



## **WE'LL BE TOGETHER AGAIN** **September 30, 2020**

Morgen! (*John Henry Mackay*) Richard Strauss  
Erin Morley, soprano/pianist

He's Goin' Away John Jacob Niles, arr.  
Sasha Cooke, mezzo-soprano; Steven Blier, pianist

Cita (*Lorenzo Varela*) Carlos Guastavino  
Efraín Solís, baritone; Steven Blier, pianist

Auf dem Bruck (*Ernst Schulze*) Franz Schubert  
Samuel Kidd, baritone; Joseph Li, pianist

Ute i skären (*Ebba Lindqvist*) Gösta Nystroem  
Amelie Aldner, mezzo-soprano; Daniel Gerzenberg, pianist

At the River Robert Lowry,  
arr. Aaron Copland  
Lulu's Back in Town (*Al Dubin*) Harry Warren  
Lawrence Brownlee, tenor; Myra Huang, pianist

We'll Be Together Again (*Frankie Laine*) Carl T. Fischer  
Amanda Lynn Bottoms, mezzo-soprano; Steven Blier, pianist

## Program Note by Steven Blier

In the early days of the pandemic I lost every summer job I had in my calendar. I wasn't alone. Nearly every musician, every actor in the world was suddenly without work. As it became clear that none of us would be able to make music in our usual intimate spaces for a while, I decided to take our concert series online.

This was more remarkable than it might appear. Video has been one of my deep phobias for years, and until last autumn I had resisted all requests to film NYFOS concerts. But there is nothing like an emergency to slap away your fears. If we can't make music in a room together, we'll collaborate across continents and oceans. After all, NYFOS' motto is, "No song is safe from us."

I got in the habit of comforting my friends and colleagues by reminding them, "We'll be together again." I realized I was quoting the title of a song I have loved for many years. I gave it a spin on the CD player this spring and burst into tears. Obviously this would have to be the title song for the opening concert of our five-performance series, NYFOS@Home. The program is about reunions, the simple joy of embracing the people you love.

The pandemic emboldened me to approach singers who would normally be booked with opera and concert gigs years in advance. One of these was a former student, Erin Morley. I was bowled over by Erin's singing the moment she walked into my studio years ago, but I still wasn't ready for her star turn this spring in the Metropolitan Opera's virtual fundraiser. While most of the singers that afternoon used pre-recorded piano tracks or availed themselves of a live pianist, Erin accompanied herself in "Chacun le sait" from Donizetti's *The Daughter of the Regiment*. She sang with soaring freedom and virtuosity, capping her aria with a stunning high F. And her piano-playing! Stunningly graceful, stylish, and clean as a whistle.

I was thrilled when she said she'd give us a song and I knew exactly which one I wanted: Strauss's "Morgen!" The composer wrote it as a wedding gift for his wife, the imperious soprano Pauline de Ahna. Strauss' music captures the transcendent beauty of a love beyond the power of words. I have always imagined it as a vow made the day before a wedding, imagining the beauties that await the lovers the next day—and for the duration of their lives.

For this program about reunions I had my heart set on “He’s Goin’ Away,” an Appalachian folk song arranged by John Jacob Niles. Niles was a passionate collector of American folk songs, and his work inspired many icons in the folk music boom of the 50s and 60s including Joan Baez and Bob Dylan. But Niles was also a gifted songwriter—he was the composer of “Black Is the Color of My True Love’s Hair,” “Go ‘Way from My Window,” and “I Wonder as I Wander.” Niles’ words and music are so piercingly truthful that most people assume they too are folk songs, not original pieces.

Niles’s song led to a long-awaited reunion with mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke, whose schedule has turned her into a busy globe-trotter—Mahler in Australia, Humperdinck in Los Angeles. “Sushi with Sasha” has become a ritual when she blows through New York, but we haven’t had a chance to make music together for a long time. NYFOS has been a home for Sasha, though, ever since her debut in 2006 (which was also her New York recital debut). Quarantined in our homes, we stayed in close touch with each other, reaching out for support.

“He’s Goin’ Away,” with its fluid, improvisatory tempo shifts, was the most challenging task of all my long-distance collaborations. Sasha was a champ, internalizing my musical fantasy and fanciful phrasing to the point where you wouldn’t know we were separated by 2,000 miles when we collaborated—nor that this is our first-ever performance of this song together.

