧

The global SARS-CoV-2 (Coronavirus) pandemic that gripped our world in early 2020 caused disruption for all of us and in every facet of our lives. The arts suffered deep impacts, calling into question the survival of live performance. Efforts both formal and informal sustained us all artistically and brought some measure of beauty to ameliorate our plague state, as we attempted to recreate some sense of normalcy in this very abnormal situation.

We learned things. That art is important. That music is important. That collaboration is important. And that all of those things must find a way to happen, even in the midst of privation.

This recital is a celebration of our persistence, a celebration of our learning, and a celebration of the music and friendships that have sustained us over this year. As the barest hint of light at the end of this pandemic tunnel can be glimpsed, we dedicate this recital to the lives that have been changed, the lives still in peril, and of course, the lives we have lost.

Quarantine Miniatures, No. XVI: “Joysongs” The set of *Quarantine Miniatures* began as the world hunkered down in 2020 to ride out COVID-19. My many wonderful musician friends were seeing gigs dry up and jobs disappear—but beyond that, we all shared a feeling of collective creative angst. With little in the way of creative outlets, how could we continue to do what we love? This project was born out of that moment. I wanted to create a shared body of work as a way to celebrate our community’s hardiness in the face of these difficulties. All of these works were written free of charge and with no obligation for performances. If the musicians wanted to perform it live, or record and stream it, great! If they wanted it to be a piece they lived with and meditated on, great!

[T]he project really grew; and especially after it was profiled in the *Houston Chronicle*, it expanded to musicians whose acquaintance I had not yet made—and people all around the world. I also began to group the pieces—all of which are short, the longest being some four minutes and the shortest a mere 20 seconds—into sets. These include collections for solo voice; solo suites for flute, saxophone, clarinet, trumpet, guitar, percussion, violin, viola, cello, bass, and piano; and sets which will be ongoing, including psalm settings for soprano and organ, and settings of poems from Joyce’s *Chamber Music* for soprano and guitar.

–MB

My friendship with Mark Buller has primarily existed in the virtual sphere, though we met at a concert in 2015. After seeing his posts about the *Miniatures*, I was intrigued and invited my friend, poet Euan Tait, to compose a text that might fit into the miniature format. He agreed immediately and with great enthusiasm. I then asked my colleague Joti Rockwell if he was interested in having the pieces scored for mandolin, since we had so enjoyed performing Tom Flaherty’s *Mandolin Songs* on the most recent Celliola concert. With his enthusiastic assent, I contacted Mark Buller, who quickly birthed his sixteenth *Miniature*.

Euan and I met when Conspirare performed Kim Andre Arnesen’s *The Wound in the Water*, set to Euan’s libretto. His “Joysongs” are filled with imagery that calls to mind both nature and the human voice. Mark’s response to this text is infinitely musical and rich, despite its brevity. In a note to me he wrote that he also included a love note to his wife, Esther. In the score of “II. The Wind Sings,” her name is rendered in the mandolin part using a combination of English and German note name and solfège syllables. Of the nearly 100 requests he has received, Mark has composed 75 *Quarantine Miniatures*; the remainder are in progress.

–MEG

Composer **Mark Buller** writes music that blends rich lyricism with bold gestures and striking rhythms. He has been privileged to write for a number of world-class ensembles and organizations, including the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Houston Grand Opera (three operas, a choral work, and over a dozen art songs), Houston Chamber Choir, and ROCO (River Oaks Chamber Orchestra).

In recent years, Mark's comic song cycles have gained some notice, beginning with *Tombstone Songs*, which sets hilarious epitaphs from the US and UK. *One-Star Songbook* explores terribly sophomoric one-star Amazon reviews of literary masterworks, maintaining the original poor grammar and spelling. And an upcoming cycle, *The Beginner's Guide to Conspiracy Theories*, once again turns to found texts, setting screeds about the Illuminati, JFK, Goop and other peddlers of pseudoscience, and QAnon.

Upcoming performances include a second work, *The Parallaxic Transits*, for the Atlanta Symphony and Robert Spano on a concert celebrating the "Atlanta School" of composers; a large-scale *Mass in Exile* with Leah Lax; and a choral work, *The Passion of St. Cecilia*, with Charles Anthony Silvestri, commissioned by Houston Chamber Choir.

