

Some Favored Nook

TONY ARNOLD,* SOPRANO
WILLIAM SHARP,* BARITONE
SETH KNOPP,* PIANO



Monday, October 2, 2023 • 7:30 pm
Leith Symington Griswold Hall

2023-24
CONCERT SEASON

Eric Nathan (b. 1983)
Canon for Three (2015)

Tony Arnold, soprano
Mira Huang (MM '22, Historical Performance Voice), soprano
Elisheva Pront (MM '23, Voice), soprano

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
Poetry by Alois Jeitteles
An die ferne Geliebte, Op. 98 (1816)

Auf dem Hügel sitz' ich, spähend
Wo die Berge so blau
Leichte Segler in den Höhen
Diese Wolken in den Höhen
Es kehret der Maien, es blühet die Au
Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder

William Sharp, baritone
Seth Knopp, piano

Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951)
Das Buch des Hängenden Gärten, Op. 15 (1909)

- I. Unterm Schutz von dichten Blättergründen
- II. Hain in diesen Paradiesen
- III. Als Neuling trat ich ein in dein Gehege
- IV. Da meine Lippen reglos sind und brennen
- V. Saget mir auf welchem Pfade
- VI. Jedem Werke bin ich fürder tot
- VII. Angst und Hoffen wechselnd sich beklemmen
- VIII. Wenn ich heut nicht deinen Leib berühre
- IX. Streng ist uns das Glück und spröde
- X. Das schöne Beet betracht ich mir im Harren
- XI. Als wir hinter dem beblühten Tore
- XII. Wenn sich bei heilger Ruh in tiefen Matten
- XIII. Du lehnest wider eine Silberweide
- XIV. Sprich nicht mehr von dem Laub
- XV. Wir bevölkerten die abend-düstern Lauben

Tony Arnold, soprano
Seth Knopp, piano

INTERMISSION

Eric Nathan

Libretto by Mark Campbell and Eric Nathan

Adapting texts by Emily Dickinson and Thomas Wentworth Higginson

Some Favored Nook (2018)

PART I

To tell me what is true?
The nearest dream recedes unrealized
Could you tell me how to grow?
They shut me up in prose
My barefoot rank is better

PART II

To see if we were growing
War feels to me an oblique place
There suddenly arose
Emancipation
All sounds ceased
There came a wind like a bugle
Attending to the wounded
That shamed the nation

PART III

These are my introduction
My wars are laid away in Books / No Prisoner be

Tony Arnold, soprano

William Sharp, baritone

Seth Knopp, piano

BIOGRAPHIES

Tony Arnold, soprano

Celebrated as a “luminary in the world of chamber music and art song” (*Huffington Post*), Tony Arnold is internationally acclaimed as a leading proponent of contemporary music in concert and recording as a “convincing, mesmerizing soprano” (*Los Angeles Times*) who “has a broader gift for conveying the poetry and nuance behind outwardly daunting contemporary scores” (*Boston Globe*). Her unique blend of vocal virtuosity and communicative warmth, combined with wide-ranging skills in education and leadership were recognized with the 2015 Brandeis Creative Arts Award, given in appreciation of “excellence in the arts and the lives and works of distinguished, active American artists.”

Arnold’s extensive chamber music repertory includes major works written for her voice by Georges Aperghis, George Crumb, Brett Dean, Jason Eckardt, Gabriela Lena Frank, Josh Levine, George Lewis, Philippe Manoury, Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez, Christopher Theofanidis, Ricardo Zohn-Muldoon, John Zorn, and numerous others. She is a member of the intrepid International Contemporary Ensemble and enjoys regular guest appearances with leading ensembles, presenters, and festivals worldwide.

With more than 30 discs to her credit, Arnold has recorded a broad segment of the modern vocal repertory with esteemed chamber music colleagues. Her recording of George Crumb’s iconic *Ancient Voices of Children* (Bridge) received a 2006 Grammy nomination. She is a first prize laureate of both the Gaudeamus International and the Louise D. McMahon competitions. A graduate of Oberlin College and Northwestern University, Arnold was twice a fellow of the Aspen Music Festival as both a conductor and singer. She currently is on the faculties of the Peabody Conservatory and the Tanglewood Music Center.

Mark Campbell, librettist

The Pulitzer Prize and Grammy Award-winning operas of librettist/lyricist Mark Campbell are among the most successful in the contemporary canon. A prolific writer, Campbell has created 40 opera librettos, lyrics for seven musicals, and text for eight song cycles and four oratorios. His works include *Silent Night*, *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*, *The Shining*, *Elizabeth Cree*, *As One*, *Stonewall*, *Sanctuary Road*, *A Thousand Acres*, *Edward Tulane*, *Unruly Sun*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *Stone Soup*, *A Sweet Silence in Cremona*, *Later the Same Evening*, *The Nefarious*, *Immoral but Highly Profitable Enterprise of Mr. Burke & Mr. Hare*, *Approaching Ali*, *A Letter to East 11th Street*, *A Year to the Day*, *Volpone*, and *Bastianello/Lucrezia*, and the musicals, *Songs from an Unmade Bed*, *The Audience*, and *Splendor*.