Practicing Carlos Guastavino’s peaceful “Cita” was a welcome escape from the ungodly stresses of spring and summer this year. The poem tells of a young lover waiting for his girlfriend by the shores of a river. In the piano we hear the sounds of the countryside—bells, breezes, rippling water. He lies back on the grass at noon, secure in the knowledge that he is irresistible. His girlfriend will tell her mother a fib, and soon they’ll be together.

Guastavino was a masterful songwriter. His melodies have a disarming combination of sexiness and innocence, and his piano-writing has the power to evoke places and emotions with unerring directness. “Cita” was dedicated to the Czech piano virtuoso Rudolf Firkušný, who met the composer in 1943 when he was on tour in Buenos Aires. I feel the presence of this master pianist in every note of “Cita.”

Efraín Solís had never sung this song before. We rehearsed it the way I rehearsed with everyone—by sharing practice recordings on our iPhones, and following up with emails and phone calls. Even so, I was bowled over by the way Efraín read my musical mind in his performance of “Cita.” I felt as if his voice were blossoming from my own heart.

When I began plans for NYFOS@Home, I wanted to include both established singers and newcomers. I often meet the next crop of balladeers at Wolf Trap, where I have performed every summer since 1994. I did not get to work there this May, but my pianist colleague Joseph Li was at his usual post—true, wearing a mask and protected by a plexiglass wall, but gamely coaching and accompanying the singers in the program. I asked Joseph if he'd heard someone who could sing Schubert's "Auf der Bruck," and he recommended the baritone Samuel Kidd. I went online and listened to this young man sing Mahler, and I was smitten. The Kidd stayed in the picture.

The song I chose is one of the most vigorous and challenging in the rep, a depiction of a perilous night-ride through the forest. The poet is coming home from a rendezvous with his beloved, charging through treacherous forest paths. His visit had filled him with joy and despair in equal measure, and it was painful for him to leave. But he trusts in the power of love—and rides bravely on, soon to return for more.

The pianist and Schubert scholar Graham Johnson sees irony and darkness in "Auf der Bruck"—a false, manic energy masking despair. Fascinating as Johnson's argument is, I don't experience this song as a death-haunted tale of hedonism, no matter the real-life perils of Schubert's and Schulze's compulsive libidos. I take the music's ardor and machismo at face-value, a paean to the strength of the human soul, the human heart—and the pianist's wrists. On the basis of this performance, I've no doubt Joseph Li could break a 3-inch board with one karate chop.

A word about the title. "Der Bruck" is a specific place in German, a hilltop near Göttingen; "Die Brücke" is German for "the bridge." Schulze called the poem "Auf der Bruck," since he wrote his lines from that very hillside. Either Schubert or his publisher changed it to "Auf der Brücke"—on the bridge—to evoke a more generalized image, a moment of transition. The song has been known by both titles ever since, but I gravitate to Schulze's original. After all, you can't gallop on a bridge for four minutes, especially with this kind of vigor.

Video has its challenges, but it also presents some unforeseen possibilities. I was able to reach out to artists in Europe and Scandinavia, singers and pianists I could not have easily brought to New York for a live concert. This meant I could recreate the team of mezzo-soprano Amelie Aldner (Swedish-born, living in Norway) and pianist Daniel Gerzenberg (a Berlin resident), whom I met when they were doing fellowships at Ravinia's Steans Institute in 2019. One of the pieces they brought in was "Ute i skären" by the Swedish

composer Gösta Nystroem. It's a song I've loved since I first programmed it at NYFOS in 1989, and every subsequent encounter has deepened its spell.

The quirky, poetic sound-world of Gösta Nystroem (1890-1966), is woven out of hypnotic ostinato figures and impressionistic chord clusters. He spent some time in southern Europe, where he studied both music and painting. That might account for the gauzy, Parisian texture of his sonority, as well as his ability to create music that seems to be made of brushstrokes. The ocean is a frequent subject of his musical works, including the mystical "Ute i skären." Writing during the Second World War, Nystroem uses a kind of musical slo-mo to evoke a vision of transcendence.

Daniel Gerzenberg and Amelie Aldner did their fair share of transcendence to recreate their partnership of two summers ago. Amelie was in the mountains of Norway, eight and a half months pregnant, when she filmed her video. Daniel, who had previously said no to all requests for long-distance collaborations, blessedly said yes to mine. He also agreed to read the translation while walking through the Black Forest in southwest Germany. They were a magical duo on the concert stage, and the pairing of their two videos creates a new kind of magic.

