



KANSAS CITY
SYMPHONY



Joyce DiDonato's Sparkling Songs and Strauss' *Die Fledermaus*

January 12-14, 2024

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

MICHAEL STERN, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR
JOYCE DIDONATO, MEZZO-SOPRANO

PROGRAM

JOYCE DIDONATO'S SPARKLING SONGS AND STRAUSS' *DIE FLEDERMAUS*

Friday and Saturday, January 12-13, 2024 at 8 p.m.
Sunday, January 14, 2024 at 2 p.m.
Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

MICHAEL STERN, CONDUCTOR
JOYCE DIDONATO, MEZZO-SOPRANO

-
- CHEN YI AND ZHOU LONG** *Transplanted Seeds*
- CHARLES IVES** *The Unanswered Question*
Joyce DiDonato, *mezzo-soprano*
- GUSTAV MAHLER** *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*
(Songs of a Wayfarer)
I. Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht
II. Ging heut' Morgen über's Feld
III. Ich hab' ein glühend Messer
IV. Die zwei blauen Augen von meinem Schatz
Joyce DiDonato, *mezzo-soprano*
- INTERMISSION -
- JOEL THOMPSON** "The Places We Leave"
Joyce DiDonato, *mezzo-soprano*
- GUSTAV MAHLER** "Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen"
(I am lost to the world) from *Rückert-Lieder*
Joyce DiDonato, *mezzo-soprano*
- JOHANN STRAUSS, JR.** Overture to *Die Fledermaus*

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ABOUT MICHAEL STERN

MICHAEL STERN, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Michael Stern's celebrated 19-year tenure as music director of the Kansas City Symphony is remarkable for the orchestra's artistic ascent, organizational development and stability, and the extraordinary growth of its varied audiences. With a determined focus on impeccable musicianship and creative programming, Stern and the orchestra have partnered with Grammy® Award-winning Reference Recordings for an ongoing series of highly praised CDs.



Stern is also music director of the National Repertory Orchestra, a summer music festival in Breckenridge, Colorado, as well as the newly rebranded Orchestra Lumos, formerly the Stamford (CT) Symphony. He was recently named artistic advisor of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, one of Canada's foremost orchestral ensembles, and following a 22-year tenure as founding artistic director of Iris Orchestra in Germantown, Tennessee, he now serves the newly reimagined Iris Collective as artistic advisor.

Stern has led orchestras throughout Europe and Asia, including the Budapest and Vienna radio symphonies, the Helsinki, Israel, London, Moscow and Royal Stockholm philharmonics, London Symphony, National Symphony of Taiwan, Orchestre de Paris and Tokyo's NHK Symphony, among many others.

In North America, Stern has conducted the Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Cincinnati, Houston, Indianapolis, National (Washington, D.C.), Montreal, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Seattle and Toronto symphonies, the Cleveland and Philadelphia orchestras and the New York Philharmonic. He has been a regular guest at the Aspen Music Festival and School, where he also worked with students in the American Academy of Conducting at Aspen.

Stern has also held conducting positions with Germany's Saarbrücken Radio Symphony Orchestra as well as France's Orchestre National de Lyon and Orchestre National de Lille.

Stern received his music degree from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where his major teacher was the noted conductor and scholar Max Rudolf. Stern co-edited the third edition of Rudolf's famous textbook, "The Grammar of Conducting," and also edited a new volume of Rudolf's collected writings and correspondence. He is a 1981 graduate of Harvard University, where he earned a degree in American history.

ABOUT JOYCE DIDONATO

JOYCE DIDONATO, MEZZO-SOPRANO

Multi-Grammy® Award winner and 2018 Olivier Award winner for Outstanding Achievement in Opera, Kansas-born Joyce DiDonato entrances audiences across the globe, and has been proclaimed “perhaps the most potent female singer of her generation” by the New Yorker. With a voice “nothing less than 24-carat gold” according to the Times, Joyce has soared to the top of the industry as a performer, a producer and a fierce advocate for the arts. With a repertoire spanning over four centuries, a varied and highly acclaimed discography and industry-leading projects, her artistry has defined what it is to be a singer in the 21st century.

Joyce begins her ambitious 2023/24 season by opening the Metropolitan Opera’s season performing her signature role of Sister Helen in a new production of Jake Heggie’s *Dead Man Walking*, where she will return later in the season to revive her critically acclaimed Virginia Woolf in Kevin Puts’ *The Hours*. This season also sees Joyce touring *Dido and Aeneas* with Il Pomo d’Oro, and further tours of “EDEN” and the Grammy Award-winning “Songplay” in Asia, South America and Europe. In concert Joyce appears with her hometown Kansas City Symphony for a series of subscription concerts, as well as performances in Istanbul, Strasbourg and Paris. Joyce also performs in recital at Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin, Wiener Musikverein and Carnegie Hall.



