

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

For me, the seeds for this program about justice and injustice through the ages were planted as long ago as 2016, as I watched our world react to events unfolding. For example, a worldwide women's march took place the day after the inauguration of the president of the United States, prompted by fears that women's rights were about to be threatened. I thought back to the Black Lives Matter movement, which began several years earlier after the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the shooting death of African-American teen Trayvon Martin. I pondered all that has happened before and since, and the response of the arts community to unsettling times.

The arts have always been there, from sculptors and painters, writers and poets, to composers and musicians of all genres, reacting to, commenting on, but also leading the dialog on justice and injustice. In designing this program, I decided to showcase the continuity of the music world's response to injustice, from the medieval era to the current day.

You will hear both 12<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century responses to misogyny in *Non puec mudar* and *Nevertheless*, responses to political and racial oppression in *Cantos Sagrados* and *Visions of Glory*, and a highly entertaining but no less serious light shined on corruption, malice, and cruelty in the church and everyday life in the Middle Ages in *Marcas Argenti* and *There Was a Town*.

You will hear traditional religious texts juxtaposed with modern thoughts of political repression, and you will hear The Magnificat (*¡Proclama mi alma!*), one of the great Biblical songs in praise of God's justice, describing casting down the proud, filling the hungry, sending the rich away, etc. It is all the more remarkable when we reflect on the fact that it was sung by a poor, unmarried girl who was a member of a tribe under Roman rule and occupation.

For her extensive insight into the music of injustice in the Middle Ages, I asked medievalist Teri Kowiak to collaborate with me on this program. We hope you will be entertained and inspired by our concert today.

Jennifer Lester, music director

## PROGRAM NOTES

### ***Cantos Sagrados*, James MacMillan (1989)**

This powerful and disturbing work displays Scottish composer James MacMillan's gift for working with dramatic texts. *Cantos Sagrados* frames Latin religious texts with English-language poetry from Latin America. This suite for chorus and organ was

commissioned by the Scottish Chamber Choir with a subsidy from the Scottish Arts Council. The first performance took place on February 10, 1990, in Edinburgh. Ariel Dorfman (b. 1942), a Chilean-American novelist whose poetry lies at the political heart of this choral suite, confronts us with the horrors of tyranny and the trials of exile (he fled Chile in 1973 after the coup of General Augusto Pinochet). Macmillan's first movement sets Dorfman's poem "Identity" as agitated speech-like violence: villagers discover a "disappeared" political victim in a river. Once the narrator decides to claim the body as if it were one of his own family, we hear a hushed "*Libera animas omnium fidelium*" (Deliver the souls of all the faithful) from the conclusion of the Latin burial service. MacMillan frames the movement in E minor, employing chromatic suspensions, bitonality, and tone clusters for dramatic effect.

For the second movement, the hauntingly beautiful central prayer features a conversational arioso over a slow ostinato. Ana Maria Mendoza's text questions why there is a shrine in Mexico, "where my brothers the Indians lived... a thousand thousand killed," dedicated to the "patroness of the [Spanish] Conquerors." MacMillan combines Mendoza's words, sung in soprano duet, with the three lower voices of the choir intoning a gentle "*Salve Maria, coeli porta*" (Hail Mother, portal of heaven) for ironic effect. The vivid third movement, in which a political prisoner is shot and his executioner begs him for forgiveness, intersperses Latin chorales with Spanish vernacular.

MacMillan remarked on the *Cantos Sagrados*: "In writing this work I wanted to compose something which was both timeless and contemporary, both sacred and secular. The title is therefore slightly misleading as the three poems are concerned with political repression in Latin America and are deliberately coupled with traditional religious texts to emphasize a deeper solidarity with the poor of that sub-continent. "It was my interest in Liberation Theology which made me combine the poems of the Mothers of the *Plaza de Mayo* in Argentina with the texts of the Latin mass in *Búsqueda* (an earlier music-theatre work) and has now led me to attempt a similar synthesis of ideas in *Cantos Sagrados*. The voices in Ariel Dorfman's poems belong to those who suffer a particular type of political repression: the 'disappearance' of political prisoners. Ana Maria Mendoza's poem about the Virgin of Guadeloupe tackles the same problem by asking a more fundamental cultural and historical question."

