



presents...

Nicholas Phan | Tenor
Jake Heggie | Piano

Recorded Thursday, July 2, 2020

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Belvedere, CA

Time

Songs which touch on the subject of time—how it can be fleeting, feel suspended, how finite our time is, etc. Also, a meditation on this moment of paused performances.

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CHARLES IVES

Memories

*A. Very Pleasant
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II.

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CHAUSSON**

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PROGRAM NOTES

All musicians have a special relationship with time. While pitches are what make melodies and harmonies, rhythm is equally foundational for music. When considering how the emotional atmosphere of a song is perceived, melody can steal the focus, but it is the tempo of a song which dictates its mood. A slow, languid pulse creates a sense of melancholy. A quick beat creates a sense of jollity or celebration. A piece of music taken at an unexpected tempo can revolutionize the way we experience a familiar tune. Take, for instance, this [video](#), in which Dolly Parton's recording of her masterwork, *Jolene*, is slowed down dramatically. It sounds like a completely different piece of music, and it takes on a new haunting character.

Musicians communicate with each other through the language of time. Rhythms are instructions on how to divide time: whole notes, quarter notes, eighth notes, sixteenth notes (or quavers, semi-quavers, etc. if you happen to be British). Tempo markings like *allegro*, *grave*, *lento*, *vivace*, and *presto* all dictate the pace. One of the great expressive tools of a musician is to play at being Chronos, the personification of time in Greek mythology. Oftentimes, we accelerate in order to create a sense of momentum and excitement, to build to a climax. Other times we slow down. One of the musical descriptions for this is the Italian word, *rubato*, which is most directly translated as "stolen". When musicians learn how to do this, we are taught to "take time": to slow down over a juicy harmonic progression and milk it for all it is worth. "Stealing" time in an effort to savor these moments, we play at being masters of time. Yet even in music, this proves to be a fallacy: in almost every instance of *rubato*, if the piece is to retain its momentum and life force, what has been taken must be given back. Like the river of time, we may slow down or speed up to create tension and release, but no matter any musician's efforts, we must continue to flow onward.

Music itself is a time machine, acting as bridge from past to present. Unlike a painting or a sculpture, no composer's work can be fully realized without a living musician to perform it. Despite the fact that Beethoven, Bach and the Boulanger sisters put pen to paper hundreds of years ago, their creations can never be complete until a musician brings the notes and rhythms they put on the page to life. Musicians are akin to time-travelers, attempting to be a conduit to the past, doing their best to bring the composer's intentions into the present.

Singers have an added layer to this relationship with time, because our bodies are instruments. Young opera singers are constantly reminded that their instruments take many years to develop, particularly male voices: most male voices won't reach the beginning of their prime until their mid-30s. Much less discussed, yet also lurking below the surface of that conversation is the fact that all human voices have an expiration date. As we age and pass the few years of

our prime, our voices begin to decline, losing their luster and sheen as our vocal cords thicken with the advancing years. Classically-trained singers spend the early years of their careers impatiently waiting for their voices to mature. In the middle and later years, singers are in a race against time.

With the world locked down for safety, musicians now find themselves with nothing but time on their hands. Banned from our concert halls and opera houses, many of us (American musicians, in particular), have been told we will not be able to perform for live audiences until next year at the earliest. Even that start date remains tentative at best. Not really certain when we will be able to return to the live stage, isolated from our colleagues and audiences, this moment feels endless.

During this pause, I've found myself thinking about humanity's relationship with time. Sometimes it feels fleeting, when the hours rush by and we can never have enough of them in the day. Other times (now), it feels suspended. Some perceive the flow of time cyclically, like the rotation of the seasons. Others as a linear, unstoppable river. We are always physically rooted in the present moment, yet our minds wander forward and backward into the past and the future. How difficult it can be to simply just be here, in the now.

This program is a musical meditation on the current moment, as well as an exploration of these themes, upon which composers and poets have been ruminating for hundreds of years. Because the program was about time, it only felt right to have the repertoire span over four and half centuries: you'll hear songs ranging from John Dowland, who was born in 1563, to the music of composers writing today, such as my esteemed colleague at the piano, Jake Heggie.

I am very grateful to Melanie Smith and San Francisco Performances for the opportunity to take a bigger step towards approximating the concert hall and present this recital program for you. I am also extraordinarily thankful to Jake Heggie: not only for allowing me to perform his songs, but also his willingness to be my musical and programming partner for this meditation on time in the place where words and music meet.

