

## A Wall Between Two Gardens

Martha Guth, soprano | Erika Switzer, piano

Crépuscule ( <i>La chanson d'Ève</i> , 1910)	Fauré/Lerberghe
10 000 miles (2024)	Staniland/Trad.
<i>Wasting the Night</i> (1990)	Wheeler/Millay
Thursday	
Recuerdo	
I shall forget you	
Time does not bring relief	
The Betrothal	
Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt (1826)	Schubert/Goethe
Cantar marinero (2014)	Sierra/Burgos
Meeres Stille (1815)	Schubert/Goethe
Suleika I (1821)	Schubert/Willemer
Penelope (2014)	Livingston
Still ( <i>Silent Awakenings</i> , 2009)	Habibi
<i>Love, Loss, and Exile</i> (2022)	Bansal/Trad.
Love	
The Stoning Ground	
Grief	
Exile	
Tulip	
So lasst mich scheinen (1821)	Schubert/Goethe
an echo, and ending ( <i>unknown</i> , 2020)	Okpebholo/Amaker
Lob der Tränen (1818)	Schubert/Schlegel

The theme of longing and the title of tonight's concert stem from an aphorism in Khalil Gibran's *Sand and Foam* which more fully states: "Sadness is but a wall between two Gardens." Throughout, the recital features the juxtaposition of 19th, 20th, and 21st-century art songs offering similar perspectives. We open in the garden of Eden at the moment Eve loses both physical home and the safety of her illusions. Complementing this is a contemporary reimagining of a folk song where a young lover leaves home, full of naivete. In *Wasting the Night*, composer Scott Wheeler sets five poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay which depict the life cycle of a love affair. It ends with "The Betrothal," a heartbreaking poem of a woman who willingly chooses a loveless marriage, followed by Goethe's poem of longing, "Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt," set by Franz Schubert. In the third set,

the separation of lovers is imagined and physical – often with an ocean between them and certainly with nature intervening throughout. The last two sets focus more viscerally on love and the experiences of exile, war, and end of life. The recital concludes with Schubert’s setting of “Lob der Tränen,” in which Schlegel exhorts longing and tears as the mechanism of love’s transformation.

-Martha Guth

Program Note on *Love, Loss, and Exile*:

We don’t often think of poetry as rebellion, but the women of Afghanistan have built a tradition out of artistic defiance, of speaking in rhyme words they are forbidden in prose. In the Pashtun culture from the mountainous regions near Pakistan, girls and women share, compose, and speak landays – an oral tradition of short poems by and for women, passed down for generations from woman to woman and tribe to tribe. The anonymous nature of these poems allows them to speak the unspeakable – to talk frankly of sensual love and desire, of yearning to make choices, of girls wanting to be more than an adjunct to their fathers, brothers, and husbands. In a society where young girls are bartered to old men, where to choose where to love is to risk death, where girls are forbidden from education, the landays tell women’s stories in their own words, unfiltered and unchecked by the men’s voices that surround them. The texts chosen for this song cycle are only the tiniest smattering of a powerful tradition, but were chosen to highlight recurrent themes that appear in landays - love and desire, grief, exile, war, and yearning. While set for classical soprano with western instruments, the music pays homage to the origins of the poetry by calling for each musician to use a variety of timbres, modes and ornamentation that come from this style.

–Juhi Bansal

**Crépuscule** (Charles van Lerberghe)

Ce soir, à travers le bonheur,  
Qui donc soupire, qu’est-ce qui pleure?  
Qu’est-ce qui vient palpiter sur mon cœur,  
Comme un oiseau blessé?

Est-ce une voix future,  
Une voix du passé?  
J’écoute, jusqu’à la souffrance,  
Ce son dans le silence.

Île d’oubli, ô Paradis!  
Quel cri déchire, dans la nuit,  
Ta voix qui me berce?

Quel cri traverse  
Ta ceinture de fleurs,  
Et ton beau voile d’allégresse?

**Twilight** (Trans. Richard Stokes)

*This evening, amid the happiness,  
Who is it that sighs and what is it that weeps?  
What comes to flutter in my heart,  
Like a wounded bird?*

*Is it a premonition,  
A voice from the past?  
I listen, till it hurts,  
To that sound in the silence.*

*Isle of oblivion, O paradise!  
What cry in the night cracks  
Your voice that cradles me?*

*What cry pierces  
Your girdle of flowers,  
And your lovely veil of happiness?*

## 10 000 miles (Anon.)

Oh fare thee well I must be gone  
And leave you for a while.  
Wherever I go, I will return  
If I go ten thousand miles  
If I go, if I go ten thousand miles.