Campbell has received many other prestigious prizes for his work, including the first Kleban Foundation Award for Lyricist, two Grammy nominations for Best Classical Recording, two Richard Rodgers Awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, three Drama Desk nominations, a Jonathan Larson Foundation Award, a New York Foundation for the Arts Playwriting Fellowship, the first Dominic J. Pellicciotti Award, and a grant from the New York State Council of the Arts.

Recordings of his works include *Silent Night* (Naxos), *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* (Pentatone), *Sanctuary Road* (Naxos), *As One* (Bright Shiny Things), *Volpone* (Wolf Trap Records), *Bastianello/Lucrezia* (Bridge), *Rappahannock County* (Naxos), *Later the Same Evening* (Albany), and *Songs from an Unmade Bed* (Ghostlight).

Campbell is also an advocate for contemporary opera in this country and serves as a mentor for future generations of writers through such organizations as the American Opera Project, American Lyric Theatre, and the American Opera Initiative. In 2020, he created and funded the only award for librettists in the history of opera: the Campbell Opera Librettist Prize, administered annually by OPERA America. He also co-created the True Voice Award to help with the training of transgender singers, overseen by Washington National Opera.

Seth Knopp, piano

Pianist Seth Knopp was a founding member of the Peabody Trio, winner of the 1989 Naumburg Award and ensemble-in-residence at the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University from 1987 to 2017. After making its Alice Tully Hall debut in 1990, the trio performed on the most important chamber music series, nationally and internationally. The trio’s reputation as champions of new music allowed them the opportunity to commission and perform the music of many of today’s most inspired musical voices.

Over his two decades as artistic director of Yellow Barn, Knopp has built an international center for chamber music, bringing musicians and audiences to Putney, Vermont for its festivals each summer. Yellow Barn’s holistic philosophy and programming that focuses listeners in new ways has become an important influence in the music world. In 2008, he created Yellow Barn’s Artist Residencies, the first residency program for performing musicians in the United States.

In 2010, Knopp founded Soundings: New Music at the Nasher, a critically acclaimed series of concerts at the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, Texas. During his thirteen years as artistic director, Soundings focused on the relationship between musical traditions, the music of our time, and the unique lens through which music helps us better understand our world.

For thirty-five years Knopp was a member of the piano and chamber music faculties at the Peabody Conservatory. His solo and chamber music performances can be heard on the Artek, Koch, and New World Records labels. He studied with Leonard Shure at New England Conservatory, Nathan Schwartz at San Francisco Conservatory, and with Leon Fleisher.

Eric Nathan, composer

Eric Nathan's music has been called "as diverse as it is arresting" with a "constant vein of ingenuity and expressive depth" (*San Francisco Chronicle*), "deeply compelling" (*The Boston Globe*), and as "a marvel of musical logic" (*Boston Classical Review*).

Nathan, a 2013 Rome Prize Fellow and 2014 Guggenheim Fellow, has garnered acclaim internationally with his music being featured at the New York Philharmonic's 2014 and 2016 Biennials, Carnegie Hall, Aldeburgh Music Festival, Tanglewood Festival of Contemporary Music, Aspen Music Festival, Ravinia Festival Steans Institute, 2012 and 2013 World Music Days, Library of Congress, and Louvre Museum.

Recent projects include commissions such as *Why Old Places Matter* (2014) for the Boston Symphony Chamber Players; *the space of a door*, that Andris Nelsons and the BSO premiered in 2016 and commercially released on the Naxos label in 2019; *Concerto for Orchestra*, which Nelsons premiered on the 2019–20 season-opening concerts; and *Opening* (2021), co-commissioned and premiered by the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation at the Library of Congress for a PBS television special.

Nathan has been honored with a Goddard Lieberman Fellowship and Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Copland House residency, Civitella Ranieri Music Fellowship, ASCAP's Rudolf Nissim Prize, four ASCAP Morton Gould Awards, BMI's William Schuman Prize, Aspen Music Festival's Jacob Druckman Prize, Leonard Bernstein Fellowship from the Tanglewood Music Center, and an Early Career Research Achievement Award from Brown University. Nathan has completed residencies at Yellow Barn, Copland House, and the American Academy in Rome, and is a 2022 Civitella Ranieri Foundation fellow.

Albany Records released a debut CD of Nathan's solo and chamber music, *Multitude, Solitude: Eric Nathan* (2015), produced by Grammy-winner Judith Sherman. Chelsea Music Festival Records released *Eric Nathan: Dancing with J.S. Bach* (2019), featuring conductor Ken-David Masur in Nathan's two suites of orchestrations of Bach keyboard works. In 2020, Gil Rose and the Boston Modern Orchestra Project released a portrait album of Nathan's music on the BMOP Sound label, and New Focus Recordings released a two-CD set of *Missing Words* in 2022.

Nathan serves as associate professor of Music in composition and theory at Brown University's Department of Music. In 2018, he was awarded Brown's most prestigious award for junior faculty, the Henry Merritt Wriston Fellowship, that recognizes excellence in teaching. He is currently Composer-in-Residence with the New England Philharmonic, and was recently named the Artistic Director of Boston's Collage New Music. He received his DMA from Cornell, a master's degree from Indiana University, and his bachelor's degree from Yale.

