



# Prison or Prophecy: The Woman in the Tower

Lyndsey Notaro, mezzo soprano

William Hobbs, piano

Sunday, March 10, 2024 at 6 p.m.

Griswold Hall



JOHNS HOPKINS  
PEABODY INSTITUTE

## — PROGRAM —

### FRENCH

Mes longs cheveux descendent from <i>Pelléas et Mélisande</i> • 1902	Claude Debussy (1862–1918)
La Tour • 2012	Howard Shore (b. 1946)
Au pays où se fait la guerre from <i>Five Melodies</i> • 1869-70	Henri Duparc (1848–1933)

### GERMAN

<i>Gedichte der Königin</i> <i>Maria Stuart</i> • 1852	Robert Schumann (1810–1856)
• Abschied von Frankreich	
• Nach der Geburt ihres Sohnes	
• An die Königin Elisabeth	
• Abschied von der Welt	
• Gebet	

## — INTERMISSION —

### ENGLISH

<i>Camille Claudel: Into the Fire</i> • 2012	Jake Heggie (b. 1961)
Prelude: Awakening	
1. Rodin	
2. La Valse	
3. Shakuntala	
4. La petite châtelaine	
5. The Gossips	
6. L'age mûr	
7. Epilogue: Jessie Lipscomb visits Camille Claudel, Montdevergues Asylum, 1929	

## Prison or Prophecy: The Woman in the Tower



The last set in my recital Jake Heggie's *Camille Claudel: Into the Fire* is the piece on which my recital is based. Camille Claudel's words:" They say I leave at night by the window of my tower" captures a spirit of defiance in the face of oppression. Camille Claudel was a very powerful force of genius who was confined and isolated with only memories of her sculptures.

There's a common theme of locking away women who do not conform to the norm. Childhood dreams of fairy tale towers and charming princes turn into nightmares. Once a metaphorical place where people are happily cut off from the rest of the world, the ivory tower becomes a prison — a symbol of female oppression and repression.

All of my pieces link to France!

FRENCH

**Mes longs cheveux descendants**  
**from *Pelléas et Mélisande* • 1902**

**Claude Debussy**  
**(1862–1918)**

Emerging from silence, the mysterious Mélisande sings as her hair cascades from her tower prison. The hypnotic music from Debussy only completed opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* enhances the psychological and symbolic contrasts: light and dark, vision and blindness, love and tragedy in an almost word-for-word setting of symbolist Maurice Maeterlinck's play *Pelléas et Mélisande*. At the top of Act III, Mélisande sings this song from her tower prison. Ensnared in a love triangle with her husband Prince Golaud and his half-brother Pelléas, the mysterious Mélisande lives and dies in the shadows. Golaud kills his half-brother and Mélisande dies a mysterious death.

**Mes longs cheveux descendants**

**My long hair falls down**

Mes longs cheveux descendent  
 jusqu'au seuil de la tour;  
 Mes cheveux vous attendent  
 tout le long de la tour,  
 Et tout le long du jour,  
 Et tout le long du jour.  
 Saint Daniel et Saint Michel,  
 Saint Michel et Saint Raphaël,  
 Je suis née un dimanche,  
 Un dimanche à midi...

My long hair falls down  
 to the threshold of the tower;  
 My hair awaits you  
 all along the tower,  
 And all day long  
 And all day long.  
 Saint Daniel & Saint Michael,  
 Saint Michael & Saint Raphael,  
 I was born on a Sunday  
 A Sunday at noon...

**La Tour**  
Commissioned for OPERA America's  
National Opera Center • 2012

**Howard Leslie Shore**  
(b. 1946)

Commissioned for the opening of Opera America's National Opera Center in New York City, Canadian composer Howard Leslie Shore wrote "La Tour" to a text by his wife Elizabeth Cotnoir. Renowned for his film scores, Shore won three Academy Awards for his musical interpretation of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* including best song "Into the West" with Eurythmics lead singer Annie Lennox.

