

LIVE FROM NEW YORK er söngtrío úr kór Metropolitan óperunnar ásamt píanóleikaranum Robert Rogers. Þau hafa sérhæft sig í amerískri tónlist, sérstaklega söngleikja - og óperutónlist.

**Constance Green** sópran nam við Mannes College of Music í New York borg. Hún hefur sungið fjölmörg óperuhlutverk við Metropolitan óperuna og má þar nefna: Kátu ekkjuna, Manon Lescaut, Rigoletto og Turandot. Nýlega söng hún á Wagner hátíðinni í Bayreuth í Þýskalandi.

**Ellen Lang** mezzósópran er mikill Íslandsvinur og hefur haldið tónleika á Íslandi, til dæmis með Sinfóníuhljómsveit Íslands. Einnig hefur hún haldið námskeið í Reykjavík í söng Broadway-tónlistar. Ættir hennar liggja til Noregs og leggur hún sérstaka rækt við norræna tónlist. Ellen var söngkennari við Westminster Choir College í Princeton, áður en hún réðst til Kórs Metropolitan óperunnar. Hún syngur einnig kammer- og samtímatónlist og hefur ferðast víða um heim sem einsöngvari með hinum þekktu tónlistarhóp Continuum. Af nýlegum hlutverkum í Metropolitan Óperunni má nefna stórt hlutverk í óperunni Jenufa.

**Irwin Reese** tenór nam við Manhattan School of Music og á að baki mjög fjölbreyttan tónlistarferil. Hann hefur sungið eitt af aðalhlutverkunum í óperunni Porgy and Bess við Houston Grand Opera, bæði í Bandaríkjunum og í Evrópu. Hann er félagi Songfellows sem er afar vinsæll karlakvartett Metropolitan Óperunnar. Einnig hefur hann sungið í þekktum sjónvarpsauglýsingum vestan hafs.

**Robert Rogers** píanóleikari nam við háskólana í Suður Florida og Illinois. Hann var m.a. kórstjóri við óperuna í Illinois og tónlistarstjóri New York Opera Ensemble. Hann starfar nú sem organisti og kórstjóri við St.Luke og St. Matthew kirkjurnar í Brooklyn, New York, auk þess sem hann starfar með þekktum söngvurum og karlakvartettinum Songfellows, að tónleikahaldi um gjörvöll Bandaríkin.

LIVE FROM NEW YORK is a vocal trio with members of the Metropolitan Opera Chorus with piano accompaniment. The group specializes in American music, especially music connected to live theatre arts.

Soprano **Constance Green**, a Mannes College of Music graduate, has soloed in many Met operas: The Merry Widow, Manon Lescaut, Rigoletto, Turandot and Dialogues of the Carmelite, to name a few. Recently she sang at the Bayreuth Richard Wagner Festival.

Mezzo **Ellen Lang** has long been a friend of Iceland and has previously given concerts in Reykjavík, performing with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra among others. Of Norwegian descent, she has emphasised Scandinavian music in her repertoire. A former Associate Professor of Voice at Westminster Choir College, Ellen Lang has given recitals and sung both contemporary music and songs from Broadway musicals. In Iceland she has previously taught a series of “how-to” masterclasses in classic Broadway singing, to great acclaim. A tour soloist with the international group Continuum, she has sung all over the world, and was recently heard at the Met in Jenufa, doing her third-act solo in this unusual opera.

Tenor **Irwin Reese** has performed in national and international tours of Porgy and Bess with the Houston Grand Opera. He has also sung with Songfellows, a male quartet comprised of members of the Metropolitan Opera Chorus. Reese holds a degree from the Manhattan School of Music. In addition to his operatic work, he has been featured in well-known television commercials.

**Robert Rogers**, pianist, holds degrees from the University of South Florida and the University of Illinois. Mr. Rogers has given recitals throughout the United States, Canada, and the West Indies with numerous operatic and concert stars, as well as the male quartet, Songfellows. He is former Music Director of the New York Opera Ensemble, and was Assistant Conductor and Chorus Master for the Illinois Opera Theater and the Lake George Opera Festival.

# Sumartónleikar í Listasafni Sigurjóns Ólafssonar

*LIVE FROM NEW YORK!*

*Constance Green sópran  
Ellen Lang mezzósópran  
Irwin Reese tenór  
Robert Rogers píanó*



Þriðjudaginn 10. júlí 2007 kl. 20:30

Við erum bandarískir söngvarar og stolt af hinum unga en auðuga músíkalska uppruna okkar.

Það var enginn hæðarleikur að setja saman efnisskrá fyrir þessa tónleika. Við ákváðum að einbeita okkur að árunum 1925 – 1970 og þá sérstaklega tímabilinu milli 1925 og 35. Tónskáldin og höfundar ljóðanna eru flest bandarísk og vel þekkt þar og jafnvel erlendis.

