

MUSIC TO ILLUMINATE, CHALLENGE, AND INSPIRE!

seraphim

CELEBRATING
SERAPHIM

AND OTHER

ANGELS
25TH ANNIVERSARY
CONCERT

IN HONOR OF THE LIFE
AND WORK OF JOHN DUNN

SATURDAY

May 13, 2023, 8:00 pm
All Saints Parish, Brookline

25TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON | 2022-2023

1943–2022

REMEMBERING JOHN DUNN



May he live on
in the hearts and memories
of all whose lives
he profoundly touched.



John G. Dunn, a graduate of Harvard College and Boston University, worked in several capacities at St. Paul's Choir School in Cambridge from 1960 until 2010, ultimately as Headmaster-Music Director. An active member of the Boston Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, John earned the Fellowship and Choir Master diplomas of the Guild and served

the Boston Chapter in numerous capacities. He was an ardent supporter of the Chapter's Young Organists Initiative. He was a gifted service player, accompanist, and recitalist. Skilled as a hymn writer, his hymn texts can be found in various Christian hymnals. Immediately prior to his death, he collaborated with Choir School alumnus Paul Murray to complete a revision of Theodore Marier's signature psalmody to conform to the new liturgical texts that have been implemented in the Catholic Church since the psalms were published in Dr. Marier's hymnal. As one of Seraphim's angels, he served as board member, mentor, and patron.



www.seraphimsingers.org

Jennifer Lester, *Music Director*
Heinrich Christensen, *Organist*

CELEBRATING SERAPHIM AND OTHER ANGELS

- Abendlied Josef Rheinberger (1839-1901)
- The Cherubic Hymn Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)
- Song of the Seraphim Michael Burgo (b. 1958)
- Psalm 96 (Cantate Domino) James Woodman (b. 1957)

Hymn:

Give Thanks to God for He is Good text by John G. Dunn (1943-2022)
(Please stand to join in singing. The score has been provided as an insert.)

Te Deum laudamus C.V. Stanford (1852-1924)



The Company of Heaven.....Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Part One: Before the Creation

Part Two: Angels in Scripture

Part Three: Angels in Common Life and at our Death

Barbara Allen Hill, *Soprano*

Thomas Valenti, *Tenor*

Rhea Yvonne Ranno, *Narrator*

Richard Tarrant, *Narrator*

For program notes, see page 10. Texts begin on page 12.

A reception follows upon conclusion of the concert.
To attend exit the sanctuary through the door at the front right.

CHORUS

SOPRANOS

Rebecca Beck
Leah Costlow
Susanne Feld
Rachael Luther
Leslie Price
Livia Racz
Beth Spaulding

ALTOS

Rita Budwey
Ellen Promise
Nicole Ruttan
Caroline Scheibe
Debra Gleason
Swartz
Kathleen Whuk

TENORS

Jason Connell*
Luca Daniel
Adrian Jones
Jay Lane
Mark Nemeskal
Daniel O'Rourke

BASSES

Daryl Bichel
Michael Budwey
Bruce Kozuma
Joshua T. Lawton
John Nesby
Charles Oliver
John Totter

* Denotes soloist

ORCHESTRA

VIOLIN 1

Lisa Brooke
Robert Curtis
Annegret Klaua

VIOLIN 2

Lisa Goddard
Emily Hale
Nelli Jabotinsky

CELLO

Steven Laven
Rebecca
Thornblade

TIMPANI

Robert Schulz

VIOLA

Sharon Bielik
Noriko Futagami

BASS

Scot Fitzsimmons

ORGAN

Heinrich
Christensen

SERAPHIM

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Robert Barney
Carson Cooman

MUSIC DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

It is with both sadness and gratitude that Seraphim dedicates this last concert of our 25th anniversary year to John Dunn. John was not just an 'angel' to Seraphim, but for me. I first met John professionally in the mid 1980s via the Boston Archdiocesan Choir School at St. Paul Parish (Cambridge) and the Boston Chapter of the American Guild of Organists (BAGO.) In 1999, I applied for the position as associate director in the Choir School, and it turns out Seraphim had a role in that. John had come to a Seraphim concert in June of that year and joked later that it had turned out to be my audition for the job! So began John's association with Seraphim.

I worked at the Choir School as his associate and accompanist for twelve years. In all that time, he supported Seraphim's work. It coincided with his interest in organ and choral works as well as in new music. He served as a board member for Seraphim for a number of years, and helped the group through more than one transition. John always pushed Seraphim to grow as an organization. At the 40th anniversary of the choir school, Seraphim sang with the men and boys of the Choir School, performing Willan's *An Apostrophe to the Heavenly Hosts* for three choirs. It was a great celebration of both the choir school, Seraphim, and John's and my collaboration and friendship.