In opera, Joyce’s recent roles include Agrippina at the Metropolitan Opera and in a new production at the Royal Opera House; Didon in *Les Troyens* at the Wiener Staatsoper; Sesto in *Cendrillon* and Adalgisa in *Norma* at the Metropolitan Opera; Agrippina in concert with Il Pomo d’Oro under Maxim Emelyanchev; Sister Helen in *Dead Man Walking* at the Teatro Real Madrid and London’s Barbican Centre; Semiramide at the Bavarian State Opera and Royal Opera House; and Charlotte in *Werther* at the Royal Opera House.

Much in demand on the concert and recital circuit, Joyce has held residencies at Carnegie Hall and at London’s Barbican Centre, toured extensively in the United States, South America, Europe and Asia and appeared as guest soloist at the BBC’s Last Night of the Proms. Other concert highlights include the Berlin Philharmonic under Simon Rattle, Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique under John Eliot Gardiner, Philadelphia Orchestra under Yannick Nézet-Séguin and the Accademia Santa Cecilia Orchestra and the National Youth Orchestra USA under Antonio Pappano.

An exclusive recording artist with Warner Classics/Erato, Joyce’s expansive discography includes the highly celebrated *Les Troyens* (winning Gramophone’s coveted Recording of the Year) and Handel’s *Agrippina* (Gramophone’s Opera Recording of the Year). Joyce’s other albums include her singular “EDEN” that has toured to nearly 40 cities globally, the acclaimed *Winterreise* with Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Grammy-Award-winning “Songplay,” “In War & Peace” which received the 2017 Best Recital Gramophone Award, “Stella di Napoli,” Grammy-Award-winning “Diva Divo” and “Drama Queens.” Other honors include the Gramophone Artist and Recital of the Year awards, as well as being an inaugural inductee into the Gramophone Hall of Fame.

ABOUT CHEN YI

CHEN YI (b. 1953)

A prolific composer who blends Chinese and Western traditions, transcending cultural and musical boundaries, Chen Yi is a 2001 recipient of the prestigious Charles Ives Living Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She is the Lorena Cravens/Millsap/Missouri Distinguished Professor at the UMKC Conservatory. She was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2005 and the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2019.



Born in China, Chen received bachelor's and master's degrees from the Central Conservatory in Beijing and her doctoral degree from Columbia University in New York. Her composition teachers included Wu Zu-qiang, Chou Wen-Chung and Mario Davidovsky. She has served on the composition faculty at the Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University and as composer-in-residence for the Women's Philharmonic, Chanticleer and the Aptos Creative Arts Center supported by Meet the Composer.

She has received fellowships and commissioning awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, American Academy of Arts and Letters, Fromm Foundation at Harvard University, Koussevitzky Music Foundation at the Library of Congress and the National Endowment for the Arts. Honors include first prize from the Chinese National Composition Competition, the Lili Boulanger Award, the NYU Sorel Medal, the CalArts/Alpert Award, the University of Texas Eddie Medora King Composition Prize Award, the ASCAP Concert Music Award, the Elise Stoeger Award from Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Friendship Ambassador Award from Edgar Snow Fund, the UMKC Kauffman Award in Artistry/Scholarship and Faculty Service and the Lifetime Achievement Award for Choral Music from the World Youth and Children Choral Artists Association. She has received honorary doctorates from Lawrence University, Baldwin-Wallace College, University of Portland, the New School University and the University of Hartford. She has given numerous whole-evening concerts of her orchestral, chamber and choral works around the world, and served as distinguished visiting professor at the Central Conservatory and Tianjin Conservatory, among many music institutions in China and the United States.

Chen's music is published by Theodore Presser Company and has been performed worldwide by such musicians as Yehudi Menuhin, Yo-Yo Ma and Evelyn Glennie, as well as numerous ensembles including the BBC, Royal, Women's, Los Angeles, New York and China philharmonics; the Halle, Saxon State and Cleveland orchestras; the Seattle, Pacific, Singapore, China National, Chicago, San Francisco, New Zealand, Kansas City and BBC symphonies; the Stuttgart, St. Paul and St. Luke's chamber orchestras; the Rascher and Prism saxophone quartets; the Shanghai and Ying string quartets; the Boston Modern Orchestra Project; Music From China; and Chanticleer.

There are more than 130 recordings of her music on labels including Bis, New Albion, CRI, Teldec, New World, Albany, Naxos, Bridge, Delos, Angel, Nimbus, Cala, Avant, Hugo, KIC, Centaur, Quartz, Innova, DECCA, XAS and China Record Co.

