

QERDDORION VOCAL ENSEMBLE

James John
Artistic Director

PRESENTS

Draw On, Sweet Night



Friday, May 13, 2016, 8 pm
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
199 Carroll Street, Brooklyn

Sunday, May 15, 2016, 3 pm
St. Ignatius of Antioch
87th Street & West End Avenue, Manhattan

THE PROGRAM

Aftonen Hugo Alfven (1872–1960)



Sfogava con le stelle Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643)

Madrigale (premiere) Antonio Somma (b. 1994)

Cade la sera Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880–1968)



Fünf Gesänge (Op. 104) Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

Nachtwache I

Nachtwache II

Letztes Glück

Verlorene Jugend

Im Herbst

❖❖❖ *Intermission* ❖❖❖

Draw On, Sweet Night John Wilbye (1574–1638)

Stars (premiere) Kyle Pederson

A Clear Midnight (premiere) David Stern (b. 1955)



Oh, Where Art Thou Dreaming?
Soldier, Rest! Thy Warfare O'er Hamish MacCunn (1868–1916)

My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land Edward Elgar (1857–1934)

The Long Day Closes Arthur Sullivan (1842–1900)



THE ARTISTS

Now in its twenty-first season, **CERDDORION** (the name, pronounced *kehr-DOHR-ee-on*, is Welsh for “musicians”) is one of New York’s most highly regarded volunteer choral ensembles. A chamber group of up to twenty-eight mixed voices, it is known for its eclectic repertoire, encompassing music from the Renaissance to the contemporary. Audiences have come to appreciate the group’s interpretive depth and technical excellence in many styles. Cerddorion has also frequently commissioned new works by such composers as Paul Moravec, Martha Sullivan, David Schober, Lisa Bielawa, David Lang, Elliot Z. Levine, Robert Dennis, and Julie Dolphin.

Besides presenting its own varied programs, Cerddorion is frequently invited to perform with other acclaimed artists. In 2011, the men of Cerddorion sang with esteemed French organist Francis Chapelet in the second inaugural recital of the Manton Memorial Organ at the Church of the Ascension in New York; they were invited back in 2014 to perform in Chapelet’s farewell concert. Past collaborations have included the North American premiere of Sir John Tavener’s all-night vigil, *The Veil of the Temple*, performed at Lincoln Center’s Avery Fisher Hall (with Dessoff Choral Consortium and choristers from London’s Temple Church); several appearances with the Christopher Caines Dance Company; Baroque opera performances with the early music instrumental ensemble Concert Royal; and serving as the resident teaching ensemble for the Dennis Keene Choral Festival in Kent, Connecticut.

In 2006, Cerddorion performed at the Eastern Divisional Convention of the American Choral Directors Association the works they had commissioned from three New York composers for their tenth anniversary season. September 2007 marked the release on the Tzadik label of *A Handful of World*, Cerddorion’s first commercial recording. The CD is dedicated to vocal works by New York composer Lisa Bielawa and includes Cerddorion’s performance of Lisa Bielawa’s *Lamentations for a City*, which was commissioned and first performed by Cerddorion in 2004.

Cerddorion is a proud member of the New York Choral Consortium.



JAMES JOHN is in his sixth season as Artistic Director of the Cerddorion Vocal Ensemble. He is also Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities at the Aaron Copland School of Music, Queens College–CUNY, where he conducts the Queens College Choir, Vocal Ensemble and Choral Society, teaches choral conducting, and serves as advisor to the graduate program in vocal performance. Recent professional highlights include guest conducting the Tokyo Oratorio Society in a performance of Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem* in Tokyo's Suntory Hall, and an invited performance by the Queens College Choir at the 2012 Eastern Division Conference of the American Choral Directors Association in Providence, Rhode Island.

Under Dr. John's leadership the choral program at the Aaron Copland School of Music has become recognized as one of the finest collegiate choral programs in the region. Past performances with the School of Music's choral ensembles include Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, award-winning productions of Argento's *Postcard from Morocco* and Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, Requiems by Mozart and Verdi, "A Night at the Opera" with Queens College alumna Erika Sunnegårdh of the Metropolitan Opera, Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*, and world premieres of works by Sidney Boquiren, Leo Kraft, Meg Collins Stoop and others. His choirs have performed in many of New York's prestigious venues, including Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Weill Recital Hall, St. Patrick's Cathedral and Trinity Church Wall Street. Under his direction the Queens College Vocal Ensemble recently released its first CD, featuring premiere recordings of partsongs by Scottish composer Hamish MacCunn, and the Queens College Choir recorded Bright Sheng's *Two Folksongs from Qinghai*, soon to be released on the Naxos label.

