



Dawn Upshaw & Gilbert Kalish

BAM Harvey Theater | Sep 11, 7:30pm

Please note revised order and additional program details:

Sonata for Flute, Oboe, Cello and Harpsichord (1952) by Elliott Carter
Fred Sherry Quartet:

- Tara Helen O'Connor, flute
- Stephen Taylor, oboe
- Fred Sherry, cello
- Jeffrey Grossman, harpsichord

Selected Songs by Charles Ives (1874—1954)

Dawn Upshaw & Gilbert Kalish:

- “Songs My Mother Taught Me”
- “Two Little Flowers”
- “Ann Street”
- “Tom Sails Away”

Gilbert Kalish:

The Alcotts, from Piano Sonata No. 2, “Concord, Mass., 1840—60”

Dawn Upshaw & Gilbert Kalish:

- “Like a Sick Eagle”
- “The Cage”
- “Memories”
- “The Housatonic at Stockbridge”
- “Down East”

Ancient Voices of Children (1970) by George Crumb

Dawn Upshaw, soprano

Gilbert Kalish, piano and toy piano

Stephen Hammer, oboe and harmonica

Bridget Kibbey, harp

James Moore, mandolin and saw

Talujon Percussion

Michael Lipsey

Ian Antonio

Bill Solomon

Benjamin P. Wenzelberg, boy soprano

Selected Songs by Charles Ives

Songs My Mother Taught Me

Text by Adolf Heyduk (1835—1923)

Songs my mother taught me in the days long vanished, seldom from her eyelids were the tear drops banished.

Now I teach my children the melodious measure, often tears are flowing from my memory's treasure.

Two Little Flowers

Text by Harmony Twitchell (Mrs. Charles Ives)

(1876—1979)

On sunny days in our backyard, two little flowers

are seen, One dressed, at times, in brightest pink

and one in green. The marigold is radiant, the rose

passing fair; The violet is ever dear, the orchid,

ever rare; There's loveliness¹ in wild flow'rs of field

or wide savannah, But fairest, rarest of them all are

Edith and Susanna.

Ann Street

Text by Maurice Morris

Quaint name, Ann street. Width of same, ten feet.

Barnums mob - Ann street, Far from obsolete.

Narrow, yes. Ann street, But business, both feet.

(Nassau crosses Ann Street) Sun just hits Ann

street, Then it quits - some greet!

Rather short, Ann street...

Tom Sails Away

Text by Charles Ives

Scenes from my childhood are with me, I'm in the lot behind our house

upon the hill, A spring day's sun is setting, mother with Tom in her

arms is coming towards the garden; the lettuce rows are showing green.

Thinner grows the smoke o'er the town, stronger comes the breeze from the ridge, 'Tis after six, the whistles have blown, the milk train's gone down the valley Daddy is coming up the hill from the mill, We run down the lane to meet him But today! In freedom's cause Tom sailed away for over there, over there!

Scenes from my childhood are floating before my eyes. Scenes from my childhood are with me, I'm in the lot behind our house upon the hill, a spring day's sun is setting, Mother with Tom in her arms is coming towards the garden;

the lettuce rows are showing green.

Thinner grows the smoke o'er the town, Stronger comes the breeze from the

ridge,

'tis after six, the whistles have blown, the milk train's gone down the valley.

Daddy is coming up the hill from the mill,

We run down the lane to meet him.

But today! In freedom's cause

Tom sailed away for over there!

Scenes from my childhood are floating before my eyes.

Like a Sick Eagle

Text by John Keats (1795-1821)

the spirit is too weak;

mortality weighs heavily on me like unwilling

sleep, And each imagined pinnacle

and steep Of godlike hardship tells

me I must dieLike a sick eagle looking towards the sky.

The Cage

Text by Charles Ives

A leopard went around his cage

from one side back to the other side; he stopped only when the keeper came

around with meat;

A boy who had been there three hours began to wonder,

“Is life anything like that?”

Selected Songs by Charles Ives

Memories

Texts by Charles Ives

A. *Very Pleasant*

We're sitting in the opera house;

We're waiting for the curtain to a-rise with wonder for our eyes;

We're feeling pretty gay, and well we may,

“Oh, Jimmy, look!” I say,

“The band is tuning up and soon will start to play.”

We whistle and we hum, beat time with the drum.

We're sitting in the opera house, awaiting for the curtain to rise

with wonder for our eyes;

A feeling of expectancy,

a certain kind of ecstasy

Sh's's's. Curtain!

B. *Rather Sad*

From the street a strain on my ear doth fall,

A tune as thread-bare as that “old red shawl,”

It is tattered, it is torn,

it shows signs of being worn,

It's the tune my Uncle hummed from early morn,

'Twas a common little thing and kind 'a sweet,

But 'twas sad and seemed to slow up both his feet;

I can see him shuffling down to the barn or to the town,

a humming.

