



Mortality Mansions

SONGS OF LOVE AND LOSS AFTER 60



Mortality Mansions

A SONG CYCLE

Music by Herschel Garfein
Texts by Donald Hall
Michael Slattery, *tenor*
Dimitri Dover, *piano*

1	When the Young Husband	3:45
2	When I Was Young	3:23
3	Woolworth's	3:07
4	The Green Shelf	3:12
5	Fête	1:11
6	The Young Watch Us	3:09
7	Summer Kitchen	5:08
8	Dying Is Simple, She Said	3:59
9	Deathwork	2:52
10	Freezes and Junes	3:04
11	Gold	4:36

Interlude: Readings

Music by Herschel Garfein
Poems by Donald Hall
Donald Hall, *reader*
Dimitri Dover, *piano*

12	When the Young Husband	3:06
13	When I Was Young	1:11
14	Woolworth's	1:11
15	The Green Shelf	1:19
16	Fête	0:29
17	The Young Watch Us	0:46
18	Summer Kitchen	0:58
19	Dying Is Simple, She Said	1:12
20	Deathwork	1:14
21	Freezes and Junes	0:47
22	Gold	1:10

Epilogue: Otherwise

Music by Herschel Garfein
Text by Jane Kenyon
Marnie Breckenridge, *soprano*
Dimitri Dover, *piano*

23	Otherwise	5:53
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Total Playing Time: 56:48


Two arts performed together illuminate each other. A poem printed on a broadside, designed by a master, adds exquisite shape to exquisite language. The greatest poetic enhancement happens when a brilliant composer sets good poems to music. I am deeply grateful for Herschel Garfein's *Mortality Mansions*, where he turns my poems into song, elevating my images as Michael Slattery's golden tenor joins Dimitri Dover's brilliant pianism. The poem by my late wife, Jane Kenyon, is sung glowingly by Marnie Breckenridge.

For me, poetry has always centered on its sound. Reading poems in silence, I hear them with my mouth. Three syllables like "dark barn door" are delicious even before they turn wooden and shadowy. When Herschel embellishes my lines by his music, he exalts one rapture by means of another. Perched in my blue chair, I am spellbound as I listen to his art transcend the language of my invention. From the first syllables to the last, maybe most gloriously in "Gold," we are swept through art's grandeur into the final achievement of unblemished silence.

Donald Hall


Donald Hall




A photograph of two men standing in a rustic wooden interior. The man on the left is wearing a dark grey sweater and a dark scarf. The man on the right is wearing a dark peacoat and a colorful patterned scarf. They are both looking towards the camera.

Michael Slattery
tenor

Dimitri Dover
piano

A photograph of a man standing in a rustic wooden interior, wearing a dark peacoat and a red scarf. He is looking towards the camera.

Herschel Garfein
composer

A photograph of a woman with blonde hair standing in a rustic wooden interior, wearing a black turtleneck. She is looking towards the camera.

Marnie Breckenridge
soprano

The Yellow Room

Pale gold of the walls, gold
 of the inside of daisies, yellow roses
 pressing from the clear bowl, and of the orchid
~~I bought for your blonde hair~~

yellow

for your ~~gold~~ hair, all day
 we lay on the huge bed, my hand
 leaving and praising the fair
 deep gold of your thighs and your back, the pale
 gold of your ass, my mouth
 loving your breast ^{and} your tongue.

the strain

~~Then every time~~ ^{then} we made love we climbed together
 to the height of our yellow room, & reached
 the room together, and lay down in it
 again, breathing more slowly,
 caressing and clozing, your hand sleepily
 touching my balls now,
 making in four days a ~~man~~
 which will last until both of us die,

that the ~~del~~ will last until ~~we die~~

EARLY DRAFT OF DONALD HALL'S "GOLD"

Hall 1-82 GOLD HG

The musical score is written on yellowed paper. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system has a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part includes markings for 'Emixto', 'mf', and 'rit'. The second system also has a vocal line and piano accompaniment, with markings for 'REPEAT', 'SCALE', and 'Emixto?'. The third system includes the lyrics 'Pale gold - of the walls, gold of the corners of' and has a 'rit-atto' marking. The score is annotated with various symbols, including arrows, circles, and checkmarks.

