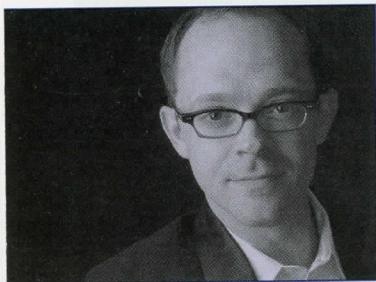


essay

"Thanksgiving" in French

by Dan Chouinard



My first and only holiday season away from home began with a "Dîner Traditionnel de Thanksgiving" at Le Blue Note, a storefront jazz bar and eatery on a dark side street in Aix-en-Provence. I was a college junior spending my fall semester in France, and on Thursdays I had a regular gig here playing saloon piano.

Tonight, the very day of *action de grâce* (standard French for "Thanksgiving"), the tiny place was packed to the walls, the locals far outnumbered by my 30 Minnesota classmates. We ate *dinde* (turkey) and *farce* (stuffing) and pumpkin soufflé; we gave thanks; we sang show tunes and ran up a big tab. On a break the owner poured me a snifter of something unpronounceable and said, "Why aren't you doing something with your music?" I thought I was.

In times of displacement and loneliness I invariably go in search of a piano and an audience, and in the fall of 1982, my first trip away from home, I went at it with a vengeance.

Gérard, my host and a local choir director—also my *de facto* agent—helped me land the weekly gig at Le Blue Note, and I repaid him by recording piano accompaniments for his choir. I got myself a moped for the semester and put it to good use criss-crossing the Provençal countryside tuning people's pianos for francs and dinner invitations. After class most days I practiced piano in the baroque hall of the international school, in preparation for a concert I'd give there in January. And on Thursdays I'd head for the restaurant where Aixois and Minnesotans alike showed up to sing American pop songs and listen to ragtime piano.

Activity helped crowd out the loneliness, but it crept in all the same like the smoky autumnal chill. Sometimes it came in the mail: a cassette from home, the voices of

Mom, Dad and siblings with last month's latest news and the heartbreaking reminder that life there did indeed go on without me.

By this semester my life was in Aix-en-Provence, and on this night gratitude was my calling. How lucky I was: a student from a nice Minnesota liberal arts college spending four months in the south of France, zipping around on this moped that tonight had carried me through the Renaissance streets to this little bar where my family of traveling companions was gathered to sing away this peculiarly American holiday.

In a few days we'd all start activating our Eurail passes and scatter like leaves across the unexplored continent. I'd go to the French Alps to ski on a real mountain; to Paris alone to walk the crowded streets, humming "Silver Bells" and munching roasted chestnuts; and then by sleeper train to the starlit Pyrenees for Christmas with the family of a French oil executive and midnight mass in a stone church that rang with shepherd songs and ancient dialect.

Tonight, out in the dark street Adventure beckoned us, its bags packed, mouthing *Let's Go!* For a brief moment we didn't notice: we'd steamed up the windows with too many choruses of "New York, New York." One last time, we sat crammed together at tables and around the hearth of the piano. Adventure and all its demands would come soon enough. Thanksgiving night was for home, family and music, wherever they were to be found.

Dan Chouinard is a freelance pianist, accordionist and writer who turns up frequently on Minnesota Public Radio and on concert stages across the region. In upcoming weeks he'll appear in Gales of November at the Fitzgerald Theater and Kevin Kling's Tales from the Charred Underbelly of the Yule Log at the Guthrie Theater, as well as other shows; see his schedule at [danchouinard.com](http://danchouinard.com).

# Minnesota Orchestra

Robert Spano, conductor

Kelley O'Connor, mezzo

Thursday, November 19, 2015, 11 am | Orchestra Hall

Friday, November 20, 2015, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

## Peter Lieberman

### *Neruda Songs*

ca. 30'

If your eyes were not the color of the moon (Sultry, languid)  
 Love, love, the clouds went up the tower of the sky (Light, brilliant)  
 Don't go far off, not even for a day (Largo)  
 And now you're mine. Rest with your dream in my dream (Passionately)  
 My love, if I die and you don't (Sustained, peaceful)

*Kelley O'Connor, mezzo*

## I N T E R M I S S I O N

ca. 20'

## Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

### Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Opus 74, *Pathétique*

ca. 45'

Adagio – Allegro non troppo

Allegro con grazia

Allegro molto vivace

Finale: Adagio lamentoso

Text and translations for Lieberman's *Neruda Songs* begin on page 38.

