

## About the performers

**Donald George** is an Associate Professor of Vocal Music at the Crane School of Music – SUNY Potsdam and an Honored Professor at Shenyang Conservatory in China. He has also taught at the Bavarian Theater Academy , Hochschule für Musik in Munich and sung at the Paris Opera, La Scala , Royal Opera of Brussels, Kennedy Center, the State Operas of Berlin, Hamburg and Vienna, the Festivals of Salzburg, Buenos Aires, Jerusalem, Istanbul, Blossom USA. He has sung with Leonard Bernstein, Kurt Masur, Yehudi Menuhin, Jeffry Tate and recorded Elijah, Verdi Requiem, Rossini's *Aureliano in Palmira* and *Le Nozze di Teti e Peleo* (the world premiere recording), *Die Schöne Müllerin*. Reviews of Donald George speak of his "pleasing tenor sound, vocally reliable in all challenges" (Verdi *Requiem-Metropolitan Opera News*), "A success for La Scala all possess a superb technique, and are consummate actors...including Donald George" (*Peter Grimes-Corriere della Sera*), Donald George provides *Candide* with a supple, beautiful toned lyricism-His Lament is one of the highlights of the performance (*Candide-Münchner Merkur*).

**Kirk Severtson** (Vocal Coach) joined the Crane faculty in 2001, where he is musical director for the Crane Opera Ensemble, coaches singers and pianists, and teaches classes in art song repertoire and accompanying. A member of the coaching staff of Lake George Opera at Saratoga (NY) during the summers, he has previously coached for Opera North, the Opera Theater of Lucca (Italy), the Rising Star Singers Festival, Dorian Opera Theater, and the Cincinnati Opera outreach program, and he held a fellowship at the Aspen Music Festival in vocal chamber music. He maintains an active performing schedule of recitals with both singers and instrumentalists, with particular interest in performing and premiering new works by living composers. One ongoing performance project is a choreographed version of Hindemith's *Das Marienleben* with soprano Judith Kellock and dancer Risa Fujita, which has been given numerous performances from New York City to Hawaii. He holds degrees from the University of Cincinnati (D.M.A. and M.M., both in piano performance) and Luther College (B.A. with majors in music, math, and computer science). His research interests include the songs and piano works of Francis Poulenc and the Des Knaben Wunderhorn songs of Gustav Mahler.



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## Faculty Recital Series

**2008-2009 Season**

Thursday, September 18  
Sara M. Snell Music Theater  
7:30 PM

**Donald George, Tenor**  
**Kirk Severtson, Piano**  
**Deborah Massell, Narrator**  
**David Pittman-Jennings, Narrator**

## “The Old Wicked Songs” of Heinrich Heine

A Biography of the Life and Times of Henrich Heine  
In Song, Poetry and Imagery

Aus meinen großen Schmerzen	Robert Franz (1815-1892)
Mit deinen blauen Augen	Richard Strauss (1864-1948)
Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht	Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
Schwanenlied	Fanny Hensel-Mendelssohn (1805-1847)
Neue Liebe	Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
Ich grolle nicht	Charles Ives (1874-1954)

Sie liebten sich beide

Der Atlas

Du bist wie eine Blume

Wo wird einst

Les deux grenadiers

Intermission

### Dichterliebe, Op. 48

Im wunderschönen Monat Mai  
Aus meinen Tränen sprießen  
Die Rose, die Lilie, die Taube, die Sonne  
Wenn ich in deine Augen seh'  
Ich will meine Seele tauchen  
Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome  
Ich grolle nicht  
Und wüßten's die Blumen, die kleinen  
Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen  
Hör' ich das Liedchen klingen  
Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen  
Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen  
Ich hab' im Traum geweinet  
Allnächtlich im Traume sieh ich dich  
Aus alten Märchen winkt es  
Die alten bösen Lieder

Clara Schumann  
(1819-1896)

Franz Schubert  
(1797-1828)

Franz Liszt  
(1811-1886)

Hugo Wolf  
(1860-1903)

Richard Wagner  
(1813-1883)

Robert Schumann  
(1810-1856)

### “Allnächtlich im Traume”

You greet me gaily in nightly dreams,  
But give me cause to mourn:  
A melancholy gaze,  
A shake of your blond locks –  
And tears.  
The word you softly say,  
The cypress sprig you give:  
They both are gone in the morning.

### “Aus alten Märchen”

Old stories sing of magic lands,  
Where flowers pine and gaze,  
Where trees speak in a chorus  
And springs break forth in dance.  
The songs of love and longing – . . .

With sweetness they beguile.  
If only I could go there!  
My heart's then glad and free.  
But morning brings the sunshine.  
My dream? It runs from me.

