Sunday, November 20, 2011, 3pm
Hertz Hall

Eric Owens, bass-baritone
Craig Rutenberg, piano

PROGRAM

Hugo Wolf (1860–1903) Drei Lieder nach Gedichten von Michelangelo
  Wohl denk ich oft
  Alles endet, was entsteht
  Fühlt meine Seele das ersehnte Licht

Robert Schumann (1810–1856) Mein Herz ist schwer, Op. 25, No. 15
  Muttertraum, Op. 40, No. 2
  Der Schatzgräber, Op. 45, No. 1
  Melancholie, Op. 74, No. 6

Franz Schubert (1797–1828) Prometheus, D. 674
  Fahrt zum Hades, D. 526
  Gruppe aus dem Tartarus, D. 583

Claude Debussy (1862–1918) Beau Soir
  Fleur des Blés
  Romance
  Nuit d’étoiles

Henri Duparc (1848–1933) L’Invitation au Voyage
  Le Manoir de Rosemonde
  Élégie

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) Don Quichotte à Dulcinée
  Chanson romanesque
  Chanson épique
  Chanson à boire

Richard Wagner (1813–1883) Les Deux Grenadiers

INTERMISSION

Funded by the Koret Foundation, this performance is part of Cal Performances’ 2011–2012 Koret Recital Series, which brings world-class artists to our community.

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Hugo Wolf (1860–1903)

Drei Lieder nach Gedichten von Michelangelo
(“Three Songs on Poems by Michelangelo”)

Hugo Wolf was the greatest German composer of songs after Schubert. A seething emotional turmoil dominated his life—from his inability to subject himself to the rigors of formal training, through his vehemently zealous support of Wagner and his bouts of near-manic compositional frenzy, to his suicide attempts and his death in an insane asylum. His life and his music blazed with a white-hot inflammability that speaks of the deepest feelings of an age that was just beginning to sense the end of the artistic, social, political and ideological era that culminated in the catastrophe of World War I.

On March 5, 1892, a teacher in Berlin named Paul Müller attended a recital of Wolf’s songs sponsored by the city’s Wagner Society, and he was struck not just by the depth of expression in the music but also by the high quality of the texts on which it was based. He met Wolf after the concert and complimented him on the verses he had chosen for his songs, and a friendship quickly sprang up between them; Müller established the first Hugo Wolf Society, in Berlin, three years later and published his reminiscences of him shortly after the composer’s death, in 1903. As a Christmas gift in 1896, Müller sent Wolf a copy of Walter Robert-Tornow’s just-published German translations of poems by Michelangelo, and the following March, only six months before his final mental breakdown, Wolf set three of them. They were his last works, and in his 1910 biography of the composer, English musicologist Ernest Newman wrote that they contain “the throb of feeling as profound as in anything Wolf ever wrote.”

In a letter to a friend, Wolf provided his own description of the first song, “Wohl denk’ ich oft an mein vergang’nes Leben” (“I often think on my past life,” excerpted from Michelangelo’s Io crederei, se tu fussi di sasso—“I believe I could, even if you were made of stone, love you so faithfully”): “[It] begins with a melancholy introduction and holds fast to this tone until the line before the last. Then it takes on unexpectedly a vigorous character (developed from the previous motive) and closes festively with triumphal fanfares, like a flourish of trumpets sounded for [Michelangelo] by his contemporaries in homage.”

The second song—Alles endet, was entstehet ("Everything ends which comes to be," based on Michelangelo’s Chiensche nase a morte arrived)—is one of Wolf’s most profound utterances. He once considered titling it Vanitas Vanitatum, and Eric Sams, in his 1961 study of Wolf’s songs, wrote that it seems to be music from “among the dead, speaking the language of the dead,” a phrase that echoes the title Modeste Mussorgsky gave to his somber evocation of the Roman catacombs in Pictures at an Exhibition, subtitled Cäm Mortuis in Lingua Mortua—“With the Dead in a Dead Language.”

Fühl’ meine Seele das ersehnte Licht von Gott? ("Is my soul feeling the longed-for light of God?" based on Michelangelo’s Non so se s’e la desitata luce) years for spiritual fulfillment but can find no answer within, and ends by tracing the unsettled state of the poet’s mind to an unnamed beloved: I am driven by a yea and a no, a sweet and a bitter—that, mistress, is the doing of your eyes.

Robert Schumann (1810–1856)

Four Songs

In 1835, Lord Byron (1788–1824) published a collection of Hebrew Melodies, poems inspired by verses from the Old Testament, that the would-be composer Isaac Nathan, the son of a Jewish cantor in Canterbury, had persuaded him to fit to his adaptations of a number of melodies from the synagogue services. My Soul Is Dark, based on I Samuel 16:14–23, was rendered into German as Mein Herz ist schwer by Karl Julius Körner (1793–1873) and given a new and deeply thoughtful setting by Robert Schumann under the title Aus den Hebräischen Gesängen ("From the Hebrew Melodies") for inclusion in his song cycle Myrthen ("Myrtles") of 1840.

