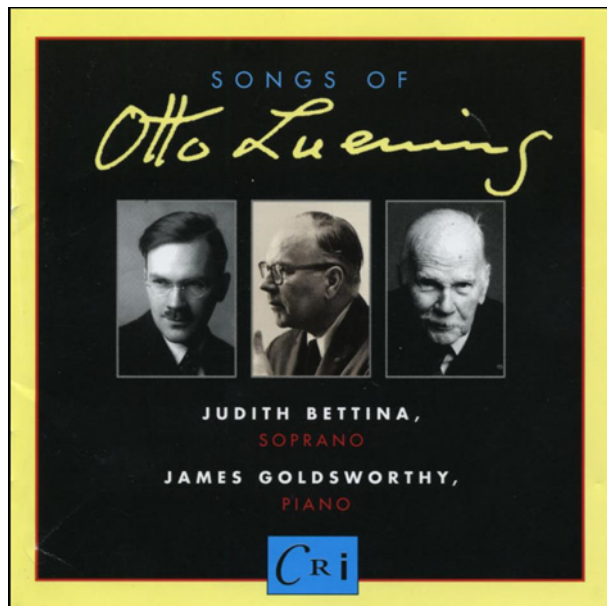


# Otto Luening: Songs

Judith Bettina, soprano



- |  |        |  |        |
|--|--------|--|--------|
| 1. She walks in Beauty (Byron) (1951) .....    | (2:20) | 12. Good-night (Shelley) .....   | (1929) |
| 2. A farm Picture (Whitman) (1929) .....       | (0:37) | 13. I faint, I perish (Shelley) (1929) .....                           | (1:07) |
| 3. The Little Vagabond (Blake) (1980) .....    | (2:26) | 14. Transience (Naidu) .....   | (1922) |
| 4. Young Love (Blake) (1928) .....             | (1:06) | 15. At Christmas time (Translation by<br>Hesse) (1917) .....           | (1:31) |
| 5. Wake the serpent not (Shelley) (1928) ..... | (1:06) | 16. In Weihnachtszeiten (Hesse) (1917) .....                           | (1:31) |
| 6. Requiescat (Wilde) (1917) .....             | (2:27) | 17. Ach! Wer bringt die schönen<br>Tage (Goethe) (1928) * .....        | (1:50) |
| 7. Venilia (Sharpe) (1922) .....               | (1:53) | <i>Songs of Emily Dickinson</i> (1942-51)                              |        |
| 8. Locations and Times (Whitman) (1928) .....  | (0:59) | 18. Our share of night to bear .....                                   | (1:11) |
| 9. Noon Silence (Sharpe) (1922) .....          | (1:14) | 19. "Hope" is the thing with feathers .....                            | (1:25) |
| 10. Visor'd (Whitman) (1928) .....             | (1:22) | 20. If I can stop one Heart from breaking .....                        | (1:20) |
| 11. Infant Joy (Blake) (1928) .....            | (1:17) | 21. Experiment to me .....   | (1:00) |
|  |        | 22. I felt a Cleaving in my Mind .....                                 | (0:39) |
|  |        | 23. Soul, Wilt thou toss again? .....                                  | (0:59) |
|  |        | 24. When I hoped I feared .....  | (0:59) |
|  |        | 25. Love's Secret (Blake) (1949) .....                                 | (2:41) |
|  |        | 26. The Harp the Monarch Minstrel<br>swept (Byron) (1951) .....        | (2:17) |
|  |        | <i>Joyce Cycle</i> (text from James Joyce's<br>"Chamber Music") (1993) |        |
|  |        | 27. Strings in the earth and air .....                                 | (1:35) |
|  |        | 28. When the shy star goes forth in heaven .....                       | (2:08) |
|  |        | 29. My love is in a light attire .....                                 | (0:51) |
|  |        | 30. Sleep now .....  | (2:17) |
- Judith Bettina, soprano; James Goldsworthy, piano;  
Susan Palma-Nidel, flute\*

Total Playing Time: 48:32

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## Notes

### Otto Luening (1900–1996)

Decades ago, in an essay introducing an album of songs by American composers, I slant-quoted Otto Luening: "In a country where composers have written too many symphonies, their songs have been too little sung."

