



The Music Department Presents

The Songs and Cycles of Evan Mack

Megan Marino & José Rubio
Evan Mack, Piano

Friday, January 31st, 2025, 7:30PM
Arthur Zankel Music Center
Helen Filene Ladd Concert Hall

Program

Up on the Crane Tower

Wang Zhihuan

Entre susurros

Lucía Peramo Cañaveras

José Rubio

Stuff I've Been Feeling Lately

Alicia Cook

Megan Marino

Letters from the Front Line

Pavlo Vyshebaba

José Rubio

Love Poems (for Married People)

John Kenney

Megan Marino and José Rubio

Up on the Crane Tower

by Wang Zhihuan

白日依山尽，
黄河入海流。
欲穷千里目，
更上一层楼。

The sun sinks behind the mountains,
The Yellow River seaward flows.
To see a thousand miles in the distance,
Up another flight one goes.

Entre susurros

By Lucía Peramo Cañaveras

cierro los ojos y pienso
en la brevedad de los recuerdos
y me esfuerzo
e intento tocarlos con la punta de los dedos.
entonces noto
tu mano que,
junto al último rayo de sol
se entrelaza con mi pelo,
tus labios
rozándome como el viento
mientras, entre susurros,
clamas al mundo que este momento
es mío,
que esta voz
es tuya,
que este mundo es nuestro,
y solo nuestro.
y como si acabaras de lanzar
un hechizo pequeñito,
descifras las leyes innatas del universo,
los acertijos más enrevesados
el amor más certero.

Between Whispers

I close my eyes and think
of fleeting memories
and I strive
and I try to touch them with my fingertips.
then I feel
your hand that,
along with the last ray of sunlight,
weaves into my hair,
your lips
caressing me like the wind
while whispering,
you proclaim to the world that this moment
is mine,
that this voice
is yours,
that this world is ours,
and only ours.
and as if you had just cast
a tiny spell,
you unravel the innate laws of the universe,
the most tangled riddles,
the truest kind of love.

Stuff I've Been Feeling Lately

By Alicia Cook

Track Seventy Eight

I hollowed out my memory;
to make room for what's to come.

I scooped out the gunk;
the letdowns, the heartache,
and left the happiness.

Yet, I was no longer myself;
unbalanced.

Maybe I was meant to be sad, I thought.

I plopped back in the painful
and scooped out the happiness;
the weddings, the graduations,
the moments I laughed until I cried.

Once again I found myself unstable.

We need both.
We need the good
and the bad
to be who we are.

For better or worse, we need both.

Track Nine

The first time my heart broke, I thought back to
the day in my childhood when a piece of glass went
through my finger after an ill-fated cartwheel.

I was eleven years old.

My mother and I were in our bathroom cleaning
up the wound. She dribbled peroxide onto the cut.
It fizzed and burned; I winced at the pain.

It needs to burn so you know it's healing,
she explained.

That small exchange during my adolescence helped
me learn to appreciate the pain pulsating from my
broken heart. In spite of the severity of my wound,
I knew the healing process had already begun.

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Track Six

~~The strongest people I know
have been overtaken by their weaknesses.
They know what it's like to lose control.
The strongest people I know
have cried in the shower and in their car.
They know loss and guilt all too well.
The strongest people I know aren't bulletproof.
They have felt the searing pain of life's shots.~~
The strongest people I know
make the decision every day to wake up
and place their two feet on the ground
even though they know the monsters beneath
their bed will grab at their ankles.

~~The strongest people I know
are not strong by definition, at all.~~

~~They are mistake-makers.
They are mess-creators.
They are survivors.~~

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Track Twenty Two

2015

I didn't just survive this year;
I lived it.

I laughed, I cried,
I scribbled things in journals.
My heart broke, but kept ticking.
My passport earned a few new stamps.

I had fancy Saturdays
and lazy Sundays.

I dipped my toes in tropical seas.
I hiked mountains
and cheated on my diet.

I made my twenty-ninth
consecutive birthday wish.

Because of this, and so much more,
I will never settle on simply
surviving ever again.

I choose to live.

Track Twenty Seven

Sometimes it hurts to breathe.