Schumann acquired his interest in literature from his father, August, a bibliophile and successful bookseller in Zwickau, and he kept abreast of the day’s most important writers throughout his life. He was already aware of the 32-year-old Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1875), the prolific Danish writer of novels, travelogues, poetry and fantasy tales, when his Kun en Spillemand ("Only a Fiddler") appeared in German translation in June 1837. Schumann read the novel—"very wise, so clever, so childlike"—was his estimation—and he thereafter sought out other works by the Danish author, including several poems translated by the German Romanticist Adalbert von Chamisso (1781–1818), whose Frauenliebe und -leben ("Woman’s Love and Life") he set in July 1840. As soon as he had finished that cycle, Schumann set five of Andersen’s poems as his Fünf Lieder, Op. 40. In October 1842, Schumann sent Andersen a copy of the Op. 40 Songs with the following note: “Perhaps the settings will seem strange to you. So at first did your poems to me. But as I grew to understand them better, my music took on a more unusual style.”

Schumann arranged a performance of the Op. 40 Songs by soprano Livia Frege with his wife, Clara, as pianist when he and Andersen met for the first time during the writer’s visit to Leipzig on June 22, 1844; Andersen declared the songs to be “poetic.” The strangeness that Schumann perceived in Andersen’s verses is exemplified by the second number of the set, Muttertraum ("A Mother’s Dream"), in which a mother lovingly cradles her child while just outside the window ravens, symbolic ill omens since ancient times, gather with sinister intent.

Schumann composed some 140 songs in 1840, the year he finally married his beloved Clara. “Oh Clara, what bliss to write songs,” he told his new wife. “I should like to sing myself to death like a nightingale.” Since Schumann was given to concentrating on one poet at a time, many of his songs are arranged into cycles created around the texts of a single author. He composed such a “song cycle”—a “Liederkreis”—on nine poems by Heinrich Heine, one of his favorite writers, and issued it as his Op. 24; the Heine Liederkreis was followed by a sequel on texts of Joseph von Eichendorff, cataloged as Op. 39. In November 1840, two months after his wedding, Schumann created a pendant to those two song cycles with the Romanzen und Balladen I, Op. 45, which contains two poems by Eichendorff and one by Heine. The first song—Der Schatzgräber ("The Treasure-Seeker")—is a grim morality tale by the devoutly Catholic Eichendorff about the wages of avarice.

The verses of Emanuel von Geibel, one of Germany’s most popular Romantic poets, were set to music hundreds of times through the early 20th century by Robert and Clara Schumann, Felix Mendelssohn and his sister, Fanny, Wolf, Grieg, Bruckner, Berg, Brahms, Bruch, Gräfin, Strauss, Schoenberg, MacDowell, Lehár and dozens of others. Robert Schumann first learned of Geibel’s poems around 1840, when his verses began appearing in literary journals and composers were submitting their songs set to them for review to the Neue Zeitschrift für Musik ("New Journal for Music"), which Schumann had founded six years before. Schumann and Geibel met in Dresden four times between April and June 1846, and it is possible that the poet presented the composer on one of those occasions with a copy of his Volkslieder und Romanzen der Spanier (1843), translations of song texts and poems by such Spanish and Portuguese Renaissance authors as Luis de Camoens (c.1524–1580), Pedro de Padilla (1540–after 1599), Gil Vicente (1465–1537) and Rodrigo de Cota (c.1430–c.1505); several of the poems are anonymous and at least some of them may have been written by Geibel himself.

In 1848, Schumann took over direction of the Dresden Verein für Chorgesang ("Association for Choral Singing"), and the following March he set ten of Geibel’s verses for that ensemble as the Spanisches Liederlied, Op. 74 ("Spanish Song Play"), which included Melancholie, based on a text by the 16th-century Spanish writer Francisco de Sá de Miranda.

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

Three Songs

Schubert set some 30 poems by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), including
the beloved Erlikönig, Prometheus was the mythological titan of ancient Greece who stole fire, the symbol of enlightenment, from the gods to release mankind from ignorance through science and art. For his brazen disregard of Zeus, Prometheus was chained to a rock, where daily an eagle tore at his liver until he was released by Hercules. Goethe began a drama on the subject of Prometheus in 1773 but sketched only three scenes, one of which is a poem of raging defiance that Schubert made into a dramatic song (D. 674) in October 1819.

