

Vox Grata

WOMEN'S CHOIR

Presents

“Life Passages”

Choral music celebrating the stages of women's lives

Jeanette MacCallum and Susan Kelly, Conductors
John Semington, Pianist

Westminster Presbyterian Church
Nashville, Tennessee
Thursday, November 10, 2016
7:00 P.M.

Free will offering to benefit Hope Clinic

Life Passages

Please silence all cell phones and pagers for the duration of the program.

Please hold applause until the conclusion of each set.

The Road Beckons

Free Spirit *from* “The Youthful Traveler”

Jane Kirchner, flute

Gwyneth Walker

Speak to the Child of Love

We dedicate this song to the women served by Hope Clinic

Allen Koepke

No puedo apartarme *from* “Cantigas de Amigo”

Paul Carey

Marriage and Motherhood

what i want

Stephen Smith

Punching the Dough *from* “Women on the Plains”

arr. Alice Parker

Tabula Rasa

Don Macdonald

When I Bring to You Colour’d Toys

Anna Horne, soloist

John Alden Carpenter

arr. Paul Carey

The Middle Years

Now I Become Myself

Gwyneth Walker

Fair Warning

Shirley W. McRae

How the Blossoms are Falling

Ramona Luengen

Letting Go

Elegy (U.S. premiere)

Meredith M. Brammeier

When You Are Old

Peter Berring

Crossing the Bar

Gwyneth Walker

Vox Grata Women's Choir

Soprano 1

Jennifer Haendel
Anna Louise Jones
Rachel Martz
Aimee Moiso
Diana Neely
Emily Neely
Emily Packard
Leigh Sutherland
Sharon Warfield
Holly Yearout

Soprano 2

Jan Allison
Emily Beavers
Jj Ebelhar
Katy Ferrell
Coni Ely Guerin
Anna Horne
Susan Kelly
Tracy Monaghan
Erica Scaramuzza
Sam Seifert

Alto 1

Annabelle Absar
Julie Birdsong
Kelly Christie
Colleen Halfmann
Jane-Coleman Harbison
Amy Kadish
Jane Kirchner
Suzie Lane
Mary Louise McCullough
Rosie Smith

Alto 2

Sylvia Leins
Denise Linn
Caitlyn Lovell
Jeanette MacCallum
Linda McFadyen-Ketchum
Erin Pearson
Nancy Williams-Settles
Karen Weir

Jeanette MacCallum is the Director of Music Ministries at Second Presbyterian Church in Nashville, TN and founder and Artistic Director of *Vox Grata*. She previously served as an Adjunct Professor in music theory and history at Belmont and Lipscomb Universities. In addition, she served as the Director of Choral Activities at Saint Cecilia Academy in Nashville, TN, from 2002 to 2012, where she conducted various ensembles and taught AP Music Theory. During her tenure at Saint Cecilia, the Advanced Choir received superior ratings at all regional and state adjudication festivals in which it participated. In addition, the St. Cecilia Advanced Choir performed at ACDA and TMEA state conferences. Mrs. MacCallum led the St. Cecilia Choir on performance tours to Carnegie Hall, Canada and Italy. In 2007, the Saint Cecilia Choir performed by invitation at the *Ospedale della Pietà* and the *Ospedale dei Derelitti* in Venice. Her students earned positions in numerous All-State and ACDA Honor Choirs.

Reared in Princeton, New Jersey, Mrs. MacCallum's passion for choral music began as a member of the distinguished Princeton High School Choir. She received her musical education at the Eastman School of Music and Belmont University, and received the Master of Church Music degree from Belmont. A frequent adjudicator and clinician, Mrs. MacCallum has directed choirs at the Blair School of Music at Vanderbilt University, as well as at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Nashville, TN. She is the President-Elect for Tennessee ACDA and serves as the Tennessee Chair for Women's Choir Repertoire and Standards. Mrs. MacCallum is the Past President and Treasurer of the Middle Tennessee Vocal Association. She is also the author of "*The Sacred Choral Works of the Venetian Ospedali*," published by GIA in "*Conducting Women's Choirs: Strategies for Success*," Debra Spurgeon, Editor and Compiler (2012).

Dr. Susan Kelly was recently appointed Assistant Professor of Music/Choral Director at Tennessee State University. She directs the University Choir and Meistersingers, teaches classes in Music Education and Conducting, and teaches Applied Voice. Aside from her work at TSU, Susan is the associate conductor for the Vox Grata Women's Choir, and serves as a soprano section leader at Westminster Presbyterian Church. Additionally, she sings soprano with the Tennessee Chamber Chorus, a professional choir based in East Tennessee.

