

ARSIS

The Gift of the Magi

An Opera in One Act based on
the short story by O. Henry

music by **DAVID CONTE**
libretto by **NICHOLAS GIARDINI**

The San Francisco Conservatory New Music Ensemble
Nicole Paiement, conductor

THE GIFT OF THE MAGI

an opera in one act based on the short story by O. Henry

Music by David Conte
Libretto by Nicholas Giardini

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Della — Aimée Puentes *Jim* — Tim Krol
Maggie — Elena Bocharova *Henry* — Chad Runyon
Magi — Branden Smith, Aaron DiPiazza, Gary Sorenson

Tracks **1** – **5** Scene I

Tracks **6** – **15** Scene II

Tracks **16** – **21** Scene III

Tracks **22** – **28** Scene IV

Total CD Time: 73:34

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SYNOPSIS

Jim and Della's cramped cold-water flat. Late afternoon, Christmas Eve.

Scene One: Della arrives home and busily prepares for the evening ahead. She lets down her long hair and luxuriates in a private reverie. Jim enters unheard and listens to her singing. Della abruptly stops when she senses him and scolds him for spying on her. He woos her, but she gently tempers his ardor. As they begin their Christmas preparations, Jim is struck with an idea and starts off on a last-minute errand. Della reminds him of their promise not to buy one another gifts. Jim balks, but she exacts his promise once again. They part tenderly and he goes off.

Scene Two: Once Jim is gone, Della searches for any money hidden in the flat, but she finds little. She seizes upon an idea and calls Maggie to come and help her. Maggie rushes in and anxiously questions Della about her call. Della calms her and tries to enlist her help in a plan to get Jim a special Christmas gift. When Della admits she wants to sell her hair for money to buy the gift, Maggie is distraught and tries to dissuade her. Della is impassive and finally persuades Maggie to help her. They go off to sell Della's hair.

Night falls and moonlight floods the apartment.

Scene Three: Jim returns and coaxes Henry in as they lug a huge Christmas tree into the flat. Jim proudly shows Henry the gift he has bought for Della. Henry is impressed but worries about the cost. He questions Jim about where he got the money to buy it. Jim evades his questions but finally admits to pawning his father's heirloom pocket-watch. Henry is outraged and they argue. Jim tries to explain and asks for Henry's understanding. Henry eventually relents and wishes Jim well as he goes.

Scene Four: Della returns and is overjoyed to find the Christmas tree. Her gift for Jim slips from her coat pocket, and she admits to breaking their promise. Jim presents his gift to her and they chide one another. Della pleads with Jim to open his gift immediately and he teases her by stalling. When he finally opens it, he is stunned to find a gold chain for his watch. Della is distressed to learn he has sold his watch for her gift and begs him to return it. He persuades her to at least open the gift and she finds ornate combs for her hair. She is heartbroken as she removes her hat to reveal her newly shorn hair. In an embarrassed silence, they start to understand the greater meaning of their gifts. They begin to see each other in a new light and come to renew their vow of commitment and love.

Libretto

*Jim and Della's cramped cold-water flat.
Late Afternoon. Christmas Eve.*

1 SCENE 1

Della rushes in loaded down with an old weather-beaten box of Christmas ornaments and a small bag of groceries. Dressed in a heavy coat, scarf and hat, she sets down the box and rushes around putting away the groceries. She throws off her coat and scarf and tries straightening up the flat, but she is drawn to the box. She carries it to the center of the room and searches through its contents. Her pace slows as she handles the garlands, ornaments and lights and imagines the room draped with them.

Finally, she rests for a moment and pulls off her hat. A river of long, beautiful hair falls from beneath the hat and encircles her. She goes to the small dressing table behind a screen which conceals the "bedroom." She sits and looks into the mirror.

2
She begins to sing a wordless melody as she combs through her magnificent hair. She is deep in thought as she works through the streams of hair around her. Jim enters unheard. He stops in the doorway and listens to her song. He imagines her behind the screen.

JIM

Della,

Oh Della,
Looking in the mirror,
Combing through your hair,
You are so beautiful.

She continues her song as he is drawn closer to her.

JIM

Della,
Oh Della, my love,
I feel you in my arms.
My hands play in your hair
Your beautiful, beautiful hair.

He spies on her behind the screen.

JIM

Della,
I see you.
I feel you.
I breathe you.

She senses Jim's presense and abruptly stops her song.

DELLA

Jim! Jim!

