

# *The* **MIRROR VISIONS** *Ensemble*

L'Ń6 MIBKOB M2ION2 EN26M2P16

"Warm tone, witty interpretive style...vital theatrical performances with histrionic touches that suited the score perfectly."

*-The New York Times*



## **The Mirror Visions Ensemble Critical Acclaim**



“Unlike most chamber music enterprises, the Mirror Visions Ensemble is run by singers rather than instrumentalists, and its programs are shaped with an ear to the poetry of song texts rather than to overarching notions of musical style.”

***The New York Times***

“Mirror Visions Ensemble is not only highly accomplished musically, but also pulls in their listeners with their winning personalities on both the individual and group level. Add those

qualities to the great service they do for contemporary composers by their continual commissioning and performing of new works, and the end result is a win for everyone.”

***New York Concert Review***

“MVE is most certainly a group to follow for anyone who truly appreciates beautiful singing, new works, art song, and thought-provoking programming.”

***I Care If You Listen***

“Charm is a quality that this ensemble of three engaging singers has in spades.”

***The New Yorker***

“The audience came out in droves for this terrific concert by The Mirror Visions Ensemble, and everyone seemed to leave the hall happy... and hungry.”

***New York Concert Review***

“The four members of The Mirror Visions Ensemble (soprano Vira Slywotsky, tenor Scott Murphree, baritone Jesse Blumberg and pianist Alan Darling) are all wonderful performers, as we heard during the recital’s solo songs. Not only do all the singers have fine voices and clear diction, they use these attributes skillfully in communicating the meaning of the words... This was memorable music making.”

***New York Concert Review***

“All three [singers] have attractive voices and expressive stage presence, whether singing alone or in well-matched ensemble.”

***The Boston Musical Intelligencer***

## Mirror Visions Ensemble 2015-2016 Biography

As *The New York Times* aptly stated, “Unlike most chamber music enterprises, the Mirror Visions Ensemble is run by singers rather than instrumentalists, and its programs are shaped with an ear to the poetry of song texts rather than to overarching notions of musical style.” Mirror Visions Ensemble’s work, presenting concerts for Soprano, Tenor, Baritone and piano, has figured prominently around performing and commissioning musical ‘mirror visions’ – multiple settings of the same text by one or more composers. What began with programs focusing on poets such as Dickinson, Heine, Shakespeare and Verlaine has since expanded to include the commissioning of over 80 works from 24 composers. Rooted in commissioned works for vocal chamber music ensemble, founder and artistic director Tobé Malawista, along with the musicians, curates each concert; composers, poets and historical figures are explored not only through their published works, but also through correspondence and other anecdotes.

Mirror Visions’ 2015-16 season begins with two West Coast performances of its acclaimed program, *Journeys*, where five MVE commissions share the ride with travel songs from Barber, Berlioz, Duparc and Hayden, among others. *Journeys* will be performed in San Francisco and Sacramento, and in Ann Arbor, MI during the spring. In January, the Mirror Visions Ensemble debuts a new program, *Myths and Legends*, featuring deities, beasts, charms and lullabies in works by Schubert, Mendelssohn, Cole Porter, Zdeněk Fibich, Hahn and Charles Griffes, among others. It brings the program to New York City’s Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center, as well as to Hillsdale, NY and Newton, MA. The ensemble premieres a second new program this season, *Holidays Around the Globe*, in Milford, PA in December.

Two recent projects devoted entirely to creating new works for vocal chamber music represent Ms. Malawista’s passion for commissioning and the discovery of new talent. In October, the Mirror Visions Ensemble announces the winners of its inaugural Young Composers Competition. Last season, seven Swedish composers were commissioned to set Swedish poems for the ensemble, all receiving their world premieres in May 2015 in Paris.

In past seasons, the ensemble has presented its unique programs and residencies both in the U.S. and abroad, including New York City’s Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Merkin Concert Hall, New York University, Le Poisson Rouge, SubCulture and Bargemusic, California State University at Fullerton, University of Southern California, the Longy School of Music of Bard College, Yale University, Northwestern University, Mt. Kisco’s Copland House, South County Concerts Chamber Music Series and

on tour in Montana. Museums in France have become a home for Mirror Visions, with many performances at the Musée Carnavalet, Musée des Arts Décoratifs and the Musée Nissim de Camondo, as well as at the American University of Paris.

The Mirror Visions Ensemble was founded by Tobé Malawista, Richard Lalli and Scott Murphree. The generous support of the Florence Gould Foundation has been vital to Mirror Visions' success in France. In recognition of her work with Mirror Visions Ensemble, artistic director Tobé Malawista was named Chevalier of the Legion of Honor for her contributions to the culture of France.

**“Charm is a quality that this ensemble of three engaging singers has in spades.” -- *The New Yorker***

**“Warm tone, witty interpretive style...vital theatrical performances with histrionic touches that suited the score perfectly.” -- *The New York Times***

**Vira Slywotzky, Soprano  
Scott Murphree, Tenor  
Jesse Blumberg, Baritone  
Mischa Bouvier, Baritone  
[www.mirrorvisions.org](http://www.mirrorvisions.org)**

**AT THE REQUEST OF THE ARTIST, PLEASE DO NOT ALTER THIS BIOGRAPHY WITHOUT  
PRIOR APPROVAL  
AUGUST 2015 - PLEASE DESTROY ALL PREVIOUSLY DATED MATERIALS**



Soprano **VIRA SLYWOTZKY** has performed with Seattle Opera, Chelsea Opera, Chautauqua Opera, Sarasota Opera, Light Opera of New York, Boston Midsummer Opera, Center for Contemporary Opera and the Berkshire Opera Festival. Favorite roles include Nedda (*Pagliacci*), Tatyana (*Eugene Onegin*), Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*), Komponist (*Ariadne auf Naxos*), Helena (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Magda (*The Consul*) and the title role in *Vanessa*. She is a founding member of the Victor Herbert Renaissance Project - LIVE! The recipient of a 2007 Richard F. Gold Career Grant, Slywotzky has twice been a New England Regional Finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, and in 2009 represented the United States at the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition.

Tenor **SCOTT MURPHREE** is a distinguished singer of the concert, recital and opera stage. He recently appeared at Nevada Opera as Anthony in *Sweeney Todd*. Other recent engagements include performances with the Utah Opera, Opera Delaware, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the New York Festival of Song, and the Five Boroughs Music Festival. Additionally, he has appeared in concerts at Weill Recital Hall, Alice Tully Hall, 92nd Street Y, and Town Hall. Mr. Murphree currently serves as an adjunct professor on the voice faculty in the Steinhardt School at New York University.

Baritone **JESSE BLUMBERG** has performed roles at Minnesota Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Atlanta Opera, Boston Early Music Festival, and at London's Royal Festival Hall. He has made concert appearances with American Bach Soloists, Boston Baroque, and on Lincoln Center's *American Songbook* series, and has performed recitals with the New York Festival of Song and Marilyn Horne Foundation. His 2015-2016 season includes *Messiah* performances at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., Bach cantatas with Montreal Baroque, a tour of *St. John Passion* with Apollo's Fire, and *The Merry Widow* at Boston Lyric Opera. Jesse is also the founder and artistic director of Five Boroughs Music Festival in New York City.

[www.jesseblumberg.com](http://www.jesseblumberg.com)

Praised by *Opera News* for his "soothing, cavernous baritone that can soar to heights of lyric beauty," Alabama-born baritone **MISCHA BOUVIER** continues to impact audiences with his keen musicality and remarkable communicative ability. Noted for his "extraordinary and varied background" by *San Francisco Classical Voice*, Mischa has appeared with Orchestra of St. Luke's, NYFOS, Folger Consort, Sting, Musica Sacra, Princeton Glee Club, Boston Symphony Orchestra, El Festival Casals de Puerto Rico, Five Boroughs Music Festival, Boston Pops, Metropolis Ensemble, Colorado Symphony Orchestra, New Mexico Symphony Orchestra, Anonymous 4, Bronx Opera, Alabama Symphony Orchestra, Columbus Symphony Orchestra, Musica Sacra Maastricht, Stamford Symphony, Mark Morris Dance Group, and The Knights. Mischa's 2015-2016 season includes performances with American Bach Soloists, Chatham Baroque, Bach Collegium San Diego, Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra, TENET, and Lysander Piano Trio, and recitals in Massachusetts, Florida, Maryland, New York and Pittsburgh. [www.mischabouvier.com](http://www.mischabouvier.com)

## History of The Mirror Visions Ensemble

Commissions of New Works    Total: 81 between April 1993 and July 2012

### Christopher Berg (b.1949)

#### *The Ghost of Madame de Sévigné* (2012)

Vocal Trio and piano

Part of *THE THREE-PANELED MIRROR* – 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary gift to Tobé Malawista

European Premiere: May 6, 2012 The American Church in Paris

American Premiere: May 22, 2012 Merkin Concert Hall, NY

#### *En Paz* (2011)

Text by **Amado Nervo**

European Premiere: October 15, 2011 Les Arts Décoratifs/Salon des Boiseres, Paris

American Premiere: October 21, 2011 Edward M. Pickman Concert Hall at the Longy School of Music, Cambridge, MA

Repeat performance: October 23, 2011 Merkin Concert Hall, NY

#### *Incominciam!* (2011)

Text by **Dante** from Canto II of *The Inferno*

European Premiere: October 15, 2011 Les Arts Décoratifs/Salon des Boiseres, Paris

American Premiere: October 21, 2011 Edward M. Pickman Concert Hall at the Longy School of Music, Cambridge, MA

Repeat performance: October 23, 2011 Merkin Concert Hall, NY

#### *Le Bijoux* (2008)

Text by **Charles Baudelaire**

For Vocal Trio and piano

Premiere: La Maison Française of New York University February 1, 2008

Repeat performance: Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris March 2008

#### *The Months* (2006)

Premiere: Merkin Hall, New York City, NY November 2006

Twelve duets on poems by **Linda Pastan**

For soprano, tenor and piano

Repeat performance: May 24, 2011 at Carnegie Weill Recital Hall, New York City, NY

#### *Letters of Lincoln* (2006)

Five texts of **Abraham Lincoln**

For tenor, baritone and piano

Premiere: Merkin Hall, New York City, NY September 18, 2006

Recording: Albany Records, *Cosmic & Domestic Matters*

Excerpts performed at the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary concerts on May 4 & 6, 2012 Paris and May 22, 2012 NY

#### *Letter From Richard* (2006)

Text by **Richard Hundley**

For tenor and piano

Premiere: Merkin Hall, New York City, NY September 18, 2006

*Démangeaisons* (2005)

Six songs to texts of letters of **Emmanuel Chabrier**

Premiere: Musée Nissim de Camondo, Paris October 1, 2005

Repeat performances: New Haven, CT 2005; Paris 2005; La Maison Française of New York University February 2007; Alliance Française de San Francisco February 2007; Private concert in NYC May 2007.

