

GORDON GETTY

THE WHITE ELECTION



cycle of 32 songs on poems by

EMILY DICKINSON



LISA DELAN – SOPRANO

FRITZ STEINEGGER – PIANO

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LISA DELAN, SOPRANO

FRITZ STEINEGGER, PIANO

Producer: Job Maarse

Balance Engineer: Jean-Marie Geijssen

Recording Engineers: Dann Thompson • Judy Kirschner

Recording venue: Skywalker Sound, San Rafael, California USA

Special thanks to Leslie Ann Jones

Blüthner Grand Piano

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be "born, bridaled, shrouded in a day." In heaven she will be "dressed to meet you, see, in white." The Dim Companion will be "Mine, by the right of the White Election... Mine, by the Grave's Repeal!..." It was in this period that Emily began wearing white.

The evidence for Wadsworth in these poems is mainly the reference to Calvary. Calvary is mentioned nine times in this period, according to Johnson, and not before. Emily was not religious at any age; she sometimes writes about religion, but more as a merry critic, except in the love poems, than as a participant. Although Calvary is a more natural metaphor for suffering than presbyteries for closeness, nine mentions of Calvary, packed in this period, are enough to make the case for Wadsworth.

Emily had studied voice and piano, and sometimes played at home. A friend remembers:

Oftentimes, during these visits to the Dickinson relative, father would be awakened from his sleep by heavenly music. Emily would explain in the morning, 'I can improvise better at night.' On one to two occasions, when not under their friendly roof, my father, in playing his respects at the house, would received a message from his cousin Emily saying, 'If you will stay in the next room, and open the fold-

ing doors a few inches, I'll come down to make music for you.' My father said that in those early days she seemed like a will-o-the-wisp.

Another visitor recalls the Emily was "often at the piano playing weird and beautiful melodies, all from her own inspiration." Emily herself writes to a friend, "I play the old, odd tunes yet, which used to flit about your head after honest hours."

All this inspires the conjecture that Emily may have set her own poems to music, or even conceived of some of them as songs in the first place. I have set them, in large part, just as Emily might have if her music had found a balance between tradition and iconoclasm something like that in her poems.

Gordon Getty



GORDON GETTY

Gordon Getty, born in Los Angeles in 1933 and residing in San Francisco since 1945, studied piano with Robert Vetleson and voice with Easton Kent during his formative years. As a student at the University of San Francisco he majored in English Literature. His first published piece was the a cappella chorus *All Along the Valley* (1959). In the early 1960s he enrolled at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, studying music theory with Sol Joseph, and there composed the *Homework Suite* (1964) for solo piano.

Since the 1980s he has produced a steady stream of compositions, beginning with *The White Election* (1981), a much-performed cycle

of 32 poems by Emily Dickinson for solo singer and piano. Also recorded by the late soprano Kaaren Erickson, this cycle has been performed in Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall and the Pierpont Morgan Library (in New York), the Kennedy Center and National Gallery of Art (in Washington, D.C.), and the Hermitage Theater in St. Petersburg Russia, among many other venues.

In 1984 he unveiled his opera *Plump Jack*, an operatic interpretation (to his own libretto, based on Henry IV and V) of Shakespeare's outrageous but poignant Falstaff. Following premiere performances by the San Francisco Symphony, *Plump Jack* was revived in semi-staged concert versions by the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the BBC Philharmonic, and, most recently in London, Austin, Albuquerque, and Mazatlan.

Most of Getty's compositions, which are published by Rork Music and distributed by Theodore Presser Company, involve the voice. His *Victorian Scenes* (1989) and *Annabel Lee* (1990) are choral settings--with orchestra or, optionally, piano--of poems by Tennyson, Housman, and (in the latter work) Poe. Both were premiered by the Los Angeles Master Chorale and Sinfonia at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion of the Los Angeles Music Center. The

San Francisco Symphony and the Men of the San Francisco Symphony Chorus performed *Annabel Lee* in both 1998 and 2004, conducted on those occasions by Michael Tilson Thomas. Getty's *Young America* (2001), a cycle of six movements for chorus and orchestra to texts by the composer and by Stephen Vincent Benét, was also performed and recorded in 2004 by the San Francisco Symphony and Chorus, with Michael Tilson Thomas conducting. *Young America* was released (on PentaTone Classics) in 2005 on Getty's choral music CD, which also includes his *Victorian Scenes*, *Annabel Lee*, *Three Welsh Songs* (1998), and *Jerusalem* (a choral extract from *Plump Jack*).

Getty's cantata *Joan and the Bells* (1998), to the composer's own libretto about the execution of Joan of Arc, was released in 2003 in a critically acclaimed recording by the Russian National Orchestra, Eric Ericson Chamber Choir, and soloists Lisa Delan and Vladimir Chernov, with Alexander Vedernikov conducting (PentaTone Classics). *Joan and the Bells* was performed in March 2004 in St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle under the baton of Mikhail Pletnev. Since its premiere in 1998, *Joan and the Bells* has been performed extensively throughout the United States, Europe and Russia. Getty's non-vocal

compositions include his *Three Waltzes for Piano and Orchestra* (1988, performed by André Previn and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra), and works for orchestra, chamber ensembles and for solo piano including the ballet suite *Ancestor Suite*, loosely based on Edgar Allan Poe's *Fall of the House of Usher*. His music has been performed in such prestigious venues as New York's Carnegie Hall, London's Royal Festival Hall, Vienna's Brahmsaal, and Moscow's Tchaikovsky Hall, as well as at the Aspen and Spoleto Festivals.

