

# Flowing Water



New Music ≈ Great Falls

Wednesday 20 March 2024

12:05 pm

Cynthia C. Stevens

Contralto

New Hope Lutheran Church

3125 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue South

Great Falls, Montana

(406) 315-1203 • (406) 768-8023

Bring a Lunch • Beverage – Dessert Provided

# Program

## **Five Cavafy Poems**

James F. Rickley

*Poems by Constantine P. Cavafy*

*Translations by Daniel Mendelsohn*

*For Contralto and Piano*

- 1—Old Men’s Souls**
- 2—Waiting for the Barbarians**
- 3—Prayer**
- 4—Trojans**
- 5—An Old Man**

*These concerts follow a protocol of new music  
As put forth by the  
Montana Composers’ Alliance  
where each original piece will be played twice  
with a Q & A monitored discussion.*

*Monitored and Facilitated by  
Alan Johnson, Tammy Bull & Marjorie Kohler*

*Videographer—Phil Burton*

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**Cynthia C. Stevens** relocated to Great Falls, Montana from Houston, Texas in the spring of 2013. She has earned two undergraduate music degrees from Maryville College and a Master of Music in Vocal Performance from the University of Tennessee. While a student at the University, she was chosen to participate in the Knoxville Opera Company Apprentice Program. In January 2014, Ms. Stevens assumed the responsibilities as Department Chair for Fine Arts and Education at Great Falls College, Montana State University. Cindy, in December 2018, completed her work on a second Master of Music degree from The University of Montana. She currently also serves as Choir Director for the Great Falls Symphony and the Chancel Choir at the First Congregational United Church of Christ.

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Konstantinos Petrou Kavafis April 29, 1863 - April 29, 1933), known, especially in English, as **Constantine P. Cavafy** and often published as C. P. Cavafy was a Greek poet, journalist, and civil servant from Alexandria. His work, as one translator put it, "holds the historical and the erotic in a single embrace." (2009 Maria Margaronis)

Cavafy's friend E. M. Forster, the novelist and literary critic, introduced his poems to the English-speaking world in 1923, famously describing him as "a Greek gentleman in a straw hat, standing absolutely motionless at a slight angle to the universe." Cavafy's consciously individual style earned him a place among the most important figures not only in Greek poetry, but in Western poetry as a whole.

Cavafy wrote 155 poems, while dozens more remained incomplete or in sketch form. During his lifetime, he consistently refused to formally publish his work and preferred to share it through local newspapers and magazines, or even print it out himself and give it away to anyone interested. His most important poems were written after his fortieth birthday, and officially published two years after his death. (Wikipedia)

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**Daniel Mendelsohn** (translator) (born 1960) is an American author, essayist, critic, columnist, and translator. Best known for his internationally best-selling and award-winning Holocaust family memoir *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million*, he is currently the Charles Ranlett Flint Professor of Humanities at Bard College, the Editor at Large of the *New York Review of Books*, and the Director of the Robert B. Silvers Foundation, a charitable organization dedicated to supporting writers of nonfiction. (Wikipedia)

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**James F. Rickley** is presently accompanist and organist at New Hope Lutheran Church. Originally from the Pennsylvania area, he chose to spend his retirement in Great Falls. His music composition training was through the University of Cincinnati and Temple University. He served as a music teacher and school administrator in Pennsylvania, Nevada, and Montana. He is the owner of the music publishing firm WayWordBound with compositional works available through the online operations of Hal Leonard Corporation.

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## Flowing Water | New Music

### Upcoming

### Series Three

November 27, 2024

Jean Annau, Clarinet  
Wendy Weissman, Clarinet

December 4, 2024

Ron Coons, Saxophone

December 11, 2024

Anne Kittleson,  
Tenor Saxophone

December 18, 2024

Christopher Kloker, Clarinet

As Alan Johnson at the first concert of this series said, (rephrasing Aaron Copland from his What to Listen for in Music [1939, 1957]), there are **Three Planes of Listening:**

***Sensuous Plane*** - As a receiver, you are not overly consciously involved listening, such as background music, "elevator" music;

***Expressive Plane*** - The music is expressing something to the listener through melody, rhythm, harmony, or other musical elements which offers an invitation in - with a response to sing or hum, move or dance, or generate an emotional response such as joy, sadness, contemplation, etc.; and,

***Sheerly Musical Plane*** - More is demanded in focusing on what is being conveyed. In performances in this series, there are not hummable melodies, nor foot tapping rhythms, nor familiar harmonies in recognized forms. It's a journey into new realms and experiences.

