

CERDDORION
VOCAL ENSEMBLE

James John
Artistic Director

PRESENTS

Time and Again

*A CELEBRATION OF CERDDORION'S
TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY*



Thursday, March 5, 2015, 8 pm
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
199 Carroll Street, Brooklyn

Sunday, March 8, 2015, 3 pm
St. Ignatius of Antioch
87th Street & West End Avenue, Manhattan

THE PROGRAM

In der Frühe Robert Dennis (b. 1933)

Ya cantan los gallos

Merrin Lazyan, soprano; Myrna Nachman, alto; Christopher Ryan, tenor

Alba

Jennifer Oates, soprano

Psalm 13 (World Premiere) Joseph Prestamo (b. 1988)

Where Should This Music Be? Christopher Ryan (b. 1968)

Dream Again (World Premiere)

Stava il Sole Paul Moravec (b. 1957)

❖❖❖ *Intermission* ❖❖❖

Everyone Sang (World Premiere) Martha Sullivan (b. 1964)

Anna Harmon, soprano; Jamie Carrillo, alto; Ben Arendsen, tenor

again (after ecclesiastes) David Lang (b. 1957)

Un Prodigio les Canto: Four Villancicos of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz Elliot Z. Levine (b. 1948)

I Pues Está Tiritando

Merrin Lazyan, Jennifer Oates, Ellen Schorr, sopranos; Jamie Carrillo, Leonore Nelson, altos;

Ben Arendsen, Michael Klitsch, tenors; Dean Rainey, bass

II Pues Mi Dío

Anna Harmon, soprano

III Aguas Puras del Nilo

Jamie Carrillo, Leonore Nelson, altos

IV Un Prodigio les Canto

Merrin Lazyan, Jennifer Oates, Ellen Schorr, sopranos; Leonore Nelson, alto; Tom Reingold, bass

CERDDORION

Sopranos

Anna Harmon

Merrin Lazyan

Cathy Markoff

Jennifer Oates

Jeanette Rodriguez

Ellen Schorr

Rebecca Schwartz

Altos

Jamie Carrillo

Clare Detko

Linnea Johnson

Myrna Nachman

Leonore Nelson

Lauren Tenney

Gretta Wren

Tenors

Ben Arendsen

Ralph Bonheim

Tim Hutfilz

Michael Klitsch

Christopher Ryan

Dean Todd

Basses

Peter Cobb

Steven Iger

Andy Kettler

Andre Kuney

Jonathan Miller

Dean Rainey

Tom Reingold

Larry Sutter



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The members of Cerddorion are grateful to James Kennerley and the Church of Saint Ignatius of Antioch for providing rehearsal and performance space for this season.

Thanks to Vince Peterson and St. Paul's Episcopal Church for providing a performance space for this season.

Thanks to Cathy Markoff for her publicity efforts.

PROGRAM CREDITS:

Michael Klitsch assembled and edited the program, compiled the texts, and handled printing.



THE ARTISTS

Now in its twentieth season, **CERDDORION** (Welsh for “musicians”) is one of New York’s most highly regarded volunteer choral ensembles. A chamber group of up to 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. Cerddorion has also frequently commissioned new works by such composers as Paul Moravec, David Schober, Lisa Bielawa, David Lang, Elliot Z. Levine, Robert Dennis, and Julie Dolphin.

Besides presenting its own varied programs, Cerddorion is frequently invited to perform with other acclaimed artists. Last season Cerddorion joined with the Shakespeare Society to present *The Food of Love*, a program of readings and choral settings. In 2011, the men of Cerddorion sang with esteemed French organist Francis Chapelet in the second inaugural recital of the Manton Memorial Organ at the Church of the Ascension in New York; they were invited back in 2014 to perform in Mr. Chapelet’s farewell concert. Past collaborations have included the North American premiere of Sir John Tavener’s all-night vigil, *The Veil of the Temple* (with Dessoff 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 2006, Cerddorion performed at the Eastern Divisional Convention of the American Choral Directors Association the works they had commissioned from three New York composers for their tenth anniversary season. September 2007 marked the release on the Tzadik label of *A Handful of World*, Cerddorion’s first commercial recording. The CD is dedicated to vocal works by New York composer Lisa Bielawa and includes Cerddorion’s performance of her *Lamentations for a City*, which was commissioned and first performed by Cerddorion in 2004.