Þau tónskáld sem ekki eru fædd á bandarískri grundu, en fluttu þangað annað hvort á flóttu undan fasisma heimaríkisins eða í von um atvinnu, urðu svo hrifin af því frelsi - músíkölsku sem og öðru - sem bandarískt þjóðfélag veitti þeim að þau aðlöguð-ust landi okkar sem væri það þeirra eigið. Mörg þeirra voru þó í fararbroddi þeirra sem vildu breyta hinum gamla evrópska tónlistarstíl nær hinum vinsæla ameríska. Öll fögnuðu þau hinni amerísku tónlist og lyftu á annað plan fágunar.

Góða skemmtun.  
Ellen Lang

# Í METROPOLITAN ÓPERUNNI:

*It Ain't Necessarily So* Irwin Reese  
- úr PORGY AND BESS eftir George Gershwin  
*Romance* Constance Green  
- úr DESERT SONG eftir Sigmund Romberg  
*What a Movie!* Ellen Lang  
- úr TROUBLE IN TAHITI eftir Leonard Bernstein

# Á BROADWAY:

*Almost Like Being in Love*  
*The Heather on the Hill*  
- úr BRIGADOON eftir Lerner og Loewe  
*Yesterdays*  
*The Touch of Your Hand*  
*Smoke Gets in Your Eyes*  
- úr ROBERTA og THE CAT AND THE FIDDLE eftir Kern og Harbach  
*Do what you wanna do, Cabin in the Sky*  
- úr CABIN IN THE SKY eftir V. Duke og Latouche

# BANDARÍSKIR LJÓÐASÖNGVAR: (sungin verða valin lög af eftirfarandi lista)

Constance Green  
*Sure on this Shining Night* op. 13 nr. 3 eftir Barber og Agee  
*Pretty og My House* úr PETER PAN eftir Bernstein  
*Simple Gifts* úr OLD AMERICAN SONGS eftir Copland  
*Spring* úr SIX ELIZABETHAN SONGS eftir Argento og Nash  
Irwin Reese  
*Dream Variations* eftir M. Bonds og Hughes  
*I, too*  
*Minstrel Man*  
*This little Light of mine* í útsetningu Hale Smith  
Ellen Lang  
*Loveliest of Trees* eftir J. Duke and Housman  
*The Nightingale* úr THREE MOUNTAIN BALLADS í úts. Clifford Shaw  
*That's Him* úr ONE TOUCH OF VENUS eftir Weill og Nash

## LIVE FROM NEW YORK

### Program Notes

We are all American singers and proud of our young, yet rich, musical heritage. Choosing a program to perform for you was no easy task. Some of our composers and lyricists are well known, even outside the U.S. Other, not so.... Most were born on American soil, and a few others (Romberg, Vernon Duke - formerly known as Vladimir Dukelsky, Weill) were so taken with the musical and other freedoms afforded them that they adopted our country as their own, even as they were leaders in changing older European styles into American “popular” music. All were men either out to make their living or to escape fascism in their native lands. All embraced with enthusiasm the music already existing in America and brought it to new levels of sophistication.

We decided to stick to the years of c. 1925 – 1970, with the bulk of our selections written in the late 30's to late 40's. The words are sometimes corny, but often right on the mark. George and Ira Gershwin's great PORGY AND BESS needs no introduction, except to say that Sportin' Life, who sings the song, would in 1935 warn his audience to take happy days with that “little grain of salt”. How right he turned out to be - World War II was right around the corner.

Romberg's *Romance*, written less than 10 years earlier, harkens back to a simpler, more naïve view of life. It is imbued with the charming, old-fashioned Viennese musical style the composer had known so well.

Dinah, Sam's troubled wife in TROUBLE IN TAHITI, has just emerged from the movie theater after seeing a wildly fantastic movie involving the US Navy, natives run amok, island princesses and witch doctors, along with erupting volcanoes and hurricanes. At the same time she makes fun of all this nonsense, she longs for beauty and excitement in her own hum-drum life and, for a time, loses herself in it. This piece was written in 1954 with the back-up vocal trio as “Greek chorus.”

BRIGADOON (possibly from the words, “bridge of Doon” in Scotland) is a tuneful bouquet many know

and love. We bring you two selections from this show, written in 1947. Another wild plot. A mysterious Scottish village, Brigadoon, appears for only one day in each 100 years, as it is under a magic spell. Two Americans, out hunting in the woods, inadvertently stumble into Brigadoon's 100 year appearance. They, of course, fall in love with the locals, trouble occurs, and all's well that ends well.

1933 and '34 saw Jerome Kern and Otto Harbach collaborating on ROBERTA and CAT AND THE FIDDLE. Silly plots, some memorable songs, and twenty years later an MGM film called *Lovely to look at* brought ROBERTA's tunes to a new audience.

