

John W. Ehrlich, Music Director

The Spectrum Singers present

A Brilliant Spectrum of Repertoire!

Saturday, March 16, 2024 at 7:30pm

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First Church Congregational 11 Garden Street, Harvard Square, Cambridge

FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

With the coming of spring, The Spectrum Singers welcome you to a concert of...love. Beginning with Billings's 18th century work extolling a love of music and ending in 19th century Europe with Brahms, this evening's performance samples the choral tradition's lasting connection with all things love. For,

"when love speaks, the voice of all the gods Make heaven drowsy with the harmony."

Following the Billings work, our all-American first half then skips to the 20th century for music extolling love and passion through all time: love for people, love for music, love for memories, love for life well-lived. In the second half, music from France, England, Hungary, and Germany round out our gift to you, our beloved audience.

So, take your seat and listen well,

"Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind, And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind."²

William Shakespeare: ¹ Love's Labour's Lost, ² A Midsummer Night's Dream

~ Dan Epstein, Board Chair

Please join The Spectrum Singers at a post-concert reception in Margaret Jewett Hall, located through the right-hand door at the front of the sanctuary.

Kindly silence all cell phones and other electronic devices.



The Spectrum Singers

John W. Ehrlich, Music Director James R. Barkovic, Assistant Conductor and Accompanist

A Brilliant Spectrum of Repertoire!

Saturday, March 16, 2024 First Church Congregational, Cambridge

 \square Applause welcomed where noted \square

Connection (1794)	William Billings (1746–1800)	
There is a Garden in Her Face (1953)	Virgil Thomson (1896–1989)	
The Hour-Glass (1949)	Irving Fine (1914–1962)	
The Coolin (1942)	Samuel Barber (1910–1981)	
1		
Three American Songs (1954) John Hardy The Colorado Trail Thomas A. Best, <i>tenor</i> ; Kai Shouting Pilgrim Karen Harvey, James B		
Karen Harvey, Janies E	farkovic, <i>pluno</i>	
Circus Band (1894) arr. Alexander Dashaw (1953)	Charles Ives (1874–1954)	
Karen Harvey, James Barkovic, <i>piano</i>		

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In the Still of the Night (from Rosalie, 1937) Cole Porter (1891–1964)

Long Time Ago (1951/2) Aaron Copland (1900–1990) arr. Irving Fine

The Promise of Living (from The Tender Land, 1954)CoplandKaren Harvey, James Barkovic, pianoKaren Harvey		
□ Intermissic	on J	
Cantique de Jean Racine, op. 11 (1865)	Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)	
1		
Come to Me (1903)	Gustav Holst (1874–1934)	
Four Slovak Folk Songs (1917) Wedding Song from Poniky Song of the Hay Harvesters from Hiadel Dancing Song from Medzibrod Dancing Song from Poniky		
n.		
Waldesnacht, op. 62, #3 (1874)	Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)	
Der Abend, op. 64, #2 (1874/5)	Brahms	
1		
Neue Liebeslieder, op. 65 (1874) Kaitlyn Hess, Reeven Wang Dai, Tricia Kennedy, soprano Kathi Tighe, mezzo-soprano Thomas A. Best, tenor Mark Andrew Cleveland, baritone		

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Karen Harvey, James Barkovic, piano

THE SPECTRUM SINGERS

Soprano

Jill Fekete Valerie Gibson Kaitlyn Hess Leslie Horst Tricia Wells Kennedy Maki Koto Isabella Ricciardi Sandra Shepard Anna Andrews Smith Christine Sullivan Kathi Tighe* Reeven Wang Dai

Alto

Christine Bishop Liz Epstein Dorrie Freedman Sara Glidden* Linda Ingram Elisabeth Jas Jeannette McLellan Penny Outlaw

Tenor

Thomas A. Best* Paul Dredge Ian Fox Keith Ohmart John Schumacher Frank Villa Maurice Wong

Bass

Ron Armstrong John Bradshaw Mark Andrew Cleveland Dan Epstein Ian Hutchinson Douglas Latham Henry Magno David Meharry* Richard Scott Steve Solomon

* Section Leader

This organization is funded in part by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency which also receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Spectrum Singers is a member of the Greater Boston Choral Consortium, a cooperative association of diverse choral groups in Boston and the surrounding area.

Connection

Hail! Sacred music hail! We offer at thy shrine one perfect round compleat in sound, celestial and divine.

Tis by thy heav'nly aid, in one majestic sound, we celebrate Jehovah's state, in one eternal round.

Great is the Lord our God, His mercy knows no bound; just are his ways, then let his praise eternally go round.

There is a Garden in Her Face

There is a garden in her face, Where roses and white lilies grow; A heav'nly paradise is that place Wherein all pleasant fruits do flow. There cherries grow which none may buy Till "Cherry ripe" themselves do cry.

Those cherries fairly do enclose Of Orient pearl a double row; Which when her lovely laughter shows, They look like rosebuds filled with snow. Yet them no peer nor prince can buy Till "Cherry ripe" themselves do cry.

Her eyes like angels watch them still; Her brows like bended bows do stand, Threat'ning with piercing frowns to kill All that attempt with eye or hand Those sacred cherries to come nigh Till "Cherry ripe" themselves do cry.

~ Thomas Campion

Billings

Thomson

The Hour-Glass

Do but consider this small dust, Here running in the glass, by atoms moved; Could you believe that this the body Ever was of one that loved? And in his mistress' flame, playing like a fly, Burned into cinders by her eye? Yes, and in death, as life, unblest, In death, as in life, to have it exprest. Even ashes of lovers find no rest.

~ Ben Jonson

The Coolin¹

Come with me, under my coat And we will drink our fill Of the milk of the white goat, Or wine, if it be thy will. And we will talk, until Talk is a trouble, too, Out on the side of the hill; And nothing is left to do, But an eye to look into an eye; And a hand in a hand to slip; And a sigh to answer a sigh; And a lip to find out a lip!