My corrupt decisions
weigh on my chest,
methodically pushing down
to crack each rib,
in hopes of infiltrating
my heart and finally exterminating
the last shred of the human being
I once was.

If that happens,
if my sanctuary is breached,
I will not stand a chance.

I will lose the one last single atom
that makes me, *me*.

I can't lose me.
I'm all I've got.

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Track Twenty Nine

I carry you with me all of the time,
but I feel your absence most on the
days when I'm the happiest.

Not when I *need* you here the most,
but when I *want* you here the most.

I believe grief is like a shadow.

It's always there, it follows
you everywhere you go,
but you only see it when
the sun is shining on a beautiful day.

Track Twenty Nine

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but I feel your absence most on the
days when I'm the happiest.~~

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you everywhere you go,
but you only see it when
the sun is shining on a beautiful day.~~

Track Sixty One

Maybe you've gone through something
no one should have to go through
at such a young age.

Maybe you know the pain
of a loss so deep,
your marrow aches.

Not many know the anguish felt in

*growing older than your older sister.
Having her laugh stolen from you
in the middle of a joke.
Talking in past tense.*

*Everything will be in
past tense from now on.*

Maybe you know what it is like
to wake up from slumber,
covered in your own tears.

Maybe each pump of your heart hurts
your chest, but your heart pumps, even still.

This pain is reminding you
that you are alive.

There is an empowerment
uncorked in grief.

*Your life will never be the same, ever,
so you can never be the same, ever.*

Pain will make you stronger,
but it will make you a lot
of other things first.

Maybe at its worst,
it will cripple you;

but, maybe,
at its best,
it will become
your superpower.

Track Thirty Six

I find comfort
in the colors of a sunset.

I find a special magic
in the fact
it never photographs
as beautifully as my eyes
can witness it firsthand.

I find a certain peace
in the conclusion of
another day lived.

And I find hope
in the precarious promise
of tomorrow.

~~Track Seventy-eight~~

~~I hollowed out my memory,
to make room for what's to come.~~

I scooped out the gunk;
~~the letdowns, the heartache,
and left the happiness.~~

Yet, I was no longer myself;
unbalanced.

Maybe I was meant to be sad, I thought.

① ~~I plopped back in the painful
and scooped out the happiness;
the weddings, the graduations,
the moments I laughed until I cried.~~

~~Once again I found myself unstable.~~

We need both.
We need the good
and the bad
~~to be who we are.~~

~~For better or worse, we need both.~~

Letters from the Front Line

by Pavlo Vyshebaba

To My Mother on Her Birthday

Believe that your tears flow in
vain, don't listen to the news
or the lady next door. I'm fine,
I'm eating to my heart's content, finally I
found good company.
The army subdivision is like a monastic cell:
strict austerity,
all day— according to the plan all dressed in
the same uniform.
I was baptized as a Chaplain here.
Far from the useless temptations of life.
I'm always sober like a clean glass.
You often said it was good for the heart,
good for the heart.
Here it's all for one and one for all,
So save your tears, save your nerves.
With love from your infinitely grateful son.

To My Battlefield Brother

There are stars in the attics, the full moon
digs into the barn.
Like patches of darkness the maple drops
ravens from its branches.
And every night there is a multitude of
whispers, among them the most distinct
voice is yours.
A stranger, closer than family to me since
that time when we fell to the ground, which
was tearing like paper.
Because of this, you must be visiting from
the other world and you ask, and you ask,
and you ask... in a whisper:
"How is it to live on?"
While death only charges me with blank
bullets, your naked body rises above the
hill on the cross.
Lead me to the living people,
Lead me through this dense forest.
Let me go, brother,
I beg you,
I beg you, let me go.

Mami do dnya narodzhennya

Povir, shcho namarno sl'ozy tvoji techut',
Ne slukhaj novyn i susids'ku pani,
U mene vse dobre, kharchujus'a doskhochu,
Nareshti potrapyv u harnu kompaniju
Pidrozdil nenache chernechyj skyt:
Suvora askeza, ves' den' za planom,
Od'ahneni vsi u odyn prykyd.
Mene okhrestyly tut kapelanom.
Daleko vid marnykh spokus butt'a
Ja zavzhdy tverezyj, mov chyste skel'tse,
Vedu na pryrodi aktyvnyj sposib zhytt'a.
Ty zh chasto kazala, tse dobre dl'a serts'a.
Tut vsi za odnoho j za vsikh odyn,
Tomu berezhy svoji sl'ozy i nervy.
Z l'ubovju, tvij vd'achnyj bezmezhno syn.