Cerddorion is a proud member of the New York Choral Consortium.



JAMES JOHN is in his fifth season as Artistic Director of the Cerddorion Vocal Ensemble. He is also Associate Professor and Director of Choral Activities at the Aaron Copland School of Music, Queens College–CUNY, where he conducts the Queens College Choir, Vocal Ensemble, and Choral Society; teaches choral conducting; and serves as advisor to the graduate program in vocal performance. Recent professional highlights include guest conducting the Tokyo Oratorio Society in a performance of Brahms’s *Ein deutsches Requiem* in Tokyo’s Suntory Hall, and an invited performance by the Queens College Choir at the 2012 Eastern Division Conference of the American Choral Directors Association in Providence, Rhode Island.

Under Dr. John’s leadership the choral program at the Aaron Copland School of Music has become recognized as one of the finest collegiate choral programs in the region. Past performances with the School of Music’s choral ensembles include Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*, award-winning productions of Argento’s *Postcard from Morocco* and Monteverdi’s *L’Orfeo*, the Mozart and Verdi requiems, “A Night at the Opera” with Queens College alumna Erika Sunnegårdh of the Metropolitan Opera, Benjamin Britten’s *War Requiem*, and world premieres of works by Sidney Boquiren, Leo Kraft, Meg Collins Stoop, and others. His choirs have performed in many of New York’s prestigious venues, including Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Weill Recital Hall, St. Patrick’s Cathedral and Trinity Church Wall Street. Under his direction the Queens College Vocal Ensemble recently released its first CD, featuring premiere recordings of partsongs by Scottish composer Hamish MacCunn, and the Queens College Choir recorded Bright Sheng’s *Two Folksongs from Qinghai*, soon to be released on the Naxos label.

Dr. John’s guest conducting appearances include Avery Fisher Hall’s annual Messiah Sing-In; a concert of American choral music with the Virginia Chorale (Virginia’s only professional choral ensemble); chorus master for the Queens Symphony; regional honor choirs throughout New York State; and a recording with jazz trumpeter Michael Mossman. He has given presentations at both divisional and national conventions of the American Choral Directors Association, and is in demand as a clinician and adjudicator throughout the United States. In Fall 2013, Dr. John returned to Tokyo to conduct Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*.

As a teacher and scholar, Dr. John has served as Guest Lecturer in conducting at the Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg, Germany, and presented seminars on American choral music in Basel and Stockholm. His dissertation on Brahms’s *Nänie*, Op. 82, won the Julius Herford Prize from the American Choral Directors Association and will be published soon in revised form as a book by The Edwin Mellen Press. His articles have appeared in *Choral Journal*, *American Choral Review*, and *Chorus America’s Research Memorandum Series*. In July 2011 he was appointed Editor of *American Choral Review*, and also serves as a member of ACDA’s National Research and Publications Committee.

Dr. John received his Doctor of Musical Arts in Conducting from the Eastman School of Music. Prior to his current position at the Aaron Copland School of Music he served as Director of Choral Activities at Tufts University in Boston, Director of Choral Activities at Nassau Community College in Garden City, NY, and as Dartmouth College’s first Conducting Fellow. He received his Master of Arts in Conducting from the Aaron Copland School of Music.



Program Notes and Texts

Time and Again

A note from the Artistic Director:

It is hard to imagine anything more appropriate to mark Cerddorion's twentieth anniversary than a retrospective of works written for the group. Bringing new choral music to life has been one of the ensemble's significant aims, and it forms a clear thread connecting past and present. Many of the pieces on our program were commissioned during Kristina Boerger's tenure as Artistic Director; she deserves great credit for the wonderful relationships she cultivated with composers, resulting in much inspiring, beautiful music. Sincere acknowledgment must also go to Susanne Peck, Cerddorion's founding conductor, whose vision and passion established the group as one of New York's finest amateur chamber choirs. I have been very fortunate to stand on their shoulders, and it has been my delight to work with these talented, experienced singers for the past five years. Indeed, without the skill, dedication, and commitment of its members—some of whom have brought their gifts to bear on this exceptional ensemble since its inception—Cerddorion would not exist today.