Euan Tait is a poet of Welsh-Scottish heritage currently residing in Wales, where he writes, leads music and interfaith retreats, and teaches English. He considers teaching to be active listening: he learns daily from students how to enable them to express their gifts and capabilities. His writing is a song of living, vital, abundant life behind what is seen, infused by reading and learning from the work of great international poets.

His choral libretti have been commissioned internationally by composers including Kim Andre Arnesen, Janet Wheeler, Chris Hutchings, Carson Cooman, and Paul Spicer, and have been performed by many groups, including Austin-based Conspirare. Several major works and a host of smaller pieces, including best sellers such as "Flight Song" have resulted. In 2018, compositions on three of his texts have been released on the major record label, Naxos.

I. Sister Bird

Sister bird
Taught me to sing:
'Murmur joy, as
flocks of starlings.'

II. The Wind Sings

Beloved,
The wind sings
Your sacred, shining,
Birdsong name.

III. The Laughter of Light

It does not perish
From the smile of the earth:
The laughter of light
Dancing in the blood.

– Euan Tait (b. 1968), 2020

Deità Silvano Composed in 1917 to texts by the celebrated Italian illustrator and cartoonist Antonio Rubino, these five songs are celebrations of woodland deities, natural phenomena, and man-made structures. They are beautifully evocative and representative of Respighi's more familiar works, including *The Pines of Rome*, which was composed at about the same time. Through rhythmic and harmonic text painting fauns, musical instruments, the goddess of radiant good health, rustling streams, and twilight in a sculpture garden come to exhilarating life. One of the most rewarding aspects of the cycle is the interplay between the vocal line and the piano accompaniment, which was a joy to prepare with Genevieve.

Respighi, with his incredible skill in orchestral writing, later orchestrated the cycle, heightening its brilliant colors and characterizations.

Clearly, I have no personal relationship with Respighi! However, several years ago my friend Lynn Burns Muehleisen, whom I met while performing her husband John's *Pietà* with *Conspirare*, told me how much she would enjoy hearing me perform this cycle. I ran across her remark as I was scouting repertoire for this program. One beautiful listening session later, I was pleased to tell her that she would be getting her wish!

–MEG

A native of Bologna, Italy, **Ottorino Respighi** studied performance and composition, including stints in Russia and Germany, where he studied with Rimsky-Korsakov and Max Bruch. His German studies also prepared him as a vocal composer. Celebrated for works that reach back to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century forms and tunes, he was nonetheless a steadfastly modern composer. Though his music secured his place in the firmament of classical composers, his willingness to have his music performed under Italy's Fascist regime damaged his domestic reputation long after his death.

1. *I fauni*

*S'odono al monte i saltellanti rivi
Murmureggiare per le forre astruse,
S'odono al bosco gemer cornamuse
Con garrito di pifferi giulivi.
E i fauni in corsa per dumeti e clivi,
Erti le corna sulle fronti ottuse,
Bevono per lor nari camuse
Filtri sottili e zeffiri lascivi.
E, mentre in fondo al gran coro alberato
Piange d'amore per la vita bella
La sampogna dell'arcade pastore,
Contenta e paurosa dell'agguato,
Fugge ogni ninfa più che fiera snella,
Ardendo in bocca come ardente fiore.*

2. *Musica in horto*

*Uno squillo di cròtali clangenti
Rompe in ritmo il silenzio dei roseti,
Mentre in fondo agli aulenti orti segreti
Gorgheggia un flauto liquidi lamenti.
La melodia, con tintinnio d'argenti,
Par che a vicenda s'attristi e s'allieti,
Ora luce di tremanti inquieti,
Or diffondendo lunghe ombre dolenti:
Cròtali arguti e canne variotocche!
Una gioia di cantici inespressi
Per voi par che dai chiusi orti rampolli,
E in sommo dei rosai, che cingon molli
Ghirlande al cuor degli intimi recessi,
S'apron le rose come molli bocche!*

The Fauns

One hears in the hills the bubbling brooks
Murmuring through the dark ravines,
One hears in the woods the groan of the bagpipes
With the chirp of merry fifes.
And the fauns racing over hills and through thickets,
Their horns erect above their broad foreheads,
Drink through their blunt, upturned nostrils
Subtle potions and lascivious winds.
And, while beneath the great choir of trees,
They weep, for love of the beautiful life:
The bagpipes of the arcadian shepherd.
Happy and fearful of the impending ambush,
The nymphs flee, faster than wild gazelles,
Their ardent lips like blazing flowers!

