



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
FACULTY OF MUSIC

## Thursdays at Noon: *Little Elegies*

Monica Whicher, *soprano* and Steven Philcox, *piano*

Thursday, February 16, 2023 at 12:10 pm | Walter Hall, 80 Queen's Park

### PROGRAM

*Please withhold applause until the end of each set of songs.*

#### **Scheidend, Opus 9 no. 6**

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)  
Johann Gustav Droysen (1808-1884)

#### **Little Elegy**

Ned Rorem (1923-2022)  
Elinor Wylie (1885-1928)

#### **Velvet Shoes (2007)**

Ray Lustig  
Elinor Wylie (1885-1928)

#### **I Remember (*Evening Primrose*)**

Steven Sondheim (1930-2021)

#### **On Parent Knees, Opus posthumous (*To A Poet*)**

Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)  
attributed to William Jones (1746-1794) after the Persian

#### **Branch by Branch (*Five Millay Songs*)**

H. Leslie Adams (b. 1932)  
Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)

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*We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates.*

*For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit.*

*Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.*

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**The New Ghost**

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1950)  
Fredegond Shove (1889-1949)

**The Lordly Hudson**

Ned Rorem (1923-2022)  
Paul Goodman (1911-1972)

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**Jeg elsker Dig (*Hjertets Melodier*, Opus 5 no. 3)**

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)  
Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875)

**Solveig's Lullaby (*Peer Gynt*, Opus 23)**

Edvard Grieg  
Henrik Ibsen (1828-1926)

**J'ai perdu mon amant (*Five Songs from Canadian Traditional Collections*)**

arranged by John Beckwith (1927-2022)

**Asteri mou, feggari mou**

Mikis Theodorakis (1925-2021)  
Nikos Gatsos (1911-1992)

**Sonnet: Mindful of you the sodden earth in spring (*Three Songs for Diane Kalish, in memorium*, 2015)**

Sheila Silver (b. 1946)  
Edna St. Vincent Millay

**Down by the Salley Gardens**

Ivor Gurney (1890-1937)  
William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)

**My Feet May Take a Little While (2006)**

Errollyn Wallen (b. 1958)

**Nature Boy**

eden ahbez (1908-1995)  
arranged by Sharon Minemoto (b. 1973)

*Little Elegies*  
PROGRAM NOTES

This is a program about love and remembering. I am thinking, with each of these songs and poems, of all that has come to pass in these most recent years of our lives, when the sharing of burden, loss or grief has not always been possible. I am thinking of home and what it means when we may or may not go to it. And I am thinking, especially, of the gift we can acknowledge when there is someone whom we miss, as a dear cousin of mine says, “a little or a lot, every single day”.

Although there is a personal connection to each of these songs and texts, their explorations of longing, of decision, states of grace, pictures, passages, and the pennies that drop - are universal. The songs collected here in two ad hoc “cycles” offer, as songs so often do, space for contemplation and for connection.

There is so much of a creator’s life that inspires their writing of poetry or music, and so much that inspires the union of these. Ned Rorem’s whole life was made up these unions. So, too was our own John Beckwith’s. The tumult of Elinor Wylie’s life was perhaps offset by her words - so spare – of reverence for nature and, in “Little Elegy”, for one no longer here. Sheila Silver’s setting of Edna St. Vincent Millay’s Sonnet, “Mindful of you the sodden earth in spring” is a true work of dedication and profound remembrance. Millay’s words as set by H. Leslie Adams clarify something decisive, something final. Errollyn Wallen’s own words and music, dedicated to her mother, give space for the kindness of self-acceptance...

As people who perform, there is no end in our own lives to all that impels us to express to - share our own and others’ stories. So too, the lives of listeners inform what might, at any given moment, become clear or confusing; what might transport us or focus us; what might give us permission to feel, or to understand things differently. However we experience a musical offering, tucked away in our singular experience is something larger: the resonance of empathy and shared understanding.