### ***Andante and Largo, Elfrida Andrée***

Born in Gotland, Sweden, at a time when women were not eligible for admission to the Royal Academy of Music nor allowed to hold positions as church organists, Elfrida Andrée took matters into her own hands (and feet) and took private lessons before taking all her exams at the Academy as an external candidate in 1857, at the age of 16. She then enlisted the support of members of parliament to change the laws, and

eventually she became the organist of the cathedral in Gothenburg 1867, a post she would hold until her death.

Among her works are organ symphonies, and a Suffrage Cantata for choir and orchestra, written for the 1911 International Women's Rights Conference in Stockholm. The two pieces you will hear today are much more humble in scale, likely written for use in worship or for teaching purposes. Andrée had studied composition in Copenhagen with Niels W. Gade, himself a student of Mendelssohn, and you definitely hear that musical lineage in these short works.

### ***Dic, Christi veritas, from Carmina Burana***

Two of our medieval songs (*Dic, Christi veritas* and *Initium sancti evangelii secundum Marcas Argenti*) come from the Carmina Burana, a collection of songs and poems from the 11th – 13th centuries discovered in Beuren, Germany, from which Carl Orff derived texts for his 1936 work. The writings are believed to have been the work of goliards: wandering students and unassigned clerics known for their social criticism and pursuit of earthly pleasures. The songs and poems are largely secular, featuring satires of church and government, as well as songs of love (some quite licentious), drinking, gambling, and mourning. Most of these works are anonymous.

*Dic, Christi veritas*, found toward the end of the songs of morality in the Carmina Burana, is a rare song with an attribution. The lyrics were penned by 12th century Parisian theologian and poet Philippe le Chancelier. Born into a powerful clerical family, he studied and taught at the University of Paris before ultimately becoming the chancellor of the Cathedral of Notre Dame.

The version of this song found in the Carmina Burana has some musical notation, but without staff lines. This would have served as a memory aid for someone who already knew the song, but no one would be able to learn the song just by referencing these symbols. Fortunately, the song also appears in other manuscripts, including a three-voice version in the Magnus Liber, which we use for this performance.

The listener will immediately notice the sections of long, florid melismas that occur at the beginning of each stanza of poetry and on the penultimate syllable of each verse. The music then becomes more homophonic and syllabic, enabling the listener to hear the text more clearly.

*Dic, Christi veritas* contains many references to scripture, history, and classical literature, such as “The Valley of Vision,” referring to a prophecy in the book of Isaiah; the Roman emperor Nero; Theonas, a third-century pope; “an arc of bullrushes,” in which the baby Moses was found by Pharaoh’s daughter; “the House of Romulus,” a reference to Rome; and “fulminating with bulls,” referring to papal bulls, which are a

type of official decree or charter. The second verse references the story of the Good Samaritan. The answer to the question posed by the text is, then, that Christ abides in acts of love performed by ordinary people.

### ***Visions of Glory, Trevor Weston (2004)***

The text for *Visions of Glory* was excerpted from the end of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech "I see the promised land," given on April 3, 1968, the night before he was assassinated. Here, Dr. King speaks of himself as a Moses figure, a faithful leader whose mission is to lead his people to the Promised Land but will not live to see it himself, which turned out to be chillingly prophetic. The final line, "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord," comes from "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Penned by abolitionist Julia Ward Howe in 1861, this song links the American Civil War to the Last Judgment and contains a number of Biblical references.

Video archives of Dr. King's speeches show a man certain of his cause, one who commanded attention from all listeners. Compared to what we see of Dr. King in the videos, Dr. Weston's setting is unexpectedly gentle, plaintive, and introspective. We get an impression of Dr. King composing this speech or planning his delivery, reflecting on the personal meaning of the words. The soft dynamic, simple rhythms, and chromaticism in the music lend a sense of weariness. We perceive a sense of the deep longing and hurt behind the words, the speech, and the mission.

Dr. Trevor Weston (b. 1967) began his musical studies at age 10 at the St. Thomas Choir school in New York City. He received his B.A. from Tufts University and earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in Music Composition Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. His honors include the George Ladd Prix de Paris from the University of California, Berkeley; a Goddard Lieberman Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters; and residencies from the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts and the MacDowell Colony. Dr. Weston describes his approach to music as follows: "Music allows us to retreat from the mundane to reflect more profoundly on our existence. My intention is to create music that is transformative regardless of instrumentation or style." His compositions have been performed by groups including Roomful of Teeth, The Boston Children's Chorus, and The Manhattan Choral Ensemble. Dr. Weston is Professor of Music at Drew University in Madison, NJ.

