

QERDDORION
VOCAL ENSEMBLE

James John

Artistic Director

PRESENTS

*American Virtuosi:
Copland and Bernstein*

Featuring Phumzile Sitole, Narrator



Friday, March 9, 2018, 8 pm
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
199 Carroll Street, Brooklyn

Sunday, March 11, 2018, 3 pm
St. Ignatius of Antioch
87th Street & West End Avenue, Manhattan

THE PROGRAM

Thou, O Jehovah Aaron Copland (1900–1990)

Help Us, O Lord

Sing Ye Praises to Our King

*Talya Westbrook, soprano; Myrna Nachman, alto;
Ralph Bonheim, tenor; Rich Dikeman, bass*

In the Beginning

Aaron Copland

Anna Harmon, soprano

❖❖❖ *Intermission* ❖❖❖

Choruses from *The Lark*

Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990)

*Jennifer Oates, soprano
Jamie Carrillo, alto
Phumzile Sitole, narrator
Juan Herrera, percussion*



THE ARTISTS

Now in its twenty-third 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 2016; and a collaborative 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 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, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

JAMES JOHN is in his eighth season as Artistic Director of the Cerddorion Vocal Ensemble. He is also Professor of Conducting 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; and heads the graduate program in choral conducting. Under his leadership the choral program at the School of Music has become recognized as one of the finest collegiate choral programs in the region, with performances by the Queens College Choir at both the New York State School Music Association Winter Conference (2010), and the Eastern Division Conference of the American Choral Directors Association (2012).

Dr. John's guest conducting appearances include Brahms's *Requiem* and Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with the Tokyo Oratorio Society and Oratorio Sinfonica Japan, Avery Fisher Hall's annual *Messiah* Sing-In, a concert of American choral music with the Virginia Chorale, and honor choirs throughout New York State. He has given presentations at both divisional and national conferences of the American Choral Directors Association, and is in demand as a clinician and adjudicator throughout the United States.

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. His dissertation on Brahms won the Julius Herford Prize from the American Choral Directors Association, and will be published in revised form as a book by Edwin Mellen Press. From 2011-2016 he served as Editor of *American Choral Review*, published biannually by Chorus America, and 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 Aaron Copland School of Music.



PHUMZILE SITHOLE

Phumzile Sitole is a New York–based actress from South Africa with an MFA in acting from Columbia University (2016). Recent theater work includes *The Comedy of Errors* and *Othello* at Classic Stage Company (CSC), *Macbeth* at Northern Stage, and *YellowCardRedCard* at New Ohio. She also toured Kenya and South Africa in Gregory Mosher's *Antigone in The World*, playing Antigone. Television credits include recurring roles on *Orange Is the New Black* (upcoming) and *The Good Fight*. Phumzile has also worked as a voice-over artist, Shakespeare Society Ambassador (Public Shakes Initiative), and a member of Clowns Without Borders, SA.

JUAN HERRERA

Juan Herrera is a percussionist based in New York City. An avid learner, Juan has studied many styles of percussion, including West African, Balinese, Middle Eastern, Brazilian, Afro-Cuban, Venezuelan, Colombian, choral, contemporary, orchestral, jazz/Latin jazz, improvisation, ragtime, and musical theater. He received his Master of Music degree in Percussion Performance from the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College.



AMERICAN VIRTUOSI: COPLAND AND BERNSTEIN

PROGRAM NOTES

BY

JAMES JOHN, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Aaron Copland (1900-1990) and Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990) are seminal figures of twentieth-century music. Copland's most famous works (such as *Appalachian Spring*, *Rodeo*, and *Fanfare for the Common Man*, to name only a few) are considered quintessentially "American"; Bernstein was not only an enormously successful composer, but also one of the world's foremost conductors. Cerddorion is excited to present lesser-known works by these two great musicians, neither of whom wrote much a *cappella* choral music. Our program was inspired both by my desire to perform Copland's *In the Beginning* (which, at approximately seventeen minutes, is one of the most formidable twentieth-century American choral works), as well as my wish to have Cerddorion take part in the Bernstein centenary.

Copland and Bernstein met for the first time in 1937 at a concert on Copland's thirty-eighth birthday: Bernstein was a nineteen-year-old Harvard junior; Copland was already an established force on the American musical scene. At an after-concert party the younger composer played a stirring rendition of Copland's *Piano Variations* (1930) and the two men struck up a warm friendship that lasted until the end of their lives (they both died in 1990 within only two months of one another).

