



AMERICAN OPERA CLASSICS



TOM CIPULLO

The Parting

Music of Remembrance



Tom Cipullo (b. 1956), Composer
David Mason (b. 1954), Librettist

The Parting (2019) 65:13

Fanni Laura Strickling, Soprano 1 4–6 8 9 11–13
Death Catherine Cook, Mezzo-soprano 1–4 6 8–10 12 13
Miklós Michael Mayes, Baritone

Music of Remembrance

Zart Dombourian-Eby, Flute • Laura DeLuca, Clarinet

Mikhail Shmidt, Violin • Walter Gray, Cello • Jessica Choe, Piano

Alastair Willis, Conductor

1	I labor so hard, searching this age we're in ...	9:17
2	You already know what you think.	5:00
3	This is the third time they've called me up.	1:56
4	How will you use the time?	6:58
5	In your two arms, back and forth ...	2:55
6	I love that poem.	6:09
7	Her letters come to me.	1:38
8	My love, the summer passes ...	8:17
9	Interlude – I can no longer either die or live without you.	5:03
10	I toppled next to him, his body flipped, stiff already ...	2:31
11	I lived on Earth in an era such as this ...	4:01
12	I've grown to hate the world, a sin.	5:06
13	The moon sways ...	6:20

Commissioned by Music of Remembrance, Mina Miller, Artistic Director

Tom Cipullo (b. 1956) and David Mason (b. 1954)

The Parting (2019)

World premiere: 19 May, 2019, Benaroya Hall, Seattle, WA, at Music of Remembrance's Holocaust Remembrance concert. *The Parting* was commissioned by Music of Remembrance (MOR) and made possible through the generous support of the National Endowment for the Arts, and Music of Remembrance's Commissioning Circle. The opera is dedicated to Mina Miller, MOR's founder and artistic director.

Opera offers a uniquely compelling vehicle for reaching people's hearts in a visceral way with stories that the world needs to hear. *The Parting* is Tom Cipullo and David Mason's second opera commission from Music of Remembrance. Their 2015 *After Life* imagined a dramatic confrontation between the ghosts of Gertrude Stein and Pablo Picasso over the role of art and artists in a troubled world. That work received the National Opera Association's prestigious Dominick Argento Chamber Opera Award.

The Parting tells the story of the great Hungarian poet Miklós Radnóti, one of the most important poetic witnesses to the Holocaust. Radnóti was a distinctive figure in Budapest's literary and intellectual circles between the World Wars. Conscripted for slave labor because of his Jewish heritage, Radnóti was murdered on a death march. When his body was exhumed from a mass grave after the war, his jacket pocket revealed a notebook with poems chronicling what he'd experienced. Those verses, ranging from tender poems to the wife he would never see again to gruesome depictions of the barbarity he had witnessed, stand among the most powerful and harrowing works of Holocaust literature.

The Parting takes us to the evening of May 19, 1944, exactly 75 years before the opera's world premiere in Seattle. Having to report the following day for his third call for forced labor and almost certain death, Radnóti shares his final evening together with his wife Fanni and is forced to ponder why we are given life: "To learn what love is. To love. To make beautiful things. To die." The work is a profound meditation on what it is about art that outlives us

and that can enable one to create even in the face of unimaginable adversity.

"They say in the dream of life, the hopeful are always with us," *The Parting* tells us. We cannot restore the lives that were destroyed in the Holocaust, nor can we fathom the unrealized creative potential of the composers and other artists among the uncountable people who perished. Sadly, our world today is threatened by many forms of inhumanity. We hope that this masterful work by Tom Cipullo and David Mason can remind us, in some small way, to guard against the rise of hatred, and to celebrate what makes us human.

Mina Miller

"You have never to look far to see that for some evil is right next door."

These lines, from the opening monologue of David Mason's libretto, haunted me throughout the many months I spent composing *The Parting*. Perhaps it's our nation's current political and social climate, but in this disappointing time of xenophobia, increased racism, shocking anti-Semitism, divisiveness, and ever-growing tribalism, David's words seemed more accurate than at any other point in my lifetime.