I first collaborated with Lawrence Brownlee at Wolf Trap when he was at the very beginning of his career. A year after our 2001 concert he made his debut at La Scala, and his career skyrocketed. By now he's graced every major opera house in the world. I was thrilled when he agreed to give us a couple of songs, especially since his longtime piano-collaborator is a woman I treasure, Myra Huang. When I asked for songs about reunions, they came up with two American classics: "At the River," the Robert Lowry hymn tune in the famous setting by Aaron Copland, and "Lulu's Back in Town," by Harry Warren and lyricist Al Dubin.

Warren was a prodigious Hollywood songwriter, turning out hit after hit: "I Only Have Eyes for You," "Jeepers Creepers," "Lullaby of Broadway," and almost all of Carmen Miranda's fruit-on-her-head numbers. In spite of his decades of success, including three Academy Awards, he never achieved the same name recognition enjoyed by Broadway songwriters. Everyone knew who composed the hits on the Great White Way, be it Irving Berlin or Richard Rodgers, but Hollywood never honored its composers. Warren's self-given nickname was "Harry Who?" David Merrick delivered him the ultimate indignity when he brought Warren's *Forty-Second Street* to Broadway—and left Warren's name off both the poster and the advertising.

I myself made the classic “Harry Who?” mistake when I misattributed “Lulu’s Back in Town” to Fats Waller. Indeed, Waller sang Harry Warren’s 1935 tune as if he owned it, and it became one of his greatest successes. Al Dubin’s lyric includes a reference to a Cole Porter song that everyone would have known at that time—“Miss Otis Regrets.” In that number Miss Otis suffers a tragic fate, but in this tune we meet a *Mr. Otis*, a much luckier human being. Like Miss Otis he’s “unable to lunch today,” but it’s because he’s otherwise occupied—shacked up in a hotel room with a girl named Lulu.

We saved the title song for the finale: “We’ll Be Together Again.” The music is by Carl T. Fischer, a mid-century composer and pianist who formed a durable musical partnership with American pop idol Frankie Laine. They wrote a number of good songs together, but this one packs the deepest emotional punch. Fischer came up with a spacious melody and a surprisingly opulent harmonic progression, while Laine mixed the bitter and the sweet with uncanny honesty. No wonder this tune has become a go-to number for generations of jazz musicians. I played it obsessively for months before recording it in September, trying out different textures and harmonies every day. I’m not done with this song—but my most recent thoughts are frozen on the video.

After all the time I spent alone with “We’ll Be Together Again,” it was a sweet miracle to hear Amanda Lynn Bottoms sing to my piano track. The phenomenon of being at once separated and miraculously reunited is the story of the last six months. The power of music has brought us together—just as it has brought all the artists to you tonight.

We’re not deserting you this year. We’ll be back in a few weeks with more songs.

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# **Texts and Translations**

## **Translations by Steven Blier**

**Morgen! ("Tomorrow") [1894]**

**Music by Richard Strauss (1864-1949); poem by John Henry Mackay (1864-1933)**

**Sung and played by Erin Morley, soprano, in her NYFOS debut**

Und morgen wird die Sonne wieder scheinen  
Und auf dem Wege, den ich gehen werde,  
Wird uns, die Glücklichen, sie wieder einen  
Inmitten dieser sonnenatmenden Erde ...  
Und zu dem Strand, dem weiten, wogenblauen,  
Werden wir still und langsam niedersteigen,  
Stumm werden wir uns in die Augen schauen,  
Und auf uns sinkt des Glückes stummes  
Schweigen ...

And tomorrow the sun will shine once again  
And on the path that I shall take  
It will reunite us—fortunate ones!—  
In the midst of this sun-breathing earth.  
And to the shore, broad, lapped by blue waves,  
We shall quietly and slowly descend.  
Wordlessly we shall gaze into each other's eyes,  
And upon us the speechless silence of happiness  
will descend.

**He's Goin' Away [1951]**

**Music and poem adapted by John Jacob Niles (1892-1980)**

**Sung by Sasha Cooke, mezzo-soprano; Steven Blier at the piano**

He's goin' away for to stay a little while,  
But he's comin' back, if he goes ten thousand mile,  
And who will tie your shoe, and who will glove your hand,  
And who will kiss your ruby lips when he is gone.  
Look away, look away over yonder mountain.

