

# VOX GRATA

presents

## “Anonymous Was a Woman”

to benefit



with special guests

*Music  
City Baroque*

Thursday, May 4, 2023, Second Presbyterian Church  
Tuesday, May 9, 2023, Westminster Presbyterian Church

Conducted by  
Jeanette MacCallum, Susan Kelly and Kathryn Duncklee  
John Semingson, Accompanist

# “Anonymous Was a Woman”

## *Choral works composed by women throughout the ages*

**O pastor animarum**

Hildegard of Bingen  
(1098–1179)

### **From the Baroque/Italian Convent Tradition**

*Music City Baroque: Maria Jose Romero, Laura Ross, Idalynn Besser, Christopher Stenstrom, Jacob Jezioro*

**Ave regina caelorum**

*Katherine Kimbrough and Amy Finka, soloists*

Isabella Leonarda  
(1620-1704)

**Miserere mei Deus**

Raffaella Aleotti  
(1575-1646)

**Regna terrae, cantate Deo**

*Mareike Sattler, Bronwen Yoncak, Susan Kelly, Ashley Vance,  
Hannah Baisley and Donna Stokes-Rogers, soloists*

Chiara Margarita Cozzolani  
(1602-1678)

**Liebst du um Schönheit**

Clara Schumann  
(1819-1896)

**Le Colibri**

Chausson, arr. Mari Esabel Valverde  
(1987- )

**Ah, Love, But a Day!**

Amy Beach  
(1867-1944)

**The Moon Bridge**

Florence B. Price  
(1887-1953)

**Durme, Durme**

Ladino Folk Song, arr. Alice Parker  
(1925- )

**On Children**

Ysaye M. Barnwell  
(1946- )

**Nada te turbe**

Joan Szymko  
(1957- )

**I Thank You God**

Gwyneth Walker  
(1947- )

# Vox Grata Women's Choir

## Sopranos

Nicole Allen, Jan Allison, Bailey Anderson, Hannah Baisley, Sidney Campbell, Brittany Carnegis, Amanda Craft, Kathryn Duncklee, Samantha Finch, Amy Finka, Susan Kelly, Janice Kemp, Katherine Kimbrough, Lauren King, Amanda Max, Hannah Meyers, Diana Neely, Anne Osborne, Kitty Schleimer, Sandra Shepherd, Brittany Smith, Caroline Spencer, Beth Thorneycroft, Deborah Torgersen-Paul, Ashley Vance, Bronwen Yoncak

## Altos

Annabelle Absar, Julie Birdsong, Kelly Christie, Hannah Elliott, Emily Fenech, Alexis Fleming, Molly Gillespie, Bri Givens, Megan Kucenski, Katelyn Lover, Jeanette MacCallum, Linda McFadyen-Ketchum, Dory Miller, Lily Norton, Mareike Sattler, McKenna Schmidt, Channing Shippen, Haley Smith, Rosie Smith, Jenny Snodgrass, Suzanne Stiles, Donna Stokes-Rogers, Maggie Ward, Karen Weir

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Vox Grata is grateful to John Semingson and Westminster Presbyterian Church for providing rehearsal space for us each week!

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**Thank you for helping us GIVE VOICE TO WOMEN IN SONG!**

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# Song Texts/Poetry Credits

## **O pastor animarum (Translation)**

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

## **Ave regina caelorum (Translation)**

Hail, O Queen of Heaven. Hail, O Lady of Angels. Hail, thou root, hail! Thou gate from whom unto the world a light has arisen. Rejoice, O glorious Virgin, lovely beyond all others. Farewell, most beautiful maiden, and pray for us to Christ.

## **Miserere mei Deus (Translation)**

Have mercy on me, O God, for my soul trusts in you. And in the shadow of your wings [I will hope], until iniquity has passed by.

## **Regna terrae, cantate Deo (Translation)**

You kingdoms of the earth, sing to God, sing psalms to the Lord, who ascended over the heavens in the east. Sing to God, for He will give you His voice, the voice of strength. Give glory to God, for his splendor is over Israel and his strength in the clouds. The Lord is wonderful in His holy places, the God of Israel. He shall give power and fortitude to His people; blessed be the Lord.

## **Liebst du um Schönheit (Translation)**

If you love for beauty, O love not me!  
Love the sun, she has golden hair.  
If you love for youth, O love not me!  
Love the spring which is young each year.  
If you love for riches, O love not me!  
Love the mermaid who has many shining pearls.  
If you love for love, ah yes, love me!  
Love me always, I shall love you ever more.