Before coming to Tennessee State University, Dr. Kelly taught at Abington Heights High School in Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania, where she directed the 120-voice Concert Choir, the Women's Ensemble, the Men's Ensemble, and served as music director for the musical. She was also the director of the Cantare Choir of The Choral Society of Northeast Pennsylvania, a community high school women's ensemble that performed at both state ACDA and PMEA conferences. She also served as the Director of Music at First Presbyterian Church of Clarks Summit, and sang soprano with The Lyric Consort, an eight-voice vocal ensemble.

Susan holds undergraduate degrees in Music Education and English Education from Wilkes University, a Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance and Choral Conducting from Temple University, and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Choral Conducting from the University of South Carolina. Prior to her move to TSU, Susan was active in both PMEA, in which she served as Choral Coordinator of District 9, and ACDA, in which she served as President-Elect Designate of ACDA-PA. Currently she is serving as the Ensemble-Specific Repertoire and Resources Chair for ACDA-TN.

Dr. John W. Semingson serves as Accompanist for Vox Grata Women's Choir. Since 2001, John has served as the Director of Music Ministries for Westminster Presbyterian Church – Nashville, where he oversees a multi-faceted music program of nine choirs involving over 200 children, youth, and adults. John holds the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in choral conducting, the Master of Church Music in both conducting and organ, and the Bachelor of Music in organ performance. He has conducted and/or served as an accompanist for church, community, and university choirs in Illinois, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Tennessee over the past 30 years.

Mission of Vox Grata

Vox Grata is comprised of joyful women who, out of gratitude for the fullness of their own lives, possess a desire to sing together for the benefit of others. The group performs repertoire that expresses a uniquely feminine spirit, especially works that promote the best interests of women in society. Vox Grata sings concert programs that directly benefit the needs of women in the Nashville community.

To be added to our mailing list, for information about supporting Vox Grata or to find out about auditions and upcoming events, please visit our website at www.voxgrata.com, or visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/VoxGrata>.

Special Thanks

Vox Grata Board of Directors – Sallie Bailey, St. Clair Blue, Kelly Christie, Karen Weir, Sylvia Leins, Susan Hassell, Laurie Cooper, Jennie Renwick, Jane Kirchner, Linda Koon, Doug MacCallum, Jeanette MacCallum, and Franco Scaramuzza

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Joe DeBusk, sound reinforcement

Ian Petty, website design

Ben Saunders and Adelia Company, videography

Franco Scaramuzza and threeseventwo creative media, graphic design

Dr. John Semingson, Director of Music Ministries, Westminster Presbyterian Church
Westminster Presbyterian Church

Upcoming Concerts

Thursday, May 18, 2017 at 7:00 PM, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Nashville, TN:

Vox Grata Spring Concert to benefit **End Slavery Tennessee**

Join us in the fight against human trafficking

Texts and Translations

The Road Beckons

Free Spirit *from* “The Youthful Traveler”

Afoot and lighthearted, I travel the open road,
healthy, free, the world before me, the long path before me,
leading wherever I choose, I travel the open road!
I do not ask good fortune. (I myself am good fortune.)
I postpone no more, question no more, need nothing!
Strong and content, I travel the open road!
The road beckons.
Afoot and lighthearted, I travel the open road.

Speak to the Child of Love

“What is love?” said a child to her mother. “What is hope, trust and peace? Are these just words that we say to one another? What do they mean? How will I know?”

“My child, my precious child: Consider the sun and the moon and the stars, the rain that comes down from above. For these are like love. The moon and the stars are shelters for your soul—outstretched hands protecting you from fear. And as you’re looking up, you’ll have the peace within. The comfort that you feel is like love my dear. Yes, this is like love.”

“When in the darkest days you feel the rain, remember its promise to provide. It’s then you’ll understand the meaning of hope; it’s always there standing at your side. This is like love.”

“And then there is the sun, so brilliant in the sky. It speaks to us of trust, of values we hold high. It nourishes the spirit, spreading joy to all. The gift of love will give you power to stand tall.”

We must speak to the child of love, of trust; speak to the child of peace and hope. Speak to the child of the moon and the stars and the sun and the rain; speak to the child of love.

No puedo apartarme *from* “Cantigas de Amigo” (I Can’t Give Up *from* Songs to a Friend)

I can’t give up his love, mother, I can’t give up! Love has reached out with its beautiful touch that captures quickly and releases slowly: I can’t let go!

