

## PROGRAM

***Early Snow*.....Lori Laitman (1955 - present)**

- I. Last Night the Rain Spoke to Me
- II. Blue Iris
- III. Early Snow

***Písně milostné, Op. 83*.....Antonín Dvořák (1841 - 1904)**

- I. Ó, naší lásce nekvete
- II. V tak mnohém srdci mrtvo jest
- III. Kol domu se teď' potácím
- IV. Já vím, že v sladké naději
- V. Nad krajem vévodí lehký spánek
- VI. Zde v lese u potoka já
- VII. V té sladké moci očí tvých
- VIII. Ó, duše drahá, jedinká

***The Space Between*.....Scott Gendel (1977 - present)**

- I. The Peace of Wild Things
- II. Whatever Happens
- III. A Song of Thanks
- IV. In This World
- V. Hate Has No World
- VI. We Will Not Leave
- VII. At Last

Laura Perkett, *soprano*  
Talar Khosdeghian, *piano*

## COMPOSERS' NOTES

### *Early Snow*

I composed *Early Snow* between November 2002 and March 2003. The cycle was commissioned by Dr. Adelaide Whitaker for soprano Jennifer Check, and it sets the poetry of Pulitzer Prize winner Mary Oliver. The three poems chosen are reflections on nature. My goal in any setting is the primacy of the text. To this end, meters shift constantly to follow the natural rhythms of the poem, melodies are structured to emphasize the most important words in a phrase, tempos are flexible, and harmonies shift to color the emotional content. In this way, every word in every poem is bound inextricably to the music.

*Last Night the Rain Spoke to Me* starts out with a flowing melody and accompaniment. The piece comes to a clearing in the middle, as the rhythm slows and the pedal sounds clear (“the sky cleared”). Grace notes in the piano under the words “stars in the sky” create a twinkling effect; likewise, the simple repetition of the accompaniment suggests “soft rain.”

*Blue Iris* allows the singer to play different roles—an author, a fly, and the wind. Different musical themes alternate until near the end when “the wind” sings “Doesn’t it...” The piano arpeggios under “distillation of blue iris” depict the flower’s dispersal in the wind. A thoughtful slower section ends the piece, with an echo of the arpeggios in the final measures.

Melodic elements repeat throughout *Early Snow*. The high piano accompaniment underneath the opening moves down in range as the snow falls and starts to cover the ground; this theme returns each time the snow falls. Other repeated elements also tie different sections of the poem together. The piano accompaniment at the end is a variation of the opening; and the singer brings the piece to a dramatic close on a high B flat, illustrating the word “sublime.”

—Lori Laitman

### *The Space Between*

When I received a commission from the Lotte Lehmann Foundation in 2005 to write a song cycle, I decided to make the new work a sort of mission statement, a declaration of both my personal philosophy and my musical passions. Immediately I thought to set the poetry of Wendell Berry, whose poems so wonderfully articulate the peace and beauty of life on this Earth, as well as the constant onslaught of threats to that life. The specific poems I assembled for *The Space Between* are in some ways grandiose. They are concerned with the most large-scale and elevated of subjects: the meaning of life, the fate of the world, and the future of humanity. But at the same time, the poems approach those subjects with the simplest and lightest of touches. Berry employs direct, lovely words to express himself. When he chooses to depict the wonder of nature, he does not drift toward the metaphysical, but instead describes the slowness of cows, the blooming of clover, and the calm of sitting on a hilltop.

The songs of *The Space Between* echo this coexistence of the extravagant and the modest. They are hugely extroverted in their overall dramatic gestures, but simple and straightforward in their details. The totality of this cycle creates an almost operatic arch over its twenty minutes, but each song also works as an entity unto itself. What kind of a personal mission statement does the cycle make, then? When reading Berry’s poetry, I find myself deeply moved by the combination of the monumentally large and the intimately small, the globally important concept and the locally inspiring detail. There is such overarching chaos and turmoil in the world, yet each individual person’s simple love can resist that tide. Wendell Berry’s poetry beautifully articulates that struggle. *The Space Between* seeks to animate his words with a rich musical life that both echoes and extends the sentiments behind them.