She rushes to him, and they embrace and kiss. They hold each other for a long moment, and then she helps him off with his coat.

3

DELLA

Jim, I didn't even hear you come in.

JIM

You sounded so happy,
I just had to listen.

DELLA

How long were you there?
How long were you listening?

JIM

Only a minute,
A minute or two.

DELLA

You shouldn't spy on me.

JIM

How can I help myself?
You are too beautiful.

DELLA

I'm so glad you're home.
I didn't want to be alone
Another minute of this precious day.

JIM

(wooing her)

Della, my Della,
All I can think of
When we're apart
Is your face and your hair
And your voice and your body.

Della, I think of you
Every minute of the day,
Waiting for the moment
We'll be together.

DELLA

Jim, Jim,
Can't you just feel
The magic in the air?
The world is alive
With the wonder of it all.

I feel so lucky,
We can share

The magic, the wonder...

JIM

Della, I want you,
Your hair falling on my face,
Your hair touching my skin
And wrapped around our bodies.

DELLA

Later, later Jim.
We'll have the night.
I long for you too
But we've much too much to do.

We must prepare
For this wonderful night.
I've got dinner to cook
And this place is a mess.
And now we have
All these garlands and lights to hang.

Look what I've found
Just left by the curb.
Imagine our luck
At finding such a treasure.

JIM

You'll have this place
Looking like a dream.

DELLA

The let's start,
Or Christmas will be here
Before we've even begun.

Della starts sorting the contents of the box while Jim goes behind the screen and changes from his workshirt. Jim reappears in a fresh shirt and watches lovingly as she arranges the decorations. Jim looks at the time on his pocket-watch and

picks up his coat.

4

JIM

Dell, I have something
Left to be done,
A last-minute thing.
It won't take me long.

DELLA

What is it, Jim?

JIM

It's a surprise.

DELLA

You know I love surprises.
But Jim, our promise,
Remember our promise.

JIM

What promise is that?

DELLA

You haven't forgotten,
Have you Jim?
We're not to buy each other
presents.
We promised, remember?

JIM

Yes, I remember.
What a foolish thing it was to say.

DELLA

Foolish or not,
That's what we promised.

JIM

That's not my surprise,
But why did we promise?
I want you to have
Something special from me.

DELLA

Jim, I know.
You're very sweet.
But you know
It's not important to me.
And we've already spent
Every cent we had saved.
It's not a good time.
There's always next year.

JIM

I know we haven't
Got that much.
But couldn't we spare
Just a little bit more?

DELLA

In truth, I've spent
Even more than we had.
I'm afraid by next month
We won't have the rent.

JIM

You don't have
To worry about that.
I'll find a way.
I always have.

DELLA

I know that, Jim.
I didn't mean...

JIM

Dell, I want you to have
A wonderful night.
I want you to have
Every gift in sight.
You've gone without
Long enough.

Wouldn't you like a new mink coat?
How 'bout a string of pearls?
I can see you covered in jewels,
Diamond rings of silver and gold.

DELLA

I don't want
Any of that.
You are all I need.
I have all I want.

We'll have the most wonderful night,
Just you and me.
What more could I ask?
You are all I need and all I want.

So promise me.
Promise me again.

JIM

I promise...I suppose.

(Della scowls)

Alright, I promise.

5

I'll be back in a little while.

DELLA

Let me see what time it is.

Della reaches into Jim's pocket for his watch which is attached to a threadbare leather strap. She takes the watch from the strap and polishes it with her skirt.

DELLA

I don't want you to be gone too long.
I will miss you here all alone.

I too think of you
The whole day through.
And wait for the moment
When we are together.

Tonight it will be
Just you and me.
So don't be late.

She reattaches the watch to the strap and slips it back into Jim's pocket. She fixes his shirt collar and smooths his hair.

JIM

I won't. I promise.

Della goes into the kitchen and starts humming a tune as she begins dinner. Jim puts his coat on and hums along with her. He looks at his watch and then turns back to study her. He starts to whistle and shines his watch vigorously. She watches him furtively as well.

DELLA

How proud he is.
How proud I am of him.
He is the world to me.
I want the world for him.

He is my wonder.

JIM

She is my wonder.

DELLA

He is my magic.

JIM

She's magic.

BOTH

He(She)is the world to me.
I want the world for him(her).

Jim finishes polishing his watch and rushes out the door.

