

Vox Grata

WOMEN'S CHOIR

Conducted by
Jeanette MacCallum

Presents

All Creation Sings!

Dr. John Semington, Accompanist
Special Guest Artist, Licia Jaskunas

Westminster Presbyterian Church
Nashville, TN
Thursday, January 30, 2014
7 PM

All Creation Sings!

Perspectives on Creation

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

Please hold applause until the conclusion of each musical set.

Perspective of a Christian Mystic

O Pastor Animarum (text by Hildegard)

Hildegard von Bingen

Soloists: Emily Neely, Leigh Anderson, Jen Way, Mary Biddlecombe, Erica Scaramuzza

Canticle to the Spirit (text by Hildegard)

Eleanor Daley

We dedicate this song to the women residents of Mending Hearts, Nashville

Perspective of Two British Poets

I See the Heaven's Glories Shine (text by Emily Bronte)

Andrea Ramsey

Sing Creations Music On (text by John Clare)

Stephen Paulus

Perspective from Ancient Hindu Hymns and Poetry

Choral Hymns from the Rig-Veda, Group III

Gustav Holst

Hymn to the Dawn

Hymn to the Waters

Hymn to Vena (The Sun Rising through the Mist)

Hymn of the Travellers

Licia Jaskunas, Harp

Perspective of Old Testament Writers

In the Beginning (Genesis 1)

Imant Raminsh

The Word Was God (Genesis 1)

Rosephanye Powell

How Excellent Thy Name (Psalm 8)

Howard Hanson

Perspective of a Native American

This We Know (text by Chief Seattle)

Ron Jeffers

Perspective of an American Poet

I Thank You God (text by e.e. cummings)

Gwyneth Walker

Vox Grata

Soprano 1

Leigh Anderson, Susan Holt, Emily Neely, Charlotte Sublett, Sharon Warfield, Jen Way

Soprano 2

Emily Beavers, Mary Biddlecombe, Jenny Knott, Erica Scaramuzza

Alto 1

Annabelle Absar, Jennifer Barnes, Kelly Christie, Brandy Luna

Alto 2

Carol Callaway-Lane, Linda McFadyen-Ketchum, Denise Statham, Karen Weir

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

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 singer, pianist and conductor, Mrs. MacCallum has also directed choirs at the Blair School of Music at Vanderbilt University, as well as at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Nashville. She currently serves as the ACDA Tennessee Chair for Women's Choir Repertoire and Standards. Mrs. MacCallum has served as the Treasurer and President 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)

John Semington is 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 nearly 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. Over the past 26 years, he has conducted and/or served as an accompanist for church, community, university and honor choirs in Illinois, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

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. The singers also enjoy the opportunity to mentor exceptional high school and college-aged women who participate in the choir as part of its choral scholar program.

Special Thanks

Vox Grata Board of Directors – Sallie Bailey, Susan Baughman, Jennifer Barnes, Kelly Christie, Susan Holt, Doug and Jeanette MacCallum
Dr. John Semingson, Director Music Ministries, Westminster Presbyterian Church
Ian Petty, Web Design – ianpetty.com
Mid-Town Printing
Westminster Presbyterian Church

Upcoming Performances

Sunday, March 2, 2014 at 4:00 PM, St. George's Episcopal Church, Nashville, TN
Vox Grata to perform in the concert celebrating 85th birthday of Wilma Jensen, organist

Thursday, May 22, 2014 at 7:00 PM, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Nashville, TN
Vox Grata to perform Spring Concert: "The Poet Sings"
Choral works featuring texts by American poets
Concert will benefit YWCA Domestic Violence Center, Nashville, TN

For information about supporting Vox Grata or to find out about auditions and upcoming events, please visit our website at www.voxgrata.com.

Texts and Translations

O Pastor Animarum (Antifon)

Latin translation: O Shepherd of souls and o first voice through whom all creation is summoned, now to you may it give pleasure and dignity to liberate us from our miseries and languishing.

Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179)

Canticle to the Spirit

Holy spirit, giving life to all life, root of all things, washing them clean; wiping out their mistakes, healing all their wounds; You are our true life, luminous, wonderful! Awak'ning the heart from its ancient sleep.