Dr. John's guest conducting appearances include Avery Fisher Hall's annual Messiah Sing-In, a concert of American choral music with the Virginia Chorale (Virginia's only professional choral ensemble), chorus master for the Queens Symphony, regional honor choirs throughout New York State, and a recording with jazz trumpeter Michael Mossman. He has given presentations at both divisional and national conventions of the American Choral Directors Association, and is in demand as a clinician and adjudicator throughout the United States. In Fall 2013, Dr. John returned to Tokyo to conduct Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*.

As a teacher and scholar, Dr. John has served as Guest Lecturer in conducting at the Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg, Germany, and presented seminars on American choral music in Basel and Stockholm. His dissertation on Brahms's *Nänie*, Op. 82, won the Julius Herford Prize from the American Choral Directors Association and will be published in revised form as a book by The Edwin Mellen Press. His articles have appeared in *Choral Journal*, *American Choral Review*, and Chorus America's *Research Memorandum Series*. In July 2011 he was appointed Editor of *American Choral Review*, and has also served as a member of ACDA's National Research and Publications Committee.

Dr. John received his Doctor of Musical Arts in Conducting from the Eastman School of Music. Prior to his current position at the Aaron Copland School of Music he served as Director of Choral Activities at Tufts University in Boston, Director of Choral Activities at Nassau Community College in Garden City, NY, and as Dartmouth College's first Conducting Fellow. He received his Master of Arts in Conducting from the Aaron Copland School of Music.



THE COMPOSERS

DAVID STERN has taught music theory at the Mannes College of Music, Queens College, the University of North Texas, Ball State University, Scripps College, and Pomona College. He has also worked as a freelance composer, orchestrator, and music copyist in Los Angeles. His most performed orchestral work was written in response to the tragic attack on New York, *We Stand for Freedom: In Memoriam, September 11th, 2001*. Dr. Stern's choral setting of St. Francis's peace prayer ("Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace") has been performed in various locations, including the St. Francis Upper Basilica in Assisi. Two orchestral works on Leonardo da Vinci were premiered by the New Haven Symphony in 2006. Dr. Stern's current project is "Lincoln Speaks of Liberty," which will bring forward Lincoln's lofty ideals, given in his own words in an inspirational orchestral setting. Many of Dr. Stern's compositions can be heard at www.davidsternmusic.com.

Born in Naples, **ANTONIO SOMMA** has since his early youth been in contact with the practice of music. He started his career as a singer in the newly founded children's choir of Teatro di San Carlo, the oldest opera house in Europe. There, under the lead of choir director Stefania Rinaldi, he soon began to sing solo roles, in such significant works as *Tosca* (2005) and *Gianni Schicchi* (2007), as well as in other San Carlo productions (Benjamin Britten's *The Little Sweep* in 2006 and Leonard Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* in 2007). Mr. Somma began his compositional studies with Gaetano Panariello, one of the most prominent composers in the Neapolitan music world, at the Conservatorio Domenico Cimarosa in Avellino, Italy, at age 13. He is currently studying with Mr. Panariello in Naples, at the Conservatorio di San Pietro a Majella, to complete his degree in composition. Mr. Somma is also close to concluding his piano studies at the same institution, under Armando Guillaro. Always passionate about choral music, he has been member of several choirs and is still a member of the San Carlo's youth choir.

He has collaborated with the creators of the Laboratorio Vivo per la Composizione (*La.Vi.Co.*, or Living Composition Laboratory), a dynamic group of Neapolitan composers coordinated by Gaetano Panariello, which is in search of new sounds to develop a contemporary music closer to the audience. With *La.Vi.Co.* Mr. Somma has realized several group works, performed almost only by the composers themselves, such as sound accompaniments to silent films and other works that involve acoustic and electronic music, recitation, and use of video. Within the *La.Vi.Co.* project, he has also realized some individual works, like *Danse*, a chamber composition premiered in November 2015. Mr. Somma has also worked as a journalist for two weekly online magazines (www.liberopensiero.eu; www.lacooltura.com) and is currently attending the three-year physics degree course at the The University of Naples Federico II.