What does it look like, this evil next door? More importantly for a composer charged with creating a new opera, what does it sound like? Picture an apartment in Hungary in the second quarter of the 20th century. Music from next door comes through the window. Perhaps it's a young girl singing a folk melody, or a husband and wife playing a four-hand work by Stephen Heller, Emánuel Moór, or any of the lesser-known Romantics. The music is tuneful, straightforward, even common. If there truly is, in the famous phrase of Hannah Arendt, a "banality of evil," might this be the sound of it – this narrow melody followed by a simple sequence, floating on the air from our neighbor's home?

It is this familiar but unplaceable music – a ghostly music from some other time and place – that is the foundation of the opera’s score. The theme that starts off the work first appears in its simplest statement, but soon becomes corrupted, presented with wayward pitches, rhythmic changes, odd voicings, and extremes of range and dynamics.

If history teaches us anything, it’s that both poetry and love have a way of outlasting evil. In one of the most moving moments in the libretto, Death teaches Radnóti why we live. “To learn what love is. To love. To make beautiful things. To die.” In the final ensemble, the original theme returns, but now transformed into something different. Is it hopeful? We have the poetry, after all. But this theme is also a warning, whispering, as in the words of Miklós Radnóti – “I lived on Earth in an era such as this ...”

Tom Cipullo



Miklós Radnóti, 1930

Asked to find a new subject for an opera, I immediately thought of the great Hungarian poet Miklós Radnóti, who was three times sent to forced labor camps during the war. In November 1944, exhausted and sick after a forced march from Serbia, Radnóti was among some 20 prisoners executed by Hungarian guards, their bodies dumped in a mass grave. On the one hand, this story seems unrelentingly dark. Yet there is a

miracle contained within it. When his body was exhumed a year later, a bloodied notebook containing Radnóti’s last poems was found in his overcoat. Poetry had somehow survived annihilation. Songs came from a dead man’s coat.

What is it about art that outlives us? Why do we continue to create even in the face of conditions that cause others to despair and give in? These are the questions I have explored in several libretti for *Music of Remembrance*. Radnóti’s poems are sometimes delightful evocations of the condition of being alive, sometimes relentless scenes of human cruelty. The range of emotions he expressed, from love and enchantment to absolute loss, presents a fully human existence pushing back against the darkness.

After several attempts, I found a dramatic structure to express all this, making use of a few of Radnóti’s poems (in versions based on translations by John Ridland and Peter V. Czipott). I chose May 19, 1944, the final night Radnóti would ever spend with his beloved wife, Fanni (who actually died at 102 in 2014, leaving behind diaries I have read in part, with Peter Czipott’s help). Events of this night occur within two kinds of time – the literal time of biography and the clock-less time inhabited by both death and poetry. We find Mik (as he is nicknamed) and Fif (as he sometimes called Fanni), packing and preparing for his departure to the final camp. They are Jews who converted to Catholicism, and their marriage has survived his infidelity.

The drama is a dance with a character representing a sort of angel of death, in which ordinary human love takes on one kind of reality, while the life of poetry takes on another. When Radnóti asks “Why do I live?”, the angel answers: “To learn what love is. To love. / To make beautiful things. To die.” The opera ends with the three figures singing together one of Radnóti’s most famous, strangely life-affirming poems. But we know how he will end. We know what it means to create in this space suspended between life and death.

David Mason

Tom Cipullo



Photo: Richard Gargiulo

Praised by the American Academy of Arts and Letters for his operas, composer Tom Cipullo is the winner of a 2012 Guggenheim Fellowship, the 2013 Sylvia Goldstein Award from Copland House, and the 2013 Arts and Letters Award from the American Academy. With librettist David Mason, he created *After Life* for *Music of Remembrance* in 2015. That dramatic depiction of a confrontation between the ghosts of Gertrude Stein and Pablo Picasso received the National Opera Association’s prestigious Dominick Argento Chamber Opera Award. Cipullo’s breakout opera *Glory Denied* (2007) was based on the true story of the Vietnam veteran who was America’s longest-held prisoner of war. www.tomcipullo.net

David Mason



Photo: Christine Mason

Librettist David Mason created remarkably insightful libretti for two of *Music of Remembrance*’s earlier commissions, Tom Cipullo’s *After Life*, and Lori Laitman’s oratorio *Vedem*. Mason has published several collections of poems and essays, and his verse novel *Ludlow* was named best poetry book of the year by *Contemporary Poetry Review*. Mason’s writing has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Harper’s Magazine*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Times Literary Supplement* and many other major publications.