Bernstein wanted to study composition with Copland, and although formal lessons never took place the older man served as an affectionate mentor to him. Copland wrote recommendations when Bernstein applied to study conducting at both the Curtis Institute and Tanglewood, and also encouraged Bernstein to find his own compositional voice: "I want to hear about your writing a song that has no Copland, no Hindemith, no Stravinsky, no Bloch, no Milhaud and no Bartok in it." Bernstein in turn championed Copland's music, recording most of his symphonic works as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic. At a Kennedy Center tribute to his older friend in 1979 Bernstein reflected, "He has always had time for everyone, especially the young, and that's the mark of a great man...I know, because I was one of them."

Born in Brooklyn to a family of Jewish immigrants, Copland's musical path was not clear-cut. His father—a local merchant—had concerns about Copland's musical ambitions. It may have been a Rabbi from the local synagogue that convinced Copland's father to permit his son to pursue music, which led to one of the most formative experiences of his life: the young composer went to Paris for three years (1921-1924) to study with Nadia Boulanger, perhaps the most renowned musical pedagogue of the twentieth century.

Boulanger made all of her students write unaccompanied motets, and Copland's *Four Motets* based on biblical texts were the fruits of his first year of study. Though Boulanger called them "stunning" after their public premiere in 1924, Copland withheld the works from publication until 1979, considering them student compositions. Indeed, one of their most intriguing aspects is that they bear virtually no trace of the triadic harmonies and folk-inspired idioms later associated with Copland's indelible personal stamp. In his autobiography Copland offers this thought-provoking assessment: "They are pretty much in the style of standard choral music of the day, with perhaps a touch of Mussorgsky...*Help Us, O Lord*, is solemn yet rather pretty...*Thou, O Jehovah, Abideth Forever*, is vigorous and seems to have a Hebraic, cantorial tone...*Have Mercy on Us, O My Lord* [not on our program] sounds somewhat French — perhaps a little à la Chausson? I seem to have had Renaissance choral music on my mind when I composed the last motet, *Sing Ye Praises to Our King*."

By contrast, in 1947 when Copland completed *In the Beginning* he was at the height of what scholars have called his "populist" phase. A string of compositions considered "quintessential Copland" were written around this time, including the short symphonic works *Lincoln Portrait* (1942) and *Fanfare for the Common Man* (1942), the famous ballets *Rodeo* (1942) and *Appalachian Spring* (1944), *Symphony No. 3* (1946) and the *Clarinet Concerto* (1948).

In the Beginning was commissioned by the Harvard Symposium on Music Criticism, which requested an extended a *cappella* composition on "a text drawn from Hebrew literature." The young Robert Shaw, who had been engaged to premiere the work at the Symposium with the Collegiate Chorale, likely influenced the parameters of the commission. Shaw had premiered Copland's *Lark* (a six-minute piece) in 1938, and he undoubtedly wanted to see Copland contribute a more substantial work to the a *cappella* repertory.

The commission proved daunting to Copland, however, who up to that time had written very little choral music. In response to the request for a Hebrew text, Copland chose the first 38 verses of the Book of Genesis in the King James version, but at one point became so frustrated that he wrote a letter reneging: "This is a very unhappy moment for me. I am faced with the necessity of writing you that I find it impossible to carry out the commission for the May Symposium concert... The reason is simple: I was unable to find a text that was suitable..." Fortunately, Shaw and A. Tillman Merritt (Harvard Professor and the Symposium organizer) persuaded him to persevere, and after briefly choosing another text by Archibald MacLeish, Copland returned to his original idea. In order to complete the piece on time, he sequestered himself in a friend's apartment in Boston for six weeks—finishing it only one month before the premiere.

Though the published score bears no formal dedication, Copland maintained that he dedicated it to Nadia Boulanger, and he sent her a copy with the inscription, "For Nadia with all my affection." That Copland had Boulanger in mind is telling because the form of *In the Beginning* is essentially an extended motet, and it is quite possible that he had his early motets in mind when writing it.

Copland included a mezzo-soprano soloist (in our performance the solo part is sung by a soprano) whom he instructs to declaim the text "In a gentle, narrative manner, like reading a familiar and oft-told story." The entire piece unfolds from this simple directive, and though there are certainly exciting moments (in particular the creation of lights on Day 4, and the creation of man on Day 6), the overall character is more lyrical than dramatic. Short refrains recur as structural pillars at the words, "And the evening and the morning of the *n*th day," which have been noted for their similarity to Hebrew cantillation Copland would have heard in synagogue when he was growing up.

