

Members of **Vox Nova Chamber Choir** have been meeting for rehearsals and concerts since February of 2009. If you've been to our previous performances, chances are good you have heard some of the music on this program before. These works cover contrasting styles, rhythms, and tonalities. They are, as the program title suggests, from both sacred and secular tradition. They are also all, in some way, love songs.

Great music rewards a second listen, but more importantly it rewards a second performance. Put the same piece on two different programs and the works around it will change how you hear it. The more you rehearse a piece of music the more it seems to develop and change. This program takes a selection of works that the choir particularly loves, whether as individual singers or as a collective, and sets them in contrast with one another to see them from new perspectives.

Libby Larsen's **Alleluia** opens with a succession of bright, dissonant chords followed by unsquare, cockeyed rhythms. The work echoes the long tradition of congregational song with a central tonality and rhythm skewed by the exuberance of the singer. Humanity has an appealing enthusiasm in this philosophical tradition, but perfection is solely God's domain—the domain at which **i thank You God for most this amazing day** takes aim. Eric Whitacre's setting of E. E. Cummings' psalm to "everything which is natural/ which is infinite/ which is yes" turns Larsen's energy inward. Its polytonal clusters and liquid transitions maintain a quiet, reverent intensity. **In Paradisum** extends spiritual contemplation beyond the present and into the future's transient unknown. The Latin text comes from the requiem service, and an aleatoric passage halfway through the piece seems to mark the soul's ascent to the celestial sphere. The ethereal freedom from rhythm lends poignancy to the inevitable return—to rhythm, to traditional tonal harmony, as the rest of us remain bound to the Earth, able only to wonder and dream about the inevitable.

The **Credo** is an absolute statement of faith central to Christian liturgy. Rautavaara's setting posits the statement as a response to trouble and uncertainty. The text piles up on itself as though murmured very quickly

by many voices. A quiet, wandering middle section which coincides with a description of the resurrection—the central mystery of Christianity—follows the shaken faith of the opening material. The mystery in turn inspires an increased sense of strength and movement that sounds stronger if not entirely rid of a lingering sense of doubt. Gyorgy Orban takes squarer aim at the ways in which human frailty informs and underpins faith in **Daemon Irrept Callidus**. The Latin text describes sin's seductiveness so thoroughly that it's difficult not to be swept away by the experience.

Sing Me to Heaven suggests a celestial path marked with "love and passion/ pain and pleasure," tempering the loftiness of the earlier hymns of praise with greater acknowledgement of human frailty. Likewise, the shadows of human nature make an appearance halfway through **Te Lucis Ante Terminum** in the form of the nightmares against which the text's prayer seeks protection. If we describe an arc from the purely emotional Alleluia through the celestial, terrestrial, and the damned, **Te Lucis** provides the comfort of protection from evils real or imagined. The existence of uncertainty, temptation, and fear inform the serenity of the final bars as they drift toward a pleasant sleep. Kevin Siegfried distills this sentiment further in his gloriously simple setting of the Shaker hymn **Lay Me Low**. The text and the setting both suggest an arrival at peace. Quiet, simple harmonies and pedal tones which unite increasing numbers of voices tie together the loose ends, clusters, and dissonances of the earlier works. With informed peace and serenity comes a new capacity for joy, embodied in Paul Basler's setting of the **Gloria** from his "Missa Kenya," set to African drums.

The central recurring material throughout Morten Lauridsen's set of six **Madrigali** consists of a jarring minor ninth dissonance the composer calls the "fire" chord. The Alleluia at the beginning of the program features the same chord with one altered note—a flatted third—but the effect could hardly be more different. These are works of unrequited love, from an operatic scale (as in "Ov'e Lass, Il Bel Viso?") to despondent intimacy ("Io Piango"). The closing work in the set, "Se Per Havervi, Oime," seeks and ultimately

finds a lambent beauty in the fires of despair—a suggestion that a love unrequited has no less beauty or power than any other.

Eric Whitacre's **Flower Songs** describe a love no less consuming, but with a passion informed more by possibility than disappointment. **Go Lovely Rose** portrays beauty in the face of the elements, tracing the seasons of the year as a metaphor for life. The music mimics its subject as it blooms, slowly fades, and dies petal by petal into the snow. **I Hide Myself** uses shyness as the foil for its protagonist's beauty, whose bloom we catch in glimpses beneath a stoic exterior. The accretion of troubled loves finally gives way to unbound passion in **With a Lily in Your Hand**, a study of contrasts where butterfly wings echo the angels of "i thank You God," and sparks fly above moonlit water.

Carmen Cavallaro's two settings of poems by Federico Garcia Lorca feature vivid landscapes set to folk melodies. **Después de Pasar** employs a stylized Spanish melody, while **El Grito** is based upon a Vietnamese folk song. Both works evoke a sense of longing for a distant, possibly idealized place and time, as though love songs for ghosts or abstractions. They seem to exist halfway between dream and reality, lushly beautiful, yet distant.