What if the night be black! And the air on the mountain chill! Where the goat lies down in her track, And all but the fern is still!

Stay with me, under my coat! And we will drink our fill Of the milk of the white goat, Out on the side of the hill!

~ James Stephens after the Irish of Raftery

Barber

Fine

¹ The *Cooleen*, or *Coolun*, literally, the "*Cul Fhionn*," or fair-haired cool, from which is derived the relatively recent *Colleen*.

John Hardy

John Hardy was a desperado man, As everybody knows: He's been to the East and he's been to the West, And he's been the wide world round. He's been to the river, And he's been baptized, And now he's sentenced to be hung, poor boy. And now he's sentenced to be hung.

John Hardy standin' in a dice room door, Not mindful of the door, He threw down one bright silver dollar, sayin' "Half o' this here I'll pay: An' the man that wins my pretty girl's money I'll blow him away, God knows, poor boy, I'll blow him away, poor boy!" Poor boy, poor boy, He'll blow him away, poor boy.

John Hardy was a desperado man, He carried two guns each day. He shot his man on the western city line And you ought to seen him get away. But along came a man and take him by the han', sayin', "March right along with me, young man, jes' march right along with me." They raised John Hardy on the scaffold, His loving wife by his side: And the very last words they heard him say were, "I'll meet you in the sweet bye and bye."

The Colorado Trail

Eyes like the morning star, cheek like a rose, Laura was a pretty girl, God Almighty knows; Weep all ye little rains, wail, winds, wail, All along the Colorado Trail.

Bacon

Bacon

Down in the valley walking between, Telling a story, here's what it says, Roses of sunshine, violets of blue, Angels of Heav'n know I love you.

Bird in a cage, love, bird in a cage, Dying for freedom, ever a slave, Ever a slave, dear, ever a slave, Dying for freedom, ever a slave.

Eyes like the morning star, cheek like a rose, Laura was a pretty girl, God Almighty knows; Weep all ye little rains, wail, winds, wail, All along the Colorado Trail.

Shouting Pilgrim

The trumpets are a-sounding, And calling for more volunteers; The armies are a-marching, Behold in front their officers. I see the flames arising, Had I the pinions of a dove, My soul would realize The wonders of redeeming love. O shout since the battle has begun, And shout while we all are marching on. The armies are marching on. O glory, glory, glory, glory be. It's step by step they move. The trumpets are a-sounding, And calling for more new volunteers; The armies are a-marching, Behold in front their officers. O shout all the glory in the soul, I'll shout while I feel the current roll, O shout for glory, For glory on High!

Bacon

Circus Band

All summer long, we boys dreamed 'bout big circus joys! Down Main Street, comes the band, Oh! "Ain't it a grand and glorious noise!"

Horses are prancing, Knights advancing; Helmets gleaming, Pennants streaming, Cleopatra's on her throne! That golden hair is all her own.

Where is the lady all in pink? Last year she waved to me I think. Can she have died? Can that rot! She is passing but she sees me not.

Where is the clown, that funny gink, Last year he winked at me I think, Can he have died? Can that rot! He's still a-winkin' but he sees me not.

Riding down from Bangor on the midnight train, Rip, slam, bang we go, sir, right on thro' the rain. When in after years we take our children on our knee, We'll teach them that the alphabet begins with D.K.E.

In the Still of the Night

In the still of the night, As I gaze from my window, At the moon in its flight, My thoughts all stray to you.

In the still of the night, While the world is in slumber Oh, the times without number, Darling, when I say to you:

Do you love me as I love you? Are you my life to be, my dream come true? Or will this dream of mine fade out of sight, Porter

8

Ives

Like the moon growing dim, on the rim of the hill, In the chill, still of the night?

~ Cole Porter

Long Time Ago

On the lake where droop'd the willow, Long time ago, Where the rock threw back the billow, Brighter than snow, Dwelt a maid beloved and cherish'd, By high and low. But with autumn leaf she perish'd, Long time ago.

Rock and tree and flowing water, Long time ago, Bird and bee and blossom taught her Love's spell to know. While to my fond words she listened, Murmuring low, Tenderly her blue eyes glisten'd, Long time ago.

The Promise of Living

The promise of living With hope and thanksgiving Is born of our loving our friends and our labor.

The promise of growing With faith and with knowing Is born of our sharing our love with our neighbor.

The promise of living The promise of growing Is born of our singing in joy and thanksgiving.

9

Copland

Copland

For many a year we've known these fields And known all the work that makes them yield, Are you ready to lend a hand? We're ready to work, We're ready to lend a hand. By working together we'll bring in the harvest, the blessings of harvest.

We plow and plant each row with seeds of grain, And Providence sends us the sun and the rain.

By lending a hand, By lending an arm, Bring out from the farm, Bring out the blessings of harvest.

Give thanks there was sunshine, Give thanks there was rain, Give thanks we have hands to deliver the grain,

O let us be joyful, O let us be grateful to the Lord for His blessing.

The promise of ending In right understanding is peace in our own hearts and peace with our neighbor.

O let us sing our song, and let our song be heard. Let's sing our song with our hearts, and find a promise in that song.

The promise of living The promise of growing The promise of ending is labor and sharing and loving.

~ Horace Everett

Fauré

Cantique de Jean Racine

Verbe égal au Très-Haut, Notre unique espérance, Jour éternel de la terre et des cieux, De la paisible nuit, nous rompons le silence, Divin Sauveur, jette sur nous les yeux!

Répands sur nous le feu de ta grâce puissante, que tout l'enfer fuie au son de ta voix, Dissipe le sommeil d'une âme languissante, qui la conduit à l'oubli de tes lois!

