

Texts, transliterations, and translations

Solovushko [The nightingale] (1889)

Composed by Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Poem by the composer

Uletal solovushko daleko,

The nightingale flew far away,

Vo chuzhuyu tipluyu storonku.

To a strange, warmer land.

"Vi proshchaiti, lyudi dobrïe, na dolgo.

"Farewell, good people, for now,

Na dolgo proshchayus' svami, lyudi!

For now, I bid you all, farewell!

Uletyet' para maya nastala!

I fly, for my time has come!

I spasiba vam za vashu lyubof, za lasku,

I thank you for your love, your affection,

Shto minya, solovushku, ni gnali,

For not chasing after me,

Pyesni pyet' mnye, solovyyu, ni mishali,

For not disturbing me with other songs,

Malikh dyetok maikh ni zabizhali!

For not allowing the tiny to children forget me!

I ostalsya bya tipyer' svami,

I would have remained with you,

Da likha byeda vashi morozi;

But your frosts are a great hardship for me;

Ni lyublyu zimï vashei byeloi,

I despise your winters of white,

Ni lyublyu ya buinovo vyetra!

And I loathe your violent winds!

A uzh kak vyesna krasna vernyotsa,

But now as the bloom of spring returns,

Snei i ya vyernus' kvam snovoi pyesnei!"

I will return for you with a new song!"

The sweet nightingale (2006)

Arranged by Eric Banks (b 1969)

British-American folksong

One morning in May, by chance I did rove,

I sat myself down, by the side of a grove,

And there did I hear: the sweet nightingale sing,

I never heard so sweet as the birds in the spring.

All on the green grass I sat myself down,

Where the voice of the nightingale echoed around,

"Don't you hear how he quivers the notes?" I declare,

"No music, no songster with him can compare."

Come all you young men, I'll have you draw near,

I pray you now heed me, these words for to hear,

That when you've grown old, you may have it to sing,

You never heard so sweet as the birds in the spring.

Mondenschein [The glimmer of the moon] (1826)

Composed by Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Poem by Franz von Schober

Des Mondes Zauberblume lacht,

The magic blossom of the moon laughs,

Und ruft mit seelenvollem Blick,

And conjures up a soulful gaze,

In uns're düstre Erdennacht

On this, our dreary earthly night

Der liebe Paradies zurück,

A lovely paradise returns;

Vom mächt'gen Arm des Schlags besiegt,

Vanquished by sleep's powerful arm,

Erstarben Sorge, Schuld und Pein;

All care and guilt and pain subside;

Das Zarte nur und Schöne fliegt

Only the tender and beautiful ones float

Entfesselt in den Geisterreich'n.

Freely in the spirit realm above.

Doch seht, die Fluren sind vertauscht,

Now look, the meadows are transformed,

Das ist die alte Erde nicht, o seht,

This is not the world we know: oh see,

Ein Silbergarten duftumrauscht,

A silver garden enshrouded in scents,

Voll Nebelschmelz und Zauberlicht;

With glittering clouds and magical glows;

Den Geist vom ird'schen Drucke frei,

The soul is free from earthly bounds,

Umwallt der Sehnsucht Ätherkleid,

And floats wistfully in an æther dress,

Er trinkt in stiller Schwärmerei

It drinks in quiet enthusiasm

Des Himmels volle Seligkeit.

And the full blessing of heaven.

Doch mahnt das Lied der Nachtigall,

Then the song of the nightingale cautions,

An seine Welt das weiche Herz,

Calling tender hearts back to its world,

In aller Wonne weckt ihr Schall
Its song awakens delight in everyone,
Den tiefsten Schmerz, der liebe Schmerz.
And the deepest, loveliest pain.

A word out of the sea (2003/2005)

Composed by Scott Perkins (b 1980)

Poem from *Leaves of grass* by Walt Whitman

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,
Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle,
Out of the Ninth-month midnight,
Over the sterile sands and the fields beyond,
 where the child leaving his bed wander'd alone, bareheaded, barefoot,
Down from the shower'd halo,
Up from the mystic play of shadows twining and twisting
 as if they were alive,
Out from the patches of briars and blackberries,
From the memories of the bird that chanted to me,
From your memories, sad brother,
 from the fitful risings and fallings I heard,
From under that yellow half-moon late-risen
 and swollen as if with tears,
From those beginning notes of yearning and love there in the mist,
From the thousand responses of my heart never to cease,
From the myriad thence-arous'd words,
From the word stronger and more delicious than any,
From such as now they start the scene revisiting,
As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,
Borne hither, ere all eludes me, hurriedly,
A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,
I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter,
Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond them,
A reminiscence sing.