Garden Music

A blast of finger-cymbals clashing rhythmically
Punctuates the silence of the rose gardens,
While at the end of fragrant, secret orchards
A flute pours out its liquid lamentation.
The melody, with silver cymbal-hissing
Shifts between saddening and becoming joyful;
Now shining with flickering, flaring light,
Now casting long sorrowful shadows:
Ringing finger-cymbals and many-sounding pipes!
A joy of songs unexpressed
for you gushes forth from the orchards,
And at the top of the rosebushes, that weave garlands
At the heart of the intimate nooks,
The roses open like soft mouths!

3. Egle

*Frondeggia il bosco d'uberi verzure,
Volgendo i rii zaffiro e margherita:
Per gli archi verdi un'anima romita
Cinge pallidi fuochi a ridde oscure.
E in te ristretta con le mani pure
Come le pure fonti della vita,
Di sole e d'ombre mobili vestita
Tu danzi, Egle, con languide misure.
E a te candida e bionda tra li ninfe,
D'ilarì ambagi descrivendo il verde,
Sotto i segreti ombracoli del verde,
Ove la più inquieta ombra s'attrista,
Perle squillanti e liquido ametista
Volge la gioia roca delle linfe.*

4. Acqua

*Acqua, e tu ancora sul tuo flauto lene
Intonami un tuo canto variolungo,
Di cui le note abbian l'odor del fungo,
Del musco e dell'esiguo capelvenere,
Sì che per tutte le sottili vene,
Onde irrighi la fresca solitudine,
Il tuo riscintillio rida e subliudii
Al gemmar delle musiche serene.
Acqua, e, lung'hessi i calami volubili
Movendo in gioco le cerulee dita,
Avvicenda più lunghe ombre alle luci,
Tu che con modi labii deduci
Sulla mia fronte intenta e sulla vita
Del verde fuggitive ombre di nubi.*

5. Crepuscolo

*Nell'orto abbandonato ora l'edace
Muschio contende all'ellere i recessi,
E tra il coro snelletto dei cipressi
S'addorme in grembo dell'antica pace
Pan. Sul vasto marmoreo torace,
Che i convolvoli infiorano d'amplessi,
Un tempo forse con canti sommessi
Piegò una ninfa il bel torso procace.
Deità della terra, forza lieta!
Troppo pensiero è nella tua vecchiezza:
Per sempre inaridita è la tua fonte.
Muore il giorno, e nell'alta ombra inquieta
Trema e s'attrista un canto d'allegrezza:
Lunghe ombre azzurre scendono dal monte...*

– Antonio Rubino (1880–1964), 1911

Aegle

The forest is heavy with leaves and fruit,
The brooks are shimmering in daisy and sapphire:
Under the green arches a lonely soul
Circles pale flames in hidden dances.
And with quiet intensity and hands as pure
As the pure fountains of life itself,
Veiled in clothes of sun and shadow
You dance, Aegle, with spiritless steps.
And toward you, white and blonde among the nymphs,
Merrily dancing like fluttering leaves,
Under the secret shadows of the leaves,
Where the most restless spirit saddens,
In translucent pearl and liquid amethyst
Flows the raw rapture of the amber.

Water

Water, once again your mellow flute
Plays to me your varying song,
Whose notes seem like the smell of mushrooms,
Of moss and of sleek, silken maiden-hair,
So that along all the tiny streams
That refresh the lonely places,
Your sparkling presence laughs and ripples
With the jewels of serene music.
Water, while along your banks the whispering reeds
Playfully wiggle their blue fingers,
Flickering longer shadows in the light,
You wind your fleeting way, seeing
On my brooding forehead and on each of the leaves
The passing shadows of clouds.

Twilight

In the abandoned garden, now the greedy moss
Fights with the ivy for every nook and cranny,
And in the sparse cluster of cypresses,
Sleeping in the womb of ancient peace
Lies Pan. On the vast marble statue,
Wrapped with morning-glory flowers,
Perhaps someday with a gentle song
A nymph might bend over her lovely figure.
God of the earth, joyful force!
You have become too serious in your old age:
Your fountain is dry forever.
The day dies, and through the vast restless shade
A song of happiness trembles and saddens:
Long blue shadows descend from the mountains.