KYLE PEDERSON is a Minneapolis-based composer and pianist whose work is increasingly heard both in the United States and abroad. His piece, *Christ Be Born in Us*, was selected as the winner of the Lutheran International Youth Choir 2015 choral composition contest. His most recent commission, *Kooloona Wabed (Though Many, One)*, was composed for the 2015 TAISM international high school choral festival in Muscat, Oman. Pederson's choral compositions and instrumental arrangements are frequently performed at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Burnsville, MN, where he works with the music ministry. Pederson's work also includes two critically acclaimed piano-based albums, *Renewal* and *12.25*, both collections of acoustic hymn arrangements.

Pederson has an undergraduate degree from Augustana University (Sioux Falls, SD), has a Master's Degree in Education from University of St. Thomas (St Paul, MN), and is currently enrolled at the Vermont College of Fine Arts in the music composition MFA program. Pederson's primary composition teachers have included Jonathan Bailey Holland, Jocelyn Hagen, and John Fitz Rogers. Additional information and links to Pederson's music and scores can be found at kylepederson.com.



Program Notes and Texts

A Note from the Artistic Director

Images associated with night have been a source of countless inspiration for poets and composers throughout the ages. Our program brings together music of several centuries related to this theme, the first half featuring works from Sweden, Italy, and Germany and the second half from America and Great Britain. It is particularly exciting to be presenting three world premieres, two of which (*Madrigale* and *Stars*) are the winners of our Fourth Annual Emerging Composers Competition, chosen from a field of more than twenty works submitted from across the globe. The third (*A Clear Midnight*) is a commission from Los Angeles composer David Stern, a long-time friend and wonderful musician. It has been especially rewarding to work on this program, partly because Brahms's *Fünf Gesänge*, Op. 104, written late in the composer's career, are imbued with a depth and profundity that are nearly unmatched. I have wanted to perform these five marvelous pieces for quite some time, the first two of which—entitled “Night Watch I” and “Night Watch II”—sparked my idea for a night-themed program.



Alfvén: *Aftonen*

Hugo Alfvén (1872–1960) was one of the most prominent Swedish composers of the first half of the twentieth century. He studied violin at the Royal Conservatory in Stockholm and was also the conductor of numerous choirs, including the very well-known male chorus, Orphei Drängar, with which he toured Europe many times. *Aftonen* is perhaps his best-known choral piece outside of Scandinavia. Composed in 1942 during the height of World War II, it bears no specific dedication, and its immediate inspiration is unknown. One scholar speculates that Alfvén may have written it “to encourage national pride and unity during... difficult times” by creating “in its saturated setting a sound of nostalgia, which appears like a dream about a forever lost past.” Alfvén's setting of this beautiful poem by Herman Sätherberg is indeed highly evocative: Rich harmonies portray the descent of evening over the landscape, punctuated by the sound of shepherds' horns echoing back and forth, captured in exquisite refrains hummed by the choir.

Aftonen

Skogen står tyst, himlen är klar.
Hör huru tjugusande vallhornet lullar.
Kvällssolns bloss sig stilla sänker
ner uti den lugna, klara våg.
Ibland dälдер, gröna kullar
eko kring nejden far...

—Herman Sätherberg (1812–1897)

The forest is still, the sky is clear.
Hear how enchanting shepherd's horns sing lullabies.
The evening sun's blush silently sinks,
Sinks down into the calm clear waves.
Among the valleys and green hills
The echo resounds near and far...

—Nathan Joel Leaf (trans.)

Monteverdi: *Sfogava con le stelle*

Somma: *Madrigale: Sussurro a pelo d'acqua in una notte in pieno agosto*

Pizzetti: *Cade la sera*

This triptych of Italian pieces is built around the winning entry of Cerddorion's Fourth Annual Emerging Composers Competition: *Madrigale: Sussurro a pelo d'acqua in una notte in pieno agosto* by Antonio Somma (b. 1994). A native of Naples, Italy, Somma is our first international winner, chosen from a field of more than twenty candidates from all over the world (Europe, Australia, the Middle East, Canada, and the United States). Somma writes of his setting:

