Program

**The House of Life**

On December 2, 1904, audiences entered Bechstein Hall (now known as Wigmore Hall) in London to hear the premiere of two new song cycles by the then-unknown composer Ralph Vaughan Williams. For Vaughan Williams (whose first name is pronounced “Rafe”), just thirty years old, and having only one song, “Linden Lea,” in publication, this was a major event in his career. Until these two substantial cycles (each lasting nearly 30 minutes), he had only written a handful of songs, and his orchestral work *Bucholic Suite* had been premiered two years earlier. The first cycle on the program, *Songs of Travel*, featured texts by Robert Louis Stevenson, and still stands as one of Vaughan Williams’ most frequently-programmed works (“The Vagabond” being a favorite of many voice teachers, and, consequently, familiar to nearly anyone who has taken a voice lesson). The second half included the cycle of six songs on texts by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, entitled *The House of Life*. Rossetti —brother to poet Christina Rossetti—was also an accomplished painter, but, contrary to public opinion, felt his literary skills surpassed those of his visual artistry. His cycle of sonnets was not completed at the time of his death, and was first known by his working title, *Towards a Work* to be Called “The House of Life”, which focused on both love in the physical and metaphysical worlds. Due to its strong narrative component, and depiction of a fated character, ala Schubert’s *Winterreise*, audiences tend to gravitate towards the Stevenson settings, rather than the structurally-bound, sometime heavy-handed writing of Rossetti. *The House of Life*, however, with its song “Silent Noon” —a sacred song for many—stands as an early milestone in what would become the long and expansive career of Ralph Vaughan Williams.

**Songs to texts by Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, notes from the composer**

**Second Performance – Translations below**

Six poems that were written in different creative stages by Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer are the inspiration for this cycle. I have collected six poems that tell a story of love and tragedy in the romantic style of the time.

1. What is poetry? It is a concise declaration of love but at the same time with a lot of hidden content.
2. Romance. “When we come back ...” is a song that tries to capture passion and romance from a sensual aspect in the style of musical impressionism.
3. Proposition. “Eternal love” is about the evolution in the relationship of our characters, where they grow up and vow eternal love. The music reflects all the romantic aspects involved in this stage of life as a couple. Full of passion, sensuality, stormy, many sensations at the same time.
4. Separation. “A tear appeared in his eyes” is the moment where the end begins. Something breaks the relationship and a moment of personal introspection arises, where regret is what prevails in this breakup.
5. Desolation. “My life is a wasteland”, after a time of separation, our main character has a negative view of life. The word wasteland describes an area where life cannot flourish. Moment
of total instability.
6. End. “Giant waves”, the cry of despair, pain, acceptance of what is coming, there is no longer fear of dying, life without your partner no longer has meaning. The tumultuous sea seems to be the next destination to visit never to return.
— Alain de Real

Six Anonymous Comic Songs

“I’m nice. I promise.” writes the multi-hyphenate artist David Sisco on the landing page of his website. Sisco —whose work encompasses teaching, composing, playwriting, performing, and advocating — is the winner of the 2010NATS (National Association of Teachers of Singing) Composition Award (Missed Connections), and the Alex Libby Award for Best Musical Performance at the 2002 Columbus National Gay & Lesbian Theatre Festival for his musical Here I Am: A Musical Personal Ad. David received his BA in Vocal Performance and Composition Honors from Syracuse University, and a MM in Vocal Performance from Boston University School for the Arts, and taught private voice at Marymount Manhattan College for over ten years, and continues to serve as an adjunct professor of voice at Wagner College. Along with Laura Josepher, he is the co-founder of ContemporaryMusicalTheatre.com, the largest database of contemporary musical theatre writers and songs, searchable by voice and song type. Out of this work, the duo has also published the second edition of their book, “Mastering College Musical Theatre Auditions.” As Sisco explains, his “life work centers around exploring music, drama, writing, and teaching, finding great inspiration and commonalities in each.” “Writing art song,” David writes, “has allowed me to explore rich avenues I wouldn’t have discovered without the beautiful texts that have inspired me.” While the Six Anonymous Comic Songs might not contain the same type of inspiration that the texts of Rossetti and Béquer on this program offer, they are no less relatable to our human experiences: drinking a bit too much, growing old bit by bit, and (perhaps the most universal experience of all:) loathing, abhorring, detesting, and despising dried apple pies.

