

About Us

CERDDORION (the name means “musicians” in Welsh) is a chamber ensemble comprising some of New York City’s finest choral singers.

Founded in 1995 by Susanne Peck, Cerddorion is dedicated to setting new standards for extraordinary choral performance. As the group’s name suggests, Cerddorion aspires to musicianship in its fullest sense, using the human voice to explore and fulfill the expressive potential of the art. Audiences have quickly come to know Cerddorion for its interpretive depth as well as its technical excellence.

Cerddorion’s repertoire spans the choral literature, from the early Renaissance to new works. Past programs have focused on Josquin Desprez; Monteverdi; early American hymns and spirituals; double-choir works by Bach and Schütz; Brahms, Schubert, and Rheinberger; Delius, Elgar, and other post-Romantics; Hindemith and his contemporaries; and 20th-century New York City composers.

Since its foundation, Cerddorion has attracted significant recognition. In August 1998 and August 1999 the group served as the resident teaching ensemble for the Dennis Keene Choral Festival in Kent, Connecticut. Other prestigious invitations include collaborations with the acclaimed early music ensemble Concert Royal in performances of Bach’s *Cantata 140* and Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*. Since October 1997, Cerddorion has been Artist-in-Residence at the New York Public Library’s Tompkins Square branch.

Robert Page, director of the Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh and professor of Music at Carnegie Mellon University, has called Cerddorion “a chamber ensemble where ‘ensemble’ is the key word. The sheen, the matching of sounds is a joy to hear ... whether it be Poulenc, Britten, Hindemith, Elgar or Victoria.”

Supporters of Cerddorion

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UpCOMING SEASON

To learn about future concerts, please visit us at www.cerddorion.org.

CERDDORION vocal ensemble

directed by
Kristina Boerger

presents

Flora & Fauna



Tuesday, May 15, 2001, 8:00 p.m.
Christ Church, Cobble Hill
326 Clinton Street
Brooklyn

Saturday, May 19, 2001, 8:00 p.m.
Church of St. Luke in the Fields
487 Hudson Street
Manhattan

CERDDORION

Sopranos

Prentice Clark
Panny King
Marilyn Lenat
Eva Lund
Wendy Reitmeier
Jeanette Rodriguez
Ellen Schorr

Altos

Grace Check
Sally Elliott
Susan Glass
Kate Kurz
Cathy Markoff
Leonore Max
Myrna Nachman

Tenors

David Deschamps
Philip Gallo
Steve Parkey
Franklin Roth

Basses

Raphael Biran
Peter Cobb
John Hetland
Peter Kurz
Tod Mijanovich
Togu Oppusunggu
Dale Rejtmar

Instrumentalists

Myrna Nachman, piano
Pedro D'Aquino, organ

About kristina boerger

An accomplished singer, conductor, and composer, Kristina Boerger comes to New York from Champaign-Urbana, where she earned a D.M.A. in choral conducting and literature at the University of Illinois. Currently Professor of Music History at Barnard College, Dr. Boerger has also served on the music faculties of Lake Forest College and Millikin University. She has been a guest conductor, adjudicator, and ensemble clinician in several Midwestern cities, as well as in Tallahassee, Québec City, and Mar del Plata, Argentina.

As Founding Director of AMASONG, an ensemble for 60 women's voices, Dr. Boerger has conducted and produced two award-winning compact disc recordings, appeared in several national venues, and toured the Czech Republic. Her work with AMASONG is the subject of a documentary soon to be aired on national public television.

Dr. Boerger received her formative musical training from pianist Annie Sherter. Her choral arrangements and compositions are sung by ensembles throughout the country, and she won the 2000 GLAMA for Best Composition.

As a singer in a variety of styles, Dr. Boerger has appeared with The King's Noyse, Rocky Maffit, and Urban Bush Women - as well as in numerous oratorio and opera roles. In 1994 she sang the soprano Evangelist role in the Canadian premiere of Arvo Pärt's St. John Passion, a CBC radio simulcast from the 17th Festival International de Lanaudière.

She currently performs with Pomerium, one of New York's premiere early music ensembles, and is a member of the Western Wind Vocal Ensemble, a sextet renowned for its performing, recording, and music education activities.

For I am under the same accusation with my Saviour—
For they said, he is besides himself.
For the officers of the peace are at variance with me, and the watchman
smites me with his staff.
For Silly fellow! Silly fellow! is against me and belongeth neither to me nor to my family.
For I am in twelve HARDSHIPS, but he that was born of a virgin shall deliver me out of all.