Also, many thanks to Jake for his virtuosic feat of whistling and playing the piano at the same time in the opening Ives song, since I am one of those unfortunates who simply cannot whistle.

I hope to see you back in the concert hall sooner rather than later, by some miracle. In the meantime, wishing you all the best for good health and safety.

A note: While we are not shown wearing masks in this video, masks were worn at all other times during the filming of this performance.

—Nicholas Phan

Memories

A. Very Pleasant

We're sitting in the opera house;
We're waiting for the curtain to arise
With wonders for our eyes;
We're feeling pretty gay,
And well we may,
"O, Jimmy, look!" I say,
"The band is tuning up
And soon will start to play."
We whistle and we hum,
Beat time with the drum.
We're sitting in the opera house;
We're waiting for the curtain to arise
With wonders for our eyes,
A feeling of expectancy,
A certain kind of ecstasy,
Expectancy and ecstasy... Sh's's's. "Curtain!"

B. Rather Sad

From the street a strain on my ear doth fall,
A tune as threadbare as that "old red shawl,"
It is tattered, it is torn,
It shows signs of being worn,
It's the tune my Uncle hummed from early morn,
'Twas a common little thing and kind 'a sweet,
But 'twas sad and seemed to slow up both his feet;
I can see him shuffling down
To the barn or to the town,
A humming.

—Texts by Charles Edward Ives

Time Stands Still

Time stands still with gazing on her face,
Stand still and gaze, for minutes, hours and years to her give place.
All other things shall change but she remains the same,
Till heavens changed have their course and Time hath lost his name.
Cupid doth hover up and down, blinded with her fair eyes,
And Fortune captive at her feet contemned and conquered lies.

Whom Fortune, Love, and Time attend on,
Her with my fortunes, love and time I honour will alone.
If bloodless Envy say Duty hath no desert,
Duty replies that Envy knows herself his faithful heart.
My settled vows and spotless faith no fortune can remove,
Courage shall show my inward faith, and faith shall try my love.

—Text by Anonymous

Le temps des lilas

Le temps des lilas et le temps des roses
Ne reviendra plus à ce printemps-ci ;
Le temps des lilas et le temps des roses
Est passés, le temps des œillets aussi.

Le vent a changé, les cieus sont moroses,
Et nous n'irons plus courir, et cueillir
Les lilas en fleur et les belles roses ;
Le printemps est triste et ne peut fleurir.

Oh ! joyeux et doux printemps de l'année,
Qui vins, l'an passé, nous ensoleiller,
Notre fleur d'amour est si bien fanée,
Las ! que ton baiser ne peut l'éveiller!

Et toi, que fais-tu ? pas de fleurs écloses,
Point de gai soleil ni d'ombrages frais ;
Le temps des lilas et le temps des roses
Avec notre amour est mort à jamais.

—Text by Maurice Bouchor

The time of lilacs and the time of roses
Will no longer come again to this spring;
The time of lilacs and the time of roses
Has passed, the time of carnations also.

The wind has changed, the skies are morose,
And we will no longer run to pick
The lilacs in bloom and the beautiful roses;
The spring is sad and cannot bloom.

Oh! Joyful and gentle spring of the year,
That came last year to bathe us in sunlight,
Our flower of love is so wilted,
Alas! that your kiss cannot awaken it!

And you, what are you doing? No budding flowers,
No bright sun at all nor cool shade,
The time of lilacs and the time of roses,
Along with our love, is dead forever.

—Translation © by Korin Kormick,
from the LiederNet Archive—www.lieder.net

Les lilas qui avaient fleuri from Clairières dans le ciel

Les lilas qui avaient fleuri l'année dernière
vont fleurir de nouveau dans les tristes parterres.
Déjà le pêcher grêle a jonché le ciel bleu
de ses roses, comme un enfant la Fête-Dieu.
Mon cœur devrait mourir au milieu de ces choses,
car c'était au milieu des vergers blancs et roses
que j'avais espéré je ne sais quoi de vous.
Mon âme rêve sourdement sur vos genoux.
Ne la repoussez point. Ne la relevez pas
de peur qu'en s'éloignant de vous elle ne voie
combien vous êtes faible et troublée dans ses bras.

