

POLYMATH

LA COMÉDIE DE LA MORT

Jordan Rutter-Covatto, countertenor / composer

Sydney Anderson, soprano

Mila Henry, piano

Joseph N. Rubinstein, composer

Saúl Nache, actor (evening)

Max Richards, actor (matinée)

André Salas, author

GDM, photographer

a counter codex production at the cell theatre

March 15, 8:00 pm | March 16, 3:00 pm & 8:00 pm

PROGRAM

“L’invitation au voyage”
“Au pays où se fait la guerre”
Henri Duparc (1848–1943)

Vampire at a Boys Dormitory - exposition
André Salas (b. 1979)

absence, presence (world premiere)

How It Is
Question
Manifest Destiny
Bus Stop
Joseph N. Rubinstein (b. 1986)

“Le spectre de la rose”
Hector Berlioz (1803–1869)

intermission

“La vague et la cloche”
Henri Duparc

Vampire at a Boys Dormitory - conclusion
André Salas

Flame & Shadow (world premiere)

The Tree
At Midnight
Song Making
Alone
Red Maples
Debtor
The Wind in the Hemlock
Jordan Rutter-Covatto (b. 1991)

ARTISTS



JORDAN RUTTER-COVATTO (he/they) is a Vietnamese-American countertenor based in New York City. Rutter-Covatto's practice combines virtuosic vocal technique with method acting processes and Baroque gesture to create performances lauded as "riveting ... frightening to behold" (Opera News, *The Turn of the Screw*, 1/5/20) and "[t]he best operatic moments" (WQXR, *Three Way*, 6/16/17).

Rutter-Covatto is a sought-after collaborator for contemporary operas and new music. He has worked as a soloist in the development of projects with The American Opera Project, Beth Morrison Projects, and American Lyric Theater in New York City. Rutter-Covatto created the role of Kyle in Robert Paterson's opera *Three Way* at Nashville Opera and Brooklyn Academy of Music, and can be heard on the original cast recording. A highlight of Rutter-Covatto's work was his company and role debut as Doodle in the second production of *The Scarlet Ibis* by Stefan Weisman and David Coté at Chicago Opera Theater. Additionally, Rutter-Covatto has worked yearly as a guest artist since 2018 in NYU Tisch's Opera Lab in which musical theater composers and librettists compose short operas based on contemporary topics including women's rights, climate change, the Stonewall riots, and reproductive rights. Rutter-Covatto's most recent recital project *The Wanderers* featured works by contemporary Vietnamese, American, and German composers alongside Schubert Lieder to contextualize the immigrant experience, and included a commission of "The Understory" by Randall Eng and Melisa Tien.

A passionate performer of Baroque repertoire, Rutter-Covatto has performed in major works including Handel's *Messiah*, Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*, and Scarlatti's *La Giuditta*. Rutter-Covatto has performed the role of the Sorceress in *Dido & Aeneas* with Hawaii Performing Arts Festival, covered it with Heartbeat Opera, and was set to perform it again with Cerddorion before the production's cancellation due to COVID-19. Additional highlights include selections of Schütz and Colonna in a holiday concert with La Fiocco, scenes from Handel's operas in a series of pastiches co-curated with operamission, and *ERATO: a baroque fetish fantasia* featuring scenes, motets, and instrumental works from the Italian Baroque, curated by Rutter-Covatto.

Rutter-Covatto has also appeared in New York City's theater scene, working off-Broadway as an onstage musician for the English-language premiere of Lot Vekemans's *POISON* with Origin Theater Company in 2016, creating the principal role of Clark in Johnny Lloyd's *birthday birthday birthday* with Columbia University's New Plays Festival in 2022, and premiering Truth Future Bachman's musical *Skyward: An Ending Elegy* at Lincoln Center's 2023 Festival of Firsts.

Rutter-Covatto prides himself on bringing classical music outside of its traditional boundaries, working in venues including the MET Museum, the Duplex Cabaret, and the Chelsea High Line.

Soprano SYDNEY ANDERSON (she/they) has been praised for her “stunning vocal fireworks,” and is quickly gaining recognition as an accomplished stage performer and concert soloist.