Ô Christ sois favorable à ce peuple fidèle pour te bénir maintenant rassemblé, Reçois les chants qu'il offre à ta gloire immortelle, et de tes dons qu'il retourne comblé! Word of the Almighty, our only hope, Eternal day of the earth and the heavens, Of the peaceful night, we break the silence, Divine Savior, cast thine eyes upon us!

Spread upon us the fire of thy powerful grace, that all hell might flee at the sound of thy voice. Dispel the sleep of a listless soul, that which leads the soul to forget thy laws!

Oh Christ show favor toward those faithful people now gathered to give thee thanks, Receive the songs they offer unto thine immortal glory, And may they return made whole by thy gifts!

Come to Me

Come to me in the silence of the night, Come in the speaking silence of a dream: Come with soft rounded cheeks and eyes as bright As sunlight on a stream; Come back in tears O memory, hope, love of vanished years.

O dream how sweet, too sweet, too bitter sweet Whose wak'ning should have been in Paradise, Where souls brimful of love abide and meet, Where thirsting, longing eyes Watch the slow door That opening, letting in, lets out no more.

Yet come to me in dreams that I may give My very life again though cold in death: Come back to me in dreams that I may give Pulse for pulse, breath for breath, Speak low, lean low As long ago, my love, how long ago.

~ Christina Rossetti

Four Slovak Folk Songs

Bartók

1. Wedding Song from Poniky

Zadala mamka, zadala dcéru D'aleko od sebe, Zakázala jej, prikázala jej: "Nechod' dcéro ku mne!"

"Ja sa udelám ptáčkom jarabým, Poletím k mamičke. A sadnem si tam na zahradečku, Na bielu laliju."

Vyjde mamička: "Čo to za ptáčka, Čo tak smutne spieva? Ej, hešu, ptačku jarabý, Nelámaj laliju!"

"Ta daly ste mňa za chlapa zlého Do kraja cudzieho. Veru mne je zle, mamička milá, So zlým mužom byti." The mother betrothed and sent her daughter, Far from herself, She ordered her, forbade her: "Daughter, don't return to me!"

"I'll return as a songbird, Fly back to Mama, And sit in her garden On a white lily."

Out comes Mama: "What kind of bird is this, Singing so sadly? Hey, shoo, fly away, songbird, Don't break my lily!"

"You gave me away to an evil fellow In a foreign land. It really is a heavy burden, Mama, Enduring a bad husband."

2. Song of the Hayharvesters from Hiadel

Na holi, na holi,	On the mountain,
Na tej širočine	On this plain,
Ved' som sa vyspala, ¹	I've indeed lain,
Ako na perine.	As on a featherbed.
Už sme pohrabaly,	We've already raked,
Čo budeme robit'?	What's more to do?
Svŕšku do doliny	From heights above to vales below,
Budeme sa vodit'.	We'll lead ourselves home.

¹The verb *vyspat* means not only "to lie down," but "to have sex." The whole song could be interpreted as a bawdy metaphor (the music, however, belies this notion. -JWE). The syntax reveals that the speaker(s) are women.

3. Dancing Song from Medzibrod

Rada pila, rada jedla Rada tancovala, Ani si len tú kytličku Neobranclovala.

Ej! Nedala si štyri groše Ako som ja dala, Žeby si ty tancovala, A ja žeby stála.

4. Dancing Song from Poniky

Gajdujte, gajdence, Pôjdeme k frajerce! Ej, gajdujte vesele, Ej, že pôjdeme smele!

Zagajduj gajdoše! Ešte mám dva groše: Ej, jedon gajdošovi, A druhý krčmárovi.

To bola kozička,² Čo predok vodila, Ej, ale už nebude, Ej nôžky si zlomila.³ She liked to drink, she liked to eat, She liked to dance. Even the hem of her skirt She did not mend.

Hey! She didn't give (the piper) four coins As I had, Just so you could dance with her Leaving me standing here by myself.

Pipe, pipers! I'll go to my sweetheart. Hey, pipe merrily, Hey, that I might go boldly!

Pipe away, pipers! I still have two coins: One for the bagpipers, And the other for the innkeeper.

Once there was a little goat Who led at the front; Hey, but she's not with us any more, Hey, she had a little accident.

~ Slovak translations by Bernard Greenberg, with fine-points and folkloric help provided by Erazim Kohák and Allan Wechsler. All edited by JWE, January, 2024.

 2 *Kozička* (little goat) is slang for a buxom woman, or her endowments. "Led at the front" refers to a folk-dance line.

³ *Nôžky si zlomila* (she broke a leg) means "had a little accident," referring to the goat's skin becoming a bagpipe, or the woman becoming pregnant.

Waldesnacht

Waldesnacht, du wunderkühle, die ich tausendmale grüß', nach dem lauten Weltgewühle, o wie ist dein Rauschen süß! Träumerisch die müden Glieder, berg ich weich ins Moos, und mir ist, als würd ich wieder all der irren Qualen los.

~ Paul Heyse

Der Abend

Senke, strahlender Gott, die Fluren dürsten nach erquickendem Tau, der Mensch verschmachtet, matter ziehen die Rosse, senke den Wagen hinab.

Siehe, wer aus des Meers krystallner Woge, lieblich lächelnd dir winkt! Erkennt dein Herz sie? Rascher fliegen die Rosse, Thetys, die göttliche, winkt. Schnell vom Wagen herab in ihre Arme springt der Führer, den Zaum ergreift Cupido, stille halten die Rosse, trinken die kühlende Flut.

An dem Himmel herauf mit leisen Schritten kommt die duftende Nacht, Brahms

Wondrously cool woodland night, whom I greet a thousand-fold: after the world's noisy tumult, Oh, how sweet is your rustling! Dreamily I nestle my weary limbs softly in the moss, and it seems to me as if once more I were free from all distracting torments.