—Scott Gendel

## TEXTS

### *Early Snow*

Mary Oliver

#### **Last Night the Rain Spoke to Me**

Last night  
the rain  
spoke to me  
slowly, saying,

what joy  
to come falling  
out of the brisk cloud,  
to be happy again

in a new way  
on the earth!  
That's what it said  
as it dropped,

smelling of iron,  
and vanished  
like a dream of the ocean  
into the branches

and the grass below.  
Then it was over.  
The sky cleared.  
I was standing

under a tree.  
The tree was a tree  
with happy leaves,  
and I was myself,

and there were stars in the sky  
that were also themselves  
at the moment,  
at which moment

my right hand  
was holding my left hand  
which was holding the tree  
which was filled with stars

and the soft rain —  
imagine! imagine!  
the long and wondrous journeys  
still to be ours.

#### **Blue Iris**

Now that I'm free to be myself, who am I?  
Can't fly, can't run, and see how slowly I walk.

Well, I think, I can read books.

“What's that you're doing?”  
the green-headed fly shouts as it buzzes past.

I close the book.

Well, I can write down words, like these, softly.

“What's that you're doing?” whispers the wind,  
pausing  
in a heap just outside the window.

Give me a little time, I say back to its staring,  
silver face.

It doesn't happen all of a sudden, you know.

“Doesn't it?” says the wind, and breaks open,  
releasing  
distillation of blue iris.

And my heart panics not to be, as I long to be,  
the empty, waiting, pure, speechless receptacle.

#### **Early Snow**

Amazed I looked  
out of the window and saw  
the early snow coming down casually,  
almost drifting, over

the gardens, then the gardens began  
to vanish as each white, six-pointed  
snowflake lay down without a sound with all  
the others. I thought, how incredible

were their numbers. I thought of dried  
leaves drifting spate after spate  
out of the forests,  
the fallen sparrows, the hairs of all our heads,

as, still, the snowflakes went on pouring softly  
through  
what had become dusk or anyway flung  
a veil over the sun. And I thought  
how not one looks like another

though each is exquisite, fanciful, and  
falls without argument. It was now early  
evening. Some crows landed and tried  
to walk around then flew off. They were perhaps

laughing in crow talk or anyway so it seemed  
and I might have joined in, there was something  
that wonderful and refreshing  
about what was by then a confident, white blanket

carrying out its  
cheerful work, covering ruts, softening  
the earth's trials, but at the same time  
there was some kind of almost sorrow that fell

over me. It was  
the loneliness again. After all  
what is Nature, it isn't  
kindness, it isn't unkindness. And I turned and  
opened the door,

and still the snow poured down  
smelling of iron and the pale, vast eternal, and  
there it was, whether I was ready or not:  
the silence; the blank, white, glittering sublime.

### *Písň milostné*

Gustav Pflieger-Morávsky

#### **1. Ó, naši lásce nekvete**

Ó, naši lásce nekvete  
to vytoužené štěstí:  
A kdyby kvetlo, a kdyby kvetlo, nebude  
dlouho, dlouho kvěsti.

Proč by se slza v ohnivě  
Polibky vevrádala?  
Proč by mne v plné lásce své  
Ouzkostně objímala?

O, trpké je to loučení,  
Kde naděj nezakyne:  
Tu srdce cítí ve chvění,  
Že brzo, ach, brzo bídně zhyne.

#### **2. V tak mnohém srdci mrtvo jest**

V tak mnohém srdci mrtvo jest,  
Jak v tem né pustině,  
V něm na žalost a na bolest,  
Ba, místa jedině.

Tu klamy lásky horoucí  
V to srdce vstupuje,  
A srdce žalem prahnoucí,  
To mní, že miluje.

