

Evening Star: Beauty Bringer



DVT
divergence vocal theater

A note from Misha ~

I can hardly take credit for artistically directing this evening... I simply asked some amazing artists to choose songs to share, in this very amazing space within which to sing, and based on an expansive theme of inspiring music. So, if anything, I've gently curated this program. You'll hear settings of the poetry of Rilke, Dickinson, Blake, Amy Lowell, and Dana Gioia; the words of composers from the letters of Schumann, Schubert, Puccini, and Bach; a world premiere by composer, Dominick DiOrio, and another, a setting of my own poetry by Elliot Cole. Many thanks to the artists who share this space with me tonight and to you, for sharing this experience with us. It is my wish that this evening's music will wash away the franticness of our whirling city's hot days, and remind us, each, what is most important in our lives... ~ M

Emily & Mister Blake

Nature the gentlest mother Aaron Copland. Emily Dickinson
Heart, We Will Forget Him Aaron Copland. Emily Dickinson
Dream Valley Roger Quilter. William Blake
Weep You No More Roger Quilter. Anon
Natasha Manley, soprano. Kyle Evans, piano

Alva Henderson's settings of the poetry of Dana Gioia

Touch. The Song (Rilka translation). The Country Wife. Planting a Sequoia
Michael Walsh, baritone. Kyle Evans, piano

Arriviste!

Hear the voice Dominick DiOrio. William Blake
Softly over sounding waves Elliot Cole. Misha Penton
Night Aaron Copland, Aaron Schaffer
The Captured Goddess Dominick DiOrio. Amy Lowell (premiere)
Misha Penton, soprano. Kyle Evans, piano

Masters' words...

from *Letters from Composers*. Dominick Argento
Franz Schubert, (to a friend)
Johann Sebastian Bach (to the Town Council)
Robert Schumann (to his fiancée). Giacomo Puccini (to a friend)
Alison Greene, soprano. Valerie Hartzell, guitar

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accessible via your smartphone now:
<http://bit.ly/iWnUIx>

Curious about the very much alive
composers on the program
with ties to Houston?
Visit their websites:

Elliot Cole: www.elliottcole.com
Dominick DiOrio: www.dominickdiorio.com

www.divergencevocaltheater.org
Boundary-dyning new music projects,
collaborative opera theater works,
spearheaded by
soprano & artistic director, Misha Penton

Tonight's Artists

Misha Penton, Artistic Director, soprano

Soprano Misha Penton's diverse performing career includes opera and multidisciplinary performance projects. She recently sang the principal roles in Divergence Vocal Theater's world premier operas, *Selkie*, a sea tale, composed by Elliot Cole and Klytemnestra, composed by Dominick DiOrio, both settings of Misha's libretti; she sang Leah in Ofer Ben-Amots' contemporary multimedia chamber opera, *The Dybbuk*, presented by the Jewish Community Center Houston's Maurice Adamo Music Foundation Residency; and Marguerite in Norman's *Incline, O Maiden*, a monodrama for soprano and chamber ensemble, with Audio Inversions, a new music ensemble in Austin, Texas. In Divergence Vocal Theater's 2008-09 season, she sang Ottavia in *The Ottavia Project*, Sapho in *The 10th Muse*, and was a featured soloist in *Autumn Spectre*, a multimedia evening of staged arts songs, piano works, and dance. Additional performances include *Voix et Harpe*, a performance of French art song, poetry and dance, in the galleries of the Museum of Fine Arts Houston. Upcoming projects include Divergence Vocal Theater works in 2011-12, and the artistic direction and curation of the company's new performance and multi-arts space, *Divergence Music & Arts* at Spring St Studios. www.mishapenton.com



