

Sine Nomine Vocal Ensemble

Rebecca Hiatt McConnaughey, *soprano*
Sangeetha Rayapati, *soprano*
Rebecca Turner, *soprano*
Gregory Aune, *tenor*
Stafford Turner, *bass baritone*

Assisted by
Michael Acord, *clarinet*
Miko Kominami, *piano*
Eric Kutz, *cello*
Katherine Vogeles, *flute*
Esther Wang, *piano*

Wednesday, July 10, 2002, 7:30 p.m.

Four Fragments from *The Canterbury Tales*

- I. Prologue
- II. A Knyght
- III. A Young Squier
- IV. The Wyf of Biside Bathe

Lester Trimble
(b. 1923)
text by Geoffrey Chaucer
(1343-1400)

Sangeetha Rayapati, *soprano*
Michael Acord, *clarinet*
Katherine Vogeles, *flute*
Esther Wang, *piano*

“C”

Bleuet
Hôtel from *Banalités*
Voyage à Paris from *Banalités*
Fleurs from *Fiançailles pour rire*

Francis Poulenc
(1899-1963)
text by Louis Aragon
(1897-1982)
text by Guillaume Apollinaire
(1880-1918)

text by Louis di Vilmorin

Rebecca Turner, *soprano*
Esther Wang, *piano*

Mercy
Stones
Shelter

André Previn
(b. 1929)
text by Toni Morrison
(b. 1931)

Rebecca Hiatt McConnaughey, *soprano*
Miko Kominami, *piano*
Eric Kutz, *cello*

Ella giammai m'amo from *Don Carlo*

Giuseppe Verdi
(1813-1901)

Stafford Turner, *bass baritone*
Eric Kutz, *cello*
Rebecca Turner, *piano*

Der Abend, Op. 64, No. 2

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)
text by Friedrich von Schiller
(1759-1805)
Jule Styne
(1905-1994)

People from *Funny Girl*

Sangeetha Rayapati, *soprano*
Rebecca Hiatt McConnaughey, *alto*
Gregory Aune, *tenor*
Stafford Turner, *bass*
Rebecca Turner, *piano*

Composer and music critic **Lester Trimble** was born in 1923 in Bangor, Wisconsin. Throughout his youth he studied violin and composition, but his early dreams of becoming a concert violinist were ended by the onset of arthritis. Encouraged by Arnold Schönberg, to whom he had sent several early scores, Trimble spent the summer of 1951 studying at Tanglewood with Darius Milhaud. He later traveled to Paris and continued studies with Milhaud and Arthur Honegger. Upon his return to America, he was engaged by Virgil Thomson to write criticism for the New York Herald Tribune. In 1963, he began teaching composition at the University of Maryland and in 1971 joined the faculty of the Juilliard School.

Four Fragments from The Canterbury Tales (1958) was the first of many chamber works that Trimble wrote involving harpsichord. In these songs the use of instrumental color and rhythmic variety is distinctive, but perhaps the most striking aspect of the work is the Middle English text of Geoffrey Chaucer's 14th century classic, *The Canterbury Tales*. As a note for the performer, Trimble has written that "as with the language of Shakespeare, we do not really know in every detail how Middle English sounded. Scholarly research has given us a good idea. But the aim in these songs is to provide pleasure, not scholarly instruction." Although many words are recognizable by sight as identical or similar to their modern English equivalents, one's ear will discern that words spelled the same often do not sound the same, giving a distinct feeling of listening to a "foreign" language.

Prologe

Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote
The drougte of March hath perced to the roote
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth

The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
 Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne;
 And smale foweles maken melodye
 That slepen al the nyght with open ye
 (So priketh hem nature in hir corges)...
 Bifil that in that seson on a day,
 In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay,
 Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage
 To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,
 At nyght was come into that hostelrye
 Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye
 Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle
 In felawshipe, and pilgrimmes were they alle,
 That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde...
 And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,
 So hadde I spoken with hem everichon,
 That I was of hir felawshipe anon,...
 But...er that I ferther in this tale pace,
 Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun
 To telle yow al the condicioun
 Of ech of hem,...
 And at a knyght than wol I first bigynne.