For H is a spirit and therefore he is God.
For K is king and therefore he is God.
For L is love and therefore he is God.
For M is musick and therefore he is God.

For the instruments are by their rhimes.
For the Shawm rhimes are lawn fawn moon boon and the like.
For the harp rhimes are sing ring string and the like.
For the cymbal rhimes are bell well toll soul and the like.
For the flute rhimes are tooth youth suit mute and the like.
For the Bassoon rhimes are pass class and the like.
For the dulcimer rhimes are grace place beat heat and the like.
For the Clarinet rhimes are clean seen and the like.
For the trumpet rhimes are sound bound soar more and the like.
For the TRUMPET of God is a blessed intelligence and so are all the instruments in HEAVEN.
For GOD the father Almighty plays upon the HARP of stupendous magnitude and melody.
For at that time malignity ceases and the devils themselves are at peace.
For this time is perceptible to man by a remarkable stillness and serenity of soul.

Hallelujah from the heart of God, and from the hand of the artist inimitable,
and from the echo of the heavenly harp in sweetness magnifical and mighty.

—Christopher Smart

Flora & Fauna

The Lamb

John Tavener (b.1944)

Il bianco e dolce cigno

Glass, Markoff, K. Kurz, Nachman, Max,
Deschamps, Gallo, Parkey, P. Kurz, Oppusunggu,
Rejtar, Biran, Mijanovich, Cobb

Jacques Arcadelt (1507-1568)

The Silver Swan

Lenat, Check, Max, Gallo, Biran

Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)

Un Cygne

Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)

The Oak and the Ash

The Willow Song Lay a Garland

Traditional,
arr. Gordon Langford (b.1930)
Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)
Robert Pearsall (1795-1856)

Have You Seen the White Lily Grow Lament Design for October

Philip Gallo, soloist; Myrna Nachman, piano

Irving Fine (1914-1962)

Les Lions Le Cri de Joie

Marilyn Lenat, soloist; Myrna Nachman, piano

Pierre Mercure (1927-1966)

Rejoice in the Lamb

Jeanette Rodriguez, Grace Check,
Philip Gallo, Peter Cobb, soloists;
Pedro D'Aquino, organ

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Notes & Texts

AS BEFITS A SPRING PERFORMANCE, we close this year's concert season in songs of reverence for natural phenomena, some of which have so recently burgeoned afresh in our city's precious—and few—green spaces.

William Blake's poem "The Lamb" adopts a primary symbol of Christian dogma. Read more universally, it is a meditation on the innocence of new creation, and on all beings' mutual provenance from a single, creative source. The SATB setting by English composer John Tavener (b.1944) that opens our concert dates from 1982. Tavener's (specifically Eastern Orthodox) mysticism is heard in all of his most well-known choral works (*Funeral Ikos*, *2 Hymns to the Mother of God*, and *Ikon of Light*). Some of the hallmarks of his style include shimmering harmonic towers of polychoral interlock and the dark thrumming of pedal chords supporting chant-like melodies. Devoid of these devices, "The Lamb" receives one of the simplest settings in Tavener's opus. It consists of little more than a brief and nearly syllabic melody that extends and harmonizes itself by its strict retrograde and inversion. Only in two sections are these stark polyphonic devices supplanted by a chordal harmonization. It is, in fact, the controlled simplicity, the economy of means, and the mantra-like repetition that imbue this piece with its air of mystical contemplation.

Our set of three "swan songs" presents familiar metaphors in favorite choral settings. The irony of the dying swan's first and final singing supplies the theme for "Il bianco e dolce cigno," a madrigal by Jacques Arcadelt (1507-1568). The Italian madrigal genre exploited a tradition of amorous poetry built on the manipulation of opposites such as life and death, pleasure and pain, love and hate. In fact, the verb *morire* ("to die")—the poetic euphemism for completion in lovemaking—provided in itself the ultimate metaphor, the strongest irony; it is thus one of the most common words in the madrigal opus. It was after Arcadelt's death that the Italian madrigal began to circulate widely in England, stimulating the invention of analogous traditions there. "The Silver Swan" by Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625) exemplifies his typically consonant, mostly diatonic use of harmony, though it does feature the characteristically English cross-relation in two poignant moments. The text contemplates afresh the contradiction of the dying swan's song, this time remarking on the irony humans often feel in our perception that the only people who die are the ones we value. Twentieth-century poet Rainer Maria Rilke avoids the timeworn swan metaphor. Instead, he compares the creature's steady grace to the effect on our awareness when we think of a beloved. This setting by Paul Hindemith comes from his *Six Chansons* of 1939. The foremost German composer of his generation, Hindemith was shaped by crises in politics and crises in the European art-music tradition.