Alsion Greene, soprano

Alison is active in the classical and contemporary music community in Houston, Texas and has performed extensively in venues from California to Boston. She is sought after for opera, chamber music, and recital work, and is respected for a professional, highly musical approach, engaging performance style, and pleasing light lyric soprano instrument. In recent seasons, Alison has been a featured artist with Opera in the Heights, St. Cecilia Chamber Music Society, Foundation for Modern Music, Divergence Vocal Theater, Opera Vista, and the Houston Gilbert and Sullivan Society. Other professional affiliations include Houston Grand Opera, Houston Chamber Choir, West Bay Opera (Palo Alto, CA), Mendocino Music Festival, and the Bethany College Messiah Festival. alisongreene.com



Michael Walsh, baritone

Michael Walsh, baritone, received his Master of Music degree from Rice University. The recipient of Rice's Carlton Prize in Opera, Mr. Walsh has been a studio artist with Central City Opera where he was Dancaïro (*Carmen*) and sang Archie Kramer in Hoiby's *Summer and Smoke*, which was broadcast on National Public Radio's 'World of Opera.' A former apprentice artist with Amarillo Opera, Michael has performed as Fiorello (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*), Wagner (*Faust*), and the Sergeant (*Manon Lescaut*) with Opera in the Heights. As the company baritone of Houston Grand Opera's *Opera to Go!*, Michael created the title role in Mary Carol Warwick's *The Velveteen Rabbit* and also appeared in touring performances of *The Barber of Seville*, *Strega Nona*, *Rusalka*, and *The Daughter of the Regiment*. As an apprentice with Utah Opera, he sang Hlas (*Jenufa*), Bolito (*Illusions*), and performed in concerts of operatic highlights with the Utah Symphony. Michael has been an artist-in-residence with Amarillo Opera and he has sung with *Ars Lyrica* and *Mercury Baroque*. He created the role of Jason for the premiere of James Norman's *wake... and sang in Trouble in Tahiti* for Opera Vista. He has appeared in several Divergence Vocal Theater productions. He is a member of the Houston Chamber Choir, a staff singer at Christ Church Cathedral, and is an adjunct faculty member of Lonestar College, Montgomery, and Houston Community College, Southwest.



Natasha Manley, soprano

Natasha Manley is a local artist who received her master of music degree from the New England Conservatory of Music. She was a member of the NEC Opera Studio Program under the direction of John Moriarty. In June of 2010 she premiered her first production as part of the HopeWerks Emerging Artist Residency Program entitled *Stand by...and go*. The production incorporated original music for voice, cello, piano, and percussion as well as modern/contemporary dance. Other recent collaborative efforts have included voice over work for choreographer jhon r. stronk's *Swinging---in the Dark*, vocal soloist for choreographer Anneke Hansen's *We Should Call it Many Things* and voice and movement for choreographer Leslie Scates' *The Billies*. She has been teaching private voice for 14 years. Her favorite role has been *La Contessa* from *Le Nozze di Figaro*.



Kyle Evans, piano

Kyle Evans, pianist, grew up studying with his aunt, Dr. Elaine Walters and made his orchestral debut at age thirteen with the Houston North Symphony. Currently, he is active in Southwest Texas as a soloist and accompanist with more than twenty schools, churches, and other organizations. He has performed with HGO's *Opera to Go!* at the Miller Outdoor Theater, and occasionally accompanies their high school studio masterclasses. He has been guest artist several times at First Methodist Downtown, which is broadcast, and has served as the staff organist at Westminster Methodist. He accompanied a cabaret musical at the Sage Theatre in NYC. He has appeared in concert with Brian Connelly at a regional convention to premiere music for two pianos and has also played for silent films at the MFAH. Kyle has an BM from Oklahoma City University where he was winner of the school's concerto competition and an MM from Rice where he assisted with the opera department and premiered and recorded many new works.