## **Le Colibri (Translation)**

The green hummingbird, the king of the hills, seeing the dew and the bright sun shine on its nest woven from fine grass, like a cool beam escapes into the air. In haste, it flies to the neighboring springs, where the bamboo makes the sounds of the sea, where the hibiscus, with its divine fragrance, opens and brings to the heart a wet flash. Toward the golden flower, it descends, has lain, and sups so much love from the rosy cup that it dies without knowing if it could have finished it. On your bare lips, oh my beloved, like so, my soul wished to expire, from the first kiss on which it left its scent.

## **Ah, Love, But a Day!**

Ah, love, but a day and the world has changed!  
The sun's away, and the bird estranged; the wind has dropped, and the sky's deranged; summer has stopped.  
Look in my eyes! Wilt thou change too? Should I fear surprise? Shall I find aught new in the old and dear, in the good and true, with the changing year?

## **The Moon Bridge**

The moon, like a big, round ball of flame rose out of the silver bay, and built a bridge of golden beams, where the fairies came to play. I saw them dancing in jeweled robes on the wavelet's rhythmic flow, and I longed to stand on the magic bridge, in the moonlight's mystic glow. But over the sky a veil of mist, thin, soft as a web of lace, was drawn, then parted, then came again, with easy coquettish grace. The moon frowned on the rippling waves, and the beautiful bridge went under the sea, nor a beam could the fairies save! I wondered if this would end their play, and if, as the bridge went down, they would lose their jewels so frail and fair, and their queen her diamond crown! But they glided away in merry mood, to their home in the rose tree's bowers, and there they danced on the dewy grass, till the wee small morning hours.

## **Durme, Durme (Translation)**

Sleep, sleep, mother's little ones, free from worry and grief. Listen, my joy, to your mother's words, the words of *Shema Yisrael*. Sleep, sleep, mother's little ones, with the beauty of *Shema Yisrael*.

## **On Children**

Your children are not your children. They are the sons and the daughters of life's longing for itself. They come through you, but they are not from you, and though they are with you, they belong not to you. You can give them your love, but not your thoughts; they have their own thoughts. You can house their bodies but not their souls, for their souls dwell in a place of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams. You can strive to be like them, but you cannot make them just like you!

## **Nada te turbe (Translation)**

Let nothing disturb you, nothing frighten you, all things are passing. God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Whoever has God lacks nothing. God is enough.

## **I Thank You God**

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 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 being doubt you, doubt unimaginable you? Lifted from the no of all nothing, now the ears of my ears awake, now the eyes of my eyes are opened.

# Program Notes

## **O pastor animarum**

Hildegard of 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.

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## **From the Baroque/Italian Convent Tradition**

Arranged by Meredith Y. Bowen

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the polyphonic music composed by nuns from the late sixteenth century Italian convent tradition. In a number of Italian cities, convents were known for the excellence of their music, and visitors from near and far attended services to hear the nuns sing and play. Many volumes of sacred music give evidence to the tradition and a number of modern editions of these works have emerged. Meredith Y. Bowen has taken a particular interest in restoring, publishing and performing this music.

## **Ave regina caelorum**

Isabella Leonarda

Isabella Leonarda was a nun at the Ursuline convent in Novara, Italy. Like many young women from wealthy families in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, she professed her vows at age 16 and lived her entire life behind the walls and iron grates of her convent. She was the most prolific nun composer of 17<sup>th</sup> century Italy, publishing 20 volumes during her lifetime. This work is a Marian antiphon which would have been sung at Compline, a service at the end of the day.

## **Miserere mei Deus**

Raffaella Aleotti

Raffaella Aleotti was a nun, organist and musical director at San Vito in Ferrara, Italy. Like many young women from wealthy families, she professed her vows at age 18, after which time she composed for her own religious community. This motet is a setting of two verses from Psalm 57. A performance would have taken place in the chapel with the nuns singing and playing behind a wall or iron grate to obscure their faces from the public.

## **Regna terrae, cantate Deo**

Chiara Margarita Cozzolani

Cozzolani was a choir nun and composer of the Santa Radegonda in Milan. She composed and published four volumes of music while residing there. This piece, a setting of four verses from Psalm 67, is a motet from 1642. The choral sections contrast beautifully with thinner vocal textures provided by virtuosic soloists, alone and in combination.

