

WILL LIVERMAN, BARITONE  
MADELINE SLETTEDAHL, PIANO

**WILL LIVERMAN**

(b. 1988)

from *Four Songs* by Paul Laurence Dunbar  
Morning

**CARL LOEWE**

(1796–1869)

from *3 Balladen, Op. 1*  
III. Erlkönig  
I. Edward

**CARL LOEWE**

*Odins Meeresritt, Op. 118*

**HERBERT HOWELLS**

(1892–1983)

*King David*

**FRANCIS POULENC**

(1899–1963)

*Quatre poèmes de Guillaume Apollinaire*  
L'Anguille  
Carte-Postale  
Avant le Cinéma  
1904

**WILLIAM BOLCOM**

(b. 1938)

*Black Max*

**J. FREDERICK KEEL**

(1871–1954)

*Three Salt Water Ballads*  
Port of Many Ships  
Trade Winds  
Mother Carey

**LIBBY LARSEN**

(b. 1950)

from *Machine Head: Ted Burke Poems*  
Machine Head

**H. LESLIE ADAMS**

(b. 1932)

from *Night Songs*  
Prayer  
The Heart of a Woman  
Sence You Went Away

**TRADITIONAL  
ARR. DAMIEN SNEED**

(b. 1979)

*Down by the Riverside*

**WILL LIVERMAN**

## WILL LIVERMAN, BARITONE

Grammy-nominated baritone Will Liverman is the recipient of the 2022 Beverly Sills Artist Award by The Metropolitan Opera. He opened the Met's 2021-22 season in a celebrated "breakout performance" (*New York Times*) as Charles in Terence Blanchard's *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*. Following *Fire*'s success, the Met announced that Liverman will star in Anthony Davis's *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, which will be the second opera by a Black composer in the company's history, premiering in the fall of 2023.

Following performances at Tanglewood and Aspen Music Festival, Liverman's 2022-23 season opened at the Kennedy Center's *50th Anniversary Celebration*, where he played the Celebrant in Bernstein's *Mass*. Next, the European premiere of Jeanine Tesori's *Blue* took Liverman to Dutch National Opera, where he made his house debut as the Reverend in the Music Critics Association's 2020 pick for "Best New Opera." Other 22-23 season engagements include performances of the title role in *Pelléas et Mélisande* at LA Opera and Zurga in *Les pêcheurs de perles* at Austin Opera; appearances with Orpheus Chamber Orchestra at Carnegie Hall and Portland Opera; and solo recital performances at London's Wigmore Hall.

Liverman's new opera, *The Factotum*, which he stars in and composed with DJ/recording artist K. Rico, premieres at the Lyric Opera of Chicago in February 2023. Inspired by Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, the piece takes place in a present-day Black barbershop on Chicago's South Side and celebrates the strength of community and power of the human spirit.

In addition to opening the Met's 2021-22 season with *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, highlights from Liverman's last season include reprisals of his roles in *Akhnaten* (Horemhab) and *The Magic Flute* (Papageno) at the Met Opera; Steward (Jonathan Dove's *Flight*) at Dallas Opera; and performances with Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Aspen Music Festival, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Park Avenue Armory, and Chicago Sinfonietta.

In February 2021, Cedille Records released Liverman's *Dreams of a New Day: Songs by Black Composers* with pianist Paul Sanchez – a collection of works by Damien Sneed, Henry Burleigh, H. Leslie Adams, Robert Owens, Margaret Bonds, and Thomas Kerr, plus a world premiere recording by Shawn E. Okpebholo and Liverman's arrangement of Richard Fariña's *Birmingham Sunday*. The album debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard Traditional Classical chart. *Dreams of a New Day* was nominated for Best Classical Solo Vocal Album at the 64th Annual Grammy Awards.

Awards and achievements include receiving a 2022 Sphinx MPower Artist Grant, the 2020 Marian Anderson Vocal Award, a 2019 Richard Tucker Career Grant, and a 2019 Sphinx Medal of Excellence. In 2017 he received a 3Arts Award and a George London Award, and was recognized as a classical division Luminarts Fellow by the Luminarts Cultural Foundation.

Liverman holds his Master of Music degree from The Juilliard School and a Bachelor of Music degree from Wheaton College in Illinois.

