

CD 2005 -- 20



Thursday, March 24, 2005
12:10 pm, Walter Hall

Thursdays at Noon

MUSIC AND POETRY

Matthew Leigh, baritone
Doreen Uren Simmons, piano
Eric Domville, commentator

THE CENTRED PASSION

Song Cycle for Baritone and Piano

(Six poems from *In memoriam A.H.H.* by Alfred Lord Tennyson)

Derek Holman

b.1931

- I. Old Yew, which graspest at the stones
- II. Tonight the winds begin to rise
- III. The path by which we twain did go
- IV. The time draws near the birth of Christ
- V. Now fades the last long streak of snow
- VI. Thy voice is on the rolling air

Commissioned through a grant from the Ontario Arts Council



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Biographies

Eric Domville is a Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Toronto. His main scholarly interest is the life and works of W.B. Yeats. He is also a writer, lecturer and broadcaster on opera. Currently he is co-teaching a graduate course on Russian song and opera in the Faculty of Music. Prof. Domville has appeared numerous times as a commentator for the Music and Poetry series.

Matthew Leigh began his musical training in his hometown of Pembroke Ontario. After studying voice and piano for six years he attended the faculty of music at the University of Toronto. During this period Matthew enjoyed performing recitals of Schumann, Schubert and new Canadian repertoire from composers John Hawkins, John Beckwith and Eric Ross. In 2002 Matthew attended the opera school at the University of Toronto and performed the roles of "Mad Anthony Wayne" from Beckwith's *Taptool!*, "Lockit" from Britten's *The Beggar's Opera* as well as "Guglielmo" from Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. In 2004 Matthew had the honor of performing the role of "Arro" in the premiere of *Opera Érotique*, a new performance piece from Victoria based Out of the Box Productions. This summer Matthew will attend the Stean's Institute for Young Artists at the Ravinia festival in Illinois. He is currently a Masters student at the University of Toronto studying with baritone Peter Barnes.

Doreen Uren Simmons met Derek Holman in the early 1970s through their friend and colleague John Sidgwick. Since then she has had the privilege of performing many of Dr. Holman's solo and choral works; including the Centred Passion in Paris, England, Montreal and even Orillia. Doreen was born in Ingesoll, Ontario and came to Toronto as a young girl to study with the renowned Mona Bates. Her professional debut was at London's Wigmore Hall in 1961. She has toured Canada with Overture concerts and was studio accompanist for the beloved Lois Marshall here at the faculty for 12 years. Doreen now lives and teaches in Orillia, and accompanies in the studio of Peter Barnes. She also coaches voice and piano privately in Toronto.

Text

1. In Memoriam A.H.H., II

Old, Yew, which graspest at the stones
That name the under-lying dead,
Thy fibres net the dreamless head,
Thy roots are wrapt about the bones.

The seasons bring the flower again,
And bring the firstling to the flock
And in the dusk of thee, the clock
Beats out the little lives of men.

O, not for thee the glow, the bloom,
Who changest not in any gale,
Nor branding summer suns avail
To touch thy thousand years of gloom:

And gazing on thee, sullen tree,
Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,
I seem to fail from out my blood
And grow incorporate into thee.

2. In Memoriam A.H.H., XV

To-night the winds begin to rise
And roar from yonder dropping day:
The last red leaf is whirl'd away,
The rooks are blown about the skies;

The forest crack'd, the waters curl'd.
The cattle huddled on the lea;
And wildly dashed on tower and tree
The sunbeam strikes along the world:

And but for fancies, which aver,
That all thy motions gently pass
Athwart a plane of molten glass,
I scarce could brook the strain and stir

That makes the barren branches loud;
And but for fear it is not so,
The wild unrest that lives in woe
Would dote and pore on yonder cloud

That rises upward always higher,
And onward drags a labouring breast,
And topples round the dreary west,
A looming bastion fringed with fire.

3. In Memoriam A.H.H., XXII

The path by which we twain did go,
Which led by tracts that pleased us well,
Thro' four sweet years arose and fell,
From flower to flower, from snow to snow:

And we with singing cheer'd the way,
And crowned with all the season lent,
From April on to April went,
And glad at heart from May to May:

But where the path we walk'd began
To slant the fifth autumnal slope,
As we descended, following Hope,
There sat the Shadow fear'd of man;

Who broke our fair companionship,
And spread his mantle dark and cold,
And wrapt thee formless in the fold,
And dull'd the murmur on thy lip,

And bore thee where I could not see
Nor follow, tho' I walk in haste,
And think that somewhere in the waste
The Shadow sits and waits for me.

4. In Memoriam A.H.H., XXVII

The time draws near the birth of Christ:
The moon is hid; the night is still;
The Christmas bells from hill to hill
Answer each other in the mist.

Four voices of four hamlets round,
From far and near, on mead and moor,
Swell out and fail, as if a door
Were shut between me and the sound:

Each voice four changes on the wind,
That now dilate and now decrease,
Peace and goodwill, goodwill and peace,
Peace and goodwill to all mankind.

This year I slept and woke with pain,
I almost wish'd no more to wake,
And that my hold on life would break
Before I heard those bells again:

But they my trouble spirit rule,
for they controlled me when a boy;
They bring me sorrow touch'd with joy,
The merry, merry bells of Yule.

5. In Memoriam A.H.H., CXV

Now fades the last long streak of snow,
Now burgeons every maze of quick
About the flowering squares, and thick
By ashen roots the violets blow.

Now rings the woodland loud and long,
The distance takes a lovelier hue,
And drown'd in yonder living blue
The lark becomes a sightless song.

No dance the lights on lawn and lea,
The flocks are whiter down the vale,
And milkier every milky sail
On winding stream or distant sea;

Where now the seamew pipes, or dives
In yonder gleaming green, and fly
The happy birds, that change their sky
To build and brood; that live there lives

From land to land; and in my breast
Spring wakens too; and my regret
Becomes an April violet,
And buds and blossoms like the rest.

6. In Memoriam A.H.H., CXXX

Thy voice is on the rolling air;
I hear thee where the waters run;
Thou standest in the rising sun,
And in the setting thou art fair.

What art thou then? I cannot guess;
But tho' I seem in star and flower
To feel thee some diffusive power,
I do not therefore love thee less:

My love involves the love before;
My love is vaster passion now;
Tho' mix'd with God and Nature thou,
I seem to love thee more and more.

Far off thou art, but ever nigh;
I have thee still and I rejoice;
I prosper, circled with thy voice;
I shall not lose thee tho' I die.