Laura Strickling



Photo: Arthur Moeller

Soprano Laura Strickling joined Music of Remembrance for the first time as the poet Miklós Radnóti's wife Fanni in *The Parting*. Praised by *The New York Times*, Strickling has performed at Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Wigmore Hall, Ravinia Music Festival, Tanglewood Music Festival, the Afghanistan National Institute of Music, and Liederfest in Suzhou, China. A champion of Tom Cipullo's music, she has recorded several of his song cycles and vocal chamber works. www.laurastrickling.com

Catherine Cook



Mezzo-soprano Catherine Cook has excelled in a wide range of roles with leading opera companies throughout the US, including the LA Opera and Houston Grand Opera. In 2018 she appeared in the Metropolitan Opera's broadcast of Thomas Adès's *The Exterminating Angel*. Cook has appeared in over 50 productions in more than 300 performances, including the title role in the world premiere of Tobias Picker's *Dolores Claiborne* and the world premiere of Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*. She has appeared with Music of Remembrance in Cipullo's *After Life*, and Heggie's *Out of Darkness*.

Michael Mayes



Known for his consummate portrayals of emotionally complex characters, baritone Michael Mayes stunned London audiences with his critically acclaimed performance as Joseph de Rocher in the UK premiere of Jake Heggie's opera *Dead Man Walking* alongside Joyce DiDonato at London's Barbican Hall. He made his European debut at the Teatro Real, Madrid in the same opera, and has performed the role with multiple opera houses, including Washington National Opera and The Atlanta Opera. Mayes also appeared with Music of Remembrance in the world premiere of Heggie's *Out of Darkness*. www.michaelmayesbaritone.com

Jessica Choe



Pianist Jessica Choe has won numerous prizes, and has performed at prestigious venues such as Lincoln Center and in Europe. She was a recipient of the 2003 Presser Foundation Award and gave her 2004 Carnegie Hall debut under the auspices of La Gesse Foundation. An avid chamber musician, she has collaborated with artists such as Alexei Lubimov and Philippe Quint, and performed in the Seattle Symphony Chamber Series [untitled] and Vashon Chamber Series among others. Choe is a graduate of the Peabody Conservatory and The Juilliard School.

Laura DeLuca



Photo: Larey McDaniel

Clarinetist Laura DeLuca has been a member of the Seattle Symphony since 1986 and the Seattle Chamber Players since its founding in 1989. A frequent performer with Music of Remembrance since its inaugural season, she appeared on Jake Heggie's *For a Look or a Touch* (8.559379), Paul Schoenfield's *Camp Songs* and *Ghetto Songs* (8.559641), Lori Laitman's *Vedem* (8.559685), Heggie's *Out of Darkness* (8.559770), and Tom Cipullo's *After Life* (8.669036). She was the solo clarinetist in the Academy Award-winning documentaries *The Long Way Home* and *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport*.

Zart Dombourian-Eby



Photo: Larey McDaniel

Flutist Zart Dombourian-Eby is principal piccolo of the Seattle Symphony. She has given masterclasses and concerts throughout the country and has performed with numerous US orchestras, including the Chicago Symphony. She appeared on Jake Heggie's *For a Look or a Touch* (8.559379) and *Out of Darkness* (8.559770). Her solo album, *In Shadow, Light*, was released on Crystal Records, and her edition of the three Vivaldi *Piccolo Concertos* is published by Theodore Presser. She is a graduate of Northwestern University.