Prologue

When that April with his sweet showers
 the drought of March had pierced to the root
 and bathed every vein in such liquor
 of which engendered virtue is the flower.
 When Zephirus also with his sweet breath
 has inspired in every holt and heath
 the tender crops, and the young sun
 has in the Ran (Zodiac) his half course run;
 and small fowls make melody
 that sleep all the night with open eye
 (so nature spurs him in these spirits)...
 Befell that in that season on a day,
 in Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay,
 ready to go on my pilgrimage
 to Canterbury with full devout courage,
 at night came inot that hostelry
 full twenty-nine in a company
 of sundry folk, by adventure fell
 in fellowship, and pilgrims were they all
 that toward Canterbury would ride...
 and shortly, when the sun was to rest,
 so had I spoken with them everyone,
 that I was of their fellowship anon,
 But... before I further in this tale proceed,
 I think it accordant to reason
 to tell you all the condition
 of each of the,...
 And at a knight then will I first begin

A Knyght

A Knyght ther was, and that a worthy man,
That fro the tyme that he first bigan
To riden out, he loved chivalrye,
Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye.
Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
And therto hadde he riden, no man ferre,
As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse,
And evere honoured for his worthynesse...
And though that he were worthy, he was wys,
And of his port as meeke as is a mayde.
He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde
In al his lyf unto no maner wight.
He was a verray parfit gentil knight...
Of fustian he wered a gypon,
Al bismotered with his habergeon,
For he was late ycome from his viage,
And wente for to doon his pilgrimage.

A Knight

A Knight there was, and a worthy man,
that from the time that he first began
to ride out, he loved chivalry,
truth and honor, freedom and courtesy.
Full worthy was he in his lord's war,
and therefore had he ridden, no man farther,
as well in Christendom as in heathenism.
And ever honored for his worthiness...
and though he was worthy, he was wise,
and of his bearing as meek as a maid.
He never yet any villainy said
in all his life unto no man wished.
He was a very perfect gentle knight...
First he wore a short vest,
all soiled with his coat of mail,
for he was lately come from his voyage,
and went to do his pilgrimage.

A Yong Squier

...a young squier...he was
A lovyere and a lusty bachelor,
With lokkes crulle as they were leyd in presse.
Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.
Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,
And wonderly delyvere, and of greet strengthe...
Embrouded was he, as it were a meede,
Al ful of fresshe floures whyte and reede.
Syngynge he was, or floytynge, al the day;
He was as fressh as is the month of May.
Short was his gowne, with sleeves long and wyde.
Wel koude he sit on hors and faire ryde.

He koude songes make and wel endite,
Juste and eek daunce...
So hoot he lovede that by nyghtertale
He sleep namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale.
La la la...

A Young Squier

...a young squire...he was
a lover and a lusty bachelor,
with locks curled as if they were laid in presses.
Of twenty years of age he was, I guess.
Of his stature he was of average length,
and wondrously adroit, and of great strength...
Embroidered was his dress, as if it were a mead,
all full of fresh flowers white and red.
Singing he was, or fluting, all the day;
he was as fresh as the month of May.
Short was his gown, with sleeves long and wide.
Well could he sit on a horse and fairly ride.
He could songs make and well engage in tournaments,
joust and also dance...
So hotly he loved that by nighttime
he sleeps no more than a nightingale.
La la la...

The Wyf of Biside Bathe

Experience, though noon auctoritee
Were in this world, is right ynogh for me
To speke of wo that is in marriage.
For, lordynges, sith I twelve yeer was of age,
Thonked be God...
Housbondes at chirche door I have had fyve,...
And alle were worthy men in hir degree.
But me was toold,...nat longe agoon is,
That sith that Crist ne wente nevere but onis...
That I ne sholde wedded be but ones...
Biside a welle, Jhesus, God and man,
Spak in repreve of the Samaritan:
"Thou hast yhad fyve housbondes," quod he,
"And that ilke man that now hath thee
Is noght thyn housbonde;" thus seyde he, certeyn...
But that I axe why that the fifthe man
Was noon housbonde to the Samaritan?
How manye myghte she have in marriage?...
God bad us for to wexe and multiplye.
That gentil text kan I wel understonde.
Eek wel I woot, he sayde myn housbonde
Sholde letet fader and mooder and tak to me;
But of no nombre mencion made he,
Of bigamye or of octogamye;
Why sholde men thane speke of it vileynye?

The Wife of Bath

Experience, though no authoritative text
is there in this world, is enough for me
to speak of what that is in marriage.
For, lord, since I was twelve years of age,
thanked be God...
husbands at the church door I have had five,...
and all were worthy men in some degree.
But I was told,...not long ago,
that since Christ never went but once...
that I should not be wedded but once...
Beside a well, Jesus, God and man,
spoke in reproach of the Samaritan:
“You have had five husbands,” said he,
“and that man that now has you
is not your husband;” thus said he, certain...
but then I asked why that the fifth man
was no husband to the Samaritan?
How many might she have in marriage?
God bade us to waxe and multiply.
That noble text can I well understand.
Also I would do well, he said, if my husband
should leave father and mother and come to me;
but of no number (of husbands) did he make mention,
of bigamy or of octogamy (eight!);
Why should men then speak of it as villainy?