Getty has been widely applauded for his creative and philanthropic achievements and has received honorary doctorates from the University of Maryland, Pepperdine University, the University of California at San Francisco, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and the Mannes College of Music in New York. In 1986 he was honored as an Outstanding American Composer at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and in 2003 he was awarded the Gold Baton of the American Symphony Orchestra League.

Of his compositions Getty has said: "My style is undoubtedly tonal, though with hints of atonality, such as any composer would likely use to suggest a degree of disorientation. But I'm strictly tonal in my approach. I

represent a viewpoint that stands somewhat apart from the 20th century, which was in large measure a repudiation of the 19th, and a sock in the nose to sentimentality. Whatever it was that the great Victorian composers and poets were trying to achieve, that's what I'm trying to achieve."

LISA DELAN



American soprano Lisa Delan has won acclaim as an outstanding interpreter of a vast repertoire. She is recognized for her versatility and breadth of accomplishment in opera, song and recording.

Ms. Delan's interpretive and techni-

cal skill in art song brought her to the finals of the 1999 Naumberg International Vocal Competition. Other recognition came from singing the title role in the world premiere of Gordon Getty's *Joan and the Bells* in 1998, a role she has since reprised in France, Germany, the US and Russia, and in the 2002 recording for PentaTone Classics. Critics have praised her depiction of Joan of Arc as "beautifully sung" (International Record Review), and "refreshingly unpretentious" (Gramophone Magazine).

Lisa Delan has performed on some of the world's leading concert stages including Lincoln Center, the Auditorio Nacional in Madrid, the Moscow Conservatory, and in special appearance at Windsor Castle. Her festival appearances include the Bad Kissingen Festival in Germany, the Colmar Festival in France and the Rachmaninoff Festival in Novgorod, Russia, the Festival del Sole in Napa Valley, California and at the Tuscan Sun Festival in Cortona, Italy.

As a recital artist, her repertoire encompasses from the Baroque to the contemporary and she is privileged to collaborate with composers whose musical lives are still works in progress: Ms. Delan has performed and recorded the music of William Bolcom, John Corigliano, David Garner, Gordon Getty, Jake Heggie and Luna Pearl Woolf, among others.

Her previous recordings for PentaTone include Joan and the Bells and And If The Song Be Worth A Smile.

FRITZ STEINEGGER

The American pianist, Fritz Steinegger, born in Phoenix, Arizona, studied in New York with Wolfgang Rose, at the Akademie in Vienna with Ludwig Czaczkes, and at the Conservatoire in Geneva with Nikita Magaloff.

A prize-winner at the International Casella Competition, Fritz Steinegger went on to play recital tours of Europe, appearing as soloist with such leading ensembles as L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the Radio Cologne Orchestra, and the Scarlatti Orchestra of Naples.

Fritz Steinegger's recent activities have been centered in Latin America, where he concertizes widely, from Mexico to Argentina. Mexico City's leading newspaper, Novedades, recently hailed him as "something quite different: a free spirit in the world of classical music".



Anmerkungen über „The White Election“

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) verbrachte ihr ganzes Leben in „Brick House“ oder „Homestead“, das von ihrem Großvater, dem Gründer der Amherst Academy und des Amherst College, in der Blüte seines Lebens errichtet worden war. Ihre Tage waren erfüllt von Familie und Schreiben. Von Emily Dickinson sind 1775 Gedichte und 1049 Briefe überliefert. Wir begegnen darin einem verspielten Ton, einer rätselhaften Sprache und tiefsinnigen Inhalten. Zu ihren Lebzeiten wurden gerade einmal elf Gedichte veröffentlicht. Dass uns derart viele Briefe überliefert sind, zeigt auch, dass man ihre Begabung sehr wohl erkannt hatte – wenn auch nur in ihrem eingeschränkten Wirkungskreis. Die anderen Gedichte wurden in einer Truhe neben ihrem Bett verwahrt oder zusammen mit ihren Briefen verschickt. Emilys Schwester Lavinia und einige Freunde begannen schließlich im Jahr 1890 auf eigene Kosten, die Gedichte zu veröffentlichen. Diese frühen Ausgaben waren bald ausverkauft und der Ruhm von Emily Dickinson gesichert. Gezänk um die Rechte verzögerte das Entstehen einer authentischen

und vollständigen Werkausgabe, bis im Jahr 1959 bei Harvard Press eine kommentierte Ausgabe erschien, die von Thomas Johnson betreut worden war.