ABOUT ZHOU LONG

ZHOU LONG (b. 1953)

Zhou Long is internationally recognized for creating a unique body of music that brings together the aesthetic concepts and musical elements of East and West. Winner of the 2011 Pulitzer Prize for his first opera, *Madame White Snake*, Zhou also has received the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award, the Elise Stoeger Prize from Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society and the Barlow Prize. He has received commissioning awards from the Koussevitzky Music Foundation, Fromm Music Foundation, Meet the Composer, Chamber Music America and the New York State Council on the Arts. He also has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim and Rockefeller foundations and the New York State Council on the Arts. *Symphony Humen 1839* (commissioned and premiered by the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra) was awarded first prize at the 2009 China National Composition Competition for symphonic work.



Born in 1953 in Beijing, Zhou Long enrolled in the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing in 1977. Following graduation in 1983, he was appointed composer-in-residence with the China Broadcasting Symphony. He travelled to the United States in 1985 under a fellowship to attend Columbia University, where he studied with Chou Wen-Chung, Mario Davidovsky and George Edwards, receiving a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in 1993. Dr. Zhou is currently Bonfils Distinguished Research Professor of Composition at the UMKC Conservatory.

Among recent accomplishments, he has completed a symphonic oratorio, *Men of Iron and the Golden Spike* for voices, choir and orchestra, co-commissioned by Stanford University and Bard College, premiered at Carnegie Hall in 2019; *Classic of Mountains and Seas* — Concerto for Orchestra, commissioned and premiered by the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra which received an award from the China National Arts Fund for subsequent performances; *Tipsy Poet* for cello and orchestra, co-commissioned and premiered by the WDR Symphony in Cologne and at the 2019 Dresden Music Festival with later performances by the Seattle Symphony and Singapore Symphony in 2023; piano concerto *Brilliant Prospect* (co-composed with Chen Yi), premiered by the Shenzhen Symphony in 2022; *Tsingtao Overture*, commissioned and premiered by the Qingdao Symphony which received an award from the China National Arts Fund for subsequent performances; *Beijing Rhyme* — A Symphonic Suite, commissioned by the Beijing Symphony Orchestra; the mixed quartet *Legend of Nine Bells*, co-commissioned by London's Wigmore Hall and New York City's Lincoln Center; and his piano concerto *Postures*, co-commissioned by the BBC Proms and the Singapore Symphony.

In 2013, Zhou Long composed a whole-evening symphonic epic, *Nine Odes*, on poems by Qu Yuan for four solo vocalists and orchestra, commissioned by the Beijing Music Festival. An adaptation of the same name for erhu and dizi co-commissioned by Beijing Music Festival, Shanghai Symphony and Guangzhou Symphony will be premiered in 2024. *Bamboo Grove* for solo violin, commissioned by the University of Notre Dame, is slated for premiere by Patrick Yim in 2024. Zhou's opera *Madame White Snake* will be co-produced by Paris' Opera Comique and Beijing Music Festival in a brand-new staging in 2025. Zhou's music of all genres has been widely performed and recorded, published by Oxford University Press and Shanghai Music Publishing House.

ABOUT JOEL THOMPSON

JOEL THOMPSON (b. 1988)

Joel Thompson, best known for his choral work *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed*, is an artist and educator currently serving as composer-in-residence with the Houston Grand Opera. Committed to creating spaces for healing and community through music, Thompson has collaborated with the New York Philharmonic, Atlanta Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Kansas City Symphony, Tallahassee Symphony, Chicago Sinfonietta and Colorado Music Festival, and served as composer-in-residence at the New Haven Symphony Orchestra (2021–2023). His opera, *The Snowy Day*, was commissioned and premiered by the Houston Grand Opera in 2021. He is working on a full-length opera, which Houston Grand Opera will premiere in spring 2027.



Thompson was a composition fellow at the Aspen Music Festival and School where he worked with composers Stephen Hartke and Christopher Theofanidis. He taught at Holy Innocents' Episcopal School in Atlanta from 2015 to 2017 and also served as director of choral studies at Andrew College from 2013 to 2015. Thompson is a proud Emory University alum, earning both bachelor's and master's degrees there. He is currently pursuing a doctorate in composition at the Yale School of Music.

Pops Concert

Cirque Carmen: Troupe Vertigo

Friday and Saturday, January 19–20 at 8 p.m.
Sunday, January 21 at 2 p.m.

Helzberg Hall at the Kauffman Center
for the Performing Arts

JACK EVERLY, GUEST CONDUCTOR



The music of *Carmen* and high-flying circus performers combine in this amazing collaboration led by America's premier maestro Jack Everly. Witness stunning physical feats choreographed and set to the classic opera score by French composer Georges Bizet. Tickets from \$40 for adults and \$28 for children.