Pobratymovi

Na horyshchakh zirky, povnyj mis'ats'
vrostaje v khliv.
Nache klapti pit'my, klen skydaje z hilok
krukiv.
I shchonochoi nakochuje shepotiv riznobij,
Sered nykh najvyraznishyj holos...tse holos
tvij.
Neznajomyj, ridnishyj za ridnykh meni z tykh
pir,
Jak my vpaly na zeml'u, shcho rvalas'a mov
papier.
Cherez te ty, napevno, navidujesh zza mezhi
I zapytujesh poshepyky: "Jak vono, dali
zhyt'?"
Poky smert' zar'adzhaje dl'a mene lysh
kholosti,
Hole tilo tvoje vysochije nad pahorbom na
khresti.
Provedy do zhyvykh, provedy cherez lis
hustyj
I pusty mene, brate, proshu tebe, proshu
tebe, vidpusty. Vidpusty.

To My Daughter

Just don't write me about the war.
Tell me, tell me if there is a
garden near you, are there
snails crawling on the ivy?
Do you hear grasshoppers or
cicadas?
And how do people call their cats in those
far, far away lands?
What I would want the
most is the absence of
sadness in the lines you
write. Are there cherry
blossoms and apricot
trees?
If they gift you a bouquet tell them how well
we used to live here.
Don't tell them how you had to run away
from the missiles.
And before you come back from abroad...
invite them, invite them back to Ukraine.
We will show each of them after the war
how grateful we are... for the peace our
children.

Don'tsi

Til'ky ne pysly meni pro vijnu,
Rozkazhy, rozkazhy, chy je bil'a tebe sad,
Chy tam povzajut' ravlyku po vjunu?
Chy ty chujesh konykiv i tsykad?
I jak l'udy klychut' svojikh kotiv
V tykh dalekykh, dalekykh vid nas krajakh?
Te, choho najbil'she by ja khotiv,
Shchob ne bulo smutku v tvojiakh r'adkakh.
Chy tsvite tam vyshn'a ta abrykos?
I jakshcho podarujut' tobi buket,
Rozkazhy, jak dobre tut nam zhylos'.
Ne rozkazuj, jak bihla ty vid raket.
Pershe nizh povernutys'a z chuzhyny,
Zaprosy, zaprosy v Ukrajinu do nas hostej,
My pokazhemo kozhnomu po vijni,
Jak my vd'achni za zpokij, za spokij svojikh
ditej.

Thirst (To My Beloved)

When all the machine guns become silent
and we will finally hear the spring, with what
a thirst we will make love to wash away the
war from our skin.

To dissolve its cursed smell in a salty sweat
together.

By your birthmarks, by those maps of stars I
will learn all of you in a way that God created
you. There will be touches lighter than light,
so that we'll get drunk from those delays. By
syllables we will recall that distant and
forgotten language of touches. Let the
goosebumps rush through our skin, let our
hair pick up electricity, so that the emptiness
and the holes in the souls would be sewed
by multitudes of strings.

Let the silence thicken over us and pierce
through the space.

I will heal with my lips your dark eyes, pale
from tears.

And when the guns cool down, how hot it will
be in bed.

I'll kiss you until the bites erase the horror
from memory.

And if fate has mercy on us to survive this
fierce spring, with what a thirst we will make
love to wash away the war from our skin.