Johann Baptist Mayrhofer was born in Steyr in 1787, went to school in Linz, and moved to Vienna in 1810 to study law. He met Schubert four years later, and the two became close friends despite their contrasting characters—Mayrhofer was moody and melancholic; Schubert, ebullient and outgoing. Schubert was influenced both by Mayrhofer’s thoughtfulness and by his knowledge of the classics, and he set some three-dozen of his poems during the next four years. They grew close enough personally that the composer moved into the poet’s quarters late in 1818, but when the libertarian but congenitally contrary Mayrhofer accepted what seemed to be a deliberately self-flagellating post with the state censor’s office in 1820 to make ends meet, Schubert moved out. Their friendship continued, however, and Schubert set nine more of Mayrhofer’s verses. Mayrhofer was deeply moved by Schubert’s early death in 1828, and he continued, however, and Schubert set nine more of Mayrhofer’s verses. Mayrhofer was deeply moved by Schubert’s early death in 1828, and he largely gave up writing thereafter. He first tried to commit suicide in 1831, and finally succeeded five years later. Schubert set Fahrt zum Hades (“Journey to Hades,” D. 526) in October 1819.

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Four Songs

Edward Lockspeiser’s statement that “poetry fertilizes the art of Debussy” is borne out by the dozens of songs that the composer created throughout his career. French art at the dawn of the 20th century was seeking to escape the hyperventilated expression of Romanticism, specifically the pervasive influence of Germanic Wagnerian Romanticism, to forge a new art informed by intuition and suggestion, by gossamer image and evocative word. Debussy was profoundly affected by these quietly revolutionary French artistic upheavals, and he immersed himself in the painting and poetry of his near-contemporaries. He sought to embody the spirit of his nation in his music—he chose as his personal title musicien français—and found continual inspiration for his work in the art of the Impressionists and the verses of the Symbolists. All of his songs use French texts by French authors.

Romance (1881) and Beau Soir (1882) are settings of evocative poems by the French writer Paul Bourget (1852–1935), who was noted for his critical essays and his psychologically penetrating novels. Bourget enjoyed considerable acclaim during his lifetime for his writings—which included a journal of his visit to the United States in 1893—and he was admitted to the Académie Française in 1894 and made an Officier de la Légion d’honneur the following year.

Fleur des Blés (“Wheat Flower”) is Debussy’s winsome setting of a poem by André Girod, who was a director of the Parisian music publishing firm that issued a biweekly journal titled L’Art Musical in the 1880s and handled several lesser-known French composers; Girod published the song in 1891. Fleur des Blés was composed early in 1881, when Debussy was accompanying the singing class of Madame Moreau-Sainti for “les jeunes filles du meilleur monde” and dedicated to one of the students, Madame Émilie Deguingand, the wife of a prominent Parisian businessman.

Théodore Faüllin de Banville (1823–1891) gained prominence through his 20 volumes of poetry but he was also known as a literary and drama critic, essayist and author of several plays produced at the Comédie-Française. He was made a member of the Légion d’honneur in 1858 and promoted to an officer in that order in 1886. Debussy’s 15 settings of Banville’s verses include a dreamy setting of Nuit d’étoiles (“Starry Night”) from 1886, which was the young composer’s first published work.

Henri Duparc (1848–1933)

Three Songs

Troubled in spirit and in health and sufficiently self-destructive to destroy much of what he composed, Henri Duparc left a tiny musical legacy to posterity: two tone poems (Lénore and Aux étoiles), a suite of waltzes for orchestra, a half-dozen pieces for piano, a cello sonata, one vocal duet, a motet for three voices, a few arrangements of organ works by Bach and Franck, and 16 songs. He is remembered almost entirely for his handful of songs, but what songs they are—exquisite, fluid, precisely inflected musical wrappings of voluptuously beautiful verse that count among the greatest contributions to the French vocal repertory.

Duparc, born in Paris on January 21, 1848, studied piano and, later, composition privately at the Collège du Vaugiraud with César Franck, who regarded Henri as his most talented pupil. Duparc’s formal training was for a career in law, but the lure of music was too strong for him, and he had begun composing in earnest by 1868, when five of his songs appeared in print. After a pilgrimage to hear Die Walküre and Tristan in Munich, where he met both Wagner and Franz Liszt, Duparc devoted himself to a musical career. He became secretary of the new Société Nationale, founded by Saint-Saëns to promote French music after the debacle of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, which premiered his orchestral Suite de Valses and three-movement Poème nocturne in 1874. (He later destroyed the Poème’s second and third movements; only Aux étoiles remains.) The Société gave his tone poem Lénore, after Burger’s ballad, the following year. During the next decade, Duparc worked on an opera based on Pushkin’s Roussalka, which he never completed and whose drafts he eventually destroyed, and added several more numbers to his collection of songs. In 1885, he suddenly stopped composing after suffering a breakdown occasioned by what Martin Cooper described in his article on Duparc in the New Grove Dictionary as “a neurotic condition [nervous debility and exhaustion], no doubt of physical origin but predominantly psychological in its manifestations of crippling hyperaesthesia [an abnormally acute sense of pain, heat, cold or touch].” Duparc never composed another note. He withdrew into a quiet life with his wife and family, tried rest cures in Switzerland and southern France, read, painted, listened to music, grew devoutly religious, and eventually became blind and paralyzed. He died at Mont-de-Marsan, in southeastern France, in 1933, nearly 50 years after composing his last song; he was 85.

