

THE 18<sup>TH</sup> STREET SINGERS  
*present*

**cross**

**currents**

*our fourth annual winter concert*

FRIDAY, JANUARY 25, 2008 • SATURDAY, JANUARY 26, 2008



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# THE 18TH STREET SINGERS

**Benjamin Olinsky**  
**ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**

**Bryan Oh**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**Ron Lee**  
**ASSISTANT MUSIC DIRECTOR**

**Wuryati Morris**  
**MANAGING DIRECTOR**

**Kari Fuglesten**  
**COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR**

**Chris Colwell & Chris Lewis**  
**CONCERT MANAGERS**

## **Soprano**

Marian Drake (Section Leader), Kendra Anderson, Krista Bergey, Jessamyn Berniker\*, Alex Colón, Ali Golden, Jessica Lee, Wuryati Morris\*, Catherine Rodman, Rasika Teredesai

## **Alto**

Sarah Redmond (Section Leader), Andrea Agalloco, Pamela Beecroft, Amy Corley, Joy Fowlin, Barbara Francis, Kari Fuglesten, Sarah Koch, Amy Lenander, Valerie Madamba, Erin Schwartz, Susan Shell, Sarah Whitton

## **Tenor**

Chris Lewis (Section Leader), Charlie Chapin, Chris Colwell, Rod Cruz, Finbar Foley, Marc Lewis, Bryan Oh, Dave Parker, Tim Schmitz, Guye Turner\*, Benjamin Wallace\*

## **Bass**

Matt Cook (Section Leader), Josh Adler, Adam Ambrogi, Nick Bath, Clinton Canady IV\*, Skip Gain, Ron Lee, Haninah Levine, Dan Mandel, Alex Reid

\* In absentia

## **A Fond Farewell To...**

Jessica Lee, who will be leaving us to begin a new career in Boston.

## About Us

Welcome to the fourth annual winter concert of the 18th Street Singers! We are a group of young people living, learning, and working in the DC area. Members of our forty-voice ensemble have a wide range of musical backgrounds, and we are drawn together by our love for singing. As a new addition to the DC choral scene, we hope to bring a fresh, spirited interpretation to traditional choral music. Our diverse repertoire includes classical masterpieces, traditional American music, folk songs from around the world, and innovative works by modern and experimental composers. We hope to bring to you the highest standards of musicianship, and we thank you for letting us share our passion for choral music with you. Again, thank you for coming, and we hope that your experience tonight will bring you back to our future concerts.

## About the Artistic Director

Benjamin Olinsky has directed the 18th Street Singers since the group's fall 2004 inception. Benjamin has studied choral conducting both at the Yale School of Music with Maggie Brooks and Dr. David Connell and at Westminster Choir College with Dr. James Jordan. As an undergraduate student at Yale, Benjamin conducted the Bach Society Chorus and the English Muffins (a madrigal choir), and served as the assistant director of the Yale Summer Chorus. He also served as music director for Out of the Blue, an award-winning contemporary a cappella group. When he isn't directing the 18th Street Singers, Benjamin serves as a policy advisor to Senator Edward Kennedy's Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee staff.

## Thanks To...

- Pastors Wendy Moen and Tom Knoll, and the entire community of First Trinity Lutheran Church, for generously inviting us to use their church over the years for our rehearsals. Without their support, we could not do what we do.
- All of the donors who have contributed much needed financial resources for us to continue our singing.
- Amy Corley, for her leadership as our Executive Director, and Susan Shell, for her past work as Communications Director.
- Kari Fuglesten, Tim Schmitz and their communications team, including Rod Cruz and Chris Colwell, for their tireless and unprecedented efforts to publicize our group, and Praveen Kathpal, Wuryati Morris, and Benjamin Wallace for helping us sell tickets tonight
- Haninah Levine, Tim Schmitz, Ben Olinsky, and Ron Lee for their contributions to the program.
- Andrea Agalloco, Jessamyn Berniker, Joy Fowlin, Dave Parker, Alex Reid, Catherine Rodman and other members for their valuable contributions to the group.

