



GOOD NEWS

Program Notes, Lyrics & Translations



Chamber Choir & Children's Choir

Matthew Myers
Artistic Director

Alisa Toy
Assistant Director

Darcy Howser
Interim Children's Choir
Conductor

Elena Panchenko
Chamber Choir Pianist

Deborah Collins
Children's Choir Pianist

present

GOOD NEWS

Chamber Choir

Ain'a That Good News arr. William L. Dawson (1899-1990)

William Dawson was born in Anniston, Alabama, and was the eldest of seven children. At age 13, he ran away from home to study music at the Tuskegee Institute, where he participated in the Tuskegee Singers and began composing. He went on to earn composition degrees from the Horner Institute of Fine Arts and the American Conservatory of Music. In 1931, he returned to Tuskegee to teach at his alma mater, now called Tuskegee University, where he worked for 25 years. Under his direction, the Tuskegee Singers became internationally renowned and performed for presidents Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt. His spiritual arrangements have become known as standard-bearers in the genre. They are known for their sensitive approach to the source melodies but also their creative interplay of vocal lines. "Ain'a That Good News" typifies this style: the melody, though passed from section to section, is always clearly decipherable, but the accompanimental parts vary with each verse and increase in complexity.

I got a crown up in-a the Kingdom,
Ain-a that good news!

*I'm a-goin' to lay down this worl',
Goin'-a shoulder up-uh my cross,
Goin'-a take it home-a to my Jesus,
Ain'a that good news!*

I got a harp up in-a the Kingdom,
Ain'a that good news!

I got a robe up in-a the Kingdom,
Ain'a that good news!

I got a Saviour in-a the Kingdom,
Ain'a that good news!

-Traditional Spiritual

Holding the Light B. E. Boykin (b. 1989)

Brittney Elizabeth Boykin was born in Alexandria, Virginia. She studied classical piano at Spelman College, then sacred music at Westminster Choir College, and then music education at the Georgia State University. She now serves as assistant professor of composition and conducting at the Georgia Institute of Technology, where she leads the Treble Choir and Chorale. As a composer, Boykin has become well-known for her artistic and accessible choral pieces. In “Holding the Light,” she features beautifully spun-out melodies and diatonic harmonies with an intricate piano part that “glitters” to reflect the opening texts of Stuart Kestenbaum’s poetry.

Gather up whatever is
glittering in the gutter,
whatever has tumbled
in the waves or fallen
in flames out of the sky,

it all comes down to this:
In our imperfect world
we are meant to repair
and stitch together
what beauty there is, stitch it

for it's not only our
hearts that are broken,
but the heart
of the world as well.
Stitch it back together.

with compassion and wire.
See how everything
we have made gathers
the light inside itself
and overflows? A blessing.

Make a place where
the day speaks to the night
and the earth speaks to the sky.
Whether we created God
or God created us

-Stuart Kestenbaum (b. 1951), from Only Now

Elijah Rock.....arr. Jester Hairston (1901-2000)

Jester Hairston was a notable American composer, arranger, conductor, and actor of the 20th century. He was a leading pedagogue in the study of the African American spiritual, and he regularly led festival choirs across the country in performances of the genre, including multiple all-state choirs. He became involved in choral music while studying architecture at Massachusetts Agricultural College, and then he studied music at Tufts University and later at the Juilliard School. His work leading choral ensembles on Broadway led to his career as an actor, including uncredited roles in such films as *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Being John Malkovich*. His arrangement of “Elijah Rock” has become one of the standards of spiritual repertoire, featuring a motoric bass line that is repeated throughout the initial verses. The middle of the piece leaves this rhythmic ostinato in a marked style and includes mixed meter to add more interest and variety to the arrangement before the return of the original material for the closing of the piece.

Elijah Rock, Shout, shout!
Elijah Rock, Comin’ up, Lord.

Satan’s a liar an’ a conjur, too,
If you don’t mind out, he’ll conjur you.
If I could, I surely would
just stand on the rock where Moses stood.

Rock-a-Elijah Rock, Shout, shout about
Elijah, Elijah, Elijah Rock, We’re gonna shout, shout!
Shout about Elijah Rock, Comin’ up, Lord.

