

MEAD WITTER SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



# *till the beast become a god*

A DMA VOICE RECITAL

Kyle Sackett, baritone

William Preston, piano

Marc Fink, oboe

November 22, 2020 | 6:30PM CT

Collins Recital Hall



**Mead Witter School of Music**  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

**A Doctor of Musical Arts Voice Recital**

Kyle Sackett, baritone

with

William Preston, piano

Marc Fink, oboe

Sunday, November 22, 2020

*program*

*Ich habe genug*, BWV 82 (1727)

J.S. Bach

(1685-1750)

- I. Aria: Ich habe genug
- II. Recit.: Ich habe genug!
- III. Aria: Schlummert ein, ihr matten Augen
- IV. Recit.: Mein Gott! wann kommt das schöne: Nun!
- V. Aria: Ich freue mich auf meinen Tod

*intermission*

*Spirits in Bondage*, Op. 40 (2017)

Benjamin C.S. Boyle

poetry of C.S. Lewis

(b. 1979)

- I. Prologue
- II. Satan Speaks
- III. Victory
- IV. Night
- V. Alexandrines
- VI. Spooks
- VII. World's Desire

*This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree*

*Recitalist is a student of Paul Rowe*

## *till the beast become a god*

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a note from the recitalist

*"Human life has always been lived on the edge of precipice. Human culture has always had to exist under the shadow of something infinitely more important than itself. If men had postponed the search for knowledge and beauty until they were secure, the search would have never begun. We are mistaken when we compare war with "normal life." Life has never been normal."* –C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

On March 20<sup>th</sup> of this year, Chicago issued a stay at home order in an effort to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Living there at the time, life's daily tasks and responsibilities shifted rather suddenly. My university teaching moved online. Grocery stores were ransacked by worried shoppers. My singing stopped altogether, first by mandate, then from sadness. For me, like many friends and colleagues, the start of this quarantine was almost a welcomed time to pause, to slow down, to read and cook new things. After a couple of weeks, I began to think proactively, exploring new music in an effort to plan my first DMA recital.

I had long hoped to program Bach's exquisite cantata *Ich habe genug* simply for its beauty. As the quarantine lengthened—cases rising, leadership missing—this prayer for release into a better life, a life beyond this realm, was somehow comforting, even as a nonbeliever. I leaned into the sadness, the loss, and found comfort and hope in Bach's writing. I enjoyed the duality of the earth-bound bass voice paired with the ephemeral oboe, representing a holy spirit. It became a personal prayer to play through this piece, connecting to a world and a history that still existed beyond 24-hour news cycles and our redundant apartment walls. And, like any great art, I found new questions buried in the music, and in myself: *What is faith really?* The belief that there must be a God to make up for the profound suffering and pain we see on Earth. *And when we feel we've born enough, why not take me now?*

Yet, we all experience pain regardless of beliefs. We all observe and experience suffering. *How do we handle that if we are not faith-based?*

In looking for a pairing with the Bach, I knew I wanted a contemporary approach on similar themes. When I discovered Boyle's stunning setting of *Spirits in Bondage*, I anticipated the Lewis texts would mirror a Christian-centered approach to our existence. Upon reading the texts, I realized this was not the tone of the theologian Lewis I had come to expect (though the mythical Lewis of Narnia is still prevalent). This cycle of lyrics was published in 1919, Lewis only 22 years old, having just lived through World War I. To say that the tone is cynical is an understatement: these poems are agnostic, skeptical, at times fiery. You hear the voice of a young, gifted writer, questioning everything. Unlike the Bach, the question here is: "with all of this suffering, how can there be a God?" To me, this felt more familiar, especially as the cycle's arch progresses, culminating in a place of belonging.

It is gratifying to have searched for knowledge and beauty during this pandemic. As we present this program and these ideas today—to an empty concert hall, Will in a mask, pandemic raging on—I am grateful to have begun this search at all. I am reminded by Lewis that "life has never been normal."

## *texts and translations*

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### **Ich habe genug, BWV 82 (1727)**

J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

text by Christoph Birkmann

composed for the Feast of the Purification of Mary, Leipzig, 1727

#### **I. Arie**

Ich habe genug,  
Ich habe den Heiland, das Hoffen der  
Frommen,  
Auf meine begierigen Arme genommen;  
Ich habe genug!  
Ich hab ihn erblickt,  
Mein Glaube hat Jesum ans Herze  
gedrückt;  
Nun wünsch ich, noch heute mit Freuden  
Von hinnen zu scheiden.

#### **II. Rezitativ**

Ich habe genug.  
Mein Trost ist nur allein,  
Daß Jesus mein und ich sein eigen  
möchte sein.  
Im Glauben halt ich ihn,  
Da seh ich auch mit Simeon  
Die Freude jenes Lebens schon.  
Laßt uns mit diesem Manne ziehn!  
Ach! möchte mich von meines Leibes  
Ketten Der Herr erretten;  
Ach! wäre doch mein Abschied hier,  
Mit Freuden sagt ich, Welt, zu dir:  
Ich habe genug.

#### **I. Aria**

I have enough,  
I have taken the Savior, the hope of the  
righteous,  
into my eager arms;  
I have enough!  
I have beheld Him,  
my faith has pressed Jesus to my heart;  
now I wish, even today with joy  
to depart from here.

#### **II. Recitative**

I have enough.  
My comfort is this alone,  
that Jesus might be mine and I His own.  
  
In faith I hold Him,  
there I see, along with Simeon,  
already the joy of the other life.  
Let us go with this man!  
Ah! if only the Lord might rescue me  
from the chains of my body;  
Ah! were only my departure here,  
with joy I would say, world, to you:  
I have enough.