The work's essence arises from that of the madrigal, a genre of choral music fashionable in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The aim of this form was to let harmony, melody and counterpoint strictly adhere to the text, resulting in an imaginative work almost freed from structure, in which precise musical cells refer to emotions, onomatopoeias and whatever composers were able to translate from poetry into the score. In this reinterpretation of that ancient—but modern—form, the verses (by young Italian poet Simone Garofalo) offer phonetic and semantic prompts to the alternation of an ample—more ample than in the past—array of sound phenomena, taken from the wide range of choices available to the human voice. In this sense, the contemporary experimentation in choral sound possibilities blends itself with aesthetic and poetic reasons, revealing all of its creative capability and emotional suggestion.

Given that Somma finds his inspiration in the madrigal, it seems quite natural to precede his piece with a work by one of Italy's most famous madrigalists, Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643). Monteverdi's setting of *Sfogava con le stelle* by the poet Ottavio Rinuccini (1562–1621) is a study in expressive word painting: Short phrases of text are declaimed dramatically on single chords, depicting the intensity with which a “lovesick man is crying to the stars”; rising scales represent his ascending entreaties; and unprepared dissonances capture the poignancy of his plight. As Somma describes above, the composer's desire to convey the emotional content of the text clearly supersedes concerns of musical form in this extraordinarily expressive work.

The same holds true for *Cade la sera* by Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880–1968), whose impressionistic musical language seems to capture perfectly the lovely description of evening in Gabriele d'Annunzio's (1863–1938) verses. Despite a timespan of more than four centuries and great contrast in musical styles, these three Italian composers clearly share common ground in their compositional approach.

Sfogava con le stelle

Sfogava con le stelle
un infermo d'amore
sotto notturno cielo il suo dolore.
E dicea fisso in loro:
“O imagini belle
de l'idol mio ch'adoro,
sì com'a me mostrate
mentre così splendete
la sua rara beltate,
così mostraste a lei
i vivi ardori miei:
la fareste col vostr'aureo sembiante
pietosa sì come me fate amante.”
—*Ottavio Rinuccini (1562–1621)*

Madrigale

**Sussurro a pelo d'acqua
in una notte in pieno agosto**

Una luna increspata sul fiume
E una cometa in rete a un pescatore

Ogni foglia che scivola sulle onde è un dio senza
scrittura.

Cade la sera

Cade la sera.
Nasce la luna dalla Verna cruda,
roseo nimbo di tal ch'effonde
pace senza parola dire.
Pace hanno tutti i gioghi.
Si fa più dolce il lungo
dorso del Pratomagno
come se blandimento
d'amica man l'induca a sapor lento.

Crying to the stars
a love-sick man
beneath the night sky spoke of his grief,
and said, while gazing at them:
“O lovely images
of the idol I adore,
if only, as you show me,
when you shine,
her rare beauty,
you could show to her
my ardent flames,
You would make her, with your golden look
compassionate, just as you make me affectionate.”

**Midnight whisper on water
in mid-August**

A rippling moon on the river
And a comet caught up in the fisher's net.

Every leaf that slides on the waves is a god with no
scriptures.

Evening falls.
The moon rises from rough Mount Alvernia,
the rosy glow of him who pours forth
peace without saying a word.
The mountaintops are all at peace.
The long ridge of the
Pratomagno range becomes gentler,
as if the blandishment of a friendly hand
were sending it slowly to sleep.

Su i pianori selvosi
ardon le carbonaie,
solenni fuochi in vista.
L'Arno luce fra i pioppi.
Stormire grande ad ogni soffio,
vince il corale ploro de' flauti alati
che la gramigna asconde.
E non s'ode altra voce.
Dai monti l'acqua corre a questa foce.
[Pace.]

—*Gabriele d'Annunzio (1863–1938)*

On the wooded plateaus
the charcoal kilns are burning,
their solemn fires visible.
The river Arno glistens between the poplars.
A loud rippling sound, at every breath of air,
overwhelms the choral lament of the winged flute
[i.e. crickets] that the couch grass hides. And no c
voice is heard;
from the mountains outlet into the sea.
[Peace.]