„The White Election“ soll Emily Dickinsons Geschichte mit ihren eigenen Worten erzählen. Es ist die Geschichte einer Dichterin – und zu den Aufgaben eines Dichters zählen nun einmal das Beobachten und das Erfinden. Sind ihre Liebesgedichte, die zu den traurigsten der englischen Sprache überhaupt zählen, vielleicht nur frei erfunden? Falls nicht, wer ist der Adressat? Besonders häufig genannt wurden die Namen von Charles Wadsworth, Otis Lord und Samuel Bowles. Alle drei waren Meinungsführer, alle drei eine Generation älter als Emily und alle drei – glücklich verheiratet. Der stattliche und gesellige Bowles würde uns recht gut passen, schließlich wurden in seinem „Springfield Republican“ sechs ihrer Gedichte veröffentlicht. Für Richter Lord spricht einiges mehr, immerhin verlobte er sich nach dem Tod seiner Frau mit Emily. Da war er bereits 66, sie gerade einmal 47 Jahre alt. Ich folge allerdings Johnsons Argumentation, der Wadsworth aufgrund mehrerer Fakten für den wahrscheinlichsten Adressaten hält und diesen nicht nur über die beiden anderen, sondern auch über die ungültige Behauptung erhebt, der „ferne

Gefährte“ in ihren Gedichten sei lediglich eine erfundene Person.

Oft können sie sich nicht getroffen haben. Wadsworth war Seelsorger der Arch Street Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. Und berühmt für seine Predigten. Mark Twain machte sich über seine Rhetorik lustig. 1854 reisten Emily und Lavinia nach Washington, um ihren Vater zu besuchen, der dort als Kongressabgeordneter wirkte. Es könnte durchaus sein, dass sie Wadsworth bei dieser Gelegenheit kennen gelernt haben. Wir wissen, dass er „Homestead“ in den Jahren 1859 und 1880 besucht hat. Sein einziger überlieferter Brief an „Meine liebe Miss Dickenson“ (sic!) ist undatiert und beginnt mit den Worten *„Ich bin über die Maßen bekümmert über euren Brief. Ich kann mir euer Trübsal vorstellen, das euch befallen hat oder das euch jetzt befällt.“* Daraus lässt sich ableiten, dass sie ihm geschrieben hat und dass es keine wirkliche Liebesbeziehung gegeben hat. Uns liegt ein Brief von Emily an ihre Freunde, die Hollands aus Philadelphia vor, in dem sie diese darum bittet, eine Anlage an „*unseren Freund bei Arch*“ zu schicken. Außerdem gibt es Briefe, die nach seinem Tod datiert sind, in denen er als ihr „*engster*“ und „*liebster Freund auf Erden*“ beschrieben wird.

Weitere Belege dafür, dass Wadsworth ihr „*ferner Gefährte*“ war – wenn auch nur in ihren Gedanken – finden wir hauptsächlich in ihrer Dichtkunst selber und im zweiten ihrer drei an den „*Master*“ adressierten Briefe. Johnson datiert diese Briefe nach ihrer Handschrift auf die Jahre 1858, 1861 und 1862. Während es sich bei Emilys Briefen prinzipiell um Liebesbriefe im weiteren Sinn handelt, transportieren der zweite und dritte Brief an den „*Master*“ ein dringendes Flehen. Im zweiten lesen wir etwa *„Wenn es Gottes Wille gewesen wäre, das ich dort atme, wo Du atmest ... Dir näher zu kommen als das Presbyterium* [also näher als es der Glauben vermochte, Anmerkung des Übersetzers], *gar näher als der maßgeschneiderte Rock von der Hand des Schneiders ...*“ Das Wort „*Presbyterium*“ passt eigentlich zu keinem anderen als Wadsworth, der neben Henry Ward Beecher Amerikas berühmtester Presbyterianer war. Weder Bowles noch Lord waren Presbyterianer und außerdem hatte keiner von beiden Interesse an Religion.

1862 wurde Wadsworth Seelsorger der First Calvary Presbyterian Church in San Francisco, wo er acht Jahre blieb. Die Jahre zwischen 1861 und 1865 gelten als der produktivste Zeitraum in Emily Dickinsons Schaffen (wenn man denn der Handschriftenanalyse

vertrauen kann). Hier entstanden ihre ersten „Totenhochzeit-Gedichte“. Die Farbe Weiß steht in der Tradition für Hochzeiten und Beerdigungen. Emily berichtet uns in ihren Gedichten, dass diese beiden Ereignisse für sie eins seien. Sie wird *„geboren, getraut und verhüllt am selben Tag“*. Im Himmel werde sie *„in weiß gekleidet, um dir zu begegnen“*. Der *„ferne Gefährte“* wird *„mein sein durch das Recht der weißen Wahl ... Mein, wenn mich das Grab wieder freigibt ...“* Von dieser Zeit an trug Emily überwiegend weiße Kleidung.

Der klare Hinweis auf Wadsworth ergibt sich in diesen Gedichten vor allem durch die Bezüge auf Calvary [Kalvarienberg = Golgatha, Anmerkung des Übersetzers]. Laut Johnson wird Calvary in dieser Zeit neunmal erwähnt, vorher hingegen überhaupt nicht. Emily war in keiner Phase ihres Lebens religiös, ab und zu schreibt sie über Religion, dann aber als eine fröhliche Kritikerin, nur in ihren Liebesgedichten gibt sie sich als Betroffene. Obwohl Calvary eine natürlichere Metapher für Leiden ist als Presbyterium für Enge, reichen neun Zitate in diesem Zeitraum wohl aus, Wadsworth als den *„fernen Gefährten“* zu identifizieren und auch zu bestätigen.