~ translation by John W. Ehrlich

Brahms

Descend, radiant god;⁴ the meadows thirst for life-giving dew Man languishes, the horses pull slower, bringing down the chariot.

See who beckons to you, lovingly smiling, from the sea's crystalline wave! Does your heart recognize her? The steeds fly faster; for godlike Thetis beckons. Quickly the driver leaps down from his chariot into her arms. Cupid seizes the bridle: the horses stand quietly, drinking from the cooling stream.

Rising to the heavens with soft steps, the fragrant night comes,

⁴ Phoebus (or "Gleaming") Apollo

ihr folgt die süße Liebe. Ruhet und liebet! Phöbus, der Liebende, ruht.

~ Friedrich Schiller

and sweet love follows. Rest and love! The lover, Phoebus, rests.

~ translation by Nick Jones

Neue Liebeslieder, op 65 (1874)

Poems by G. F. Daumer and Johann Wolfgang Goethe, English Translation by Nick Jones and John W. Ehrlich

~ 1 ~

Verzicht, o Herz, auf Rettung, dich wagend in der Liebe Meer! Denn tausend Nachen schwimmen zertrümmert am Gestad' umher!

Finstere Schatten der Nacht, Wogen und Wirbelgefahr! Sind wohl, die da gelind rasten auf sicherem Lande, euch zu begreifen im Stande?

Das ist der nur allein, welcher auf wilder See stürmischer Öde treibt, Meilen entfernt vom Strande! on dry land, understand your plight? He alone can do so,

Who, resting safely

who on the high seas faces stormy solitude, Miles away from the shore!

Mark Andrew Cleveland, baritone

~ 3 ~

16

An jeder Hand die Finger hatt' ich bedeckt mit Ringen, die mir geschenkt mein Bruder in seinem Liebessinn. Und einen nach dem andern

The fingers of each hand I covered with rings which my brother gave me in affection, and I gave away

~ 2 ~

sea of love! For a thousand ships are drifting, wrecked on the surrounding shores!

Dark shadows of the night,

treacherous waves and current!

Abandon hope of rescue, O heart,

when you venture on the

Brahms

gab ich dem schönen, aber unwürdigen Jüngling hin.

Kaitlyn Hess, soprano

one after the other to that handsome but unworthy boy.

~ 4 ~

Ihr schwarzen Augen, ihr dürft nur winken, Paläste fallen und Städte sinken. Wie sollte stehen in solchem Strauß Mein Herz, von Karten das schwache Haus? You have only to wink your dark eye, and palaces fall and cities crumble. How should my heart withstand such an assault, a mere house of cards?

Mark Andrew Cleveland, baritone

~ 5 ~

Wahre, wahre deinen Sohn, Nachbarin, vor Wehe, weil ich ihn mit schwarzem Aug' zu bezaubern gehe.

O wie brennt das Auge mir, das zu zünden fordert! Flammet ihm die Seele nicht, deine Hütte lodert.

Kathi Tighe, mezzo-soprano

Neighbor, guard and protect your son from harm, for with my dark eyes I'm going to bewitch him.

O how my eye burns to ignite his desire! If his soul is not kindled, then your hut shall catch fire.

~ 6 ~

Rosen steckt mir an die Mutter, weil ich gar so trübe bin. Sie hat Recht, die Rose sinket, so wie ich, entblättert hin.

Reeven Wang Dai, soprano

My mother pins roses on me because I am so melancholy. She is right, the rose fades away just as I do, pining away. Vom Gebirge Well' auf Well' kommen Regengüsse, und ich gäbe dir so gern hunderttausend Küsse!

Weiche Gräser im Revier, schöne stille Plätzchen! O wie linde ruht es hier sich mit einem Schätzchen!

Nagen am Herzen fühl' ich ein Gift mir. Kann sich ein Mädchen, ohne zu frönen zärtlichem Hang, Fassen ein ganzes wonneberaubtes Leben entlang?

Tricia Kennedy, soprano

Ich kose süß mit der und der und werde still und kranke, denn ewig, ewig kehrt zu dir, o Nonna, mein Gedanke!

Thomas A. Best, tenor

Alles, alles in den Wind sagst du mir, du Schmeichler! Alle samt verloren sind deine Müh'n, du Heuchler! Einem andern Fang' zu lieb ~ 7 ~

From the mountains, wave upon wave, come torrents of rain, and I would likewise love to shower a hundred thousand kisses on you!

~ 8 ~

Soft grasses in this spot, lovely quiet little places! O how gently one can rest here with a sweetheart!

~ 9 ~

Gnawing at my heart I feel a poison. Can a maiden, without indulging a tender inclination, bear the thought of a whole lifetime devoid of bliss?

~ 10 ~

I sweetly woo this girl and that but become quiet and disconsolate, because my thoughts return ever and ever to you, Nonna!

~ 11 ~

Into the wind goes all, all you say to me, you flatterer! Wholly wasted are your efforts, you hypocrite! Set your snares stelle deine Falle! Denn du bist ein loser Dieb, denn du buhlst um alle!

Kaitlyn Hess, soprano

Schwarzer Wald, dein Schatten ist so düster! Armes Herz, dein Leiden ist so drückend! Was dir einzig wert, es steht vor Augen, ewig untersagt ist Huldvereinung.

Nein, Geliebter, setze dich mir so nahe nicht! Starre nicht so brünstiglich mir ins Angesicht!

Wie es auch im Busen brennt, dämpfe deinen Trieb, daß es nicht die Welt erkennt, wie wir uns so lieb! for another catch of love! For you are a wanton thief, making love to everyone.

~ 12 ~

Dark forest, your shadows are so gloomy! Poor heart, your sorrows are so oppressive! Before your eyes stands the one thing you value, forever forbidden is a happy union.

~ 13 ~

No, beloved, do not sit so close to me! Do not gaze so fervently into my face!