A contemporary music enthusiast, Sydney has participated in numerous world premieres as well as workshops of new compositions at various stages of the creation process. She was most recently featured with Beth Morrison Projects at National Sawdust, creating the role of One in the World Premiere of Elizabeth Gartman's *it is a comfort to know*, as a part of BMP: Next Generation, starred as Ruth Bader Ginsburg in *Scalia/ Ginsburg* with Opera in the Heights, and created the role of Dalinda in the World Premiere of Johnathan Dawe's *Being Ariodante* with Ensemble Échappé.



During the summer of 2019, Sydney covered Jennifer Zetlan in the title role of Ricky Ian Gordon's *Ellen West*, which was premiered at Opera Saratoga and co-commissioned by Beth Morrison Projects. Her connection to Opera Saratoga dates back to 2015, when she participated in the company's young artist program and covered the role of Virgil in the world premiere of *The Long Walk* (Jeremy Howard Beck and Stephanie Fleischmann.)

Other recent opera roles include Dew Fairy in *Hansel und Gretel* (Opera Saratoga), Elettra in *Idomeneo* (Opera Neo), Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* (Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra), Manon in *Manon*, Lisette in *La Rondine*, Adina in *L'eslisir d'amore*, Antonia in *Les Contes d'Hoffman*, Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus*, and Tallulah in Thomas Pasatieri's *The Hotel Casablanca*.

Sydney was named an Eastern Region Finalist after winning the Eastern District of the 2020 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, and went on to win the Audience Favorite Award at the Region Finals. She has previously won two Encouragement Awards through the competition (2018 and 2019), and was named a 2019 Finalist in the prestigious Jensen Foundation Vocal Competition.

Sydney made her European concert debut in the summer of 2017 with the Danube Symphony Orchestra in Budapest, after winning First Place in their Concerto Competition. She has previously appeared as a featured soloist with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, The Metropolitan Opera Guild, New Haven Chorale and Orchestra, and in recital with Opera Saratoga at Opera America's National Opera Center in New York City. Other recent soloist appearances include Mozart's *Requiem*, the Title Role in Handel's *Esther* (Manchester Symphony Orchestra), Evangelist in Schütz's *Johannes Passion*, many J. S. Bach cantatas with Bach Society Houston.

To see Sydney's work as an inter-disciplinary arts producer, visit www.vexationsintime.com



MILA HENRY (she/her) is a New York-based conductor, pianist and music director who maintains a versatile career, spanning folk operas to rock musicals to reimagined classics. Hailed “a stalwart contributor to the contemporary opera scene” (Opera Ithaca), she conducted the premieres of *Letters That You Will Not Get* (The American Opera Project) and *Magdalene* (PROTOTYPE); assisted on *The Night Falls* (BalletCollective, PEAK Performances) and *Iceland* (Overtone Industries, La MaMa); played for *We Shall Not Be Moved* (Opera Philadelphia, The Apollo, Dutch National Opera); and coached for *Iphigenia* (Real Magic, Octopus Theatrical) and *The World is Round* (Ripe Time, OBIE-winner). She has collaborated extensively with AOP, Beth Morrison Projects,

HERE, Opera on Tap, PROTOTYPE and VisionIntoArt, and as a recital pianist, has performed at Brooklyn Art Song Society (serving on their New Music Advisory Board), Kaufman Music Center, Library of Congress, OPERA America, Feinstein’s/54 Below and Café Sabarsky. She is also a member of the band Opera Cowgirls. milahenry.com

JOSEPH N. RUBINSTEIN (he/him) was born in Cleveland, OH, and grew up between there and Newport News, VA. He currently lives in New York City. With an emphasis on emotional directness and vivid storytelling, Joseph’s melodically driven and dramatic work is often inspired by American history, explorations of identity, and the natural world. His style is particularly informed by the folk-influenced concert music of the United States, United Kingdom, and Russia, as well as by minimalism, sacred choral music, and musical theater. His work has been presented at organizations including Fort Worth Opera, the Seagle Music Festival, the American Opera Project, Manhattan School of Music, Renée Fleming’s SongStudio at Carnegie Hall, the Spoleto Festival, and the Society for New Music.



