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Sunday, February 10, 2013, 3pm Hertz Hall

# Eric Owens, *bass-baritone* Warren Jones, *piano*

PROGRAM

Claude Debussy (1862–1918) Beau Soir (1882) Fleur des Blés (1881) Romance (1881)

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) Don Quichotte à Dulcinée (1932–1933)

Chanson romanesque Chanson épique Chanson à boire

Richard Wagner (1813–1883) Les Deux Grenadiers (1840)

Hugo Wolf (1860–1903) Drei Lieder nach Gedichten von Michelangelo (1897) Wohl denk ich oft Alles endet, was entstehet

Robert Schumann (1810–1856) Mein Herz ist schwer, Op. 25, No. 15 (1840) Muttertraum, Op. 40, No. 2 (1840)

> Der Schatzgräber, Op. 45, No. 1 (1840) Melancholie, Op. 74, No. 6 (1849)

Fühlt meine Seele das ersehnte Licht

Franz Schubert (1797–1828) Prometheus, D. 674 (1819) Fahrt zum Hades, D. 526 (1817) Gruppe aus dem Tartarus, D. 583 (1817)

INTERMISSION

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## Hugo Wolf (1860–1903) Drei Lieder nach Gedichten von 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 blaze 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 crederrei, 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 Chiunche nasce a morte arriva) 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 Modest Mussorgsky gave to his somber evocation of the Roman catacombs in Pictures at an Exhibition, subtitled Cum Mortuis in Lingua Mortua—"With the Dead in a Dead Language."

Fühlt 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'è la desiata luce) yearns 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 yes and a no, a sweet and a bitter—that, mistress, is the doing of your eyes.

#### Robert Schumann (1810–1856) Four Songs

In 1815, 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 (1781-1838), 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 deauthor. 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, Griffes, 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

clared 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

Illustration by Tom Bachtell

to the *Neue Zeitschift 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 (ca. 1524–1580), Pedro de Padilla (1540–aft. 1599), Gil Vicente (1465–1537), and Rodrigo de Cota (ca. 1430-ca. 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 Liederspiel* ("Spanish Song Play"), Op. 74, 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 thirty poems by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), including the beloved *Erlkönig. 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 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), Mayrhofer's evocation of the soul's journey across the River Styx, the mythical boundary separating the lands of the quick and the dead, in January 1817.

There is no more disturbing and violent page anywhere in Schubert's creative output than Gruppe aus dem Tartarus ("Group from Tartarus," D. 583), his 1817 setting of Friedrich von Schiller's chilling vision of a most fearsome hell. The frightening imagery of Schiller's poem is heightened by references to ancient mythology: Tartarus was the sunless abyss below Hades, the underworld inhabited by departed souls, where Zeus imprisoned the Titans after defeating them; Cocytus was a tributary of the Acheron, the river over which Charon ferried the souls of the dead; Saturn was the god of agriculture, believed to have ruled earth during a period of happiness and plenty, and "shattering his sickle asunder" portends the death of hope itself. The great German baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau said that he never placed Gruppe aus dem Tartarus at the end of a recital because "the listener will be left stunned and terrified."

## Claude Debussy (1862–1918) Three 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 intimation 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 Academie 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 lesserknown 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 Émile Deguingand, the wife of a prominent Parisian businessman.

## 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 Quixote 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' 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 Dulcinée 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

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 17th 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 Loève-Veimar. (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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Acclaimed 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 o 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.

During the 2012-2013 season, Mr. Owens reprises his acclaimed role of Alberich in the Metropolitan Opera's complete Ring cycles, directed by Robert Lepage, and returns to San Francisco Opera as Capellio in Bellini's I Capuleti e i Montecchi and to Los Angeles Opera as Sharpless in Puccini's Madama Butterfly. He also joins jazz legends Bobby McFerrin, Chick Corea, Dave Grusin, and Terence Blanchard for "Jazz and the Philharmonic," a special one-night-only concert at the Adrienne Arsht Center in Miami. His concert calendar includes Bach's Mass in B minor with the New York Philharmonic under the baton of Alan Gilbert; the title role in Mendelssohn's Elijah with the Pacific Chorale; appearances with Marin Alsop and the Baltimore Symphony, and James DePriest and the Detroit Symphony; and a New Year's Eve gala with Ludovic Morlot and the Seattle Symphony. Together with pianist Warren Jones, Mr. Owens appears in recital in Berkeley, Nashville, and Milton, Massachusetts. In addition to his singing performances, Mr. Owens will be seen in cinemas worldwide as the host of the Met's Live in HD broadcast of Wagner's Parsifal.

