



UNIVERSITY OF
OREGON

SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND DANCE

“Mortal Sphere”

CHAMBER MUSIC and ORIGINAL ART INSTALLATION

Laura Wayte, soprano
Nathalie Fortin, piano
Idit Shner, soprano & alto saxophones
Lillian Almeida, artist

BEALL CONCERT HALL

Friday, November 13, 2015 | 7:30 p.m.



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MORE INFO
LauraWayte.com

from **Ten Blake Songs**

Infant Joy
A Poison Tree
The Piper
The Lamb
The Shepherd
Ah! Sunflower
Cruelty has a Human Heart
The Divine Image
Eternity

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)
William Blake (175-1827)

I NEVER SAW ANOTHER BUTTERFLY

Ellwood Derr (1932-2008)

Song cycle for soprano voice, alto saxophone and piano. On the poems by children who were incarcerated in the Nazi ghetto for Jews in Terezín, Czechoslovakia (1942-1944) and who died in Auschwitz before the end of October 1944.

Prologue: Terezín (Theresienstadt)
The Butterfly
The Old Man
Fear
The Garden

Knoxville: Summer of 1915

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)
James Agee (1909-1955)

FIGURES FROM AN OPERA

An Installation for Stage by Lillian Almeida

*Created for Mortal Sphere, a recital by Soprano Laura Decher Wayte
Dedicated to my mother, Mary F. McKinstry (1931-2014)*

Backdrop painting: 36' x 25'; Six panels. Plastic mesh, latex paint, wood, glue and hanging hardware. Forms designed to echo the painting "Paper Horses" from the Figures from an Opera series.

Floating silhouettes: Nine figures, approx. 20' ea. Wire sheathed in rubber, and plastic tubing, clear monofilament, hanging hardware, metal conduit, spray paint. Light and shadows (primarily during Samuel Barber's Knoxville: Summer 1915): effects created by Bob Durnell, using a minimal system of two lighting trees.

About this artwork:

Inspired by singer Laura Wayte's invitation to create an installation for her fall 2015 vocal concert Mortal Sphere, the development of Figures from an Opera has been deeply influenced by our subsequent conversations about family and the dynamics of human relationship, and by James Agee's novel, A Death in the Family, from which the lyrics for the piece Knoxville: Summer 1915 were taken.

Up to this point, the Figures from an Opera series includes a stage installation for the performance at Beall Music Hall, an ongoing series of paintings, and a group of small wire sculptures. These works introduce a set of figures

Fear

Today the ghetto knows a different fear, close in its grip... Death wields an icy scythe. An evil sickness spreads a terror in its wake, the victims its shadow weep and writhe. Today a father's heartbeat tells his fright. And mothers bend their heads in their hands. Now children choke and die with typhus here... No, no, oh God, we want to live! Not watch our numbers melt away. We want to have a better world. We want to work. We must not die.

The Garden

A little garden,
Fragrant and full of roses.

The path is narrow

And a little boy walks along it.

A little boy, a sweet boy, like that growing blossom.

But, when that blossom comes to bloom

The little boy will be no more.

KNOXVILLE: SUMMER OF 1915

We are talking now of summer evenings in Knoxville, Tennessee in the time that I lived there so successfully disguised to myself as a child . . .

It has become that time of evening when people sit on their porches, rocking gently and talking gently and watching the street and the standing up into their sphere of possession of the trees, of birds' hung havens, hangars. People go by; things go by. A horse, drawing a buggy, breaking his hollow iron music on the asphalt: a loud auto: a quiet auto: people in pairs, not in a hurry, scuffling, switching their weight of aestival body, talking casually, the taste hovering over them of vanilla, strawberry, pasteboard, and starched milk, the image upon them of lovers and horsemen, squared with clowns in hueless amber. A streetcar raising its iron moan; stopping; bell and starting, stertorous; rousing and raising again its iron increasing moan and swimming its gold windows and straw seats on past and past and past, the bleak spark crackling and cursing above it like a small malignant spirit set to dog its tracks; the iron whine rises on rising speed; still risen, faints; halts; the faint stinging bell; rises again, still fainter; fainting, lifting, lifts, faints foregone: forgotten. Now is the night one blue dew. Now is the night one blue dew, my father has drained, he has coiled the hose. Low in the length of lawns, a frailing of fire who breathes..Parents on porches: rock and rock. From damp strings morning glories hang their ancient faces. The dry and exalted noise of the locusts from all the air at once enchants my eardrums.

