

The Ph.D./D.M.A. Programs in Music
Guest Artist Recital

October 28, 2022 7:30 p.m.
Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall



Nina Berman, soprano
Steve Beck, piano

Album Release
Milton Babbitt: Works for Treble Voice and Piano

The Widow's Lament in Springtime (1951) Milton Babbitt
(1916–2011)

Pantun (2000)

Chelsea Square (1999) Jeff Nichols
(b. 1957)

Fünf Lieder, Op. 107 (1886-1888) Johannes Brahms
(1833–97)
An die Stolze
Salamander
Das Mädchen spricht
Maienkätzchen
Mädchenlied

Du (1957) Milton Babbitt
Wiedersehen
Wankelmut
Begegnung
Verzweifelt
Allmacht
Traum
Schwermut

Tutte le Corde (1994)

Milton Babbitt

Two Songs (1921)

Roses Breathe in the Night
Night in the Woods

Marion Bauer
(1882–1955)

Selections from “A Thousand Years of Love” (1998)

Tonight When There is No Moon
Valley Girl in Love
Lunar Joe
Lean Your Cheek

Bruce Adolphe
(b. 1955)

Phenomena [with tape] (1975)

Milton Babbitt

Notes on the Program

This album has taken us many years and many performances to complete, and it is with tremendous gratitude, joy, and excitement that we share this evening’s program with you in celebration of its release. Steve and I are so pleased to present some highlights from Babbitt’s catalogue, juxtaposed with works by composers who were deeply influential to Babbitt, and works by his students and colleagues.

I was initially drawn to Babbitt as a listener, and I was struck from the first by the contradiction his work encompasses — it is notated with precision, yet it swings; it is simultaneously emotionally removed, yet full of pathos; the melodic lines are disjointed, yet form a lyrical tapestry of sound; and Babbitt’s veneration of jazz and popular American music intermingles seamlessly with his penchant for a degree of complexity that is sometimes nearly opaque.

As a singer, I love the challenges presented by this work, and singing this repertoire has tested my vocal technique and my musicianship. I have found great reward in seeking balance between the restraint necessitated by the music on the page and the deep feeling required in order to make meaning of it, and I have found joy in engaging with the feeling of release that comes with allowing my voice to speak across the broad vocal range for which Babbitt writes. Further to the musical rewards of working on these pieces, I have always appreciated Babbitt’s deep respect for poetry and literature; the texts he chooses to set are full of nuance and richness, much in the way of Babbitt’s music. One of my hopes is that as you listen to this evening’s program, and to Babbitt’s vocal music more broadly, you will come away feeling not only that his music elevates the texts, but that the richness of the texts equally elevates his compositional style.

Why does this music matter, though and why embark on this project? It matters because despite its sometime reputation for severity, Babbitt’s music is arguably the best, the greatest, exemplar of serialism, and Babbitt, himself, is a towering figure in high modernism more generally. Despite his prominence, though, some of his songs had never before been recorded! Thus it has been an honor and a joy (and sometimes a slog...) to put together this recording. Babbitt’s music is full of liveliness and varied expression, and working through his catalogue as both a listener and performer has been eye-opening for both of us. Furthermore, in presenting a stylistically varied program like this evening’s, Steve and I hope to illustrate not only the diversity of music that influenced Babbitt, but also Babbitt’s broad and continued reach: as a composer, he was deeply influenced by music as different as the Bauer and the Brahms on this evening’s program, but also by theatre music and

American jazz; in turn, as a teacher, Babbitt turned out students whose music sounds as dissimilar as, for example, the Nichols and the Adolphe on this evening's program.

In my view, a large part of Babbitt's genius is that the intricacy of his music dovetails beautifully with the sense of humor for which he is so famous; in other words, to my ear, his music overflows with heart not in spite of its complexity but as a result of it. In a sense, the systems he created around composition freed him to let rip the poignancy and soul that draw me to it. I hope that as you listen this evening, you will feel the same pull toward it that Steve and I have felt.

With that, we'd like to extend tremendous thanks to all of you for being here this evening. We are further grateful to the support of a few individuals who have made this project possible — to Dan Lippel, Zack Bernstein, Jeff Nichols, Bruce Adolphe, Galen Brown, Ryan Streber, and Josh Mailman: THANK YOU.