*Trois éventails* (2004)

Text by **Stéphane Mallarmé**

Vocal Trio and piano

- - - on same concert program as *Démangeaisons*

*The Night Gallery* (2003)

Poem by **Jeffrey Greene** from *American Spirituals*

Solo voice and piano

Premiere: The Elebash Recital Hall, Graduate Center/CUNY in New York City, NY November 22, 2003

Repeat performances: University of New Haven, March 2004; 2 performances October at Cambridge

University, England and The American Library in Paris; Princeton University "Friends of Princeton" Concert Series on February 2005

Recording: Albany Records –*Secrets*

*Les Mouches* (2002)

Letter of **Benjamin Franklin** in his own translation into French

A capella vocal trio

*This is a "Mirror Vision"*

*The Flies* - The same letter written by **Benjamin Franklin** in English, was set to music by Richard Pearson Thomas

For Vocal Trio, flute and piano

Premiere of both these works in Paris November 23, 2002

Repeat performance at Cambridge University, England November 2002; Merkin Hall New York City, NY Sept 2006

*Cantata: Portrait en miniature de Madame de Sévigné* (2001)

Cycle of songs, duets and trios to letters of **Madame de Sévigné** (1626-1696)

Premiere: The Carnavalet Museum, Paris March 23, 2002

Ten repeat performances in Paris at The Carnavalet Museum, The Chateau du Val in St. Germain-en-laye (October 2004) and Cambridge University, England

Three performances in New Haven, New York and San Francisco 2006.

A capella Trio performed for the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concerts on May 4 & 6, 2012 Paris; May 22, 2012 NY

Recording: Albany Records –*Un American à Paris*

*Les loisirs de la Poste (Postal Pastimes)* (2001)

Six songs to texts of **Stéphane Mallarmé**

For Vocal Trio and piano

Premiere: The Carnavalet Museum, Paris March 23, 2002

Ten repeat performances in Paris at The Carnavalet Museum, The Chateau du Val in St. Germain-en-laye (October 2004) and Cambridge University, England

Three performances in New Haven, New York and San Francisco 2006.

Recording: Albany Records –*Un American à Paris*

*Homage à Francis Poulenc* (1999)

Text of **Robert Desnos**

Five songs for soprano and piano

Premiere: Edinburgh March 6, 2000

Eight repeat performances in New York, Paris, London and Cambridge University.

Recording: Albany Records – *Un American à Paris*

*La Moisson* (1999) Gift from composer

Solo and piano

Text of **Robert Desnos**

European Premiere: March 13, 2004 Musée Nissim de Camondo, Paris

Repeat performances: March 14, 2004 Salle Cortot, Paris; June 14, 2005 Program presented by Jean Roy, Paris

American Premiere: March 19, 2004 French Library & Cultural Center, Boston

Repeat performances: July 14, 2004 Central City Opera House – Denver;

April 15, 2005 St. Paul St. James Church – New Haven, CT

*L'intelligence et la Musicalité chez les Animaux* (1996)

Text by **Erik Satie**

Vocal duet and piano

Premiere: The American Church in Paris September 29, 1996

Translated into English by the composer and performed at The Great Neck Library, Great Neck, New York December 20, 1996

Two performances in Paris and two performances in Boston 2004

Recording: Albany Records – *Un Américain à Paris*

*Don't let that horse...* (1996)

Poem by **Lawrence Ferlinghetti**

For baritone and violin

Premiere: Carnegie Weill Recital Hall, New York City, NY April 14, 1996

*This is a "Mirror Vision" with Richard Lalli "Don't let that horse..."  
(A "Mirror Vision" is two or more musical settings of same text)*

**Tom Cipullo** (b. 1959)

*Emily's Truth* (2012)

Vocal Trio and piano

Part of *THE THREE-PANELED MIRROR* – 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary gift to Tobé Malawista

European Premiere: May 6, 2012 The American Church in Paris

American Premiere: May 22, 2012 Merkin Concert Hall, NY

*A Letter from Chicago* (2011)

*I. The Parlor Car*

*II. Nightmare at the Windermere Hotel*

A letter from **Edna St. Vincent Millay**

For soprano with piano and tenor and baritone accompaniment

Premiere: Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, New York City, NY May 24, 2011



*Lilacs* (2010)

Poem by **Jeffrey Greene**

To be performed the summer of 2010 in Connecticut and in winter of 2011 in Paris

*Ask The Moon* (2005) Gift to Tobé Malawista

Poem by **Linda Pastan**

Solo voice and piano

*Secrets* (2003)

Poetry by **Linda Pastan**

Song cycle for soprano, tenor, baritone and piano (45 minutes in length)

Premiere: The Elebash Recital Hall, Graduate Center/CUNY in New York City, NY November 22, 2003

Repeat performances: University of New Haven, March 2004; 2 performances October 7 and 9 at Cambridge University and The American Library in Paris; Princeton University "Friends of Princeton" Concert Series on February 2005; Merkin Hall, New York City, NY Nov. 2006

Excerpts performed at the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary concerts on May 4 & 6, 2012 Paris and May 22, 2012 NY

Recording: Albany Records – *Secrets*

*Harriet's Song* (2000)

Poem by **Jane Bowles**

Solo voice and piano

Premiere: Community Service performance in Connecticut January 31, 2000

Three repeat performances: Paris, Cambridge University, New York City, NY

*A Visit with Emily* (1999)

Poetry and letters of **Emily Dickinson** and **T.W. Higginson**

Song cycle for soprano, tenor, baritone and piano (35 minutes in length)

Premiere: The Blackstone Memorial Library, Branford, Connecticut January 9, 1999

Published by Oxford University Press 2002

Repeat performances: Yale University, New Haven; Cambridge University, England; Stockholm and Uppsala, Sweden; London; Edinburgh; Paris; New York; Basel; Switzerland and twice in Amherst, Massachusetts: once for the opening of the Leo Smit Concert Series at The Jones Library (December 2000) and in 2002 as part of the International Meeting of the Emily Dickinson Society; Jonathan Edwards College Yale University April 2009; American University of Paris April 2009 and a private concert in Paris; Christ & St. Stephen's Episcopal NYC September 2009

Excerpts performed at the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary concerts on May 4 & 6, 2012 Paris and May 22, 2012 NY

Many performances by other groups

*The Cove* (1996)

Poem by **Kay Boyle**

For soprano, viola and piano

Premiere: The Great Neck Library, Great Neck, New York October 20, 1996

Repeat performances: Community Service performance in Wallingford, Connecticut and The Essex Unitarian Church - London, England and all over Connecticut with cello

*Aubade* (1996)

*This is a "Mirror Vision"*

Same text as that set by **Daron Aric Hagen**

Vocal duet and piano

Premiere: Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, New York City, NY April 14, 1996

Repeat performances: City Music Conservatory, Osnabrück, Germany May 1996 and The American Church in Paris September 1996

**Christopher Culpo** (b. 1960)

*Une comète* (2003)

Text from letter of **Madame de Sévigné**

Solo voice and piano

*This is a "Mirror Vision"*

The same letter was set to music by Christopher Berg in his Cantata: "*Portrait en miniature de Madame de Sévigné*"

Premiere: The Carnavalet Museum, Paris May 31, 2003

Repeat performances: The Carnavalet Museum, Paris June 2003 and at The Chateau du Val, St. Germain-en-laye October 12, 2003

*What's sauce pour l'oie* (2002)

Text by **Ogden Nash**

Vocal trio plus piano

Premiere: Institut de jeunes Aveugles in Paris November 23, 2002

Repeat performance: Cambridge University, England November 2002; 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary concerts on May 4 & 6, 2012 Paris and May 22, 2012 NY

*Ballade des Femmes de Paris* (2001)

Text by **Francois Villon** (1431)

Solo voice and piano

Premiere: Hospital Cochin, Paris October 7, 2001

(Concert for patients of the hospital)

Ten repeat performances: Musée Carnavalet, Paris (Eight performances in the museum); one for Community Service in New Haven, Connecticut; one October 2003 at the Chateau du Val near Paris; three performances in New Haven, New York and San Francisco 2006.

*Tango du Dessert* (2001)

Text from **Menu from a Paris Ice Cream Parlor**

Vocal trio with piano

Premiere: Paris (Private Concert) October 5, 2001

Repeat performances: Paris (a hospital concert), The American Cathedral in Paris, Institute de jeunes Aveugles in Paris, and other private concerts in France and Switzerland; and at the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concerts May 4 & 6, 2012 Paris

Three poems by **Paul Verlaine** (2001)

*Spleen* (solo voice and piano)

*Damsons la Gigue* (solo voice and piano)

*Chevaux de Bois* (a capella trio)

Premiere: The Kosciuszko Foundation, NY May 5, 2001

*The Sea-gull and The Ea-gull* (2000)

Text by **Ogden Nash**

Vocal trio with piano

Premiere: Paris June 12, 2000

Three repeat performances: New York, Paris

**Randall Eng** (1970)

*Cocktails* (2001)

Text by **Ellen Lewis**

Vocal Trio

Premiere: Private concert, Paris October 5, 2001

**Daron Aric Hagen** (b. 1961)

*Love Scene from Romeo and Juliet* (1996)

Text by **William Shakespeare**

For soprano, baritone, piano, violin, flute and violincello

Premiere: Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, New York City, NY April 14, 1996

Repeat performance: Merkin Concert Hall, NY 2006

*This is a "Mirror Vision"*

Because, we commissioned Tom Cipullo to set the same text and he called it *Aubade*

**Juliana Hall** (b. 1958)

*Two Birds* (1995)

Poetry of **e e cummings**

Solo voice and flute

Premiere: The American Church in Paris November 26, 1995

Repeat performance: Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, New York City, NY April 1996

**Richard Lalli** (b. 1952)

*To a Young Astronomer* (2006)

Poetry of **Linda Pastan**

Solo voice and piano

Premiere: Merlin Hall, New York City, NY October 16, 2006

*Emily Dickinson* (2005)

Poetry of **Linda Pastan**

Solo voice and piano

Premiere: Merkin Hall, New York City, NY October 16, 2006

Repeat performances: 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary concerts May 4 & 6, 2012 Paris and May 22, 2012 NY

*The Train* (2004)

Poem by C.K. Williams

For soprano and piano

Premiere: Cambridge University – October 7, 2004

Repeat performances: The American Library, Paris October 2004, Princeton University February 2005 and New Haven March 2005

Recording: Albany Records – *Secrets*

*Les Cris de Paris* (2002)

Text taken from The Carnavalet Museum's collection of signs of street vendors from the Middle Ages, and from Clément Jannequin

A capella trio

Premiere: The Carnavalet Museum, Paris March 23, 2002

Ten repeat performances in Paris at The Carnavalet Museum, The Chateau du Val in St. Germain-en-laye (October 2004) and Cambridge University, England

Three performances in New Haven, New York and San Francisco 2006.