Last season, Mr. Owens delighted audiences both in opera and recital halls. He embarked on a significant recital tour with pianists Robert Spano and Craig Rutenberg. With engagements in Washington, D.C., Portland, and Philadelphia, Mr. Owens also performed at

Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall and sang Bach cantatas with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. He also continued his work with the Metropolitan Opera's Ring cycle, appearing as Alberich in Siegfried and in Götterdämmerung. He performed Beethoven's Missa solemnis with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, one of three appearances there in 2011-2012, including Jochanaan in Strauss's Salome with the Cleveland Orchestra. Summer began with Mr. Owens reprising the role of the Storyteller in A Flowering Tree by John Adams with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. He continued his summer at Glimmerglass Festival as the Artist in Residence, appearing in Aida and Lost in the Stars, and performing a jazz concert.

Eric 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 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 performed 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. Doctor Atomic was later recorded and received the 2012 Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording. Mr. Owens made his Boston Symphony Orchestra debut under the baton of David Robertson in Mr. 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 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 conducted by Donald Runnicles. He is featured on the Nonesuch Records release of A Flowering Tree. 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 the age of six, followed by formal oboe study at age eleven under Lloyd Shorter of the Delaware Symphony and Louis Rosenblatt of the Philadelphia Orchestra. He 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 Boyajian. He serves on the Board of Trustees of both the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts and Astral Artistic Services.

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



Warren Jones enjoys a widely diverse and celebrated career in music. In 2011 he received the "Achievement Award" from the Music Teachers National Association of America—their highest honor. He was named "Collaborative Pianist

of the Year" in 2010 by *Musical America*, and in the same year received an Honorary Doctorate from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Mr. Jones performs regularly with many of today's best known artists, including Stephanie Blythe, Eric Owens, Denyce Graves, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, Anthony Dean Griffey, Bo Skovhus, Thomas Hampson, John Relyea, Joseph Alessi, and Richard "Yongjae" O'Neill, and is the Principal Pianist for the California chamber music group Camerata Pacifica. In the past, he has partnered such great performers as Marilyn Horne, Samuel Ramey, Håkan Hagegård, Kathleen Battle, Barbara Bonney, Carol Vaness, Judith Blegen, Tatiana Troyanos, and Martti Talvela—and performed with the Juilliard, Borromeo, and Brentano quartets.

Mr. Jones has often been a guest artist at Carnegie Hall and in Lincoln Center's Great Performers" series, as well as the American summer festivals at Tanglewood, Ravinia, and Caramoor. Internationally, he has appeared at every major venue in Europe, South America, Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong. Mr. Jones has been invited three times to the White House by American Presidents to perform at concerts honoring the President of Russia, and Prime Ministers of Italy and Canada—and three times he has appeared at the U.S. Supreme Court as a specially invited performer for the Justices and their guests.

In recent years, Mr. Jones has conducted sold-out, critically acclaimed performances of Mascagni's *L'amico Fritz* with the Merola Opera Program at San Francisco Opera and Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at the Music Academy of the West, and in 2013 returns to the podium there for Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*.

Mr. Jones's discography includes 29 recordings; he can be heard on every major record label, in wide-ranging repertory from Schubert and Brahms to more esoteric compositions of Gretchaninoff, Clarke, and Smit, as well as in contemporary works by Harbison and others.

Mr. Jones is a member of the faculty at the Manhattan School of Music in New York City, and each summer he teaches and performs at the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, California. He often participates as a mentor for young musicians in Professional Training Workshops as part of the Weill Education Institute at Carnegie Hall. For ten years he was Assistant Conductor at the Metropolitan Opera, and for three seasons served in the same capacity at San Francisco Opera. Mr. Jones is also a prominent musical jurist, having been a judge for the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, the Walter Naumberg Foundation Awards, and the Metropolitan Opera Auditions.

Born in Washington, D.C., Mr. Jones grew up in North Carolina and graduated with honors from the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, Massachusetts—where he currently serves on the Board of Visitors. A resident of New York City, Mr. Jones enjoys cooking, exercise, historical novels, and lively political discussion. Please visit www.warrenjones.com, which features a full listing of his recordings and itinerary.