-Nina Berman

About the Artists

Soprano **Nina Berman** has performed in a variety of settings, from vocal improvisation to opera, with a particular focus on chamber music and art song. She has given numerous premieres, and has done live radio performances on WQXR, WNBC, and WHTZ. Additionally, Dr. Berman has focused on both early music and standard concert repertoire, singing in concert and on the opera stage throughout the US and Canada, and as a chorister with The Bard Festival Chorale, the St. Bartholomew's Choir, and Bard SummerScape. She is active in New York, having performed as soloist and chamber musician at the city's major venues, including Carnegie Hall's Weill Hall, Alice Tully Hall, B.B. King's Blues Club, The Iridium, New York City's Town Hall, Brooklyn's Roulette, The Cutting Room, and SubCulture, as well as in numerous tristate area concert series, most often in collaboration with pianist Steve Beck. Dr. Berman also sings as member of Andrew McKenna Lee's neo-psychedelic ensemble The Knells, whose recordings have been lauded by the New York Times, Washington Post, and The New Yorker. She holds a Bachelors and Masters of Music from the Manhattan School of Music, and a Doctorate of Musical Arts from the CUNY Graduate Center.

A recent New York concert by pianist **Steven Beck** was described as "exemplary" and "deeply satisfying" by Anthony Tommasini in the New York Times. He is a graduate of the Juilliard School, where his teachers were Seymour Lipkin, Peter Serkin and Bruce Brubaker. Mr. Beck made his concerto debut with the National Symphony Orchestra, and has toured Japan as soloist with the New York Symphonic Ensemble. His annual Christmas Eve performance of Bach's Goldberg Variations at Bargemusic has become a New York institution. He has also performed as soloist and chamber musician at Alice Tully Hall, the Kennedy Center, the Library of Congress, Weill Recital Hall, Merkin Hall, and Miller Theater, as well as on WNYC; summer appearances have been at the Aspen Music Festival and Lincoln Center Out of Doors. He has performed as a musician with the New York City Ballet and the Mark Morris Dance Group, and as an orchestral musician he has appeared with the New York Philharmonic, the New York City Ballet Orchestra, and Orpheus. Mr. Beck is an experienced performer of new music, having worked with Elliott Carter, Pierre Boulez, Henri Dutilleux, Charles Wuorinen, George Crumb, George Perle, and Fred Lerdahl. He is a member of the Knights, the Talea Ensemble, Quattro Mani, and the Da Capo Chamber Players. His discography includes George Walker's piano sonatas, for Bridge Records, and Elliott Carter's "Double Concerto" on Albany Records. He is a Steinway Artist.

Jeff Nichols (b.1957) grew up in Colorado, Texas and Indiana. He began playing the piano and composing at the age of nine and went on to study composition, piano and theory at the Juilliard School and at Princeton, Indiana and Harvard Universities. His principal teachers were Milton Babbitt and Donald Martino. Dr. Nichols' music is published by Theodore Presser and C.F. Peters and is recorded on various labels, among them New World and Ablaze Records. Recent projects include a setting of sonnets by Rilke for soprano, clarinet, guitar and string quartet (composed for and recorded by Nina Berman with an ensemble conducted by James Baker), a cello and piano piece written for Chris Gross and Steve Beck, and a solo harpsichord piece-

in-progress for the Toronto-based harpsichordist Wesley Shen. Dr. Nichols has taught at Columbia and Harvard Universities and currently teaches composition at Queens College and The Graduate Center, CUNY, where he also directs the doctoral composition program.

Bruce Adolphe is a composer of international renown, much of whose output addresses science, history, and the struggle for human rights. His works are frequently performed by major artists, including Itzhak Perlman, Yo-Yo Ma, Fabio Luisi, Joshua Bell, Daniel Hope, Angel Blue, the Brentano String Quartet, the Washington National Opera, the Metropolitan Opera Guild, the Human Rights Orchestra of Europe, and over 60 orchestras worldwide. Among his most performed works are the violin concerto *I Will Not Remain Silent*, the violin/piano duo *Einstein's Light*, and *Tyrannosaurus Sue: A Cretaceous Concerto*. Also an author, lecturer, and innovative educator, Mr. Adolphe has spent decades helping people to hear and enjoy music in extraordinary ways. He is the author of several books, including *The Mind's Ear: Exercises for Improving the Musical Imagination for Performers, Listeners and Composers* (3rd ed., 2021) and the chapter on composing in *Secrets of Creativity: What Neuroscience, the Arts, and Our Minds Reveal* (2019). His chapter *The Sound of Human Rights: Wordless Music that Speaks for Humanity* will be published in the *Routledge Guide to Music and Human Rights* in May, 2022. Widely known for his weekly Piano Puzzler segment on *American Public Media's Performance Today*, Mr. Adolphe is also resident lecturer and director of family concerts for the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in New York and the artistic director of the *Off the Hook Arts Festival* in Colorado. He has been a fellow of the Salzburg Global Seminar, visiting lecturer in the residential colleges at Yale, composer-in-residence and visiting scholar at the Brain and Creativity Institute in Los Angeles, distinguished composer-in-residence at the Mannes College of Music, and on faculty at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and the Juilliard School. Visit www.bruceadolphe.com