My only regret is that it was not practical to include more of the extraordinary works commissioned by Cerddorion over the years. Time simply would not allow it, and though this is certainly a good problem to have, it made repertoire choices a challenge. Nevertheless, I am thrilled that we were able to make room on the program for three world premieres—living demonstration of Cerddorion's ongoing commitment to new music. We present these fruits of our labors to you with sincere gratitude, for without the wonderful audiences that, *Time and Again*, have supported Cerddorion so generously, none of this would be possible.

Robert Dennis, “In der Frühe,” Ya cantan los gallos,” and “Alba”

“Ya cantan los gallos” is a selection from Morning Group 1, premiered by Cerddorion in 2006. In 2009, Cerddorion performed Morning Group 2, which included “In der Frühe” and “Alba.”

Robert Dennis's commissions and performances include pieces composed for the Denver Project, the New York City Opera, I Cantori, Cerddorion, the Jubal Trio, Calliope, the New Amsterdam Singers, the Baird Trio, and the Lincoln Center Institute. His music for orchestra has been performed by the Cleveland, Chicago, and Louisville orchestras. *Il Ritorno*, his second piece composed for the American Brass Quintet, was included in the group's double CD collection *State of the Art: The ABQ at 50*. Three of his eight scores for Pilobolus were performed on the PBS series *Dance in America*. Recordings include *Man in the Moon*, a group of Mr. Dennis's works composed for the Western Wind Ensemble.

About *Morning Groups 1 and 2*, the composer writes:

I've always been a “morning person,” so it's not surprising I would get around to setting a group of poems that deal with the subject in various ways. “In der Frühe” is taken from Bertolt Brecht's *The Good Person of Setzuan*. The title character, Shin Te, describes the beauty of the city in the morning. “Ya cantan los gallos” (Iñigo López de Mendoza) is a setting of a 15th century Spanish love poem; morning's arrival is not always welcome. I was initially attracted to Ezra Pound's “Alba” by the nightingale imagery and the unusual rhymes. For me, the strongest moment in the poem is the almost violent change from the gentle, nocturnal mood to the coming of dawn.

In der Frühe

Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956)

In der Frühe habe ich die Stadt nie gesehen. Heute bin ich zwischen den Zeitungsjungen gegangen, den Männern, die den Asphalt mit Wasser überspülen, und den Ochsenkarren mit dem frischen Gemüse von Land. . . . Mit jedem Schritt wurde ich lustiger. Ich habe immer gehört, wenn man liebt, geht man auf Wolken, aber das Schöne ist, das man auf der Erde geht, dem Asphalt. . . . Die Häusermassen sind in der Frühe wie Schutthaufen, in denen Lichter angezündet werden, wenn der Himmel schon rosa und noch durchsichtig, weil ohne Staub ist. . . . Es engeht euch viel, wenn ihr nicht liebt und eure Stadt seht in der Stunde, wo sie sich vom Lager erhebt wie ein nüchterner alte Handwerker, der seine Lungen mit frischer Luft vollpumpt und nach seinem Handwerkzeug greift, wie die Dichter singen.

I had never seen the city at dawn. Today I mixed with the newsboys, with the men who were washing down the streets, with the ox-carts bringing fresh vegetables in from the fields. . . . With every step I grew happier. I had always been told that when one is in love one walks on air, but the wonderful thing is that one walks on earth, on tarmac. . . . The blocks of buildings are like rubbish heaps with little lights glowing in them; the sky is pink but still transparent, clear of dust. . . . You miss a great deal if you are not in love and cannot see your city at that hour when she rises from her couch like a sober old craftsman, filling his lungs with fresh air and reaching for his tools, as the poets have it.

Ya cantan los gallos

Íñigo López de Mendoza (1398–1458)

Ya cantan los gallos,
buen amor, y vete,
cata que amaneçe,
“Que canten los gallos, yo,
¿cómo me iría,
pues tengo en mis braços
la que yo más quería?
Antes moriría
que de aquí me fuese,
aunque amaneçiese.”

The cocks are crowing.
Dear love, be gone,
Look, the day is breaking.
“Let them sing.
How can I leave
When I have in my arms
The one I most desire?
I would rather die
Before leaving this place
So early in the morning.”

Alba

Ezra Pound (1885–1972)

When the nightingale to his mate
Sings day-long and night late
My love and I keep state
In bower
In flower,
’Till the watchman on the tower
Cry:
“Up! Thou rascal, Rise,
I see the white
Light
And the night
Flies.”

