

High School Mixed Choirs

Gregory B. Ritter, Conductor

Program:

Freshman Mixed Chorus

breathhtaking ballads...

O Love

Elaine Hagenberg (b. 1980)

O Love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in thee; I give thee back the life I owe, that in thy ocean depths its flow may richer, fuller be. O Joy that seeks me through pain, I cannot close my heart to thee; I trace the rainbow through the rain, and feel the promise is not vain, that morn shall tearless be.

Footsteps

Craig Courtney (b. 1948)

I see His footsteps in the way and follow them through darkest night, unafraid I stumble not. In the glow of perfect light, I see. I walk in footsteps of His love, and find His light leads on before. Then he gently turns to me, softly whispers "trust me more". Then as I follow in His way, my path ahead will brightly shine. For in His path of guiding light, I find His footsteps first, then mine.

Sing Me to Heaven

Daniel Gawthrop (b. 1949)

In my heart's sequestered chambers lie truths stripped of poet's gloss. Words alone are vain and vacant, and my heart is mute. In response to aching silence, memory summons half-heard voices, and my soul finds primal eloquence and wraps me in song. If you would comfort me, sing me a lullaby. If you would win my heart, sing me a love song. If you would mourn me and bring me to God, sing me a requiem. Sing me to heaven. Touch in me all love and passion. Pain and pleasure, touch. Touch in me grief and comfort, love and passion, pain and pleasure. Sing me a lullaby, a love song, a requiem. Love me. Comfort me. Bring me to God. Sing me a love song. Sing me to heaven.

Advanced Mixed Chorus

a set of Ave Marias...

Ave Maria... virgo serena

Josquin des Prez (c. 1450-1521)

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, serene Virgin. Hail, thou whose Conception, full of great joy, fills heaven and earth with new gladness. Hail, thou whose Nativity became our great celebration, as the light-bearing Morning Star anticipates the true Sun. Hail, faithful humility, fruitful without man, whose Annunciation was our salvation. Hail, true virginity, immaculate chastity, whose Purification was our cleansing. Hail, glorious one in all angelic virtues, whose Assumption was our glorification. O Mother of God, remember me. Amen.

Bogoroditse Devo

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Rejoice, virgin mother of God, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, for you have borne the Savior of our souls.

Ave Maria

Pärt Uusberg (b. 1986)

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and in the hour of our death. Amen.

Advanced Mixed Chamber
throughout the day in choral music...

Dawn

Eric William Barnum (b. 1979)

From the door's soft opening and the day's first sigh, filling the room, I see before me a life of doors, one opening on another, doors upon doors and sighs upon sighs, rising in a tide of mornings, rising, until that final sigh, and the last morning, and the last holy breath, whispering "this..."

Afternoon on a Hill

Eric William Barnum (b. 1979)

I will be the gladdest thing under the sun! I will touch a hundred flowers and not pick one. I will look at cliffs and clouds with quiet eyes, watch the wind bow down the grass, and the grass rise. And when lights begin to show up from the town, I will mark which must be mine, and then start down!

Evening Prayer

Ola Gjeilo (b. 1978)

Accompanist, Cello/Tenor Saxophone

Watch, O Lord, with those who wake, or watch, or weep tonight, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend your sick ones, O Lord Jesus Christ; rest your weary ones; bless your dying ones; soothe your suffering ones; pity your afflicted ones; shield your joyous ones; and all for your love's sake. Amen.

Sure On This Shining Night

Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943)

Sure on this shining night of star-made shadows round, kindness must watch for me this side the ground, on this shining night, this shining night. The late year lies down the north; all is healed, all is health. High summer holds the earth. Hearts all whole. Sure on this shining night, I weep for wonder wand'ring far alone, of shadows on the stars. Sure on this shining night.

The Music of Stillness

Elaine Hagenberg (b. 1980)

There will be rest, and sure stars shining over the roof-tops crowned with snow, a reign of rest, serene forgetting, the music of stillness holy and low. I will make this world of my devising out of a dream in my lonely mind. I shall find the crystal of peace, – above me stars I shall find.

Program Notes

O Love, Elaine Hagenberg

We open and close our concert with the incredible Elaine Hagenberg. Hagenberg is a prolific young composer renowned worldwide for flowing melodies and the stunning text. This beautiful setting of George Matheson's familiar hymn text functions perfectly in both sacred or secular settings. Here, *O Love* is given a fresh new melody with equally refreshing and gorgeous harmonies. Simply stunning!

Footsteps, Craig Courtney

The image of the footsteps of the Savior leading us onward provides a foundation for our testimony of trust. This anthem is an intimate and compelling text with artistic choral writing, enhanced by a lovely piano accompaniment. This lovely text setting accompanies a flowing linear melody harmonized with beautiful chord progressions. Gorgeous!

Sing Me to Heaven, Daniel Gawthrop

Daniel Gawthrop enjoys a widespread and well-deserved reputation as a prolific composer of choral and organ music. His works, many of which are settings of text by his wife and creative partner Jane Griner, are beloved by choral singers everywhere, and no work has enjoyed a greater appeal and a more synonymous association with Gawthrop's name than *Sing Me to Heaven*, for good reason. This gem carries every singer's wish to be carried away to heaven by singing. Beginning with a unison treble melody low in the women's voices, the piece adds voice by voice, trading women's voices with men's until the opening section comes to a lush close, setting up the final melodic expansion culminating on a forte widely-spaced chord on the word heaven. Listen well, listen deep. See if you agree that this piece holds possibilities for healing.