—Text by Francis Jammes

The lilacs which bloomed last year
will flower again in their sad beds.
Already the frail peach tree has bedecked the blue sky
with its roses, like a child on the feast of Corpus Christi.
My heart should die amid all these things,
for it was among white and pink orchards
that I had hoped for I don't know what from you.
My soul sleeps soundly in your lap.
Don't push it away. Don't awaken it,
for fear that when it leaves
it will see how you are weak and troubled in its arms.

—Translation © by Faith J. Cormier,
from the LiederNet Archive—www.lieder.net

Mandoline

Les donneurs de sérénades
Et les belles écouteuses
Échangent des propos fades
Sous les ramures chanteuses.

C'est Tircis et c'est Aminte,
Et c'est l'éternel Clitandre,
Et c'est Damis qui pour mainte
Cruelle [fait]1 maint vers tendre.

Leurs courtes vestes de soie,
Leurs longues robes à queues,
Leur élégance, leur joie
Et leurs molles ombres bleues,

Tourbillonnent dans l'extase
D'une lune rose et grise,
Et la mandoline jase
Parmi les frissons de brise.

—Text by Paul Verlaine

The givers of serenades
And the lovely women who listen
Exchange insipid words
Under the singing branches.

There is Thyrsis and Amyntas
And there's the eternal Clytander,
And there's Damis who, for many a
Heartless woman, wrote many a tender verse.

Their short silk coats,
Their long dresses with trains,
Their elegance, their joy
And their soft blue shadows,

Whirl around in the ecstasy
Of a pink and grey moon,
And the mandolin prattles
Among the shivers from the breeze.

—Translation © by Emily Ezust,
from the LiederNet Archive—www.lieder.net

Early in the Morning

Early in the morning
Of a lovely summer day,
As they lowered the bright awning
At the outdoor café,
I was breakfasting on croissants
And café au lait
Under greenery like scenery,
Rue François Premier.

They were hosing the hot pavement
With a dash of flashing spray
And a smell of summer showers
When the dust is drenched away.
Under greenery like scenery,
I was twenty and a lover
And in Paradise to stay,
Very early in the morning
Of a lovely summer day.

—Text by Robert Hillyer

Silent Noon

Your hands lie open in the long fresh grass,—
The finger-points look through like rosy blooms:
Your eyes smile peace. The pasture gleams and glooms
'Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass.
All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,
Are golden kingcup fields with silver edge
Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn-hedge.
'Tis visible silence, still as the hour-glass.

Deep in the sun-searched growths the dragon-fly
Hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky:—
So this wing'd hour is dropt to us from above.
Oh! clasp we to our hearts, for deathless dower,
This close-companioned inarticulate hour
When twofold silence was the song of love.

—Text by Dante Gabriel Rosetti

Heures ternes

Voici d'anciens désirs qui passent,
Encor des songes de lassés,
Encor des rêves qui se lassent ;
Voilà les jours d'espoir passés !

En qui faut-il fuir aujourd'hui !
Il n'y a plus d'étoile aucune :
Mais de la glace sur l'ennui
Et des linges bleus sous la lune.

Encor des sanglots pris au piège !
Voyez les malades sans feu,
Et les agneaux brouter la neige ;
Ayez pitié de tout, mon Dieu !

Moi, j'attends un peu de réveil,
Moi, j'attends que le sommeil passe,
Moi, j'attends un peu de soleil
Sur mes mains que la lune glace.

—Text by Maurice Maeterlinck

Desires of bygone years file by,
So too, the musings of the old,
And dreams surrendered long ago;
And there go former days of hope!

What respite might we find today!
No stars remain to fly to now,
Just boredom 'neath a crust of ice
And linens blue under the moon.

And sobs suppressed, trapped in the throat!
See there the cold hearths of the ill,
And sheep at pasture eating snow;
My God, take pity on it all!

As for me, I'll wait to awake.
I shall wait for slumber to pass.
I'll await the warmth of the sun
On these hands now chilled by the moon.

—Translation © by Ray Granlund

Attente

Mon âme a joint ses mains étranges
À l'horizon de mes regards ;
Exaucez mes rêves épars
Entre les lèvres de vos anges!

En attendant sous mes yeux las,
Et sa bouche ouverte aux prières
Éteintes entre mes paupières
Et dont les lys n'éclosent pas ;

Elle apaise au fond de mes songes,
Ses seins effeuillés sous mes cils,
Et ses yeux clignent aux périls
Éveillés au fil des mensonges.

—Text by Maurice Maeterlinck

My soul has joined her foreign hands
At the horizon of my glances;
Grant my scattered dreams
Between the lips of your angels!

