

## Faces of War

## Presented by the Classical Concert Series at The First Church in Belmont

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Sophie Berman, Soprano Claire Burreson, Soprano Megan Roth, Mezzo-Soprano David Thomas Mather, Baritone JJ Penna, Piano

Artistic Director: Megan Roth
Administrative Director: Evangelia Leontis
Director of Public Relations: Edward Vogel
Technical Director: Nathan Roth

#### A Message from the Artistic Director



Welcome to our spring performance and the final program of our 2022-2023 season, *Faces of War*. This program was born out of a desire to give you, our dear audience, a space to come together and reflect on the troubling time we find ourselves in as the war in Ukraine continues to rage on. The collective compassion and heartbreak that we feel for the innocents in this conflict can leave us feeling helpless and frustrated. Through this program, I hope we can gain understanding into the far-reaching effects

that are felt throughout communities and nations each time a war is waged.

The selections presented tonight feature texts from several major wars of the past, including WWI and WWII, the Vietnam War, and the Iraq War. Throughout each of these wars it is impossible to ignore the collective human experience as evidenced in the texts: the impact on the families and loved-ones back home, the grotesque and unimaginable devastation wrought on the soldiers during battle, and the terrible after-effects and life-altering repercussions on the soldiers themselves.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, war can also bring us closer together, whether through our collective opposition to a conflict, or in a more intimate fashion such as sweethearts sending love letters across an ocean. What was clear in designing this program was that war is a time that brings us closer together, creating deep connections to our families, our communities, and our country.

I hope through this shared musical experience and reflection back in time through an artistic lens, you leave with new insight and understanding of war that helps you navigate the many conflicting emotions that surround the present-day.

~ Megan Roth, Founder & Artistic Director



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## Faces of War

#### ~Program~

Johnny Get Your Gun – Over There George M. Cohan Tom Lehrer The Folk Song Army \*Beat! Beat! Drums R. Michael Daugherty Some Other Time Leonard Bernstein From On the Town **Ned Rorem** War Scenes A Night Battle A Specimen Case An Incident **Inauguration Ball** The Real War Will Never Get in the Books Cherise Leiter \*Love Letters from a War II. Basic Training III. Iceland IV. The Yanks VI. Queen of My Heart It's been a long, long time Jule Styne \*In Newport Dylan Trần Here, Bullet Kurt Erickson Here, Bullet Eulogy Steven Kohn \*The War Prayer

<sup>\*</sup>indicates a winner from our Call for Scores

#### ~Texts~

#### Johnny Get Your Gun...Over There (George M. Cohan)

Johnnie, get your gun Get your gun, get your gun Take it on the run On the run, on the run

Hear them calling, you and me Every son of liberty Hurry right away No delay, go today

Make your daddy glad
To have had such a lad
Tell your sweetheart not to pine
To be proud her boy's in line

Over there, over there
Send the word, send the word over there
That the Yanks are coming
The Yanks are coming
The drums run tumming everywhere

So prepare, say a prayer
Send the word, send the word to beware
We'll be over, we're coming over
And we won't come back till it's over, over there

Johnnie, get your gun Get your gun, get your gun Johnnie show the Hun You're a son of a gun

Hoist the flag and let her fly Like true heroes do or die Pack your little kit Show your grit, do your bit

Soldiers to the ranks
From the towns and the tanks
Make your mother proud of you
And to liberty be true.

Over there, over there...

#### The Folk Song Army (Tom Lehrer)

We are the folk song army Every one of us cares We all hate poverty, war, and injustice Unlike the rest of you squares

There are innocuous folk songs, yeah But we regard 'em with scorn the folks who sing 'em have no social conscious Why, they don't even care if Jimmy Crack Corn

If you feel dissatisfaction Strum your frustrations away Some people may prefer action But give me a folk song any old day

The tune don't have to be clever

And it don't matter if you put a couple extra syllables into a line
It sounds more ethnic if it ain't good English

And it don't even gotta rhyme...excuse me, rhyne!

Remember the war against Franco? That's the kind where each of us belongs Though he may have won all the battles We had all the good songs!

So join in the folk song army!
Guitars are the weapons we bring
To the fight against poverty, war, and injustice
Ready, aim, sing!