I came to consider John as a friend as well as colleague, mentor, and boss. John was not just a cheerleader; he would tell me if something I was doing or going to do was wrong or wouldn't work. Seraphim's board and all those who know John will recognize this aspect of John. I am profoundly grateful for John's honesty and wisdom, always delivered with love and humor, and, of course, for his friendship. He is very much missed.

Seraphim has been blessed with many other 'angels' over the years—audiences, composers, donors, and mentors. Some, like John Dunn, have been all of those things. I extend my deep gratitude to you all for your support of me and Seraphim these 25 years!

—Jennifer Lester

Jennifer Lester, music director

Jennifer Lester, Founder and Music Director of The Seraphim Singers, is among the outstanding choral conductors of her generation. Critically acclaimed for creative programming and well-known as an unflagging advocate of new music, Ms. Lester presents emotional and musically engaging performances of challenging but rewarding repertoire. Ms. Lester has commissioned works from both nationally known and local living composers, including Avner Dorman, Shruthi Rajasekar, Christina Whitten Thomas, Carson Cooman, Julian Wachner, and James Woodman. She is committed to diversifying the choral repertoire, programming and commissioning music by women and non-white composers.



Ms. Lester has served as Music Director at the Church of Our Saviour in Brookline and as Associate Music Director and Organist of Saint Paul Parish in Cambridge. She is a past Dean of the Boston Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. Also a Fulbright scholar, Ms. Lester holds a Bachelor's degree from the New England Conservatory of Music, and a Master of Music in choral conducting from Yale University.

Heinrich Christensen, organist



A native of Denmark, Heinrich Christensen came to the US in 1998 and received an Artist Diploma in Organ Performance from the Boston Conservatory, in addition to degrees from conservatories in Denmark and France. He was appointed Music Director of historic King's Chapel in the year 2000, after serving as affiliate organist under the direction of Daniel Pinkham during the final two years of Dr. Pinkham's 42-year tenure at the church.

Heinrich was a prizewinner at the international organ competitions in Odense and Erfurt and has given solo recitals on four

continents. He has performed with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Boston Ballet, Handel & Haydn Society, and numerous choruses in the greater Boston area.

An avid proponent of contemporary music, he has premiered works by Daniel Pinkham, Carson Cooman, Graham Gordon Ramsay, James Woodman, and several others. He has recorded several organ and choral CDs, and Daniel Pinkham's works for solo voice and organ with Florestan Recital Project.

Barbara Allen Hill, soprano



Highly regarded for her artistry and versatility, Barbara Allen Hill specializes in performing and recording the music of the Middle Ages through the present day. Recent solo performances include Mozart's *Coronation Mass* (soprano), Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater Dolorosa* (soprano), and Richard J. Clark's *Te Deum* (soprano), as well as concert appearances with Seven Times Salt, Hesperus, The Henry Purcell Society of Boston, and the Cambridge Christmas Revels. Recent ensemble appearances include performances with Emmanuel Music, Ensemble Altera, Nightingale Vocal Ensemble, and The Crossing.

An enthusiastic supporter of new music, she especially enjoys the opportunity to premiere and record new works. Highlights include recording Gavin Bryar's *The Fifth Century* (2018 GRAMMY Award for Best Choral Performance), premiering Julia Wolfe's *Fire in my mouth* with the NY Philharmonic and The Crossing in January 2019, and in July 2022 she made her Carnegie Hall debut as the mezzo-soprano soloist in Heidi Breyer's *Amor Aeternus: A Requiem for the Common Man*.

Barbara is a member of Beyond Artists and donates a portion of her artistic earnings to organizations such as 350.org, beyondartists.com, barbaraahill.com

BIOS



Thomas Valenti, *tenor*

Thomas Valenti is a Boston based tenor whose passion is in collaborative music. His most recent collaborations have been with Boston Conservatory Opera where he sang the roles of Romboïdal in Jacques Offenbach's *L'île de Tulipatan* and Elder Gleaton in Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*. As a frequent contributor to the new music scene, Thomas works closely with budding composers, ensembles, and other performers to blend his voice in a wide array of musical styles.

He is a graduate of the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami where he achieved his Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance, and is currently pursuing his Master of Music in Operatic Performance at the Boston Conservatory under the tutelage of Dr. Rebecca Folsom. Also an avid poet, Thomas frequently is commissioned to have his texts set in choral works, solo works, and for spoken word performances.

When he is not singing he enjoys sailing on the Charles and doting on his cat, Giacomo Pussini.

Richard Tarrant, *narrator*

Richard Tarrant was born in Brooklyn, NY. He received his BA from Fordham College and his D. Phil. from Oxford University. Tarrant taught Classics at the University of Toronto from 1970 to 1982, and then at Harvard until retiring in 2018. He sang with Jennifer Lester for many years, first at St. Paul's in Harvard Square and more recently at Church of Our Saviour in Brookline.