6 **SCENE 2**

Della makes sure he is gone and starts rifling through her purse. She dumps its contents on the table and scrounges for any loose cash. Finding little, she searches several hiding places in the flat for more. She comes up very short and paces around in despair. She sinks into a chair and buries her face in her hands. She looks up with a start, her hair entwined in her fingers. She goes to the mirror and folds her hair up to see what it would look like short. Full of purpose, she sweeps her hair back and goes out to the hall phone to call Maggie.

7

DELLA

Maggie, it's Della.
Come quickly, I need you.
Now...Yes, now.
It's very important.
No, nothing's wrong.
I just need your help.
I'll tell you in a minute.
It's something very special.
Please come right up.
I will be waiting.

Della goes to a drawer and solemnly takes a pair of scissors from it. She looks at them and touches the length of her hair. She puts the scissors on the table just as Maggie pounds on the door and calls frantically from outside.

8

8

MAGGIE

(offstage)

Della! Della! Della!

Della lets her in and Maggie breathlessly enters.

MAGGIE

Della, what's wrong?
I ran all the way.
Three flights of stairs.
I'm dying...Please tell me.

What's happened? What's wrong?
Are you alright?
It must be something awful.

DELLA

It's not like that at all.
Calm down. Drink some water.
I just need your help
With something very special.

MAGGIE

So tell me. What is it?
I can't wait another minute.
Are you sure you're alright?

DELLA

Yes, I'm fine.
Listen. Listen carefully.
I need your help
With a surprise for Jim.

MAGGIE

Oh, you know I'm very good
At that sort of thing.
Just tell me.
Tell me before I explode!

DELLA

I want to buy Jim
A very special gift.
He's worked so hard.
He's been such a prince.

I've scrounged a little money.
But not nearly enough.
So Maggie, I need your help
So I can get what I need.

MAGGIE

What can I do?
How will we get it?

DELLA

Madame Sophranie,
You know, the beautician,
She has that shop
Just down on Broadway.

Well...she's offered me
A great deal of money...
It's really very simple...
All we have to do is...

MAGGI

What?
What is it?
I'll die if you don't tell me!

DELLA

Madame Sophranie
Has always admired,
Has always admired
The length of my hair.

She'll pay top dollar,
A fortune, really,
If I will sell her
All of my hair.

9

MAGGIE

What are you saying?
Sell your hair?
Don't even think it.
Have you gone crazy?

DELLA

She's offered me a fortune,
And I need it for Jim.
It's the only way I have
Of getting Jim the gift.

Maggie, please help me.
It's so very important.
You are my best friend.

I need you more than ever.

Della hands the scissors to Maggie and presents her hair for cutting.

DELLA

Please do it quickly.
Please don't think, just do it.

Maggie slams the scissors back onto the table.

MAGGIE

No! No! No!
Don't say another word.
It would be a sin.
I won't let you do it.

Just think how long
It has taken it to grow.

DELLA

It grows very fast.
Besides, it's too old-fashioned.

9

MAGGIE

Della, your hair is so beautiful.
It's worth more than any fortune.

DELLA

I've made up my mind.
It's no use to scold me.

MAGGIE

Della, you must listen.
You're not even thinking.
Imagine what could happen.

10

Tonight there's a full moon.
You know what that means.
Cut your hair today,
And you'll go bald for sure.

My granny, poor thing,
Poor, poor thing,
Made the very same mistake,
The same mistake.
It never grew it back,
Not a single hair.
She never grew it back
Or forgave herself.

There are so many stories
Just like that.
You think I'm superstitious,
But you'll see. You'll see.

11

Tonight there's a full moon.
You know what that means.
You will go bald.

DELLA

It's useless to try
To change my mind.

I know what I'm doing.
I've made up my mind.
I'm not a child.

MAGGIE

There's a full moon.
You will go bald.
My poor Granny,
It never grew back.

Della, please listen.
It would be a sin.

I won't let you do it.
You will go bald.

DELLA

I've made up my mind.
It's no use to scold me.
I know what I'm doing.
I'm not a child.
Maggie, please help me.
It is for Jim.

MAGGIE

Della, your hair,
It is your glory.

DELLA

Maggie, won't you help me?
It is for Jim.

MAGGIE

Della, I can't.

DELLA

Then I'll do it myself.
I'm not afraid.

Della picks up the scissors and goes to cut her hair. Maggie shrieks and covers her eyes. Della throws down the scissors, unable to do it.

