

VAN DIEMEN'S BAND

ECHOED
VOICES

SIOBHAN STAGG
NICO DE VILLIERS

TUE 23 JULY 2024

HOBART TOWN HALL

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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Dutch-American conductor and Oscar-winning composer Richard Hageman was born on July 9, 1881 in Leeuwarden, the capital of Friesland in the north of the Netherlands. Having shown a lot of musical promise as a child, Hageman became a protégé of the Queen Regent, Emma at the age of 11. With her support, Hageman studied at the Conservatoire Royal in Brussels from 1893-1895. Thereafter he continued his studies at the Amsterdamsch Conservatorium.

In the first decade of the the twentieth century, Hageman became a conductor of the Netherlands Opera, then moved to Paris in 1903, to work in the studio of the renowned mezzo-soprano Mathilde Marchesi, the teacher of singers such as Nellie Melba, Frances Alda, and Emma Eames. After meeting Yvette Guilbert, a popular diseuse and muse of painter Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, Hageman accompanied Guilbert on two concert tours of the United States in 1906.

These trips piqued his interest in the New World and two years later he moved to New York to start a 13-year engagement as conductor and coach at the Metropolitan Opera. Following his tenure there, Hageman worked as a freelance conductor and composer across the United States. In 1930, he moved back to Europe to complete and promote his only opera, *Caponsacchi* in Germany and Austria.

Six years later, Hageman returned to the United States to bring *Caponsacchi* to the Metropolitan Opera for two performances in 1937, the last time the opera was staged. The following year, Hageman moved to Hollywood, quickly establishing himself as an A-list composer, scoring films for directors such as John Ford and Frank Lloyd.

Six of his film scores were nominated for an Academy Award, winning with John Ford's western, *Stagecoach* (1939). In addition to film music, Hageman also composed concert music and conducted concert and opera performances at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles.

He starred in several films, including *The Great Caruso* (1951) with Mario Lanza in the title role, with Billie Holiday in *New Orleans* (1947), and in *Rhapsody* (1954) with Elizabeth Taylor.

After retiring from Hollywood in 1954, Hageman continued to compose concert music until 1960. He died in his sleep at his home in Beverly Hills on March 6, 1966. His death was noted widely with the obituaries greatly divergent depending on where they were published. While the *New York Times* celebrated Hageman as a "Composer, Conductor, Pianist," the *Los Angeles Times* remembered him solely as a "Film Composer".

Hageman As Song Composer

Although feted as a film composer, Hageman started composing songs more than two decades before he moved to Hollywood and it was this activity which steadily coursed throughout his career. He published his first songs in 1917, around the age of 35, making him a relatively late starter compared to composers such as Charles Ives or Samuel Barber who were already penning songs during their teens. \

When a *Musical Courier* journalist asked why Hageman had taken so long before taking up composition, he answered, "I felt that there was enough good music in the world without adding any poorer to it". Hageman might be downplaying his own compositional ambitions here but by the 1930s he admitted that he was not a "champion of the ultra-Modernist school". These comments suggest that Hageman probably anticipated the likelihood of him drawing more on the influences of the composers whose songs he often played in recital or whose works he conducted rather than following the lead of the avant garde composers who were gaining prominence in the time between the two world wars. And so, hearing glimpses or musical suggestions of composers such as Tchaikovsky, Henri Duparc, Debussy, or Richard Strauss echoed in some of Hageman's songs is unsurprising.

The press noticed these echoes early on in Hageman's writing. When Hageman published his first two settings of poems from Rabindranath Tagore's *The Gardener* (1915), critics considered "Do Not Go, My Love" (1917) to be "quasi-Tchaikovskyan" or "quite à la Duparc". These reminiscences of other composers' sound worlds created a familiarity which at once elevated Hageman's songs above the realm of mere parlor songs while at the same time maintaining its appeal to a wider public.

For example, "Do Not Go, My Love," Hageman's best-known song, has become a classic within the American art song canon, and has been regularly included on recital programs and recordings dedicated to the American art song genre by celebrated artists such as Maggie Teyte, Kiri Te Kanawa, and Thomas Hampson.