Joseph Prestamo, *Psalm 13*

Joseph Prestamo was featured in Cerddorion’s June 2014 program of choral works derived from Shakespeare, with his memorable Shakespeare settings. Shortly afterwards, he began working on Psalm 13, which receives its premiere here.

Joseph Prestamo is a composer and pianist living in New York, a Ph.D candidate at the CUNY Graduate Center, and an adjunct lecturer at the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College, New York City. He has a master’s degree in composition from the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance where he studied with Kristin Kunstler and Bright Sheng, and a bachelor’s degree in piano performance from the Aaron Copland School. His master’s thesis, *Aftermath*, was performed by the University of Michigan Symphony Orchestra, and his piano piece, *Sketches*, was recorded by Brian Hanke. In addition, he works as an accompanist and as a music educator teaching adults and children at the Malverne School of Music in Malverne, New York.

The Biblical Psalms have always been a very personal source of inspiration and comfort to me. From the celebratory psalms to the painful lamentations, there seems to me something intensely human about them. In particular, Psalm 13 has always been a favorite, because of its deeply personal nature and unbridled emotional expression. The psalm takes the reader on a journey from despair to hope, but while it covers a lot of ground, the tone remains introspective throughout. I tried to capture the inward focus of the psalm through tense, closely spaced harmonies and very slow, subtle shifts from one moment to the next.

Another wonderful feature of the Psalms is how often music is celebrated. Whether grieving or filled with joy, the psalmist’s response to the ups and downs of life is to sing to the Lord. I am incredibly grateful to Cerddorion for their devotion to new music and support of contemporary composers.—*Joseph Prestamo*

Psalm 13

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Look on me and answer, O Lord my God.
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,
and my enemy will say, “I have overcome him,”
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.
I will sing to the Lord,
for he has been good to me.

Christopher Ryan, *Where Should This Music Be?* and *Dream Again*

In anticipation of last year's Shakespeare program, Christopher Ryan composed the haunting Where Should This Music Be? from The Tempest. Its companion piece, Dream Again, followed, and Cerddorion is thrilled to offer both works on this program.

Christopher Ryan received a B. A. in vocal performance at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where he studied composition with Robert Crane. He has written two short operas, both of which were premiered at UW-Madison, and incidental music for three plays at UW-Madison Theatre. Other highlights of his catalogue include three pieces for chorus, a string quartet, a woodwind quintet, a piano trio, more than twenty songs, and a cantata, *Women's Shoes*, on a text by Marlene Dietrich. His current project is a setting of Baudelaire's *Les Litanies de Satan*. He has sung with Cerddorion since 2003.

I've been composing for 25 years, and singing in choral groups for 40 years, yet I had never put those two sets of skills together until I wrote *Where Should This Music Be?* Of course, I used my years of experience as a choral singer when I wrote it, knowing what works and what doesn't. And having sung in Cerddorion for over 10 years, I knew what the group did well, and what their abilities are. I felt like a kid with the box of 64 Crayola crayons—I wanted to use every color. I wanted to show off my abilities as a composer, and also the abilities of the choir. Jim asked me to write a companion piece for the 20th anniversary concerts, and I went back to the same source as the previous piece, *The Tempest*. This time, with *Dream Again*, I figured I didn't have anything to prove and just wanted to write something that was pretty!

—Christopher Ryan

Where should this music be? (*The Tempest*, Act I, Scene II)

William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

Where should this music be? I' the air or the earth?
It sounds no more, and sure it waits upon
Some god o' th' island.
[...] Thence I have follow'd it,
Or it hath drawn me rather. But 'tis gone.
No, it begins again.

Full fathom five thy father lies.
Of his bones are coral made.
Those are pearls that were his eyes.
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell
Ding-dong.
Hark, now I hear them.
Ding-dong, bell.

Dream Again (*The Tempest*) Act III, Scene II) William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

The isle is full of noises,
Sounds, and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices
That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again. And then, in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open and show riches
Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked
I cried to dream again.

Paul Moravec, *Stava il Sole*

Cerddorion premiered Stava il Sole in May 2012, as part of "Joy Beyond Words," a program of music setting texts in languages other than that of the composer. Many of Cerddorion's current members participated in the premiere and are deeply gratified to reprise this favorite composition.

