



American Voices Recital Series

FAR OFF LIGHT

Music of Bernstein, Copland, Scott Gendel,
and Richard Pearson Thomas



Chicago Fringe Opera Presents
American Voices Recital Series

FAR OFF LIGHT

Scott Brunscheen, Tenor • Julia Elise Hardin, Mezzo
Jason Carlson, Piano

Aaron Copeland: Martin's Aria.....Scott Brunscheen
The Tender Land

Scott Gendel: Forgotten Light.....Julia Elise Hardin
Poetry of Emily Dickinson

1. Wild Nights!
2. A Quiet Way
3. Bring Me the Sunset
4. Heart! We will Forget Him!
5. I Reason
6. The Silent End
7. After Great Pain

Richard Pearson Thomas: Far Off.....Scott Brunscheen
Poetry of Constantine Cavafy

1. Morning sea
2. Body, remember
3. At the cafe entrance
4. One night
5. In despair
6. Far Off

Leonard Bernstein: What a Movie.....Julia Elise Hardin
Trouble in Tahiti

Upcoming Shows

Leonard Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*
March 13, 14, 19, 20 & 21 @ 7:30 pm, Chopin Theatre

More info: ChicagoFringeOpera.com/events

Program Notes

We began the repertoire selections for this recital with the arias, knowing we wanted to preview Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti* and to pair it with something of equal "Americana" writing. Copland's *The Tender Land* is an obvious resource from this genre, and it coupled nicely with the themes of *Trouble in Tahiti*. Both characters, Martin and Dinah, are at a transitional point in their lives, seemingly stuck and dreaming for more. And in the end, both never take the step, whether if be forward or back, towards change.

The concept of transition and journeys continued with us as we chose our respected song cycles. It's a popular general theme for many works of collected songs. However, we wanted to find works that specifically addressed deeply human elements of an individual.

Richard Pearson Thomas' lyrical and thoroughly American voice was a perfect fit for this program. Many of his vocal works feature accessible melodies, fresh harmonic and rhythmic structure, and a poignant relation to the text. The cycle *Far Off* uses a series of unrelated poems by the early 20th century poet, Constantine Cavafy, to create a reflective narrative exploring forbidden desire, the temptation leading up to it, and the devastating aftermath. Between outburst of emotion and excitement, Thomas gives the listener and musicians startlingly intimate moments that lay bare the emotional turmoil of personal discovery and growth. The composer bookends the cycle with ethereal strumming of the piano strings to frame the present day text. The cycle's conclusion comments on these "faded" and "far off" events with whimsical nostalgia and suggest an acceptance of self.

Scott Gendel was commissioned by Julia Faulkner to write the cycle *Forgotten Light*, and with it won the very first ASCAP/The Lotte Lehmann Foundation Song Cycle Competition in 2005. This was the first of the song cycles chosen for the recital, we both were swept away by it almost immediately. *Forgotten Light* employs seven previously unlinked poems of Emily Dickinson, which together capture a journey, as Gendel writes, "from the giddy start of a love affair through its demise and then into grief." The piece in many ways evokes a modern *Frauenliebe und -leben* (Schumann), the "life and love" of a woman from the cusp of romance to the death of her spouse. Here the poetry creates a more malleable scenario, allowing a greater chance that the listener can identify with the voice of the piece. The compositional style is exciting for both listener and singer, and, though a contemporary piece, the melodies and programmatic themes linger making the journey last long after the piece finishes.

Biographies

Scott Brunscheen, tenor, of West Des Moines, Iowa spent the 2014 season with Madison Opera understudying Tonio in *La Fille du Regiment*, soloist with the Internationale Bachakademie Stuttgart, soloist and ensemble member with Caramoor Bel Canto Festival in New York, singing with Lyric Opera of Chicago's Opera in the Neighborhoods in Dean Burry's *The Brothers Grimm*, and performing Male Chorus in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* in Chicago. Previous seasons have included performances in operatic and concert works of Cavalli, Mozart, Rossini, Puccini, Philip Glass, and Sondheim. A graduate of Roosevelt and University of Utah, he has continued his training as a young artist and performed with Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Caramoor Bel Canto Festival, Madison Opera, Chicago Opera Theatre, and Opera New Jersey. Mr. Brunscheen currently lives in Chicago with his husband and is the co-general manager of Chicago Fringe Opera.

Scott Gendel is a composer, vocal coach, and pianist living in Virginia. Recently, he recorded his piece "At Last" with soprano Camille Zamora and cellist Yo-Yo Ma, as part of "An AIDS Quilt Songbook: Sing For Hope." Scott's music is published by Classical Vocal Reprints, ECS Publishing, and the Tuba/Euphonium Press. His art songs have been recorded on Albany Records and Naxos. He received his DMA from The University of Wisconsin in 2005, where he also designed and taught an undergraduate composition curriculum. Upcoming commissioned works include "I'm Afraid It's You" for tenor and piano, to be premiered at Virginia Tech this spring; and "#dreamsongs," for choir, cello, and piano written for the Santa Clara University Choirs. As a pianist and vocal coach, Scott works regularly at Madison Opera, as well as at The Barter Theatre, Opera North, and in recitals. Please visit www.scottgendel.com for more info.

Julia Elise Hardin, mezzo-soprano, a native of Lawrence, KS, has been touted as a "powerful" and "expressive" singer drawing from her extensive acting background. As a singer, she has performed principal and featured roles with Lyric Opera of Chicago's Opera in the Neighborhoods, Chicago Opera Theater, Castleton Festival founded by the late Maestro Lorin Maazel, Florentine Opera, Central City Opera, and Fondazione Lirico in Bari, Italy. Orchestral engagements have included the Milwaukee Symphony, Grand Rapids Symphony, Rockford and Ft. Wayne Symphonies. Ms. Hardin garners accolades from NATSAA, Neue Stimmen, Chicago Union League, and the Friends of Austria. She is Manager of Education and Development for Twickenham Fest (Huntsville, AL), Co-General Manager for Chicago Fringe Opera, and holds a Bachelors degree from the University of Kansas and a Masters from Northwestern University. She continues study with Julia Faulkner.

Richard Pearson Thomas, composer and pianist, has had works performed by the Boston Pops, Covent Garden Festival, Houston Grand Opera, Chautauqua Opera, Banff Centre, Audra McDonald, Sanford Sylvan, Lauren Flanagan, and many others. He is a recipient of an American Composers' Forum Continental Harmony commission for the Alabama Tri-State Orchestra. His work *Race for the Sky*, which was commissioned as a commemoration of the events of 9/11, has been performed nationwide. Mr. Thomas is currently on faculty at Teachers College/Columbia University and has taught at Yale and the University of Central Florida. He is composer-in-residence of the Gold Opera Project, Young Audiences/New York. Additionally, he has concertized with singers worldwide.

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