*Lessons* (2002)

Poem by C.K. Williams

Performances: The Institute for the Blind in Paris for the Benefit of

*The Paris Writers Workshop* November 2002;

University of New Haven, March 2004; 2 performances October 2004 at Cambridge University and The American Library in Paris; Princeton University "Friends of Princeton" Concert Series on February 2005.

Recording: Albany Records – *Secrets*

*The History of the Seven Young Parrots* (2000)

Text by Edward Lear

A capella trio

***This is a "Mirror Vision" with Richard Pearson Thomas – same text***

Premiere: The Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut October 15, 2000

Six repeat performances: Cambridge University, Paris, New York City NY, The Hague, Basel, Switzerland

*My Uncle Arly* (2000)

Text by Edward Lear

Vocal Trio and piano

Premiere: The Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut October 15, 2000

Four repeat performances: Cambridge University, England; The Hague; Paris

*Shorts* (2000)

Text by W.H. Auden

Premiere: The American Protestant Church of The Hague (Netherlands)

November 12, 2000

Two repeat performances: Cambridge University, England; Paris



*Three Greene Songs* (1999) [Fearsome Wonder / Recovering / Presence]

Poetry by **Jeffrey Greene**

For soprano, baritone and flute

Premiere: The Florence Gould Hall, New York City, NY October 15, 1999

Seven repeat performances: two Community Service performances in the Greater New Haven area, Connecticut; one at Cambridge University, England; two in Paris, two in Basel; and one in New York City

*Where the Bee Sucks* (1999)

Text by **William Shakespeare**

A capello trio

Premiere: The Florence Gould Hall, New York City October 15, 1999

Eleven repeat performances: four performances in Sweden; two in Paris; one in London, Edinburgh, New York City NY; and two Community Service performances in Connecticut

*When icicles hang by the wall* (1998)

Text by **William Shakespeare**

A capella trio

Premiere: The Blackstone Memorial Library, Branford, Connecticut January 9, 1999

Fourteen repeat performances: four for Community Service performances in the Greater New Haven area, Connecticut and Riverdale, New York; three in Sweden, two in Paris, two in New York City NY; and one in Basel, Edinburgh and London

*When Daisies Pied* (1998)

Text by **William Shakespeare**

A capella trio

Premiere: The Florence Gould Hall, New York City, NY October 15, 1999

Repeat performance: New York City, NY

*Don't let that horse...* (1996)

Text by **Lawrence Ferlinghetti**

For soprano, baritone and violincello

***A "Mirror Vision" with Christopher Berg's "Don't let that horse..."***

Both premiered at Carnegie Weill Recital Hall, NYC April 14, 1996

**Robert Manno** (b. 1944)

*Muja Pieszczotka* (2011)

Poem by **Adam Mickiewicz**

For soprano, violin and piano

Premiere: New Haven – February 20, 2011

**Russell Platt** (b. 1965)

*From Noon to Starry Night – A Walt Whitman Cantata* (2006)

Song cycle to poems of **Walt Whitman**

Vocal Trio and piano

Premiere: Merkin Hall, New York City, NY October 16, 2006

Repeat performances: Jonathan Edwards College Yale University April 2009; American University of Paris April 2009 and a private concert in Paris; Christ & St. Stephen's Episcopal New York City, NY September 2009.

Recording: Albany Records, *Cosmic & Domestic Matters*

**Betty Roe** (b. 1930) London, England

*All in the Golden Afternoon* (1996)

Text by **Lewis Carroll**

For soprano, flute, violoncello and piano

Premiere: Community Service performance in Wallingford, Connecticut November 19, 1996

Repeat performances: London, England and all through Connecticut and New Jersey.

Published by Thames Publishing and Trade Distribution by William Elkin Music Services

*Answer July [which became Delight]* (1996)

Text by **Emily Dickinson**

Three duets

Premiere: The Great Neck Library, Great Neck, New York October 20, 1996

Repeat performances: London; Stockbridge, Massachusetts; Amsterdam; Stockholm, Sweden; Edinburgh; Cambridge University; Amherst, Massachusetts; a Community Service performance in New Haven, CT; and at the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary concerts May 4 & 6, 2012 in Paris and May 22, 2012 NY

Published by Thames Publishing and Trade Distribution by William Elkin Music Services

**William Ryden** (b. 1939)

Duet in Ragtime *Words? And Music* (2002)

**Lyrics by the composer**

Duet for soprano and mezzo soprano with piano

Premiere: The Cercle Suede's, Paris February 21, 2002

Repeat performance: The American Church in Paris February 2002

*Three Alice Songs (made up of The Lobster Quadrille, The Pool of Tears Song, The Looking Glass Tango)* (1997)

Text by **Lewis Carroll**

Performed individually and as a group 20 times: at The Ambassador's Residence in Paris, as well as at churches and a hospital (Hospital Cochin), and private concerts in New York at The Town Hall; in Arles, France and in Stockholm, Sweden; in libraries: The Blackstone Library in Branford, Connecticut, The Great Neck Library in Great Neck, New York, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden in Brooklyn, New York, at Yale University (Saybrook College) in New Haven, Connecticut, five Community Service performances in Connecticut and the AARP in Riverdale, New York

Published by Masters Music Publications, Inc. 1997

*The Owl and the Pussy-Cat* (1996)

Text by **Edward Lear**

Premiere: The Great Neck Library, Great Neck, New York October 20, 1996

21 Performances in Paris, France; Basel, Switzerland; The Hague (Netherlands); London, England; Stockholm, Sweden; Cambridge University, England; Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut; Norfolk Chamber Music Festival at “The White House”; Stockbridge, Massachusetts; Great Neck Library, Great Neck, New York; The Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Brooklyn, New York and five Community Service performances in Connecticut and the AARP in Riverdale, New York

*The Pool of Tears Song* (1996)

Text by **Lewis Carroll**

Premiere: April 14, 1996

*The Lobster Quadrille* (1994)

Text by **Lewis Carroll**

Premiere: New Haven, Connecticut September 23, 1994

*The Looking-Glass Tango* (1994)

Text by **Lewis Carroll**

Premiere: The Town Hall, New York City April 10, 1994

**Deborah Fischer Teason** (b. 1951)

*The Bells at Saint-Aignan* (1994)

Poetry by **Jeffrey Greene**

Two voices and piano

Premiere: The New Haven Historical Society, New Haven, Connecticut  
September 23, 1994

Two repeat performances: New York City, NY

**Richard Pearson Thomas** (b. 1959)

*Clean Plates Don't Lie!* (2009)

*A Cantata in Celebration of Sustainable Food*

Text from the **Menu of Blue Hill at Stone Barns Restaurant** and words of **Dan Barber**

For Vocal Trio with violin, violoncello and piano

Premiered November 2010 Merkin Hall, New York City, NY and performance at the Edward M. Pickman Concert Hall at the Longy School of Music, Cambridge, MA

Repeat performances: July 27, 28 & 29, 2011 throughout Montana; June 3, 2012 Bellport, NY (Long Island)

*The Quangle Wangle's Hat* (2008)

Text by **Edward Lear**

For Solo voice with flute, violoncello and piano

Premiere: Connecticut January 2009

Repeat performances: Connecticut and New Jersey

*Prologue: Letter from Tobé* (2006)

Text by **Tobé Malawista**

Vocal Trio and piano

Premiere: Merkin Hall, New York City, NY September 18, 2006

Repeat performances: at the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary concerts May 4 & 6, 2012 Paris and May 22, 2012 NYC.

*The Butterfly Tree* (2005)

Poetry by **Linda Pastan**

Song cycle not yet performed

*The Mouse* (2004)

Text by **Ogden Nash**

- not yet premiered

*Droplets* (2003)

Poem by **C.K. Williams**

For Baritone and piano

Premiere: The Elebash Recital Hall, Graduate Center/CUNY in New York City, NY November 22, 2003

Repeat performances: University of New Haven, March 2004; 2 performances October at Cambridge

University, England and The American Library in Paris; Princeton University “Friends of Princeton” Concert Series on February 2005

Recording: Albany Records – *Secrets*

*Fish ‘n Chicks* (2003)

Texts by **C.W. Barden**, **Ogden Nash**, **Theodore Roethke**, **Hilaire Belloc**, and **Betty Crocker**

Song cycle for soprano, tenor, baritone and piano

Premiere: The Kosciuszko Foundation, New York City, NY May 5, 2001

Five repeat performances: Basel, Paris 2001, 2002, 2003

*A Swiss Girl in Paris* (2002)

Work for flute and piano

Premiere: Paris, November 23, 2002

Repeat performance: Cambridge University, November 2002

*To Coulanges* (2002)

Three voices and piano

### ***This is a “Mirror Vision”***

This is a letter by **Madame de Sévigné** set by Christopher Berg, but in English translation

Premiere: Paris November 23, 2002

Repeat performances: Cambridge University, England November 26, 2002



*The Flies* (2002)

Letter written by Benjamin Franklin in English

Three voices, flute and piano

*This is a "Mirror Vision"*

Same letter, but in French translation, set to music by Christopher Berg (*Les Mouches*)

Premiere: Paris November 23, 2002

Repeat performance: Cambridge University, England November 2002 and Merkin Hall New York City, NY September 2006

*A Nash Menagerie* (2001)

Text by Ogden Nash

Three voices a capella

Premiere: The American Cathedral, Paris 2002

Repeat performance: Elebash Recital Hall, The Graduate Center/CUNY, New York City, NY November 2003; and at the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concerts May 4 & 6, 2012 Paris and May 22, 2012 NY

*The History of the Seven Young Parrots* (2000)

Poem by Edward Lear

Three voices and piano

*This is a "Mirror Vision"*

Same text is set by Richard Lalli

Premiere: Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut October 15, 2000

Seven repeat performances: Paris, New York, Basel, The Hague, Cambridge University 2001, 2002, 2003

*They don't speak English in Paris* (1997)

Text by Ogden Nash

Vocal duet and piano

Premiere: The Palm House at The Brooklyn Botanic Garden April 7, 1997

Six repeat performances: Basel; Paris 2002 and 2003

*Seeing a woman as in a painting by Berthe Morisot* (1996)

Poem by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

Voice and piano

Premiere: The American Church in Paris September 29, 1996

Two repeat performances: London; Paris

## **Francine Trester** (b. 1969)

*Mouse Song* (2003)