BIOS

Rhea Yvonne Ranno, *narrator*

Rhea's love for music and performance stems from their mother, who is a concert pianist, vocalist, and composer. When they are not thrifting Aretha Franklin albums, they can usually be found singing Sunday church hymns long after the service has ended. Rhea has been a slam poet since high school and appreciates any opportunity to bring the spoken word to life.

Rhea holds a Bachelor of Liberal Arts in Humanities, cum laude, from Harvard Extension School. A long-time higher education administrator, Rhea currently serves as the Assistant Registrar of Enrollment Technology at Harvard Law School.

Outside of their career, Rhea enjoys spending time with their partner Salem and their two cats, Oscar and Robbie. As of April of this year, Rhea is in discernment for the Episcopal priesthood. Born and raised in Boston, they are proud to call Allston home.

Seraphim concerts explore diverse composers and varied repertoire, with newly commissioned pieces performed alongside timeless gems. The north star that guides our programming is the exploration of deeply human themes: longing, protest, suffering, and transcendence. We use choral music to illuminate and challenge us to act on pressing issues in our world, including homelessness, climate change, and racial justice.

GREATER BOSTON CHORAL CONSORTIUM

The Seraphim Singers is a member of the Greater Boston Choral Consortium, a cooperative association of diverse choral groups. To learn more, visit www.bostonsings.org.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Michael Mauceri, *Graphic Design*
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William Endicott, *Engraving*
Usher crew
Church of Our Saviour, *Rehearsal Space*

TRIBUTES TO JOHN DUNN

I came to consider John as a friend as well as colleague, mentor, and boss. John was not just a cheerleader; he would tell me if something I was doing or going to do was wrong or wouldn't work. Seraphim's board and all those who know John will recognize this aspect of John. I am profoundly grateful for John's honesty and wisdom, always delivered with love and humor, and, of course, for his friendship. He is very much missed.

—Jennifer Lester, Music Director, Seraphim

John Dunn was a supreme influence on many of us gathered here tonight, whether we be Choir School-related, AGO-affiliated, or simply fortunate enough to be friends of a man whose boundless love and generosity was given so selflessly. Our loss is surely heaven's gain, so I will simply quote John, saying, "Long may he wave!"

—Mark Nemeskal, Tenor Section, Seraphim

John recommended me for Seraphim's board. After the first meeting I received a phone call asking me to be president. Thanks, John! Over the years he became a fast friend, colleague, and trusted advisor. I miss his email messages and our lunches together, at which he always looked quite dapper and wore his trademark penny loafers with no socks!

—Daryl Bichel, Bass Section, Seraphim

On this landmark anniversary my heart is very full as I reflect on both my long and rewarding association with Jennifer Lester and her remarkable Seraphim; and the cherished companionship of my wise, mordantly funny, and sometimes unsettlingly honest friend, John Dunn. To these two colleagues and friends I owe a world of gratitude.

—James Woodman, composer

When I was 25, I was at John's home for dinner and still addressed him as "Mr. Dunn". At one point he said, "I am grateful that you still call me that, but don't you think it's time to call me 'John'?" Our recent work, revising Theodore Marier's psalter, was the product of mentor/protegé, colleagues, and friends. It was a great honor to work alongside him in this project. As I was discerning a "career change" from the choir loft to a vocation to the priesthood, John was hugely supportive, but encouraged me to not give up organ playing or making music. He has made a lasting imprint on the lives of so many students. May his memory be eternal.

—Br. Paul Murray, BACS '96

John Dunn is the single greatest influence on my musical life. I will forever treasure his encouragement, guidance, and friendship.

—William Endicott, AAGO, Music Director, Holy Name Parish, West Roxbury

As a parishioner at St. Paul's Church from 1972 to 2015, I was an active supporter of the Archdiocesan Choir School, led by Dr. Theodore Marier. John Dunn, successor to Marier, faithfully carried out the music program and education of the choir boys with seamless sensitivity, creativity, dedication, and uncommon musicality. John was a treasure in his own right, a friend to many, an inspiration to generations of students, and a devoted master of the glorious canon of church music, whether at the organ, teaching, or conducting. His legacy is strong and memories of him will linger long in the history of St. Paul Church.

—Susan A. Lester

TRIBUTES TO JENNIFER LESTER

Congratulations to Jennifer Lester and Seraphim for 25 years of innovative programming and musical excellence! Jen's unique musical vision has consistently brought the profound beauty and expressive power of choral music to singers and audiences alike. I am profoundly grateful to have been a member of the soprano section for more than 20 years. Singing under her direction has given me the most profound musical experiences of my life.

—Eileen Sweeney, Soprano Section, Seraphim

Jen, thank you for making my music sing, not just through the talented voices of Seraphim, but also through your spirit and passion for new music. Your continued support of my work and other living composers sets a standard all choirs should follow. I am honored to be included in the Seraphim community and look forward to seeing where Seraphim's creativity leads.

