

Vox Grata

WOMEN'S CHOIR

Presents

Songs on an Eastern Wind *Choral Music from Central and Eastern Europe*

Jeanette MacCallum and Susan Kelly, Conductors
John Semington, Accompanist

American Guild of Organists
St. Andrew Lutheran Church
Franklin, Tennessee
Monday, May 9, 2016

Westminster Presbyterian Church
Nashville, Tennessee
Thursday, May 19, 2016

Free will offering to benefit Family Reconciliation Center

Songs on an Eastern Wind

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

Gloria from Mass No. 6

György Orbán, b. 1947

Lauliku lapsepõli

arr. Veljo Tormis, b. 1930

Erica Scaramuzza, Mareike Sattler and Amory Scott, soloists

Salve Regina

Miklós Kocsár, b. 1933

Benedictus Es

Ēriks Ešenvalds, b. 1977

O Salutaris Hostia

*Anna Horne and Susan Kelly, soloists (Franklin)
Emily Neely and Emily Beavers, soloists (Nashville)*

Six Choral Songs, Op. 15

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Sung in English using edition by Mark Herman and Ronnie Apter

1. **Glory**
2. **Night**
3. **The Pine Tree**
4. **Now the Waves Are Drowsing**
5. **Captivity**
6. **The Angel**

Missa de Spiritu Sancto

Rihards Dubra, b. 1964

1. **Kyrie**
2. **Gloria**
3. **Sanctus et Benedictus**
4. **Agnus Dei**

Vox Grata

WOMEN'S CHOIR

Soprano 1

Catherine Birdsong Broyles
Jennifer Haendel
Rebecca Harris
Anna Horne
Emily Neely*
Diana Neely+
Emily Packard
Sharon Warfield*

Soprano 2

Jan Allison
Emily Beavers
Jj Ebelhar
Katy Ferrell
Susan Kelly
Haley Smith
Erica Scaramuzza*+

Alto 1

Annabelle Absar
Julie Birdsong
Kelly Christie*
Colleen Halfmann
Jane-Coleman Harbison
Jane Kirchner
Mary Louise McCullough
Amory Scott+

Alto 2

Sylvia Leins
Denise Linn
Caitlyn Lovell
Linda McFadyen-Ketchum
Erin Pearson
Mareike Sattler+

*Founding member

+Section leader

Jeanette MacCallum is the Director of Music Ministries at Second Presbyterian Church in Nashville, TN and founder and Artistic Director of *Vox Grata*. Prior to that, she was 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 currently serves as the President-Elect for Tennessee ACDA and 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*," recently 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 where she directs the University Choir and Meistersingers, teaches classes in Music Education and Conducting, and teaches Applied Voice. Outside of her work at TSU, she sings with Vox Grata and serves as a substitute singer and pianist at several Nashville churches. Susan also continues to sing soprano with The Lyric Consort, an eight-voice a cappella ensemble based in northeast Pennsylvania that has performed on state and regional ACDA conferences.

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 also served as 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, and as the Director of Music at the First Presbyterian Church of Clarks Summit.

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.

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.

Texts and Translations

Gloria from Mass No. 6 [Sung in Latin]

György Orbán

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father. Lord Jesus Christ, only begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. You are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One; you alone are the Lord; you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Lauliku lapsepõli (The Songster's Childhood) [Sung in Estonian]

arr. Veljo Tormis

When I was very little, al-lea, I grew so prettily; I was but one night old, just two days old, mother took my cradle to the meadow, put my crib on the heath, put a duck to rock the cradle, the bird of summer to push me. The duck had many words; the bird of summer had lots of songs; the duck sang many songs to me there; the bird of summer, it spoke to me a lot. That is where this child learned the songs; this crazy one got to know the words; all of them I placed on paper; all of them I hewed into a book. That is why I have so many words; that is why I have lots of tunes.

Salve Regina [Sung in Latin]

Miklós Kocsár

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us; and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, o loving, o sweet Virgin Mary.