He has collaborated with librettists and writers including Mark Campbell, Jason Kim, and Melisa Tien. Rubinstein and Kim’s opera in development *House of Legendary* received the 2017 Opera Genesis Grant from the American Opera Project and The Hermitage Artist Colony, as well as the 2020 Repertoire Development Grant from OPERA America. Select vocal works by Rubinstein are published by See-A-Dot, Hal Leonard, and North Star Music; recordings can be heard on Albany Records, 4Tay Records, and Crossover Music. Rubinstein is an alumnus of the Pacific Chorale’s Choral Sketches program, the New Dramatists’ Composer-Librettist Studio, and The American Opera Project’s Composers & the Voice program, and holds degrees in composition from Columbia University (BA) and The Juilliard School (MM).



ANDRÉ SALAS (he/him) is a Brooklyn-born writer, film journalist, accordionist, and occasional DJ. Salas's films *Latin Boys Go to Hell* (Strand Releasing, 2001) and *Eulogy for a Vampire* (Water Bearer Films, 2010) are works of queer cinema that reclaim QPOC narratives in the thriller and horror genres. Salas's work draws influence from the Italian *giallo* style, old-school horror, Baroque music, and first wave gothic aesthetics. Tonight's presentation of *A Vampire at the Boy's Dormitory* is an adaptation of an unpublished screenplay.

SAÚL NACHE (he/him) is a music director, vocal director, voice teacher, performer, unapologetically gay and BIPOC, and lover of all musical styles! Saúl seeks to lead rehearsals with joy, fun, energy, creativity, and all while getting the work done to an impeccable level! He recognizes that not everyone learns in the same way, and seeks to connect the work to the indigenous spirit of play. Decolonizing the spaces he works in is also very important, and works to advocate for all participants to feel seen and heard. Saul enjoys running rehearsals, working with ensembles, working one on one, and leading the pit orchestra. Having taught music theater voice for several years at many collegiate institutions, Saúl is able to construct the best sound for multiple different genres and styles of music with relative ease.



Saúl recently served music director/arranger of *The Bar Bilbao: A Kurt Weill Cabaret* in which he co-conceived the show with collaborators James Pierce III and Sheila Morgan with the Cherry Grove Theater Arts Project. He made his Off-Broadway debut as the music director for *Hip Hop Cinderella* with music composed by Rona Siddiqui at the New Victory Theater. Other shows Saúl has music directed since being in NYC are readings of *Ybor City*, *Post Roe Monologues*, *Telo*, *Last Coffee in Rockville*, and *It Happened in Key West*. He has also music directed the production of *Quillen*, a new musical based on Chilean myths with music by Pablo Concha and book and lyrics by Jamie Buxton, and was the associate music director for a workshop of *CATS* with the Perelman Performing Arts Center under Darryl Archibald as music director. In concert, Saúl has served as the associate music director for *Azul*, a new bilingual musical with music by Jacinta Clusellas at 54 Below, and as the music director/arranger/vocal arranger for *Eros: A Night of Passion with Ianne and the Baddies* at Joe's Pub. Other shows as music director have been *Xanadu*, *Avenue Q*, *The Life*, *Pippin*, *Big River*, *9 to 5: The Musical*, *Violet*, *Big Fish*, and *Dames at Sea*.

Having been involved in singing all his life, Saúl has also studied piano for twelve years. He also loves fitness, running, knitting (#knitsbysaul), and all things furry!



MAX RICHARDS (he/him) is an actor, singer, writer, and creative born and raised in Kirksville, Missouri. A boundless curiosity for anything new and an avid adventurous mindset led him to New York City.

The first play Max ever saw was an original melodrama performed in an old cattle auction barn behind his grandparents' house. He spent many hours there during his childhood playing, pretending, and probably mishandling props. When he turned 11 he started acting in plays at the local Maple's Repertory Theatre and hasn't stopped since!