Monica Whicher

## *Little Elegies*

### TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

#### **Scheidend (Parting), poem by Johann Gustav Droysen (1808-1884)**

Wie so gelinde die Flut bewegt!  
Wie sie so ruhig den Nachen trägt!  
Fern liegt das Leben, das Jugendland!  
Fern, fern liegt der Schmerz, der dort mich  
band,  
Sanft tragt mich, Fluten, zum fernen Land!

Droben der Sterne stiller Ort,  
Unten der Strom fließt fort und fort.  
Wohl warst du reich, mein Jugendland!  
Wohl, wohl war es süß, was dort mich band,  
Sanft tragt mich, Fluten, zum fernen Land!

How gently the tide moves!  
How calmly it carries the boat!  
Far away lies life, the land of youth!  
Far, far away lies the pain that bound me there,  
Carry me gently, floods, to that distant land!

Above, the stars' quiet space,  
Below, the river flows on and on.  
You were indeed rich, land of my youth!  
Sweet, so sweet, was all that held me there,  
Carry me gently, floods, to that distant land!

*Translation by M. Whicher*

#### **Little Elegy, poem by Elinor Wylie (1885-1928)**

Withouten you  
No rose can grow;  
No leaf be green  
If never seen  
Your sweetest face;  
No bird have grace  
Or power to sing;  
Or anything  
Be kind, or fair,  
And you nowhere.

#### **Velvet Shoes, poem by Elinor Wylie**

Let us walk in the white snow  
In a soundless space;  
With footsteps quiet and slow,  
At a tranquil pace,  
Under veils of white lace.

I shall go shod in silk,  
And you in wool,  
White as white cow's milk,  
More beautiful  
Than the breast of a gull.

We shall walk through the still town  
In a windless peace;  
We shall step upon white down,  
Upon silver fleece,  
Upon softer than these.

We shall walk in velvet shoes:  
Wherever we go  
Silence will fall like dews  
On white silence below.  
We shall walk in the snow.

**I Remember, lyrics by Steven Sondheim (1930-2021), from *Evening Primrose***

I remember sky  
It was blue as ink  
Or at least I think  
I remember sky  
I remember snow  
Soft as feathers  
Sharp as thumb tacks  
Coming down like lint

And it made you squint  
When the wind would blow  
And ice like vinyl on the streets  
Cold as silver, white as sheets  
Rain like strings and changing things  
Like leaves

I remember leaves  
Green as spearmint  
Crisp as paper  
I remember trees  
Bare as coat racks  
Spread like broken umbrellas

And parks and bridges  
Ponds and zoos  
Ruddy faces, muddy shoes  
Light and noise and bees and boys  
And days

I remember days  
Or at least I try  
But as years go by  
They're sort of haze  
And the bluest ink  
Isn't really sky  
And at times I think  
I would gladly die  
For a day of sky

**On Parent Knees, poem attributed to William Jones (1746-1794), after the Persian**

On parent knees, a naked new-born child,  
Weeping thou sat'st, while all around thee smiled:  
So live, that sinking to thy life's last sleep,  
Calm thou may'st smile, while all around thee weep.

**Branch by Branch, poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)**

Branch by branch  
This tree has died. Green only  
Is one last bough, moving its leaves in the sun.

What evil ate its root, what blight,  
What ugly thing,  
Let the mole say, the bird sing;  
Or the white worm behind the shedding bark  
Tick in the dark.

You and I have only one thing to do:  
Saw the trunk through.

**The New Ghost, poem by Fredegond Shove (1889-1949)**

And he cast it down, down, on the green grass,  
Over the young crocuses, where the dew was--  
He cast the garment of his flesh that was full of death,  
And like a sword his spirit showed out of the cold sheath.  
He went a pace or two, he went to meet his Lord,  
And, as I said, his spirit looked like a clean sword,  
And seeing him the naked trees began shivering,  
And all the birds cried out aloud as it were late spring.

