

## UPCOMING VOICE EVENTS

Friday, March 1 at 7:00 p.m.

Alumnae Recital with Liisa Dávila and Taylor Haines, sopranos  
Capistrano Concert Hall - FREE!

Saturday, March 9 at 7:00 p.m.

Choirs at St. John's Lutheran Church  
1701 L Street - \$10 general, \$7 senior, \$5 student

Sunday, March 31 at 2:00 p.m.

13th Annual Robert S. Dinsmore Opera Scholarship Event  
Capistrano Hall 151 – FREE!

Friday, April 26 at 7:00 p.m. and Sunday, April 28 at 2:00 p.m.

Opera Theatre presents two, one-act American operas:  
Menotti's *Amelia Goes to the Ball*, and Barab's *Game of Chance*.  
Capistrano Concert Hall - \$10 general, \$7 senior, \$5 student

*Please consider donating to our voice area; envelopes are available  
in the lobby. You may designate the "Voice Scholarship Fund"  
on your donation envelope to help support our student singers  
and the future of our programs.*

## Singing America

**Robin Fisher, soprano**

with

**Hatem Nadim, pianist**

**Gia Battista, reader**

MONDAY, 7:00 P.M.

FEBRUARY 4, 2019

CAPISTRANO CONCERT HALL

### Singing America

*Please hold applause until the end of each section.*

It's All I have to Bring (Emily Dickinson) Ernst Bacon (1898-1990)  
And this of all my hopes (Dickinson) Ernst Bacon

#### Winter

O Sleeping Lay the Maiden Snow Richard Hundley (1931-2018)  
(Kenneth Patchen)  
Song (Adelaide Crapsey) Hugo Weisgall (1912-1997)  
White Nocturne (Conrad Aiken) Paul Nordoff (1909-1977)  
Rapunzel (Crapsey) John Duke (1899-1984)  
Let Us Walk in the White Snow (Elinor Wylie) Mary Howe (1882-1964)

#### Spring

Nobody Knows This Little Rose (Dickinson) John Duke  
The Breath of a Rose (Langston Hughes) William Grant Still (1895-1978)  
Dreamin' Town (Paul Laurence Dunbar) Florence Price (1887-1953)  
What's the Use? (Dunbar) Florence Price

#### Summer

Bee! I'm expecting you! (Dickinson) John Duke  
A June Day (Sara Teasdale) Sergius Kagen (1909-1964)  
In the Woods (Paul Bowles) Paul Bowles (1910-1999)  
Softly the Summer (Richard Hundley) Richard Hundley

#### Fall

Viennese Waltz (Wylie) John Duke  
Bells in the Rain (Wylie) John Duke  
Wild Swans (Edna St. Vincent Millay) John Duke  
Little Elegy (Wylie) Mary Howe  
The Dying Nightingale (Stark Young) Norman Dello Joio (1913-2008)

*Please take home copies of the poetry in the lobby following the concert.*

Wylie, Sara Teasdale (1884-1933) struggled with the conflicts her conservative upbringing caused her artistic aspirations, ultimately leading to her suicide. Unlike Wylie, Teasdale's poetry adheres to more conventional forms. Paul Bowles was both a gifted musician and writer who sought training in Europe and beyond, studying composition with Aaron Copland and Virgil Thomson. The success of his many art songs touted as "fresh, with great vitality," did not prevent him from re-locating to Morocco where he spent most of his adult life. Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950) coined the term "My candle burns at both ends," and like Wylie, she was a woman of compelling beauty and personality. Her poetry was infused with compressed emotion that challenged boundaries of conventional poetic form and meter. As a child of Italian immigrants, Norman Dello Joio grew up listening to long nights of opera recordings at home. He became a prominent composer having shared the stimulating artistic summers at Tanglewood with the likes of Leonard Bernstein and Koussevitzky. In addition to many art songs, he left a lasting legacy as an academic devoted to the philosophy and practice of music education. Stark Young (1881-1963) abandoned teaching for journalism and became a drama critic after a stint on the *New York Times*, revered by playwrights, composers and actors alike. This text is the dramatic climax from an opera libretto Young wrote for Dello Joio based on the Oscar Wilde tale taken from *Complete Fairy Stories*.

