

77TH SEASON OF

CONCERTS

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART | NOVEMBER 11, 2018



PROGRAM

Tapestry

Cristi Catt, soprano

Laurie Monahan, mezzo soprano

Daniela Tošić, alto

Shira Kammen, viola and alto

James Falzone, clarinet and pipes

Arsentiy Kharitonov, piano and bass baritone

Lessons of Darkness: Armistice Day 1918

November 11, 2018 | 3:30

West Building, West Garden Court

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

Deux Mélodies hébraïques

1. Kaddisch (excerpt)

Le Tombeau de Couperin: Prelude

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

“Nuit d'étoiles”

Erik Satie (1866–1925)

Arr. James Falzone

Gnossienne 2

Lili Boulanger (1883–1918)

Les Sirènes

James Reese Europe (1880–1919)

Improvisations on Themes of James

Reese Europe

Attrib. Đorđe Marinković (d. 1977)

Arr. Daniela Tošić

“Tamo daleko”

Armenian folk song

“Dal Dala”

Armenian folk song

Arr. Douglas Wagner

“Alagyaz”

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

Four Russian Peasant Songs

(original a cappella version of 1914–1917)

Maurice Ravel

Le Tombeau de Couperin: Forlane

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)

“Tebe Poem” from the *Liturgy of Saint*

John Chrysostom

Ivan Moody (b. 1964) and

Anna Akhmatova (1889–1966)

“Slova” (Words)

Sergei Rachmaninoff

“Sugubaya i Posleduyuschiya Ekteniya”

from the *Liturgy of Saint John*

Chrysostom

Intermission

François Couperin (1668–1773)

Meditations on a Theme of Couperin

Maurice Ravel

Le Tombeau de Couperin: Menuet

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

Selections from *Cantata: Dona Nobis Pacem*

Agnus Dei

Reconciliation

Dirge for Two Veterans

Maurice Ravel

Le Tombeau de Couperin: Rigaudon

Songs of Protest and Peace

Claude Debussy

“Noël des enfants qui n'ont plus de maison” (Christmas for Homeless Children)

Improvisations on Claude Debussy's Violin Sonata in G Minor, L148

John McCutcheon (b. 1952)

Arr. Shira Kammen

“Christmas in the Trenches”

Neil Young (b. 1945)

“Find the Cost of Freedom”

David Lang (b. 1957)

“Make Peace”

My Shepherd Will Supply My Need (Psalm 23)

Arr. Virgil Thomson (1896–1989)

THE ENSEMBLE

Tapestry, a Boston-based ensemble of women's voices, made its debut in 1995 with the performance of Steve Reich's *Tehillim* at Jordan Hall, which the *Boston Globe* deemed "a knockout." Critics hail the musicians' rich distinctive voices, their "technically spot-on singing," and their emotionally charged performances. *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* has described Tapestry as "an ensemble that plants haunting vibrations, old and new, in our ears."

The ensemble's concert and festival appearances are many and include the Utrecht Early Music and the Maastricht Musica Sacra Festivals, Regensburg's Tage Alter Musik, the Flanders festivals of Gent and Brussels, the Moscow Conservatory, Rome's Donne in Musica, Boston's Jordan Hall and Harvard University, New York's Frick Collection, Houston's Da Camera, Denver's Newman Performing Arts Center, and Stanford University. Recent appearances have included the Library of Congress and the Frick Collection with the group's program "American Dreams," a performance at the Bucerius Foundation in Hamburg with works from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries broadcast by the Norddeutsche Radio, and the unveiling of a mini-opera based on Tibetan folklore written for Tapestry by Sheila Silver that premiered at Ottawa's new Music and Beyond Festival. The work subsequently toured North and South America. In addition to *Lessons of Darkness*, Tapestry is touring *Starry Night*, a program designed for the Wilson Observatory and the Da Camera Society Concert Series in Los Angeles.

Tapestry has made four recordings with Telarc International: *Angeli, Music of Angels*; *Hildegard von Bingen: Celestial Light*; *Song of Songs—Come into My Garden*; and *The Fourth River*, winner of Chamber Music America's Recording of the Year. Two other recordings are under the German Label, MDG: *Faces of a Woman* and *Sapphire Night*, the latter the winner of the Echo Prize.

PROGRAM NOTES

Tapestry marks the 100th anniversary of World War I's Armistice Day by honoring composers who risked their lives, supported the war effort, or were impacted by the conflict, as well as others who reflected on themes of war and peace following the Armistice. Composed works are paired with folk songs to create a fuller picture of early twentieth-century musical life and to explore the theme of lives affected by World War I in France, Britain, Armenia, Serbia, Russia, and the United States.

