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Paris for a While: Compositions by Richard Becker

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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Paris for a While

Compositions by

Richard Becker, piano

Assisted by

Maris Wicker, soprano

University Vocal Quartet:

Jennifer Cable, soprano

Suzanne Stevens, alto

Jeffrey Riehl, tenor

James Smith, baritone



SEPTEMBER 19, 1999, 8 PM

CAMP CONCERT HALL

BOOKER HALL OF MUSIC

GEORGE M. MODLIN CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Program

I. Words for a While (ten songs), texts by Richard Becker

intertwined with

II. Paris Piano Pieces

Prelude

(from *Paris Piano Pieces*)

Words for a While

Jennifer Cable, soprano

Words for a while
floating by me
softly fade.
Night lingers
in the wilderness of sky.

And the mountains sing
their song above oh so peacefully
you can only hear it
in the river of time.

There goes a marsh hawk over the pond
here a vole trembles then runs from its shadow.

Lines floating by
for a while seem to tell
things so magical
as the clouds go pass-ing by.

And the mountains sing
their song above oh so peacefully
you can only hear it
in the river of time.

Hyacinths

Maris Wicker, soprano

Won't you tell me you will meet me
Where the hyacinths are blooming
And the fountains spray the air.
And the Museo di Therma
Has a statue of Apollo.
Bending down he palms
The discus in quiet revery.

Giants! ...grazed the pin-nates
Bending nature to their will.
Until catastrophe
brought generations of the bee.

Won't you tell me you will meet me
Where the hyacinths are blooming
And the fountains spray the air.
In the piazza where the fountains spray
The hyacinths are weeping
And the priests feed dinosaurs
That have changed to birds.

Won't you tell me you will meet me
Where the hyacinths are blooming
And the fountains spray the air.

And the Museo di Therma
Has a statue of Apollo.

Street Song

Jennifer Cable

I can't go on much longer,
Longing for I know not what,
Gazing out at the river
That sparkles up at me.

I have dark thoughts
Of being pulled down
Below its tall quays.

Serve a glass of red wine
To the man over here.

Put your feet up, don't be shy.
Take me up to your room,
And I will give you what you want.

Why am I in this room
When I can be out there
Where the sun meets the water?

And I have money enough
To get through one more day!

Bagatelle

(from *Paris Piano Pieces*)

Arrowhead

Jeffrey Riehl, tenor

What
you find
washed in sunlight
you take home to your own bath—
though you can't get out the brine—
and then to school where
they teach you how
the earth was made,
and you let them
taste from your
sharp stone
its bitter
salt.

La Dame à la Licorne (The Woman with the Unicorn)

Maris Wicker

The lion and the unicorn
Hold up the standard
Of my father's house.

And they open the tent doors for me.

I return the necklace
Renouncing all sensuality
And pledge myself

To the object of my sole desire.

Equinox

James Smith, baritone

A squadron of blackbirds rests
on my oak tree. Their chatter and rustling
remind me of those ominous winds before a spring storm.

I bang a broom against the trunk and send them flocking.
Shudder at their lengthening festoon across the sky

that gathers in a whirlpool on the horizon,
pours through an invisible funnel
and is gone.

Invention

(from *Paris Piano Pieces*)

Dance

(from *Paris Piano Pieces*)

A Day in Black Mountain

✧ Suzanne Stevens, alto

They come riding the mountain wind.
Old and young, soon to break up,
Long to last, and unborn...

They come on the wind dancing.
You can see all over the town
How they shape the mountains here.

How these mountains are shaped
By their spirits of fire and ice
And the bluest sky.

Mandrake

Suzanne Stevens

To a very strong black dog
I tie you with a strong cord,
Stronger than the moonlight.

I invoke the god of darkness
And give my love to the night,

My eyes blindfolded to your sweet sight.
Ears plugged against your shriek that kills
All listeners for their love.

I stand at water's edge and glimpse
At sunrise the little streaks of light
On the sea. The sea...