The Housatonic at Stockbridge

Text by Robert Underwood Johnson

Contented river! in the dreamy realm

The cloudy willow and the plummy elm: Thou beautiful! From ev'ry dreamy hill

What eye but wanders with thee at thy will,

Contented river! And yet ever-shy

To mask thy beauty from the eager eye: Hast thou a thought to hide from field and town?

In some deep current of the sunlit brown Ah! There's a restive ripple, and the swift

Red leaves, September's firstlings, faster drift;

Wouldst thou away, dear stream! Come, whisper near!

I also of much resting have a fear:

Let me tomorrow thy companion be

By fall and shallow to the adventurous sea!

Down East

Text by Charles Ives

Songs!

Visions of my homeland,

come with strains of childhood,

Come with tunes we sang in school days

and with songs from mother's heart;

Way down east in a village by the sea,

stands an old, red farm house

that watches o'er the lea;

All that is best in me,

lying deep in memory,

draws my heart where I would be

nearer to thee.

Ev'ry Sunday morning,

when the chores are almost done,

from that little parlor

sounds the old melodeon,

“Nearer my God to Thee, nearer to Thee;”

With those strains a stronger hope

comes nearer to me.

Dawn Upshaw has recorded extensively for the Nonesuch label. She may also be heard on Angel/EMI, BMG, Deutsche Grammophon, London, Sony Classical, Telarc, and on Erato and Teldec in the Warner Classics Family of labels.

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GEORGE CRUMB—COMPOSER’S NOTES

Ancient Voices of Children was composed during the summer of 1970 on commission from the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation, while I was in residence at Tanglewood, MA. This work forms part of an extended cycle of vocal compositions based on the poetry of Federico García Lorca which has absorbed much of my compositional energy over the past eight years. Other works in the cycle include *Night Music I* (1963) for soprano, keyboard, and percussion; four books of Madrigals (1965-69) for soprano and a varying instrumental combination; *Songs, Drones, and Refrains of Death* (1968) for baritone, electric instruments, and percussion; and *Night of the Four Moons* (1969) for alto and four instrumentalists.

In *Ancient Voices of Children*, as in my earlier Lorca settings, I have sought musical images that enhance and reinforce the powerful, yet strangely haunting imagery of Lorca’s poetry. I feel that the essential meaning of this poetry is concerned with the most primary things: life, death, love, the smell of the earth, the sounds of the wind and the sea. These “ur-concepts” are embodied in a language which is primitive and stark, but which is capable of infinitely subtle nuance. In a lecture entitled Theory and Function of the “Duende,” Lorca has, in fact, identified the essential characteristic of his own poetry. Duende (untranslatable, but roughly: passion, élan, bravura in its deepest, most artistic sense) is for Lorca “all that has dark sounds ... This ‘mysterious power that everyone feels but that no philosopher has explained’ is in fact the spirit of the earth... All one knows is that it burns the blood like powdered glass, that it exhausts, that it rejects all the sweet geometry one has learned ...”

The texts of *Ancient Voices* are fragments of longer poems which I have grouped into a sequence that seemed to suggest a “larger rhythm” in terms of musical continuity. The two purely instrumental movements—“Dances of the Ancient Earth” and “Ghost Dance”—are dance-interludes rather than commentaries on the texts. These two pieces, together with the 3rd song, subtitled “Dance of the Sacred Life-Cycle” (which contains a rising-falling ostinato bolero rhythm in the drums), can be performed by a solo dancer.

The vocal style in the cycle ranges from the virtuosic to the intimately lyrical, and in my conception of the work I very much had in mind Jan DeGaetani’s enormous technical and timbral flexibility. Perhaps the most characteristic vocal effect in *Ancient Voices* is produced by the mezzo-soprano singing a kind of fantastic vocalise (based on purely phonetic sounds) into an amplified piano, thereby producing a shimmering aura of echoes. The inclusion of a part for boy soprano seemed the best solution for those passages in the text where Lorca clearly implies a child’s voice. The boy soprano is heard offstage until the very last page of the work, at which point he joins the mezzo-soprano onstage for the closing vocalise.

The instruments employed in *Ancient Voices* were chosen for their particular timbral potentialities. The pianist also plays toy piano (in the 4th song), the mandolinist musical saw (2nd song)—although in this recording a separate player is used for the saw—and the oboist harmonica (4th song). Certain special instrumental effects are used to heighten the “expressive intensity”—e.g., “bending” the pitch of the piano by application of a chisel to the strings (2nd song); use of a paper-threaded harp (in “Dances of the Ancient Earth”); the frequent “pitch-bending” of the oboe, harp, and mandolin. The mandolin has one set of strings tuned a quartertone low in order to give a special pungency to its tone. The three percussionists command a wide range of instruments, including Tibetan prayer stones, Japanese temple bells, and tuned tom-toms. The instrumentalists are frequently called upon to sing, shout, and whisper.