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Milton Babbitt: Works for Treble Voice and Piano



Texts and Translations

The Widow's Lament in Springtime

William Carlos Williams

Sorrow is my own yard
where the new grass
flames as it has flamed
often before but not
with the cold fire
that closes round me this year.
Thirtyfive years
I lived with my husband.
The plumbtree is white today
with masses of flowers.
Masses of flowers
load the cherry branches
and color some bushes
yellow and some red
but the grief in my heart
is stronger than they
for though they were my joy
formerly, today I notice them
and turn away forgetting.
Today my son told me
that in the meadows,
at the edge of the heavy woods
in the distance, he saw
trees of white flowers.
I feel that I would like
to go there
and fall into those flowers
and sink into the marsh near them.

Pantun

John Hollander

Dawn, and the clouds start running in the wind
A single star divides the distant hill.
If I could touch his picture in my mind
The dimming world would grow invisible.

Bright jewels drop upon the grass,
Drop in the grass and sparkling lie.
Love is like dew on blades of grass,
Vanishing when the sun is high.

This water at the shore's the blue mirror of
young eyes and bright.
Even next door I long for you,
Even more when you're out of sight.

The road goes right, the road goes left,
Around the same small clump of pine.
Do not write, do not send a gift:
Your longing stays the same as mine, your longing
stays the same as mine.

A splashing drop, another drop of water from the
bowl I touch.
Somewhere near midnight I start up
And weep, weep in the pillow that I clutch.

Fünf Lieder, Op. 107

An die Stolze

Paul Flemming

Und gleichwohl kann ich anders nicht,
Ich muß ihr günstig sein,
Obgleich der Augen stolzes Licht
Mir mißgönnt seinen Schein.
Ich will, ich soll, ich soll, ich muß dich lieben,
Dadurch wir beid' uns nur betrüben,
Weil mein Wunsch doch nicht gilt
Und du nicht hören wilt.

Wie manchen Tag, wie manche Nacht,
Wie manche liebe Zeit
Hab' ich mit Klagen durchgebracht,
Und du verlachst mein Leid!
Du weißt, du hörst, du hörst, du siehst die Schmerzen,
Und nimmst der' keinen doch zu Herzen,
So daß ich zweifle fast,
Ob du ein Herze hast.

Salamander

Carl Lemcke

Es saß ein Salamander
Auf einem kühlen Stein,
da warf ein böses Mädchen
Ins Feuer ihn hinein.

Sie meint', er soll verbrennen,
Ihm ward erst wohl zu Mut,
wohl wie mir kühlem Teufel
Die heiße Liebe tut.

Das Mädchen spricht

Otto Friedrich Gruppe

Schwalbe, sag mir an,
Ist's dein alter Mann
Mit dem du's Nest gebaut,
Oder hast du jüngst erst
Dich ihm vertraut?

Sag', was zwitschert ihr,
Sag', was flüstert ihr
Des Morgens so vertraut?
Gelt, du bist wohl auch noch
Nicht lange Braut?

To the Proud Woman

Translation by Emily Ezust

And nevertheless, I can do nothing else:
I must be well-disposed to her,
even if her eyes' proud light
begrudges me their shine.
I will, I should, I should, I must love you;
therefore, we both will be unhappy,
for my wish is in vain,
and you do not wish to hear it.

How many days, how many nights,
how much lovely time
have I spent in lamentation,
and you laugh at my grief!
You know, you hear, you hear and see my pain,
and take none of it to heart,
so that I am tempted to doubt
whether you even have a heart.

