

THE ALDEBURGH CONNECTION

NORTHERN LIGHTS



WALTER HALL

SUNDAY, JANUARY 31st, 1988

2:30 p.m.

NORTHERN LIGHTS

Canadian January Night

Ice storm: the hill
a pyramid of black crystal
down which the cars
slide like phosphorescent beetles
while I, walking backwards in obedience
to the wind, am possessed
of the fearful knowledge
my compatriots share
but almost never utter:
this is a country
where a man can die
simply from being
caught outside.

ALDEN NOWLAN

The art of song flourishes easily, some might say too easily, in the warm Mediterranean sun. Conversely, those of us who share Alden Nowlan's 'almost unutterable knowledge' — Russians, Scandinavians, Canadians — are part of cultures whose lyric voice had to emerge slowly, from hibernation, as it were. In today's concert, we have no deep thesis to propound; we merely present a representative sequence of music, in which, perhaps, a few parallels may be discerned. Climate, especially winter, obviously features strongly — Mussorgsky's *Trepak* depicts a terrifying image of winter which is benignly tamed in *The Canadian sleigh song*. Rachmaninov's exuberant *Spring waters* has its counterpart in Holman's *Now fades the last long streak of snow*. Finally, all of us northerners are able to draw on inexhaustible well-springs of folksong: we celebrate this fact in John Greer's exciting new *All around the circle*.



Most of our spoken extracts are taken from the memoirs of Lord Frederic Hamilton, a diplomat who writes entertainingly of his time as Secretary in the British Embassy in Petrograd (St. Petersburg). He also visited Canada — his sister, Lady Maud, was the wife of Lord Lansdowne, Governor-General from 1883 to 1885.

PART 1

MARTHA COLLINS, soprano

MARK PEDROTTI, baritone

STEPHEN RALLS & BRUCE UBUKATA, pianos

WINTER AND SPRING IN RUSSIA

Where are you, little star? (*Grekov*)

Modest Mussorgsky (1839-91)

*Where are you, little star? Have the black clouds shrouded you from sight?
Tell me, beautiful one, where are you? Have you forgotten your true love,
who longs for you so?*

In the silent night (*Fet*)

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

*In the silent night, in vain I try to banish thoughts of you. I long to cry out
aloud, that night may know your name.*

From Five children's songs

Alexander Gretchaninov (1864-1956)

1. Lullaby (*anon.*) *In the twilight, the birds build a nest in the wood.
Nightingale, sing your song.*

2. Ai dudu (*Pleshcheyev*) *On the oak sits a raven and blows on his pipe.
The farmer asks his wife for a son four feet tall. Ai dudu!*

Trepak (Songs and dances of death) (*Goleshnichev-Kutusov*)

Mussorgsky

*The forest is deserted. The blizzard wails and howls. Look! In the
darkness, death embraces a poor drunken old man, dances a trepak with
him and whispers in his ear:*

*"You are tired and weary: lie down and go to sleep. I'll start a fine game
around you. Shake up the bed, swan-like snow! Sing, wild weather, that
this drunkard may sleep to your strains. Forests, darkness and snow, wrap
him in the softest blanket. Sleep my friend!"*

*Over the cornfields, the sun is smiling; a song sounds through the air, birds
are flying.*

Polonaise (Suite No. 1 in C, Op. 15)

Anton Arensky (1861-1906)

Spring waters (*Tyutchev*)

Rachmaninov

*The fields are still white with snow. But flowing water rushes along
proclaiming "Spring is here!" And soft, warm May days crowd joyfully
behind the Spring.*

VIKING VOICES

The diamond in the snow (*Wecksell*)

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

*A diamond glitters on freshly fallen snow. It glows with adoration for the
warm sun and melts to a tear. Happy are the lovers who worship their
highest ideal and, thus adoring, die!*

Black roses (Josephson)

Sibelius

In my heart grows a rose tree, its stems covered with thorns. As it grows and grows, I think I shall perish: for sorrow has roses black as night.

The maiden came (Runeberg)

Sibelius

The maiden came from the tryst with red hands: "I have been picking roses, mother." She came with red lips. "I have been eating raspberries, mother." She came with pale cheeks. "Make a grave, mother, and write on it that I was made pale by my lover's unfaithfulness."

Let's dance gay in green meadow (Faeroe Island Dance - Folksong)

Percy Grainger (1882-1961)

The Australian Grainger, born almost as far south as a composer could be, appears in our concert by virtue of his enthusiasm for things Nordic. He collected many folksongs in Denmark and the Faeroe Islands and was a close friend of Grieg.

A swan (Ibsen)

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)

My white, silent swan — in the birth of song you ended your life. You were indeed a swan.

I Love You (Andersen)

Grieg

You are my heart's chief happiness: I love you forever.

Two musical relics of my mother

Grainger

1. Hermundur Illi (Faeroe Island Dance-Folksong)

2. As Sally sat a-weeping. This is an English folksong; but Grainger's arrangement was completed in Denmark as a companion to Hermundur Illi. He and his mother would often perform piano duo works.