The sweet, fantastic vision evoked by Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) in his L’Invitation au voyage is perfectly reflected in Duparc’s music. Le Manoir de Rosemonde (“Rosemonde’s Manor”), composed in 1879, sets a text by the Parisian novelist, journalist and poet Robert de Bonnières (1850–1905), a close friend with whom Duparc once shared an apartment. The poem, which had just been published in Bonnières’s Contes de fées (“Fairy Tales”), tells of a feverish quest to find the refuge of love in the cryptic “blue domain of Rosemonde,” perhaps a reference to the beautiful Rosamund Clifford, mistress of King Henry II of England.
Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

Don Quichotte à Dulcinée

Ravel spent four months early in 1932 on tour with Marguerite Long putting his new Piano Concerto in G on display throughout much of central Europe to enthusiastic praise. When he returned to the Basque countryside for a rest, he found waiting for him there a commission to write music for a film version of Don Quichote starring the legendary Russian basso Feodor Chaliapin in the title role. Despite his declining health and his doctor’s warning to save his strength, Ravel was intrigued by the project and he accepted it, agreeing to compose both background music and songs specially prepared for Chaliapin. The film’s producer, Georg W. Pabst, had already engaged as screenwriter and lyricist Paul Morand, a world traveler, skilled diplomat and writer well known for his novels depicting many cultures with clarity and realism. With the widely regarded Ravel as another contributor, Pabst not only had a fine artistic team, but also figured to attract backers for the undertaking. Ravel, despite an ambitious beginning during the summer, was unable to complete any of his assignment on time, and Jacques Ibert was entrusted to take over in his place in the production team. (Pabst overcame financial difficulties to complete his film, a valuable document of Chaliapin if not a memorable cinematic endeavor.) Ravel, however, continued the songs as a concert work and completed them some time early the following year, though his deteriorating neurological condition made it difficult for him to control his hands, forcing him to seek the help of Lucien Garban and Manuel Rosenthal in preparing the fair copy of the full score. Don Quichotte à Dulcinée was Ravel’s last work.

These songs are the final evidence of Ravel’s long interest in the music of Spain, which had blossomed in such earlier works as the Rapsodie espagnole, L’Heure espagnole and Boléro. He had even contemplated an opera based on the tale of Cervantes’s quixotic knight, though that plan never came to fruition. Each of the three settings of Morand’s poems is based on a traditional dance rhythm of Spain: Chanson romanesque on the quajira, Chanson épique on the zortzico and Chanson à boire on the jota. The first is a love song of near manic devotion to the beloved Dulcinee in the characteristic Spanish meter produced by alternate measures of 6/8 and 3/4. The second song presents Quixote as a holy warrior invoking the aid of the Madonna and Saint Michael to sustain him in his valiant quest. The closing Drinking Song paints the hero in his one undeniable virtue—as an expansive tippler.

Richard Wagner (1813–1883)

Les deux grenadiers (“The Two Grenadiers”)

In July 1839, cabals and creditors ran Wagner out of Riga, where he had been conducting at the local opera house for the previous two years. (Wagner was a notorious financial deadbeat throughout his life.) With his wife, Minna, and Robber, their enormous Newfoundland dog, he arrived in Paris on September 17 by a circuitous route that led through London. Wagner’s time in the French capital was the most miserable he ever endured. Though he met many of the city’s important musicians, including Meyerbeer (a transplanted German), he spoke virtually no French, and could make no professional headway. He lived in poverty in a miserable garret, struggling to exist by writing journal articles and undertaking such menial musical tasks as arranging selections from recent operatic hits. The nadir of his fortunes came in October 1840, when he was briefly incarcerated in debtor’s prison. Though he was longing to bring his visions of vast operatic ventures to the stage (he had begun Rienzi before leaving Riga), Wagner wrote a few songs to French texts “in order to gain the graces of the Parisian salon world through its favorite singers,” he recalled in his autobiography. “I composed several French songs, which, after all my efforts to the contrary, were considered too out of the way and difficult to be actually sung.” Wagner demonstrated his nascent sense of drama early in 1840 in a setting of Die beiden Grenadiere (“The Two Grenadiers”) by Heinrich Heine that had been rendered into French by François-Adolphe Lœve-Weimar. (Robert Schumann set Heine’s poem in the original German that April.) The poem, which Heine included in his Buch der Lieder of 1827, imagines two of Napoleon’s soldiers captured in Russia who only learn of their emperor’s ultimate defeat at Waterloo in June 1815 on their long trek home. One says that it is time to return to his wife and child, but the other experiences one last surge of patriotism that culminates in a fervent reference to La Marseillaise.

