

QERDDORION
VOCAL ENSEMBLE

James John

Artistic Director

PRESENTS

*Reverent Cadence
and Subtle Psalm*

*SACRED MUSIC AND PSALM SETTINGS
SPANNING FIVE CENTURIES*



Friday, June 2, 8 pm
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
199 Carroll Street, Brooklyn

Sunday, June 4, 3 pm
St. Ignatius of Antioch
87th Street & West End Avenue, Manhattan

THE PROGRAM

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| Laudibus in Sanctis | William Byrd (1543–1623) |
| |  |
| Os Justi | Anton Bruckner (1824–1896) |
| Talismane | Robert Schumann (1810–1856) |
| |  |
| Hymn to St. Cecilia | Benjamin Britten (1913–1976) |
| <i>Jennifer Oates, soprano; Anna Harmon, soprano; Jude Cobb, alto; Mark Hewitt, tenor; Peter Cobb, bass</i> | |

Intermission

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| Beati Quorum Via | Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924) |
| Beati Omnes (<i>World Premiere</i>) | Bernardino Zanetti (b. 1961) |
| |  |
| Wilt Thou Forgive? (<i>World Premiere</i>) | Ron Anderson (b. 1962) |
| I Cannot Attain Unto It | Nico Muhly (b. 1981) |
| |  |
| Sixty-Seventh Psalm | Charles Ives (1874–1954) |
| Beautiful River | arr. William Hawley (b. 1950) |
| |  |
| Valiant for Truth | Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958) |



THE ARTISTS

Now in its twenty-second 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, Julie Dolphin, and Martha Sullivan.

Recent appearances include an invited performance at the November 2016 New York State American Choral Directors Association Conference in Garden City, NY; a featured performance on the cable television series *American Music* in February of 2016; and a collaborative concert with Sweden’s highly acclaimed professional choir *Voces Nordicae* in June of 2015. 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. Other collaborations have included 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 Dessoif Choral Consortium and choristers from London’s Temple Church); several appearances with the Christopher Caines Dance Company; and Baroque opera performances with the early music instrumental ensemble Concert Royal.

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 seventh season as Artistic Director of the Cerddorion Vocal Ensemble. He is also 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 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*. From 2011–2016 he served as Editor of *American Choral Review*, and has also participated 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.



THE WINNERS OF CERDDORION'S FIFTH ANNUAL EMERGING COMPOSERS COMPETITION

Bernardino Zanetti, born in Musile di Piave (Venice), is active as a composer, organist, conductor, and singer. As organist, he has held concerts in Italy, Germany, France, Austria, Switzerland, Poland and other European Countries; as choir conductor he has earned national prizes, held concerts all over Europe, and recorded TV shows in Europe. He has recorded several CDs as organist, choir conductor and singer with several chamber choirs. His vocal and instrumental compositions have won prizes and earned him commissions. His music has been published by Edizioni Musicali Europee (Milan), Associazione Cori Piemontesi, and Armelin (Padova).

Ron Anderson, who holds a doctoral degree in Piano Performance, as well as degrees in Opera and Composition, maintains a busy schedule as a performer (both as a pianist and a vocalist), composer, and teacher. His choral compositions have been received enthusiastically, and have won competitions and critical acclaim. His symphonic fanfare, *Citius, Altius, Fortius*, was premiered in 2005 with the Cypress Pops Orchestra and won first Prize in the MTAC Composers Today Competition in 2006. Dr. Anderson also won first Prize with his *Gethsemane* for string quartet in 2007, and again with his *Nightfall*, for solo piano in 2008. His composition, *The Autumn Tree*, for Voice, Cello, and Piano, will be premiered at the 70th Anniversary of the Music Teachers Association of California, Pasadena Branch.

Dr. Anderson teaches at Chapman University and maintains his own private studio, which has produced winners in The Chopin Foundation International Piano Competition, Composers Today, MTNA, and other competitions. His adjudicating activities include judging for the MTNA Composition Competition, the Reno Youth Music Festival, the Yamaha International Junior Original Concert, and the Composers Today State Contest. Dr. Anderson serves as the State Chair for the Composers Today Young Composers Guild of the Music Teachers Association of California.