Emily hat Gesang und Klavier studiert und von Zeit zu Zeit auch zu Hause musiziert. Ein

Freund erinnert sich

„Des öfteren wurde der Vater während der Besuche bei den Dickinsons von himmlischer Musik geweckt. Emily sagte dann am nächsten Morgen ‚Des nachts kann ich besser improvisieren‘. Bei der einen oder anderen Gelegenheit erhielt mein Vater eine Nachricht von seiner Cousine Emily, die besagte ‚Wenn Du im Nachbarzimmer bleibst und die Flügeltüren ein wenig öffnest, komme ich hinunter, um für Dich zu musizieren‘. Mein Vater sagte, dass sie ihm in diesen frühen Tagen wie ein Irrlicht vorkam.“

Ein anderer Besucher erinnert sich, dass Emily *„oft am Klavier saß und merkwürdige und wunderschöne Melodien spielte, die alle ihrer eigenen Fantasie entsprangen“*. Emily schreibt selber an einen Freund *„Ich spiele die alten, merkwürdigen Melodien, die einem nach ehrlichen Stunden im Kopf umherschwirren“*.

All dies verstärkt die Vermutung, dass Emily ihre eigenen Gedichte vertont haben könnte oder einige zumindest anfänglich sogar als Lieder entwickelt hat. Ich habe sie zu großen Teilen so vertont, wie Emily es wohl getan hätte - wenn es in ihrer Musik eine Balance zwischen Tradition und Bilderstürmerei gegeben hätte. Ganz so wie in ihren Gedichten.

Aus dem Amerikanischen von Franz Steiger

Notes sur The White Election

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) vécut de sa naissance à sa mort dans la « Maison en briques » encore appelée « Homestead » que son grand-père, fondateur de l'Académie et du Collège d'Amherst, avait fait construire à l'apogée de sa carrière. La jeune femme consacra tout son temps à sa vie familiale et à l'écriture. 1049 lettres et 1775 poèmes écrits de sa main sont parvenus jusqu'à nous. Le ton est généralement enjoué, la langue déconcertante et le contenu profond. Seuls onze de ses poèmes furent publiés de son vivant. La survivance d'un nombre si impressionnant de lettres suggère en soi que son don épistolaire avait été reconnu dans le cercle de ses proches. Ses poèmes restèrent dans un coffre à côté de son lit ou furent parfois envoyés avec des lettres. À partir de 1890, sa sœur Lavinia ainsi que quelques amis publièrent plusieurs de ses poèmes à leur propre compte. Les premières éditions furent épuisées et la renommée d'Emily assurée. Des querelles à propos de droits d'auteur retardèrent jusqu'en 1959

la publication de ses œuvres complètes, aux éditions Harvard Press, sous la direction de Thomas Johnson.

The White Election se propose de raconter l'histoire d'Emily Dickinson avec ses propres mots. C'est le récit d'une poétesse et le propre des poètes est d'observer et d'inventer. Ses poèmes amoureux, les plus désespérés au niveau du langage, sont-ils de simples inventions de l'esprit ? Si ce n'est pas le cas, que veut-elle dire et à qui songe-t-elle ? Charles Wadsworth, Otis Lord et Samuel Bowles, tous directeurs de pensées, tous plus âgés d'une génération et tous heureux en ménage sont parmi les hypothèses les plus envisageables. On voudrait peut-être bien qu'il s'agisse du séduisant Bowles, au caractère très sociable, dont le journal Springfield Republican publia six de ses poèmes. Le juge Lord représente un candidat encore plus sérieux. En effet, après le décès de son épouse, il se fiança avec Emily ; elle avait alors 47 ans et lui 66. Toutefois j'avancerais, à l'instar de Johnson, que les preuves semblent converger en faveur de Wadsworth plutôt que des deux autres et démentent également l'hypothèse que le « Dim Companion » (le compagnon obscur) évoqué dans ces poèmes ne serait que pure fiction.

Ils se rencontrèrent probablement très rarement. Wadsworth était pasteur de l'église

presbytérienne d'Arch Street à Philadelphie et célèbre pour ses sermons (Mark Twain tourna d'ailleurs en dérision son éloquence). Emily et Lavinia se rendirent à Washington en 1854 pour rendre visite à leur père alors qu'il siégeait au Congrès. Peut-être rencontrèrent-elles Wadsworth au cours de ce séjour. Nous savons qu'il se rendit à Homestead en 1859 et en 1880. L'une de ses lettres passée à la postérité et adressée à « My Dear Miss Dickenson » (sic), non datée, commence ainsi : « Votre mot m'afflige au-delà de toute mesure. Je peux seulement imaginer l'affliction qui vous a touchée ou qui vous touche à présent... ». Ce passage suggère qu'elle lui avait écrit et qu'aucune relation amoureuse n'avait alors trouvé place. Nous avons par contre une lettre d'Emily à ses amis de Philadelphie, les Josiah Holland, leur demandant de bien vouloir faire parvenir à « notre excellent ami » quelque chose qu'elle avait joint à sa lettre et dans des lettres écrites après la mort de Wadsworth, elle le décrit comme « son plus proche » et « son plus cher ami en ce monde ».

