

QERDDORION

VOCAL ENSEMBLE

James John

Artistic Director

PRESENTS

A Celebration of Langston Hughes

with guest artists

The Unsung Collective

Tyrone Clinton, Jr., Artistic Director



Sunday, April 30, 2023, 4 pm
Good Shepherd–Faith Presbyterian Church
152 West 66th Street, Manhattan

LMCC

THE PROGRAM

Cerddorion Vocal Ensemble

Three by Langston
New Moon
Luck
Joy

Ricky Ian Gordon (b. 1956)

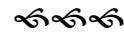
Benjamin Balatbat, piano

Democracy
America Will Be!

Robert Applebaum (b. 1941)

Joel Thompson (b. 1988)

*Lex Frazier, soprano; Grace Hwoang, soprano;
Angie Martinez, soprano; Talya Westbrook, soprano*



The Unsung Collective

Bring Me All Your Dreams
The Negro Speaks of Rivers

Christopher H. Harris (b. 1985)

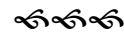
Margaret Bonds (1913–1972)

Patrice P. Eaton, mezzo soprano

Hold Fast to Dreams

Roland Carter (b. 1942)

Asha Lindsey, soprano



Combined Choirs

Afro-American Fragments

William Averitt (b. 1948)

Olanna Goudeau, soprano; Talya Westbrook, soprano

Konstantza Chernov and Cullan Bryant, piano

I Dream A World

Rosephanye Powell (b. 1962)

Benjamin Balatbat, piano



There will be no intermission in today's performance.

THE ARTISTS

Now in its twenty-eighth 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, Martha Sullivan, and Sidney Marquez Boquiren.

In a May 2022 performance, Cerddorion presented the New York premiere of Melissa Dunphy’s *Amendment: Righting Our Wrongs*, as well as Sidney Marquez Boquiren’s *Arise*, which had been commissioned by the group for a program marking the centennial of the ratification of 19th Amendment in 1920. Previously, in March 2020, Cerddorion collaborated with members of The October Project to present the New York premiere of *The Book of Rounds—21 Songs of Grace*. And for eight nights in October 2018, the group performed in the “Mile-Long Opera: A Biography of 7 O’Clock,” as the High Line became the stage for a massive multimedia performance created by architect Liz Diller, composer David Lang, and librettists Anne Carson and Claudia Rankine.

Other guest appearances have included an invited performance at the 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 2016; and a concert with Sweden’s highly acclaimed professional choir Voces Nordicae in June 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. Other collaborations have included the North American premiere of Sir John Tavener’s all-night vigil, *The Veil of the Temple*, several appearances with the Christopher Caines Dance Company; and Baroque opera performances with the early music instrumental ensemble Concert Royal.

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 and Vocal Area Network, and an Artist in Residence at the Church of St. Ignatius of Antioch.



JAMES JOHN, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

JAMES JOHN is in his thirteenth season as Artistic Director of Cerddorion Vocal Ensemble. He is also Professor of Conducting and Director of Choral Activities at the Aaron Copland School of Music (ACSM), Queens College-CUNY, where he directs the Queens College Vocal Ensemble and Queens College Choral Society and heads the graduate program in choral conducting.

Under Dr. John's leadership, the choral program at ACSM has become recognized as one of the finest collegiate choral programs in the region, with performances by Queens College choral ensembles at state and divisional conferences of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA). In New York City, his choirs have performed in such prestigious venues as Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Weill Recital Hall, Merkin Hall, St. Patrick's Cathedral, and Trinity Church Wall Street. His ACSM choral ensembles have also been featured on two compact disc recordings—*The Partsongs of Hamish MacCunn*, released by the QC Vocal Ensemble, funded by a grant from the PSC-CUNY Research Foundation; and *Songs of Peace and Praise*, a compilation of choral music by Queens College composers, released on the NAXOS label.

Dr. John's guest conducting has included Brahms's *Requiem* and Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with the Tokyo Oratorio Society and Oratorio Sinfonica Japan, David Geffen Hall's annual *Messiah* Sing-In, a concert of American choral music with the Virginia Chorale, and honor choirs throughout New York. He has served as guest chorus master for the Queens Symphony and participated in a choral recording with jazz trumpeter Michael Mossman, head of ACSM's Jazz Performance Program. Dr. John has also contracted choirs for Josh Groban, including appearances on *The Tonight Show* and the opening ceremonies of the U.S. Open, as well as for his Stages tour of New York City.