—Christina Whitten Thomas, Composer

I have always admired Jennifer Lester's consummate skills as a choral conductor. She provides a wealth of information to the singers, making her interpretation of the scores crystal clear. I am also impressed by her commitment to new music, both in commissioning works and helping to usher new music into the choral canon, especially works by women and people of color. Bravo, Jen! Twenty-five magnificent years!

—Daryl Bichel, Bass Section, Seraphim

TRIBUTES TO JENNIFER LESTER, CONT.

On this landmark anniversary my heart is very full as I reflect on both my long and rewarding association with Jennifer Lester and her remarkable Seraphim; and the cherished companionship of my wise, mordantly funny, and sometimes unsettlingly honest friend, John Dunn. To these two colleagues and friends I owe a world of gratitude.

—James Woodman, Composer

Jen, thank you for your steadfast work on behalf of living composers! And heartfelt congratulations on Seraphim's 25th Anniversary! With much gratitude.

—Edie Hill, Composer

Jennifer Lester is a musical visionary whose impact will only grow in time. The sui generis nature of her programming challenges heart and mind, thus edifying the soul. Such influence emanates from her generous nature, conviction, and talent. More than a musician, Jennifer Lester's work uplifts humanity.

—Richard J. Clark, Director of Music, Archdiocese of Boston
and Director of Music and Organist, Cathedral of the Holy Cross.

MUSIC DIRECTOR'S PROGRAM NOTES

Selecting the music for this concert was a joy. The theme of angels, Seraphim being the highest order of angels, gave me a lens through which to explore our identity in a new and fun way, and to take a look back as well as forward.

I knew that we had to perform Rheinberger's *Abendlied*. It has been a chorus favorite since we did it at our second concert in fall 1998. It is the perfect "first piece," especially when sung from the back, or a gallery/balcony. Rheinberger beautifully sets the text, from the biblical "road to Emmaus" story in Luke, as an invitation to "abide" - to stay and rest at the end of the day.

We first performed Tchaikovsky's *Song of the Cherubim* from the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom in our program on Russian icons. Cherubim are the second order of angels, just below Seraphim. And, what bass section doesn't love to sing the Russian Orthodox repertoire?

MUSIC DIRECTOR'S PROGRAM NOTES, CONT.

Michael Burgo was a founding member of Seraphim and sang with the group for many years. His *Song of the Seraphim* is based on a text from Isaiah 6, where Isaiah describes his vision of God seated on the throne, with "Seraphim stationed above." This piece was written for our fifth anniversary and performed again for our tenth.

One of my favorite composers and a great supporter of Seraphim, James Woodman, has contributed several pieces to the Seraphim repertoire. *Psalm 96* was commissioned for our tenth anniversary in 2007. It sets Mary Sidney Herbert's (1561-1621) wonderful poetic translation of the text.

Stanford's *Te Deum* setting sits alongside a few others we have done over the years—by Howells, Britten, Douglas Major, and a particularly interesting one by Ellen Oak that involved djembe drums and Gregorian chant! For this occasion, I felt the Stanford in B-flat was properly celebratory, and of course very English.

The planning for this concert began with Britten's *The Company of Heaven*. This work is "all angels, all the time," and really has it all: drama, celebration, stunning texts from scripture and poets like Rossini and Blake, and ancient hymns.

Benjamin Britten (1913–1976) was an English composer, conductor, and pianist, and a prominent figure in 20th-century music. Born in Lowestoft, England, he began composing at the age of five and attended the Royal College of Music in London. Following graduation, he took a job with the BBC's film unit, writing nearly 40 scores for the theatre, cinema, and radio.

The BBC's Religious Affairs department commissioned *The Company of Heaven* in 1937, when Britten was 23. Britten's music was meant to accompany a radio program marking Michaelmas, a feast day named after the archangel Michael who, according to scripture, hurled Lucifer out of Heaven. The texts for *The Company of Heaven* include writings about angels with sources ranging from the Bible to contemporary poetry.

Though the program was mostly spoken, Britten set selected texts to music and composed two purely instrumental movements for this work. He dramatized the battle between Michael and Lucifer in his theatrical "War in Heaven," which features *sprechstimme* (half-spoken, half-sung) from the lower voices, along with an ominous organ part and aggressive percussion. "A Thousand Gleaming Fires," a setting of a poem by Emily Brontë, was specifically written to be performed by tenor Peter Pears, a member of the BBC Singers. This was the first of many pieces Britten would write for Pears, who eventually became his life-long partner. The final piece of the cantata, "Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones," draws on the hymn of the same name, one well-known to Anglican church-goers.

Although there was discussion of publishing the piece or reworking it for concert performance, this did not happen in Britten's lifetime. The first concert performance of the complete work was given at the Aldeburgh Festival in 1989, over 50 years after the original radio program.

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

Abendlied, Josef Rheinberger
(Sung in German.)

Stay with us, for quickly falls the evening,
and the day is past and over.
Stay with us, for quickly falls the evening.

The Cherubic Hymn, Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky
(Sung in Russian.)