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Hugo Wolf
Drei Lieder nach Gedichten von Michelangelo

Wohl denk ich oft

Text: Walter Heinrich Robert-Tornow (1852–1895)

Based on the Italian text by Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564)

Wohl denk ich oft an mein vergangenes Leben,
Wie es vor meiner Liebe für dich war;
Kein Mensch hat damals Acht auf mich gegeben,
Einer Tag verloren für mich war;
Ich dachte wohl, ganz dem Gesang zu leben,
Auch mich zu flüchten aus der Menschen Schar.
Genannt in Lob und Tadel bin ich heute,
Und, dass ich bin, wissen alle Leute!

Alles endet, was entstehet

Alles endet, was entstehet.
Alles, alles rings vergehet,
Denn die Zeit flieht, und die Sonne
Sieht, dass alles rings vergehet,
Denken, Reden, Schmerz, und Wonne;
Und die wir zu Enkeln hatten
Schwand en wie bei Tag die Schatten,
Und die wir zu Enkeln hatten
Denken, Reden, Schmerz, und Wonne.

Fühlt meine Seele das erschene Licht

Fühlt meine Seele das erschene Licht
Von Gott, der sie erschuf? Ist es der Strahl
Von anderer Schönheit aus dem Jammertal,
Der in mein Herz Erinnrung weekt und bricht?

Ist es ein Klang, ein Traumgesicht,
Der in mein Herz Erinnrung weckend bricht?
Von andrer Schönheit aus dem Jammertal,
Von Gott, der sie erschuf? Ist es der Strahl
Fühlt meine Seele das erschene Licht?

Robert Schumann

Mein Herz ist schwer from Myrthen

Text: Karl Julius Körner (1793–1873)
Based on the English text by George Gordon Noel Byron,
Lord Byron (1788–1824)

Mein Herz ist schwer! Auf!
Vor der Wand die Laute—
Nur sie allein mag ich noch hören,
Entlocke mit geschickter Hand
Ihr Töne, die das Herz betören.
Kann noch mein Herz ein Hoffen nähren,
Es zaubert diese Töne her,
Und birgt mein trocknes Auge Zähren,
Sie fließen, und mich brennt’s nicht mehr!

Nur tief sei, wild der Töne Fluss,
Und von der Freude weggekehret!
Ja, Sänger, dass ich weinen muss,
Sonst wird das schwere Herz verzehret!
Denn seh’! Von Kummer ward’s genähret,
Mit stummem Wachen trug es lang,
Und jetzt vom Ausersten belehret,
Da brech es oder heil im Sang.

Muttertraum

Text: Adelbert von Chamisso (1781–1838)
Based on a Danish text by Hans Christian Andersen
(1805–1875)

Die Mutter betet herzig und schaut
Entzückt auf den schlummernden Kleinen.
Er ruht in der Wiege so sanft und traut.
Ein Engel muss er ihr scheinen.

Sie küsst ihn und hetzt ihn, sie hält sich kaum.
Vergessen der irdischen Schmerzen,
Es schweift in die Zukunft ihr Hoffnungstraum.
So träumen Mütter im Herzen.

Der Rab indes mit der Sippschaft sein
Kreischt draussen am Fenster die Weise:
Dein Engel, dein Engel wird unser sein,
Der Räuber dient uns zur Speise.

Der Schatzgräber

Text: Josef Karl Benedikt von Eichendorff (1788–1857)

Wenn alle Wälder schliefen,
Er an zu graven hub,
Rastlos in Berges Tiefen
Nach einem Schatz er grub.

My Soul Is Dark

My heart is heavy! Arise!
Take the lute from the wall, it alone I still wish to hear;
with a skilful hand entice from it sounds that beguile the heart.
If my heart can still nurture a hope, these sounds shall magically call it forth,
and if my dry eyes harbor tears, they shall flow, and I shall no longer be burned by pain!

Only deep, wild be the flow of the notes, and turned away from joy!
Yea, singer, that I must weep, otherwise my heavy heart shall be consumed!
For look! It was nourished by anguish, with mute watching it long bore its burden, and now, having been taught by the extremes of pain, it must break or heal in song.

The mother prays sweetly and gazes with delight upon her slumbering little one.
He rests in his cradle, so tender and cozy.
He must seem to be an angel to her.

She kisses him and hugs him, she cannot restrain herself.
Forgetting all earthly pain, her hopeful dreams wander into the future.
Thus do mothers often dream.

The raven meanwhile, shrieks a tune outside the window: your angel, your angel will be ours—the brigand shall serve us at supper.