Walter Gray

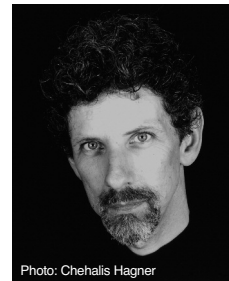


Photo: Chehalis Hagner

Cellist Walter Gray has been a member of the Seattle Symphony for four decades. A founding member of the Kronos Quartet and the new music ensemble Quake, he produced and performed on *Chinary Ung – Seven Mirrors* (New World Records). He can also be heard on Music of Remembrance's recording of Paul Schoenfield's *Camp Songs* and *Ghetto Songs* (8.559641), Lori Laitman's *Vedem* (8.559685), Jake Heggie's *Out of Darkness* (8.559770), and Tom Cipullo's *After Life* (8.669036).

Mikhail Shmidt

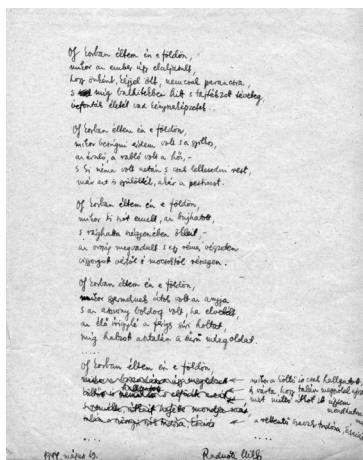


Photo: Jim Hsu

Violinist Mikhail Shmidt received his Master's degree from the Gnessin Russian Academy of Music and has been a member of the Seattle Symphony since 1990. He has performed with the Moscow State Symphony Orchestra and as concertmaster of the Camerata Boccherini, and has recorded for Melodiya and Erato. A central artistic participant with Music of Remembrance since its inception, Shmidt can be heard on Jake Heggie's *For a Look or a Touch* (8.559379) and *Out of Darkness* (8.559770), Paul Schoenfield's *Camp Songs* and *Ghetto Songs* (8.559641), Lori Laitman's *Vedem* (8.559685), and Tom Cipullo's *After Life* (8.669036).

Music of Remembrance

Music of Remembrance (MOR) is a non-profit organization founded in 1998 by artistic director Mina Miller to remember the Holocaust through music. With concert performances, educational programs, recordings, and commissions of new works by some of today's leading composers, MOR honors those of all backgrounds who found the strength to create even in the face of suffering, and those who had the courage to speak out against cruelty. Their stories communicate urgent lessons for today, and look beyond the Holocaust itself to the experience of others who have been excluded or persecuted for their faith, ethnicity, gender or sexuality. Along with its large and varied repertoire of Holocaust-era music, MOR commissions and premieres new works by some of today's leading composers, building bridges across generations and sharing stories that underline the Holocaust's urgent relevance for us now. *The Parting* is among the more than 30 new works that MOR has commissioned in its first two decades, including chamber music, song, oratorio, opera, ballet and film score. MOR's mission is not religious, nor is its scope limited to Jewish music or experience. Its commissions have also focused on the Holocaust's impact on homosexuals, women, children, Roma, political prisoners and courageous freethinkers. www.musicofremembrance.org



Fragment, "I lived on earth in an era such as this ..."
Manuscript of one of Radnóti's final poems, 19 May 1944



Radnóti statue in Budapest, Hungary, 2015
by Frigyes Janzer, b. 1939

Mina Miller



Pianist and MOR artistic director Mina Miller studied at the Manhattan School of Music and earned her PhD in Music from New York University. She has performed solo recitals at Wigmore Hall, the Tivoli Festival (Copenhagen), and the Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival (Finland), and concert engagements have taken her throughout North America, Great Britain, Europe, and Scandinavia. In 1998, her career as a recitalist and concerto soloist metamorphosed when she founded Music of Remembrance and began serving as the organization's president and artistic director. Miller's bold leadership has drawn national attention by commissioning new works from composer luminaries such as Ryuichi Sakamoto, Betty Olivero, Paul Schoenfield, Jake Heggie, Tom Cipullo, Lori Laitman, Mary Kouyoumdjian, Shinji Eshima, and Thomas Pasatieri, among others. Recognized as an authority on Holocaust-era music and musicians, Miller has lectured in Seattle and internationally on the precious cultural and artistic legacy that escaped Nazi destruction.

