

CERDDORION

VOCAL ENSEMBLE

directed by

Susanne Peck

presents

NOW SING NEW YORK!

CONTEMPORARY CHORAL WORKS
BY NEW YORK COMPOSERS

Sunday, May 4, 1997
4:00 P.M.
First Presbyterian Church
of Yorktown
2880 Crompond Road
Yorktown Heights, NY

Wednesday, May 14, 1997
7:30 P.M. Meet the Composer
8:05 P.M. Concert
Church of St. Luke in the Fields
487 Hudson Street
New York, NY

CERDDORION

Susanne Peck, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

SOPRANOS

Andrea Larson
Margaret O'Brien
Lisa Rein
Jeanette Rodriguez
Debbie Schaeffner
Sherry Zukof

ALTOS

Jane Baun
Eric S. Brenner
Grace Check
Kate Troast Kurz
Marilyn Lenat
Ellen Schorr

TENORS

Ralph Bonheim
Michael Chamberlin
Thomas Cirillo
David Deschamps
Philip Gallo
R. J. Hazeltine-Shedd

BASSES

Raphael Biran
Peter Cobb
Steve Friedman
Ashley Goodall
Shawn Hall
Peter Kurz
Robb Moss

NOW SING NEW YORK!

from Six Madrigals

Vita De La Mia Vita
Oré, Fermate Il Volo
Io Son La Primavera

William Hawley (b. 1950)

Two Impressions

A Slash of Blue
in Just- spring

—Whistler, Marilyn Lenat

James Bassi (b. 1961)

Sacred Songs

Come In
Psalm CXLVI: Praise the Lord!
Psalm XXIII

Elliot Z. Levine (b. 1948)

O Nata Lux
In Monte Oliveti

Nancy Wertsch

Sing, My Soul, His Wondrous Love
Mercy and Truth are Met

—Organ, Shawn Hall

Ned Rorem (b. 1923)

Rejoice We All in the Lord

from Seven Motets for the Church Year

INTERMISSION

Sound Canticle on Bay Psalm 23.

—Quartet, Sherry Zukof, Marilyn Lenat,
David Deschamps, Shawn Hall

Gregg Smith (b. 1931)

Spinning Flax

—Mezzo-soprano, Grace Check

Lisa Bielawa (b. 1968)

from Sing, My Tongue

Faithful Cross!

—Soprano, Jeanette Rodriguez

Calvin Hampton (1938-1984)

from The Boulding Chorales

Can I, Imprisoned

My Lord, Thou art in Every Breath I Take

Kevin Oldham (1960-1993)

Teach Me, O Lord

Robert Beaser (b. 1954)

NOTES AND TEXTS

VITA DE LA MIA VITA

Vita de la mia vita,
Tu mi somigli pallidetta olivà
O rosa scolorita;
Nè di beltà sei priva,
Ma in ogni aspetto tu mi sei gradita,
O lusinghiera ò schiva;
E se mi segui o fuggi,
Soavemente mi consumi e struggi.
—Torquato Tasso (1544-1595)

ORE, FERMATE IL VOLO

Ore fermate il volo
Nel lucido oriente,
Mentre s'en vola il ciel rapidamente;
E, carolando in torno
A l'alba matutina
Ch'esce da la marina,
L'umana vita ritardate e'l giorno.
E voi, Aure veloci,
Portate i miei sospiri
Là dove Laura spiri
E riportate a me sue chiare voci,
Si che l'ascolti io solo,
Sol voi presenti e'l signor nostro Amore,
Aure soavi ed Ore.
—Torquato Tasso (1544-1595)

IO SON PRIMAVERA

Io son la Primavera
Che lieta, o vaghe donne, a voi ritorno
Col mio bel manto adorno
Per vestir le campagne d'erbe e fiori
E svegliarvi nel cor novelli amori.

LIFE OF MY LIFE

Life of my life,
you are to me like a pallid olive
or a fading rose;
nor are you deprived of beauty,
but in every way you please me,
whether you flatter or shun;
and whether you follow me or flee
softly you consume and melt me.
—English translation by William Hawley

SOFT BREEZES AND HOURS

Hours, cease your flight
In the lucid East,
As the heavens fly quickly past;
And, dancing about
The morning light
Rising from the sea,
Slow the life of man and slow the day.
And you, swift Breezes,
Carry my sighs
There, where Laura breathes
And bring back to me her clear words,
That I alone may hear them,
With only you and our lord Love present,
Soft Breezes and Hours.
—English translation by William Hawley

I AM SPRING

I am Spring
who gladly, lovely women, returns to you
with my beautiful, embellished mantle
to dress the countryside in greenery and flowers
and to arouse in your hearts new loves.

