

PROGRAM NOTES

Quincy Symphony Chorus
Quincy, Illinois
November 16, 2024

Psallite (Now We Sing), Michael Praetorius (1571-1621), arranged by Norman Greyson. Sung in Latin, German and English texts, this choral classic with bell-like pairing of voices harkens to the church bells chiming the news of Christ's birth.

Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light, Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750). This chorale occurs in J. S. Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, which was first performed in 1734 during the time when Bach was in charge of music at the Dt. Nicholas Church and the St. Thomas Church in Leipzig. It is actually a set of six shorter works, each about the length of a cantata, meant to be sung on Christmas day, New Year's Day, and on the Feast of the Epiphany, January 6. Chorales are interspersed throughout. "Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light" is a most familiar chorale from Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*.

How Can I Keep From Singing? Gwyneth Walker (b. 1947) is based on a Quaker hymn from the United States dating back to the 1800's. References to the persecution of Friends may be heard in the lyrics. Yet, faith and courage prevail. This arrangement emphasizes the celebratory and life-affirming aspects of the song. Significant text: "When friends hold courage in their hearts..." "No one can shake my inmost calm..." "Since I believe that love abides," ... These thoughts are followed by long passages of *la la la's* emanating from the trustful believer's joyful singing.

A Vision Unfolding, Kyle Pederson (b.1971) was commissioned in 2021 by 7 choirs around the country to write an extended work, centered broadly around themes of social justice. American poet, spoken word artist and singer Shanelle Gabriel was asked by Pederson to add the words that would be a vision for the audience and singers. Together they hoped to re-articulate what our country has stood for in its best moments, and they found powerful declarations in our foundational texts and speeches of a nation rooted in equality, freedom, justice, and inclusion.

The composer's hope is "that we lean into the invitation that the choir offers – that each of us might reach out beyond our comfort zone and seek to build bridges of care and connection, finding a better way of being in community. That we might stand in solidarity with those whose voices are too often dismissed, regardless of their skin color, sexual orientation, faith background, or other characteristic. That we might not dismiss, disdain, or judge those whose politics are different from ours, but that we might make the uncomfortable effort to see them as people just as worthy of respect and dignity."

Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy is one of the most famous songs to come out of WWII. The QSC ladies sing it tonight in honor of the 80th anniversary of D-day. 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 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.

Festival Sanctus, John Leavitt (b. 1956). The Sanctus marks the beginning of the Eucharistic portion of the Roman Catholic Mass, and is here given an elaborate joyous setting that praises God and all of his creation: Heaven and the Earth and is sung at the end of the Liturgy.

John Leavitt received his doctorate at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and has been choral conductor at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Wichita, Kansas.

The Great Spirit of Love, David Conte (b. 1955). David Conte has been Professor of Music Composition at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music since 1985. He studied in Paris with Nadia Boulanger on a Fulbright Scholarship has composed and published over 150 works. The text in four verses leads the “Great Spirit of Love into your mind, into your heart, into your life and finally finds its way into our world. Then, “We will truly be one people, we will finally be free.”

Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind, Sir John Rutter. Dr. Rutter took the sonnet written by Shakespeare from *As You Like It*. This sonnet expresses discontent with human nature, as the poem compares the harsh but honest winter wind to the deceitful and ungrateful behavior of people. The wind’s presence may be unpleasant, but the speaker implies that the emotional pain caused by human betrayal is more severe. The refrain has the speaker ironically proclaiming that “most friendships is feigning, most loving mere folly.” This suggests that the superficial relationships and false affections that are common in society are more prevalent than genuine connections. The poem concludes that love does indeed find its intended recipients.

Three Madrigals, Emma Lou Diemer (1927- 2024). Emma Lou Diemer received her doctorate from Eastman and subsequently was a Fulbright scholar in Belgium. These three works were inspired by the madrigals style which flourished in England in the late 16th – early 17th centuries. Dr. Diemer used words from 3 of Shakespeare’s plays to set these madrigals. “O Mistress of mine, where are you roaming?” is from the *Twelfth Night*, “Take, O take those lips away,” is from *Measure for Measure* and “Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more!” from *Much Ado About Nothing*. Her approach, however, is more contemporary but still preserves the typical “Hey nonny, nonny” at the close. These are the texts which were used by the Elizabethan madrigal composers at the turn of the 17th century.

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee. Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) finished composing this melody *Ode to Joy*, from the first movement of his final symphony, number 9, in 1824. The Chorus is celebrating the 200th anniversary of its composition.

Henry Van Dyke (1852-1933), an American author, Ambassador to the Netherlands, Presbyterian clergy, and a close friend to Helen Keller, wrote lyrics in 1907 to the popular hymn melody, *Ode to Joy*. Van Dyke wrote of this hymn that “it may be sung together by people ...who are not afraid that any truth of science will destroy religion, or any revolution on earth overthrow the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, this is a hymn of trust, joy, and hope.”

I Am But a Small Voice, Odina E. Batnag. With its plea for freedom, peace, prosperity, and love for all mankind, the text of this choral work touches responsive chords in every listener. There is a hint of imitation between the treble and bass voices. At its close, a grand climax brings this work to a satisfying conclusion.

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