

Oregon
Composers
Forum

featuring Estelí Gomez

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Heart of Autumn

MUSIC + LYRICS Daniel DeLay

PERFORMERS + INSTRUMENTS

Estelí Gomez, soprano
Darlene Mueller, clarinet
Ian Jones, vibraphone
Simeon Brown, violin
Rubi Yan, viola
Jeffrey Yang, cello
Isaac Smith, conductor

PROGRAM NOTES

Heart of Autumn is a meditation on three hikes in high autumn in Pikes Peak, Iowa during October of 2013, 2014, and 2016. The music and text are a contemplation on the transient beauty of autumn; in turn a reflection of the delicate and ephemeral nature of our own inner lights as human beings. I dedicate the music of this work to soprano Esteli Gomez; it has been the privilege of a lifetime to work with her and to witness my music be truly brought to life. I dedicate the text of this work to two of my closest friends, Ben Tuggle and Chris Merchant, with whom I shared these unforgettable autumnal experiences.

TEXT

Golden air enshrines the
forest. Reflected by a
thousand floating leaves.
Crisp, clean, and cool.

Beneath the trees, a great river flows.
Surrounding more wooden towers,
each adorned with crowns of
luminous yellow and orange.

As we walk upon a vast auburn carpet,
a hawk
glides through manifold branches.
We are submerged

Soprano **ESTELÍ GOMEZ** is a founding member of the Grammy Award-winning octet Roomful of Teeth. In November 2011 she received first prize in the Canticum Gaudium International Early Music Vocal Competition in Poznan, Poland. She has appeared as a soloist with the Louisiana Philharmonic, Bach Collegium San Diego, Kingsbury Ensemble, The University of Texas Wind Ensemble, Seraphic Fire, Musica Vocale, Spire Chamber Ensemble, Princeton Pro Musica, and Santa Fe Desert Chorale. Ms. Gomez has taught during artist residencies at Yale, Princeton, Lawrence, Exeter, University of Oregon Eugene, Grinnell, UMKC, Depauw, Bowdoin, and MIT. Last year she released Robert Kyr's Songs of the Soul on Harmonia Mundi with Austin-based Conspirare. With Roomful of Teeth she has recently performed at Lincoln Center, Ravinia Music Festival, and Walt Disney Hall, and in Seoul, South Korea, Istanbul, Turkey, and Morelia, Mexico, and she recorded a Tiny Desk concert for NPR. Highlights of her 2015–16 season include solo debuts at the Kennedy Center and with the New York Philharmonic; the role of Galatea in Handel's *Acis and Galatea* in Baltimore; performances of Handel's *Messiah* and Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* in Osaka and Tokyo, Japan; a recital of Schubert and Mendelssohn with fortepiano and period clarinet in St. Louis; Ligeti's *Aventures* and *Nouvelles Aventures* with the New World Symphony in Miami; a featured chapter in the premiere of *Hopscotch* with Los Angeles-based experimental opera company *The Industry*; Berio's *Sinfonia* with Roomful of Teeth and the Seattle Symphony; teaching residencies at the University of Missouri–Kansas City, California Institute of the Arts, James Madison University, and Cornell University; and Roomful of Teeth's first collaboration with the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), Kaija Saariaho, and Peter Sellers. Originally from Santa Cruz, California, Esteli Gomez received her bachelor of arts with honors in music from Yale College, and master of music from McGill University, studying with Sanford Sylvan.



a truck, downhill the drunk to their get-away rides; i wonder of goodbye, that goodnight-see-you-later when you're nothing but a sway, a kiss, a pipe-dream plane ride of small talk on a corner when the concerts end and the dancing begins. i know now; tomorrow's yesterday – our last night of truck-hood high-fives and high jinks has sunk, like caved-roof rafters – crawling with 20-somethings, dangling destinies in their rainy missteps; their pockets full of baggies, chests full of smoke – inflated, on the roof counting church steeples and spitting to hear the sound; we watched elastic bodies swirl their bones loose in the brittle-brick warehouse that sang out hallelujahs each times the bass-line bounced; you called me young and brave and broke me into infinite wishes.

The Clouds Were Painted

MUSIC + LYRICS Joseph Vranas

PERFORMERS + INSTRUMENTS

Estelí Gomez, soprano
Grant Mack, celesta
Andrew Reid, electric bass
Alexandre Pabst, double bass
Kathie Hsieh, percussion
Ian Jones, percussion

PROGRAM NOTES

The Clouds Were Painted was inspired by the transcendental music of Icelandic pop musician Björk, particularly from the 2011 album, Biophilia. The poem, which comes from a child-like observation of the many hyper-realistic paintings of clouds, has a modified haiku structure, which is emphasized in the music through prolific usage of 5 and 7/8 odd meters. Combined with a mix of acoustic and electro-acoustic instruments, the piece experiments with iterations of simplistic rhythmic and melodic motives underneath a more improvisatory sounding vocal line.