Minnesota Orchestra concerts are broadcast live on Friday evenings on stations of **Classical Minnesota Public Radio**, including KSJN 99.5 FM in the Twin Cities.





## Peter Lieberman

**Born:** October 25, 1946, New York City

**Died:** April 23, 2011, Tel Aviv

### Neruda Songs

In the early 1980s, Peter Lieberman was still an obscure, largely unrecognized composer when the Boston Symphony chose him as one of 12 to write a work for its centennial season of 1981-82. As the youngest of the 12, he was not yet 40, and he had yet to write an orchestral work. But his Piano Concerto, premiered with Peter Serkin as soloist, catapulted Lieberman to international recognition. For a time, Lieberman was simultaneously a director of Shambhala Training in the Boston area, a professor at Harvard University (his only academic appointment, which lasted from 1984 to 1988) and a composer. He spent the last two decades of his life working solely as a composer while living in Santa Fe. He died in Tel Aviv, where he had gone for treatment of lymphoma.

Lieberman had been born into a family life dominated by the arts. His father, Goddard Lieberman, was also a composer, but his lasting fame derives from many years as president of Columbia Records. His mother was Vera Zorina, a ballerina with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and former wife of choreographer George Balanchine. Lieberman studied music at Columbia University and Brandeis University. Charles Wuorinen, Milton Babbitt and Donald Martino were his principal composition teachers. A deep and abiding interest in Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism colored much of his music, if not programmatically, then in a spiritual way. As a result of meditating he relaxed and, he said, “as a product of relaxation more space came into [my] music.”

Following the premiere of his Piano Concerto in Boston, Lieberman received commissions from major orchestras and musical organizations from Toronto to Tokyo. One of his most successful works has been a second concerto for Serkin, *Red Garuda* (1999), his third Boston Symphony commission.

For the Toronto Symphony and Yo-Yo Ma he wrote a cello concerto, *The Six Realms* (2000). This orchestra also premiered his Viola Concerto (1993). Lieberman's last works include *The World in Flower*, premiered by the New York Philharmonic in 2009; *Songs of Love and Sorrow*, premiered by the Boston Symphony in 2010; and *Remembering JFK*, premiered by the National Symphony the year Lieberman died. *Shing Kham* for percussion and orchestra was left incomplete at his death; it was finished by Oliver Knussen and Dejan Badnjar.

### sonnets and songs

Santa Fe held special importance for Lieberman. This was where he saw the world premiere in 1997 of the largest project of his career, *Ashoka's Dream*, a stage work involving the story of a third-century Indian leader and how he learned generosity through Buddhism. In the cast was the woman he would later marry, mezzo Lorraine Hunt, for whom he wrote the *Neruda Songs* and the *Rilke Songs*.

Lieberman discovered the *100 Love Sonnets* by Nobel-prize-winning Chilean poet Pablo Neruda (1904-1973) in a shop at the Albuquerque airport in 1997. *The Neruda Songs* resulted from a co-commission by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Boston Symphony. The former orchestra gave the world premiere on May 20, 2005, with Esa-Pekka Salonen conducting. Lorraine Hunt Lieberman was the soloist. Tim Page in *The Washington Post* called the *Neruda Songs* “one of the most extraordinarily affecting artistic gifts ever created by one lover to another.” Alex Ross described the music as having “the feeling of one of those golden summer afternoons when the world seems to reach a point of magical equilibrium, and we want to slow down time so that it does not end so quickly.” *The Neruda Songs* won Lieberman the prestigious Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition in 2008.

The composer writes: “Each of the five poems that I set to music seemed to me to reflect a different face in love's mirror. The first poem, ‘If your eyes were not the color of the moon,’ is pure appreciation of the beloved. The second, ‘Love, love, the clouds went up the tower of the sky like triumphant washerwomen,’ is joyful and also mysterious in its evocation of nature's elements: fire, water, wind, and luminous space. The third poem, ‘Don't go far off, not even for a day,’ reflects the anguish of love, the fear and pain of separation. The fourth poem, ‘And now you're mine. Rest with your dream in my dream,’ is complex in its emotional tone. First there is the exultance of passion. Then, gentle, soothing words lead the beloved into the world of rest, sleep and dream. Finally, the fifth poem, ‘My love, if I die and you don't,’ is very sad and peaceful at the same time. There is the recognition that no matter how blessed one is with love, there



will be a time when we must part from those whom we cherish so much. Still, Neruda reminds one that love has not ended. In truth, there is no real death to love nor even a birth: 'It is like a long river, only changing lands, and changing lips.'"

