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soprano **Melanie Duncan**
pianoforte **Claire Cooper**



Melanie Duncan – soprano

Claire Cooper – pianoforte

Dominick Argento (b.1927)

Six Elizabethan Songs

- 1 Spring poem by Thomas Nash 1'37"
- 2 Sleep poem by Samuel Daniel 3'22"
- 3 Winter poem by William Shakespeare 1'40"
- 4 Dirge poem by William Shakespeare 3'32"
- 5 Diaphenia poem by Henry Constable 2'01"
- 6 Hymn poem by Ben Jonson 3'51"

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

Mèlodies passagères Op. 27 (1950-1)

Poèmes français: Rainer Maria Rilke

- 7 Puisque tout passe 1'31"
- 8 Un cygne 2'09"
- 9 Tombeau dans un parc 1'57"
- 10 Le clocher chante 1'13"
- 11 Dèpart 1'52"

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson

- 12 Nature, the gentlest mother 4'00"
- 13 There came a wind like a bugle 1'34"
- 14 Why do they shut me out of Heaven? 2'24"
- 15 The world feels dusty 1'52"
- 16 Heart, we will forget him 2'29"
- 17 Dear March, come in! 2'11"
- 18 Sleep is supposed to be 2'54"
- 19 When they come back 2'06"
- 20 I felt a funeral in my brain 2'22"
- 21 I've heard an organ talk sometimes 2'06"
- 22 Going to Heaven! 2'33"
- 23 The chariot 3'21"

With Dominick Argento, Samuel Barber and Aaron Copland we have a virtual A B C of American composers of the art song.

A **Dominick Argento** (b.1927) with 13 operas to his name is considered to be America's leading composer of the genre. The majority of his music is vocal; and operates within a predominantly tonal context, freely combining tonality, atonality, and 12-tone writing while tapping into deep currents of sentiment and passion. The lyric song cycle, *Six Elizabethan Songs* of 1958 was one of Argento's early attempts with this vocal genre, which also includes the Pulitzer Prize winning *From the Diary of Virginia Woolf* (1975), *Letters from Composers* (1968), *To Be Sung Upon the Water* (1973), *Casa Guidi* (1983) and *A Few Words About Chekhov* (1996). Argento is recognised by singers as a composer who writes current music that is both singable and beautiful. Warm audience responses confirm that this is both expressive and accessible music. "I think that music ... began as an emotional language. For me, all music begins where speech stops." — Dominick Argento.

B **Samuel Barber** (1910-1981) is considered to be one of the most expressive representatives of the lyric and romantic trends in musical composition in the United States. He developed a characteristic style, which while drawing on some recent technical procedures never indulged in experimentation for its own sake. Barber wrote 36 songs that are dotted evenly through a long composing career, which commenced in 1927 with his first published song *Daisies*. Other vocal compositions include *Dover Beach*, for voice and string quartet (1931); three vocal works with orchestra, *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* (1948), *Prayers of Kierkegaard* (1954), *Andromache's Farewell* (1962); and *Medea* (1947). It was for a vocal work, the opera *Vanessa*, that he won his first Pulitzer Prize. With a fine baritone voice and the potential for a professional career as a singer, the composition of vocally satisfying material remained a consistent feature of Barber's output. The relationship between word and tone is carefully moulded in long lyric lines so that the musical structure and style may serve to imitate, illuminate and, on occasion, contradict the language. The collection featured here, *Mélodies passagères* op. 27 (1950-1) to texts by Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) is a fine example of this. "When I'm writing music for words, then I immerse myself in those words and I let the music flow out of them." — Samuel Barber (1971).