<b>La Tour</b>	<b>The Tower</b>
J'y étais au début lorsque la lumière première avançait Il était le soleil. Nous étions deux points de lumière dans un monde sombre. Il est le soleil. Je suis la lune. Il est le ciel. Je suis la terre. Nous nous aimions. Chaque Coeur aimait l'autre.	I was there at the start when the light first advanced He was the sun. we were two points of light. in a dark world He is the sun. I am the moon. He is the sky. I am the earth. We love each other Each heart loved the other
Nos corps savent nos deux âmes une racine enlacées. J'y étais avec lui au début, Nous étions deux points de lumière dans un monde sombre. Je suis avec lui à la fin. Et pourtant la fin est le début.	Our bodies know our two souls are one root entwined I was there with him at the start we were two points of light in a dark world I was with him at the end And yet the end is the beginning.

**Au pays où se fait la guerre**  
from *Five Melodies* • 1869-70

**Henri Duparc**  
(1848–1933)

Originally intended for Duparc's opera *Roussalka*, "Au pays où se fait la guerre" sets Théophile Gautier's poem *La Comédie de la mort* (Paris, 1838), which was based on a Slavic Folktale by Alexander Pushkin. This dark fairytale follows Rousalka, a water nymph, as she falls in love with a human prince and makes a deal with an evil witch to become part of his world, exchanging her beautiful voice for the gift of legs. Self-criticism led Duparc to destroy his incomplete opera and this piece is all that remains.

<b>Au pays où se fait la guerre</b>	<b>To the land where war is waged</b>
Au pays où se fait la guerre Mon bel ami s'en est allé, Il semble à mon coeur désolé Qu'il ne reste que moi sur terre. En partant, au baiser d'adieu, Il m'a pris mon âme à ma bouche... Qui le tient si longtemps, Mon Dieu? Voilà le soleil qui se couche, Et moi toute seule en ma tour, J'attends encore son retour. Les pigeons sur le toit roucoulent Roucoulent amoureusement, Avec un son triste et charmant; Les eaux sous les grands saules coulent. Je me sens tout près de pleurer, Mon coeur comme un lys plein s'épanche, Et je n'ose plus espérer, Voici briller la lune blanche. Et moi toute seule en ma tour, J'attends encore son retour. Quelqu'un monte à grands pas la rampe... Serait-ce lui, mon doux amant? Ce n'est pas lui, mais seulement Mon petit page avec ma lampe... Vents du soir, volez, dites-lui Qu'il est ma pensée et mon rêve, Toute ma joie et mon ennui. Voici que l'aurore se lève. Et moi toute seule en ma tour, J'attends encore son retour.	To the land where war is waged My love is gone It seems, to my lonely heart That I am alone on earth. In leaving with his farewell kiss, He took my soul from my lips... What keeps him so long, my God? Now the sun is setting And I, all alone in my tower, I still await his return. The pigeons on the roof coo Coo amorously, With a sad and charming sound; The waters under the huge willows flow . . . I feel myself close to tears, My heart like a lily full overflows And I no longer dare hope, Now shines the white moon, And I, all alone in my tower, I still await his return. Someone bounds up the stairs. Could it be he, my sweet lover? It is not he, but only My little page with my lamp. Evening winds, fly. Tell him That he is my thought and my dream, All my joy and all my pain. Now that the dawn rises, And me all alone in my tower, I await still his return.

*Gedichte der Königin Maria Stuart,*  
Op. 135 • 1852

**Robert Schumann**  
(1810–1856)

Schumann's *Gedichte der Königin Maria Stuart* (The Maria Stuart songs) sets Gisbert Freiherr von Vincke's (1813-1892) German verses based on letters attributed to Mary, Queen of Scots (1542–1587). It focuses on poignant moments in the life of Mary who became Queen of Scotland as a newborn, after the death of her father James V. Mary spent her childhood (from age 6) in France as a member of Henri II's royal court. In 1558 (age 15), she married the Dauphin, Francis II and briefly became Queen of France until Francis' death in 1560. On Francis' death and the death of her mother who ruled Scotland as regent, Mary returned to Scotland in 1561. Schumann's song cycle begins with the young widow's return to Scotland and ends with her final prayer before her execution. It is the last song cycle written by Schumann — who at the time was on the verge of mental breakdown.