Marriage and Motherhood

what i want

What I want is to be blessed.
What I want is a cloak of air;
the light entering my lungs;
my love entering my body.
What I want is to be blessed.
What I want is to be aware
of the blessing descending like the sky
sliding down the spectrum.

What I want is to be aware
of the spaces between the stars;
to breathe continuously the sources of sky;
a veined sail moving;
my love never setting foot to the dark anvil of earth.

Punching the Dough *from* “Women on the Plains”

Come all you young waddies, I'll sing you a song; stay back from the wagon, stay where you belong; I've heard you observing, "I'm fussy and slow;" while you're punching the cattle, I'm punching the dough!

When you're cutting the stock, I'm cutting the steak; when you're wrangling the horses, I'm wrangling the cake; when you're hazing the dogies and batting your eye, I'm hazing dried apples that aim to be pie!

You brag about shooting out windows and lights; but try shooting biscuits for twelve appetites; when you crawl from your roll and the ground it is froze, then who boils the coffee that thaws out your nose?

You say that I'm old and my feet on the skid; but I tell you right now you are nothing but kids; if you reckon your mounts are some snaky and raw, just try riding herd on a stove that won't draw.

No use of your snorting and fighting your head. If you like it with chili, just eat what I said! For I aim to be boss of this end of the show: while you're punching the cattle, I'm punching the dough!

Tabula Rasa (Blank Slate)

In my arms, breathe.
Life without limits.
Light of day, dark night.
Sleep, dream, rest in safety.
With your heart, your soul,
Listen and know this truth:
Within you are boundless futures

If you are given freedom;
Freedom to grow,
Freedom to learn,
Freedom to touch,
Freedom to feel,
Freedom to imagine,
Freedom to love,
Freedom to be loved.

When I Bring to You Colour'd Toys

When I bring to you colour'd toys, my child,
I understand why there is such a play
of colours in clouds, on water,
and why flow'rs are painted in tints:
when I bring colour'd toys to you, my child.

When I sing to make you dance,
I truly know why there is music in leaves,
and why waves send their chorus of voices
to the heart of the listening earth:
when I sing to make you dance.

When I bring sweet things to your greedy hands
I know why there is honey in the cup of the flower,
and why fruits are secretly filled with sweet juice:
when I bring sweet things to your greedy hands.

The Middle Years

Now I Become Myself

Now I become myself. It's taken
Time, many years and places;
I have been dissolved and shaken,
Worn other people's faces,
Run madly, as if Time were there,
Terribly old, crying a warning,
"Hurry, you will be dead before—"
(What? Before you reach the morning?)
Now to stand still, to be here,
Feel my own weight and density!
The black shadow on the paper
Is my hand; the shadow of a word
As thought shapes the shaper
Falls heavy on the page, is heard.

All fuses now, falls into place
From wish to action, word to silence,
My work, my love, my time, my face
Gathered into one intense
Gesture of growing like a plant.
As slowly as the ripening fruit
Fertile, detached, and always spent.
Falls but does not exhaust the root,
So all the poem is, can give,
Grows in me to become the song,
Made so and rooted so by love.
Now there is time and Time is young.
O, in this single hour I live
All of myself and do not move.
I, the pursued, who madly ran,
Stand still, stand still, and stop the sun!

Fair Warning (A Testament to Independence in Old Age)

When I am an old woman, I shall wear purple with a red hat,
which doesn't go, and doesn't suit me.
And I shall spend my pension on brandy and summer gloves,
and satin sandals, and say we have no money for butter.
I shall sit down on the pavement when I am tired
and gobble up samples in shops and press alarm bells
and run my stick along the public railings
and make up for the sobriety of my youth.
I shall go out in my slippers in the rain,
and pick the flow'rs in other people's gardens
and learn to spit!
But maybe I ought to practice a little now
so people who know me are not too shocked and surprised,
when suddenly I am old and start to wear purple.

How the Blossoms are Falling

The fruit takes from the sun;
The skin swells thin green,
swells to red, swells to ripeness,
until the time for giving,
when the wind thuds and seeds the earth; and the rich brown
soil receives the flight down.

And to walk at that moment in the orchard once again,
when the children are still small;
And to see in the sunlight
how the blossoms are falling.

Letting Go

Elegy

Mama, Mother, Madre, don't go too far.
I have lost you in a crowd of cluttered days.
Mama, Oomm, Mutter, don't go too far.
Your voice echoed in mine, lyrically calling me to your arms.
Mama, Matka, Eemah, don't go too far.
Your arms held me then; hold me now from afar.
Mama, don't go too far.
Mama.