EARLY SKETCH OF HERSCHEL GARFEIN'S "GOLD"

The Architecture of Mortality

With *Mortality Mansions*, a song cycle in eleven parts, the poet Donald Hall and the composer Herschel Garfein have done more than make a work of boldly complicated, thrillingly emotive literary/musical art. They have performed a public service, providing the audience of the 21st century with an alternative narrative of eros and aging – a subversively nuanced and humane conception that defies the gauzy tropes of Viagra ads and the defensive naughtiness of “old-people sex” jokes in pop entertainment from *Golden Girls* to *Grace and Frankie*. In a culture obsessed with sexuality and youth, Hall and Garfein grant us the gift of considering late life as real life, in the full richness of its complexities, its pleasures, its trials, and its anguishes.

The work, though derived from the text of a small selection of poems written over the course of Hall's six-decade-long career, was conceived as a song cycle by Garfein and given

form, performed, and recorded under Garfein's ardent and exacting stewardship. As Hall has explained, “What people will experience as *Mortality Mansions* does not resemble a book of poems or a program of poems. It has a kind of wholeness of its own. It is something I had not had in mind when I wrote the poems. It has a wholeness I could never have anticipated or predicted.”

The quality of unity that Donald Hall has found unexpectedly in *Mortality Mansions* emerged slowly, over time, as Herschel Garfein delved into and experimented with Hall's poetry. Garfein, in addition to his well-

known work as a respected contemporary composer (the opera *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*), librettist (the opera *Elmer Gantry*, for which Garfein and composer Robert Aldridge shared a Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Classical Composition), and director, also teaches a graduate seminar in Script Analysis at the



Painting of Donald Hall
by Michael Slattery

New York University/Steinhardt School of Music and Performing Arts. He understands writing of many kinds, as a practitioner of multiple creative arts as well as an educator. Still, he found himself taken aback by the thematic breadth, the earthy candor, and sheer carnality that he found when he gave Hall's work his close attention, at the suggestion of a friend.

“Like a lot of people, I suppose, I had a limited understanding of what his work is about, based on the way he is generally described – that is, as a New Hampshire poet, a rural poet in the mold of Robert Frost, with whom he had apparently studied when he was young. He didn't sound particularly interesting to me,” Garfein recalls. Reading through the judiciously curated Hall collection *White Apples and the Taste of Stone* (2006), he thought, “Wow – everything I've heard about this man's work is pretty unfair. For somebody as well known and respected as he is, this man is not well understood at all.”

Donald Hall, 89 at the time of this album's release, has been writing poetry since his teens in the 1940s and had his first collection of poems, *Exiles and Marriages*, published in 1955, three years before Herschel Garfein was born. By virtue of both his prolificacy and longevity, he has produced a full bookcase of works in many forms: more than 20 collections of poetry, a dozen-plus books for young readers, several memoirs, books of essays, plays, short story col-

lections, a few biographies, and a couple of textbooks. They include enough works with nature and rural life at their heart to explain the widespread perception of Hall as a poet of the bucolic. The Library of Congress, in its announcement of Hall's appointment as Poet Laureate in June 2006, quoted former Laureate Billy Collins categorizing Hall as falling in “the Frostian tradition of the plainspoken rural poet” and made a point to note that Hall lived “on an old family farm in rural New Hampshire, in the house where his grandmother and his mother were born.”

Among the surprises Garfein found in Hall's poetry was abounding evidence that Hall has often been less interested in acts of birth, wherever they have taken place, than he has been in the act of conception. “He's brilliantly horny – or he has been in so much of his poetry, particularly his late work,” Garfein notes, drawing special attention to the robust body of poems Hall wrote during or in memory of his 20-year marriage to poet Jane Kenyon, who died in 1995.

With its first piece, **1** “When the Young Husband,” *Mortality Mansions* immerses the listener in the world of Donald Hall's mind, heart, and body, a sphere where the three states of being tend to coexist in tenuous equilibrium, but sometimes clash with destructive force. Garfein sets up the song's theme of treacherous carnal impulse with a finger-snapping Rat Pack motif, played with wry surety by the pianist Dimitri

Dover, and the singer Michael Slattery brings a subtly unsettling dose of male bravura to the song's story of a newly married man on his way to an afternoon tryst that, in the end, damages several lives.

With the second piece, **2** "When I Was Young," the cycle shifts into the present tense and dives into the themes of ardor and eros, commitment and loss, in its aging characters. "When I was young and sexual/I looked forward to a cool Olympian age/for release from my obsessions," Slattery sings with the plaintive clarity that distinguishes him as one of the most artfully communicative singers of contemporary concert music. "At sixty," he continues, "the body's one desire/sustains my pulse, not to mention/my groin..."

