

Upcoming Spring 2006 Concert

Please join us this May for our concert of works by New York composers featuring works by Patrick Castillo, John Corigliano, Julie Dolphin, and Martha Sullivan; and including the premiere of our latest commission, a setting of selected texts about morning by Robert Dennis.

L'INVITATION AU VOYAGE

Sunday, May 7, 4:00 pm Brooklyn, Oratory Church of St.
Boniface

Saturday, May 13, 8:00 pm Manhattan, St. Luke in the Fields

Please visit our website www.cerddorion.net for additional information.

Support Cerddorion

Ticket sales cover only a small portion of our ongoing musical and administrative expenses.

If you would like to make a tax-deductible contribution, please send a check (payable to Cerddorion NYC, Inc.) to:

Cerddorion NYC, Inc.
Post Office Box 946, Village Station
New York, NY 10014-0946

CERDDORION

VOCAL ENSEMBLE

Kristina Boerger

Artistic Director

PRESENTS

The Ears of My Ears



Tuesday, February 7, 2006 - 8:00 p.m.
The Oratory Church of St. Boniface
190 Duffield Street
Brooklyn, New York

Saturday, February 11, 2006 - 8:00 p.m.
Church of St. Luke in the Fields
487 Hudson Street
Manhattan, New York

CERDDORION

SOPRANOS	ALTOS	TENORS	BASSES
Bonny Hart	Judith Cobb	Tim Hutfilz	Phillip Cheah
Julia Hurn	Ann Evans	A. Lamar Kauffman	Soyoung Choi
Amy Litt	Susan Glass	Michael Klitsch	Peter Cobb
Wendy Reitmeier	Cathy Markoff	Steve Parkey	Brian Murphy
Michellanne Rothrock	Myrna Nachman	Eddie Rubeiz	Dale Rejtmar
Ellen Schorr	Kristina Vaskys	Chris Ryan	Tom Samiljan
Rebecca Stanton	Gretta Wren	Marty Silverberg	Laurence Weller
		Mark Stedman	

CERDDORION IS A MIXED chamber choir dedicated to outstanding performances of the best choral music. Now in its eleventh season, it has become one of the most admired ensembles in the thriving New York choral music scene. As befits its name (*cerddorion* is Welsh for “musicians”), the ensemble aspires to musicianship in its fullest sense, using the human voice to explore and fulfill the expressive potential of the art. Audiences have come to know Cerddorion for its interpretive depth as well as its technical excellence, in repertoire that spans the chamber choral literature, from Medieval polyphony to new compositions. Past programs have focused on Josquin; Monteverdi; early American hymns and spirituals; double-choir works by Bach and Schütz; Brahms, Schubert, and Rheinberger; Delius, Elgar, and other post-Romantics; Hindemith and his contemporaries; and living composers including Robert Dennis, Lisa Bielawa, Elliot Z. Levine, David Lang, Tom Shake, and Giles Swayne.

Since its founding in 1995 by Susanne Peck, Cerddorion has attracted significant recognition and numerous invitations to collaborate with other prestigious artists. In 1998 and 1999, the group served as the resident teaching ensemble for the Dennis Keene Choral Festival in Kent, Connecticut. Cerddorion performed Bach’s *Cantata 140* and Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* with the acclaimed early music ensemble Concert Royal. In 2001, Cerddorion lent its “ethereal sounds” (*Dance Insider*, 10/10/01) to *The War Council*, part of a site-inspired work produced by Dancing in the Streets in Brooklyn, in collaboration with the Christopher Caines Dance Company, the first of several projects with the choreographer.

2005–2006

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

	Chair	Directors	
	Peter Cobb	Christopher Caines	
President	Cathy Markoff	Judith Cobb	
Vice President	Tim Hutfilz	Panny King	
Secretary	Chris Ryan	Wendy Reitmeier	
Treasurer	Peter Cobb	Eddie Rubeiz	

Donors

Our concerts would not be possible without a great deal of financial assistance. Cerddorion would like to thank the following, who, in addition to many of our members, have generously provided financial support for our activities.