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PROGRAM NOTES

CHEN YI AND ZHOU LONG

Transplanted Seeds (2023)

15 minutes

Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, suspended cymbal, glockenspiel, high block, triangle, wood blocks, harp and strings.

We are little seeds from China, coming out from the deep cultural roots of thousands of years.

We have grown on the American soil nurtured by the spring rains in the multicultural society.

We have been working hard and looking forward to a bright future of the globe.

Commissioned by the National Repertory Orchestra through the generous support of Dr. Kai Yiu Yeung and Pam Piper Yeung, our composition *Transplanted Seeds* for orchestra was premiered by the NRO on July 19, 2023, and subsequently performed by the Kansas City Symphony on January 12-14, 2024, directed by Michael Stern.

Transplanted Seeds is a single-movement orchestral work including five sections. The work begins with a simple tune of a Cantonese children's folksong, "Moonlight Shines," symbolizing the place where we came from, played on the violin solo with pure tone color, followed by a warm cello section, then a dialogue of the two in canon. The background is an ostinato played by the harp and supported by the soft string sections.

The second section consists of three variations of the folksong with more woodwinds brought in, which opens the orchestral spectrum gradually with a wide range of pantonal passages. The third section introduces new pitch material drawn from another Cantonese folk tune, "Prancing Horses," which features a special pentatonic mode with a tritone in the descending scale, supported by the human voice whisper sound (Sha-la-la-la-la) coming from the orchestra, symbolizing the spring rains that nurture the soil quietly at night. Its development brings the music into the fourth section, which features a string quartet joined by two flutes and two clarinets. The sliding tones on the strings imitate Cantonese speaking sound, symbolizing sentimental nostalgia and expressive yearning. When the folk tune material is woven with the reciting sound shape of the words "We Are America" in Cantonese, Mandarin and English by all instruments in the orchestra, the music enters the fast fifth section, which has all melodic materials combined in the background and presents the brass chorale. It leads the music into the climax in the finale, symbolizing the hard-working people in our new society towards the flourishing future of the world.

— *Chen Yi and Zhou Long*

PROGRAM NOTES

CHARLES IVES (1874-1954)

The Unanswered Question (1906, revised 1935)

6 minutes

4 flutes (or 2 flutes, oboe, and clarinet), trumpet (or English horn, or oboe or clarinet if not playing otherwise), and strings. Joyce DiDonato sings the trumpet part in these performances.

THE STORY

Now revered as an American iconoclast who composed music decades ahead of its time, Charles Ives was also especially adept at the insurance business, earning a secure living while reserving nights, weekends and vacations for composition. In 1906, as he was laying the groundwork for his own insurance company, Ives wrote the initial sketch for *The Unanswered Question*. He later described it as “a cosmic landscape,” its aleatoric elements lending themselves well to the characterization. He revised the work in 1935 and the premiere finally took place on May 11, 1946, at Columbia University in New York City by a chamber orchestra from Juilliard, some 40 years after its conception. In the years since, it has become one of his most popular works.

It was Ives’ practice to write short “notes to self” about his projects, experiences and music. This unruly assemblage of memos provides insight into the composer and his work. His reminiscence about *The Unanswered Question* is wry:

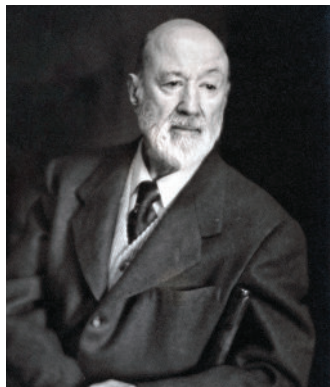
Around this time, running from say 1906 ... up to about 1912-14 or so, things like *All the Way Around and Back*, *The Gong on the Hook and Ladder*, *Over the Pavements*, *Tone Roads*, *The Unanswered Question*, etc. were made. Some of them were played — or better tried out — usually ending in a fight or hiss ... I must say that many of those things were started as kinds [of] studies, or rather trying out sounds, beats, etc., usually by what is called politely “improvisations on the keyboard” — what classmates in the flat called “resident disturbances.”

THE MUSIC

Each of the three sound layers in “The Unanswered Question” proceeds at its own pace, inhabiting separate rhythmic and tonal spheres that gently intersect. Ives provided descriptive notes in a preface to the published score of the work:

The strings play *ppp* [pianississimo, very very soft] throughout with no change in tempo. They are to represent “The Silences of the Druids — Who Know, See and Hear Nothing.” The trumpet [or the solo voice, in our case] intones “The Perennial Question of Existence,” and states it in the same tone of voice each time. But the hunt for “The Invisible Answer” undertaken by the flutes and other human beings becomes gradually more active, faster and louder through an *animando* to a *con fuoco*. This part need not be played in the exact time position indicated. It is played in somewhat of an impromptu way; if there be no conductor, one of the flute players may direct their playing. “The Fighting Answerers,” as the time goes on, and after a “secret conference,” seem to realize a futility, and begin to mock “The Question” — the strife is over for the moment. After they disappear, “The Question” is asked for the last time, and “The Silences” are heard beyond in “Undisturbed Solitude.”