Oh the rivers never will run dry  
Or the rocks melt with the sun.  
I'll never be false to the boy I love  
'Til all, all these things be done  
'Til all, no 'til all these things be done.

Oh the crows that are so black my love  
Would turn their feathers to white,  
If ever I'm false to the boy I love  
The day would turn to night  
Yes, the day would turn to night.

## *Wasting the Night*

### 1. Thursday (Edna St. Vincent Millay)

And if I loved you Wednesday,  
Well, what is that to you?  
I do not love you Thursday—  
So much is true.

And why you come complaining  
Is more than I can see  
I loved you wednesday - yes  
But what is that to me?

### 2. Recuerdo (Millay)

We were very tired, we were very merry—  
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry.  
It was bare and bright, and smelled like a stable—  
But we looked into a fire, we leaned across a table,  
We lay on a hill-top underneath the moon;  
And the whistles kept blowing, and the dawn came soon.

We were very tired, we were very merry—  
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry;  
And you ate an apple, and I ate a pear,  
From a dozen of each we had bought somewhere;  
And the sky went wan, and the wind came cold,  
And the sun rose dripping, a bucketful of gold.

We were very tired, we were very merry,  
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry.  
We hailed, "Good morrow, mother!" to a shawl-covered head,  
And bought a morning paper, which neither of us read;  
And she wept, "God bless you!" for the apples and pears,  
And we gave her all our money but our subway fares.

### 3. I shall forget you (Millay)

I shall forget you presently, my dear,  
So make the most of this, your little day,  
Your little month, your little half a year  
Ere I forget, or die, or move away,  
And we are done forever; by and by  
I shall forget you, as I said, but now,  
If you entreat me with your loveliest lie  
I will protest you with my favorite vow.  
I would indeed that love were longer-lived,  
And vows were not so brittle as they are,  
But so it is, and nature has contrived  
To struggle on without a break thus far,—  
Whether or not we find what we are seeking  
Is idle, biologically speaking.

### 5. The Betrothal (Millay)

Oh, come, my lad, or go, my lad,  
And love me if you like!  
I hardly hear the door shut  
Or the knocker strike.

Oh, bring me gifts or beg me gifts,  
And wed me if you will!  
I'd make a man a good wife,  
Sensible and still.

And why should I be cold, my lad,  
And why should you repine,  
Because I love a dark head  
That never will be mine?

### Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe)

Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt  
Weiss, was ich leide!  
Allein und abgetrennt  
Von aller Freude,  
Seh' ich ans Firmament  
Nach jener Seite.  
Ach! der mich liebt und kennt  
Ist in der Weite.  
Es schwindelt mir, es brennt  
Mein Eingeweide.  
Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt  
Weiss, was ich leide!

### 4. Time does not bring relief (Millay)

Time does not bring relief; you all have lied  
Who told me time would ease me of my pain!  
I miss him in the weeping of the rain;  
I want him at the shrinking of the tide;  
The old snows melt from every mountain-side,  
And last year's leaves are smoke in every lane;  
But last year's bitter loving must remain  
Heaped on my heart, and my old thoughts abide.  
There are a hundred places where I fear  
To go,—so with his memory they brim.  
And entering with relief some quiet place  
Where never fell his foot or shone his face  
I say, "There is no memory of him here!"  
And so stand stricken, so remembering him.

I might as well be easing you  
As lie alone in bed  
And waste the night in wanting  
A cruel dark head!

You might as well be calling yours  
What never will be his,  
And one of us be happy;  
There's few enough as is.

### Only Those who know Longing (Trans. Richard Stokes)

*Only those who know longing  
Know what I suffer!  
Alone and cut off  
From every joy,  
I search the sky  
In that direction.  
Ah! he who loves and knows me  
Is far away.  
My head reels,  
My body blazes.  
Only those who know longing  
Know what I suffer!*

### **Cantar marinero** (Julia de Burgos)

¡Una vela!  
¡Una vela nadando en el mar!  
¿Es el mar que ha salido a mirarme,  
o es mi alma flotando en el mar?