In composing *Ancient Voices of Children* I was conscious of an urge to fuse various unrelated stylistic elements. I was intrigued with the idea of juxtaposing the seemingly incongruous: a suggestion of Flamenco with a Baroque quotation (Bist du bei mir, from the Notebook of Anna Magdalena Bach), or a reminiscence of Mahler with a breath of the Orient. It later occurred to me that both Bach and Mahler drew upon many disparate sources in their own music without sacrificing “stylistic purity.”

It is sometimes of interest to a composer to recall the original impulse—the “creative germ”—of a compositional project. In the case of *Ancient Voices* I felt this impulse to be the climactic final words of the last song: “... and I wil go very far... to ask Christ the lord to give me back my ancient soul of a child.”

FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA — ANCIENT VOICES OF CHILDREN

I. “El niño mudo”
El niño busca su voz.
(La tenía el rey de los grillos.)
En una gota de agua
buscaba su voz el niño.
No la quiero para hablar;
me haré con ella un anillo
que llevará mi silencio
en su dedo pequeñito.

I. “The Little Mute Boy”
The little boy was looking for his voice.
(The king of the crickets had it.)
In a drop of water
the little boy was looking for his voice.
I do not want it for speaking with;
I will make a ring of it
so that he may wear my silence
on his little finger.

II. “Gacela de la huida”
Me he perdido muchas veces por el mar
con el oído lleno de flores recién
cortadas,
con la lengua llena de amor y de
agonía.
Muchas veces me he perdido por el mar,
como me pierdo en el corazón de
algunos niños.

II. “Gacela of the Flight”
I have lost myself in the sea many times
with my ear full of freshly cut flowers,
with my tongue full of love and agony.
I have lost myself in the sea many times
as I lose myself in the heart of certain children.

III. “¿De dónde vienes, amor, mi niño?”
¿De dónde vienes, amor, mi niño?
De la cresta del duro frío.
¿Qué necesitas, amor, mi niño?
La tibia tela de tu vestido.
¡Que se agiten las ramas al sol
y salten las fuentes alrededor!

En el patio ladra el perro,
en los árboles canta el viento.

Los bueyes mugen al boyero
y la luna me riza los cabellos.
¿Qué pides, niño, desde tan lejos?

Los blancos montes que hay en tu
pecho.
¡Que se agiten las ramas al sol
y salten las fuentes alrededor!
Te diré, niño mío, que sí,
tronchada y rota soy para ti.
¡Cómo me duele esta cintura
dónde tendrás primera cuna!
¿Cuándo, mi niño, vas a venir?
Cuándo tu carne huela a jazmín.
¡Que se agiten las ramas al sol
y salten las fuentes alrededor!

III. “Yerma’s Song” from Yerma
(Dance of the Sacred Life-Cycle)
From where do you come, my love, my
child?
From the ridge of hard frost.
What do you need, my love, my child?
The warm cloth of your dress.
Let the branches ruffle in the sun
and the fountains leap all around!

In the courtyard a dog barks,
In the trees the wind sings.

The oxen low to the ox-herd
and the moon curls my hair.
What do you ask for, my child, from so
far away?

FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA — ANCIENT VOICES OF CHILDREN

The white mountains of your breast.
Let the branches ruffle in the sun
and the fountains leap all around!
I'll tell you, my child, yes,
I am torn and broken for you.
How painful is this waist
where you will have your first cradle!
when, my child, will you come?
When your flesh smells of jasmine-
flowers.
Let the branches ruffle in the sun
and the fountains leap all around!

IV. “Gacela del niño muerto”
Todas las tardes en Granada,
todas las tardes se muere un niño.

IV. “Gacela of the Dead Child”
Each afternoon in Granada,
a child dies each afternoon.

V. “Balada de la placeta”
Se ha llenado de luces
mi corazón de seda,
de campanas perdidas,
de lirios y de abejas.
Y yo me iré muy lejos,
más allá de esas sierras,
más allá de los mares,
cerca de las estrellas,
para pedirle a Cristo
Señor que me devuelva
mi alma antigua de niño.

V. “Ballad of the Little Square”
My heart of silk
is filled with lights,
with lost bells,
with lilies, and with bees,
and I will go very far,
farther than the seas,
close to the stars,
to ask Christ the Lord
to give me back
my ancient soul of a child.

Excerpts from Selected Poems by Federico García Lorca.
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