– Translation © Joshua Breitzer, 2004

Ich und Du *Ich und Du* was commissioned by San Francisco's LIEDER ALIVE! as part of Erickson's
===== 2013–2016 Composer Residency. It was premiered in San Francisco in April 2014 by soprano
Heidi Moss with the composer at the piano. The texts are taken from nineteenth-century German poets
Klaus Groth, Friedrich Hebbel, and Joseph von Eichendorff.

–KE

One of the many events sent online by the pandemic was the 2020 National Conference of the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS), which featured an installment of “Composers and Cocktails” with Erickson and the Cincinnati Song Initiative. I was immediately taken with “Mondnacht,” performed by Kurt and his wife, soprano Heidi Moss Erickson, and ordered the score forthwith. Shortly thereafter, we were both invited to serve on the NATS Art Song Initiative, where we became acquainted.

Something we share is a commitment to the promotion and performance of the art song genre. Kurt's modern explorations of German Romantic texts are a sort of musical Janus: reflecting the great tradition of lieder composers while also looking forward to a new wave of American song composition in languages other than English. “Dein Blaues Auge” and “Mondnacht” are likely familiar to listeners from their settings by Brahms and Robert Schumann, respectively. While less familiar, the soaring and achingly beautiful text of “Ich und Du” (“Wir träumten voneinander”) makes for a satisfying centerpiece for the cycle.

–MEG

Kurt Erickson is currently serving as Composer-in-Residence with San Francisco performing arts organization LIEDER ALIVE!, writing and premiering new commissioned works for renowned singers on their subscription concert series. His *Here, Bullet* song set received First Prize in the 2020 NATS Art Song competition and has been performed by more than twenty-five singers across the globe. An entrepreneurial artist, he has served over ten years in multi-year composer residencies with cathedrals, dance companies, performing arts organizations, and national shrines. Noteworthy premieres and commissions include choral works premiered by the San Francisco Girls Chorus at Davies Symphony Hall, performances of the song set *Chicago Songs* throughout the US, premiere performances and radio interviews at the American Guild of Organists National Convention, and a commissioned work for soprano and orchestra to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Berkeley Community Chorus & Orchestra. He is a frequent performer with his wife, acclaimed soprano Heidi Moss Erickson.

*Dein blaues Auge hält so still,
Ich blicke bis zum Grund.
Du fragst mich, was ich sehen will?
Ich sehe mich gesund.*

*Es brannte mich ein glühend Paar,
Noch schmerzt das Nachgefühl;
Das deine ist wie See so klar
Und wie ein See so kühl.*

– Klaus Groth (1819–99), 1854

*Your blue eyes keep so still
That I can gaze upon their very depths.
You ask me what I want to see?
I see my own well-being.*

*A glowing pair burned me once;
The after-effect still hurts.
Yet your eyes are like a lake so clear,
And like a lake, so cool.*

– Translation © Emily Ezust, n.d.

*Ich und Du
Wir träumten voneinander
Und sind davon erwacht,
Wir leben, um uns zu lieben,
Und sinken zurück in die Nacht.*

*You and I
We dreamed of one another
And wakened to the Light—
We live to love each other
And then return to the night.*

*Du tratst aus meinem Traume,
Aus deinem trat ich hervor.
Wir sterben, wenn sich eines
Im andern ganz verlor.*

*Auf einer Lilie zittern
Zwei Tropfen, rein und rund,
Zerfließen in eins und rollen
Hinab in des Kelches Grund.*

– Christian Frederick Hebbel (1813–63), 1843

You came out of my dream, dear,
And out from yours came I.
When lost in one another
Two individuals die.

A tremble on a lily
Two dewdrops, clear and round,
Run into one, and roll down
To sink in the blossom's ground.