C **Aaron Copland** (1900-1990) achieved a distinctive musical characterisation of American themes in an expressive modern style. In the summer of 1921 Copland became the first American student in composition of Nadia Boulanger, a brilliant teacher who shaped the outlook of an entire generation of American musicians. After years of cultivating a variety of sharp-edged styles, he came to a realisation that was to have a considerable impact on his compositional output. "... I began to feel an increasing dissatisfaction with the relations of the music-loving public and the living composer. It seemed to me that we composers were in danger of working in a vacuum." The result was an attempt to simplify the new music in order that it would have meaning for a large public. *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson* perfectly exemplify the directness of meaning and expression that Copland was aiming for. This major song cycle was composed between March 1949 and March 1950; and presents a consciously American style in the interpretation of the universally appealing verse of Emily Dickinson.

Dominick Argento (b.1927)

Six Elizabethan Songs

Song Cycle for High Voice and Piano

1. Spring

poem by Thomas Nash

Spring, the sweet Spring, is the year's pleasant king;
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring,
Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing,
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!
The palm and may make country houses gay,
Lambs frisk and play, the shepherds pipe all day,
And we hear aye birds tune this merry lay,
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!
The fields breathe sweet, the daisies kiss our feet,
Young lovers meet, old wives a-sunning sit,
In every street these tunes our ears do greet,
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo! Spring!
The sweet Spring!

2. Sleep

poem by Samuel Daniel

Care-charmer Sleep,
son of the sable night,
Brother to Death,
in silent darkness born,
Relieve my anguish and restore thy light;
With dark forgetting of my care return.

And let the day be time enough to mourn
the shipwreck of my ill-adventured youth:
Let waking eyes suffice to wail their scorn
Without the torment of the nights untruth.

Cease, dreams,
the images of day-desires
To model forth the passions of the sorrow;
Never let rising sun approve you liars
To add more grief
to aggravate my sorrow:
Still let me sleep,
embracing clouds in vain,
And never wake to feel the days disdain.

3. Winter

poem by William Shakespeare

When icicles hang by the wall
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Toms bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail;
When blood is nipt
and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl -
Tuwhoo! Tuwhit! Tuwhoo!
A merry note!
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parsons saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marians nose looks red and raw;
When roasted crabs
hiss in the bowl
Then nightly sings the staring owl -
Tuwhoo! Tuwhitt! Tuwhoo!
A merry note!
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

4. Dirge

poem by William Shakespeare

Come away, come away, death,
And in sad cypress let me be laid;
Fly away, fly away, breath;
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.

My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,
O prepare it!
My part of death,
no one so true did share it.
Not a flower, not a flower sweet,
On my black coffin let there be strown;

Not a friend, not a friend greet
My poor corpse,
where my bones shall be thrown:
A thousand, thousand sighs to save,
Lay me, O where Sad true lover never find my
grave,
To weep there!

5. Diaphenia

poem by Henry Constable

Diaphenia like the daffadowndilly,
White as the sun, fair as the lily,
Heigh ho, how I do love thee!
I do love thee as my lambs
Are beloved of their dams:
How blest were I if thou would'st prove me.

Diaphenia like the spreading roses,
That in thy sweets all sweets encloses,
Fair sweet, how I do love thee!
I do love thee as each flower
Loves the sun's life-giving power;
For dead, thy breath to life might move me.
Diaphenia like to all things blessed,
When all thy praises are expressed,
Dear joy, how I do love thee!
As the birds do love the spring,
Or the bees their careful king;
Then in requite, sweet virgin, love me!

6. Hymn

poem by Ben Jonson

Queen and huntress, chaste and fair,
Now the sun is laid to sleep,
Seated in thy silver chair,
State in wonted manner keep:
Hesperus entreats thy light,
Goddess excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade
Dare itself to interpose;
Cynthia's shining orb was made
Heav'n to clear when day did close;
Bless us then with wished sight,
Goddess excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearl apart,
And thy crystal shining quiver;
Give unto the flying hart
Space to breathe, how short so-ever:
Thou that mak'st a day of night,
Goddess excellently bright.

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)
Mémoires passagères Op. 27 (1950-1)
Texts by Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926)
English Translations by Louise Varèse



7. Puisque tout passe

Puisque tout passe, faisons
la mélodie passagère;
celle qui nous désaltère
aura de nous raison.
Chantons ce qui nous quitte avec amour et art;
soyons plus vite que le rapide départ.