-Traditional Spiritual

I've Been in the Storm So Long arr. Arreon A. Harley-Emerson (b. 1988)
Anneliese Zook, soloist

Arreon Harley-Emerson is a Baltimore native who began his singing career at age 7 in the Peabody Conservatory Children's Chorus. He studied composition and vocal performance at Goucher College in Baltimore as well as choral conducting and vocal performance at the University of Delaware. He is now a doctoral candidate in choral conducting at Temple University in Philadelphia. He served for nine years as the director of music at the Choir School of Delaware, where his choirs earned international renown for their artistic and emotional performances. He serves as the national chair for the American Choral Directors Association Diversity Initiatives Committee, and he offers equity consulting through his own company, Equity Sings. Through his professional choir, Elevate Vocal Arts, he has hosted the Bent But Not Broken conference, which highlights African American music and musicians. His arrangement of the spiritual "I've Been in the Storm So Long" is traditional in its layout with a soloist accompanied by the choral parts, but his modern harmonies give the spiritual a stunning contemporary feel. He wrote this arrangement in response to the murder of George Floyd in 2020.

Give me time to pray, time to pray, Lord.
Give me little time to pray.

I've been in the storm so long, children.
Oh, give me little time to pray.

Yes, Lord!

Oh, I'm so tired, so tired, Lord,
My feet are weary and my soul is too.
I need your strength, Lord, to carry through,
Can't let my soul become another victim too!

I've been in the storm so long, children.
Oh, give me little time to pray.

I'm so tired, so tired, Lord,
My feet are weary and my soul is too.
I need your strength, Lord, to carry through,
Won't let my soul become a victim too!

I've been in the storm so long, children.
Oh, give me little time to pray.

-Traditional Spiritual

Say Her Name Alysia Lee (b. 1981)
Jill Freuden, soloist

Alysia Lee is a singer, conductor, and community organizer based in Baltimore, Maryland. She is founder and artistic director of Sister Cities Girlchoir, a choral program based in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Camden, NJ. She serves as editor of Hal Leonard Publishing's Exigence for Young Voices series, which features works written BBIA composers for young choirs. Her most famous choral piece is "Say Her Name," which she wrote in response to the tragic murders of several young Black individuals earlier in this decade. From the composer:

"This original song by Alysia Lee was written as a vehicle to bring the powerful libation ceremony to the concert stage with a call to action. The #SayHerName movement resists police brutality against Black women. If you say the name, you're prompted to learn the story, and if you know the story, then you have a broader sense of all the ways Black bodies are made vulnerable to police violence."

Say her name. She cannot be forgotten by us.
Say her name. Put her name in the air.

Breonna Taylor
Atatiana Jefferson
Pamela Turner
Philando Castile
Eric Garner
Michael Brown

Say his name. He cannot be forgotten by us.
Say his name. Put his name in the air.

Say their names. They cannot be forgotten by us.
Say their names. Put their names in the air.

Say her name. She cannot be forgotten by us.
Say her name. Put her name in the air.

-Alysia Lee

We Shall Walk Through the Valley..... arr. Undine Smith Moore (1904-1989)

Composer **Undine Smith Moore**, called the “Dean of Black Women Composers,” was one of the most prolific American choral composers of the mid-twentieth century. Though she focused her career on her work as a theory, piano, and organ professor at Virginia State University, her compositions “on the side” were prolific. One of the first African-American women to have her work published and widely disseminated, she saw only 26 of her compositions published in her lifetime – a mere quarter of her compositional output. Moore arranged several spiritual settings, but she wrote a wide range of works, including her 1925 choral cantata *Sir Olaf and the Erl King’s Daughter*, based on Norwegian folklore, and perhaps her most important and substantial work, *Scenes from the Life of a Martyr*, a 1980 oratorio on the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. For this work, Moore served both as librettist and composer. Her setting of the spiritual “We Shall Walk Through the Valley” is exquisite in its simplicity: she allows the melody space to breathe due to the a relaxed tempo with mostly diatonic harmonies.

Lord, we shall walk in peace.

We shall walk through the valley in peace.
If Jesus himself shall be our leader,
We shall walk through the valley in peace.

Lord, we shall walk in peace.

