"Songs of Sea and Life" for tenor/baritone voice and piano

Dominic Dousa, *University of Texas at El Paso*
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO DEPARTMENT OF
Music

PRESENTS

Faculty Recital Series
Christopher Meerdink - Tenor

Elisa Fraser Wilson - Mezzo - Soprano

Accompanied by Patricia H. Provencio

Sunday, April 3rd, 2005
Fox Fine Arts Recital Hall 2:30pm
Program

I. Deposuit From Magnificat
   Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

II. From Hermit Songs
    At St. Patrick’s Purgatory
    The Heavenly Banquet
    The Crucifixion
    The Monk and His Cat
    The Desire for Hermitage
    Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

III. V molchan’ji nochi tajnoj
     O, net, molju, ne ukhodil!
     Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Blagoslovljaju vas, lesa
     Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Intermission

IV. Parto, parto from La Clemenza di Tito
     W.A. Mozart (1756-1791)
     Featuring Dr. David Ross, clarinet

V. Songs of Sea and Life
     Dominic Dousa (b.1973)
     I. ‘The winds as at their hour of birth’
     II. Break, Break, Break
     III. Crossing the Bar
     Featuring Dr. Dominic Dousa, Piano

VI. From Sietes canciones populares españolas
     Manuel de Falla (1876-1946)
     El paño moruno
     Seguidilla murciana
     Asturiana
     Nana
     Canción

VII. Befreit
     Richard Strauss (1864-1949)
     Allerseelen
IV. Synopsis: After Servilia orders Sextus to kill Titus and set fire to Rome, Sextus meekly acquiesces and sings that he will do anything for her beauty and love.

Parto, parto ma tu ben mio meco ritorna in pace;  
Sarò quel più ti piace,  
quel che vorrai farò.  
Guardami e tutto obbligio,  
E a vendicarti io volo.  
A questo sguardo solo d me si penserà.  
Ah qual poter, O Dei! donaste alla beltà!  
I go, I go, but you, my love, make peace with me;  
I will be whatever pleases you more,  
I will do what you like.  
Look at me, and I forget everything,  
And to avenge you I fly.  
I will think of this glance alone.  
Ah, what power, O Gods, have you given to Beauty!

Songs of Sea and Life
Poetry by Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)
Composed November-December 2004

V. The common themes of the three poems that comprise this song cycle are the imagery of the sea and its metaphors for various life experiences. "The winds, as at their hour of birth" reflects the purity of new life and freedom. The shimmering accompaniment and soaring vocal lines underscore the ethereal and blissful atmosphere evoked by the images of winds and streams and of the proclamations, "we are free."

In "Break, Break, Break," the poet almost defiantly goads the sea to continue its churning while a storm rages in his own mind. He then remarks whimsically about those who amid the turmoil are seemingly unperturbed ("O well for...") before his attention turns to the troubling awareness that his own sense of comfort and ease is gone ("But O for the touch..."). The setting of the final stanza combines the energetic mood of the breaking waves and the somber realization that what has brought security will not come back. However, the song ends not with a feeling of resignation, but with an invigorating finish that suggests a sense of resolve to forge a new path.

In "Crossing the Bar," the softly pulsating accompaniment and opening melodic motive in the piano evokes a sea that is now calm, gentle, and a place of repose. This tranquil mood gives way to moments of introspection and melancholy ("And may there be no moaning...", "And may there be no sadness..."), as one prepares for the final stage in life’s journey. The song concludes with a fervent expression of hope and confidence that one will find peace. The end of the last verse, "when I have crossed the bar," brings the first conclusive cadence in the home key, indicating that one will indeed find rest at the end of life’s journey.

This song cycle is gratefully dedicated to my friend and colleague, Dr. Chris Meerdink.
-Dominic Douza

VI. The "Seven Spanish Popular Songs" of Manuel de Falla (1876-1946) are probably the best-known group of recital songs in the Spanish repertoire. They are decidedly more than a mere set of "arrangements" of Spanish folksongs, although they are all based on themes, rhythms and verses from the folklore of several regions of the country—Murcia in the south east, Asturias in the north west, Aragon in the north east, and Andalusia in the once Moorish south. They do not constitute a "cycle" telling a narrative story, but they paint a lively, varied and extraordinarily comprehensive picture of a people, its culture and its folk music. —Fredrick Fuller

El paño moruno

Al paño fino, en la tienda,  
Al paño fino, en la tienda,  
Una mancha le cayó;  
Una mancha le cayó;  
Por menos precio se vende,  
Por menos precio se vende,  
Porque perdió su valor,  
Porque perdió su valor.  
¡Ay!

The Moorish cloth

On the fine cloth, in the store  
On the fine cloth, in the store  
A stain set in  
A stain set in  
For a lower price it sold  
For a lower price it sold  
Because it has lost its value  
Because it has lost its value  
Oh!
**Dr. Christopher Meerdink** is a Lecturer at the University of Texas in El Paso. Previously he taught on the voice faculty at Taylor University in Upland, Indiana. He completed his doctorate at the University of Michigan in Voice Performance under the direction of George Shirley. He earned his M.M. and B.M. from Bowling Green State University and Houghton College, respectively.

Dr. Meerdink has performed extensively in recital as well as the opera stage. Some of his roles include Tamino in *The Magic Flute*, the Magician in *The Consul* and Dr. Caius in *Falstaff*. Dr. Meerdink spent four years working for Toledo Opera as a Resident Artist. His performance experience there included mainstage roles, concert engagements and opera quartet programs, and performances through the Education and Outreach Program. Dr. Meerdink is recorded on the Naxos American Classics label.

**Elisa Fraser Wilson** is Assistant Professor of Voice and Music Theatre at UTEP. Her duties include teaching applied voice and directing both the University Jazz Singers and the Department of Music's Music Theatre Company. Dr. Wilson holds degrees in music education and performance from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Wichita State University (KS) and a doctoral degree in Choral Conducting and Literature from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Prior to moving to El Paso in 1998, Dr. Wilson taught choral music at Champaign Central High School in Champaign IL. She has worked with young people in music since 1986, directing summer musical theater programs and community youth choirs and providing individual voice instruction. Former employers include the Decatur, Illinois Recreation Department, Millikin University (IL) and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Dr. Wilson is also an active performer with experience in a variety of musical styles including opera, musical theater, jazz and popular music. Since moving to the El Paso area, she has appeared with the UTEP Union Dinner Theater, the UTEP Theater and Opera Departments, the UTEP jazz bands, the El Paso Chamber Choir and the El Paso Opera Company. Favorite appearances include performances with the El Paso Opera Company as Amina in *La Traviata* and with the UTEP Union Dinner Theater as Eva Peron in *Evita* and Victoria Grant in *Victor/Victoria*. 