8. Un cygne

Un cygne avance sur l'eau
tout entouré de lui-même,
comme un glissant tableau;
ainsi à certains instants
un être que l'on aime
est tout un espace mouvant.

Il se rapproche, doublé,
comme ce cygne qui nage,
sur notre âme troublée...
qui à cet être ajoute
la tremblante image
de bonheur et de doute.

9. Tombeau dans un parc

Dors au fond de l'allée,
tendre enfant, sous la dalle,
on fera le chant de l'été
autour de ton intervalle.

Si une blanche colombe
passait au vol là-haut,
je n'offrirais à ton tombeau
que son ombre qui tombe.

10. Le clocher chante

Mieux qu'une tour profane,
je me chauffe pour mûrir mon carillon.
Qu'il soit doux, qu'il soit bon aux Valaisannes.
Chaque dimanche, ton par ton,
je leur jette ma manne;

Since all things pass

Since all things pass,
lets make a passing melody;
the one to quench our thirst
Will be the one to win us.
What leaves us, let us sing
With love and art; and swifter let us be than the swift departure.

A swan

A swan moves over the water
surrounded by itself,
like a painting that glides;
thus, at times,
a being one loves
Is a whole moving space.

And draws near, doubled,
like the moving swan,
on our troubled soul..
which to that being adds
the trembling image
Of happiness and doubt.

Grave in a park

At the end of the avenue, sleep,
tender child beneath the stone;
around your interval well sing
The song of summer.

If a white dove
flies overhead,
I will lay upon your grave
Only its shadow that falls.

The bell tower sings

Better warmed than a secular tower,
To ripen my carillon am I.
May it be sweet, may it be good for the girls of Valais.
Every Sunday, tone by tone,
I throw them out my manna;

qu'il soit bon, mon carillon,
aux Valaisannes.
Qu'il soit doux, qu'il soit bon;
samedi soir dans les channes
tombe en gouttes mon carillon
aux Valaisans des Valaisannes.

11. Départ

Mon amie, il faut que je parte.
Voulez-vous voir
l'endroit sur la carte?
C'est un point noir.
En moi, si la chose
bien me réussit,
ce sera un point rose
dans un vert pays.

may it be good, my carillon,
For the girls of Valais.
May it be sweet, may it be good;
into their beers on Saturday nights,
drop by drop, falls my carillon
For the boys of the girls of Valais.

Departure

My sweet, I must go away.
Would you like to see
The place on the map?
Its a black point.
In me, it will be,
if the thing succeeds,
a rose-red point
In a green land.



Aaron Copland (1900-1990)
Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson
Texts by Emily Dickinson(1830-1886)

“These 12 songs were composed during the period from March 1949 to March 1950. The poems centre about no single theme, but they treat of subject matter close to Miss Dickinson: nature, death, life, eternity. The 12 songs are dedicated to 12 composer friends.” — Copland 1950

12. Nature, the gentlest mother

Nature, the gentlest mother
Impatient of no child,
The feeblest or the waywardest,
Her admonition mild

In forest and the hill
By traveller is heard,
Restraining rampant squirrel
Or too impetuous bird.

How fair her conversation,
A summer afternoon,

Her household, her assembly;
And when the sun goes down

Her voice among the aisles
Incites the timid prayer
Of the minutest cricket,
The most unworthy flower.

When all the children sleep
She turns as long away
As will suffice to light her lamps;
Then, bending from the sky,

With infinite affection
And infiniter care,
Her golden finger on her lip,
Wills silence everywhere.

13. There came a wind like a bugle

There came a wind like a bugle,
It quivered through the grass,
And a green chill upon the heat so ominous did pass.
We barred the window and the doors
As from an emerald ghost

The doom's electric moccasin ... that very instant passed.
On a strange mob of panting trees and fences fled away.
And rivers where the houses ran the living looked that day,
The bell within the steeple wild,
The flying tidings whirled ...
How much can come
And much can go ...
And yet abide the world.