In addition to drawing parallels with other composers, critics also praised Hageman for his originality. *Musical America* highlighted the piano writing in "May Night" (1917) as "one of the most delightful piano accompaniments" published at the time while *Musical Courier* suggested that the "many highly unusual points" in "At The Well" (1919) "simply cannot be described in words". But perhaps the greatest praise came from Tagore himself, who considered Hageman's "At The Well" as the best musical setting he had ever heard of any of his poetry.

Echoed Voices

Siobhan Stagg and I curated *Echoed Voices* to introduce the lesser-known Hageman in parallel with the more celebrated Richard Strauss and Henri Duparc. It is no surprise that echoes of Duparc emerge in Hageman's sound world since the French composer's influence permeated fin de siècle France and Belgium when Hageman was in the early stages of establishing his musicianship. Strauss's influence is dually discernible in both Hageman's songs. Similarities in poetic notions of existentialism in some Strauss settings are echoed—poetically as well as musically—in Hageman's Robert Nathan settings and the German songs.

A Journey Through Time

While exploring memory and the different facets of the human condition, *Echoed Voices* considers the counterpoint of passing time through the seasonal and quotidian rhythms of life and how we who experience this life, respond to it. From the opening line of "Miranda" ("Do you remember an Inn, Miranda?") to the jubilant close of "Is It You?," this programme explores the landscape of memory, the passing of time, and love's ultimate conquest.

The first half loosely tracks the passing of the seasons as they occur in the northern hemisphere: the exuberance of a summer love affair ("Ständchen") is contrasted with the glow of an autumnal October day that celebrates the maturity of love ("So Love Returns"). Although both songs are reminiscences of June, "So Love Returns" anticipates the final years of life with "the cold November rain". The parallel between reflecting on the past while awaiting the future is echoed in Strauss's classic song "Allerseelen," creating a bookending overview of the narrative from May to November.

Under the overarching canopy of the changing seasons, the narrative of *Echoed Voices* explores the passing of time, drawing parallels between reality and the ethereal. As the narrative lines between real life and timelessness become blurred, musings of the afterlife juxtaposes purgatory ("Am Himmelstor") and paradise ("Morgen"). The iridescent early morning heralds a new day ("Ständchen"), mirroring the mysticism of dusk and sensual loss of innocence ("An die Nacht"). The second half's references to time are more subtle, and themes such as the beauty of night ("The Night Has A Thousand Eyes"), an erotic awakening ("May Night"), and the fear of the loss of love ("Do Not Go, My Love") are threaded through from the first half.

The second half focuses more on the immediacy of the human experience as it is considered through the dual lens of requited and unrequited love. The pairing of Duparc's songs with Hageman's, narrates two tales of lost love through its poetic themes. The bookending songs, "Le manoir de Rosemonde" and "Nocturne," are linked through the motif of the colour blue. Robert de Bonnières's love-sick knight, "bitten by love like a ferocious dog," searches in vain for the blue manor of the Lady

Rosamund, while the blue ribbons decorating the coffin in Jean Moréas's "Nocturne" remind of the colour of Rosamund's eyes. The triptych of songs in the middle of the French group narrates the full spectrum of a relationship: the Hageman songs flanking the one Duparc song recount the complete arch of a relationship ("Il passa") while grieving unrequited love ("Ton coeur est un tombeau"). Duparc's "Extase" (Ecstasy, 1874) at the centre draws together the enigma of the two parallel narratives in this group: whether it is the fantasy of the defeated knight or a retelling of an actual memory is left for the audience to decide.

The recital's closing group draws together the various themes in *Echoed Voices* by juxtaposing the opposite ends of a relationship: love at first sight at a cocktail party ("Voices") is followed by a celebration of enduring love that remains beyond the confines of mortality and time ("Is It You?").

Musical Echoes

Echoed Voices projects a broader insight into Hageman's output by drawing musical parallels between Hageman's songs and those by other composers. Although the program's title implies that Hageman's songs occasionally echo composers who influenced him, Hageman also develops similar ideas recurring within his own oeuvre, often written decades apart.

