

Vox Grata

WOMEN'S CHOIR

Presents

“Advice to a Young Girl”

Jeanette MacCallum and Susan Kelly, Conductors
John Semingson, Pianist

Westminster Presbyterian Church
Tuesday, November 5, 2019

Second Presbyterian Church
Thursday, November 14, 2019

Free will offering to benefit Mother To Mother

Advice to a Young Girl

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

Be Bold!

I Have a Voice

Moira Smiley

Honor Your Autonomy

Advice to a Girl

Karen P. Thomas

Be Mindful

what i want

Stephen Smith

Live in the Moment

Now I Become Myself

Gwyneth Walker

Make the World a Better Place

Richer for Her

Elizabeth Browne, cello

Andrea Ramsey

Live as an Activist

Breathe in Hope

Dale Trumbore

Find Solace in Nature

The Peace of Wild Things

Joan Szymko

Remember that You are Beautiful

Truth

Andrea Ramsey

Seek Acceptance

A Breath of Kindness

Jane Kirchner, flute

Lane Johnson

What Will You Do?

Your One and Only Life

arr. Stephen Smith

Vox Grata Women's Choir

Soprano 1

Hannah Baisley
Catherine Birdsong Broyles
Brittany Carnegis
Anne Louise Jones
Dina Mañalac
Marlayna Maynard
Mary Catherine Mousourakis
Diana Neely
Kelsey Pate
Libby Skolnik
Sharon Warfield

Alto 1

Annabelle Absar
Jennifer Adam
Julie Birdsong
Kelly Christie
Jane-Coleman Cottone
Amy Kadish
Jane Kirchner
Suzie Lane
Mary Louise McCullough
Janet Salyer
Rosie Smith
Krysta Waldrop

Soprano 2

Jan Allison
Allison Asarch
Jennifer Barnes
Katy Burrows
Ella Chapman
Susan Kelly
Janice Kemp
Erika Milner
Jenna Payne
Mareike Sattler
Sandra Shepherd
Morgan Tingle
Sara Tate Takeuchi

Alto 2

Sara Chang
Sylvia Leins
Caitlyn Lovell
Jeanette MacCallum
Linda McFadyen-Ketchum
Dory Miller
Bridget Simpson
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. Jeanette 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, Jeanette'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, Jeanette 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 Past President of Tennessee ACDA and has served as the Tennessee Chair for Women's Choir Repertoire and Standards. Jeanette 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 serves as Assistant Professor of Music/Choral Director at Tennessee State University. She directs the University Choir and Meistersingers, teaches classes in Music Education and Conducting, teaches Applied Voice, and serves as advisor for Club V, the student vegan organization. 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 and The Cecilia Ensemble, a professional choir based in Augusta, Georgia.

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 President 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. Vox Grata is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, tax-exempt organization.

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>.

100% of the contributions received at this program will benefit Mother To Mother, a nonprofit that provides vital health, safety and wellness items for infants and children in need through a network of social workers, nurses, agencies and local hospitals. All donations to Mother To Mother are tax-deductible.

Special Thanks

Vox Grata Board of Directors – Jim Aderhold, Jan Allison, Jill Austin, St. Clair Blue, Kelly Christie, Teresa Davidson, Jane Ferrell, Susan Hassell, Vanessa Jackson, Denise Linn, Carla Lovell, Jeanette MacCallum, and Vicky Tarleton

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Rev. Dr. Mary Louise McCullough, Pastor, **Second Presbyterian Church**

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

Texts

I Have a Voice (text by the composer)

Listen, speak out, listen, sing!
Take the space, make a sound.
I have a voice!
It trembles and it shakes like thunder.
You have a voice.
We have a voice, a voice inside, buried inside.
A sound!
Wake the sleeping lioness.
Thunder catches my heart! Thunder fills my lungs!
Thunder takes my breath! Thunder fills my lungs!
I can listen to you now, and I can hear you without fear.
I can speak clearly now, and I know that love is near.
I am not afraid. I am not alone.
I have a voice. You have a voice.
We have many voices.
We have a voice!

Advice to a Girl (text by Sara Teasdale)

No one worth possessing
Can be quite possessed;
Lay that on your heart,
My young angry dear;
This truth, this hard and precious stone,
Lay it on your hot cheek,
Let it hide your tear.
Hold it like a crystal
When you are alone
And gaze in the depths of the icy stone.
Long, look long and you will be blessed:
No one worth possessing
Can be quite possessed.

what i want (text by Pat Lowther)

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
the blessing descending
like the sky
sliding down the spectrum

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

Now I Become Myself (text by May Sarton)

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?
Or the end of the poem is clear?
Or love safe in the walled city?)
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!