CABIN IN THE SKY, 1940 (also, with musical help from Harold Arlen), was an all-black musical that made a huge star out of Lena Horne and paired her with her CABIN “rival”, Miss Ethel Waters. CABIN IN THE SKY tells a version of the Faust legend in which Little Joe, a man killed over gambling debts, is given six months to redeem his soul and become worthy of entering Heaven - otherwise his soul will be condemned to Hell. In the midst of all his choosing, a character called “Lucifer, Junior” tries to sway him to sin, in the form of temptress Georgia Brown. A twenty-something John Latouche came in as lyricist at the last minute to help composer Vernon Duke. Latouche gained fame later for writing the lyrics for BALLAD OF BABY DOE, the opera about Colorado silver miners and their wives and girlfriends - music by Douglas Moore. BABY DOE was the opera that put Beverly Sills on the map.

Sam Barber, Leonard Bernstein, and Aaron Copland are, by now, household names. James Agee, who wrote the words to *Sure on this Shining Night*, also authored the words later set in Barber's masterpiece, KNOXVILLE, SUMMER OF 1918. Remember “It has become that time of evening, when people sit on their porches, rocking gently and talking gently...” The late, great soprano Eleanor Steber, from Wheeling, West Virginia, made that her musical signature piece.

James Barrie, who wrote the book PETER PAN, could not have foreseen how his charming story developed over the years. Made famous by Mary

Martin in a musical rendition, and later in the movies, the “boy who wouldn't grow up” found a captive audience on the legitimate stage, too. In 1950, the play with music and words supplied by Leonard Bernstein first appeared.

*Simple Gifts* is based on a Shaker hymn tune. Unfortunately, the Shakers are mostly if not entirely gone, having embraced celibacy and counted on converts to swell their religious ranks. They have left in their wake a large opus of charming, dance-tune like hymns, perfectly crafted houses, barns, and revolutionary (in terms of beauty, form and function) furniture design. In fact, the word, Shaker, was said to describe how they liked to worship God - in large circles of believers literally dancing for joy. You may hear some of this quality in Copland's song setting.

Dominick Argento chose ancient Elizabethan texts for his SIX ELIZABETHAN SONGS. Although he uses some of the conventions of lute song and its ilk (“to-whit, to whoo”), this prolific Midwestern composer writes a crisp, clean, contemporary song. A Pulitzer prize winner, Argento lives in Minnesota, where he recently retired as Professor of Music at the University.

Composer, pianist and teacher, Margaret Bonds was also the first black soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Later in her career, she made arrangements of spirituals for soprano Leontyne Price. Bonds' THREE SONGS are all set to texts by the great American poet, Langston Hughes. They seem almost “dream-scapes” of mood and a sense of “otherness” that compelled Hughes himself to leave America for France a generation ago. Essayist, dramatist, lyricist, and newspaper columnist as well, Hughes the poet was part of the black expatriate community during the 1920's in Paris. Although he spent a great deal of his life travelling all over the world, he eventually settled in Harlem, New York City and died there, in 1967, at age 65.

Hale Smith - composer, arranger, mentor to American jazz musicians, professor at CW Post College and later, University of Connecticut, originally arranged *This Little Light of Mine* for high voice and orchestra. It was recorded by the London Sym-

phony.

John Duke's *Loveliest of Trees* is perhaps his most famous song. The text (from A SHROPSHIRE LAD) is by the Englishman, A. E. Housman. The main theme of A SHROPSHIRE LAD is mortality, how life is precious and how death can strike at any time. Trees certainly underscores that idea- “Now, of my three-score year and ten, twenty will not come again!”

*The Nightingale* tells a somewhat confusing story. Narrator sees couple. Boy seems to court girl. Girl asks boy to marry her. Boy says, “Can't do it - I have a girlfriend in London waiting for me. BUT - I'll stay in London a year and maybe I'll come back to 'see waters gliding', hear the nightingale sing”. The question is - is that a hint that he, indeed DOES love her? It's not clear to me. The words and tune come from East Tennessee and Western Virginia - the Appalachian Mountains area. Probably the original tune and text are much older, likely from England. In any case, Shaw's chord changes are definitely of a more contemporary nature.

ONE TOUCH OF VENUS has a ridiculous and charming plot. It's set in a department store where a young employee, Eddie Hatch, kisses a statue of Venus, the goddess of love. The statue then comes to life. The plot thickens when the reborn goddess of love falls for the hapless Eddie. Born in Germany in 1900, the composer, Kurt Weill (along with wife, Lotte Lenya), had run from the Nazis and made his home in the U.S. Jumping right into the American musical scene, he composed this show for Broadway in 1943. It starred Mary Martin, (the star of PETER PAN) as the statue goddess herself. Note the delicious words of Ogden Nash, pithy poet of light verse. He was helped, in this case, by S.J. Perelman, master wordsmith and writer for some of the Marx Brothers movies. Why is this song included in the art song section of the concert? Apart from the excellent text, there exist vocal leaps and challenges seldom seen in Broadway. Weill is now considered a “cross-over” legitimate composer of songs.

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Ellen Lang