Hildegard von Bingen

I See the Heaven's Glories Shine (from poem "No Coward Soul is Mine") Emily Bronte (1818-1848)

No coward soul is mine, no trembler in this world's storm-troubled sphere: I see the Heaven's glories shine, and faith shines equal, arming me from fear. O God within my breast, Almighty, ever-present Deity! Life—that in me has rest, As I—undying Life—have power in thee! With wide-embracing love, Thy spirit animates eternal years; pervades and broods above; changes, sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears. Though earth and man were gone, and suns and universes ceased to be, and Thou were left alone,

every existence would exist in Thee. There is not room for Death; nor atom that his might could render void: Thou art Being and Breath, and what Thou art may never be destroyed.

Sing Creations Music On

John Clare (1793-1864)

Sing creations music on! Nature's glee is in ev'ry mood and tone. Eternity! Nature's universal tongue singeth here! Songs I've heard and felt and seen ev'rywhere. Songs like the grass are ever green ev'rywhere. The giver said live and be and they have been forever!

Choral Hymns from the Rig-Veda (translated from Sanskrit by composer) Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

1. Hymn to the Dawn

Hear our hymn O Goddess, rich in wealth and wisdom; ever young yet ancient; true to Law Eternal. Wakener of the songbirds; ensign of the Eternal; Draw thou near O Fair one, in thy radiant Chariot. Bring to her your offering; humbly bow before her; raise your songs of welcome, as she comes in splendor.

2. Hymn to the Waters

Flowing from the firmament forth to the ocean; healing all in earth and air, never halting; Indra, Lord of Heaven formed their courses; Indra's mighty laws can never be broken; cleansing waters flow ye on, hasten and help us. Lo, in the waters, dwelleth One; Knower of all on earth and sea; whose dread command no man may shun; Varuna, Sovran Lord is He; Onward ye waters onward hie; Dance in the bright beams of the sun; Obey the ruler of the sky, who dug the path for you to run.

3. Hymn to Vena (the Sun Rising through the Mist)

Vena comes born of light; He drives the many coloured clouds onward; here, where the sunlight and the waters mingle, our songs float up and caress the newborn infant; Vena comes, the child of cloud and mist appeareth on the ridge of the sky; He shines on the summit of creation! The hosts proclaim the glory of our Common Father; Vena comes; He hath come to the bosom of his beloved; smiling on him, she beareth him to highest heaven; with yearning heart on thee we gaze; O gold-winged messenger of mighty Gods; wise men see him in their libations as the sacrifice mounts to the eternal heights, mingling with our solemn chant; he stands erect in highest heaven, clad in noble raiment, armed with shining weapons, hurling light to the farthest region; rejoicing in his radiant splendor.

4. Hymn of the Travellers

Go thou on before us, guide us on our way, Mighty One; make our journey pleasant, never let us stray; wonderworker hearken, come in thy splendor, come in thy mighty power. Trample on the wicked, all who would oppose, Mighty One; drive away the robber, drive away our foes. As we journey onward, songs to thee we raise, Mighty One; thou didst aid our fathers, guard us all our days. Feed us and inspire us, keep us in thy care, Mighty One; Lead us past pursuers, unto meadows fair.

In the Beginning (Genesis 1)

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth; and the earth was without form and void. And darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters; and God said, "Let there be light" and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good. And God divided the light from the darkness, and God called the light day, and the darkness he called night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. And God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also; God set them in the heavens to give light upon the earth; to rule over day and night, and to divide the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was very good.

The Word Was God (Genesis 1)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God; the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made that have been made; all things were made by Him.

How Excellent Thy Name (Psalm 8)

O Lord our Lord, how excellent Thy name in all the earth! Who hast set Thy glory above the heavens? When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou are mindful of Him? And the son of man, that Thou visitest him? For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, Alleluia! And hast crowned him with glory and honor; Thou madest him to have dominion over the work of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet. Alleluia!

I Thank You God

e.e. cummings (1894-1962)

I thank you God for most this amazing day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything which is natural, which is infinite, which is yes; I who have died am alive again today; and this is the sun's birthday; this is the birthday of life and love and wings; and of the gay great happening illimitably earth; how should any human being doubt You? How

should tasting touching any human merely being doubt You? How should tasting touching hearing seeing breathing any human merely being doubt You? Doubt unimaginable You? Lifted from the no of all nothing, doubt You? Now the ears of my ears awake! Now the eyes of my eyes are opened!