— Eric T. Williams



PROGRAM NOTES

GUSTAV MAHLER (1860-1911)

Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen (Songs of a Wayfarer) (1885)

17 minutes

Solo voice, 3 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, glockenspiel, tam-tam, triangle, harp and strings.



THE STORY

In the mid-1880s, Mahler was an up-and-coming conductor who had in quick succession been named music director at five different venues, each more prestigious than the last. While he was the “Musical and Choral Director” at the Royal Theatre in Kassel, he became smitten with a soprano named Johanna Richter. They worked closely together at the theatre and corresponded as friends. It appears she was friendly but non-committal, while Mahler, in his first intense experience of love, was completely stricken. Their relationship never moved beyond formal, polite behavior, and this pained Mahler grievously; he wrote in letters to other friends, “I am torn apart, my heart is bleeding, all is lost.” His unrequited love found expression in poems he wrote that were to become the text for *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*.

The term “Geselle,” usually translated into English as “wayfarer,” actually means “journeyman,” a craftsman who has studied with a master but is not yet a master himself and who travels from town to town to study with multiple masters. This adds another layer of autobiographical meaning to the piece; Mahler was at a point in his career where he was skilled as a conductor and composer but did not yet consider himself a master, and was traveling from town to town honing his skills.

Much like “Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen,” also on today’s program, was deeply connected with Mahler’s Fifth Symphony, the *Lieder* are connected to his First. The main theme of the second song became the main theme of the Symphony’s first movement, and the last verse of the fourth song (the most hopeful part of the piece) was used in the Symphony’s third movement as a contemplative interlude in the midst of the funeral march.

THE MUSIC

The piece is an example of progressive tonality, in which each song ends in a different key than it began. The first song, “When My Sweetheart Is Married,” speaks of losing love to another, and marvels: “Alas, how can the world be so fair?” Winds and strings trade the accompaniment back and forth.

“I Went This Morning Over the Field” features the two flutes and the harp, as the poet muses on the beauty of nature, but it ends with his admission that his love can never blossom.

“I Have a Gleaming [or Red-Hot] Knife” obsesses over being reminded of his love everywhere he looks, feeling as if he has a knife in his heart. The music is marked “Stormy, wild.”

The final song, “The Two Blue Eyes of My Beloved,” is quiet, gentle and lyrical. The third verse is set to the major-key melody used in the First Symphony; it speaks of finally finding peace. Somehow, everything is well again: “All, love and sorrow and world and dream!” But the final few bars end back in minor, as if the music is belying the poet’s happy ending.

— *AJ Harbison*

TEXTS + TRANSLATIONS

GUSTAV MAHLER Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht

Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht,
Fröhliche Hochzeit macht,
Hab' ich meinen traurigen Tag!
Geh' ich in mein Kämmerlein,
Dunkles Kämmerlein!
Weine! wein'! Um meinen Schatz,
Um meinen lieben Schatz!

Blümlein blau! Blümlein blau!
Verdorre nicht! Verdorre nicht!
Vöglein süß! Vöglein süß!
Du singst auf grüner Heide!
"Ach, wie ist die Welt so schön!
Ziküth! Ziküth!"

Singet nicht! Blühet nicht!
Lenz ist ja vorbei!
Alles Singen ist nun aus!
Des Abends, wenn ich schlafen geh',
Denk' ich an mein Leide!
An mein Leide!

When my darling has her wedding day,
Her joyous wedding day,
I have my day of mourning!
I go into my little room,
Dark room!
I weep! Weep! For my darling,
For my darling love!

Little blue flower! Little blue flower!
Don't wither! Don't wither!
Sweet little bird! Sweet little bird!
You sing on green heath!
"Oh, how the world is so beautiful!
Chirp! Chirp!"

Sing not! Bloom not!
Spring is over!
All singing is now over!
In the evening when I go to sleep,
I think of my sorrow!
Of my sorrow!

Classical Concert

Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 5, plus *The Magic Flute* Overture

Friday, January 26 at 8 p.m.

Saturday, January 27 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, January 28 at 2 p.m.

Helzberg Hall at the Kauffman Center for the
Performing Arts

KAZEM ABDULLAH, GUEST CONDUCTOR
JUN IWASAKI, VIOLIN

W.A. MOZART Overture to *The Magic Flute*

W.A. MOZART Violin Concerto No. 5

ERICH KORNGOLD Symphony in F-sharp

Tickets from \$25.