### “Die alten bösen Lieder”

Those awful scary dreams.  
Go get a great big coffin,  
I'll fill it up, you'll see.  
The coffin must be bigger  
Than a tun that's full of wine.  
And make the bier much longer  
Than a bridge across the Rhine.  
We'll need twelve big strong giants  
To bury it at sea.  
No grave except the ocean  
Is big enough for me.  
Do you know why my coffin  
Has got to be so vast?  
Those old wicked songs were full of  
My love and sorrow past

### Quotes from Heinrich Heine:

Oh, what lies there are in kisses.  
Whatever tears you may shed, in the end you always blow your nose.  
Experience is a good school. But the fees are high.  
If the Romans had been obliged to learn Latin, they would never have found time to conquer the world.  
Talking and eloquence are not the same: to speak and to speak well are two things. A fool may talk, but a wise man speaks.  
The Wedding March always reminds me of the music played when soldiers go into battle.  
There are more fools in the world than there are people.  
True eloquence consists in saying all that is necessary, and nothing but what is necessary.  
When words leave off, music begins

## Program Notes

### “Ich grolle nicht”

Though my heart breaks, though night engulfs your heart –  
I don't hold a grudge.  
In dreams I saw the snakes of night  
Eat at your heart, your world –  
I don't hold a grudge.  
'Cause you, too, also suffer.

### “Und wüßten's die Blumen”

The flowers would cry to heal me  
If they knew how she's wounded my heart.  
The nightingales' songs would soothe me  
If they knew I'm sad and hurt.  
The stars would fall down to console me  
If they knew she's caused me such harm.  
Nightingales, flowers, and stars – all know nothing.  
She, only, knows of the tear in my heart.

### “Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen”

The flutes and fiddles resound  
At the wedding dance of my love.  
Then the trumpets blare a round  
To the moans and groans of the angels above.

### “Hör' ich ein Liedchen klingen”

I hear the song they're singing –  
Her song! I want to die.  
To the peak the longing pulls me;  
In pain there, I just cry.

### “Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen”

Boy loves girl – girl loves another,  
And he loves yet another girl.  
The first girl marries out of wrath  
The first boy coming down her path.  
This tale is old, but for him it's new.  
His heart will break in two.

### “Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen”

The flowers, they speak and they whisper,  
The luminous flowers of summer.  
But I – I walk through the garden in silence.  
They speak: “Sad one, forgive her, our sister.”

### “Ich hab' im Traum geweinet”

In dreams you died, and next morning ...  
The tears – they still flowed from my cheek.  
In dreams you left, and next morning  
I cried long from the bitter hurt.  
In dreams you stayed and you loved me.  
Next morning still tears did spurt.

In 1827, **Heinrich Heine**, one of the greatest German lyric poets - and one of the most controversial - collected his poetry into a volume entitled *Buch der Lieder* (Book of Songs). The 245 poems in this volume, his most famous collection, have been set to music nearly 5,000 times. In fact, one of the most popular poems, "Du bist wie eine Blume," has been set by over 400 composers, and although it seems to be a song about a beautiful child, Heine once asserted it was about a white pig about to be slaughtered.

In his works, Heine's use of paradox and irony are often a disguise for some underlying truth. His poems can seem naïve and sentimental, yet the underlying themes are often sadness, desperation, rage, and death, and they generally end with a message contrary to the seemingly trite words and emotions. His is a masterly combination, often copied yet rarely surpassed. On his death bed, when the priest asked if he expected forgiveness, he replied, “God will forgive me; it is his job.” Heine remained ironic to the end.

Heinrich (Harry) Heine was born to Jewish parents in Düsseldorf December 13, 1797. He earned a degree in law, but in order to join the civil service he changed his name from Harry to Heinrich and converted to Protestantism; however, he neither practiced law nor worked for the government. Throughout his life, he corresponded and was friends with many of the revolutionaries of the times: La Fayette and St. Simon (both of the American Revolution) and Marx and Engels. For a time, he even contemplated immigrating to America. One of his most famous quotes, “Wherever they burn books they will also, in the end, burn human beings,” is engraved at the site of the 1933 Nazi book burnings in Berlin. (This quote was in fact written about the burning of the Koran by the Spanish Inquisition.) An outspoken critic of the German government, Heine left for Paris in 1831, where he lived in exile, his works being banned throughout Germany. He spent the last several years of his life ill in his "mattress-grave" in a Paris apartment, in great pain possibly suffering from MS. He died in Paris in 1856 and is buried in the Cimetière de Montmartre. In 1897, when an attempt was made to erect a monument to Heine in Düsseldorf, his birthplace, permission was refused on the grounds of Heine's anti-German statements. The monument was then given to the city of New York, where it stands today in Joyce Kilmer Park, known commonly as the Heine or Loreley Fountain. In the 1930s, his most famous poem, “The Loreley,” set to music by Friedrich Silcher, was ordered by the Nazis to be called a “folk song,” thus removing his name. As he said, “I may not deserve to be remembered as a poet, but surely as a soldier in the battle for human freedom.”