Figure 1: Young Mary

**1. Abschied von Frankreich**

Mary, a young widow (age 18), returns to rule Scotland in a time of religious and political upheaval. In this song she bids farewell to France, the only country she knows. Tragic events follow: a troubled marriage to Lord Darnley, the Protestant rebellion, and the murder of her Italian secretary, David Rizzio (orchestrated by her husband).

<b>Abschied von Frankreich!</b>	<b>Farewell to France</b>
Ich zieh dahin!	I am going away!
Ade,	Farewell,
mein fröhlich Frankenland,	my cheerful France,
Wo ich die liebste	Where I found the dearest
Heimat fand,	homeland,
Du meiner Kindheit	You are my childhood
Pflegerin!	guardian!
Ade, du Land,	Farewell, you land,
du schöne Zeit.	you beautiful time,
Mich trennt das Boot vom Glück	The ship bears me far away
so weit!	from happiness!
Doch trägt's die Hälfte	Yet it carries but half
nur von mir:	of me:
Ein Teil für immer	One portion will
bleibet dein,	forever be yours,
Mein fröhlich Land,	My cheerful land,
der sage dir,	it tells you
Des andern eingedenk	to be mindful of
zu sein!	others!
Ade! Ade!	Farewell!

## 2. Nach der Geburt ihres Sohnes

Isolated, Mary (age 23) reflects on the birth and future of her son James. She could not imagine the tragic turn her life would take in the next thirteen months. People turned against Mary because they believed she was involved in the murder of her husband, Lord Darnley. When Mary married Earl Bothwell (who was questioned in Darnley's murder), Protestant nobles forced her to abdicate in favor of her son. Later, she escaped her prison in Lochleven Castle.

Nach der Geburt ihres Sohnes	After the birth of her son
<p>Herr Jesu Christ, den sie gekrönt mit Dornen, Beschütze die Geburt des hier Gebor'nen. Und sei's dein Will', lass sein Geschlecht zugleich Lang herrschen noch in diesem Königreich. Und alles, was geschieht in seinem Namen, Sei dir zu Ruhm und Preis und Ehre, Amen.</p>	<p>Lord Jesus Christ, whom they crowned with thorns, Protect the birth of the one here born, And, if it be Thy will, let his lineage Long rule in this kingdom. And all that happens in his name Be to You glory, praise and honor, Amen.</p>

## 3. An die Königin Elisabeth

After her defeat at Langside in 1568, Mary (age 25) flees to England to plead for her cousin Elizabeth I's support. Mary probably didn't anticipate Elizabeth's reluctance to help, but she could not have imagined her flight to England would result in nineteen years of captivity in Bolton Castle.

An die Königin Elisabeth	To Queen Elizabeth
<p>Nur ein Gedanke, der mich freut und quält, Hält ewig mir den Sinn gefangen, So dass der Furcht und Hoffnung Stimmen klangen, Als ich die Stunden ruhelos gezählt.</p> <p>Und wenn mein Herz dies Blatt zum Boten wählt, Und kündet, Euch zu sehen, mein Verlangen, Dann, teurer Schwester, fasst mich neues Bangen, Weil ihm die Macht, es zu beweisen, fehlt.</p> <p>Ich seh' den Kahn im Hafen fast geborgen, Vom Sturm und Kampf der Wogen festgehalten, Des Himmels heit'res Antlitz nachtumgraut. So bin auch ich bewegt von Furcht und Sorgen, Vor euch nicht, Schwester. Doch des Schicksals Walten Zerreisst das Segel oft, dem wir vertraut.</p>	<p>One thought alone gladdens and grieves me And dominates my mind, So that the voices of fear and hope resound, When sleepless I count the hours.</p> <p>And when my heart chooses this letter as messenger, Revealing how I long to see you, Then, dear sister, a new anguish seizes me, Because the letter lacks the power to prove it.</p> <p>I see the boat half hidden in the harbor, Held back by the storm and warring waves, And heaven's serene face blackened by night. So am I likewise beset by cares and fear, Not of you, my sister. But by fate's rule that Often tears apart the sail in which we trust.</p>

#### 4. Abschied von der Welt

Resigned that she will die in captivity. While awaiting her execution, Mary forgives the hatred of her enemies and emplores her faithful friends to pray for her eternal peace — a peace she was denied in life.