Our amazing concertmaster Jun Iwasaki takes a solo bow in Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 5, the pinnacle of elegance and refinement. Iwasaki's incredible artistry meets Mozart's gift for melody in this stylish and thoroughly enjoyable concerto.

TEXTS + TRANSLATIONS

GUSTAV MAHLER Ging heut' Morgen über's Feld

Ging heut' morgen über's Feld,
Tau noch auf den Gräsern hing;
Sprach zu mir der lust'ge Fink:
"Ei du! Gelt?
Guten Morgen! Ei, Gelt? Du!
Wird's nicht eine schöne Welt?
Zink! Zink! Schön und flink!
Wie mir doch die Welt gefällt!"

Auch die Glockenblum' am Feld
Hat mir lustig, guter Ding',
Mit den Glöckchen, klinge, kling,
Ihren Morgengruß geschellt:
"Wird's nicht eine schöne Welt?
Kling! Kling! Schönes Ding!
Wie mir doch die Welt gefällt!"

Und da fing im Sonnenschein
Gleich die Welt zu funkeln an;
Alles, alles, Ton und Farbe gewann!
Im Sonnenschein!
Blum' und Vogel, groß und klein!
"Guten Tag! Guten Tag!
Ist's nicht eine schöne Welt?
Ei, du! Gelt? Schöne Welt!"

Nun fängt auch mein Glück wohl an?
Nein! Nein! Das ich mein',
Mir nimmer, nimmer blühen kann!

I went this morning over the field,
Dew still hung on the grass;
The merry finch spoke to me:
"Ah you! Isn't it?
Good morning! Ah, isn't it? You!
Will it not be a beautiful world?
Chirp! Chirp! Beautiful and nimble!
How the world pleases me!"

Also the bluebells in the field
Merrily and in good spirits,
With the bells, ring, ring,
Their morning greeting rang:
"Will it not be a beautiful world?
Ring! Ring! Beautiful thing!
How the world pleases me!"

And then in the sunshine
The world began to sparkle;
Everything, everything, gained in sound and color!
In the sunshine!
Flowers and birds, big and small!
"Good day! Good day!
Is it not a beautiful world?
Ah, you! Isn't it? Beautiful world!"

Now does my happiness begin also?
No! No! The happiness I mean,
Can never, never bloom for me!



GUSTAV MAHLER Ich hab' ein glühend Messer

Ich hab' ein glühend Messer,
Ein Messer in meiner Brust,
O weh! O weh!

Das schneid't so tief
In jede Freud' und jede Lust,
So tief! so tief!
Es schneid't so weh und tief!

Ach, was ist das für ein böser Gast!
Nimmer hält er Ruh',
Nimmer hält er Rast!
Nicht bei Tag,
Nicht bei Nacht, wenn ich schlief!
O weh! O weh! O weh!

Wenn ich in dem Himmel seh',
Seh' ich zwei blaue Augen steh'n!
O weh! O weh!
Wenn ich im gelben Felde geh',
Seh' ich von fern das blonde Haar
Im Winde wehn! O weh! O weh!
Wenn ich aus dem Traum auffahr'
Und höre klingen ihr silbern Lachen,
O weh! O weh!
Ich wollt', ich läg' auf der schwarzen Bahr',
Könnt' nimmer die Augen aufmachen!

I have a glowing knife,
A knife in my breast,
O woe! O woe!
That cuts so deeply
In every joy and every pleasure,
So deep! so deep!
It cuts so painfully and deeply!

Ah, what an evil guest it is!
Never at peace,
Never at rest!
Not by day,
Not by night, when I would sleep!
O woe! O woe! O woe!

When I look into the heavens,
I see two blue eyes there!
O woe! O woe!
When I walk in the yellow field,
I see from a distance her blonde hair
Blowing in the wind! O woe! O woe!
When I awaken from my dream with a start
And hear the sound of her silvery laughter,
O woe! O woe!
I wish I was lying on my black bier,
And could never again open my eyes!



TEXTS + TRANSLATIONS

GUSTAV MAHLER Die zwei blauen Augen von meinem Schatz

Die zwei blauen Augen von meinem Schatz,
Die haben mich in die weite Welt geschickt.
Da mußt' ich Abschied nehmen
Vom allerliebsten Platz!
O Augen blau, warum habt ihr mich angeblickt?
Nun hab' ich ewig Leid und Grämen!

The two blue eyes of my darling,
They have sent me out into the wide world.
Then I had to bid farewell
To this most beloved place!
O eyes blue, why did you look at me?
Now I have eternal sorrow and grief!