Once Paumanok,
When the lilac-scent was in the air
 and Fifth-month grass was growing,
Up this seashore in some briars,
Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with brown,
And every day the he-bird to and fro near at hand,
And every day the she-bird crouch'd on her nest,
 silent, with bright eyes,
And every day I, a curious boy,
 never too close, never disturbing them,
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

Shine! shine! shine!

Pour down your warmth, great sun!

While we bask, we two together.

Two together!
Winds blow south, or winds blow north,
Day come white, or night come black,
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,
Singing all time, minding no time,
While we two keep together.

Till of a sudden,
May-be killed, unknown to her mate,
One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on the nest,
Nor return'd that afternoon, nor the next,
Nor ever appeared again.

And thenceforward all summer in the sound of the sea,
And at night under the full of the moon in calmer weather,
over the hoarse surging of the sea,
Or flitting from brier to brier by day,
I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he-bird,
The solitary guest from Alabama.

Blow! blow! blow!
Blow up sea-winds along Paumanok's shore;
I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to me.

Yes, when the stars glisten'd,
All night long on the prong of a moss-scallop'd stake
Sat the lone singer wonderful causing tears.

He call'd on his mate,
He pour'd forth the meaning which I of all men know.
Yes, my brother, I know,
The rest might not, but I have treasur'd every note,
[For I] listen'd to keep, to sing, now translating the notes,
Following you, my brother.

O past! O happy life! O songs of joy!
In the air, in the woods, over fields,
Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!
But my mate no more, no more with me!
We two together no more.

Demon or bird! (said the boy's soul)
Is it indeed toward your mate you sing?
 or is it really to me?
For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping,
 now I have heard you,
Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake,
And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer,
 louder and more sorrowful than yours,
A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me, never to die.
O give me the clew! (it lurks in the night here somewhere),
Or if I am to have so much, let me have more!

A word then, (for I will conquer it),
The word final, superior to all,
Subtle, sent up – what is it? – I listen;
Are you whispering it, and have been all the time, you sea-waves?
Whereto answering, the sea,
Delaying not, hurrying not,
Whisper'd me through the night
Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death,
Death, death, death, death, death.

Which I do not forget,
But fuse the song,
That he sang to me in the moonlight on Paumanok's gray beach,
With the thousand responsive songs at random,
My own songs awaked from that hour,
And with them the key, the word up from the waves,
The word of the sweetest song and all songs,
That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet,
(Or like some old crone, rocking the cradle,
swathed in sweet garments, bending aside,)
The sea whisper'd me.

Yet, love endures (2005)

Composed by Donald Skirvin (b 1946)

Poems by Hart Crane

I. And bees of paradise

I had come all the way here from the sea,
Yet met the wave again between your arms,
Where cliff and citadel—all verily
Dissolved within a sky of beacon forms—
Sea gardens lifted rainbow-wise through eyes
I found. Yes, tall, inseparably our days
Pass sunward. We have walked the kindled skies
Inexorable and girded with your praise,
By the dove filled, and the bees of paradise.

II. Echoes

Slivers of rain upon the pane,
Jade-green with sunlight melt and flow
Upward again:—they leave no stain
Of all the storm an hour ago.
Over the hill a last cloud dips
And disappears, and I should go
As silently but that your lips
Are warmer with a redder glow.
Fresh and fragile, your arms now
Are circles of cool roses, —so...
In opal pools beneath your brow
I dream we quarreled long, long ago.

III. A stolen hour

It sheds a shy solemnity,
This lamp in our poor room.
O grey and gold amenity,—
Silence and gentle gloom!
Wide from the world, a stolen hour
We claim, and none may know
How love blooms like a tardy flower
Here in the day's afterglow.
And even should the world break in
With jealous threat and guile,
The world, at last, must bow and win
Our pity and a smile.