Figure 2: *Painting of Mary, Queen of Scots attributed to P Oudry, 1578)*

Abschied von der Welt	Farewell to the World
<p>Was nützt die mir noch zugemess'ne Zeit?            Mein Herz erstarb für irdisches Begehren,            Nur Leiden soll mein Schatten nicht entbehren,            Mir blieb allein die Todesfreudigkeit.</p>	<p>What use is the time still allotted me?            My heart is dead to earthly desires,            Only suffering is left to my shadow,            The joy of death alone remains.</p>
<p>Ihr Feinde, lasst von eurem Neid:            Mein Herz ist abgewandt der Hoheit Ehren,            Des Schmerzes Übermaß wird mich verzehren;            Bald geht mit mir zu Grabe Haß und Streit.</p>	<p>Cease envying me,            O enemies:            My heart is turned away from nobility's honor,            The excess of pain will consume me,            Hatred and strife will soon go with me to my grave.</p>
<p>Ihr Freunde, die ihr mein gedenkt in Liebe,            Erwägt und glaubt, daß ohne Kraft und Glück            Kein gutes Werk mir zu vollenden bliebe.</p>	<p>You friends, you who think of me with love,            Consider and believe that without strength or luck            No good work would remain for me to achieve.</p>
<p>So wünscht mir bess're Tage nicht zurück,            Und weil ich schwer gestrafet werd' hienieden,            Erfleht mir meinen Teil am ew'gen Frieden!</p>	<p>So do not wish for the return of better days,            And because I've been severely punished here on earth,            Pray that a share of eternal peace might be mine!</p>

#### 5. Gebet

A lonely prayer prior to her beheading in 1587 (age 44 years).

Gebet	Prayer
<p>O Gott, mein Gebieter,            Ich hoffe auf Dich!            O Jesu, Geliebter,            Nun rette Du mich!            Im harten Gefängnis,            In schlimmer Bedrängnis            Ersehne ich Dich;            In Klagen, dir klagend,            Im Staube verzagend,            Erhör', ich beschwöre,            Und rette Du mich!</p>	<p>O God, my Lord            I put my hope in You!            O Jesus, beloved            Now rescue me!            In a harsh prison,            In dire straights            I long for You;            In lamentation, I cry to You,            Despairing in the dust,            Listen, I swear,            And rescue me!</p>

ENGLISH

**Camille Claudel: Into the Fire**  
Texts by Gene Scheer • 2012

**Jake Heggie**  
(b. 1961)

American composer Jake Heggie was commissioned to write *Camille Claudel: Into the Fire* to celebrate the Alexander String Quartet 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato (2012). Known for his operas *Dead Man Walking*, *Moby-Dick*, and *Great Scott*, Heggie’s seven-song cycle depicts the fiery French sculptor, Camille Claudel. Gene Scheer’s historical, first-person narrative based on her sculptures, letters, and one unforgettable photograph captures Claudel’s spirit. The cycle is based on Debussy’s G minor string quartet with a strong sense of dance. Debussy and Claudel were close friends — he kept a copy of her sculpture *La Valse* on his mantle.

**French sculptress Camille Claudel (1864-1943)**

Claudel’s sculptures — sublime, beautiful, inspired, aching — dance and sing through time. A promising young artist in the early 1880s, Claudel met and fell in love with sculptor Auguste Rodin, twenty-four years her senior. She lived in his shadow as his collaborator, mistress and muse. At the height of their creativity and passion, she produced sculptural works of genius that captured fluid form and movement at a time when a woman was rarely taken seriously. The French art critic Octave Mirbeau described Camille Claudel as “a rebellion against nature: a woman of genius!”