TEXT

56. Free Admission

The clouds were painted
Delicate brushstrokes

Smell of oil paint
On celestial canvas
Daily exhibit

- from 63 Poems by Joseph Vranas

in the heart of autumn.
The great river flowing beneath our feet,
the glowing ceiling of flaxen leaves
above our heads.
They sing the elegant song of an
ephemeral soul.

Even when night has fallen
—and so too the once-brilliant leaves—
Beauty can still be remembered.

Flower No Flower

MUSIC Michael Fleming

LYRICS Bai Juyi

TRANSLATION Arthur Waley

PERFORMERS + INSTRUMENTS

Estelí Gomez, soprano
Simeon Brown, violin
Zee Apperson, bass clarinet

PROGRAM NOTES

The enchanting imagery of the poem Flower No Flower by Bai Juyi is expressed through the exploration of blended timbres, melodies, and gestures in Indian classical music to create a transforming and mystical sonic landscape. In North Indian classical singing and the carnatic violin style, melodic lines are expressed through melismas and series of ornaments called gamakas, and the beauty of the sound is considered in between the notes as much as the notes themselves.

TEXT

Flower no flower
Mist no mist

Arrives at midnight
And leaves at dawn

Arrives like a spring dream - how many times
Leaves like a morning cloud - nowhere to find

Im Harren

MUSIC Cara Haxo
LYRICS Stefan George

PERFORMERS + INSTRUMENTS

Estelí Gomez, soprano
 Nicholas Pietromonaco, piano

PROGRAM NOTES

Im Harren (2016) was composed for mezzo-soprano Kayleigh Butcher and pianist Christopher Narloch as part of their Schönberg Project, a commissioning project in which fifteen composers wrote pieces to accompany the fifteen movements of Schoenberg's Das Buch der hängenden Gärten. Schoenberg's cycle describes a love affair between a prince and an unspecified lover, which eventually dissolves when the prince's lover leaves and the garden crumbles. In the tenth movement, the prince waits for his lover by the garden, contemplating the plants that bloom there. The movement initiates the climax of their relationship.

Im Harren uses three lines of Stefan George's text from the tenth movement, focusing on the theme of waiting. The repetitive motive that opens and closes the piece symbolizes the lover's anxious anticipation. Although Schoenberg's cycle is sung from the prince's perspective, my interpretation depicts the woman's point of view as she waits for the prince to arrive and, eventually, succumbs to pleasure. As in Schoenberg's cycle, the woman will ultimately leave the relationship, a decision I view as a sign of strength.

TEXTExcerpts from George's text

Das schöne Beet betracht ich
 mir im Harren,
 Es ist umzäunt mit purpurn-
 schwarzem Dorne,
 Und in der Mitte Glocken, weiss
 und mild.

Translation by the composer

I consider the beautiful garden
 bed as I wait.
 It is enclosed with crimson-
 black thorns,
 and in the middle, bells, white
 and mild.

phrase 'everything works out in the end.' In my day-to-day life I'll often come across problems that are out of my control, but am convinced I need to solve. This piece exists as a reminder to let go and experience life as it comes, without trying to fix all of the little things.

furcula

MUSIC Isaac Smith
LYRICS Elese Daniel

PERFORMERS + INSTRUMENTS

Estelí Gomez, soprano
 Grant Mack, piano

PROGRAM NOTES

The title of millennial poet Elese Daniel's *f u r c u l a* references the scientific name for the wishbone of a bird. The poem zigzags frenetically and paints a vivid, sensuous picture of her generation, aimless and wandering, yet living and loving intensely. The scope of the poem seems to exist in two states simultaneously: it follows with equal intensity a group of "20-somethings" and the intimacy of a heartbroken relationship. In the end, it is revealed that the narrator is the wishbone who was broken to grant her lover's wishes.

The music reflects and deepens this sensuality, at times evoking a smoky room or lamplit street corner. The asymmetrical, often angular vocal line wanders between the quiet machinations of a moment's love and the larger-than-life hedonism of youth. The rich, jazzy harmonies blur and blend between simple and complex states of mind, dancing and cascading to the precious points of rest, only to be roused again by the narrator's restless heart.