A v tom-to sladkém domnění  
Se ještě jednou v ráj

#### **1. Oh, our love does not blossom**

Oh, our love does not blossom  
to its desired happiness:  
And if it were to blossom, it would not  
last long

Why does a tear steal into  
Passionate kisses?  
Why would, while in love,  
This anxiety embrace me?

O, bitter is the parting,  
where hope does not beckon:  
Now the heart feels in trembling  
That soon, oh, soon, it will miserably perish.

#### **2. In so many a heart is death**

In so many a heart is death,  
as in a dark wasteland,  
In it, indeed, is only a place  
For pain and suffering.

The burning deceptions of love  
enter the heart,  
And a grieving heart yearns,  
It makes me love.

And in that sweet thinking  
yet once more in paradise

To srdce mrtvé promění  
A zpívá, zpívá, starou báj!

this dead heart transforms  
And sings, sings the old song!

### 3. Kol domu se ted' potácím

### 3. Now I'm staggering outside the house

Kol domu se ted' potácím,  
Kdes bydlívála dříve,  
A z lásky rány krvácím,  
Lásky sladké, lživé!

Now I'm staggering outside the house  
where you used to live,  
and I'm bleeding from wounds of love,  
Love, sweet and false!

A smutným okem nazírám,  
Zdaž ke mně vedeš kroku:  
A vstříc ti náruč otvírám,  
Však slzu cítím v oku!

And with sad eyes I look on,  
to see whether you take a step towards me:  
and facing you I open my arms  
But I feel a tear in my eye!

Ó, kde jsi, drahá, kde jsi dnes,  
Což nepřijdeš mi vstříce?  
Což nemám v srdci slast a ples,  
Tě uzřít nikdy více?

Oh, where are you, dear, where did you go,  
Why do you not come towards me?  
Will my heart never have the pleasure  
Of seeing you again?

### 4. Já vím, že v sladké naději

### 4. I know, from sweet hope

Já vím, že v sladké naději  
Tě smím přec milovat;  
A že chceš tím horoucněji  
Mou lásku pěstovat.

I know, from sweet hope  
that I may still love you;  
and that therefore you want to more ardently  
Cultivate my love.

A přec, když nazřím očí tvých  
V tu přerokošnou noc  
A zvím jak nebe lásky z nich  
Na mne snáší moc:

And yet, when I behold your eyes  
on this blissful night  
and I know how the heavens of love from them  
seek power onto me:

Tu moje oko slzámí,  
Tu náhle se obstrává,  
Neb v štěstí naše za námi  
Zlý osud pozírá!

Now my eyes are with tears,  
Now suddenly they are wiped dry,  
For in our happiness behind us  
Evil fate gazes!

### 5. Nad krajem vévodí lehký spánek

### 5. Over the countryside reigns light sleep

Nad krajem vévodí lehký spánek  
Jasná se rozpjala májová noc;  
Nesmělý krade se do listů vánek,  
S nebes se schýlila míru moc.

Over the countryside reigns light sleep,  
the clear May night has spread itself out;  
A timid breeze steals itself to leaves,  
With heaven descends much peace.

Zadřímlo kvítí, poto-kem šumá  
Tišeji nápěvů tajemných sbor.  
Příroda v rozkoši blaženě dumá,  
Neklidných živlů všad utichl vzpor.

Sleeping wildflowers, murmuring streams,  
Quieter tunes from a mysterious choir.  
Nature in pleasure blissfully muses,  
Restless elements and turbulence fade all around

Hvězdy se sešly co naděje světla,

Stars gather to bring light,

Země se mění na nebeský kruh.  
Mým srdcem, v němž-to kdys blaženost kvetla,  
Mým srdcem táhne jen bolesti ruch!

Earth changes into heaven's ring.  
My heart, where bliss once bloomed,  
Is now driven by pain!

#### 6. Zde v lese u potoka já

#### 6. Here in the forest by the creek

Zde v lese u potoka já  
Stojím sám a sám;  
A ve potoka vlny  
V myšlenkách pociťuji.