# CROSSCURRENTS

## I. ANCHORS

- ❖ My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord  
ARR. MOSES HOGAN
- ❖ Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child  
ARR. GERHARD SCHROTH
- ❖ Keep Your Lamps  
ARR. ANDRE THOMAS
- ❖ There Will Be Rest  
FRANK TICHELI
- ❖ Witness  
ARR. JACK HALLORAN
- ❖ Sing Me To Heaven  
DANIEL GAWTHROP

## II. CURRENTS

- ❖ Io Son la Primavera  
WILLIAM HAWLEY
- ❖ Water Night  
ERIC WHITACRE, TEXT BY OCTAVIO PAZ,  
TR. MURIEL RUKEYSER
- ❖ Vineta  
JOHANNES BRAHMS
- ❖ Shenandoah  
ARR. MARSHALL BARTHOLOMEW AND  
FENNO HEATH

*(Intermission)*

### III. TRADITION

- ❖ Ave Maria  
ANTON BRUCKNER
- ❖ Christus Factus Est  
ANTON BRUCKNER
- ❖ Richte mich, gott  
FELIX MENDELSSOHN
- ❖ Misto Klekani  
ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK
- ❖ Past Life Melodies  
SARAH HOPKINS

### IV. REINVENTION

- ❖ Words  
ANDERS EDENROTH
- ❖ I Sat Down Under his Shadow  
SIR EDWARD BAIRSTOW
- ❖ Hymne à la Vierge  
PIERRE VILLETTE
- ❖ O Magnum Mysterium  
MORTEN LAURIDSEN
- ❖ Agnus Dei  
SAMUEL BARBER

*Please join us for a short reception after the show.*

## Program Notes

### **My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord**

We open tonight's concert, as we often do, with an African-American spiritual – representing one of the oldest and most influential traditions in American music. "My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord" speaks to the power of music to inspire inner strength and renewal of faith in all of us as we navigate the challenges and difficulties of everyday life. This arrangement, by legendary New Orleans-born composer and arranger Moses Hogan (1957-2003), was first performed in 1998. Following a mostly homophonic opening half in which the lyrics describe the individual's acts of singing and praying, the arrangement builds to a frenzied and intense coda featuring the call and response of the female and male voices, reminding us that our faith draws strength from others around us.

### **Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child**

Many say the strongest love is that between a mother and her child, and this traditional spiritual uses the absence of this love to express the wrenching emotions of loneliness and abandonment endured by slaves of the American South. This profoundly tragic piece, arranged by American choral director Gerhard Schroth, is particularly effective in evoking the rawness of the painful emotions with the use of dark tones, a heavy tempo, the provocative use of soprano and alto harmony in places to mimic the sounds of women weeping.

### **Keep Your Lamps**

In different variations of melody and lyrics, "Keep Your Lamps" has been a favorite of blues and gospel musicians at least since it was recorded by the Texas preacher and bluesman Blind Willie Johnson in the 1930s. Like many spirituals, "Keep Your Lamps" appears to be a song with a double message, inspiring its listeners both to hope for God's redemption and to work for their own freedom. This version, arranged by Andre Thomas (b. 1952) – alongside Moses Hogan one of the most influential arrangers of spirituals in recent decades – alludes to the New Testament Gospel of Matthew, in which Jesus compares the wise believer to a virgin who, when told that her bridegroom is coming, prepares enough lamp-oil to await her beloved whenever he may come.