In their vivid evocations of the rapture and mystery of love, their haunting images, masterly orchestration, refinement and sensuous sheen, Lieberman's *Neruda Songs* recall the world of another great orchestral song cycle, Ravel's *Shéhérazade*. They also evoke Strauss' Four Last Songs, especially in the last songs of the cycles, each imbued with a golden glow and a sense of quiet confidence in the acceptance of inevitable death. The Strauss connection goes further. Both Strauss and Lieberman cultivated relationships with their future wives—both professional singers—during rehearsals of their own first operas (in Strauss' case, Pauline d'Ahna in *Guntram*; in

Lieberman's case, Lorraine Hunt in *Ashoka's Dream*, where she portrayed Ashoka's second wife, Triraksha; Lorraine became Lieberman's second wife as well). Pauline and Lorraine also served as powerful muses to their composer-husbands. Unlike the Strausses, who lived into ripe old age, the Liebermans died tragically young—Lorraine at just 52, Peter at 64, both from cancer. A live recording of the *Neruda Songs* with the Boston Symphony on the Nonesuch label remains as eloquent testimony to the luminous beauty of Lorraine Hunt Lieberman's voice, her mesmerizing vocal delivery, and to a sublime artistic partnership.

**Instrumentation:** solo mezzo with orchestra comprising 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), oboe, English horn, 2 clarinets (1 doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, vibraphone, glockenspiel, crotales, high suspended cymbal, maracas, low tom-tom, harp, piano and strings

### Peter Lieberman *Neruda Songs* poetry by Pablo Neruda

**I. Si no fuera porque tus ojos tienen color de luna**  
Si no fuera porque tus ojos tienen color de luna,  
de día con arcilla, con trabajo, con fuego,  
y aprisionada tienes la agilidad del aire,

si no fuera porque eres una semana de ámbar,  
si no fuera porque eres el momento Amarillo  
en que el otoño sube por las enredaderas  
y eres aún el pan que la luna fragante  
elabora paseando su harina par el cielo,

oh, bienamada, yo no te amaría!  
En tu abrazo yo abrazo lo que existe,  
la arena, el tiempo, el árbol de la lluvia,

y todo vive para que yo viva:  
sin ir tan lejos puedo verlo todo:  
veo en tu vida todo lo viviente.

**I. If your eyes were not the color of the moon**  
If your eyes were not the color of the moon,  
of a day full of clay, and work, and fire,  
if even held-in you did not move in agile grace like the air,

if you were not an amber week,  
not the yellow moment  
when autumn climbs up through the vines;  
if you were not that bread the fragrant moon  
kneads, sprinkling its flour across the sky,

oh, my dearest, I could not love you so!  
But when I hold you I hold everything that is –  
sand, time, the tree of the rain,

everything is alive so that I can be alive:  
without moving I can see it all:  
in your life I see everything that lives.

**II. Amor, amor, las nubes a la torre del cielo**  
Amor, amor, las nubes a la torre del cielo  
subieron como triunfantes lavanderas,  
y todo ardió en azul, todo fue estrella:  
el mar, la nave, el día se desterraron juntos.

Ven a ver los cerezos del agua constelada  
y la clave redonda del rápido universo,  
ven a tocar el fuego del azul instantáneo,  
ven antes de que sus pétalos se consuman.

No hay aquí sino luz, cantidades, racimos,  
espacio abierto por las virtudes del viento  
hasta entregar los últimos secretos de la espuma.

Y entre tantos azules celestes, sumergidos,  
se pierden nuestros ojos adivinando apenas  
los poderes del aire, las llaves submarinas.

**II. Love, love, the clouds went up the tower of the sky**  
Love, love, the clouds went up the tower of the sky  
like triumphant washerwomen,  
and it all glowed in blue, all like a single star,  
the sea, the ship, the day were all exiled together.

Come see the cherries of the water in the weather,  
the round key to the universe, which is so quick:  
come touch the fire of this momentary blue,  
before its petals wither.

There's nothing here but light, quantities, clusters,  
space opened by the graces of the wind  
till it gives up the final secret of the foam.

Among so many blues – heavenly blues, sunken blues –  
our eyes are a little confused: they can hardly divine  
the powers of the air, the keys to the secrets in the sea.