Figure 3:  
Camille Claudel



Figure 4: Claudel and  
Jessie Lipscomb Lipscom

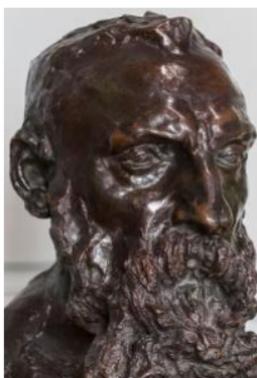
As their stormy and ill-fated affair ended, and Claudel gained recognition for individualism in her sculpture — her family committed her to an asylum in 1913,. She remained imprisoned at Montdevergues Asylum for 30 years until her death in 1943. Isolated, she was stripped of any connection to her life and her art.

**Prelude: Awakening**

The cycle begins the day Camille is to be taken to the asylum. As dawn breaks “Awakening”, she wakes to the strange reality of what is about to happen and talks to her sculptures. Each song, except the final one, brings to life a sculpture: Rodin, La Valse, Shakuntala, La petite châtelaine, The Gossips, and L’age mûr.

## 1. Rodin

Inspired by the powerful, rugged bust of Rodin, the text comes from a letter Claudel sent Rodin from the Château d'Islette, where they would escape each summer and dedicate themselves to their work and each other. This summer, she traveled alone.



*Figure 5: Camille Claudel, Bust of Rodin, 1886–1892.*

---

### Rodin

Last night,  
I went to sleep completely naked.  
I pretended you were holding me  
    But I woke alone again  
    Everything burned away  
    In the cruel morning light.  
Was I dreaming that you loved me  
    Though you left me far behind?  
    Someone's there.  
    Hidden in the shadows,  
    you don't want me to see,  
    you don't want me to find.  
In the clay, I search with my fingers  
    to uncover something true.  
    Rodin. Rodin!  
    Was there ever a time  
    you wanted me to find you?  
    There's a secret I have traced  
    in your eyes, your brow, your hair:  
    others think they see you,  
    but we both know you're not there.  
In the clay, I searched with my fingers  
    to uncover something true.  
    Rodin! Rodin!  
    Was there ever a time  
    you wanted me to find you?  
    Rodin? Rodin?

## 2. La Valse

*La Valse* (*The Waltz*) captures the dance of love and death — it captures movement and stillness — like a freeze frame. Several copies were cast in bronze. Claude Debussy had one on his piano. Originally a scandalous piece with naked forms, the state forced Claudel to add drapery to conceal the human form.



Figure 6: Camille Claudel, *La Valse*, 1891–1905

### La Valse

---

The light of day will fade  
And shadows will descend.  
No breath can last forever,  
No heart break truly mend.  
Again, again.

Console.

Oh, console my eyes with beauty.

Allow me to forget  
That every dance of love  
Is mingled with regret.  
Take me one step closer,  
one step back, one step spins,  
one step hovers.

Take me!

Take me to the place  
for unrepentant lovers!

Is it in the spirit?  
Is it in the flesh?  
Where do I abide?

Console.

Oh, console my eyes with beauty.

Allow me to forget  
That every dance of love  
Is mingled with regret.

Ah!

### 3. Shakuntala

Claudel's *Sakuntala*, also known as *Abandonment*, is based on a drama by the Hindu poet Kalidasa. After Prince Dushyanta gave the beautiful Sakuntala a wedding ring, the Prince belittled a beggar who cast a spell on him: the Prince would not recognize Sakuntala until he saw the ring, which had fallen into the Lake. When the prince didn't



Figure 7: *Shakuntala*, 1888–1905

recognize Sakuntala, she fled to the desert and gave birth to a son. After finding the ring in the stomach of a fish, the prince searches for Sakuntala and begs for her forgiveness.

#### Shakuntala

---

Shakuntala!  
Shakuntala!  
He called my name in a whisper.  
He called my name in a cry.  
Before, before I was a mother.  
Before I met the king.  
Before he made his promise.  
Before I wore his ring.  
Before I was forgotten,  
abandoned and ignored.  
Before I was denied all that I adored.  
Ah...  
I did not know who I was.  
Shakuntala!  
Shakuntala!  
After he had learned the truth.  
After all his tears.  
Begging my forgiveness  
After wasting many years.  
Wishing to reclaim me.  
Kneeling at my feet.  
Ah!  
He reaches to embrace me  
will the circle again be complete?  
I lean and let him hold me  
his lips familiar yet estranged  
I forgive him utterly  
but in doing so have I changed?  
Ah!  
Shakuntala!  
Shakuntala!  
I hear your whispers, your cries,  
oh I want to take you back, my love,  
but who I was, who I was has died.