There will be no trials there.
If Jesus himself shall be our leader,
We shall walk through the valley in peace.

Lord, we shall walk in peace.

-Traditional Spiritual, adapted by A. L. Hatter

Lift Ev'ry Voice and SingJ. Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954)
Mac Murphy, Brian Collins, and Alisa Toy, soloists arr. Zanaida Robles (b. 1979)

J. Rosamond Johnson, a Jacksonville, Florida, native, was a composer and singer during the Harlem Renaissance Era. He is best known for his hymn "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing," which he composed to a text by his brother, James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938). After they wrote the hymn in 1900, it became popular in African American communities and was deemed by the NAACP as the Black national anthem in 1917. This arrangement of the hymn was written by Zanaida Robles, a composer, vocalist, church musician, and choral conductor who earned her bachelor's degree in voice from California State University—Long Beach, her master's degree in conducting from California State University—Northridge, and her doctorate in choral music from the University of Southern California. She leads a comprehensive music program at Neighborhood Unitarian Universalist Church in Pasadena, CA, and serves as director of choirs at Harvard-Westlake Upper School in Studio City, CA. Her arrangement remains true to the original hymn by showcasing the melody throughout the work, but she brings out the character of the text by highlighting the words which represent both the joys and pains of the Black American experience.

Lift ev'ry voice and sing
Till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the listening skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has
taught us;
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has
brought us.
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
Let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chastening rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our parents sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been
watered;
We have come, treading our path through the
blood of the slaughtered.
Out from the gloomy past,
Till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who hast by Thy might
Led us into the light;
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God,
where we met Thee;
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world
we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand,
True to our God,
True to our native land.

Lift ev'ry voice and sing!

-James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938)

Children's Choir

This Little Light of Mine Traditional Spiritual
arr. Raffi (b.1948)

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

I'm gonna take this light around the world and I'm gonna
Let it shine
I'm gonna take this light around the world and I'm gonna
Let it shine
I'm gonna take this light around the world and I'm gonna
Let it shine
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

Chorus

Well, I won't let anyone blow it out, I'm gonna let it shine
I won't let anyone blow it out, I'm gonna let it shine
I won't let anyone blow it out, I'm gonna let it shine
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

Chorus

Every day, Every day,
I'm gonna let my little light shine

Hold Out Your Light..... Traditional Spiritual
arr. Rollo Dilworth (b.1970)

Hold out your light, children,
Hold out your light, children,
Hold out your light for the world

Hold out your light, you heaven-bound soldier,
Hold out your light, you heaven-bound soldier,
Hold out your light, you heaven-bound soldier,
Let your light shine around the world

Oh, brother won't you hold out your light,
Oh, sister won't you hold out your light,
Oh, children won't you hold out your light,
Let your light shine around the world,

Hold out your light, you heaven-bound soldier,
Hold out your light, you heaven-bound soldier,
Hold out your light, you heaven-bound soldier,
Let your light shine around the world

Oh, leader won't you hold out your light,
Oh, teacher won't you hold out your light,
Oh, neighbor won't you hold out your light,
Let your light shine around the world,

Hold out your light, children,
Hold out your light, children,
Hold out your light for the world

Take the “A” Train..... Billy Strayhorn (1915-1967)
arr. Kirby Shaw (b.1941)

You must take the “A” train
To go to Sugar Hill way up in Harlem
If you miss the “A” train
You’ll find you missed the quickest way to Harlem
Hurry, get on, now it’s coming
Listen to those rails a-thrumming
All aboard, get on the “A” train
Soon you will be on Sugar Hill in Harlem

Chamber Choir

Sing Out, My Soul..... Marques L. A. Garrett (b. 1984)

Marques Garrett serves as Associate Professor of Choral Studies at the University of North Texas in Denton, TX. He is an active clinician and author, having published two anthologies of choral works as well as conducted numerous all-state choirs. He holds degrees from Hampton University, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and Florida State University. While spirituals and gospel have often been the study of research and publications in the choral field, Garrett’s research focuses on non-idiomatic choral works by African American choral composers in order to showcase the wide variety of pieces available to perform by these pieces. His own compositional style includes many of the syncopations and rhythmic interest of jazz and spirituals while incorporating the lyricism of Romantic-era music.

