

# CERDDORION

VOCAL ENSEMBLE

*Kristina Boerger*  
*Artistic Director*

PRESENTS

## Spectacular Vernacular



Sunday, May 11, 2008—4 P.M.  
Oratory Church of St. Boniface  
11 Willoughby St.  
Brooklyn, New York

Sunday, May 18, 2008—4 P.M.  
Church of St. Luke in the Fields  
487 Hudson Street  
Manhattan, New York

# *Spectacular Vernacular*

## **I. Early North America**

I Am a Poor Wayfarin' Stranger

Eastern U.S. folk song,  
arr. Julie Dolphin

Better Land

Shape-note hymn,  
O. A. Parris

Witness

Negro Spiritual,  
arr. Jack Halloran

## **II. Popular South America**

Se equivocó la paloma

*Larry Sutter, soloist*

Carlos Guastavino  
arr. Kristina Boerger

Duerme Negrito

*Bonny Hart, soloist*

Atahualpa Yupanqui  
arr. Emile Solé

Samba-lelé

Brazilian folk song,  
arr. Daniel R. Afonso, Jr.

## **III. At sea**

Grey Funnel Line

Cyril Tawney

Lowlands

*Ian McGullam, soloist*

Atlantic Sea Shanty,  
arr. Alice Parker and Robert Shaw

## **IV. In the mountains**

Sübrali sa se, Sübrali

Bulgarian folk song (Rhodope)

Stanav si Rano

Macedonian folk song

## **V. Dancing in Macedonia**

Buvcansko

Traditional Macedonian

Legnala Rodna

Traditional Macedonian

Berance

Adam Good

Lesno

Traditional Macedonian

## **Izvornotes**

Jeff Fine, *kaval*

Marjorie Selden and Kristina Vaskys, *tambura*

Sheila Krstevski, *tupan*

## **VI. At the party**

Janger

Balinese folk song,  
arr. Budi Susanto Yahanés

Ke nale monna

South African choral song (Sotho)

## **VIII. Bonnie Scotsmen**

Skye Boat Song

Scottish folk melody,  
texted by Sir Harold Boulton  
arr. Yumiko Matsuoka

Bobby Shaftoe

Scottish folk song,  
arr. David Willcocks

## **VII. Gettin' the Spirit**

Swing Down, Chariot

Early gospel quartet

The Storm Is Passin' Over

Charles Albert Tindley

Da Lawd Is My Shepahd

Hymn from Bethany Fellowship  
Church, London

## **IX. Black on Black**

Black Is the Color

*Mark Stedman, soloist*

Appalachian folk song,  
arr. Yumiko Matsuoka

Blackbird/I Will

John Lennon and Paul McCartney  
*arr. Jonathan Rathbone*

*Cerddorion is joined on the "Skye Boat Song" by Mary Marcell and Polly Runyon.*

❖❖❖ *Pause* ❖❖❖

# CERDDORION

NOW IN ITS THIRTEENTH SEASON, CERDDORION is one of New York's most highly regarded volunteer choral ensembles. A chamber group of twenty-eight mixed voices, it is known for its eclectic repertoire, encompassing music from the Renaissance to the contemporary. Audiences have come to appreciate the group's interpretive depth and technical excellence in many styles.

Besides presenting its own varied programs, Cerddorion is frequently invited to perform with other acclaimed artists. Past collaborations include: the North American premiere of Sir John Tavener's all-night vigil, *The Veil of the Temple*, performed at Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall (with Desoff Choral Consortium and choristers from London's Temple Church); several appearances with the Christopher Caines Dance Company; baroque opera performances with the early music instrumental ensemble Concert Royal; and serving as the resident teaching ensemble for the Dennis Keene Choral Festival in Kent, Connecticut.

Cerddorion was selected to sing at the 2006 Eastern Divisional Convention of the American Choral Directors Association, where they presented the works they had commissioned from three New York composers for their tenth anniversary season.

This past fall marked the release on the Tzadik label of *A Handful of World*, the first commercial recording featuring Cerddorion. The CD is dedicated to vocal works by New York composer Lisa Bielawa and includes Cerddorion's performance of Bielawa's *Lamentations for a City*, which was commissioned and first performed by Cerddorion in 2004.

## *Kristina Boerger*

An accomplished singer, conductor, and choral arranger, Kristina Boerger received her formative musical training from pianist Annie Sherter and holds a doctorate in Choral Conducting and Literature from the University of Illinois. She lectures in music history at Barnard College, teaches choral conducting at the Manhattan School of Music.

Her work in the 1990s as founding director of AMASONG: Champaign-Urbana's Premier Lesbian/Feminist Chorus, is the subject of the documentary film *The Amasong Chorus: Singing Out*, which after touring festivals in the United States and worldwide has enjoyed repeated broadcast on PBS. Her work as a guest conductor and choral clinician has brought her recently to the University of Illinois Chamber Singers and to the Chicago Children's Choir, as well as to repeat engagements with the Kalamazoo Bach Festival Society and the Syracuse Schola Cantorum. She also serves as associate conductor with the Collegiate Chorale.

As a singer in a variety of styles, she has appeared on stage and on disc with the King's Noyse, Rocky Maffit, the Tallis Scholars, Early Music New York, Vox Vocal Ensemble, Bobby McFerrin, Alarm Will Sound, and Urban Bush Women. She is a member of the acclaimed early music ensemble Pomerium and of the Western Wind Vocal Ensemble, a sextet renowned for its performing, recording, and music education activities.