Paul Moravec's numerous orchestral, chamber, choral, operatic, and lyric pieces have earned him many distinctions, including the Rome Prize Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, three awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Rockefeller Foundation, and the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for Music. A graduate of Harvard College and Columbia University, he has taught at Columbia, Dartmouth, and Hunter Colleges and currently is University Professor

at Adelphi University. He was the 2013 Paul Fromm Composer-in-Residence at the American Academy in Rome, recently served as Artist-in-Residence at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, NJ, and was also recently elected to membership in the American Philosophical Society. Mr. Moravec's upcoming premieres include *The King's Man*, with Kentucky Opera, and *Amorisms*, with the Nashville Ballet. Mr. Moravec's discography includes "Northern Lights Electric," an album of his orchestral music with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project released in 2012 on the BMOP Sound label. He has four albums of chamber music on Naxos American Classics, and releases appearing in early 2014 include "Blue Fiddle," with Hilary Hahn on Deutsche Grammophon, and "Piano Quintet," with Jeremy Denk and the Lark Quartet, on Bridge Records. His work is published by Subito Music, available at www.subitomusic.com.

As a composer, I try always to make beautiful things, and I use whatever techniques and materials are useful for the particular composition at hand. Some of those materials are atonal or nontonal, but the overall harmonic context of my music derives from the tonal tradition, which after all is the lingua franca of Western music—essentially, Monteverdi to the Beatles and beyond.

The text of *Stava il sole* is excerpted from *Purgatorio*, Canto XXVII, in which Virgil bids farewell to Dante. The account of Dante's advancing through "the temporal and eternal fires" is a crucial moment in his long spiritual journey, as well as one of the most moving passages in the entire Commedia trilogy. This composition was commissioned by Cerddorion and is dedicated to the group with affection and admiration.—*Paul Moravec*

Stava il Sole

Dante Alighieri (c.1265–1321)

Stava il sole; onde 'l giorno sen giva,
Come l'angel di Dio lieto ci apparse.

So stood the Sun; hence was the day departing,
When the glad Angel of God appeared to us.

Fuor de la fiamma stava in su la riva,
E cantava "Beati mundo corde!"

Outside the flame he stood upon the verge,
And chanted forth, "Blessed are the pure in heart!"

"Più non si va, se pria non morde,
Anime sante, il foco: intrate in esso,
E al cantar di là non siate sorde."

"No one farther goes, souls sanctified,
If first the fire bite not; within it enter,
And be not deaf unto the song beyond."

"Il temporal foco e l'eterno
Veduto hai;
...ch'io te sovra te corono e mitrio."

"You now have seen the torment
Of the temporal and the eternal fires;
...Over thyself I crown thee and mitre thee."

Martha Sullivan, *Everyone Sang*

Cerddorion has sung several of Martha Sullivan's compositions, including most recently Under the Greenwood Tree in last year's Shakespeare program, "The Food of Love." Everyone Sang was written expressly for this 20th anniversary program.

Martha Sullivan is a New York composer specializing in vocal music. She came to composing via her singing, which has always focused on new music. Ms. Sullivan has been involved with notable premieres and recordings by composers such as Toby Twining and John Zorn and has made regular summer appearances at Bard Summerscape, as well as two solo appearances with VOX, the late New York City Opera's new-music opera lab (in Gordon Beeferman's *The Rat Land*). She first composed music for voice during her seven years with the Gregg Smith Singers. Ms. Sullivan now sings, composes, and conducts in C4: The Choral Composer/Conductor Collective. She has been commissioned by choral groups across the country, including Chicago *a cappella*, The Esoterics, Bella Voce (Reno), and the Southern Oregon Repertory Singers, as well as by groups in Tokyo and Zurich. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Music Composition at Rutgers University, working with Charles Fussell. Ms. Sullivan is an ASCAP composer.

To celebrate Cerddorion's 20th anniversary, I wrote music to Siegfried Sassoon's poem "Everyone Sang." To honor a choir, a poem about singing is a natural choice. Sassoon's poem, though, points to something beyond the choral: He composed these lines after the signing of the Armistice that ended World War I in 1918. The singing in the poem is a metaphor for the sudden upwelling of hope among those who had survived this most lethal of conflicts. In this poem, hope and song both rise upward and travel, and this sense of motion determined the shape of the lines in my own writing. The opening line of music returns in many places, in different contexts, sometimes sung by the entire choir together, sometimes staggered into imitative passages, always swirling up and outward like Sassoon's birds. Eventually the voices converge into rich chords over which soloists echo and affirm the final words of the poem.