William Sharp, baritone

Baritone William Sharp has a reputation as a singer of artistry and versatility, garnering acclaim for his work in concert, recital, opera and recording. He performs actively, as he has for five decades. He has appeared with most major American symphony orchestras including those of New York, Chicago, Washington, Boston, Baltimore, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. He has created world premiere performances and recordings of works by composers such as Leonard Bernstein, John Harbison, John Musto, Jon Deak, Libby Larson, David Del Tredici, Lori Laitman, Steven Paulus, Scott Wheeler, and David Liptak. His performances and recordings of baroque and earlier music are equally acclaimed.

Sharp's discography of several dozen discs encompasses music spanning 900 years, from the 12th century to today. His 1990 world premiere recording of Leonard Bernstein's last major work, *Arias and Barcarolles* won a Grammy award, and he was nominated for a 1989 Grammy for Best Classical Vocal Performance for his recording featuring the works of American composers such as Virgil Thomson, John Musto, and Lee Hoiby. He made his New York recital debut in 1983, Kennedy Center debut in 1984, and Carnegie Hall recital debut in 1989. He is winner of the Carnegie Hall International American Music Competition, the Young Concert Artists International Auditions, the Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Prize, and the Geneva International Competition.

Sharp has taught voice at the university level since 1977 and joined the Peabody Conservatory faculty in 2002. His students are performing throughout the world in concert and opera.

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

An die ferne Geliebte, Op. 98 (1816)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Poetry by Alois Jeitteles (1794–1858)

Auf dem Hügel sitz' ich, spähend

Auf dem Hügel sitz' ich, spähend
In das blaue Nebelland,
Nach den fernen Triften sehend,
Wo ich dich, Geliebte, fand.

Weit bin ich von dir geschieden,
Trennend liegen Berg und Tal
Zwischen uns und unserm Frieden,
Unserm Glück und unsrer Qual.

Ach, den Blick kannst du nicht sehen,
Der zu dir so glühend eilt,
Und die Seufzer, sie verwehen
In dem Raume, der uns teilt.

Will denn nichts mehr zu dir dringen,
Nichts der Liebe Bote sein?
Singen will ich, Lieder singen,
Die dir klagen meine Pein!

Denn vor Liedesklang entweicht
Jeder Raum und jede Zeit,
Und ein liebend Herz erreicht
Was ein liebend Herz geweiht!

Wo die Berge so blau

Wo die Berge so blau
Aus dem nebligen Grau
Schauen herein,
Wo die Sonne verglüht,
Wo die Wolke umzieht,
Möchte ich sein!

Dort im ruhigen Tal
Schweigen Schmerzen und Qual.
Wo im Gestein
Still die Primel dort sinnt,
Weht so leise der Wind,
Möchte ich sein!

Hin zum sinnigen Wald
Drängt mich Liebesgewalt,
Innere Pein.
Ach, mich zög's nicht von hier,
Könnt ich, Traute, bei dir
Ewiglich sein!

To the Distant Beloved

Translated by Richard Wigmore © 2005

I sit on the hill peering
into the blue mist,
gazing towards distant pastures
where I found you, beloved.

I am far away from you;
mountain and valley lie between us,
between us and our peace,
our happiness and our torment.

Ah! You cannot see the gaze
that wings to you so ardently,
and the sighs that are scattered
in the space that divides us.

Will nothing ever reach you again,
will nothing be love's messenger?
I shall sing, sing songs
that pour out my suffering to you.

For all space and time
dissolves at the sound of love,
and a loving heart attains
what a loving heart has blessed!

Where the mountains so blue
look down
from the grey mists,
where the sun dies,
where the cloud envelops,
there I should like to be!

There in the peaceful valley
sorrows and torment are stilled.
Where in the rock
the primrose silently meditates,
where the wind blows so softly,
there I should like to be!

I am driven to the musing forest
by the power of love,
and inner sorrow.
Ah! Nothing would move me from here
if I could be with you, beloved,
eternally!

Leichte Segler in den Höhen,

Leichte Segler in den Höhen,
Und du, Bächlein klein und schmal,
Könnt mein Liebchen ihr erspähen,
Grüsst sie mir viel tausendmal.

Seht ihr, Wolken, sie dann gehen
Sinnend in dem stillen Tal,
Lasst mein Bild vor ihr entstehen
In dem luft'gen Himmelssaal.

Wird sie an den Büschen stehen,
Die nun herbstlich falb und kahl.
Klagt ihr, wie mir ist geschehen,
Klagt ihr, Vöglein, meine Qual!

Stille Weste, bringt im Wehen
Hin zu meiner Herzenswahl
Meine Seufzer, die vergehen
Wie der Sonne letzter Strahl.

Flüstr' ihr zu mein Liebesflehen,
Lass sie, Bächlein, klein und schmal,
Treu in deinen Wogen sehen
Meine Tränen ohne Zahl!

Diese Wolken in den Höhen,

Diese Wolken in den Höhen,
Dieser Vöglein munterer Zug,
Werden dich, o Huldin, sehen.
Nehmt mich mit im leichten Flug!

Diese Weste werden spielen
Scherzend dir um Wang' und Brust,
In den seidnen Locken wühlen.
Teilt' ich mit euch diese Lust!

Hin zu dir von jenen Hügeln
Emsig dieses Bächlein eilt.
Wird ihr Bild sich in dir spiegeln,
Fließ zurück dann unverweilt!

Light clouds drifting on high,
and you, tiny, narrow stream:
if you catch sight of my beloved,
greet her from me many thousand times.

Clouds, if you see her walking
in the silent valley, sunk in thought,
let my image appear before her
in the airy realms of heaven.