REVERENT CADENCE AND SUBTLE PSALM PROGRAM NOTES

BY
JAMES JOHN, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

The title of our program is taken from a line at the beginning of Benjamin Britten's *Hymn to St. Cecilia* ("With reverent cadence and subtle psalm"), which inspired me to assemble this collection of psalm settings and sacred music. We are also delighted to present world premieres by Bernardino Zanetti and Ron Anderson, who this year tied for first place in our fifth annual Emerging Composers Competition.

William Byrd, *Laudibus in Sanctis*

William Byrd (c. 1543-1623) is perhaps the most well-known and influential English composer of the late Renaissance. A Catholic in Protestant England, Byrd was forced to navigate between public persona and private conviction throughout his long career. He wrote a substantial amount of Anglican service music while working in the Chapel Royal under Elizabeth I, and at the same time privately composed works for the persecuted Catholic minority. The most famous of these are his three unusually expressive mass settings—clearly the product of deep personal faith—written between 1592 and 1595.

Just prior to his masses Byrd published a second volume of Latin motets entitled *Cantiones Sacrae* in 1591 (the first volume appeared in 1589). "Laudibus in Sanctis" is featured prominently as the opening piece in this collection, indicating that the composer himself held it in particularly high regard. The text, a paraphrase of Psalm 150, is an exhortation to praise God with song and dance. Word painting in response to images of various instruments (trumpet, lyre, organ, cymbal etc.), as well as a lively portrayal of 'joyful dancing feet' in triple meter, is perhaps the motet's central feature—though it is also a veritable tour de force of complex contrapuntal and imitative techniques indicative of Byrd's exceptional mastery.

William Byrd, *Laudibus in Sanctis*

Laudibus in sanctis Dominum celebrate
supremum,
Firmamenta sonent inclita facta Dei.

Inclita facta Dei cantate, sacraque potentis
Voce potestatem saepe sonate manus.

Magnificum Domini cantet tuba martia
nomen,
Pieria Domino concelebrate lira.
Laude Dei, resonent resonantia tympana
summi,
Alta sacri resonent organa laude Dei.

Hunc arguta canant tenui psalteria corda,

Hunc agili laudet laeta chorea pede.
Concava divinas effundant cymbala
laudes,
Cymbala dulcisona laude repleta Dei,

Omne quod aetheris in mundo vescitur
auris,

Halleluia canat, tempus in omne Deo.

- Paraphrase of Psalm 150

In holy praises celebrate the Lord most
high;
Let the heavens echo the glorious acts of
God:
Sing of the glorious acts of God, and with
holy voice
Ever magnify his power and handiwork.

Let the martial trumpet praise the great
name of the Lord
And the Muses' lyre join in celebration.
Let the loud timbrel resound in praise of
the most high
God, Likewise the lofty organ.

Praise him with the psaltery's nimble
string;
Praise him with joyful dancing feet.
Let the hollow cymbals pour forth his holy
praises
And the sweet-sounding cymbals be filled
with the praise of God.
Let everything in the world that lives and
breathes

Sing an endless alleluia to God.

Anton Bruckner, *Os Justi*
Robert Schumann, *Talismane*

Austrian composer Anton Bruckner (1824-1896), perhaps best known for his colossal symphonies, wrote a prolific amount of choral music, including numerous choral-orchestral works, a wealth of partsongs for male chorus, and approximately forty motets. An organist and devout Catholic, he was influenced by the Cecilian movement (a nineteenth-century movement for the reform of church music), which idealized *a cappella* works of the past and sought to “revive composition in the style of Palestrina.” *Os Justi* was composed in 1879 and dedicated to Ignaz Traumihler, choirmaster at the Abbey of St. Florian where Bruckner had been a choirboy and where he later served as schoolteacher and organist (1845-1855). Written in the Cecilian spirit, it is a setting of Psalm 37: 30-31 in the Lydian mode (Lydian, along with Dorian, Phrygian and Mixolydian is one of the four church modes that served as the basis of Western music prior to the adoption of major and minor scales). Quite remarkably, by exploiting the characteristics of this ancient scale Bruckner was able to eschew chromaticism of any kind, and without using a single sharp or flat create extraordinary richness and harmonic beauty.

