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**Jan DeGaetani, mezzo-soprano**  
**Gilbert Kalish, piano**

## **GEORGE CRUMB** (b. 1929)

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Elegiac Songs and Vocalises for Soprano and Amplified Piano

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**Jan DeGaetani, mezzo-soprano**  
**Gilbert Kalish, amplified piano**

## CHARLES IVES

### Songs

The songs of Charles Ives cover the entire range of his compositional and philosophical language. Ives's 151 songs are remarkable for their harmonic and rhythmic innovation, even their experimental nature. But the most extraordinary characteristic of these songs is their exceptionally diverse subject matter. In Ives's songs, an entire range of human reflection and experience becomes material for expression: religious fervor, domesticity, political activism, war, adolescent humor, the subconscious, an animal in a cage, a city street, a river.

Through music Ives felt free to express any idea about any subject. The price of this freedom was artistic and critical isolation, lasting until Ives had virtually stopped composing. But the benefits of this extreme individualism were a consistent integrity and growth, that give each song an underlying strength born of Ives's convictions. Musically and contextually self-contained, each song portrays individual emotions and memories, posing different philosophical questions or points of view.

#### **Down East, 1919, text by Charles Ives**

*Down East* provides a striking example of Ives's ability to musically integrate differing stylistic resources into his own compositional language. Beginning with an impressionistic "vision" of the past, moving through tonal memories of "songs from mother's heart," and culminating in a final memory of a hymn sung in faith, *Down East* transforms these materials into an affirmation of a fundamentally optimistic, transcendentalist viewpoint.

"Hope," wrote Ives in the *Essays Before a Sonata*, "is a complimentary substance we must have with us now"—a substance enriched and nourished through the values and memories of our individual pasts.

#### **Down East**

Songs! Visions of my homeland,  
come with strains of childhood,  
Come with tunes we sang in school days  
and with songs from mother's heart;  
Way down east in a village by the sea,  
stands an old, red farm house that watches o'er  
the lea;

All that is best in me, lying deep in memory,  
draws my heart where I would be, nearer to thee  
Ev'ry Sunday morning, when the chores were  
almost done,  
from the little parlor sounds the old melodeon,  
"Nearer my God to Thee, nearer to Thee;"  
With those strains a stronger hope comes nearer  
to me.

#### **Two Little Flowers, 1921, text by Charles and Harmony Ives**

This brief, delicate song, written about Ives's daughter, Edith, and her playmate, Susanna Minturn, captures a common and precious human emotion: love for the innocence and beauty of children.

#### **Two Little Flowers**

On sunny days in our back yard,  
Two little flowers are seen,  
One dressed, at times, in brightest pink,  
And one in green.  
The marigold is radiant,  
the rose passing fair;  
The violet is ever dear,  
The orchid ever rare;

There's loveliness in wild flowers  
Of field or wide savannah,  
But fairest, rarest of them all  
Are Edith and Susanna.

#### **Tom Sails Away, 1917, text by Charles Ives**

The continued existence of American and European civilization was threatened by World War I. Ives was not naïve as to the economic and political causes of the conflict, but neither did he doubt that the war must be fought and won as a battle for democratic liberty and freedom of expression.

In *Tom Sails Away*, the tragic dichotomy between national survival and personal sacrifice is portrayed as a family's involvement in events beyond their control. At first, the happy commonplace events of family life flood an observer's musical memory. Soon, however, fragments of patriotic tunes recall the vivid reality of the most recent family memory: a son has gone to war. The distant sadness of the ending, like a vision blurred through tears, reminds us that just as war was unavoidable then, ultimately it must be rendered unnecessary by the quality of human progress.

#### **Tom Sails Away**

Scenes from my childhood are with me,  
I'm in the lot behind our house upon the hill,  
a spring day's sun is setting,  
mother with Tom in her arms is coming towards  
the garden;  
the lettuce rows are showing green.  
Thinner grows the smoke o'er the town,  
stronger comes the breeze from the ridge,  
'Tis after six, the whistles have blown.  
The milk train's gone down the valley.  
Daddy is coming up the hill from the mill,  
We run down the lane to meet him.