Text adapted from “Songs of Joy”

Sing out, my soul, [your] songs of joy;
Sing as a happy bird will sing
Beneath a rainbow’s lovely arch
In [early] spring.

Think not of death...
Strive not for gold...

Train up [your] mind to feel content,
What matters then how low [your] store?
What we enjoy, and not possess,
Makes rich or poor...

-William Henry Davies (1871-1940)

Bring Me All Your DreamsChristopher H. Harris (b. 1985)

Christopher H. Harris is Director of Choral Activities at Arkansas Tech University and founder of the Houston Master Singers. A native of Fort Worth, Texas, he has degrees from Texas Southern University, Ithaca College, and Florida State University. His compositions have earned several accolades, including winning the National Association for Music Education Composition Competition. His a cappella work, “Bring Me All Your Dreams,” is an adaptation of Langston Hughes’s poem “The Dream Keeper.” A central figure in the Harlem Renaissance, Hughes (1901-67) was a pioneer in the art form of jazz poetry, which integrates the structure and rhythm of jazz and blues music to form the cadence of the text. An advocate for social and racial justice, his contributions to African American art and literature are superlative; Hughes is often lauded as the most significant Black American poet of the 20th century.

Harris uses the standard classical ternary form (ABA) to provide structure to his work, but his lush contemporary chords allow for a relaxing sonic experience geared to the modern listener.

Adapted from “The Dream Keeper”

Bring me all...your dreams,
You dreamers,
Bring me all...your
Heart melodies
That I may wrap them
In a blue cloud-cloth
Away from the too-rough fingers
Of the world.

-Langston Hughes (1902-67)

To Sit and Dream Rosephanye Powell (b. 1962)

Rosephanye Powell is professor of voice at Auburn University in Auburn, AL, where she teaches voice, vocal literature, and vocal pedagogy and also conducts three choral ensembles. Her vast catalogue of compositions includes many works for solo voice as well as for choirs of various voicings. She holds a BME from Alabama State University, and MM from Westminster Choir College, and a DM from Florida State University. Her piece “To Sit and Dream” features poetry by Langston Hughes adapted from his poem “To You.” This piece opens with a “dreamy” piano introduction that leads to the unison presentation of the text. The music soon moves into polyphony, with multiple layers of choral lines on top of one another.

Adapted from “To Sit and Dream”

To sit and dream, to sit and read,
To sit and learn about the world
Outside our world of here and now—
Our problem world—
To dream of vast horizons of the soul
[Of] dreams made whole,

Unfettered, free—help me!
All you who are dreamers, too.
Help me...make
Our world anew.
I reach out my [hand] to you.

-Langston Hughes (1902-67)

Witness arr. Stacey V. Gibbs (b. 1964)
Tyler Barton and Victoria Sundin, soloists

Stacey V. Gibbs is a conductor, composer, arranger, and clinician who is best known for his arrangements of African American spirituals. While inspired by the settings of the arrangers who came before him, such as Dawson, Hairston, and Hogan, his settings employ a rhythmic rejuvenation and often include complex interplays between different vocal lines. He has written over 200 published arrangements. “Witness” is one of his most popular spiritual settings due to the motoric rhythmic background that accompanies the solo lines. The syncopation and call-and-response echoes provide rhythmic interest. Gibbs’s arrangement is set to be slower than other previously published versions of the spiritual, which allows time for the message of the stories in the piece to sink in for both the listener and performer.

Who’ll be a witness for my Lord?
My soul is a witness for my Lord.

Oh, tell me
Who’ll be a witness for my Lord?
My soul is a witness for my Lord.

Dere was a man of de Pharisees,
His name was Nicodemus an’ he didn’ believe.
De same came to Chris’ by night,
Wanted to be taught out of human sight.

Nicodemus was a man who desired to know
how a man can be born when he is ol’
Chris’ tol’ Nicodemus as a frien’
He said, “Man, you mus’ be born again.”

He said, “Marvel not,
If you wan’ to be wise,
Repent, believe, an’ be baptize’.

Then you’ll be a witness for my Lord.
My soul is a witness for my Lord.