Walt Whitman was a Civil War poet. "Beat! Beat! Drums!" is one of his finest efforts in the war poem genre. Although the age of soldiers being led into battle by drums and bugles is long past, the image is still vivid and compelling.

The poem emphasizes the theme, Faces of War. It "scatters the congregation" and disrupts the scholar. It leaves no peace for newlyweds, no peace for farmers plowing their fields. No one is allowed to sleep in peace, and war interrupts the activities of businessmen (bargainers, brokers, speculators), artists (singers), lawyers and judges. It "makes no parlay" to exclude the timid or religious, the old or young, the child or its mother. Even the dead must wait in the fields for burial.

As I think of the devastation in Ukraine, I find Whitman's poem a worthy reflection of the tragedy of war. It is a costly business with no real winners. The means of destruction may have changed, but Whitman's line is still relevant: "So strong you thump O terrible drums – so loud you bugles blow."

#### Beat! Beat! Drums! (Walt Whitman)

Beat! beat! drums! -- blow! bugles! blow!

Through the windows -- through the doors -- burst like a ruthless force,

Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,

Into the school where the scholar is studying;

Leave not the bridegroom quiet -- no happiness must he have now with his bride,

Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field or gathering his grain,

So fierce you whirr and pound you drums -- so shrill you bugles blow.

Beat! beat! drums! -- blow! bugles! blow!

Over the traffic of cities -- over the rumble of wheels in the streets;

Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses? no sleepers must sleep in those beds,

No bargainers' bargains by day -- no brokers or speculators -- would they continue?

Would the talkers be talking? would the singer attempt to sing?

Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case before the judge?

Then rattle quicker, heavier drums -- you bugles wilder blow.

Beat! beat! drums! -- blow! bugles! blow!

Make no parley -- stop for no expostulation,

Mind not the timid -- mind not the weeper or prayer,

Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,

Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's entreaties,

Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie awaiting the hearses,

So strong you thump O terrible drums -- so loud you bugles blow.

#### Some Other Time (Betty Comden and Adolf Green)

Twenty-four hours can go so fast, You look around, the day has passed. When you're in love, time is precious stuff; Even a lifetime isn't enough!

Where has the time all gone to?

Haven't done half the things we want to.

Oh, well, we'll catch up some other time.

This day was just a token,

Too many words are still unspoken.

Oh, well, we'll catch up some other time.

Just when the fun is starting,

Comes the time for parting.

But let's be glad for what we've had, and what's to come.

There's so much more embracing still to be done, but time is racing.

Oh, well, we'll catch up some other time.

Didn't get half my wishes,

Never have seen you dry the dishes.

Oh, well, we'll catch up some other time.

Can't satisfy my craving,

Never have watched you while you're shaving.

Oh, well, we'll catch up some other time.

Just when the fun's beginning, comes the final inning.

Where has the time all gone to? ...

## War Scenes (Walt Whitman, from 'Specimen Days') A Night Battle

What scene is this? -is this indeed humanity - these butchers' shambles? There they lie, in an open space in the woods, 300 poor fellows, the groans and screams mixed with the fresh scent of the night, that slaughterhouse! O well is It their mothers cannot see them. Some have their legs blown off, some bullets through the breast, some indescribably horrid wounds in the face or head, all mutilated, sickening, torn, gouged out, some mere boys, they take their turns with the rest...Such is the camp of the wounded, while over all the clear large moon comes out at times softly, amid the crack and crash and yelling sounds. The clear-obscure up there, those buoyant upper oceans, a few large placid stars beyond, coming languidly out, then disappearing, the melancholy draperied night around. And there, upon the roads and in these woods, that contest, never one more desperate in any age or land.

What history can ever give (for who can know) the mad, determin'd tussle of the armies? Who knows the many conflicts in flashing moonbeam'd woods, the writhing squads, the cries, the din, the distant cannon, the cheers and calls and threats and awful music of the oaths, the indescribable mix, the officers' orders, the devils fully rous'd in human hearts, the strong shout, *Charge, men, charge*?...And still again the moonlight pouring silvery soft its radiant patches over all. Who paints the scene, the sudden partial panic of the afternoons, at dusk?