Benedictus Es [Sung in Latin]

Ēriks Ešenvalds

Blessed art Thou, the Lord God of our fathers. And glorious and to be praised for all ages. And blessed is the name of thy glory, which is holy. And glorious and to be praised for all ages. Blessed art Thou in the holy temple of thy glory. And glorious and to be praised for all ages. Blessed art Thou on the holy throne of thy kingdom. And glorious and to be praised for all ages. Blessed art Thou upon the scepter of thy divinity. And glorious and to be praised for all ages.

O Salutaris Hostia [Sung in Latin]

Ēriks Ešenvalds

O saving Victim, opening wide the gate of heaven to us below, our foes press hard on every side; thine aid supply; thy strength bestow. To thy great name be endless praise, immortal Godhead, One in Three. O grant us endless length of days, in our true, native land with thee. Amen.

Six Choral Songs, Op. 15

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Glory

Glory! Long live the people in glory! First are the people, first is their fate, first is their need for freedom and peace! Our fathers battled enemies and defended the land that we might be free. Now we go onward, one loving family, furthering freedom even as we are strengthening peace.

Night

Softly night comes in on dusky wings, taking flight across the land, and from somewhere drifts a dreary song, drifts a song made dark by a tear. Go away, you melancholy tune. Soon the night will fall away. The triumphant resurrected day will bring happiness to all. Meanwhile, weary dreamers are renewed in the mystery of sleep. Crimson dawn will seep across the sky and dissolve itself in blue.

The Pine Tree

The north wind is savage. The mountain is barren. Alone on the peak stands a pine. It sways as it slumbers, as glittering snowflakes drift downward and clothe it in white. It dreams in its sleep of a distant horizon, a desert of sand dunes and sun, where, high on a cliff, swaying slowly in sorrow, a beautiful palm stands alone.

Now the Waves Are Drowsing

Now the waves are drowsing in the quiet night, azure waters glimmer brightly in the full moonlight. Silver moonbeams falling set the waves ablaze beneath. Like a moonbeam driving darkness from the ocean, joy makes light of grief.

Captivity

“Little nightingale with your head beneath your wing, why do you eat nothing and why do you not sing?” “Ages ago I sang in spring in a wood beneath the stars. Now I only hang my head in a cage with golden bars. Should I sing? My mate is alone and sighing for me? Should I sing when my nestlings are calling and crying for me?” “Through the open window behold the open sky. Be happy, little nightingale. Spread your wings and fly!”

The Angel

The heavenly song of an angel in flight was quietly filling the night. The clouds and the moon and the stars in a throng were listening as he sang the song. He sang of the sinless spirits in bliss in gardens of paradise. He sang of the greatness of God, and his guileless praises pervaded the sky. The angel embraced a young soul in his arms to set in this harsh vale of tears. The sound of the song lingered on in the soul, remaining alive through the years. Confined to the face of the wearisome world, the soul ached with wondrous desire; the sounds of the earth could never replace a song of the heavenly choir.

Missa de Spiritu Sancto [Sung in Greek and Latin]

Rihards Dubra

Kyrie

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy

Gloria

(See translation of text earlier in the program)

Sanctus et Benedictus

Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth. The heavens are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Agnus Dei

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

Program Notes

Gloria from Mass No. 6

György Orbán

György Orbán was born in Romania of Hungarian parents in 1947. A resident of Hungary since 1979, Orbán has worked as an editor for Editio Musica Budapest in addition to teaching at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music. His compositional output is large and oriented towards the choral idiom. His smaller choral compositions are rooted in Hungarian secular music when he was restricted from composing sacred music during the Communist regime. Since the fall of Communism in the former Soviet Union and the independence of Hungary in the late 1980s, his sacred catalog has grown substantially. He takes a particular interest in setting the Mass as evidenced by his 13 settings of the text.

While Orbán sets the traditional Latin Mass text, he acknowledges that he is not bound by stylistic traditions, preferring to inject “national color” with a reference to secular music into each movement. His harmonies and melodies are equally non-traditional and distinctive. Three of his thirteen masses (Nos. 6, 9 and 12) were composed for female voices, the first two accompanied by piano and the last by string quintet.

The Gloria from Mass No. 6 displays the composer’s penchant for dance-like, rhythmic elements and non-traditional harmonies, including modal melodies and a challenging piano accompaniment.

