

MUSICAL MEDITATIONS

Joshua Hughes & Kevin Navarro

bass-baritone

piano

Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen, BWV 56

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

1. Aria
2. Recitativo
3. Aria

Two Concert Etudes

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

- Étude Op. 10, No. 3 in E Major ("Tristesse")
- Étude Op. 25, No. 1 in A-flat Major ("Aeolian Harp")

Selections from *Elijah*, Op. 70

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-1847)

- Lord God of Abraham
- Cast thy burden upon the Lord (piano transcription by Myles Birket Foster, 1851-1922)
- Is not His word like a fire?
- O rest in the Lord (arr. Foster)
- It is enough
- Lift thine eyes (arr. Foster)
- For the mountains shall depart

Prelude Op. 28 and Polonaise Op. 53 in A-flat Major ("Heroic")

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

Zion's Walls

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

from *Old American Songs*

Sunday, August 8th, 2021
4:00 PM

Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption
1111 Gough Street San Francisco, CA 94109

Notes and Translations

Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen, BWV 56

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

The first of only three solo cantatas Bach composed for bass, *Ich will den Kreuzstab* was written in Leipzig for the 19th Sunday after Trinity in 1726. The text describes the Christian life as a voluntary journey “carrying the cross” as a follower of Jesus. The recitative refers to the day’s prescribed Gospel reading (Matthew 9:1-8) in which Jesus travels on a boat (hence, the metaphor of life as a sea voyage). The final aria expresses joy at being united with the savior.

1. Arie

Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen,
Er kömmt von Gottes lieber Hand,
Der führet mich nach meinen Plagen
Zu Gott, in das gelobte Land.
Da leg ich den Kummer auf einmal ins Grab,
Da wischt mir die Tränen mein Heiland selbst ab.

2. Rezitativ

Mein Wandel auf der Welt
Ist einer Schiffahrt gleich:
Betrübnis, Kreuz und Not
Sind Wellen, welche mich bedecken
Und auf den Tod
Mich täglich schrecken;
Mein Anker aber, der mich hält,
Ist die Barmherzigkeit,
Womit mein Gott mich oft erfreut.
Der ruft so zu mir:
Ich bin bei dir,
Ich will dich nicht verlassen noch versäumen!
Und wenn das wütenvolle Schäumen
Sein Ende hat,
So tret ich aus dem Schiff in meine Stadt,
Die ist das Himmelreich,
Wohin ich mit den Frommen
Aus vielem Trübsal werde kommen.

3. Arie

Endlich, endlich wird mein Joch
Wieder von mir weichen müssen.
Da krieg ich in dem Herren Kraft,
Da hab ich Adlers Eigenschaft,
Da fahr ich auf von dieser Erden
Und laufe sonder matt zu werden.
O gescheh es heute noch!

1. Aria

I will gladly carry the Cross,
it comes from God's dear hand,
and leads me, after my troubles,
to God, in the promised land.
There at last I will lay my sorrow in the grave,
there my Savior himself will wipe away my tears.

2. Recitative

My pilgrimage in the world
is like a sea voyage:
trouble, suffering, and anguish
are the waves that cover me
and with death itself
daily terrify me;
my anchor however, which holds me firm,
is mercy,
with which my God often gladdens me.
He calls thus to me:
“I am with you,
I will not forsake you or abandon you!”
And when the raging torrents
are come to an end,
then I will step off the ship into my city,
which is the kingdom of heaven,
where with the righteous
I will emerge out of many troubles.

3. Aria

Finally, finally my yoke
must fall away from me.
Then will I fight with the Lord's strength,
then I will have an eagle's power,
then I will journey from this earth
and run without becoming fatigued.
O let it happen today!

-Christoph Birkmann (1703-1771)

Matthew 9:1, Hebrews 13:5,
Revelation 7:14, Isaiah 40:31

Selections from *Elijah*

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-1847)

When Mendelssohn was a child, his grandmother presented him with a gift that was to alter the course of his life: a copy of J.S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. Despite Bach's generally unfavorable reputation at the time, the score seized Felix's imagination. At the age of twenty, Mendelssohn conducted the first performance of the *St. Matthew Passion* since Bach's death, resulting in a full-scale revival and reevaluation of Bach's works throughout Germany and beyond, and a universal recognition of their genius and significance. Inspired by the passions of Bach and oratorios of Handel, Mendelssohn modeled his sweeping oratorios *St. Paul* and *Elijah* after the Baroque masters. Though unstaged, *Elijah* dramatically depicts the life of the Old Testament prophet through recitative, arias, and choruses.

Lord God of Abraham

Elijah contrives a competition between the God of Abraham and the earth-god Baal by proposing a task: "You and I will each sacrifice a bull, and rather than set fire to it in the usual fashion, each will call on his god to consume the sacrifice." Elijah mocks the prophets of Baal as they continually fail to summon the requisite fire. After their final supplication collapses, Elijah bears a simple prayer into the stunned silence. The simplicity of "Lord God of Abraham" stands in irony against the gaudy display offered by the priests of Baal.

Draw near, all ye people; come to me!

Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel! This day let it be known that Thou art God; and I am Thy servant! O show to all this people that I have done these things according to Thy word! O hear me Lord and answer me; and show this people that Thou art Lord God; and let their hearts again be turned! (I Kings 18:30, 36, 37)

Is not his word like a fire?