Let us pull back the blanket,
slide off our bluejeans,
assume familiar positions,
and celebrate lust in Mortality Mansions.

Garfein had been toying with various titles for the cycle until, after he had several of the songs finished, he woke up one night with the final words of "When I Was Young" echoing in his head. "Mortality Mansions"—that captures it all, the whole essence of the piece," says Garfein. "It's about sex and romance and bereavement, the joy in living day to day with someone you

are entwined with in the deepest ways — emotionally, intellectually, and physically — knowing, all the while, that death could be around the corner and will, finally, come. The image of that final phrase from 'When I Was Young' suggests both grandeur and a sense of inevitable decline. Knowing that the decline is inevitable and, in some ways, already here, only enhances the intensity of the moment and the importance of enjoying it."

Approaching sixty himself at the time he began this project and with parents (the actor Carroll Baker and the director Jack Garfein) well into their eighties, Garfein was viscerally drawn to the theme of mortality; and happily married to the educator Vicki Bernstein for nearly 20 years, he felt he "had a good idea of what Donald Hall derived from his deep connection with Jane Kenyon." Compelled by the thematic content, Garfein found the vernacular clarity of Hall's writing suitable to setting to music.

"I love poetry, but I don't think a lot of it works well set to music, and sometimes the very best poetry works very badly," Garfein says. "It doesn't need any help from music. A problem with a fair amount of art songs based on poetry is that the music is not only unnecessary, it does a certain damage to the poetry by imposing a layer of pretentiousness to it. In art song these days, there's way too much art—or 'artiness'—and not enough song.

"One of the things that appealed to me immediately about Donald Hall's work is the simplicity and directness of the writing—the unfussiness of it. It has the naturalness of spoken language, along with wonderful subtlety and elegance. It stands on its own, but lends itself well to music." That is to say, Hall's poetry, much like Hall in life, gives itself welcomingly, generously, to empathetic partnership.

With the purpose of making a seriously ambitious work of musical art spared of despoiling "artiness," Garfein employed his impressive creative resources with imagination, meticulous precision, restraint, good taste, and no interest in ever sounding impressive. The song craft in this work is nothing short of masterly, but applied with unyielding rigor in service to the material. There are strains of Schubert in

10 "Freezes and Junes," a wrenchingly sad song whose sadness Garfein evokes, as Schubert

might, in a major key (D). There's a hint of Debussy in the sprightly lyricism of **5** "Fete." Throughout each song, in fact, there are moments of virtuosic musical invention that never draw attention to their virtuosity: the cinematic over-cranking effect of the music for the passage about driving slowly past an accident scene in **4** "The Green Shelf"; the highly nuanced attention



Proctor Cemetery, Andover, NH
Photo courtesy of Donald Hall

to line endings in **9** "Deathwork"; the counter-intuitive shifts in registers for the alternating points of view in **8** "Dying Is Simple, She Said"; the climax of **7** "Summer Kitchen," when the focal character (Jane Kenyon) announces, "It's ready now," and Garfein undergirds the scene with a simple triad in an unexpected key (A-flat); the medieval-sounding figure in **11** "Gold" that Garfein slips in as an allusion in "When I Was Young"; and enough more like this to titillate a musicologist without rattling a lay listener such as Donald Hall, who calls himself a "total ignoramus

about music.”

To serve both the unaffected expressiveness and the understated complexity of this work, Garfein called upon a singer, Michael Slattery, and a pianist, Dimitri Dover, esteemed for their communicative powers and dedication to emotional connectedness. Slattery, who has sung new music as well as repertoire extensively with orchestras worldwide, drew upon his actorly skill to give voice to work specific to the experience of a much older man. “I may seem an unconventional choice for these poems about love and loss after sixty,” Slattery says. “But my approach to song tends to be unique among singers, as Herschel understands. I typically begin my work by focusing on the words, rather than the music, and finding a way to bring clarity and honesty to the narrative. To do that well, you need more than personal experience. It requires a rich imagination and an even richer understanding of your own humanity. That’s what I’ve tried to do here.”