Salamander

Translation by Emily Ezust

There sat a salamander
upon a cold stone,
when a malicious girl
threw him into the fire.

She thought he should burn up,
but he began to be of good cheer,
just as on me, a cold devil,
hot love operates.

The Maiden Speaks

Translation by Emily Ezust

Swallow, tell me,
was it your old husband
with whom you built your nest,
or have you just recently
entrusted yourself to him?

Tell me what you twitter about,
tell me what you whisper about
in the mornings, so confidentially?
Eh, you haven't been
a bride for very long, have you?

Maienkätzchen

Detlev von Liliencron

Maienkätzchen, erster Gruß,
Ich breche euch und stecke euch
An meinen alten Hut.

Maienkätzchen, erster Gruß,
Einst brach ich euch und steckte euch
Der Liebsten an den Hut.

Mädchenlied

Paul Heyse

Auf die Nacht in den Spinnstub'n
Da singen die Mädchen,
Da lachen die Dorfbub'n,
Wie flink gehn die Rädchen!

Spinnt jedes am Brautschatz,
Daß der Liebste sich freut.
Nicht lange, so gibt es
Ein Hochzeitsgeläut.

Kein Mensch, der mir gut ist,
Will nach mir fragen.
Wie bang mir zu Mut ist,
Wem soll ich's klagen?

Die Tränen rinnen
Mir übers Gesicht—
Wofür ich soll spinnen,
Ich weiß es nicht!

May Catkins*

Translation by Richard Stokes

May catkins, first greeting;
I pick you and pin you
On my old hat.

May catkins, first greeting,
Once I picked you and pinned you
On my sweetheart's hat.

*A catkin is a cluster of tiny flowers produced by a tree

Maiden's Song

Translation by Richard Stokes

At night in the spinning rooms,
there sing the maidens,
there laugh the village boys;
how quickly do the little wheels fly!

Each girl spins for her trousseau ,
so that her lover will be glad.
It won't be long before
wedding bells peal.

No man who is kind to me
asks after me.
How anxious I feel,
to whom can I lament?

The tears run
down my face—
For what am I spinning?
I don't know!

Du

August Stramm

Wiedersehen

Dein Schreiten bebt
 In Schauen stirbt der Blick
 Der Wind
 Spielt
 Blasse Bänder.
 Du
 Wendest
 Fort!
 Den Raum umwirbt die Zeit!

Wankelmut

Mein Suchen sucht!
 Viel tausend wandeln Ich!
 Ich taste Ich
 Und fasse Du
 Und halte Dich!
 Versehne Ich!
 Und Du und Du und Du
 Viel tausend Du
 Und immer Du
 Allwege Du
 Wirr
 Wirren
 Wirrer
 Immer wirrer
 Durch
 Die Wirrnis
 Du
 Dich
 Ich!

Begegnung

Dein Gehen lächelt in mich über
 Und
 Reißt das Herz.
 Das Nicken hakt und spannt.
 Im Schatten deines Rocks
 Verhaspelt
 Schlingern
 Schleudert
 Klatscht!
 Du wiegst und wiegst.
 Mein Greifen haschet blind.
 Die Sonne lacht!
 Und
 Blödes Zagen lahmet fort
 Beraubt beraubt!

You

Translations by Zachary Bernstein

Reunion

Your striding quivers
 In looking, the glance dies
 The wind
 Plays
 Pale ribbons.
 You
 Turn
 Away!
 Space is wooed by time!

Inconstancy

My seeking seeks!
 Many thousand transform I!
 I feel I
 and grasp You
 and hold You!
 Dissolve in yearning I!
 And You and You and You
 Many thousand You
 and always You
 Everywhere You
 Confused
 Confusion
 More confused
 Ever more confused
 Through
 The confusedness
 You
 Yourself
 I!

Meeting

Your walking smiles over into me
 And
 Tears my heart.
 The nodding hooks and strains.
 In the shadow of your skirt
 Tangled up
 Swerving
 Hurls
 Slaps!
 You sway and sway
 My grasping snatches blindly.
 The sun laughs!
 And
 Dull hesitation continues to lame me
 Bereft bereft!

Verzweifelt

Droben schmettert ein greller Stein
Nacht grant Glas
Die Zeiten stehn
Ich
Steine.
Weit
Glast
Du!