A mè Zeffiro spira,
 A me ride la terra
 e'l ciel sereno;
 Volan di senò in seno
 Gli Amoretti vezzosi a mille mille
 Chi armato di stral, di chi faville.
 E voi ancor gioite,
 Godete al mio venir
 tra risi e canti;
 Amate i vostri amanti
 Or che'l bel viso amato april v'infiora;
 Primavera per voi non torna ognora.
 —Torquato Tasso (1544-1595)

For me Zephir sighs,
 for me the earth laughs,
 as do the serene heavens;
 from breast to breast fly
 the charming Amoretti by the thousands,
 armed with arrows and with torches.
 And you, again delighted,
 take pleasure in my coming
 amidst laughing and song;
 love your lovers
 while April adorns lovely faces with flowers;
 Spring for you will not return forever.
 —English translation by William Hawley

About the Composer:

William Hawley's works have been recorded by Chanticleer, The Gregg-Smith Singers, et al. and performed in cities throughout the world, including London, Tokyo, Paris, Berlin, San Francisco and his home, New York. Regarding these pieces, Mr. Hawley writes: "In these madrigals, I set the lyric poems of Torquato Tasso quite freely, allowing the great beauty of the language to guide me. The bittersweet alternation of emotions, expressed in endless variety, made composition a great pleasure, as I found one madrigal quite naturally leading to the next."



TWO IMPRESSIONS

1) A SLASH OF BLUE

A slash of blue
 A sweep of gray
 Some scarlet patches on the way,
 Compose an evening sky
 A little purple slipped between
 Some purple trousers hurried on
 A wave of gold
 A bank of day
 This just makes out the morning sky.
 —Emily Dickinson

2) IN JUST- SPRING

in Just- spring
 when the world is mud-luscious
 the little lame balloonman whistles far and wee
 and eddie and bill come running
 from marbles and piracies
 and it's spring
 when the world is puddle-wonderful
 the queer old balloonman whistles far and wee
 and betty and isbel come dancing
 from hopscotch and jump rope
 and it's spring
 and the goat-footed balloonman
 whistles far and wee
 —e. e. cummings

About the Composer:

James Bassi, who has studied composition at New England Conservatory and the Manhattan School of Music, has had his works performed at Avery Fisher Hall, The Cathedral of St. John the Divine and throughout the United States. He received an NEA grant to become composer-in-residence with the Western Wind Vocal Ensemble, which led to a performance of his cantata "love, war, and politics" based on seven e.e. cummings' poems. Mr. Bassi, who composes in a variety of genres, also writes for musical theater with his lyricist-collaborator Richard Lollo. Regarding tonight's pieces, Mr. Bassi writes: "The title Two Impressions reflects the impressionistic nature of both the music and the text. Dickinson's poem contains evocative images of sky and color. cummings depicts a spring scene with children, and the somewhat disturbing surreal presence of the balloonman. I have chosen to portray the balloonman quite literally with a whistling solo, somewhat following the lead of Debussy's prelude 'Le Petit Berger' where one hears the little shepherd piping on the piano."

SACRED SONGS COME IN

Come in:

let us bow and bend low:

let us kneel before the God who made us

for he is our God and we the people who belong to his pasture,

the flock that is led by his hand.

Oh that today you would listen to his voice!

Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,

as on that day at Massah in the desert,

when your fathers put me to the test;

when they tried me, though they saw my work.

If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart.

PSALM CXLVI: PRAISE THE LORD!

Praise the Lord, my soul!

It is he who keeps faith forever.

Who is just to those that are oppressed.

It is he who gives bread to the hungry,

the Lord who sets prisoners free.

Praise the Lord,
who gives sight to the blind,
who raises up those who are bowed down,
Praise the Lord!

The Lord who protects the stranger,
and upholds the widow and orphan.
It is the Lord who loves the just but thwarts the path of the wicked.

The Lord will reign for ever,
Zion's God, from age to age.
Praise the Lord, my soul.
Praise the Lord.

PSALM XXIII

The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul:
He guideth me in straight paths for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me;
Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of mine enemies;
Thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Amen.