Valerie Hartzell, guitar

Valerie Hartzell began her classical guitar studies on a half-size Ramirez at the age of three. At the age of six, she studied with Alexandre Lagoya at the Académie Internationale d'Été in Nice, France. She has performed in many festivals, including the Tennessee Festival at MTSU, the ECU Competition and Festival, the MANC Guitar Competition Festival, the Pennsylvania Academy of Music Festival (where she shared the stage with Eliot Fisk), and at the 2010 ChamberArt Festival in Madrid, Spain. In March of 2007, Ms. Hartzell performed with studio members of the Houston Grand Opera at the *Rienzi* Recital Series. Ms. Hartzell has also performed as a guest soloist for the NYC Classical Guitar Society, the Troubadour Series at Wofford College, The Charlotte Guitar Society, Arizona State University, Appalachian University, and at Texas State University. She was a prizewinner at the Portland Guitar Competition, the ECU Competition and Festival, and the Appalachian Guitar Festival and Competition. She has won 1st prizes at the 10th International Guitar Competition "Simone Salmaso" in Italy and at the Concours de Guitare Classique Heitor Villa-Lobos in France. Currently, she is Adjunct Faculty at the Houston Community College, maintains a private teaching studio, and is a member of the Presti Trio, the first all women professional classical guitar trio in the United States. Valerie Hartzell is the creator and Director of the annual "Classical Minds" Guitar Institute and Competition as part of the Texas Music Festival at Moores School of Music. www.valeriehartzell.com



The evening's poetry & prose...

Natasha's songs...

Nature the Gentlest mother, Emily Dickinson

Nature, the gentlest mother,
Impatient of no child,
The feeblest or the waywardest,—
Her admonition mild

In forest and the hill
By traveller is heard,
Restraining rampant squirrel
Or too impetuous bird.

How fair her conversation,
A summer afternoon,—
Her household, her assembly;
And when the sun goes down

Her voice among the aisles
Incites the timid prayer
Of the minutest cricket,
The most unworthy flower.

When all the children sleep
She turns as long away
As will suffice to light her lamps;
Then, bending from the sky,

With infinite affection
And infiniter care,
Her golden finger on her lip,
Wills silence everywhere.

Heart, we will forget him! by Emily Dickinson

Heart, we will forget him!
You an I, tonight!
You may forget the warmth he gave,
I will forget the light.

When you have done, pray tell me
That I my thoughts may dim;
Haste! lest while you're lagging,
I may remember him!

Dream Valley, William Blake

Memory, hither come
And tune your merry notes;
And while upon the wind
Your music floats,

I'll pore upon the stream,
Where sighing lovers dream,
And fish for fancies as they pass
Within the watery glass.

I'll drink of the clear stream,
And hear the linnet's song,
And there I'll lie and dream
The day along;

And when night comes I'll go
To places fit for woe,
Walking along the darkened valley,
With silent melancholy.

Weep you no more, Anon

Weep you no more, sad fountains;
What need you flow so fast?
Look how the snowy mountains
Heaven's sun doth gently waste!
But my sun's heavenly eyes
View not your weeping,
That now lies sleeping,
Softly now, softly lies
Sleeping.

Sleep is a reconciling,
A rest that peace begets;
Doth not the sun rise smiling
When fair he sets?
Rest you, then, rest, sad eyes!
Melt not in weeping,
While she lies sleeping,
Softly now, softly lies
Sleeping.

Michael's songs...the poetry of Dana Gioia

Touch

Enter this moment silently.
Palm against palm our two hands touch,
tense with the danger that we see.
Enter this moment silently with eyes averted.
Guilty, we know one word spoken is too much.
Enter this moment silently.
Palm against palm our two hands touch.

The Song

How shall I hold my soul that it does not touch yours?
How shall I lift it over you to other things?
If it would only sink below into the dark like some lost thing
or slumber in some quiet place which did not echo your soft
heart's beat.
But all that ever touched us- you and me-
touched us together like a bow that from two strings could
draw one voice.
On what instrument were we strung? And to what player did
we sing our interrupted song?