#### **Specimen Case**

Poor youth, so handsome, athletic, with profuse shining hair. One time as I sat looking at him while he lay asleep, he suddenly, without the last start, awaken'd, open'd his eyes, gave me a long steady look, turning his face very slightly to gaze easier, one long, clear, silent look, a slight sigh, then turn'd back and went into his doze again. Little he knew, poor death-stricken boy, the heart of the stranger that hover'd near.

#### **An Incident**

In one of the fights before Atlanta, a rebel soldier, of large size, evidently a young man, was mortally wounded top of head

so that the brains partially exuded. He lived three days, lying on his back on the spot where he first dropt. He dug with his heel in the ground during that time a hole big enough to put in a couple of ordinary knapsacks. He just lay there in the open air, and with little intermission kept his heel going night and day. Some of our soldiers then moved him to a house, but he died in a few minutes.

#### **Inauguration Ball**

...At the dance and supper room I could not help thinking, what a different scene they presented to my view a while since Fill'd with a crowded mass of the worst wounded of the war. Tonight, beautiful women, perfumes, the violins' sweetness, The polka and the waltz; then the amputation, the blue face, the groan, the glassy eye of the dying, the clotted rag, the odor of blood, and many a mother's son amid strangers, passing away untended there...

#### The Real War Will Never Get In the Books

And so goodbye to the war. I know not how it may have been To others. To me the main interest was in the rank and File of the armies, both sides, and even the dead on the Field. The points illustrating the latent character of the American young were of more significance than the political Interests involved. Future years will never know the seething Hell of countless minor scenes. The real war will never get In the books, perhaps must not and should not be. The whole Land, North and South, was one vast hospital, greater (like life's Importance, will be, has already been, buried in the grave.

Love Letters from a War is an eleven-song cycle for tenor and piano lasting about 25 minutes. With the exception of the text for "Troop-Train," which was an entry from his diary, the texts for each song are taken from letters that the composer's grandfather, Kenneth R. Chapin, wrote to her grandmother between 1942 and 1945. The greeting in "Hi-Ya Toad," which was the first letter he wrote her, may seem a bit unusual (most men asking a girl out on a date do not, as a general rule, address her as 'Toad'). 'Toad' was the nickname that he gave her after an incident in which she, while visiting his younger sister, put a toad in his bed hoping to attract his notice. While perhaps a bit unconventional as a romantic ideal, there are eight children, sixteen grandchildren and numerous great-grandchildren who are very grateful to that toad.

While in basic training and later as a bomber pilot in Europe, he wrote numerous letters home to his young wife filled with beautiful sentiments and insightful descriptions of his surroundings. The daughter born in the seventh song is the composer's mother.

### Love Letters from a War (Kenneth R. Chapin)

#### **II. Basic Training**

"Basic Training, Texas, 1943"
My dearest sweetheart,
When that train pulled out of that station
It ground my heart under the very wheels that said to you
"He's gone."

#### III. Iceland

"August 17, 1944"
Darling, Somewhere in Iceland,
hope you are okay.
Still loving you, and will, forever!

#### V. The Yanks

"Saturday, October 14, 1944"

I left the best part of me with you.

My dearest wife,

You'll be surprised at a lot of things that happen over here when I get home to tell you. In England or Ireland the women didn't hesitate to proposition you right out on the street. You didn't need to worry though, I'll come home to you and be the same as when I left you! I suppose that the people over here have a more or less hard time with the yanks Partly because the yank is the best paid soldier in the world And even more important than that most of them can make love faster than even the French!

#### VI. Queen of My Heart

"November 2, 1944"

There is a deck of cards lying here on the desk and I nonchalantly thumbed through.

I realized that you were the queen of my heart and the last girl in the deck of my dreams.

So I laid the queen of hearts on the top of the deck, and now I'm imagining that she is you.

To this lovely Queen of my heart I'll dedicate my entire life,

and strive until my dying day to make her proud that she's my wife.

And when and if a Baby comes, the baby too my life will share,

I'll work till all my fingers bleed to give them both the best of care.

I have a huge and bountiful supply of sweet nothings for your ears,

And soft caresses for your cheek, enough to last a thousand years!