Dimitri Dover, a staff pianist and assistant conductor for the Metropolitan Opera with deep experience in concert vocal music, was immediately struck by the expressive range of Garfein’s piano writing for this cycle. “These songs run a very wide gamut of emotions and styles and textures,” Dover says, “and they have a virtuosity that is sometimes apparent and sometimes understated. The musical influences and

references vary from early American patriotic songs to Prokofiev to Las Vegas lounge music. It’s sometimes challenging to play, but all very satisfying.”

As a capstone to *Mortality Mansions*, the music on this album concludes with a setting by Garfein of a poem by Jane Kenyon, sung by the soprano Marnie Breckenridge, with Dimitri Dover on piano. The poem, [23] “Otherwise,” is one of Kenyon’s best-known and most moving: a paean to the precious quotidian pleasures of life while we’re still living, with acute awareness that things could be, and soon will be, *otherwise*. Breckenridge, a longtime admirer of Kenyon’s poetry, sings the piece with knowing sensitivity, caressing the delicate lines about having breakfast, walking the dog, working, and lying in bed with her mate, an unnamed Donald Hall.

“I had read ‘Otherwise’ as a poem before, but I don’t think I fully appreciated its depth until I sang it,” Breckenridge says. “It seems very simple, but it’s profoundly deep. To sing it, I had to peel away layer after layer until I got to the core and sang in an almost spoken way – not at all operatic.”


Ending this album with the voice of Jane Kenyon serves as reminder of Kenyon’s presence throughout *Mortality Mansions*. Created by Hall and Garfein, it is largely about Kenyon, a great American poet whose own stature is undiminished by her impact on Hall throughout and

well past their years together.

Mortality Mansions was first performed, in an early iteration of eight parts, in a concert by Slattery and Dover that Garfein oversaw in a school down the road from that farmhouse where Hall’s grandmother and mother were born and Hall still lives. Hall took part in the event, reading the poems in the cycle, much as he has done in the second portion of this recording. At the conclusion of the evening, Garfein drove Hall back to his house. Hall, weary from the undertaking, sat silently through the ride. Garfein pulled into the farmhouse drive and turned off the car, and Hall, looking straight ahead, said, “I wish Jane could have seen this.”

David Hajdu

David Hajdu is the author of Lush Life: A Biography of Billy Strayhorn, Love for Sale: Pop Music in America, and other books. Three-time winner of the ASCAP Deems Taylor Award for music writing, he is music critic for The Nation and professor at Columbia University.



Performance History

Mortality Mansions was commissioned by Sparks and Wiry Cries, Martha Guth and Erika Switzer, Artistic Directors, through an anonymous donation.

Eight of the songs were first performed at “An Evening of Poetry and Song” at Proctor Academy, Andover, New Hampshire, May 13, 2016, with Donald Hall and Herschel Garfein, Michael Slattery, tenor and Dimitri Dover, pianist.

Ten of the songs were performed on March 30, 2017, on the program *Mortality Mansions* at the Heyman Center for the Humanities, Columbia University, Eileen Gillooly, Executive Director. Michael Slattery, tenor, and Dimitri Dover, pianist. With readings by Jean Valentine, Richard Ford and Dr. Rita Charon. Donald Hall participated via live link from New Hampshire.



Hall and Kenyon, ca. 1992
Photo courtesy of Donald Hall

When the Young Husband

When the young husband picked up his friend's pretty wife
in the taxi one block from her townhouse for their
first lunch together, in a hotel dining room
with a room key in his pocket,

midtown traffic gridlocked and was abruptly still.
For one moment before klaxons started honking,
a prophetic voice spoke in his mind's ear despite
his pulse's erotic thudding:

"The misery you undertake this afternoon
will accompany you to the ends of your lives.
She knew what she did when she agreed to this lunch,
although she will not admit it;

and you've constructed your playlet a thousand times:
cocktails, an omelet, wine; the revelation
of a room key; the elevator rising as
the penis elevates; the skin

flushed, the door fumbled at, the handbag dropped; the first
kiss with open mouths, nakedness, swoon, thrust-and-catch;
endorphins followed by endearments; a brief nap;
another fit; restoration

of clothes, arrangements for another encounter,
the taxi back, and the furtive kiss of good-bye.
Then, by turn: tears, treachery, anger, betrayal;
marriages and houses destroyed;

small children abandoned and inconsolable,
their foursquare estates disestablished forever;
the unreadable advocates; the wretchedness
of passion outworn; anguished nights

sleepless in a bare room; whiskey, meth, cocaine; new
love, essayed in loneliness with miserable
strangers, that comforts nothing but skin; hours with sons
and daughters studious always

to maintain distrust; the daily desire to die
and the daily agony of the requirement
to survive, until only the quarrel endures."
Prophecy stopped; traffic started.