Compared to Bruckner, the choral music of Robert Schumann (1810-1856) remains relatively unknown. In addition to more than fifteen choral-orchestral works he wrote over sixty partsongs, most of which were intended for two choirs (a men’s choir and a mixed choir) he directed while living in Dresden during the latter part of the 1840s. *Talismane*, composed in 1849, is an exuberant setting of the first three stanzas of a poem by Goethe praising the divine in all things and imploring artistic inspiration. Schumann wrote of his own beliefs that he was “religious but without religion,” and Goethe’s text seems to encapsulate this blurring of lines between sacred and secular. Not published until two years after Schumann’s death, *Talismane* concludes a set of pieces entitled *Vier doppelchörige Gesänge* (Four Songs for Double Choir), Op. 141, which are the composer’s only works for double choir, and represent the pinnacle of his achievement in this genre.

Anton Bruckner, *Os Justi*

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| Os justi meditabitur sapientiam, | The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, |
| Et lingua ejus loquetur judicium. | And his tongue speaks what is just. |
| Lex Dei ejus in corde ipsius: | The law of God is in his heart; |
| Et non supplantabuntur gressus ejus. | And his feet do not falter. |
| Alleluia. | Alleluia. |

- *Psalms 37: 30-31*

Robert Schumann, *Talismane*

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|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Gottes ist der Orient! | The East is God’s! |
| Gottes ist der Okzident! | The West is God’s! |
| Nord und südliches Gelände | Northern and southern lands |
| Ruht im Frieden seiner Hände. | rest in the peace of his hands. |

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Er, der einzige Gerechte, | He, the only one who is just, |
| Will für jedermann das Rechte. | wants justice for everyone. |
| Sei von seinen hundert Namen | Of his hundred names, |
| Dieser hochgelobet! Amen. | Let this one be highly praised! Amen. |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Mich verwirren will das Irren; | Errors try to confuse me, |
| Doch du weißt mich zu entwirren, | But you know how to disentangle me. |
| Wenn ich handle, wenn ich dichte, | If I act, if I compose poems, |
| Gieb du meinem Weg die Richte! | Give direction to my path. |

- *Goethe*

Benjamin Britten, *Hymn to St. Cecilia*

Benjamin Britten’s *Hymn to St. Cecilia*, Op. 27, was composed in 1942 on board ship as Britten (1913-1976) journeyed home across the Atlantic after deciding to end a trial period of emigration to the United States, where he had been living since 1939 with a family in Amityville, Long Island. The well-known poet W.H. Auden, a close friend of Britten’s, wrote the text. Auden knew that Britten’s birthday fell on St. Cecilia’s Day (November 22nd); and St. Cecilia, of course, is the patron saint of music.

A brief summary of the poem (written in three sections, with a recurring refrain at the end of each) will prove useful in understanding Britten’s musical setting. The first section is a poetic narrative, re-telling the myth of St. Cecilia (first recorded in approximately A.D. 500). The second section personifies music, and the elusive quality of artistic inspiration. The final section is a meditation on lost innocence, and concludes with a series of lines that refer to various instruments (violin, drum, flute, and trumpet). At the end of each of these sections the four-line refrain calls upon St. Cecilia for guidance and inspiration.

Britten's musical setting corresponds exactly to the structure of the poem: it has three main sections, each followed by a refrain. The first section is built around a *cantus firmus* that appears as a single melody passed seamlessly down from the high range of the tenors into the low range of the basses. In the second section a new *cantus firmus* appears as a sustained melody sung in unison by the altos and basses, around which Britten weaves an intricate web of imitative polyphony at a very quick tempo. At the beginning of the third section the basses begin an ostinato pattern (a single melody repeated over and over again), and motives from it are gradually incorporated into the other voices. As this takes place, a soprano soloist enters with the text, "O dear white children casual as birds", perhaps personifying the voice of St. Cecilia herself. Then more soloists enter - an alto, bass, another soprano, and tenor—each in turn with melodies that imitate the various instruments mentioned in the poem (violin, drum, flute and trumpet). The work concludes with a return of the refrain (which begins with the *cantus firmus* from the opening section), and a final call to St. Cecilia for inspiration.