DELLA

Well then, I'm a coward.
But I've made up my mind.
I'm sure that Madame Sophranie
Will be glad to oblige me.

Della gets her coat and starts to leave. She turns and faces Maggie.

12**DELLA**

He is strong and he is proud.
Still, he is afraid inside,
Afraid he's not as good as some
Or good enough for all his pride.

When he comes to me each night,
I see him and know that all is right.
I know him as no other can.
To me, he is the finest man.

I must help him to believe
He is all that I can see.
I would give him anything
To show him how I feel.

For I love him.
I love him.
And that's all I need to know.
He needs me to believe.

He is strong.
He is proud.
He is my love.

He gives to me the world each day.
I would give him anything.

Della goes to Maggie.

13**DELLA**

Maggie, you are my best friend.
Try to understand.
Go with me to Madame Sophranie.
I may need to hold your hand.
Maggie softens and throws her arms around Della. They embrace.

BOTH

You are my best friend.
We'll go to Madame Sophranie.

DELLA

Try to understand.

MAGGIE

I will hold your hand.

They go off quietly. The late afternoon dusk turns to night as the Magi sing offstage.

14**MAGI**

Long ago,
On a starlit night,
Three wise kings
Journeyed far toward the light.

They carried with them
The most precious of things,
Gifts for an infant,
Gifts for a king.

Their story oft told,
So that even today,
Wise people among us
Follow their way.

They carry to those
They love with their heart
Gifts that are precious
And pretty and smart.
But the gift of the Magi
Is not one of jewels.
If this be mistaken,
The wise become fools.

15

It is night; moonlight floods the apartment.

16

SCENE 3

Jim opens the door and calls in to Della.

JIM

Della, I'm back.
Della. Dell?

He looks around for her, but she has not yet returned. He goes back to the door and addresses Henry who is in the hall.

JIM

She's gone out.
Let's hurry
Before she comes home.

Jim starts to carry one end of a huge Christmas tree through the door. Henry grunts in the hall as Jim coaxes him in.

HENRY

(offstage)

Ow.

JIM

Easy does it
That's it... That's right.
Just a little more.

Henry comes through the door lugging his end of the tree.

HENRY

Oh, my back.

JIM

Sorry Hank.

HENRY

Hmm.

They carry the tree into the flat.

HENRY

Why such a big tree?

JIM

Believe it not, it was free.

HENRY

Gee, I wonder why.

JIM

By the time I went,
They were giving them away.

HENRY

Lucky you. Lucky me.

They rest for a moment with the tree on the floor.

JIM

Della will love it.

HENRY

That's just great.

They start to stand the tree up.

JIM

Okay, here we go.

Jim admires the tree while Henry stoops over rubbing his back.

JIM

Isn't it great?

HENRY

Wonderful.

JIM

Henry, thanks.
You're a pal.

HENRY

Yeah...Sure...Anytime.

JIM

You should come by
When it's all done up.

HENRY

If I can still walk by then.

Henry finally stands upright and has a good look at the tree.

HENRY

It's a real good tree.

JIM

Do you really think she'll like it?

HENRY

Sure she will.
It's guaranteed.

JIM

I want to make her
Happy tonight.
This is her favorite
Night of the year.

HENRY

You two
Are just like kids.
Like a pair of kids
On Christmas Eve.

Well, you deserve
All the happiness there is.
Enjoy yourselves.
Have a good time.

Henry starts to leave.

17

JIM

Henry, wait.
I want to show you
My present for Della.

Jim takes a small, ornately wrapped box from his coat pocket.

JIM

Every time we pass
This certain little shop
She stops and she stares
At the very same thing.
She tries not to show
How much she really cares.
But her eyes light up
And you know what that means.

I can't wait to see
The look on her face
When she opens this up
and there it will be.

Jim opens the box and shows Henry the contents.

HENRY

That's real nice.
She'll go crazy for sure.
But you must have paid
Quite a pretty penny I bet.

JIM

Nothing's too good
For Della tonight.
If she's happy,
That's all that counts.

HENRY

Well, I hope you'll still
Have something left to eat.
By the way, where did you
Make that kind of money?

JIM

It wasn't difficult.
It was well worth it.

HENRY

Now, I'm worried.
What did you do?
Nothing stupid I hope.

JIM

You might think,
But I'm sure it was right.
Della deserves
Even more than I've got.

HENRY

That kind of talk
Get's people in trouble.
What did you do
For your queen, Prince Charming?