Poem by Jeffrey Greene

For Vocal duet and piano

Premiere: Elebash Recital Hall, The Graduate Center/CUNY, New York City

November 22, 2003

Repeat performances: University of New Haven, March 2004; October at Cambridge University and The American Library in Paris; Princeton University "Friends of Princeton" Concert Series on February 2005

Recording: Albany Records – *Secrets*

*Of Ascension* (1999)

Three songs to texts of **Jeffrey Greene**, **Emily Dickinson**, **William Shakespeare**

Premiere: Florence Gould Hall, New York City October 15, 1999

Four repeat performances: New York City, NY; Paris; Cambridge University, England

*The Octopus* (1999)

Text by **Jeffrey Greene** (from *Of Ascension*)

For Solo voice and piano

Premiere: Elebash Recital Hall, The Graduate Center/CUNY, New York City, NY

November 22, 2003

Repeat performance: University of New Haven, March 2004; 2 performances October at Cambridge

University, England and The American Library in Paris; Princeton University “Friends of Princeton” Concert Series on February 2005

Recording: Albany Records – *Secrets*

**Scott Wheeler** (b. 1952)

*Letters To Isabella* (2011)

Text from **Henry James**, **Paul Bourget**, **Kakuzo Okakura**

and includes *The Stairway of Jade* by **Kakuzo Okakura**

For soprano, tenor, baritone and piano

European Premiere: October 15, 2011 Les Arts Décoratifs/Salon des Boiseries, Paris

American Premiere: October 21, 2011 Edward M. Pickman Concert Hall at the Longy School of Music, Cambridge, MA

Repeat performance: October 23, 2011 Merkin Concert Hall, NY

**Yehudi Wyner** (b. 1929)

*A Mad Tea-Party* (1996)

Text: **Lewis Carroll** (From Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland)

For soprano, tenor, baritone, piano, violin, flute and violoncello.

Premiere: Carnegie Weill Recital Hall, NYC April 14, 1996

Repeat performances: Merkin Hall, New York City, NY November 2006, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, New York City May 2011.

*Restaurants, Wines, Bistros, Shrines* (1994)

Original Text by **Yehudi Wyner**

4 vocal duets with piano

Premiere: The Town Hall, New York City April 10, 1994

Repeat performances: 12

In Paris, France; Stockholm, Sweden; Osnabrück, Germany; Stockbridge, Massachusetts; Norfolk, Connecticut, Riverdale, New York (for the AARP), Stratford, Connecticut (a Community Service Performance).

# The *MIRROR VISIONS* Ensemble

**examiner.com**

March 27, 2015

## **The Mirror Visions Ensemble will bring five new works to San Francisco next week**

By Stephen Smoliar



The next concert to be given in the Music at Meyer series at Temple Emanu-El will present the Mirror Visions Ensemble chamber vocal trio of soprano Vira Slywotzky, tenor Scott Murphree, and baritone Jesse Blumberg. This group has a particularly strong interest in poetry. As *The New York Times* put it, the group's programs are "shaped with an ear to the poetry of song texts rather than to overarching notions of musical style." The "mirror vision" of the group's name comes from exploring multiple settings of the same text by one or more composers. To this

end it has commissioned over 80 works from 24 composers.

The program prepared for Music at Meyer is entitled *Journeys*. It will introduce five commissioned works by Tom Cipullo, Scott Wheeler, Christopher Berg, Gilda Lyons and Deborah Fischer Teason, all on the theme of travel. Two of the texts are epistolary. *Nightmare at the Windermere Hotel* is a cycle of two songs based on a letter written by Edna St. Vincent Millay, while Wheeler's *Letters to Isabella* is a set of three songs, each setting a letter written to Isabella Stewart Gardner. The authors



**KIRSHBAUM  
ASSOCIATES INC.**

711 WEST END AVENUE SUITE 5KN NEW YORK NY 10025 (212) 222-4843 TEL (212) 222-7321 FAX WWW.KIRSHBAUMASSOCIATES.COM

of those letters are Henry James, Paul Bourget, and Kazuko Okakura. The remaining three new works are place-related, "Great Barrier Reef" by Lyons, "The Bells at Saint-Aignan" by Teason, and "The Ghost of Madame de Sévigné at the Carnavalet" by Berg. The travel theme will be further continued by an arrangement of the folk song "He's Gone Away," along with compositions by Henri Duparc, Hugo Wolf, Joseph Haydn, Hector Berlioz, Cole Porter, Felice Blangini, Francis Poulenc, Samuel Barber, and Stephen Schwartz. The

pianist for the program will be Grant Wenaus.

All Music at Meyer events begin at 7:30 p.m. on Monday nights in the Martin Meyer Sanctuary of Temple Emanu-El. This particular concert will take place on March 30. The Temple is located at 2 Lake Street near the corner of Arguello Street. Single tickets are \$25 with a \$22 rate for seniors and students. Tickets may be purchased online through a Brown Paper Tickets event page. Tickets may also be purchased through a 24/7 ticket hotline at 800-838-3006.



# The *MIRROR VISIONS* Ensemble



October 5, 2014

## Mirror Visions Ensemble server up music a la carte in the Recital Hall

By Amber Uddin

When people think of classical or opera music, they usually think of tragedy, suspense and romance, not a step-by-step tuna casserole recipe.

The Mirror Visions Ensemble, a vocal chamber ensemble, is doing just that by bringing beautiful music and stirring audiences' appetites with sprinklings of comedy.

Concert à la carte is a journey through several musical pieces that cover everything from choosing ingredients, to menus and recipes, to supporting sustainable food.

The performance allows the musicians to indulge their "foodie" inclinations and bring the audience along with them as they revel in all of the many pleasures of dining.

The trio brings a strong comedic element that echoes throughout the lively and engaging performance.

"Fresh warm bread. What is there like fresh, warm bread? With a bit of butter spread," they sing in the song "Bread" from *The Baker's Wife* by Stephen Schwartz.

Highlighted in the performance are the works of artists like Samuel Barber, Christopher Berg, William Bolcom and Cole Porter, to name a few.

The ensemble consists of renown singers Vira Slywotzky (soprano), Scott Murphree (tenor), and Jesse Blumberg (baritone).

Accompaniment for the ensemble is provided by composer Richard Pearson Thomas (piano), Naho Parrini (violin) and Alberto Parrini (cello).

The trio will perform at Cal State Fullerton as well as teach a master's class where students and those who are interested in the performing arts can learn more from the experts and participate in a discussion.

Mirror Visions seeks to capture and recreate the atmosphere of the salon and soiree of the 19th century.

And just like the salons of that time, there is a bit of philosophy involved as well.

One of the musical numbers, "Clean Plates Don't Lie," is based on the menus and philosophy of renowned chef Dan Barber, originator of the farm-to-table movement.

Barber's principles have changed the way many Americans approach farming and food, and they use art as a vehicle for explaining the relationship and furthering the important conversation of food and sustainability, according to their website.

The ensemble will perform Tuesday at 8 p.m. in the Recital Hall.

Tickets cost \$13 with Titan Discount, \$15 for general public and there is still available seating.

For more information or to purchase tickets online, visit the Claves Performing Arts Center website.

For anyone looking for a fun night out or wanting to improve their cooking skills, this performance is sure to bring a lighthearted night of fun and music.

With all the talk of fresh warm bread and sorbets, attendees might want to make dinner reservations ahead of time.



KIRSHBAUM  
ASSOCIATES INC.

711 WEST END AVENUE SUITE 5KN NEW YORK NY 10025 (212) 222-4843 TEL (212) 222-7321 FAX WWW.KIRSHBAUMASSOCIATES.COM

GREAT FALLS  
**TRIBUNE**

January 19, 2011

## **Great Falls native's cantata a big hit in the Big Apple**

By Polly Kolstad

During a recent trip to New York City, my husband and I sank our teeth into the tasty musical talents of Great Falls native Richard Pearson Thomas.

We were invited to his ninth premiere, "Know Thy Farmer," a cantata celebrating music and food.

As part of this visit, Thomas later escorted us to Blue Hill at Stone Barns Restaurant in Pocantico Hills to enjoy the food of Dan Barber, a two-time James Beard award recipient, with whom Thomas collaborated for his cantata.

Seated next to us in the full audience of "Know Thy Farmer" at Merkin Concert Hall, Thomas' mother, Marillyn, recalled her son's youthful days when she and his sister, Marlie, would sing songs to his piano accompaniment. To him the results didn't always turn out quite right.

"He had his own rendition; he was already composing in grade school and just kind of rolled his eyes," Marillyn said.

As a teenager growing up in Great Falls, Thomas was the organist for Our Savior's Lutheran Church and played for the Virginia City Players in Virginia City. He's had works performed by the Boston Pops, Houston Grand Opera, Manhattan Chamber Orchestra and Riverside Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir. His songs have been sung in Carnegie Hall, the Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, Merkin Concert Hall and before the U.S.

Congress.

He's currently on the faculty of the Teachers College/Columbia University and is a composer-in-residence at the Gold Opera Project, Young Audiences in New York. In that capacity, he has composed nearly 90 operas with students in New York City public schools and was awarded the National Medal of Arts by President Clinton for this work.

Two years ago Tobe Malawista, president and artistic director of Mirror Visions, presented Thomas with the opportunity to pair music with food. She sent him menus from Blue Hill at Stone Barns restaurant, challenging him to write about sustainable food.

"I looked at the menu and put stories in my mind, picturing all these things blooming," said Thomas, a graduate of the Eastman School of Music and the University of Southern California.

The concert a la carte was played out with the help of three singers, violin, violoncello and piano.

"If you love food, if you love music, you're in the right seat," tenor Scott Murphree said.

Malawista called it an "extraordinary experience, to see a mere thought transformed into thrilling music."

Thomas' work only made us more hungry for the tasty ingredients that were his inspiration.

A fortnight later, from Grand Central Station, we took the train to Tarrytown, a lovely half-hour ride along the Hudson



**KIRSHBAUM  
ASSOCIATES INC.**

River. Taxis then drove us through the rolling hills to Blue Hill at Stone Barns on land once owned by the Rockefeller family.

At Blue Hill, more than 200 varieties of crops are grown year-round, many of which are served at the elegant tables in the restaurant dining room. We strolled through the fields and barns of the farm before being treated to an amazing evening of creatively prepared food.

Chiogga beets, romano beans, purple cauliflower, honey, Berkshire pork, eggs from their resident hens, and handcrafted breads made from exotic wheat varieties are just a handful of the foods produced on this sustainable farm. Back in the city, we had tickets to two Broadway plays and the opera, "Carmen," at the Metropolitan Opera House. But no performance was more emotionally rendering than Thomas' presentation of his original composition, "Race for the Sky," at the Philoctetes Center in mid Manhattan.