When I Was Young

When I was young and sexual

I looked forward to a cool Olympian age
for release from my obsessions.

Ho, ho, ho. At sixty the body's one desire

sustains my pulse, not to mention

my groin, as much as it ever did, if not quite
so often. When I gaze at your

bottom as you bend gardening, or at your breasts,

or at your face with its helmet

of sensuous hair, or at your eyes proposing
the text of our next encounter,

my attention departs from history, baseball,

food, poetry, and deathless fame.

Let us pull back the blanket, slide off our bluejeans,
assume familiar positions,

and celebrate lust in Mortality Mansions.



Woolworth's

My whole life has led me here.

Daisies made out of resin,
hairnets and motor oil,
Barbie dolls, green
garden chairs,
and forty-one brands of deodorant.

Three hundred years ago
I was hedging and ditching in Devon.
I lacked freedom of worship,
and freedom to trade molasses
for rum, for slaves, for molasses.

"I will sail to Massachusetts
to build the Kingdom
of Heaven on Earth!"

The side of a hill
swung open.
It was Woolworth's!

I followed this vision to Boston.

The Green Shelf

Driving back from the market,
bags of groceries beside me,
I saw on a lawn
the body of a gray-haired man
twisted beside his power mower.

A woman twisted
her hands above him, mouth wide
with a cry.
She bent close to him, straightened,
bent again, straightened,

and an ambulance
stopped at the curb.
I drove past them slowly
while helpers
kneeled by the man.

Over the stretcher
the lawnmower continued to throb
and absently
the hand of the old woman
caressed the shuddering

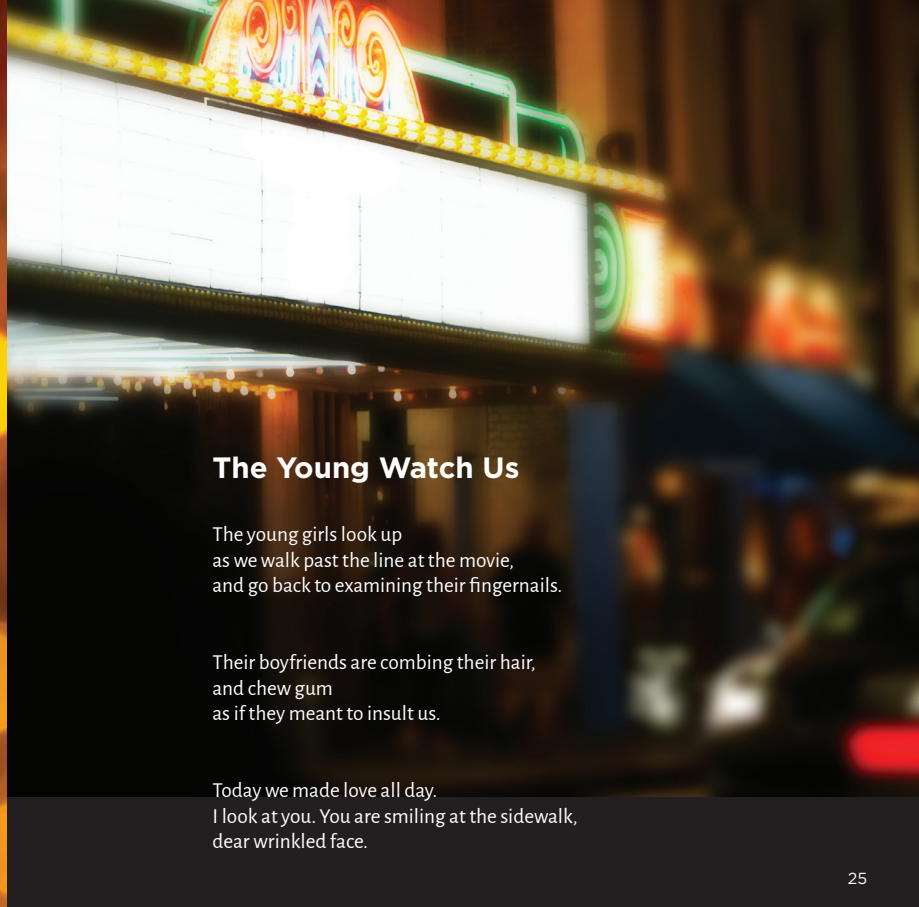
handle. Back.
I put the soup cans in order
on the green shelves —
pickles, canned milk, peas,
basil, and tarragon.