## MADELINE SLETTEDAHL, PIANO

Houston-based pianist and coach Madeline Slettedahl is an acclaimed collaborator known for her “extraordinarily expressive” performances (Seen and Heard International). In the 2021-2022 season she joined the Houston Grand Opera music staff, assisting on their productions of *Carmen*, *Dialogues des Carmélites*, and *Roméo et Juliette*. Her summer 2022 engagements included joining the music staff at Wolf Trap Opera, returning as an affiliate music staff member with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and performing a featured recital at Green Lake Festival of Music with soprano Katie Henry. Prior to her time in Chicago, she attended Music Academy of the West, where she won First Prize in the Marilyn Horne Song Competition.

Recent performances with Will Liverman include engagements at Green Lake Festival of Music and



**MADELINE  
SLETTEDAHL**

University of Richmond. In addition to her work with singers, Madeline regularly performs chamber music with instrumentalists. In 2019, she appeared at TwickenhamFest, a summer festival co-founded by soprano Susanna Philips, where Madeline performed Bartok's Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion with pianist Myra Huang and members of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra.

An advocate for new music, Madeline has debuted a number of commissions including the world premieres of *Willows* for solo piano by composer-conductor Roger Briggs and *My Life a Lyric Cry* by Canadian and Greek composer Constantine Caravassilis. In January 2019 she collaborated with composer Nico Muhly on his song cycle *Strange Productions* (SongStudio).

Madeline earned a Master of Music degree from the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, where she was the recipient of the Andre Watts Scholarship and Olshan Foundation Fellowship Award. She is an alumna of Western Washington University (B.M. Piano Performance), where she was awarded first prize in the WWU Concerto Competition, as well as the Outstanding Music Department Graduate in 2014. Previous appointments include staff pianist for the Shepherd School of Music and assistant faculty at the Marrowstone Music Festival.

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## NOTES

### WILL LIVERMAN: MORNING

Mr. Liverman opens his recital with his setting of a poem by Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906). Dunbar was a pioneer in American Black literature: the first to establish a national reputation as a poet and short story writer, and to be able to support himself through his writing. The son of former enslaved parents, he published his first volume of poetry in 1893 while working as an elevator operator. By the late 1890s he was working in the reading room of the Library of Congress in Washington. Dunbar wrote primarily about the antebellum South, generally adopting Black dialect. "Morning" is an exception: a love song, linking the beauty of nature with a wanderer's pursuit of love, personified by the promise and beauty of the day. Mr. Liverman says, "I've always been inspired by the poems of

Paul Laurence Dunbar. He writes in such an honest and poignant way that hits straight to the heart. I was very inspired this past summer and wanted to breathe new life into some of Dunbar's writings and give them a fresh musical perspective."

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The North German Schubert: that was Johann Carl Gottfried Loewe's reputation in the 19th century, as purportedly declared by a Viennese fan. Though Loewe's setting of "Erlkönig" has been eclipsed by Schubert's masterpiece, Loewe remains highly regarded for his lieder, particularly the ballads.

CARL LOEWE:  
ERLKÖNIG, OP. 1  
NO. 3  
EDWARD, OP. 1  
NO. 1

Both "Erlkönig" and "Edward" were part of Loewe's Opus 1, composed in 1818 and published in 1824. The text of "Erlkönig" is by Germany's celebrated poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. A desperate father gallops through the forest on a stormy night, his ailing son cradled in his arms. Death appears as a specter, terrifying the child during the wild ride. In the span of barely three and a half minutes, Loewe takes us inside each of the three characters, so that we experience the father's high anxiety, the siren call of Death as it seeks to claim the boy, and the child's emotional seesaw between the comfort of his father's embrace and the sinister invitation that beckons. The instrumental accompaniment suggests the pounding hooves of the horse, heightening the emotional tension. Loewe's "Erlkönig" is a miniature opera, requiring the singer to deliver three characters.

"Edward" is a Scottish ballad; the German translation is by Gottfried von Herder. Loewe sets it as a miniature opera with two characters: a mother and son. Their exchanges are distinguished by meter changes (6/8 to 2/4). Spying Edward's sword dripping with blood, she questions him sharply, suspicious that he has done something terrible. He claims first to have killed his hawk, and then his horse, but gradually it emerges that he has slain his father. After this shocking confession, she demands penance. What will he do with his family, his possessions? At the end, Edward curses her for the counsel she has given him: the murder was at her direction. Loewe's music is charged with drama as the conversation grows more tense, building inexorably to its devastating climax.