¡Una ola en la vela!  
¡Una ola en la vela del mar!  
¿Es mi amor que se trepa en el viento,  
o es tu vida en las alas del mar?

¡Una vela! ¡Una ola! ¡Dos sueños  
entre el cielo y el pecho del mar!  
¿Es que el sol se ha calzado de espumas,  
o es que somos los brazos del mar?

¡Una vela! ¡Una ola! ¡Un naufragio  
en las blancas espaldas del mar!  
No hay un puerto que pueda alojarnos...  
¡Remaremos el barco del mar!

### **Meeres Stille** (Goethe)

Tiefe Stille herrscht im Wasser,  
Ohne Regung ruht das Meer,  
Und bekümmert sieht der Schiffer  
Glatte Fläche rings umher.  
Keine Luft von keiner Seite!  
Todesstille fürchterlich!  
In der ungeheuern Weite  
Reget keine Welle sich.

### **Sailor Song** (trans. Virginia Sierra)

*A sail!*  
*A sail floating in the sea!*  
*Is it the sea that's out to look at me,*  
*Or is it my soul floating in the sea?*

*A wave in the sail!*  
*A wave in the sail in the sea!*  
*Is it my love climbing to the wind,*  
*Or is it your life in the wings of the sea?*

*A sail! A wave! Two dreams*  
*Between the sky and the bosom of the sea!*  
*Is it that the sun wears shoes of foam,*  
*Or is it that we are the arms of the sea?*

*A sail! A wave! A shipwreck*  
*In the white shoulders of the sea!*  
*There is not a port that can shelter us...*  
*We will row on the boat of the sea.*

### **Sea Silence** (Trans. Stokes)

*Deep silence weighs on the water,*  
*Motionless the sea rests,*  
*And the fearful boatman sees*  
*A glassy surface all around.*  
*No breeze from any quarter!*  
*Fearful, deadly silence!*  
*In all that vast expanse*  
*Not a single ripple stirs.*

**Suleika I** (Marianne von Willemer)

Was bedeutet die Bewegung?  
Bringt der Ost mir frohe Kunde?  
Seiner Schwingen frische Regung  
Kühlt des Herzens tiefe Wunde.

Kosend spielt er mit dem Staube,  
Jagt ihn auf in leichten Wölkchen,  
Treibt zur sichern Rebenlaube  
Der Insekten frohes Völkchen.

Lindert sanft der Sonne Glühen,  
Kühlt auch mir die heissen Wangen,  
Küsst die Reben noch im Fliehen,  
Die auf Feld und Hügel prangen.

Und mir bringt sein leises Flüstern  
Von dem Freunde tausend Grüsse;  
Eh' noch diese Hügel düstern,  
Grüssen mich wohl tausend Küsse.

Und so kannst du weiterziehen!  
Diene Freunden und Betrübten.  
Dort wo hohe Mauern glühen,  
Dort find' ich bald den Vielgeliebten.

Ach, die wahre Herzenskunde,  
Liebeshauch, erfrishtes Leben  
Wird mir nur aus seinem Munde,  
Kann mir nur sein Atem geben.

**Suleika I** (Trans. Richard Wigmore)

*What does this stirring portend?  
Is the east wind bringing me joyful tidings?  
The refreshing motion of its wings  
cools the heart's deep wound.*

*It plays caressingly with the dust,  
throwing it up in light clouds,  
and drives the happy swarm of insects  
to the safety of the vine-leaves.*

*It gently tempers the burning heat of the sun,  
and cools my hot cheeks;  
even as it flies it kisses the vines  
that adorn the fields and hillsides.*

*And its soft whispering brings me  
a thousand greetings from my beloved;  
before these hills grow dark  
I shall be greeted by a thousand kisses.*

*Now you may pass on,  
and serve the happy and the sad;  
there, where high walls glon,  
I shall soon find my dearly beloved.*

*Ah, the true message of the heart,  
the breath of love, renewed life  
will come to me only from his lips,  
can be given to me only by his breath.*

**Penelope** (Cecilia Livingston)

What is it  
to be waiting?

What is it  
to be waiting  
for you?

Is it  
wanting?

Is it  
loving?

Is it  
moving through me like a fire?

Desire?

Is it  
loneliness in empty rooms?

Stillness...