On a personal note, my friend Steve Paulus died while I was writing this music. He was a marvelous composer, a passionate advocate for new music, a soft-spoken gentleman, and a good friend. The coda at the end of this piece seems somewhat unrelated to the earlier music, but for me it evokes the Minnesota choral sound Steve often wrote for, as well as the larger community of choral singers in this country. As we mourn, his memory may still encourage us to make music, to reach for hope, and believe that "the singing will never be done."

I am grateful to James John and the wonderful singers of Cerddorion for bringing this music to life.—*Martha Sullivan*

Everyone Sang

Siegfried Sassoon (1886–1967)

Everyone suddenly burst out singing;
And I was filled with such delight
As prisoned birds must find in freedom,
Winging wildly across the white
Orchards and dark-green fields; on - on - and out of sight.

Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted;
And beauty came like the setting sun:
My heart was shaken with tears; and horror
Drifted away... O, but Everyone
Was a bird; and the song was wordless; the singing will never be done.

David Lang, *again (after ecclesiastes)*

Cerddorion is proud to have performed several compositions by David Lang: in 2005, the group commissioned him to write this work for our 10th anniversary.

David Lang won the 2008 Pulitzer Prize in Music for *the little match girl passion*, based on a fable by Hans Christian Andersen and Lang's own rewriting of the libretto to J. S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. The Harmonia Mundi recording of this piece was awarded a 2010 Grammy Award for Best Small Ensemble Performance. Lang has also received the Rome Prize and Le Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres and was Musical America's 2013 Composer of the Year. Lang's tenure as 2013–14 Debs Composer's Chair at Carnegie Hall saw his critically acclaimed festival, "collected stories," showcase different modes of storytelling in music. This season, Lang sees the premieres of a string quartet for the 10th anniversary of Sage Gateshead, a choral piece for the 75th anniversary of Tanglewood Music Center, a new piece for musikFabrik, a new composition for the Bamberg Symphony, and "just (after song of songs)" for Trio Mediaeval and Saltarello. Lang's music is used regularly for ballet and modern dance around the world, and his film work includes the score for Jonathan Parker's (*Untitled*), the music for the award-winning documentary *The Woodmans*, and string arrangements for *Requiem for a Dream*, performed by the Kronos Quartet. In addition to his work as a composer, Lang co-founded New York's inimitable music collective Bang on a Can, and he is Professor of Composition at the Yale School of Music. His music is published by Red Poppy Music (ASCAP) and is distributed worldwide by G. Schirmer, Inc.

In the notes for our May 2005 10th anniversary concert, then-artistic director Kristina Boerger writes of *again (after ecclesiastes)*:

When King David's son Qoheleth muses in *Ecclesiastes I* about the rising and the setting of the sun, he is more pessimistic than celebratory. In tonight's featured premiere, *again (after ecclesiastes)*, David Lang paraphrases seven verses from this chapter and sets them according to a model that he expects will speak for itself to anyone reading the text. Cerddorion has valued this composition for the particular kinds of attention it exacts from the singers as they cooperate to reveal and sustain its design.

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 seas 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.

Elliot Z. Levine, *Un Prodigio les Canto: Four Villancicos of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*

Elliot Z. Levine has long been a friend of Cerddorion, from encouraging the group at the time of its founding to occasionally stepping in to cover a last-minute illness in the bass section! It was natural for us to turn to Mr. Levine for a special commission celebrating the group's 10th anniversary. Since its premiere in 2005, Un Prodigio les Canto has become one of Cerddorion's best-loved commissions, by singers and audiences alike.

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, the Folger Consort, and the Kalamazoo Bach Festival. He received his M.M. from the Manhattan School of Music and his B.A. from Queens College; he has also studied at the Orff School in Salzburg. He trained in conducting with Robert Hickok and in composition with Robert Starer at Brooklyn College. Recipient of five Meet-the-Composer grants, Mr. Levine has been commissioned by many groups besides Cerddorion, including the Harmonium Choral Society, the Church of St. Mary the Virgin,

the Church of St. Luke in the Fields, Temple Israel Center and the Western Wind Vocal Ensemble. Since 1980, he has conducted and coached at Western Wind Workshops and at American Choral Directors Association conferences around the country. He has taught at City College of New York and Upsala College. Mr. Levine is cantor at Temple Emanuel of Great Neck and sings in the professional choir of the Church of St. Luke in the Fields in New York City. He is published by Shadow Press, Harold Flammer Inc., E. Henry David, Plymouth, Colla Voce, and Willis Music.