Les preuves que Wadsworth était le Compagnon Obscur, ne serait-ce que dans les pensées d'Emily, nous sont essentiellement fournies par ses poèmes, comme nous allons le découvrir plus loin, mais aussi dans la seconde

des trois ébauches de lettres adressées au « Maître ». En s'appuyant sur des études calligraphiques, Johnson date approximativement ces lettres autour des années 1858, 1861 et 1862. Bien que toutes les lettres d'Emily soient des lettres d'amour au sens large du terme, la deuxième et la troisième adressées au Maître sont des implorations. On peut lire dans cette deuxième lettre : « Si cela avait été la volonté de Dieu que je puisse respirer là où vous respirez ... pour une proximité dépassant celle des consistoires ou celle encore du nouveau manteau confectionné par le tailleur ». Les « consistoires » ne semblent pouvoir s'appliquer à personne d'autre que Wadsworth, le plus célèbre pasteur presbytérien après Henry Ward Beecher. Ni Bowles ni Lord n'étaient presbytériens ni ne montraient un intérêt particulier pour la religion.

En 1862, Wadsworth devint pasteur à la Première église presbytérienne du Calvaire, à San Francisco, où il demeura pendant huit ans. Si les analyses d'écriture sont justes, la période 1861-1865 fut pour Emily la plus productive et, de cette époque également, datent ses premiers poèmes sur la mort et le mariage. Le blanc est traditionnellement la couleur des épousailles et des funérailles. Dans ses poèmes, Emily nous confie que pour

elle ces événements ne feront plus qu'un, se faisant en un jour (« born, bridaled, shrouded in a day »). Elle sera vêtue de blanc pour le rencontrer au ciel et le Dim Companion sera alors sien (« Mine by the right of the white election... Mine by the graves's repeal... »). C'est à cette époque qu'Emily commença à s'habiller en blanc.

Dans les poèmes datant de cette époque, la référence au Calvaire représente l'indice le plus important en faveur de Wadsworth. Selon Johnson, le mot Calvaire y est cité neuf fois alors qu'il n'apparaît pas dans les œuvres antérieures. À aucun moment de sa vie, Emily n'a été profondément religieuse ; elle prit parfois la religion pour sujet, plus pour en faire une critique animée qu'à titre de participante, excepté dans les poèmes d'amour. Bien que le Calvaire soit une métaphore allant plus de soi pour évoquer la souffrance que les consistoires ne le sont pour évoquer la proximité, les neuf mentions du mot Calvaire au cours de cette période suffisent pour que l'on penche en faveur de Wadsworth.

Ayant étudié le chant et le piano, Emily jouait parfois chez elle. Un proche se souvient :

Souvent, lors de ces visites à la famille Dickinson, une musique céleste sortait Père de son sommeil. Emily expliquait alors au

matin « j'improvise mieux la nuit ». À une ou deux reprises, alors qu'il ne se trouvait pas sous leur toit accueillant, mon père, venu présenter ses hommages aux Dickinson, reçut un message de sa cousine Emily disant : « Si vous venez séjourner dans la pièce voisine et si vous laissez les portes légèrement entrebâillées, je descendrai jouer pour vous. » Mon père disait qu'à cette époque, elle lui faisait penser à un feu follet.

Un autre visiteur se souvient qu'Emily était souvent au piano, jouant des mélodies belles et étranges, toutes de sa propre création. Emily écrivit elle-même à un ami : « Je joue encore les airs anciens et étranges, ceux qui venaient à l'esprit durant les heures avancées de la nuit. »

Tout ceci laisse conjecturer qu'Emily avait peut-être mis elle-même ses poèmes en musique ou même qu'en premier lieu elle avait conçu certains d'entre eux sous forme de chants. Je les ai arrangés en grande partie de la même façon qu'Emily aurait pu le faire si sa musique avait trouvé, un peu à l'image de ses poèmes, un équilibre entre tradition et iconoclasme.

Traduction française :

Catherine Weijburg-Cazier

PART ONE: THE PENSIVE SPRING

1. I SING TO USE THE WAITING

(major setting)

I sing to use the waiting,
My bonnet but to tie
And shut the door unto my house,
No more to do have I

Till his best step approaching,
We journey to the day
And tell each other how we sang
To keep the dark away.

2. THERE IS A MORN BY MEN UNSEEN

There is a morn by men unseen
Whose maids upon remoter green
Keep their seraphic May,
And all day long, with dance and game,
And gambol I may never name,
Employ their holiday.

Here to light measure move the feet
Which walk no more the village street
Nor by the wood are found,
Here are the birds that sought the sun

When last year's distaff idle hung,
And summer's brows were bound.

Ne'er saw I such a wondrous scene,
Ne'er such a ring on such a green
Nor so serene array,
And if the stars, some summer night,
Should swing their cups of Chrysolite
And revel till the day.

Like thee to dance, like thee to sing,
People upon the mystic green,
I ask each new May morn.
I wait thy far fantastic bells
Announcing me in other dells
Unto the different dawn!