To highlight these echoes, Hageman's "So Love Returns" is paired with Strauss's "Allerseelen" while Duparc's "Extase" precedes Hageman's "Ton coeur est un tombeau". More subtle echoing narratives are sometimes separated by several songs to maintain the integrity of the songs themselves yet adding to effective programming. The most important parallel here is the mirror between Hageman's "Bettlerliebe" and Strauss's "Morgen".

Hageman's song considers unrequited love while Strauss's anticipates the preservation of an already established and dedicated love. Hageman reflects these opposites by echoing "Morgen" in the extended introduction to "Bettlerliebe" and by inverting a snippet of Strauss's piano melody in his own introduction.

As early critics recognised the underlying influence of Duparc in some of Hageman's songs, the second group from this recital's second half combine songs by Hageman and Duparc to highlight the musical onomatopoeia which connect the two composers' styles. The noise of the horses' hooves charging forth in horn-like octaves in the piano in Duparc's "Le manoir de Rosemonde" anticipates the hammering of the carpenter making a coffin in Hageman's "Nocturne". More subtly the undulating piano-writing in Duparc's "Extase" is suggested in Hageman's "Ton coeur est un tombeau".

"The Night Has A Thousand Eyes" and "Is It You?" are at the extremes of the second half to highlight Hageman's own development both musically and poetically. "The Night Has A Thousand Eyes" pivotally establishes the shift from a broader narrative around seasons to that of a specific time of day. Musically, the song reflects moments from the first half while anticipating poetic ideas that closes the recital. The song's rippling piano part conjures up slight echoes of similar sound worlds in "Ständchen" and "Cäcilie" while its sustained phrases and soaring vocal line prepares for the epic narrative of the conclusive "Is It You?". Boudillon's poem "The Night Has A Thousand Eyes" references the effects of a relationship coming to an end in the closing phrase "when love is done" while Nathan's "Is It You?" celebrates the eternal power of conquering love in the jubilating climax "till life and death and time itself are done".

While *Echoed Voices* might be a first foray for many into the rich sound world of Hageman's songs, programming the Dutch-American composer prominently alongside art song stalwarts such as Duparc and Strauss aims to reignite an interest in the life and music of Richard Hageman, whom Thomas Hampson lamentingly celebrates as "a cherished but forgotten chapter in the history of American music".

— Nico de Villiers

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

SIOBHAN STAGG

With her "angelic" voice (Kölner Stadt Anzeiger, 2023) and "ethereal stage presence" (Sydney Morning Herald), Australian soprano Siobhan Stagg has become one of the most sought-after lyric artists of her generation.

A member of Deutsche Oper Berlin's ensemble from 2013-19, her roles included Pamina *Die Zauberflöte*, Sophie *Der Rosenkavalier*, Tytania *A Midsummer Nights' Dream*, Gilda *Rigoletto*, Micaëla *Carmen*, Adele *Die Fledermaus*, Musetta *La bohème*, Contessa di Folleville *Il viaggio a Reims* and Waldvogel and Woglinde in *The Ring Cycle* conducted by Sir Simon Rattle.

Appearing on some of the most prestigious stages worldwide, Siobhan has enjoyed success as the title role in *Cendrillon* for the Lyric Opera of Chicago; Pamina and Susanna *Le nozze di Figaro* for the Royal Opera House Covent Garden; Sophie *Der Rosenkavalier* and Eritea *Eliogabalo* for the Opernhaus Zurich, Sophie *Der Rosenkavalier* in two successive seasons at Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin; Mélisande for Opera de Dijon and Australia's Victorian Opera (for which she received the Green Room Award for Best Female Lead in an Opera); Gilda, Blonde and Cordelia in Aribert Reimann's *Lear* for the Hamburgische Staatsoper; Najade *Ariadne auf Naxos* for the Bayerische Staatsoper; Blonde for the Dutch National Opera; staged performances of Mozart's *Requiem* at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence and Morgana *Alcina* and Marzelline *Fidelio* for the Grand Théâtre de Genève.

