

PROGRAM NOTES: Mark Campbell in Song

HOTEL TIMES SQUARE

Oct. 21, 1935

To the Mayor of the  
City of New York -

With this letter to you I am also resigning from  
my position buying a gun and starting a good fight - I have no  
criminal record - I do not mix with the cheap ladies or criminals -  
and will go a hell of a long ways before you get me

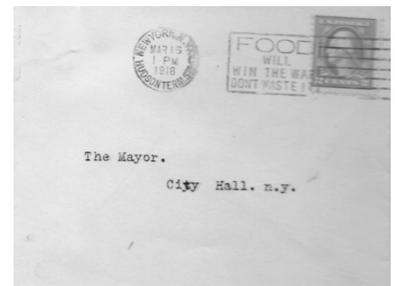
Why

Your restaurants and other business institutions  
are going just a little to strong - 3 slices of tomato on 2  
leafs of lettuce in the Automat cost 15¢ or 5¢ a slice for tomatoes  
which cost 25¢ a peck.

The dirty rats have not seen the blood of women and  
children in the gutter.

Sincerely,  
J. P. C-----

*Dear Mayor.* I created the text for this song cycle after reading *Museum of Complaint* (ed: Matthew Bakkom), a compendium of 132 letters written to the Mayor of New York from 1751 to 1969. Five letters written to Mayor LaGuardia from the mid- to late-1930s served as inspiration for each of these songs. A few years after completing the text, I met brilliant composer Mark Baechle, heard his music and was thrilled when he told me he wanted to set them.



*Finley Giles - the Dachshund*

*8 Phases of Luna.* Sparks and Wiry Cries commissioned this song cycle and I was so glad when they suggested Kamala Sankaram as composer. I had met Kamala while mentoring for American Lyric Theatre and was impressed with her splendid musical gifts as well as her collaborative spirit. (I'm proud that we'll be working on a new opera/music theatre work together). The idea for this song cycle was probably birthed years ago when I met my neighbor—and brilliant poet—Marie Howe on the street where we live while walking my Cardigan Welsh Corgi, Harry. I was whining about one thing or another and Marie wisely pointed to Harry and said, “Learn to be more like him.” This song cycle is dedicated to Finley Giles, the one year-old dachshund who just this past year has blessed mine and my husband’s life—and indeed has a friend at the Leroy Street Dog Run named “Luna.”

*Thoroughfare*. This song cycle was created with composer Conrad Cummings for the tenor Keith Jameson—but tonight we're switching the gender...and voice type. The narrative is kind of a shorter and less depressing *Winterreise* about a person who has just broken up with a boyfriend and tries to walk it off by taking a walk down Broadway. Each song in this cycle represents an intersection of that famed thoroughfare and ends with a view of the New York Life Building.

**Other songs:**

- “You Need Song.” This song, with music by Kevin Puts, was commissioned by the Opera America Songbook and appears on that recording.
- “Making Maps.” I wrote this with composer Ricky Ian Gordon for *Rappahannock County*, a theatrical song cycle commissioned to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the Civil War (and recorded on Naxos). The lyric is based on letters Jed Hotchkiss wrote to his wife about serving as cartographer for General Stonewall Jackson.
- “Crossing the Hudson.” Robert Paterson’s and my duet that was commissioned by Five Boroughs Music Festival. It was the first song I ever wrote about Staten Island.
- “have had” was written in memory of my friend Don Ruddy, who died of AIDS in the 90s. It was part of a suite of three songs with music by Stephen Hoffman that was performed at his memorial service in the Brooklyn Anchorage.
- “Spring” is Gihien Lee’s and my song from my theatrical song cycle *Songs from an Unmade Bed*, which premiered at New York Theatre Workshop in 2005 and is recorded on Ghostlight Records with its original performer.

Many thanks to Martha, Erika and Jesse for having the radical notion of devoting an entire concert to that “other” part of any song: the words. Let’s hope it starts a trend. And additional thanks to David for joining the team and applying his directorial expertise.

-Mark Campbell