

Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia
proudly presents their 148th Season: REUNION

OUR STORY IS NOT OVER

We grieve, we process, we begin to rebuild.
an evening of music and poetry

Thursday • March 17, 2022 and Saturday • March 19, 2022



DASHON BURTON
bass-baritone



ELIZABETH SCANLON
poet



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Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia
Dominick DiOrio, Artistic Director

present as the second program of their 148th season

Our Story Is Not Over

featuring

Dashon Burton bass-baritone

Elizabeth Scanlon poet

Doris Hall-Gulati clarinet

Sarah Sutton viola

Phillip R. O'Banion percussion

Ting Ting Wong piano

and

Dominick DiOrio conductor

Heather Mitchell assistant conductor

Mary Bond & Erik Stenswold conducting apprentices

Sam Tower director

Margaux Cattelona stage manager

Thursday, March 17, 2022 • 7:30 pm

Saturday, March 19, 2022 • 7:30 pm

Suzanne Roberts Theater
480 S Broad Street, Philadelphia

Thank you for wearing your mask during the performance.

Please silence all cell phones during the performance.

*As a reminder, the use of photographic or recording equipment
during the concert is prohibited.*

MENDELSSOHN CHORUS OF PHILADELPHIA

Celebrating 148 Years of Artistic Excellence and Adventurous New Music

A Note from the Artistic Director & Conductor

We grieve, we process, we begin to rebuild...

I had high hopes for my first season with the Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia, when I accepted the job in early March of 2020. I immediately began to sketch out what the 2020-21 concerts were going to look like... collaborations with orchestra and chorus, historic works of our past, and exciting new commissions by living composers.

And then on March 11, 2020, all of that initial planning came to a halt. We were told that singing wasn't safe. We started to talk about "pivoting" and "Zoom rehearsals."

That experience of being shocked out of our usual patterns was the impetus for this program: *Our Story Is Not Over*. Tonight, you will witness a program of music and spoken word, and how the text of our songs informs our music-making. You will experience live poetry by our guest author Elizabeth Scanlon – including a new work written just for tonight. You will hear the music of composers from all walks of life, inspired by poets ancient and contemporary. And you may even feel the ground shake when Dashon Burton opens his mouth to sing!

We grieve... feel the frustration in Andrea Ramsey's textless *Stomp on the Fire* made visceral with stomping and clapping. Notice the contemplative quality of Wendell Berry's poetry in *Walking to the Sun*, and empathize with William Still's powerful reckoning in Paul Moravec and Mark Campbell's *Sanctuary Road* (sung here deliberately with a quintet of soloists of many races, by special permission of the creative artists, to amplify these stories of unity and empathy).

We process... take the journey of understanding with poet Lynn Ungar and composer Dana Wilson in the world premiere of *Pandemic*, a poem written at the onset of COVID-19's lockdown in the US, long before we would know the full scale of its trauma. Reena Esmail reminds us that "the sun does not say to the earth: you owe me." And Dale Trumbore's *Perhaps* sets conductor Brandon Elliott's program note to a cappella choral music in a poignant and searching way: "perhaps we may live an answer or illuminate a story..."

We begin to rebuild... Megan Levad responds to the Flint water crisis by imploring: "Neighbor, we are kind, kin, ken... Let us plant our gardens now, where we live." Melissa Dunphy and Feminista Jones center the act of baking as we center the act of mental wellness – and sweet, sweet satisfaction. And Joel Thompson takes Maya Angelou as muse, as the caged bird "opens his throat to sing" the long-needed song of freedom.

We grieve, we process, we begin to rebuild... We do this necessary work together by examining the interaction of word and sound, of text and thought, of trial and truth. Our program tonight is for you and for all of us, as we find our footing once again, anchored by the stories of our community and our creative artists.

Thank you for being here.

Dominick DiOrio

Artistic Director & Conductor

Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia
Dominick DiOrio, Artistic Director & Conductor

Our Story Is Not Over

You are welcome to applaud as you feel moved throughout the program.