Ich bin ausgegangen in stiller Nacht,
Wohl über die dunkle Heide.
Hat mir niemand Ade gesagt, Ade!
Mein Gesell' war Lieb' und Leide!

I went out in the silent night,
Well over the dark heath.
Nobody told me goodbye frankly, goodbye!
My companions were love and sorrow!

Auf der Straße stand ein Lindenbaum,
Da hab' ich zum ersten Mal im Schlaf geruht!
Unter dem Lindenbaum,
Der hat seine Blüten über mich geschneit,
Da wußt' ich nicht, wie das Leben tut,
War alles, alles wieder gut!
Alles! Alles!
Lieb und Leid, und Welt und Traum!

By the road stands a linden tree,
And there for the first time I rested in sleep!
Under the linden tree,
It snowed its blossoms over me,
I didn't know what life would be like,
And all, all was good again!
All! All!
Love and sorrow, and world and dream!

JOEL THOMPSON (b. 1988)

"The Places We Leave" (2022)

15 minutes

*Solo voice, piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons,
2 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals,
marimba, tam-tam, xylophone and strings.*



THE STORY

Joel (pronounced "jo-el") Thompson's life journey is intriguing. Born in the Bahamas to Jamaican parents, his early years were suffused with a Caribbean vibe. The family moved to Houston when he was 10 and that was his introduction to what he calls "the possibilities of this country." Another move brought him to Atlanta and eventually studies at Emory University, where he followed a pre-med curriculum balanced by music classes. Attending a revelatory music festival tipped the scale in favor of music. Choral conducting studies led to a job at Andrew College in Georgia. At that time, composing music was a private artistic expression for Thompson, not intended for performance. It was also when he penned his best-known work to date: *The Seven Last Words of the Unarmed*, later premiered in 2015. There was another move, back to Atlanta, before embarking on doctoral composition studies at Yale University. Life has since led back to Houston with a five-year appointment as the Houston Grand Opera's first composer-in-residence. "The Places We Leave" was premiered by countertenor Anthony Roth Costanzo and the New York Philharmonic conducted by Jaap van Zweden in January 2022.

PROGRAM NOTES

JOEL THOMPSON *continued*

"The Places We Leave" (2022)

THE MUSIC

Thompson's background as a choral conductor has made him especially sensitive to text and his compositions beautifully meld musical intent with textual meaning. Thompson notes, "I think I write from a place where I have to really feel it in my bones. I have to be truthful. I prioritize honesty." Thus, it shouldn't be surprising that "The Places We Leave" is a wonderfully evocative setting of the poem by Tracy K. Smith, 22nd Poet Laureate of the United States. Smith's words are a distillation of life experience, chronicling a growing understanding of love, loss and self-esteem. Thompson's music is lush without being overpowering, deliciously romantic yet not naïve, suited for the concert hall but with subtle touches of Broadway, and eminently thoughtful. For a composer whose interests include "sitting in silence to think and philosophize," meditative and compelling music is a natural outcome.

— *Eric T. Williams*

The Places We Leave

BY TRACY K. SMITH

I used to love houses built
high on hills, windows
ice-white in daylight.

*

Down below, from the hiss
and flow of passing roads,
I thought a toehold up there

I loved someone once
who was always going.
I fought to keep up—

*

on spindly stilts would be
heavenly. Now, I like to see
how vines and weeds

walking, talking,
everything about him
left me breathless.

can ravage walls
and collapse the eaves
of the places we leave.

I thought if I could
leave something behind—
leave my fears, my very self

behind—I could keep him.
How small they always were,
or how quickly they shrink,

the places we leave.

I used to think love
was a form of escape.
A race away from

the opposite of love,
which is fear, perhaps,
or boredom. I'd come

to life after a drink,
a kiss, a drive hitting
every green light.

I thought love meant
All of me had to be shed.
Now I go along in reverse,

collecting myself bit by bit
from the places I've left.

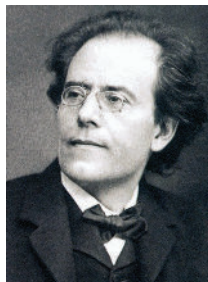
PROGRAM NOTES

GUSTAV MAHLER (1860-1911)

"Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen" from *Rückert-Lieder* (1901)

7 minutes

Solo voice, oboe, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, harp and strings.



THE STORY

Friedrich Rückert, a German poet, wrote "Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen" (I am lost to the world) during his courtship of his future wife, Luise Wiethaus-Fischer, in 1821. The narrator of the poem speaks peacefully of being dead to the "hustle and bustle" of the world, ending with the lines, "I live alone in my heaven, / in my love, in my song!"