– Translation © Leon Malinofsky, 2007

Mondnacht

*Es war, als hätt' der Himmel,
Die Erde still geküßt,
Daß sie im Blütenschimmer
Von ihm nun träumen müßt.*

*Die Luft ging durch die Felder,
Die Ähren wogten sacht,
Es rauschten leis die Wälder,
So sternklar war die Nacht.*

*Und meine Seele spannte
Weit ihre Flügel aus,
Flog durch die stillen Lande,
Als flöge sie nach Haus.*

– Josef Karl Benedikt von Eichendorff
(1788–1857), 1841

Moonlit Night

It was as if the sky
Had quietly kissed the earth,
So that, glistening with blossoms,
She must only dream of him.

The breeze wafted through the fields,
The ears of corn waved gently,
The forests rustled faintly,
So sparkling clear was the night.

And my soul stretched
its wings out far,
Flew through the still lands,
as if it were flying home.

– Translation © Ezust, n.d.

Love Sweet *Love Sweet* is a collection of five songs based on love poems by the American poet, Amy Lowell. The layout of the poetry reflects the trajectory of a relationship: from birth to death. Three of the songs make use of an unusual piano technique: stopped piano (this unique color is created by reaching in and slightly muffling the piano strings before they are struck in the traditional manner [with the hammer of the key]). This color decision came about because of the presence of the violin and cello in the accompaniment as well; the resulting sound mimics the string instruments' pizzicato effect (plucking the string, as opposed to traditional bowing).

The poems: "Apology," "The Giver of Stars," "Absence," and "A Gift" are from *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed* (1912). "A Fixed Idea" is from *A Dome of Many-Coloured Glass* (1912).

This work was commissioned by SongFest and made possible with the generous support of The Sorel Foundation.

–JH

In addition to its finely crafted songs that allow singer, piano, and instruments to weave in and around each other like a dance of spiraling vines, Higdon's *Love Sweet* was an introduction to the sublime love poetry of Amy Lowell. At one point the influential leader of the Imagist poets, Lowell fell into obscurity after her death. The interplay between brooding despair and exuberant love is brilliantly depicted in these poems, now understood to have been written for her partner, Ada Dwyer Russell.

In addition to my regular collaborations with Genevieve Feiwen Lee, we were fortunate to mount the last Milhaud celebration for Mills College with musical friends Sara Parkins (violin) and Maggie Parkins (cello). While we didn't perform together on that concert, Genevieve shared with us a recording of *Love Sweet*, with which we instantly fell in love. When the opportunity to perform this recital arose, this piece and my friends were the first to make the cut. We so enjoyed our rehearsals that we are now looking for more works for soprano and piano trio.

–MEG

Jennifer Higdon is one of America's most acclaimed and most frequently performed living composers. She is a major figure in contemporary classical music, receiving the 2010 Pulitzer Prize in Music for her Violin Concerto, a 2010 Grammy® Award for her Percussion Concerto, a 2018 Grammy® Award for her Viola Concerto, and a 2020 Grammy® Award for her Harp Concerto. Most recently, Higdon received the Nemmers Prize from Northwestern University, given to contemporary classical composers of exceptional achievement who have significantly influenced the field of composition. Higdon enjoys several hundred performances a year of her works, and *blue cathedral* is one of today's most performed contemporary orchestral works, with more than 650 performances worldwide. Her works have been recorded on more than 60 albums, and her Percussion Concerto recording was recently inducted into the Library of Congress National Recording Registry. Higdon's first opera, *Cold Mountain*, won the prestigious International Opera Award for Best World Premiere. Dr. Higdon holds the Rock Chair in Composition at The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

Apology

Be not angry with me that I bear
Your colors everywhere,
All through each crowded street,
And Meet
The wonder-light in every eye,
As I go by,

Each plodding wayfarer looks up to gaze,
Blinded by rainbow-haze,
The stuff of happiness,
No less,
Which wraps me in its glad-hued folds
Of peacock golds.

Before my feet the dusty, rough-paved way
Flushes beneath its gray.
My steps fall ringed with light,
So bright
It seems a myriad suns are strown
About the town.

Around me is the sound of steepled bells,
And rich perfumed smells
Hang like a wind-forgotten cloud,
And shroud
Me from close contact with the world.
I dwell, imperaled.

You blazon me with jewelled insignia.
A flaming nebula
Rims in my life. And yet
You set
The word upon me, unconfessed,
To go unguessed.

The Giver of Stars

Hold your soul open for my welcoming.
Let the quiet of your spirit bathe me
With its clear and rippled coolness,
That, loose-limbed and weary, I find rest,
Outstretched upon your peace, as on a bed of ivory.