JIM

I'm sure you won't like it,
But I had to find a way.

HENRY

You know what I'm thinking?
I sure hope I'm wrong.

JIM

What are you thinking?

HENRY

I hope you didn't get yourself
Mixed up with something shady.

JIM

Henry, it's not what you're thinking.

By now you know me better than
that.

I would never do such a thing.

HENRY

Well then? What did you do?
How did you get such a fancy little
gift?

JIM

All that I had
That was worth anything...

HENRY

Yeah?

JIM

The only thing I had...
Was my Dad's old watch.

HENRY

Oh brother Oh boy.

18

You sold the watch?
You sold your daddy's watch?
It was your grandfather's, too.
What were you thinking?

JIM

Pawned the watch.
I pawned the watch.
What could I do?
I didn't have a gift for Della.

HENRY

That watch has been
In your family for years.

JIM

Della's my family now.

HENRY

She'll be the one
Who's madder than me.

JIM

What could I do?
I had no other way
Of getting her the gift.

HENRY

You sold the watch.
You sold your daddy's watch.
It was your grandfather's too.

JIM

What could I do?
I didn't have a gift.

HENRY

It was a damn fool thing to do.

JIM

How can you say that?
I want the best
For Della right now.
What do I care
about an old watch?

HENRY

I don't understand
How you can talk like that.
That's your father
You're talking about.

You told me yourself
What that watch meant to him.
How many times
Have you told me the story?

What were you thinking?
I don't understand.
I don't understand.

19

JIM

He gave me his watch

The day I turned sixteen.
He said: "Now you're a man.
When you wear it, think of me."

I was so proud
But scared all the same.
I kept it polished and wound
And locked away.

The first time I wore it
Was the saddest day I've known.
I wore it to remember him.

I have worn it
Everyday since then.
But I don't need a watch
To remind me of him.

My father always told me
To follow my heart.
Now she is my heart
And I am a man.

She is all that's important to me.
She's the only reason I need.
I know in my heart
I did the right thing.
I hope he'd agree.

20

HENRY

What do I know?
Why listen to me?
Maybe I'm just
A stupid old ass.

But you should enjoy it,
Now that it's done.
You're a good kid, Jim
You've got a good heart.

JIM

Henry, you'll see.
You'll see I was right.

HENRY

Yeah...Yeah,
I'm sure I will.
You'll make her
Very happy tonight.

JIM

I hope so. I hope so.

HENRY

Of course you will.
Of course you will.
Listen, I gotta go now.

JIM

Thanks again
For all your help.
I don't know
What I'd do without you.

HENRY

What do you mean?
You'd do just fine.
And Jim,
Forget about what I said.

JIM

Okay, Hank.
I'll see you later.

Jim hides the box deep underneath the tree. Henry leaves and meets Della in the hall.

21

DELLA

(offstage)
Hello, Henry.
Merry Christmas.

16

HENRY

(offstage)

Same to you.
Don't you look nice.

DELLA

Is Jim back yet?

HENRY

He's waiting for you.

DELLA

Then I'd better go in.

HENRY

You two have a good night.

22

SCENE 4

Della enters and is stunned by the magnificent tree. She and Jim gaze across the room at one another. They glide toward each other and fall into a passionate embrace. Finally, Jim leads Della over to the tree.

JIM

Della,
My Della,
This is for you.

DELLA

Oh, Jim.
Jim, it's a beauty.

JIM

I couldn't resist.
It called out your name.

DELLA

Thank you, Jim.
What a wonderful surprise.
Now it will be
A perfect night.

Jim takes her in his arms.

JIM

It's already perfect
Now that you're home.

DELLA

It's so clear and cold tonight.
I've never seen the stars so bright.

JIM

Where did you go?
I missed you so.

DELLA

I'll tell you later.
I've a surprise of my own.

JIM

Now that we're together,
I'll never let you go.

Jim unbuttons her coat and starts to slip it off. She holds onto her hat. A small, brightly wrapped box falls from her coat pocket. She quickly picks it up and hides it from Jim.

23

JIM

What's that?
What have you got?

DELLA

Jim, I know we promised,
But I had to after all.
I wanted you to have this
So I had to break our vow.

JIM

Dell, I'm disappointed,
After all the fuss you made.

DELLA

It's true I'm the one
Who made us both promise.
But I couldn't imagine
You not having this.