If she stops by the bushes,
now yellowed and bared by autumn,
lament to her what has befallen me,
pour out, birds, my suffering!

Gentle west wind, as you blow,
carry to my heart's chosen one
my sighs, which fade
like the sun's last rays.

Whisper to her my loving entreaties,
tiny, narrow stream, in your ripples
let her see truly reflected
my tears without number!

These clouds in the heights,
this cheerful flock of birds
will see you, my beloved.
Take me with you in your easy flight.

These west winds will play
teasingly about your cheek and breast,
will ruffle your silken curls.
If only I could share this pleasure with you winds!

From those hills this stream
rushes eagerly to you.
If her image is reflected in you,
flow back without delay!

Es kehret der Maien, es blühet die Au,

Es kehret der Maien, es blühet die Au,
Die Lüfte, sie wehen so milde, so lau,
Geschwätzig die Bäche nun rinnen.

Die Schwalbe, die kehret zum wirtlichen Dach,
Sie baut sich so emsig ihr bräutlich Gemach,
Die Liebe soll wohnen da drinnen.

Sie bringt sich geschäftig von kreuz und von quer
Manch weicheres Stück zu dem Brautbett hieher,
Manch wärmendes Stück für die Kleinen.

Nun wohnen die Gatten beisammen so treu,
Was Winter geschieden, verband nun der Mai,
Was liebet, das weiss er zu einen.

Es kehret der Maien, es blühet die Au,
Die Lüfte, sie wehen so milde, so lau,
Nur ich kann nicht ziehen von hinnen.

Wenn alles, was liebet, der Frühling vereint,
Nur unserer Liebe kein Frühling erscheint,
Und Tränen sind all ihr Gewinnen.

Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder,

Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder,
Die ich dir, Geliebte, sang,
Singe sie dann abends wieder
Zu der Laute süßem Klang.

Wenn das Dämmerungsrot dann ziehet
Nach dem stillen blauen See,
Und sein letzter Strahl verglühet
Hinter jener Bergeshöh;

Und du singst, was ich gesungen,
Was mir aus der vollen Brust
Ohne Kunstgepräg' erklungen,
Nur der Sehnsucht sich bewusst:

Dann vor diesen Liedern weichet
Was geschieden uns so weit,
Und ein liebend Herz erreicht
Was ein liebend Herz geweiht.

May returns, the meadow blooms,
the breezes blow so gentle and mild,
the babbling brooks now flow again.

The swallow returns to the hospitable roof,
and builds her bridal chamber so eagerly;
love is to dwell there.

From all directions she busily collects
many a soft scrap for her bridal bed,
many a warm scrap for her little ones.

Now the couple live together so faithfully;
what winter has separated, May has joined;
all who love, May can unite.

May returns, the meadow blooms,
the breezes blow so gentle and mild.
I alone cannot leave here.

When spring unites all that loves,
for our love alone there is no spring,
and tears are its only gain.

Take them, then, these songs
that I sang to you, beloved;
sing them again in the evening
to the sweet sound of the lute.

When the red glow of twilight draws
towards the calm blue lake,
and the last ray dies
behind the far hilltop;

And you will sing what I have sung,
what, from my full heart,
flowed artlessly,
only conscious of its longing:

Then, with these songs,
the distance which separated us will recede,
and a loving heart shall attain
what a loving heart has blessed.

Das Buch der hängenden Gärten, Op. 15 (1909) *The Book of the Hanging Gardens*

Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951)

Poetry by Stefan George

I. Unterm Schutz von dichten Blättergründen

Unterm schutz von dichten blättergründen,
Wo von sternern feine flocken schneien,
Sachte stimmen ihre leiden künden,
Fabeltiere aus den braunen schlünden
Strahlen in die marmorbecken speien,
Draus die kleinen bäche klagend eilen:
Kamen kerzen das gesträuch entzünden,
Weisse formen das gewässer teilen.

II. Hain in diesen Paradiesen

Hain in diesen paradiesen
Wechselt ab mit blütenwiesen,
Hallen, buntbemalten fliesen,
Schlanker störche schnäbel kräuseln
Teiche, die von fischen schillern,
Vögel-reihen matten scheines
Auf den schiefen firsten trillern
Und die goldnen binsen säuseln –
Doch mein traum verfolgt nur eines.

III. Als Neuling trat ich ein in dein Gehege

Als neuling trat ich ein in dein gehege;
Kein staunen war vorher in meinen mienen,
Kein wunsch in mir, eh ich dich blickte, rege.
Der jungen hände faltung sieh mit huld,
Erwähle mich zu denen, die dir dienen
Und schone mit erbarmender geduld
Den, der noch strauchelt auf so fremdem stege.

IV. Da meine Lippen reglos sind und brennen

Da meine lippen reglos sind und brennen,
Beacht ich erst, wohin mein fuss geriet:
In andrer herren prächtiges gebiet.
Noch war vielleicht mir möglich, mich zu trennen;
Da schien es, daß durch hohe gitterstäbe
Der blick, vor dem ich ohne lass gekniet,
Mich fragend suchte oder zeichen gäbe.

V. Saget mir auf welchem Pfade

Saget mir, auf welchem pfade
Heute sie vorüberschreite –
Daß ich aus der reichsten lade
Zarte seidenweben hole,
Rose pflücke und viole,
Daß ich meine wange breite,
Schemel unter ihrer sohle.