The treasure-seeker
When all the forests were sleeping, he began to dig, without rest in the mountain deep: for a treasure did he dig.
Du mich beneidest.
Um dessen Glut
Und meines Herd,
Und meine Hütte, die du nicht gebaut,
Doch lassen stehn
Musst mir meine Erde
An Eichen dich und Bergeshöh’n;
Der Disteln köpft,
Und übe, dem Knaben gleich,
Mit Wolkendunst
Bedecke deinen Himmel, Zeus,
Dass ich säh’ die Stunde,
Keine frohe Stunde.
Und im langen Leben
Schmerz auf Schmerz mir geben,
Saht nur Wund’ auf Wunde,
Saht nicht eine Freude,
Saht nur Qual für Liebe,
So trübe, so trübe!
Ihr Augen, vom Leide
Aus diesen Banden!
Der mein Leben löset
Wann denn, wann denn, wann denn,
Wann, wann erscheint der Morgen,
Wann denn, wann denn, wann denn,
Der mein Leben löset
Wann denn, wann denn, wann denn,
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Wann denn, wann denn, wann denn,
Wann, wann erscheint der Morgen,
Journey to Hades

The dory creaks, cypresses whisper; hear, spirits’ eerie cries. Soon I will be on the gloomy shore far removed from beautiful Earth.

Sunlight, starlight, neither shines there, no song sounds, no friend is found. Take, o distant land, these final tears my eyes have left to shed.

Already I see the wan Danaids, and curse-burdened Tantalus; heavy with death’s stillness, Oblivion, your age-old river, murmurs.

I call forgetting a second death. To lose what I spent utmost strength to win, and then repeat the struggle— When will these tortures finish? When?

The dory creaks, cypresses whisper; hear, spirits’ eerie cries. Soon I will be on the gloomy shore far removed from beautiful Earth.

Group from Tartarus

Hark—like the angered ocean’s murmuring, like a brook weeping through rocky hollows, groans yonder, dankly deep, a grievous, vain, torment-extracted moan. Agony contorts their faces, despair opens wide their jaws in imprecation. Hollow their eyes: their gaze fixes fearfully on Cocytus’s bridge, or, weeping, follows Cocytus’s drear course. Softly and in fear, each of the other asks whether it be not yet the end. Eternity above them whirls in circles, and shatters Saturn’s sickle asunder.

Claude Debussy

Beautiful Evening

When streams turn pink in the setting sun, and a slight shudder rushes through the wheat fields, a plea for happiness seems to rise out of all things and it climbs up towards the troubled heart.

A plea to relish the charm of life while there is youth and the evening is fair, for we pass away, as the wave passes: the wave to the sea, we to the grave.

Wheat Flower

Amid the wheat that the breeze has ruffled in playful teasing, leaving disorder so gay, here I seize my chance to please you, and pluck for you a sweet bouquet.

Place it lightly on your breast; I made it in your image blest and do you say, “Tell me why?” A little bird, I have guessed, has already told you why!

First some ears of wheat, the flare of your lovely hair, golden tresses full of sun; now the scarlet poppies fair, these your lips that love has won.

And these bluets, how enchanting, but of azure disconcerting, these bluets are your own eyes, no blue on this earth so dazzling, heaven’s flow’rs fall’n from the skies.
Luxe, calme et volupté.

Là, tout n’est qu’ordre et beauté,
Brillant à travers leurs larmes.

De tes traîtres yeux,
Si mystérieux
Pour mon esprit ont les charmes
Les soleils mouillés
Au pays qui te ressemble.

Aimer et mourir
Aimer à loisir,
D’aller là-bas vivre ensemble,
Songe à la douceur
Mon enfant, ma sœur,
Text: Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867)

L’invitation au voyage
Text: Théodore Faullin de Banville (1823–1891)

Dans les ombres de la feuillée,
Quand tout bas je soupire seul,
Tu reviens, pauvre âme éveillée,
Toute blanche dans ton linceuil.

Tu reviens, pauvre âme éveillée,
Quand tout bas je soupire seul,
Dans les ombres de la feuillée,
Et je revois à notre fontaine
Tous ces yeux bleus comme les cieux;
Là, tout n’est qu’ordre et beauté,
Brillant à travers leurs larmes.

La sereine mélancolie vient éclore
Je rêve aux amours défunts.

Lyre qui soupire,
Sous ta brise et tes parfums,
Nuit d’étoiles, sous tes voiles,
De béatitude et de paix?

D’une vapeur surnaturelle,
De la suavité céleste
Ne sont plus un parfum qui reste
Is there no longer a perfume that remains
of the celestial sweetness
of the days when you enveloped me
in a supernatural haze,
made of hope, of faithful love,
of bliss and of peace?

Nuit d’étoiles
Text: Théodore Faullin de Banville (1823–1891)

Nuit d’étoiles, sous tes voiles,
sous ta brise et tes parfums,
Triste lyre qui soupire,
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I. Romanesque Song

If ever for rest you are yearning,
I’ll hush the winds and the seas, my love,
I will say to the sun above,
“Cease in your flight, stay in your turning!”

If ever for morning you sigh,
the stars I will hide and their wonder,
the splendor of heavy tear asunder,
and banish the night from the sky.