*** Represents a special donation to the Cerddorion Commission Fund**

Patrons

Anonymous, in memory of Leeds Mitchell, Jr.*
New York Times Company Foundation*
Time Warner Foundation
Robb Moss*

Benefactors

Nancy and Karsten Boerger*
The Svetlana and Herbert Wachtell Foundation
Priscilla Kauff

Supporters

Beatrice Frank
In memory of Alice and Marvin Frankel
Martin and Carol Geller
In memory of William and Margaret Reitmeier
The Law Offices of Share & Blejce
Nancy M. Tooney*
Mara and Richard Wallace

Friends

Thomas Bettridge
Saletta Boni*
Jane and John Brickman
Milton and Gail Cooper
Zachary Cummings*
Linda Cunningham
Cathy Douglass and Bruce Dohrenwend
Charlotte and Jeffrey Fischman
In memory of Robert Fountain
Clara Genetos*
Ron and Nina Gilson
Gerald Greland and Dale Rejtmar*
Debbie Griffin
Margaret Hunt
Robert Juceam
Sharon Kaplan*
Samuel and Francine Klagsburn Foundation
Kate and Peter Kurz*
Nina and Tim Lannan
David and Cathy Morocco
Peggy and Hans Neville
Jeff Neuman and Cynthia Wachtell
Jerry Nussenblatt
Jack and Muriel Polish
Barbara Retzco
Charles and Joan Rodriguez
Mary and Ghassan Rubeiz
Howard L. and Anita L. Ryan
Richard Slade
Catharine R. Stimpson
The McGraw-Hill Companies
Socrates and Evelyn Triantafillou*
Joette Warren

Friends (continued)

Caroly Wilcox
Sarah White

Donors

Joellen Ausanka
Jean Clark
Howard and Arlene Eisenberg
Allison Fromm Entrekin
John and Barbara Evans
Patricia Fitzsimmons
Laura Garner
David and Joan Green
Susanne Greene
John Hetland
Kathi Iannacone
Kathleen Kuhlman
Nicole and John Louras
Phyllis and Del Markoff
Michael and Laurie Pollock
Barbara Berg and Arnold G. Schlanger
Edith Shapiro
Alec Peter Stais
Paul Steinberg
Ruta Vaskys and Martin Freed
Dorothy Yoreo

Contributors

Carol Barker
Jane Bender
Roger Boxhill*
Dolores Dolan
Norton and Barbara Garber
Jean Garner
Martha L. Garner
Jane Levy and Jerry Goldman
Andrew and Rosamund Hamersley
Jim and Marti Hart
Sally Hess
Barbara Hiller
Linnea Johnson*
Thomas and Mary Karis*
David Lang
Steve Lanser
Marcia Miller
Michael Miller
Israel Nachman
Peter and Luek Oleson*
Anele Pilius
Beth Polish and Philip Friedman*
Rosalie Rodomsky
Paul Share*
Paul Steinberg*
Jeremy Szabo*

Many thanks to Robb Moss and FloraCulture for the unique and beautiful florals.

Visit: www.floraculture-nyc.com

Composer Biographies

David Lang is co-founder and co-artistic director of New York's legendary music festival, Bang on a Can.

His recent projects include monumental musical environments like the dark and meditative amplified orchestra piece *The Passing Measures*; *Writing on Water* for the London Sinfonietta, with visuals by English filmmaker Peter Greenaway; *Shelter for Trio* Mediaeval and *MusikFabrik*, with co-composers Michael Gordon and Julia Wolfe; *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field* - an opera for the Kronos Quartet; *Grind to a Halt* for the San Francisco Symphony; *World to Come*, a commission for cellist Maya Beiser from Carnegie Hall, loud love songs, a concerto for the percussionist Evelyn Glennie and the EOS Orchestra, and the oratorio *Lost Objects*, staged most recently by film director Francois Girard at the Next Wave Festival of the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Lang's work is recorded on the Sony Classical, BMG, Point, Chandos, Argo/Decca, and Cantaloupe labels.

Elliot Z. Levine has been the baritone for the Western Wind Vocal Ensemble since its inception in 1969. He has appeared as a soloist with such groups as *Musica Sacra*, the Rome Opera, *La Fenice*, the Mannes Camerata, *Music at Ascension*, the Ensemble for Early Music, and the Folger Consort. Levine recently was the Bass soloist in Bach's B Minor Mass with the Kalamazoo Bach Festival. He received his M.M. from the Manhattan School of Music and his B.A. from Queens College and has also studied at the Orff School in Salzburg, conducting with Robert Hickok, and composition with Robert Starer at Brooklyn College. He has been awarded five Meet-the-Composer Grants. For twenty-five years he has been a conductor and coach at Western Wind Workshops at such institutions as Dartmouth and Smith Colleges, U. Mass, and ACDA choral conferences around the country. He has been composer-in-residence at the Church of St. Thomas More in N.Y.C. and the schools of Delmar, N.Y. Levine is published by Shadow Press, Harold Flammer Inc., E. Henry David, Plymouth, Colla Voce, and Willis Music Co.