**CARL LOEWE:**  
**ODINS MEERESRITT,**  
**OP. 118**

“Odins Meeresritt” is late Loewe, from 1851. Aloys Schreiber’s text adapts a Norse legend in which a narrator sets the scene and provides transitions during the dialogue. The god Odin appears to Oluf, a blacksmith, awakening him in the middle of the night. Odin demands that his horse be re-shod, since he must be in Norway before dawn. The horseshoe, initially undersized, amazes the blacksmith by growing to the correct size. Loewe uses changes of meter and tempo to illustrate the god’s impatience and commanding manner. Odin’s music is agitated; Oluf’s replies are calmer and hesitant. At the end, as Odin gallops off, twelve eagles trail him, unable to keep pace. Loewe treats the poem as if it were recitative, with frequent pauses to emphasize Odin’s insistence. The eagles’ flight provides the pianist with a stunning virtuoso finish.

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**HERBERT HOWELLS:**  
**KING DAVID**

At the turn of the 20th century, Britain enjoyed a renaissance in composing unparalleled in modern music history. A bumper crop of home-grown geniuses emerged including Edward Elgar, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and William Walton. Herbert Howells belongs to that English musical renaissance, and was considered a second-tier composer who wrote a significant amount of first-rate music.

Like his contemporaries John Ireland, Gustav Holst, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Frank Bridge, Howells studied with Sir Charles Villiers Stanford at the Royal College of Music. He began his career as an organist at Salisbury Cathedral, and then suffered a few years of ill health. By 1920 he was sufficiently strong to accept a teaching position at his alma mater, where he remained on the faculty until his 80s.

“King David” is a poem by Walter de la Mare, a poet best known for his children’s collection *Peacock Pie* (1913). Howells set “King David” in 1919, and later incorporated it as the 12th song in a larger cycle. The text describes the profound melancholy of the Old Testament king, and his

inability to take comfort from the music of harps. Over the course of four stanzas, he walks in a moonlit garden and hears the mournful song of a nightingale. The songbird's sorrowful music gives solace to the king; his own sorrow dissipates, and he finds peace at last. The music traces this trajectory from hopelessness to tranquility.

Widely regarded as a masterpiece among English art songs, "King David" illustrates how music can bring comfort. Howells later said that he was "prouder to have written 'King David' than almost anything mine." He and de la Mare became close friends, and the poet declared Howell's setting to be perfect.

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Francis Poulenc was one of the younger members of the group that critic Henri Collet dubbed "Les Six" in 1920. (The other five were Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Germaine Tailleferre, Darius Milhaud, and Georges Auric.) Their iconoclastic, eccentric leader was Erik Satie; their spokesman and champion was Jean Cocteau. These six gifted young composers shared two principal goals. One was thwarting the Impressionist movement in music and the conservatism represented by such older generation composers as Vincent d'Indy and Gabriel Fauré. The other was celebrating the very aspects of popular culture that the Conservatoire crowd disdained: cabarets, music halls, night clubs, and music of the streets. Although each of Les Six went his or her own direction during the 1920s, Poulenc retained aspects of the group's philosophy throughout his career. As he matured, his music gained depth; however, he never lost his tongue-in-cheek insouciance and love of Parisian street music. Both are present in the four Apollinaire songs. Poulenc met the celebrated poet and art critic as a teenager, shortly before the older man's death from Spanish influenza in 1918. He was instantly captivated by Apollinaire and his verse. Said to have coined the terms "cubism" and "surrealism," Apollinaire was the quintessential Parisian modernist; Poulenc revered him as a bastion of contemporary French culture. He responded to Apollinaire's sense of satire,

FRANCIS  
POULENC:  
QUATRE POÈMES  
DE GUILLAUME  
APOLLINAIRE

droll humor, and sarcasm. He later wrote, “I have found in his poetry a rhythm corresponding exactly to the rhythm of my music.”

