



# NEWS RELEASE

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## Gordon Getty Brings Landmark Composition, *The White Election*, to Amherst

AMHERST, Mass. – On Saturday, April 18, at 3 p.m., the Emily Dickinson Museum will present a performance of composer Gordon Getty's *The White Election*, a work for soprano soloist and piano. Soprano Lisa Delan, accompanied by pianist Kristin Pankonin, will perform the composition at the First Congregational Church at 165 Main Street in Amherst, and then participate in a reception with the composer immediately afterward. A contribution of \$15 for adults and \$5 for students is suggested.

The Amherst performance coincides with the release of a new recording of Gordon Getty's settings of 32 of Dickinson's poems to music. In 1982, Getty composed *The White Election* after close reflection on Emily Dickinson's 1862 poetic declaration "Mine --- by the Right of the White Election! Mine – by the Grave's Repeal! Title – Confirmed! Delirious Charter! Mine—long as Ages steal!" The song cycle explores themes of mortality, renunciation and fulfillment through a selection of Dickinson's work and classical music. Concert performances and the original recording 20 years ago by the late Kaaren Erickson of *The White Election* have been highly praised.

Delan is recognized worldwide for her versatility and breadth of accomplishment in opera, song and recording. Critics have praised her depiction of Joan of Arc in another Gordon Getty composition, *Joan and the Bells*, as "Beautifully sung and 'refreshingly unpretentious.'" Her recording of *The White Election* with pianist Fritz Steinegger will be released in April 2009.

Pankonin performs regularly throughout the San Francisco area and has performed as both a soloist and collaborator under the auspices of the Old First Church concerts, Mills College Concert Series and the Latin Chamber Music Society.

Of the inspiration for his work, Getty has noted that Dickinson had studied voice and piano, and played at home. A friend of the poet remembered that on her father's visits to the Dickinson home, he "would be awakened from his sleep by heavenly music. Emily would explain in the morning, 'I can improvise better at night.'" Another visitor recalled that Emily was "often at the piano playing weird and beautiful melodies, all from her own inspiration." Emily herself told a friend, "I play the old, odd tunes yet, which used to fit about your head after honest hours." Getty has remarked that "all this inspires the conjecture that Emily may have set her own poems to music, or even conceived of some of them as songs in the first place. I have set them, in large part, just as Emily might have if her music had found a balance between tradition and iconoclasm something like that in her poems."

The April 18 performance of *The White Election* falls under the Emily Dickinson Museum's spring program in connection with The Big Read, funded by a generous grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

### ABOUT THE BIG READ

The Big Read: The Poetry of Emily Dickinson is part of a pilot initiative created by the NEA in partnership with the Poetry Foundation to celebrate great American poets and the nation's historic poetry locales. The Emily Dickinson Museum is presenting well over a dozen programs this spring to invite readers everywhere to become newly acquainted with or delve more deeply into Emily Dickinson's poetry.

For more information about The Big Read or *The White Election* concert, contact Nan Fischlein, Program Coordinator, at 413-542-2034 or [nfischlein@emilydickinsonmuseum.org](mailto:nfischlein@emilydickinsonmuseum.org).

### ABOUT THE EMILY DICKINSON MUSEUM

The Emily Dickinson Museum, comprising the Dickinson Homestead and The Evergreens, is devoted to the story and legacy of poet Emily Dickinson and her family. Both properties are owned by the Trustees of Amherst College. The museum is overseen by a separate Board of Governors charged with raising its operating and capital funds. The Homestead was the birthplace and residence of the poet (1830-1886). The Evergreens was the 1856 home of the poet's brother and sister-in-law, Austin and Susan Dickinson.

The Emily Dickinson Museum is located at 280 Main St. in Amherst, Mass. The official museum website is [www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org](http://www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org). Hours are Wednesday through Sunday, from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m.; the museum is closed on major holidays.

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