He is currently working on a setting of C.Day Lewis' "Requiem for the Living" for the Central City Chorus of N.Y.

Program

*Please reserve your applause until the end of each set.******

DYING FOEMEN

Lamentation Over Boston William Billings (1746–1800)

Shiloh – A Requiem Jonathan David
conducted by Phillip Cheab, 2/11

Lamentations for a City Lisa Bielawa
Jeremy Szabo, english horn

THE SONS OF DAVID

Absalon fili mi Josquin Desprez (c. 1440–1521)
or Pierre de la Rue (c. 1452–1518)

Nigra Sum Michael Praetorius (1571–1621)

again (after Ecclesiastes) David Lang

Surge amica mea G. P. da Palestrina (1525–1594)

Hosanna to the Son of David Thomas Weelkes (1575–1623)

THE EARS OF MY EARS

i thank You God Elliot Z. Levine

may i feel Elliot Z. Levine

III. Aguas puras del Nilo Elliot Z. Levine
*from Un prodigio les canto:
Four Villancicos of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*

Program Notes

WELCOME TO CERDDORION'S MIDWINTER CONCERT. Days from now we will have the honor of performing at the convention of the American Choral Directors Association taking place here in New York City. We have chosen to use this significant venue as a platform for the three pieces that you, our supporters, enabled us to commission for our tenth anniversary season last year. You who have heard these new works by Lisa Bielawa, Elliot Z. Levine, and David Lang know that they richly deserve the exposure we are about to give them among this country's most dedicated choral conductors. We are thrilled for the opportunity to share these pieces – made possible from within our community here – with the wider community of choral music lovers and thus to ensure for them a long performance life. So as to keep these pieces performance-ready for the upcoming event, we have built tonight's program around them.

Dying Foemen

In our first set, centered on Lisa Bielawa's "Lamentations for a City," American poets and composers respond to war. We open with "Lamentation over Boston," with words and music by William Billings, Revolutionary America's foremost proponent of choral singing. The poem mourns the destruction wrought during the British occupation of the colonial port city that began in April of 1775 and lasted 11 months. Billings paraphrases Psalm 137, a response to the Babylonian Captivity of the Jews that followed the sack of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. The familiar opening to this Psalm says: "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered thee, o Zion." The Psalmist continues, lamenting the impossibility of singing Zion's sacred songs in a strange land and praying to be stricken in various ways should he ever forget Jerusalem. So Billings begins: "By the rivers of Watertown we sat down and wept when we remembered thee, o Boston." After several wrenchingly personal lines, Billings vows to remember Boston lest all manner of calamities befall him, the worst of which he expresses in metaphors of a mute or discordant music.

New York composer Jonathan David writes about "Shiloh: A Requiem," his setting of a Civil War poem by Herman Melville:

The Tennessee field near the Methodist church called Shiloh was the site of one of the bloodiest battles of The Civil War. Herman Melville wrote "Shiloh: A Requiem (April 1862)" four years later. The poem begins and ends in the present-day natural world of birds, clouds and rain, with the earlier carnage reflected upon in between. My setting begins with a pictorial suggestion of the 'skimming swallows,' who return, in greater numbers, at the end in an aleatoric section. The prevailing counterpoint of the piece is relieved by the hymn-like textures describing the lonely church and the prayers of the dying.

Lovers of Benjamin Britten's **War Requiem** will recognize companion sentiments in these two pieces. The afterlife meeting and reconciliation of the English and German soldiers that culminates in "Let us Sleep Now" is recalled in Melville's line: "Foemen at morn but friends at eve, fame or country least their care...;" at Shiloh, the dead from both sides lie commingled as the swallows fly over and life continues.

Composer Biographies

Jonathan David lives in New York City, where he composes choral works, music-theatre, and song, and serves as Music Director for the chamber chorus, How! His choral music has been performed by, among others, the Princeton Singers, New York Treble Singers, and the Americas Vocal Ensemble. David's *Fall into Winter* was commissioned by the Lawrence Philharmonic, which premiered the work in February 2005 with a chorus of over 130 high school and middle school students. His one-act musical, *Bronx Express*, based on an early 20th c. Yiddish vaudeville, premiered in August to packed houses at the New York International Fringe Festival. In December The Greenwich Village Singers, along with the Children's Aid Society Chorus, premiered his *Fantasy on Medieval Carols*. The Orfeo Duo commissioned and in February will premiere his song cycle, *The Persistence of Song*, with baritone Daniel Neer. In March the Western Illinois University Singers will perform his setting of Tennyson's *Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal*, which was published last February by Oxford University Press. David continues work on his musical, *Islands of Light*, with librettist Heather Hill, which centers on the conflict between the steamboats and railroads at the eve of the Civil War. His music has received awards from ASCAP, the Americas Vocal Ensemble, the Global Network of Conservatories, and the Berklee Wind Ensemble.