3. I HAD A GUINEA GOLDEN

I had a guinea golden,
I lost it in the sand
And though the sum was simple
And pounds were in the land,
Still had it such a value
Unto my frugal eye,
That when I could not find it
I sat me down to sigh.

I had a crimson robin
Who sang full many a day,
But when the woods were painted,
He too did fly away.
Time brought me other robins,
Their ballads were the same,
Still for my missing troubadour
I kept the "house at hame".

I had a star in heaven,
One "Pleiad" was its name,
And when I was not heeding
It wandered from the same.
And though the skies are crowded,
And all the night ashine,
I do not care about it
Since none of them are mine.

My story has a moral;
I have a missing friend,
"Pleiad" its name, and robin,
And guinea in the sand.
And when this mournful ditty,
Accompanied with tear,

Shall meet the eye of traitor
In country far from here,
Grant that repentance solemn
May seize upon his mind,

And he no consolation
Beneath the sun may find.

4. IF SHE HAD BEEN THE MISTLETOE

If she had been the mistletoe
And I had been the rose,
How gay upon your table
My velvet life to close.
Since I am of the Druid,
And she is of the dew,
I'll deck tradition's buttonhole,
And send the rose to you.

5. NEW FEET WITHIN MY GARDEN GO

New feet within my garden go,
New fingers stir the sod.
A troubadour upon the elm
Betrays the solitude.

New children play upon the green,
New weary sleep below,
And still the pensive spring returns,
And still the punctual snow!

6. SHE BORE IT

She bore it till the simple veins
Traced azure on her hand,
Till pleading, round her quiet eyes
The purple crayons stand.

Till daffodils had come and gone,
I cannot tell the sum,
And then she ceased to bear it
And with the saints sat down.

No more her patient figure
At twilight soft to meet,
No more her timid bonnet
Upon the village street,

But crowns instead and courtiers
And in the midst so fair,
Whose but her shy, immortal face
Of whom we're whispering here?

7. I TASTE A LIQUOR NEVER BREWED

I taste a liquor never brewed
From tankards scooped in pearl;
Not all the vats upon the Rhine
Yield such an alcohol!

Inebriate of air am I,
And debauchee of dew,
Reeling through endless summer days
From inns of molten blue.

When landlords turn the drunken bee
Out of the foxglove's door,
When butterflies renounce their "drams",
I shall but drink the more,

Till seraphs swing their snowy hats
And saints to windows run,
To see the little tippler
Leaning against the sun.

8. I SHOULD NOT DARE TO LEAVE MY FRIEND

I should not dare to leave my friend,
Because, because if he should die
While I was gone, and I too late
Should reach the heart that wanted me,

If I should disappoint the eyes
That hunted, hunted so to see
And could not bear to shut until
They noticed me, they noticed me,

If I should stab the patient faith

So sure I'd come, so sure I'd come,
It listening, listening went to sleep
Telling my tardy name,

My heart would wish it broke before,
Since breaking then, since breaking then
Were useless as next morning's sun
Where midnight frosts had lain!

PART TWO: SO WE MUST MEET APART

9. THERE CAME A DAY AT SUMMER'S FULL

There came a day at summer's full
Entirely for me;
I thought that such were for the saints
Where resurrections be.

The sun as common went abroad,
The flowers accustomed blew,
As if no soul the solstice passed
That maketh all things new.

The time was scarce profaned by speech;
The symbol of a word
Was needless as, at Sacrament,
The wardrobe of our Lord.

Each was to each the sealed church,
Permitted to commune
This time, lest we too awkward show
At Supper of the Lamb.

The hours slid fast, as hours will,
Clutched tight by greedy hands,
So faces on two decks look back,
Bound to opposing lands.

And so when all the time had leaked,
Without external sound
Each bound the other's crucifix,
We gave no other bound,

Sufficient troth that we shall rise,
Deposed, at length, the grave,
To that new marriage justified
Through Calvaries of love.

10. THE FIRST DAY'S NIGHT HAD COME

The first day's night had come,
And grateful that a thing
So terrible had been endured,
I told my soul to sing.

She said her strings were snapped,

Her bow to atoms blown,
And so to mend her gave me work
Until another morn.
And then a day as huge
As yesterdays in pairs
Unrolled its horror in my face
Until it blocked my eyes,

My brain began to laugh,
I mumbled like a fool,
And though tis years ago, that day,
My brain keeps giggling still.

And something's odd within;
That person that I was
And this one do not feel the same.
Could it be madness, this?

II. THE SOUL SELECTS HER OWN SOCIETY

The soul selects her own society
Then shuts the door;
To her divine majority
Present no more.

Unmoved, she notes the chariots pausing
At her low gate,
Unmoved, an emperor be kneeling

Upon her mat.

I've known her from an ample nation
Choose one,
Then close the valves of her attention
Like stone.

12. IT WAS NOT DEATH, FOR I STOOD UP

It was not death, for I stood up
And all the dead lie down,
It was not night, for all the bells
Put out their tongues for noon.

It was not frost, for on my flesh
I felt siroccos crawl,
Not fire, for just my marble feet
Could keep a chancel cool.