IV. Worn more bright

My hands have not touched pleasure since your hands, —
No, — nor my lips freed laughter since 'farewell,'
And with the day, distance again expands
Voiceless between us, as an uncoiled shell.
Yet, love endures, though starving and alone.
A dove's wings clung about my heart each night
With surging gentleness, and the blue stone
Set in the tryst-ring has but worn more bright.

Deux chansons [Two songs] (1882)

Composed by Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)

Anonymous poems

I. Les fleurs et les arbres [Flowers and trees]

Les fleurs et les arbres, les bronzes, les marbres, les ors, les émaux,
Flowers and trees, bronzes and marbles, golds and enamels,
La mer, les fontaines, les monts et les plaines consolent nos maux.
Sea and fountains, mountains and plains console our every care.

Nature éternelle, tu sembles plus belle au sein des douleurs!
O eternal nature, you are most beautiful at the bosom of our sorrow!
Et l'art nous domine, sa flamme illumine le rire et les pleurs.
Art prevails over us, and its flame enlightens our laughter and tears.

I. Calme des nuits [The calm of night]

Calme des nuits, fraîcheur des soirs,
The calm of night, the freshness of evening,
Vaste scintillement des mondes,
The vast shimmering of the firmament,
Grand silence des antres noirs,
And the great silence of black caverns:
Vous charmez les âmes profondes.
You enchant every thoughtful soul.

L'éclat du soleil, la gaité,
The glare of the sun, cheerfulness, and
Le bruit plaisent aux plus futiles;
Noise: you bring joy, but mostly fleeting;
Le poète seul est hanté
The poet, alone, is haunted,
Par l'amour des choses tranquilles.
By his love of peaceful things.

Charm me asleep (1993)
Composed by David Conte (b 1955)
Poem by Robert Herrick

Charm me asleep, and melt me so
With thy delicious numbers;
That being ravish't, hence I goe
Away in easie slumbers.
Ease my sick head, and make my bed,
Thou power that canst sever
From me this ill: and quickly still
Though thou not kill my fever.

Thou sweetly canst convert the same
From a consuming fire
Into a gentle licking flame,
And make it thus expire.
Then make me weep my paines asleep;
And give me such reposes,
That I, poore I, may think, thereby,
I live and die, 'mongst roses.

Fall on me like a silent dew,
Or like those maiden showers,
Which, by the peepe of day, doe strew
A baptism o'er the flowers.
Melt, melt my paines, with thy soft straines,
That having ease me given,
With full delight, I leave this light,
And take my flight for heaven.

Al dolce suon' [In the sweet sound] (1568)
Composed by Orlandus Lassus (1530-1594)
Poem by A Minturno

Al dolce suon' del mormorar de l'onde
In the sweet sound of the murmuring waves
Al nov' odor de le fiorite piagge,
In the new fragrance of the flowering countryside,
A l'arene del'oro, ai ricchi scogli,
In the sands of gold, in the abundant rocks,
Al bel cantar de le sirene,
In the beautiful song of the siren,

Al porto delle fatiche mie,
In the threshold of my weariness,
Mi scors' un lume
I see a glimmer of a lamp,
Ch'in fin qua giù m'ardea dal terzo cielo.
That burns for me in the highest heaven.

Concord (1954)
From Choral dances from Gloriana
Composed by Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)
Poem by William Plomer

Concord is here
Our days to bless
And this our land to endure
With plenty, peace, and happiness.
Concord and time,
Each needeth each:
The ripest fruit hangs where
Not one, but only two can reach.

Love letters (2005)
Arranged by Bern Herbolzheimer (b 1948)
Four traditional Tatar folksongs

I. Gold and silver

Once I had a gold and silver thimble,
But I can't set it on the table now.
I would go to you within this note I write,
But I can't fit inside of it.

II. Red or coral

There are six rows of beads in that red necklace,
But this one of coral has seven shiny rows.
I will not write. I'll not send a letter.
If you really miss me, you'll come back on your own!

III. White

On this sheet, this white sheet of paper,
I wrote your name again and again.
Oh my dove! Oh my beauty!
Only God knows how much I love you.