JIM

I'll forgive you this time
If you promise not to scold.
He gets her gift from under the tree.

JIM

This is for you.

DELLA

Jim, why did you?
You didn't have to...

JIM

Yes, I did.
Now don't say a word.
For I couldn't imagine
You not having this.

DELLA

Jim, we're quite a pair.

JIM

So much for our promise.

DELLA

Well, now that we've broken it,
Why wait any longer?
Open your gift.
Open it right now.

She hands him the box.

24

JIM

But it's not Christmas yet.
We're breaking all the rules.
I think we should wait a bit
At least until midnight.

17

DELLA

Jim, I can't wait.
Please open it now.

JIM

I don't know.
I think it's wrong.

DELLA

Oh Jim,
Do it for me.
It's all that I ask.
It would make me so happy.

JIM

Alright, I suppose this once.

He starts to open the box and feigns difficulty.

JIM

It's wrapped so well,
I can hardly...

DELLA

Hurry. Hurry.
I can't wait anymore.

JIM

Alright, here goes.

25

He opens the box and is stunned when he looks inside. He is silent.

DELLA

Jim, it's for your watch...
A proper chain to wear it proudly.
How I hope that it will match.
I searched and searched quite madly.
Don't you like it, Jim?

JIM

Yes...of course I do.
It's just...I don't know what to say.

She pulls the glittering chain from the box and holds it up.

DELLA

Jim, it's real gold.
See how it sparkles.
How I long to see
How fine you'll look
When you wear it.

JIM

Della, you're so kind.
What a fine and beautiful gift.
You can never know
How much this means to me.

DELLA

Jim, put it on.
I want to see how it will look.

JIM

I'm sure it will be fine.
Why don't you open your gift?

DELLA

Well, first let me see.
I want to see how it will look.

She pulls the old leather strap from his pocket and finds his watch gone.

DELLA

Ah!
Jim, what's happened?
Where is your watch?
Where is it Jim?
What have you done?

JIM

I didn't want to tell you.
How could I tell you?

DELLA

Where has it gone to?
Where has it gone?

JIM

(very softly)

Sold.

DELLA

Sold?

JIM

Sold.

He indicates her gift.

DELLA

Oh... Oh.

JIM

Dell, how could I know?
How I wanted to surprise you.

DELLA

Jim, please take this back
So we can buy back your watch.
That is all I want.
That's the only gift I need.

JIM

This has gone so wrong.
It isn't what I planned at all.
But at least open it up.
Please let me see you open your gift.

26

She opens the box. Another silence.

JIM

Those are the combs
You were always eyeing.
How long I've imagined them
Like a crown in your hair.
Aren't they the right ones,
The ones you stared at for so long?

DELLA

Yes, they're the ones.
Oh, and so beautiful.
And you sold
Your watch for these.

JIM

Let me see them in your hair,
Your beautiful hair.
Then I'll never think
Of that old watch again.

DELLA

I can't.
Don't ask me.
We must get back your watch.

She slowly pulls off her hat revealing her hair cropped quite short. Jim stares at her, stunned and speechless. Della nervously runs her fingers over her shorn hair. Jim looks at the chain and then back at Della.

JIM

You cut your hair for me?

Della nods. There is a long, awkward silence as they face each other with their precious, worthless gifts.

DELLA

Jim, do you still think I'm pretty?

27

JIM

Della,
My Della,
I've never really seen
All that you have been.
You are so beautiful.

Della,
Oh Della, my love,
My love was nearly blind.
Now I see you in the light
Of this clear and beautiful night.

DELLA

Jim, I saw only wonder
Through a magical eye.
I loved you naively
Without knowing why.

But now I can see
Your love is what is beautiful.
You and your love
Are so beautiful to me.

JIM

How could I have missed
What was right before my eyes?
I feel as though I'm seeing you
For the first time in my life.

DELLA

I could only see
What I wanted you to be.
But I have never really known
All the ways you are much more.

JIM

Now from this moment
I can see beyond my pride.
I can see you clearly.
I will love you as you are.

DELLA

In a single moment
I have changed before your eyes.
I can truly know you.
I can love you as you are.

JIM

Let's put away our gifts for now.
We won't need them for awhile.

DELLA

Maybe someday we will laugh
Remembering our foolish past.

28

JIM

Della, I see you.
I see you and I need you.

DELLA

I feel your eyes upon me
As I've never felt before.
And my love grows with each glance,
With each glance I love you more.