Here in the forest by the creek  
I stand all alone;  
And like the stream's waves  
My consuming thoughts flow.

Tu vidím starý kámen,  
Nad nímž se vlny dmou;  
Ten kámen stoupá a padá  
Bez klidu pod vlnou.

I see an old stone,  
over which the waves foam;  
that stone beneath the waves  
Rises and falls without rest

A proud se oň opírá,  
Až kámen zvrhne se.  
Kdy vlna života mne ze světa  
Odnese, kdy, ach, vlna života mne odnese?

And the current trips on the rock  
To the stone until it is overturned.  
When will the wave of life  
Carry me from this world?

#### 7. V té sladké moci očí tvých

#### 7. In the sweet power of your eyes

V té sladké moci očí tvých  
Jak rád, jak rád bych zahynul,  
Kdyby mě k životu jen smích  
Rtů krásných nekynul.

In the sweet power of your eyes  
How I wish I had died,  
If the laughter from your beautiful lips  
Did not beckon me to life

Však tu smrt sladkou zvolím hned  
S tou láskou, s tou láskou ve hrdí:  
Když mě jen ten tvůj smavý ret  
K životu probudí.

I would choose this sweet death right away  
with this love, with this love in my breast:  
If only your smiling lips  
Would awaken me to life.

#### 8. Ó, duše drahá, jedinká

#### 8. Oh, my soul's only dear one

Ó, duše drahá, jedinká,  
Jež v srdci žiješ dosud:  
Má obléhá tě myšlenka,  
Ač nás dělí zlý osud.

Oh, my soul's only dear one,  
You who live ever in my heart:  
My thoughts circle around you,  
Though evil fate divides us.

Ó, kéž jsem zpěvnou labutí,  
Já zaletěl bych k tobě;  
A v posledním bych vzdechnutí  
Ti vypěl srdce v mdlobě.  
Ach, ve posledním vzdechnutí.

Oh, if only I were a singing swan,  
I would fly to you;  
and in my last breath  
I would sing out my heart to you in fainting.  
Ah, in my last breath.

*The Space Between*  
Wendell Berry

**The Peace of Wild Things**

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may  
be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great  
heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

**Whatever Happens**

Whatever happens,  
those who have learned  
to love one another  
have made their way  
to the lasting world  
and will not leave,  
whatever happens.

**A Song of Thanks**

I have been spared another day  
to come into this night  
as though there is a mercy in things  
mindful of me. Love, cast all  
thought aside. I cast aside  
all thought. Our bodies enter  
their brief precedence,  
surrounded by their sleep.  
Through you I rise, and you  
through me, into the joy  
we make, but may not keep.

**In This World**

The hill pasture, an open place among the trees,  
tilts into the valley. The clovers and tall grasses  
are in bloom. Along the foot of the hill

dark floodwater moves down the river.  
The sun sets. Ahead of nightfall the birds sing.  
I have climbed up to water the horses  
and now sit and rest, high on the hillside,  
letting the day gather and pass. Below me  
cattle graze out across the wide fields of the  
bottomlands,  
slow and preoccupied as stars. In this world  
men are making plans, wearing themselves out,  
spending their lives, in order to kill each other.

**Hate Has No World**

Hate has no world.  
The people of hate must try  
to possess the world of love,  
for it is the only world;  
it is Heaven and Earth.  
But as lonely, eager hate  
possesses it, it disappears;  
it never did exist,  
and hate must seek another  
world that love has made.

**We Will Not Leave**

Whatever happens,  
those who have learned  
to love one another  
have made their way  
to the lasting world  
and will not leave,  
whatever happens.

**At Last**

We come at last to the dark  
and enter in. We are given bodies  
newly made out of their absence  
from one another in the light  
of the ordinary day. We come  
to the space between ourselves,  
the narrow doorway, and pass through  
into the land of the wholly loved.