You read about Samson; from his birth,
He was de stronges’ man that ever lived on earth.
Way back yonder in ancient times
He killed ten thousan’ of de Philistines.

Then ol’ Samson went wandrin’ about,
Samson’s strength was never foun’ out
Until his wife sat upon his knees.
She ask, “Tell me where yo’ strength lies, if you please.”

Well, Samson’s wife, she talked so fair,
Samson said, “Cut off-a my hair.”
“Oh yes,” he said, “shave-a my head jus’a s clean as yo’ han’,
an’ my strength will come like a nat’ral man.

Then you’ll be a witness for my Lord.
My soul is a witness for my Lord.

-Traditional Spiritual

I BelieveMark A. Miller (b. 1967)
Emma Price and Fae Bigler, soloists

Mark A. Miller serves as Professor of Church Music and Director of Chapel at Drew University in Madison, NJ. He also serves as a lecturer in sacred music at Yale University's Institute of Sacred Music. He believes in the power of music – particularly sacred music – to serve the community through social justice. He has composed a wide variety of church anthems as well as secular pieces about unity and interhuman connection. His setting “I Believe” features a poem that was written on a cellar wall in Cologne, Germany, during the Holocaust. The Jewish individual in hiding had a timeless message of hope in the darkest times of their life. Miller's setting features terraced dynamics and an additive model, beginning with a soloist and then adding layers of choral parts on top as both the emotion and the dynamics increase.

I believe in the sun
even when it's not shining.

I believe in love
Even when I don't feel it.

I believe in God
Even when God is silent.

I'm Gonna Sing 'Til the Spirit Moves in My HeartMoses Hogan (1957-2003)
Alisa Toy, conductor

Moses Hogan was born in New Orleans and experienced musical excellence from a young age. He was a member of the first graduating class from New Orleans Center for Creative Arts High School, and he went on to study piano at Oberlin Conservatory. He began graduate studies at Juilliard School and later Louisiana State University, but his success as a composer and arranger led him to pursue full-time creative activity. In his short life became the most prominent arranger of spirituals of his generation. His works capture the essence of the source material while providing rhythmic variation and changes in choral texture. “I'm Gonna Sing 'Til the Spirit Moves in My Heart” follows the conventions of his spiritual arrangements, but it is an original tune freely composed by Hogan. He features the tenors on the melody throughout most of the piece, while the rest of the choir echoes in a traditional call-and-response format.

I'm gonna sing 'til the spirit moves in my heart.
I'm gonna sing 'til Jesus comes.
(Sing, oh my Jesus, 'til he comes.)

It was grace that brought me.
(Oh yeah, my Lord)
It was grace that taught me.
It was grace that kept me
And it's grace that will lead me home.
(Hallelu)

I'm gonna pray 'til the spirit moves in my heart.
I'm gonna pray 'til Jesus comes.
(Pray, oh my Jesus, 'til he comes.)

Can't you feel the spirit movin'?

I'm gonna shout 'til the spirit moves in my heart.
I'm gonna shout 'til Jesus comes.
(Shout, oh my Jesus, 'til he comes.)

I'm gonna sing 'til my Jesus,
'til he comes.

We Are the Music Makers Reginal Wright (b. 1976)

Reginal Wright is a lecturer in choral music at Baylor University. With a 20-year career teaching middle school and high school choir, Wright began composing when he needed more accessible works for his young singers. His compositions have recently become quite popular due to their tuneful melodies as well as their rhythmic variation; Wright frequently presents the same text in a slightly different rhythmic arrangement to create interest for the listener. “We Are the Music Makers” excerpts the poem “Ode” by Arthur O’Shaughnessy (1844-81), a British poet and scientist. While literature was his greatest love, he worked with reptiles and amphibians to make a living. As a herpetologist, O’Shaughnessy’s name is commemorated in the binomial nomenclature of four lizards, as their species are all *oshaughnessyi*. From the collection *Music and Moonlight*, “Ode” is his most famous poem, as its singer-friendly text has been set to music by such composers as Edward Elgar and Zoltán Kodály.

We are the music makers,
 We are the dreamers of dreams.
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
 Sitting by desolate streams;
World-losers and forsakers
 On whom the pale moon gleams:
We are the movers,
 We are the shakers