Old-fashioned lovers kiss  
did they ever miss  
each other?

**Still** (Iman Habibi)

Still, but alive.  
By the grace of its dancing leaves,  
or the fallen.

Still,  
a relic of lost intellects,  
lingers over my green garden.

When will you come home to me?  
When will I bloom again?

Darling boy,  
I breathe the same salt air,  
the same sun on my hair.

When they see the boats  
from the headland  
they'll strike up the band!

Darling boy  
will you ever again  
hold my hand while we're sleeping?

What is it  
to be waiting?

What is it  
to be waiting  
for you?

Is it  
Loving?

Is it  
loneliness in empty rooms?

## Love Loss and Exile

(Pashto landay, trans. by Juhi Bansal)

### 1. Love

Your love is like water, like fire;  
The waves engulf me, the flames consume me.

### 2. The Stoning Ground

Mother come to the prison window  
Talk to me before they take me to the stoning ground

### 3. Grief

If my love dies let me be his shroud  
Together we will wed the dust

### 4. Exile

I hold a fading flower in my hand  
I do not know who to give it to in this strange land

### 5. Tulip

I'm like a tulip in the desert; I will die before I can open  
And the waves of desert wind will scatter my petals

## So lasst mich scheinen (Goethe)

So lasst mich scheinen, bis ich werde,  
Zieht mir das weisse Kleid nicht aus!  
Ich eile von der schönen Erde  
Hinab in jenes dunkle Haus.

Dort ruh' ich eine kleine Stille,  
Dann öffnet sich der frische Blick;  
Ich lasse dann die reine Hülle,  
Den Gürtel und den Kranz zurück.

Und jene himmlischen Gestalten  
Sie fragen nicht nach Mann und Weib,  
Und keine Kleider, keine Falten  
Umgeben den verklärten Leib.

Zwar lebt' ich ohne Sorg' und Mühe,  
Doch fühlt' ich tiefen Schmerz genug.  
Vor Kummer altert' ich zu frühe;  
Macht mich auf ewig wieder jung!

## Thus let me seem (Trans. Richard Wigmore)

*Thus let me seem till thus I become.  
Do not take off my white dress!  
I shall swiftly leave the fair earth  
for that dark dwelling place below.*

*There, for a brief silence, I shall rest;  
then my eyes shall open afresh.  
Then I shall leave behind this pure raiment,  
this girdle and this rosary.*

*And those heavenly beings  
do not ask who is man or woman,  
and no garments, no folds  
enclose the transfigured body.*

*True, I lived free from care and toil,  
yet I knew much deep suffering.  
Too soon I grew old with grief;  
make me young again forever!*



**an echo, and ending** (Marcus Amaker)

If death has a sound then I am now its echo,  
Silence will soon pass through me  
And I will remember  
that I was made to have an ending.  
And war, with its infinite resonance  
Also has boundary.  
I am far from my family, I will soon be home...

**Lob der Tränen** (August Wilhelm von Schlegel)

Laue Lüfte,  
Blumendüfte,  
Alle Lenz- und Jugendlust;  
Frischer Lippen  
Küsse nippen,  
Sanft gewiegt an zarter Brust;  
Dann der Trauben  
Nektar rauben,  
Reihentanz und Spiel und Scherz:  
Was die Sinnen  
Nur gewinnen:  
Ach, erfüllt es je das Herz?

Nicht mit süßen  
Wasserflüssen  
Zwang Prometheus unsern Leim:  
Nein, mit tränen,  
Drum im Sehnen  
Und im Schmerz sind wir daheim.  
Bitter schwellen  
Diese quellen  
Für den erdumfangnen Sinn,  
Doch sie drängen  
Aus den Engen  
In das Meer der Liebe hin.

**In praise of tears** (Trans. Richard Wigmore)

*Warm breezes,  
fragrant flowers,  
all the pleasures of spring and youth;  
sipping kisses  
from fresh lips,  
lulled gently on a tender breast;  
then stealing nectar  
from the grapes,  
dancing, games and banter:  
what the senses alone  
can obtain:  
ah, does it ever satisfy the heart?*

*Prometheus did not  
force our glue  
with sweet rivers of water:  
no, with tears,  
therefore in longing  
and in pain we are home.  
These springs  
swell bitterly  
for the earth-wide sense,  
but they push  
out of the narrows  
into the sea of love.*