As a teacher and scholar, Dr. John has served as guest lecturer in conducting at the Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg, Germany, and has presented seminars on American choral music in Basel and Stockholm. He has given presentations at both divisional and national conferences of the ACDA and is in demand as a clinician and adjudicator throughout the United States. His dissertation on Brahms won the Julius Herford Prize from the ACDA, and from 2011 to 2016 he served as editor of the scholarly journal *American Choral Review*, published biannually by Chorus America. He has also served 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. His prior appointments include Director of Choral Activities at both Tufts University (Boston, MA) and Nassau Community College (Garden City, NY), as well as Conducting Fellow at Dartmouth College. He received his Master of Arts in conducting from the ACSM.



THE GUEST ARTISTS

THE UNSUNG COLLECTIVE, INC.

The Unsung Collective, directed by Dr. Tyrone Clinton, Jr., is a nonprofit organization devoted to celebrating people of color in Western art music in New York City. The Unsung Collective navigates countless stories that are the true fabric of historical and current events, with the aim of stretching the confines of music of the Western canon. This ensemble and its members are born of the same community that bears the music by which many of these stories are told. As an ensemble, the collective is committed to fostering relationships through collaboration and sharing art with those willing to listen.

The Unsung Collective has collaborated with some of the world's most prolific artists. Most recently, The Unsung Collective pioneered and completed the first residency to open New York City's brand-new Center for Art, Research and Alliances (CARA), as part of South African artist Neo Muyanga's first solo exhibition in the United States entitled A Mass of Cyborgs. As part of her America: A Hymnal series, The Unsung Collective collaborated with Bethany Collins, both at the historic 15th Street Quaker Meeting House in New York City and at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania. Last fall, The Unsung Collective Chamber Orchestra led a performance of *Recomposed by Max Richter: Vivaldi—The Four Seasons* at Harlem's Saint Philip's Episcopal Church. In Summer 2022, The Unsung Collective made their Lincoln Center debut and were the first predominantly Black ensemble to perform for the Mostly Mozart Festival in its over 50-year history. Just one year prior, in 2021, The Unsung Collective pioneered the World Trade Center's first Juneteenth Celebration in the same year it was first proclaimed a Federal holiday by President Joseph Biden.

The Unsung Collective rehearses in Harlem and calls home Mother AME Zion Church—the oldest African American religious institution in New York City.

TYRONE CLINTON, JR.

Dr. Tyrone Clinton, Jr., is the founder and artistic director of The Unsung Collective Inc., a nonprofit organization devoted to celebrating people of color in Western art music in New York City. In Summer 2022, Dr. Clinton and The Unsung Collective made their Lincoln Center debut and were the first predominantly Black ensemble to perform for the Mostly Mozart Festival in its more than 50-year history. In an effort to make Juneteenth a national holiday, he pioneered the World Trade Center's first Juneteenth Celebration on June 19, 2021.

As an accomplished musician in his field, he was a guest artist in Hawaii conducting the Cornell University Chamber Singers. Dr. Clinton was also regularly featured as a guest on Sirius XM Satellite Radio discussing a wide range of topics, including the current state of Black music, Afro-Latin identity, and contemporary music at the Grammy Awards. In May 2023, he will take part in conducting *Search for Spring*, a new choral work commissioned by Lincoln Center that addresses climate change.

Dr. Clinton was the first Black recipient of the Frank Huntington Beebe Fund for Musicians. This grant allowed him to complete dissertation research while living in Mexico and Spain. His dissertation discusses performance practice of the Baroque *villancicos de negro* choral genre, analyzing the portrayal of Africa through a Spanish lens. His article “Black in the Baroque” was published in the *Choral Journal* in 2021.

Dr. Clinton served as conductor of Northwestern University’s Women’s Choir and University Chorus. He worked as chorus master alongside conductor John DeMain in Carlisle Floyd’s *Susannah* at Northwestern University and with resident conductor of the Los Angeles Opera, Grant Gershon. Other notable conducting engagements include the Atlanta University Center Orchestra, both Morehouse College and Spelman College Glee Clubs, and Clark Atlanta University’s Philharmonic Society. As a contributor to scholarship in the Western art world, Dr. Clinton has lectured at several institutions, including New York University, Indiana University, Bard College, Longy School of Music, and Syracuse University.