Some of the many composers who took their inspiration from Heine's texts are represented in this concert. **Robert Franz** was one of the most gifted of German song writers, composing over 500 songs, mostly forgotten now. **Richard Strauss**, the Bavarian master, as is evident in this Alpine jewel of a song, composed only a few songs with texts by Heine. **Johannes Brahms** was a good friend of Heine and was the pianist for the first performance of Schumann's *Dichterliebe*. **The Mendelssohns**, brother and sister Felix and Fanny, were also friends of Heine. It being unseemly for a woman to compose, Fanny either never published her songs or they were published in her brother's name.

(When Felix had his first audience with Queen Victoria, the Queen sang, in his honor, her favorite Felix Mendelssohn song, after which he had to tell her that it was composed by his sister.

The Queen had good taste.) **Charles Ives**, the American, studied at Yale under the Munich-trained Horatio Parker; thus Ives was versed in the German music tradition. Obstinate, Ives inserts an apology to his setting of Heine's "Ich grolle nicht" in his collection of songs:

"The writer has been severely criticized for attempting to put music to texts of songs, which are masterpieces of great composers. The song above, and some of the others, were written primarily as studies. It should be unnecessary to say that they were not composed in the spirit of competition; neither Schumann, Brahms or Franz will be the one to suffer by a comparison, another unnecessary statement. Moreover, they would probably be the last to claim a monopoly of anything-especially the right of man to the pleasure of trying to express in music whatever he wants to. These songs are inserted not so much in spite of the criticism as because of it."

**Clara Schumann**, Robert's wife, like Fanny Mendelssohn, did not publish much in her lifetime. She composed "Sie liebten sich beide" for Robert's birthday in 1842 with this dedication: "Not much, but with love to my good Robert..." The beautiful chromatic harmonies and rhythmic subtleties of this song can surely compare to any of the more famous songs of the period. **Franz Schubert** composed only six songs with texts by Heine. In January 1828, at the last gathering of Schubert and his friends, (now known as the Schubertiade), he was introduced to Heine's Buch der Lieder. Schubert brought the book home and in spite of his severe illness, set six of the poems before his death in November. "Der Atlas" is one of the most dramatic and tragic in the song literature. **Franz Liszt** was about seven or eight people rolled into one: piano virtuoso, composer, conductor, music teacher, author, man of the cloth, notorious lover, and all-around unforgettable character. He composed this slip of a song surely to a beautiful child and not to a white pig.

**Hugo Wolf's** settings for all of his songs make use of colorful harmonies and key changes to express the underlying psychological moods. Tonight's song is in a revised English translation by Donald George. The original text was used as Heine's epitaph, carved on his tomb in Paris. **Richard Wagner** used Heine's The Memoirs of Herr von Schnabelewopski as his inspiration for his first masterpiece, The Flying Dutchman. Wagner's setting of "Les deux grenadiers" is in a French translation, in the style of the French Grand Opera.

On tonight's program, the piece will be performed in the 19th century Melodram style, with a text (arranged here by Donald George) spoken over the music.

**Robert Schumann** is the composer most closely associated with Heine, having written many songs to his texts, including the brilliant cycle Dichterliebe. In this work, the sixteen songs are less a cycle about a poet's unrequited love than they are an exploration of the poet's fateful inability to love. A striking characteristic of Dichterliebe is the unforgettable integration of the piano, with its varying accompaniments, introductions, and postludes of never before heard length and brilliance. The astonishing epilogue on the piano seems to sum up the entire cycle, going through a variety of moods and emotions, as if in a dream, bringing this cycle of despairing and shattered love, "the old wicked songs," to an unsettled, melancholy conclusion.

**Dichterliebe (A Poet's Love)** paraphrased by Philip Sweet

**"Im wunderschönen Monat Mai"**

Like buds in May  
My love unfolded.  
Like birds in May  
I told her of my longing.

**"Aus meinen Tränen sprießen"**

My tears, they sprout like the flowers;  
My sighs, they sing like nightingales.  
And if you do love me,  
Then I will give to you:  
A bouquet of all my tears  
And a nightingale concert of sighs.

**"Die Rose, die Lilie, die Taube"**

The rose and the lily, the dove and the sun:  
I loved them once all, but now there's just one.  
She's sweet, she's lovely, the source of all love.  
She's my rose and my lily, my sun and my dove

**"Wenn ich in deine Augen seh"**

Your eyes – they wipe away my pain.  
Your kiss – it makes me well again.  
Your touch – a joy that's from on high.  
Then you speak of love, and I just have to cry.

**"Ich will meine Seele tauchen"**

I'll dip my soul in the lily.  
The lily breathes out love's song,  
The song of her kiss, with ripples of awe  
That once made my lips tremble.

**"Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome"**

The Rhine, the beautiful river,  
Reflects a cathedral so grand.  
Inside, there stands a picture  
That brightened the wasteland in me.  
Madonna - her eyes, lips and cheeks –  
Resembles my girl to a tee.