Let us who mystically represent the Cherubim,
and who sing the thrice-holy hymn
to the life-creating Trinity,
now lay aside all cares of this life,
that we may receive the King of All,
who comes invisibly upborne by the angelic host.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Song of the Seraphim, Michael Burgo

In the year of King Uzziah's death,
I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exulted,
with the train of his robe filling the temple.
Seraphim were stationed above.
Each had six wings: with two they veiled their faces,
with two they covered their feet,
and with two they hovered aloft.
They called to one another: Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh,
Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus. Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Adonai ts'va ot, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts.
All the earth is full of God's glory.

TEXTS

Psalms 96 (Cantate Domino), James Woodman

Sing, and let the song be new,
Unto him that never endeth:
Sing all Earth and all in you.
Sing to God and bless his name;
Of the help, the health he sendeth,
Day by day new Ditties frame.

Make each country know his worth:
Of his acts the wondered story
Paint unto each people forth.
For Jehovah great alone
All the Gods, for awe and glory,
Far above doth hold his throne.

For but Idols what are they,
Whom besides made earth adoreth?
He the Skies in frame did lay:
Grace and honor are his guides
Majesty his temple storeth:
Might in guard above him bides.

Kindreds come, Jehovah, give,
Give Jehovah all together:
Force and fame whereso you live.
Give his name the glory fit:
Take your offerings, get you thither,
Where he doth enshrined sit.

Go adore him in the place
Where his pomp is most displayed:
Earth, O go with quaking pace,
Go proclaim Jehovah king:
Stayless world shall now be stayed;
Righteous doom his rule shall bring.

Starry roof, and Earthy floor
Sea and all thy wideness yieldeth:
Now rejoice and leap and roar.
Leafy infants of the wood,
Fields and all that on you feedeth,
Dance O dance, at such a good.

For Jehovah cometh lo!
Lo, to reign Jehovah cometh:
Under whom ye all shall go.
He the world shall rightly guide:
Truly as a king becometh,
For the people's weal provide.

TEXTS

Te Deum laudamus, C.V. Stanford

We praise Thee, O God,
we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.
All the earth doth worship Thee,
the Father everlasting,
To Thee all Angels cry aloud,
the Heavens, and all the Powers therein.
To Thee Cherubim and Seraphim continually cry,
Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth:
Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Thy glory.

The glorious company of the Apostles praise Thee.
The goodly fellowship of the Prophets praise Thee.
The noble army of Martyrs praise Thee.
The holy church throughout all the world
doth acknowledge Thee:
The Father of an infinite majesty:
Thine honourable, true and only Son:
Also the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.

Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ.
Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.
When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man,
Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.
When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death,
Thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.
Thou sittest at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father.
We believe that Thou shalt come to be our judge.

We therefore pray Thee, help Thy servants,
whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood.
Make them to be numbered with Thy saints
in glory everlasting.
O Lord, save Thy people, and bless Thine heritage.
Govern them, and lift them up forever.
Day by day, we magnify Thee; and we worship Thy Name,
ever world without end.
Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin.

TEXTS

O Lord, have mercy upon us.
O Lord, let Thy mercy lighten upon us, as our trust is in Thee.
O Lord, in Thee have I trusted: let me never be confounded.

The Company of Heaven, Benjamin Britten
Cantata for speakers, soprano solo, tenor solo,
Chorus (SATB), timpani, organ and strings
Words selected by R. Ellis Roberts (1879-1953)

Part One: **Before the Creation**

I. **Chaos**

Introduction for orchestra

Spoken Texts: Theodosius and John Milton

II. **The morning stars**

Hymn for chorus and orchestra
Text adapted from St. Joseph the Hymnographer.

The morning stars who, ere light was, were light,
Heav'n's light, heav'n's radiance, in adoration,
There when the day shines, still unstain'd by night,
Cry Holy, Holy, Holy in exultation!
Guards, sentries, Captains of the celestial places,
Thrones, princedoms, Virtues, powers, They praise Him,
Whom the four living ones, whom angels with veiled faces adore,
And the Cherubim and Seraphim.
"Who is like God?" Michael the captain saith;
Raphael, God's cure, sends comfort in distress,
And Gabriel who wing'd once to Nazareth,
Gabriel, the light of God, brings peace!
They sing as when the new earth first was hung
Dizzy, in space, and all the planets and stars were young;
Creation was over . . . six nights and six days.
The sons of God for joy shouted God's praise!