Jonathan David is an ASCAP composer.

Composer-vocalist **Lisa Bielawa** often takes inspiration for her work from literary sources and close artistic collaborations. Her 2004 work *Hurry*, for soprano and chamber ensemble, was commissioned by Carnegie Hall as part of Dawn Upshaw's Perspectives series. The inaugural season of Zankel Hall included the premiere of her work *The Right Weather* by American Composers Orchestra and award-winning pianist Andrew Armstrong. Bielawa will begin a three-year residency with Boston Modern Orchestra Project in 2006 under the auspices of Music Alive, a national program jointly designed and managed by Meet The Composer and ASOL.

Upcoming projects include a piano quintet for pianist Jon Nakamatsu and the Miami String Quartet, and *The Lay of the Love and Death* for violinist Colin Jacobsen and baritone Jesse Blumberg based on an epic poem by Rilke, which premieres at Lincoln Center in March 2006 at the Premiere Commissions Gala. Bielawa has received grants, fellowships, and awards from the Civitella Ranieri Foundation in Italy, The Fund for U.S. Artists at International Festivals, New York State Council on the Arts, New York Foundation for the Arts, the American Society of Composers, Authors & Publishers, the Omaha Symphony International Competition, and the Fondation Royaumont in France. As a vocalist, she has premiered and recorded countless works by her composer colleagues.

Kristina Boerger

KRISTINA BOERGER received her formative musical training from pianist Annie Sherter and holds the doctorate in choral conducting and literature from the University of Illinois. Having served on the faculties of Lake Forest College and the Millikin University School of Music, she lectures in music history at Barnard College and teaches choral conducting at the Manhattan School of Music. In recent projects as a guest conductor, she has appeared at the invitation of the University of Illinois Chamber Singers, the Kalamazoo Bach Festival, the Syracuse Schola Cantorum, the Christopher Caines Dance Company, and New York's AMUSE.

As Founding Director (1990-1999) of AMASONG: Champaign-Urbana's Premier Lesbian/Feminist Chorus, Dr. Boerger directed and produced two award-winning recordings, appeared in several national venues, and toured the Czech Republic. Her work with this ensemble is the subject of the documentary film *The AMASONG Chorus: Singing Out*, which has toured festivals worldwide and enjoys repeated broadcast on PBS.

As a singer in a variety of styles, Dr. Boerger has appeared on stage with the Vox Vocal Ensemble, Alarm Will Sound, The King's Noyse, and Urban Bush Women, also recording for Bobby McFerrin, Pan Morigan, Rocky Maffit, and Early Music New York. She tours and records regularly with the early music ensemble Pomerium and with the Western Wind *a cappella* sextet.

This is Dr. Boerger's sixth season as Artistic Director of Cerddorion.

Closing the set is Lisa Bielawa's "Lamentations for a City," which takes its place as a significant contribution to a favorite choral genre with a rich tradition. About the piece, the composer writes:

The poet of the Lamentations of Jeremiah was witness to the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. His descriptions of the details of suffering are painfully vivid, and his passionate eulogy to the wounded city takes its literary place alongside Euripides' heartbreaking verses to the fallen Troy or W.G. Sebald's searching inquiries into the rubble of Dresden. When I wrote these Lamentations I was on retreat in Umbria, a valley of walled cities with ghosts at every gate. The now-serene and quaint countryside has a history of brutality. When we see Renaissance paintings of cities, they appear abstracted to us, little units cradled, perhaps, in a saint's hand. But in Umbria these pictures seemed not so far from the truth. There I saw cities as they had been for millennia, until relatively recently: jewels on hilltops, elegantly poised for self-defense but mercilessly vulnerable when penetrated. Troy, Jerusalem, Perugia, Dresden, Hiroshima, New York, Baghdad, Beslan, Jerusalem again. Sometimes great poets witness the raping of great cities. But in September 2004 I turned instead to the hemorrhaging web media for crisis reports from cities all over the world. This language appears as background texture in "Lamentations for a City" to give testimony to the vitality of the human tradition of bringing cities to their knees through cruelty, treason, humiliation, and destruction.

