

Program

(Please hold your applause till the *** listed).

Sing Joyfully William Byrd (1539/40-1623)

Psalm 81 Texts/tunes from Ainsworth Psalter (1612)
Psalm 4 arr. Robert Shaw (1916-1999) and Alice Parker (b. 1925)

The King shall rejoice, HWV 260 George Frideric Händel (1685-1759)

- I. The King shall rejoice
- II. Exceeding glad shall he be
- III. Glory and great worship
- IV. Thou has prevented him
- V. Allelujah

Brief Intermission

Organ Interlude:
March and Fanfare Matthew McConnell (b. 1980)

Melody Horatio Parker (1863-1919)
Scott Bailey, organist

The composer of the world Text by Gracia Grindal (b. 1943)
Music by Alice Parker (b. 1925)

Centennial Hymn Text by R. S. Storrs
Tune by Charles Zeuner (1795-1857)

Ancient Mother Traditional Native American,
arr. Chappell Kingsland (b. 1980)

The Rhodora Text by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)
Music by William Bolcom (b. 1938)

Excerpts from *Six Dickinson Miniatures:* Texts by Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)
Music by Raymond Schroyens (b. 1933)

Summer for thee
Parting

I died for beauty

Heart not so heavy as mine

Elliott Carter (1908-2012)

Good night, dear heart

text by Robert Richardson
and Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorn Clemens)
Music by Dan Forrest (b.1978)

Readers: Brit Albritton and Sarah Metcalf

Program Notes and Texts

An American hymn tune “thread” weaving through our program:

There’s a land that is fairer than day,
And by faith we can see it afar;
For the Father waits over the way
To prepare us a dwelling place there.

We shall sing on that beautiful shore
The melodious songs of the blessed;
And our spirits shall sorrow no more,
Not a sigh for the blessing of rest.

To our bountiful Father above,
We will offer our tribute of praise
For the glorious gift of His love
And the blessings that hallow our days.

Refrain: In the sweet by and by,
We shall meet on that beautiful shore.

Text: Sanford Fillmore Bennett (1868)
Tune: “Webster,” by Joseph Webster (1819-1875),
student of Lowell Mason

Looking at the psalm singing that flourished in colonial America also invites us to look into the roots of that tradition. Renaissance English composer William Byrd’s six-part anthem, “Sing Joyfully,” is based on the first four verses of Psalm 81 as taken

from the Geneva Bible, a version created in 1560 by English scholar refugees in Switzerland. It became vastly popular in England and was the preferred version of the Pilgrims for their Mayflower voyage. Also accompanying them was a psalter compiled by the English separatist minister Henry Ainsworth (1571-1622/23)– the basis for two arrangements (Psalm 81 and Psalm 4) also featured on our program. These psalm settings show a stark contrast in texture - Byrd's anthem highly polyphonic with voices imitating each other in rapid succession, the Shaw/Parker settings gravitating to unison, two-part or homophonic writing with phrasing to highlight the metrical verse.

On June 2, 1818, a newly established musical society in Boston performed Handel's Coronation anthem, "The King shall rejoice" – originally written for King George II and premiered in Westminster Abbey in London – on the third floor of a building on the corner of Boylston and Washington streets that served as a performance hall. It was a curious choice; oratorios such as *Messiah* and *Creation* were understandable mainstays for a society promoting the work of Handel and Haydn, but a Coronation anthem stood in stark contrast to the independence from English monarchy that the United States had fought to achieve. Nonetheless, it fulfilled the aims of the society's founders to promote performances of quality sacred music (which in itself is interesting commentary on their perceptions of political and religious identity at the time). One of four Coronation anthems which Handel composed in 1727, it is based on texts of Psalm 21 according to the Book of Common Prayer, building to an elaborate, fugal "Alleluiah" at the work's close.

In her notes on her work, *The Composer of the World*, Alice Parker describes how she was drawn to the writing of her friend and poet, Gracia Grindal. About the poem: "The whole work is a meditation on creative power, the wonders inside everything 'ordinary'. It is a sonnet in fourteen lines, but only falls into the usual eight plus six pattern in its end-rhymes. 'The horns, the bells, the metal pipes, they play/Music that only he has heard before' are a hinge in the center of the poem, connecting the creator with us who only dimly hear the music of the spheres. I added the Alleluias at beginning and end to frame the poem, creating a chant-like context out of which the song could rise."

On Oct. 17, 1883, the town of Longmeadow, MA marked the 100th anniversary of its founding with a celebration on the Town Green – according to documents of the event, a fitting tribute for the "coming of age of this eldest child of the sovereign State (of Massachusetts)". Among many speakers at the event was Professor Richard Storrs, whose grandfather had served as the second minister of First Church in Longmeadow from 1786-1819. Following Storrs' welcome address, the assembly sang a hymn he had written for the occasion, to a familiar tune by Charles Zeuner. Our performance today moves immediately into a chant in recognition of Native Americans who inhabited Longmeadow and the surrounding region through this time:

Bend low – in brightest beauty bend,

Ye skies, that o'er our fathers smiled:
Sweetest, selectest influence lend,
To bless the heart of every child.