If space lost in chaos was o’er you,
filling your soul with nameless fear,
god-like I’d come, shaking my spear,
and sow the stars, radiant before you.

But if ever I hear you cry,
“Give me your life! Prove how you love me!”
Darkness will fall, shadows above me,
blest you still, then I shall die.
O Dulcinée.

II. Romanesque Song

I. Romanesque Song

If ever for rest you are yearning,
I’ll hush the winds and the seas, my love,
I will say to the sun above,
“Cease in your flight, stay in your turning!”

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But if ever I hear you cry,
“Give me your life! Prove how you love me!”
Darkness will fall, shadows above me,
blest you still, then I shall die.
O Dulcinée.

II. Romanesque Song

May the light of heaven on my sword be lying,
give to my spirit purity,
and lend my heart sweet piety,
and lift my soul in ecstasy, undying!
(Oh! dear Saint George and Saint Michael, hear me!)

An angel watches ever near me,
my own beloved, so like to you,
Madonna, maid divine! Amen.

III. Drinking Song

Lady adored! Wherefore this sorrow?
I live in your glances divine,
say not that love, love and good wine,
brings to us mortals grief tomorrow! Ah!

III. Drinking Song

Drink on! drink to joy!
For good wine makes you laugh like a merry boy!
Makes you laugh, laugh like a boy!
Ah! Ah! Ah! to joy! La La La!

Drink on, drink to joy!
Who wants a maid (not I, I’m thinking!),
a maiden who mopes all day long,
silent and pale, never a song,
frowning to see her lover drinking! Ah!

Drink on, drink to joy!
For good wine makes you laugh like a merry boy!
Makes you laugh, laugh like a boy!
Ah! Ah! Ah! to joy! La La La!

Drink on, drink to joy!
For good wine makes you laugh like a merry boy!
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Makes you laugh, laugh like a boy!
Ah! Ah! Ah! to joy! La La La!

Drink on, drink to joy!
Fixe à mon sein glacé par le trépas
la croix d’honneur que mon sang a gagnée;
dans le cercueil couche-moi l’arme au bras,
met sous ma main la garde d’une épée;
de là je prêterai l’oreille au moindre bruit,
jusqu’au jour, où, tonnant sur la terre ébranlée,
l’écho de la mêlée
m’appellera du fond de l’éternelle nuit!

Peut-être bien qu’en ce choc meurtrier,
sous la mitraille et les feux de la bombe,
mon Empereur poussera son coursier
vers le gazon qui couvrira ma tombe.

Alors je sortirai du cercueil, tout armé;
and les plis sacrés du drapeau tricolore,
j’irai défendre encore
la France et l’Empereur,
l’Empereur bien aimé.”

The Cross of Valor, on its red band,
over my heart you shall lay;
my musket place into my hand;
and my sword at my side display.

So shall I lie and listen in the ground,
a guard watching, silently staying
 till once more I hear the cannon’s echo
and the hoofbeats of neighing horses.

Perhaps in the shock of battle,
under fire and with bombs falling,
my Emperor will pass right over my grave,
with each sword a flashing reflector.

And I, fully armed, will rise up from that grave,
and under the sacred folds of the tricolor,
I’ll again defend
France and the Emperor,
the beloved Emperor.”

A cclaimed for his commanding stage presence and inventive artistry, American bass-baritone Eric Owens has carved a unique place in the contemporary opera world as both an esteemed interpreter of classic works and a champion of new music. Equally at home in concert, recital and opera performances, Mr. Owens continues to bring his powerful poise, expansive voice and instinctive acting faculties to stages around the world.

The 2010–2011 season saw Mr. Owens’s Ring cycle debut as Alberich in Wagner’s Das Rheingold in Robert Lepage’s new production at the Metropolitan Opera, conducted by James Levine on the opening night of the Metropolitan’s season. Universally praised, Mr. Owens’s performance was considered a standout of the production. The 2010–2011 season also saw Mr. Owens as Ramfis in Aida at San Francisco Opera, and in the title role in Peter Sellars’s new Hercules at Lyric Opera of Chicago. On the concert stage, Mr. Owens appeared as Lodovico in Otello with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and conductor Riccardo Muti in performances at Symphony Center in Chicago and Carnegie Hall in New York.

During 2011–2012, Mr. Owens embarks on a significant recital tour with pianists Robert Spano and Craig Rutenberg. With engagements in Washington DC, Berkeley, Portland and Philadelphia, Mr. Owens will also perform February 21 at Carnegie Hall’s Zankel Hall. He will sing Bach Cantatas with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center on December 6. This season, Mr. Owens continues his work with the Metropolitan Opera’s Ring cycle, with his character Alberich reappearing in October in Siegfried and in January in Götterdämmerung. The complete cycles will begin in April 2012. Mr. Owens will perform Beethoven’s Missa solemnis with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in March at Carnegie Hall, one of three appearances there in 2011–2012. Appearing as Jochanaan in Strauss’s Salome with the Cleveland Orchestra, Mr. Owens assumes the role in both Cleveland and at Carnegie Hall in May. Summer 2012 begins with Mr. Owens reprising the role of the Storyteller in A Flowering Tree by John Adams with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. He will continue his summer at Glimmerglass Festival 2012 as the Artist in Residence. There, he will appear in Aida and Lost in the Stars, and will perform a jazz concert.