Country Wife

She makes her way through the dark trees
Down to the lake to be alone.
Following their voices on the breeze,
She makes her way. Through the dark trees
The distant stars are all she sees.
They cannot light the way she's gone.
She makes her way through the dark trees
Down to the lake to be alone.

The evening's poetry & prose...

The night reflected on the lake,
The fire of stars changed into water.
She cannot see the winds that break
The night reflected on the lake
But knows they motion for her sake.
These are the choices they have brought her:
The night reflected on the lake,
The fire of stars changed into water.

Planting a Sequoia

All afternoon my brothers and I have worked in the orchard,
Digging this hole, laying you into it, carefully packing the soil.
Rain blackened the horizon, but cold winds kept it over the
Pacific,
And the sky above us stayed the dull gray
Of an old year coming to an end.

In Sicily a father plants a tree to celebrate his first son's
birth—
An olive or a fig tree—a sign that the earth has one more life
to bear.
I would have done the same, proudly laying new stock into
my father's orchard,
A green sapling rising among the twisted apple boughs,
A promise of new fruit in other autumns.

But today we kneel in the cold planting you, our native giant,
Defying the practical custom of our fathers,
Wrapping in your roots a lock of hair, a piece of an infant's
birth cord,
All that remains above earth of a first-born son,
A few stray atoms brought back to the elements.

We will give you what we can—our labor and our soil,
Water drawn from the earth when the skies fail,
Nights scented with the ocean fog, days softened by the
circuit of bees.
We plant you in the corner of the grove, bathed in western
light,
A slender shoot against the sunset.

And when our family is no more, all of his unborn brothers
dead,
Every niece and nephew scattered, the house torn down,
His mother's beauty ashes in the air,
I want you to stand among strangers, all young and
ephemeral to you,
Silently keeping the secret of your birth.

Misha's songs...

Hear the voice of the Bard!, William Blake

Hear the voice of the Bard!
Who present, past, and future sees;
Whose ears have heard
The Holy Word,
That walked among the ancient trees,

Calling the lapsed soul,
And weeping in the evening dew;
That might control
The starry pole,
And fallen, fallen, light renew!

"O Earth, O Earth, return!
Arise from out the dewy grass;
Night is worn,
And the morn
Rises from the slumberous mass.

"Turn away no more;
Why wilt thou turn away?
The starry floor,
The watery shore,
Is given thee till the break of day."

Softly over sounding autumn waves, Misha Penton

Softly over sounding autumn waves you sail
The scent of your neck against my face a memory
Of seastars, anemone and shell gathered mornings
Oceanstrand rainforest moss chills our hands
- so lightly touching
We climb marine granite toward an osprey pine aerie
A seal bobs her beckoning head for us:
Seduction to dash our bodies
Against deceptive stone and join her in the fearless sea

Night, Aaron Schaffer

My heart is placid as the lake
Which softly flows 'neath starlit skies.
And, as I walk, faint melodies of night,
Of things but half awake,
Stand soothing to its very deeps;
It thrills and starts while mankind sleeps.
The gentle murmur of the lake
Is silvered by a fountain's play.
A nightbird sings its tuneful lay
Full of the night's vast joy and ache.
A low wind sighs thru ghostly trees
Which shiver in the dancing breeze.

The Captured Goddess, Amy Lowell

Over the housetops,
Above the rotating chimney-pots,
I have seen a shiver of amethyst,
And blue and cinnamon have flickered
A moment,
At the far end of a dusty street.

Through sheeted rain
Has come a lustre of crimson,
And I have watched moonbeams
Hushed by a film of palest green.

It was her wings,
Goddess!

The evening's poetry & prose...

Who stepped over the clouds,
And laid her rainbow feathers
Aslant on the currents of the air.