—*John Waterhouse (trans.)*

Brahms: *Fünf Gesänge*

Composed for the most part between 1886 and 1888, the five Op.104 part songs are among Johannes Brahms's last works and represent the peak of his small-scale secular choral composition. He had already written five sets of secular works for a *cappella* chorus, as well as numerous sacred choral pieces and works for women's and men's ensembles. His major choral works were behind him, as were most of his orchestral and instrumental works. In fact, as he wrote to his publisher Simrock in 1890, a year after the publication of the Op. 104 pieces, he considered himself to be at the end of his compositional career and perhaps not too far from the end of his life: "With this note...you can take leave of my music, because it is high time to stop." He was at this point a renowned public figure who had received honors and accolades throughout Europe, but he was no longer performing and touring as actively as he had been, and he was somewhat unsure of exactly what his future as an "elder statesman" held in store. Although well settled in Vienna with friends and with a few projects in mind, he already felt himself, only in his mid-50s, to be getting old. It was only his fortuitous meeting with the clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld that led to a final burst of composition, including the clarinet trio, quintet, and two sonatas. Brahms's very last works after these were a second string quintet, four sets of piano pieces, and the Four Serious Songs.

The bittersweet, autumnal feeling of the Op. 104 partsongs make them, arguably, the most personal and expressive of all of Brahms's works in this genre. Glimmers of hope are subsumed into an overall sadness about the brevity of life, lost youth, and nightfall as a metaphor for death. The texts are from a variety of sources—the first two by the great poet Friedrich Rückert; the third by Brahms's friend and early biographer, Max Kalbeck; the fourth a translation of a Czech folk text by the writer Josef Wenzig; and the final one by his good friend Klaus Groth. Brahms's serious study of Renaissance and

Baroque polyphony—he procured and studied scores by Bach, Handel, and Schütz as they became available—is evident in his handling of the multivoiced textures, with their canonic, imitative, and antiphonal passages.

The first three works, *Nachtwache I*, *Nachtwache II*, and *Letztes Glück*, are for six voices (SAATBB). In the first, the poet reveals his feelings of love and the frail hope that if "no other heart" opens, the nightwind will carry them, sighing, back to him ("seufzend in meines zurück). A slow, melancholy piece, it unfolds in short, gentle phrases alternating antiphonally between the upper and lower voices, intensifying chromatically in the middle section, and building to a climax near the end, which quickly falls away at the final repetitions of "zurück." *Nachtwache II*, the shortest of the set and the only one consistently in a major key, projects a more confident and hopeful mood. The falling fourths at the opening clearly depict the horn calls of the text, and the dactylic rhythms convey a quiet, solemn nobility as the piece unfolds. The magical harmonic shift down a major third at "Lösche die Lampe getrost" starts an intensification that culminates in the soaring suspensions, radiant subdominant harmonies, and joyous proclamations of peace which close this brief but extraordinary work. Like the first piece, *Letztes Glück* is slow and despondent, its outer sections sung antiphonally, in this case with falling two-notes motives depicting the lifeless leaves as summer turns to fall while man still nurtures dreams of spring. While the lyrical, major-key middle section projects a sense of possibility, it cannot dispel the prevailing feelings of hopelessness.

Verlorene Jugend is the liveliest of the set. For five voices, the work is in ABAB form. It is the only one of the set based on a folk text and the music of the A sections has a matching rough-hewn feel to it. In minor and set in strict canon, the music in these fast, restless sections draws a parallel between roaring mountains and stones playfully flung into waters and the carefreeness of one's younger years. The slower B sections, though they superficially hide the poignancy of the text by their major mode and lyricism, in fact more deeply mourn the irrevocable loss of youth. *Im Herbst* is considered by many to be the greatest of the five pieces and one of the most sublime of Brahms's partsongs for mixed voices. Its simple four-voiced texture and strophic form belie its profound beauty and expressiveness. The saddest of the five songs, it is a sombre and introspective reflection on the losses that come in the "autumn" of one's life. It was originally even darker in mood, written a third lower. The gently lilting 6/4 meter, the chromaticism and and unexpected harmonic shifts, the stark open fifths at the final cadences—all these contribute to the anguish of the first two verses, which speak quietly of pain, sorrow, decline and death. And yet Brahms closes the piece in a somewhat different vein, suggesting man's resignation in the face of the inevitable. For the final verse he recasts the previous music in the parallel major key, and the mood shifts to a sense of peaceful acceptance, perhaps even mingled with bliss, as the heart overflows in tears.—*Myrna Nachman*

Nachtwache I

Leise Töne der Brust,
geweckt vom Odem der Liebe,
Hauchet zitternd hinaus,
ob sich euch öffnen ein Ohr,
Öffn' ein liebendes Herz,
und wenn sich keines euch öffnet,
Trag' ein Nachtwind
euch seufzend in meines zurück.