"That's because," he would have added, "they don't write enough of them."

Otto's aphorisms have stuck in the memories of his hundreds of students and uncounted friends and colleagues; they are still often heard, usually without attribution. Luening practiced what he preached: of his nearly 400 compositions, nearly 80 are songs, mostly with piano accompaniment, some with flute (which he played admirably) or chamber ensemble. There is but one symphony.

The thirty songs recorded here are representative of those Luening composed between 1917 and 1993. (Although their order is not chronological, their dates of composition are provided.) It was characteristically accommodating of Otto to have arranged for his birth in 1900, thereby simplifying the task of writers, readers, and listeners who might wish to compare his compositions with the course of musical developments in the 20th century. Because Luening was a

contrarian, what he was doing stylistically was usually what most other composers were not doing at the time.

He was born into a family of musicians. His mother, a singer, claimed that her son had a repertory of fifty songs in English and German at the age of three and a half; his father—conductor, vocal coach, educator—had sung under Wagner's direction in the Beethoven Ninth Symphony performance that celebrated the laying of the Bayreuth cornerstone in 1872! Other family members also sang. It is therefore not surprising that Otto Luening wrote songs earlier than the 1917 songs included here. The Hesse setting, included here in German and English versions, reflects the fact that the Luening family settled in Munich, Germany, in 1912; when the U.S. entered World War I in 1917, Otto escaped to Zürich, Switzerland. There he studied composition with Busoni and Jarnach and played flute in orchestras under Strauss and Nikisch.

One finds a large number of songs written between 1928 and 1942 in both the complete works and in those recorded here. This outpouring reflects in part his activities at the time as a vocal coach and opera conductor of the Eastman School Opera Company, and its successor the American Opera Company (a touring outfit dedicated to opera in English).

More importantly, he married one of the singers in those companies, Ethel Codd, a spinto-coloratura, in 1927 and wrote for her voice, which he accompanied as pianist and flutist in recitals here and abroad. With their separation in 1944, Luening turned his attention primarily to instrumental and choral works. His one opera, *Evangeline*, with Teresa Stich-Randall in the title role, was premiered in 1948 at Columbia University. His completion of that work and the preparation and conducting of it and many other premieres of American opera in the forties (including Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Medium* and Virgil Thomson and Gertrude Stein's *The Mother of Us All*) — not to speak of his Columbia teaching duties and his selfless service to organizations promoting American composers — encroached on his composing time.

In the fifties Luening's pioneering compositions in electronic music (tape-music) startled listeners accustomed to his relatively conservative style and unacquainted with his early quasi twelve-tone works and his inquiring musical intelligence. His easy oscillation between the seemingly simple and the "avant-garde" resembled the work of his contemporaries Henry Cowell and Percy Grainger.

The songs from first to last are "seemingly simple," generally consonant, some of the common chords distantly related and voiced uncommonly, according to his notions of "acoustic harmony." The vocal lines and their accompaniments pay their respects to the masters of German Lieder, Robert Franz (1815-1892) in particular. Most are short, on the average hardly two minutes.

The *Joyce Cycle* from 1993 is an appropriate cyclic close, for Luening and James Joyce had been friends in Zürich 75 years earlier. While writing *Ulysses*, Joyce directed the English Players, for which he hired the teenaged Luening as stage manager and actor in juvenile roles. He often read passages of his novel to Luening for his comments on his musical allusions.

Another Luening aphorism is that all composers could be put into two categories: those who are lyric and those who are not. Although Otto was to compose well into his 97th year, he wrote no more songs. But perhaps vocal music was never far from his mind. One of his last pieces, a duet for violin and cello, dated January 1, 1996 and dedicated to me, is titled appropriately *A Box at the Opera*.