## There Will Be Rest

Frank Ticheli (b. 1958), like Morton Lauridsen, Eric Whitacre and William Hawley, three other contemporary composers featured in tonight's repertoire, writes choral music in a style sometimes described as a "modern madrigal": music whose structure and overall effect recall the lushness of Renaissance and Romantic choral music, but whose building blocks include tonal clusters and other harmonic elements alien to those older musical styles. "There Will Be Rest" is a setting of a haunting poem written by American poet Sara Teasdale shortly before her suicide in 1933. The poem opens with images of consolation, foreseeing "a reign of rest, serene forgetting, the music of stillness," lit by "sure stars." In time, though, the poem's vision darkens, as the poet resolves, "I will make this world of my devising out of a dream in my lonely mind."

## Witness

"Witness," arranged by Jack Halloran (1916-1997), is a favorite of the 18th Street Singers. The lyrics recount briefly and wittily several stories from the Old and New Testaments, weaving the individual narratives into a sermon about the importance of bearing witness to God. Halloran was an Iowa-born songwriter and radio conductor who worked with musicians including Bing Crosby, Dean Martin, Ray Charles, Pat Boone and Frank Sinatra and was involved in the popularization of jazzy mid-century standards such as "Volare" and "The Little Drummer Boy." In contrast to those pieces, this up-tempo arrangement of "Witness," with its percussively rhythmic backbone of parallel chords and its precise interplay of voice parts, recalls the disciplined, tight sound of a Sunday gospel service.

## Sing Me to Heaven

This piece by the Virginian composer Daniel Gawthrop (b. 1949) has captured the heart of many singers and listeners in the years since it was written in 1991 and has become a favorite of choirs and audiences alike. The composition, inspired by a beautiful poem written by Gawthrop's wife Jane Griner, is a tender expression of the meaning of music to the composer and the power of song to touch the human spirit. The text is heartfelt and tinged with melancholy – "Sing with me a lullaby, a love song, a requiem" – and it is heightened by Gawthrop's use of lyrical melodic lines for the women's voices and his sensitive and nuanced mix of rich harmonic colors of the Romantic era and the dissonance heard in contemporary compositions.

## Io Son la Primavera

Of the four "modern madrigals" in tonight's repertoire, "Io Son la Primavera," by William Hawley (b. 1950), is the most "classical," both in sound and in choice of text. "Io Son la Primavera" ("I am Spring") is the last in a set of six poems by the Renaissance poet Torquato Tasso set by Hawley for the San Francisco choir Chanticleer. The graceful, cascading descending lines that recur throughout the piece serve as text painting, recalling the "sighing" wind and the mingling laughter of the earth, the "serene heavens" and the "lovely women" to whom the poem is addressed. This song also tells us to relish and treasure new beginnings: "Love your lovers now, while April adorns lovely faces with flowers: Spring for you will not return forever."

## Water Night

This setting by Eric Whitacre (b. 1970) of Octavio Paz's poem "Agua Nocturna" (more properly translated as "Night Water") is among the most popular new works of American choral music. One of the greatest Latin American poets of the twentieth century, Paz was also, like many members of the 18th Street Singers, a public servant: a career foreign service officer, Paz served as Mexico's ambassador to India before resigning in 1968 to protest the Mexican government's violent policies. The sequence of images that makes up "Water Night" is at once a philosophical meditation and an erotic vision. The mingling of reality and reflection at the water's edge recalls concepts in both Surrealism, which Paz encountered in France around the time he wrote "Water Night," and Buddhism, which he later studied while in India. At the same time, Paz's synesthetic descriptions are lushly and unmistakably sensual. Whitacre's setting is full of text-painting: in places, simple melodies convey the water's flow, while in others, dense tonal clusters built up from as many as fourteen notes create a sound which literally shimmers.

## Vineta

Johannes Brahms' (1833-1897) Vineta comes from his *Weltliche Gesänge* (op. 42), a set of six-part a cappella "world" songs that played with rich voicings and textures. Vineta, the second of the cycle, combined these rich, colorful sonorities with a dynamic and sweeping movement. The music mirrors the thematic juxtaposition of the text -- deep currents and tides of the sea entombing the passionate beckoning of an ancient love that yet manages to shine through the water and call out as if a distant bell.