Even though they burn in your bosom, subdue your longings, so that the world will not know how in love we are!

Kaitlyn Hess, soprano; Kathi Tighe, mezzo-soprano

~ 14 ~

Flammenauge, dunkles Haar, Knabe wonnig und verwogen! Kummer ist durch dich hinein in mein armes Herz gezogen! Kann in Eis der Sonne Brand, sich in Nacht der Tag verkehren? Kann die hieße Menschenbrust atmen ohne Glutbegehren?

Fiery eye, dark hair, lovely and bold youth, because of you my poor heart is wrenched with sorrow. Can ice come from the sun's fire? Can day change into night? Can the passionate human breast breathe without glowing desire? Ist die Flur so voller Licht, daß die Blum' im Dunkel stehe? Ist die Welt so voller Lust, daß das Herz in Qual vergehe? When fields are so full of light,why should the flower stand in the dark?When the world is so full of pleasure,why should the heart perish in torment?

~ 15 ~

Zum Schluß: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Nun, ihr Musen, genug! Vergebens strebt ihr zu schildern, wie sich Jammer und Glück wechseln in liebender Brust.

Heilen könnet die Wunden ihr nicht, die Amor geschlagen, aber Linderung kommt einzig, ihr Guten, von euch. Envoi:

Now enough, ye Muses! Vainly you strive to portray how sorrow and joy mingle in the loving breast.

You cannot heal the wounds inflicted by Cupid; but solace comes only, kind ones, from you.

PROGRAM NOTES

Tonight's program features several personal favorites from my past 44 years of directing this wonderful group of singers.

I admit to a bit of self-indulgence with this program. I've had to sacrifice a regular programming nicety that always offered palpable resonances between pieces. But I hope that the overall richness of each selection tonight, grouped by European or American origin, will be an acceptable alternative.

Speaking of American, throughout this chorus's 44-year performing history, I've put particular emphasis on performing American choral music, as I have always felt that the best of it yields nothing in quality to choral music created anywhere else. Yet, how could a program of my favorites <u>not</u> include Brahms, Fauré, Holst, and Bartók? These were composers whose music I had discovered and admired in my youth, both as an avid listener and as a singer in a church choir that I readily acknowledge is where I first discovered my love of choral music, and where, under the leadership of three superb church musicians, I gained most of my elementary musical training and respect for artistic discipline. Thank you, again, my early mentors!

All of us onstage have enjoyed our preparation of tonight's far-ranging repertoire, and we trust that you will feel with us all the inherent and transporting joy this music sends forth into a world that today, more than ever, needs all the joy we can bring to it.

- JWE

The following eloquent notes on **William Billings** were written by American composer and musicologist Douglas Townsend ca. 1968:

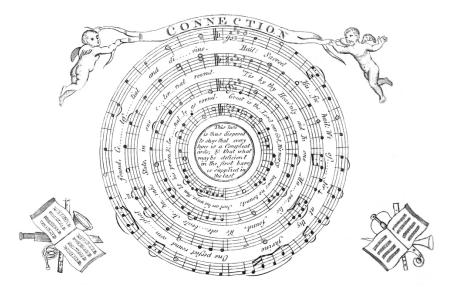
William Billings was born in Boston, Massachusetts on October 7, 1746. According to a contemporary, he was a "...singular man, of moderate size, short of one leg, with one eye, without any address, and with an uncommon negligence of character. Still, he spake and sang and thought as a man above the common abilities." Billings, a tanner by trade, was more above the common abilities than most Americans of the Revolutionary period, for he devoted himself almost exclusively to the profession of music, [...] as a teacher, conductor, composer, and even a music publisher, bringing out several collections of his own works. [...] They contained sacred as well as secular choruses that were written with the limitations of amateur singers in mind.

[...] Billings received little formal music training—a fact that deterred him not a whit in his passionate pursuit of music. After all, in the brave new world in which he flourished, a man was expected to be inventive and adventurous. As Billings once wrote:

... I don't think myself confined to any Rules for composition, laid down by any that went before me, neither should I think (were I to pretend to lay down Rules) that any who came after me were any ways obligated to adhere to them, any further than they should think proper; so, in fact, I think it best for every *Composer* to be his own *Carver*.

William Billings, who died on September 26, 1800, was, indeed, his own *Carver*, and he whittled out an American art form that is often primitive in its vigor and majesty, but always powerful in its human appeal. He spoke and sang and thought of just one love—music.

It is thus fitting that we begin tonight's program with Billings's paean of praise to music, written in the form of a "round" and published as the frontispiece of his groundbreaking anthology *The Continental Harmony*. Typical of the unique mind of this creative musician, he wrote this "round" as a circular score:



Virgil Thomson's elegant and fastidious *Four Songs Set to the Poems* of *Thomas Campion* are as much a reflection of the personality of the composer himself as they are elements of the music. Thomson celebrated what he called "vertical, undifferentiated counterpoint," and the *Four Songs* all exhibit this to a greater or lesser degree. The charm and the skill of the writing manage to artfully camouflage this attempt at simplicity of expression. When combined with the relentless diatonic harmony Thomson favors, one might be tempted to dismiss this music

as simplistic and naive, but it is precisely these qualities of simplicity and innocence which befit Campion's beautiful texts so perfectly. Originally written for solo mezzo-soprano with clarinet, harp, and viola accompaniment, Thomson and Ruggero Vené later recast the songs for chorus with piano accompaniment.

Campion's verse *There is a Garden in Her Face* regards the features of a beautiful young woman, and, with metaphor, likens them to fruits and flowers. Thomson's sweet, piquant melodies and harmonies perfectly reflect the poet's colorful portraiture.

Irving Fine's small but precious legacy of compositions is one of the real treasures of American music. Few other American composers so felicitously combine an almost Ravel-like delicacy and love of detail and craft with a real "American-sounding" harmonic syntax and gift for melody.