Richer for Her (text from poem *For the Love of the World* by Charlotte Tall Mountain)

For the love of a tree,
she went out on a limb.
For the love of the sea,
she rocked the boat.
For the love of the earth,
she dug deeper.
For the love of the stars,
she let her light shine.
For the love of spirit,
she nurtured her soul.
For the love of the Goddess,
she drew down the moon.
For the love of a good time,
she sowed seeds of happiness.
For the love of family,
she reconciled differences.
For the love of her enemies,
she suspended judgment.
For the love of community,
she mended fences.
For the love of herself,
she acknowledged her worth.

And the world was richer for her.

Breathe in Hope (text by Maya Jackson)

What would we do if we didn't have the privilege of being distracted

I know life has to move on.
I know we must honor our personal lives.
I know we must not live in darkness.
I know we must celebrate the grace in our humanity.
To keep our lungs from collapsing.
We must breathe in hope.
And so have I. Taken in joy. And beauty.
And selfishness. And frivolity. And laughter.
We are wonderful. Humans. We find the light.

But I fear the moment passing.
Already distracted from the fire though the smoke is still filling our lungs.

This is going to sound wrong.
But I hope this pain lasts.

I hope that it holds.
I don't want to heal
just yet.

We have become experts at recovery.
I hope we become expert at Revolution.

The Peace of Wild Things (text by Wendell Berry)

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Truth (text by Gardenia Bruce)

My roots are earth, muddy river and honeysuckle
Sturdy and rigid, like farmhouse planks.

I shared a sisterhood with the amber grasses,
My dreams climbed endlessly, like the kudzu in July
I shared a sisterhood with the amber grasses,
My dreams climbed endlessly, no end in sight.

In nature, in naïve youth, all the forest was possible,
All the pasture was my own.
My mother told me I was beautiful.
And I believed her then, why shouldn't I?

There is no doubt in a pond,
Insecurity does not grow in a meadow.
It will not sprout beneath the southern pines.
It is planted by the boys on the school bus.
Tended by the words of small minds.
And words may wound you, but are they true?

You are beautiful, you are enough,
You must believe in that, believe the truth.

My roots are earth, muddy river and honeysuckle.
My roots are beautiful.
My roots are strong.

A Breath of Kindness (text by Dinah Maria (Mulock) Craik)

Oh, the comfort –
The inexpressible comfort of feeling
safe with a person,
Having neither to weigh thoughts,
Nor measure words – but pouring them
All right out – just as they are –
Chaff and grain together –
Certain that a faithful hand will
Take and sift them –
Keep what is worth keeping –
and with the breath of kindness
Blow the rest away.

Your One and Only Life (text by Susan Crowe)

About a thousand years ago, when I was very young,
My hair burned like the sea beneath an ever-rising sun;
My blood ran thick with promise, I was tender to the bone;
But now I'm Evangeline, made of stone.

This is your one and only life. What will you do?

Now the meteors of August, they fly all through my hair.
The day will come when I will rise to find my eye less fair;
And this body scorched by beauty and these hands I left unplayed –
What was I waiting for, afraid?

This is your one and only life. What will you do?

You can dream, you can imagine, you can simply hope and pray,
You can save yourself for glory, you can wait til judgement day;
You can hold out til you stand a breath away from heaven's gate;
Your day of redemption will come – too late.

This is your one and only life. What will you do?

Program Notes

I Have a Voice

Moira Smiley

Moira Smiley is a singer/composer. Her remarkable career has produced award-winning ensembles, and recordings of experimental, emotional music. Always improvisational in her approach, Moira marries her study of traditional folksong with an avant-garde sensibility. She accompanies herself on banjo, accordion, piano and percussive movement while performing solo, or with her vocal group, VOCO. She is well-known and beloved around the world as a choral composer and arranger, with millions of singers world-wide singing her music, and a Carnegie Hall concert featuring her music coming in 2020. In 2018 she released her latest solo album and choral songbook, *Unzip The Horizon*.

In the composer's words, "to say 'I have a voice' could explore both the physical, speaking/singing voice and the more existential voice, or 'what you want to say in the world.' Writing this piece was an encouragement to myself, and to all of us to keep trying to find and use our voices to change the world, even if we sometimes feel weak, unsure, faltering. In the piece's unfolding, the breath wakes us. We find ourselves in wonder at the bowl of sky around us, by our tiny presence in a giant cosmos. We explore the world around us, then our own physicality through sound and movement. We see and hear each other, and discover that when we're in harmony and solidarity we are thunderously powerful. This was begun in response to the tides of racism, sexism and greed that greet us in the news on many days. 'What can I do?' I often find myself asking. Over and over I see that my work is to stay awake, responsive, and encourage others to aspire to the same. As I wrote, I imagined YOU, women of all stripes, singing this, encouraging each other, being encouraged, and shedding all shyness, exclaiming "HA!!" - while you sing, stomp and clap!"