Benjamin Britten, *Hymn to St. Cecilia*

I

In a garden shady this holy lady
With reverent cadence and subtle psalm,
Like a black swan as death came on
Poured forth her song in perfect calm:
And by ocean's margin this innocent virgin
Constructed an organ to enlarge her prayer,
And notes tremendous from her great engine
Thundered out on the Roman air.

Blonde Aphrodite rose up excited,
Moved to delight by the melody,
White as an orchid she rode quite naked
In an oyster shell on top of the sea;
At sounds so entrancing the angels dancing
Came out of their trance into time again,
And around the wicked in Hell's abysses
The huge flame flickered and eased their pain.

*Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions
To all musicians, appear and inspire:
Translated Daughter, come down and startle
Composing mortals with immortal fire.*

II

I cannot grow;
I have no shadow
To run away from,
I only play.

I cannot err;
There is no creature
Whom I belong to,
Whom I could wrong.

I am defeat
When it knows it
Can now do nothing
By suffering.

All you lived through,
Dancing because you
No longer need it
For any deed.

I shall never be
Different. Love me.

III

O ear whose creatures cannot wish to fall,
O calm of spaces unafraid of weight,
Where Sorrow is herself, forgetting all
The gaucheness of her adolescent state,
Where Hope within the altogether strange
From every outworn image is released,
And Dread born whole and normal like a beast
Into a world of truths that never change:
Restore our fallen day; O re-arrange.

O dear white children casual as birds,
Playing among the ruined languages,
So small beside their large confusing words,
So gay against the greater silences
Of dreadful things you did: O hang the head,
Impetuous child with the tremendous brain,
O weep, child, weep, O weep away the stain,
Lost innocence who wished your lover dead,
Weep for the lives your wishes never led.

O cry created as the bow of sin
Is drawn across our trembling violin.

O weep, child, weep, O weep away the stain.

O law drummed out by hearts against the still
Long winter of our intellectual will.

That what has been may never be again.

O flute that throbs with the thanksgiving breath
Of convalescents on the shores of death.

O bless the freedom that you never chose.

O trumpets that unguarded children blow
About the fortress of their inner foe.

O wear your tribulation like a rose.

*Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions
To all musicians, appear and inspire:
Translated Daughter, come down and startle
Composing mortals with immortal fire.*
- W.H. Auden

Charles Villiers Stanford, *Beati Quorum Via* Bernardino Zanetti, *Beati Omnes*

Born in Dublin to one of the city's most prominent lawyers, Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) was a pivotal figure in British music during his lifetime. Though his oeuvre stretches prolifically across all genres (including symphonic and operatic works), he is remembered today primarily for his church music. Stanford's influence as a teacher was also extraordinary: as a Professor of Composition at the Royal College of Music his students included Ralph Vaughan Williams, Herbert Howells, Gustav Holst, and Frank Bridge, to name only a few. He is credited with helping to bring about a musical renaissance in Great Britain during the latter part of the nineteenth century, and was knighted in 1902.

Stanford had a deep affinity for choral music. As an undergraduate at Cambridge University he was a choral scholar and directed two choral groups; he later went on to serve as Director of the London Bach Choir from 1885 to 1902. *Beati Quorum Via*, a setting of the first line of Psalm 119, was composed in 1890 and published in 1905 as the second of *Three Latin Motets*, Op. 38. It is probably Stanford's most well-known *a cappella* sacred work, unmatched in lyricism and in the composer's graceful handling of the six-part vocal texture.

Similarity of sentiment made it natural to pair Italian composer Bernardino Zanetti's setting of the first line of Psalm 128, *Beati Omnes*, with Stanford's *Beati Quorum Via*. Zanetti (b. 1961), dual winner of this year's Emerging Composers Competition, writes:

The inspiration and message of my composition was suggested to me by the text, which I find of fundamental importance and beauty, according to an approach that is in line with the long tradition of Western musical culture. The repetition of the words 'beati' and 'timent' represents a continual desire for interior exploration on the path leading to redemption and, above all, to God. The piece was not built on a particular compositional language; melodic lines are very simple but all develop their own identity and together they build a harmonious richness and a sound universe that invites the listener to contemplation and reflection.