VI. Jedem Werke bin ich fürder tot

Jedem werke bin ich fürder tot.
Dich mir nahzurufen mit den sinnen,
Neue reden mit dir auszuspinnen,
Dienst und lohn, gewährung und verbot,
Von allen dingen ist nur dieses not
Und weinen, daß die bilder immer fliehen,
Die in schöner finsternis gediehen –
Wann der kalte klare morgen droht.

I.

Under shade of dense leaf-cover
Where delicate flakes snow down from the stars,
Gentle voices murmur their sorrows,
Mythical creatures, from their brown spouts
Spew streams into the marble basin,
From which brooklets hurry away, plaintively
Candles ignited the bushes,
White forms divided the waters.

II.

Grove in this paradise
weaves with flowery meadows,
Pavilions, brightly painted tiles.
Slender stork beaks ripple
Ponds that gleam with fish,
Rows of birds in a dull glow
Trill on the crooked ridges,
And the golden sedges rustle –
But my dream pursues only one thing.

III.

As a novice, I entered into your enclosure;
No wonder was before in my face
No desire in me, before I truly looked at you.
Look graciously upon my folded young hands,
Choose me as one who serves you
Spare, with merciful patience,
The one who still falters on such strange paths.

IV.

Since my lips are immobile and burning,
I begin to observe where my feet have come to:
Into other men's splendid domain.
Perhaps it was still possible to run away,
But then it seemed that through high gate rails
The view, before which I kneeled untiringly,
Sought to question me or give a sign.

V.

Tell me, by which path
She will walk upon today –
That I may, from the richest chests
Fetch soft-spun silks,
Pick roses and violets,
That I may lay my broad cheek,
As a footstool beneath her soles.

VI.

To all efforts I am henceforth dead.
You call me close with your senses,
To spin out new conversations with you,
Service and payment, permission and prohibition,
Of all things only this is necessary,
And to weep, because the images always escape
Which flourished in beautiful darkness –
When the cold, clear morning threatens.

VII. Angst und Hoffen wechselnd sich beklemmen

Angst und hoffen wechselnd mich beklemmen,
Meine worte sich in seufzer dehnen,
Mich bedrängt so ungestümes sehnen,
Daß ich mich an rast und schlaf nicht kehre,
Daß mein lager tränen schwemmen,
Daß ich jede freude von mir wehre,
Daß ich keines freundes trost begehre.

VIII. Wenn ich heut nicht deinen Leib berühre

Wenn ich heut nicht deinen leib berühre,
Wird der faden meiner seele reißen
Wie zu sehr gespannte sehne.
Liebe zeichen seien trauerflöre
Mir, der leidet, seit ich dir gehöre.
Richte, ob mir solche qual gebühre,
Kühlung spreng mir, dem fieberheissen,
Der ich wankend draussen lehne.

IX. Streng ist uns das Glück und spröde

Streng ist uns das glück und spröde,
Was vermocht ein kurzer kuss?
Eines regentropfens guss
Auf gesengter bleicher öde,
Die ihn ungenossen schlingt,
Neue labung missen muss
Und vor neuen gluten springt.

X. Das schöne Beet betracht ich mir im Harren

Das schöne beet betracht ich mir im harren,
Es ist umzäunt mit purpurn-schwarzem dorne,
Drin ragen kelche mit geflecktem sporne
Und sammtgefederte, geneigte farren
Und flockenbüschel, wassergrün und rund
Und in der mitte glocken, weiss und mild -
Von einem odem ist ihr feuchter mund
Wie süsse frucht vom himmlischen gefild.

XI. Als wir hinter dem beblühten Tore

Als wir hinter dem beblühten tore
Endlich nur das eigne hauchen spürten,
Warden uns erdachte seligkeiten?
Ich erinnere, daß wie schwache rohre
Beide stumm zu beben wir begannen
Wenn wir leis nur an uns rührten
Und daß unsre augen rannen -
So verbliebest du mir lang zu seiten.

XII. Wenn sich bei heilger Ruh in tiefen Matten

Wenn sich bei heilger ruh in tiefen matten
Um unsre schläfen unsre hände schmiegen,
Verehrung lindert unsrer glieder brand:
So denke nicht der ungestalten schatten,
Die an der wand sich auf und unter wiegen,
Der wächter nicht, die rasch uns scheiden dürfen
Und nicht, daß vor der stadt der weisse sand
Bereit ist, unser warmes blut zu schlürfen.

VII.

Fear and hope alternately oppress me,
My words stretch into sighs,
I am afflicted with such impetuous longing,
That I pay no heed to rest and sleep,
That my bed is swimming in tears,
That I push away every other joy,
That I desire no friend's comfort.

VIII.

If I do not touch your body today,
The thread of my soul will tear
Like an over-stretched sinew.
Let mourning crepes be beloved signs for
Me, who suffers, since I have belonged to you.
Judge whether I deserve such torment,
Sprinkle cool water upon my fevered forehead,
As I stagger outside unsteadily.

IX.

Fortune is severe with us, and brittle -
What could a brief kiss do?
A raindrop is cast
Upon the parched, bleached desert,
Which swallows it without pleasure,
Which must do without refreshment,
And which cracks anew beneath the refulgence.

X.