Allmacht

Forschen Fragen
Du trägst Antwort
Fliehen Fürchten
Du stehst Mut!
Stank und Unrat
Du breitest Reine
Falsch und Tücke
Du lachst Recht!
Wahn Verzweiflung
Du schmiegest Selig
Tod und Elend
Du wärmst Reich!
Hoch und Abgrund
Du bogst Wege
Hölle Teufel
Du siegst Gott!

Traum

Durch die Büsche winden Sterne
Augen tauchen blaken sinken
Flüstern plätschert
Blüten gehren
Düfte spritzen
Schauer stürzen
Winde schnellen prellen schwellen
Tücher reißen
Fallen schrickt in tiefe Nacht.

Schwermut

Schreiten Streben
Leben sehnt
Schauern Stehen
Blicke suchen
Sterben wächst
Das Kommen
Schreit!
Tief
Stummen
Wir.

Despairing

Above, a bright stone smashes
Night splinters glass
The times stand still
I
Stone.
Far away
Radiance
You!

Omnipotence

Studying asking
You carry [the] answer
Fleeing fearing
You stand courage!
Stench and filth
You spread purity
Falsehood and perfidy
You laugh with justice!
Madness despair
You nestle bliss!
Death and misery
You warm rich[ness]!
Height and abyss
You bent paths
Hell devil
You are victorious God!

Dream

Through the bushes wind stars
Eyes plunge smolder sink
Whispering burbles
Blossoms seethe
Scents splash
Showers plummet
Winds dart bounce swell
Sheets tear
Falling startles into deep night.

Melancholy

Striding striving
Living craves
Shuddering standing
Glances seek
Dying grows
The coming
Screams!
Deeply
Grow mute
We.

Two Songs

Roses Breathe in the Night

Margaret Widdemer

Roses breathe in the night
Down the path to my lover.
Tall and fair is my lover,
Ardent and young is he.

Wood-folk, wild till the night,
Fauns in the woodland cover,
Hide me not from my lover,
Between the woods and the sea!

Breath of wind in the night,
Like the touch of my lover -
Far, still far is my lover,
Has he forgotten me?

Far, sweet stars, glitter bright,
Show the way to my lover,
Toward the lips of my lover
Between the woods and the sea!

Close, ah, close in the night
Press the lips of my lover!

Night in the Woods

Edward Rowland Sill

Night in the woods,—night:
Peace, peace on the plain.
The last red sunset beam
Belts the tall beech with gold;
The quiet kine are in the fold,
And stilly flows the stream.
Soon shall we see the stars again,
For one more day down to its rest has lain,
And all its cares have taken flight,
And all its doubt and pain.
Night in the woods,—night:
Peace, peace on the plain.

Selections from **A Thousand Years of Love**

Tonight When There is No Moon

Ono No Komachi

English version by Bruce Adolphe

Tonight, when there is no moon
I lie awake wanting him so;
Passion burns my heart.

Valley Girl in Love

Bruce Adolphe

Once, I was like,
You know...whatever!
But then I met this guy.
He's like...Ah!
I'm like...Ah!
It's so totally,
You know.
He's in love with me:
Not!

Now, it's so cool,
Totally awesome!
I'm so like totally...
He's like...Ah!
I'm like...Ah!
It's so totally
You know!
I'm so totally...
I'm like...I'm like...
AH!

Lunar Joe

Bruce Adolphe

It was down by a deer moon crater
A few lightyears ago,
In the glow of a supernova
That I met Lunar Joe.

In his right hand he held my left,
With his left hand he held my right;
With his other hand he gently stroked my hair
All through the purple night.

He bid me leave my planet
To visit a distant star;
Together we would tool around
In his intergalactic car.

I gazed into his orange eyes
And into his blue one, too;
I said, "Although you're the best of guys,
I am too young to give all to you."

Since then there have been a few suitors
Some human, others not quite;
But none has gently stroked my hair
All through the purple night.

Oh, Lunar Joe, I miss you so!
I've loved no one but you!
No one but you!

Lean Your Cheek

Rumi

English version by Bruce Adolphe

Lean your cheek, rest a moment
On my drunken cheek
So I may forget the war and cruelty inside me.
You have opened the seven gates of heaven;
Now lay Your hand on my tightened heart.
All I have to offer you is an illusion: myself.
I'm not asking for some sweet pistachio candy;
But your everlasting love.
Fifty times I have said, "Heart, cease hunting.
Step into this net."