



Arrivals and Departures

Songs about life's comings and goings...and the stuff in between

GREGORY AMERIND

TENOR

EVAN C. PAUL

PIANO

GUEST ARTISTS

STEP RAPTIS, PERCUSSION

MELISSA SOLOMON, SOPRANO

DANIELLE KRISON, MEZZO SOPRANO

RYAN DOWNEY, BASS



**ASU HERBERGER COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS, ORGAN HALL
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2008, 7:30 PM**

Program Notes and Acknowledgements

Set One: 4 Songs

“*Time Magazine* once called **Ned Rorem** ‘the world’s best composer of art songs.’ The phrase has followed him around like a faithful puppy ever since. The songs are, indeed, among the best in the contemporary canon, showing Rorem’s uncanny ability to breathe notes into words while leaving a poet’s thoughts intact. In 1997, he produced a tour de force of his text-setting art, the cycle “Evidence of Things Not Seen,” which incorporates thirty-six poems by twenty-three poets. It takes the listener on a quietly epic journey from innocence to experience and on to solitude and extinction—essentially, the entire span of a human life.”¹ This set of four songs from various cycles and works offers some of my favorite Rorem compositions that all serve tonight’s theme. The first is from his one-act opera, “Childhood Miracle,” a musical retelling of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s story, *The Snow Image*, with text by Elliot Stein. In Hawthorne’s story, two children build a snow image (changed from a girl to a snowman in Rorem’s setting) which comes to life and, for a brief afternoon, becomes their playmate. The snowman tells the children of his long journey to becoming a complete being, a great metaphor for all our lives and a perfect way to begin tonight’s explorations. Next is a setting of a Robert Hillyer poem, “Early in the Morning.” Hillyer, a Pulitzer Prize winning American poet, captured a scene that I identified very closely with my own youth. The vivid imagery of his poem takes center stage in one of Rorem’s most beloved songs, resulting in a simple, yet poignant remembrance. “Snake,” a poem by another American Pulitzer Prize winner, Theodore Roethke, is a journey into our primal instincts. The piano is the star of this piece with its twisting, turning, serpentine lines and disjointed harmonic structure evoking all the necessary reptilian flavor. Roethke’s father, Otto Roethke was a German immigrant who owned a large local greenhouse. Much of Theodore’s childhood was spent in this greenhouse, as reflected in his use of natural imagery in his poetry. This piece reflects both his muses; nature and exploration of the human psyche. The final song in the set, from yet a third Pulitzer winner, is from Rorem’s cycle *The Nantucket Songs*. John Ashbery’s introspective poem touches many places I often visit in my own self-reflections.

Set Two: 3 Songs

This set of songs from three critically-acclaimed Broadway musicals share more the theme of tonight’s performance. They are also from musicals that are largely “through-composed” and thus more like opera in their structure and form, relying mostly on music and very little dialogue to move the story forward.

The emergence of **Stephen Sondheim** as the quintessential Broadway composer paralleled in many ways the revolution occurring in the world of popular music. Often weaving social commentary into his very personal style and subject matter, “Sondheim’s work is most notable for his musical sophistication and is considered to be greater than that of many of his musical theater peers. His lyrics are likewise renowned for their ambiguity (“Send in the Clowns”), wit (“Buddy’s Blues”) and urbanity (“The Little Things You Do Together”); he employs various literary techniques and devices that make his writing more akin to poetry than Tin Pan Alley. Indeed, in 1968 and 1969, Sondheim published an astonishingly inventive series of word puzzles in *New York* magazine. These are sometimes inadequately referred to as mere crosswords; in fact, the form and construction of the puzzles was every bit as creative and diabolical as the clues.”² This song from “Company” conjures a picture, good or bad, of the continuous and seemingly endless wave of humanity that flows through the cement

¹ New Yorker Magazine article, October 20, 2003

² Wikipedia

canyons of New York City. “The Golden Apple” is a post-modern retelling of Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The show resets the events of Homer's epics to the state of Washington, near Mt. Olympus, (how convenient) during the years after the Spanish-American War at the turn of the 20th century. The small town of Angel’s Roost is thrown into confusion when old Menelaus’ fancy-free wife, Helen, runs off with a traveling salesman named Paris (he's in town to judge an apple pie bake-off). Ulysses, just returned from the Spanish-American War, is already restless and goes to retrieve Helen, leaving his wife Penelope for a ten-year adventure. The Lazy Afternoon is the fancy discussed by Helen and Paris prior to their abrupt departure. Finally, Sportin’ Life, the drug-pushing, womanizing, silver-tongued pimp from Catfish Row, offer’s Bess a slightly different take than Sondheim’s on life in the Big Apple. Although this is not one of the Gershwins’ light-hearted valentines to the city that never sleeps, I hope you agree it offers a slam-bang finish to the first half of tonight’s travelogue.

Set Three: 6 Songs

The first journey is my favorite kind of trip. This is the kind where you’ve no idea exactly where you’re going and what you will find when you get there – wherever it is. I’ve decided to just ad-lib for a while and see what happens. I’ll try to make it fun, interesting, and surprising.

The other songs in this set are from different periods in my life over the last quarter century, are not in any order, and are only somewhat auto-biographical. All were originally composed with full instrumentation (*shameless self-promotion alert*: some can be heard on my CD “Late Boomer” available at all fine downloading sites), but I decided to give them a different setting with just piano and percussion to see what different colors I could find. I hope you enjoy the set.

Set Four: 1 Song

Two very gifted writers, Gunnar Madsen and Richard Green, since the early 1980’s, have composed many pieces for their acclaimed vocal group “The Bobs.” Those that have followed them through the years know them for their odd and irreverent humor that sometimes finds a piece of timeless truth in commenting on the human condition.

Acknowledgements

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Lastly, to my family – my wife Carrie and my daughters Alee and Brenda – thank you for your constant love and encouragement. It means the world to me.

Performance Note:

The performers would appreciate that you hold applause until the completion of all the songs in each set.