The Spectrum Singers have championed the cause of Irving Fine's music since the chorus's first season some forty-four years ago, and it has been gratifying to note the increasing frequency with which one encounters this splendid composer's works in the local concert venues. Fine was born in Boston in 1914 and attended Harvard where he studied with Walter Piston and was accompanist with G. Wallace Woodworth's Harvard Glee Club. He studied further with Nadia Boulanger, taught music at Harvard from 1939 to 1950, and then moved on to Brandeis where he remained until his untimely death in 1962, only 47 years of age and on the brink of international recognition. *The Hour-Glass* stems from 1949, and in many ways is the composer's *magnum opus* for chorus. This notwithstanding, *The Hour-Glass*, a choral suite based on the elegant and eloquent verse of Ben Jonson, is also among the finest of *a cappella* works in the entire choral repertoire.

One need only read Jonson's text of *The Hour-Glass*, the last work in the suite, to appreciate the perfect match which exists between Fine's elegantly crafted music and Jonson's evocative verse. The poet views an hour-glass, and opines that the material constantly passing through it may not be sand, but perhaps the ashes of a wounded lover who, like a fly, playing in a candle's flame, was so consumed by his beloved that he was burned to cinders by the mere glance of her eye. And if this

remarkable conceit were not enough, the poet goes on to muse on how much like an "unblessed" life these flowing cinders represent—that they symbolize the tensions and agony which difficult love creates in life, that the cinders of this unlucky lover, even in death as in life, still find no rest as they ceaselessly cycle and flow through the hour-glass. This is shiver-producing stuff, as is Fine's music, profoundly centered within a heartbreakingly beautiful and emotional lyricism.

Samuel Barber had a native passion for Celtic, particularly Irish, literature. Acknowledged as a masterpiece of American choral literature, *Reincarnations*, like his first songs, are settings of works by Irish poet James Stephens. Barber considered himself an honorary Irishman. He loved the land and its people, their melancholy strain, their wild humor, their verbal felicity.

The Coolin, the third piece in the song cycle, falls into the traditional category of love song or praises of a beautiful woman. The title refers to a lock of hair or "curleen" that grew on a young girl's neck and came to be a term for one's sweetheart. Stephens wrote: "I sought to represent that state which is almost entirely a condition of dream wherein the passion of love has almost overreached itself and is sinking into a motionless languor." Barber uses a gentle *siciliano* rhythm for this old Irish love song, filtered through Stephens's romantic poetry.

Ernst Bacon is best known today for some 250 solo songs, most of which are set to American poets, Whitman and Dickinson in particular. His several works for chorus are deftly crafted. *Three American Songs* were published in 1954 and are drawn from traditional American sources. Quite different from one another, the set of three form a powerful and poignant triptych.

John Hardy is a tale about John Wesley Hardin, or Harding, depending on the source. A ruthless outlaw who shot people dead just because he did not like the way they looked, he nonetheless became a folk hero almost a Robin Hood character, thought to be kind to the poor, not unlike a later Depression desperado, Pretty Boy Floyd. Bacon's portrait is granitic and appropriately sinister with a driving and dissonant "saloon piano" accompaniment.

The Colorado Trail, with its tenor and soprano solos, its simple but exquisite piano cantilena, and its wordless choral accompaniment

evokes pathos and the murmur of prairie winds with its story of a beautiful "kept woman," the bird in a cage, dying for freedom.

The third song, *Shouting Pilgrim*, begins with a driven, motoric accompaniment for piano four-hands, and then pushes aside all that comes before it with a torrent of religious zeal in a warlike "hymn" which conjures a marching army calling for ever more volunteers to its cause. Almost terrifying in its focused intensity, it builds to a brilliant climax, lifting sopranos to a high C at the end.

Charles Ives is among the most remarkable of American composers. After having been a moderately successful composer in his early days, he abruptly gave up music later in life, and spent his remaining years as an insurance salesman. Due much to the efforts of Aaron Copland, and later, Leonard Bernstein, Ives's music has enjoyed a much-deserved renaissance. 2024 marks the 150th anniversary of Ives's birth, and appropriate celebrations of this event are occurring nation-wide. The Spectrum Singers have sung Ives regularly throughout the chorus's 44-year history and are pleased to do so tonight and also on May 18, when his transcendental *Psalm 90* will be performed.

As noted by Ives scholar and performer John Kirkpatrick in 1973:

The Circus Band is a strong mating of a boyhood march (dated 1894, originally for piano, full of age-19 high spirits, fully-lived), and some retrospective words (added years later, full of age-40s nostalgia for a vanished boyhood)—the whole orchestrated by George F. Roberts directly from *114 Songs* with suggestions from Ives.

It is the orchestrated version that Alexander Dashnaw, a much-admired scholar and Professor Emeritus of Music at Long Island University - C.W. Post Campus, arranged for mixed chorus with piano duet accompaniment in 1953.

The Circus Band recalls the composer's youth and the sights and sounds of marching bands and parades. The raucous ending's final note gives out an amusing tongue-in-cheek exclamation which has lately become an oft-used mono-syllabic term of denial.

Cole Porter, American playboy, son of a rich industrialist, wrote music—mostly very good music—for just the joy of it. A continenthopping, carefree gadabout, Porter's life and music are aptly described by one of his Broadway show's titles: *Anything Goes*. Whatever struck Porter's fancy, he composed music which would richly embody his subject. In the *Still of the Night* is a striking example of this—a poignant, pleading song, here richly arranged for chorus by Ralph Hunter in 1939. Porter's gifts of complex chromatic melody and his extraordinary skill with writing and setting the English language are very evident here in what is truly one of the great love songs.