TEXTS

Part Two: **Angels in Scripture**

IIIa. **Jacob!**

Chorus and organ

Spoken Texts: Thomas Heywood, Genesis 28 vv 10-12, 16-17,
and 2 Kings 6 vv 15-17

IIIb. **Elisha!**

Chorus and organ

Spoken Text: R. Ellis Roberts

IIIc. **Hail, Mary!**

Soprano solo, chorus, and organ

Spoken Text: Luke 1 vv 26-28, 31, 38

IV. **Christ, the fair glory**

Hymn for soloists, chorus, and orchestra

Sung Text: Ascribed to Rabamus Maurus,

Translated by Athelstan Riley

Spoken Texts: Christina Rossetti and R. Ellis Roberts

Christ, the fair glory of the holy Angels,
Thou who has made us, thou who o'er us rulest,
Grant of thy mercy unto us thy servants
Steps up to heaven.
Send thy Archangel, Gabriel, the mighty;
Herald of heaven, may he from us mortals
Spurn the old serpent, watching o'er the temples
Where thou art worshipped.
May the best Mother of our God and Saviour,
May the assembly of the Saints in glory,
May the celestial companies of Angels ever assist us.

TEXTS

V. **War in heaven**

Male chorus and orchestra

Text: Revelation 12 vv 7-9 and 18 vv 1-2

And there was war in heaven: War! In heaven!
Michael and his angels fought against the dragon;
And the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not;
Neither was their place found any more in heaven.
And the great dragon was cast out,
That old serpent, called the Devil,
And Satan, which deceiveth the whole world:
He was cast out into the earth,
And his angels were cast out with him.
And after these things I saw another angel
come down from heaven, having great power;
And the earth was lightened with his glory.
And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire.

Part Three: **Angels in Common Life and at our Death**

VI. **Heaven is here**

Soprano solo, chorus, and orchestra

Chorus Text: unattributed

Spoken Text: John Ruskin, Francis Thompson,
and R. Ellis Roberts

Heaven is here and the angels of Heav'n.
It is given to them to guard, guide, warn and conduct us on earth;
Many winged, many eyed, mighty in love,
They stand watch at our birth, stand watch at our death,
Bringing us along the road, bringing us peace,
Bringing us brotherhood.
Ear may not hear, eye may not see,
But about us, around us, in town and in temple,
At our work, at our play, as a cloud,
As a light in the night, in the day
The angels assemble, praying, fighting, singing,
Rejoicing, for you, me, for all the children of God.
Heaven is here and the angels of Heaven.

TEXTS

VII. **A thousand thousand gleaming fires**

Tenor solo and orchestra

Text: Emily Brontë

A thousand thousand gleaming fires
Seem'd kindling in the air;
A thousand thousand silvery lyres
Resounded far and near.
Me-thought the very breath I breath'd
Was full of sparks divine,
And all my heather couch was wreath'd
By that celestial shine.
And while the wide earth echoing rung
To their strange minstrelsy,
The little glittering Spirits sung,
Or seem'd to sing, to me:
"O mortal! mortal! let them die,
Let time and tears destroy,
That we may overflow the sky
With universal joy!
To thee the world is like a tomb,
A desert's naked shore;
To us, in unimagined bloom
It brightens more and more.
"And could we lift the veil and give
One brief glimpse to thine eye,
Thou wouldst rejoice for those that live
Because they live to die!"
The little glittering Spirits sung,
Or seemed to sing, to me, to me.

VIII. **Funeral march for a boy**

Orchestra

Spoken Texts: R. Ellis Roberts and Christina Rossetti

IX. **Whoso dwelleth under the defense of the most high**

Psalms for unaccompanied chorus

Sung Text: Psalm 91 vv 1, 9-13

Spoken Text: William Blake

TEXTS

Who so dwelleth under the defense of the most High:
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
For thou, Lord, art my hope:
Thou hast set thine house of defense very high.
There shall no evil happen unto thee:
Neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.
For he shall give his angels charge over thee:
To keep thee in all thy ways.
They shall bear thee in their hands:
That thou hurt not thy foot against a stone.
Thou shalt go upon the lion and adder:
The young lion and the dragon shalt thou tread,
Shalt tread under thy feet.
For he shall give his angels charge over thee:
To keep thee in all thy ways.

X. **Lento maestoso**

Speaker and orchestra

Texts: John Bunyan, Luke 20 vv 35-36, and D.G. Rossetti

XI. **Ye watchers and ye holy ones**

Hymn for soloists, chorus, and orchestra

Text: Athelstan Riley

O Ye watchers and ye holy ones,
Bright Seraphs, Cherubim and Thrones,
Raise the glad strain, Alleluia!
Cry out Dominions, Princedoms, Powers,
Virtues, Archangels, Angels' choirs, Alleluia!
O higher than the Cherubim,
More glorious than the Seraphim,
Lead their praises. Alleluia!
Thou bearer of the eternal Word,
Most gracious, magnify the Lord, Alleluia!
O friends, in gladness let us sing,
Supernal anthems echoing, Alleluia!
To God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit, Three in One. Alleluia! Amen!
Heav'n is here and the angels of Heav'n. Amen!

The Seraphim Singers traces its roots to an ad hoc choir that formed to perform a piece as part of a student research project at Boston University. I was one of this group of church musicians, and I found the experience so rewarding that I suggested we create a formal ensemble. Calls were made, rehearsal space was found, a program came together, and The Seraphim Singers performed its debut concert in April of 1997.