—*Friedrich Rückert (1788–1866)*

Gentle tones of the breast,
awakened by the breath of love,
waft away trembling,
seeking an ear which is open to you,
a loving heart which is open to you,
and if none opens for you,
may a night wind carry you
sighing back to mine.

Nachtwache II

Ruhn Sie? Rufet das Horn
des Wächters drüben aus Westen,
und aus Osten das Horn
rufet entgegen: Sie ruhn.
Hörst du, zagendes Herz,
die flüsternden Stimmen der Engel?
Lösche die Lampe getrost,
hülle in Frieden dich ein!

—*Friedrich Rückert*

Are they at rest? calls the watchman's horn
from over there in the west,
and from the east the horn
calls back: They are at rest!
Do you hear, timid heart,
the whispering voices of the angels?
You can put the lamp out now
and wrap yourself in peace.

Letztes Glück

Leblos gleitet Blatt um Blatt
Still und traurig von den Bäumen;
Seines Hoffens nimmer satt,
Lebt das Herz in Frühlingsträumen.

Lifeless one leaf after another glides
quietly and sadly down from the trees;
never satiated with hope,
the heart lives on in dreams of spring.

Noch verweilt ein Sonnenblick
Bei den späten Hagerosen,
Wie bei einem letzten Glück,
Einem süßen, hoffnungslosen.

—*Max Kalbeck (1850–1921)*

A ray of sun lingers
with the late hedge-roses
like a last taste of happiness,
a sweet, hopeless taste.

Verlorene Jugend

Brausten alle Berge,
sauste rings der Wald
Meine jungen Tage,
wo sind sie so bald?

Jugend, teure Jugend,
flohest mir dahin;
O du holde Jugend,
achtlos war mein Sinn!

Ich verlor dich leider,
wie wenn einen Stein
Jemand von sich
schleudert in die Flut hinein.

Wendet sich der Stein
auch um in tiefer Flut,
weiß ich, daß die Jugend
doch kein Gleiches tut.

—*after the Bohemian sketches of Josef
Wenzig (1807–1876)*

Im Herbst

1. Ernst ist der Herbst.
Und wenn die Blätter fallen,
sinkt auch das Herz
zu trübem Weh herab.
Still ist die Flur,
und nach dem Süden wallen
die Sänger stumm,
wie nach dem Grab.

All the mountains roared,
the woods howled round about—
my young days,
where have they gone so quickly?

Youth, precious youth,
you fled away from me;
oh my lovely youth,
I was quite heedless.

Sadly I lost you,
as when someone
throws a stone
into the water.

Even if the stone returns
in the deep water,
I know that youth
does not return.

The autumn is grim,
and when the leaves fall
the heart also sinks
down to somber pain.
The plain is quiet,
and the singers surge silently
towards the south,
as if towards the grave.

2. Bleich ist der Tag,
und blasse Nebel
schleiern die Sonne
wie die Herzen ein.
Früh kommt die Nacht:
denn alle Kräfte feiern,
und tief verschlossen
ruht das Sein.

The day is pale,
and pallid fog
veils the sun
as it does our hearts.
The night comes early;
for all powers are idle,
and existence rests
deeply veiled.

3. Sanft wird der Mensch.
Er sieht die Sonne sinken,
er ahnt des Lebens
wie des Jahres Schluß.
Feucht wird das Aug',
doch in der Träne
Blinken entströmt
des Herzens seligster Erguß.
—Klaus Groth (1819–1899)

Man becomes gentle.
He sees the sun sinking,
he feels the close of life
as well as of the year.
His eye becomes moist,
but in the glittering of his tears
the greatest bliss
streams from his heart.