Several composers, enamored of **Aaron Copland**'s *Old American Songs* originally written for solo baritone, have created choral settings of several songs in the cycle. The most felicitous of these are those by the composer's friend and colleague, Irving Fine, whom Copland affectionately referred to as "Oiv." Fine's expertly and lovingly crafted choral settings elevate these already wonderful solos to a higher level of expression and emotion than one might have thought possible. The story told in *Long Time Ago* becomes all the more poignant when the early, sunny mood of the song darkens to tell of an unexpected and tragic loss.

Aaron Copland's opera *The Tender Land*, first performed in 1954, is set on a farm in the American Midwest during the 1930s. The music is cut from the same cloth as that of Appalachian Spring—the melodic, easygoing, folkish vein that Copland could so masterfully create.

The Promise of Living closes the opera's first act. Building up in texture from single vocal lines through duets and trios, the music progresses through a soprano/alto duet against a hymn-like accompaniment in the lower voices to its finale, a grand chorale of five voices in triple time accompanied by a flowing triplet obbligato, climaxing in a triple-fortissimo at the top of the chorus's range.

Gabriel Fauré completed his student years at the Ecole Niedermeyer in Paris on July 28, 1865. He had just won the *Premiere Prix* in composition with his *Cantique de Jean Racine*. This precocious early opus (#11) exhibits many signs of a great lyric composer. Apparent in this brief but moving work are the unique harmonic style and gift for seductive melody which come to full fruition in the songs and orchestral compositions yet to come. **Gustav Holst** is best known to concertgoers for his very popular 1919 orchestral suite *The Planets*. But church musicians know that Holst also wrote a large body of very effective music for choirs. He grew up idolizing Wagner, and in 1895 while a student at the Royal College of Music he met Ralph Vaughan Williams where the two became good friends. Holst later became infatuated with Hindu literature and philosophy and left his musical studies to learn Sanskrit. He returned to the College, studied trombone, played in wind ensembles, began teaching, was among the first to revive and be an advocate for the music of Henry Purcell, and began conducting choirs in schools. His big success with *The Planets*, sadly, served only to bewilder him. He became introverted and withdrew from public life. A series of illnesses was broken by a visit to Harvard as Guest Lecturer in Music in 1932, but he fell ill again that spring and died in London—far too soon—in 1934.

Come to Me, written in 1903, was intended to be the fifth of Holst's *Five Part Songs*, op. 12, but for reasons unclear, it and the third song were left behind when three of their brethren were published by Novello many years ago. Perhaps Holst felt that the frankly romantic text and the rich, heartfelt music to match it did not project a *persona* appropriate to his later life, or the song harbored a poignant or wistful memory he later chose to forget—we will never know. In any case, *Come to Me* is extraordinarily beautiful, very much worthy of being heard. The Spectrum Singers were privileged to give the first United States performance of this work in 1992 through the gracious assistance of the Holst estate and Faber Music in London. The work has now—finally and thankfully—been published by Faber.

Béla Bartók made his first contact with folk music scholar Zoltán Kodály in 1905, and together they began to collect and publish folk songs. In 1906, the two began extensive travels in Hungary and surrounding regions and recorded songs using early phonograph equipment. Bartók and Kodály took some of the songs they had collected and harmonized and arranged them for performance, of which tonight's 1917-composed *Four Slovak Folk Songs* is an example. In these, Bartók, unlike Brahms, retained the original modal characteristics of the folk melodies he used and only embellished them with modern harmonizations and accompaniments. Bartók's scholarly work in folk music is as important as his accomplishments as a composer, and indeed, these two aspects of his life's work are highly complementary.

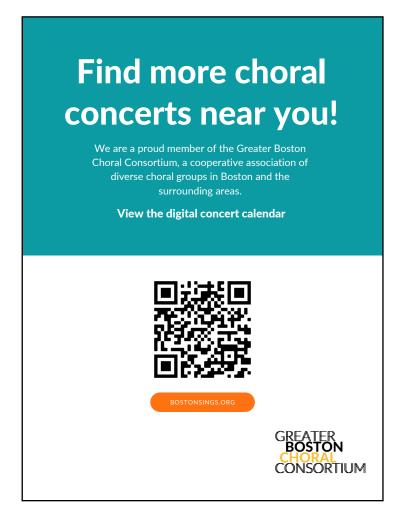
One of the great joys of every serious singer is the vocal music of **Johannes Brahms**. The scope, variety, depth of emotion, and sheer artfulness of this body of work is unmatched in the late romantic repertoire. Very few composers have written so rich a variety of works for the voice that somehow speak so directly to the soul of the performer and listener, though Schubert and Mahler are certainly worthy of the same esteem. Choral singers love this music unabashedly—choral directors, too. And this genre was certainly important to Brahms—vocal works total more than half of his musical output.

Waldesnacht, redolent of the atmosphere of the dark green woods, dates from 1874 and is notable for its rich harmonic progressions, suspensions, and sense of repose. *Der Abend*, written but one year later is a concise masterwork, painting in almost operatic colors the symbolic descent of the sun in the form of Phoebus (Apollo) and his chariot, being welcomed into the sea at sunset by his lover Thetis, as Cupid leads the exhausted horses to a cooling stream.

Brahms's two sets of *Liebeslieder*, set generally in waltz meter and scored for vocal quartet with piano duet, have been enthusiastically embraced by musicians and music lovers since the moment of their publication, and no wonder! Love songs of the highest order, both op. 52 and 65 collections run the gamut of emotion and melody. The earlier op. 52, however, sound somewhat pale in comparison to the later and darker op. 65. While op. 52 addresses love from a relatively positive and somewhat naive philosophical perspective, op. 65 deals quite forthrightly with the pleasures as well as the considerably challenging difficulties of amorous human relationships. A predominance of heavily chromatic harmony and minor key settings underscore the more serious nature of this latter opus. The music becomes more darkly passionate as a result, as it paints the foibles of the human condition.