Darling, I hope that you'll be satisfied and with bowing heart, I ask if you'll be so kind as to accept this small offering, My unworthy self and this Love of Mine?

# It's Been A Long, Long Time (Sammy Cahn)

Never thought that you would be Standing here so close to me.

There's so much I feel that I should say

But words can wait until some other day.

Just kiss me once, then kiss me twice,

Then kiss me once again, It's been a long, long time.

Haven't felt like this, my dear, since can't remember when,

It's been a long, long time.

You'll never know how many dreams I dreamed about you

Or just how empty they all seemed without you.

So, kiss me once, then kiss me twice,

Then kiss me once again, It's been a long, long time.

#### In Newport (Ocean Vuong, from Ba – poems from Ocean)

Ba-poems from Ocean explores the dualities of the father figure. This is conveyed through constant shifts between expressions of admiration, fear, anger, judgment, confusion, care, etc. towards the father. Lines describing gentle caresses are pressed up against descriptions of violent acts. In a given song, the singer both condemns and nurses, both emulates and rejects, runs both from and toward their father.

The songs are from a child's perspective, taking place in present moments between father and son, in the son's memory, or in the recollection of second-hand stories. Often the narration will shift between present, past, and future tenses, conveying temporal scale. The piece culminates in a statement near the end of the final song, "I am chasing my father the way the dead chase after days—". To me, this is not just a literal description of a child running towards their father, but a later-in-life realization of the impact their father had on their life. The realization that perhaps, through all of their striving for success, their efforts to be known, their bids for closeness, part of them has always been chasing their father.

#### In Newport (Ocean Vuong)

"In Newport I watch My Father Lay His Cheek to a Beached Dolphin's Wet Back"

& close his eyes. His hair the shade of its cracked flesh, his right arm inked with three falling phoenixes—

torches marking the lives he had or had not taken—cradles the pinkish snout.

Its teeth gleaming like bullets.

Huey. Tomahawk. Semiautomatic.

I was static as we sat in the Nissan watching *the* waves brush over our breaths when he broke for the shore, hobbled on his gimp leg. Mustard-yellow North Face jacket diminishing towards the grey life smeared into ours.

Shrapnel-strapped. Bush-wacker.

The last time I saw him run like that, he had a hammer in his fist, mother a nail length out of reach.

America. America a row of street-lights flickering on his whiskey lips as we ran.

A fam'ly screaming down Franklin Ave.

A-D-D. P-T-S-D. P-O-double-U. Pow. Pow.

Pow says the sniper. Fuck you says the father, tracers splashing through palm leaves.

Confetti green, how I want you green. Green despite the red despite the rest.

His knees sunk in ink-black mud, he guides a ribbon of water to the pulsing blow-hole.

O-kay. O-kay. A-K Forty Seven. I am eleven only once as he kneels to gather the wet refugee into his arms.

Waves swallowing his legs. The dolphin's eye gasping like a newborn's mouth.

& once more I am swinging open the passenger door. I am running toward a rusted horizon, running out of a country to run out of. I am chasing my father the way the dead chase after days.

& although I am still too far to hear it, I can tell, by the way his neck tilts to one side, as if broken, that he is singing my favorite song to his empty hands.

#### Here, Bullet (Brian Turner)

If a body is what you want then here is bone and gristle and flesh. Here is the clavicle-snapped wish, the aorta's opened valves, the leap thought makes at the synaptic gap. Here is the adrenaline rush you crave, that inexorable flight, that insane puncture into heat and blood. And I dare you to finish what you've started. Because here, Bullet, here is where I complete the word you bring hissing through the air, here is where I moan the barrel's cold esophagus, triggering my tongue's explosives for the rifling I have inside of me, each twist of the round spun deeper, because here, Bullet, here is where the world ends, every time.