I contemplate the beautiful flowerbed as I tarry:
It is bordered with purple-black thorns
In which chalices rise with speckled spurs
And velved-covered, inclined ferns
And flocked tufts, watery-green and round
And in the center -- bells, white and gentle --
From the first breath her moist mouth
Is as sweet as fruit from the heavenly fields.

XI.

When we were behind the flowery gates
Finally sensing only our own breathing,
Were our blisses imagined?
I remember, that like weak reeds
Both of us began to tremble silently
Whenever we barely touched each other lightly
And that our eyes welled -
You remained at my side a long time that way.

XII.

When, in holy repose in deep meadows,
Our hands press against our temples,
Veneration eases the fire of our limbs:
So do not think of the misshapen shadows
Rocking up and down on the wall,
Do not think of the watchers rushing to separate us,
Nor of the white sand outside the city
That is ready to sip our warm blood.

XIII. Du lehnst wider eine Silberweide

Du lehnst wider eine silberweide
Am ufer, mit des fächers starren spitzen
Umschirmst du das haupt dir wie mit blitzen
Und rollst, als ob du spieltest dein geschmeide.
Ich bin im boot, das laubgewölbe wahren,
In das ich dich vergeblich lud zu steigen...
Die weiden seh ich, die sich tiefer neigen
Und blumen, die verstreut im wasser fahren.

XIV. Sprich nicht mehr von dem Laub

Sprich nicht immer
Von dem laub,
Windes raub;
Vom zerschellen
Reifer quitten,
Von den trittten
Der vernichter
Spät im jahr.
Von dem zittern
Der libellen
In gewittern,
Und der lichter,
Deren flimmer
Wandelbar.

XV. Wir bevölkerten die abend-düstern Lauben

Wir bevölkerten die abend-düstern
Lauben, lichten tempel, pfad und beet
Freudig - sie mit lächeln, ich mit flüstern -
Nun ist wahr, daß sie für immer geht.
Hohe blumen blassen oder brechen,
Es erblasst und bricht der weiher glas
Und ich trete fehl im morschen gras,
Palmen mit den spitzen fingern stechen.
Mürber blätter zischendes gewühl
Jagen ruckweis unsichtbare hände
Draußen um des edens fahle wände.
Die nacht ist überwölkt und schwül.

XIII.

You lean against a silver willow
On the shore, with the stiff points of your fan
You protect your head with lightning bolts
And roll your jewelry as if you were playing.
I'm in the boat, hidden by the greenery,
Which I invited you to step into...
I see the willows, which bend themselves lower,
And flowers, that are floating scattered on the water.

XIV.

Say no more
About the leaves,
Robbed by the wind,
About the smashing of
Ripe quinces,
About the steps
Of the destroyer
Late in the year.
About the trembling
Of the dragonfly
In lightning storms,
Or about the the lights,
Whose flickering is
Unsteady.

XV.

We populated the night-gloomy
Arbors, bright temples, path and flowerbed
Joyfully - she with smiles, I with whispers -
Now it is clear that she is gone forever.
Tall flowers pale or break,
The glass pond turns pale and breaks,
And I stumble in the decaying grass;
Palms jab with their pointy fingers.
The hissing throng of withered leaves
Chased by jerking invisible hands
Outside the dun walls of Eden.
The night is overcast and sultry.

Some Favored Nook (2018)

Eric Nathan (b. 1983)

Libretto by Mark Campbell and Eric Nathan

Adapting texts by Emily Dickinson and Thomas Wentworth Higginson

PART I

To tell me what is true?

*[Dickinson letter to Higginson, received April 16, 1862; and Higginson's commentary in "Emily Dickinson's Letters," in the Atlantic Monthly, October 1891]*¹

DICKINSON:

Mr. Higginson,
Are you too deeply occupied to say if my verse is
alive? The mind is so near itself
It cannot see distinctly, And I have none to ask.
Should you think it breathed,
And had you the leisure to tell me, I should feel
quick gratitude.

HIGGINSON:

The letter was postmarked "Amherst," In a
handwriting so peculiar
As if the writer might have taken her first lessons By
studying fossil bird-tracks.

DICKINSON:

If I make the mistake, That you dared to tell me
Would give me sincerer honor toward you.

HIGGINSON:

Of punctuation there was little; She used chiefly dashes
But the most curious thing
Was the total absence of a signature. As if the shy
writer wished to recede As far as possible from view
—in pencil, not in ink.

DICKINSON:

I inclose my name, asking you, If you please, sir,
To tell me what is true?

HIGGINSON:

The name was Emily Dickinson.

DICKINSON:

That you will not betray me It is needless to ask,
Since honor is its own pawn.

The nearest dream recedes unrealized

HIGGINSON:

Inclosed in the letter were poems.
One with an aerial lift
that bears the ear upward with the bee it traces

DICKINSON:

*The nearest dream recedes unrealized.
The heaven we chase,
Like the June bee Before the schoolboy,
Invites the race,
Stoops to an easy clover, Dips—evades—teases—
deploys— Then to the royal clouds
Lifts his light pinnacle, Heedless of the boy
Staring, bewildered, at the mocking sky. Homesick
for steadfast honey,—
Ah! The bee flies not
Which brews that rare variety.*

HIGGINSON:

The bee himself did not evade the schoolboy More
than she evaded me;
It is hard to say what answer was made by me— I
remember to have ventured on some criticism...