Program Notes

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O Pastor Animarum

Hildegard von Bingen

Hildegard of Bingen was a German writer, composer, Christian mystic and abbess of the Benedictine order. She was named a Doctor of the Church by Pope Benedict XVI in 2012. Hildegard is often credited as the first important female composer in music history. Her poetry and melody reveal imagination and genius in expression. Her plainchant melodies, inspired by her daily singing of the Divine Office, are characterized by wide vocal ranges, large leaps and dramatic flourishes. She composed antiphons, responsories, sequences and hymns for monastic use. She is also credited for writing the first musical drama, "The Ritual of the Virtues". She believed music to be the highest form of praise to God.

Canticle to the Spirit

Eleanor Daley

Born and raised in Ontario, Eleanor Daley received her Bachelor of Music Degree in Organ Performance from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario and holds diplomas in piano and organ from the Royal Conservatory of Music, Toronto and Trinity College, England. She has been the Director of Music at Fairlawn Avenue United Church in Toronto, Ontario since 1982. During this time, she has established a thriving choral program for which much of her music has been composed. A prolific composer, Eleanor has a remarkable gift for melody. Her works are most notable for their sensitive interweaving of text and music. She has published over one hundred choral compositions and is commissioned extensively throughout North America.

I See the Heaven's Glories Shine

Andrea Ramsey

Dr. Andrea Ramsey is a composer, conductor and music educator. Currently, Dr. Ramsey teaches and conducts choirs at The Ohio State University. Having extensive experience teaching youth and children, Andrea believes strongly in the growth of young people as musicians and singers. This piece was commissioned by the Allegro Community Children's Choir of Kansas City.

Sing Creations Music On

Stephen Paulus

Stephen Paulus is one of the most prolific composers of our time, with over 400 works including opera, orchestral and choral compositions. He has served as Composer in Residence with the orchestras of Atlanta and Minnesota and been commissioned by conductors Kurt Masur, Sir Neville Marriner and Leonard Slatkin. Paulus is credited with over 150 choral works, including "Pilgrims' Hymn", sung at the funerals of Presidents Reagan and Ford. His works have received thousands of performances and recordings by such groups as the Robert Shaw Festival Singers, VocalEssence, the L.A. Master Chorale and the Dale Warland Singers. "Sing Creations Music On" was commissioned and premiered by the American Boychoir and Glen Ellyn Children's Chorus in 2001. Sadly, Mr. Paulus suffered a serious stroke in July 2013. His long term prognosis remains uncertain.

Choral Hymns from the Rig-Veda

Gustav Holst

English composer Gustav Holst is best known for his orchestral work, "The Planets", however Holst never felt it to be his best work. He was influenced by his studies with English composer, Peter Stanford and his lifelong friendship with the renowned Ralph Vaughan Williams. For a number of years, Holst taught music at an all-girls school in England. He composed in his free time, often laboring for many years over a single composition.

As a young man, Gustav Holst became interested in Hindu mysticism, a fascination that resulted in several major compositions based on translated Sanskrit texts. At one point, Holst actually enrolled in Sanskrit classes so that he could make his own musically suitable translations when necessary. Among the felicitous results of this study were four sets of "Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda", a canonical sacred text of Hinduism. The four sets of choral hymns were composed between 1907 and 1914. We perform the third of these sets tonight. Holst's natural affinity for Eastern philosophy and literature is evident in these sumptuous, magical pieces for treble chorus with harp accompaniment. The first one grabs the listener right away with a series of rising fifths, each beginning a half-step higher from where the previous one ended, seemingly ascending toward a mystical realm. "Hymn to Vena," the third and most substantial of the set, features Ravelian harmonic sophistication, with fraught, whole-tone-based chords dissolving into sweeter, lusher sonorities, all serving to enhance the sense of wonder. The ethereal harp writing contributes strongly

to these rare treasures. All four hymns are quite modal in their construction, conveying the mystery and awe of the universe and its creation.

In the Beginning

Imant Raminsh

Imant Raminsh is a Latvian-born composer who immigrated to Canada, ultimately studying composition in Toronto, Salzburg and British Columbia. His works have been performed worldwide and he is the recipient of the National Choral Award by the Association of Canadian Choral Conductors.