About the Composer:

Elliot Z. Levine has been the baritone for the Western Wind Vocal Ensemble since its inception in 1969. He received his M.M. from the Manhattan School of Music, his B.A. from Queens College and has studied composition with Robert Starer at Brooklyn College. He has been awarded five Meet-the-Composer Grants and is composer-in-residence at the Church of St. Thomas More in New York, for which he composed the pieces on tonight's program.



O NATA LUX

O nata lux de lumine,
Jesu redemptor saeculi,
dignare clemens supplicum
laudes preces que sumere.

Qui carne quondam contegi
dignatus es pro perditis,
Nos membra confer effici,
tui beati corporis.

IN MONTE OLIVETI

In monte Oliveti
oravit ad Patrem:
Pater, si fieri [potest],
transeat a me calix iste.

Spiritus quidem promptus est,
caro autem infirma:
fiat voluntas tua.
Vigilate et orate,
ut non in tretis in tentationem.

O born light of light,
Jesus, redeemer of the world,
mercifully deem worthy and accept
the praises and prayers of your supplicants.

Thou who once deigned to be clothed in flesh
for the sake of the lost ones,
grant us to be made members
of your holy body.

On Mount Olivet
He prayed to the Father:
Father, if it is possible,
let this cup pass from me.

The spirit indeed is willing,
but the flesh is weak:
Thy will be done.
Watch and listen,
Pray that you do not fall into temptation.

About the Composer:

Nancy Wertsch is a graduate of The Curtis Institute of Music and won a Fulbright Grant to study at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin. As well as being a composer and arranger, Ms. Wertsch is an accomplished singer, having sung opera rôles in Aspen, Memphis and Wisconsin. On Martin Luther King Day, at King's own church in Atlanta, her arrangement of "Blessed Assurance" has been heard regularly, and her arrangement of "America the Beautiful" was performed at the White House. Both O Nata Lux and In Monte Oliveti, composed for the choir at St. Joseph's Church in Greenwich Village, were written for the Feast of The Transfiguration.



SING, MY SOUL, HIS WONDROUS LOVE

Sing, My Soul, His Wondrous Love,
Who, from yon bright throne above,
Ever watchful o'er our race,
Still to man extends His grace.

Heav'n and earth by Him were made,
All is by His scepter sway'd;
What are we that he should show
So much love to us below?

God, the merciful and good,
Bought us with the Savior's blood
And, to make our safety sure,
Guides us by His spirit pure.

Sing, my soul, adore his name;
Let his glory be thy theme:
Praise Him till He calls thee home,
Trust His love for all to come.

—Hymn 22 (III, 1) of the Protestant Episcopal Church, U.S.A. (1841)

MERCY AND TRUTH ARE MET

Mercy and truth are met together,
righteousness and peace have kissed.

Truth shall spring out of the earth,
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

Yea, the Lord shall show loving kindness,
and our land shall yield her increase.

Righteousness shall go before him,
and peace shall be the pathway of his steps. Amen.

—Psalm 85:10-13

REJOICE WE ALL IN THE LORD

Rejoice we all in the Lord.

Rejoice we all in the Lord
keeping holy day in honor of all the Saints;
in whose solemnity the Angels rejoice
and glorify the Son of God.

Rejoice in the Lord
O ye righteous;
for it becometh well the just to be thankful.
Rejoice, rejoice we all.

—Introit for All Saints

About the Composer:

Ned Rorem has studied composition at the Curtis Institute, Juilliard and privately with Arthur Honegger, Virgil Thompson and David Diamond. As well as being known as a composer, Mr. Rorem has published many essays and an acclaimed set of diaries. His skillful use of language is perhaps one reason that he has contributed so prolifically to the choral repertoire. Mr. Rorem's opus also includes many operas, orchestral and chamber works and in 1976 he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his Air Music.



SOUND CANTICLE ON BAY PSALM 23

The Lord to me a shepherd is,
want therefore shall not I,
He in the fields of tender grass doth cause me down to lie.
To waters calm me gently leads,
Restore my soul doth He,
He doth in paths of righteousness
for his names sake lead me.
Yea, though in valley of death's shade,
I walk, none ill I'll fear,
Because thou art with me.
Thy rod and staff my comfort are.
For me a table thou hast spread,
In presence of my foes,
Thou dost anoint my head with oyle,
My cup it overflows.
Goodness and mercy surely shall,
All my days follow me,
And in the Lord's house I shall dwell
So long as day shall be.