BOTH

I will love you forever,
Always love you as you are.

*They gently embrace as the Magi sing
offstage.*

MAGI

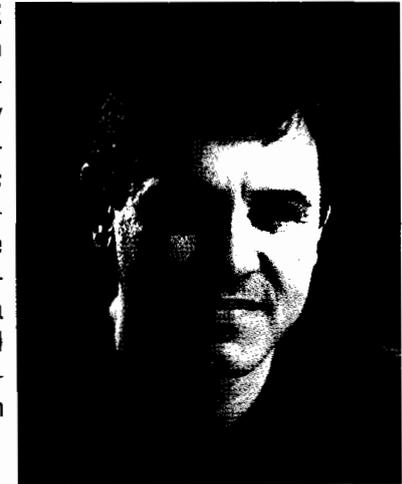
So the gift of the Magi
Again we behold.
And wise fools among us
Learn that love is their gold.

*The lovers kiss as the stars shine down on
them.*

END OF OPERA

DAVID CONTE

has received commissions from Chanticleer, the San Francisco Symphony Chorus, the Oakland East-Bay Symphony and the Dayton Philharmonic. His first opera *The Dreamers* (with librettist Philip Littell) was commissioned and produced by the Sonoma City Opera. He has composed songs for singers Barbara Bonney, Phyllis Bryn-Julson, and Thomas Hampson. Mr. Conte is Professor of Composition at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.



NICHOLAS GIARDINI

has also collaborated with David Conte on *Eos*, a choral symphony commissioned by the Boston (Mass.) Gay Men's Chorus. In his native Chicago, Mr. Giardini acted extensively and directed his own work before pursuing a career in medicine.

NICOLE PAIEMENT (conductor)

is director of the San Francisco Conservatory New Music Ensemble and Director of the Orchestra and Chamber Singers at the University of California at Santa Cruz, and Artistic Director of the California Ensemble Parallele. Ms. Paiement has recorded the music of Tailleferre, Cowell, and Harrison, and was the first prize winner in the Scaritt Conducting Competition.

AIMÉE PUENTES (Della)

has sung Micaela, Sister Constance, Pamina, Musetta, Giannetta and Barbarina. She recently made her debut with the New Orleans Opera Association. She has sung with the San Francisco Opera, Opera San José, Chautauqua Opera, and Arizona Opera.

TIM KROL (Jim)

was a member of Chanticleer for nine years, and appears on thirteen Chanticleer recordings, including the Grammy Award-winning "Colors of Love." Mr. Krol has also played leading roles in Chanticleer's production of Benjamin Britten's "Curlew River," and in the Berkeley Symphony's production of Elliott Carter's "What Next?" under the direction of Kent Nagano.

ELENA BOCHAROVA (Maggie)

is an Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera. She made her debut with that company in the 1999 *Ring* Festival, and has appeared in their productions of *Louise*, *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Wozzeck*. Ms. Bocharova created the role of Maggie in the 1997 workshop production of *The Gift of the Magi*.

CHAD RUNYON (Henry)

has appeared in concerts throughout the Bay Area with the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, American Bach Soloists, the San Francisco Symphony, the Men and Boys of Grace Cathedral, the San Francisco Opera and Chanticleer. Mr. Runyon also maintains a private voice studio, and serves on the music staff of the Pacific Boychoir Academy.

San Francisco Conservatory New Music Ensemble
Nicole Paiement, Conductor

Founded in 1968, The San Francisco Conservatory New Music Ensemble was one of the first groups in the country to engage students in the performance of 20th century works. Composer John Adams directed the group during its early years, establishing connections with Bay Area composers and developing a diverse audience. The Ensemble is composed entirely of Conservatory students, and gives six concerts annually.

<i>Violin I</i> Rira Watanabe	<i>Flute</i> Melanie Schattschneider	<i>Horn</i> Anna Mayne
<i>Violin II</i> Celeste Cleveland	<i>Oboe</i> Rebecca Van de Ven	<i>Trumpet</i> Jonas Feldman
<i>Viola</i> Stephanie Fong	<i>Clarinet</i> Yumiko Moriyasu	<i>Harp</i> Deanna Williams
<i>Cello</i> Dana Putnam	<i>Bass Clarinet/Clarinet</i> Stephanie Summers	<i>Piano</i> Leesa Dahl
<i>Bass</i> Harty Tam	<i>Bassoon</i> Charles Moehnke	

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