A multi-faceted musician, Dr. Clinton has been featured on several projects in the United States, including conducting Henryk Górecki’s Symphony No. 3 for the American Cancer Society, leading his Strange Fruit concert in honor of police brutality victims in Chicago, and recording on the soundtrack for Spike Lee’s movie *Miracle at St. Anna*. As a singer, Dr. Clinton has had the privilege to share the stage with Denyce Graves, Jessye Norman, Andrea Bocelli, Il Divo, Idina Menzel, the late Aretha Franklin, and the late Bo Diddley. Additionally, he has performed in the presence of two U.S. presidents, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton. Other notable choral performances include singing with the Atlanta Symphony Chorus, the Columbus Symphony Chorus, and the Atlanta Singers. For the 2022–2023 season, Dr. Clinton will premiere a new work by composer Julia Wolfe at Lincoln Center as part of the Grammy-winning ensemble The Crossing.

A native of Brooklyn, Dr. Clinton has returned to New York City in hopes of sharing music unique to his experience and educating young musicians. He is a graduate of Northwestern University (DMA), Ohio State University (MM), and Morehouse College (BA). He has a diverse career as an educator, having taught in several states and currently teaching in the New York area.



KONSTANTZA CHERNOV

An active soloist and chamber musician, pianist Konstantza Chernov has performed extensively throughout the United States and Europe. She is a member of *jouvence*, a duo with violinist Jenny Grégoire, and the Chernov-Podgurski Duo with pianist Barbara Podgurski. An advocate of contemporary music, Konstantza Chernov has given premiere performances of works by Michael Capobianco, Eric B. Chernov, Leo Kraft, Martín Kutnowski, and Douglas O'Grady, among many others. With the Chernov-Podgurski Duo she gave the world premiere of Daniel Plante's two-piano version of Irving Fine's *Toccata concertante* at Steinway Hall. Additionally, for several years, she was the pianist for the Long Island Composers' Alliance's annual concerts in New York City, performing solo and chamber works by Richard Brooks, Herbert Deutsch, Martin Halpern, Leo Kraft, Joel Mandelbaum, Dana Richardson, David Schober, and Edward Smaldone. Recent performances include the solo Piano Fantasy at the Leo Kraft Memorial Concert, a Merkin Hall appearance with the New York Virtuoso Singers, and the world premiere of Eric B. Chernov's 18 amuse-bouches for solo piano.

Dr. Chernov was born in Sófia, Bulgaria, where she received her initial musical training, and subsequently came to the United States to study at Mannes College of Music. She holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Collaborative Piano from The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Dr. Chernov earned her Bachelor of Music and Master of Arts degrees in piano performance from Queens College, where she was a Presser Scholar. She is currently on the faculty at Queens College, where she teaches piano and class piano and coaches chamber music. She is also on the faculty of Queens College's Center for Preparatory Studies in Music.

CULLEN BRYANT

Pianist Cullan Bryant is a preeminent chamber musician and accompanist in New York City. He has been heard in collaboration with many of the great musicians of the century, including violinist and United Nations Messenger of Peace Midori; violinists Oleh Krysa, Misha Keylin, and Emanuel Borok; cellists Peter Rejto and Paul Tobias; members of the Amati, American, and Borromeo Quartets; members of the New York Philharmonic, Metropolitan Opera, Orchestra of St Luke's, New York City Ballet, and Boston and Detroit Symphonies, and in such venues as Merkin Hall, Alice Tully Hall, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Detroit's Orchestra Hall.

Mr. Bryant made his Carnegie Hall debut in 1992 in recital with the late violinist Patmore Lewis. He began playing at the age of 2. At 11, he toured Arkansas and Texas, including playing in televised recitals. Awards include the Leschetizky International Competition, the National Arts Club NY, the Memphis Beethoven Competition, and a certificate of outstanding citizenship from Arkansas's governor. His principal teachers were Christopher Kabala, Robert Goldsand, and Artur Balsam.

BENJAMIN BALATBAT

Benjamin Balatbat is a pianist and music director based in New York City. He has worked as a ballet pianist for Gibney Dance and the National Dance Institute and has music directed shows for Narrows Community Theater and Baruch College. In addition to accompanying the Cerddorion Vocal Ensemble this season, Benjamin is currently music directing the musical *Assassins* with the Gallery Players in Brooklyn.