IV. Rosy

Many flow'rs in the garden, only one is the sweetest rose.
Yesterday I read your letter, all day long I was rosy-cheek'd!
Many trees are in the orchard, only one has the sweetest fruit.
Yesterday I read your letter, all day long I was rosy-cheek'd!

Sarasvati: a hymn to the goddess (2008)

Composed by Eric Banks (b 1969)

Verses from the *Sarasvati vandana* and the *Rig Veda* (1:3:10-12)

*pavakā na sarasvatī
vajeḅir vājinīvatī
yajnyam vaṣṭu diyāvasu
čodayitri sunṛitānām
četanī sumatīnām
yajnyam dade sarasvatī
maho 'arṇa sarasvatī
pra četayati ketunā
diyō viṣvā vi rājati*

She glows as brightly
as the pearly winter moon,
Her garments waft
with aromatic jasmine
in the morning dew.

She bears her instrument,
the vina, on her arm,
And takes her seat
upon a throne of lotus-
flower purest white.

She reigns, encircled and
respected by the gods,
Her ever-reaching
wisdom is exceeded only
by her grace.

O Sarasvati:
Remove my apathy,
Destroy my ignorance,
Protect me.

*yā kundendu tuṣārahāra davalā
yā ṣubra vastravṛtā
yā vīnā vara daṇḍā maṇḍītakarā
yā ṣveta padmāsanā
yā brahmāčuta ṣānkara prabṛtibī
devāī sadā vanditā
sā mām pātu sarasvatī bagavati
nihṣeṣa jādāpahā*

She comes to us when we seek the truth,
And answers the questions that we bring.

She opens our eyes with morning light,
And raises our voices when we sing.

She polishes every tarnished heart,
And clarifies every clouded mind.

She motivates every stagnant soul,
And stimulates art of every kind.

O Sarasvati! O mighty ocean!
To you we make our dedication.
O wash us with your inspiration.
Accept our humble meditation.

UPCOMING ESOTERICA

DISTLER

Hugo Distler centennial

21 22 28 29 June 2008

Born in Nuremberg on 24 June 1908, Hugo Distler found himself in the crossfire of the escalating World War II. Driven by a devotion far too progressive for the German traditionalism of his day, Distler, quite simply, wrote the wrong music at the wrong time. His music, replete with spiritual fervor that was not tolerated by the Nazis, was eventually labeled "degenerate art." As a conscientious objector constantly under the threat of conscription into the German army, Distler finally took his own life, on 1 November 1942. In fewer years and a far more hostile climate than Mozart, Hugo Distler was a prolific choral pioneer. Please join The Esoterics to celebrate his genius with a performance of his entire collection of sacred motets, *Geistliche Chormusik*.

DAMĀN

The seven Persian creations

4 5 11 12 October 2008

On the second of his sojourns to India, The Esoterics' director Eric Banks had the opportunity to study the ancient texts and singing practices of the Parsis who have lived in the region around Bombay since the 8th century. In his research at the Cama Oriental Institute, Eric studied the *Avesta*, the earliest scriptures of Zoroastrianism - arguably the world's oldest monotheism - a faith that has influenced nearly every other religion on the planet. While in Bombay, Eric studied the *Gathas*, the oldest recorded chants in history, as well as the *Bundahishn*, the Persian cosmology. From these sources, Eric has assembled a libretto for an *a cappella* choral opera that will be premiered by The Esoterics in this unprecedented concert event.

CARTER & MESSIÆN

A double centennial

6 7 13 14 December 2008

Born day apart almost a century ago (10 and 11 December 1908), the composers Elliott Carter and Olivier Messiaen provide a fascinating study of how creativity can manifest itself in vastly different ways. In this concert series, The Esoterics will perform Carter's entire repertoire for chorus, including: *To music*, *Harvest home*, *Heart not so heavy as mine*, *Musicians wrestle everywhere*, *The harmony of morning* for women's chorus and *Emblems* for men's voices. The ensemble will also perform Messiaen's compositions for chorus: his transcendent *O sacrum convivium*, and one of the most unforgettable works in the choral repertoire: his *Cinq rechants* - which retells the tale of Tristan and Isolde in a myriad of surrealistic images and tongues.