#### **Eulogy (Brian Turner)**

It happens on a Monday, at 11:20 A.M., As tower guards eat sandwiches and seagulls drift by on the Tigris River. Prisoners tilt their heads to the west Though burlap sacks and duct tape blind them. the sound reverberates down concertina coils the way piano wire thrums when given slack. And it happens like this, on a blue day of sun, when Private Miller pulls the trigger to take brass and fire into his mouth: the sound lifts the birds up off the water, a mongoose pauses under the orange trees, and nothing can stop it now, no matter what blur of motion surrounds him, no matter what voices crackle over the radio in static confusion, Because if only for this moment the earth is stilled, and Private Miller has found what low hush there is down in the eucalyptus shade, there by the river. PFC B. Miller (1980-March 22, 2004)

Mark Twain wrote "The War Prayer" in 1904-5 to protest America's involvement in the Spanish-American War. His family convinced him to keep it from publication, fearing it was too controversial. It was published after his death.

Twain made the case that if God causes all things to happen and bless select people, then He must also, willingly, deny others his blessing. It is the other side of prayer, the unspoken side, which Twain so brilliantly characterized in "The War Prayer". It is not my goal to demean anyone's faith or enter into a theological debate. I see Twain's essay not as an indictment of religion, but as an impassioned anti-war statement, the kind of which will always have resonance.

Those familiar with this work will recognize the astonishing liberties taken in adapting it. Whole passages were cut, phrases were moved around and words were deleted or replaced with my own, all in the interest of concision, storytelling and the considerations one makes when fitting words to music. But the essence of Twain's tone and message has not been altered.

#### The War Prayer (Mark Twain, adapted)

It was a time of great excitement!
The country was up in arms and every breast burned With the holy fire of patriotism!
Drums were beating, bands were playing,
And all down the street as far as the eye could see,
A fluttering of flags flashed in the sun!

Every day the young volunteers
Marked down the wide avenue,
Gay and fine in their new uniforms!
The proud mothers and proud fathers,
Proud sisters and sweethearts,
Cheering them with voices choked with
Happy emotion as they swung by!

Every night the packed meeting houses Echoed with the sound of patriotic oratory, Which stirred them deep in their hearts, And was greeted with waves of applause, Bringing tears to their eager shining eyes! It was a grand and glorious time!

Sunday morning came. The church was filled.

The minister delivered a prayer,
Such as none had ever heard before.
He beseeched the ever-merciful loving Father of us all
To watch over our noble soldiers
And aid, comfort and encourage them
In their just and righteous cause.
Bless them and shield them
In the day of battle and hour of peril!
Bear them in his mighty hand!
Make them invincible!
Grant honor and glory
To their country and flag!
Amen

A reverent pause came over the whole congregation.

In the silence, a strange old man entered, And with slow and noiseless step, moved up the aisle. Taking his place at the altar, he turned And spoke to the congregation.

"I come as a messenger from the throne of God. HE has heard your prayer and is prepared to grant it. But HE wants you to know your prayer has two parts. We have heard the first part, As uttered by your servant in this hall. I shall now tell you what you have silently asked for.

Oh, Lord, our Father,
Our brave young men go forth to battle.
Be with them, Lord.
Be thou with them,
As they stray from the sweet peace of our beloved firesides.

Help us, Lord, to drown the thunder of their guns With the shrieks of their wounded.
Help us cover their smiling fields
With the pale forms of their dead.
Help us lay waste to their homes.
Help us wring the hearts of their grieving widows!
Turn out their orphaned children
To wander the wastes of their ruined land
In rags and hunger and pain!
May they be broken in spirit,
Imploring thee for mercy and denied it!
Blight them!
Help us destroy them!
We ask thee, in the name of love!

Ye have prayed it. HE has heard you. If ye still desire it, speak. HE is waiting..."

#### About the Artists

Known for her skillful musicianship and engaging character work, New York and Boston-based soprano **Sophie Berman** has captivated audiences all over the country. Throughout her musical career, Berman has studied and performed pieces from a variety of musical eras, allowing her to explore the versatility of her voice within the classical realm. As a recitalist, Berman has performed many works by women composers, including Undine Smith Moore, Abbie Betinis, Clara Schumann, Barbara Strozzi, and Isabelle Aboulker. Berman also enjoys performing on the operatic stage, and she has sung the roles of Susanna (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Laetitia (*The Old Maid and the Thief*, cover), and Musetta (*La Bohème*). Now at the Longy School of Music for her Master of Music degree, Berman is studying under Professor Carol Mastrodomenico, expanding on her foundation of vocal technique through the lens of vocal pedagogy.