But today! Today Tom sailed away for,  
for over there, over there, over there!  
Scenes from my childhood are floating before  
my eyes.

#### **The See'r, sketched in 1913, completed 1920, text by Charles Ives**

Humorously laconic, this vignette is an examination of the contrasts of old age and youth, expressed in terms of personal as well as societal attitudes. Perhaps illustrative of Ives's own personal life, this scene is nevertheless presented without judgmental comment on the situation described.

In the Postface to *114 Songs*, Ives writes that the purpose of a song may be to ask the following questions: "What has brought me to this? Where am I? Why do I do this?" *The See'r* asks these questions, and answers none.

#### **The See'r**

An old man with a straw in his mouth  
sat all day long before the village grocery store;  
he liked to watch the funny things a going by!

#### **Songs My Mother Taught Me, 1895, English text by Natalie Macfarren**

Only a few of Ives's songs are faithful reflections of the European art-song, and *Songs My Mother Taught Me* is the most extended of these, inspired as it was by Dvořák's 1880 setting of the same text in *Seven Gypsy Melodies, Op. 55*. While the structural relationships bear a slight similarity to Dvořák's model, the musical material is entirely original and it is possible that the emotional poignancy of the song is Ives's response to the unexpected death of his father during the Fall of 1894.

Both the substance and masterful construc-

tion of this song show that, by age 21, Ives was already the equal of any American song composer, and was just beginning to intuit the musical directions that he so dramatically expanded in his mature works.

#### *Songs My Mother Taught Me*

Songs my mother taught me  
in the days long vanished,  
Seldom from her eye-lids  
were the tear drops banished  
Now I teach my children  
each melodious measure  
often tears are flowing,  
from my memory's treasure.

#### *The Side Show, 1921, text by Charles Ives*

This light-hearted musical joke combines an irreverent text with a parody of the second movement of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, quoted in the piano a few measures before the end. A chain of humorous metaphors make a point about the progressive purposes of music, which Ives had earlier commented on in the *Essays Before a Sonata*: "If a composer's conception of his art, its function and ideals, even if sincere, coincide to such an extent with...groove-colored permutations of tried-out expediency, so that he can arrange them over and over again to his delight—has he or has he not been drugged with an overdose of habit-forming sounds?"

Like every well told joke, this song is brief, truthfully concise, and funny.

#### *The Side Show*

"Is that Mr. Riley, who keeps the hotel?"  
is the tune that accomp' nies the trotting track bell;  
An old horse unsound, turns the merry-go-round,  
making poor Mr. Riley look a bit like a Russian  
dance,  
some speak of so highly, as they do of Riley!

#### *The White Gulls, 1921, Russian Text by Maurice Morris, trans. Morris Pool*

The purpose of the human soul, and its relationship to God was one of Ives's most intense concerns. His last work, the unfinished Universe Symphony, was to have been a depiction of the unity of man and nature, existing and developing co-equally by universal forces. On a smaller scale, *The White Gulls* also reflects Ives's concern with the relationship of the soul to natural motions and forces.

The changing shapes and contours of the melodic line, reminiscent of a gull's slow flight, and the combination of chromatic and whole-tone harmonies, all musically illustrate an unsettled drifting and restlessness. The conclusion of the song offers the peaceful resolution of "rest, on an all receiving breast."

#### *The White Gulls*

The white gulls dip and wheel  
Over waters gray like steel.  
The white gulls call and cry  
As they spread their wings and fly.  
The white gulls sink to rest  
On the tides slow heaving breast.  
Souls of men that turn and wheel  
Over waters cold as steel  
Souls of men that call and cry  
As they know not where to fly.  
Souls of men that sink to rest  
On an all receiving breast.