Lauliku lapsepõli

Veljo Tormis

The Estonian choral tradition literally embodies the power of communal singing. With a population of only 1.4 million, this small country boasts over 1,000 choirs. Every five years since 1869, the country’s singers gather at a special site on the outskirts of Tallinn for a unique and amazing event: the *Laulupidu* or All-Estonian Song Festival, where a choir of 20,000 sings for and with an audience of 100,000. Surprisingly, during years of Soviet occupation in the mid-to-late 20th century, this gathering was even larger. From 1869 until today, the *Laulupidu* ideal remains consistent: to reaffirm cultural roots, to pass along the songs from generation to generation, and, as a gathered people, to sustain the culture’s value and unique identity.

Veljo Tormis, himself Estonian, used folk melodies as material for thematic development in the traditional classical compositional style. But his compositional epiphany occurred with the composing of *Estonian Calendar Songs*, wherein he attempted to preserve the ancient Estonian (*regilaul*) song. He is quoted as saying: “I don’t use folksong; folksong uses me.” By using the hallmarks of Estonian culture—the language and the *regilaul*—as his compositional materials, Tormis carries forward the country’s ancient traditions into the next millennium.

Regilaul texts are single non-strophic lines of 8 syllables, alternating stressed and unstressed syllables. Instead of end rhymes, these texts use alliteration and assonance. The melodies are characterized by a narrow range, scalar motion, frequent repetition of tones and independence from the harmonic motion so typical of western European folk tunes. (Notes by the publisher)

Salve Regina

Miklós Kocsár

Born in 1933 in Hungary, Miklós Kocsár studied at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest, ultimately marrying music teacher and choral conductor Ildikó Herboly, a prominent educator of the Kodály method. His compositions include chamber music, especially music for winds in addition to a large catalog of choral compositions. Many of his vocal works were set to verses by Hungarian poets. This a cappella setting of the Marian antiphon exhibits the composer’s quest for beauty of sound and his insistence on strict formal proportions, both characteristic features of his compositions.

Benedictus Es and O Salutaris Hostia

Ēriks Ešenvalds

Ēriks Ešenvalds is one of the most sought-after choral composers of today. Born in Riga, his works are performed widely on every continent. Himself a choral singer, his CD recordings have won many awards and he has been commissioned by elite choirs from around the world including the Choir of Trinity College Cambridge, Polyphony and the State Choir “Latvija” to name a few.

Benedictus Es is a short, rhythmic hymn of praise and a prescribed canticle for Morning Prayer. Somewhat playful in spirit and totally homophonic, the piece employs stepwise motion throughout and refers to several modes.

O Salutaris Hostia has quickly become one of Ešenvalds’ most popular pieces. It was originally written for female voices but is often sung in its mixed choir setting. It is a gentle meditation, a hushed chorale for full choir with curlicues of melody from two solo sopranos drifting above. The soloists alternate between echoing and singing together in thirds. The effect is quietly ecstatic, offering a moment of adoration and wonderment appropriate for the Eucharistic text.

Six Choral Songs, Op. 15

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Between 1890 and 1917, Rachmaninoff composed over 80 songs in an essentially 19th-century Russian style characterized by long, broad melodies (often melancholy) and rich harmonies. The style was evidently influenced by the French *romance* and inspired by Russia's Romantic poets. Not surprisingly, his songs feature sumptuous and often virtuosic piano accompaniments that along with the vocal writing, convey the musical weight of the text. The Op. 15 songs were composed in 1895 while Rachmaninoff taught at the Maryinsky Girls' School.

Throughout the set, the chorus is divided into two parts, singing almost entirely at a third or in unison. The songs are short and straightforward in nature but require an elegance of expression that only a mature ensemble might convey. In fact, Rachmaninoff said in a letter in 1896 that they were so difficult that no child would be able to sing them.

No. 1, "Glory" is a patriotic song to a hymn text by Nikolai Nekrasov. The poem was written when Nikolai II ascended the Russian throne. There are two versions of the first song in the set—the original poem (sung today) and an altered version acceptable to the Tsarist censors which the composer was required to use in order to have his work approved. The original poem expresses a democratic, populist sentiment while the altered text contains religious overtones and offers praise to Tsar Alexander II, the "giver of freedom," who abolished serfdom in Russia in 1861.

