

UC San Diego | Division of Arts and Humanities | Music

WEDNESDAYS@7 Presents

Grander far the unseen soul...  
Susan Narucki, soprano & Donald Berman, piano

Wednesday, April 17, 2019 – 7:00 p.m.  
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Nadia Boulanger

*Au bord de la route* (1922)  
*Chanson* (1922)  
*Cantique* (1909)  
*J'ai frappé* (1922)

Nadia Boulanger

*Vers la vie nouvelle* (1917), *piano solo*

Ruth Crawford Seeger

*From "Five Songs"* (1929)  
*Home thoughts*  
*White Moon*  
*Sunsets*

Viktor Ullmann

*Three Hölderlin Lieder* (1943)  
*Sonnenuntergang*  
*Der Frühling*  
*Abendphantasie*

**intermission**

Ingrid Stölzel  
Christopher Cerrone  
Nina C. Young

*Grand is the Seen* (2014)  
*That Night with the Green Sky* (2013)  
*Swan Song* (2018)

Aaron Helgeson

*Through Glimpses of Unknowing* (2012), *piano solo*

Charles Ives

*From "114 Songs"* (1922)  
*Ann Street*  
*At Sea*  
*The Greatest Man*  
*West London*  
*Down East*

## Program Note

Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979) was best known as one of the 20th century's most important and influential pedagogues, and taught a number of celebrated composers and musicians. She was also an active composer, though her works are infrequently performed; the songs and piano solo on the program date primarily from 1917-1922 and are notable for their concise, clear form and direct - in some cases - brutal, emotional expression.

Three of American composer Ruth Crawford Seeger's evocative settings of poems of Carl Sandburg, dating from 1929, are included as well. Crawford Seeger's compositional language is rooted firmly in the modern, yet she creates a delicate, variegated sound world that lifts and envelops Sandburg's imagery.

The *Three Hölderlin Songs* (1943) of Viktor Ullmann were written during the composer's internment at Terezin. The poems speak to the possibility of transcendence through our relationship to the natural world; these little known masterworks of the song genre, written during the last year of the composer's life, are luminous and achingly beautiful.

The second half opens with music from a younger generation of composers: Ingrid Stölzel, Christopher Cerrone and Nina C. Young. Stölzel's *Grand is the Seen* captures Whitman's resplendent text, with a deft use of instrumental color and sweeping vocal lines. Cerrone's *The Night with the Green Sky* builds an atmosphere of almost suffocating fragility through the simplest of means. And in *Swan Song*, Nina C. Young creates a fusion of word and sound in which time seems suspended. Aaron Helgeson's piano solo, *Through Glimpses of Unknowing* explores the knife edge between sound and silence, with writing of delicacy and restraint.

The program concludes with songs by Charles Ives. Don and I have collaborated on music of Ives for decades. The songs presented on this program evoke an America that is long past, with a notable exception: *West London*. "Ill, moody and tongue tied" is the description that Matthew Arnold applies to the homeless woman with her child, who seek help from the few to whom they are visible. Ives' song, nearly one hundred years old, illuminates the situation that surrounds us, still.

Are songs a distillation of life's experience, for those who compose them and those who

perform them? We live in a time that is full of noise, violence and discord. Our program is full of music of great audacity, if we consider the audacity it takes to be immersed in the life of the spirit, against all odds.

- Susan Narucki

## About the Artists

For over three decades, American soprano **Susan Narucki** has forged a unique path; her dedication to the music of our time has led to award winning recordings, critically acclaimed performances with musicians of the first rank and close collaborations with generations of composers. Since joining the faculty at the University of California at San Diego in 2008, she has been deeply engaged in commissioning, producing and performing chamber operas that illuminate critical issues in society. Her projects have earned major philanthropic support from the MAP Fund /Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, UC MEXUS, Creative Capital Foundation, New Music USA and multiple awards from the National Endowment for the Arts. Ms. Narucki's most recent production is *Inheritance*, a chamber opera that addresses gun violence in America. With music by Lei Liang and libretto by Matt Donovan, the world premiere performances of the opera took place at UC San Diego on October 24-27, 2018.

Ms. Narucki also commissioned and produced *Cuatro Corridos* (2013), the critically acclaimed chamber opera that addresses trafficking of women across the U.S.- Mexico border. With libretto by internationally renowned Mexican author Jorge Volpi, the opera has been performed fourteen times in the United States and Mexico and has had multiple broadcasts on Canal 22, Mexico's art and culture television network. Ms. Narucki's recording of *Cuatro Corridos* on Bridge Records earned a 2017 Latin Grammy Nomination and was a Critic's Choice of both Opera News and Gramophone.

A dedicated mentor to the next generation of singers, Ms. Narucki's recent residencies include the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, the Aichi University of the Arts, the Longy School of Music and the Oberlin Conservatory. In December 2018, Ms. Narucki was appointed Director of Art and Community Engagement, a new program housed within the Institute for the Arts and Humanities at UC San Diego.

Pianist **Donald Berman** is recognized as a chief exponent of new works by living composers, overlooked music by 20th century masters, and recitals that link classical and modern repertoires. His 2-volume *The Unknown Ives* and *The Uncovered Ruggles* (New World) represents the only recordings of the complete short piano works of Charles Ives and Carl Ruggles extant. Other recordings on Bridge Records include the 4-CD set *Americans in Rome: Music by Fellows of the American Academy in Rome*, *The Piano Music of Martin Boykan*, and *Scott Wheeler: Tributes and Portraits*. Berman has also recorded *The Light That Is Felt: Songs of Charles Ives* (with Susan Narucki, soprano New World), *Wasting the Night: Songs of Scott Wheeler* (Naxos) and Christopher Theofanidis's *Piano Concerto* (Summitt), as well as music by Su Lian Tan (Arsis), Arthur Levering (New World), Martin Boykan (New World; Bridge), Tamar Diesendruck (Centaur), and Aaron Jay Kernis (Koch).

Recent performances by Donald Berman include solo recitals at Bargemusic, National Sawdust, and (le)Poisson Rouge in New York City. He has also been a featured soloist at Zankel Hall, Rockport Music Festival as well as abroad in Belgrade, Rome, Beijing, and Israel.

A 2011 Radcliffe Institute Fellow, Berman is currently President of The Charles Ives Society. He teaches at the Longy School of Music of Bard College and Tufts University. His principal teachers were Mildred Victor, George Barth, John Kirkpatrick, and Leonard Shure.

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