The Sons of David

Our second set takes its shape from David Lang's "again (from Ecclesiastes)." The editorial introduction to the book of Ecclesiastes reads: "The words of Qoheleth, the son of David, king in Jerusalem." Each of the pieces here is either about or attributed to a son in the Davidic line of kingship. The beloved Renaissance motet "Absalon fili mi" is found in the collected works of Josquin Desprez, though current scholarly opinion suggests attribution to Pierre de la Rue, a respected member in Josquin's generation of Franco-Flemish polyphonists. The text is David's lament for his son Absalom, who was killed in a gruesome riding accident. Several later contrapuntists of note, including Weelkes, Thomkins, and Ramsey, composed poignant motets on this lament and also on David's lament for his beloved Jonathan. This motet relies in part for its expressive power on text-painting – that is, the pictorial setting of a word's meaning. The broken, falling triads on the words *sed descendam* presage the ascendance of such devices in the flourishing of the Italian madrigal several decades later.

Our next son of David is Solomon, who succeeded his father as King of Israel. Tradition attributes the gorgeous love poetry of the *Song of Songs* to him, and he appears briefly in the third of the book's eight chapters. Michael Praetorius, a Lutheran musician writing on the cusp of the German Baroque, and Giovanni Luigi da Palestrina, Renaissance master of Counter-Reformation Italy, contribute settings of favorite verses from the first two chapters. In the text of Praetorius's "Nigra sum," a young woman advocates cleverly for herself under an apparent taboo among the lighter-skinned against coupling with the darker-skinned. Declining to challenge this prejudice head-on, she nonetheless impresses with her overt insistence on taking her place, upon her own choosing, at the side of the man she loves. In Palestrina's "Surge amica mea," it is the man who addresses the woman,

extolling her loveliness and comparing it to the delights of the natural world around them. The recurring eighth-note melisma (a single vowel sustained over a succession of several notes) that dominates the opening vividly paints the word *surge* and provides a fitting complement to the opening melismas on *nigra* in Praetorius's motet.

Nestled between this pair of densely contrapuntal, amorous pieces is David Lang's "again (after Ecclesiastes)," a string of emotionally detached observations rendered through a tightly controlled simplicity of means. The text presents a resigned, almost pessimistic, assessment of the repetitive and ultimately inconsequential patterns of natural forces and human behavior. Who is this Qoheleth, this king of such practical wisdom, the one who most famously reminded us that "to everything there is a season?" The most cursory investigation reveals that Qoheleth is not the proper name of a specific descendant of David but rather a title meaning "gatherer" (of a congregation) or "preacher." Tradition attributes this book, too, to Solomon, though one line of scholarly argument places it outside of Solomon's lifetime. In fact, pursuing the clue in Strong's Concordance that the word *Qoheleth* is feminine, one scholar (Floyd Bragg) suggests that it was written by David's daughter Tamar, born of the same wife who was Absalom's mother.

The primary organizing principle of Lang's setting involves descending melodic strings that fragment as they pass from one section of the chorus to another. This pattern is relieved in the middle of the piece by a handful of chords whose dogged stasis eventually begs for the return of the fragmenting melodies that close the piece. One musical phrase differs from another only by subtle shifts and displacements, giving the smallest component great power to affect the entire texture. The control and attention required of the performers to sustain Lang's fabric focuses us almost microscopically on our own bodies' processes of breathing, phonating, enunciating, tuning – initiating, sustaining, and releasing.

We close our set with Thomas Weelkes's triumphant "Hosanna to the Son of David," which "son," meaning *descendant*, is Jesus Christ, praised in this anthem as the divine King, sitting "in the highest heav'ns." Writing at the end of the English Renaissance, Weelkes was a consummate madrigalist, and his sacred works benefit from the techniques of textual and motivic unification honed in his highly polyphonic secular pieces. In his twenties, he earned appointments as organist and choirmaster at Winchester College and Chichester Cathedral. Aspirations of a position with the Chapel Royal went unfulfilled, and ultimately, he died unemployed after a short life infamously marred by regular drunkenness. The intricacy and exuberance of this anthem attest nonetheless to the vitality of Weelkes's creative powers and secure for it a beloved place both in the concert hall and in the body of Anglican service music for which it was created.

III. Aguas puras del Nilo

(Estribillo)

Aguas puras del Nilo,
parad, parad,
y no le llevéis
el tributo al Mar,
pues él vuestras dichas
puede envidiar.

¡No, no, no corráis,
pues ya no podéis
aspirar a más!
¡Parad, parad!

(Coplas)

Soseiga, Nilo undoso,
tu líquida corriente;
tente, tente,
párate a ver gozoso
la que fecundas, bella,
de la tierra, del Cielo, Rosa, Estrella.