Max values impactful, diverse theatre and film that offers reflection and conversation (with a soft spot for LGBTQIA+ characters and stories).

GEOFFREY DOIG-MARX (GDM)

“I don’t like a lot of art. I only like two pieces I have in my home. My GDM and my Hirschfeld.” – Chita Rivera

GDM left home at age 15 and lived in runaway shelters and group homes in the Albany area. In the mid-1980s he moved to New York City and started his career in dance, musical theatre and choreography. In December of 2011, Doig-Marx moved to Harlem where he started painting, photographing, writing and hasn’t looked back. You can read about his life growing up in his blog “A Day in the Life/Down the Rabbit Hole” which is being turned into a novel in 2024.



Currently, an Associate Professor of Dance at Marymount Manhattan College (2001-Present), Montclair State University (2011-Present) and Rider/ARB’s Princeton Ballet School (17yrs). He was the Artistic Director of The Mantis Project Dance Company (10yrs) and Creator/Artistic Director of The Elan Awards (6 years). As a working Director and Choreographer he is a current member of Actor’s Equity and an associate member of The Society of Directors and Choreographers.

He was the resident Artist of POSH NYC (9 years) and The West End Lounge (5 years) and The Pecora in Harlem (5 years). He has had several solo showings of his work in several New York venues. His first New York Solo gallery showing was at The Lanyon 36 Gallery in 2015. His work currently hangs at Peridance, The Broadway Dance Center and in the halls of The Martha Graham Dance Company. He recently finished a children’s book entitled *Agnes and the Museum of Art* which is available on [Amazon](#).

PROGRAM NOTE

Throughout human history, monsters and mythology have been used to anthropomorphize our fears; from the horrors of Dante's *Inferno* and Goethe's *Faust* to more contemporary figures like Pennywise and Art the Clown (coulrophobia - a fear of clowns) or M3GAN (anxieties of household AI run amok), we have always given name and identity to the things that terrify us the most.

Yet the monsters that truly threaten us are more abstract. Grief, depression, and other mental illnesses come from inside of us and consume us more than any ogre, wild animal, or cannibal. Those of us who possess the luck and resources to survive attacks from these dangers are all finally devoured by Death. Perhaps we see Death as the grim reaper, an old crone, a headless rider, or the youth Thanatos. Cultures around the world and throughout history all have unique visions of Death, yet the function of each is the same: to escort us from this life to the next.

It is in the literary tradition of authors like Dante Alighieri and Goethe that Théophile Gautier wrote his imposing anthology *La comédie de la Mort*. The titular poem, which opens the anthology, is a nine-part series depicting the poet's descent into the underworld where he encounters a dialogue between a corpse and a worm and speaks on the nature of life and death with cultural figures including the Renaissance artist Raphael, Faust, and Don Juan. The anthology became a favorite of Nineteenth-Century literary and musical society; the poems were set by numerous composers including Fauré, Bizet, Berlioz, and Duparc. The decadence, tragedy, and sumptuousness of Gautier's imagery would influence writers like Charles Baudelaire and Victor Hugo, and remain defining characteristics of French Romanticism.

Such imagery and thematic material exists in dialogue with the challenges of mental health that many artists, often inadvertently, navigate through their work. After famously exploring themes of obsession and suicide in his *Symphonie Fantastique* (1830), Berlioz returns to images of grief and the supernatural in *Les nuits d'été* - six settings of Gautier, all from *La comédie de la Mort* - including the melancholic "Le spectre de la Rose" in which the ghost of a rose plucked to be worn as a corsage returns nightly to a woman's bedside.

For his part, Duparc's musical output is fundamentally shaped by the sudden self-imposed destruction of his music after abruptly ceasing to compose at the age of thirty-seven. Notably, his only opera *Roussalka* (the French libretto adapted by Gautier after Pushkin) was lost except for an excerpt titled "Absence" and republished as the song "Au pays où se fait la guerre." The neuroses that contributed to the shape of his artistic life can perhaps be seen in his tumultuous setting of Gautier's "La vague et la cloche" with its nightmarish musical painting of a large bell clanging endlessly through the night.