14. Why do they shut me out of Heaven?

Why do they shut me out of Heaven?
Did I sing too loud?
But I can sing a little minor,
Timid as a bird.
Wouldn't the angels try me just once more
Just see if I troubled them ...
But don't shut the door, don't shut the door ...
Oh if I were the gentlemen in the white robes
and they were the little hand that knocked,
Could I forbid, could I forbid, could I forbid?
Why do they shut me out of Heaven?
Did I sing too loud?

15. The world feels dusty

The world feels dusty,
when we stop to die ...
We want the dew then
Honors taste dry ...
Flags vex a dying face
But the least fan
stirred by a friend's hand
Cools like the rain
Mine be the ministry when thy thirst comes...
Dews of thyself to fetch and holy balms.

16. Heart, we will forget him

Heart, we will forget him
You and I, tonight.
You may forget the warmth he gave.
I will forget the light
When you have done, pray tell me,
That I my thoughts may dim
Haste lest while you're lagging,
I may remember him.

17. Dear March, come in!

Dear March, come in!
How glad I am ...
I looked for you before.
Put down your hat ...
You must have walked ...
How out of breath you are.
Dear March, how are you?
And the rest?
Did you leave Nature well?
Oh, March come right upstairs with me
I have so much to tell.
I got your letter and the bird's
The maples never knew that you were coming,
I declare ...
How red their faces grew,
But March forgive me.
And all those hills you left for me to hue,
There was no purple suitable,
You took it all with you.
Who knocks? that April?
Lock the door, I will not be pursued ...
He stayed away a year, to call when I am
occupied

But trifles look so trivial
As soon as you have come
And blame is just as dear as praise
And praise as mere as blame.

18. Sleep is supposed to be

Sleep is supposed to be,
By souls of sanity,
The shutting of the eye ...
Sleep is the station grand
Down which on either hand
The hosts of witness stand ...
Morn is supposed to be,
By people of degree
The breaking of the day,
Morning has not occurred
That shall aurora be
East of Eternity
One with the banner gay
One in the red array
That is the break of day.

19. When they come back

When they come back if blossoms do,
I always feel a doubt if blossoms can be born
again
When once the art is out.
When they begin if robins do
I always had a fear I did not tell
it was their last Experiment last year.
When it is May, if May return.
Has nobody a pang that on a face so beautiful
we might not look again?
If I am there, one does not know ...
what party one may be tomorrow,
But if I am there, I take back all I say!

20. I felt a funeral in my brain

I felt a funeral in my brain,
And mourners to and fro,
Kept treading, treading, treading till it seemed
that sense was breaking through ...
And when they all were seated
A service like a drum
Kept beating, beating, beating till I thought
my mind was going numb.

And then I heard them lift a box,
And creak across my soul
With those same boots of lead again,
Then space began to toll
As all the heavens were a bell
And Being but an ear.
And I and silence some strange race
Wrecked solitary here.

21. I've heard an organ talk sometimes

I've heard an organ talk sometimes
In a cathedral aisle
And understood no word it said
Yet held my breath the while ...
And risen up and gone away,
A more Bernardine girl
And know not what was done to me
In that old hallowed aisle.

22. Going to Heaven!

Going to Heaven! Going to Heaven! Going to
Heaven!
I don't know when ...
Pray do not ask me how ...
Indeed I'm too astonished to think of
answering you ...
Going to Heaven! Going to Heaven!
How dim it sounds.
And yet it will be done ...
As sure as flocks go home at night
Unto the shepherd's arm!
Perhaps you're going too!
Who knows?
If you should get there first
Save just a little place for me,
Close to the two I lost ...
The smallest "robe" will fit me
and just a bit of "crown"
for you know we do not mind our dress
when we are going home.
Going to Heaven! Going to Heaven!
I'm glad I don't believe it
For it would stop my breath
And I'd like to look a little more at such a
curious earth.
I am glad they did believe it
Whom I have never found ...