Caprice

(from *Paris Piano Pieces*)

Exquisite Pianist

James Smith

Yours is an old soul come
From ancient rock and sand,
An old song sung of fragrant grass.

As if from cooling arbors
Of shrub and vine,
Your deep green eyes harbor
The tall ships of an illusive peace.

Pain-proud and amused, you flirt
Like a slender forest huntress
Hiding dark dreams that rage
Beneath your haunting virgin smile

And sprinkle my days ecstatic
With fingers perfect and bold.

Driftwood

Jeffrey Riehl

Driftwood we touched that day on the beach
Was rubbery as cheese. And like the sea's
Lost helium balloon, the sun bounded out of reach
Behind the dunes.

Barefoot on the strand

We thought we could see
A herd of elephants in a single cloud,
And laid to rest the central argument—

Even as we wondered when
The cormorant we'd found half-
Buried in sand last

spread its wings

Over Wellfleet—: that with no choice
But to live and die, that day on the beach
We chose to live what life we had.

Improvisation

(Enfin)

Richard Becker has played solo recitals at Alice Tully Hall and Town Hall in New York, the Library of Congress and the National Gallery of Art in Washington and at over 60 universities and colleges. As a chamber musician he has appeared at Carnegie Hall, Kaufmann Hall (of the 92nd St. Y), Washington University, Brattleboro Music Center, Harvard University, and in Richmond at the Virginia Museum, Carpenter Center, the Landmark Theatre, Virginia Commonwealth University Performing Arts Center, and at the University of Richmond, where he often collaborates with the Shanghai Quartet.

Becker's performances at the French Piano Institute's French Music Festival, Salle Cortot, Paris (1996), and in collaboration with the Ecole Normale de Musique de Paris, won him First Prize and a recital at the French Embassy in Washington, D.C. (1996) for his "excellence in [the] performance of Debussy" (Jurists: Narcis Bonet, Roy Howat, and Roger Muraro). As part of his 1997 University of Richmond-sponsored residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts de Paris for composition and poetry, he performed a recital of his own work and music of Chopin. Becker was reinvited to the Cité in the summer of 1999. Critical response to his interpretation of French music is typified by the *Richmond Times Dispatch*:

"...Becker summed up Debussy's musical eyes, ears, and temperament..."

Becker's compositions have been performed at the Tanglewood Music

Festival, Peabody Conservatory, Boston's Gardner Museum, the National Gallery of Art's American Music Festival, Town Hall, Williams College, the Eastman School of Music (1993), Bennington College, University of Connecticut, Bucknell University, Hudson River Museum, Virginia Museum, Ecole Normale de Musique (1996) Cité Internationale des Arts de Paris (1997, 1999), and at the University of Richmond, among others. They have



Richard Becker

been heard over NPR, the Voice of America, and have been performed nationally by artists including the Peabody Trio, pianists Paul Hanson, Claudia Stevens, Joanne Kong, and Nancy Burton Garret, by the Roxbury Chamber Players, by members of the Richmond Symphony, CURRENTS, and Schola Cantorum at the University of Richmond, and others. He has been a MacDowell Colony Fellow, a Resident poet at the Vermont Studio Center (1998), and is an American Academy of Arts and Letters music award nominee. His *Five Mementos* is recorded by pianist Nancy Burton Garrett on CRS.

Becker's performance of piano music by award winning American composer, David Chaitkin, is forthcoming on CRI.

Since 1993, poetry by Richard Becker has appeared in *America*, *American Poets and Poetry*, *Bottomfish*, *Columbia*, *Explorations*, *fuel*, *Möbius*, *Cold Mountain Review*, and *Visions International*. He has recently given public readings of his poetry at the Fredericksburg Center for the Creative Arts, and at Shapesspeare and Company in Paris, France.