Dörven Dalai returns to joyful exuberance, this time in the form of a meeting of friends. The text and setting are Mongolian, but the emotional experience is universal. Friends gather, greet one another, sing, and live in the moment together. And the moment, for all of us, is better for it.

Program notes by Matthew Kuhrt

The choir extends special thanks to Darwin Gillett, Vivian J. Kemp, William Waterman, Delmar Small, Cristle Collins Judd, the Bowdoin Music department, Events and Summer Programs, and the Bowdoin College community.

Vox Nova Chamber Choir was founded in 2009 by Shannon M. Chase and Karen Topp, and features members of the Maine Midcoast musical community, including Bowdoin College faculty and alumni. The group seeks to provide a new and unique voice by championing the expansive body of modern and contemporary choral music, and seeks to provide singers and audiences with new ways of hearing the oldest instrument in human experience. For more information, including a performance calendar and audition information, please visit voxnova.com.

Dr. Shannon M. Chase is clinical assistant professor of music education in the Mason Gross School of the Arts of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, where she serves on the academic and performance faculties. Prior to her appointment in Mason Gross, Chase held appointments on the faculties of Bowdoin and Colby colleges and was associate director of choral activities in the School of Music & Dance of the University of Oregon. She earned the Ph.D. in Music Education at The Florida State University under André J. Thomas and Rodney Eichenberger, the Master of Music in Choral Conducting from the University of Maine (1999) and the Bachelor of Music in Music Education from the University of Southern Maine (1993). A mezzo-soprano, Chase sings and teaches private voice lessons through her studio, *Sotto Voce*.

Jennifer Hand Runge received the Master of Music in Choral Conducting from New England Conservatory, and the Bachelor of Arts from Bowdoin College. She has studied conducting under Robert Greenlee, Tamara Brooks, Stephen Kushner, Doreen Rao and James Jordan. Her choral music teaching experience includes Poly Prep Country Day School, Phillips Exeter Academy and The Pingry School. In addition to conducting, she has sung in numerous community choirs throughout the Boston and New York metropolitan areas, and is a charter member of Vox Nova.

Texts and Translations

i thank You God for most this amazing day

e.e. cummings

i thank You God for most this amazing
day:for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky;and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes

(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday;this is the birth
day of life and of love and wings:and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any—lifted from the no
of all nothing—human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)

In Paradisum

Into paradise may the angels lead you;
on your arrival may the martyrs receive you,
and lead you to the holy city of Jerusalem.
My the choir of angels receive you,
and with Lazarus the poor man,
may you rest eternally.

Credo

I believe in one God, Father almighty,
maker of heaven and of earth and of all things visible
and invisible.
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of
God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of
Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, being
of one substance with the Father;
by whom all things were made;
who for us and for our salvation came down from
heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the
Virgin Mary, and was made man;
he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and
suffered, and was buried, and the third day he rose
again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into
heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father;
from thence he shall come again, with glory, to judge
the quick and the dead;
whose kingdom shall have no end.
And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who
proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and

the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake
by the prophets.

In one holy catholic and apostolic Church; we
acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we
look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the
world to come.

Amen.

Daemon Irrepiit Callidus

The Demon sneaks expertly
Tempting the honorable heart;
He sets forth trickery amidst praise, song and dance.
However amiably the demon acts,
it is still worth less than the heart of Jesus.

The Flesh is tempted by sensuality
Gluttony clings to our senses;
It overgrows, it encroaches, it stretches.
However appealing the Flesh is,
It is still worth less than the heart of Jesus.

Though the Universe may confer
Thousands upon thousands of praises,
However appealing it all is,
It is still worth less than the heart of Jesus.
They neither fulfill nor extinguish the heart's passion,
Demon!

Te Lucis Ante Terminum

To You before the day's end
We pray, creator of all things,
That by Your clemency
You might be our grand keeper.

Put nightmares far from us,
And night terrors,
And restrain our enemies
That our bodies may not know pollution

Grant this, Father almighty
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Who through all ages reigns
with the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Sing Me to Heaven

In my heart's sequestered chambers
lie truths stripped of poet's gloss.
Words alone are vain and vacant
and my heart is mute.

In response to aching silence
memory summons half-heard voices
and my soul finds primal eloquence
and wraps me in song.

If you would comfort me,
sing me a lullaby.

If you would win my heart,
sing me a love song.

If you would mourn me and bring me to God,
sing me a requiem,
Sing me to heaven.

Touch in me all love and passion,
pain and pleasure,
touch grief and comfort;
Love and passion
pain and pleasure.

Sing me a lullaby,
a love song,
a requiem.

Love me, comfort me,
bring me to God:
Sing me a love song,
sing me to heaven.

Lay Me Low

Lay me low.

Where the Lord can find me,
Where the Lord can own me,
Where the Lord can bless me.

Gloria

Glory be to God on high,
and on earth peace unto all men of goodwill.

We worship thee, we praise thee,
we thank thee for thy great glory.