Eighty years later, the Austrian composer Gustav Mahler felt deeply drawn to the poem. In the summer of 1901, resting from the "hustle and bustle" of his job as the director of the Vienna State Opera, he spent several months at the composing villa at Maiernigg he had just built. It was to prove the most productive summer of his life, as he composed two movements of his monumental Fifth Symphony, four of the *Rückert-Lieder* (songs on Rückert's poems), three of the *Kindertotenlieder* (Songs on the Death of Children, also with text by Rückert) and one additional song. These works are interconnected in many ways — there are similarities between the theme of "Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen" and the famous Adagietto from the Fifth Symphony — and foreshadow some of the great works of his later period, including his vocal/orchestral song cycle *Das Lied von der Erde* (The Song of the Earth).

The first performances of the song, both in its orchestral setting and in smaller performances with just piano and singer, won over both audiences and critics. They also helped launch Mahler, who was better known as a conductor, to greater success as a composer.

THE MUSIC

The music is gorgeous and peaceful throughout, featuring the English horn in multiple solos, with the accompaniment coming as much from the harp and the other wind instruments as from the strings. Each of the three stanzas of the poem begins with similar music but ventures into different musical territory. Before the last phrase, the music sounds like it is coming to rest, but instead of the tonic home chord Mahler writes a dissonant minor chord. The soprano sings "in meinem Lied" (in my song) *pianissimo*, very softly, and the music resolves back home.

— *AJ Harbison*

TEXTS + TRANSLATIONS

Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen

BY FRIEDRICH RÜCKERT

Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen,
Mit der ich sonst viele Zeit verdorben,
Sie hat so lange nichts von mir vernommen,
Sie mag wohl glauben, ich sei gestorben!

I am lost to the world,
With which I squandered so much time,
It has heard nothing from me for so long,
It may well believe that I am dead!

Es ist mir auch gar nichts daran gelegen,
Ob sie mich für gestorben hält,
Ich kann auch gar nichts sagen dagegen,
Denn wirklich bin ich gestorben der Welt.

I am not at all concerned,
If it should think that I am dead,
Nor can I hardly deny it,
For truly I am dead to the world.

Ich bin gestorben dem Weltgetümmel,
Und ruh' in einem stillen Gebiet!
Ich leb' allein in meinem Himmel,
In meinem Lieben, in meinem Lied!

I am dead to the world's tumult,
And I rest in a still realm!
I live alone in my heaven,
In my love, in my song!



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PROGRAM NOTES

JOHANN STRAUSS, JR. (1825-1899)

Overture to *Die Fledermaus* (1874)

9 minutes

Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, bass drum, orchestra bells, snare drum, triangle and strings.



THE STORY

Celebrated violinist and composer Johann Strauss, Sr. achieved a fair degree of renown and financial success leading his popular dance ensemble, touring Europe and turning the Viennese waltz into the epitome of elegance. Despite his success, he was adamantly opposed to having his three sons pursue music as a career. Rebellious teenager Johann Strauss, Jr. resisted and formed his own ensemble, competing with his father and eventually drawing his brothers into the business. At the elder Strauss' death in 1849, the two ensembles merged and Johann, Jr. took on his father's mantle as the "Waltz King." With a brilliant flair for dance music, Johann, Jr. wrote nearly 500 dances, including waltzes, polkas, quadrilles, marches, galops and mazurkas. Following his keen business instincts, he made numerous arrangements of his music for various ensembles and levels of expertise, thus ensuring broad play and lucrative sales.

In the second half of the 19th century, the Viennese took great delight in operettas — similar to a musical comedy, with songs and spoken dialogue. Works by Jacques Offenbach and Franz von Suppé captivated the public imagination and it was not until 1871 that Strauss tried his hand at the genre. His first two efforts were successful but quickly forgotten (*Indigo und die Vierzig Räuber* and *Carneval in Rom*). His previous success cushioned Strauss from the financial panic of 1873, and he took the opportunity to embark on his next project: *Die Fledermaus* (The Bat). The story is rom-com improbable, filled with practical jokes, disguises, mistaken identities, extramarital flirtation, a masked ball and a great deal of champagne. The titular bat is simply a reference in the story to an evening when one of the characters wore a bat costume and was humiliated by his best friend's practical joke — with carefully plotted revenge now at hand.

THE MUSIC

The operetta's overture is a microcosm of the dance-fest to come, filled with memorable tunes so skillfully orchestrated as to earn the admiration of none other than Johannes Brahms. The sudden tempo changes mirror the quicksilver plot twists, but the music always flows effortlessly. The vivacious opening leads to — what else? — a waltz, filled with Viennese charm and elan. Suave melodies give way to madcap musical antics, whetting the appetite for lighthearted fun. The French expression *chacun à son goût* (each to one's own taste) figures prominently in the operetta and with this delightful overture, Strauss offers something for everyone's taste.

— Eric T. Williams

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