A CELEBRATION OF LANGSTON HUGHES

A Note from the Artistic Director

It has been a delight and privilege to put together this program of choral settings of the poetry of Langston Hughes (1901–1967). Born in Mobile, Alabama, Hughes grew up in the Midwest and moved to New York City in the 1920s, where he became a major figure in the Harlem Renaissance, celebrating African American art, music, and culture. He was also a life-long social activist, fighting for civil rights and incorporating themes of justice, equality, and civil liberty into his work. Hughes loved jazz, and his poetry sparkles with jazz-influenced rhythms and melodic cadences that lend themselves to a musical setting. It is no wonder that so many composers have been drawn to his work.

A very special aspect of this performance is Cerddorion’s collaboration with The Unsung Collective, “a community-based music collective devoted to celebrating stories of the Black experience,” led by Artistic Director Tyrone Clinton, Jr. I met Tyrone early last summer, right around the same time that I discovered the wonderful Langston Hughes settings of composer William Averitt, featured as the centerpiece on today’s concert. Averitt’s music inspired me to build a program around this theme, and inviting Tyrone and his marvelous group of singers to be part of it seemed like a compelling and obvious next step. In the words of Langston Hughes: “I dream a world where man no other man will scorn... where black or white, whatever race you be, will share the bounties of the earth, and every man is free...” It is in this spirit that we sing together for you today.

—James John

Ricky Ian Gordon, *Three By Langston*

Ricky Ian Gordon is one of today’s foremost composers of art song, opera and musical theater. His work has garnered numerous awards and has been performed internationally by a wide range of artists, such as Dawn Upshaw, Renée Fleming, Audra McDonald, Kristin Chenoweth, and Judy Collins. Most recently, his opera *Intimate Apparel* premiered at Lincoln Center Theater in January 2022. Gordon’s writing blends elements of popular and classical music into a finely wrought, highly accessible style that forms the basis of his own unique voice. He has been drawn to the poetry of Langston Hughes throughout his career, and his settings capture the poet’s directness, humanity, and joyful musicality.

Three By Langston, a choral cycle of Hughes’s poetry, was commissioned by the Keynote Arts Association for the Manhattan Choral Festival in 1998. In “New Moon,” imitative vocal lines interact whimsically as if to convey the excitement and optimism of new beginnings; “Luck” creates an atmosphere of gentle melancholy, employing a forthright, homophonic texture to reflect on those who have been outcast or forgotten; and “Joy,” with its lilting dance-rhythms and lively syncopations, reminds us that delight can be found in the most unexpected places. Each piece in this cycle also exists separately as an art song for solo voice.

The New Moon

There’s a new, young moon riding the hills tonight;
There’s a sprightly, young moon exploring the clouds;
There’s a half-shy, young moon veiling her face like a virgin,
Waiting for her lover.

Luck

Sometimes a crumb falls
From the tables of joy,
Sometimes a bone
Is flung.
To some people
Love is given,
To others
Only heaven.

Joy

I went to look for Joy,
Slim, dancing Joy,
Gay, laughing Joy,—
Bright-eyed Joy,—
And I found her
Driving the butcher's cart
In the arms of the butcher boy!
Such company, such company,
As keeps this young nymph, Joy!

Robert Applebaum, *Democracy* Joel Thompson, *America Will Be!*

Until 2000, Robert Applebaum taught physics and chemistry at New Trier High School in Illinois, where he was on the faculty for 35 years. He is an accomplished jazz pianist, and in 1980 he began composing Jewish liturgical music, including three complete Sabbath services. The Chicago Children’s Choir has performed his setting of “V’ahavta” at the White House, and his works have been featured on several programs of SHE, a New York City women’s *a cappella* ensemble. He has also received many commissions for liturgical music from a variety of religious institutions.

Cerddorion premiered Applebaum’s *Democracy* in 2018; it is the middle movement from a trio of Langston Hughes settings. The poem speaks candidly about freedom, expressing a desire for justice within the democratic process and frustration with slow progress. Applebaum’s setting is built around an ostinato on the word “freedom” that features a poignant minor 6th, as if to suggest brooding over a wish that remains elusive and unfulfilled. As the piece unfolds, Applebaum introduces syncopations and jazz-influenced harmonies that capture the lilt of Hughes’s rhythmic language, highlighting the poem’s powerful, unadorned message.