Charles Villiers Stanford, *Beati Quorum Via*

Beati quorum via integra est,
qui ambulat in lege Domini.
- *Psalm 119, 1*

Blessed are the undefiled in the way,
who walk in the law of the Lord.

Bernardino Zanetti, *Beati Omnes*

Beati omnes qui timent Dominum,
qui ambulat in viis ejus.
- *Psalm 128, 1*

Blessed are all they that fear the Lord:
and walk in his ways.

Ron Anderson, *Wilt Thou Forgive?*
Nico Muhly, *I Cannot Attain Unto It*

John Donne's penitential poem, *A Hymn to God the Father* (1623), serves as the text for Ron Anderson's *Wilt Thou Forgive?* Anderson (b. 1962) and Bernardino Zanetti are dual winners of this year's Emerging Composers Competition. The composer writes:

John Donne (1572-1631) was one of the greatest of the metaphysical poets in England, a group that included George Herbert, Andrew Marvell, and possibly John Milton. An Anglican priest with a less than perfect moral reputation, Donne expressed through his poetry (notably, the *Holy Sonnets*) the incongruities of human attempts at living the Christian life.

In the present poem, the speaker reveals his struggles with sin—the sin he was born with, the sin he commits daily, the sin through which he influences others to sin, and the sin he has quit for a short while, only to take up again for many more years. He confesses yet another sin: the fear that he will “perish on the shore,” presumably to die with unforgiven sins, consigned to eternal damnation. His desperate plea is that God's Son “shall shine as he shines now and heretofore.” If God answers this prayer, he will fear no more, and will know that all his sins, including the sin of fear, are finally forgiven.

My musical setting uses subtle inflection of rhythm and meter to mirror the text, aiming for natural prosody of speech and expressive accentuation. Melodic contours emphasize important words, while harmonic placement projects the various moods throughout the poem. The key relationships involve mostly shifts of minor 3rds; starting in D minor, the piece moves through several keys, reaching its final statement in D major. A variety of textures maintains aural interest: clusters and close harmony, full divisi chords, and an imitative passage painting the words, “won others to sin, and made my sin their door.” A series of shimmering major chords brings the work to a close, declaiming the words, “Thy Son shall shine as he shines now and heretofore,” and, “I fear no more.”

American composer Nico Muhly (b. 1981) studied at Juilliard, and is a rising star on the international music scene. He is the youngest composer ever to be commissioned by the Met, where his opera *Two Boys* had its American premiere in 2013. Muhly's *I Cannot Attain Unto It* was written in 2005 for the Manhattan Choral Ensemble. The following note is taken from the composer's website:

I Cannot Attain Unto It is a setting of a section of Psalm 139 arranged such that certain syllables repeat and cycle around each other. The harmonic motion of the piece is through common tones, a method in which a single note is sustained through two related or unrelated keys. The use of the repetition is meant to be at once devotional and hypnotic. Mr. Muhly said he has been drawn to the psalms since he was a young child. “Their obsessive repetition and turns of phrase has always fascinated me. Every time I set one, I learn something new about the strategic use of repetition.”

Ron Anderson, *Wilt Thou Forgive?*

Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which was my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run,
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won
Others to sin, and made my sin their door?
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallow'd in, a score?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by thyself, that at my death thy Son
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;
And, having done that, thou hast done;
I fear no more.

- *John Donne, 'A Hymn to God the Father,' 1623*

Nico Muhly, *I Cannot Attain Unto It*

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
I cannot attain unto it.
Whither shall I go from thy spirit?
or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:
if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

– *Psalm 139, 6-8*

Charles Ives, *Sixty-Seventh Psalm*
William Hawley, *Beautiful River*

Charles Ives (1874-1954) was born in Danbury, Connecticut. His early experiments with dissonance, bi-tonality and other non-traditional techniques distinguish him as one of the most innovative composers of all time. The *Sixty-Seventh Psalm* was the only one of Ives's psalm settings published during his lifetime, and it is an extraordinary example of an early use of bi-tonality: the men's parts are in G minor, and the women's in C major. Ives may have written this as a partial parody of his own church choir, which he often joked "sang in two different keys." However, by juxtaposing two tonalities Ives also creates an other-worldly effect, lending a sense of urgency to the prayer, "God be merciful unto us," and imparting a quality of supernatural awe to the final phrase, "And all the ends of the earth shall fear him."