And yet it tasted like them all.
The figures I have seen
Set orderly for burial
Reminded me of mine,

And if my life were shaven
And fitted to a frame,
And could not breathe without a key,
And 't was like midnight some,

When everything that ticked has stopped
And space stares all around,
Or grisly frosts, first autumn morns,
Repeal the beating ground,

But most like chaos, stopless, cool,
Without a chance or spar,
Or even a report of land
To justify despair.

13. WHEN I WAS SMALL, A WOMAN DIED

When I was small, a woman died;
Today her only boy
Went up from the Pontomac,
His face all victory

To look at her. How slowly
The seasons must have turned,
Till bullets clipped an angle
And he passed quickly round.

If pride shall be in paradise,
Ourself cannot decide;
Of their imperial conduct
No person testified.

But proud in apparition,

That woman and her boy
Pass back and forth across my brain,
As even in the sky

I'm confident that bravos
Perpetual break abroad
For braveries remote as this
In scarlet Maryland.

14. I CRIED AT PITY, NOT AT PAIN

I cried at pity, not at pain,
I heard a woman say
"Poor child", and something in her voice
Convicted me of me.

So long I fainted, to myself
It seemed the common way,
And health and laughter, curious things,
To look at, like a toy.

To sometimes hear "rich people" buy,
And see the parcel rolled
And carried, I supposed, to heaven,
For children made of gold,

But not to touch, or wish for,
Or think of, with a sigh,

And so and so had been to me,
Had God willed differently.

I wish I knew that woman's name,
So when she comes this way,
To hold my life, and hold my ears
For fear I hear her say

She's "sorry I am dead" again,
Just when the grave and I
Have sobbed ourselves almost to sleep,
Our only lullaby.

15. THE NIGHT WAS WIDE

The night was wide, and furnished scant
With but a single star
That often as a cloud it met
Blew out itself for fear.

The wind pursued the little bush
And drove away the leaves
November left, then clambered up
And fretted in the eaves.

No squirrel went abroad,
A dog's belated feet,
Like intermittent plush, he heard

Adown the empty street.

To feel if blinds be fast,
And closer to the fire
Her little rocking chair to draw,
And shiver for the poor,

The housewife's gentle task.
"How pleasanter", said she
Unto the sofa opposite,
"The sleeter than May, no thee"

16. I CANNOT LIVE WITH YOU

I cannot live with you.
It would be life,
And life is over there
Behind the shelf

The sexton keeps the key to,
Putting up
Our life, his porcelain,
Like a cup

Discarded of the housewife,
Quaint or broke.
A newer Sevres pleases,
Old ones crack.

I could not die with you,
For one must wait
To shut the other's gaze down,
You could not,

And I, could I stand by
And see you freeze,
Without my right of frost,
Death's privilege?

Nor could I rise with you,
Because your face
Would put out Jesus',
That new grace

Glow plain and foreign
On my homesick eye,
Except that you than he
Shone closer by.

They'd judge us. How?
For you served heaven, you know,
Or sought to.
I could not,

Because you saturated sight,
And I had no more eyes
For sordid excellence

As paradise.

And were you lost, I would be,
Though my name
Rang loudest
On the heavenly fame.

And were you saved,
And I condemned to be
Where you were not,
That self were hell to me.

So we must meet apart,
You there, I here,
With just the door ajar
That oceans are, and prayer,
And that white sustenance,
Despair.

PART THREE: ALMOST PEACE

17. MY FIRST WELL DAY, SINCE MANY ILL

My first well day, since many ill,
I asked to go abroad
And take the sunshine in my hands,
And see the things in pod

Ablossom just when I went in,
To take my chance with pain,
Uncertain if myself or he
Should prove the strongest one.

The summer deepened while we strove.
She put some flowers away,
And redder cheeked ones in their stead,
A fond, illusive way.

To cheat herself it seemed she tried,
As if before a child
To fade. Tomorrow rainbows held,
The sepulchre could hide.

She dealt a fashion to the nut,
She tied the hoods to seeds,
She dropped bright scraps of tint about,
And left Brazilian threads.

On every shoulder that she met,
Then both her hands of haze
Put up, to hide her parting grace
From our unfitted eyes.

My loss by sickness, was it loss,
Or that ethereal gain,
One earns by measuring the grave,
Then measuring the sun?

18. IT CEASED TO HURT ME

It ceased to hurt me, though so slow
I could not feel the anguish go,
But only knew by looking back
That something had benumbed the track.

Nor when it altered I could say,
For I had worn it every day
As constant as the childish frock
I hung upon the peg at night,

But not the grief. That nestled close
As needless ladies softly press
To cushions' cheeks to keep their place.

Nor what consoled it I could trace,
Except whereas 't was wilderness,
It's better, almost peace.

19. I LIKE TO SEE IT LAP THE MILES

I like to see it lap the miles
And lick the valleys up,
And stop to feed itself at tanks,
And then prodigious step

Around a pile of mountains,

And supercilious peer
In shanties by the sides of roads,
And then a quarry pare

To fit its ribs and crawl between,
Complaining all the while
In horrid hooting stanza,
Then chase itself downhill

And neigh like Boanerges,
Then, punctual as a star,
Stop, docile and omnipotent,
At its own stable door.