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

## *Program Notes*

"*That's* not something we're interested in doing" was my warning as a newly hired director of one particular vocal ensemble dedicated to the finest traditions in the choral art. Specifically, I was being warned away from "folk" music, concert arrangements of vernacular tunes, the very stuff of Cerddorion's concert this afternoon.

To be sure, the choral art in the West owes its tradition to the elite institutions—monasteries, cathedrals, royal chapels—in whose service it was first developed, long before there was any such phenomenon as the public concert. And even today there are those attendees at the finest venues who would like to experience their music patronage as an enactment of their high social status; they will spend more effort to shame a neighboring attendee clad in blue jeans than to remain awake during the performance.

But to endorse any absolute border between vernacular musics and art musics is to support a fiction. The greatest composers in our canon had an ear for the music of common people around them. Recall the numerous 15th-century Mass settings based on the popular tune "L'Homme armé," the evocation of bagpipes and fiddles in the peasant dance that erupts in Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, Brahms's imitations of raucous performances by traveling Gypsy bands—the list goes on. And because we musicians, no matter how elite, have not for centuries been able to escape anyway the charge of trucking with and absorbing the putatively lax morals of the socially undesirable, let us abandon all pretense and confess to taking pleasure in the sounds and rhythms of the street—and of the loading docks, threshing fields, township plazas, clapboard churches, and coffeehouses!

All of the pieces we will sing tonight began as songs in contexts variously referred to as "folk," "vernacular," or "popular." Many are attributable to entire communities rather than to the names of individual songwriters. Several have been adapted, to greater or lesser extents, to the conventions of the Western concert chorus; others will be altered only by what happens when we—who are not Bulgarian peasants or Jamaican Londoners—try as best we reasonably can to sound something like the songs' originators.

### **I. EARLY NORTH AMERICA**

The three offerings in our first set draw their inspiration from songs and styles of the early United States. **Poor Wayfarin' Stranger** is a well-loved folk tune with disputed origins—the Catskills? the Appalachians?—and possible Irish ancestry. Because of its verse-refrain structure, its particular pentatonic scale, and its references to crossing the River Jordan to rejoin departed loved ones, it is sometimes classified as a "White Spiritual," though another theory suggests that it had its true and eventually concealed origins among Southern plantation workers. Our arrangement was made by Julie Dolphin, a former member of Cerddorion and a working singer and composer in the greater New York area. Dolphin interferes little with the unfolding of the

original melody, supplying a subtle harmonic mantle and introducing the echoing effects of some imitation among the voice parts; this presentation maintains our curiosity while allowing the source material to speak eloquently for itself.

We follow “Poor Wayfarin’ Stranger” with **The Better Land**, a shape-note hymn that expresses a like sentiment: that after this troubled life, we are headed for a place of joy and rest. The shape-note style was an outgrowth of the congregational singing schools that, having begun in Revolutionary New England, became especially popular in the White Protestant churches of the rural South. (A parallel shape-note practice in Black churches often involved the same hymns sung to “swung” rhythms.) Musical notation in this tradition features note-heads of four different shapes that facilitate sightsinging. In these hymns, the melody is carried in the tenor voice, and the added harmonies feature many passing dissonances as well as open octaves, fourths, and fifths. “The Better Land,” which was published in 1936, was composed by Oren Adolphus Parris (1897–1966), a Missionary Baptist from Alabama. Parris’s teachers included renowned masters of Southern harmony, from 17th-century hymns to the newer, Southern gospel quartet style. The influence of this latter genre is heard in the refrain, whose flatted seventh degree betrays the hymn’s more recent provenance. We present the first verse with only the melody and its supporting bass line, saving the more modern harmony, which appears in the alto part, for the next verses.

The traditional way to perform shape-note songs is to sit on benches in a square, with each side of the square dedicated to one voice part. Singers take turns calling out their hymn requests by number. The song leader marks time by waving his or her arm straight up and down. The proper style is to sing every note as loudly as possible and to breathe whenever breath is needed, regardless of the phrase structure of text or music. The vocal technique is bright and forced, with no vibrato. This particular sound is exhilarating to hear, and certainly to produce, though we will be giving you a compromise between that and the kind of vocal use we will need to get us through the rest of the concert in its variety of sounds. To experience an authentic shape-note event, one may attend any of the various regular shape-note gatherings that take place nationwide in this vital tradition. (Bring a dish to pass.)

**Witness** is clearly identifiable as a bona-fide Spiritual, a song developed among slave communities in the rural South. The collection, notation, and publication of Spirituals was a project of Abolitionists in the mid-19th century, who felt that no White person confronted with these songs’ beautiful and direct expressions could deny the full humanity of the slaves who had created them. The public birth of the arranged concert Spiritual is reckoned as the 1871 fund-raising tour of the nine-member Jubilee Singers from Fisk University in Nashville, one of our country’s historically Black colleges. This arrangement by Jack Halloran takes its place in a repertoire constituting America’s most significant stylistic contribution to the Western choral art.