Rejoice in the Lamb

Rejoice in God, O ye Tongues; give the glory to the Lord, and the Lamb.
Nations, and languages, and every Creature, in which is the breath of Life.
Let man and beast appear before him, and magnify his name together.
Let Nimrod, the mighty hunter, bind a Leopard to the altar, and consecrate
his spear to the Lord.
Let Ishmael dedicate a Tyger, and give praise for the liberty in which
the Lord has let him at large.
Let Balaam appear with an Ass, and bless the Lord his people
and his creatures for a reward eternal.
Let Daniel come forth with a Lion, and praise God with all his might
through faith in Christ Jesus.
Let Ithamar minister with a Chamois, and bless the name of Him, that cloatheth the naked.
Let Jakim with the Satyr bless God in the dance.
Let David bless with the Bear—The beginning of victory to the Lord—to the Lord the
perfection of excellence—Hallelujah from the heart of God, and from the hand of the artist
inimitable, and from the echo of the heavenly harp in sweetness magnifical and mighty.

For I will consider my Cat Jeoffry.
For he is the servant of the Living God, duly and daily serving him.
For at the first glance of the glory of God in the East he worships in his way.
For this is done by wreathing his body seven times round with elegant quickness.
For he knows that God is his Saviour.
For God has blessed him in the variety of his movements.
For there is nothing sweeter than his peace when at rest.
For I am possessed of a cat, surpassing in beauty, from whom I take occasion
to bless Almighty God.

For the Mouse is a creature of great personal valour.
For—this is a true case—Cat takes female mouse—male mouse will not depart,
but stands threat'ning and daring.
... If you will let her go, I will engage you, as prodigious a creature as you are.
For the Mouse is a creature of great personal valour.
For the Mouse is of an hospitable disposition.

For the flowers are great blessings.
For the flowers have their angels even the words of God's Creation.
For the flower glorifies God and the root parries the adversary.
For there is a language of flowers.
For flowers are peculiarly the poetry of Christ.

Les Lions

Les lions jaunes hurlent dans le sable
L'épouante est dans la ville et les ténèbres
Entourent ma demeure
Tout le monde a peur

Le feu gagne la montagne haute
Ah! qu'ils périssent les hommes et les femmes
Ah! qu'ils meurent les oiseaux et les fleurs
Fermez vos grands yeux blancs
Sauvez vos plus belles céramiques

Les jeunes hommes sont morts
et les petites filles pleurent des paroles d'autrui
tout est perdu et la vengeance est inutile
l'indigation est prise au piège
l'âme de ton serviteur seigneur est moult
je crie vers toi pour ta compassion
le jeune lion hurle dans le sable
—Gabriel Charpentier

Le Cri de Joie

Le cri de joie est sorti de ma bouche
tout le monde danse sur les places
et les colonnes chavirent
le cri de joie est en avant de moi
je le prends avec moi
il m'illumine de lumière
et ses commandements sont près de moi
le jeune homme est parti par-dessus la mer
emportant avec lui des gerbes de glaïeuls
et son cri est allégresse
—Gabriel Charpentier

The yellow lions roar in the sand
Terror is in the city and darkness
Surrounds my dwelling place
Everyone is afraid

Fire reaches the high mountain
Ah! Let the men and women perish
Ah! Let the birds and flowers die
Close your great white eyes
Rescue your loveliest ceramics

The young men are dead
And the little girls weep words of others
All is lost and revenge is useless
Indignation is caught in a trap
The soul of your servant, Lord, is crushed
I cry to you, Lord, for your compassion
The young lion roars in the sand

The cry of joy has left my mouth
everyone dances in the squares
and the columns overturn
the cry of joy is before me
I take it with me
it illuminates me with light
and its commandments are near me
the young man has left for the sea
carrying with him sheaves of gladioli
and his cry is elation

of progressive harmony. While some of his contemporaries proclaimed the death of tonality, he sought to recast it according to principles of acoustics and counterpoint as promulgated in his tome *Unterweisung im Tonsatz* ("The Craft of Musical Composition"). In "Un Cygne," the listener will hear that all the voices in each phrase move inexorably—if unpredictably—to the harmonic stability of open fifths or triads.