After 9/11, the local historical society commissioned Thomas to put to music memorials left by people in the streets near Ground Zero. He chose a poem by Hilary North, which expresses how her life would never be the same. Thomas was joined by violinist Stephanie Chase and vocalist Hope Hudson.

After the last note was played, Chase reflected on the evening.

"I'm unable to think about the words, because Richard's music is so powerful," she said.

"In a way, it is so healing for me," Hudson said. "Long after I'm gone, I hope people sing the American song tradition. Richard has written 16 songs for me, some not premiered yet."

Since 9/11, Thomas' "Race for the Sky" has been sung in many places including Carnegie Hall and the Lincoln Center.

His busy schedule keeps him hopping.

We had barely packed our suitcases to depart New York, when he was off to Boston for another performance of "Know thy Farmer."

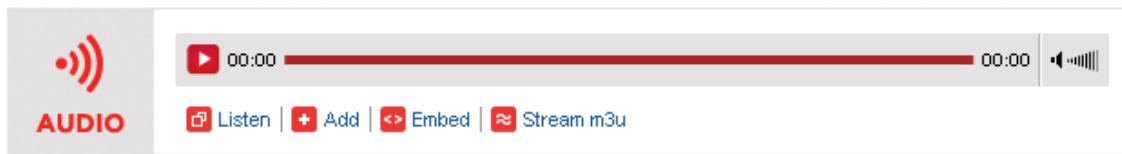
# The *MIRROR VISIONS* Ensemble



September 8, 2010

## Soundcheck

### Mirror Visions Ensemble and Chef Dan Barber



From Bach's *Coffee Cantata* to Leonard Bernstein's song "Plum Pudding," food and classical music have long intersected. Today, the Mirror Visions Ensemble join us to preview Richard Pearson Thomas's "know thy farmer," a new cantata based on menus from chef Dan

Barber's Blue Hill restaurant.

Barber is a proponent of the "farm-to-table" philosophy, which encourages the use of ingredients from local farms, as well as from pastures and fields near the restaurant. He joins us by phone to talk about the piece (and the menus that inspired it).

*The Mirror Visions Ensemble and executive chef Dan Barber will appear at Le Poisson Rouge on Monday, Sept. 13 at 6:30 p.m. More information [here](#).*



KIRSHBAUM  
ASSOCIATES INC.

711 WEST END AVENUE SUITE 5KN NEW YORK NY 10025 (212) 222-4843 TEL (212) 222-7321 FAX WWW.KIRSHBAUMASSOCIATES.COM

The *MIRROR VISIONS* Ensemble  
THE MIRROR VISIONS ENSEMBLE

# The New York Times

May 26, 2011

## Songs of the Poets, in Chamber Settings

By Allan Kozinn



"Mirror Visions Ensemble": From left, Margaret Kampmeier, Katherine Cherbas, Vira Slywotzky, Jesse Blumberg and Scott Murphree at Weill Recital Hall on Tuesday. (Richard Termine)

Unlike most chamber music enterprises, the Mirror Visions Ensemble is run by singers rather than instrumentalists, and its programs are shaped with an ear to the poetry of song texts rather than to overarching notions of musical style. The group, directed by Tobé Malawista, a soprano, includes Scott Murphree, tenor; Jesse Blumberg, baritone; and Vira Slywotzky, soprano; with Margaret Kampmeier, the pianist, as its superb accompanist.

"Night and Dreams," the program the group offered on Tuesday evening at

Weill Recital Hall, took its name from an opening miscellany of 19th- and early-20th-century songs about the night, sung expressively by Mr. Blumberg and Mr. Murphree, though each needed the length of a song to settle into the hall's magnifying acoustics.

Until they did, you could focus on the inventiveness of the set itself, which included Mr. Blumberg's languid reading of Respighi's "Notte" and his more powerful, secure performance of Sibelius's "Var det en dröm?" and Mr. Murphree's expressively shaped account



KIRSHBAUM  
ASSOCIATES INC.

711 WEST END AVENUE SUITE 5KN NEW YORK NY 10025 (212) 222-4843 TEL (212) 222-7321 FAX WWW.KIRSHBAUMASSOCIATES.COM

of Schubert's "Nacht und Träume."

Nocturnal concerns lay at the heart of recent cycles by Scott Wheeler and Tom Cipullo as well. Krista River, a guest mezzo-soprano with a warm tone and a witty interpretive style, captured the world-weary spirit of "Wasting the Night," Mr. Wheeler's setting of five arrestingly idiosyncratic love poems (some pained, others nonchalant) by Edna St. Vincent Millay.

Mr. Cipullo also drew on Millay's writing, though not her poetry. His comic "Letter From Chicago" is based on excerpts from her correspondence about a frustrating trip to the Midwest, with sections devoted to an unhappy ride from Chicago to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, on "one of those Middle Western so-called parlor cars," and her inability to persuade room service in a Chicago hotel to bring her an order. Ms. Slywotzky gave a vital, theatrical performance with histrionic touches that suited the score perfectly.

Mr. Cipullo's vocal writing is fresh and natural, and he amplifies it with thoughtful, sometimes picturesque

commentary in the piano line. A second of his cycles, "Insomnia," was less overtly theatrical than his Millay setting, but it had its moments, particularly in the Sondheim-like vocal quartet setting of the Cornelius Eady poem from which the cycle takes its name.

Thereafter, melancholy pieces like Dana Gioia's "House," heard in two versions (for solo baritone, and later for quartet), were offset by a lively, driven setting of Lisel Mueller's "Storm" and a comic rendering, full of interplay between the vocalists, of Juliet Wilson's haiku "Snoring."

Yehudi Wyner's accessible, amusing "Mad Tea-Party," a setting of a scene from "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," closed the concert, with Ms. Slywotzky playing an astute Alice, Mr. Blumberg as the Mad Hatter, and Mr. Murphree as the March Hare. Here the concert's palette expanded somewhat: the singers and Ms. Kampmeier were joined by Harumi Rhodes, violinist; Katherine Cherbas, cellist; and Jennifer Grim, flutist. They gave the music a bright, lively reading.



# The *MIRROR VISIONS* Ensemble

I CARE IF YOU LISTEN

March 27, 2015

## A Journey Through Song with the Mirror Visions Ensemble

By Lauren Alfano



The acclaimed vocal trio Mirror Visions Ensemble, comprised of Vira Slywotzky (soprano), Scott Murphree (tenor), and Jesse Blumberg (baritone), is famous for its many commissions of new works by today's most exciting composers and in particular, for its 'mirror visions' commissions of multiple works set to the same text. MVE's programs are well-known for being meticulously constructed, text-centered, and organized around a particular theme. Their concert entitled *Journeys* (featuring pianist

Grant Wenaus and directed by Tobé Malawista) presented at SubCulture NYC on March 10 was no exception. This carefully curated recital carried the audience through journeys of all imaginable types: the lusty passion of young love, impossible romantic triangles, the world under the sea (real and imagined), the quirky and often lonely atmosphere of hotel stays, and finally, the restful repose of two lovers traveling alone with nowhere in particular to go. The program included a number of favorites from the standard



KIRSHBAUM  
ASSOCIATES INC.

repertoire, some lesser-known fare, and five exciting new commissions.

Opening the program was Duparc's fitting *chanson* "L'invitation au voyage" performed with elegance by Murphree whose pianissimo high notes were used to great effect here and throughout the performance. Blumberg sang next, offering an impeccable rendition of Wolf's "Auf einer Wanderung." Easily one of the finest concert and recital singers of our generation, Blumberg's contributions to the program were many-fold and his smooth legato phrasing, perfect diction, and beauty of tone never faltered. Finally, Slywotzky is an excellent partner to her collaborators. Possessing a full, rich soprano with a strong lower register, Slywotzky is a talented actress who radiates pure joy and ebullience onstage. Her opening selection (Haydn's "The Mermaid's Song") was executed with finesse though the sheer size and richness of her instrument belied the lightness of the piece. However, later selections, such as the second song in Scott Wheeler's song cycle, *Letters to Isabella* (an MVE commissioned-piece) were well-suited to showcase the roundness and warmth of her voice. In a refreshing change of pace, all three singers displayed a particular affinity and talent for the lighter fare on the program: Cole Porter's hilarious "Tale of the Oyster" (made even more enjoyable by Murphree's playfully earnest rendition), the hymn "He's Gone Away" (movingly sung by Blumberg), and "Chanson" from Sondheim's *The Baker's Wife* (performed with exceptional tenderness and beauty by Slywotzky). Additional program highlights included Berlioz's "L'île inconnue" (well-known from the cycle *Les nuits d'été* but performed here with the dialogue divided among the trio), as well as Samuel Barber's narrative "Solitary Hotel" affectively staged by the group.

Unsurprisingly, the most successful works on the program were the five MVE commissions. The songs in

Wheeler's cycle *Letters to Isabella* are settings of the personal letters from friends of art collector/patron Isabella Gardner and are masterfully varied in their construction to capture the essence of each writer's personality in music. In addition to the jaunty note from Paul Bourget (sung by Slowatsky), the group sang letters to texts by Henry James and Kakuzo Okakura (whose letter was actually directed at his cat, then in Gardner's care). Also, the trio's rendition of the scene "At the Windermere Hotel" from Tom Cipullo's *Nightmare at the Windermere Hotel* was delightfully spot-on, both musically and dramatically, aided in no small part by Cipullo's lush writing and brilliant interplay between the vocal and piano parts. The audience especially appreciated Slywotzky's sharp comedic wit and over-the-top theatrics in this hilarious comedy-of-errors.

Additionally, the trio's *acapella* performance of Gilda Lyon's "Great Barrier Reef" was incredibly well executed. The atmospheric piece, which calls for lip pops, sighs, and other non-singing vocal techniques to be seamlessly interwoven into a complex polyphony of atmospheric melodic phrases is doubtlessly demanding. However, this talented trio betrayed no sign of the work's difficulty, and each singer carried their lines forward with grace and ease.

The colorful "Bells at Saint-Aignan" by Deborah Fisher Teason served as one of several moments of calm tranquility in the midst of an otherwise energized excursion. The performance ended with William Ryden's "The Owl and the Pussycat" (another piece commissioned by the group). With the air of a waltz song from an earlier era, this tale of two unlikely lovers—the owl and the pussycat—sailing away together provided a charming and satisfying end to the show's voyage.

Pianist Grant Wenaus must be highly commended for his artistry and masterful collaboration with the singers. In each piece, he displayed a rare combination of technical virtuosity,

excellent articulation, and balance that perfectly complemented and never overpowered the voices.