Blow soft – ye balmy breezes, blow,
That winged our fathers o'er the sea,
These meadows, fresh and fair, to sow
With sacred seeds of Liberty.

Ye mountains, meadows, woods and plains,
Ye skies, and streams, and glades, and groves,
Exult – that still to you remains
This village of our fathers' loves.

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Ancient Mother, I hear you calling,
Ancient Mother, I hear your song.
Ancient Mother, I hear your laughter.
Ancient Mother, I taste your tears.

In Frederick Turner's article, "Still ahead of his time" (honoring the 200th anniversary of Ralph Waldo Emerson's birth), Turner described how Emerson "lived in the afterglow of the New England Puritan age of faith, and in the dawn of America's political, artistic and exploring power...at the center of his insights was a vision of nature's intimate relationship with the human and the divine." The poem "Rhodora", published in 1847, encapsulates his vision. American composer William Bolcom's setting was composed for the Otterbein College Choir, also for the bicentennial of Emerson's birth in 1803.

The Rhodora:
On being asked, whence is the flower?

In May, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes,
I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,
Spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook,
To please the desert and the sluggish brook.
The purple petals fallen in the pool
Made the black water with their beauty gay;
Here might the red-bird come his plumes to cool,
And court the flower that cheapens his array.
Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why
This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,
Tell them, dear, that, if eyes were made for seeing,
Then beauty is its own excuse for Being;
Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!
I never thought to ask; I never knew;

But in my simple ignorance suppose
The self-same power that brought me there, brought you.

“To shut our eyes is travel,” wrote Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) to a friend in 1870. While she, an Amherst native, never traveled abroad, her poetry remarkably made its way to continental Europe and beyond, not long after her passing. Composer Raymond Schroyens, born and educated in Belgium, is one example of Dickinson’s global reach; his *Six Dickinson miniatures*, which were published in English and include a translation of her poetry into Dutch, show remarkable sensitivity to her writing and the nuances of the English language. Schroyens describes his vocal music as “strongly attached to the natural prosody of the text” and inclined toward “flowing legato”; his Dickinson settings are written in a chant-like manner, primarily without time signature or key signature (though tonal in concept).

I. Summer for thee, grant I may be
When Summer days are flown!
Thy music still, when Whipporwill
And Oriole—are done!

For thee to bloom, I'll skip the tomb
And row my blossoms o'er!
Pray gather me—
Anemone—
Thy flower—forevermore!

IV. My life closed twice before its close--
It yet remains to see
If Immortality unveil
A third event to me

So huge, so hopeless to conceive
As these that twice befell.
Parting is all we know of heaven,
And all we need of hell.

VI. I died for beauty, but was scarce
Adjusted in the tomb,
When one who died for truth was lain
In an adjoining room.

He questioned softly why I failed?
"For beauty," I replied.
"And I for truth - the two are one;
We brethren are," he said.

And so, as kinsmen met a-night,

We talked between the rooms,
Until the moss had reached our lips,
And covered up our names.

Twice winner of the Pulitzer Prize, the first composer to receive the United States National Medal of Arts, Elliott Carter is internationally recognized as one of America's leading voices of the classical music tradition. Carter's prolific career spanned over 75 years, with more than 150 pieces ranging from chamber music to orchestra to opera (bio summary courtesy of Boosey and Hawkes). In her article "Layers of meaning: Expression and design in Carter's Songs," Brenda Ravenscroft describes Carter's approach to text setting as "both deeply abstract and, at times, profoundly illustrative"...as if "the meaning of the words is distilled into music." (*Elliott Carter Studies*, ed. Boland/Link). While in stark contrast to Schroyens' interpretation, Carter's setting of "Heart not so heavy as mine" (1938) shows equal sensitivity to Dickinson's poetry – infusing the piece with rhythmic motives that capture specific events or moments on a canvas of time.

Heart, not so heavy as mine
Wending late home—
As it passed my window
Whistled itself a tune—
A careless snatch—a ballad—A ditty of the street—
Yet to my irritated Ear
An Anodyne so sweet—
It was as if a Bobolink
Sauntering this way
Carolled, and paused, and carolled—
Then bubbled slow away!
It was as if a chirping brook
Upon a dusty way—
Set bleeding feet to minuets
Without the knowing why!
Tomorrow, night will come again—
Perhaps, weary and sore—
Ah Bugle! By my window
I pray you pass once more.

The text of "Good Night, Dear Heart" – taken from the last lines of a poem by Robert Richardson – was chosen by Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens) as an epitaph for his daughter, Olivia Susan ("Susy") Clemens, who died of meningitis at the age of 24 while Twain was traveling abroad. It was an unexpected and deeply painful loss; author Laura Trombley described Susy as a "second muse" in Twain's life, who as a teen had written a biography of her father that was later incorporated into his own autobiography. Composer Dan Forrest, a native of Elmira, New York where Twain and his family are buried, decided to set the text in response to a loss

in his extended family. Forrest has been widely commissioned and received numerous awards, including the ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer's Award and the ACDA Raymond Brock Award, among others. For our program his work gives us a poignant yet hope-filled close:

Warm summer sun,

Shine kindly here,

Warm southern wind,

Blow softly here.

Green sod above,

Lie light, lie light.

Good night, dear heart,

Good night, good night.