#### 4. La petite chatelaine

La Petite Châtelaine represents the loss of innocence. In 1892, Claudel reluctantly aborted Rodin's child, which ended their affair. Sculpted shortly after, this is one of a series of sculptures of her lost child. Claudel began to suffer paranoia, a fear that Rodin was trying to steal her ideas like he stole their child. In this song, Claudel questions the sculpture and the child it represents.



Figure 8: *La petite chatelaine*

---

#### La Petite Châtelaine

Hello, my little one,  
La petite châtelaine.  
Do you know who I am?  
Do you know who I am?  
They say I leave at night  
By the window of my tower  
Hanging from a red umbrella  
With which I set fire to the forest.

Hello, my little one,  
La petite châtelaine.  
Do you know who I am?  
Or the land you come from?  
Where the earth is stained

I did as he said  
And returned you to clay.  
Oh, how could I bleed  
Such a blessing away?  
Now I'm forever alone  
With my children of stone.  
La petite châtelaine.  
Can you hear my voice?  
The voice of your mother?

## 5. The Gossips

The Gossips represents a turning point for Claudel. While Rodin's sculptures and fame grew massive, hers became intimate, small. In a letter to her brother, Claudel shared that she was being followed by "la bande à Rodin" ("Rodin's gang") depicted in onyx and bronze.



Figure 9: *The Gossips*, 1897

### The Gossips

What is in my hands?  
What is in my head?  
So many ideas,  
My mind aches!  
So many ideas,  
the earth quakes!  
People at a table  
listen to a prayer  
three men on a high cart  
laugh and go to mass  
a woman crouches on a bench  
and cries all alone  
What does she know?  
Does she know  
three people sit behind a screen and whisper?  
What is the secret  
suspended in the air?  
I know I know  
the Halo rush the light is dim  
into the fire is it him?  
Is it him? Is it him?

## 6. L'age mûr

L'Age Mûr ("Maturity" or "Destiny") is a large bronze sculpture at the Musée d'Orsay that depicts three figures: an older man being led away by an ancient woman while a younger



Figure 10: *L'Age Mûr (The Age of Maturity)*, 1899)

woman pleads on her knees. Dating from the time of Claudel's abortion, it depicts movement from youth to old age — but has been interpreted as Rodin leaving Claudel for his long-time lover, Rose Beuret. This song reintroduces the Rodin theme haunting her thoughts.

## 7. Epilogue: Jessie Lipscomb visits Camille Claudel, Montdevergues Asylum, 1929

In 1913, Claudel's mother and brother ordered she be taken to an asylum. To avoid scandals, her brother had her confined in isolation. Caregivers insisted she did not need to be confined — that she needed society. Her visitors were limited: her mother and sister never visited her, her brother Paul visited every few years, and in 1929, her closest friend Jessie Lipscomb came to visit (Epilogue). Jessie and her husband found Claudel quiet, reflective, and dear. The photograph Jessie's husband took of them is the last evidence we have of Camille Claudel.



*Figure 11: Camille Claudel (left) and Jessie Lipscomb 1929, photo made by William Elborne (husband of Jessie Lipscomb)*

### Epilogue: Jessie Lipscomb visits Camille Claudel, Montdevergues Asylum, 1929

---

Thank you for coming.  
I thought everyone had forgotten.  
Thank you for rememb'ring me.  
Four children?  
Beautiful... beautiful  
off to Italy?  
Beautiful... beautiful  
you will have wonderful things to eat there.  
Here they are trying to poison me.  
I see that they don't.  
I cook for myself.  
Thank you for rememb'ring me.  
Do you remember our studio in Paris?  
Everything moving.  
Two young women, so many ideas.  
Look at me now!  
Oh, Jessie...  
Ev'ry dream I ever had was of movement.  
Touching. Breathing.  
Reaching. Hov'ring.  
Something always about to change.  
A photograph?  
Just me and you.  
Yes, I understand I must be very still  
Thank you for rememb'ring me.