

PROGRAM NOTES

Quincy Symphony Chorus

Quincy, Illinois

March 5, 2022

Dr. Carol Mathieson

Here Comes the Sun reminds us that even when times get us down, the sun can come out and melt tensions away. Guitarist George Harrison of the Beatles wrote it when he was fed up with stifling business negotiations and frustrated that his bandmates wouldn't consider recording his songs. He retreated to Eric Clapton's house and sat in his garden. There, the song came to him. Lennon was in the hospital recovering from an automobile accident, but the others laid down tracks before leaving the studio for the summer. Harrison laid down several additional tracks himself, including one played on the second Moog synthesizer ever made. He had bought one...but he had to teach himself to play it. Harrison said: ... *it seems as if winter in England goes on forever; by the time spring comes you really deserve it.* Perhaps we all do?

Moon River, written by Johnny Mercer and Henry Mancini for the movie *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, has given hundreds of singers a vehicle to croon about a dreamy somewhere else. It took Mancini a month to compose the first 3 notes but half an hour to finish the rest.

Swinging on a Star also came from a movie and quickly became a pop standard. In *Going My Way* (1944), Bing Crosby, as a parochial school priest, admonishes his students to study hard, or they will end up as stubborn mules, slippery fish, slovenly pigs, or silly monkeys.

Moonglow, a slow Lindy Hop, has a place in American culture as a #1 hit for the Benny Goodman orchestra in 1934; but it also played an important role in bringing black and white musicians together. In 1936, ten years before Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in sports, black vibes player Lionel Hampton and black pianist Teddy Wilson joined white clarinetist Goodman and white drummer Gene Krupa to play *Moonglow* on stage and on vinyl. As Goodman once said, "*If a guy's got it, let him give it. I'm selling music, not prejudice.*"

Choose Something Like a Star is Robert Frost's beautiful reminder that grand ideals do not dictate our every action. They burn from afar as bright beacons to light our own insights. Frost and Randall Thompson had both taught at Amherst in Massachusetts, so when the college asked Frost for a 200th anniversary piece in 1959, he asked his colleague to set 7 of his poems in choral cycle to be titled *Frostiana*. At its premiere, Frost was so pleased that he leapt up and asked for it to be sung again. He then banned any other composer from setting his poetry.

Moonlight in Vermont is a lovely ballad that seems to project New England through native eyes. However, Ohio lyricist J.M. Blackburn wrote the text while touring Vermont with a travelling puppet theatre. Composer Karl Suessdorf was born in Valdez, Alaska where his father owned a saloon. Nevertheless, the song became an instant jazz standard in 1944 and Vermonters loved it.

Stardust began as a tune Hoagy Carmichael whistled as he left a hangout frequented by students at Indiana University where he was studying law in 1927. In 1928 he recorded an instrumental version which so impressed Mills Music publishers that they offered him a job. House writer Mitchell Parish came up with lyrics, and the song became an immediate success in clubs and on radio; it remains a jazz standard. *Stardust* has been recorded over 1500 times. In 1936, RCA Victor released a vinyl record of it with Benny Goodman's orchestra on one side and Tommy Dorsey's band on the other.

Island in the Sun showcases 3 calypso songs written by Irving Burgie, who along with Harry Belafonte brought that form to public attention in the mid-20th century. Calypso is Afro-Cuban music that originated in Trinidad and Tobago in the mid-19th century from rhythmic roots in West Africa and spread to the rest of the Caribbean. Burgie's mother was from Barbados; Belafonte spent his childhood in Jamaica. Yet Burgie was Julliard-trained and composed the Barbados national anthem, and Belafonte participated in protests against South African apartheid and wrote 10 American civil rights protest songs.

Ain't No Sunshine was a 1971 breakthrough R&B-soul-blues song for Bill Withers, who said that his inspiration came from the fight with alcoholism in the movie *Days of Wine and Roses*. Withers said, "It's like going back for seconds on rat poison. Sometimes you miss things that weren't particularly good for you." Withers had intended to write more in the 3rd verse, putting in "I know" 26 times just to keep the rhythm; but the studio musicians said keep it that way, and he did.

Once Upon a Time comes from the 1962 musical *All American*, written by Emmy-winning composer Charles Strouse. It is a bittersweet song about love that did not last forever. A graduate of Eastman, Strouse turned his technique to the Broadway stage.

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star asks questions of a far-away point of light and concludes that it is a comfortable constant. Composer Daniel Elder hails from Georgia and studied choral music at Westminster Choir College in Princeton, NJ. His arrangement of this children's tune aims to bring out both the wonder and the wisdom of those who gaze at stars.

Moon Medley features Tin Pan Alley songs from the early 20th century. *By the Light of the Silvery Moon* first appeared on stage in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1909. The song was recycled into a Broadway show and ultimately became a standard ballad. *Shine On Harvest Moon* also debuted in the Ziegfeld Follies in 1908 and became a standard of film and vaudeville song and dance, hoofed by such diverse performers as Rocky the Flying Squirrel and Laurel and Hardy. *On Moonlight Bay* became a standard of barbershop quartets, and with *Silvery Moon*, lent tunefulness to 2 eponymous '50's movies. *It's Only a Paper Moon*, originally titled *If You Believed in Me*, was written in 1932 by Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg for a Broadway show that had a very short run. However, Paul Whiteman's orchestral recording landed it on the hit parade, and it was incorporated into the score of a 1933 movie.

Over the Rainbow was Arlen and Harburg's next collaboration for *The Wizard of Oz*, and it won the 1939 Oscar for best song. Many singers made recordings of it in original form, but in 1993, Hawaiian singer Israel Kamakawiwo'ole walked into a recording studio with his ukulele and recorded his own version in 1 take. It went platinum.

The Warmth of the Sun had a personal poignancy for writers Brian Wilson and Mike Love of the rock band The Beach Boys. They wrote it on the day of and in response to President Kennedy's assassination in 1963. Even with Wilson's signature daring chord changes, it is a lovely ballad of loss that is not really ever forgotten.

Quiet Nights of Quiet Stars is a Brazilian bossa nova standard written in Portuguese in 1960 by Antônio Carlos Jobim. Gene Lees wrote the English translation. The Portuguese title *Corcovado* refers to a Rio de Janeiro mountain.

No Moon at All, written in 1947 by David Mann and Redd Evans, is a jazz standard made famous by Doris Day. Mann reinforced the universality of good music by using the chord changes of the baroque master J.S. Bach's *Double Violin Concerto*.

Aquarius / Let the Sunshine In came about when Fifth Dimension lead singer Billy Davis, Jr. saw the 1967 musical *Hair*, and insisted on recording *Aquarius*, pairing it with a few bars of another song from the show. In reality, Jupiter aligns with Mars several times a year; the moon is in the 7th house for 2 hours every day. So, perhaps when Sun, Moon, and Stars align, peace will indeed guide the planets.