INTERMISSION

during which tea will be served in the lobby

PART 2

MARTHA COLLINS, soprano

DENNIS GIESBRECHT, tenor

GABRIELLE PRATA, mezzo

MARK PEDROTTI, baritone

STEPHEN RALLS & BRUCE UBUKATA, pianos

WINTER AND SPRING IN CANADA

Our old Canadian home

C.P. Woodlawn

Nothing is known of the background to this rousing piece. Published in 1868, it was entered (like all Canadian music of the time) 'according to Act of Parliament ... in the Office of the Minister of Agriculture.'

The Canadian sleigh song (*Mackay*) Henry Russell (1812-1900)
 Russell was an English singer who visited Toronto, then became organist of Rochester, NY, before returning to England where he presented entertainments of anecdotes and songs like this one, from The Emigrant's Progress.

Now fades the last long streak of snow (*Tennyson*) Derek Holman (b. 1931)
 Holman's cycle The centred passion, settings of six poems from In Memoriam, was composed for Mark Pedrotti and first performed by him in 1987.

After the dazzle of day (*Whitman*) Harry Somers (b. 1925)
 The second of Three songs written in 1946.

LOVE IN A COLD CLIMATE

The role of Canada in the world today (*Dave Mullin*) Harry Freedman (b. 1922).
 From Poems of young people, written in 1968 to texts by public and high school students in Toronto.

Sonnet (*E.B. Browning*) Sir Ernest MacMillan (1893-1973)
 'To my Wife.'

Jimmie's got a goil (*e.e. cummings*) John Beckwith (b. 1927)

The fourth of Six songs to poems by e.e. cummings of 1980-82.

Brilliant contredanse and polka George Strathy (1818-90)
 Original piano duets were rare in nineteenth-century Canada. This one, published in 1864, was written by the first Professor of Music at the University of Trinity College, who claimed to have studied with Mendelssohn and Liszt. In 1881, a university journal reported "we have seen nothing of him — no graduates — no lectures — no examinations — it is time for a change."

FROM SEA TO SEA

Song for fine weather (*Haida Indian*) Jean Coulthard (b. 1908)
 From Two poems of the Haida Indians (1972)

All around the circle — A Canadian folksong suite John Greer (b. 1954)
 First performance: commissioned by The Aldeburgh Connection

1. When the ice worms nest again (Arctic)
2. The Alberta homestead (Alberta)
3. Old grandma (Prairies)
4. Rattle on the stovepipe (Ontario)
5. Do you see that there bird? (Nova Scotia)
6. The morning dew (Newfoundland)
7. Quodlibet, introducing seven different Newfoundland folksongs.

The remaining concerts in our Sunday Series will be:

- 1888 – Year of Song on March 13, with Nancy Hermiston, Catherine Robbin, Tony Boutté and Kevin McMillan
- Lorelei on May 8, with Deborah Milson, Benoit Boutet and Daniel Neff.

Tickets (\$12, or \$10 seniors/students) are available from:

THE ALDEBURGH CONNECTION, 74 Follis Avenue
Toronto M6G 1S6 (telephone 531-3330)

Please also consider making a donation to our funds. A gift of \$35 (or \$50 dual membership) will qualify you to become a **Friend of The Aldeburgh Connection Concert Society**, and will help to ensure the continuation of our presentations. All donations will be acknowledged with a receipt for income tax purposes.



We gratefully acknowledge assistance from:

- THE ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL, THE MUNICIPALITY OF METROPOLITAN TORONTO, THE TORONTO ARTS COUNCIL, and many individual donors
- Bruce Philpott (BEDFORD HOUSE DESIGNS), who has provided the floral arrangements
- Dean and Rosemary Dover, who generously assisted in the commissioning of John Greer's *All around the circle*.

Aldeburgh, on the east coast of England, is the small town where Benjamin Britten, Peter Pears and Eric Crozier founded the Festival of Music which flourishes to this day. Stephen Ralls and Bruce Ubukata have visited and worked there for many summers, together with many of the singers appearing with The Aldeburgh Connection. The group is their brain-child, and has been filling a major gap in the Canadian concert scene for the past five years.

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Martha Collins, whose third season with The Aldeburgh Connection this is, maintains a varied career, ranging from concerts of Handel and Viennese operetta with the Toronto Symphony to a starring appearance in Schaefer's *Patria I* with the Canadian Opera Company. In March, she will sing the role of Miss Jessel in Vancouver Opera's production of Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*.

Gabrielle Prata is currently appearing as Sonyetka in Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* with the Canadian Opera Company. She has had great success in two Mozart roles: Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* (Aldeburgh, 1986) and Ramiro in *La finta giardiniera* (Guelph, 1987). Upcoming engagements include Dryad in Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* in Vancouver.

Dennis Giesbrecht has performed extensively in the concert field, counting some fifty oratorio roles in his repertoire. He also maintains a busy operatic schedule, including current appearances in Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* with the COC. With that company, he will shortly take the roles of Brighella in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Peter Quint in *The Turn of the Screw*.

Mark Pedrotti needs no introduction to most Canadian audiences. His recording of Orff's *Carmina Burana* will shortly be released on Newport Classics; he has been appearing in *Die Fledermaus* with New York City Opera and makes a recital debut in London, England in February. Other operatic engagements will include Pelléas in Ottawa, *The Marriage of Figaro* in Knoxville and *La bohème* in Cincinnati and Belfast.

Gabrielle Prata and Dennis Giesbrecht appear by kind permission of the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble.

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The Aldeburgh Connection is represented by:
HART/MURDOCK ARTIST'S MANAGEMENT, Toronto