Could you tell me how to grow?

*[Letter to T. W. Higginson, received April 26, 1862]*²

DICKINSON:

Mr. Higginson,
Your kindness claimed earlier gratitude,
But I was ill, and write to-day from my pillow. Thank
you for the surgery;
It was not so painful as I supposed. I bring you
others, as you ask, Though they might not differ.
While my thought is undressed, I can make the
distinction;
But when I put them in the gown, They look alike and
numb.
I would like to learn.
Could you tell me how to grow,
Or is it unconveyed, like melody or witchcraft?

HIGGINSON/DICKINSON:

Your friend,
E. Dickinson.

¹ Adapted from Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Emily Dickinson's Letters," *Atlantic Monthly*, October 1891.

² Adapted from Emily Dickinson, published in Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Emily Dickinson's Letters," *Atlantic Monthly*, October 1891.

They shut me up in Prose

[Poem, "They shut me up in Prose," ca. 1862]₃

DICKINSON:

They shut me up in Prose— As when a little Girl
They put me in the Closet—
Because they liked me "still"—
Still! Could themselves have peeped— And seen my
Brain- go round—
They might as well have lodged a Bird For Treason—
in the Pound—
Himself has but to will And easy as a Star
Abolish his Captivity—
And laugh—No more have I—

[Essay, "Repression at Long Range"]₄

HIGGINSON:

The most gifted woman, Is like a single plant Trying
to sustain itself
Where the soil is not yet fitted for its reception, And
it is only in some favored nook
That it manages to exist at all.

My barefoot rank is better

[Letter to Higginson, received June 8, 1862]₅

DICKINSON:

Dear Friend,
I have had few pleasures so deep as your opinion,
And if I tried to thank you, my tears would block my
tongue. I smile when you suggest
That I delay "to publish,"
That being foreign to my thought As firmament to fin.
If fame belonged to me, I could not escape her,
My barefoot rank is better.
Would you have time to be the "friend" you should
think I need? I have a little shape: it would not
crowd your desk,
Nor make much racket as the mouse that dents
your galleries.

PART II

To see if we were growing

[From "Introduction," in *Army Life in a Black Regiment*]₆

HIGGINSON:

I did not seek the command Of colored troops,
But it sought me.
I had always looked for the arming of the blacks, I
had been an abolitionist too long,
And had known and loved John Brown too well, Not
to feel a thrill of joy
At last on finding myself
In the position where he only wished to be. I
obtained from the War Department, Permission to
report to General Saxton, Thenceforth my lot was cast
Altogether with the black troops, Mine lay among
hundred men Suddenly transformed
From slaves into soldiers
A battalion of black soldiers A spectacle since
so common
Seemed then the most daring of innovations. I felt
sometimes as if
We were a plant trying to take root But constantly
pulled up
To see if we were growing.

War feels to me an oblique place

[Letter to Higginson, received in the winter of 1862-3]₇

DICKINSON:

Dear Friend,
I should have liked to see you before you became
improbable. War feels to me an oblique place.
Should there be other summers, Would you perhaps
come?
Should you,
Before this reaches you, Experience immortality,
Who will inform me of the exchange?

HIGGINSON/DICKINSON:

Your Gnome.

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⁴ Adapted from Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Repression at Long Range," in *Concerning All of Us* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1882), 204.

⁵ Adapted from Emily Dickinson, published in Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Emily Dickinson's Letters," *Atlantic Monthly*, October 1891.

⁶ Adapted from Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Introduction," in *The Writings of Thomas Wentworth Higginson: Army Life in A Black Regiment*, 4-7. University of California: Riverside Press, 1900.

⁷ Emily Dickinson, published in Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Emily Dickinson's Letters," *Atlantic Monthly*, October 1891.

There suddenly arose

[Diary entry from the evening of January 1, 1863]⁸

HIGGINSON:

The President's Emancipation Proclamation was read.
There suddenly arose
A strong male voice Cracked and elderly
Into which two women's voices instantly blended,
Singing,
As if by an impulse
That could no more be repressed
Than the morning note of the song-sparrow. – I never
saw anything so electric;
It made all other words cheap;
It seemed the choked voice of a race at last
unloosed. After it was ended,
Tears were everywhere.
These souls burst out in their lay, as if they were by
their own hearths at home!

Emancipation

[Poem, "No rack can torture me," ca. 1862. Titled "Emancipation" in Todd/
Higginson publication, 1890]⁹

DICKINSON:

Emancipation

No rack can torture me, My soul's at liberty Behind
this mortal bone There knits a bolder one
You cannot prick with saw, Nor rend with scymitar.
Two bodies therefore be; Bind one, and one will flee.
The eagle of his nest
No easier divest And gain the sky, Than mayest thou,
Except thyself may be Thine enemy;
Captivity is consciousness, So's liberty.

All sounds ceased

[From "Up the St. Mary's," in *Army Life in a Black Regiment*]¹⁰

HIGGINSON:

It was after midnight.
The moonlight—
The woods— Drew a pistol— Took aim—
"Charge in upon them! Surround them!" Confused—
Rifle-shots— Advancing guard—
A man fell at my elbow— As if a tree had fallen—
Confusion— Scattering—
Firing rapidly—
Hail-storm of bullets Pattered precisely Upon the
iron cannon— I gave the order—
All sounds ceased—
And left us in peaceful possession of the field.