Sources:

*American Art Song & American Poetry* by R. Friedberg & R. Fisher (2012)  
*Song of America*, launched in 2009 by the Hampsong Foundation:  
[www.songofamerica.net](http://www.songofamerica.net)

was a rising star as both composer and author when he changed his career to music therapy in mid-life. Conrad Aiken (1889-1973) infused his poetry with parallels from music in his choice of forms, rhythmic patterns and colors, as seen here in "White Nocturne."

John Duke (1899-1984) composed some 250 art songs, mostly set to American poetry; strongly averse to the "abstract" idioms of the early twentieth century, he strove to join a universally meaningful musical language with poetry in songs crafted expertly for both pianist and singer. Mary Howe was a gifted pianist, mother of three, and at age 40, a successful composer, whose numerous art songs deserve more attention. Elinor Wylie (1885-1928), product of a high-society family, lived a stormy and tragic life after choosing to abandon stifling social norms to embrace her poetic gifts. W. G. Still's mixed ethnic heritage provided him with a rich experience that included traditional spirituals, hymns and classical training, leading to a scholarship created just for him in composition at Oberlin conservatory. An accomplished pianist, he gained extensive experience in orchestration as a student, giving his songs a richer and more colorful harmonic texture. Langston Hughes (1902-1967), one of the major black literary figures of the twentieth century, gave voice to the sorrows of his race with the literary transmutation of their speech and song. Florence Price—born just 8 years after Still—like him, went to black schools in Little Rock, and had college-trained parents to foster her artistic development. Like Howe, a mother of three, she became an influential teacher (Margaret Bonds was one of her students), and would rank with Still as the other leading African American composer of the twentieth century. Paul Laurence Dunbar's (1872-1906) parents escaped slavery, and their son was already an accomplished writer as a teen. His choice to write in dialect led to praise from the editor of a prominent magazine, who found that it "reports of what passes in the hearts and minds of a . . . people whose poetry had hitherto been inarticulately expressed in music, but now finds, for the first time in our tongue, literary interpretation of a very artistic completeness." Dunbar is considered a precursor of the Harlem Renaissance that was integral to Hughes' career.

Sergius Kagen was first known to me as the author of a book about vocal literature, but he was known to my professors as a prominent vocal coach and composer of some 60 art songs and two operas, whose knowledge of the singing voice was essential to their grateful melodic settings. Like

Soprano **Robin Fisher** has performed to critical acclaim in such cities as Paris, Vienna, Prague, Hamburg, Chicago and Dallas. Press reviews remark on her "amazingly precise coloratura, melting diminuendi, splendid high notes and delightful musicality" (*Opernwelt*) and her "mature timbre and total self-assurance. . . . an extremely exciting singer-actress" (*Westdeutsche Zeitung*).

Ms. Fisher's many recital appearances in both Europe and the United States attest to her love for the art song. She made a compact disc recording of sacred American art songs in collaboration with pianist Dalton Baldwin, issued in 2003 (*God Be in My Heart*). National Public Radio broadcast an interview and concert excerpts in 2002 from her lecture-recital series "Poetry and Music in the American Art Song." Austrian Radio recorded her world premiere performance of several avant-garde works from the Styrian Fall Festival, and Swiss Radio invited Ms. Fisher to record Mozart lieder accompanied by fortepiano for broadcast during a Mozart festival.

Together with scholar Ruth Friedberg, Dr. Fisher published a revised edition of *American Art Song & American Poetry* in 2012 (publ. by Rowman & Littlefield) with a foreword by baritone Thomas Hampson. Together with Friedberg, Ms. Fisher also published *The Selected Writings of John Duke* in 2007 (Scarecrow Press) with a foreword by composer Ned Rorem.