Across the Atlantic and in the next century, Sara Teasdale created a similarly prophetic output. While she rose to fame with her collection *Love Songs* in 1917 and maintains relative popularity due to her antiwar poem "There Will Come Soft Rains" and "There Will Be Rest," many of her other poems take a bitter and resentful tone with explicit references to her eventual suicide. One of the more portentous references can be found in the poem "The Wind in the Hemlock" where she describes dying under the highly toxic hemlock tree; she would commit suicide via overdose thirteen years later.

Among the lasting appeals of horror stories is that they allow us to interpret the sources of our fears. It is telling that some of the most lasting monsters do not simply kill their victims but transform them: the vampire, the werewolf, the zombie. Even Death itself is often seen as a transformation from a corporeal body to a spiritual one. These creatures leave their legacies behind to continue their endless rampage against our day-to-day lives. They represent the true monsters of obsession, despair, and grief which can consume us just as thoroughly. Regardless of how we negotiate these perils, we all eventually become consumed by Death, the apex predator, the eternal Renaissance man, the ultimate polymath. - JRC

FROM THE COMPOSERS

absence, presence

absence, presence explores the uncanny boundary between this world and the next. Each of the poems in the cycle alludes to the mysterious nature of what happens after we die, and the strange way that the worlds of the living and the dead might blur together. I was particularly interested in a modern and American expression of this theme, and each of the texts is by a late twentieth-century or twenty-first century American poet. The music is ghostly and spare, and highlights the mystery and emotion inherent in the poetry. This cycle was written for and is dedicated to Jordan Rutter-Covatto, whose artistry inspired the work.

— Joseph N. Rubinstein

Flame & Shadow

Flame & Shadow is a collection of songs by Sara Teasdale from the collection of the same name, written between the time of her Pulitzer Prize win and her divorce.

Teasdale's work is often set to music, but her most famous poems like "There will be rest" and "There will come soft rains" belie the tempestuous passion and grief that characterizes much of her other poetry. I became interested in the gendered nature of the "tortured artist;" how do we engage with concepts of death and despair, and how do our identities relate to that process? Can the feelings of depression and agony be made tangible through musical rendering?

The peaks and valleys of human emotion have always been a source of inspiration for composers. My own interpretation took the form of an onset of *something wrong*, a fly in the ointment: a pitch bend. This gesture serves as the central motive of the first song. Each subsequent song introduces a new motive, while repeating the central motives of every song that came before it. These are set to music inspired by the idioms of deep passion: blues, bel canto opera, German Romanticism, Lisztian outbursts of the piano. Through this approach, I set out to capture the cumulative and all-encompassing nature of long-term clinical depression.

— Jordan Rutter-Covatto

ABOUT COUNTER CODEX

COUNTER CODEX is a project-based artist collective. We create innovative experimental concert experiences featuring a wide range of music in a social atmosphere. Our first project, *ERATO: a baroque fetish fantasia*, celebrated the connection between the values of discipline, vocation, and eroticism inherent in Italian Baroque music and the contemporary leather and kink community. *POLYMATH: La Comédie de la Mort* re-examines the queerness of gothic aesthetics in a context that no longer needs to hide itself for commercial viability.

COUNTER CODEX is a not for profit organization. You can help make the next COUNTER CODEX project happen by making a donation at the link below.

countercodex.com/support

We would like to offer our special thanks to:

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TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

L'invitation au voyage - Charles Baudelaire (from *Les fleurs du mal*)

Mon enfant, ma soeur,
Songe à la douceur
D'aller là-bas vivre ensemble!
Aimer à loisir,
Aimer et mourir
Au pays qui te ressemble!
Les soleils mouillés
De ces ciels brouillés
Pour mon esprit ont les charmes
Si mystérieux
De tes traîtres yeux,
Brillant à travers leurs larmes.

Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
Luxe, calme et volupté.

