

SWANSONGS: The Last Recital

Celebrating 60 Years of Professional Singing

Stephen Swanson, *baritone*

David Gompper, *piano*

Wallenberg Hall – Denkmann Memorial Building

Augustana College

Rock Island, Illinois

Sunday, March 10, 2024 at 7:00 PM

I – SINGING

If music be the food of love (3rd Version, 1695)

Words by Henry Heveningham (1651-1700)

Music by Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Realized by Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Wie Melodien zieht es mir (1886), op. 105, no. 1

Words by Klaus Groth (1819-1899)

Music by Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Wie Melodien zieht es
Mir leise durch den Sinn,
Wie Frühlingsblumen blüht es
Und schwebt wie Duft dahin.

Thoughts, like melodies,
Steal softly through my mind,
Like spring flowers they blossom
And drift away like fragrance.

Doch kommt das Wort und faßt es
Und führt es vor das Aug',
Wie Nebelgrau erblaßt es
Und schwindet wie ein Hauch.

Yet when words come and capture them
And bring them before my eyes,
They turn pale like grey mist
And vanish like a breath.

Und dennoch ruht im Reime
Verborgен wohl ein Duft,
Den mild aus stillem Keime
Ein feuchtes Auge ruft.

Yet surely in rhyme
A fragrance lies hidden,
Summoned by moist eyes
From the silent seed.

English translation © Richard Stokes

How can I keep from singing? (1869)

Words by Robert Lowry; revised by Pete Seeger (1919-2014)

With new text (1950) by Doris Plenn (1917-1999)

Music by Robert Lowry (1826-1899)

The Roadside Fire (*Songs of Travel*, 1905)

Words by Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)

Music by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

II – CYCLE OF LOVE

Heimliche Aufforderung (1893), op. 27, no. 3

Words by John Henry Mackay (1864-1933)

Music by Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Auf, hebe die funkelnde Schale
empor zum Mund,
Und trinke beim Freudenmahle
dein Herz gesund.

Und wenn du sie hebst, so winke
mir heimlich zu,
Dann lächle ich, und dann trinke
ich still wie du ...

Und still gleich mir betrachte
um uns das Heer
Der trunkenen Schwätzer—verachte
sie nicht zu sehr.

Nein, hebe die blinkende Schale,
gefüllt mit Wein,
Und laß beim lärmenden Mahle
sie glücklich sein.

Doch hast du das Mahl genossen,
den Durst gestillt,
Dann verlasse der lauten Genossen
festfreudiges Bild,

Und wandle hinaus in den Garten
zum Rosenstrauch,—
Dort will ich dich dann erwarten
nach altem Brauch,

Und will an die Brust dir sinken
eh' du's gehofft,
Und deine Küsse trinken,
wie ehemals oft,

Und flechten in deine Haare
der Rose Pracht—
O komm, du wunderbare,
ersehnte Nacht!

Come, raise to your lips
the sparkling goblet,
And drink at this joyful feast
your heart to health.

And when you raise it, give
me a secret sign,
Then I shall smile, and drink
as quietly as you ...

And quietly like me, look
around at the hordes
Of drunken gossips—do not
despise them too much.

No, raise the glittering goblet,
filled with wine,
And let them be happy
at the noisy feast.

But once you have savoured the meal,
quenched your thirst,
Leave the loud company
of happy revellers,

And come out into the garden
to the rose-bush,—
There I shall wait for you
as I've always done.

And I shall sink on your breast,
before you could hope,
And drink your kisses,
as often before,

And twine in your hair
the glorious rose—
Ah! come, O wondrous,
longed-for night!

English translation © Richard Stokes

Nachtgang (1895), op. 29, no. 3

Words by Otto Julius Bierbaum (1865-1910)

Music by Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Wir gingen durch die stille, milde Nacht,
dein Arm in meinem, dein Auge in meinem;

We walked through the gentle silent night,
your arm in mine, your eyes gazing into mine;

der Mond goss silbernes Licht über dein Angesicht;
wie auf Goldgrund ruhte dein schönes Haupt,
und du erschienst mir wie eine Heilige:
mild, mild und gross, und seelenübertoll,
heilig und rein wie die liebe Sonne.
Und in die Augen schwoll mir ein warmer Drang,
wie Tränenahnung.
Fester fasst' ich dich und küsste —
küsstest dich ganz leise, — meine Seele weinte.

the moon shed silver light over your face;
as though on gold your fair head lay,
and you seemed to me like a saint:
gentle, gentle and great, with a brimming soul,
holy and pure like the dear sun.
And a pressing warmth welled into my eyes,
like impending tears.
I held you closer and kissed you —
kissed you so gently — my soul wept.