And the Lord came on, He came down, and saw  
That a soul was waiting there for Him, one without flaw,  
And they embraced in the churchyard where the robins play,  
And the daffodils hang down their heads, as they burn away.

The Lord held his head fast, and you could see  
That he kissed the unsheathed ghost that was gone free--  
As a hot sun, on a March day, kisses the cold ground;  
And the spirit answered, for he knew well that his peace was found.

The spirit trembled, and sprang up at the Lord's word--  
As on a wild, April day, springs a small bird--  
So the ghost's feet lifting him up, he kissed the Lord's cheek,  
And for the greatness of their love neither of them could speak.  
But the Lord went then, to show him the way,  
Over the young crocuses, under the green may  
That was not quite in flower yet--to a far-distant land;  
And the ghost followed, like a naked cloud holding the sun's hand.

**The Lordly Hudson, poem by Paul Goodman (1911-1972)**

“Driver, what stream is it?”  
I asked, well knowing  
it was our lordly Hudson  
hardly flowing.

“It is our lordly Hudson  
hardly flowing,” he said,  
“under the green-grown cliffs.”

Be still, heart!  
No one needs  
your passionate suffrage  
to select this glory—  
this is our lordly Hudson  
hardly flowing  
under the green-grown cliffs.

“Driver has this a peer  
in Europe or the East?”

“No, no!” He said.  
Home! Home!  
Be quiet, heart!  
This is our lordly Hudson  
and has no peer  
in Europe or the East;  
this is our lordly Hudson  
hardly flowing  
under the green-grown cliffs  
and has no peer  
in Europe or the East;  
be quiet, heart!  
Home! Home!

**Jeg elsker Dig (I Love You), poem by Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875)**

Min Tankes Tanke ene Du er vorden,  
Du er mit Hjertes første Kjærlighed.  
Jeg elsker Dig som Ingen her på Jorden,  
jeg elsker Dig i Tid og Evighed.

You have become my only thought.  
You are my heart's first love.  
I love you as no one else here on Earth,  
I love you through time and eternity!  
*Translation by M. Whicher*

### **Solveig's Vuggesang (Solveig's Lullaby), poem by Henrik Ibsen, 1828-1926**

Sov, du dyreste Gutten min!  
Jeg skal vugge dig, jeg skal våge.

Sleep my dearest boy!  
I will cradle you, I will stay awake.

Gutten har siddet på sin Moders Fang.  
De to har leget hele Livsdagen lang.

The boy has been sitting in his mother's lap.  
The two have played for life's long day.

Gutten har hvilet ved sin Moders Bryst  
hele Livsdagen lang. Grud signe dig, min Lyst!

The boy has rested at his mother's breast  
For all of life's long day. God bless you, my Joy!

Gutten har ligget til mit Hjerte tæt  
hele Livsdagen lang. Nu er han så træt.  
Sov, du dyreste Gutten min!  
Jeg skal vugge dig, jeg skal våge.

The boy has lain close to my heart  
For life's long day. Now he is so tired.  
Sleep my dearest boy!  
I will cradle you, I will stay awake.

*Translation by M. Whicher*

### **J'ai perdu mon amant (Traditional French Canadian)**

J'ai perdu mon amant.  
Et je m'en souci' guère;  
Le regret que j'en ai  
Sera bientôt passé.  
Je porterai le deuil  
D'un habit de satin;  
Je verserai des larmes  
De vin.

I have lost my love,  
but it hardly concerns me;  
the regret that I have  
will soon be in the past.  
I will wear mourning clothes  
of satin;  
I will shed tears  
of wine.

Amant, que j't'ai donc fait  
Qui puiss' tant te déplaire?  
Est-c' que j't'ai pas aimé  
Comm' tu l'as mérité?  
Je t'ai aimé, je t'aime,  
Je t'aimerai toujours.  
Pour toi mon coeur soupire  
Toujours.