Vois sur ces canaux
Dormir ces vaisseaux
Dont l'humeur est vagabonde;
C'est pour assouvir
Ton moindre désir
Qu'ils viennent du bout du monde.
— Les soleils couchants
Revêtent les champs,
Les canaux, la ville entière,
D'hyacinthe et d'or;
Le monde s'endort
Dans une chaude lumière.

Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
Luxe, calme et volupté.

My child, my sister,
I dream of the sweetness
To go down there to live together!
To love at our leisure,
To love and to die
In a land which resembles you!
The wet suns
Of its clouded skies
For my spirit are the charms
So mysterious
Of your traitorous eyes,
Shining as it travels their tears.

There, everything is only order and beauty,
Luxury, calmness and voluptuousness.

You see on the canals
These ships go to sleep
Whose humor is of a vagabond;
It is to assuage
Your smallest desire
That they go to the edge of the world.
— The setting suns
Clothe the countryside again,
The canal, the entire city,
In hyacinth and in gold;
The world puts itself to sleep
In a hot light.

There, everything is only order and beauty,
Luxury, calmness and voluptuousness.

Au pays où se fait la guerre - Théophile Gautier ("Romance" in *La comédie de la mort*)

I

Au pays où se fait la guerre
Mon bel ami s'en est allé ;
Il semble à mon cœur désolé
Qu'il ne reste que moi sur terre !
En partant, au baiser d'adieu,
Il m'a pris mon âme à ma bouche.
Qui le tient si longtemps, mon Dieu ?
Voilà le soleil qui se couche,
Et moi, toute seule en ma tour,
J'attends encore son retour.

II

Les pigeons sur le toit roucoulent,
Roucoulent amoureusement ;
Avec un son triste et charmant
Les eaux sous les grands saules coulent.
Je me sens tout près de pleurer ;
Mon cœur comme un lis plein s'épanche,
Et je n'ose plus espérer.
Voici briller la lune blanche,
Et moi, toute seule en ma tour,
J'attends encore son retour.

III

Quelqu'un monte à grands pas la rampe :
Serait-ce lui, mon doux amant ?
Ce n'est pas lui, mais seulement
Mon petit page avec ma lampe.
Vents du soir, volez, dites-lui
Qu'il est ma pensée et mon rêve,
Toute ma joie et mon ennui.
Voici que l'aurore se lève,
Et moi, toute seule en ma tour,
J'attends encore son retour.

I

To the country where war is made
My beloved has gone;
It seems to my desolate heart
That there is no rest for me on earth!
At parting, for the farewell kiss,
He took my soul from my mouth.
Who holds him for so long, my God?
There the sun is setting,
And I, all alone in my tower,
I still wait for his return.

II

The pigeons on the roof coo,
Coo lovingly;
With a sad and charming sound
The water flows onto the great willows.
I feel completely ready to cry;
My heart is like a full lily erupting,
And I do not dare to hope.
Here the white moon shines,
And I, alone in my tower,
I still wait for his return.

III

Someone climbs the great ramp's steps:
Could it be him, my sweet beloved?
It is not him, but only
My little page with my lamp.
Evening winds, fly, tell him
That he is my thoughts and my dream,
All my joy and all my ennui.
Here where dawn rises up,
And I, all alone in my tower,
I still wait for his return.

How it is - Peter Everwine

This is how it is—

One turns away
and walks out into the evening.
There is a white horse on the prairie, or
a river
that slips away among dark rocks.

One speaks, or is about to speak,
not that it matters.

What matters is this—

It is evening.
I have been away a long time.
Something is singing in the grass.

Question - May Swenson

Body my house
my horse my hound
what will I do
when you are fallen

Where will I sleep
How will I ride
What will I hunt

Where can I go
without my mount
all eager and quick
How will I know
in thicket ahead
is danger or treasure
when Body my good
bright dog is dead

How will it be
to lie in the sky
without roof or door
and wind for an eye

With cloud for shift
how will I hide?

Manifest Destiny - Adam O. Davis

This house will
outlast
me and all those ghosts
I know.

I know
there is always
a ghost
idling on the edge
of what
I hold dear.