“C”

One of Poulenc's best known melodies, “C” is thus entitled because in French this letter is pronounced “cé”, and every line of the poem rhymes with the ending “cé”. This song recalls the dark days of 1940 and the tragic exodus of the French population as it fled before the invading forces.

J'ai traversé les pont de Cé
C'est la que tout a commencé
Une chanson des temps passés
Parle d'un chevalier blessé

D'une rose sur la chaussée
Et d'un corsage délacé
Du château d'un duc insensé
Et de cygnes dans les fossés

De la prairie où vient danser
Une éternelle fiancée
Et j'ai bu comme un lait glacé
Le long lai des gloires faussées.

La Loire emporte mes pensées
Avec les voitures versées

Et les armes désa morcées
Et les larmes mal effacées

Oma France, ô ma délaissées
J'ai traversé les ponts de Cé.

“C”

I have crossed the bridges of Cé
It is there that it all began
A song of bygone days
tells of a wounded knight

of a rose on the carriage way
and an unlaced bodice
of the castle of a mad duke
and swans on the moats

of the meadow where comes dancing
an eternal betrothed
and I drank like iced milk
the long lay of false glories.

The Loire carries my thoughts away
with the overturned cars
and the unprimed weapons
and the ill-dried tears.

O my France, o my forsaken one
I have crossed the bridges of Cé.

Bleuet

This song, written in 1939, is a play on the word “Bleuet” (Cornflower/Young Soldier), as young soldiers wore blue. The narrator speaks to a young soldier of just twenty years, asking him if he is truly aware of not only what he has witnessed, but what he has experienced. As the clock turns five in the afternoon, the young soldier is dying and we are returned to the “sweetness of former day, slow moving beyond all memory” with the “taps” theme in the piano.

Jeune homme de vingt ans
qui as vu des choses si affreuses
que penses tu des hommes de ton enfance?
Tu connais la bravoure et la ruse,
tu as vu la mort en face plus de cent fois
tu ne sais pas ce que c'est que la vie.

Transmets ton intrépidité
A ceux qui viendront après toi.
Jeune homme, tu es joyeux,
ta mémoire est ensanglantée,
Ton âme est rouge aussi de joie.

Tu as absorbé la vie
de ceux qui sont morts près de toi.

Tu as de la decision.
Il est dix septheures es tu saurais mourir,
Si non mieux que tes aînés,
du moins plus pieusement,
car tu connais mieux la mort que la vie.
O douceur d'autrefois lenteur immémoriale.

Cornflower/Young Soldier

Young man of twenty years
you have seen such terrible things
What do you think of the men of your childhood?
You have seen bravery and cunning,
you have seen death face to face a hundred times
You do not know what life is.

Hand on your fearlessness
to those who come before you.
Young man you are full of joy,
your memory is steeped in blood.
Your soul is red with joy.

You have absorbed the life
of those who die beside you.
You have resolution.
It is seventeen o'clock (5 p.m.) and you would know how to die
if not better than your elders
at least with more piety
for you know death better than life.
O sweetness of former day, slow moving beyond all memory.

Hôtel

According to Pierre Bernac, this is "the laziest song ever written." But do not be fooled-it is still a song of happiness. The poet is sitting in his Parisian hotel room, with a ray of sunshine beaming through the window; and all he wants to do is smoke!

Ma chambre a la forme d'une cage
le soleil passe son bras
par la fenêtre
mais moi qui veux fumer
pour faire des mirages
j'alume au feu du jour ma cigarette.
Je ne veux pas travailler-
je veux fumer.

Hotel

My room is shaped like a cage
the sun puts its arm
through the window
but I who would like to smoke,
to make smoke pictures,
I light my cigarette by the fire of day.
I do not want to work-

I want to smoke.

Voyage à Paris

These verses, set in a “valse-musette,” as played in popular dance halls in Paris, are indicative of the poet’s longing for the gaiety of the city’s lifestyle.

Ah! la charmante chose
quitter un pays morose
pour Paris, Paris joli.
Q’un jour du créer l’Amour!

Voyage to Paris

Ah! how charming
to leave a dreary place
for Paris, delightful Paris,
that once upon a time love must have created!

Fleurs

This is a setting of the poem in which a woman is burning souvenirs of a faded love—flowers brought by this love in the winter, powdered with sand. The mingling of the vocal line and the melody in the piano is one of Poulenc’s greatest compositional traits. This song exemplifies such mingling and shows the depth of his genius.

Fleurs promises,
fleurs tenues dans tes bras,
fleurs sorties des parenthèses d’un pas.
Qui t’apportait ces fleurs l’hiver
sau poudrées du sable des mers?
Sable de tes baisers,
fleurs des amours famées
les beaux yeux sont de cendre
et dans la cheminée
Un cœur enrubanné de larmes.
Brûle avec ses images saintes.