— Jack Beeson

#### Text:

1. She walks in Beauty  
George Gordon Byron (Lord Byron)

##### I.

She walks in Beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;  
And all that's best of dark and bright  
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:  
Thus mellowed to that tender light  
Which Heaven to gaudy day denies.

##### II.

One shade the more, one ray the less,  
Had half impaired the nameless grace  
Which waves in every raven tress,  
Or softly lightens o'er her face;  
Where thoughts serenely sweet express,  
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

##### III.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,  
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,  
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,  
But tell of days in goodness spent,  
A mind at peace with all below,  
A heart whose love is innocent!

2. A Farm Picture  
Walt Whitman

Through the ample open door of the peaceful country barn,  
A sunlit pasture field with cattle and horses feeding,  
And haze and vista, and the far horizon fading away.

3. The Little Vagabond  
William Blake

Dear mother, dear Mother, the Church is cold.  
But the Ale-house is healthy & pleasant and warm:  
Besides I can tell where I am use'd well.  
Such usage in heaven will never do well.

But if at the Church they would give us some Ale,  
And a pleasant fire, our souls to regale:  
We'd sing and we'd pray all the live-long day:  
Not ever once wish from the Church to stray.

Then the Parson might preach & drink and sing,  
And we'd be as happy as birds in the spring:  
And modest dame Lurch, who is always at Church,  
Would not have bandy children nor fasting nor birch.

And God like a father rejoicing to see,  
His children as pleasant and happy as he:  
Would have no more quarrel with the Devil or the Barrel  
But kiss him & give him both drink and apparel.

4. Young Love  
William Blake

Are not the joys of morning sweeter  
Than the joys of night?  
And are the vig'rous joys of youth  
Ashamed of the light?

Let age & sickness silent rob  
The vineyards in the night;  
But those who burn with vig'rous youth  
Pluck fruits before the light.

(Otto Luening setting)

Are not the joys of morning sweeter  
Than the joys of night?  
And are the vigorous joys of youth  
Ashamed of the light?

Let age and sickness silent rob  
The vineyards in the night;  
But those who burn with vigorous youth  
Pluck fruits before the light.

N.B.: This is the second half of the poem "To  
Nobodaddy" by William Blake

5. Wake the serpent not  
Percy Bysshe Shelley

Wake the serpent not—lest he  
Should not know the way to go,—  
Let him crawl which yet lies sleeping  
Through the deep grass of the meadow!  
Not a bee shall hear him creeping,  
Not a may-fly shall awaken  
From its cradling blue-bell shaken,  
Not the starlight as he's sliding  
Through the grass with silent gliding.

(Otto Luening setting)

Wake the serpent not—lest he  
Shall not know the way to go,—

6. Requiescat  
Oscar Wilde

Tread lightly, she is near  
Under the snow,  
Speak gently, she can hear  
The daisies grow.

All her bright golden hair  
Tarnished with rust,  
She that was young and fair  
Fallen to dust.

Lily-like, white as snow,  
She hardly knew  
She was a woman, so  
Sweetly she grew.

Coffin-board, heavy stone,  
Lie on her breast,  
I vex my heart alone,  
She is at rest.  
Peace, Peace, she cannot hear

Lyre or sonnet,  
All my life's buried here,  
Heap earth upon it.

7. Venilia  
William Sharp

Along the faint shores of the foamless gulf  
I see pale lilies droop,  
wan roses fall and silence stilling  
the uplifting wave and in the movement  
of the uplifted wave,  
and 'ere the rose fall  
or the lily breathe,  
silence becomes a lonely voice like hers.  
Venilia who when loved  
was given wings a far off flight,  
mourned ceaseless as a dove  
till bitter Circe had made her  
but a voice still lingering  
as a fragrance in dire woods  
when on the wind swims the yellow leaf.