Tu corriente oportuna,
que piadoso moviste,
viste, viste,
que de Moisés fue cuna,
siendo arrullo a su oído
la onda, la espuma, el tumbo y el sonido...

No en frágil hermosura,
que aprecia el loco abuso,
puso, puso
esperanza segura,
bien que excedió su cara
la de Ruth, Bethsabe, Thamar, y Sara.

A ésta, Nilo sagrado,
tu corriente sonante
cante, cante,
y en concierto acordado
tus ondas sean veloces
sílabas, lenguas, números, y voces.

III. Pure waters of the Nile

(Refrain)

Pure waters of the Nile,
subside, subside,
do not carry
the tribute out to sea,
for the sea may envy you
your blessings.

No, cease your coursing,
for you could not
hope for a greater joy than this!
Subside, subside!

(Verses)

Billowy Nile,
slow your current down;
hold still, hold still,
stop yourself to gaze with pride
on the one whom you nourish, beautiful one
of the earth, of Sky, Rose, Star.

Awed, you moved your
timely current,
you see, you see,
that was Moses's cradle,
lulling his ear
with wave and foam, ripple and hum.

Not in fragile beauty,
so wrongly prized,
did she place
sure hope,
yet of face she was fairer
than Ruth, Bathsheba, Tamar, and Sarah.

To her, sacred Nile,
may your sounding current
sing, sing,
and in tuned accord
may your waves be swift
syllables, tongues, measures, and voices.

Trans: Alan Trueblood

Used by permission of Harvard University Press

i thank You God

i thank You God for most this amazing
day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes

(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday; this is the birth
day of life and of love and wings: and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any --lifted from the no
of all nothing--human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)

may i feel

may i feel said he
(i'll squeal said she
just once said he)
it's fun said she

(may i touch said he
how much said she
a lot said he)
why not said she

(let's go said he
not too far said she
what's too far said he
where you are said she)

may i stay said he
(which way said she
like this said he
if you kiss said she

may i move said he
is it love said she
if you're willing said he
(but you're killing said she

but it's life said he
but your wife said she
now said he)
ow said she

(tip-top said he
don't stop said she
oh no said he)
go slow said she

(cccome? said he
ummm said she)
you're divine! said he
(you are Mine said she)

—e. e. cummings
(from 100 selected poems
Grove Press 1954)

THE EARS OF MY EARS

Our final set is devoted to music of Elliot Z. Levine, a longtime supporter of Cerddorion, a trusted colleague and dear friend of mine, and a composer of wide-ranging creativity. Levine writes music for the most accomplished musicians and for classrooms of the completely untrained alike. He is uncommonly adept at pitching the music's level of difficulty and the content of its text toward the particular abilities and interests of the performers for whom he writes. We begin with two settings of poetry by e. e. cummings.

These pieces were made for the Western Wind, of which sextet Levine and I are both members. "i thank You God" could be considered a sacred text of the most universal spiritual content possible. The musical language – which Levine describes as being in the style of James Taylor – is immediately approachable by Western audiences at all levels of musical sophistication. One of Levine's most beloved works, this piece has been arranged for a variety of voicings, to accommodate the many different ensembles who have clamored for it. You will hear it tonight in its original form.

The next piece was composed to occupy a specific position in a Western Wind program of love songs. We had been performing Monteverdi's "Si ch'io vorrei morire," as perfect a musical depiction of seduction, desire, and sexual fulfillment as one can find in the mature Italian Renaissance. Levine wondered whether he could create a companion piece with an English text in a contemporary musical idiom. *Voilà* "may i feel," full of lovers' negotiations (in a waltz), temptations (in "blue" notes), doubts (in descending, whole-tone scales), blunders (in displaced accents), and ecstasies (I'm not telling).

We close our concert with the third of four movements Levine wrote for us last year, all of them settings of villancico texts by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Born in 1648 in Mexico to an unwed mestiza, Juana was literate by age three, and by age seven she had plans to acquire an education at Mexico University by dressing in men's clothes. By her teens, she was reading philosophical and theological tomes in Latin and had earned a reputation as a prodigy and a beauty. At age 16, she was presented to the court of the Viceroy, where she won the affections of his wife, entered into her service, and lived at court for four years. Eventually, having no wealth of her own, and flatly refusing to marry, she exercised her last option for securing a life of learning and creativity, which was to enter the convent of San Jerónimo, where she remained until her death in 1695. At the convent, she had her own library and study. She held regular *tertulias* from behind her convent bars with learned men of the court and of the university, whom she also bested when brought before them to demonstrate her learning. She wrote many poems and plays, excelled at music, and studied all branches of knowledge. In 1680 she established a friendship with the new Vicereine María Luisa, whom she addressed as "Lisi" in numerous love poems. When María Luisa departed with the Viceroy in 1688, Sor Juana lost their protection and came under fierce misogynist attacks. The archbishop in particular accused her of undue secularism in her studies and writings. By the time she died of the plague at age 46, she had been forced to renounce her writings and sell off her library.