Mr. Owens has created an uncommon niche for himself in the ever-growing body of contemporary opera works through his determined tackling of new and challenging roles. He received great critical acclaim for portraying the title role in the world premiere of Elliot Goldenthal’s Grendel with the Los Angeles Opera, and again at the Lincoln Center Festival, in a production directed and designed by Julie Taymor. Mr. Owens also enjoys a close association with John Adams, for whom he created the role of General Leslie Groves in the world premiere of Doctor Atomic at San Francisco Opera, and of the Storyteller in the world premiere of A Flowering Tree at Peter Sellars’s New Crowned Hope Festival in Vienna and later with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Mr. Owens made his Boston Symphony debut under the baton of David Robertson in Adams’s Nativity oratorio El Niño.

Mr. Owens’s career operatic highlights include his San Francisco Opera debut in Otello conducted by Donald Runnicles; his Royal Opera, Covent Garden, debut in Norma; Aida at Houston Grand Opera; Rigoletto, Il Trovatore...
and *La Bohème* at Los Angeles Opera; *Die Zauberflöte* for his Paris Opera (Bastille) debut; and *Ariodante* and *L’Incoronazione di Poppea* at the English National Opera. He sang Collatinus in a highly acclaimed Christopher Alden production of Britten’s *The Rape of Lucretia* at Glimmerglass Opera. A former member of the Houston Grand Opera Studio, Mr. Owens has sung Sarastro, Mephistopheles in *Faust*, Frère Laurent, Angelotti in *Tosca*, and Aristotle Onassis in the world premiere of *Jackie O* (available on the Argo label) with that company.

Mr. Owens is featured on two Telarc recordings with the Atlanta Symphony: Mozart’s Requiem and scenes from Strauss’s *Elektra* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, both under the baton of Donald Runnicles. He is featured on the Nonesuch Records release of *A Flowering Tree*. In addition to great popular and critical acclaim, Mr. Owens has been recognized with multiple awards, including the 2003 Marian Anderson Award, a 1999 ARIA award, and second prize in the Plácido Domingo Operalia Competition, the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and the Luciano Pavarotti International Voice Competition.

A native of Philadelphia, Mr. Owens began his musical training as a pianist at age six, followed by formal oboe study at age eleven under Lloyd Shorter of the Delaware Symphony and Louis Rosenblatt of the Philadelphia Orchestra. He later studied voice while an undergraduate at Temple University, and then as a graduate student at the Curtis Institute of Music. He currently studies with Armen Boyajan. He serves on the Board of Trustees of both the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts and Astral Artistic Services.

Mr. Owens appears by arrangement with IMG Artists, Carnegie Hall Tower, 152 West 57th Street, New York, New York 10019.

Pianist Craig Rutenberg has collaborated with many of the world’s greatest vocalists and is recognized as one of the most distinguished accompanists on the stage today.

Having studied piano and interpretation with John Wustman, Geoffrey Parsons, Pierre Bernac and Miriam Solovieff, Mr. Rutenberg has appeared in recital with Denyce Graves, Sumi Jo, Harolyn Blackwell, Susanne Mentzer, Frederica von Stade, Angelika Kirchschlager, Dawn Upshaw, Thomas Hampson, Ben Heppner and Jerry Hadley, as well as Olaf Bär, Simon Keenlyside and José van Dam. He has performed with Mr. Hampson at the White House under the Clinton administration.

Mr. Rutenberg records for Deutsche Grammophon, EMI/Angel, BMG/RCA and Koch International. He has often appeared in concert on national and international television and radio, including numerous PBS specials.

Currently Head of Music Administration at the Metropolitan Opera, Mr. Rutenberg is also guest coach at the Royal Opera in Stockholm, the Gothenburg Opera and the Norwegian Opera in Oslo.

He has coached and given master classes at the Ryan Opera Center for American Artists at Lyric Opera of Chicago, Chicago Opera Theatre, Santa Fe Opera and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Mr. Rutenberg has also worked for the Opera Studio de Paris, the Glyndebourne Festival Opera, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera and Vancouver Opera.

In addition to his duties at the Metropolitan Opera and his teaching activities in the 2011–2012 season, Mr. Rutenberg appears in recital with Christine Brewer, Marcello Giordani, Eric Owens, Mathias Hausmann and Mr. Hampson. As a solo pianist, he continues to record the complete piano music of Virgil Thomson for the Virgil Thomson Foundation’s label, Everbest.