Reminiscent of the "rage" arias and texts from Handel's *Messiah* ("For He is like a refiner's fire" and "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel"), Elijah concludes his chastisement of the followers of Baal with a purifying zeal. The walking bass line depicts the footsteps of the wicked scurrying to avoid God's wrath.

Is not His word like a fire; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock into pieces? For God is angry with the wicked every day; and if the wicked turn not, the Lord will whet His sword; and He hath bent His bow, and made it ready. (Jeremiah 23:29; Psalm 7:11, 12)

It is enough

The princess Jezebel, who instituted the worship of Baal, incites a mob to kill Elijah. Depressed, abandoned, and believing his teachings to have fallen on deaf ears, Elijah escapes to the desert. "It is enough" (German – "Es ist genug") is modeled on J.S. Bach's "Es ist vollbracht" ("it is finished"), the last words of Christ on the cross as related in the Saint John Passion. Mendelssohn employs the same isolated key – F# minor, the same mournful cello solo, and the same ternary structure (with an intense, agitated middle section). The aria's introduction suggests the heavy footsteps that lead the prophet into exile and illuminates the Christological aspect of Elijah's suffering.

Though stricken, they have not grieved! Tarry here, my servant; the Lord be with thee. I journey hence to the wilderness

It is enough; O Lord, now take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers! I desire to live no longer; now let me die, for my days are but vanity! I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts! For the children of Israel have broken Thy covenant, and thrown down Thine altars, and slain all Thy prophets — slain them with the sword; and I, even I, only am left; and they seek my life to take it away. (Job 7:16; I Kings 19:4, 10)

For the mountains shall depart

God reveals himself, speaking through the angels to convey a message to Elijah: seven thousand loyal followers remain in Israel, he is not alone, and he must once again return to the path. Brimming over from the encounter, Elijah sets out with fresh focus and purpose. His parting words refer to the covenant between God and His people. The covenant which he earlier saw as irretrievably broken has now been manifestly, and personally, restored.

I go on my way in the strength of the Lord. For Thou art my Lord; and I will suffer for Thy sake. My heart is therefore glad, my glory rejoiceth, and my flesh shall also rest in hope. (Psalms 71:16, 16:2, 9)
For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but Thy kindness shall not depart from me, neither shall the covenant of Thy peace be removed. (Isaiah 54:10)

-William Bartholomew (1793-1867)

Zion's Walls from *Old American Songs*

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

Copland's *Old American Songs* is a collection of hymns and folk songs drawn from various sources. *Zion's Walls* is a revivalist song credited to John G. McCurry (1821-1886), composer and compiler of tune books such as the *Social Harp*. Copland wrote an original countermelody which you will first hear in the piano introduction.

About the Artists

Bass-Baritone Joshua Hughes, lauded for his "lush, rich" voice (TheatreBloom), "powerful lyricism" (Texas Classical Review), and "brilliant vocal range" (DC Metro Theater Arts), has performed in opera, operetta, theatre, cabarets, and concerts ranging from Bach to Broadway. Joshua recently returned from abroad performing as a holiday vocalist and caroler at Hong Kong Disneyland. Previous credits include Bach's *Saint John Passion* with Soli Deo Gloria, *La Réve de Carmen* (Escamillo) with Opera on Tap San Francisco, Barab's *Little Red Riding Hood* (Wolf) with Opera San José, Courcelle's *Achille in Sciro* (Licomede) with Orchestra of New Spain, Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrona* (Uberto) and Handel's *Alcina* (Melisso) with American Baroque Opera Company, Boris Blacher's *Die Flut* (Der Fischer) and Weill's *Mabagonny Songspiel* (Bobby) with Opera in Concert, and Purcell's *The Fairy Queen*, Bach's *Saint Matthew Passion*, and Charpentier's *Les Arts Florissants* with Dallas Bach Society. Hughes has also made his mark with British operetta, receiving the President's Choice Award at the 2021 Houston Gilbert and Sullivan Society competition and performing with Baltimore's Young Victorian Theatre Company in *A Salute to Gilbert and Sullivan* and in their productions of *Mikado* (Ko-Ko), *HMS Pinafore* (Sir Joseph Porter) and *Iolanthe* (Lord Chancellor), and *Ruddigore* (Robin) with Victorian Lyric Opera Company. Joshua currently lives in Palo Alto with his husband.
www.joshuahughesbassbaritone.com

Kevin Navarro, classical pianist and vocal accompanist is a native of Seattle, Washington and has resided in San Francisco for the past nine years. Kevin earned his Bachelor's of Music in Piano Performance from Pacific Lutheran University School of Music, where he studied under Dr. Calvin Knapp of the Julliard School, Dr. Richard Nance, Director of Choral Activities and Mira Frohnmayer, Chair of Vocal Studies at PLU School of Music. During his tenure at PLU, Kevin served as the choral accompanist for both University Chorale, and internationally renowned Choir of the West. Kevin was very active in musical theatre and opera productions in the Seattle/Tacoma region, and has served as a principle/stage accompanist for PLU Opera Workshop, Tacoma Opera, Seattle Opera and the Tacoma Musical Playhouse including productions such as *Madame Butterfly*, *Marriage of Figaro*, *Magic Flute*, and *West Side Story*. In December of 2020, Kevin won 2nd Place at the Music International Grand Prix Semi-Finals in San Francisco. In addition to maintaining an active solo performance schedule, Kevin serves as Associate Accompanist for the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus, as well as Director of Music for First Congregational Church of San Rafael.