Levine writes about his music:

I have been aware of the brilliant life of Sor Juana for over fifteen years. What has impressed me was her quest for self-fulfillment and her thirst to learn and transcend traditional gender roles in 17th-century Mexico. After reading many different poems, I decided on these villancico texts from 1691, which were designed for music of her time that is still lost. I was attracted by their vivid imagery, (which) leaped off the page and demanded music out of me.

The poem I chose (for the third movement is) for St. Catherine of Alexandria. I think Sor Juana identified with St. Catherine, who converted many Romans (including the Emperor's wife) and dazzled a court of scholars convened to discredit her. As Catherine was about to be tortured on the wheel, it flew apart; after this she was beheaded.

In these pieces I have tried to capture some of the flavor of Spanish and Latin-American 17th century music while using a conservative contemporary harmonic language. I was intrigued by the challenge of writing for double chorus.... It is one of life's great pleasures to be a colleague of Kristina Boerger in the Western Wind Vocal Ensemble. Her... clear musical concepts inspired me to write these pieces for Cerddorion."

We thank you all for your support tonight as we ready ourselves for a huge audience of conductors hungry to be inspired by new repertoire, well executed. We hope you will leave this place with "the ears of your ears" awakened, and we look forward to performing for you again in May.

Copyright 2006 by Kristina Boerger

SURGE AMICA MEA

Surge, amica mea,
speciosa mea, et veni:
Columba mea, in foraminibus petrae
in caverna maceriae,
ostende mihi faciem tuam,
sonet vox tua, in auribus meis:
vox enim tua dulcis,
et facies tua decora,

Arise, my companion,
my beautiful one, and come:
My dove, in the cleft of the rock,
in the secret places,
turn thy face to me,
sound your voice in my ear,
for your voice is sweet,
and your face is lovely.

HOSANNA TO THE SON OF DAVID

Hosanna to the Son of David,
Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord,
Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna,
Thou that sittest in the highest heav'ns,
Hosanna in excelsis Deo.

Texts & Translations

ABSALON FILI MI

Absalon fili mi,
quis det ut moriar pro te,
fili mi Absalon?
Non vivam ultra, sed descendam
in infernum plorans.

Absalom, my son,
who will give that I might die for you,
my son Absalom?
May I live no more, but descend
weeping into hell.

NIGRA SUM

Nigra sum sed formosa
o filiae Jerusalem:
Nolite me considerare quod sum subnigra
quia me coloravit sol:
Indica mihi quem diligit anima mea
ubi pascas
ubi cubes in meridie.
Ne vagari incipiam
sodalium tuorum.

I am black but beautiful,
o daughters of Jerusalem:
Look not upon my blackness,
for it is the sun that has colored me.
Tell me, you whom my soul loves,
where you pasture your sheep,
where you rest them at noon.
I shall not wander
by the flocks of your clansmen.

again (after Ecclesiastes)

people come and people go – the earth goes on and on
the sun rises, the sun sets – it rushes to where it rises again
the wind blows round, round and round – it stops, it blows again
all the rivers run to the sea, but the sea is never full – from where the rivers run they run again

these things make me so tired – I can't speak, I can't see, I can't hear
what happened before it will happen again
I forgot it all before.
I will forget it all again.

LAMENTATION OVER BOSTON

By the rivers of Watertown we sat down and wept.
We wept when we remembered thee o Boston.
As for our friends, Lord God of Heaven,
preserve them, defend them, deliver and restore them unto us again.
For they that held them in bondage
required of them to take up arms against their brethren.
Forbid it, Lord, God forbid.

A voice was heard in Roxbury which echoed through the continent;
Weeping for Boston because of their danger.
Is Boston my dear town? Is it my native place?
For since their calamity, I do earnestly remember it still.
If I forget thee, yea if I do not remember thee,
Then let my numbers cease to flow, then be my muse unkind.
Then let my tongue forget to move, and ever be confined.

Let horrid jargon split the air, and rive my nerves asunder.
Let hateful discord greet my ear as terrible as thunder.
Let harmony be banished hence, and consonance depart;
Let dissonance erect her throne, and reign within my heart.