There is a significant pause before Day 7, the day of rest, after which Copland continues with musical material that is essentially new, as if to highlight the special nature of the Sabbath. He does not stop here, however, but concludes with an epilogue leading all the way to Genesis 2:7—a second account of creation culminating in the words, "And man became a living soul," forming an extraordinarily powerful climax.

[For more information on Copland's *In the Beginning* see Allison Fromm's excellent dissertation entitled, *Aaron Copland's In the Beginning: Context and Creative Process* (University of Illinois, 2015), which served as a significant source for these notes.]

In 1955 Lillian Hellman asked Bernstein to write incidental music for a Broadway production of *The Lark*, her adaptation of Jean Anouilh's *L'Alouette* (The Lark)—a retelling of the trial and execution of Joan of Arc. The play is presented primarily as a flashback, and explores "the intersection where faith and political reality and pragmatism meet head on." These themes would have been particularly meaningful to Hellman, who during the McCarthy Era was called to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee, and was blacklisted for a time.

By the mid 1950s Bernstein had already experienced tremendous success with the musicals *On the Town* and *Wonderful Town*, and was at work on *West Side Story* as well as *Candide* (another collaboration with Hellman). His music for *The Lark*, originally scored for a septet of solo voices (including countertenor), deliberately evokes a medieval flavor. He wrote eight choruses in all, three French and five Latin. The French choruses are based on medieval French lyrics: "Spring Song" on Claude Le Jeune's *Reveyez venir du printemps*; "Court Song" on a chanson by Adam de la Halle; and "Soldier's Song" on the folk tune *Vive la Grappe*. The Latin Choruses are primarily Mass texts: Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, Benedictus and part of the Agnus Dei—along with an excerpt from Psalm 143, "Hear My Prayer, O Lord" (Exaudi orationem meam, Domine), featured at the beginning of the "Prelude." Thirty years later Bernstein expanded and refashioned the Latin Choruses into his *Missa Brevis*.

The original Broadway production of *The Lark* included Julie Harris in the role of Joan (for which she won a Tony Award), along with a star-studded cast that included Christopher Plummer and Boris Karloff. Noah Greenberg and the New York Pro Musica pre-recorded the choruses for the production. Our performance features narrations from the play to recreate a sense of the original drama and provide context for Bernstein's wonderfully evocative music. The particular version we are performing can be found on a recording entitled *Counterpoint Premieres* by Robert De Cormier (Albany Records, December 1, 2008).



Thou, O Jehovah

Thou, O Jehovah, abideth forever.
God reigneth over all men and nations.
His throne doth last and doth guide all the ages.
Why wilt Thou forsake us ever?
When wilt Thou forget us never?

Thou, O Jehovah, abideth forever,
And all the length of our days will ever be our Savior.
When wilt Thou forget us never?

Help Us, O Lord

Help us, O Lord
For with Thee is the fount of life
In Thy light shall we see light.
Let us march and try our ways.
Turn to God.
It is good that man should wait.
It is good that man should hope
For the salvation of the Lord.

Sing Ye Praises to Our King

Sing ye praises to our King.
O sing ye praises to our Ruler
Sing ye praises to our King and Ruler.
Come and hear, all ye men,
Come and hear my praises.
He doth bless all the Earth
Bringeth peace and comfort.
Shout unto God all ye men.
Shout unto God all your praises.

In the Beginning

- 1 In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth
- 2 And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.
- 3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.
- 4 And God saw the light, that it was good, and God divided the light from the darkness.
- 5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.
- 6 And God said "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters and let it divide the waters from the waters."
- 7 And God made the firmament and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so.
- 8 And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.
- 9 And God said, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so.
- 10 And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas. And God saw that it was good.
- 11 And God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth." And it was so.
- 12 And the earth brought forth grass and herb yielding seed after its kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after its kind. And God saw that it was good.
- 13 And the evening and the morning were the third day.
- 14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years.

15 And let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth.”
And it was so.

16 And God made two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also.

17 And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,

18 And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

19 And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

20 And God said “Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.”

21 And God created great whales and every living creature that moveth which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind and every winged fowl after his kind. And God saw that it was good.