TEXT

in the foggy shine of sweat glazed bodies, glowing in the dark, we made music with our hips: i felt bass in your lips, your tongue tasted like dusk, like bubblegum skylines, dripping gold as the sun says good night and I swear, I swear I heard my name in the whispers of your footsteps while they wandered towards the packed cab of

This morning I woke
 In a bamboo bed with paper curtains,
 I have no words for my weary sorrow,
 No fine poetic thoughts.
 The sandalwood incense smoke is stale,
 The jade burner is cold.
 I feel as though I were filled with quivering water.
 To accompany my feelings
 Someone plays three times on a flute
 “Plum blossoms are falling
 in a village by the river.”
 How bitter this spring is.
 Small wind, fine rain, hsiao, hsiao,
 Falls like a thousand lines of tears.
 The flute player is gone.
 The jade tower is empty.
 Broken hearted—we had relied on each other.
 I pick a plum branch,
 Heaven and earth;
 There is no one to give it to.

Diye**MUSIC** Andrew Reid**PERFORMERS + INSTRUMENTS**

Estelí Gomez, soprano
 Alycia Thatcher, soprano
 Carly Walker, alto
 Carson Lott, tenor
 Dylan Bunten, bass

PROGRAM NOTES

Diye is a spiritual successor to a composition premiered by Estelí Gomez last spring. Like its predecessor, Diye doesn't use any text, but employs a technique called vocalise – the implementation of wordless vocal sounds that affect the shape of the voice, but hold no rhetorical meaning. The piece itself is inspired by the

November

MUSIC Sarah Jordan
LYRICS Amy Lowell

PERFORMERS + INSTRUMENTS

Estelí Gomez, soprano
 Simeon Brown, violin
 Rubi Yan, viola
 Hendrick Mobley, cello

PROGRAM NOTES

This vocal work was inspired by my recent discovery of the Imagist Poetry movement from the early 20th C. Within the piece, I set the text “November” by Amy Lowell; who was inspired by this particular poetry style in her own work. The text gives way to personal emotional interpretation which I took the liberty of expressing through the music.

TEXT

The vine leaves against the brick wall of my house
 are rusty and broken

Dead leaves gather under the pine-trees

The brittle boughs of lilac-bushes
 Sweep against the stars

And I sit under a lamp
 Trying to write down the emptiness of my heart

Even the cat will not stay with me
 But prefers the rain under the meager shelter of a cellar window

Lycidas - I**MUSIC** Samuel Lord Kalcheim**LYRICS** John Milton**PERFORMERS + INSTRUMENTS**

Estelí Gomez, soprano
 Darlene Mueller, clarinet
 Samuel Lord Kalcheim, organ

PROGRAM NOTES

Milton wrote the sublime elegy “Lycidas” to commemorate his school friend Edward King, who drowned in the Irish seas in 1637. This is both an elegy and a pastoral poem; it is the song of a young shepherd (here a metaphor for the clergy), who has lost his fellow shepherd friend. At a time when sadness played a stronger role in my life than it does now, I formed a resolution to learn poetry by heart, and “Lycidas” especially formed a comforting companion to my sorrow. Still today “Lycidas” never ceases to move me. The entire poem takes about 10 minutes to recite, so for a piece of this scope, I set only the first introductory stanza. The remainder of the poem seems to progress through various stages of grief, ending with solace and acceptance. In the final stanza, the shepherd having ended his song, a narrator describes his moving on with his life: “At last he rose, and twitch’d his mantel blue/Tomorrow to fresh woods and pastures new.”

TEXT

In this Monody the author bewails a learned Friend, unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester on the Irish Seas, 1637; and, by occasion, foretells the ruin of our corrupted Clergy, then in their height.

YET once more, O ye Laurels, and once more,
 Ye Myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
 I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
 And with forced fingers rude
 Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.
 Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear

Compels me to disturb your season due;
 For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
 Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.
 Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew
 Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.
 He must not float upon his watery bier
 Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
 Without the meed of some melodious tear.

Gu Yan Er**MUSIC** Li Tao**LYRICS** Li Qingzhao**TRANSLATION** Kenneth Rexroth
and Ling Chung**EDITED** Li Tao**PERFORMERS + INSTRUMENTS**

Estelí Gomez, soprano
 Darlene Mueller, clarinet
 Hendrik Mobley, cello

TEXT (CHINESE)

孤雁儿

李清照 (1084- ~1151)

藤床纸帐朝眠起，说不尽、无佳思。
 沉香断续玉炉寒，伴我情怀如水。
 笛声三弄，梅心惊破，多少春情意。
 小风疏雨簌簌地，又催下、千行泪。
 吹箫人去玉楼空，肠断与谁同倚？
 一枝折得，人间天上，没个人堪寄。

TEXT (ENGLISH)

A little wild goose

Li Qingzhao (1084-~1151)