**III. Arie**

Schlummert ein, ihr matten Augen,  
Fallet sanft und selig zu!  
Welt, ich bleibe nicht mehr hier,  
Hab ich doch kein Teil an dir,  
Das der Seele könnte taugen.  
Hier muß ich das Elend bauen,  
Aber dort, dort werd ich schauen  
Süßen Friede, stille Ruh.

**IV. Rezitativ**

Mein Gott! wenn kömmt das schöne:  
Nun!  
Da ich im Friede fahren werde  
Und in dem Sande kühler Erde  
Und dort bei dir im Schoße ruhn?  
Der Abschied ist gemacht,  
Welt, gute Nacht!

**V. Arie**

Ich freue mich auf meinen Tod,  
Ach, hätt' er sich schon eingefunden.  
Da entkomm ich aller Not,  
Die mich noch auf der Welt gebunden.

**III. Aria**

Fall asleep, you weary eyes,  
close softly and pleasantly!  
World, I will not remain here any longer,  
I own no part of you  
that could matter to my soul.  
Here I must build up misery,  
but there, there I will see  
sweet peace, quiet rest.

**IV. Recitative**

My God! When will the lovely 'now!'  
come,  
when I will journey into peace  
and into the cool soil of earth,  
and there, near You, rest in Your lap?  
My farewells are made,  
world, good night!

**V. Aria**

I delight in my death,  
ah, if it were only present already!  
Then I will emerge from all the suffering  
that still binds me to the world.

*Translation by Pamela Dellal*

## **Spirits in Bondage, Op. 40 (2017)**

Benjamin C.S. Boyle (b. 1979)

poetry of C.S. Lewis (abbreviated and rearranged by the composer)

commissioned by Lyric Fest, premiered in Philadelphia, 2017

### **I. Prologue**

As of old Phoenician men, to the Tin Isles sailing  
Straight against the sunset and the edges of the earth,  
Chaunted loud above the storm and the strange sea's wailing,  
So in mighty deeps alone on the chainless breezes blown  
In my coracle of verses I will sing of lands unknown,  
Flying from the scarlet city where a Lord that knows no pity,  
Mocks the broken people praying round his iron throne,  
Sing about the Hidden Country fresh and full of quiet green.  
Sailing over seas uncharted to a port that none has seen.

### **II. Satan Speaks**

I am Nature, the Mighty Mother,  
I am the law: ye have none other.  
I am the flower and the dewdrop fresh,  
I am the battle's filth and strain,  
I am the widow's empty pain.  
I am the sea to smother your breath,  
I am the bomb, the falling death.  
I am the fact and the crushing reason  
To thwart your fantasy's new-born treason.  
I am the spider making her net,  
I am the beast with jaws blood-wet.  
I am a wolf that follows the sun  
And I will catch him ere day be done.

### **III. Victory**

Roland is dead, Cuchulain's crest is low,  
The battered war-rear wastes and turns to rust,  
And Helen's eyes and Iseult's lips are dust  
And dust the shoulders and the breasts of snow.  
The faerie people from our woods are gone,  
No Dryads have I found in all our trees,  
No Triton blows his horn about our seas  
And Arthur sleeps far hence in Avalon.

Now in the filth of war, the baresark shout  
Of battle, it is vexed. And yet so oft  
Out of the deeps, of old, it rose aloft  
That they who watch the ages may not doubt.

Though often bruised, oft broken by the rod,  
Yet, like the phoenix, from each fiery bed  
Higher the stricken spirit lifts its head  
And higher-till the beast become a god.

#### IV. Night

I know a little Druid wood  
Where I would slumber if I could  
For there the white owls all night long  
In the scented gloom divine  
Hear the wild, strange, tuneless song  
Of faerie voices,  
Dancing, dancing, under the moon,  
Until, amid the pale of dawn  
The wandering stars begin to swoon. . . .  
Ah, leave the world and come away!

#### V. Alexandrines

There is a house that most of all on earth I hate.  
Though I have passed through many sorrows and have been  
In bloody fields, sad seas, and countries desolate,  
Like eyes of one long dead the empty windows stare  
And I fear to cross the garden, I fear to linger there,  
For in that house I know a little, silent room  
Where Someone's always waiting, waiting in the gloom  
To draw me with an evil eye, and hold me fast—  
Yet thither doom will drive me and He will win at last.

## VI. Spooks

Last night I dreamed that I was come again  
Unto the house where my beloved dwells  
After long years of wandering and pain.

And I stood out beneath the drenching rain  
And all the street was bare, and black with night,  
But in my true love's house was warmth and light.

Yet I could not draw near nor enter in,  
And long I wondered if some secret sin  
Or old, unhappy anger held me fast;

Till suddenly it came into my head  
That I was killed long since and lying dead—  
Only a homeless wraith that way had passed.

So thus I found my true love's house again  
And stood unseen amid the winter night  
And the lamp burned within, a rosy light,  
And the wet street was shining in the rain.

## VII. World's Desire

Love, there is a castle built in a country desolate,  
On a rock above a forest where the trees are grim and great,  
Nothing is can trouble it,  
And it shall be a resting-place, dear heart, for you and me.

Through the wet and waving forest with an age-old sorrow laden  
Singing of the world's regret wanders wild the faerie maiden,

Often to the castle gate up she looks with vain endeavour,  
For her soulless loveliness to the castle winneth never.

But within the sacred court, hidden high upon the mountain,  
Wandering in the castle gardens lovely folk enough there be,  
Breathing in another air, drinking of a purer fountain  
And among that folk, beloved, there's a place for you and me.