Promised flowers,
flowers held in your arms,
flowers sprung from the parenthesis of a step*
who brought you these flowers in winter
powdered with the sand of the seas?
Sand of your kisses,
flowers of faded loves
the beautiful eyes are ashes
and in the fireplace
a heart beribboned with sighs
burns with its treasured pictures.

*the shape made by a footprint in the sand

Mercy

I could watch
heads

turn from the traveler's look
the camera's probe
bear the purity of their
shame
hear mute desolation in syllables
ancient as
death.
I could do these things
if
only if only
I knew that when milk
spills
and hearts stop
underheel
some small thing gone
chill
is right
to warm toward a touch because
mercy
lies in wait
like a shore.
Mercy
mercy
mercy
like a shore.

Stones

I don't need no man
telling me I ain't one.
My trigger finger strong
as his on a shot gun.
Buttercake and roses smooth
stones in my bed.
Handmade quilts cover
stones in my bed
I don't need no man
telling me I ain't one.
My backbone ain't like his
but least I got one.
High-heeled slippers break
stones in my bed.
Games played at night trick
stones in my bed.
Stones.
I don't need no man
telling me.

Shelter

In this soft place
Under your wings
I will find shelter
From ordinary things.

Here are the mountains
I want to scale
Amazon rivers
I'm dying to sail.

Here the eyes of the forest
I can hold in a stare
And smile the movement
Of Medusa's green hair.

In this soft place
Under your wings
I will find shelter
From ordinary things.

Ella giammai m'amo!...

As the curtain rises on Act 3 of Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Don Carlo*, King Philip is seated at his desk. It is just before daybreak, and he has spent the night coming to terms with the troubles of his politically arranged marriage to Elizabeth, the queen. She is less than half his age and was betrothed to his own son, Carlo, before the union was announced. Despite all of his yearning, Philip accepts that she does not and will never love him.

Ella giammai m'amò!
No, quell cor chiuso è a me,
amor per me non hal
Io la rivedo ancor
contemprar triste in volto
il mio crin bianco il dì
che qui di Francia venne.
No, amor per me non ha,

(coming back to himself)

Ove son?... Quei dopier
presso a finir!... L'aurora imbianca
il mio veron!
Già spunta il dì! Passar veggo
i miei giorni lenti!
Il sonno, o Dio! Spari
dai miei occhi languenti!
Dormirò sol nel manto mio regal

quando la mia giornata
è giunta a sera,
dormirò sol sotto la vòlta nera,
là, nell'avello dell'Escorial.
Se il serto regal a me
desse il poter
di leggere nei cor,
che Dio può sol veder!...
Se dorme il prence,

veglia il traditore;
il serto perde il re,
il consorte l'onore!

She never loved me

She never loved me!
No, her heart is closed to me,
she doesn't love me!
I still recall
how sad she looked
when she saw my white hair
the day she arrived from France.
No she does not love me.

translated by Guia Monti

(coming back to himself)

Where am I? Those candles
about to die! Dawn whitens
my balcony!
The day has begun! I see my days slowly draw out
Sleep, oh God! vanished
from my languishing eyes!
I will sleep alone, wrapped up in my regal mantle
when my day
has come to an end,
I will sleep alone under the dark vault
there, in the tomb in the Escorial.
If the royal crown
could give me the power
to read into the hearts
that only God can see!
If the Prince sleeps,
the traitor is awake;
the King loses the crown
and the husband his honour!

Der Abend

Senke, strahlender Gott,
die Fluren dürsten
nach erquickendem Tau,
der Mensch verschmachtet,
mutter ziehen die Rosse,
senke den Wagen hinab.

Siehe, wer aus des Meers
krystallner Woge
lieblich lächelnd der Winkt!
Erkennt dein Herg sie?
Rascher fliegen die Rosse,
Thetys, die göttliche, winkt.

Schnell vom Wagen herab

in ihre Arme springt der Führer,
den Zaum ergreift Cupido,
stille halten die Rosse,
trinken die kühlende Flut.

An dem Himmel herauf
mit leisen Schritten
kommt die duftende Nacht,
ihr folgt die süsse Liebe.
Ruhet und liebet!
Phöbus, der liebende ruht.

The Evening

Sink, shining God of the sun,
the fields thirst
for the quickening dew,
man languishes,
weary, straining horses
sink with the wagon.

See, who from the sea's
crystal wave
sweetly, laughingly calls!
she knows your heart?
Swiftly fly the horses,
Thetis, the beautiful, calls.

Quickly down from the wagon
into her arms springs the leader,
Cupid takes the reins,
quietly halt the horses,
drinking from the cool river.

In the heavens above
with gentle step
comes the fragrance of night,
it follows the sweetest love.
Resting and loving!
Phoebus, the loving one, rests.