On the rough wet grass of the back yard my father and mother have spread quilts. We all lie there, my mother, my father, my uncle, my aunt, and I too am lying there....They are not talking much, and the talk is quiet, of nothing in particular, of nothing at all in particular, of nothing at all. The stars are wide and alive, they seem each like a smile of great sweetness, and they seem very near. All my people are larger bodies than mine,...with voices gentle and meaningless like the voices of sleeping birds. One is an artist, he is living at home. One is a musician, she is living at home. One is my mother who is good to me. One is my father who is good to me. By some chance, here they are, all on this earth; and who shall ever tell the sorrow of being on this earth, lying, on quilts, on the grass, in a summer evening, among the sounds of the night. May God bless my people, my uncle, my aunt, my mother, my good father, oh, remember them kindly in their time of trouble; and in the hour of their taking away. After a little I am taken in and put to bed. Sleep, soft smiling, draws me unto her: and those receive me, who quietly treat me, as one familiar and wellbeloved in that home: but will not, oh, will not, not now, not ever; but will not ever tell me who I am.

Prologue: Terezín

Terezín, that bit of filth in dirty walls.
 And all around barbed wire, and thirty thousand souls who sleep,
 Who once will wake
 And once will see
 Their own blood spilled.
 I was once a little child,
 Three years ago.
 That child who longed for otherworlds.
 But now I am no more a child
 For I have learned to hate.
 I am a grownup person now,
 I have known fear.
 But anyway, I still believe I only sleep today, that I'll wake up,
 A child again, and start to laugh and play.
 Somewhere, far away out there, childhood sweetly sleeps, along that path among the trees,
 There o'er that house which was once my pride and joy.
 There my mother gave me birth into this world so I could weep.

The Butterfly
 A butterfly,
 The last, the very last,
 So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow.
 As if the sun's tears would sing against a white stone...
 Such a yellow
 Is carried lightly 'way up high.
 It went away, I'm sure, for it wished to kiss the world goodbye.
 For seven weeks I've lived in here,
 Pinned up inside this ghetto.
 But I have found my people here.
 The dandelions have befriended me
 And the white chestnut candles in the court.
 Only I never saw another butterfly.
 That butterfly was the last one.
 Butterflies don't live in here, in the ghetto.

The Old Man
 In Terezín in the so-called park
 A queer old grand dad sits somewhere, there, in the so-called park.
 He wears a beard down to his lap
 And on his head,
 A little cap.
 In Terezín in the so-called park.
 Hard crusts he crumbles in his gums.
 He's only got one single tooth.
 My poor old man with working gums.
 There's no soft roll or lentil soup
 For you, my poor old grey beard.

that have come to represent archetypal family members to me: Mother, Father, Child etc. that I relate to as characters existing in an operatic setting conveying sadness, yearning, elation or conflict.

Curiously, in this imagery, the figures don't actually appear to be singing or vocalizing. Their interactions and relationships are tonal as are our thoughts existing like the music of longing, lament, passion and joy that resides inside and between people. In the creation of Mortal Sphere, Laura Wayte and I have reflected on this emotionally pure, tonal resonance as an elevated kind of voice when expressed through music. My figurative pieces explore this idea through their delicate and tenuous relationships to the ground and each other.

My aim for the Beall Hall installation was to create an environment that elegantly holds the suggestions of human figures, while allowing the shapes of the "empty" spaces between, inside and around them, to be an emotionally charged vessel, where Laura's songs, Nathalie and Idit's music, and actual and visual silence can move. Working with lighting design assistance from Bob Durnell, and the stage management expertise of Thor Mikesell, Productions Manager at the University of Oregon School of Music and Dance, we've taken our cues from the inherent limitations of the hall's beautiful, traditional structure, (built and outfitted for musical presentations rather than theatrical events), in creating a sparse but visually dynamic setting designed to be a seamless extension of the vocal and piano renderings.

The audience is invited to view the artwork more closely on the stage after the recital, and to join us in the reception hall afterward to meet Laura, Nathalie, Idit, and Lillian and to view paintings from the Figures from an Opera series.

Special thanks to Peter and Kanani Almeida, Robin O'gara, Helen Liu, Bob Durnell, Rita Seligson, Thor Mikesell, David Mason, Tallmadge Doyle, Miranda Callander and Vicki Amorose.

ABOUT THIS MUSIC

artist statement by Laura Wayte

"I was once a little child, three years ago. That child who longed for other worlds. But now I am no more a child for I have learned to hate. I am a grown-up person now. I have known fear."

-Hanus Hachenburg, from "I never saw another butterfly"
 set to music by Ellwood Derr.

"By some chance, here they are, all on this earth; and who shall ever tell the sorrow of being on this earth, lying, on quilts, on the grass, in a summer evening, among the sounds of the night."

-James Agee, from "Knoxville: Summer of 1915"
 set to music by Samuel Barber

The impact of a society on a family is immense. Everywhere in the world people want to live in a civilized community that is stable and sustainable so that children can grow into fully developed and balanced people. In this concert, I explore societal impacts on childrearing through the prism of my own German-American cultural heritage: In works of literature and music, we observe the complex nature of human striving: moral, amoral and decidedly evil and the effect it has on the next generation. We perform tonight while thinking of recent headlines about the current migration crisis, hoping we can learn from past mistakes.