The Early Years:

Commissioning New Works

From the start, the ensemble was committed to performing contemporary works and new music, and quickly drew the attention of local composers, several of whom even joined to sing in the group. *Abendlied*, which has become a signature piece for Seraphim, was first performed in November 1998, along with our first world premiere, *Veni Creator Spiritus* by Ronald Maltais, who sang countertenor in the choir while finishing a PhD in composition at Boston University. *At the Lighting of the Lamps*, by Julian Wachner, was the group's first commission, performed in April 1999, along with Widor's *Mass for two organs and two choirs*. That was our first concert at Mission Church in Boston, and the beginning of our ensemble being in residence there.

In our 2001-2 season, we offered a world premiere at each of our three programs, works by Graham Ramsay, Elliott Gyger, and Richard J. Clark. Ramsay wrote his setting of Ps 121 for us, and in 2002 he composed settings of Ps 67 and Ps 23, creating a beautiful triptych of works. This season also produced our first collaboration with Clark and our first concert at the newly renovated St. Cecilia's

in Boston's Back Bay. The collaboration with Clark continued over the years with *Christe qui lux es et dies* (2014) and *On emptiness, wisdom, and fortune* (2015), to our 20th anniversary premiere of Clark's *I am the Land*.

Gyger is a composer who was on the music faculty at Harvard, and sang for a few years with the group. We commissioned his *Hebrew, Latin, Greek*, performed in February 2002. It was our most ambitious program/piece to that point. The group recorded the piece for ECS, and we commissioned several other pieces from Gyger over the years. The most difficult piece we have ever done, his *Temptation in the Desert*, was performed in November 2006, and again at Holy Name Parish in West Roxbury and St. Paul's in Harvard Square. He also composed a piece for my wedding, *Wie schön leuchtet*, performed with the St. Paul Parish Choir and the Boston Boy Choir. Seraphim also sang pieces for the occasion.

Michael Burgo, former music director at St. Ignatius in Chestnut Hill and a singer in the group for a number of years, gave us *Song of the Seraphim*, premiered at St. Ignatius in June 2003. The group received a grant from Choral Arts New England (CANE) supporting two commissions, *Psalms 67* by Israeli composer Avner Dorman, and Carlyle Sharpe's *Peace* in May 2004. The ensemble's premiere of Eric Sawyer's *Three choruses from Ecclesiastes* in 2003 led to two commissions from him: his *Sacred Places* (2005) and *Donne secours* (2009), which are among the group's favorites. Our first commission from advisory board member Carson Cooman was *Exaltation* for our *American Sampler* concert (2011); we also performed his *Veni creator spiritus* in 2019.

We commissioned our first piece from James Woodman, *Psalms 96* in May 2006; it also was sung at my wedding in October 2007. We commissioned his *Ave maris stella* in 2008, and have performed his *Midwife's Tale* several times. Woodman's *The Annunciation* was commissioned for our 20th anniversary concert honoring John Dunn as friend, board member, and patron.

Innovative and Thematic Programming

Beyond commissioning new works, innovative, thematic programming became another hallmark of Seraphim's work. The works on Seraphim's programs have never been standard, and the ability and willingness of the singers to go outside traditional repertoire has allowed me a broad canvas and many colors to paint with.

Some of the highlights of themed concerts include our concert around Jesuit composers and the setting of important texts performed at St. Ignatius in 2004, and the *American Sampler* concert (2011) that included early shape note music to music of the civil war, modernist, and new work. The *Variété Française* concert (2012) marked our 15th anniversary and included rarely heard double organ repertoire. *The Short 20th Century* program (2014) marked the 100 year anniversary of World War I and covered the period to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990.

2014 also marked a collaboration with Peter Krasinski to accompany Dreyer's silent film, *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc*. A combination of pieces chosen by Peter and me, Peter's improvisations, and incidental music commissioned from Gyger created a musical background for the film. We screened the film twice to our accompaniment, once

at St. Ignatius, funded by a grant from the Institute for Liberal Arts at Boston College, and once at First Lutheran Church in Boston.

In 2016, I developed a program around the theme of creation and highlighting women composers. *Renew the Face of the Earth* included a commissioned piece by Polina Nazaykinskaya, *Triptych*, and also music of Patricia Van Ness, Abbie Betinis, Christina Whitten Thomas, and Gwyneth Walker.

Perhaps the most emotionally intense of our concerts was *Oppression, Exile, Solidarity* in 2016, which included the first piece we performed by Zachary Wadsworth, and from whom we commissioned *Earthquake* for our *Visions of War, Peace, and Paradise* program in 2017. I had been thinking in more dimensions about music and the experience of music, and about its ability to express spiritual but also social justice themes.