Alastair Willis



Conductor Alastair Willis made his first appearance with Music of Remembrance in *The Parting*. He was the associate conductor of the Seattle Symphony, and is currently music director of the South Bend Symphony Orchestra. He has guest conducted around the world, including engagements with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, and The Philadelphia Orchestra, as well as working with Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble. Willis received a GRAMMY Award nomination for Best Classical Album in 2009 for Ravel's *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* with the Nashville Symphony Orchestra (8.660215). www.alastairwillis.com

Erich Parce



Stage director Erich Parce has brought his imaginative stagecraft to Music of Remembrance (MOR) productions for over a decade, including the world premieres of Tom Cipullo's *After Life* and Jake Heggie's *Out of Darkness*. As an operatic baritone, Parce has performed with the Metropolitan Opera and Opéra de Montréal among others. He has been a frequent vocalist with MOR, performing in the world premieres of Paul Schoenfield's *Camp Songs*, and Lori Laitman's *Holocaust 1944*, *Fathers*, and *The Seed of Dream* (commissioned for him and recorded on Naxos). Parce was the artistic director of Skagit Opera at its inception in 2002. www.musicofremembrance.org/artists/erich-parce

THE PARTING

Libretto by David Mason

DEATH

¶ I labor so hard, searching this age we're in,
and those I choose are all so wan.

They say that death is in love
with poetry. They say
in the dream of life
the hopeful are always with us.
I am the friend
who knows you will wake to the world.

If you live in a time of peace
where only the traffic and work
and the small disappointments of life
disturb your sleep,

you are lucky.
You have never to look far
to see that for some
evil is right next door.

The 19th of May, for example,
1944, an apartment
in Budapest, and a loving couple.
A troubled, loving couple ...

Their love has been tested.
It will be tested more.

He is a poet, and some people believe
I am in love with poetry.
Maybe so,
but I am a fickle lover.

Look at this woman, his wife.
She's a hard worker.
It can't be easy living with a man
for whom destiny is made of words.

I walk through the spaces between them,
the pauses, the headaches, the breaths.
They can't help but know I'm here ...
but they live in the dream. They hope.

FANNI

It is night and I sense you near.

DEATH

They know I'm here,
but they live in the dream. They hope.

FANNI

Why must there always be another?

DEATH

They hope.

FANNI

Why must there always be another?
My husband is leaving tomorrow.
I want to be with him, alone.
Why must there always be another?

DEATH

I can be jealous too.

You wanted him, your poet.
But you wanted happiness also.
Often he turned away
to his words.

He doesn't write them for me
but for you.
You and the future he will not see.

FANNI

It's night and I sense you near.

DEATH

I can be jealous too.

FANNI

I want to be with him, alone.
Why must there always be another?

DEATH

There's only a little time.
Go to him now.
Use the time you've got.

The 19th of May
must seem an eternity.

I whisper his name:
Radnóti the poet.
Miklós. Mik.

MIKLÓS
Just give me a little more time.

DEATH

Use the time you've got.
What would you like to know?

MIKLÓS

Why is the whole world dying?
Is a man only the ember of a cigarette
to be stubbed out and thrown away?

DEATH

☒ You already know what you think.
It's May 19th.
And a beautiful woman is with you.
How will you use the time?

MIKLÓS

I'll give her a love poem.

DEATH

Which one?

MIKLÓS

"After April Rain."

DEATH

Yes.

MIKLÓS

*As happy, with a woman on my chest,
as when the sun shines after April rain,
I shout! and straight away, clean-rinsed in light,
My voice rings, like that bird's up to his middle,
now, in the crystal puddle.*

DEATH

You were young when you wrote that,
and in love.

MIKLÓS

I'm still in love.

DEATH

Are you sure? You've given her cause to doubt.

MIKLÓS

I'm over that.

DEATH

Nothing is over, Mik. Nothing is ever. Remember.

MIKLÓS

☑ This is the third time they've called me up.
It will be the last, I'm sure.
I've been ill. I've been dying to write.
I'm taking my notebook tomorrow.
If they catch me ...
These guards. They don't care who they kill.

DEATH

In the dream of life
you are not lucky.

MIKLÓS

If they catch me, ...