*(Otto Luening setting)*

*wan roses fall and silence stilling  
the uplifted wave, and in the movement  
of the uplifted wave,  
Venilia who when love  
as fragrance in dim woods*

8. Locations and Times  
Walt Whitman

Locations and times—what is it in me that meets them all,  
whenever and wherever, and makes meat home?  
Forms, colors, densities, odors—what is it in me that  
corresponds  
with them?

9. Noon Silence  
William Sharpe

A lyre bird sings a low monotonous song  
then all is still  
a soft wind breathes along the lofty gums  
and faintly dies away  
and silence wakes and knows her dream is day.

10. Visor'd  
Walt Whitman

A mask, a perpetual natural disguiser of herself,  
Concealing her face, concealing her form,  
Changes and transformations every hour, every moment,  
Falling upon her even when she sleeps.

11. Infant Joy  
William Blake

I have no name  
I am but two days old.—  
What shall I call thee?  
I happy am  
Joy is my name,—  
Sweet joy befall thee!

Pretty joy!  
Sweet joy but two days old.  
Sweet joy I call thee:  
Thou dost smile.  
I sing the while  
Sweet joy befall thee.

12. Good-night  
Percy Bysshe Shelley

I.  
Good-night? ah! no; the hour is ill  
Which severs those it should unite;  
Let us remain together still,  
Then it will be *good* night.

II.  
How can I call the lone night good,  
Though thy sweet wishes wing its flight?  
Be it not said, thought, understood—  
Then it will be—*good* night.

III.  
To hearts which near each other move  
From evening close to morning light,  
The night is good; because, my love,  
They never *say* good-night.

13. I faint, I perish  
Percy Bysshe Shelley

I faint, I perish with my love! I grow  
Frail as a cloud whose [splendours] pale  
Under the evening's ever-changing glow:  
I die like mist upon the gale,  
And like a wave under the calm I fail.

14. Transience  
Sarojini Naidu

Nay, do not grieve tho' life be full of sadness,  
Dawn will not veil her splendour for your grief,  
Nor spring deny their bright, appointed beauty  
To lotus blossom and ashoka leaf.

Nay, do not pine, tho' life be dark with trouble,  
Time will not pause or tarry on his way;  
To-day that seems so long, so strange, so bitter,  
Will soon be some forgotten yesterday.

Nay, do not weep; new hopes, new dreams, new faces,  
The unspent joy of all the unborn years,  
Will prove your heart a traitor to its sorrow,  
And make your eyes unfaithful to their tears.

*(Otto Luening setting)*

*Time without pause, nor tarry on his way;  
Nay, do not weep; new hopes, new faces,  
The unborn joys of all the unborn years,*

15. At Christmas time  
Translation from Hermann Hesse

At Christmas time I travel far  
And go away from children's playing  
And go through wood and snow alone;  
And sometimes, tho' not every year  
I find a happy hour again  
And from the many things I know

Then for a moment I am healed  
And somewhere in the woods,  
But for an hour  
I feel an ancient breath that cools my soul  
And I'm a child again.

16. In Weihnachtszeiten  
Hermann Hesse—written December 3, 1913

In Weihnachtszeiten reis' ich gern  
Und bin dem Kinderjubiläum fern  
Und geh im Wald und Schnee allein.

Und manchmal, doch nicht jedes Jahr  
Trifft meine gute Stunde ein,  
Dass ich von allem was da war,  
Auf einen Augenblick gesunde  
Und irgendwo im Wald für eine Stunde  
Der Kindheit Duft erfülle tief im Sinn  
Und wieder Knabe bin.

17. Erster Verlust  
(ach! Wer bringt die schönen Tage)  
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Ach, wer bringt die schönen Tage,  
Jene Tage der ersten Liebe,  
Ach, wer bringt nur eine Stunde  
Jener holden Zeit zurück!

Einsam nähr ich meine Wunde,  
Und mit stets erneuter Klage  
Traur ich ums verlorne Glück.

Ach, wer bringt die schönen Tage,  
Jene holde Zeit zurück!