Waiting under my weary eyes,
And her mouth open in prayers
Extinguished between my eyelids
And of which the lilies do not bloom;

She satisfies at the bottom of my dreams,
Her breasts denuded under my eyelashes
And her eyes gazing half-open at the risks
Awakened by the thread of illusions.

—Translation © by Korin Kormick,
from the LiederNet Archive—www.lieder.net

I Will Lie Down

I will lie down in autumn
let birds be flying
Swept in a hollow by the wind
I'll wait for dying
I will lie inert unseen
my hair same-colored with grass and leaves
Gather me for the autumn fires
with the withered sheaves
I will sleep face down in the burnt meadow
not hearing the sound of water over stones
Trail over me cloud and shadow
Let snow hide the whiteness of my bones

—Text by May Swenson

By the Spring, At Sunset from Of Laughter and Farewell

Sometimes we remember kisses,
Remember the dear heart-leap when they came:
Not always, but sometimes we remember
The kindness, the dumbness, the good flame
Of laughter and farewell.
Beside the road
Afar from those who said "Good-bye" I write,
Far from my city task, my lawful load.
Sun in my face, wind beside my shoulder,
Streaming clouds, banners of new-born night
Enchant me now. The splendors growing bolder
Make bold my soul for some new wise delight.
I write the day's event, and quench my drouth,
Pausing beside the spring with happy mind.
And now I feel those kisses on my mouth,
Hers most of all, one little friend most kind.

—Text by Vachel Lindsay

The Sun Kept Setting from How Well I Knew the Light

The Sun kept setting—setting—still
No Hue of Afternoon—
Upon the Village I perceived—
From House to House 'twas Noon—
The Dusk kept dropping—dropping—still
No Dew upon the Grass—
But only on my Forehead stopped—
And wandered in my Face—
My Feet kept drowsing—drowsing—still
My fingers were awake—
Yet why so little sound—Myself
Unto my Seeming—make?
How well I knew the Light before—
I could see it now—
'Tis Dying—I am doing—but
I'm not afraid to know—

—Text by Emily Dickinson

If it's ever spring again

If it's ever spring again,
Spring again,
I shall go where went I when
Down the moor-cock splashed, and hen,
Seeing me not, amid their flounder,
Standing with my arm around her;
If it's ever spring again,
Spring again,
I shall go where went I then.

If it's ever summer-time,
Summer-time,
With the hay crop at the prime,
And the cuckoos - two - in rhyme,
As they used to be, or seemed to,
We shall do as long we've dreamed to,
If it's ever summer-time,
Summer-time,
With the hay, and bees achime.

—Text by Thomas Hardy

Before life and after from Winter Words

A time there was - as one may guess
And as, indeed, earth's testimonies tell -
Before the birth of consciousness,
When all went well.

None suffered sickness, love, or loss,
None knew regret, starved hope, or heart-burnings;
None cared whatever crash or cross
Brought wrack to things.

If something ceased, no tongue bewailed,
If something winced and waned, no heart was wrung;
If brightness dimmed, and dark prevailed,
No sense was stung.

But the disease of feeling germed,
And primal rightness took the tinct of wrong;
Ere nescience shall be reaffirmed
How long, how long?

—Text by Thomas Hardy

In years defaced from Till Earth Outwears

In years defaced and lost,
Two sat here, transport-tossed,
Lit by a living love
The wilted world knew nothing of:

Scared momentarily
By gain-givings,
Then hoping things
That could not be.

Of love and us no trace
Abides upon the place;
The sun and shadows wheel,
Season and season sereward steal:

Foul days and fair
Here, too, prevail,
And gust and gale
As everywhere...

But lonely shepherd souls
Who bask amid these knolls
May catch a faery sound
On sleepy noon-tides from the ground:

"O not again
Till Earth outwears
Shall love like theirs
Suffuse this glen!"

—Text by Thomas Hardy

Some Other Time from On the Town

Twenty four hours can go so fast
You look around, the day has passed
When you're in love, time is precious stuff
Even a lifetime isn't enough

Where has the time all gone to?
Haven't done half the things we want to
Oh, well, we'll catch up some other time

This day was just a token
Too many words are still unspoken
Oh, well, we'll catch up some other time

Just when the fun is starting
Comes the time for parting
But let's be glad for what we had and what's to come

There's so much more embracing
Still to be had, but time is racing
Oh, well, we'll catch up some other time

—Text by Betty Comden and Adolph Green