#### *West London "A Sonnet," 1921, text by Mathew Arnold*

Ives uses Arnold's depiction of poverty and social stratification in mid-19th century London to illustrate his own view of human character. Ives knew that strength, courage, and

purpose are not auxiliary attributes of wealth, political power, or even education, but are potentials of each individual, developed morally. The beggar-woman of this song-degraded by physical circumstances, ill and "moody," refusing the money of the rich, represents this morality, this dignity.

Ives's focus on religious belief, in which every individual might hope for spiritual transformation, is expressed by the quotation of hymnody throughout his songs and larger compositions. As a particularly poignant example of this technique, *West London* concludes with a prayerful fragment of the early American hymn, *There is a Fountain Filled with Blood*, a final symbolic reference to the relief of suffering by spiritual, not material, evolution.

#### *West London*

Crouched on the pavement, close by Belgrave  
Square,  
A tramp I saw, ill, moody, and tongue-tied.  
A babe was in her arms, and at her side  
A girl; their clothes were rags, their feet were bare.  
Some laboring men, whose work lay somewhere  
there,  
Passed opposite; she touched her girl, who hid  
Across, and begged, and came back satisfied.  
The rich she had let pass with a frozen stare.  
Thought I: "Above her state this spirit towers;  
She will not ask of aliens, but of friends,  
Of sharers in a common human fate.  
She turns from the cold succour, which attends  
The unknown little from the unknowing great,  
And points us to a better time than ours."

#### *Afterglow, 1919, text by James Fenimore Cooper, Jr.*

This quiet and sustained piece is one of Ives's most impressionistically composed songs. The ambiguities of the harmonies and rhythms all reinforce the elusive impression of an afterimage. In the *Essays Before a Sonata* Ives wrote: "Intense lights, vague shadows, and great pillars in a horizon are difficult things to nail a signboard to." Substance, for Ives, was the art-object produced by a conviction based in spiritual and moral consciousness. Both the substance and manner in which this conviction is expressed in *Afterglow* emphasize the transience of perceptual beauty, and its transformation into "true beauty" from the memory, to the soul.

#### *Afterglow*

At the quiet close of day,  
Gently yet the willows sway;  
When the sunset light is low,  
Lingers still the afterglow;  
Beauty tarries loth to die,  
Every lightest fantasy  
Lovelier grows in memory,  
Where the truer beauties lie.

## GEORGE CRUMB

### Apparition

#### Elegiac Songs and Vocalises for Soprano and Amplified Piano

Written in 1979 for Jan DeGaetani and Gilbert Kalish, *Apparition* is George Crumb's first work for solo voice and piano, and his first setting in English. The text of *Apparition* is extracted from Walt Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," part of a set of poems grouped under the title *Memories of President Lincoln*. Whitman wrote "When Lilacs..." during the weeks following the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, April 14, 1865. Although Whitman's poem is specifically an elegy to Lincoln, Crumb has chosen most of his text from a section sub-titled "Death Carol." This is a pause in the direct reference to Lincoln, and contains some of Whitman's most imaginative writing on the experience of death.

In *Apparition*, each song and vocalise form a piece of a larger vision, eventually coalescing as a tableau. The literary and musical materials focus on concise, highly contrasting metaphors for existence and death. Yet Crumb's cycle offers the listener reassurance. For just as in Whitman's verse, death is never depicted as an ending of life. Instead, it is circular, always a beginning or an enriched return to a universal life-force.

#### I. The Night in Silence Under Many a Star

The piano opens the cycle with a pulsating evocation of Nature, accompanying the soprano who sings of symbols of eternity: "the night," symbolic of the physical universe; "the ocean shore," symbolic of motion and time; "the soul," representative of conscious-

ness; and "the body turning to thee," illustrative of the cycle of life and death. With the presentation of this symbology a stage is set, upon which more personal visions of death will appear.

#### Vocalise 1: Summer Sounds

Vocalise 1 sharpens the focus from the vastness of the first song to a more specific time and location—further preparation for the more personal elegies which follow.