## I      **Old Men's Souls**

Inside their old bodies, so wasted away,  
the souls of old men sit around.

How woebegone the poor things are, and  
how bored by the wretched life they live.

How afraid they are of losing it and how they love it,  
these bewildered and contradictory  
souls, which sit around— tragicomic—  
inside their old hides, so worn away.

## II      **Waiting for the Barbarians**

—What is it that we are waiting for, gathered in the square?

The barbarians are supposed to arrive today.

—Why is there such great idleness inside the Senate house? Why are the Senators sitting there, without passing any laws?

Because the barbarians will arrive today.

Why should the Senators still be making laws?

The barbarians, when they come, will legislate.

—Why is it that our Emperor awoke so early today, and has taken his position at the greatest of the city's gates seated on his throne, in solemn state, wearing the crown?

Because the barbarians will arrive today.

And the emperor is waiting to receive their leader. Indeed he is prepared to present him with a parchment scroll. In it he's conferred on him many titles and honorifics.

—Why have our consuls and our praetors come outside today

wearing their scarlet togas with their rich embroidery, why have they donned their armlets with all their amethysts,

and rings with their magnificent, glistening emeralds; why should they be carrying such precious staves today, maces chased exquisitely with silver and with gold?

Because the barbarians will arrive today; and things like that bedazzle the barbarians.

—Why do our worthy orators not come today as usual to deliver their addresses, each to say his piece?

Because the barbarians will arrive today; and they're bored by eloquence and public speaking.

—Why has this uneasiness arisen all at once,  
and this confusion? (How serious the faces have become.)  
Why is it that the streets and squares are emptying so  
quickly, and everyone's returning home in such deep con-  
templation?

Because night has fallen and the barbarians haven't come.  
And some people have arrived from the borderlands,  
and said there are no barbarians anymore.  
And now what's to become of us without barbarians.  
Those people were a solution of a sort.

### **III Prayer**

The sea took into her depths a sailor's life.—  
Unaware, his mother goes and lights  
a taper before the image of Our Lady  
that the weather might be fair, and his return speedy—  
while at the wind she always strains her ears.  
But as she prays the ikon hears,  
solemn and full of mourning,  
knowing that the son she awaits won't be returning.

### **IV Trojans**

Our efforts, those of the ill-fortuned;  
our efforts are the efforts of the Trojans.  
We will make a bit of progress; we will start  
to pick ourselves up a bit; and we'll begin  
to be intrepid, and to have some hope.  
But something always comes up, and stops us cold.  
In the trench in front of us Achilles  
emerges, and affrights us with his shouting.—  
Our efforts are the efforts of the Trojans.  
We imagine that with resolve and daring  
we will reverse the animosity of fortune,  
and so we take our stand outside, to fight.

But whenever the crucial moment comes,  
our boldness and our daring disappear;  
our spirit is shattered, comes unstrung;  
and we scramble all around the walls  
seeking in our flight to save ourselves.  
And yet our fall is certain. Up above,  
on the walls, already the lament has begun.  
They mourn the memory, the sensibility, of our days.  
Bitterly Priam and Hecuba mourn for us.

### **V      An Old Man**

An Old Man In the noisy café, right in the middle,  
an old man sits bent over the table;  
his newspaper in front of him, with no one for company.  
And in his contempt for his wretched old age,  
he thinks how very little he enjoyed  
the years when he had strength, and wit, and beauty.  
He knows he's aged a lot: he feels it, sees it.  
And even so, the moment when he was young seems  
like yesterday. How brief a span, how brief a span.  
And he brooded on the way that Prudence had duped him:  
and how he'd always trusted— so stupidly!—  
the lie she told: "Tomorrow. You have lots of time."  
He remembers the impulses he bridled; and how  
much joy he sacrificed. His foolish caution, now,  
is mocked by each lost opportunity. ...  
But all this thinking, all this remembering  
makes the old man dizzy. And leaning  
on the table in the café, he falls asleep.

*Cavafy, C.P.. Complete Poems Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition. 2012*