Notes generously supplied by the Butler School of Music, University of Texas

Artists

Andrew Stuckey, baritone

Andrew Stuckey’s opera and concert performances are widely acclaimed for their visceral power and rich beauty. Mr. Stuckey is a baritone whose many and varied roles speak to his accomplished voice and broad appeal. Roles on which he has put his unique stamp include Tonio in I Pagliacci, Iago in Otello, and the title roles in Gianni Schicchi, Rigoletto and Falstaff. He had the honor of working with the late maestro Lorin Maazel as Michele in Il tabarro, Sonora in La fanciulla del West and Iago in Otello. As the black-hearted Iago in Opera Roanoke’s stellar production, the Roanoke Times deemed his portrayal “not to be missed.”
With the Festival Lyrique-en-mer, in France, he debuted the title role in Verdi’s sparkling comic opera *Falstaff*. He has interpreted these and other great leading roles for opera houses throughout the United States. He teaches Studio Voice, History of Opera and Diction for Singers at the University of Arizona and has taught Master Classes in the United States, France, Mexico, Costa Rica, and Italy.

**Douglas Kinney Frost, piano**

Douglas Kinney Frost has led orchestras and opera companies on four continents, consistently receiving high praise from journalists and his colleagues. He has been re-engaged by every opera company, orchestra and academic institution he has conducted. “Under the baton of music director Douglas Kinney Frost the orchestra consistently presents concerts that are interesting, stimulating and thought-provoking.” He is the Principal Conductor of the Butler Opera Center at the University of Texas at Austin. Hailed as ‘fear-less’ by the national press during his eight-year tenure as Artistic and Music Director of Syracuse Opera he has demonstrated an ability to inspire audiences and artists with creative programming and thrilling performances. Maestro Frost has a national reputation for dynamic education initiatives, and his advocacy for emerging vocalists and conductors remains a significant national calling card. He has conducted the world’s finest musical institutions including LA Opera, Baltimore Symphony, Teatro Colon, and Teatro dell’Opera di Roma. In 2015, the LA Times has acclaimed his ‘colorful style of conducting’. He has appeared with many acclaimed international musicians including Joshua Bell, Greer Grimsley, David Schifrin and Patricia Racette. Through his development he has assisted such beloved conductors as James Conlon, Richard Bonynge and Marin Alsop.
1. ¿Qué es poesía? 
¿Qué es poesía?, dices mientras clavas en mi pupila tu pupila azul.

¡Qué es poesía!, Y tú me lo preguntas? 
Poesía... eres tú.

2. Romanza 
Cuando volvemos las fugaces horas del pasado a evocar, temblando brilla en sus pestañas negras una lágrima pronta a resbalar.

Y al fin resbala, y cae como gota de rocío, al pensar que, cual hoy por ayer, por hoy mañana, volveremos los dos a suspirar.

3. Proposición 
Amor eterno 
Podrá nublarse el sol eternamente; 
Podrá secarse en un instante el mar; 
Podrá romperse el eje de la tierra Como un débil cristal.

¡Todo sucederá! Podrá la muerte Cubrirme con su fúnebre crespón; 
Pero jamás en mí podrá apagarse La llama de tu amor.

4. Separación 
Asomaba a sus ojos una lágrima, y a mi labio una frase de perdón; habló el orgullo y se enjugó su llanto, y la frase en mis labios expiró.

Yo voy por un camino, ella por otro; pero al pensar en nuestro mutuo amor, yo digo aún: ¿por qué callé aquel día? Y ella dirá: ¿por qué no lloré yo?

5. Desolación 
Mi vida es un erial: flor que toco se deshoja; que en mi camino fatal, alguien va sembrando el mal para que yo lo recoja.

1. What is poetry? 
What is poetry? You say while you nail in my pupil, your blue pupil.

What is poetry! and you ask me this? 
Poetry is you.

2. Romance 
When we return the fleeting hours 
Of the past evoke. 
Shivering, shines on her black lashes 
A tear, ready to slip.

And finally it slips and falls like a drop 
Of dew, thinking that 
Which today for yesterday, for today tomorrow 
We return us both to breath.

3. Proposition 
Love eternal 
Could clouds cover the sun forever; 
Could the sea dry up in an instant; 
Could it break the axis of the earth 
Like a delicate crystal.

Everything will happen! 
Could death cover me with its funeral cape veil; 
But never for me could one extinguish 
The flame of your love.

4. Separation 
Appeared in her/his eyes a tear, 
And to my lip a phrase of forgiveness; 
Spoke pride and wiped away his/her tears, 
And the phrase on my lips died.

I go on a road, she on another; 
But thinking of our mutual love, 
I say still: Why be quiet that day? 
And she said, Why don’t I cry?

5. Desolation 
My life is a wasteland: 
Flowers I touch sheds itself; 
That in my fatal way, 
Someone is sewing evil 
So that I can gather it.