A prized concerts performer, Siobhan's highlights of recent seasons include *Shéhérazade* with Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks / Tugan Sokhiev; Mahler's *Symphony No.2* with London Symphony Orchestra / Sir Simon Rattle; *Das Buch mit sieben Siegeln* with Wiener Symphoniker / Ingo Metzmacher; Berg's *Sieben frühe Lieder* with Rundfunk- Sinfonieorchester Berlin / Vasily Petrenko; *Das Paradies und die Peri* with both Gürzenich Orchester Köln / François-Xavier Roth and Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra; Mozart's *Requiem* with Cleveland Orchestra / Franz Welser-Möst; Brett Dean's *In This Brief Moment* with NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester / Alan Gilbert as well as a celebrated return to her native Australia for concerts with Sydney Symphony Orchestra / Simone Young and as soloist in residence with Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

The 2023/24 season sees Siobhan make her role debut at Opéra national de Lorraine as Ilia *Idomeneo* before making her return to Deutsche Oper Berlin for Pamina, Hamburgische Staatsoper for Gilda, Bayerische Staatsoper for *Lady Magnesia*, the Komische Oper for Susanna and to the Opéra Comique and Opéra de Dijon for *L'Autre Voyage* – a new opera showcasing the forgotten vocal scores of Franz Schubert.

In concert, Siobhan revisits her relationship with Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks for Schubert's G major mass conducted by Riccardo Muti; opens the season with Gürzenich Orchester Köln / François-Xavier Roth in Mahler's *Symphony No.4*; embarks on a multi-concert tour with Pygmalion Ensemble in Mendelssohn's *Elijah*; makes her debut with Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne in Fauré's *Requiem* and returns to Australia for multiple solo recitals across the country and solo collaborations with Melbourne and Queensland Symphony Orchestras.

In recognition of her international achievements in the arts, the Mayor of Mildura awarded Siobhan the Key to the City in 2023; the third recipient of this honour in the city's history. Siobhan is passionate about education and talent development and recently created a series of scholarships for young singers called the Siobhan Stagg Encouragement Awards. She sits on the Board of the Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust.

NICO DE VILLIERS

Nico de Villiers is a South African pianist, coach, and author who has been based in the United Kingdom for more than two decades. He holds degrees from the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, the University of Michigan, as well as the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Nico was the recipient of the ABRSM International Undergraduate Scholarship, a University of Michigan Teaching Assistant Scholarship, and scholarships from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama scholarship fund.

He performed as soloist, accompanist, and chamber musician in the Southbank Centre's Queen Elizabeth Hall and Royal Festival Hall, the Barbican, and St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London; Birmingham Symphony Hall; the Rudolf Oetkerhalle in Bielefeld and the Kammermusiksaal in Bonn, Germany; the Mozarteum Grosser Saal in Salzburg, Austria; the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Netherlands, and the Terrace Theatre at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC. Recital partners have included sopranos Chen Reiss, Siobhan Stagg, Barbara Bonney, baritone William Berger, and bass Matthew Rose. Festival performances include the Salzburg Festival, Edinburgh Festival, Oxford Lieder Festival, Chopin Birthday Festival in Warsaw, Poland, and the International Johannesburg Mozart Festival in South Africa. His performances have been broadcast live over BBC Radio 3, Dutch National Radio, and Polish Radio.

Nico holds the post of Deputy Head of Vocal Studies in the School of Vocal Studies and Opera at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, England. He previously served as a vocal coach on the vocal faculties of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, the Royal College of Music, Trinity Laban Conservatory in London, and the University of Michigan School of Music. Nico's research focuses on the life and music of Dutch-American composer Richard Hageman. In addition to publishing articles in *Classical Singer* and *Opera Magazine*, Nico co-authored *Richard Hageman: From Holland to Hollywood* (Peter Lang, 2020), the first critical biography on Richard Hageman, with co-authors Kathryn Kalinak and Asing Walthaus. In 2022, he collaborated with Australian soprano Siobhan Stagg in recording *Voices: Songs by Richard Hageman* (Aliud Records), the first album solely dedicated to Hageman's songs. Nico's forthcoming monograph on *Richard Hageman — Song Composer* (Peter Lang) is due for release in December 2024.

THANKYOU

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