Let the flickering flame of your soul play all about me,
That into my limbs may come the keenness of fire,
The life and joy of tongues of flame,
And, going out from you, tightly strung and in tune,
I may rouse the blear-eyed world,
And pour into it the beauty which you have begotten.

Absence

My cup is empty to-night,
Cold and dry are its sides,
Chilled by the wind from the open window.
Empty and void, it sparkles white in the moonlight.
The room is filled with the strange scent
Of wistaria blossoms.
They sway in the moon's radiance
And tap against the wall.
But the cup of my heart is still,
And cold, and empty.

When you come, it brims
Red and trembling with blood,
Heart's blood for your drinking;
To fill your mouth with love
And the bitter-sweet taste of a soul.

A Gift

See! I give myself to you, Beloved!
My words are little jars
For you to take and put upon a shelf.
Their shapes are quaint and beautiful,
And they have many pleasant colours and lustres
To recommend them.
Also the scent from them fills the room
With sweetness of flowers and crushed grasses.

When I shall have given you the last one,
You will have the whole of me,
But I shall be dead.

– Amy Lowell (1874–1925), 1912

A Fixed Idea

What torture lurks within a single thought
When grown too constant; and however kind,
However welcome still, the weary mind
Aches with its presence. Dull remembrance taught
Remembers on unceasingly; unsought
The old delight is with us but to find
That all recurring joy is pain refined,
Become a habit, and we struggle, caught.
You lie upon my heart as on a nest,
Folded in peace, for you can never know
How crushed I am with having you at rest
Heavy upon my life. I love you so
You bind my freedom from its rightful quest.
In mercy lift your drooping wings and go.

– Lowell, 1910

Chansons Créoles (excerpts) The *gens de couleurs* were men of culture and learning. Many were educated in France. Let me be clear: they were Creoles of Color, a part of the separate caste that didn't fit into Louisiana's White Creole establishment (though related by blood) and didn't want to intermingle with Black people either, lest their protected status be disrupted. Bear in mind that the published book of poems, *Les Cenelles*, appeared in 1845, not exactly a progressive civil rights era in Louisiana. What was most appealing to me as a composer was the subject matter that these poets chose to immortalize and the style of the poetry—French romanticism: there is a poem about a romantic meeting spoiled by the light of the moon, a tribute to a great beauty's exquisite brown eyes, an ode to an old favorite hat that draws laughter and the wearer's pride.

–JLCII

John and I have been friends and collaborators for nearly 30 years, having met when he was beginning his studies at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music. I have been performing *Lis'en to the Lams*, his cycle of spirituals for two sopranos, almost as long. When this recital of music among friends became a reality, I knew I wanted to include some of his solo settings.

Premiered in 2006 by tenor Jason Oby, the mutual friend for whom they were composed, *Chanson Créoles* occupies a unique space in the repertoire as settings of poetry by antebellum Black Louisianan writers. The poems are a very present demonstration of the ways in which social interactions have and have not changed since the time of their writing. The subtitle of Michel St. Pierre's brief "Couplet" alludes to the shooting of its female subject and goes on to say that if she had acted right, she would not have been shot. The odious idea of women dying and/or being assaulted at the hands of men for not responding as those men believed they should is clearly not a new problem. Cornelius undergirds this misogyny with jaunty rhythms and discordances that suggest a person repeating the sentiment to its utterer, asking, "that's the story you want to go with?" He similarly employs a boisterous accompaniment to match the strutting of a fashionable gent, and evokes moonlight admiration with spacious chords and harmonies that paint the scintillating starlight.