## Shenandoah

Shenandoah is a favorite example of the work song – one of the great American folk traditions and a powerful influence in the American choral tradition. This melody was made popular by boatmen on the Ohio, Missouri, and Mississippi Rivers in the 1840s. Its origins are unclear, but many believe the song alludes to the Shenandoah Valley and River in Virginia. This arrangement by the American choral directors Marshall Bartholemew and Fenno Heath uses a languid tempo, expansive phrasing and the delicate layering of the upper voices to evoke a sense of place both concrete and abstract, bringing to mind both the water-borne rhythm of the boatmen's lives and a more general and profound sense of memory, longing and home.

## Ave Maria

The setting of "Ave Maria" by Austrian composer Anton Bruckner (1824-1896) is one of the best-known settings of this central Christian prayer. Taken from the New Testament Gospel of Luke, the text praises the Virgin Mary and asks her to intercede on behalf of those who pray to her. Unlike Felix Mendelssohn and Johannes Brahms, two other composers of great nineteenth century motets whose works are featured tonight, Bruckner was a devout Catholic, as reflected in his use of the Latin rather than the German text. While Bruckner's setting is typically Romantic in its harmonic lushness and its dramatically contrasting dynamics and musical colorations, the setting is remarkable for its simplicity and majesty.

## Christus Factus Est

Where Bruckner's "Ave Maria" is a meditation on tenderness and maternal love, the second Bruckner motet in our program, "Christus Factus Est," explores much darker material – the "obedient" death of Jesus on the cross. Accordingly, the setting is far darker in tone than the setting of "Ave Maria," employing more dissonances and minor harmonies. The more discordant theme is also reflected rhythmically: whereas "Ave Maria" has a largely vertical structure, with the four parts moving either homophonically or in simple counter-relations, "Christus Factus Est" employs more complex polyphonies, with different voices singing staggered or even syncopated lines. The greater rhythmic and harmonic complexity gives "Christus Factus Est" a more modern feel, in contrast to the other motet's distinctly Romantic sound.

## Richte Mich, Gott

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) took the text of "Richte Mich, Gott" from the German translation of Psalm 43. The text shares social and literary themes with "Keep Your Lamps." The psalmist asks of God: "plead my cause against an ungodly nation, deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.... Send out your light and your truth, let them lead me." The psalm also shares the association, noted in "My Soul's Been Anchored," between music and religious experience, stating: "I will go to the altar of God... and on the harp I will praise you." Mendelssohn's setting, by turns declamatory and meditative, reflects the psalmist's characteristic alternation of pious patience and defiant martial bombast.

## Misto Klekani

Like many late Romantic composers, Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904) sought to fuse the cosmopolitan, transnational culture of classical music with the musical traditions of his native culture - in Dvořák's case, what is now the Czech Republic. Rather than restrict himself to his own culture, however, Dvořák sought out and borrowed from a diversity of cultures. While directing the National Conservatory in New York City in the 1890s, Dvořák was introduced to African American and Native American musical tradition, which are believed to have influenced his best-loved work, his Symphony No. 9 "From the New World." "Misto Klekani," or "Twilight Blessing," shows Dvořák's characteristic synthesis of classical and folk traditions, infusing the traditional Romantic part-song with the rhythms and energy of an Eastern European folk-dance.

## Past Life Melodies

Though classically trained as a cellist, Australian composer Sarah Hopkins (b. 1958) is best known for compositions inspired by Aboriginal Australian music. In "Past Life Melodies," Hopkins combines Aboriginal, Central Asian and European influences. From these diverse traditions, Hopkins's composition draws out three common musical elements - drone (a sustained, unmoving underlying note or chord), chant (a simple, rhythmic unison line) and overtone singing. The last of these three elements, in which singers manipulate the shape of their resonant spaces to produce a "second voice," can be heard most prominently towards the end of the song, when the chanted melody fades completely into the drone and the "second voice" takes over with an almost mechanical, warbling sound high above the choir.