About the Composer:

Gregg Smith, as well as being an accomplished composer, is conductor of the world-renowned Gregg Smith Singers, founded in 1955. His Sound Canticle on Bay Psalm 23 is based upon the setting found in the 1698 edition of the first North American musical publication, the Bay Psalm Book, first published in 1640. Smith's modern transformation has a definite circular and surrounding sound and uses polytonality as a compositional device. A solo quartet sings the hymn while the remaining singers echo words and phrases. At the end, the final phrase is echoed by seventeen different voice parts.



SPINNING FLAX

"From early dawn to the ninth hour I think from hour to hour while spinning flax,
I wait patiently the other hours for my end with good hope."

—Melania the Younger, 5th century

"My thoughts - I think them with my whole body.
You're going to laugh - with my hands, my feet, with my whole body,
When I have a thought, I think it in my head, but I feel it everywhere."

—anonymous hysteria patient, 1903

"I travel everywhere at night
Tonight I shall come and find you even though you were to lock yourself in your room.
I have had a vision, a storm-tost sea,
A ship full of souls beaten about by the tempest of unclean thoughts."

—Charlotte Cadière, 1728

"I know you think my mind is wandering, but I assure you it is not so."

—anonymous nun, A.D. 675

"I shall give thee words and wisdom none shall be able to withstand."

—St. Catherine of Siena, 1370

"You will not believe me, I am counted but as a dreamer
But when this dreamer is hanged, then remember what I said to you:
If you had believed the voice that spake to you, you had died.
But seeing you spake to it and resisted it, it had power to kill you."

—Mary Parsons, 1651

About the Composer:

*Lisa Bielawa is the New York Foundation for the Arts 1996 Greg Millard Fellow in Music Composition and the winner of two ASCAP Young Composers Competition Awards (1995 and 1996). Lisa received her B.A. in 1990 from Yale University. As the vocalist for the Philip Glass Ensemble, she has performed and recorded throughout the world. About tonight's piece, Ms. Bielawa writes: "The collaged texts of **Spinning Flax** are 'spun together' from a broad historical range of source materials that provide actual recorded utterances of young girls aged 12-20 in some state of visionary transcendence. In writing this piece, I have found that the prevailing, guiding image for me has been a young woman sitting and spinning flax for 1500 years, waiting for a time when visionary, creative expression for women can take a decisive form, meanwhile engaging in a transcendent and often dangerous life of the mind."*



FAITHFUL CROSS!

Faithful cross! above all other, one and only noble tree!
None in foliage, none in blossom, none in fruit thy peer may be:
Sweetest wood and sweetest iron! Sweetest weight is hung on thee.
Bend thy boughs, O tree of glory!

—Venantius Honorius Fortunatus (540? - 600?)

About the Composer:

Faithful Cross! is the fourth movement of *Sing, My Tongue*, cantata for Palm Sunday commissioned by and dedicated to Philip Brunell and Plymouth Congregational Church in Minneapolis, MN in 1981. The text is that of the ancient *Pange Lingua*, written by Venantius Honorius Fortunatus (540? - 600?), and translated by John Mason Neal (1818 - 1866). This haunting setting combines the richness of an African-American spiritual with the austerity of Russian church music. Calvin Hampton (1938-1984) was the Director of Music at Calvary Episcopal Church, Gramercy Park for twenty years. His life was ended by AIDS in August 1984 at the age of forty-five.



CAN I, IMPRISONED

Can I, imprisoned, body-bounded, touch
The starry robe of God, and from my soul,
My tiny Part, reach forth to his great Whole,
And spread my Little to the infinite Much,
When Truth forever slips from out my clutch,
And what I take indeed, I do but dole
In cupfuls from a rimless ocean-bowl
That holds a million million million such?
And yet, some Thing that moves among the stars,
And holds the cosmos in a web of law,
Moves too in me: a hunger, a quick thaw
Of soul that liquefies the ancient bars,
As I, a member of creation sing
The burning oneness binding everything.