When You Are Old

When you are old and gray and full of sleep,
and nodding by the fire,
take down this book and slowly read,
and dream of the soft look your eyes had once,
and of their shadows deep;
How many loved your moments of glad grace,
and loved your beauty with love false or true.
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
and loved the sorrows of your changing face.
And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly how Love fled and paced upon the mountains overhead,
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

Crossing the Bar

Sunset and evening star, and one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar, when I put out to sea.
But such a tide as moving seems asleep, too full for sound and foam,
when that which drew from out the boundless deep turns again home.
Twilight and evening bell, and after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness or farewell, when I embark;
For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place the flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face when I have crossed the bar.

Program Notes

Free Spirit *from* “The Youthful Traveler”

Gwyneth Walker

This jovial piece is the opening movement of a set of “songs of travel and adventure” for flute, women’s chorus and piano. The words were adapted by the composer from a text by Walt Whitman by the composer. The songs were commissioned by the Bella Voce Women’s Chorus of Burlington, Vermont.

Speak to the Child of Love

Allen Koepke

Allen Koepke has been a music educator in Iowa for over fifty years. In addition to composing, Koepke is a frequent clinician and adjudicator. This piece is a setting of the composer’s poem and deals with questions that children might ask at one time or another. Using the allegory of the sun, moon, stars and rain, the questions are answered, not just for the sake of the children, but, perhaps, all of us. The song is in the modern folk genre style. (Notes by the publisher)

No puedo apartarme *from* “Cantigas de Amigo”

Paul Carey

The *Cantigas de Amigo* were a genre of folk poetry composed as early as the tenth century by young women of Spain and Portugal. The poems were passed down via oral tradition for centuries before being committed to writing around 1500. Their wonderfully direct language and evocative images, all written in simple couplets called *jarchas*, were so admired by the educated Arab poets of medieval Spain that *jarchas* from well-known *cantigas* were often incorporated into Arabic poems. By 1600, Spanish male poets began to compose in the *cantiga de amigo* form as well.

The speaker in a typical *cantiga* is an adolescent girl confiding to her *madre*, either her mother or another female confidante, her feelings about discovering love for the first time or other matters of the heart. The traditional texts are universal and still resonate beautifully today. The accompaniment in this arrangement imitates the sound of guitars as the young girl realizes the power of love. (Notes by the arranger)

what i want

Stephen Smith

This breathtakingly stunning and life-affirming song is based upon a poem by Pat Lowther. The composition was written for Vancouver-based Elektra Women’s Choir by its accompanist, Stephen Smith. The poem, a simple plea for light and blessing, conveys the spirit of mature love, the kind never fully realized by the poet. The melody is well crafted and harmonized, with lovely contours and shapes, making it very satisfying to the singer.

Tabula Rasa

Don Macdonald

Don Macdonald has a varied musical background that includes experience as a performer, conductor, educator and composer. Residing in Canada, he has composed for and sung with various Vancouver-based choirs and orchestras.

For this piece, Macdonald chose a text by Allison Girvan. Musically, he had a specific image in mind of a quiet moment between a mother and child when the mother sees, as she has never seen, the potential of the precious life she holds in her arms--a silent acknowledgement of her child and every child as a “blank slate” with seemingly limitless potential. (Notes by the publisher)

Punching the Dough *from* “Women on the Plains”

arr. Alice Parker

“Punching the Dough” is a traditional Canadian folk song or cowboy song told from the point of view of the cook. A regular trail outfit consisted of a chuckwagon, a horse wrangler, a boss or captain, about six riders for every thousand cattle, and a cook. The cook’s wagon, made popular in recent years by chuckwagon races, carried a ton or two of utensils and provisions for the camp. The cook wielded immense power in the outfit and could inflict humiliation or starvation upon his enemies.

Alice Parker is a renowned American composer, conductor and teacher. She studied choral conducting with Robert Shaw. Her life’s work has been in choral and vocal music and she has published many arrangements of folksongs, hymns and spirituals, many written with Robert Shaw.

When I Bring to You Colour’d Toys

arr. Paul Carey

This text by Rabindrath Tagore has been set by many composers including John Alden Carpenter, who wrote the art song melody here arranged by Paul Carey. Carey, a full-time composer, founded Vox Caelestis Women’s Chorus, an Illinois-based professional women’s choir which premiered this work.

