

## *Involuntary Love Songs* Program Notes

Iman Habibi, **False Morning & The River-Lip:**

Omar Khayyām was a medieval Persian polymath best recognized for his deeply philosophical quatrains which, while showing some religious skepticism, are thought to have inspired mystic Sufi thinkers such as Rumi and Attar. Fitzgerald's poetic adaptations are a reinterpretation of the essence of Khayyām rather than exact translations, serving more as a conveyance that transports readers to his world. They are appealing in their musical flow and structure, qualities they share with classical Persian poetry. The music maintains the apparent simplicity of Khayyām's message, more often asking questions rather than offering answers, while drawing parallels between some of the underlying poetic connections.

Jocelyn Morlock, **Involuntary Love Songs:**

*Involuntary Love Songs* portray three points in a love which is denied and hidden, and finally, eventually, acknowledged and embodied. In Thaw the protagonist describes everything around them to their distant, unacknowledged love, yearning for them, yet trying to feel nothing, to be cold and distant. After momentarily admitting to missing them, the protagonist right away puts their armor back up and describes the spring thaw happening outside, not acknowledging a parallel emotional thaw. Matches uses imagery of fire to portray a state of mental upheaval, denial, and desperation - the protagonist is circling and circling, talking to themselves in short, jagged phrases, attempting to swallow back their raging emotions, in a state of incandescent, manic energy. In Script the protagonist is communicating directly with their beloved in a sensual, ecstatic language that finally admits to and revels in the powerful feelings that were denied earlier.

Jeffrey Ryan, **Everything Already Lost:**

From the first moment I heard Jan Zwicky read from her work—richly layered poems that evoke nature, music, and profound distilled emotional moments—I hoped someday to have the chance to set her words to music. When baritone Tyler Duncan and pianist Erika Switzer asked me to write a new song cycle for them, that day arrived. In exploring Zwicky's poetry together, one poem in particular stood out. *Schumann: Fantasie, Op. 17*—Zwicky's response to the monumental Romantic piano work that was itself Schumann's response to Beethoven's song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte*—included brief quotations from the Jeitteles poems that Beethoven set (just as Schumann quoted musical fragments from the Beethoven). This major poem naturally became the cornerstone for this new cycle. The musical setting is my own response to Zwicky, Schumann, and Beethoven. Opening with a short fantasia based on the same Beethoven fragment that Schumann quoted, the song follows the *Fantasie*'s structure and proportions, borrowing selected musical materials and expanding them in new directions to express memory, distance, and the fleetingness of moments together.

The three shorter preceding songs complement the themes of loneliness and aloneness, distance and home. *Bill Evans: Alone* is another of Zwicky's responses to music, here in a setting that draws on jazz vocal inflections and Evans-style piano sonorities.

In *Autumn Again*, the evening sounds of crickets and katydids trigger a reflection on the nature of existence and happiness.

The restrained and transparent *Night Music* captures a single vision in moonlight, perhaps real, perhaps memory.

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