*

I never know
when
I should confront
the ghost
or how to walk
so that
the ghost leaves
before
I have to.

*

Please tell me
how
to smile knowing
how
terrible the stars
are for
never changing
and for
not knowing how.
Terrible
how terrible
please
tell me are
the stars.

Bus stop - Donald Justice

Lights are burning
In quiet rooms
Where lives go on
Resembling ours.

The quiet lives
That follow us—
These lives we lead
But do not own—

Stand in the rain
So quietly
When we are gone,
So quietly . . .
And the last bus
Comes letting dark
Umbrellas out—
Black flowers, black flowers.

And lives go on.
And lives go on
Like sudden lights
At street corners

Or like the lights
In quiet rooms
Left on for hours,
Burning, burning.

Le spectre de la rose - Théophile Gautier (from *La comédie de la mort*)

Soulève ta paupière close
Qu'effleure un songe virginal ;
Je suis le spectre d'une rose
Que tu portais hier au bal.
Tu me pris encore emperlée
Des pleurs d'argent de l'arrosoir,
Et, parmi la fête étoilée,
Tu me promenas tout le soir.

Ô toi qui de ma mort fus cause,
Sans que tu puisses le chasser,
Toute la nuit mon spectre rose
À ton chevet viendra danser :
Mais ne crains rien, je ne réclame
Ni messe ni *De Profundis* ;
Ce léger parfum est mon âme,
Et j'arrive du paradis.

Mon destin fut digne d'envie ;
Et pour avoir un sort si beau,
Plus d'un aurait donné sa vie,
Car sur ton sein j'ai mon tombeau,
Et sur l'albâtre où je repose
Un poète, avec un baiser,
Écrivit : Ci-gît une rose
Que tous les rois vont jalouser.

Raise your closed eyes,
Touched by a virginal dream,
I am the specter of a rose
That you wore to the ball yesterday.
You took me, still pearled
With the silver tears of the watering can
And among the starry festival,
You walked with me all night.

Oh, you that were the cause of my death,
Without the power to chase it,
All night my rosy ghost
Will dance at your bedside;
But do not be afraid, I reclaim
Neither a mass nor a *De Profundis*;
This light fragrance is my soul,
And I arrive at paradise.

My destiny is worthy of envy;
And to have such a beautiful fate,
More than one would give their life,
Because I have my tomb on your breast.
And on the albatross on which I repose
A poet with a kiss
Has written: Here lies a rose,
Of which all kings are jealous.

La vague et la cloche - François Coppée (from *Le Reliquaire*)

Une fois, terrassé par un puissant breuvage,
J'ai rêvé que parmi les vagues et le bruit
De la mer je voguais sans fanal dans la nuit,
Morne rameur, n'ayant plus l'espoir du rivage.

L'Océan me crachait ses baves sur le front
Et le vent me glaçait d'horreur jusqu'aux
entrailles ;
Les vagues s'écroulaient ainsi que des
murailles,
Avec ce rythme lent qu'un silence interrompt.

Puis tout changea. La mer et sa noire mêlée
Sombrèrent. Sous mes pieds s'effondra le
plancher
De la barque... Et j'étais seul dans un vieux
clocher,
Chevauchant avec rage une cloche ébranlée.

J'étreignais la crierde opiniâtrement,
Convulsif, et fermant dans l'effort mes
paupières ;
Le grondement faisait trembler les vieilles
pierres,
Tant j'activais sans fin le lourd balancement.

Pourquoi n'as-tu pas dit, ô rêve! où Dieu nous
mène ?
Pourquoi n'as-tu pas dit s'ils ne finiraient pas,
L'inutile travail et l'éternel fracas
Dont est faite la vie, hélas ! la vie humaine ?

One time, floored by a powerful drink,
I dreamt that among the waves and the noise
Of the ocean I sailed that night with no
lighthouse,
A dismal rower, no longer having the hope of
shore.

The ocean spits its drool on my face
And the wind freezes me with horror to my
entrails;
In this way the waves collapse on the walls,
With the slow rhythm of an interrupted silence.