Joel Thompson is an Atlanta-based composer perhaps best-known for his *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed*, a cantata that sets words of African American men who were killed by the police and that won the 2018 American Prize in composition. His setting of *America Will Be!* is based on a Hughes poem that is a searing (and much longer) indictment of American ideals, *Let America Be America Again*. Thompson takes short excerpts from Hughes’s poem and juxtaposes them with well-known lines from Emma Lazarus’s *The New Colossus*, which appears at the base of the Statue of Liberty, creating a passionate critique that also presents a hopeful vision for the future. The composer writes:

When I was a young child, I imagined that America was like living on Sesame Street in Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood—a utopic land of opportunity and freedom. When I finally arrived at age 10, my dreams had mostly come true, but I also learned a somber lesson that not all principles are easy to put into practice. It was that friction between professed ideals and painful reality that Langston Hughes captured in his poem, “Let America Be America Again.” That friction is also the foundation of the piece commissioned by Shannon Lyles and the Freedom High School Patriot Singers in Orlando, Florida. Freedom High School serves such a diverse community of immigrants that 11 languages were represented in Ms. Lyles’ top choir. As hateful and xenophobic rhetoric became prominent in national discourse, we worked together to capture the essence of the choir’s ethnic diversity and artistic unity. Emma Lazarus’s words, which are engraved at the base of the Statue of Liberty, are a perfect foil to Hughes’s dark (but ultimately hopeful) sentiments. To add a personal touch to the piece, I asked members of the choir to complete three prompts—I hope.../I dream.../I sing...—which they would then translate and record so that I could get a sense of the rhythm of their respective languages. In the end, the piece aims to make plain how far we are from the ideals we’ve set for ourselves, but it also clings to the hope that we will one day achieve them. I can’t think of anything more American than that.

Democracy

Democracy will not come
Today, this year
Nor ever
Through compromise and fear.

I have as much right
As the other fellow has
To stand
On my two feet
And own the land.

I tire so of hearing people say,
Let things take their course.
Tomorrow is another day.
I do not need my freedom when I'm dead.
I cannot live on tomorrow's bread.

Freedom
Is a strong seed
Planted
In a great need.

I live here, too.
I want freedom
Just as you.

America Will Be!

(adapted from *Let America Be America Again**)
...who are you that mumbles in the dark?
And who are you that draws your veil across the stars?...

... I’m the one who dreamt... a dream... while still a serf of kings,...
a dream so strong, so brave, so true,
That even yet it ... sings...
To build a “homeland of the free”...

For all the songs we’ve sung,
And all the dreams we’ve dreamed,

America was never America to me,
And yet I swear... America will be!

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Give me your tired, your poor,
your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
give me the wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these to me!
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

(Adapted from Emma Lazarus’s *The New Colossus*.)

Statements

<u>Spanish</u> : Yo sueño de un nuevo amanecer.	I dream of a new dawn.
<u>Sindhala</u> : Mage anagatha sinduwa.	I sing for the future.
<u>Filipino</u> : Umaasa ako no may pagbabago.	I hope there is change.
<u>Arabic</u> : ’Atamanaa ’an albashar yatealam an yu hib.	I hope that people can learn to love.
<u>Portuguese</u> : Eu canto porque estou livre.	I sing because I am free.
<u>Mandarin</u> : Wo mèngxiangzhe meihao de wèilái.	I dream of a better future.
<u>Japanese</u> : Seigi o motomote.	I hope for justice.
<u>German</u> : Ich singe für eine Flucht aus der Welt.	I sing for an escape from the world.
<u>Vietnamese</u> : Còn uoó mong hoà bình.	I dream of peace.
<u>Haitian Creole</u> : Mwen chante pou lapè sou Latè.	I sing for peace.

Christopher H. Harris, *Bring Me All Your Dreams*

This setting of the Langston Hughes poem *The Dream Keeper* illustrates the beauty of a dream soundscape. In its homophonic simplicity, this piece creates an atmosphere through rich harmony, familiar text, and dynamic variance that drifts the listener away. The Unsung Collective starts the program with Harris’s setting of this text not just for the shimmering harmonies, but because the text communicates that a Dream Keeper aims to protect dreams “Away from the too-rough fingers of the world.” Though written decades ago, Hughes knew the importance of protecting unsullied dreams in a modern-day world. While life will present challenges, it is the belief that a dream that remains pure and untouched is all the more likely to succeed.

The Dream Keeper

Bring me all of your dreams,
You dreamers,
Bring me all of your
Heart melodies
That I may wrap them
In a blue cloud-cloth
Away from the too-rough fingers
Of the world.