*(Otto Luening setting)*  
*Ach, wer bringt die schönen Tage zurück!*

18. Our share of night to bear  
Emily Dickinson

Our share of night to bear—  
Our share of morning—  
Our blank in bliss to fill  
Our blank in scorning—

Here a star, and there a star,  
Some lose their way!  
Here a mist, and there a mist,  
Afterwards—Day!

19. "Hope" is the thing with feathers  
Emily Dickinson

"Hope" is the thing with feathers—  
That perches in the soul—  
And sings the tune without the words—  
And never stops—at all—

And sweetest—in the Gale—is heard—  
And sore must be the storm—  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm—

I've heard it in the chilliest land—  
And on the strangest Sea—  
Yet, never, in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb—of Me.

20. If I can stop one Heart from breaking  
Emily Dickinson

If I can stop one Heart from breaking  
I shall not live in vain  
If I can ease one Life the Aching  
Or cool one Pain

Or help one fainting Robin  
Unto his Nest again  
I shall not live in Vain.

21. Experiment to me  
Emily Dickinson

Experiment to me  
Is every one I meet  
If it contain a Kernel?  
The Figure of a Nut

Presents upon a Tree  
Equally plausibly,  
But Meat within, is requisite  
To Squirrels, and to Me.

22. I felt a Cleaving in my Mind  
Emily Dickinson

I felt a Cleaving in my Mind—  
As if my Brain had split—  
I tried to match it—Seam by Seam—  
But could not make them fit.

The thought behind, I strove to join  
Unto the thought before—  
But Sequence raveled out of Sound  
Like Balls—upon a Floor.

*(Otto Luening setting)*

*I felt a cleavage in my mind*  
*But sequence raveled out of reach*

N.B. Otto Luening used a Little Brown edition of the poetry of Emily Dickinson dated from 1942. The edition, originally published in 1890 and again in 1937, was edited by Martha Dickinson Bianchi. In this edition, the title, and thereby the first line, was "I felt a cleavage in my mind," and the penultimate line was "But sequence raveled out of reach."

23. Soul, Wilt thou toss again?  
Emily Dickinson

Soul, Wilt thou toss again?  
By just such a hazard  
Hundreds have lost indeed—  
But tens have won an all—

Angel's breathless ballot  
Lingers to record thee—  
Imps in eager Caucus  
Raffle for my Soul!

24. When I hoped I feared  
Emily Dickinson

When I hoped I feared—  
Since I hoped I dared  
Everywhere alone  
As a Church remain—  
Spectre cannot harm—  
Serpent cannot charm—  
He deposes Doom  
Who hath suffered him—

25. Love's Secret  
William Blake

Never seek to tell thy love  
Love that never told can be;  
For the gentle wind does move  
Silently, invisibly.

I told my love, I told my love,  
I told her all my heart,  
Trembling, cold, in ghastly fears—  
Ah, she doth depart.

Soon as she was gone from me  
A traveler came by  
Silently, invisibly—  
O, was no deny.

(Otto Luening setting)

*Never seek to tell thy love  
Love that never told should be;  
Ah, she did depart!  
Soon after she was gone from me,  
A traveler came by,  
Silently, invisibly;  
He took her with a sigh.*

26. The Harp the Monarch Minstrel swept  
George Gordon Byron (Lord Byron)

I.

The Harp the Monarch Minstrel swept,  
The King of men, the loved of Heaven!  
Which Music hallowed while she wept  
O'er tones her heart of hearts had given—  
Redoubled be her tears, its chords are riven!  
It softened men of iron mould,  
It gave them virtues not their own;  
No ear so dull, no soul so cold,  
That felt not—fired not to the tone,  
Till David's lyre grew mightier than his Throne!

II.

It told the triumphs of our King,  
It wafted glory to our God;  
It made our gladdened valleys ring,  
The cedars bow, the mountains nod;  
Its sound aspired to Heaven and there abode!  
Since then, though heard on earth no more,  
Devotion and her daughter Love  
Still bid the bursting spirit soar  
To sounds that seem as from above,  
In dreams that day's broad light can not remove.