There came a wind like a bugle

[Poem (excerpted), "There came a wind like a bugle," no date;¹¹
Poem (full), "They dropped like Flakes," ca. 1862]¹²

DICKINSON:

There came a wind like a bugle; It quivered through
the grass, And a green chill upon the heat So
ominous did pass
They dropped like Flakes— They dropped like Stars—
Like Petals from a Rose—
When suddenly across the June A Wind with
fingers— goes—
They perished in the Seamless Grass— No eye could
find the place—
But God can summon every face On his
Repealless— List.

Attending to the wounded

[From "Up the St. Mary's," in *Army Life in a Black Regiment*]¹³

HIGGINSON:

Attending to the wounded—
Making stretchers for those to be carried—
One man killed instantly by ball through the heart—
Seven wounded,
One of whom will die. Another, with three wounds—
One of which may cost him his life
Would not report himself till compelled to do so by
his officers. While dressing his wounds, he quietly
talked of what they had done, And of what they yet
could do.
He is perfectly quiet and cool,
But takes this whole affair with the religious bearing
Of a man who realizes that freedom is sweeter
than life.

[Poem, "A death-blow is a life-blow to some," 1865]¹⁴

DICKINSON:

A death-blow is a life-blow to some; Who, till they
died, did not alive become; Who, had they lived,
had died,
But when they died, vitality begun.

⁸ Adapted from Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *The Writings of Thomas Wentworth Higginson: Army Life in A Black Regiment*, 54–56. University of California: Riverside Press, 1900.

⁹ Poems by Emily Dickinson. Edited by Two of Her Friends, Mabel Loomis Todd and T. W. Higginson. [First Series.] Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1890.

¹⁰ Fragments excerpted from Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *The Writings of Thomas Wentworth Higginson: Army Life in A Black Regiment*, 100, 109. University of California: Riverside Press, 1900.

¹¹ Excerpted from manuscript, Amherst College, no. 458. (www.edickinson.org)

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¹³ Adapted from Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *The Writings of Thomas Wentworth Higginson: Army Life in A Black Regiment*, 102–104. University of California: Riverside Press, 1900.

¹⁴ Emily Dickinson, published in Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Emily Dickinson's Letters," *Atlantic Monthly*, October 1891.

That shamed the nation

[From "Conclusion," in *Army Life in a Black Regiment*]¹⁵

HIGGINSON:

We had touched the pivot of the war. Whether this
vast and dusky mass
Should prove the weakness of the nation or its
strength, Must depend in great measure,
We knew, upon our efforts. Till the blacks
were armed,
There was no guaranty of their freedom. It was their
demeanor under arms
That shamed the nation into recognizing
them as men.

PART III

These are my introduction

[Letter to Higginson, no date, prior to August 16, 1870]¹⁶

DICKINSON:

Dear Friend,
You were not aware that you saved my life.
To thank you in person has been since then one of
my few requests.

[From Higginson's commentary "Emily Dickinson's Letters," *Atlantic Monthly*,
October 1891]¹⁷

HIGGINSON:

At last after many postponements, On August 16, 1870,
I found myself face to face
With my hitherto unseen correspondent At her
father's house.
I heard an extremely faint and pattering footstep
Like that of a child, in the hall,
And in glided, almost noiselessly, A plain shy little
person, with eyes, As she herself, said,

HIGGINSON/DICKINSON:

"Like the sherry the guest leaves in the glass,"

HIGGINSON:

She came toward me with two day lilies

DICKINSON:

These are my introduction Forgive me if I am
frightened. I never see strangers
And hardly know what I say

HIGGINSON:

But soon she began to talk— almost constantly—

DICKINSON:

If I read a book and it makes My whole body so cold
No fire can ever warm me, I know that is poetry.

HIGGINSON:

Interspersed with these confidences Came phrases—
Putting into words what the most extravagant Might
possibly think without saying.

DICKINSON:

If I feel physically as if
The top of my head were taken off, I know that is
poetry.

HIGGINSON:

We met only once again
We corresponded for years
She sometimes enclosed ¹⁸ flowers
Or fragrant leaves
With a verse or two.

My Wars are laid away in Books / No Prisoner be

[Poem, "My Wars are laid away in Books," no date]¹⁹

DICKINSON:

*My Wars are laid away in Books—
I have one Battle more—
A Foe whom I have never seen But oft has scanned
me o'er— And hesitated me between
And others at my side,
But chose the best— Neglecting me—till
All the rest, have died—
How sweet if I am not forgot By Chums
that passed away—
Since Playmates at threescore and ten
Are such a scarcity—*

HIGGINSON:

My Wars are laid away in Books—

DICKINSON:

My Wars are laid away in Books—
[Poem, "No Prisoner be," ca. 1863]²⁰

DICKINSON/HIGGINSON:

*No Prisoner be—
Where Liberty— Himself—abide
with Thee.*

¹⁵ Adapted from Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *The Writings of Thomas Wentworth Higginson: Army Life in A Black Regiment*, 359. University of California: Riverside Press, 1900.

¹⁶ Emily Dickinson, published in Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Emily Dickinson's Letters," *Atlantic Monthly*, October 1891.

¹⁷ Adapted from Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Emily Dickinson's Letters," *Atlantic Monthly*, October 1891.

¹⁸ Tense changed from the original.

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