Trees are the symbols and metaphors in our next set, featuring English poets and composers. "The Oak and the Ash" is a folk song, heard here in a setting by Gordon Langford. The characters in the poem, languishing in London's crude urbanity, associate oak, ash, and ivy trees with their native, northern soil, to which they long to return. The composer of "Willow Song," Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) was proud to consider himself a Londoner, though he was born in Gloucester. He was the premier English composer of his generation, and the first of great stature to emerge since Purcell. His vast output spans several developmental stages, all of which comprise a preponderance of committedly English-themed works: the majority of his titles evoke English place names, English folksongs, or figures from England's artistic past. The very simple "Willow Song" comes from early in his opus and sets the mournful words of Shakespeare.

The theme of mourning continues in "Lay a Garland," from 1840, by Robert Pearsall (1795-1856). In the poem, by F. Beaumont and J. Fletcher, garlands of willow and a casket of yew mark the passing of a false lover. Pearsall studied composition from contrapuntists in Germany, where he was influenced by the Cecilian movement. This effort to reform Catholic church music advocated a return to the discipline and purity of Palestrinian polyphony. Though "Lay a Garland" is a secular piece, it resembles a Counter-Reformation motet in structure. Pearsall's exquisite dissonance treatment, however, ventures harmonically further afield than was ever possible for Palestrina, and it is this feature that gives it away as a 19th-century creation. The dense polyphonic texture renders the poem virtually unintelligible in performance. That the text is not particularly important to this piece is proved in the fact that Pearsall reissued it as a contrafactum for liturgical use, replacing the original poem with the famous scriptural text: *Tu es Petrus et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam.* ("Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I build my church.")

Irving Fine (1914-1962), a Bostonian, was a composer, teacher, and conductor. His illustrious mentors include Walter Piston, Nadia Boulanger, and Serge Koussevitsky. Uniting 12-tone techniques with tonality, his mature harmonic language is essentially dissonant, though his choral writing makes ample use of essentially triadic sonorities. "Have You Seen the White Lily Grow" and "Lament," both from the cycle entitled *The Hour-Glass*, are settings of poetry by Ben Jonson. The former compares fresh lilies, swan's down, honeycombs, and other undisturbed natural wonders to a bedazzling beloved. In the latter, the death of the beloved is mourned as the withering of a daffodil. The third piece in this set comes from Fine's *The Choral New Yorker*, settings of poetry

found in the pages of that hallowed weekly magazine. Extending Jonson's metaphor in "Lament," the poet of "Design for October," Jake Falstaff meditates on the passing of a beloved season that has been marked by precious sightings of geese, fawns, and blackbirds.

Québécois composer Pierre Mercure was born in 1927 and died tragically in a motorcycle accident in 1966. His *oeuvre* is characterized by the effort to fuse different art forms. He kept the regular company of a group of writers, painters, actors, and dancers devoted to the tenets of Paul-Emile Borduas, whose 1948 manifesto *Refus global* indicted middle-class conservatism and argued for the liberation of the creative self. We are presenting the first and last movement of Mercure's *Cantate pour une joie* ("Cantata for a Joy"), originally composed for chorus, soloists, and orchestra. The librettist, Gabriel Charpentier (b.1925), is also a composer, specializing in music for theatrical productions. In its entirety, the *Cantate* dwells on the horror of a city's destruction and the confusion and madness of its inhabitants. These apocalyptic scenes recall the oft-set verses on the sack of Jerusalem in Jeremiah's *Lamentations*. The first movement opens with images of yellow lions roaring in the desert and fire descending from the mountains; at the close of the movement, it is a lone young lion who roars. It is only in the cantata's final movement where the text turns to a theme of hope and redemption, whose symbol is a young man going forth across the sea with a cry of joy in his mouth and sheaves of gladioli in his arms.

We close where we began: with English poetry and music based on the image of the lamb. Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) was the next towering English composer to succeed Vaughan Williams. He selected the text for *Rejoice in the Lamb* from 18th-century poet Christopher Smart's extended work by the same name, *Jubilate Agno*. This poem, written during Smart's institutionalization for insanity, was ill understood in his time and thus went unpublished until 1939. That the mentally ill in Smart's day were given like treatment with criminals is signaled in the middle of the cantata: "For the officers of the peace are at variance with me, and the watchman smites me with his staff." Still, Smart takes his abuse as a sign of his ultimate worth, for even his Savior was similarly accused of criminal madness, and martyred for it. His faith in redemption leads him in spite of his trials to praise the living God as seen in all creatures and in all other manifestations that delight our senses. It is the recitation of these blessings—the elegant movements of cats, the poetry of flowers, the multitudinous sounds of different musical instruments—that occupies most of Britten's inspired music in this justly well-loved work.