Then everything changed. The sea and its black
fray
Sank. Under my feet the planks of the ship
Collapsed... And I was alone in an old bell
tower,
Straddling with rage a shaken bell.

I clutch the shrill thing obstinately,
Convulsive, and effortfully close my eyes;
The grumbling makes the old stones tremble,
Such was the way I endlessly found the loud
balance.

Why don't you tell us, oh dream, where God
leads us?
Why don't you tell us if it never ends,
The useless work and the eternal fracas
That are the facts of life, alas, the life of man?

Flame & Shadow - Sara Teasdale

I. The Tree

Oh to be free of myself,
With nothing left to remember,
To have my heart as bare
As a tree in December;

Resting, as a tree rests
After its leaves are gone,
Waiting no more for a rain at night
Nor for the red at dawn;

But still, oh so still
While the winds come and go,
With no more fear of the hard frost
Or the bright burden of snow;

And heedless, heedless
If anyone pass and see
On the white page of the sky
Its thin black tracery.

II. At Midnight

Now at last I have come to see what life is,
Nothing is ever ended, everything only begun,
And the brave victories that seem so splendid
Are never really won.

Even love that I built my spirit's house for,
Comes like a brooding and a baffled guest,
And music and men's praise and even laughter
Are not so good as rest.

III. Song Making

My heart cried like a beaten child
Ceaselessly all night long;
I had to take my own cries
And thread them into a song.

One was a cry at black midnight
And one when the first cock crew –
My heart was like a beaten child,
But no one ever knew.

Life, you have put me in your debt
And I must serve you long –
But oh, the debt is terrible
That must be paid in song.

IV. Alone

I am alone, in spite of love,
In spite of all I take and give—
In spite of all your tenderness,
Sometimes I am not glad to live.

I am alone, as though I stood
On the highest peak of the tired gray world,
About me only swirling snow,
Above me, endless space unfurled;

With earth hidden and heaven hidden,
And only my own spirit's pride
To keep me from the peace of those
Who are not lonely, having died.

V. Red Maples

In the last year I have learned
How few men are worth my trust;
I have seen the friend I loved
Struck by death into the dust,
And fears I never knew before
Have knocked and knocked upon my door—
“I shall hope little and ask for less,”
I said, “There is no happiness.”
I have grown wise at last—but how
Can I hide the gleam on the willow-bough,
Or keep the fragrance out of the rain
Now that April is here again?
When maples stand in a haze of fire
What can I say to the old desire,
What shall I do with the joy in me
That is born out of agony?

VI. Debtor

So long as my spirit still
Is glad of breath
And lifts its plumes of pride
In the dark face of death;
While I am curious still
Of love and fame,
Keeping my heart too high
For the years to tame,
How can I quarrel with fate
Since I can see
I am a debtor to life,
Not life to me?

VII. The Wind in the Hemlock

Steely stars and moon of brass,
How mockingly you watch me pass!
You know as well as I how soon
I shall be blind to stars and moon,
Deaf to the wind in the hemlock tree,
Dumb when the brown earth weighs on me.

With envious dark rage I bear,
Stars, your cold complacent stare;
Heart-broken in my hate look up,
Moon, at your clear immortal cup,
Changing to gold from dusky red,
Age after age when I am dead
To be filled up with light, and then
Emptied, to be refilled again.

What has man done that only he
Is slave to death, so brutally
Beaten back into the earth
Impatient for him since his birth?

Oh let me shut my eyes, close out
The sight of stars and earth and be
Sheltered a minute by this tree.
Hemlock, through your fragrant boughs
There moves no anger and no doubt,
No envy of immortal things.
The night-wind murmurs of the sea
With veiled music ceaselessly,
That to my shaken spirit sings.
From their frail nest the robins rouse,
In your pungent darkness stirred,
Twittering a low drowsy word,
And me you shelter, even me.
In your quietness you house
The wind, the woman and the bird.
You speak to me and I have heard:

"If I am peaceful, I shall see
Beauty's face continually;
Feeding on her wine and bread
I shall be wholly comforted,
For she can make one day for me
Rich as my lost eternity."