English translation © Richard Stokes

Morgen! (1893), op. 27, no. 4

Words by John Henry Mackay (1864-1933)

Music by Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Und morgen wird die Sonne wieder scheinen
Und auf dem Wege, den ich gehen werde,
Wird uns, die Glücklichen, sie wieder einen
Inmitten dieser sonnenatmenden Erde ...

And tomorrow the sun will shine again
And on the path that I shall take,
It will unite us, happy ones, again,
Amid this same sun-breathing earth ...

Und zu dem Strand, dem weiten, wogenblauen,
Werden wir still und langsam niedersteigen,
Stumm werden wir uns in die Augen schauen,
Und auf uns sinkt des Glückes stummes Schweigen ...

And to the shore, broad, blue-waved,
We shall quietly and slowly descend,
Speechless we shall gaze into each other's eyes,
And the speechless silence of bliss shall fall on us ...

English translation © Richard Stokes

Allerseelen (1882), op. 10, no. 8

Words by Hermann von Gilm (1812-1864)

Music by Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Stell auf den Tisch die duftenden Reseden,
Die letzten roten Aestern trag herbei,
Und laß uns wieder von der Liebe reden,
Wie einst im Mai.

Set on the table the fragrant mignonettes,
Bring in the last red asters,
And let us talk of love again
As once in May.

Gib mir die Hand, daß ich sie heimlich drücke,
Und wenn man's sieht, mir ist es einerlei,
Gib mir nur einen deiner süßen Blicke,
Wie einst im Mai.

Give me your hand to press in secret,
And if people see, I do not care,
Give me but one of your sweet glances
As once in May.

Es blüht und duftet heut auf jedem Grabe,
Ein Tag im Jahr ist ja den Toten frei,
Komm an mein Herz, daß ich dich wieder habe,
Wie einst im Mai.

Each grave today has flowers and is fragrant,
One day each year is devoted to the dead;
Come to my heart and so be mine again,
As once in May.

English translation © Richard Stokes

III – AGING

Try to Remember (*The Fantasticks*, 1960)

Words by Tom Jones (1928-2023)

Harvey Schmidt (1929-2018)

Sunrise, Sunset (*Fiddler on the Roof*, 1964)

Words by Sheldon Harnick (1924-2023)

Music by Jerry Bock (1928-2010)

When I'm Sixty-Four (*Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, 1967)

Words and music by Paul McCartney (b. 1942)

With additional lyrics by John Lennon (1940-1980)

Get Up and Go (1954)

Words collected and adapted and set to original music by Pete Seeger

Old Friends (*Bookends*, 1968)

Words and music by Paul Simon (b. 1941)

The Dutchman (1968)

Words and music by Michael Peter Smith (1941-2020)

IV – SWANS

Le Cygne (*Histoires naturelles*, 1906)

Words by Jules Renard (1864-1910)

Music by Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Il glisse sur le bassin,
comme un traîneau blanc, de nuage en nuage.
Car il n'a faim que des nuages floconneux
qu'il voit naître, bouger,
et se perdre dans l'eau.
C'est l'un d'eux qu'il désire.
Il le vise du bec,
et il plonge tout à coup son col vêtu de neige.
Puis, tel un bras de femme sort d'une manche,
il le retire.
Il n'a rien.
Il regarde: les nuages effarouchés ont disparu.
Il ne reste qu'un instant désabusé,
car les nuages tardent peu à revenir, et, là-bas,
où meurent les ondulations de l'eau,
en voici un qui se reforme.
DouceMENT, sur son léger coussin de plumes,
le cygne rame et s'approche . . .
Il s'épuise à pêcher de vains reflets,
et peut-être qu'il mourra victime de cette illusion,
avant d'attraper un seul morceau de nuage.
Mais qu'est-ce que je dis?
Chaque fois qu'il plonge,
il fouille du bec la vase nourrissante
et ramène un ver.
Il engraisse comme une oie.