Fruitful Collaborations

The group has enjoyed a number of collaborations with other ensembles over the years. In 2008 we performed a concert of *Magnificat* settings with Musica Sacra, and in 2011 I was able to realize a dream of mine to direct Bach's *St. John Passion*, which we performed at St. Paul's church with the St. Paul's Adult Choir and The Orchestra of Emmanuel Music. In 2015 we collaborated with Kol Arev for the concert *Jerusalem: Holy, Disputed, Lamented*, which included commissions by Joseph Ness, *Me'al Pitsgat al Har Hatzofim*, and Avner Dorman's *70 Names of Jerusalem*.

20th Anniversary Celebration

We marked our 20th year with a concert highlighting our important and most beloved commissions, and a performance of Maurice

Duruflé's *Requiem* to conclude a concert focused on pre- and post-Reformation music to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Duruflé's *Requiem* is a favorite work in the group and was offered in remembrance for those who suffered and lost their lives in the conflicts surrounding the Reformation.

Seasons 20-25: Highlighting POC and Women Composers

In the last five years, we extended our seasons to include very popular Christmas concerts, coupled with our annual winter wear drives for The Friday Café at First Church in Cambridge. We continued to commission new works, especially seeking pieces by women composers. *The Deceiver* by Christina Whitten Thomas was commissioned for *Commissions Old and New* (2018), and for the *Women's Perspectives* concert in 2019 we commissioned *Woman of No Distinction* by Richard J Clark, dramatizing the experience of the woman at the well's encounter with Jesus. The stunning solo part was sung by Anna Ward and, in a reprise performance, by Julia Sullivan.

We also commissioned *Nevertheless She Persisted* from young Indian-American composer Shruthi Rajasekar. We performed several works by Edie Hill, and commissioned *do I wake or sleep* from Ms. Hill for our spring 2023 concert. In addition, the work of a number of living women composers were showcased by the group in this period: Hilary Tann, Kerry Andrew, Maria Esabel Valverde, Margaretha Christina de Jong, and Patricia Van Ness.

The pandemic meant a stop to concerts for a year, but we created a number of curated programs called *Seraphim Revisited*,

using our stockpile of concert recordings. These gave us a chance to return to favorite pieces and those that spoke to the moment. We also sang our signature piece, Rheinberger's *Abendlied*, along with Stephen Paulus' *Pilgrim's Hymn* as a virtual choir.

Live performances resumed in Fall 2021 with a vespers service that included the premiere of Joel Davis's *Ave Maria*, funded by the Lily Foundation for their conference at Boston College. I continued to diversify our repertoire, with our Christmas concert in 2021 including pieces by several Black composers: Robert Nathaniel Dett, Robert Harris, and Edward Henry Margetson. Our spring 2022 concert, *These Too Sing America*, was dedicated entirely to Black composers, including works by Sarai Hillman (*Psalm 59.16*), Zanaida Robles (*Nunc dimittis*), and Trevor Weston (*Visions of Glory*).

Seraphim's 25th Anniversary Season

Our 25th anniversary season began in November 2022 with the premiere of Teri Kowiak's *There was a Town*; a South American style *Magnificat* by Teresa Murphy, and a reprise of James MacMillan's *Cantos sagrados* for our *In/Justice* program. Our Christmas concert in December included two Ukrainian carols, and in March 2023 *Songs of Earth* featured a commission by Edie Hill entitled *do I wake or sleep?*, sponsored by the Irving Forbes Centennial Grant from CANE, a grant from the Newton Cultural Council, and a substantial gift from a patron. Other pieces in that program were Rhiannon Randle's *Our Burning World*, Christina Whitten Thomas's *Songs of Gold*, and encore performances of Abbie Betinis' *Songs of Smaller Creatures*, and Patricia Van Ness's *In principio*.

Seraphim: Past, Present, and Future

Along with commissions and innovative programming, an important part of our performance history has been the weaving in of music from all periods with 20th century music and commissions, expanding and integrating new voices into the choral repertoire. Compositions from the Medieval mystic Hildegard von Bingen, the Renaissance nun Sulpitia Cesis, along with works by Bach, Schütz, Brahms, Palestrina, Tallis, Byrd, Mendelssohn, and Poulenc are part of the long list of works we have performed for these 25 years.

We couldn't have been successful without our singers, board members, and patrons! Special recognition goes to founding board members and advisors Margaret

Angelini, Paul Mattal, Karl Saur, and John Dunn, and to our accompanists and collaborators. Heinrich Christensen has served as organist and/or concert master for most of our history. Warm thanks to musical advisors, both formal and informal, including composers James Woodman, Carson Cooman, and Richard J. Clark, singer Robert Barney, vocal coach Teri Kowiak, and board president, singer, and advisor Daryl Bichel.

And... it continues! We are planning next year's programs and I look forward to taking up the director's baton for Season 26! Expect Seraphim's unique combination of new music and established treasures, woven together in arresting themes that challenge and inspire.

—Jennifer Lester, Music Director

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