About *Un Prodigio les Canto*, the composer writes:

The life of Juana Inés Ramiriz (better known as Sor Juana de la Cruz) follows a trajectory, from her humble birth outside Mexico City in 1648 to being a renowned published poet, dramatist, scholar, theologian, feminist, scientist, musician, and nun who died during the plague of 1694. I've known of her poetry and inspiring life for many years. In searching for texts, I found Alan Trueblood's anthology of her works. I was attracted by the vivid imagery and directness of the *villancico* texts she wrote in 1691. These were set to music of their time, but it has not reappeared yet. The poems leapt off the page and demanded music out of me.

Two are Christmas texts and two are for St. Catherine of Alexandria. I think she identified with St. Catherine, who converted many Romans (including the Emperor's wife) and dazzled a court of scholars convened to discredit her. As St. Catherine was about to be tortured on the wheel, it flew apart. After this, she was beheaded. Sor Juana, while a young lady-in-waiting at the court in Mexico City, was tested by a group of scholars on her prodigious knowledge of Latin, Greek, philosophy, and theology. I recommend browsing the Dartmouth College website; there is also an impressive biography by Octavio Paz.

In these pieces, I 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 and having the conductor sing. It is one of life's great pleasures to have been a colleague of Kristina Boerger in the Western Wind Vocal Ensemble. Her beautiful, clear singing and clear musical concepts inspired me to write these pieces for Cerddorion. [Ed. Note: *The soprano solo in "Pues mi Diós" was written for, and originally performed by, Dr. Boerger.*]

Note: When *Un Prodigio les Canto* was premiered by Cerddorion 10 years ago, Cerddorion's artistic director Kristina Boerger wrote the following about Sor Juana de la Cruz:

Sor Juana was born in 1648 to an unwed mestizo woman in Mexico. She was literate by age three, and by age seven she was already planning to acquire an education at Mexico University by dressing in men's clothes. As a teenager, she was reading philosophical and theological tomes in Latin and earning 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, entering into her service and living at court for four years. Having no wealth of her own, and flatly refusing to marry, she exercised her last viable 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* [similar to a literary salon] 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 this regal couple departed 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.

I. Pues está tiritando

Pues está tiritando amor en el hielo
y la escarcha y la nieve me lo tienen
preso, ¿quién le acude?

¡El agua!

¡La tierra!

¡El aire!

¡No, sino el fuego!

Pues al niño fatigan sus penas y males,
y a sus ansias no dudo que alientos le
faltan, ¿quién le acude?

¡El fuego!

¡La tierra!

¡El agua!

¡No, sino el aire!

Pues el niño amoroso tan tierno se
abrasa,

que respira en volcanes diluvios de
llamas, ¿quién le acude?

¡El aire!

¡El fuego!

¡La tierra!

¡No, sino el agua!

Si por la tierra el niño los cielos hoy deja,

y no halla en qué descansa su cabeza en
ella, ¿quién le acude?

¡El agua!

¡El fuego!

¡El aire!

¡No, mas la tierra!

I. Since Love is shivering

Since Love is shivering in the ice,
and hoarfrost and snow have ringed him
round, who will come to his aid?

Water!

Earth!

Air!

No, none but Fire!

Since the Child is assailed by pains and ills,
and is surely breathless before his woes,
who will come to his aid?

Fire!

Earth!

Water!

No, none but Air!

Since the tender, loving Child burns with
fever

unto breathing volcanic torrents of flame,
who will come to his aid?

Air!

Fire!

Earth!

No, none but Water!

If today the Child leaves the heavens for
the earth,

and he finds no place there to rest his head,
who will come to his aid?

Water!

Fire!

Air!

No, rather Earth!

II. Pues mi Diós

Pues mi Diós ha nacido a penar,
déjenle velar.

Pues está desvelado por mí,
déjenle dormir.