### ***No pulesc mudar no digua mon vejaire, Teri Kowiak (2022)***

Although this song is attributed to Raimon Jordan in its only manuscript source, it is believed that the author was in fact someone from the circle of Maria de Ventadorn, a noblewoman who served as patron to a number of troubadours and trobairitz. In the poem, our unnamed lady pushes back against the misogyny seen in the writings of her male counterparts. She specifically calls out Marcabru, a troubadour from the previous generation whose songs criticizing the morality of lords and ladies focused disproportionately on the latter. Her criticism is not reserved only for misogynistic writers, but also for their audiences, chastising them for believing whatever tales the troubadours tell them. The long-objectified Lady has now become the speaker, passing her own judgment on the morality of the men in her poem.

**Composer note:** Since the original tune for this poem is long lost, I wrote a melody in the style of the troubadours and trobairitz. I chose the Mixolydian mode, a major-adjacent scale frequently used in medieval music. Bright and often used for energetic trumpet fanfares, it lends itself to the sassy nature of the text. In performance, I will use a simple drone as accompaniment, to underline what our lady had to say.

**Troubadours and Trobairitz:** The troubadours and trobairitz (female troubadours) were poet-musicians whose art flourished in 11th – 13th century Provence, in the south of France. They wrote in the *langue d'oc*, a language distinct from the French spoken in the north, and their songs featured a variety of intricate poetic forms. Although best known for their songs of chivalry and courtly love, many also wrote political songs and satires, as well as collaborative debate songs.

Manuscripts of troubadour song typically convey pitches but provide no indication of rhythm, thus modern performers must choose between imposing a rhythm or singing in a declamatory style based on word stress and melodic contour. We know from iconography and medieval accounts that the troubadours and trobairitz used musical instruments, but none of their accompaniments were written down. Time has not treated the trobairitz as kindly as their male counterparts. While approximately 2,500 troubadour poems survive in manuscript sources, and over 200 with melodies, we have only a few dozen works of the trobairitz, and only a single one with melody.

### ***Nevertheless*, Shruthi Rajasekar (2019)**

*Nevertheless* is an exploration of the meaning of events that transpired during the 2017 Senate hearings regarding the nomination of Jeffrey Sessions to the position of United States Attorney General. The text of the piece is from the official Congressional record of the proceedings, cut into fragments reminiscent of political sound bites. It is from this event that the feminist slogan "Nevertheless, she persisted" was born. Curiously,

the word “persisted” is absent entirely from the text of the piece; it is supplied by our collective memory.

The composer writes, “I studied the transcript record of the original incident...I was struck by how the various accounts of what occurred were viewed by everyone involved as definitive truths. "Here is what transpired," Senator McConnell intoned, as if his words were indisputable. But what happened on February 7, 2017? Was it the silencing of women? Was it a rule needlessly or even recklessly broken? Was it chaos? Was it order? Did it mean nothing? Did it mean... everything? These conflicting truths are all too familiar to us. Yet in spite of our present vitriolic stasis, in which many clamor to be heard but not much is said, I hold this fragile hope: that she, nevertheless, continues.”

Named by The Guardian as a composer "who will enrich your life", Shruthi Rajasekar (b. 1996) is an Indian-American musician exploring identity, community, and joy. Shruthi's music draws from her training in the Carnatic (South Indian classical) and Western classical idioms. Composition honors include the KHORIKOS ORTUS International Award and the Global Women in Music Award from the United Nations & Donne in Musica. As a soprano and Carnatic vocalist, Shruthi has been recognized by the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) and the internationally-televised Carnatic Music Idol USA. A graduate of Princeton University, Shruthi was awarded a Marshall Scholarship in the UK for graduate studies in composition and ethnomusicology.

### ***There Was a Town, Teri Kowiak (2022)***

“There Was a Town” is an English translation of the troubadour song “Una ciutat fo, no sai cals” by Peire Cardinal (c. 1180 – c. 1278), a clergyman who abandoned his career in the church to pursue a life at court writing poems and songs. Although he retained his Christianity, he was known for his satirical songs and dislike of the clergy. He received patronage from several noble families, traveled extensively, and wrote prolifically. Ninety-six of his poems survive to this day.

This song is one of Peire’s many satires and tells the story of a man who woke up to discover that all of his neighbors had gone crazy. However, since he was the only sane person around, they all thought *he* was the crazy one. The moral of Peire’s story is that when everyone succumbs to corruption, false doctrine, or bad behavior, the one person who upholds virtue and truth is the one who seems crazy.