22 And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas and let fowl multiply in the earth.”

23 And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

24 And God said, “Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth after his kind.” And it was so.

25 And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind. And God saw that it was good.

26 And God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them.

28 And God blessed them and God said unto them, “Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”

29 And God said, “Behold I have given you ev’ry herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth and every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed to you it shall be for food.

30 And to every beast of the earth and to every fowl of the air and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for food.” And it was so.

31 And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Chapter 2

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

2 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

3 And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

4 These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens

5 And every plant of the field before it was in the earth and every herb of the field before it grew. For the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.

6 But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul.



Leonard Bernstein, *Choruses from The Lark*

Prelude

Exaudi orationem meam, Domine.
Qui tollis peccata mundi.
Miserere nobis.

Hear my prayer, O Lord,
Who takes away the sins of the world.
Have mercy upon us.

Narration: The Beginning

Spring Song

Revey venir le printemps.
Laudate dominum. Alleluia.

Behold the return of Spring.
Praise the Lord. Alleluia.

Narration: Voices

Alleluia

Alleluia. Amen.

Alleluia

Alleluia. Amen.

Narration: Saving France

Court Song

Fi, mari de vostre amour.
Cor j'ai ami, noble et de bel atour.
Tout l'aime aussi.
Ne sert de nuit, sert de nuit et de jour.

Beware, husband, of your love.
I have a lover, noble and beloved.
I love him entirely.
He satisfies me at night, night and day.

Narration: King Charles VII

Spring Song (reprise)

Narration: The March to Orléans

Benedictus

Benedictus qui venit
in nomine Domini.
Osana in excelsis.

Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Narration: The Siege of Orléans

Soldiers Song

Vive la Jeanne, la jolie Jeanne.
Jolie jolou, jola la la

Long live Jeanne, pretty Jeanne.
Jolie jolou, jola la la.

Narration: Imprisoned and Broken

Qui tollis peccata mundi (reprise)/
Narration: Confession Denied

Sanctus

Sanctus Dominus, Deus Sabaoth,
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloriae tuae.
Osanna.

Lord God of Hosts,
Heaven and Earth are full of Your glory.
Hosanna.

Narration: Awaiting the Stake

Requiem

Requiem eternam
Dona eis, Domine,
Et lux perpetua luceat eis.
Kyrie eleison.

Eternal rest
Grant unto them, Lord,
And let light perpetual shine on them.
Lord have mercy.

Narration: My Happiest Day

Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Regi nostro clarissimo.
Regi nostro illustrissimo.
Regi clarissimo electo Dei.

Glory to God in the highest.
Glory to our most brilliant king.
Glory to our most illustrious king.
Our brilliant king, God's elect.



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Ticket sales cover only a small portion of our ongoing musical and administrative expenses. To make a tax-deductible contribution, please visit www.cerddorion.org or send a check (payable to Cerddorion NYC, Inc.) to:

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For further information about Cerddorion Vocal Ensemble, please visit our website: www.cerddorion.org. To join our mailing list, visit our website! You can also follow us on Twitter: [@cerddorionnyc](https://twitter.com/cerddorionnyc), or like us on Facebook: Cerddorion Vocal Ensemble.

TO BE SUNG ON THE WATER

Join us in the conclusion of our twenty-third season as we present water-themed masterworks spanning five centuries, including music by Palestrina, Barber, Heitzeg, R. Murray Schafer, and the winner(s) of Cerddorion's sixth annual Emerging Composers Competition.

Friday, June 1, 8 pm, St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Sunday, June 3, 3 pm, St. Ignatius of Antioch

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Our concerts would not be possible without a great deal of financial assistance. Cerddorion would like to thank the following, who have generously provided financial support for our activities over the past year.

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The members of Cerddorion are grateful to James Kennerley, Father Andrew Blume, and the Church of Saint Ignatius of Antioch for providing rehearsal and performance space for this season. Thanks also to Vince Peterson and St. Paul's Episcopal Church for providing a performance space for this season.

CERDDORION

Sopranos

Anna Harmon
Molly Masterton
Jennifer Oates
Jeanette Rodriguez
Ellen Schorr
Talya Westbrook

Altos

Jamie Carrillo
Susan Glass
Linnea Johnson
Cathy Markoff
Myrna Nachman
Katie Wilkes

Tenors

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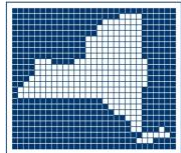


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