DEATH

You live in a time of hate
and justice will never come.
How will you use the time?

MIKLÓS

This is the third time they've called me up.
I'm taking my notebook.
The third time ...
It will be the last.

DEATH

☒ How will you use the time?
It's May 19th.

FANNI

The night is ours.

MIKLÓS

The night is ours.

FANNI

The only night we have.

MIKLÓS

All I've ever wanted was you.
All I've ever wanted
was our life, our days of freedom
to read and write and walk in the park.

FANNI

Today I walked by the Danube
wishing you were there.
It's May. The birds are back.
The lilac blossomed weeks ago.
Today I walked by the Danube
wishing you were with me.

MIKLÓS

I should have gone.

TOGETHER

The night is ours, my love,
The only night we have.

MIKLÓS

I should have gone with you.
The Danube ...
Too many days I've hidden in these rooms
as if I were a criminal.

FANNI

My love ...

MIKLÓS

This world is a crime.
This world is a perversity.
It is what people do,
Hungarians and Germans,
everyone who hates the Jews.

FANNI

Our savior was a Jew.

MIKLÓS

He loved the world.
I've tried to follow him.

I hate the world.

Sometimes I hate the world.
Sometimes I see
the labor battalions,
men in rags, dead on their feet,
parades of walking bones
made to dig their graves
before they lie in them.

I see these things
and then I think of you
and only want to live.
I want to write love poems,
Love poems to my loving wife.

FANNI

You will. The night is ours,
the only night we have.

FANNI

☑ In your two arms back and forth I rock
silently.

MIKLÓS

In my two arms back and forth you rock
silently.

FANNI

In your two arms I am a child,
listening.

MIKLÓS

In my two arms you are a child
I listen to.

FANNI

With your two arms around me, you embrace me
when I'm afraid.

MIKLÓS

With my two arms around you I embrace you
unafraid.

TOGETHER

In your two arms not even Death
will frighten me,
nor its great silence.
In your two arms,
as through a dream,
I will pass through ...

FANNI

☒ I love that poem.
Even if you wrote it for another.

Tomorrow you go to Vác.

MIKLÓS

Tomorrow...

FANNI

You'll write me,
tell me where they send you.
For now, my love,
I've filled your little knapsack,
rolled your blanket.
I've sewn a button on your coat,
darned your red pullover.
The nightmare will begin
and end. Somehow ...

DEATH

I walk through the spaces between them,

FANNI

What will happen to him?

DEATH

through the pauses, through breaths.
They can't help but know I'm here.

FANNI

What will happen to him?

DEATH

You can't know.

FANNI

You're like the other woman.
You're always here, even when you're not.

DEATH

He does love you, my dear.

FANNI

What are we alive for?

DEATH

To learn about love.

FANNI

My body hungered for him
and for months he wouldn't come.

I know he's a poet. I know he lives to write.

I know he has no future – you don't have to tell me that –
but he makes art for the future.

Is it you he loves?

Does he think he's a martyr?
What about me? Why do I live?

DEATH

To learn how to love. Go back to him now.
His betrayal is all in the past. Let it go.
It's May 19th. The only night you have.

It is more terrible than she can know.

The mercy is that she will learn it piece by piece.
She'll send him letters he will never answer.
I can see it like I see these hands.

MIKLÓS

☑ Her letters come to me.
I have no way of writing back,
only the notebook where I keep my poems.
The Communists are coming closer.
There is so little time when we're not bent
to the pick and shovel.
My body is weakening. I'm sick,
a walking skeleton. They beat me for writing poems
so I keep writing poems,
letters to my love.

FANNI

☒ My love, the summer passes
and you have not written.
I think of our last night together.
How much I wanted to tell you.

MIKLÓS

I lie on the bed-board, a captive animal among worms;
the fleas renew their siege again, but the army of flies
has calmed. It's night, and look, all at once our captivity's
one day shorter, and life is one day shorter too. The
camp sleeps. The moon shines on the hillside, the wires
grow tense in its light, and you can see through the
window the sentries' shadows thrown on the wall, pacing
in the night.

FANNI

The river is so beautiful in summer.
Our friends are asking after you
and look away when I tell them
I have not heard.