—MEG

John L. Cornelius, II is a member of ASCAP and the American Federation of Musicians (AFofM) and his output includes a number of chamber works, orchestral works, and song cycles. He has also written, along with his collaborator, Michael J. Bobbitt, several works for the lyric theater including *Garfield: The Musical with Cattitude*, *Bob Marley's Three Little Birds* (Nomination—Charles MacArthur Award for Outstanding New Play—Helen Hayes Awards 2014), *Mirandy and Brother Wind*, *Say It Ain't So!*, *The Yellow Rose of Texas*, and *The Bingo Long Travelling All-Stars and Motor Kings*. Both *Garfield* and *Three Little Birds* are licensed through R&H Theatricals and *Mirandy* through New Plays for Young Audiences. His most recent concert works include *Chansons Créoles*, a song cycle whose text is by *gens de couleur* of nineteenth-century Louisiana; *Three Creole Songs* commissioned by the Kingwood Chorale; *Song of Houston* and *The Kashmere Cycle*, song cycles commissioned by Houston Grand Opera's HGOCO.; and *Fulfilled*, a Passion Week Cantata. His new chamber opera, *What Wings They Were*, a commission from HGOCO, premiered in May 2016. His most recent works include a set of *Cowboy Songs* and *Sweet Freedom's Song: a Fantasia on the hymn-tune America*. Dr. Cornelius is a native of Jackson, Mississippi and is a Professor of Music at Prairie View A&M University.

Couplet

*Contre une demoiselle sur qui
On avait tiré un coup de pistolet*

*Avec plus de timidité,
De douceur dans le caractère,
Et le regard moins effronté,
Peut-être Elina pourrait plaire:
Mais loin d'avoir les dons heureux
Qui font rechercher une belle,
Elina n'allume des feux—
Que pour lui brûler la cervelle.*

— Michel St. Pierre (1810–52)

Verses

*Against a young lady who
Was shot by a pistol*

With more timidity,
A softness of character,
And a less impertinent stare,
Maybe Elina could be pleasing:
But far from possessing the fortunate blessings,
Which one seeks in a beauty,
Elina lights only the fires —
That will scorch her brains.

— Translation © Melissa Givens, 2021

Vers écrit sur l'Album de Mademoiselle

*L'étoile qui scintille en la voûte des cieux,
De l'astre de la nuit la suave lumière
Sont moins douces à voir qu'un regard de tes yeux
Sous ta brune paupière.*

– Pierre Dalcour (1813–??)

Mon vieux chapeau

*On dit que mon chapeau
Remonte au temps d'Hérode,
Qu'il n'est plus à la mode,
Qu'il m'en faut un nouveau.
Mais tout bas je répète
Que chacun a son goût;
Quand je l'ai sur la tête,
Je suis bien vu partout.*

*Lorsque sur un côté
Je l'ajuste avec grâce,
Chacun me donne place,
Je marche avec fierté.
Ma belle, la première,
Me dit que je suis beau,
Quand de cette manière
Je mets mon vieux chapeau.*

*Ah! si dans sa bonté
Dieu me faisait la grâce
De prolonger ma race,
Que je serais flatté
De voir avant que j'aie
Dans un monde nouveau,
Un garçon de ma taille
Mettre mon vieux chapeau.*

– Mirtill-Ferdinand Liotau (c. 1800–47)

Lines written in Mademoiselle's Album

The star that twinkles high in the vault of heaven,
The soft light of the evening star,
Are not as sweet to look at as a glance from your eyes
Under their brown eyelids.

– Translation © Givens, 2021

My Old Hat

They say that my hat
Is as ancient as Herod,
That it is out of style,
That I must get new one.
But out of their earshot I say
Each to his own taste;
When I wear it on my head,
People regard me well in every place.

When to one side
I adjust it with grace,
Everyone steps aside for me,
I walk with pride.
My beauty is the first
To tell me I am handsome,
When in this way
I wear my old hat.

Ah! if in His goodness
The good Lord were to allow me
To prolong my race,
How flattered I would be
To see, before I go
To a new world,
A young man of my size
Wearing my old hat.

– Translation © Givens, 2021

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

American soprano **Melissa Givens** moves and excites audiences and critics alike with a rich, powerful tone, crystalline clarity, and intelligent musical interpretations. Especially noted for her expressiveness and elegance on the stage, she's been hailed as a singer whose music making is "consistently rewarding" and "a pleasure to hear." Givens is also an extremely versatile artist, regularly performing repertoire from the Baroque era through music of the twenty-first century.

Recent performances include the solo recital *Out of the Shadows: Art Songs by Black Composers*, the premiere of the ACDA Genesis Prize-winning compositions with *Conspirare*, and the premiere of Tom Flaherty's *Dear Lieder*. Upcoming events include a duet recital with baritone Timothy Jones, and the release of her second solo recording, *The Artist at Fifty*, a recital of art songs from the composers' fiftieth year.