## II. POPULAR SOUTH AMERICA

Our next set features three songs from South America in arrangements that simulate customary instrumental accompaniments. Carlos Guastavino (1912–2000), composer of **Se equivocó la paloma**, is the perfect example of a classically trained composer with a taste for popular music. Born and musically educated in Argentina, Guastavino enjoyed a worldwide reputation in his lifetime, traveling to England in the 1940s to perform his piano works and to attend a premiere of his orchestral music by the BBC Orchestra. In the 1950s he traveled to the former Soviet Union and to China to perform from his immense repertoire of songs for voice and piano. His style is strongly influenced by folk and popular song; in turn, many of The Americas’ most popular singers of acoustic song have recorded versions of his compositions. My arrangement of “Se equivocó la paloma” uses the choir to arpeggiate the guitar chords I have heard in covers by Mercedes Sosa, the incomparable Argentine goddess of *nueva canción*, and by Joan Baez, folk-revival superstar of the United States.

**Duerme, negrito** is a standard favorite from the repertoire of the leftist Argentine folk singer Atahualpa Yupanqui. Among the famous artists who have recorded versions of this song are Mercedes Sosa and Chile’s Revolutionary martyr, Victor Jara. This arrangement, by Emile Solé of Venezuela, features a soprano soloist, under whom the chorus’s jazzy guitar harmonies are rhythmically distributed among the parts so as to simulate an ensemble of hands on drum skins. The tune is a lullaby, sung to a child whose mother is a slave laborer in the fields, toiling in poor health and for no pay. The baby is promised all manner of goodies if he will quickly fall asleep; but if he keeps fussing, the “white devil” will come and bite off his little foot.

**Samba-lelé** is a silly children’s song from Brazil. When even that country’s martial-arts form—*capoeira*—is practiced to the syncopated motivations of the *pandeiro* (a frame drum resembling a large tambourine), we should not be surprised that the most naïve little tune comes to us embedded in an accompaniment of positively infectious dance rhythms. In this arrangement by Daniel R. Afonso, Jr., the sections of the chorus alternate between carrying a phrase of melody and joining the vocal rhythm section. The harmony is inflected throughout with modern chords reflecting the influence of *bossa nova*.

## III. AT SEA

Our third set pairs two sailors’ laments. I learned **Grey Funnel Line** from a recording by the English folk duo Silly Sisters (Maddy Prior and June Tabor), after whose treatment our performance is essentially transcribed. I first made the transcription in the 1990s for performance and recording by my choir in Illinois, at which time the song’s writer, Cyril Tawney, was still alive to be asked for permission and to be paid a standard royalty. When I spoke with him, he was delighted to know of a live choral version of his song and to receive even a small amount of money for the recording of it. I have since learned that Tawney, who died in 2005 at the age of 75, earned his living as a professional folk singer for 45 years and represents to Britain what Pete Seeger is to the United States. But prior to becoming his country’s most recognized folk revivalist, he had manned submarines for the Royal Navy, during which stint he collected traditional navy songs and verse. “Grey Funnel Line” is surely influenced by this repertoire. The title refers to the nickname for Britain’s warships, their “funnels” being their smokestacks.

Traditional sea chanties fall into categories according to the nature and type of work they accompanied. **Lowlands** is a *balyard chanty* (also called a “long drag” chanty): a song used for heavy labor of long duration that required considerable setup time between pulls, such as raising or lowering a mighty sail. There is a record that a version of “Lowlands” was sung as long ago as the 16th century, on Sir Walter Raleigh’s ship. Our version repeats: “a dollar and a half is a hoosier’s pay,” leaving us to wonder how significant numbers of Indianians could have made it to sea in time to be enshrined in this tune. In fact, there are earlier uses of the word, one of which seems to be a mispronunciation of the Eastern European tribes known as “Hussars.” In another etymology, the word is used for the military class of “light horsemen.” In an old West Indian form of “Lowlands,” we get a clue that “hoosier” separates one class of serviceman from another, whether by his race, the nature of his work, or both:

*A white man’s pay is rather high.  
Lowlands, lowlands, away, my John!  
A black man’s pay is rather low.  
My dollar and a half a day.*

*Five dollars a day is a hoosier’s pay.  
Five dollars a day is a hoosier’s pay.  
A dollar and a half is a matlow’s pay.  
A dollar and a half won’t pay my way.*

“Matlow,” as it turns out, is what a British sailor calls himself, after the French *matelot*. And in the 17th and 18th centuries, it was common for an escaped slave to accept the British navy’s welcome to join their ranks. What is certain is that “Lowlands” has undergone centuries of melodic and textual transformation in its travels around the Black Atlantic. Our plaintive choral arrangement by Robert Shaw and Alice Parker exploits the weary longing of the traveling, menial laborer.