The vocal techniques of drone, chant and overtone singing have been closely associated throughout history with meditation and other spiritual exercises. The combination of stillness and motion expressed in these techniques is often compared to the visions of stillness and motion at the hearts of many mystical systems.

## Words

Words begins the last set, entitled "Reinvention," and comes from the new revival of choral music centered around contemporary and jazz a cappella group singing taking root all across college campuses worldwide. The trend has also led to small, professional vocal bands, such as the Sweden-based Real Group, that first wrote and performed the piece. The song speaks of the expressive power of the element unique to vocal music --- words, which take on a rhythm and music of their own.

## I Sat Down Under His Shadow

Sir Edward Cuthbert Bairstow (1874-1946) was an English organist and composer in the Anglican Church music tradition. Though he has been eclipsed in name recognition by his contemporary Ralph Vaughan Williams, Bairstow lays claim to twenty-nine acclaimed anthems for the Church, all of which are marked by qualities of utmost sincerity, tenderness, and timelessness. I Sat Down Under His Shadow, a blissful setting from the Song of Solomon chapter 2 verses 3 and 4, is one of his most well-known. Bairstow's use of shifting modalities and rhythmic flexibility between duple and triple subdivisions was at the forefront of a new modern harmonic language that reinvented the the choral music of the Romantic era, including that of Brahms.

## Hymne à la Vierge

Pierre Villette (1926-1998) followed in the footsteps of Maurice Duruflé, who served as his mentor, in abandoning the more abstract and experimental styles of Boulez and other French contemporaries. Villette instead chose to build upon Gregorian chant, medieval, and jazz traditions to create a sweet, melodious sound with long, interplaying vocal lines. This would help pave a path for later choral composers like Morton Lauridsen who would receive acclaim in America for adopting a similar approach. Hymne à la Vierge (or Hymn to the Virgin) perhaps best demonstrates this, and not unsurprisingly has become Villette's most famous work.

## O Magnum Mysterium

Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943) is an American composer whose works have been widely performed. O Magnum Mysterium is one of his series of sacred a cappella motets (Ave Maria, O Nata Lux, Ubi Caritas et Amor and Ave Dulcissima Maria being the others) that uses a modern harmonic language as a setting for religious texts. Lauridsen evokes the "magnificent mystery" of the birth of Christ through the use of constant and varying placements of dissonance and tension between the notes of the inner and outer voices to create a shimmering and enigmatic feel to the music. Then, like a fog lifted by the sun, the piece sheds its ethereal shroud and slowly transitions into a warm and resonant sound hailing the arrival of Jesus Christ.

## Agnus Dei

Samuel Barber (1910-1981) is one of the great American composers of the 20th century. He was a child prodigy, playing piano at six, composing at seven, and entering the Curtis Institute of Music at 14. Barber chose not to write music in the austere non-tonal style of his contemporaries, but in the traditional, lyrical style which he preferred. Agnus Dei is a choral arrangement of the composer's Adagio for Strings, itself an arrangement for string orchestra of the second movement to his String Quartet, Opus 11, written in 1936. Aware that he had just composed a work that would gain him fame and fortune, Barber wrote to a friend, "I have just finished the slow movement of my quartet today - it is a knockout!" The orchestral version was performed often by Toscanini, and its sustained melodic lines and lush harmonies were used to great effect in the film "Platoon." Barber received several requests for arrangements of the Adagio and transcribed the work for chorus in 1967, using the Agnus Dei text. This neo-Romantic work has a great deal of metrical flexibility that supports the natural rhythms of the text, and the slowed-down time and distinct use of chromatics allow Barber to imbue the sacred text with a remarkable depth of emotion and a profound sense of grief and loss. This work is a technically demanding piece that is ordinarily sung a cappella only by significantly larger choirs.

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