Since the mighty autumn afternoon,
I left them in the ground.

23. The chariot

Because I would not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me.
The carriage held but just ourselves and
Immortality.
We slowly drove ...
He knew no haste and I had put away
My labour and my leisure too
For his civility ...
We passed the school where children played,
Their lessons scarcely done
We passed the fields of gazing grain
We passed the setting sun,
We paused before a house that seemed a
swelling of the ground ...
The roof was scarcely visible ... the cornice but
a mound,
Since then 'tis centuries but each feels shorter
than the day, I first surmised
The horses' heads were toward eternity.



Melanie Duncan is a first-class Honours graduate of the Queensland Conservatorium of Music, and is currently completing a Masters at Monash University on a Monash Postgraduate Scholarship. She has been a semi-finalist and finalist in several competitions, including the 1997, 1998 Marianne Mathy Awards, and the 1998 Herald Sun Aria and Australian Youth Aria.

While at the Qld Conservatorium of Music, her operatic roles included a Fairy in *A Midsummer Nights Dream*, Papagena in *The Magic Flute*, *Une pastourelle in L'enfant et les sortilèges* and *Monica in Menotti's The Medium*, a role she has also sung for Opera North in Mackay.

In 1996 she joined the Victoria State Opera's schools production of *The Bitter Curse of Baggie Crunch*, appearing as Molly and in 1997 she was engaged as the female swing in Opera Australia's schools production of *Little Dream*, appearing as Sneer, Terradile and *Little Dream*. She was a chorus member of Opera Australia for its Melbourne season during 1998 and again for its 1999 Melbourne season.

In 1999 she has performed the role of Giannetta in *L'Elisir d'Amore* for Melbourne Lyric Opera, and the role of Miss Wordsworth in *Albert Herring* for Operalive.

Her concert work includes performances as the soprano soloist in Mozart's *Requiem* for Melbourne Chorale, Mozart's *Coronation Mass* for Monash University, and Faure's *Requiem* for Qld Conservatorium.

Forthcoming performances include recitals in the festivals of Melbourne, Brisbane, Mildura and Macedon. A recital at the MLC Music Academy and an ABC Classic FM studio broadcast.

Claire Cooper studied with John Winther at the Canberra School of Music, and later at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. She spent five years as repetiteur and accompanist at the Victorian College of the Arts and is currently a member of staff at the Faculty of Music, University of Melbourne as an accompanist.

As a freelance pianist, Claire has worked extensively in Melbourne with the National Academy of Music, Symphony Australia, Melbourne Symphony, State Orchestra of Victoria, and Chamber Made Opera. She is an accomplished recitalist, and has performed in the Melbourne and Castlemaine Festivals, and has an extensive and wide-ranging repertoire.

Radio broadcasts include Young Australia Programme for ABC FM and an ABC live performance with mezzo Kirsten Boerema.

Claire shared the Musical Partnership Prize in 1998 with Blake Fischer in the City of Melbourne Song Recital Award (and they have recently recorded a compact disc of English Art Song).



Introductory notes: Dr Carol Williams
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Art Song is distinguished from other forms of singing by the close attention paid to the mood of the lyrics and the importance of the accompanying piano. It is an intimate and powerful art form bringing together poet, composer, pianist, singer and audience member. But the performance of Art Song is all too rare today. A concern to reverse the diminishing numbers of practitioners and audiences led to the creation of the Song Recital Award in 1995 by Mietta O'Donnell and Tony Knox under the patronage of the distinguished contralto Lauris Elms. Current committee members include Professor John Poynter, Stephen Dee, Margaret Haggart, Daniele Kemp, Hilary McPhee, Hartley Newnham, Linnhe Robertson, Mary Ryan, Joan Spiller and Maria Vandamme.

Melanie Duncan won the Award in 1999, as well as the Popular Choice award and shared in the Musical Partnership prize with her accompanist, Claire Cooper. Judges were Robert Rosen, John Dingle, David Miller, and chair, Professor John Poynter.



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