The four poems of *Quatre poèmes de Guillaume Apollinaire* are epigrammatic—the complete set elapses in barely five minutes—and lighthearted, in what biographer Benjamin Ivry calls “[Poulenc’s] best joyous vein.” “L’Anguille” (The Eel) is a cabaret waltz in which the pianist is instructed to play without pedal. “Carte-Postale” is a brief love song in Poulenc’s satirical vein. The last two songs are cousins to Gilbert & Sullivan’s patter songs: “Avant le Cinéma” mocks intellectuals; “1904”—originally called “Carnaval”—packs its punch in the final line. All four are somewhat frivolous, dipping dangerously close to vulgarity but saved by Poulenc’s colorful manipulation of tonalities and instinctive flair for Apollinaire’s texts.

Each song has a different dedicatee, reflecting Poulenc’s broad artistic circle: “L’Anguille” to the cubist painter Marie Laurencin, who had been Apollinaire’s lover in the early 1900s; “Carte-Postale” to Mme Cole Porter; “Avant le Cinéma” to Mme Picasso (the Russian ballerina Olga Khoklova); and “1904” to Mme Jean-Arthur Fontaine, *née* Marie Escudier, who had been painted by Odilon Redon, Edouard Vuillard, and Pierre Bonnard.

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**WILLIAM BOLCOM:  
BLACK MAX**

Composer and pianist William Bolcom is an American treasure, and one of this country’s foremost composers. He has also been active as a performer. With his wife, soprano Joan Morris, he engineered a resurgence of interest in American turn-of-the-century popular song. Bolcom was also a pioneer in the ragtime revival of the 1960s and 1970s.

Between 1963 and 1996, Bolcom composed four volumes of cabaret songs in collaboration with lyricist Arnold Weinstein. “Black Max,” from volume 1, was purportedly based on the remembrances of Dutch-born painter



Willem de Kooning: the title character was an elusive figure known on the seedy streets of Rotterdam's red-light district. Bolcom's setting is a narrative of Black Max's sinister meanderings and encounters. Mostly sung but partly *parlando*, the song is cousin to Kurt Weill's "Mack the Knife" in *The Threepenny Opera*. "Black Max" is both dark and humorous, inviting vivid interpretation from the singer.

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England's Frederick Keel was a baritone and professor of singing at the Royal Academy of Music. He is best known for his art songs, but he also delved deep into the history and tradition of English folk songs. Keel's works included settings of Elizabethan and Jacobean lyrics that helped to foster a renewed interest in the verse of those eras. His *Three Salt Water Ballads*, however, are settings of contemporary poetry by John Masefield, drawn from Masefield's first published collection in 1902. Masefield would return to the theme of seafaring and maritime history, expanding the original set in *Salt Water Poems and Ballads* (1916).

Keel was the quintessential singer/songwriter of his era. He favored straightforward syllabic delivery, and the vocal lines are lyrical and idiomatic to the English language, inviting clear diction rather than virtuosity. Keel's piano parts are supportive and substantive, but never intrude on the vocal delivery. Like Schumann and others before him, he gave the piano free rein in preludes, interludes, and postludes. His formal structure follows the poems, whose folk-like character permeates these appealing, eminently listenable songs.

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Libby Larsen achieved a national profile in her early 20s, in 1973, when she co-founded the Minnesota Composers Forum with her colleague and friend Stephen Paulus. The organization sought to join communities with composers and performers and to foster the composition and performance of new music. It was renamed the American

### FREDERICK KEEL: THREE SALT WATER BALLADS

### LIBBY LARSEN: MACHINE HEAD

Composers Forum in the 1990s and remains a powerful advocacy group.

Larsen grew up in Minnesota and began composing at age seven. She earned three degrees at the University of Minnesota, studying with Dominic Argento, and in 1983 became the first woman to serve as resident composer with a major American orchestra (the Minnesota Orchestra). She has been prolific, writing more than 500 compositions ranging from modestly proportioned chamber works to full-length operas.

She has a lifelong fascination with spoken language and its rhythms. This has affected her philosophy that all music is an avenue for communication. “Machine Head” is one of her settings of poems by Ted Burke, a writer, poet, bookseller, and musician based in San Diego. Burke makes ironic and satirical observations about everyday life. *Machine Head: Ted Burke Poems* (2022) was commissioned by the Aspen Music Festival. Mr. Liverman premiered it in Aspen last August.

“Machine Head” is a meditation on our technology-obsessed culture. Larsen opens with a hard-driving boogie introduction that imitates the unstoppable motor rhythm of industrial machines. The singer reflects on aspects of machinery in our lives, eventually revealing a profoundly human loss and a bitter acknowledgment about bad habits. Insistent and almost relentless, “Machine Head” gets into your head and won’t let go.

