

**QUINCY SYMPHONY CHORUS**  
**PROGRAM NOTES**  
**March 4, 2017**  
**Compiled by Dr. Carol Mathieson**

Can one kind of music characterize a melting pot of cultures with tunes and spice added from wave after wave of immigrants, determined to live the American Dream? *Songs of Our History* samples the confident optimism in the music Americans have sung for campfires or chorus lines or concert halls for the last 250 years. There's even a time for you to join in!

*Songs of the Earth* reminds us that hopes and dreams existed in music of our land long before Colonial times. This chant of the Mohawk people uses words of long-forgotten meaning in homage to the distant past, making it, as composer Z. Randall Stroope says, a "call to remembrance."

*Two Songs of the Revolution* showcases America's first published composer, William Billings. A tanner by training, Billings learned some technique from a Danish immigrant but mostly learned composing by absorbing music he encountered in church choirs and community singing in Revolutionary War Boston. He wrote daringly original compositions, putting many a melody in the tenor voice as early motet composers did. *Chester*, a wildly popular patriotic march, and *America*, an equally patriotic chorus, both lead from the tenor.

*A Civil War Medley*, arranged by Missouri composer Greg Gilpin, shouts out the battle cries of North and South: "the Union forever!" and "in Dixie Land, I'll take my stand." But the quiet hope of courage "just before the battle" and a recasting of an Irish march of despair into one of American optimism "when Johnny comes marching home" remind us that these are songs of war.

*Keep Your Lamps!* and the final number in tonight's concert *I Hear America Singing* reflect the longing of the African-American community from slave to Civil Rights to modern times to reach the Promised Land, both in the hereafter and the here and now. Composer André Thomas, whose doctorate is from the University of Illinois and whose celebrated arrangements of Spirituals have influenced his own musical output, adds conga drums to *Lamps* to emphasize its origins and has published *America Singing* with full orchestra to emphasize the grandeur of America for all of us.

*Ride On, King Jesus* is also a Spiritual, but it comes from quite a different tradition. Alice Parker was a brilliant composer and organist who studied at Julliard with the renowned conductor Robert Shaw in the 1940's. When Shaw organized his famous Chorale, Parker joined him as arranger; they collaborated for decades. They drew much of the music they used from folk and spiritual sources, including this reference to a procession which, like many Spirituals, speaks beyond the Palm Sunday story to hope for glory near at hand.

*Old West Medley* allows Kansas City composer Mark Hayes to blend the brags of Old West cowboys about their heroics on the "old Chisholm trail" and the beauty of lady loves like "the yellow rose of Texas" with tender lullabies that settled the herd for the night in their "home on the range."

*Cindy* is a *frollic tune*, a dancelike song from folk tradition that invites singers to make up verses to add to the fun. Versions exist in both black and white communities in rural Appalachia, and there is a Cajun version from the Louisiana swamps. *Cindy* was popular at play parties-- musical games played where dancing was forbidden. Carol Barnett created this arrangement for the Minneapolis-based Dale Warland Singers.

**20<sup>th</sup> Century Celebration** begins with music that Americans associate with the stage...but audiences may croon after the show. For the first 3 decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, American stage musicals didn't so much tell stories as entertain with song and dance. If the songs were good, piano hacks plunked them out on old upright pianos along New York's Tin Pan Alley so folks could buy sheet music and play them at home. Missouri composer and arranger Greg Gilpin captures their brash turn-of-the-century confidence.

***Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy*** is one of the most famous songs to come out of WWII. However, it was written, recorded, and featured in a movie before America ever entered combat. With Europe and Asia at war in 1941, a peacetime draft began to expand our forces so America would be prepared. Don Raye and Hughie Prince wrote *Bugle Boy* as an advertising promotion for this effort. The Andrews Sisters trio recorded it and several months later, they sang it in the Abbott and Costello movie *Buck Privates*. By the time America entered WWII, the song was a huge hit; when the QSC ladies sing it tonight, you'll agree it still is.

***Don't Get Around Much Anymore*** is a 1940's Duke Ellington jazz standard. Much like musical revue pieces went to Tin Pan Alley before WWII, musical theatre songs went to jazz clubs and radio as the grist for improvisation. This tune's original title, *Never No Lament*, might even reflect an underlying optimism.

**20<sup>th</sup> Century Celebration--the '50's**. Post-WWII was the first time American adolescents became a marketing demographic with time and money to influence the charts. The airwaves were filled with Rock and Roll, and the teen idol was Elvis Presley.

***This Land is Your Land*** reflects Oklahoma singer Woody Guthrie's love of America and its common folk. Folk music grows in a stable, isolated community with input from many over time. Guthrie composed *This Land* in a folk style, and it triggered a huge revival that reached a peak in the '60's.

***The Look of Love*** is a '60's bossa nova hit written for a James Bond movie by Burt Bacharach as an instrumental piece and recorded by Sergio Mendes & Brazil '66. Hal David later wrote words, and it became a popular vocal standard as well.

***TV Time! America's Classic Television Themes*** come from the '60's and '70's when families gathered around the living room television set and watched shows together. Like the revues of the '20's theme songs referenced the show but reflected Carol Burnett Show's "I'm So glad We had This Time Together."

***Disney Spectacular*** explores iconic Disney film songs that moved from screen to popular recordings. QSC presents songs from the beautifully drawn cartoon *Pinocchio* and live/cartoon interaction film *Song of the South* from the '40's and from the wonderful filmed musical with interspersed segments of animation *Mary Poppins* from the '60's.

***100 Years of Broadway*** excerpts come from Broadway's Golden Age of the 1950's with *Gypsy*, *Guys and Dolls*, and *Music Man*. *Hello, Dolly* and *Oliver!* are just into the '60's. These songs fit memorable stories and became standards having American optimism that uplifts us yet today.