Now I Become Myself

Gwyneth Walker

This choral setting of May Sarton's poem aims to capture the process of growing into one's own self as a complete person. Thus, the opening eight measures present forceful chords in piano and chorus—the strength of knowing oneself. This section is an introductory statement. The main portion of the song then begins with rapid accompaniment patterns and vocal effects (“t k t k”) to represent the scattered and scurrying person, running through life, searching. The music slows with the words “Now to stand still...” The self-discovery process is unfolding. The scurrying patterns return, this time yielding to a full growth into the glorious final statement: “I, the pursued, who madly ran, stand still, stand still, and stop the sun!” And the opening piano chords now return in triumph beneath the chorus.

Gwyneth Walker, a former composition faculty member at Oberlin College Conservatory, currently resides in Vermont. Her catalog includes over 130 commissioned works for orchestra, band, chamber ensemble and choir. Her compositional output for women's choirs is significant in both quantity and quality.

Fair Warning

Shirley W. McRae

Shirley McRae is Professor Emerita at the Rudy E. Scheidt School of Music at the University of Memphis. During her long career as a music educator, she published extensively, with articles in church and music education journals. She also composed and arranged many songs for children and choirs. This one is a setting of a well-known poem entitled “Warning” written in 1961 by the British poet Jenny Joseph. “Warning” was named the most popular post-war poem in a 1996 poll by the BBC. Its second line was the inspiration for the Red Hat Society.

Elegy

Meredith Brammeier

Elegy reflects on a human experience that crosses boundaries of culture, place, and time: the death of one's mother. The use of the word “mother” and “mama” in different languages throughout the piece portrays the universality of mourning and the relationship between mother and child.

Written for six-part women's chorus, *Elegy* alternates between a refrain and three verses; in each verse, the ensemble divides into two three-part choirs. The first two verses begin with one choir echoing the other in an imitative texture, building toward a merging of the two choirs into one at the climax of each verse. In the third verse all voices begin together, then individual parts break away until the piece ends with a final quiet plea. *Elegy* is dedicated to the memory of the composer's mother, Loreeta Buckendahl Brammeier.

How the Blossoms are Falling

Ramona Luengen

Ramona Luengen has been commissioned and recorded by Canada's finest choirs and instrumentalists. Her works have been performed and broadcast around the world, and she is well respected for her work as both a choral composer and conductor.

This piece was commissioned by Elektra Women's Choir upon the retirement of one of its founding conductors, the late Diane Loomer. This poem by Joy Kogawa captured the essence of the occasion, that is, a celebration of Loomer's many rewarding years as co-conductor, tinged by a sense of nostalgia and sadness which understandably accompanies all such departures.

In the words of the composer, “There is such exquisite delicacy and beauty in all of Joy's writing, but in this particular poem we sense fulfillment coupled with an underlying wistfulness, a looking back on nature's life cycle as fruit grows from seed to ripeness, moving from fragile birth to rich maturity. The second stanza of the poem speaks of an aching longing to turn back the clock...I could not help but think what a perfect analogy this would be for Diane's retirement. How, many years ago, a small, young and enthusiastic band of women began their life as a choir, still glowing in the spring sun. How, after many years of commitment and dedication, of energy, work and blind faith, Diane and Morna [Edmundson] have guided and cajoled, watching as Elektra matured into the choir it now is.” (Notes by the publisher)

When You Are Old

Peter Berring

Peter Berring, a native Canadian, was educated at the University of British Columbia, receiving the President's Prize upon graduation in 1977. Although a piano major, he studied composition, quickly displaying a natural affinity for choral writing. He later developed a close association with several Vancouver-based choirs including Elektra Women's Choir, which premiered this piece. *When You Are Old* is a warm, nostalgic work based upon a poem by W.B. Yeats. The piano plays a significant role in the work, requiring the full range of the instrument and employing interesting colors and harmonies quite independent from the voices.

Crossing the Bar

Gwyneth Walker

This musical setting of a poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson was created in memory of the composer's mother. The poem focuses on the image of a boat putting out to sea, as a metaphor for the final voyage of our lives. The musical interpretation frames the poem with introductory and closing piano passages which may be heard as the spirit initially descending from heaven (to impart the message of the song to us) and then re-ascending, in peace. Within the body of the song, each of the four verses receives a distinct setting, especially in the piano accompaniment. The concluding lines of the poem, “I hope to see my Pilot face to face...” are transformed in the final choral statement into “For I can see my Pilot face to face...” (Notes by the composer)

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