



Faculty Recital Series

2018–2019 Season

Sara M. Snell Music Theater

Wednesday, March 6, 7:30 PM

**Music for Tenor and Horn of
Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)**

Donald George, tenor
Lauren Becker, horn
Julie Miller, piano
Erin Brooks, narrator

Canticle III, “Still Falls the Rain”
for tenor, horn and piano, Op. 55 (1954)
The Raids, 1940, Night and Dawn, from “The Canticle of the Rose”

Edith Sitwell
(1887–1964)

The text is sung in the form of recitatives, culminating in a type of Sprechgesang at the moment where the poet quotes a phrase of Christopher Marlowe’s play *Doctor Faustus*. Between these recitatives, the horn and piano play interludes consisting of a theme and six variations, based on an atonal series of ten notes. The horn and tenor unite only at the very end, when the poem evokes the voice of God. Edith Sitwell had converted to Catholicism, so the poem is filled with evocations of Catholic theology, juxtaposed on visions of the bombings of London in WWII. She was considered extravagant and replied to critics: *I am not eccentric. It's just that I am more alive than most people. I am an unpopular electric eel set in a pond of catfish.*

Still Falls the Rain

Still falls the Rain—

Dark as the world of man, black as our loss—

Blind as the nineteen hundred and forty nails

Upon the Cross.

Still falls the Rain

With a sound like the pulse of the heart that is changed to the hammer-beat

In the Potter's Field, and the sound of the impious feet on the Tomb:

Still falls the Rain

In the Field of Blood where the small hopes breed and the human brain

Nurtures its greed, that worm with the brow of Cain.

Still falls the Rain

At the feet of the Starved Man hung upon the Cross.

Christ that each day, each night, nails there, have mercy on us—

On Dives and on Lazarus:

Under the Rain the sore and the gold are as one.

Still falls the Rain—

Still falls the Blood from the Starved Man's wounded Side:

He bears in His Heart all wounds,—those of the light that died,

The last faint spark

In the self-murdered heart, the wounds of the sad uncomprehending dark,

The wounds of the baited bear—

The blind and weeping bear whom the keepers beat

On his helpless flesh... the tears of the hunted hare.

Still falls the Rain—

Then— *O Ile leape up to my God: who pulles me doune—*

See, see where Christ's blood streames in the firmament:

It flows from the Brow we nailed upon the tree

Deep to the dying, to the thirsting heart

That holds the fires of the world, —dark-smirched with pain

As Caesar's laurel crown.

Then sounds the voice of One who like the heart of man

Was once a child who among beasts has lain—

“Still do I love, still shed my innocent light, my Blood, for thee.”

6. Sonnet

O soft embalmer of the still midnight,

Shutting, with careful fingers and benign,
Our gloom-pleas'd eyes, embower'd from the light,
Enshaded in forgetfulness divine:
O soothest Sleep! if so it please thee, close,
In midst of this thine hymn my willing eyes.
Or wait the "Amen" ere thy poppy throws
Around my bed its lulling charities.
Then save me, or the passèd day will shine

Upon my pillow, breeding many woes,
Save me from curious conscience, that still lords
Its strength for darkness, burrowing like a mole;
Turn the key deftly in the oilèd wards,
And seal the hushèd casket of my Soul.

Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings (Piano), Op. 31 (1943)

1. "Prologue" (horn solo, using only natural harmonics)

2. "Pastoral", *The Evening Quatrains* by Charles Cotton (1630–1687)
3. "Nocturne", *Blow, bugle, blow* by Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809–1892)
4. "Elegy", *The Sick Rose* by William Blake (1757–1827)
5. "Dirge", the anonymous *Lyke-Wake Dirge* (fifteenth century)
6. "Hymn", *Hymn to Diana* by Ben Jonson (1572–1637)
7. "Sonnet", *To Sleep* by John Keats (1795–1821)
8. "Epilogue" (horn solo; reprise of Prologue, played offstage)

This song cycle was written for Britten's companion, Peter Pears and the horn virtuoso, Dennis Brain. Beginning and ending with a horn solo played on natural harmonics (which sound flat or sharp to Western ears) which evoke a distant, primeval atmosphere, the *Serenade* is an extraordinary example of Britten's ability to set an anthology of texts bound together by a similar theme, in this case, the world of night, sleep and dreams. The twilight atmosphere that characterizes this beautiful and evocative work is offset by the two settings that form its centerpiece, the 'worm in the rose' of Blake's 'Elegy' and a nightmarish setting of the anonymous 15th-century 'Lyke-Wake Dirge' (Corpse-Wake Dirge), which is in an old form of the Yorkshire dialect.

1. Pastoral

The day's grown old; the fainting sun
Has but a little way to run,
And yet his steeds, with all his skill,
Scarce lug the chariot down the hill.
The shadows now so long do grow,
That brambles like tall cedars show;
Mole hills seem mountains, and the ant
Appears a monstrous elephant.
A very little, little flock
Shades thrice the ground that it would stock;
Whilst the small stripling following them
Appears a mighty Polypheme.
And now on benches all are sat,
In the cool air to sit and chat,
Till Phoebus, dipping in the west,
Shall lead the world the way to rest.

2. Nocturne

The splendour falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story:
The long light shakes across the lakes,
And the wild cataract leaps in glory:
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,

Bugle blow; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.
O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.
O love, they die in yon rich sky,
They faint on hill or field or river:
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow for ever and for ever.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

3. Elegy

O Rose, thou art sick!
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night
In the howling storm,
Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

4. Dirge

This ae nighte, this ae nighte,
Every nighte and alle,
Fire and fleet and candle-lighte,
And Christe receive thy saule.
When thou from hence away art past,
Every nighte and alle,
To Whinny-muir thou com'st at last;
And Christe receive thy saule.
If ever thou gavest hosen and shoon,
Every nighte and alle,
Sit thee down and put them on;
And Christe receive thy saule.
If hosen and shoon thou ne'er gav'st nane
Every nighte and alle,

The whinnes sall prick thee to the bare bane;
And Christe receive thy saule.
From Whinny-muir when thou may'st pass,
Every nighte and alle,
To Brig o'Dread thou com'st at last;
And Christe receive thy saule.
From Brig o' Dread when thou may'st pass,
Every nighte and alle,

To Purgatory fire thou com'st at last;
And Christe receive thy saule.
If ever thou gavest meat or drink,
Every nighte and alle,
The fire sall never make thee shrink;
And Christe receive thy saule.
If meat or drink thou ne'er gav'st nane,
Every nighte and alle,
The fire will burn thee to the bare bane;
And Christe receive thy saule.
This ae nighte, this ae nighte,
Every nighte and alle,
Fire and fleet and candle-lighte,
And Christe receive thy saule.

5. Hymn

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 wishèd 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