Spraha (Kokhanij)

Jak zamovknut' usi avtomaty,
I rozchujemo vresh'ti vesnu,
Jak zhe sprahlo my budem kokhatys',
Shchoby zmyty iz sebe vijnu,
Rozchynyty jiji kl'atyj zapakh
U solonomu potovi vdvokh.
Ja po mushkakh, po zorjanykh mapakh
Vyvchu vs'u, jak stvoryv tebe boh.
Budut' dotyky lehshi za lehki,
Shchob pjanity vid zvolikan',
Po skladakh pryhadaty daleku
I zabutu movu torkan'.
Shchob murashylo nashu shkiru,
Shchob voloss'a pidkhopl'uvav strum,
Shchob u dushakh proval'i'a ta diry
Zat'ahalys'a, zat'ahalys'a bezlichch'u strun.
Khaj zhushchajet's'a tysha nad namy
I pronyzuje prostir naskriz'.
Budu ztsil'uvaty hubamy
Temni ochi, poblidli vid sliz.
I koly okholonut' harmaty,
Jak zhe har'ache bude v lizhkakh.
Do ukusiv tebe tsiluvatymu,
Shchob styravs'a iz pamjati zhakh.
I jakshcho nas pomyluje fatum
Perezhyty ts'u l'utu vesnu,
Jak zhe sprahlo my budem kokhatys',
Shchoby zmyty iz sebe vijnu.

Instead of Confession

Father,
I'm only human like you,
I have lost my faith and I will not pretend that
I haven't.
I've reached such a level of
loneliness where I'm probably no
longer able to confess. Do not
prepare to let me go without sin,
my conscience no longer
responds. While driving the birds
away from the dead,
I do not read prayers but poems.
I tell you, not as a messenger from God, no
offense.
I tell you as a brother:
I want so much to live another time!
How much I sometimes do not want to die.
Don't take it for cowardice or fear, I've
mostly become indifferent to death, but I
sometimes see those storks on the
chimneys,
The occasional reflection of the sky in a
puddle, how the fog goes down the river
like a steam train and I think that I could
still live on...
No matter how simple or difficult
life may be... after months over
the abyss in the rye. I love this
murmuring of prayers.
Father, read them to me while I sleep.
Give me a blessing for love, promise me that
we will still be able to love.

Zamist' spovidi

Otche, ja lyshe l'udyna, jak i ty,
Virus vtratyv i ne budu prykydatys'.
Ja dos'ah takoho rivn'a samoty,
Shcho spoviduvatys', pevno, vzhe ne zdaten.
Ne hotujs'a vidpuskaty bez hrikhiv,
Moja sovist' ne vidhukujets'a bil'she.
Vid zahyblykh vidhan'ajuchy ptakhiv,
Ne molytvy ja zachytuvav, a virshi.
Khaj ne poslants'u vid boha, bez obraz,
Kapelane, ja kazhu tobi jak bratu:
Jak zhe khochets'a pozhyty in'shyj raz,
Jak zhe inkoly ne khochets'a vmyraty.
Ne pryjmy za malodushnist' chy za strakh,
Ja zdebil'shoho do smerti stav bajduzhyj,
Ta pobachysh tykh lelek na dymar'akh,
Vypadkovyj vidblysk neba u kal'uzhi,
Jak rikuju jde tuman mov parot'ah,
I podumajesh, shcho mozhna b shche
pozhyty.
Khoch jake proste chy to skladne zhytt'a
Pisl'a mis'atsiv nad prirvoju u zhyti.
Ja l'ubl'u tse bubotin'n'a molytov,
Otche, pochytaj jikh, doky budu spaty.
Daj meni blahoslovinn'a na l'ubov,
Obits'aj, shcho my shche zmozhemo kokhaty.

Love Poems (for Married People)

by John Kenney

You are different

You are different I want to share my life with you.

I do.

I said those words

in front of all our friends.

As well as your incredibly annoying family.

You're different.

That's what I thought

when we met.

I told my friends

He's different.

(They said you weren't.)

And now we are married

for life.

Is that right?

(Wow! that seems really long now!)

But here's something.

You're different

from, like, when we first met.

Your OkCupid profile said

I like running and hiking and cooking!

Have you ever cooked?

And you seem to have parked that running thing for a
while.

I'm kind of thinking a lot of that was

bullshit.

If we were to redo your profile

hypothetically

what would we write?

I like sitting.

Not showering.

*I enjoy putting my hand down the front of my shorts and
scratching my balls.*

And occasionally looking up at my new wife

and saying what's up.

Which is a weird thing to say to your wife.

Bathroom door

Super minor point.

Not a big deal at all.