The above quotes are the lines of text from the program of Mortal Sphere that led me to apply these works of music to the world's current migration crisis. Those words plus the picture of the little boy who drowned while trying to migrate out of Syria.

As we look at today's migration crisis, I think it is helpful to look to the past for examples of how we did and

did not help one another through other difficult times. The examples are endless, but I look here at the way the Nazi's attempted to elevate their own position in the world by putting down an entire other group of people. This was a hateful and desperate act, which came at a moment of extreme economic, social and cultural stress. What if the rest of the world had turned toward the problem earlier, rather than only after World War II and all its pain?

In "I never saw another butterfly" I hear through the voices of these concentration camp-imprisoned children what it does to them when we shut them away and turn our backs. Like the little boy on the beach, their lives were taken away by the adults in their worlds. And it happened twice: when their innocence was broken, and when they were killed.

We learn from William Blake and Ralph Vaughan Williams that humans have two sides: the strong, moral and responsible, and the weak, afraid and evil. Blake makes it clear that it is up to each of us to decide, together, which mode will prevail. The migration crisis of 2015 is an opportunity to choose the right way by learning from history. Syria is in a crisis and its people are forced to flee and ask others for help. What if we gave that help more easily and more quickly?

The text from Barber's "Knoxville" shows us a different way. And it is an opportunity that was given to my own father who was born in Nazi Germany but then able to raise his own children during a time of peace and in an American society. The Barber shows us that children and our entire future benefit from the civilized stability of Agee's Knoxville: We see the boy notice himself for the first time as a potential adult, and notice for the first time his parents' sacrifices and responsibilities. He sees that contentment is only right now in a meaningless moment that is allowed to exist because nothing got in its way. He sees his parent's future deaths and his own future responsibility, and he wishes for "his people" that it not be too difficult.

This concert is my wish for the future: May the difficulties I feel we will face in climate change be met with openness and respectful care for one another, not with hate and oppression.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Marjorie Taylor and The Velvet Edge (187 E. Broadway) for dressing the performers.

Thank you to David Mason and Thor Mikesell for all your help with art installation.

Ten Blake Songs

1. Infant Joy
"I have no name:
I am but two days old."
What shall I call thee? "
I happy am,
Joy is my name."
Sweet joy befall thee!

Pretty Joy!
Sweet Joy, but two days old.
Sweet Joy I call thee:
Thou dost smile, I sing the while,
Sweet joy befall thee!

2. A Poison Tree
I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath didn't end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.
And I water'd it in fears,
Night & morning with my tears;
And I sunnèd it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.
And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright.
And my foe beheld it shine,

And he knew that it was mine.
And into my garden stole
When the night had veil'd the pole,
In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretch'd beneath the tree.

3. The Piper
Piping down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee,
On a cloud I saw a child,
And he laughing said to me:

"Pipe a song about a Lamb."
So I piped with merry cheer. "
Piper, pipe that song again;"
So I piped: he wept to hear.

"Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe;
Sing thy songs of happy cheer:"
So I sang the same again,
While he wept with joy to hear.
"Piper, sit thee down and write
In a book, that all may read."
So he vanish'd from my sight,

And I pluck'd a hollow reed,
And I made a rural pen,
And I stain'd the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear.

5. The Lamb
Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed,
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb,
I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb,
I'll tell thee: He is callèd by thy name,

For He calls Himself a Lamb.
He is meek, and He is mild:
He became a little child.
I a child, and thou a lamb,
We are callèd by His name.
Little Lamb, God bless thee!

6. The Shepherd
How sweet is the Shepherd's sweet lot!
From the morn to the evening he strays;
He shall follow his sheep all the day,
And his tongue shall be fillèd with praise.

For he hears the lamb's innocent call,
And he hears the ewe's tender reply;
He is watchful [while]¹ they are in peace,
For they know when their Shepherd is nigh.

7. Ah! Sunflower!
Ah, Sun-flower! weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the sun;
Seeking after that sweet golden clime,
Where the traveller's journey is done;
Where the Youth pined away with desire,
And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow,
Arise from their graves, and aspire
Where my Sun-flower wishes to go.

8. Cruelty has a human heart

Cruelty has a human heart,
And Jealousy a human face,
Terror the human form divine,
And Secrecy the human dress.
The human dress is forgèd iron,
The human form a fiery forge,
The human face a furnaceseal'd,
The human heart its hungry gorge.

9. The Divine Image
To Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love
All pray in their distress;
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love
Is God, our Father dear,
And Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love
Is man, His child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart,
Pity a human face,
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.
Then every man, of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine,
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, Turk, or Jew;
When Mercy, Love and Pity dwell
There God is dwelling too.

10. Eternity
He who binds to himself a Joy
Doth the wingèd life destroy;
But he who kisses the Joy as it flies
Lives in Eternity's sunrise.

The look of love alarms,
Because it's fill'd with fire;
But the look of soft deceit
Shall win the lover's hire.