The music of Maurice Ravel serves as a touchstone and focal point for this program. In 1914, Ravel completed *Deux Mélodies hébraïques* shortly before he enlisted in the army. An atheist and spiritualist, he was drawn to the Kaddish, a Jewish prayer and song of mourning. Too old to serve as a front-line soldier, he drove an ambulance often stationed at battle scenes. Between 1914 and 1917, he composed *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, a suite of six works for solo piano. Each piece honors a soldier who died in the war. When asked why the music was lively rather than mournful, Ravel replied that the loss of life was already sad, why should the music be sad?

Inspired by this idea of lives interrupted, the first half of the program features more joyful songs written before the war, a bit of ragtime, and folk songs. We then close with Rachmaninoff's reflections on the theme of mercy with prayers, bookending a poem by Anna Akhmatova. The second half of our program is built around Ralph Vaughan William's masterpiece, *Cantata: Dona Nobis Pacem*, paired with songs of protest and peace.

In his fifties and suffering poor health, Claude Debussy spent the war years in Paris raising money for orphans and the wounded. His musical response to the war was "Noël des enfants qui n'ont plus des maisons" (Christmas for Homeless Children), for which he wrote the text as well as the music. He died of cancer in March 1918 during the German bombardment of Paris. We also include one of his chansons, "Nuit d'étoiles," written at age fourteen, as well as improvisations based on his final work, Violin Sonata in G Minor.

Erik Satie's military career did not last long. In 1886, at age twenty, he joined the army and after a few months was discharged for deliberately infecting himself with bronchitis. Passionately anti-German, he did wage a musical war and also took aim at Debussy and Ravel. As the "patron saint" of Les Six—a group of early twentieth-century French composers who countered German Romantic music, as well as the music of Debussy and Ravel—Satie had a strong impact on the direction of postwar music. We include his *Gnossienne 2*, published in 1893. Satie made up the term *gnossienne* for his new and experimental musical form. The word "gnossienne" may be connected to gnosticism, as that philosophy was one of his passions.

Lili Boulanger, the younger sister of composer and teacher Nadia Boulanger, was the first woman to win the Prix de Rome. She died in March 1918, in Paris, of Crohn's disease. During the war, Lili and Nadia organized support of French soldiers. We offer a piece written by Lili prior to the war—*Les Sirènes*. It has a lightness of texture and spirit that contrasts with her later works, especially *Psalms 130* for chorus and orchestra, which she composed during the war.

James Reese Europe fought on the front lines in World War I and brought ragtime and early jazz to Europe. The son of a former slave, his was the first all-black orchestra to play in Carnegie Hall in 1912. During the war, he was charged with forming a band for the 369th Regiment, the Harlem Hellfighters—the first African American unit to land in France. One of the regiment's soldiers noted, “the French know no color line,” which stood in contrast to the violent racial riots, lynchings, and discrimination occurring in the United States. In 1919, Europe was murdered in Boston while on tour with his Hellfighters. Jazz legend Eubie Blake deemed him the “Martin Luther King of music.”

“Tamo daleko” is a Serbian song attributed to Đorđe Marinković. The piece commemorates the Serbian army's retreat to Corfu in the winter of 1915, following Serbia's invasion by the Austro-Hungarian forces. Approximately 200,000 Serbian soldiers (and civilians fleeing with them) perished due to cold, hunger, disease, exhaustion, and murder by the enemy. The Serbs consider this episode to be one of the greatest national tragedies with the highest loss of life per capita of any country involved in the war. With its theme of sacrifice and longing for the homeland, “Tamo daleko” became popular in the Serbian diaspora after the war. It was played at the funeral of Nikola Tesla, a Serbian inventor who died in New York City in 1943.

The folk song “Alagyaz,” is a favorite of the Armenian people. Using the First World War as an excuse, the Ottoman Empire carried out a mass deportation of ethnic Armenians, executing millions and seizing their property and wealth. By 1923, almost the entire Armenian population in Eastern Anatolia had disappeared. Mount Aragats (formerly Alagyaz from the Turkish *alagöz* [variegated eye]) is an isolated four-peaked volcano and the highest mountain range in Armenia. According to an ancient Armenian legend, Mount Aragats and Mount Ararat were loving sisters who parted after a quarrel and separated permanently. Currently, the mountains are further separated politically, with Mount Ararat being located in Turkey.

Igor Stravinsky writes in his autobiography: “My profound emotion on reading the news of war, which aroused patriotic feelings and a sense of sadness at being so distant from my country, found some alleviation in the delight with which I steeped myself in Russian folk poems.” In July 1914, he made one last trip to his home in Ustyulh at the western edge of the Ukraine to gather his work on Russian folk music. He returned to Switzerland just as national borders were closing. *Four Russian Peasant Songs* are based on dish-divination songs—fortune-telling games played by women at Yuletide.