Déjenle velar, que no hay pena,
en quien ama,
como no penar.

Déjenle dormir, que quien duerme,
en el sueño se ensaya a morir.

Silencio, que duerme.

Cuidado, que vela.

¡No le despierten, no!

¡Sí le despierten, sí!

¡Déjenle velar!

¡Déjenle dormir!

*The audience is invited to join in singing the
final phrase.*

III. Aguas puras del Nilo

(Estrillo)

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!

II. Since my God

Since my God was born to pain,
let him wake.

Since he's wakeful for me,
let him sleep.

Let him wake, for there is no pain,
in one who loves,
like not feeling pain.

Let him sleep, for he who sleeps
practices in dreams for death.

Be silent, for he sleeps.

Take care, for he wakes!

Do not wake him, no!

You must wake him, yes!

Let him wake!

Let him sleep!

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!

(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.

(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. I, II, and III: Alan Trueblood
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IV. Maitines de Santa Catarina de Alejandria, Oaxaca, 1691, Villancico XI

Un prodigio les canto.
(¿Que, qué, qué, qué?)
Esperen, aguarden, que yo lo diré.
(¿Y cuál es? ¡Diga aprisa,
que ya rabio por saber!)
Esperen, aguarden, que yo lo diré.

Coplas

Erase una Niña,
como digo a usted,
cuyos años eran,
ocho sobre diez.
Esperen, aguarden,
que yo lo diré.

Ésta (qué sé yo,
cómo pudo ser),
dizque supo mucho,
aunque era mujer.
Esperen, aguarden,
que yo lo diré.

Porque, como dizque
dice no se quién,
ellas sólo saben
hilar y coser...
Esperen, aguarden,
que yo lo diré.

Pues ésta, a hombres grandes
pudo convencer;
que a un chico, cualquiera
lo sabe envolver.
Esperen, aguarden,
Que yo lo diré.

IV. Saint's Day of Catherine of Alexandria, Oaxaca, 1691, Eleventh Villancico

I will sing you a wonder,
(What, what, what, what?)
Wait, hold on, for I will tell you.
(What is it? Tell me quickly,
I'm dying to know!)
Wait, hold on, for I will tell you.

Verses

I will tell your Grace
of a girl
whose age was
ten plus eight.
Wait, hold on,
for I will tell you.

This girl (and I have
no idea how),
was very learned, they say,
although she was a woman.
Wait, hold on,
for I will tell you.

For it is said
that someone said
that women only know
how to spin and sew...
Wait, hold on,
for I will tell you.

Well, this girl could defeat great men
in argument;
for smaller minds
are easy to inveigle.
Wait, hold on,
for I will tell you.

Y aun una Santita
dizque era también,
sin que le estorbase
para ello el saber.
Esperen, aguarden,
que yo lo diré...

Pues como Patillas
no duerme, al saber
que era Santa y Docta,
se hizo un Lucifer.
Esperen, aguarden,
que yo lo diré.

Porque tiene el Diablo
esto de saber,
que hay mujer que sepa
más que supo él.
Esperen, aguarden,
que yo lo diré.

Pues con esto, ¿qué hace?
Viene, y tienta a un Rey,
que a ella la tentara
a dejar su Ley.
Esperen, aguarden,
que yo lo diré.

Tentóla de recio;
mas ella, pardiez,
se dejó morir
antes que vencer.
Esperen, aguarden,
que yo lo diré.

No pescuden más,
porque más no sé,
de que es Catarina,
para siempre. Amen.

—*Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648–1694)*

And she was a perfect saint
they also say,
and that her knowledge
was no hindrance to her saintliness.
Wait, hold on,
for I will tell you.

But since Old Goat-Foot (the Devil)
never sleeps, hearing
that she was saintly and learned,
he made himself a morning star (Lucifer).
Wait, hold on,
for I will tell you.

Because the Devil
knows at least
that there are women
who know more than he.
Wait, hold on,
for I will tell you.

What does he up and do?
He comes to a king
and tempts him to tempt her
to leave her faith.
Wait, hold on,
for I will tell you.

He tempted her sorely;
but she, by God,
preferred to die
than be vanquished.
Wait, hold on,
for I will tell you.

Ask me no more,
for I only know
that she is Catarina,
forever and ever. Amen.

Trans.: Robert Hilder

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