Wilbye: *Draw On, Sweet Night*

During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the madrigal enjoyed an extraordinary flowering in Elizabethan England, for a time even superseding the mass and motet as a vehicle for expressing a composer's profoundest musical thoughts. John Wilbye (1574–1638) is perhaps the quintessential English madrigalist: Throughout his long career, he published two books of madrigals (nearly sixty pieces) and wrote little else. Several of his works, including *Weep, O Mine Eyes*, *Adieu Sweet Amaryllis*, and *Sweet Honey-Sucking Bees*, are among the most well-known in the genre. *Draw On, Sweet Night* has been called “not only Wilbye's finest single achievement, but perhaps also the greatest of all English madrigals” (The *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*). Such high praise is certainly warranted. The work is a tour de force (nearly six minutes long) capturing both the beauty and melancholy associated with night. The opening theme is exceptionally lovely and returns later on in the composition to undergo significant development; word painting, such as the alternation of major and minor modes to portray shifting moods, is employed with great skill; and complex counterpoint is handled with such ease as to seem effortless.

Draw On, Sweet Night

Draw on, Sweet Night, friend unto those cares
That do arise from painful melancholy.
My life so ill through want of comfort fares,
that unto thee I consecrate it wholly.
Sweet Night, draw on
My griefs when they be told to shades
and darkness find some ease from paining,
And while thou all in silence dost enfold,
I then shall have best time for my complaining.

Pederson: *Stars*

Composer Kyle Pederson writes:

Stars was born out of a life-long fascination with the night sky, and the text (written by the composer), is a meditation on the interconnectedness of creation. The light from distant stars takes eons to reach our eyes, connecting us with an ancient past. And many elements that comprise our bodies were cast out of stars millions upon millions of years ago. Since we are the “stuff of stars,” where will we cast our own light? Whose world will we impact? Harmonically, the piece seeks to evoke the vastness and mystery of space, while simultaneously capturing the intimacy of connection.

Stars

Stars
Legacies of light
Ages ago you spun light into the bleak
Ancient light lands in tonight's sky
Ancient light falls on my eye
And I?
A star
sacred stellar dust
casting light out through time
In whose sky will my light fall?

Stern: *A Clear Midnight*

David Stern writes:

A Clear Midnight is an *a cappella* choral setting in four parts of a poem by Walt Whitman (1819-1892) written on commission for James John and the Cerddorion Vocal Ensemble. This brief poem from Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* is about the soul arising in flight at night as the lessons and things of earthly life are put aside.

I have long admired Walt Whitman's poetry for its metaphysical insight and exuberant portrayal of life. In order to illustrate the soul's “free flight into the wordless” I took the liberty of having the choir sing on the vowel sound “ah” so that the singers depart from words. The musical style is largely based on traditional chords that progress in poetic at times unpredictable ways, guided by the aesthetic of providing an uplifting experience of beauty. I wish to express my appreciation to Dr. John and the Cerddorion Vocal Ensemble for the opportunity to write *A Clear Midnight* for them.

A Clear Midnight

This is thy hour O Soul, thy free flight into the wordless,
Away from books, away from art, the day erased, the lesson done,
Thee fully forth emerging, silent, gazing, pondering the themes thou lovest best,
Night, sleep, death and the stars.

MacCunn: *Oh, Where Art Thou Dreaming?
Soldier, Rest! Thy Warfare O'er*

Elgar: *My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land*

Sullivan: *The Long Day Closes*

Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842–1900), Sir Edward Elgar (1857–1934) and Hamish MacCunn (1868–1916) were among the most successful and influential British composers of their generations. All three helped pave the way for their successors, including Ralph Vaughan Williams and Benjamin Britten.

MacCunn, born and raised in Scotland, was among the first British composers to explore national topics in his music and one of the first to attend to the Royal College of Music, which opened in 1883 (he brashly declined his degree in 1886). In the late 1880s, he earned a place among prominent British composers of the time with “Scottish” overtures and choral-orchestral works based on Scottish texts. His compositions after the turn of the century failed to match the success of his earlier works, and a disappointed MacCunn died in 1916, after a long battle with throat cancer. The majority of his part songs were written during his time at the Royal College of Music and in the early years of his professional career. “Oh where art thou dreaming?” (1884), composed during his second year at the Royal College of Music, tells of a maiden waiting for the nocturnal arrival of her beloved, though she waits in vain, as reflected in the lack of a conclusive cadence and the bass declaration of “thou comest not” at the end of the partsong. In “Soldier, rest!” (1893, a setting of Canto 1 of Sir Walter Scott’s *The Lady of the Lake*), a local woman invites a knight lost in the Scottish Highlands to rest in her father’s home. After the calm, soothing opening, dissonances interrupt at the mention of battlefields and the antics of unseen fairies before the restful music from the beginning returns to conclude the work.