27. Strings in the earth and air  
James Joyce (permission not granted)
28. When the shy star goes forth in heaven  
James Joyce
29. My love is in a light attire  
James Joyce
30. Sleep now  
James Joyce

Soprano **Judith Bettina**, hailed for her proficiency in a wide range of musical styles, has appeared as guest soloist with such orchestras as the Houston Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, and Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. She has appeared with chamber groups throughout the United States and Europe, including guest appearances with the Bach Chamber Soloists, Continuum, New York Philomusica, The New Music Consort, The Geneva Music Festival, The Sequoia String Quartet, Speculum Musicae, Chamber Music West, San Francisco Contemporary Chamber Players, the Monadnock Music Festival, and invitational concerts at the Library of Congress. Highly acclaimed for her performances of contemporary music, Bettina has had works written for her by Mel Powell, Tobias Picker, Chester Biscardi, David Rakowski, Richard Karpen, and David Olan. She has premiered works by Charles Wuorinen, Milton Babbitt, Lori Dobbins, Richard Danielpour, George Tsontakis, and Vivian Fine. Her recent performances have included *Song Offerings* by Jonathan Harvey with Ensemble 21, *The Rain in the Trees* by Tobias Picker with the Chautauqua Symphony, Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* and works by Stravinsky with conductor Robert Craft, *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten* by Schoenberg at The Bard Festival, and *La Vie en rouge* by Edison Denisov with Boston Musica Viva. Bettina's other CRI recordings include *After Great Pain* by David Olan (CD 565), *The Gift of Life* by Chester Biscardi (CD 686), and David Rakowski's *Three Songs on Poems of Louise Bogan*

(CD 820). Judith Bettina graduated from the Manhattan School of Music. She has been on the faculty of Stanford University and the MacPhail Center for the Arts.

Pianist **James Goldsworthy** has performed throughout Europe, Israel, Japan, Canada, and the United States, including broadcasts on Austrian National Television, the California cable television show Grand Piano, BBC radio, and Minnesota Public Radio. While a Fulbright scholar in Vienna, Goldsworthy performed in one of the Musikverein 175th anniversary celebration concerts given in the Brahms Saal, and concertized in Vienna, Baden, and Spital am Semmering, Austria. More recently, he performed in recitals given at the Hôtel de Ville in Paris, and in Le Sax concert hall in Achère, France. He has accompanied the singers Judith Bettina, Benjamin Luxon, Marion Kilcher, Véronique Dubois, and Edith Zitelli in recital, and concertized with violinist Lilo Kantorowicz-Glick, and violist Jacob Glick. He has premiered works by Milton Babbitt, Chester Biscardi, David Olan, Tobias Picker, Mel Powell, David Rakowski, Cheng Yong Wang, and Amnon Wolman. He has taught at Goshen College, Stanford University, and the University of St. Thomas. He is presently an associate dean at Westminster Choir College of Rider University. His recordings with Judith Bettina of Chester Biscardi's *The Gift of Life* and David Rakowski's *Three Songs on Poems of Louise Bogan* appear on CRI.

## Production Notes

Produced and engineered by Judith Sherman.

Executive Producer: Joseph R. Dalton

Assistant Engineer and Editing Assistance: Jeanne Velonis

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Publishing:

*Joyce Cycle*, *At Christmas Time*, *Ach! Wer bringt die schönen Tage*, *A Farm Picture*, *The Little Vagabond*, *Young Love*,

*Transience*, *Requiescat*, *Venilia*, *Noon Silence*: American Composers Alliance

*Love's Secret*: Edward B. Marks Music Company

*The Harp the Monarch Minstrel swept*, *I faint*, *I perish*, *Infant Joy*, *She walks in Beauty*, *Wake the serpent not*, *Locations and Times*, *Good-night*: Highgate Press, Inc.

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