Fête

Festival lights go on
in villages throughout
the province, from Toe
Harbor, past the
Elbow Lakes, to Eyelid Hill
when you touch me, there.



The Young Watch Us

The young girls look up
as we walk past the line at the movie,
and go back to examining their fingernails.

Their boyfriends are combing their hair,
and chew gum
as if they meant to insult us.

Today we made love all day.
I look at you. You are smiling at the sidewalk,
dear wrinkled face.

Summer Kitchen

In June's high light she stood at the sink
With a glass of wine
And listened for the bobolink
And crushed garlic in late sunshine.

I watched her cooking, from my chair.
She pressed her lips
Together, reached for kitchenware,
And tasted sauce from fingertips.

"It's ready now. Come on," she said.
"You light the candle."
We ate, and talked, and went to bed,
And slept. It was a miracle.

Dying Is Simple, She Said

from Her Long Illness

"Dying is simple," she said.
"What's worst is ... *the separation*."
When she no longer spoke,
they lay alone together, touching,
and she fixed on him
her beautiful enormous round brown eyes,
shining, unblinking,
and passionate with love and dread.

Deathwork

Wake when dog whimpers. Prick
Finger. Inject insulin.
Glue teeth in.
Smoke cigarette.
Shudder and fret.
Feed old dog. Write syllabic

On self-pity. Get Boston *Globe*.
Drink coffee. Eat bagel. Read
At nervous speed.
Smoke cigarette.
Never forget
To measure oneself against Job.

Drag out afternoon.
Walk dog. Don't write.
Turn off light.
Smoke cigarette
Watching sun set.
Wait for the fucking moon.

Nuke lasagna. Pace and curse.
For solitude's support
Drink Taylor's port.
Smoke cigarette.
Sleep. Sweat.
Nightmare until dog whimpers.



Freezes and Junes

She laid bricks arranged
in V's underneath

the garden's rage of blossom.
After her death, after

the freezes of many winters,
her bricks rise and dip

undulant by the wellhead,
in summer softened by moss,

and in deep June I see
preterite, revenant poppies

fix, waver, fix, waver, fix...

Gold

Pale gold of the walls, gold
of the centers of daisies, yellow roses
pressing from a clear bowl. All day
we lay on the bed, my hand
stroking the deep
gold of your thighs and your back.
We slept and woke
entering the golden room together,
lay down in it breathing
quickly, then
slowly again,
caressing and dozing, your hand sleepily
touching my hair now.

We made in those days
tiny identical rooms inside our bodies
which the men who uncover our graves
will find in a thousand years,
shining and whole.

Otherwise

I got out of bed
on two strong legs.
It might have been
otherwise. I ate
cereal, sweet
milk, ripe, flawless
peach. It might
have been otherwise.
I took the dog uphill
to the birch wood.
All morning I did
the work I love.

At noon I lay down
with my mate. It might
have been otherwise.
We ate dinner together
at a table with silver
candlesticks. It might
have been otherwise.
I slept in a bed
in a room with paintings
on the walls, and
planned another day
just like this day.
But one day, I know,
it will be otherwise.

Poem by Jane Kenyon



Jane Kenyon (1947-1995)

Photo courtesy of Donald Hall

Jane Kenyon was born in 1947 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. She graduated from the University of Michigan in 1970 and in 1972 married the poet Donald Hall, with whom she moved to Eagle Pond Farm in New Hampshire in 1975. She published four books of poetry: *From Room to Room* in 1978, *The Boat of Quiet Hours* in 1986, *Let Evening Come* in 1990, and *Constance* in 1993. She received a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and a Guggenheim Fellowship. In December 1993 she and her husband were the subject of an Emmy Award-winning documentary by Bill Moyers, called *A Life Together*. She died of leukemia in 1995. Her *Collected Poems* appeared in 2005.

Michael Slattery



MICHAEL SLATTERY has performed with the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival, the French National Orchestra in Paris, the Akademie für Alte Musik in Berlin, and the Orchestra of St. Luke's at Carnegie Hall.

Career highlights include the *Tristan Project* (Lincoln Center), the title roles in *Candide* (Royal Festival Hall) and *L'Orfeo* (Théâtre du Châtelet, Glimmerglass), and leading roles at the Berlin Staatsoper, Opéra de Lyon, and the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, among others.