—Kristina Boerger

Have You Seen the White Lily Grow

Have you seen the white lily grow
Before rude hands have touched it?
Have you seen the fall of the snow
Before the soil hath smutched it?
Have you felt the wool of beaver or swan's down ever?
Have you tasted the bag of the bee?
O so fair, so soft, so sweet is she!
Have you heard, have you felt, have you seen,
The white lily grow?

—Ben Jonson

Lament

Slow, fresh fount, keep time with my salt tears:
Yet slower, O faintly gentle streams,
List to the heavy part the music bears,
Woe weeps out her division when she sings.
Droop, herbs and flow'rs,
Fall, grief in show'rs.
Our beauties are not ours;
O! that I could still,
Like melting snow upon some craggy hill, drop.
Since nature's pride is now a withered daffodil.

—Ben Jonson

Design for October

Then I heard a voice saying
Summer is gone! Summer is ended
It is done. It is gone. It is ended.

No more at morning will you stir the fawn.
Or see the black birds, black on the lawn.
No more at morning will you hear the crying geese of the dawn.

Then in my window,
Grave was I
Gravely I watched the Summer die
And the last of the crying geese go by.
Summer is gone! Summer is ended
It is done. It is gone. It is ended!

—Jake Falstaff

The Willow Song

The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,
Sing all a green willow;
Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,
Sing willow, willow, willow.
The fresh streams ran by her and murmur'd her moans,
Sing willow, willow, willow:
Her salt tears fell from her, and soften'd the stones;
Sing willow, willow, willow,
Sing all a green willow must be my garland.

—William Shakespeare (*Othello*, IV, iii)

Lay a Garland

Lay a garland on her hearse
Of dismal yew;
Maidens, willow branches wear;
Say she died true,
Her love was false, but she was firm.
Upon her buried body lie lightly,
thou gentle earth.

—F. Beaumont & J. Fletcher

The Lamb

Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life, & bid thee feed
By the stream & o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee:
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb.
He is meek, & he is mild;
He became a little child
I, a child, & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb, God bless thee!
Little Lamb, God bless thee!

—William Blake

Il bianco e dolce cigno

Il bianco e dolce cigno cantando more.
Et io piangendo giung' al fin del viver mio.
Stran' e diversa sorte, ch'ei more
sconsolato,
et io moro beato. Morte che nel morire,
m'empie di gioia tutt' e di desire.
Se nel morir' altro dolor non sento
di mille mort' il dì sarei contento.

—Anonymous

The Silver Swan

The silver swan who, living, had no note,
When death approached, unlocked her silent throat.
Leaning her breast against the reedy shore,
Thus sang her first and last, and sang no more:
“Farewell all joys, O death come close mine eyes.
More geese than swans now live, more fools than wise.”

—Anonymous

Un Cygne

Un cygne avance sur l'eau
tout entouré de lui-même,
comme un glissant tableau;
ainsi à certains instants
un être que l'on aime
est tout un espace mouvant.

Il se rapproche, doublé,
comme ce cygne qui nage,
sur notre âme troublée...
qui à cet être ajoute
la tremblante image
de bonheur et de doute.
—Rainer Maria Rilke

The white and gentle swan dies singing.
And I arrive weeping at the end of my life.
Strange and different fate,
that she dies disconsolate
And I die blessed. Such a death that in dying
I am filled with complete joy and desire.
If in dying I feel no other pain
I would be content to die a thousand times a day.

The Oak and the Ash

“Oh! the Oak and the Ash and the bonny Ivy tree
How I wish once again in the North I could be.”

A North Country maid up to London had strayed
Although with her nature it did not agree.
She wept and she sighed, and so bitterly she cried,
“How I wish once again in the North I could be.

“Oh! the Oak and the Ash and the bonny Ivy tree
They flourish at home in my own Country.

“While sadly I roam, I regret my dear home,
Where lads and young lasses are making the hay;
The merry bells ring and the birds sweetly sing
The meadows are pleasant and maidens are gay.

“Oh! the Oak and the Ash and the bonny Ivy tree
They flourish at home in my own Country.

“No doubt, did I please, I could marry with ease;
For where maidens are fair, many lovers will come:
But the one whom I wed must be North Country bred
and tarry with me in my North Country home.

“Oh! the Oak and the Ash and the bonny Ivy tree
They flourish at home in my own Country.

“How I wish once again in the North I could be.”
—Traditional