#### IV. IN THE MOUNTAINS

The Balkan Mountains are the source for our next two sets. Our access to **Sūbrali sa se**, **Sūbrali** has come—via my friend and colleague Mollie Stone of the Chicago Children’s Chorus—through recordings and scores by Libana, a Bay Area women’s nonet with a special focus on Eastern European village song. This song was collected in the Rhodope region of Bulgaria, where the love of singing is so great that Orpheus is said to have been born there. *A cappella* group songs from throughout the Balkan Mountains are typically from repertoires exclusive to women, while music involving instruments was the province and privilege of men. Women, of course, never had their hands free of work—neither in the fields by day nor at the hearth by night—for the mastering of instruments. Peasant girls typically grew up singing together as they shared their work, and the bright, penetrating timbre we associate with so much Balkan women’s singing reflects a vocal technique well-adapted to the sustaining of harmonies across large, outdoor spaces. Following Kitka’s example (as heard on their CD *The Vine*), however, we adopt a more intimate register and dynamic for this song about sexual adventure. The distinct regional varieties of Balkan song can be identified by particulars such as verse metrics or the number and relationship of melodic lines to accompanying or droning voices. In

this song, each phrase of text has eight syllables, which is the assigned number in the Rhodopes for songs sung by females. The melodic line employs the most rhythm and pitch changes, while the two, more static, harmony parts underneath it provide a rich drone.

As neighboring countries, Macedonia and Bulgaria share many cultural roots, and there is much music whose origins are difficult to place distinctly in either one or the other. **Stanav si Rano**, from Macedonia, is a song for men to sing, and thus it features instrumental accompaniment. The vocal lines are organized as one melody line, one harmony line that moves below the melody in parallel thirds, and a second harmony line that is basically a drone, changing pitch infrequently. Reflecting the Balkan absorption of Turkish and Gypsy influences, this song’s scale contains the augmented second usually associated with the music of Semitic or Romani tribes in Central Asia, the Middle East, or North Africa. In this song, progressing from one pitch to the next is always a matter of moving only one degree—either upward or downward—in the scale; there are no leaps. The result is a compact, dense—one might say “muscular”—sound. Our performance of the song is accompanied on traditional instruments by the members of *Izvornotes*, a group to which our alto Kristina Vaskys belongs.

#### V. DANCING IN MACEDONIA

Guest musicians **Izvornotes** play traditional folk music from Macedonia. Instrumentation for the ensemble typically includes a *gajda* (goat-skin bagpipe), *kaval* (end-blown flute), *tambura* (long-necked lute), and *tupan* (two-headed drum). Though these instruments were common in the villages of Macedonia, this type of ensemble was not formally developed until 1950. During this period following World War II, there was a resurgence of national pride, fueling the development of many ensembles dedicated to performing traditional music and dance. It was then that *gajda* player and dancer Pece Atanasovski collaborated with ethnomusicologist Zivko Firfov to establish a standard for Macedonian music played on traditional instruments. They called this music *Izvorno*, stemming from the word meaning “traditional instruments.”

Macedonian *Izvorno* music is often played for dancers; hence, all of the songs featured in this concert are dance tunes. **Bufcansko** is a dance from the town of Buf in southern Macedonia. Originally danced by women, it is now danced in mixed lines. **Legnala Rodna** is played in 9/8, with a 2+3+2+2 subdivision that is unusual even for Balkan music. **Berance**, very similar to the Greek dance *Poustenio*, is also danced in the Lake Prespa region of Macedonia. While the dance is traditional, this particular melody was composed by American *tambura* player Adam Good. A long evening of dancing is often ended with a **Lesno**, a slow, simple dance in 7/8.

#### VI. AT THE PARTY

Now we travel even further east, to Indonesia, where the *gamelan* is the traditional musical ensemble. A *gamelan* is an orchestra primarily composed of brass metallophones in various shapes and sizes, on which individuals play recurrent, concentric melodic cycles within a shared scale. The most elaborate use of *gamelan* is for the accompaniment of all-night shadow-puppet plays on stories from Indonesian epic lore. But *gamelan* also graces civic ceremonies, religious observances, and other important public events. In villages in Bali, where **Janger** originated, the local *gamelan* instruments—which also include flute and hand drum—are considered to be communally owned, and anyone in the town is likely to have had many a turn at them under the guid-

ance of the local leader. Traditionally, the music is orally transmitted, and in the very communal practice of Bali, participants may have a hand in shaping new pieces as they are being prepared.

“Janger” is a song sung by Balinese youths as they dance together at evening parties. This arrangement by Budi Susanto Yohanes, an expert in Indonesian choral music, uses vocables such as “bong,” “tung,” and “nya” to simulate the sounds and the patterns produced by the various instruments in the Balinese gamelan.

A word about the authenticity of our performance is in order. Gamelan scales are based in different tuning systems from the equal-tempered scales to which Western ears are accustomed. To us, gamelan music sounds “out of tune,” as a Chopin piano prelude would undoubtedly sound to Balinese listeners. Yohanes, who has prepared and marketed his arrangement for the Western choral market, makes no mention in his edition of tuning accommodations we should adopt to better approximate a Balinese scale. He most probably discarded any such idea as prohibitively impractical; typically, the volunteer choristers whose business supports this publisher must work hard enough to remain successfully in their own tuning system. Furthermore, it would be accurate to say that each individual gamelan has its own characteristic tuning anyway. With no suggestion for simulating regional intonations, we rely for our best shot at a convincing performance on whatever characteristic version of Western temperaments *we* manage to produce (and, in fact, what could be more authentic than this approach?), trusting the other, more typically Balinese features of the performance to shine through and compel your interest.