20. SPLIT THE LARK AND YOU'LL FIND THE MUSIC

Split the lark and you'll find the music,
Bulb after bulb in silver rolled,
Scantily dealt to the summer morning,
Saved for your ear when lutes be old.

Loose the flood, you shall find it patent
Gush after gush reserved for you.
Scarlet experiment! Skeptic Thomas!
Now do you doubt that your bird was true?

21. THE CRICKETS SANG

The crickets sang and set the sun,
And workmen finished one by one
Their seam the day upon.

The low grass loaded with the dew;
The twilight stood as strangers do,
With hat in hand, polite and new
To stay as if, or go.

A vastness as a neighbour came,
A wisdom without face or name,
A peace as hemispheres at home,
And so the night became.

22. AFTER A HUNDRED YEARS

After a hundred years
Nobody knows the place,
Agony that enacted there
Motionless as peace.

Weeds triumphant ranged;
Strangers strolled and spelled
At the lone orthography
Of the elder dead.

Winds of summer fields
Recollect the way,
Instinct picking up the key
Dropped by memory.

23. THE CLOUDS THEIR BACKS TOGETHER LAID

The clouds their backs together laid,
The north begun to push,
The forests galloped till they fell,
The lightning played like mice.

The thunder crumbled like a stuff.
How good to be in tombs,
Where nature's temper cannot reach,
Nor missile ever comes.

24. I SHALL NOT MURMUR

I shall not murmur if at last
The ones I loved below
Permission have to understand
For what I shunned them so.
Divulging it would rest my heart,
But it would ravage theirs.
Why, Katie, treason has a voice,
But mine dispels in tears.

PART FOUR: MY FEET SLIP NEARER

25. THE GRAVE MY LITTLE COTTAGE IS

The grave my little cottage is,
Where keeping house for thee,
I make my parlor orderly
And lay the marble tea

For two divided briefly,
A cycle it may be,
Till everlasting life unite
In strong society.

26. I DID NOT REACH THEE

I did not reach thee, but my feet
Slip nearer every day,
Three rivers and a hill to cross,
One desert and a sea;
I shall not count the journey one
When I am telling thee.

Two deserts, but the year is cold,
So that will help the sand;
One desert crossed, the second one
Will feel as cool as land.
Sahara is too little price

To pay for thy right hand.

The sea comes last. Step merry, feet,
So short we have to go,
To play together we are prone,
But we must labor now;
The last shall be the lightest load
That we have had to draw.

The sun goes crooked.
That is night,
Before he makes the bend.
We must have passed the middle sea.
Almost we wish the end
Were further off;
Too great it seems
So near the whole to stand.

We step like plush,
We stand like snow,
The waters murmur new.
Three rivers and the hill are passed,
Two deserts and the sea!
Now death usurps my premium,
And gets the look at thee.

27. MY WARS ARE LAID AWAY IN BOOKS

My wars are laid away in books;
I have one battle more,
A foe whom I have never seen
But oft has scanned me o'er,
And hesitated me between
And others at my side,
But chose the best, neglecting me,
Till all the rest have died.
How sweet if I am not forgot
By chums that passed away,
Since playmates at threescore and ten
Are such a scarcity!

28. 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 windows 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

Those looked that lived that day,
The bell within the steeple wild
The flying tidings told:
How much can come,
And much can go,
And yet abide the world!

29. THE GOING FROM A WORLD WE KNOW

The going from a world we know,
To one a wonder still
Is like the child's adversity
Whose vista is a hill.
Behind the hill is sorcery
And everything unknown,
But will the secret compensate
For climbing it alone?

30. UPON HIS SADDLE SPRUNG A BIRD

Upon his saddle sprung a bird
And crossed a thousand trees;
Before a fence without a fare
His fantasy did please.
And then he lifted up his throat
And squandered such a note,
A universe that overheard

Is stricken by it yet.

31. BEAUTY CROWDS ME

Beauty crowds me till I die,
Beauty, mercy have on me,
But if I expire today
Let it be in sight of thee.

32. I SING TO USE THE WAITING
(minor setting)

I sing to use the waiting,
My bonnet but to tie
And shut the door unto my house,
No more to do have I

Till his best step approaching,
We journey to the day
And tell each other how we sang
To keep the dark away.



Fritz Steinegger and Gordon Getty



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THE WHITE ELECTION
A CYCLE OF 32 SONGS FOR SOPRANO AND PIANO
COMPOSED BY GORDON GETTY (BORN 1933)
ON POEMS BY EMILY DICKINSON (1830-1886)

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GORDON GETTY (born 1933)

THE WHITE ELECTION

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SUPER AUDIO CD

cycle of 32 songs on poems by

EMILY DICKINSON (1830-1886)

Part One: THE PENSIVE SPRING

Part Two: SO WE MUST MEET APART

Part Three: ALMOST PEACE

Part Four: MY FEET SLIP NEARER

LISA DELAN – SOPRANO

FRITZ STEINEGGER – PIANO

Total playing time: 70. 30

Producer: Job Maarse

Balance Engineer: Jean-Marie Geijsen

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