

Entrance Notes

From Anne's email to Laura regarding how Entrance complements our Going Home concert theme:

I have pasted below what I wrote to Linda about why I chose it, but also in a larger sense, I think it fits in our program because people who leave their homes bring such vision and creativity to the places they go, because they -- unlike the rest of us -- are seeing the world anew. Those of us who never travel or leave our own homes have eyes weakened by viewing "things already too well-known" -- so, without dismissing the pain of leaving one's world behind (and notwithstanding the reasons people have to do that or the reception they receive in the new) the song fits because it points to the gift of sight that is given to the emigrant, as well as the infinite and unmeasurable ways the immigrant enriches, enlivens and renews the world they join (in an ideal world, where they're allowed to do so). Because the song is not called "Leaving the Safe Haven," it's "Entrance" into the new, where they will make a home that may be larger and more rich for everyone involved. Also, btw, it's a sonnet -- traditionally a love poem and in the 2nd person -- so we could think of it as a love song to the immigrants who come to us.

Here's what I (Anne) wrote on the personal level, if that's interesting to you:

I have an artistic side to my personality (as opposed to my academic/professional side), and often have all these ideas in my head, which I've rarely been able to get out cohesively (by writing or painting), and I've come to know that this falling short is partly because I am afraid to leap into the unknown. This poem speaks so urgently to this desire to create something *true,* which I think is universal. This poem both illustrates the poet's skillful ability to portray a deep truth *and* tells a reader that anyone -- not just a great poet -- can do so! The speaker urges the reader to "step out of doors" (the boundaries of one's own comfortable, interior world) and then promises that anyone can see infinity ("open to your sight" is an interesting turn of phrase -- not in the original German -- and I think it implies you must also be open to seeing it) -- and what does this "whoever" do with this opportunity to see boundlessness? -- you are urged to create a living thing outside of yourself -- symbolized by a tree, with fruit ripening like words "still in your mouth," i.e., in silence, (or, actually, "still"ness) -- motionless) . Some of the imagery is of movement -- stepping out, lifting, placing the tree (the tree is also a phallic symbol, insofar as it's tall and huge (in the original, "slender") and generative of new life) -- as opposed to this still/silent incubation. You're definitely no longer in that safe but stuffy house you were in, you're in the dark (with your words?), and then, when you comprehend what you've created -- which I think means more than just understanding, but true to the word's roots -- you wholly grasp or contain it -- you close your eyes (presumably, less safe, but more free from "things ... too well-known") and release what you've created to the world. As I read it closely today, I think Rilke's version is also kind of but not primarily about death -- in the original German, an early line says something like "yours is the last house before the distance" (one translator called it "before the far-off"), and "tired eyes can't free themselves from the spent (or worn-out) threshold) which sounds like aging, or approaching an end that might be difficult to escape. Maybe? But I think Gioia's translation choices, which do not recreate those lines literally and instead introduce infinity and the visionary potential much more positively, foreground the idea of artistic immortality. Also, -- I love a good sonnet and think Gioia has really captured the cadences of meter and rhyme, as well as the traditional sense of addressing a beloved, in his translation.