Ms. Fisher won both the prestigious Fulbright-Hayes Scholarship and a Rotary Foundation Award to pursue studies in Europe, and received the coveted Artist's Diploma cum laude from the University of Vienna. She holds a D.M.A. degree from the University of Texas at Austin. A native of California, she began her vocal studies at San José State University and went on to graduate from Smith College cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa. Her students have won vocal competitions and are active performers and teachers throughout the United States. Ms. Fisher is Professor of Voice in the Sacramento State School of Music. [rfisher@csus.edu](mailto:rfisher@csus.edu)

Pianist **Hatem Nadim** was born in Cairo, Egypt. At the age of ten, he enrolled at the Cairo Conservatoire, where he studied solo piano with R. Yassa, V. Fedorovtzev and V. Samaliotow, graduating with honors. As a music scholarship winner for studies at University of Frankfurt (Germany),

he began post-graduate studies in chamber music and vocal accompaniment with Professors Joachim Volkmann and Rainer Hoffmann, completing a Masters-level degree in both disciplines. From 1989 to 1996 he was a member of the piano faculty at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, while maintaining an adjunct position as collaborative pianist, chamber music coach and piano accompaniment instructor at the University of Mannheim. Since 2002, Mr. Nadim has been a faculty performer at the “Vielsaitig” Music festival in Füssen, Germany. From 2006-2015, Mr. Nadim served as staff accompanist at California State University in Fresno, and he served on the faculty of Notre Dame de Namur University in Belmont California from 2013-15. Now a freelance artist, he continues his teaching and performing affiliations with the FOOSA music festival in Fresno, the Lingua e Canto summer program in Italy and Opera Academy of California in San Francisco.

**Gia Battista** is a graduate student in Vocal Performance at Sac State. She is the stage director and acting coach for the Sac State Opera Theatre. Gia is co-founder and Artistic Director of Davis Shakespeare Festival, a theater company based in Davis. She is an actor, director, and vocalist.

Tonight’s program features selected songs from *American Art Song & American Poetry* (2012), a revised edition of scholar Ruth C. Friedberg’s seminal books from the 1980s in which she traced the origins and development of this genre. By connecting composers’ biographies with the lives and work of the poets they chose to set, this book reveals the intersection of inspiration and artistry in this quintessentially American art form. The revised edition adds 10 contemporary composers to Friedberg’s original studies and provides an updated format so that singers and teachers can easily explore musical examples at the piano. The book addresses 41 American composers, some 60 American poets, and elucidates over 100 American art songs. Many of these songs are out of print and no longer available for purchase. Our hope is that this concert will serve to inspire audiences and singers to discover and perform these beautiful songs anew as a vital part of our musical heritage.

The first two songs are by one of the first American composers to develop a newer harmonic language in the twentieth century, Ernst Bacon, who often turned to the poetry of Emily Dickinson for inspiration. In 1960, as he watched the decline in performance of art song in concert, he wrote, “it is quite possible that some of the best musical writing in America has taken the form of song... [In] America we have a wealth of lyric poetry calling for song.”

#### Brief Notes

Ernst Bacon composed over 100 art songs, set mostly to American poetry. His predominant choice was Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) whose preoccupation with nature, the after-life, personal pain and transcendental goodness provided many composers with a quintessentially American voice for their emerging 20<sup>th</sup> century idioms. Richard Hundley could be considered one of our greatest art song composers for his devotion to this genre and his gift for creating atmospheric imagery. Kenneth Patchen (1911-1972) worked in steel mills as a young man, never neglecting his writing talent or passion for a more just society through peace and universal love. Hugo Weisgall fled Nazi terror to become one of our nation’s leading professors of music. His set his first published cycle of songs to the poignant poetry of Adelaide Crapsey (1878-1914), a promising poet and professor of literature at Smith College, who died of tuberculosis at a tragically young age. Paul Nordoff