Margaret Bonds, *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*

Margaret Bonds and Langston Hughes were acquainted in the 1930s and became lifelong friends that can be observed between their marriage of music and text. At just 17 years of age, Hughes writes about Black American connection to rivers in this country and aligns that experience with African enslaved peoples and their relation to rivers in Africa. In contrast to dreaming of what could be, Hughes takes a historical glance back into Black existence, encompassing both marvels such as the construction of Egyptian pyramids and terrors as depicted in American slavery. He communicates that while often neglected in the context of the existence of humankind, Black identity was as prevalent in the historical past as it is in the present.

Bonds compliments Hughes’s poem by evoking the text and taking the listener on a journey. In this piece, Bonds develops harmonic language in the piano accompaniment indicative of the various memory shifts, as well as melodic material filled with text painting illustrated by the singer.

The Negro Speaks of Rivers

I’ve known rivers:
I’ve known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.

I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I’ve seen
its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I’ve known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

Roland Carter, *Hold Fast to Dreams*

The Unsung Collective finishes this set with Roland Carter’s arrangement of *Hold Fast to Dreams*. In a dramatic yet sensitive portrayal of Hughes’s poetry, Carter takes the listener on a journey through dynamic polarity and a brilliant sense of homorhythmic skill that highlights the power of the text. Carter paints Hughes’s use of metaphorical imagery through tonality, articulation, and rubato sections that create intense moments of stress and release. As the program begins with a warm concept of dreams, here Carter allows the listener to hear the severity of a world without them.

This aforementioned world absent of dreams is a “barren field covered in snow,” and life becomes a “broken-winged bird That cannot fly.” Bringing the piece to a close, Carter seamlessly aligns “Hold on, keep your hands on the plow,” a melody that permeates Black-Amercian culture (also present in Hughes’s *Freedom’s Plow*) from the church to the front lines of fighting for justice since the early 19th century.—*Tyrone Clinton, Jr.*

Dreams

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

William Averitt, *Afro-American Fragments*

William Averitt is a prolific composer whose works have been performed across the globe. He is Professor Emeritus of composition at Shenandoah University in Virginia and has received fellowships, grants, and commissions from numerous sources, including the National Endowment for the Arts (twice), the Maryland Symphony, Opus 3 Trio (Washington, DC), the Atlanta Chamber Players, the Paducah (Kentucky) Symphony Orchestra, and the Bach Choir of Pittsburgh. Also active as a conductor, Averitt was founder and music director of Winchester Music Viva, a community-based professional-level chamber choir, for over ten seasons. Averitt has often been inspired to set the poetry of Langston Hughes and has completed four choral cycles of Hughes settings, of which *Afro-American Fragments* was the first. He writes:

Afro-American Fragments was written in 1991 for Winchester (Virginia) Musica Viva, the chamber choir I had founded in 1981. It appeared on the concluding concert of our 10-year celebratory season. The choice of the four-hands accompaniment was the result of my wanting to utilize the talents of the two pianists who had been our collaborators over the previous 10 years. Subsequently, it won the 1992 Contemporary Choral Composition Competition of the Robert Wagner Center at California State–Los Angeles. A few years later, it began to appear on concerts by Conspirare under Craig Hella Johnson, who ultimately recorded three of its movements. In 2009, ECS published the score and, in 2013, the UMKC Conservatory Singers under Robert Bode included it and two later Langston Hughes cycles on their MSR CD entitled *The Deepness of the Blue*.

Afro-American Fragments’ six poems and movements are organized into three pairs. In the brief “Wonder,” Hughes creates an early evening city scene, just as the streetlights flicker on. This is followed by “When Sue Wears Red,” a poem that seems to be the musings in church of a love-struck young man whose obsessive thoughts constantly are interrupted by shouts of the choir singing phrases like “Come with a blast of trumpets, Jesus!” Musically, this is set as a sort of a ragtime. The short and evocative “Dream Dust” is used as a preface to Hughes’s great “Song for Billie Holiday,” presented as a blues in which the spirit of the great jazz singer is evoked by a solo soprano in the concluding section. The final two movements are written to reflect two styles of spirituals, “Feet o’ Jesus” in the manner of a gentle hymn and “Fire!” as an energetic, up-tempo anthem.

Afro-American Fragments

Wonder

Early blue evening.
Lights ain’t come on yet.
Looky yonder!
They come on now!