Ave Maria... virgo serena, Josquin des Prez

Josquin des Prez's *Ave Maria* is perhaps his most famous composition and certainly his most often sung today, appears at the head of the first volume of motets ever printed (1502). Its composition occurred during the composer's service at one of several French and North Italian courts. Apparently written some time between 1476 and 1497; this motet expounds with classic elegance the stylistic ideals of the Italian Renaissance and provides one of the best examples of its style, power, and beauty. The structure of Josquin's musical setting corresponds to the text in a lucid way. Each musical phrase corresponds to a phrase of text, and points of imitation frequently expose these phrases. Moments of structural articulation arrive at cadences, where two or more voices rest on perfect intervals. Within this style of composition, Josquin wrote a motet of classic balance and stunning polyphony: *Ave Maria... virgo serena*.

Bogoroditse Devo, Sergei Rachmaninoff

Composed during a two-week period in January and February of 1915, the *All-Night Vigil* was Rachmaninoff's second sacred work, which is perhaps interesting since he was not particularly close to the Russian Orthodox Church or attended services. He was nonetheless profoundly affected by its music and included Orthodox chants in his First Symphony. Comprised of fifteen movements, it is a setting of texts taken from the *All-Night Vigil* ceremony, a compilation of texts from the three canonical hours of Vespers, Matins and the First Hour. Sergei Rachmaninoff's music is characterized by memorable soaring melodies, romantic harmonies and a distinctive Russian flavor. The *All-Night Vigil* represents the summit of Russian choral music. This is a setting of the *Ave Maria*, the sixth movement from the work.

Ave Maria, Pärt Uusberg

Pärt Uusberg is an up-and-coming Estonian composer who is an active singer, actor, conductor, and prize-winning composer. The majority of his catalog falls under the genre of choral music, although he has also written film music and works for piano and orchestra. His choral songs often are set to liturgical texts or to poetry of Estonian authors. These works are often marked by simple yet tender meditative atmospheres, rich harmonies throughout, and great sonorities at emotional climaxes. Enjoy this modern rendition of the classic *Ave Maria*.

Dawn, Eric William Barnum

A conductor and composer, Eric William Barnum continues to passionately seek new ground in the choral field. Barnum is currently the Director of Choral Activities at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. He has appeared as a conductor across the United States, as well as internationally. Working with choirs of all kinds, he endeavors to provide intensely meaningful experiences for singers and audiences. Barnum set *Dawn* to a poem by Dr. Robert Bode for a recorded album themed "Mornings Like This" by Bode's professional choir Choral Arts. Sunrises are glorious things though when you do the work to get up early enough. It always seems to be worth it. Dawn brings with it possibility. A newness. A cleanliness. The return of the sun has a fresh warmth too it as we shield our eyes from the bright light. With a repeating rising vocal line transferred from part to part, harmonic tensions are created from some unresolved suspensions. Enjoy the sunrise with rich sonorities and a gradual built of light.

Afternoon on a Hill, Eric William Barnum

With her timeless poem, Edna St. Vincent Millay has captured the concept of 'home' perhaps more beautifully than any. Many musical settings of the text respond to moments on nature's hill, and its intense and glorious beauty on display. Though it examines pastoral themes, this setting focuses on transience, transformation, and nostalgia. St. Vincent Millay answers the question: What would a person who is 'the gladdest thing under the sun' act like? They would 'touch a hundred flowers and not pick one.' They would look, watch, listen, and be at peace. They would allow Time - time to sit, be quiet, to be. So much time is allowed that evening descends by the end of the lyric and home must be seen from the hilltop, which is the truly glorious climax. There is my home! Amid all lights in the town, there is my home. The close of the piece employs a haunting and slightly ominous musical feel. It attempts to capture

the idea of joy rather than happiness. The experience on the hill will always remain a fleeting one, as we cannot stop time. And so we laugh, we sigh, we breathe, and then when time catches us, we mark the light which must be ours, and go home.

Evening Prayer, Ola Gjeilo

Evening Prayer from 2010 was Ola Gjeilo's first choral work incorporating instrumental improvisation, with solo improvisation passages for the tenor sax (or alternative instrument).

Having grown up with his father being a good amateur saxophonist, and more recently collaborating with Phoenix-based Ted Belledin, doing entire sax/piano duo concerts together that were completely unplanned and improvised, Gjeilo wanted to find a way to combine our playing with the Chorale.

It was the final piece written for the Phoenix Chorale during his 2009-2010 residency with them, and their benchmark recording of the work.

Sure On This Shining Night, Morten Lauridsen

Morten Lauridsen taught composition at the University of Southern California for more than 40 years, and was named an "American Choral Master" by the National Endowment for the Arts in addition to receiving many other grants, prizes and commissions through the years. Lauridsen's choral pieces are widely performed by choral groups.

In this composition, Lauridsen uses a poem by the Pulitzer-Prize-winning James Agee. The poem, 'Sure On This Shining Night,' comes from Agee's book, *Permit Me Voyage*, and has been interpreted by scholars to represent the resolution of sorrow through the kindness and hope for humankind, found in the exquisiteness of both the earth's natural beauty and heaven's celestial splendor. Lauridsen's quiet expression of joy in the opening phrases by the men is accentuated by soaring voices from the women. All voices eventually blend together with the composer's trademark seconds and ninths harmonies that transport the listener to a higher musical plane of hushed wonder, where, "Sure on this shining night, all is healed, all is health, hearts all whole."

The Music of Stillness, Elaine Hagenberg

This through-composed choral work with piano accompaniment is a text painting of Sara Teasdale's poem "There Will Be Rest." Sonorously scored choral phrases above the well-crafted piano accompaniment conjure up images of stars shining, rooftops covered with snow, crystal peace finding the music of stillness. Following a serene opening, the piece rises and falls through both affecting climaxes and passages of great tranquility, ending with the same sense of stillness with which it begins. Enjoy the end of our concert with this emotional and divine piece of music.