Mr. Slattery debuted with the New York Philharmonic in the Britten *Serenade*, returning the following season for Handel's *Messiah*. Other notable appearances include the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, Houston Symphony, New World Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra, and the Edinburgh and Spoleto Festivals.

Mr. Slattery's new English translation of Bach's *St. John Passion* (commissioned by MasterVoices) was performed in 2017 at Carnegie Hall.

Mr. Slattery's solo recordings include *The Irish Heart* and a collaboration with Montreal chamber ensemble LaNef entitled *Dowland in Dublin*, chosen by Opera News as a Best of the Year for 2012. Their next album, *The People's Purcell*, was released in January 2018.

The 2018-2019 season will include a collaboration with Missy Mazzoli and Royce Vavrek at the Miller Theater in New York City and a return to the Los Angeles Philharmonic in Britten's *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings*.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several large, overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Dimitri Dover



Pianist **DIMITRI DOVER** has performed as recitalist and chamber musician in venues such as New York's Alice Tully Hall, Merkin Hall, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, and Park Avenue Armory, as well as Zipper Hall (Los Angeles), Segerstrom Hall (Orange County), and throughout the United States, Canada, and Austria. Recent appearances in the New York area include Brooklyn Art Song Society, Chelsea Music Festival, Cutting Edge Concerts, Joy in Singing, Met Opera Rising Stars, and The Song Continues. Mr. Dover has performed in the composer's presence the works of Thomas Adès, Valerie Coleman, George Crumb, Herschel Garfein, Jake Heggie, Libby Larsen, John Musto, André Previn, Shulamit Ran, Kaija Saariaho, and Chris Theofanidis, among many others.

In 2016, Mr. Dover joined the music staff of The Metropolitan Opera, where he has served as assistant conductor for Saariaho's *L'Amour de Loin* and Adès's *The Exterminating Angel*, in which he also performed as piano soloist. He holds degrees from The Juilliard School, Peabody Conservatory, and Harvard University. He has also received summer fellowships from Tanglewood and Aspen, as well as Songfest at Colburn, where he returned as faculty coach in 2016. He is a graduate of the Metropolitan Opera Lindemann Young Artist Program.

A handwritten signature in black ink, written in a cursive style. The name "Dimitri Dover" is clearly legible.

Marnie Breckenridge



American soprano **MARNIE BRECKENRIDGE** is captivating international audiences with roles ranging from the Baroque and bel canto to modern opera, concerts and recordings. She has sung with the San Francisco Opera, the English National Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Fort Worth Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Indianapolis Opera, Prague State Opera, The Metropolitan Opera Guild, Arizona Opera, Opera Parallèle, and other US and European houses. She has also performed at Carnegie Hall, the Ravinia Music Festival, the Bard Music Festival, Teatro São Paulo, and National Sawdust, as well as with the San Francisco Symphony and Philharmonia Baroque. As a favored interpreter of living composers' music, her in-depth portrayals and excellent musicianship have established her as a go-to performer of critically acclaimed new works with her "lovely soprano" voice (*The New York Times*), and "lyrical poignancy and dramatic power" (*The Chicago Tribune*). Recent favorite roles include Mother in Little's *Dog Days*, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, Lucia in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Gilda in *Rigoletto*, La

Princesse in Glass's *Orphée*, Sierva Maria in Peter Eötvös' *Love And Other Demons*, Emily in Ned Rorem's *Our Town*, Margarita Xirgu in Golijov's *Ainadamar*, the title role in Milhaud's *Médée*, and Cunegonde in *Candide*, deemed "simply terrific" (*Opera Magazine UK*) and "note perfect" (*Prague Post*). Breckenridge is a featured soloist on the 2012 New World Records' album of Victor Herbert songs, and can be heard on Dimitri Hvorostovsky's *Heroes and Villains*, (a Delos recording), *Vocal Music of David Conte*, *Dog Days* (Little) and countless other recordings by American composers. She trained at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music in voice (MM) and at The American Conservatory Theatre in drama.

www.marniebreckenridge.com

HERSCHEL GARFEIN is a two-time Grammy Award-winning composer, librettist and stage director. He is the composer/librettist of *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*, the first-ever operatic adaptation of a play by Tom Stoppard (excerpts: Fort Worth Opera *Frontiers* 2014; piano-vocal premiere: The Seagle Colony 2017). Of the Fort Worth performance, the *Wall Street Journal* wrote, "Garfein set the diamond-bright dialogue of the Tom Stoppard play with clarity and wit, heightening the comedy through skillful ensemble writing and characterization."