**III. No estés lejos de mí un solo día**

No estés lejos de mí un solo día, porque cómo,  
porque, no sé decirlo, es largo el día,  
y te estaré esperando como en las estaciones  
cuando en alguna parte se durmieron los trenes.

No te vayas por una hora porque entonces  
en esa hora se juntan las gotas del desvelo  
y tal vez todo el humo que anda buscando casa  
venga a matar aún mi corazón perdido.

Ay que no se quebrante tu silueta en la arena,  
ay que no vuelen tus párpados en la ausencia:  
no te vayas por un minuto, bienamada,

porque en ese minuto te habrás ido tan lejos  
que yo cruzaré toda la tierra preguntando  
si volverás o si me dejarás muriendo.

**III. Don't go far off, not even for a day**

Don't go far off, not even for a day, because –  
because – I don't know how to say it: a day is long  
and I will be waiting for you, as in an empty station  
when the trains are parked off somewhere else, asleep.

Don't leave me, even for an hour, because  
then the little drops of anguish will all run together,  
the smoke that roams looking for a home will drift  
into me, choking my lost heart.

Oh, may your silhouette never dissolve on the beach;  
may your eyelids never flutter into the empty distance.  
don't leave me for a second, my dearest,

because in that moment you'll have gone so far  
I'll wander mazelily over all the earth, asking,  
Will you come back? Will you leave me here, dying?

**IV. Ya eres mía. Reposa con tu sueño en mi sueño.**

Ya eres mía. Reposa con tu sueño en mi sueño.  
Amor, dolor, trabajos, deben dormir ahora.  
Gira la noche sobre sus invisibles ruedas  
y junto a mí eres pura como el ámbar dormido.

Ninguna más, amor, dormiré con mis sueños.  
Iras, iremos juntos por las aguas del tiempo.  
Ninguna viajará por la sombra conmigo,  
solo tu, siempre viva, siempre sol, siempre luna.

Ya tus manos abrieron los puños delicados  
y dejaron caer suaves signos sin rumbo,  
tus ojos se cerraron como dos alas grises,

mientras yo sigo el agua que llevas y me lleva:  
la noche, el mundo, el viento devanan su destino,  
y ya no soy sin ti sino sólo tu sueño.

**IV. And now you're mine. Rest with your dream in my dream.**

And now you're mine. Rest with your dream in my dream.  
Love and pain and work should all sleep, now.  
The night turns on its invisible wheels,  
and you are pure beside me as a sleeping amber.

No one else, Love, will sleep in my dreams.  
You will go, we will go together, over the waters of time.  
No one else will travel through the shadows with me,  
only you, evergreen, ever sun, ever moon.

Your hands have already opened their delicate fists  
and let their soft drifting signs drop away;  
your eyes closed like two gray wings, and I move

after, following the folding water you carry, that carries me away.  
The night, the world, the wind spin out their destiny.  
Without you, I am your dream, only that, and that is all.

**V. Amor mío, si muero y tú no mueres**

Amor mío, si muero y tú no mueres,  
amor mía, si mueres y no muero,  
no demos al dolor más territorio:  
no hay extensión como la que vivimos.

Polva en el trigo, arena en las arenas  
el tiempo, el agua errante, el viento vago  
nos llevó como grana navegante.  
Pudimos no encontrarnos en el tiempo.

Esta pradera en que nos encontramos,  
oh pequeño infinito! devolvemos.  
Pero este amor, amor, no ha terminado,

y así como no tuvo nacimiento  
no tiene muerte, es como un largo río,  
sólo cambia de tierras y de labios.

**V. My love, if I die and you don't**

My love, if I die and you don't—,  
My love, if you die and I don't—,  
Let's not give grief an even greater field.  
No expanse is greater than where we live.

Dust in the wheat, sand in the deserts,  
time, wandering water, the vague wind  
swept us on like sailing seeds.  
We might not have found one another in time.

This meadow where we find ourselves,  
O little infinity! we give it back.  
But Love, this love has not ended:

just as it never had a birth, it has  
no death: it is like a long river,  
only changing lands, and changing lips.







## Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Born: May 7, 1840, Votkinsk, Russia

Died: November 7, 1893, St. Petersburg, Russia

### Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Opus 74, *Pathétique*

much conjecture has surrounded the “program” of Tchaikovsky’s Sixth Symphony. During its composition he wrote to his nephew Vladimir Davidov that “the program will be of a kind that will remain an enigma to all—let them guess... This program is saturated with subjective feeling...while composing it in my mind I shed many tears.”