“In the Beginning” begins with a recitative like section underscored by hollow sonorities. Harmonic ambiguity also characterizes the description of darkness and the deep, but an intensification of rhythm and texture culminates in the moment of creation of light. A middle section describes the division of light from darkness, and this leads into an expanded lyrical third section which concludes the work.

The Word Was God

Rosephanye Powell

Dr. Rosephanye Powell has been hailed as one of America’s premier women composers of choral works. She is commissioned by university choruses, professional, community and church choirs, as well as many secondary schools each year. In 2012, the Nashville Chamber Singers premiered her four-movement sacred work for chorus, organ and orchestra, “Cry of Jeremiah” for the National Convention of the American Guild of Organists. Dr. Powell is an accomplished singer, voice professor and conductor who has been commissioned by notable women’s choirs such as Vox Femina, The Sofia Chamber Choir, and MUSE Cincinnati’s Women’s Choir.

The text and the theme of this piece is introduced simply, beginning in unison and growing into homophony in the voices. The simplicity represents the “nothingness” that existed before creation. The unison represents the oneness of God and Christ. The homophony represents the distinctness of God and Christ in their roles. The contrasting B section serenely states that everything that has been made was made by Christ. It is lyrical and provides relief from the tension of the opening section. In the final section, creation is spoken into existence with six entrances of the text “in the beginning was the Word”, each one representing one day of creation. During the coda, the song builds in intensity, to the final statement of the text, with the final “God” sung after a dramatic rest.

How Excellent Thy Name

Howard Hanson

Howard Hanson, American composer, conductor and educator spent forty years as head of the Eastman School of Music. During his tenure at Eastman, Hanson continued to compose prolifically while also serving as conductor of the prestigious Eastman Philharmonic. In that role, he became a great champion of American music as well. It is estimated that he conducted approximately 1,500 works by 700 composers during his time there.

Hanson’s most lauded works are his seven symphonies, especially his second and fourth symphonies, the latter earning him the Pulitzer Prize. His style displays the influence of an early teacher, Ottorino Respighi and his love for lush, lyric colors in the style of Sibelius with whom he shared a Nordic heritage. Hanson was among the first twentieth century American composers to achieve success in this style, while other Americans continued to compose in new “Americana” styles or in the more angular style of Stravinsky.

This We Know

Ron Jeffers

In addition to composing, Ron Jeffers is known for his work as a music educator at Oregon State University and as a publisher with the company Earthsongs.

“This We Know”, originally composed in a four-language version for mixed choir (English, German, French and Spanish) was written for the First World Symposium on Choral Music in 1987. The piece is dedicated to the International Federation for Choral Music and to the abiding wisdom and spirit of Chief Seattle. Later, a transcription for men’s choir was made for the University of Michigan Men’s Glee Club. MUSE, a Cincinnati Women’s Choir, sang the first transcription for women’s voices.

I Thank You God

Gwyneth Walker

“I Thank You God” was commissioned by the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) and premiered at the National ACDA Convention in February, 1999. The text is adapted from the E.E. Cummings poem of the same name.

Composer Gwyneth Walker writes: “This is a poem of grandeur and of praise. Therefore it might be expected that this musical setting would aim at vastness, grandeur and awakening.” Walker accomplishes this through a variety of means. First, the piano introduction includes slowly unfolding piano arpeggios which focus on open intervals of octaves, fifths and fourths, exploiting the full range of the piano keyboard. The composer also takes the singers on a harmonic journey which begins in a low register in C minor, and then travels through a number of other key areas until it reaches the distant key of G-flat. At this point, the voices are drawn closely together into a tone cluster containing the pitches G-flat, A-flat and B-flat, only to open apart into the glorious C major chords which conclude the piece in the high register.

The speaker in the poem is almost breathless as he expresses his wonder at the natural world. In the customary style of the poet, the

speaker hardly pauses, having no space even for punctuation. Walker conveys this aspect of the text through a number of sequences of the phrase "I thank you God" and through static melodic lines to set the poet's adjectives ("how should tasting touching hearing seeing breathing any human merely being doubt you?").

A central phrase, "I who have died am alive again today" returns frequently and expresses the rebirth of the soul with each "amazing day".