No. 2, "Night" is based upon a poem by Vladimir Ladyzhensky and portrays night as a time of gloom.

No. 3, "The Pine Tree" is based upon a poem by Mikhail Lermontov which tells of a pine tree on a snowy, cold mountain peak, dreaming of another life as a beautiful palm tree growing in the hot desert. The vocal line is extremely simple, but the piano accompanies the choir wistfully. The static vocal line of a dream is conveyed wordlessly by the choir over which soloists sing the text.

No. 4, "Now the Waves are Drowsing" is set to a poem by Grand Duke Konstantinovich. It describes how, as the moon lights up the sky, so joy brightens sorrow. The marriage of voices and piano is particularly successful in this delicate song.

No. 5, "Captivity" sets a poem by Nikolai Tsyganov that tells the tale of a caged nightingale. There is just a hint in the music of the *Dies Irae* melody—an allusion found in other works by the composer.

No. 6, "The Angel" is based upon another Lermontov poem in which the poet describes an angel's song as a song surpassing all mortal songs. This final song in the opus is the most extended in the set—an excellent miniature that is beautifully organized and which requires a skilled pianist.

The songs of Opus 15 are frequently performed in Russian. Vox Grata is pleased to perform them using the English translation by Nashville residents Mark Herman and Ronnie Apter and published by Musica Russica.

Missa de Spiritu Sancto

Rihards Dubra

Rihards Dubra has emerged from the largely secular tradition of choral music-making in Latvia as a distinctive voice, that of a composer devoting himself exclusively to the composition of sacred music. The purity of this endeavor is one that Dubra has admired in the work of the so-called "holy minimalists" such as Arvo Pärt and John Tavener. Dubra prefers to describe his own music as "a style of meditation"—one instilled with the essence of the Middle Ages through a 21st century lens. All Dubra's music is shaped by his own faith and is the result of a deeply spiritual desire "to write truthful and emotional music". Dubra explains, "as faith is the only purity in this world, I cannot imagine anything better than to write only sacred music. I doubt that the energy I feel inside me is mine. I do not create music—I just write down what has been sent to me."

The Missa de Spiritu Sancto fuses minimalism and neo-romantic melodies with the inflections and philosophy of Gregorian, Medieval and Renaissance music. The work was commissioned by the Lithuanian Academy of Music in 2001 and was clearly destined for liturgical as well as concert use. The Kyrie creates a timeless atmosphere imbued with elements of organum. The Gloria, by contrast, is suitably exuberant and here the choral writing is more homophonic. In the softer middle section, the melody moves in octaves in the outer parts while the middle parts provide harmonic color. This style of writing is exploited even more in the Sanctus where the parallel octaves are part of six-part cluster chords, accompanied by a jubilant organ accompaniment akin to a peal of bells. The more reverential Agnus Dei utilizes a simple four-part harmonized melody as a refrain juxtaposed with a minimalist organ accompaniment. The concluding section is set to the text "dona nobis pacem". Here, all the elements come together as the singers and two organists improvise melodic fragments within a long, carefully paced crescendo, representing an outburst of free expression and joy. (Notes by Rupert Gough)

Vox Grata

WOMEN'S CHOIR

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. It is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, tax-exempt organization.

100% of the contributions received at this program will benefit the Family Reunification Program of the Family Reconciliation Center, a special counseling program which helps meet the needs of families during the critical reentry phase following incarceration. All donations are tax-deductible.

Special Thanks

Vox Grata Board of Directors – Sallie Bailey, Jennifer Barnes, Kelly Christie, Susan Hassell, Susan Holt, Jane Kirchner, Linda Koon, Doug MacCallum, Jeanette MacCallum and Franco Scaramuzza

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Franco Scaramuzza and threeseventwo creative media, graphic design

Westminster Presbyterian Church

Upcoming Performances

Thursday, November 10, 2016:

Vox Grata presents

“Seasons of Life” - songs that celebrate the stages of a woman’s life

Westminster Presbyterian Church

To receive information about upcoming Vox Grata events, receive our e-newsletter or learn about choir auditions, please visit our website at www.voxgrata.com, or visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/VoxGrata>.