From a Javanese party song, we go to a very social bit of South African choral music from Sotho. In **Ke Nale Monna**, choristers sing together of celebrations to acknowledge their shared membership in a community of friends. The verse is structured so that the names of individuals in the group can be inserted. (In our performance, because almost no one in the group has a name that sounds good when inserted into the phrase, we remain with the generic term of comradely affection, *buti*, which literally means “brother.”) Choral singing occupies a powerful and cherished place in South Africa. Having figured instrumentally in motivating anti-Apartheid activists, its most important role currently is in the fight against HIV/AIDS, as a vehicle for communicating information and for organizing communities of support. (In some towns, when a family is receiving the news that a member has been positively diagnosed, a choir will come and sing to them.) In South African singing, as in so many village traditions, song is inseparable from dance. We will, therefore, in an earnest attempt at authenticity, be brave! (My thanks again to Mollie Stone, for her wonderful DVD *Vela, Vela*, which teaches the voice parts and movements to several wonderful South African choral songs.)

### VIII. BONNY SCOTSMEN

To Scotland, now, for traditional songs about two political leaders. The tune to the **Skye Boat Song** originated as the Gaelic rowing song “Cuachag nan Craobh” (“The Cuckoo in the Grove”). It was first published in 1884 in *Songs of the North*, with new lyrics crafted for the melody by Sir Harold Boulton. (This businessman, philanthropist, and songwriter also retexted the old Welsh melody we know as “All Through the Night.”)

The “Skye Boat Song” recalls the famous escape of Bonny Prince Charlie (Charles Edward Stuart), who, after his 1746 defeat at Culloden—which ended the Stuarts’ bid for reaccession to the British throne—fled to the Isle of Skye disguised as a serving maid. Our arrangement was made by Yumiko Matsuoka, a singer and composer/arranger for the Grammy-nominated *a cappella* quintet Vox One and a faculty member of the Berklee School of Music. Matsuoka created this arrangement for Phyllis Clark’s Women Singing. Because that group no longer convenes, the honor fell to us this past March to record the piece for an upcoming CD of Matsuoka’s music, which will also feature performances by Vox One and the Western Wind. (Please stay tuned for news of the CD’s release.)

**Bobby Shaftoe** was an 18th-century British Member of Parliament known for his fancy dress and for extravagant womanizing during his travels. His nickname, “Bonny Bobby Shaftoe,” is enshrined in this famous ditty, which he apparently used as an electioneering gimmick. This arrangement was made by David Willcocks, who was born in Cornwall and musically trained at Westminster Abbey. He is best known for his two decades as Director of Music at King’s College, Cambridge, which post he left in 1974 to become director of the Royal College of Music.

### VII. GETTIN’ THE SPIRIT

For our set of 20th-century, Black Christian music, I have arranged and strung together three songs learned from the recordings entitled *Singing in the African-American Tradition* made by Dr. Ysaye M. Barnwell of Sweet Honey in the Rock. **Swing Down, Chariot** was recorded in the 1930s by the Golden Gate Quartet, a group of Black men from Virginia instrumental in the popularization of this early style of Southern gospel music, which has roots in Black shape-note practice. This genre of “quartet music” was typically sung by four men—including a falsettist—in close harmonies, moving together in tight rhythms. This description should call to mind that other great American vocal-quartet tradition, “barbershop” singing, a term first used in association with African-American practice. In fact, the high-stakes SPEBSQUA, American Gospel Quartet, and pop *a cappella* competitions with which we are familiar today are extensions of the gospel quartet conventions of the 1930s and 1940s.

From this early “convention song,” we segue into **The Storm is Passin’ Over**. The composer name attached to this widely performed hymn is that of Charles Albert Tindley (1851–1933). However, going to the website that allows one to read the text and listen to a midi file of Tindley’s composition, one hears a quite different music and recognizes the text as having been paraphrased. The deadline for printing this program will have expired before I excavate the path that brought the song from its original form to this one. Still, it is worth acknowledging Tindley as one of the founding fathers of American gospel music. Tindley, whose parents were slaves, taught himself to read at age 17. While working as a janitor in Philadelphia’s Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church, he earned his divinity degree by correspondence, later becoming that church’s pastor. At his death, his congregation was numbered at 12,500. His “I’ll Overcome Someday” is the basis of the Civil Rights anthem, “We Shall Overcome.” The recurring theme of the surmounting of troubles was a common one in the emerging gospel music of the industrial cities of the North, where the Black workers of the Great Migration found that crossing the Mason-Dixon line had not meant a full escape from the hardships of second-class citizenship.

The set ends with the rousing paraphrase of Psalm 23, **Da Lawd is my Shepahd**, as heard in London's Bethany Fellowship Church. The congregation of Bethany comprises a cultural plurality of Black immigrants from a variety of African nations and Caribbean islands. For the rhythm instruments used on my source recording, I have substituted two kinds of body percussion. The tenors' syncopated clapping is a rhythm that undergirds various Black styles from the southern United States, including plantation *ring shouts*—a kinetic form of worship practiced by clapping while moving in a circle with feet close to the ground—and parade music from the *Mardi Gras Indians*, secret societies of inner-city Blacks in New Orleans. The bass section, meanwhile, is engaged in a kind of low, rhythmic breathing called “trumping”; this practice accompanies the spiritual dance in ceremonies of Jamaican Revivalism, a fusion between Christianity and the spirit-possession religions native to West Africa.