The Mirror Visions Ensemble continues their performances of *Journey* in France and California this spring, and the group will release *The Three-Paneled Mirror*, a CD comprised entirely of MVE

commissions, in May 2015. This recording is sure to be a must-have addition for lovers of art song. MVE is most certainly a group to follow for anyone who truly appreciates beautiful singing, new works, art song, and thought-provoking programming.

# The *MIRROR VISIONS* Ensemble



March 14, 2015

## Mirror Visions Ensemble presents **Journeys in Review**

By Jeffrey Williams

To celebrate the upcoming release of their CD entitled *The Three-Paneled Mirror* (Centaur Records CRC 3381/3382), comprised entirely of commissioned works, Mirror Visions Ensemble presented a program called *Journeys* at SubCulture in New York City. Featuring works from the standard repertoire paired with premiered commissioned works from contemporary composers (not included on their CD), it proved to be a trip filled with wonder and whimsy.

Mirror Visions Ensemble, directed by Tobé Malawista, has stated their mission as “performing and commissioning musical ‘mirror images’- multiple settings of the same text by one or more composers,” and presenting programs that are “built around themes and always include new works commissioned by the ensemble.” Each member of Mirror Visions has an impressive list of accomplishments and credentials as soloist and was featured as such in at least one work in the program.

*Journeys* included works about exploring the sea, islands, and forests, letters from friends, as well as visits to churches and several hotels. There were

sixteen works total on the program with the earlier being songs from Hugo Wolf, Hector Berlioz, Joseph Haydn, Felice Blangini, Henri Duparc, 20<sup>th</sup> century masters Samuel Barber and Francis Poulenc, and popular composers Cole Porter and Stephen Schwartz. The newer were commissioned works by Gilda Lyons, Scott Wheeler, Deborah Fischer Teason, Tom Cipullo, and William Ryden.

As much as I would like to give a detailed account of all the songs, I will concentrate mostly on the commissioned works. For the older works, I will mention three highlights: Baritone Jesse Blumberg dynamic, full-bodied performance of Hugo Wolf's *Auf einer Wanderung*, tenor Scott Murphree's hilarious take on Cole Porter's *Tale of the Oyster*, which had the audience roaring with laughter, and Samuel Barber's setting of James Joyce in *Solitary Hotel* performed in Film Noir style, with soprano Vira Slywotzky taking the part of the *femme fatale* as she slinked to the front of the stage – it was campy to be sure, but how very effective it was!

Moving on to the commissioned works, *Great Barrier Reef* by Gilda



KIRSHBAUM  
ASSOCIATES INC.

Lyons, from “recent studies, adapted by the composer,” featured swirling sounds of the waves, as the music “flowed” from one performer to the next in rapid sequence, and with some added sound effects. It was an ingenious work given a polished performance.

*Letters to Isabella*, by Scott Wheeler, uses the texts of three letters written to art collector and museum founder Isabella Stewart Gardner. The first from Henry James (for tenor), the second from Paul Bourget (for soprano), and the last (for baritone) from Kakuzo Okakura, ostensibly written to his cat, who was “visiting” with Ms. Gardner. Mr. Wheeler expertly captured the tone of each letter, from the longing sighs of James, to the world-weary Bourget (who found Florida especially odious), and the playful teasing of Okakura, and the performers projected those qualities with consummate grace.

*The Bells at Saint-Aignan* by Deborah Fischer Teason, using text from Jeffrey Greene, was to this listener the highlight of the commissioned works. As told in the program, each bell at this church has three names, the first the name of a noble woman, the second after bees or wasps, and the third for the notes they sounded. This commemorative piece was conveyed with haunting tonal ambiguity in both the vocal and piano writing, never straying too far toward atonality, but remaining unsettled throughout. It was a mesmerizing effect, given an equally mesmerizing performance.

*At the Windermere Hotel*, by Tom Cipullo, with text from *Nightmare at the Windermere Hotel* by Edna St. Vincent Millay, was a sure-fire crowd pleaser. The audience was in stitches as the quest for an elusive cup of coffee from room service took an absurdly comic route. Even pianist Grant Wenaus got into the act – when he called out “Kitchen Speaking,” the audience howled in laughter. This was just pure fun and Mirror Visions played it for all it was worth.

William Ryden’s *The Owl and the Pussy-Cat*, using Edward Lear’s verses, was a delight and brought the program to a successful finish.

It was gratifying that all the composers of the commissioned works were in attendance and able to be acknowledged for their compositions by the appreciative audience.

*The Ghost of Madame de Sévigné at the Carnavalet*, by Christopher Berg, was offered as an encore, after which the Ensemble greeted the many people who wished to see them. Mirror Visions Ensemble is not only highly accomplished musically, but also pulls in their listeners with their winning personalities on both the individual and group level. Add those qualities to the great service they do for contemporary composers by their continual commissioning and performing of new works, and the end result is a win for everyone. I look forward to hearing more from and about Mirror Visions Ensemble.

# OPERA NEWS

June 2014

## "The Leaves of the Butterfly Tree"

By Fred Cohn

The Mirror Visions Ensemble's April 6 concert was an occasion to explore the ways that music and text interact. Entitled "The Leaves of the Butterfly Tree," the hour-long program, given at the downtown club SubCulture, offered settings by six composers of poems by two contemporary poets, Linda Pastan and Jeffrey Greene. All of the works had been commissioned by Mirror Visions, a twenty-two-year-old vocal trio dedicated to music set to poetry.

The setup demanded that we focus on the texts themselves, which is why I enjoyed the compositions in direct proportion to the extent that they let us hear the words clearly. The concert started, logically enough, with a number that presented the three singers in tandem, Tom Cipullo's "Weather Forecast." But the concerted singing drowned Pastan's words, especially when it got high and loud. In general, the text emerged best in solo numbers, or in duets where the singers sang in alternation — for instance, in Richard Lalli's intriguing *Three Greene Songs*, a set of soprano/baritone duets, with the voices deployed so discretely that each word made its full effect. Unlike the rest of the songs on the program, the Lalli set used a flute (the excellent Jennifer Grim) rather than a pianist. I couldn't at first hearing quite follow the musical logic of Lalli's work, but the wandering flute line did give the effect of an inquisitive human mind in active

contemplation, and the hummed ending to "Presence," the last of the three numbers, was an apt illustration of the poem's image of children playing in the obliterating night.

Francine Tester's settings of "The Octopus" and "Mouse Song" matched the whimsy of Greene's texts. The six very short numbers from Christopher Berg's *The Months* (to Pastan texts) each conjured a condensed impressionistic image. The most effective writing for the whole trio came in Richard Pearson Thomas's "The Butterfly Tree" (Pastan again), written in Andrews Sisters-like close harmony. But Russell Platt's contribution — another *Three Greene Songs* — offered the most musical pleasure of the evening, especially in "Extended Night," the meditation of a man caring for his dying mother, with Chopinesque, onomatopoeic raindrops in the piano part, and a rush of melody in the postlude that registered as a surge of emotion.

All three singers — Vira Slywotzky, soprano; Scott Murphree, tenor and Mischa Bouvier, baritone—brought healthy voices and unquestionable commitment to the material, although Slywotzky, in her more exuberant outbursts, did not seem to have fully taken the measure of the intimate performing space. Margaret Kampmeier's work on the piano was beyond reproach.



KIRSHBAUM  
ASSOCIATES INC.



## COMPARATIVE LITERATURE & ENGLISH

AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF PARIS

April 4, 2014

### **Andrew Davidson reviews 'The Leaves of the Butterfly Tree: The Poetry of Linda Pastan & Jeffrey Greene'**



From the lyric poets of ancient Greece to modern stars like Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen, the relationship between poetry and music is so deep it is almost impossible to imagine one existing without the other. Over the last few years, the American University of Paris has provided some excellent opportunities for students to explore this complex relationship; for example, in 2012 the university hosted Well-Tuned Words, a lute and soprano duo whose repertoire included music set to the centuries-old poetry of such writers as John Milton and John Donne. But for many students, this performance felt like something from days long gone—what about today's poetry? The answer to this question came on March 27th, when the Grand Salon was filled to capacity with excited listeners for the world premiere of the Mirror Visions Ensemble's "Leaves of the Butterfly

Tree," a selection of commissioned musical pieces set to the words of the acclaimed American poets Linda Pastan and Jeffrey Greene.

The talent on display was exceptional. Mr. Greene, a beloved AUP professor and the director of the university's Creative Writing program, has published five poetry collections, two nature books, and a memoir. Ms. Pastan taught for several years at American University, has published thirteen volumes of poetry, and in 2003 won the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize, one of the most prestigious awards for American poets. The Mirror Visions Ensemble has recently celebrated its twentieth anniversary of performing as a troupe, during which time it has commissioned more than eighty works. Clearly, all the elements were in place for something very special.

On this night twenty-four songs were performed in total, most as parts of larger song cycles. Eight of the songs performed were world premieres: three songs set to the poetry of Mr. Greene in the cycle "Three Greene Songs," composed by Russell Platt, and five songs set to the poetry of Ms. Pastan in the cycle "The Butterfly Tree," composed by Richard Pearson Thomas.

A worry often held about performed poetry events is that they will be "deadly



KIRSHBAUM  
ASSOCIATES INC.

serious”—which is a code phrase, of course, for “grim” and/or “boring.” No worries here! Mr. Greene’s poems ranged from a playful meditation on an octopus curling its way into a terra cotta pot, only to be scooped from the ocean by fishermen, to the church of Saint-Aignan where the tower bells are named after noble women, wasps, and musical notes. Ms. Pastan’s work included a seven-song cycle that reflects on the months between March and September, to the philosophically funny “why are your poems so dark?”

The poems are consistently excellent, as one would expect from poets of this caliber; and while the poems are remarkably precise in their detail, they allow the thoughts provoked in the listeners to wander globally. A poem about an octopus is not really a poem about an octopus, of course, any more than a poem about the darkness of a poem is really about its darkness. Perhaps the octopus “touches in us a place / of sympathy or sadness / since it has a human / weakness of its own”, and perhaps the darkness is simply to remind us that “when God demanded light, / he didn’t banish darkness. / Instead he invented / ebony and crows / and that small mole / on your left cheekbone.”

This is great stuff—but to see it in its written form, one notices the poems are not written with a regular rhyme scheme or in the stanza forms that lend

themselves so well to music. So what are the composers to do, when music is so often mathematical in its structure? No fear, reader and listener: the composers did just fine. In fact, the lack of obvious repetitive structure in the poems seemed to free the composers to take interesting chances with the words and rhythms. Here, I must confess my limitation as a reviewer: I am not schooled in music theory and I cannot write with any authority on chord choices or motifs or the difference between intermedios and intermezzos. But I can say this: the music was a delight for my ears, both in its composition and in how it was sung with such gusto and personality by Vira Slywotzky (soprano), Scott Murphree (tenor), and Joshua Jeremiah (baritone). Performing most admirably, also, were Margaret Kampmeier on piano and Lena Gutke on the flute.