#### passionate, not pathetic

Tchaikovsky considered calling it the “Tragic,” but when his brother Modeste suggested *pateticheskyy*, the composer exclaimed, “Excellent, Modya, bravo, *pateticheskyy*!” The word was inscribed immediately on the score’s title page and taken to the publisher Jurgenson. Within a day Tchaikovsky changed his mind. But Jurgenson, no doubt with an eye towards the sales potential of such a catchy title, let the work go out as *Symphonie pathétique*, and the name stuck. It is worth noting that the word *pathétique* derives from the Greek *patheticos*, which has a different flavor than in most modern English contexts, where it usually implies inadequacy and pity, as in “a pathetic attempt.” The Russian *pateticheskyy* refers to something passionate, emotional and, as in the original Greek, having overtones of suffering.

Death seems to lurk in much of the work. The words “death” and “dying” occur in a letter Tchaikovsky wrote explaining the plan of the symphony. Some listeners hear an expression of a hypersensitive artist given to alternating moods of exaltation and dejection, and try to follow each emotional state in the music as a mirror of the composer’s soul. Others take their cue from critic Philip Hale, who wrote: “Here is a work that, without a hint or a suggestion of a program, sums up in the most imaginative language the life of man, with his illusions, desires, loves, struggles, victories, unavoidable end.”

Jonathan Kramer offers this balanced view: “Tchaikovsky’s

language is one of immediacy, not subtlety, and nowhere is his emotionalism more personal than in the *Pathétique*. His sentimentalism was symptomatic of his era, but today the excesses of late Romantic art can be appreciated in their historical context. We have known, in the wars of the 20th century, a deeper and far more devastating hysteria than is depicted in the Sixth Symphony. The unbridled outpouring of this music, especially in its last movement, is tolerable today because it does not seem to portray the deepest possible human despair. Although the composer may have intended high tragedy, the music itself does not seem to attempt such lofty heights. It is over-effusive, unstable, impulsive, yet it is immediate and spontaneous—it is, in a word, human.”

Tchaikovsky began working on his last symphony in February 1893 and conducted the first performance on October 28 in St. Petersburg. It was only mildly successful, yet he felt that it was “the best and especially the most sincere of my works. I love it as I have never loved any of my other musical creations.” At the second performance, three weeks later, conducted by Eduard Nápravník, the symphony left a powerful impression. But the composer was dead: his *Symphonie pathétique* had become his swan song.

*adagio - allegro non troppo*. The introductory bassoon solo, which crawls slowly through the murkiest colors of the orchestra, becomes the melodic material for the *Allegro* section’s principal theme. The second theme, presented by the violins, is probably the most memorable of the entire work, haunting in its beauty, poignancy and sad lyricism. The clarinet brings this theme down to the limits of audibility. A crash shatters the mood abruptly, and the development section ensues, one of the most

“...the best and especially the most sincere of my works. I love it as I have never loved any of my other musical creations.”

– Tchaikovsky, on his *Pathétique* Symphony

violent and ferocious passages Tchaikovsky ever wrote. A brief recapitulation is followed by a consoling coda.

*allegro con grazia*. The second movement, in 5/4 meter, has famously been called a “broken-backed waltz, limping yet graceful.” A *Trio* section in the middle, also in 5/4, is noteworthy for the steady, pulsing notes in the bassoons, double basses and timpani.

*allegro molto vivace*; *finale: adagio lamentoso*. The *Pathétique*’s third movement combines elements of a light scherzo with a heavy march. So festive and exuberant does the march become that one is tempted to stand and cheer at the end, making all the more effective the anguished cry that opens the finale. The finale’s infinitely warm and tender second theme in D major works itself into a brilliant climax and crashes in a

tumultuous descent of scales in the strings. The first theme returns in continuously rising peaks of intensity, agitation and dramatic conflict. Finally the energy is spent, the sense of struggle subsides, and a solemn trombone chorale leads into the return of the movement’s second theme, no longer in D major but in B minor—dark, dolorous, weighted down in inexpressible grief and resignation. The underlying heart throb of double basses eventually ceases and the symphony dies away into blackness...nothingness.

**Instrumentation:** 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, cymbals, bass drum, tam-tam and strings

Program notes by **Robert Markow**.



Tchaikovsky, portrait by Nikolai Kuznetsov, 1905.