Advice to a Girl

Karen P. Thomas

This piece is taken from a *The Singer's Path*, a five-movement choral cycle on poetry by Sara Teasdale. The poems chosen for this cycle are those texts that are particularly relevant to young women, and which lent themselves to an exploration of life journeys. The work was commissioned by the Young Women's Choral Projects of San Francisco.

Karen P. Thomas, composer and conductor, is the Artistic Director and Conductor of the Seattle Pro Musica. Her compositions are performed and broadcast throughout the world, by groups such as The Hilliard Ensemble and the Vocal Consort of Brussels. Her works are published by Santa Barbara Music Publishing, and have been featured at numerous ACDA and AGO conferences. A prize-winning composer, she has received grants from the NEA, The American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, and Meet the Composer, among numerous others.

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 melody is well crafted and harmonized, with lovely contours and shapes, making it very satisfying to the singer. The poem, a simple plea for light and blessing, conveys the spirit of mature love, the kind never fully realized by the poet, Pat Lowther who was tragically murdered by her second husband. One of her latest works, this poem was found in a manuscript at the time of her death. Its title, spelled with lower-case letters, may indicate the poet's sense of herself within the universe as an "i," not an "I," and to emphasize that the phrase "what i want" is not an egocentric demand, but a prayer for blessing.

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 a clock and 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.

Richer for Her

Andrea Ramsey

Andrea Ramsey is a composer, conductor, and music educator. Her teaching experiences range from work with adolescent and children's voices to frequent guest conducting of all-state and honor choirs, to her current position as the Associate Director of Choral Studies at the University of Colorado Boulder. An ASCAP award-winning composer, Andrea has over 80 published choral works in print.

Poet Charlotte Tall Mountain (1941-2006) was known for her deep love of our planet earth and for humanity. The text sung today is taken from her most widely circulated poem, *For the Love of the World* and evokes her kindred connection with the Indigenous spirituality.

Breathe in Hope

Dale Trumbore

Maya Jackson's text for *Breathe in Hope* began as two Facebook posts responding to the violent deaths of Philando Castile and Alton Sterling. The composer states: "reading Maya's words, I was drawn to her poetic call for action. When confronted with tragedy, we may instinctively search for hope and healing. In the face of violent injustice, though, maybe the hope we seek can only be found when we recognize our own accountability and ask what actions we can take to create lasting change."

Dale Trumbore is a Los Angeles-based composer and writer whose music has been praised by *The New York Times* for its "soaring melodies and beguiling harmonies." Trumbore's compositions have been performed widely in the U.S. and internationally by ensembles including the American Contemporary Music Ensemble (ACME), Los Angeles Master Chorale, Los Angeles Children's Chorus, Modesto Symphony, Pacific Chorale, Pasadena Symphony, The Singers – Minnesota Choral Artists, and VocalEssence.

The Peace of Wild Things

Joan Szymko

Joan Szymko (born 1957), in addition to being an active composer, has directed choirs in the Pacific Northwest for over twenty-five years. Abundant lyricism, rhythmic integrity and vigorous attention to text are hallmarks of her diverse and distinctive choral writing. Especially noteworthy is Szymko's significant contribution to the body of literature for women's voices. Her music provides opportunities for women's choruses to stretch beyond the ordinary and expected, to the refreshing and powerful. In 2010, Szymko was selected as the composer of the Raymond W. Brock Commission by the American Choral Directors Association. Her setting of Kentucky-based poet Wendell Berry's poem is "dedicated to the welfare of all beings."

Truth

Andrea Ramsey

In the words of the composer, "this work feels especially personal for me, both in its familiar Southern references (having grown up in Arkansas) and in how it evokes memories of my mother. She was a constant encouragement, always believing in me and telling me I was beautiful and strong. Every young woman should have a force like this in her life, whether it is her own mother or someone else. There is great power in "you are beautiful. You are enough."

A Breath of Kindness

Lane Johnson

Lane Johnson is a composer and teacher based in Utah. He studied composition and music theory at Brigham Young University and taught choral music at both the Junior High and High School levels. His compositions have been performed by university, high school, junior high school, church and community choirs throughout the world. They have also been featured at national and regional ACDA conventions. This piece was premiered by the Brigham Young University Women's Chorus in 2014.

Your One and Only Life

arr. Stephen Smith

Canadian composer Stephen Smith resides in Vancouver, British Columbia where he serves as the accompanist for Elektra Women's Choir. His compositions and arrangements have been widely performed and recorded by dozens of ensembles, including the Vancouver Men's Chorus, Elektra Women's Choir and the Seattle Men's Chorus, to name a few. This piece is an arrangement of singer-songwriter Susan Crowe's folk song of the same name.