Sergei Rachmaninoff fled Russia in 1917, seizing a chance to perform in neutral Sweden and eventually settling in the United States. Tapestry adapted sections of his *Liturgy* to frame a poem—written by Anna Akhmatova and composed for us by British composer Ivan Moody—as part of our *Faces of a Woman* recording (German Label, MDG). In 1914, Akhmatova was one of Russia's most celebrated poets of the twentieth century. She enjoyed a rich intellectual life, meeting up with Boris Pasternak, Marina Tsvetaeva, and others at the infamous Stray Dog Café. The café was shut down in 1915, and in 1917 the Russian Revolution caused artists to flee the country. Akhmatova chose to remain in Russia and witnessed the imprisonment or execution of her close friends and colleagues. She continued to write and was shortlisted for the Nobel Prize in 1965.

Baroque composer François Couperin was a muse to Ravel, who said that his style was influenced more by Couperin and Mozart than by Debussy. Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin* is a tribute both to his fallen friends and his muse. As an early music ensemble, we leapt at the opportunity to program a baroque-inspired piece into a World War I program. *Meditations on a Theme of Couperin* is inspired by the haunting Third Lesson of the *Leçons de Tenebrae* (*Lessons of Darkness*, the title of our program). The lessons are settings from the Old Testament Book of Lamentations in which Jeremiah grieves for the fallen Jerusalem. Each section begins with an elaborate setting of a single Hebrew letter. The opening of the Third Lesson is one of the most captivating themes in baroque music and is the inspiration of *Meditations on a Theme of Couperin*.

At age forty-two, Ralph Vaughan Williams signed on as a private in the Royal Medical Corps and served in the Salonika campaign of 1915 and on the French Western Front in 1916. His *Cantata: Dona Nobis Pacem* premiered in 1936, as a plea for peace. Vaughan Williams drew inspiration from Walt Whitman's poetry, and for three of the cantata's six movements he used Whitman's poems, such as “Reconciliation” and “Dirge for Two Veterans.” Although written in response to the Civil War, Whitman's words are timeless. Vaughan Williams opens and closes his cantata with a prayer for peace, “Dona nobis pacem.”

John McCutcheon wrote “*Christmas in the Trenches*” based on a true World War I story. There are many different accounts of what happened on Christmas Eve 1914, but it is generally agreed that the holiday truce began with carols. *Time Magazine* printed an account by Graham Williams of the Fifth London Rifle Brigade. “First the Germans would sing one of their carols and then we would sing one of ours, until when we started up ‘O Come, All Ye Faithful’ the Germans immediately joined in singing the same hymn to the Latin words *Adeste Fideles*. And I thought, well, this is really a most extraordinary thing—two nations both singing the same carol in the middle of a war.”

Neil Young is a Canadian singer, songwriter, and activist. Canada entered World War I in 1914 as part of the British Commonwealth. “Find the Cost of Freedom” first appeared on the B side of the recording of “Ohio,” which was written in response to the killing of Kent State students during Vietnam War protests. Originally performed by Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young, the song is a chilling reminder of war’s cost: young lives brutally cut short.

David Lang is a twenty-first-century composer who, like Ravel, was inspired to set the Kaddish. For this piece, the prayer is translated into a simple statement: “If you can make peace, make peace. In the heavens, in us, in all the world make peace.”

Virgil Thompson enlisted in the National Guard after the United States entered the war in April 1917. He received orders to ship out for France in September 1918, but the Armistice came before his scheduled departure. He then returned to Harvard, where he studied with Nadia Boulanger and discovered Satie, whose music influenced him more than any other composer’s. We close with Thompson’s arrangement of Psalm 23, “When I walk through the shades of death, Thy presence is my stay.”

Researching and developing this concert has been a fascinating departure from Tapestry’s usual programming. And yet, it connects to the way we are drawn to experiences shared across different cultures and eras. Art, music, and literature have the power to fuel hatred or nurture compassion. Our program barely scratches the surface of one of the most complicated periods of the twentieth century, but guided by Ravel’s theme of lives interrupted, we offer this concert in the hope for a more peaceful future.

Program notes by Tapestry

TRANSLATIONS

Maurice Ravel, *Deux Mélodies hébraïques*: 1. Kaddisch (excerpt)

Magnified and sanctified be the name of God throughout the world
which He has created according to His will.
May He establish His kingdom during the days of our life
and the life of all speedily and soon and let us say Amen.

Claude Debussy, “Nuit d’étoiles”

Night of stars, beneath your veils,
beneath your breeze and your perfumes,
sad lyre which is sighing,
I dream of bygone loves.