He's goin' away for to stay a little while,  
But he's comin' back, if he goes ten thousand mile,  
And Pappy will tie my shoe, and Mammy will glove my hand,  
And you will kiss my ruby lips when you come back.  
Look away, look away over yonder mountain.

He's goin' away for to stay a little while,  
But he's comin' back, if he goes ten thousand mile,  
To build me a cabin upon yon mountain high,  
Where all the wild birds can't hear me when I cry.  
Look away, look away over yonder mountain.

**Cita (“Rendez-vous”) [1957]**

**Music by Carlos Guastavino (1912-2000); poem by Lorenzo Varela (1916-1978)**

**Sung by Efrain Solís, baritone; Steven Blier at the piano**

Te espero en el mediodía, amiga,  
Por el camino del río  
A la sombra de la encina.  
Lámame si estoy dormido, amiga.

I'll wait for you at midday, my dear one,  
Along the road to the river.  
In the shade of the oak tree  
Call me if I'm asleep, my friend.

Que hace mucho que no cierro  
Los ojos por verte, niña,  
Y es muy traidora esta sombra  
Soleada de la encina.

I haven't closed my eyes  
For so long, hoping to see you.  
And it is very beguiling,  
This dappled shade of the oak tree.

Y al otro lado del río  
Duerme el ganado entre brisas  
De los trigales y olivos, niña.  
Y ya sueño tu pañuelo  
Sobre mi frente dormida,  
Y las cigarras ensayan  
Sus coros en la encinas  
Te espero en mediodía amiga.

Across the river  
The cattle are sleeping in the breeze  
Between the wheat fields and olives, my girl.  
I dream of your handkerchief  
Caressing my sleepy brow  
And the cicadas are rehearsing  
Their chorus in the oak trees.  
I'll wait for you at midday, my friend.

Dile a tu madre que vas  
A lavarte la camisa  
Y que el río está impaciente  
Esperándote en la orilla.

Tell your mother you are off  
To wash your blouse,  
And that the river is impatient  
Awaiting you on the bank.



**Auf der Bruck ("On the 'Bruck' hilltop) [1825]**

**Music by Franz Schubert (1797-1830); poem by Ernst Schulze (1789-1817)**

**Sung by Samuel Kidd, baritone, in his NYFOS debut; Joseph Li at the piano**

Frisch trabe sonder Ruh und Rast,  
Mein gutes Ross, durch Nacht und Regen!  
Was scheust du dich vor Busch und Ast  
Und strauchelst auf den wilden Wegen?  
Dehnt auch der Wald sich tief und dicht,  
Doch muss er endlich sich erschliessen,  
Und freundlich wird ein fernes Licht  
Uns aus dem dunkeln Tale grüssen.

Wohl könnt' ich über Berg und Feld  
Auf deinem schlanken Rücken fliegen  
Und mich am bunten Spiel der Welt,  
An holden Bildern mich vergnügen.  
Manch Auge lacht mir traulich zu  
Und beut mir Frieden, Lieb' und Freude.  
Und dennoch eil' ich ohne Ruh  
Zurück, zurück zu meinem Leide.

Denn schon drei Tage war ich fern  
Von ihr, die ewig mich gebunden,  
Drei Tage waren Sonn' und Stern  
Und Erd' und Himmel mir verschwunden.  
Von Lust und Leiden, die mein Herz  
Bei ihr bald heilten, bald zerrissen,  
Fühlt' ich drei Tage nur den Schmerz,  
Und ach! die Freude musst' ich missen!

Weit sehn wir über Land und See  
Zur wärmern Flur den Vogel fliegen;  
Wie sollte denn die Liebe je  
In ihrem Pfade sich betrügen?  
Drum trabe mutig durch die Nacht!  
Und schwinden auch die dunkeln Bahnen,  
Der Sehnsucht helles Auge wacht,  
Und sicher führt mich süsSES Ahnen.

Trot briskly on without pausing to rest,  
My good horse, through the night and rain!  
Why shy away from bush and branch?  
Why do you stumble on the wild paths?  
Though the forest stretches deep and dense  
It must open up at last  
And a far-off light will give us a friendly greeting  
From the deep valley.

I could gladly fly speed over mountain and field  
On your slender back  
And satisfy myself with the world's pleasures,  
Its colorful array of pastimes, its fair sights.  
Many an eye winks at me affectionately,  
And offers me peace, love and joy.  
And yet, I hurtle without rest  
Back to my sorrow.