## IX. BLACK ON BLACK

Our last set features arrangements of two of the most beautiful songs in the English language, one a folk relic and the other an original creation from within the lifetime of anyone here this afternoon who is at least middle-aged. **Black Is the Color of My True Love's Hair** was collected in 1916 in Southern Appalachia by Cecil Sharp. Like many a good Appalachian tune, it is likely to have had a forebear in the Anglo-Celtic repertoire. (Lovers of this song should not miss Nina Simone's subtle and moving cover for voice, piano, and upright bass.) Our arrangement is another selection from the catalogue of Yumiko Matsuoka, who has a particular gift for very surprising and deeply pleasing harmonic turns.

We finish our concert with a brilliant arrangement of Paul McCartney's **Blackbird**, a song so attractive and so perfect that a plethora of musicians from a wide stylistic and instrumental spectrum have honored it with their own interpretations. McCartney's lyrics are a response to the escalation of racial tensions in the United States during 1968. This eight-part *a cappella* arrangement was made for the Swingle Singers by Jonathan Rathbone, who pairs the tune with another charming song from the same source (the Beatles' *White* album), Lennon and McCartney's **I Will**. To close today's contemplation of stylistic interpenetration, let us recognize the reverse of a point I made at the start of this essay, which is that the best vernacular musicians have always had an ear for the elite musics of their cultures: McCartney developed the guitar part to “Blackbird” from a segment of the Bourée in E minor by none other than Johann Sebastian Bach.

Spectacular.

—Kristina Boerger

## Texts

### I Am a Poor Wayfarin' Stranger

I am a poor wayfarin' stranger  
A-trav'lin' through this world of woe,  
Yet there's no sickness, toil or danger  
In that bright world to which I go.

I'm goin' home to see my father (mother) (sister) (brother),  
I'm goin' there no more to roam.  
I'm just a-goin' over Jordan,  
Just a-goin' over home.

### The Better Land

1. The road to glory seems so long, and sorrows often take my song,  
I'm going to a better land, I'm going to a better land  
Where troubles are unknown, all sorrow will be gone.  
We'll sing around the throne in sweet accord,  
Adoring Jesus, our dear Lord.
2. From Jesus' side I will not stray, I know he'll guide me all the way, [Refrain]
3. I know it is not very far, to heaven where my treasures are, [Refrain]

### Witness

Who'll be a witness for my Lord?  
Oh I'll be a witness for my Lord.  
There was a man of the Pharisees, His name was Nicodemus and he didn't believe.  
The same came to Christ by night, wanted to be taught out of human sight.  
Nicodemus was a man who desired to know how a man can be born when he is old.  
Christ told Nicodemus as a friend, “Man, you must be born again.”  
He said, “Marvel not, man, if you want to be wise, repent, believe and be baptized.”  
Then you'll be a witness for my Lord, soul is a witness for my Lord.  
You read about Samson, from his birth he was the strongest man that ever lived on earth.  
Way back yonder in ancient times he killed ten thousand of the Philistines.  
Then old Samson went a wand'rin' about. Samson's strength was never found out.  
“Til his wife sat upon his knee, she said, “Tell me where your strength lies, if you please!”  
Well, old Samson's wife she talk so fair,  
Samson said, “Cut off a my hair! [“Cut it off!”] Shave my head just as clean as your hand,  
And my strength will come like a natural man.”  
Samson was a witness for my Lord, soul is a witness for my Lord.  
There's another witness for my Lord!  
My soul is a witness for my Lord!

### Se equivocó la paloma

Se equivocó la paloma,  
Se equivocaba.  
Por ir al norte fue al sur.  
Creyó que el trigo era agua,  
Se equivocaba.  
Creyó que el mar era el cielo,  
Que la noche la mañana.  
Se equivocaba.  
Que las estrellas rocío,  
Que el calor la nevada.  
Se equivocaba.  
Que tu falda era su blusa,  
Que tu corazón su casa.  
Se equivocaba.  
Ella se durmió en la orilla,  
Tu en la cumbre de una rama.  
Se equivocaba.

*The dove made a mistake.  
She was mistaken.  
To go north, she flew south.  
She thought the wheat was water.  
She was mistaken.  
She thought the sea was the sky  
And the night the day.  
She was mistaken.  
That the stars were dew,  
That the heat was the snowfall.  
She was mistaken.  
That your skirt was your blouse.  
That your heart was her house.  
She was mistaken.  
She fell asleep on the shore,  
You on the tip of a branch.  
She was mistaken.*

### Duerme Negrito

Duerme, duerme negrito,  
Que tu mama e'ta en el campo negrito.  
Drume, drume mobila.  
Te va a traé' codonise para tí,  
Te va a traé' fruta fre'ca para tí,  
Te va a traé' ca'ne de ce'do para tí,  
Te va a traé' mucha' cosa' para tí,  
Y si negro no se duerme,  
Viene e' diablo blanco y zás  
Le come la patica chica bú,  
Apura chica bú.

*Sleep, sleep little black one,  
Your mother is in the fields, little one.  
Sleep, sleep little one.  
She is going to bring quail for you,  
She is going to bring fresh fruit for you,  
She is going to bring pork for you,  
She is going to bring many things for you.  
And if the black one doesn't go to sleep  
The white devil will come and Zap!  
He'll eat your little foot, chica bú,  
Hurry, chica bú!*

Duerme, duerme negrito,  
Que tu mama e'ta en el campo negrito.  
Trabajando duramente, trabajando si,  
Trabajando y no le pagan, trabajando si,  
Trabajando y va tosiendo, trabajando si,  
P'al negrito chiquitito,  
P'al negrito si.