Recent work includes *The Cyclone* for soprano Marnie Breckenridge and *The Five Borough Songbook*, 2017; the libretto for Robert Aldridge's opera *Sister Carrie* (Florentine Opera, Milwaukee) released on Naxos Records in 2017; stage direction and English dialogue for Mozart's *The Magic Flute* for Eklund Opera, University of Colorado; script and direction of the jazz-theater piece *My Coma Dreams* for composer Fred Hersch (Palmetto DVD; *Boston Globe's* Best of 2014).

Career highlights: *Mythologies* (music and lyrics) the landmark dance triptych for The Mark Morris Dance Group; *Sueños* (composer, co-lyricist) for Mabou Mines; *American Steel* for the Alabama Symphony; incidental music for *Troilus & Cressida* directed by Sir Peter Hall; *Alzheimer's Stories* (libretto) for Robert S. Cohen and *Parables* (libretto) for Aldridge.

Recordings include: *The Brooklyn Art Song Society: New Voices* (Roven Records) and *Innocence/ Experience* (GPR Records), mezzo Jennifer Rivera's solo disk which features his William Blake song cycle *The Divine Image*.

He received a 2012 Grammy for Best Contemporary Classical Composition for his "wildly operatic libretto" (*BBC Music Magazine*) for Aldridge's *Elmer Gantry*, and received a 2016 Grammy as Producer of Ted Nash's *Presidential Suite: Eight Variations on Freedom*.

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Herschel Garfein



Donald Hall



DONALD HALL was born in Hamden, Connecticut, in 1928. He has published poems, essays, short stories, memoirs, plays, biographies, textbooks, and children's books. *The Selected Poems of Donald Hall*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, came out in December 2015, which had issued *Essays After Eighty* a year earlier. His children's book *The Ox-Cart Man* won the Caldecott Award for 1980. In 2006, Hall was appointed the Library of Congress's fourteenth Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry, and in March 2011 President Obama awarded him the 2010 National Medal of Arts. He makes his home in Wilmot, New Hampshire. In 2018 he brings out *A Carnival of Losses: Notes Nearing Ninety*.



Photos from Donald Hall's album: (Clockwise from L) Hall receiving 2010 National Medal of Arts, 2011; Group photo, Michigan, 1970s (From L.: Kenyon's sister-in-law Dawn, brother Reuel, Kenyon, Hall); Jane Kenyon as a teenager.

Mortality Mansions

SONGS OF LOVE AND LOSS AFTER 60

All selections composed by Herschel Garfein (BMI)

Texts by Donald Hall (1-22)
Otherwise text by Jane Kenyon (23)

Michael Slattery, tenor (1-11)
Dimitri Dover, piano

Marnie Breckenridge, soprano (23)
Donald Hall, reader (1, 12-22)

Recording Engineer: Blanton Alspaugh
Mixing and Mastering: Mark Donahue
Edited, Mixed and Mastered at SoundMirror, Boston, MA.

Mortality Mansions was recorded November 17, November 27 & 28, 2017 at Oktaven Audio, Mount Vernon, NY.
Piano: 1987 Steinway Hamburg D.
Piano technician: Dan Jessie

Liner Notes: David Hajdu
Introductory Essay: Donald Hall
Packaging and Graphic Design: Jessie Glass, glassfoundry, LLC.

Producers: Herschel Garfein, Kabir Sehgal
Assistant Producers: Ryan Streber, Martha Guth, Erika Switzer

Photography: Maundy Mitchell

The Architecture of Mortality
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Shelf", "Fête", "The Young Watch Us", "Summer Kitchen", "Dying Is Simple, She Said" (excerpt from *Her Long Illness*), "Deathwork", "Gold". Used with Permission. All Rights Reserved.

"Freezes and Junes"
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Song manuscript (p.9) courtesy of Herschel Garfein

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Michael Slattery, *tenor*
Dimitri Dover, *piano*

Marnie Breckenridge, *soprano*
Donald Hall, *reader*

Herschel Garfein, *music*
Donald Hall, *texts*

Otherwise text by Jane Kenyon

PRODUCED BY
Herschel Garfein
Kabir Sehgal