The set opens with a volcanic eruption from the piano, and only a few times thereafter does the mood soften or relax. Bliss, seduction, jealousy, anger, and torment are all encountered en route to the finalé. And, for the text of that finalé, Brahms turns to Goethe, perhaps Germany's greatest poet, for solace among the muses, who alone, the poet and composer opine, can calm the stormy seas of the human condition. This finalé is unique to both sets of *Liebeslieder*, as it is not a waltz at all. The accompaniment is a *passacaglia*, set in 9/4, reminiscent of sustained and pizzicato strings together, almost serenade-like, with a sense of relief and resignation about it, much as one might feel after a particularly arduous and ultimately unresolved argument. Heady stuff, this music, but after all, so are the subjects it attempts to embrace.

~ Program Notes © 2024 by John W. Ehrlich



THE SPECTRUM SINGERS

The Spectrum Singers is an acclaimed Boston-area chorus performing repertoire from the Renaissance to the present day. John W. Ehrlich formed the ensemble in 1980 and continues to lead the chorus in concerts at First Church Congregational, Cambridge. The chorus is frequently joined by professional vocal soloists and orchestral musicians, and has been invited to collaborate with Emmanuel Music, the Cantata Singers, Boston Landmarks Orchestra, Indian Hill Symphony, and several other musical organizations. The chorus has also been invited to perform on many concert series throughout New England.

In recent seasons, The Spectrum Singers has continued its commitment to contemporary music, offering the New England premiere of a new work by Mohammed Fairouz and the world premiere of *Novum Decus Oritur*, by our composition contest winner, Joshua Hummel. It has offered rich programs ranging from more familiar, large-scale masterpieces to lesser known but deserving works of all eras. The chorus has also performed a broad exploration of requiems, from the familiar (Mozart, Fauré, Duruflé) to the lesser known (Alfred Desenclos and John Rutter).

The Boston Globe has praised John W. Ehrlich and The Spectrum Singers for "unfailingly dramatic performances that grappled with real issues in the music and real issues the music is about." Now in its 44th season, the chorus honors Maestro Ehrlich in his final season as Music Director, while continuing its mission of performing both familiar and lesser-known works in programs of compelling depth and professional execution for an audience of appreciative listeners.



JOHN W. EHRLICH



John W. Ehrlich, founder and Music Director of The Spectrum Singers, has been active as a singer and conductor in the Boston and Cambridge areas for more than forty-five years. He is widely admired for his intriguing and adventuresome programming. "From the beginning, it's been my goal to seek out and perform worthy, important music that is rarely heard," he says. "As our name suggests, we draw on the whole 'spectrum' of masterworks from the Renaissance to the present day."

Mr. Ehrlich studied music and conducting while attending the Hartt School of Music, Trinity College, and both Harvard and Boston Universities. His teachers were Robert Shaw, Gregg Smith, G. Wallace Woodworth, and Vytautous Marijousius. Also a singer, Mr. Ehrlich has sung with the Hartford Chamber Choir, Tanglewood Festival Chorus, Cambridge Society for Early Music, John Oliver Chorale, Boston Baroque, and the Emmanuel Church Choir. For eight seasons he was music director of The Master Singers of Worcester.

This is Mr. Ehrlich's 44th and final season as Music Director of The Spectrum Singers.

JAMES R. BARKOVIC



James R. Barkovic has been active in the Boston area as a conductor, pianist, organist, violist and accompanist for more than thirty years. In addition to serving as the Assistant Conductor and Accompanist for The Spectrum Singers, he is the Music Director of the Westford Chorus. He serves as Music Director at Holy Family Parish and West Concord Union Church, both of Concord, Mass. Mr. Barkovic is the Chapel Organist and Instructor of Organ at Middlesex School, also of Concord. He

is also the Choir Director at Congregation B'nai Shalom of Westborough, Mass.

Mr. Barkovic received his Master of Music in Piano Performance from the New England Conservatory of Music, where he studied with Stephen Drury, performed in master classes for Leonard Shure and Veronica Jochum, and studied organ improvisation with William Porter. A native of Minnesota, he received his undergraduate diploma from St. Olaf College, with concentrations in music theory and history.

This is Mr. Barkovic's 32nd season as Assistant Conductor and Accompanist of The Spectrum Singers.

GUEST ARTIST



Karen Harvey enjoys a multifaceted career as pianist, educator and conductor. A featured soloist with numerous orchestras, she was twice awarded Tanglewood fellowships and has premiered many compositions, including several written for her. Ms. Harvey's solo recital of contemporary music at the Wang Center was hailed by Josiah Fisk of the *Boston Herald* as "brilliant work by pianist with an infinite supply of fingers." She serves as the full-time Minister of Music at UCC Norwell, MA, where she

conducts four choirs in a multigenerational music ministry.

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THANK YOU!

The Spectrum Singers would like to thank Jim Barkovic, our rehearsal accompanist; and Luellen Best, for vocal coaching and assistance. We also thank Rozann Kraus, house manager; and the rest of our front-of-house team for house management and ticketing assistance.

Many thanks to Kirsten Manville, Parish Administrator, and Peter Sykes for their assistance at First Church Congregational.

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For years our average spending has been slightly less than our income; we aim to continue carefully to base our expenditures on our income. Donations have averaged 53% of income. Ticket sales and dues from members are most of the rest.

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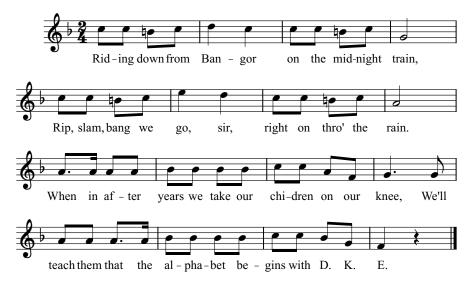
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