#### II. When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd

This brief, delicate song contains the only text not from the "Death Carol." Whitman's memory of the fragrance of blooming lilacs became his symbol for the time-period following Lincoln's assassination. Crumb's setting conjures an elusive scent—gently drifting, intermixing, and separating...an expression of an ineffably sad memory.

#### III. Dark Mother Always Gliding Near with Soft Feet

This reverential elegy combines an intense personal plea with an instinctively religious hope for death as release. Crumb's religiously allusive use of chant and imitative counterpoint further define this song as a prayer.

#### Vocalise 2: Invocation to the Dark Angel

Crumb has often balanced his quiet and ecstatic visions with representations of the evil aspects of nature. This vocalise is a harsh, primal invocation. It leads without pause into the fourth song.

#### IV. Approach Strong Deliveress

Death as emancipation is one of the most ancient human desires. In Whitman's metaphor of death as feminine and life-resurrecting, the concept of a deliveress is forceful and redemptive. Crumb reflects this in a relentlessly driving march. Propelled by implacable energy, this song is joyous in its hope for and embracement of death.

#### Vocalise 3: Death Carol ("Song of the Nightbird")

The singer of Whitman's "Death Carol" was a solitary hermit thrush:

'the grey-brown bird I know receiv'd us  
And he sang the carol of death...  
From deep secluded recesses,  
Came the carol of the bird.'

#### V. Come Lovely and Soothing Death

Constructed as the culminant song of the cycle, this intensely personal summoning and welcoming of death transforms and extends the musical imagery of the preceding songs and vocalises into a final transcendent statement of the inevitability of death's arrival, "to all, to each."

#### VI. The Night in Silence Under Many a Star

After death, the forces of Nature remain; physicality, motion, consciousness, and life. Recapitulating the opening of the cycle, with no textual changes and only minor musical adjustments, Crumb re-affirms Whitman's view of the circularity of life and death.

#### Apparition

(Texts from Walt Whitman's *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd*)

- I. The night in silence under many a star,  
The ocean shore and the husky whispering  
wave whose voice I know,  
And the soul turning to thee O vast and  
well-veil'd death,  
And the body gratefully nesting close to thee.
- II. When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,  
I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with  
ever-returning spring.
- III. Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,  
Have none chanted for thee a chant  
of fullest welcome?  
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,  
I bring thee a song that when thou must  
indeed come, come unflinchingly.
- IV. Approach strong deliveress,  
When it is so, when thou hast taken them  
I joyously sing the dead,  
Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,  
Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death.
- V. Come lovely and soothing death,  
Undulate round the world, serenely  
arriving, arriving,  
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,  
Sooner or later delicate death.
- VI. The night in silence under many a star,  
The ocean shore and the husky whispering  
wave whose voice I know,  
And the soul turning to thee O vast and  
well-veil'd death,  
And the body gratefully nesting close to thee.

### Jan DeGaetani

Esteemed for her versatile artistry, mezzo-soprano Jan DeGaetani appears internationally in lieder recitals, chamber music concerts, oratorio, opera, and with orchestra. She is renowned for her presentation of contemporary music, including many premieres of new works written for her by leading composers on both sides of the Atlantic. Born in Ohio, Miss DeGaetani is a graduate of the Juilliard School. She is a Professor of Voice at the Eastman School of Music, and spends her summers as Artist-in-Residence at the Aspen Music Festival. Miss DeGaetani has recorded for Arabesque, Bridge, CRI, Columbia, Decca, Nonesuch, Vanguard, and Vox Records.

### Gilbert Kalish

Pianist Gilbert Kalish has appeared throughout the United States, Europe, and the Far East, both as soloist and in ensemble. His outstanding performances of new music as well as the 18th and 19th-century literature have established him as a major voice in American music. Born in New York, Mr. Kalish has been pianist for the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble since 1960, and for the Boston Symphony Chamber Players since 1969. He is head of Chamber Music and Keyboard Activities at the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood, and Professor of Piano at The State University of New York at Stony Brook. Mr. Kalish has recorded for Arabesque, Bridge, Columbia, CRI, DG, Desto, Folkways, New World and Nonesuch.



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