I followed her for long,
With gazing eyes and stumbling feet.
I cared not where she led me,
My eyes were full of colours:
Saffrons, rubies, the yellows of beryls,
And the indigo-blue of quartz;
Flights of rose, layers of chrysoprase,
Points of orange, spirals of vermilion,
The spotted gold of tiger-lily petals,
The loud pink of bursting hydrangeas.
I followed,
And watched for the flashing of her wings.

In the city I found her,
The narrow-streeted city.
In the market-place I came upon her,
Bound and trembling.
Her fluted wings were fastened to her sides with cords,
She was naked and cold,
For that day the wind blew
Without sunshine.

Men chattered for her,
They bargained in silver and gold,
In copper, in wheat,
And called their bids across the market-place.

The Goddess wept.

Hiding my face I fled,
And the grey wind hissed behind me,
Along the narrow streets.

Alison's songs...

Franz Schubert (to a friend)
Vienna, 31 Mar 1824

My brightest hopes have come to nothing, the joys of friendship and love soon turn to sorrows, and even my pleasure in beauty itself is in danger of dying away! "*Meine Ruh' ist hin, mein Herz ist schwer,*" thus sang Gretchen at her spinning wheel. So might I now sing every day, for every night I got to bed hoping that I shall not wake again, and each morning only brings back all the sorrows and grief of the day before. "*Meine Ruh' ist hin, mein Herz ist schwer,*" thus sang Gretchen at her spinning wheel. And so I spend my days, joyless and friendless.

Johann Sebastian Bach (to the Town Council)
Leipzig, 24 Aug 1736

Magnificent, most honourable gentlemen, our wise and learned councilors, distinguished Lords and Patrons, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera... . May it please you to condescend to hear how Herr Johannes Fredrich Eitelwein, a merchant in the town of Leipzig, was married on the twelfth

of August of the present year out of town, and therefore thinks himself entitled to withhold the fees due us in all such cases, and has made bold to disregard our many kind reminders. Where as the said fees make up the greater part of our emoluments, a perquisite of this position and no one has hitherto endeavoured to withhold from us our lawful share. We therefore feel compelled to beg you, honoured Lords and Gracious Patrons for this reason to take us under your protection and by your decision to uphold us in our old right and agreed Salario, and further to enjoin upon the said Herr Eitelwein that he remit to us a due proportion of the foresaid marriage fees, together with the costs occasioned, in this instance, which we also claim, with all respect and reverence. Magnificent and honourable gentlemen, most wise and learned councilors, distinguished Lords and Patrons, from your most humble and devoted servant, Johann Sebastian Bach.

Robert Schumann (to his fiancée)
Leipzig, 3 Jun 1839

The most certain this is still that we continue to love each other with all our hearts and I feel sure that in your heart there is a rich fund of love, and you will make your husband happy for a long, long time. You are a wonderful girl, Klara! There is such a host of varied and beautiful qualities in you that I will never know how you have managed to bring them all together during your short life. But there is one thing I know, Klara, and that is: I believe you would have been a very different girl if you had never met me at so early a stage and been impressed by my gentle way. Leave me this belief, it makes me happy. I taught you to love, and drew you close, to be the ideal bride as I imagined her; you were my most gifted pupil, and as my reward you said to me: "Well, then, take me, take me, take me, take me, take me, take me, take me!"

Giacomo Puccini (to a friend)
Paris 10 May 1898

I am sick of Paris! I am sick of panting for the fragrant wood, for the free movement of my belly in wide trousers and no waistcoat; I pant, I pant after the wind that blows free and fragrant from the sea; I savor with wide flaring nostrils its salty breath, and stretch my lungs to breathe it all! I hate pavements! I hate palaces! I hate capitals! I hate columns of marble! I love the beautiful column of poplar and fir; I love the vault of shady glades; I love the green expanse of cool shelter in forest old or young; I love the blackbird in flight; I love the woodpecker, seagull, and lark! I hate the horse, the cat and the toy dog! I hate the steamer, the top hat, the dress coat, and I hate Paris!