Soprano *Maris Wicker* earned a Bachelor of Music in piano performance at the University of Richmond, where her principal teacher was Richard Becker. She also holds a J.D. degree from T. C. Williams School of Law, and practiced law in Richmond, Dallas, and Washington, D.C. Particularly drawn to the art song and oratorio repertoire, she has sung recitals in Richmond and the Washington area, most recently with Becker. Their program included the premiere of several of his songs. She sings regularly at St. Patrick's Episcopal Church in Washington, and appeared recently as Cupid in a Victorian Lyric Opera Company production of Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld*. Ms. Wicker teaches early childhood music and studies voice with Susan Dash of Philadelphia. A Richmond native, she lives in Bethesda, Maryland, with her husband and son.

Jennifer Cable has performed throughout the United States and Europe in solo repertoire ranging from the Renaissance through the 20th Century. In addition to opera and oratorio, Cable has sung with many chamber music ensembles, including Tragicomedia, Musica Nova, the Kennedy Center Chamber Players, the Richmond Chamber Players and Currents. She is a founding member and regular artist with Affetti Musicali, an early music ensemble well known to Richmond audiences, and has made several solo appearances with the Richmond Symphony Orchestra. Undergraduate study at Oberlin College was followed by the Eastman School of Music for her Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts. Cable was also awarded Performer's Certificates in both Opera and Vocal Performance from the Eastman School of Music. She has attended the Aspen Music Festival, the Akademie für Alte Musik in Bremen, Germany, the International Institute for Chamber Music in Munich, the



UR Vocal Quartet

Aldeburgh Festival and the Britten-Pears School in Aldeburgh, England, and the Franz Schubert Institute in Vienna. She is currently studying voice with Marlena Malas in New York City and serves on the faculty of the University of Richmond in Richmond, Virginia. She has recorded for Word Records and the Contemporary Record Society.

Suzanne Stevens, mezzo-soprano, has sung to critical acclaim around the country. Her operatic credits include the role of Dinah in Opera Carolina's production of Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*, and Maddalena in *Rigoletto* with the Lansing Lyric Opera. She has also sung with the Ash-Lawn Highland Summer Festival in Charlottesville, performing the role of Ma Moss in its acclaimed production of Aaron Copland's *The Tenderland*, with Portland Opera (Oregon) in Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, and has also sung the roles of Hansel in Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, Dorabella in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* and Mother Marie in Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*.

Concert work includes solo work with the Rochester Oratorio Society, Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, the Greater Lansing Symphony Orchestra, the Eastman School Symphony and the University of Richmond Orchestra and Choirs. She teaches voice at the University of Richmond, is on faculty with the Virginia Commonwealth University Community School for Performing Arts.

A graduate of Michigan State University, she earned the Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance and Literature from the Eastman School of Music, where she also earned the Performer's Certificate in Voice.

Jeffrey Riehl, a native of central PA, is Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Richmond where he directs the choral program and teaches a variety of music courses for the general student. As a singer, Riehl has performed with Robert Shaw, the early music consort Affetti Musicali, the Eastman Collegium Musicum and lutenist Paul O'Dette, the Dickinson College Choir, the Lebanon Valley College Chorus, the Bucks County Choral Society, the Lebanon County Choral Society, the Westminster Choir, and the Children's Miracle Network Annual Messiah Sing. He is active as a guest conductor, clinician, and adjudicator and has recorded for Chesky Records as a member of the Westminster Choir.

Riehl is an active scholar with particular interests in eighteenth-century Viennese sacred music and the nineteenth-century German lied. He is currently editing the unpublished songs of Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel and is preparing a comprehensive guide to the sacred works of W. A. Mozart.

Riehl earned the Doctor of Musical Arts in Conducting at the Eastman School of Music, the Master of Music in Choral Conducting at Westminster Choir College, and the BS in Music Education at Lebanon Valley College. His principal conducting study has been with Joseph Flummerfelt, Frauke Haasemann, Robert Shaw, Helmuth Rilling, Donald Neuen, and William Weinert; voice study with Thomas Houser, Carol Webber, Ruth Drucker, Oren Brown, and Marvin Keenze; he has also studied Movement with Elaine Summers as well as the Alexander and Feldenkrais Techniques. He is married to Suzanne Riehl and they have two children.