—Kenneth Boulding

MY LORD, THOU ART IN EVERY BREATH I TAKE

My Lord, Thou art in every breath I take,
And every bite and sup taste firm of Thee.
With Buoyant mercy Thou enfoldest me,
And holdest up my foot each step I make.
Thy touch is all around me when I wake,
Thy sound I hear, and by Thy light I see
The world is fresh with Thy divinity
And all Thy creatures flourish for Thy sake:
For I have looked upon a little child
And seen Forgiveness, and have seen the day
With eastern fire cleanse the foul night away;
So cleansest Thou in this House I have defiled.
And if I should be merciful, I know
It is Thy mercy, Lord, in overflow.
—Kenneth Boulding

About the Composer:

Kevin Oldham was a recipient of a national "Meet-the-Composer" grant as well as the Festival of the Atlantic Young Composers Award. He received both his Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from Juilliard. Mr. Oldham was also a noted pianist who made his orchestral debut with the Detroit Symphony under the baton of Erich Kunzel in 1980. His Concerto for Piano, Op. 14 was recorded and released as the centerpiece of BMG Catalyst's CD, Memento Bittersweet. He was active in the Estate Project for Artists with AIDS and died in March of 1993. These two pieces from The Boulding Chorales were dedicated to composer John Duffy and Kevin Walters, formerly of The Marble Collegiate Church Choir of New York.



TEACH ME, O LORD

Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes
And I shall keep it unto the end.
And I will praise Thee with my whole heart,
With uprightness of heart.

Incline my heart unto Thy statutes
Make me go in the path of the Lord,
For Thy word is my salvation,
Thy law is my delight.

My soul melteth away for sorrow,
O Lord, how I long for Thy word,
For Thy word is my song within the house of my pilgrimage.

Teach me, O Lord the way of Thy hand.
Teach me, O Lord the way of Thy statutes
And I shall keep it unto the end.

Alleluia.

—Psalm 119

About the Composer:

Robert Beaser, who is currently professor and Chairman of the Composition Department at Juilliard, has accrued numerous awards, including fellowships from the Guggenheim and Fulbright Foundations, a Charles Ives Scholarship, an ASCAP Composers Award, and honors in the Stroud International Competition in England. In 1995, when the American Academy of Arts and Letters honored him with its lifetime achievement award—the "Academy Award" in Music—the citation read: "His masterful orchestration, clear-cut structures, and logical musical discourse. . . reveal a musical imagination of rare creativity and sensitivity. . . and puts him in the forefront of his generation of composers." The original Teach Me, O Lord was commissioned in 1983 by the publishing firm of Alexander Broude, Inc., to commemorate the thirty-fifth anniversary of the State of Israel. The current incarnation of the piece, condensed from the original which was 14 minutes in length, receives its world premiere at tonight's performance.



CERDDORION, pronounced \ kair-'dor-i-on \ (the name means "musicians" in Welsh), is a vocal ensemble comprised of some of New York City's finest amateur and semi-professional choral singers. Founded by artistic director Susanne Peck in 1995 under the name Galatea, Cerddorion is dedicated to pursuing beauty in vocal lyricism and to achieving a rich, mellifluous timbre while striving for excellence in diction, intonation and unity of performance. From years of solo and ensemble performance in vocal repertoire ranging from medieval to contemporary, Ms. Peck brings to the conductor's podium a solid technical understanding of singing and a passion for the awe-inspiring journey into the interpretation of music. Cerddorion is committed to exploring an eclectic, multifaceted repertoire with an emphasis on contemporary music.

Since its formation, Cerddorion has presented concerts in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Westchester County, New York, with challenging programs including "Winter, War and Flowers: Paul Hindemith and his Influential Contemporaries" (Poulenc, Stravinsky, Ravel, Bartok); "Rich English Fare: Post-Romantic Choral Inspirations from Nature" (works by Barber, Delius, Elgar, Walton and others); "Dying to Live: Hymns of Early America, Spirituals, and Folk Song Arrangements (works by Billings, Ingalls, Read, Ives and others) and "Monteverdi: Musica Spirituale e Madrigali".

Highly acclaimed as a soprano soloist, chamber singer and voice teacher in the greater New York City area as well as throughout the country and abroad, artistic director SUSANNE PECK was chosen in the summers of 1994, 1995 and 1996 to participate in Chorus America's conducting workshop at Saranac Lake, where she studied with Margaret Hillis, Gregg Smith and Dennis Keene, among others. She has been assistant to Dennis Keene, director of Ascension Music at Church of the Ascension, and to Kyler Brown at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, home of the Virgin Consort, in New York City. Ms. Peck also assists Johannes Somary in his direction of the Taghkanic Chorale in Peekskill, New York. In 1993, she founded the vocal chamber ensemble Charis, which appears regularly in Dobbs Ferry, Mt. Kisco and Somers, New York and toured in Italy (with various members of Cerddorion) during the summer of 1995.

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