An Assistant Professor at Pomona College, Givens remains in demand as a recitalist and clinician and appears frequently with Grammy®-winning *Conspirare: A Company of Voices*. She can also be heard on her solo album, *let the rain kiss you*.

A versatile performer of music spanning five centuries, Grammy®-nominated **Genevieve Feiwen Lee** has thrilled audiences on the piano, harpsichord, toy piano, keyboard, and electronics. She enjoys music that challenges her to go outside of her comfort zone to sing, speak, act, and play new instruments. She has appeared as a soloist in France, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Poland, and the Netherlands. Ms. Lee has premiered and commissioned numerous works, and she can be heard on the Innova, Albany, and Reference labels. In the Los Angeles area, Ms. Lee has been a guest performer with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Chamber Music series at Disney Hall, Southwest Chamber Music, Jacaranda, Piano Spheres, and the Hear Now New Music Festival. She is a founding member of the Mojave Trio and performed in Carnegie Hall with the Garth Newel Piano Quartet. Ms. Lee received her degrees from the Peabody Institute, École Normale de Musique de Paris, and the Yale School of Music. Having joined the Pomona College faculty in 1994, she is the first recipient of the Everett S. Olive Professorship, endowed by Yuk Mei Shim '50.

Joti Rockwell, Associate Professor of Music, joined the Pomona College faculty in fall of 2007. He has taught courses on music theory, American popular music, music and mathematics, and rhythm, and he is a previous recipient of the Wig Distinguished Professor Award for Excellence in Teaching. His scholarly work has centered around American roots music and music theory, and his writings have appeared in publications including *Journal of Music Theory*, *Ethnomusicology*, and *Popular Music*. He received a B.S. in physics and music from Haverford College and a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. Prior to his graduate work, he performed full time as one half of an acoustic duo, touring extensively across the United States and recording five albums, one of which was for the Nashville label Compass Records. He plays roots music, bluegrass, and contemporary concert music on the acoustic guitar, mandolin, and banjo, and he also performs in and coordinates Pomona's Balinese gamelan ensemble, *Giri Kusuma*.

Violinist **Sara Parkins** is a Grammy®-Award winner for Best Chamber Music Performance for the complete recordings of the Haydn String Quartets with the Angeles Quartet. She is a founding member of the Eclipse Quartet and a member of the acclaimed Eroica Trio. She has collaborated with prominent new-music composers and performers such as Anthony Braxton, Mark Dresser, and Guy Klucevsek. In addition, Sara has performed with the Orchestra of St. Luke's in New York City. She is currently principal second violinist with the Pasadena Symphony, is an active studio musician, and a former member of the Rosetti String Quartet in Los Angeles. Ms. Parkins has performed at the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, the Banff Centre, Strings in the Mountains, and the Bravo Festival in Vail, Colorado. Internationally, Sara has

participated at the Taklos Festival in Zurich, The Wels Unlimited Festival, the Festival Internationale de Cadeques in Spain, and in Eisenstadt, Austria. Sara is featured on Phillips Classics, Victo, Avant and Tzadik recording labels. She attended the Curtis Institute of Music and SUNY at Stony Brook.

An uncommonly versatile musician, cellist **Maggie Parkins** is in demand as both a performer and a teacher. Based in Los Angeles, Parkins is equally at home in chamber music, orchestral music and the avant-garde, and has performed throughout the Americas and Europe. Always an advocate for new and experimental music, Parkins, as a founding member of the Eclipse String Quartet, has commissioned or premiered numerous works for string quartet. She is also a member Brightwork newmusic ensemble based in Los Angeles. She has performed under the batons of Seiji Ozawa, Leonard Bernstein, and Simon Rattle. Her orchestral experience includes the Brooklyn Philharmonic, the Pasadena Symphony, and the Los Angeles Master Chorale. No stranger to the solo stage, Parkins has performed concerti with the UC Irvine Symphony Orchestra and the Tanglewood Festival Orchestra, recitals at Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and elsewhere. An active recording artist as well, Parkins can be heard on the Albany, Bridge, New World, Tzadik, Avan, and Victo labels. She was the cello professor at UC Irvine for 19 years where she ran the chamber music program, and is currently on faculty at Pomona College.