SHILOH - A Requiem (April 1862)

Skimming lightly, wheeling still,
The swallows fly low
Over the field in clouded days,
The forest-field of Shiloh --
Over the field where April rain
Solaced the parched ones stretched in pain
Through the pause of night
That followed the Sunday fight
Around the church of Shiloh --
The church so lone, the log-built one,
That echoed to many a parting groan
And natural prayer
Of dying foemen mingled there --
Foemen at morn, but friends at eve --
Fame or country least their care:
(What like a bullet can undecieve!)
But now they lie low,
While over them the swallows skim
And all is hushed at Shiloh.

Herman Melville (1866)

LAMENTATIONS FOR A CITY

ALEPH (1:1)

A reading from the Lamentations of
Jeremiah the prophet:

ALEPH

How lonely sits the city
That was full of people!

“no information about his condition is available”
“he said such meetings are commonplace”
“then they sent a tape that was supposed to contain their demands”
“even in cases where the cause was known, records sometimes don't specify”
“they offer moral support but no military training”

How like a widow has she become,
She that was great among the nations!
She that was a princess among the
cities
Has become a vassal.

“he also urged national restraint”
“he urged them to show love and respect for foreigners”
“as the initial investigation showed”
“both buses departed from the central bus station in the city”
“the central bus station in the city”
“they were also aboard the plane”
“records sometimes don't specify”
“higher authorities were aware of abuses”

BETH (1:2)

She weeps bitterly in the night,
Tears on her cheeks;
Among all her lovers
She has none to comfort her;
All her friends have dealt treacherously
with her.
They have become her enemies.

“they observed a minute's silence”
“refusing to cooperate for fear of their lives”
“refusing for years to cooperate”
“have been there for months without being charged”

“they can be held indefinitely”
“they were aware of abuses”
“they take all necessary measures”
“they observed a minute's silence”

DALETH (1:4)

The roads to Zion mourn,
For none come to the appointed
feasts;
All her gates are desolate,
Her priests groan;
Her maidens have been dragged away,
And she herself suffers bitterly in the
night.

“fighting broke out around 5”
“for sure there will be retaliation”
“found in the car”
“further to the South”

“He said such meetings are commonplace”
“He vowed to take revenge for Thursday's killings”
“He announced instead that he was firing all his ministers”
“He tried to return but was not allowed in”

“He hasn't spoken since”
“He visited the center”
“He urged them to show love and respect”
“Hundreds of armed fighters”

ZAYIN (1:7)

Jerusalem remembers in the days of
her affliction and bitterness
All the precious things that were hers
from days of old

“relations between the two countries are so close”
“they routinely share classified information”
“they can be held indefinitely if considered a security threat”
“a danger looms that he could be held responsible”
“heightened regional tensions”
“raising the specter of a raid”
“before the woman reported him”
“the harsh criticism he received”

ALEPH (4:1)

How the gold has grown dim,
How the pure gold is changed!
The holy stones lie scattered
At the head of every street.

YOD (2:10)

The elders of the daughter of Zion
Sit on the ground in silence;
They have cast dust on their heads
And put on sackcloth;
The maidens of Jerusalem
Have bowed their heads to the
ground.

“these comments are a basis for mutiny”
“security forces will conduct multiple arrests”
“sending a huge column of smoke up into the air”
“a soldier must fulfill orders”

“security forces”
“sending smoke”
“sirens went off”
“soldiers were escaping”

KAPH (2:11)

My eyes are spent with weeping;
My soul is in tumult;
My heart is poured out in grief

“because of the destruction of the daughter of my people”
“the soldiers felt their lives were at risk”
“no crime goes unpunished”
“I don't know why this happened to us”
“you traitor, stop pretending and wait”

“the destruction of the daughter of my people”
“leave them out of this ugly game”
“sending a huge column of smoke into the air”
“the retaliation will be justified”
“hundreds of armed fighters are ready”

“because of the destruction”
“for sure there will be retaliation”
“a soldier must fulfill orders”
“explosives were found in the car”

“the destruction of the daughter of my people”
“refusing for years to cooperate”
“witnesses refusing for fear of their lives”
“they are ready for future attacks”
“I don't want to describe what I saw”

“I don't know why this happened.”
“I don't want to describe what I saw”

MEM (2:13)

What can I say to you, to what compare you,
O daughter of Jerusalem?
What can I liken to you, that I may comfort you,
O virgin daughter of Zion?
For vast as the sea is your ruin;
Who can restore you?