Are you still in Serbia?

Are you working in the mines?
The Communists are coming close –
perhaps they will be better than the Reich.
What do they feed you?
And your pretty red jumper – do you wear it?

MIKLÓS

Do you see, dear? – The camp is sleeping, dreams are
moving: one startles awake with a snort, turns over in his
bunk, and already he sleeps again, his face glimmering.
Only I sit awake, tasting a half-smoked cigarette in my
mouth instead of your kiss, and dreaming, relief never
comes: I can no longer die or live without you.

DEATH

Keep writing, Mik.
The notebook close to your heart.

FANNI

Please send me your poems.
I miss them. I have your books
but it's not the same.
We could hold hands and walk by the river
and you could recite them to me
as you did when we were happy.

MIKLÓS

9) I can no longer either die or live without you.

FANNI

My body is hungry for you.

MIKLÓS

Our savior died for love.

DEATH

You are not Jesus. Learn!

MIKLÓS

I can die for my art.

DEATH

You can die for nothing.
You can die because the world
is full of dying. Men kill for a sausage.
The earth is in ruins. Men kill for God
or the absence of God.

MIKLÓS

Then why do I live?

DEATH

To learn what love is. To love.
To make beautiful things. To die.
Go back to her now.
Go back to the dream of life.

I can give them one night.
The only night they have.
Mik? He won't last long.
He'll be dead on his feet
before they load him into the death cart.

The notebook will be in his pocket.
When he falls into the grave,
his skull blown apart by the bullet,
he will hold his hand to his heart
where the poems continue to live.

The last poem, the most dreadful of all,
as if it is already written,
as if he has foreseen it all.
In a year they will find the mass grave,
the songs from a dead man's coat.

Fif will arrive with her friends
and try to recognize the bones.
She will try to recognize his red jumper.

The last poem, the most dreadful of all
and closest to my heart.

10) *I toppled next to him; his body flipped,
stiff already, as a gut string snaps.
Shot in the nape. "You'll end like this as well,"
I whispered to myself, "Lie still, relax.
Now, Death's the rose they say that patience makes."
"Der springt noch auf" rang out above me.
On my ear the muddied blood was caking.*

They say I am in love with poetry.

That's what I love. That's what I envy.
The kiss of life.

How will you use the time?

MIKLÓS

I'll write from Vác
and tell you where they send me.
For now, my love, keep all my poems.

This "Fragment" I will take with me –
The one I'm trying to finish. Art against Death.

FANNI

11) *I lived on earth in an era such as this:
informers were honored, and the murderer,
the stool pigeon, or the thief was hailed a hero –
and one whose loyalty was never sated
as if he carried the plague, already was hated.*

MIKLÓS

*I lived on earth in an era such as this:
when one who spoke frankly had to hide
and chew on his fists in shame to stay alive –
the nation ran amok, grinning, drunk on blood
and its filthy fate washed over it in a flood.*

FANNI

*I lived on earth in an era such as this:
when a mother was a curse to her own children,
and a woman was happy only when she aborted,
the living envied the worm-eaten corpse, untroubled,
and the poison on their table foamed and bubbled.*

MIKLÓS

12) I've grown to hate the world,
a sin. I must learn how to love again.

FANNI

Live.
Come back to me and love.

MIKLÓS

I promise.

FANNI

It's midnight, love.
There's no hot water for a bath
and you have far to go tomorrow.
Sleep now, my love.
Sleep.

MIKLÓS

In your two arms back and forth I rock,...

FANNI

Sleep now. Sleep.

MIKLÓS

You're the only one for me.
Please believe me. I've always known.

TOGETHER

We've always known.
Before our life began,
our souls met by a river.
It was in May, the birds were back.
We lived like blossoming.
And when I held your hands
I knew we had met before.
Not even Death could part us.

DEATH

They say
in the dream of life
the hopeful are always with us.
I am the friend
who knows you will wake to the world.

But that is tomorrow.
Tonight is the only night you have.
Sing with me now
before you sleep.

MIKLÓS

What shall we sing?