Beautiful River (or "Shall we gather at the River") was written in 1864 by Robert Lowry, pastor at Hanson Place Baptist Church in Brooklyn, New York. Lowry's hymn describes a beautiful vision of the apocalypse in which "pure water of life" flows "clear as crystal...out of the throne of God." William Hawley's eight-part choral arrangement captures the serenity and simplicity of Lowry's ethereal river in the opening measures by harmonizing the famous melody with a G major scale that descends stepwise over the course of more than two octaves. Hawley (b. 1950), a New York native now based in Maine, has a catalogue of more than one hundred choral works. Ensembles including Chanticleer, the Nederlands Kammerkoor, Singer Pur, and the Singapore Youth Choir Ensemble Singers have premiered his music across the globe.

Charles Ives, *Sixty-Seventh Psalm*

God be merciful unto us, and bless us;
and cause his face to shine upon us.
That thy way may be known upon earth,
thy saving health among all nations.
Let the people praise thee, o God;
O let the nations be glad and sing for joy:
for thou shalt judge the people righteously,
and govern the nations upon the earth.
Let the people praise thee, O God;
let all the people praise thee.
Then shall the earth yield her increase;
and God, even our own God, shall bless us.
And all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

William Hawley, *Beautiful River*

Shall we gather at the river,
Where bright angel-feet have trod,
With its crystal tide forever
Flowing by the throne of God?

Yes, we'll gather at the river,
The beautiful, the beautiful river;
Gather with the saints at the river
That flows by the throne of God.

On the margin of the river,
Washing up its silver spray,
We will walk and worship ever
All the happy, golden day.

- Robert Lowry, 1864

Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Valiant for Truth*

Ralph Vaughan Williams was one of the most influential and prolific British composers of the first half of the 20th century. Born in 1872, his style is rooted in the rich harmonies and tonal language of late Romanticism. Choral music is an essential aspect of his oeuvre, and throughout his long career he wrote everything from choral-orchestral works such as *Dona Nobis Pacem* and *A Sea Symphony*, to sacred and secular *a cappella* music, folk-song arrangements, and hymn settings and services for the Anglican Church. He also composed many beautiful songs for solo voice, and several operas, including *Riders to the Sea*, *Sir John in Love*, and *Pilgrim's Progress*. The last of these reflects Vaughan Williams' forty-year fascination with the work of John Bunyan, author of the book by the same name. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (published between 1678 and 1688) is an allegorical journey, reflecting humankind's quest for meaning and spiritual enlightenment. Vaughan Williams' opera had a long period of gestation (from approximately 1910 to 1950), and in its own way provides insight into the composer's evolution from atheist to "cheerful agnostic."

Mr. Valiant-for-Truth is a character that appears toward the end of Bunyan's story. It is unclear exactly what he is meant to represent, though as his name implies, he is someone who—despite many travails—has kept his eye on the mark, and managed to endure with ideals intact. Completed in 1941, Vaughan Williams' motet was written in response to the death of his friend, Dorothy Longman, and is unrelated to the opera. It is a setting of Bunyan's prose description of the moment that Mr. Valiant-for-Truth learns that his death will come soon, the fortitude with which he accepts this news, and the magnificence of his passing.

Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Valiant for Truth*

After this is was noised abroad
that Mr. Valiant-for-truth was taken with a summons...;
and had this for a token that the summons was true,
“That his pitcher was broken at the fountain.”

When he understood it,
he called for his friends, and told them of it.

Then said he, “I am going to my Father’s,
and though with great difficulty I am got hither,
yet now I do not repent me of all the trouble I have been at
to arrive where I am.

My sword, I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage,
and my courage and skill, to him that can get it.
My marks and scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me,
that I have fought his battles, who now will be my rewarder.”

When the day that he must go hence, was come,
many accompanied him to the riverside,
into which, as he went, he said,
“Death, where is they sting?”
And as he went down deeper, he said,
“Grave where is thy victory?”

So he passed over,
and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.
- *John Bunyan (1678)*

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