



Christopher Michael Kelley, Baritone
Eric D. Carlson, Piano

Songs of the Sacred and the Profane

26. April 2013

17:00

Recital Hall
Arizona State University School of Music

Christopher Michael Kelley, Baritone
Eric D Carlson, Piano

Songs of the Sacred and the Profane

26. April 2013

17.00

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
text by Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (1715-1769)

Sechs Gellert-Lieder, op. 48

- I. Bitte
- II. Die Liebe des Nächsten
- III. Vom Tode
- IV. Die Ehre Gottes aus der Natur
- V. Gottes Macht und Vorsehung
- VI. Bußlied

Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)
text by Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

I said to Love, op. 19b

- I. I need not go
- II. At Middle-Field Gate in February
- III. Two Lips
- IV. In five-score Summers (Meditation)
- V. For Life I had never cared greatly
- VI. I said to Love

Program Notes

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

text: Anonymous

Chansons gaillardes, FP. 42

- I. La Maîtresse volage
- II. Chanson à boire
- III. Madrigal
- IV. Invocation aux Parques
- V. Couplets bachiques
- VI. L'Offrande
- VII. La Belle Jeunesse
- VIII. Sérénade

Baritone, Christopher Michael Kelley was last seen in ASU's Lyric Opera Theatre as Frank in *Die Fledermaus*. In 2012 he made debuts as Sid in Britten's *Albert Herring* and in the Mozart roles Figaro & il Conte d'Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte*, and Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* all in Weimar, Germany, as well as Don Miguel de Panatellas in Offenbach's *La Perichole* in Austin, TX, and Mr. Gobineau in *The Medium* and Melchior in *Amahl and the Night Visitors* with the Symphony of the Southwest, both by Menotti. He has spent extended periods of time studying Lieder, German language poetry, and opera in Austria, primarily in the cities of Graz, Salzburg and Vienna.

His Oratorio credits as a Bass/Baritone soloist include the Mozart *Requiem*, Fauré *Requiem*, Schubert *Mass No. 6 in E-flat*, Bach *Magnificat* and *Cantata 140 (Wachet auf)*. Earlier this month, Christopher was heard as Baritone soloist in John Rutter's *Mass of the Children*, featuring the Dayspring Chorale and Phoenix Boys Choir. In August he will be returning to Weimar Germany to debut the title role in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

Ludwig van Beethoven's *Sechs Lieder von Gellert*, op. 48, is an interesting, and very rarely heard set of songs. Written thirteen or fourteen years prior to his famous song cycle, *An die ferne Geliebte*, op. 98 of 1816, it is unknown how the conception of these songs came about. No original sketches of these songs survive, but it is rumored that Beethoven was particularly drawn to one of these poems in particular, "Vom Tode," and he actually set it to music multiple times over the course of his career, both before and after the publication of the *Sech Gellert-Lieder*. While a complete manuscript for his op. 48 has been discovered, it was from Beethoven's Viennese circle of acquaintances, and not the direct source used for the first publication. Interestingly enough, it bears the date on it "Montags den 8t Martz 1802" which places the composition roughly one year prior to the date that it had been believed to be composed in 1803.

It had been thought before the discovery of this manuscript that the idea to set these poems came with the death of Countess Browne, who was the wife of one of Beethoven's major patrons in Vienna. That was, however, in 1803, so this story has been laid to rest. Another interesting realization was the differences in song order to what is used today, among others, one difference is the reversals of songs four and five. *Sechs Gellert-Lieder* was also re-arranged by a fellow Beethoven admirer who had a particular propensity for "fixing" the work of his colleagues, Franz Liszt. His arrangements are heard today possibly even less than the originals. In Liszt's arrangements, he greatly changed the order, beginning with number five and ending with number four, also changing some of the tonalities of the songs. Conductor and pianist Christoph Eschenbach comments that these songs by Gellert are very illuminating about Beethoven's personal relationship with religion. They represent a very direct relationship with God, without any church or dogma, just as Beethoven believed his relationship with God to be.

Continued

The fact that Finzi's set, *I said to Love*, op.19b was compiled posthumously by his executors is amazingly fortuitous, given the subject matter. The set, performed first at Gerald Finzi's memorial concert in 1957, was greeted with much praise. Vaughan-Williams was quoted as saying the first and last songs particularly "hit the nail in his head right away." Three of the songs here were composed in Finzi's final year. "At Middle-Field Gate in February" explores an adventurous harmonic palate and even hinting occasionally at whole-tone figures; "For Life I Had Never Cared Greatly," providing gentle tunefulness, yet shows his skill at creating such a natural intimacy; and "I said to Love" which he sets in a violent, vigorous way that contrasts the piece he was writing simultaneously, the well known *In Terra Pax*. This set of songs, set to Thomas Hardy poetry, for which Finzi had a particular affinity, has a tone of self reflection, sometimes verging on nostalgic melancholy. It is as if to confess mistakes that had been made in the way a life has been lead. Hindsight truly is 20/20.

In *The Diary of My Songs*, Poulenc remarks of the *Chansons gaillardes* (or bawdy songs), "I am fond of this collection where I tried to show that outright obscenity can adapt itself to music... The texts were found in an anthology of songs of the seventeenth century." Like in the fifth song, that opens with the line, "I am often throughout the day, playful and sad in turns," this set goes back and forth between frenzied panegyrics and almost eerily serene scenes of prayer, as in song six, "The Offering," possibly the only truly obscene piece in the collection. Performed originally by baritone, Pierre Bernac and the composer on the piano, *Chansons gaillardes* is an interesting and engaging divergence from the state of art song in the 20th century, unlike any other art songs you have heard before.