Claire Burreson is a soprano currently studying Voice Performance at the Boston Conservatory at Berklee. Her hometown is Seattle, Washington where she was a member of Seattle Opera's Teen Vocal Studio and Youth Opera Project as well as a performer with the Seattle Gilbert and Sullivan Society and the Pacific Lutheran University opera program. Claire recently earned first place in the NATS Boston Auditions, performed in the Lift Ev'ry Voice Masterclass at Harvard University, and placed in the Calliope's Call Young Singer Competition. This summer she participated as a studio artist at the SongFest Art Song Festival and traveled to Barcelona as an apprentice artist with Berkshire Choral International. Claire is honored to perform with Calliope's Call as she finishes her degree and begins her career in classical performance and opera.

Praised for his "amusing baritone" (Boston Music Intelligencer) and "liquid vocal gold" (Carduus), baritone **David Thomas Mather** is a versatile and adaptive vocalist who embraces a wide body of repertoire, including early Baroque, German Lieder, and musical theatre, drawing inspiration from classical and contemporary styles in his singing. A freelancer in Boston, he works regularly with groups including The Boston Camerata, Emmanuel Music, Carduus, and more; recent performances include the bass soloist for *BWV 106*, First Witch in Eccles' *Macbeth* with the Purcell Society of Boston, and solos from Handel's *Messiah: Part the First* with the Trinity Church Choirs, where he sings as a section leader. Other credits include singing with the Grand Teton Music Festival Choir, the Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra, Lowell House Opera, and the Boston Opera Collaborative. He holds a Masters degree in Historical Performance from the Longy School of Music, where he studied with Tyler Duncan.

David is thrilled to be making his debut with Calliope's Call this spring, and to join such a roster of fine musicians. In addition, he will join the Newburyport Choral Society and the Boston Camerata as the bass soloist for a joint concert of the medieval *Carmina Burana* and the modern adaptation by Carl Orff in May. To learn more, visit https://www.davidtmather.com.

Known for her "rich character portrayals" and "versatile voice," mezzo-soprano **Megan Roth** enjoys a varied career performing opera, oratorio, art song, and chamber music, with repertoire spanning from early to contemporary music. Most recently, Megan "smoldered" in the role of Tisbe in *La Cenerentola* with Boston Midsummer Opera, receiving accolades as she "...vamped about with sufficient trashy glitter, bringing the angry coloratura across the footlights with comic menace."

In June 2021, Megan performed in the company's first post-pandemic live performance as Despina in excerpts of Cosi fan tutte, along with other scenes and arias. Additional roles include Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with Summer Garden Opera in Virginia and in *Little Women* with MassOpera, where she was praised for her "warm and sonically sumptuous Meg." Other notable engagements include soloist in Copland's *In the Beginning* with Vox Humana in Dallas, Texas and Handel's *Messiah* with The Keene Chorale as well as the Rhode Island Civic Chorale and Orchestra.

As an active chamber musician, Megan performs with several renowned national ensembles including GRAMMY® nominated Skylark Vocal Ensemble and True Concord, Yale Choral Artists, and the Cincinnati Vocal Arts Ensemble. Also an accomplished violinist, Megan was honored to have a featured violin solo on the 2021 GRAMMY® nominated album *It's a Long Way* with the Skylark Vocal Ensemble. *www.meganroth.com* 

J.J. Penna has performed extensively with a variety of eminent singers, including Kathleen Battle, Harolyn Blackwell, Measha Brueggergosman, David Daniels, Denyce Graves, Ying Huang, Susan Narucki, Roberta Peters, Florence Quivar, and Andreas Scholl. He has held fellowships at the Tanglewood Music Center, Banff Center, Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, Music Academy of the West, and San Francisco Opera's Merola Opera Program. He received his training under Martin Katz, Margo Garrett, and Diane Richardson. Devoted to the teaching of classical song literature, he has been on the faculties of The Juilliard School, the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, the Bowdoin Festival, Westminster Choir College, the Renée Fleming Song Studio, and Vancouver International Song Institute. He currently teaches at the Yale University School of Music and the New England Conservatory.

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