FANNI

One of yours, my love. "Sky Flying Clouds."
It's all movement and smoke and life.

MIKLÓS

And you're in it too.

DEATH

I'll sing with you,
and then leave you
to your dream of life.

MIKLÓS

13) *The moon sways in the sky flying clouds;
I wonder that I'm not yet gone.*

DEATH

*I labor so hard, searching this age we're in,
and those I choose are all so wan.*

*Sometimes the year looks around itself and screams,
it looks around, then falls into a faint.
What sort of autumn cowers behind my back,
what sort of winter's coming, dull and pained!*

FANNI

*The forest bled, and in the season's turning
Time bled each hour away.
The wind scrawled numbers, large
and darkling, on the snow all day.*

MIKLÓS

*I understand this, and I know that, too,
the air I feel is as heavy as lead,
a silence, then whispers surround me,
as when I was born to the dead.*

FANNI

*I stop here by a tree,
and the leaves buzz angrily.
A branch bends down.*

MIKLÓS

*To hang me by the neck?
I'm tired, and neither cowardly
nor weak.*

FANNI

*Just silence. And the branch also
frisks my hair noiselessly, afraid.*

TOGETHER

*One should forget, but I have never yet
forgotten anything I've seen or said.*

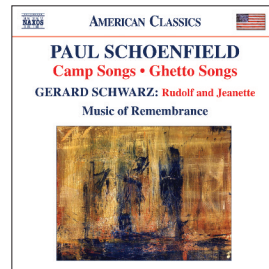
*Clouds flying over the moon; the poison draws
so green, then blue, a smear across the sky.
Carefully, I roll myself a cigarette,
slowly. I'm alive.
I'm alive.*

Translations of Radnóti's verse are adapted from *All That Still Matters at All: Selected Poems of Miklós Radnóti*.
Translated by John M. Ridland and Peter V. Czipott (New American Press, 2013). Used by permission.

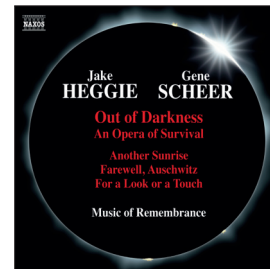
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Tom CIPULLO

(b. 1956)

1-13 **The Parting** (2019)

Libretto by David Mason (b. 1954)

Fanni Laura Strickling, Soprano

Death Catherine Cook, Mezzo-soprano

Miklós Michael Mayes, Baritone

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

Music of Remembrance

Zart Dombourian-Eby, Flute

Laura DeLuca, Clarinet

Mikhail Shmidt, Violin

Walter Gray, Cello

Jessica Choe, Piano

Alastair Willis, Conductor

Mina Miller, Artistic Director

A detailed track list can be found on page 2 of the booklet.

The sung texts are included in the booklet, and may also be accessed at www.naxos.com/libretti/669044.htm

Recorded: 21 May 2019 at Illsley Ball Nordstrom Recital Hall, Benaroya Hall, Seattle, Washington, USA

Produced, engineered and edited by Dmitriy Lipay

Booklet notes: Mina Miller, Tom Cipullo, David Mason

Edition: Unpublished, recorded with composer's permission

Front cover: Catherine Cook, Michael Mayes and Laura Strickling in the world premiere performance of *The Parting*, directed by Erich Parce.

Photo: Ben Vanhouten



AMERICAN OPERA CLASSICS

Heard here in its world premiere recording, *The Parting* is a daring opera by award-winning composer Tom Cipullo and librettist David Mason that explores the life and art of Miklós Radnóti, one of the most important poetic witnesses to the Holocaust, and one of its tragic victims. Radnóti's poems express emotions from love and enchantment to absolute loss, and *The Parting* includes texts found in his jacket pocket after his death. This opera is a profound meditation on what it is about art that outlives us, that enables us to be creative even in the face of unimaginable adversity, and reminds us to guard against hatred and to celebrate what makes us human.

This work was commissioned by Music of Remembrance, a Seattle-based organization dedicated to remembering the Holocaust through music with concert performances, educational programs, recordings and commissions of new works. (www.musicofremembrance.org)

www.naxos.com

Playing
Time:
65:11