For it has been three days since I parted  
From her—the one with whom I have an eternal bond;  
For three days sun and stars,  
Earth and heaven, have vanished from me.  
When I was with her, my joy and sorrow  
both healed and tore at my heart,  
But for three days now I have felt only the pain.  
And alas, the joy I have had to forgo!

We watch the bird fly far over land and sea  
Towards warmer pastures.  
Why, then, should love ever  
Be misled in its journey?  
So trot on bravely through the night!  
Though the dark paths may vanish,  
The bright eye of longing remains awake,  
And a sweet premonition leads me safely onwards.

**Ute i skären ("Out in the headlands") [1943]**

**Music by Gösta Nystroem (1890-1966); poem by Ebba Lindqvist (1908-1995)**

**Sung by Amelie Aldner, mezzo-soprano; Daniel Gerzenberg at the piano,  
in their NYFOS debuts**

En dag skall komma  
då vinden står stilla,  
då darrgräset sjunger  
och solen somnat.

A day shall come  
When the wind is still  
When the grasses sing  
And the sun has fallen asleep.

Då skall vi fara dit ut  
till de yttersta öarna,  
ljuskringflutna, hägringslysande,  
burna på bränningens skum.

Then we shall venture out  
To the most distant islands  
Haloed in light as if in a vision,  
Carried on the white foam of the waves.

**At the River [1864, arrangement from 1952]**

**Music by Robert Lowry (1826-1899), arranged by Aaron Copland (1900-1990)**

**Sung by Lawrence Brownlee; Myra Huang at the piano, in their NYFOS debuts**

Shall we gather by the river,  
Where bright angel's feet have trod,  
With its crystal tide forever  
Flowing by the throne of God?

Soon we'll reach the shining river,  
Soon our pilgrimage will cease,  
Soon our happy hearts will quiver  
With the melody of peace.

Yes, we'll gather by the river,  
The beautiful, the beautiful river,  
Gather with the saints by the river  
That flows by the throne of God.

Yes, we'll gather by the river,  
The beautiful, the beautiful river,  
Gather with the saints by the river  
That flows by the throne of God.

**Lulu's Back in Town [1935]**

**Music by Harry Warren (1893-1981); lyric by Al Dubin (1891-1945)**

**Sung by Lawrence Brownlee, tenor; Myra Huang at the piano**

Got to get my old tuxedo pressed,  
Got to sew a button on my vest,  
'Cause tonight I've got to look my best,  
Lulu's back in town.

You can tell all my pets,  
All my Harlem coquettes,  
Mister Otis regrets,  
That he won't be aroun'.

Got to get a half a buck somewhere,  
Got to shine my shoes and slick my hair,  
Got to get myself a boutonniere,  
Lulu's back in town.

You can tell the mailman not to call,  
I ain't comin' home until the fall  
And I might not get back home at all—  
Lulu's back in town!

**We'll Be Together Again [1945]**

**Music by Carl T. Fischer (1912-1954); lyrics by Frankie Laine (1913-2007)  
Sung by Amanda Lynn Bottoms, mezzo-soprano; Steven Blier at the piano**

Here in our moment of darkness  
Remember the sun has shone.  
Laugh and the world will laugh with you—  
Please, don't you cry alone.

No tears, no fears,  
Remember, there's always tomorrow.  
So what if we have to part?  
We'll be together again.

Your kiss, your smile  
Are memories I'll treasure forever.  
So try thinking with your heart—  
We'll be together again

Times when I know you'll be lonesome,  
Times when I know you'll be sad,  
Don't let temptation surround you,  
Don't let the blues make you bad.

Some day, some way,  
We both have a lifetime before us,  
For parting is not goodbye—  
We'll be together again.

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# Acknowledgements

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[Amanda Lynn Bottoms](#), mezzo-soprano

[Lawrence Brownlee](#), tenor

[Sasha Cooke](#), mezzo-soprano

[Daniel Gerzenberg](#), pianist

[Myra Huang](#), pianist

[Samuel Kidd](#), baritone

[Joseph Li](#), piano

[Erin Morley](#), soprano and pianist

[Efraín Solís](#), baritone

with

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Join us on October 21 for the premiere of "Black Market" and Other Songs  
for Survival, co-curated by Theo Hoffman and Steven Blier, featuring the  
world premiere of a new song by Matthew Aucoin.

For more info on our online series, see [www.nyfos.org/athome](http://www.nyfos.org/athome)