**Composer note:** I decided to use an English translation of this poem to make this piece more relatable for modern-day audiences (and more intuitive for our modern-day

composer). I found a charming translation by American poet W.D. Snodgrass that preserved the spirit of the original along with its sense of rhythm and rhyme. In the interest of playful storytelling, I dug deeply into text painting, creating staccato raindrops, quirky rhythms when referencing dance, and using the lowest notes of the bass singers for growls. Several melodic motifs recur throughout the piece, sometimes in their original form and sometimes altered: the music bounces between the brightness of the major scale and the darkness of the Phrygian mode as the story shifts between talking about the sane man and his crazy neighbors. I hope you enjoy "There Was a Town."

### ***Initium sancti evangelii secundum Marcas Argenti, from Carmina Burana***

If *The Onion* were an album instead of a newspaper, this would be on it. This satire of scripture sharply criticizes the corruption seen in the church in the Middle Ages. The music makes use of psalm tones (formulaic melodies used for singing psalms at mass), and lyrics that are a play on phrases found in the liturgy. Examples of the latter include "The Holy Gospel according to the *Marks of Silver*," instead of "The Holy Gospel according to *Mark*," and "Thanks be to *Gold*" instead of "Thanks be to *God*." In this parody, the singers proclaim the virtues not of humility, charity, and patience, but of riches and wealth, and glorifying whatever means are necessary to acquire it. Although the target of the satire was the Roman Catholic Church, it is just as applicable to our modern-day televangelists and prosperity gospel heretics. Singing this song at the time it was written likely would have cost you your head. In the spirit of satire, we are acting out the song as a liturgical play.

### ***¡Proclama mi Alma!, Teresa Murphy***

After graduating from Brunswick High School in 2014, Maine native Teresa Murphy spent the next year teaching music in Perú and Venezuela. She co-founded the "Latidos" ("Heartbeats") Music Foundation to provide children and youth with musical education, personal development, a close-knit community, and protection from the surrounding gang culture. Teresa returned to the US to study at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA, where she double-majored in Music and Spanish. In summer 2019, Teresa was accepted into the Residencia Hemisferio Sur, a one-month artistic residency in Buenos Aires, where she composed a work based on the paintings of Julio Gaete Ardiles, a Chilean visual artist. In August 2019, she began her Master's in Voice Performance and Pedagogy at Arizona State University. She served as a student leader of the ASU Arizona Women's Collaborative (AWC), an initiative which celebrates the voices of female and nonbinary artists. She is currently choir director at Brophy College Preparatory, an all-boys' Jesuit High School in Phoenix, Arizona.

The piece is a setting of the text of The Magnificat, or Song of Mary, which is mentioned only in the Gospel of Luke. When Mary became pregnant with the Son of God, she visited her cousin Elizabeth, who was pregnant with the child who would become John the Baptist. When Mary greeted Elizabeth, Elizabeth told her that she felt her own unborn child leap for joy. She recognized the nature of Mary's pregnancy and child, blessing her and praising her. Mary responded with the words of the Magnificat. This is a song of praise, faith—and revolution. Mary speaks of putting down the mighty, exalting the humble and meek, and sending the rich empty away. Oppressed people around the world have used these lines in political statements. In some countries, the text was considered so subversive it was banned outright by the government.

Teresa composed *¡Proclama mi Alma!* during her time at Holy Cross. She writes, “In the Magnificat, Mary signs onto no less than an overturning of the systems of the world! What kind of a rebellion is this? One that begins on a tritone... known as the most dissonant interval..., used throughout this piece to represent the clash between the corrupt systems of our world and the loving justice of God. The dissonance is propelled forward with a salsa rhythm, which I learned in Venezuela. Amid systems of economic, social, and political corruption, the Venezuelan people today struggle for justice, equality, and dignity, which I see as analogous to the revolution outlined in the Magnificat. In singing this piece, we stand in solidarity with all who suffer and strive for a world that resembles the Kingdom of Heaven.”

As wonderful as this text is in Latin, it gains a sense of urgency in the vernacular. In using the Spanish language, salsa rhythms, and the provocative tritone, Teresa Murphy creates a Magnificat setting that is a joyful, active, and subversive song of celebration.

*Program notes for Carmina Burana, Troubadours and Trobairitz, Nevertheless, ¡Proclama mi alma! and Visions of Glory by Teri Kowiak, edited by Livia Racz (2022). Cantos Sagrados notes by Laura Prichard, edited by Eileen Sweeney (2016), Teri Kowiak and Livia Racz (2022).*