It was an enchanting evening. At the reception that followed, the performers mingled with the guests drinking wine and receiving well-deserved congratulations for an evening that will not soon be forgotten. And for those unable to attend the event, lament not: you have another chance! Well, if you are in New York, that is. There will be a performance of “Leaves of the Butterfly Tree” at SubCulture at 45 Bleeker Street, Manhattan, on Sunday, April 6 at 7:30pm. You can buy your tickets here.

# The *MIRROR VISIONS* Ensemble



May 12, 2013

**Andrea Nierenberg's review of the Mirror Visions Ensemble, a vocal trio featuring soprano Vira Slywotzky, tenor Scott Murphree and baritone Jesse Blumberg "Concert à la carte" at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall on Saturday, May 11, 2013 at 8PM**

By Andrea Nierenberg

Fantastic and entertaining performance with the Mirror Visions Ensemble at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall. The 70 minute performance flew by with a combination of smiles and continual entertainment.

The program was comprised of food-themed songs by composers such as Samuel Barber, Christopher Berg, Leonard Bernstein, Cole Porter and Stephen Schwartz.. The program featured Richard Pearson Thomas' cantata Clean Plates Don't Lie, a musical celebration of the farm-to-table movement inspired by the menus of Blue Hill at Stone Barns Restaurant in New York. It was wonderful to listen to and the creativity and passion of the singers was truly amazing.

The Mirror Visions Ensemble is a soprano/tenor/baritone vocal trio, which is best described as a chamber music ensemble run by singers with programs that are shaped with an ear to the poetry of song texts rather than specific musical styles. The artistic director of the ensemble, Tobé Malawista, has been quietly commissioning more than 75 vocal chamber music works in 20 years from 14 composers including Scott Wheeler, Christopher Berg, Tom Cipullo, Russell Platt, Richard Pearson Thomas and Yehudi Wyner.

The vocal trio is soprano, Vira Slywotzky, tenor, Scott Murphree, and baritone Jesse Blumberg- all fantastic with a wonderful chemistry working together.

The first half of the program explores food — ingredient selection, meal preparation (including recipes!) and the pleasure of dining — through familiar and obscure songs in both French and English by American composers such as Samuel Barber, Christopher Berg, Leonard Bernstein, William Bolcom, Christopher Culpo, Cole Porter, and Stephen Schwartz. The feast culminates with Richard Pearson Thomas' cantata Clean Plates Don't Lie, which sets to music a number of texts drawn from the menus of Blue Hill at Stone Barns Restaurant.

The ensemble serves up a delectable "Bread", from Stephen Schwartz's "The Baker's Wife" — a musical based on the book and French film *La Femme du Boulanger*, an appetizing "Tuna Supreme" from Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook (set by Richard Pearson Thomas), and the smooth sorbet flavors of the Parisian ice cream parlor Berthillon in Christopher Culpo's "Tango du Dessert." Leonard Bernstein's *La Bonne Cuisine Française* includes the frenzied "Rabbit at Top Speed", whipped up according to



KIRSHBAUM  
ASSOCIATES INC.

711 WEST END AVENUE SUITE 5KN NEW YORK NY 10025 (212) 222-4843 TEL (212) 222-7321 FAX WWW.KIRSHBAUMASSOCIATES.COM

Henri Dumont's directions. Mr. Murphree and Ms. Slywotzky perform Christopher Berg's Les gourmandises from Portrait en Miniature de Madame de Sévigné. Daliah (a New York City grade school student) calls for seven chickens in Martin Hennessy's "Daliah's Soup", simmered and sung by Ms. Slywotzky.

The ensemble has performed this uniquely engaging program worldwide, from Paris to Montana, and New York (Merkin Concert Hall, Le Poisson Rouge, NYU's Frederick Loewe Theatre) in between.

Brilliant, creative and a lot of fun- I highly recommend the very entertaining Concert a la carte with The Mirror Visions Ensemble.

# The Boston Musical Intelligencer

October 25, 2011

## Mrs. Gardner as Aphrodite and Athena

By Steven Ledbetter

I was completely unfamiliar with The Mirror Visions Ensemble, but the fascinating program offered at the Longy School's Pickman Hall on October 21 has definitely put them on my radar. The ensemble, under artistic director Tobé Malawista, consists of three singers (Vira Slywotzky, soprano; Scott Murphree, tenor; and Jesse Blumberg, baritone) and pianist Alan Darling. As a chamber ensemble dominated by voices, it assembles programs that emphasize the interaction of words and music, including pieces from many periods (covering the 17th to the 21st centuries on Friday), many musical styles, and new pieces especially commissioned, three of which were performed in this program. The singers all stayed on stage throughout the program, allowing them to move swiftly between songs and groups. All three have attractive voices and expressive stage presence, whether singing alone or in well-matched ensemble.

Malawista planned the program around a noted Bostonian figure, Isabella Stewart Gardner, creator of the wondrous museum on the Fenway and one of the most colorful figures in the social and artistic life of Boston around the turn of the last century. A great deal of research went into the planning, first choosing music in categories that celebrated Mrs. Gardner's passions and interests, and then in choosing three

wonderful letters to her to be set to music by Scott Wheeler.

The name of the program, "Aphrodite & Athena," seemed rather grandiose until it was revealed that the phrase had been applied to Mrs. Gardner herself by a cousin in a letter to this energetic woman who seemed to be everywhere: "You must have a double, one devoted to society, music, admiration, and pearls, and the other sterner sister given to labor and duty; a kind of Aphrodite with a lining of Athene." To that end, the program was shaped with groups of songs (variously for one, two, or three voices) representing the "Athena" side of her, especially in *Incominciam!*, an extended new setting by Christopher Berg of a passage from Dante; then the first of two "Venetian Sojourns" celebrating her favorite city; a group of diverse songs involving love and therefore obviously suggesting Aphrodite; Scott Wheeler's *Letters to Isabella*, a group suggesting her love for solitude (a very different person than the one normally presented in the society columns of her day); a second "Venetian Sojourn"; and a group entitled "The Crown of Life," reflecting her sense of fulfillment in a life lived as she chose to live it.

Within these groups, the songs ranged from the familiar and much-loved (Monteverdi's "Zefiro torna," Brahms's "Die Mainacht," and Schubert's "Im



KIRSHBAUM  
ASSOCIATES INC.

Abendrot”) with slightly less familiar songs, including some in languages infrequently encountered in American vocal recitals (Rangström’s “Pan,” Sibelius’s “Norden”) and marvelous infrequently heard songs by Joaquin Nin, Jules Massenet, and Reynaldo Hahn. And on top of this, the new pieces by Berg and Wheeler.

Christopher Berg is a very busy composer of songs, I learned, though I have not had the occasion to hear his work before. The program opened with his setting of a passage from Book II of Dante’s *Inferno*, which he slightly rearranged in order and divided up between the singers, who were identified as Dante, Virgil, and Beatrice. This is a bit of poetic license, since Beatrice does not appear until the *Paradiso* (though she is often referenced earlier). I confess I did not get into this piece, though another hearing might well open up Berg’s connection to Dante’s lines. On the other hand, I found Berg’s *En Paz*, a setting of Amado Nervo’s “Paz” (“Peace”) in a kind of madrigal style for the three voices with piano, to be a lovely and touching close.

Personal letters between people who know one another well often tell us something about both the sender and the recipient. Scott Wheeler’s *Letters to Isabella* sets texts of great charm by three very good friends of Mrs. Gardner, writers who are also real writers. He was originally presented with a selection of three possibilities but decided that he wanted to read the letters himself to see if there were anything that struck him as better possibilities — and he ended up choosing the three that he had first been shown. Henry James is represented by an utterly characteristic Jamesian missive in which he arranges to meet her at her arrival in England. In essence the message is, “I’ll meet the 2:30 boat from Calais at Dover,” but he turned it into a lengthy and lightly flirtatious paragraph of balanced phrases and complex

clauses. The second letter is in French, from the poet and novelist Paul Bourget (whose poem *Musique* is sung elsewhere in the program in Debussy’s setting). Bourget wishes her a farewell (in a macaronic epistle) if he is unable to see her in this land “des elevators, des fast trains, des hands up, des smash up, des pet alligators”! The final letter is from her closest friend in Japan, Kakuzo Okakura, who actually wrote his letter, charmingly, to her cat.

The songs are set for tenor, soprano, and baritone respectively. There is a special art of setting prose texts in a song. The composer rarely writes tunes that are meant to be memorable and self-sufficient in themselves, because the form of the text rarely allows for a shaping of balanced phrases. Instead, the natural rhythm of the language as spoken tends to suggest the nature of the vocal line—almost always syllabic and very flexible, though occasionally stretched out or heightened for some kind of emphasis. Scott Wheeler is very much at home in this kind of writing; the songs have a natural flow as if James or Bourget or Okakura might be thinking of musical phrases themselves. And I have little doubt that a second and third hearing would bring out the inherent melody that is tricky to grasp in a first encounter, precisely because it is novel and because the listener is also caught up with the surprise of the words. Following the three “letter” songs, the ensemble performed Wheeler’s setting of a poem by Okakura, *The Stairway of Jade*, inspired by a staircase at Fenway Court. This is more traditionally “songlike,” with short poetic lines of just two or three beats per line. The composer noted that “it is a hymn to nature, to architecture, and to Mrs. Gardner herself.” The intertwining voices provide a lovely, gently romantic close to the cycle of letters that preceded them.



# Queens Bar Bulletin

February 2011

## ***BARGEMUSIC: MIRROR VISIONS*** **ENSEMBLE**

By Howard Wieder

The Mirror Visions Ensemble a vocal trio featuring soprano Vira Slywotzky, tenor Scott Murphree, baritone Jesse Blumberg, and pianist Alan Darling gave an inspired performance at the Fulton Ferry Landing's Bargemusic on an icy, slushy Saturday, January 29, 2011.

Alan Darling was phenomenal, even spectacular at the piano. The three vocalists, soprano Vira Slywotzky, tenor Scott Murphree, baritone Jesse Blumberg, were superb, bringing out the beauty, humor, and melancholy of the pieces, with their gifted voices.

In celebration of the Bargemusic series' focus on 20th and 21st century music, the Mirror Visions Ensemble, whose artistic director is Tobe Malawista, performed two commissioned works exploring literary themes: Russell Platt's "From Noon to Starry Night: A Walt Whitman Cantata" and Tom Cipullo's brilliantly crafted A Visit With Emily.