Elgar rose to fame at the turn of the century as the younger MacCunn witnessed the decline of his popularity. Elgar’s earlier successes centered on a series of choral-orchestral works composed for major choral festivals in the Midlands of England. His *Enigma Variations* (1899) cemented his place as one of Britain’s up and coming composers, and, his subsequent compositions fulfilled these expectations. Unlike many

of his contemporaries, he avoided academic posts throughout his career, with the exception of his brief tenure as Peyton Professor of Music at Birmingham University from 1905 to 1908. After his wife’s death in 1920, he composed no more significant works, though he continued to promote his music, and even recorded some of his compositions on gramophone records, until a few months before his death in 1934. In Elgar’s atmospheric “My love dwelt in a Northern land,” as in “Oh where art thou dreaming?”, love and night are intertwined, though here love is recalled amidst vivid descriptions of the northern landscape, the moon, and the rising sun, which rends love a fleeting memory.

Though Sullivan began his musical studies at the Royal Academy of Music, like many of his generation he completed his education in Germany, at the Leipzig Conservatoire, before establishing his career at home. Though best known today for his operettas, Sullivan established himself as one of Britain’s leading composers with his incidental music for *The Tempest* (1862), his cantata *The Golden Legend* (1886), and other works for the concert hall. After serving as Principal of the National Training School of Music (the predecessor of the Royal College of Music) for five years, Sullivan migrated to the more financially lucrative genre of operettas. His death, in 1900, sparked national mourning, an uncommon occurrence for composers at the time, and he was buried in St. Paul’s Cathedral. “The Long Day Closes” forgoes the toils of love and depictions of wild landscapes to focus on the reflective stillness of the day’s end.—*Jennifer Oates*

My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land

My love dwelt in a Northern land.
A dim tower in a forest green
Was his and far away the sand
And gray wash of the waves were seen
The woven forest boughs between:
And oft that month we watched the moon
Wax great and white o'er wood and lawn
And wane, with waning of the June,
Till, like a brand for battle drawn,
She fell, and flamed in a wild dawn.

And through the Northern summer night
The sunset slowly died away,
And herds of strange deer, silverwhite,
Came gleaming through the forest gray,
And fled like ghosts before the day.
I know not if the forest green
Still girdles round that castle gray.
I know not if, the boughs between,
The white deer vanish ere the day:
The grass above my love is green,
His heart is colder than the clay.

—*Andrew Lang (1844–1912)*

Oh Where Art Thou Dreaming?

Oh where art thou dreaming,
On land, or on sea?
In my lattice is gleaming
The watch-light for thee;
And this fond heart is glowing
To welcome thee home,
And the night is fast going,
But thou art not come:
No, thou com'st not!

Soldier, Rest! Thy Warfare O'er

Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking;
Dream of battled fields no more,
Days of danger, nights of waking.
In our isle's enchanted hall,
Hands unseen thy couch are strewing,

The Long Day Closes

No star is o'er the lake, its pale watch keeping,
The moon is half awake, through grey mist
creeping.
The last red leaves fall round the porch of roses,
The clock has ceased to sound. The long day
closes.

Sit by the silent hearth in calm endeavour,
To count the sound of mirth, now dumb forever.

'Tis the time when night flowers
Should wake from their rest,
'Tis the hour of all hours
When the lute singeth best,
But the flowers are half sleeping
Till *thy* glance they see;
And the hushed lute is keeping
Its music for thee.
Yet thou com'st not!
—*Thomas Moore (1779–1852)*

Fairy strains of music fall,
Ev'ry sense in slumber dewing.
Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Dream of fighting fields no more;
Sleep the sleep that knows no breaking,
Morn of toil, nor night of waking.
—*Walter Scott (1771–1832)*

Heed not how hope believes and fate
disposes:
Shadow is round the eaves. The long day
closes.

The lighted windows dim are fading slowly.
The fire that was so trim now quivers lowly.
Go to the dreamless bed where grief repose:
Thy book of toil is read. The long day close:
—*Henry Fothergill Chorley (1808–1872)*



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