We praise thee, we worship thee,
we bless thee, we glorify thee.

We thank thee for thy great glory.

O Lord God, heavenly King.

The only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

O Lord God, Lamb of God

that taketh the world's sins,

have mercy upon us.

For thou alone art holy,

thou alone art Lord

thou, Lord, art Almighty, Jesus Christ,

with the Holy Ghost,

art in God's glory.

Amen.

Ov'è, Lass', Il Bel Viso?

Translation by Erica Muhl

Alas, where is the beautiful face? Behold, it hides.
Woe's me, where is my sun? Alas, what veil
Drapes itself and renders the heavens dark?
Woe's me, that I call and see it; it doesn't respond.
Oh, if your sails have auspicious winds,
My dearest sweet, and if you change your hair
And features late, if the Lord of Delos
Hides grace and valor in your beautiful bosom,
Hear my sighs and give them place
To turn unjust disdain into love,
And may your pity conquer hardships.
See how I burn and how I am consumed by fire;
What better reason, what greater sign
Than I, a temple of faithful life and love!

Quando Son Più Lontan

Translation by Erica Muhl

When I am farther from your beautiful eyes
That made me change my wishes and my ways,
The flame grows and leads me to my death;
And you, who for my fate
Could restrain the sweet flame,
Deny me the flame that inflames me.

Amor, lo Sento L'alma

Translation by Erica Muhl

Oh love, I feel my soul
Return to the fire where I
Rejoiced and more than ever desire to burn.
I burn and in bright flames
I feed my miserable heart;
The more it flames
The more my loving grows,
For all my sorrows come
From out of the fire where I
Rejoiced and more than ever desire to burn.

Io Piango*Translation by Erica Muhl*

I'm weeping, for the grief
 Makes me cry, since I
 Can find no other remedy for my fire.
 So trapped by Love am I
 That ever I lie in torment
 But the more I cry the less pain I feel.
 What cruel, unheard-of fate
 That silence gives me death and weeping life!

Luci Serene E Chiare*Translation by Erica Muhl*

Eyes serene and clear
 You inflame me, but my heart must
 Find pleasure, not sorrow, in the fire.
 Words sweet and dear,
 You wound me, but my breast must
 Find pleasure, not sorrow, in the wound.
 O miracle of love!
 The soul that is all fire and blood,
 Melts yet feels no sorrow, dies yet does not
 languish.

Se Per Havervi, Oime*Translation by Erica Muhl*

If, alas, when I gave you my heart,
 There was born in me that passion,
 Cruel Lady, which burns me everywhere
 So that I am all aflame,
 And if, loving you, bitter torment
 Makes me die of sorrow,
 Wretched me! What shall I do
 Without you who are my every joy?

Go, Lovely Rose

Go, lovely rose
 Tell her that wastes her time and me,
 That now she knows,
 When I resemble her to thee,
 How sweet and fair she seems to be.
 Tell her that's young,
 And shuns to have her graces spied,
 That hadst thou sprung
 In deserts where no men abide,
 Thou must have uncommended died.
 Small is the worth
 Of beauty from the light retired;

Bid her come forth
 Suffer herself to be desired,
 And not blush so to be admired.

Then die! That she
 The common fate of all things rare
 May read in thee;
 How small a part of time they share,
 That are so wondrous sweet and fair!

I Hide Myself

I Hide myself within my flower
 that wearing on your breast,
 You unsuspecting wear me too
 and angels know the rest.

I hide myself within my flower
 that fading from your vase,
 you, unsuspecting feel for me
 almost a loneliness...

With a Lily in Your Hand*Translation by Jerome Rothenberg*

With a lily in your hand
 I leave you, o my night love!
 Little widow of my single star
 I find you.
 Tamer of dark

Butterflies!
 I keep along my way.
 After a thousand years are gone
 You'll see me,
 o my night love!

By the blue footpath,
 tamer of dark
 stars,
 I'll make my way.
 Until the universe
 can fit inside
 my heart.

El Grito (The Scream/The Cry)

The ellipse of a cry
sighs from hill
to hill.

Rising from the olive trees,
it appears as a black rainbow
upon the azure night.

Ay!

Like the bow of a viol,
the cry causes the long strings
of the wind to vibrate.

Ay!

(The people of the caves
hold out their oil lamps.)

Ay!

Después de Pasar (After the Passing)

The children gaze
at a point far, far away.

The oil lamps are extinguished.
Some blind girls
question the moon,
and through the air rise
spirals of tears.

The mountains gaze
at a point far, far away.

Dörven Dalai (The Four Seas)

As clear as the water of the West Sea,
as gentle as the areca leaves.

With happiness and good fortune we have met.
Let's drink the best of wine, rejoice and sing,
and enjoy this joyful moment together.

As pristine as the water of the East Sea,
as gentle as the fruit tree leaves.

With good wishes and luck we have met.
Let's raise our wine cups, rejoice and sing,
and enjoy this happy moment together.