In the words of composer Tom Cipullo, "A Visit With Emily is something of a

genre bender, part song cycle in its intimacy and accompaniment, part opera in its size and ensembles." Through the use of Emily Dickinson's poetry, along with letters to and from her and T.W. Higginson, Tom Cipullo constructs a revealing portrait of the enigmatic poet.

Russell Platt's "From Noon to Starry Night: A Walt Whitman Cantata" is based on a selection of Walt Whitman's poems, displaying the roughneck Whitman, the democratic Whitman, the transcendentalist Whitman, Whitman the "lover of comrades," and Whitman the "bard of war Russell Platt goal was to "emulate the combination of expressive intensity, precise word setting, and lyric driven recitative of the Spanish and Italian Songbooks, in a more twentieth century harmonic idiom."

After the concert, running into Girmaldi's Pizzeria, the new name and old site of the legendary Patsy's Pizza, near the Bargemusic was a perfect excuse to escape the cold weather.

# The *MIRROR VISIONS* Ensemble

THE MIRROR VISIONS ENSEMBLE



January 29, 2011

## The Mirror Visions Ensemble in Review

*Works by Russell Platt and Tom Cipullo*

*Bargemusic*

By Harry Saltzman



It is a good idea to arrive at concerts early, not only so that one can have time to read the program notes, but also in order to make the transition from the hectic life of the city, to place a “cordon sanitaire” around the event being attended. This is especially important when attending events at Lincoln Center or at the Carnegie Halls, as one needs to decompress after a ride on the NY Subway. My favorite pre-concert “cordon sanitaire” begins just after exiting the subway at the York Street Station of the F train. One then walks **Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass** through DUMBO. There are fleeting views of the Manhattan Bridge

on the right and soon parts of the Brooklyn Bridge come into view. After a right turn down Old Fulton Street, one soon arrives at the East River. Ahead is the Manhattan skyline, to the right the span of the Brooklyn Bridge, and to the left, moored to the Brooklyn shore, is home of Bargemusic. Floating in the East River, this one of our city’s most unusual and pleasant chamber music venues.

Founded in 1992 The Mirror Visions Ensemble (Tobé Malawitsa, Artistic Director) has commissioned more than seventy vocal chamber music works. Given the magnificent performances we heard tonight from soprano Vira



KIRSHBAUM  
ASSOCIATES INC.

Slywotzky, tenor Scott Murphree, baritone Jesse Blumberg and pianist Alan Darling, contemporary composers are very fortunate to have such skilled and dedicated performers championing their music. Tonight's concert featured two of The Mirror Visions Ensemble's commissions.

The first half was devoted to Russell Platt's "From Noon to Starry Night: A Walt Whitman Cantata." This setting of ten Whitman poems was written in a spiky but not painfully dissonant harmonic style, often leavened by major triad final chords. It began with two trios which were sung with perfect intonation and rhythmic clarity. The first was fairly tonal, but spiced by added "wrong notes" in some of the chords, while the second was a waltz. Each of the following solo movements was performed with attention to the meaning of the words and with impeccable diction. I found the consonant opening of the fifth movement, "I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing," quite beautiful.

After intermission we heard Tom Cipullo's "A Visit with Emily," settings of letters and poetry of Emily Dickenson and letters of T.W. Higginson. As did Mr. Platt, Mr. Cipullo spoke about his work before it was performed. I usually

dislike these pre-performance-spoken-program-notes, but Mr. Cipullo's were most informative, quite funny, and very well delivered. Most interesting was the statement that his settings were not meant to augment or to clarify the meaning of the poems, but to express his reaction to them. Mr. Cipullo's music has none of the retro-consonant elements employed by Mr. Platt, and it never wavers from an astringent harmonic language. If there was a "retro" aspect to his music, it was his skillful use of use of earlier musical devices, an aspect of this work I enjoyed very much. Movements three (sung by Mr. Blumberg,) four (sung by Mr. Murphree,) and five (sung by Ms. Slywotzky) were based on poems which had to do with fame. Movement six combined the melodies of these three songs, a devise called a quodlibet. It was brilliantly performed by the three soloists and pianist Alan Darling. In later movements we heard a catch, a chaconne, a passacaglia and another quodlibet.

And after hearing fine performances of skillful settings of great poetry in a unique venue, I could reenter reality by retracing my steps under those two great bridges mentioned in paragraph one. Only in New York!

# The *MIRROR VISIONS* Ensemble



October 26, 2010

## Mirror Visions Ensemble Enchants Hopkins



On Sunday afternoon, October 24, the New Haven based vocal trio, *Mirror Visions Ensemble* delighted an intimate audience in Heath Commons with their recital of American songs about food and eating.

The trio, comprised of Jesse Blumberg, Scott Murphree, and Vira Slywotzky, accompanied on piano by Richard Pearson Thomas, performed a program in two sets, the first half comprised of songs adapted from recipes, menus and other existing arrangements. The second half of the performance was a special preview of a new cantata, "Know Thy Farmer" written by Thomas, that explores the movement of sustainable eating through the menus and writings of chef Dan Barber. "Know Thy Farmer" will officially premier worldwide in New York City at the Merkin Concert Hall on November 9th. Their performance left the audience hungry for more, and perhaps for the wine and cheese reception that followed.



KIRSHBAUM  
ASSOCIATES INC.

711 WEST END AVENUE SUITE 5KN NEW YORK NY 10025 (212) 222-4843 TEL (212) 222-7321 FAX [WWW.KIRSHBAUMASSOCIATES.COM](http://WWW.KIRSHBAUMASSOCIATES.COM)



Congratulations to the performers on a fantastic, entertaining program. And thank you for sharing your new work and extraordinary talent with the Hopkins community.



# The *MIRROR VISIONS* Ensemble

THE MIRROR VISIONS ENSEMBLE



November 9, 2010

## The Mirror Visions Ensemble in Review

*Concert a la Carte'*

*Merkin Concert Hall, New York, NY*

*November 9, 2010*

By Anthony Aibel



In a most delectable concert, the Mirror Visions Ensemble presented an evening of music as it relates to cuisine. The program opened with soprano Vira Slywotzky, tenor Scott Murphree and baritone Jesse Blumberg appearing from behind the audience and walking down the aisles—a lovely touch—sentimentally and endearingly singing Cole Porter's "Come to the Supermarket in Old Peking." The vocal trio sang beautifully in tune and with great unity of humor. After the Porter, the trio rotated in a series of solo numbers. The composer Christopher Berg was present for his "Carrot Jingle"—lyrics by Joan Van

Poznak—and he could not have received a better performance by Scott Murphree. The trio reconvened for a performance of "Bread" from "The Baker's Wife" by Stephen Schwartz. They were stellar once again, as the exaggerated diction at the ends of words like 'bread' brought great character and clarity to the song, and the heavenly falsetto chord at the finish was perfectly on pitch. Other highlights included a sassy reading of "Riesling d'Alsace at the Brasserie" by Yehudi Wyner and Bernstein's "Rabbit at Top Speed", sang with polish and commitment by Murphree and Blumberg. Slywotsky's



KIRSHBAUM  
ASSOCIATES INC.

711 WEST END AVENUE SUITE 5KN NEW YORK NY 10025 (212) 222-4843 TEL (212) 222-7321 FAX WWW.KIRSHBAUMASSOCIATES.COM



interpretation of “Daliah’s Soup”—with charming music by Martin Hennessy and lyrics by a New York City School student—combined to make a memorable performance.

It was smart to exclude an intermission, as there would be limitations to a full program about food. The length was just right. Richard Pearson Thomas’ “Tuna Supreme” was fun—if somewhat repetitious with regards to text, and his larger work “Know thy Farmer,” which received its world premiere, was a great success. Here, to add some needed variety to the evening, Thomas added a trio of instrumentalists to the trio of vocalists: violinist Harumi Rhodes and cellist Alberto Parrini (along with Thomas himself on piano). The music

was well-played and well-balanced, as the piano trio stayed *sotto voce* and emerged only when they needed to. There were Brahmsian/ Neo-Romantic touches in the “Passacaglia and Chorale: Pasture”, and complex and exciting fugal passages in the finale: Clean Plates Don’t Lie”—and other moments of sincere expression or excitement that didn’t always go with the partly mundane, simple text—but therein lies some of this work’s humor; some selections were from menu listings, after all.

The audience came out in droves for this terrific concert by The Mirror Visions Ensemble, and everyone seemed to leave the hall happy... and hungry.



## The Mirror Visions Ensemble Discography

### Centaur

- CRC3381/3382      **The Three-Paneled Mirror** (May 12, 2015): *Clean Plates Don't Lie* (Richard Pearson Thomas); *The Months* (Christopher Berg); *A Visit with Emily* (Tom Cipullo); *The Three-Paneled Mirror: Emily's Truth* (Cipullo), *Theories of Perfection at Merkin Concert Hall* (Thomas), *The Ghost of Madame de Sévigné at the Carnavalet* (Berg).

### Albany

- 1032      **Cosmic and Domestic Matters** (June 17, 2008): *Lincoln Letters* (Christopher Berg); *Dear Youth*: "Christmas Night", "The trouble was Tom was in love", "The Lord knows best", "O, for such a dream" (Daron Hagen); *From Noon to Starry Night* (Russell Platt). Richard Lalli, Margaret Kampmeier, Scott Murphree, Tobe Malawista, Jane Shelly, Jody Sheinbaum, Alan Darling.
- 720      **Secrets** (December 2004): Tom Cipullo - *Secrets*: "Blizzard", "Secrets", "The Almanac of Last Things", "Because", "The Arithmetic of Alternation", "Weather Forecast", "Drift", "RSVP Regrets Only", "The Dogwoods", "In Back of", "What We Want", "Drift & RSVP Regrets Only", "Subway", "The Book", "In the Middle of a Life"; Richard Lalli: *Lessons*, for voice & piano, *The Train*, for voice & piano; Richard Pearson Thomas: *Droplets*, for voice & piano; Francine Trester: *Three Greens*: "The Octopus", for voice & piano, "Mouse Song"; Christopher Berg: *Three Greens*: "The Night Gallery", for voice & piano. Tobé Malawista, Scott Murphree, Richard Lalli, Margaret Kampmeier.
- 576      **Un Américain à Paris** (June 2003): Berg: *Les Loisirs de la Poste* (*Postal Pastimes*), songs for voice & piano, *Portrait en Miniature de Madame de Sévigné*, songs for voice(s) & piano, *Hommage à Francis Poulenc*, for soprano & piano, *L'Intelligence et la Musicalité chez les animaux* (*Intelligence and Musicality Among Animals*), for soprano & baritone, *La Moisson* (*Harvest*), for tenor & piano. Tobé Malawista, Scott Murphree, Richard Lalli.





