When Sue Wears Red

When Susanna Jones wears red
her face is like an ancient cameo
Turned brown by the ages.

Come with a blast of trumpets,
Jesus!

When Susanna Jones wears red
A queen from some time-dead Egyptian night
Walks once again.

Blow trumpets, Jesus!

And the beauty of Susanna Jones in red
Burns in my heart a love-fire sharp like a pain.

Sweet silver trumpets,
Jesus!

Dream Dust

Gather out of star-dust
Earth-dust,
Cloud-dust,
And splinters of hail,
One handful of dream-dust
Not for sale.

Song for Billie Holiday

What can purge my heart
Of the song
And the sadness?
What can purge my heart
But the song
Of the sadness?
What can purge my heart
Of the sadness
Of the song?

Do not speak of sorrow
With dust in her hair,

Feet o’ Jesus

At the feet o’ Jesus,
Sorrow like a sea.
Lordy, let yo’ mercy
Come driftin’ down on me.

Or bits of dust in eyes
A chance wind blows there.
The sorrow that I speak of
Is dusted with despair.

Voice of muted trumpet,
Cold brass in warm air.
Bitter television blurred
By sound that shimmers—
Where?

At the feet o’ Jesus
At yo’ feet I stand.
O, ma little Jesus,
Please reach out yo’ hand.

Fire!

Fire,
Fire, Lord!
Fire gonna burn ma soul!

I ain't been good,
I ain't been clean —
I been stinkin', low-down, mean.

Fire,
Fire, Lord!
Fire gonna burn ma soul!

Tell me, brother,
Do you believe
If you wanta go to heaben
Got to moan an' grieve?

Fire,
Fire, Lord!
Fire gonna burn ma soul!

I been stealin',
Been tellin' lies,
Had more women
Than Pharaoh had wives.

Fire,
Fire, Lord!
Fire gonna burn ma soul!
I means Fire, Lord!
Fire gonna burn ma soul!

Rosphanye Powell, *I Dream A World*

In addition to serving as Professor of Voice at Auburn University, Rosphanye Powell has been hailed as one of America’s premier women composers of solo vocal and choral music. She has an impressive catalogue of works that are in great demand at choral festivals throughout the country, and she is commissioned yearly to compose for university choruses, professional, community and church choirs, as well as secondary school choruses. Langston Hughes’s poem *I Dream A World* is said to have inspired Martin Luther King, Jr., and Powell’s setting (as described by her publisher, Hal Leonard) “is an anthem for all those who believe in human rights, in peace and hope for a better tomorrow.” It is in this spirit that we conclude our program. The composer writes of her own work:

In *I Dream A World* I depict musically Mr. Hughes’s juxtaposition of the world that is and the world that could be. The world of which Langston Hughes dreams is characterized by joy, peace, and freedom; yet, the one in which he lives is full of the “wretchedness” of racial prejudice and avarice. I begin the work with a joyful piano introduction that represents the “dream” theme. This is followed by a choral introduction in which the women, echoed by the men, sound the first hearing of “I Dream A World.” The beginning of the song is, for Hughes, a pleasant dream, in which “our world” is one where love, joy, and freedom rule. However, as the song develops, the dream becomes dark, representing the present state of being. This is heard in a shift from consonant chords to the use of dissonance in the piano, as well as rhythmic agitation in both the vocal and piano parts. As Hughes’s dream develops further, the poet chooses to believe that “joy, like a pearl” will one day “attend the needs of all mankind.” Because of this, he will continue to dream for a better world, heard in the passionately repeated phrase “I Dream” near the end of the song. *I Dream A World* ends with a final climactic statement of “our world,” followed by two accented and strident piano chords which depict the poet startled awake—only now aware that he has been dreaming.

I Dream A World

I dream a world where man
No other man will scorn,
Where love will bless the earth
And peace its paths adorn
I dream a world where all
Will know sweet freedom's way,
Where greed no longer saps the soul
Nor avarice blights our day.

A world I dream where black or white,
Whatever race you be,
Will share the bounties of the earth
And every man is free,
Where wretchedness will hang its head
And joy, like a pearl,
Attends the needs of all mankind-
Of such I dream, our world!



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WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU NEXT SEASON!

The members of Cerddorion Vocal Ensemble hope you enjoy today’s performance and that you will plan on attending our performances in the 2023–2024 concert season. Check our web site (www.cerddorion.org) for information on the new season as it becomes available.

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