He glides on the pond,
like a white sleigh, from cloud to cloud.
For his hunger is only for the fleecy clouds
that he sees forming, moving
and being lost in the water.
It is one of them that he desires.
He aims at it with his beak,
and suddenly immerses his snow-clad neck.
Then, just as a woman's arm emerges from a sleeve,
he pulls it back.
He has caught nothing.
He looks: The startled clouds have disappeared.
He remains disillusioned for only a moment,
for the clouds return before very long, and, over there,
where the ripples on the water are dying away,
one cloud is already forming.
Softly, on his light feather cushion,
the swan paddles and approaches . . .
He exhausts himself fishing for empty reflections,
and perhaps he will die, a victim to that illusion,
before catching a single piece of cloud.
But what am I talking about?
Every time he dives,
he burrows in the nourishing mud with his beak
and comes back with a worm.
He's fattening up like a goose.

Translated by Arbie Orenstein

The Crucifixion (*Hermit Songs*, 1953), op. 29, no. 5

Words from the Speckled Book, 12th century

Translated by Howard Mumford Jones

Music by Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

En Svane (1876), op. 25, no. 2

Words by Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906)

Music by Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)

Min hvide svane
du stumme, du stille,
hverken slag eller trille
lod sangrøst ane.

Angst beskyttende
alfen, som sover,
altid lyttende
gled du henover.

Men sidste mødet,
da eder og øjne
var lønlige løgne,
ja da, da lød det!

I toners føden
du slutted din bane.
Du sang i døden;
du var dog en svane!

My swan, my silent one,
With white plumage,
Your delightful songs,
No trill betrayed.

Fearfully mindful of
The elves in the dell,
You glided, listening,
Always in circles.

And yet you forced
Our final parting
With false promises.
Yes, there, there you sang!

Singing, you closed
Your earthly course.
You died, faded away.
You were a swan nevertheless!

Translation from the German by C. Ersel King

The Swan (2024)

Words by Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926)

Translation from the German by Nikolaus Loening (b. 1975)

Music by David Gompper (b. 1954)

In memory of Stefan Loening (1939-2021)

V –REPRISE

Get Up and Go

With new words (2023) by Stephen Swanson (b. 1945)

Celebrating 60 Years of Professional Singing

Stephen Swanson began his professional singing career in 1963 as a chorister at St. Pauls Church (UCC) in Chicago. In 1967 he was hired as principal baritone for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) Chorus under the direction of Margaret Hillis. After graduating from college, he became the go-to baritone soloist for oratorio performances by amateur choirs throughout Chicagoland, as well as a featured soloist for the CSO under George Solti, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, and Margaret Hillis. From 1973-1975 he was an American Guild of Musical Artists apprentice/young artist with The Wolftrap Company. In 1975 Steve moved to Switzerland to participate in the International Opera Studio at the Zurich Opera. For the next eighteen years he was resident baritone in the municipal opera houses in Kaiserslautern and Passau, Germany. His final years in Europe concluded with an international tour as the Emperor in the Holocaust opera *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* by Viktor Ullmann. Steve joined the faculty of The University of Iowa (UI) in 1994. Returning to oratorio, Steve performed Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* across the country. He enjoyed the privilege of performing theme-based recitals with outstanding members of the UI School of Music faculty.

Since 1991, **David Gompper** has been Professor of Composition in the UI School of Music, Director of the Center for New Music (CNM), and this year, Interim Director of the University of Iowa Symphony Orchestra. Through David's leadership, the CNM supports and disseminates new music by students and young composers while giving student musicians a platform to perform contemporary music. As a composer, David has created works for vocal, chamber ensembles, and orchestra that have been performed and recorded in Europe and the US. As a pianist, David is passionate about collaborating with and composing for fellow musicians. He travels the world performing with violinist Wolfgang David, cellist Timothy Gill, bassist Volkan Orhon, and clarinetist Michael Norsworthy.

Steve and David toured extensively with two different recitals which were released in compact disc format by Albany Records <www.albanyrecords.com>.

Was my Brother in the Battle? SONGS OF WAR (TROY 1056) was created as Steve's personal protest to Operation Iraqi Freedom, launched by the United States on March 20, 2003. The songs are "about the individuals involved in America's historic military conflicts, their friends, and their families – harsh, ironic, funny, patriotic, poignant, disturbing – images of America at war."

Animal Songs: Bestiaries in English, French, & German (TROY1365) features a song cycle composed for the occasion by David Gompper to words by UI Emeritus Professor and former Iowa Poet Laureate Marvin Bell. The program also includes songs about animals by Maurice Ravel, Max Reger, and the cabaret duo Flanders & Swann.

Acknowledgements

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Nikolaus Loening

Evelyn Galstad

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Program by Marilyn Swanson