Serene melancholy
comes to blooms in the depths of my heart,
and I hear the soul of my beloved
quiver in the dreaming wood. Night of stars...

At our fountain I see again
your gazes, blue as the heavens;
this rose is your breath,
and these stars are your eyes. Night of stars...

Lili Boulanger, *Les Sirènes*

We are the beauty that charms the strongest men,
The trembling flowers of foam
And of mist,
Our fleeting kisses are the dream of the dead!

Among our long tresses
The water glimmers in silver tears.
Our changing, sparkling glances
Are green and blue like the waves.

With a sound like the delicate shivers
Of harvest wheat
We flutter about without wings.
We seek tender conquerors.
We are the immortal sisters
Offered to the desires of your earthly hearts.

Đorđe Marinković, “Tamo daleko”

There, far away, where the yellow lemon blooms,
There was the only path open to the Serbian Army.
There was the only path open to the Serbian Army.

Armenian folksong, “Alagyaz”

Mount Alagyaz is shrouded in clouds,
Vay le, le, le, le, le, le, le,
Rain has soaked the ground.
Ah, my dear, sweet mother.

Igor Stravinsky, *Four Russian Peasant Songs*

1. Near the church in Chigisy...Glory! Glory!
Across the Yanza River...Glory! Glory!
There the wealthy farmers live...Glory! Glory!
They rake up gold by the shovelful...Glory! Glory!
They gather up pure silver by the basketful...Glory! Glory!
2. Ovsen, Ovsen, Ovsen! I am hunting a black grouse.
Ovsen, Ovsen! It hides under a bush, but I grab its tail...Ovsen!
Its tail stuffed in my hand...Ovsen!
Its tail stuffed in my hand a handful of money.
Ovsen, Ovsen, Ovsen!
3. A pike came from Novgorod...Glory!
It dragged its tail from the White Lake...Glory!
Its scales are of silver...Glory!
They are gilded with gold...Glory!
Its back is braided with pearls...Glory!
Its head is studded with pearls...Glory!
And in place of its eyes are precious diamonds...Glory!
4. Fatso ventured out into the turnip patch. Glory, glory, glory, glory!
A pound of lice burst from Fatso. Glory, glory, glory, glory!
A pound of lice and a half-pound of fleas. Glory, glory, glory, glory!

Sergei Rachmaninoff, “Tebe Poem” from *The Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*

To thee we sing.
We praise and bless thy name.
We offer humble thanks.
Hear us, oh Lord God.

“Slova” (Words) by Anna Akhmatova

Oh, there are unique words,
those who say them—spend far too much.
Only Heaven’s blue is inexhaustible,
and the mercy of God.

**Sergei Rachmaninoff, “Sugubaya i Posleduyuschiya Ekteniya”
from *The Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom***

Lord have mercy.

**Claude Debussy, “Noël des enfants qui n’ont plus de maisons”
(Christmas for Homeless Children)**

Our houses are gone!
The enemy has taken everything, even our little beds!
Of course, Papa has gone to war.
Poor Mama died before she saw all this.
What are we going to do?
Christmas! Little Christmas!
Don’t go to their houses, never go there again.
Punish them!

Avenge the children of France!
The little Belgians, the little Serbs and the little Poles, too!
If we’ve forgotten anyone, forgive us.
Christmas! Christmas! Above all, no toys.
Try to give us our daily bread again.

Our houses are gone!
The enemy has taken everything, even our little beds!
They burned the school and the schoolmaster.
They burned the church and the Lord Jesus!
And the poor old man who couldn’t get away!
Christmas, listen to us. Our wooden shoes are gone,
but grant victory to the children of France!

Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Seventh Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin Concerts

Unless otherwise noted, concerts are held in the West Building, West Garden Court.

Nobuntu

Featuring traditional Zimbabwean songs, Afro jazz, and gospel
November 18, 3:30

PROJECT Trio

Sound Sketches
Location to be posted the day of the concert.
November 23, 12:10

M5 Mexican Brass

Brasscinación
November 25, 3:30

PIQSIQ

Inuit style throat singers
East Building Auditorium
November 29, 12:00

Carolina Eyck + American Contemporary Music Ensemble

Fantasias
December 2, 3:30

Caroling in the Rotunda

U.S. Army Chorus
MSG Jason Gottshall, conductor
West Building Rotunda
December 8, 1:30 and 2:30

General Information

Admission to the National Gallery of Art and all of its programs is free of charge, except as noted.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed.

Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

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Cover Käthe Kollwitz, *Never Again War* (*Nie Wieder Krieg*) (detail), 1924, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Richard A. Simms