Love, what have I done to you  
that could upset you so?  
Is it that I didn't love you  
as you deserved?  
I did love you; I do love you;  
I will love you always.  
For you my heart sighs  
always.

La maison de chez nous  
C'est un lieu solitaire;  
On n'y voit pas souvent  
Divertir ses amants.  
Pour des amants qu'on aime,  
Qu'on aim' si tendrement,  
On aimerait les voir  
Souvent.

Our house  
is a lonely place;  
there, one does not often find  
the diversions of lovers.  
For the lovers that one loves,  
that one loves so tenderly,  
one would like to see them  
often.

*Translation by M. Whicher*



### **Asteri mou, fengari mou, poem by Nikos Gatsos (1911-1992)**

Αστέρι μου, φεγγάρι μου, της άνοιξης κλωνάρι  
μου  
κοντά σου θά 'ρθω πάλι, κοντά σου θά 'ρθω μιαν  
αυγή  
για να σου πάρω ένα φιλί και να με πάρεις πάλι.

Αγάπη μου, αγάπη μου, η νύχτα θα μας πάρει,  
τ' άστρα κι ο ουρανός, το κρύο το φεγγάρι.

Θα σ' αγαπώ, θα ζω μες στο τραγούδι  
θα μ' αγαπάς, θα ζεις με τα πουλιά  
θα σ' αγαπώ, θα γίνουμε τραγούδι  
θα μ' αγαπάς, θα γίνουμε πουλιά

My star, my moon, my branch of spring  
I will come to you again, I will come near you one  
dawn  
to give you a kiss and you will take me back.

My love, my love, the night will take us away,  
the stars and the sky, the cold moon.

I will love you, I will live in the song,  
you will love me, you will live with the birds,  
I will love you, we will become song,  
you will love me, we will become birds.

*Translation by M. Whicher*

### **Sonnet III: Mindful of you the sodden earth in spring, poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay**

Mindful of you the sodden earth in spring,  
And all the flowers that in the springtime grow,  
And dusty roads, and thistles, and the slow  
Rising of the round moon, all throats that sing  
The summer through, and each departing wing,  
And all the nests that the bared branches show,  
And all winds that in any weather blow,  
And all the storms that the four seasons bring.

You go no more on your exultant feet  
Up paths that only mist and morning knew,  
Or watch the wind, or listen to the beat  
Of a bird's wings too high in air to view,—  
But you were something more than young and sweet  
And fair,—and the long year remembers you.

### **Down by the Salley Gardens, poem by William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)**

Down by the salley gardens my love and I did meet;  
She passed the salley gardens with little snow-white feet.  
She bid me take love easy, as the leaves grow on the tree;  
But I, being young and foolish, with her would not agree.

In a field by the river my love and I did stand,  
And on my leaning shoulder she laid her snow-white hand.  
She bid me take life easy, as the grass grows on the weirs;  
But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears.

**My Feet May Take a Little While, poem by Errollyn Wallen (b. 1958)**

My feet may take a little while  
To walk the way of my dreaming heart;  
The more I walk, the more I breathe,  
The more I breathe, the less I know.

There is a song that I was taught,  
Of hills and streams and all  
The hopes and fears of living things  
Are written there in me.

My feet are slower than my heart,  
Slower than my dreams, than my will.  
I'll walk a million miles,  
I've walked a million miles of innocence.

My feet may take a little while  
To walk the way of my dreaming heart;  
The more I walk, the more I breathe,  
The more I breathe, the less I know.

**Nature Boy, poem by eden ahbez (1908-1995)**

There was a boy  
A very strange enchanted boy  
They say he wandered very far, very far  
Over land and sea  
A little shy and sad of eye  
But very wise was he.

And then one day  
A magic day he passed my way  
And while we spoke of many things  
Fools and kings  
This he said to me  
The greatest thing you'll ever learn  
Is just to love and be loved in return.

The greatest thing you'll ever learn  
Is just to love and be loved in return.

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