James Riley Smith has appeared with Virginia Opera, Opera Memphis, Southern Opera Theatre, in roles such as Sharpless, *Madama Butterfly*; Count Almaviva, *Le Nozze di Figaro*; Guglielmo, *Così fan Tutte*; Marcello, *La Bohème*; and Lescaut, *Manon* as well as numerous comprimario roles. Last season he sang the title role in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* with the VCU Opera Theater and also appeared with the Richmond Symphony singing Aaron Copland songs. He has sung in concert as a guest artist at the National Cathedral and the French Embassy in Washington, D.C. and has performed extensively in Germany and the Middle East. A veteran musical theatre performer, he has played such roles as Papa Charlie, *Shenandoah*; Archibald Craven, *The Secret Garden*; Michael, *I Do, I Do*. He has played the role of Father (God) in Swift Creek Mill Playhouse's production of *Children of Eden* by Stephen Schwartz and with Virginia Opera as the Prince in Gounod's *Romeo et Juliette*. He teaches on the voice faculties of Virginia Commonwealth University and the University of Richmond.

GEORGE M. MODLIN CENTER FOR THE ARTS

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Admission is free of charge unless otherwise indicated

James Nares: Tetragram

August 19 to December 11, 1999
Marsh Art Gallery

Contemporary New York artist James Nares presents a site-specific series created for the Marsh Art Gallery. Installed in four bays, his *Tetragram* paintings are abstractions that elevate the gesture of the brushstroke to monumental proportions as each "letter" of his tetragram, with its spiritual overtones, embodies the elegant, choreographic movement of his large-scale brush loaded with oil paint flowing over the surface of each panel.

Kendall Shaw: A Life's Journey in Art

August 19 to October 2, 1999
Marsh Art Gallery

This retrospective exhibition of American artist Kendall Shaw (born 1924, New Orleans) includes his early works in the 1960s that involve figuration as a basis for abstraction, his powerful pattern paintings of the 1970s and 1980s that push the boundaries of the modernist grid and color harmonies, and his current works that continue his investigations of color, pattern, and his belief in the dynamic power of abstraction to carry emotional and sensual content.

Family Weekend Concert

Friday, September 24, 1999, 8 pm
Camp Concert Hall, Booker Hall of Music

The University of Richmond's student music ensembles are featured in this annual musical revue, including the University Band, Choir, Jazz Ensemble, Orchestra and Schola Cantorum.

ETHOS Percussion Group with Glen Velez, *frame drums and percussion*

Wednesday, September 29, 1999, 8 pm
Camp Concert Hall, Booker Hall of Music

Presented through the Office of Statewide Partnerships of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Embracing musical styles from around the globe, ETHOS stuns audiences with its vibrant sounds and extensive and unique collection of instruments. ETHOS will be joined by Grammy Award winner Glen Velez in an exploration of sound and texture titled *Earth/Rhythms*. Mr. Velez is an internationally recognized master drummer who has merged his background in Western percussion with the study of frame drum performance styles from around the world. While in Richmond ETHOS will conduct a number of residency activities both at the University and at the Virginia Museum.

Tickets: Adults \$16, Sr. Citizens \$14, Faculty/Staff \$12, UR Students \$5

Morning Might Pass

by Matt Di Cintio, '00

Directed by Walter Schoen

September 30, 1999, 8 pm

October 1-2, 1999, 8 pm

October 3, 1999, 2 pm

Alice Jepson Theatre

The Department of Theatre and Dance is proud to present *Morning Might Pass*, written by Richmond senior Matt Di Cintio, as the opening production of its turn-of-the-millennium season.

Tickets: Adults \$8, Sr. Citizens, Faculty/Staff & non-UR Students \$7, UR Students \$3