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H. LESLIE ADAMS:  
PRAYER  
HEART OF A  
WOMAN  
SENCE YOU WENT  
AWAY

Cleveland native Leslie Adams attended Oberlin College, Cal State Long Beach, and Ohio State. Early in his career he taught at Stillman College, Florida A&M, and University of Kansas, teaching voice and conducting choruses. Since the 1980s he has composed full time, though he continues to serve as a church organist. In 1997 he became executive vice president and artist-in-residence for Creative Arts Inc., a nonprofit dedicated to promoting the works of minority artists.

These three songs grew out of Adams's encounter with poet Langston Hughes (1902-1967) while living in New York City in the early 1960s. Adams admired Hughes greatly, and expressed a wish to set some of his poetry. Hughes did grant formal permission for several poems, including "Prayer." Adams eventually selected five texts by other African-American poets, publishing them in 1961 as the cycle *Nightsongs: Six Afro-American Songs*. "Prayer" opens the cycle. Its mood is uncertainty; the singer asks God for guidance and direction. Adams's setting is intimate, with simple chordal accompaniment in the piano echoing the singer's heartfelt plea.

"The Heart of a Woman," with text by Georgia Douglas Johnson (1886-1966), is about the cultural experience of a Black woman in early 20th-century America. The first stanza likens her spirit to a bird at dawn: buoyant and full of promise. By contrast, the second stanza dwells in the night world, where dreams have failed. Adams has said, "The song represents a person trying to break through and achieve some sort of freedom." His setting is tinged with jazz harmonies and rhythms, including more than a hint of the blues.

"Sence You Went Away" is distinguished by James Weldon Johnson's use of Black dialect for the text. The title says it all: "Sence You Went Away" is about love lost, and the dark mood that robs the world of its natural beauty. The composer has said, "It's a dramatic vignette with a little bit of sadness. But again, the richness of the harmony and lyricism show that it's not sad, but rather more bittersweet."

"Down by the Riverside" has its origins in the antebellum South. It is one of the most familiar spirituals to emerge from the pre-Civil War era. By the 1920s, it had worked its way into the jazz standard repertory, adopted regularly as the basis for improvisation. The spiritual was first recorded by the Fisk University Jubilee Quartet in 1920. Over the next two decades, more than a dozen gospel

TRADITIONAL/ARR.  
DAMIEN SNEED:  
DOWN BY THE  
RIVERSIDE

recordings followed. The tune—also known as “Study War No More”—remains popular with jazz musicians.

Damien Sneed is a musical polymath: a pianist, organist, composer, conductor, arranger, producer, and arts educator who has worked with major figures in classical music, jazz, rhythm & blues, and gospel. His arrangements of spirituals include a collaboration with opera star Jessye Norman in 2009. Sneed has recorded “Down By The Riverside” with tenor Lawrence Brownlee, an irresistible duet drawing on ragtime, gospel, and classic jazz. We hear it transposed to Mr. Liverman’s baritone.

*Program Notes by Laurie Shulman ©2022*

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## UPCOMING CONCERTS

**LEIF OVE ANDSNES, PIANO**  
**MON, JAN 23, 2023 | 7:30 PM**  
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Photo: Gregor-Hohenberggallery

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# UPCOMING CONCERTS

## CHAMBER SERIES

**Skride Piano Quartet**

Sun, Feb 5, 2023 | 4:00 pm

**Leila Josefowicz, violin**

Wed, Mar 22, 2023 | 7:30 pm

**Pacifica Quartet**

**Anthony McGill, clarinet**

Wed, Apr 26, 2023 | 7:30 pm

**Imani Winds**

Wed, May 10, 2023 | 7:30 pm

## PIANO SERIES

**Leif Ove Andsnes, piano**

Mon, Jan 23, 2023 | 7:30 pm

## SPECIAL EVENTS

MUSIC IN THE GALLERIES

**Lírios Quartet**

Sun, Mar 12, 2023

11:00 am & 1:00 pm (identical concerts)

Clyfford Still Museum

1250 Bannock Street, Denver

## SPECIAL THANKS

### SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL FACILITIES DISTRICT (TIER III)

for supporting FCM's outreach efforts through school residencies and master classes

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