*Sleep, sleep little black one,  
Your mother is in the fields, little one.  
She's working hard, working, yes,  
Working and they don't pay her, working, yes,  
Working and she's coughing, working, yes,  
For her sweet little black one,  
For her little one, yes.*

### Samba-lelé

Samba-lelé tá doente,  
Tá co'a cabeça quebrada.  
Samba-lelé precisava  
De umas dezoito lambadas.  
Samba, samba, Samba-lelé !  
Pisa na barra da saia, lelé.

*Samba-lelé is sick,  
He has a broken head,  
Samba-lelé needed  
Some eighteen hard hits.  
Samba, samba, Samba-lelé  
Step on the skirt's hem, lelé.*

O mulata bonita,  
Onde é que você mora ?  
Moro na Praia Formosa,  
E daqui vou me embora.  
Samba, samba, Samba-lelé !  
Pisa na barra da saia, lelé.

*Oh beautiful brunette,  
Where do you live ?  
I live on Formosa Beach,  
And I am leaving this place.  
Samba, samba, Samba-lelé  
Step on the skirt's hem, lelé.*

Diga, mulata bonita,  
Como é que se namora ?  
Põe o lençinho no bolso,  
Com a pontinha de fora.  
Pisa, pisa, pisa, mulata,  
Pisa na barra da saia, mulata.

*Tell me, beautiful brunette,  
How does one court?  
Put a small handkerchief in the pocket  
And leave a small point out.  
Step, step, step, brunette girl,  
Step on the skirt's hem, brunette girl.*

### Lowlands

Lowlands, lowlands, away my John.  
O, my old mother, she wrote to me,  
She wrote to me to come home from sea.  
Ah lowlands, my dollar and a half a day.  
A dollar a day is a Hoosier's pay.  
Lowlands, lowlands, away, my John.  
All in the night, my true love came.  
Lowlands, lowlands, away my John.  
All in the night, my true love came.  
My dollar and a half a day.  
She came to me, all in my sleep.  
Lowlands, lowlands, away my John.  
She came to me, all in my sleep.  
My dollar and a half a day.  
And then I knew my love was dead.  
Lowlands, lowlands, away my John.  
And then I knew my love was dead.  
My dollar and a half a day.  
Lowlands, lowlands, away, my John.  
My dollar and a half a day.

### Grey Funnel Line

Don't mind the rain or the rollin' sea.  
The weary night never worries me.  
But the hardest time in a sailor's day  
Is to watch the sun as it dies away.  
Here's one more day on the Grey Funnel Line.  
The finest ship that sail'd the sea  
Is but a prison for the likes of me.  
But give me wings like Noah's dove:  
I'd fly up harbor to the girl I love.  
Here's one more day on the Grey Funnel Line.  
O, Lord if dreams were only real,  
I'd have my hand on that wooden wheel.  
And with all my heart I'd turn it around  
And tell the boys that we're homeward bound.  
Here's one more day on the Grey Funnel Line.  
I'll pass the time like some machine  
Until blue waters turn to green.  
Then I'll dance on down that walk ashore  
And sail the Grey Funnel Line no more.

### Subralise

Sübrali sa se, sübrali  
Malkine momi, srednine.  
Popreli kolko popreli,  
Legnali ta sa zaspali,  
Spali sa lolko pospali.  
Porva sa moma razbudi  
I si na družki vikaše :  
"Stanite, družki, da vidi, mūri,  
Komu kakvo e lipsalo.

Mene e, družki, lipsalo  
Na bela šijka gerdanče."  
Vtora mominka vikaše, mūri,  
"Mene e, družki, lipsalo,  
Mene e, družki, lipsalo, mūri,  
Na tjonko korsče kolanče."

Treta mominka vikaše:  
"Mene e, družki, lipsalo,  
Mene e, družki, lipsalo, mūri,  
Na tjonka snažka sukmance. "

*The girls and young women gathered together to spin for a while. They lay down and fell asleep and slept for a while.*

*The first girl woke up and said to her friends, "Get up, friends—let us see who is missing what. I am missing a necklace from my fair throat." The second girl said, "I am missing a belt from my slender waist." The third girl said, "I am missing the overdress from my slender body."*

### Stanav si Rano

Stanav si rano porano,  
zemav si pushka na ramo.  
Zemav si pushka na ramo,  
otidov gora zelena.  
Otidov gora zelena,  
tam najdov moma Elena.  
Otidov gora zelena,  
tam najdov moma Elena.

Tam najdov moma Elena,  
kai polni voda studena.  
Kai pol ni voda studena,  
od sharplaninski izvori.  
Od sharplaninski izvori,  
vo tie stomni shareni.  
Od sharplaninski izvori,  
vo tie stomni shareni.

Od Lena voda pobarav,  
ona mi voda ne dade.  
Ona mi voda ne dade,  
letna mi Lena da bega.  
Letna mi Lena da bega,  
ostavi stomni shareni.  
Letna mi Lena da bega,  
ostavi stomni shareni.

FrLiv si pushka od ramo,  
stignav si moma Elena.  
Stignav si moma Elena,  
fativ si Lena za raka.  
Fativ si Lena za raka,  
i si ja zemav za zhena.  
Fativ si Lena za raka,  
i si ja zemav za zhena.

