

For immediate release

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## **Mortality Mansions**

*Songs of Love and Loss After 60*

**Herschel Garfein**, multi-Grammy® Award-winning composer

**Donald Hall**, former US Poet Laureate

**Tenor Michael Slattery and Pianist Dimitri Dover**

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

**A new DELOS Recording Highlights**

**Love and Sexuality, Bereavement and Memory in Late Life**

in a unique intergenerational song cycle

Liner notes by acclaimed music writer David Hajdu. With an Introduction by Donald Hall.

44-page full color booklet with complete poem texts.

**Release Date: June 8, 2018 / Review Copy available: May 14, 2018**

On June 8, 2018 DELOS Records will release **MORTALITY MANSIONS, Songs of Love and Loss After 60**, an ambitious and timely vocal album composed by **HERSCHEL GARFEIN**, multi-Grammy® Award winner, to texts by **DONALD HALL**, 2006 U.S. Poet Laureate. Acclaimed tenor **MICHAEL SLATTERY** (“elemental emotional force” –*Financial Times*; “sweet-toned tenderness” – *NY Times*) and Metropolitan Opera pianist **DIMITRI DOVER**, the artists for whom the song cycle was composed, lead this spirited and deeply moving journey in song, which brims with stylistic inflections ranging from musical theater to German *lieder* to Sousa marches.

Focusing on crucial issues rarely addressed in song, the eleven-song cycle starts at age sixty with ironic remembrances of youthful trysts, settles into contented domesticity and sexual fulfillment, only to pass on through harrowing confrontations with death before arriving at a transcendent recognition of love’s redemptive power. A touching reversed perspective comes as an Epilogue with the song *Otherwise*, on a poem by Hall’s deceased wife, **JANE KENYON**, sung by soprano **MARNIE BRECKENRIDGE** (“lyrical poignancy and dramatic power” –*Chicago Tribune*).

As an Interlude on the disk, the 89 year-old Hall reads his poems to Garfein’s musical accompaniments, lending personal and historical significance to this recording. The liner notes are by David Hajdu, three-time winner of the ASCAP Deems Taylor Award for music writing.

*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.*

– From the liner notes by David Hajdu

### **Background**

MORTALITY MANSIONS began as an intergenerational working relationship between poet Hall (nearing 90) and composer Garfein (in his 50’s), who would drive the 11-hour round trip to work with Hall at his farmhouse in central New Hampshire. This culminated in a first performance at a school down the road from the farmhouse, with Slattery and Dover performing, and Hall reading his poems. In March 2017, the nearly complete song cycle was presented by the Heyman Center for the Humanities at

Columbia University in a program featuring readings of the song-texts by Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Richard Ford, and Bollingen Prize-winning poet Jean Valentine, with Donald Hall joining by live link from New Hampshire.

The Delos album, produced by Herschel Garfein and Kabir Sehgal, is a world premiere recording that includes two songs never heard before.

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Sexuality over 60, aging in place, intergenerational relations and end-of-life choices – as the baby boom generation enters into old age, with ever-greater numbers of people choosing to remain in the workforce, these crucial issues have emerged in our cultural discourse. **MORTALITY MANSIONS** gives eloquent and passionate voice to these concerns, and highlights a collaboration between a fresh and talked-about young vocal talent, a brilliant collaborative pianist, a multi-Grammy®-winning theater composer, and a revered American poet.

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.

from *Gold* by Donald Hall

### Biographies

**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, and the Akademie für Alte Musik in Berlin. Career highlights include *the Tristan Project* (Lincoln Center), the title roles in *Candide* (Royal Festival Hall) and *L'Orfeo* (Théâtre du Châtelet, Glimmerglass). Mr. Slattery's solo recordings include *The Irish Heart* and collaborations with Montreal chamber ensemble LaNef: *Dowland in Dublin* (chosen by Opera News as a Best of the Year for 2012), and *The People's Purcell*, released in January 2018. His 2018-2019 season will include an operatic collaboration with Missy Mazzoli and Royce Vavrek, and a return to the Los Angeles Philharmonic in Britten's *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings*.

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 USA, Canada, and Austria.

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* (piano soloist). He holds degrees from The Juilliard School, Peabody Conservatory, and Harvard University. He is a graduate of the Metropolitan Opera Lindemann Young Artist Program.

Soprano **MARNIE BRECKENRIDGE** has sung with the San Francisco Opera, the English National Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Prague State Opera, as well as at Teatro São Paulo, the Ravinia Music Festival, and the Bard Music Festival. A favored interpreter of living composers' music, she has been singled out for 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*, La Princesse in Glass's *Orphée*, Sierva Maria in Peter Eötvös's *Love And Other Demons*, the title role in Milhaud's *Médée*, and Cunegonde in *Candide* ("Simply terrific" -- *Opera*

*Magazine UK* ). Recent recordings: Dimitri Hvorostovsky's *Heroes and Villains*, *Vocal Music of David Conte*, and Little/Vavrek's *Dog Days*.

**HERSCHEL GARFEIN** is a two-time GRAMMY® award-winning composer, librettist and stage director. He is the composer/librettist of *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*, based on the play by Tom Stoppard. Of a 2014 Fort Worth Opera "Frontiers" performance, Heidi Waleson wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*, "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* (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) 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.

Recordings include: *The Brooklyn Art Song Society: New Voices* (Roven Records) and *Innocence/Experience* (GPR Records), featuring his William Blake song-cycle *The Divine Image*.

2012 GRAMMY® for Best Contemporary Classical Composition for his "wildly operatic libretto" (*BBC Music Magazine*) for Aldridge's *Elmer Gantry*. 2017 GRAMMY® as Producer of *Presidential Suite: Eight Variations on Freedom*.

**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 National Medal of Arts. He makes his home in Wilmot, New Hampshire. In July, 2018 he brings out *A Carnival of Losses: Notes Nearing Ninety* (Houghton Mifflin).

**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 Bill Moyers documentary, "A Life Together." She died of leukemia in 1995. Her *Collected Poems* appeared in 2005.

**KABIR SEHGAL** (co-producer) is a multi -GRAMMY® award-winning producer – most recently in 2017 for Pablo Ziegler's *Jazz Tango* (Best Latin Jazz Album). A frequent contributor to MSNBC and Fortune, he is author of the *NY Times* best seller "Coined: The Rich Life of Money And How Its History Has Shaped Us."

A pioneer in the digital recording of classical music, **DELOS MUSIC** has been at the forefront of the industry for forty-five years. Its star-studded Opera and Vocal series includes such luminaries as Jamie Barton, Lawrence Brownlee, Ewa Podles, Nicole Cabell, Isabel Leonard, Sondra Radvanovsky, and the late Dmitri Hvorostovsky. Since 2008, Delos recordings have been distributed worldwide through **NAXOS RECORDS**, the largest independent classical label in the world.

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