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## **Liebst du um Schönheit**

Clara Schumann

Clara Schumann was a pianist and composer who lived in Romantic-era Germany. She was one of the foremost pianists of 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe at a time when men dominated the piano performing scene. She was highly regarded as a composer in her own right, and was married to the composer Robert Schumann. They championed each other's compositions and often collaborated both in writing and in performing. They each wrote a great deal of vocal music and would read poetry together as a means for selecting musical texts. This text represents an English translation from the German by Friedrich Rückert.

This song was originally written as a lied (a German solo voice song) in 1841, the year after Robert and Clara were married. It was published within a set of 12 songs and arranged for treble choir by Drew Collins.

## Le Colibri

Chausson/Valverde

Parisian composer Ernest Chausson (1855-1899) cultivated a dramatic musical style, rich in chromaticism and characterized by a French reserve. A student of Massenet and Franck, his music was often heard in the salon with other young composers, including Claude Debussy. This piece is derived from his "*Sept Mélodies*," a collection of solo songs, here elegantly arranged by Mari Esabel Valverde. The text was written by Leconte De Lisle.

The royal hummingbird represent a metaphor for pleasure and is painted into sound with gently rising and falling melodic lines over captivating harmonies. The 5/4 meter encourages purposeful placement of beats, which creates and recreates lulls of suspense. The piano, mostly brushing below, sometimes flows in behind sustained voices, the way flecks of air trace the elegant gestures of a bird. While the sensuous imagery is abundant, every element of the song, poetic and musical, demands grace and dignity.

## Ah, Love, But a Day!

Amy Beach

Amy Beach was an acclaimed composer and pianist, often referred to as one of "The Boston Six." A pianist from an early age, she was quickly recognized as a child prodigy. She considered herself a self-taught composer and her first symphony was the first to be composed and published by an American woman. While Beach wrote a variety of works, she is most known for her collection of over 150 songs. This particular song is from her Opus 44, a set of three songs by Robert Browning. Written for solo voice and piano, it was arranged for treble choir by Brandon Williams.

## The Moon Bridge

Florence B. Price

Florence B. Price was the first African-American woman composer to earn national recognition in the United States. While she helped define America's voice in classical music with its neo-Romantic style, her music was influenced by her cultural heritage with folk and spiritual elements revealing her Southern roots. Unfortunately, racism and gender inequality resulted in what Price's biographer, Rae Linda Brown, calls an "Invisible Woman." Largely thanks to the discovery of many of her manuscripts in 2009, her music is enjoying a renaissance. The Nashville Symphony recently performed Price's *Piano Concerto in One Movement* on its "Trailblazing Women" concert series. The text of this piece was written by Mary Rolofson Gamble.

## Durme, Durme

arr. Alice Parker

This traditional Ladino lullaby is in the language of the Sephardic Jews. Developed from the exile of Jews from Spain in 1492 to various countries, it integrates elements of local languages into Old Spanish. It is a language of tremendous cultural importance, especially given its people were able to thrive during a 500-year exile.

This beloved Sephardic song is about watching over a loved one as they sleep and the wealth of feeling that one experiences in that tender moment. Sung from generation to generation, a version recorded in 1943 of Miriam Baruch is archived with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The song was arranged for treble choir by renowned American composer Alice Parker, now in her late 90s! Parker has published over 500 compositions, and was named the first Director Laureate of Chorus America, receiving the Robert Shaw Award from the American Choral Directors Association in 2013.

## On Children

Ysaye M. Barnwell

Ysaye Barnwell joined Sweet Honey In The Rock in 1979 and remained a vocalist and instrumentalist in the group for 34 years, performing on more than 30 recordings with the ensemble. Since retiring from the group, she has served as a master teacher and choral clinician in African-American cultural performance around the world. Her workshops inspire singers and educators, cultural activists and historians. She has also been commissioned as a composer for numerous choral, film, video, dance and theatrical projects. This text was written by Kahlil Gibran.

## Nada te turbe

Joan Szymko

The author of this text, Saint Teresa of Ávila (born 1515) was a Spanish nun and one of the great mystics of the Roman Catholic Church who founded the Carmelite Reform. In 1970 she was the first woman to be elevated to doctor of the church by Pope Paul VI.

Joan Szymko (born 1957) is a composer and choral conductor in the Pacific Northwest. Her choral music is characterized by abundant lyricism, rhythmic intensity and vigorous attention to text. Especially noteworthy is her significant contribution to the body of literature 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".

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