*I got up early  
put a rifle over my shoulder  
Went to the green woods  
there I found Elena.*

*There I found Elena  
fetching cold water  
From the springs of the mountain Shar  
with her colorful jars.*

*I asked her for some water.  
She wouldn't give me the water  
But she ran away  
And left the jars.*

*I threw my rifle.  
I ran after Elena.  
I caught up with her  
I took her by the hand and married her.*

## Janger

Ngiring mejangeran di jaba tengaha.

*Let's dance 'Janger' in 'jaba tengabe.'* [the middle section of a traditional Balinese house]

Cak, ara kijang jangi janger kopyak epong.  
Kopyak sede kopyak sedopak dedopong.

*[There is no meaning to these two lines. The sounds are meant to imitate Balinese instrumental music.]*

Sriag sriog,  
ngining mejangeran di jaba tengaha.

*Swaying to and fro,  
Let's dance 'Janger' in 'jaba tengabe.'*

## Ke Nale Monna

Ke nale monna  
Helele  
Monna yena  
Lebitso la hae  
Ke a buti buti  
Iyo nana !

*I have a man  
[this is a cry of joy]  
This is a man of mine  
The name of this man  
It is brother, my brother  
[another shout of joy]*

## The Skye Boat Song

Speed bonny boat, like a bird on the on the wing,  
Onward the sailors cry!  
Carry the lad that's born to be king,  
Over the sea to Skye!  
Loud the winds howl, loud the waves roar,  
Thunderclaps rend the air.  
Baffled our foes stand on the shore,  
Follow they will not dare.  
Speed bonny boat....  
Though the waves leap, soft shall ye sleep,  
Ocean's a royal bed;  
Rocked in the deep, flora will keep,  
Watch by your weary head.  
Speed bonny boat....  
Burned are our homes, exile and death  
Scatter the loyal men;  
Yet e'er the sword cool in the sheath,  
Charlie will come again.  
Speed bonny boat....

## Bobby Shaftoe

Bobby Shaftoe's gone to sea,  
Silver buckles at his knee;  
He'll come back and marry me,  
Bonny Bobby Shaftoe.  
Bobby Shaftoe's bright and fair,  
Combing down his yellow hair,  
He's my ain for evermair,  
Bonny Bobby Shaftoe.  
Bobby Shaftoe's tall and slim,  
He's always dress'd so neat and trim,  
The ladies they all keek at him,  
Bonny Bobby Shaftoe.  
Bobby Shaftoe's gotten a bairn,  
For to dandle in his arm,  
In his arm and on his knee,  
Bobby Shaftoe loves me.  
Bobby Shaftoe's gone to see,  
He'll come back and marry me,  
Bonny Bobby Shaftoe.  
He'll marry me!

## Swing Down, Chariot

Swing down, chariot, stop and let me ride  
Oh rock me Lord, rock me Lord, calm and easy  
I've got a holdin' on the other side. (Why don't you...)

## The Storm Is Passin' Over

Oh courage, my soul, and let me journey on,  
though the night is dark, and I am far from home.  
Praise be to God, the mornin' light appears,  
The storm is passin' over, Hallelujah.

Thunder rollin' and billows shake the ground.  
See the lightning flashing and dark clouds all around.  
Jesus walked the sea and calmed the angry waves.  
The storm is passin' over, Hallelujah.

## Da Lawd is my shepahd

Da Lawd is my shepahd. I shall not want.  
He maket' me to lie down in green paschahs.  
Oh, leave oh leave, oh leave me nevah, Lawd.  
I say, leave oh leave, oh leave me nevah, Lawd.  
He's my shepahd, I shall not want.

**Black Is the Color**

Black is the color of my true love's hair;  
Her lips are something wondrous fair;  
The purest eyes and the daintiest hands  
I love the ground on where she stands.  
I love my love and well she knows,  
I love the grass on where she goes;  
If she on earth no more I see,  
My life shall quickly fade away.  
I grow too troublesome to mourn and weep,  
But satisfied I here could sleep.  
I'll write to you in a few little lines,  
I'll suffer death ten thousand times.  
The winter has passed, and the leaves are green.  
The time is gone that we have seen.  
And yet, I hope the time will come  
When you and I will be as one.  
My own true love, so fare you well;  
The time has passed, I wish you well;  
But still I hope that the day will come  
When you and I will be as one.

**Blackbird/I Will**

Blackbird singing in the dead of night,  
Take these broken wings and learn to fly.  
All your life you were only waiting  
for this moment to arise.

Blackbird singing in the dead of night,  
Take these sunken eyes and learn to see.  
All your life you were only waiting  
For this moment to be free.

Blackbird fly, blackbird fly  
Into the light of a dark black night.

Who knows how long I've loved you?  
You know I love you still.  
Will I wait a lonely lifetime?  
If you want me to I will.

For if I ever saw you,  
I didn't catch your name.  
But it never really mattered,  
I will always feel the same.

Love you forever, and forever,  
Love you with all my heart.  
Love you whenever we're together,  
Love you when we're apart.

And when at last I find you,  
Your song would fill the air.  
Sing it loud so I can hear you.  
Make it easy to be near you.  
For the things you do endear you to me.  
Ah, you know I will.

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