But I think I missed

The family meeting

where we decided

it was a good idea

to keep the bathroom door

and trying to talk to me when I pass by.
See
what happens to me
is that the magic dies a little.
I die a little.

Are you in the mood?

I am
Let's put the kids down.
Have a light dinner.
Shower.
Maybe not drink so much.
And do the thing I would rather do with you than anyone else.
Lie in bed and look at our iPhones.

I breathe you

I am dreaming
but it feels so real.

A man. Is it you?
Not even close.

It's Rob, Casey's husband.
The one with the Italian accent.

We are on the beach.
Rob and me, not you.

He chases me
playfully. And we laugh.

Then my top falls off
Oops, I giggle.
And he catches me.

And then, a terrible smell.
Like garbage. Wet dog. Death!

I am blinking and awake
your breath hot on my face.

You son of a bitch.
Rob, come back

Couples counseling

Let's try some
role play
the therapist says.
Roger
you start.
And Roger
let's remember that

role play
isn't where
you pretend
Amy
is her friend
Jenifer.

Let's spice things up

That's what you said
when we're ordering
in the Mexican restaurant
and I said
Ohmigod
are you serious?
And you smiled
and said *totally*.
Spicey is nicey you said
in a weird accent
laughing
but also a little embarrassed by that accent thing.

And I said
it would have to be with a women though
not a guy.
And you said
what are you talking about?
And I said
aren't you talking about having a threesome?
You get that look on your face sometimes and you got it here.
And you said
I was talking about getting the mole and maybe some
pico de gallo.
To which I said
Oh.
Okay.
That's a good idea, too.

At the kitchen sink

I was feeling
fondness
for you
As you gave me
a shoulder massage
at the sink.

What a small
lovely surprise.

And then you
cupped my boobs
and made a *wha-wha* noise.

And in an instant
I felt disgust
and sadness and regret.

Ode to your psychopharmacologist

Dear doctor pill man
who doles out love in miligrams.
Alchemist.
Magic mix.
Mixologist.
Husband: behaved.
Marriage: saved.
I would not be around
had we not found
the perfect combo
of Zoloft and Lexapro.
You're a pro.
I thank you so!

Why are you in the shower with me?

Did the bathtub shrink?
I ask because here we are,
naked,
showering together,
like we once did all the time.
Remember? At the beginning?
We would stand and talk,
seals slipping by one another,
a playful ease letting the other in to the stream.
Now?
I'm not sure what you're doing here.
I'm freezing.
There's shampoo stuck in my eyes.
You just stepped on my foot.
For the love of Christ who flushed the toilet?
Because I'm being scalded alive.
Get out.
Now.
It was a nice idea though, honey
Could you close the door?

Bedtime

Now, we are in the bedroom in our underpants.
Let's turn the lights down.
No, further.
Off, I guess, is the technical term.
Maybe try a towel under the door
Where that sliver of lights is coming in.
What if we just cuddle
And by cuddle, I mean not actually touch.
Each of us at the far edge
of our own side of the bed.
Why does it feel like a twin bed?

I have a fun sexy idea.
Let's close our eyes
and see who can keep them closed the longest.
For the next, like, seven hours or so.
I like you.

No kidding

You called me and said you were meeting friends for beers at a bar that had bocce.
I was surprised.
We knew each other
though not well.

But Sunday evening
in late fall we drank beer
and talked like old friends.

Your friends never showed.
Were they ever coming?
It got late we left.
Standing on a corner,
it didn't feel like just meeting for a beer anymore.

I hadn't wanted to leave my apartment that evening.
Because it was easier to stay in.
It was easier to be alone.

Except you ruined my sad little life.
You kissed me.
How strange that it happens like that.
If we'd just parted the corner.
A whole life never lived.

I proposed in Paris
at a café across from a fountain
by an old church.

I guess I just wanted to say
thank you.
For saving my life. For helping me un-become the person I was.
For staying when it would have easier to leave.

We passed a guy on a bench once.
He was playing a kazoo.
partially dressed like a clown
And wore ski goggles.
The would have been you, you said smiling.
If you hadn't met me.
And it's probably true.
It's certainly true that you could have done better.
But I most assuredly could not.

I just hope it doesn't take a poet
for you to know that.