Walking to the Sun (2017) Dominick DiOrio

Doris Hall-Gulati, clarinet & Sarah Sutton, viola
Phillip R. O'Banion, percussion & Ting Ting Wong, piano

Poems from **Lonesome Gnosis** (2014) Elizabeth Scanlon

Complications
Anathema
Name Your Price

Even after all this time... (2016) Reena Esmail

Perhaps (2017) Dale Trumbore

Mary Bond, conductor

Poems from **Lonesome Gnosis** (2014) Elizabeth Scanlon

Thanksgiving
St. Lucy's Day
Reform

Pandemic (2020) Dana Wilson

World Premiere

Rachael Lipson, soprano & Sharon Rhinesmith, alto
Michael Robert Smith, tenor & Erik Stenswold, bass
Ting Ting Wong, piano

Stomp on the Fire (2018) Andrea Ramsey

Heather Mitchell, conductor

Poems from **Lonesome Gnosis** (2014) Elizabeth Scanlon

Consider the Source
Swan Song

Five Mystical Songs (1911)

Ralph Vaughan Williams

1. Easter
2. I've got me flowers
3. Love bade me welcome
4. The Call
5. Antiphon

Dashon Burton, bass-baritone
Ting Ting Wong, piano

Intermission

Rain Song (2017)

Michael Ippolito

Sarah Sutton, viola
Erik Stenswold, conductor

Let Us Plant Our Gardens Now (2016)

Dominick DiOrio

Joshua McCord, speaker & Carl Ellinwood, Jr., tenor
Phillip R. O'Banion, percussion & Ting Ting Wong, piano
Heather Mitchell, conductor

A Slice of Pie (2020)

Melissa Dunphy

Live, in-person premiere

Doris Hall-Gulati, soprano saxophone & Phillip R. O'Banion, percussion
Ting Ting Wong, piano

The commissioning of ***A Slice of Pie*** was made possible by the
generous financial support of the Robert Black Foundation Trust,
with additional contributions by Frank Cassell, Jon Kochavi, and John Kohlhas.

Poems from **Lonesome Gnosis (2014)**

Elizabeth Scanlon

Family Drama
Deadheading

Fantasia Nègre No. 4 in B Minor (1932)

Florence B. Price

Ting Ting Wong, piano

Three Dream Portraits (1959)

Margaret Bonds

Minstrel Man
Dream Variation
I, Too

Dashon Burton, bass-baritone
Ting Ting Wong, piano

I Dream a World (2021)

Damien Sneed

Dashon Burton, bass-baritone
Ting Ting Wong, piano

Excerpts from **Sanctuary Road** (2017)

Paul Moravec
libretto by Mark Campbell

Dashon Burton, portraying William Still
Jina Jang, soprano & Julia Bokunewicz, alto
D'quan Tyson, tenor & Lucas DeJesus, bass
Ting Ting Wong, piano

Convocation

Elizabeth Scanlon

World Premiere

The Caged Bird Sings for Freedom (2016)

Joel Thompson

Dashon Burton, bass-baritone
Doris Hall-Gulati, clarinet & Ting Ting Wong, piano

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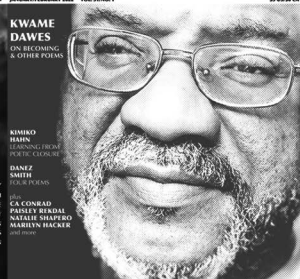
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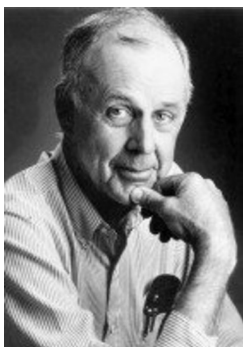
The AMERICAN
POETRY REVIEW

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2022 VOL. 51/NO. 1



Program Notes

The arts of music and poetry have long been entwined. The ancient Greeks recognized sung lyrics as one of the four genres of poetry and placed them under the aegis of Euterpe, the muse of music. Generations of composers, inspired by poetry, have shaped music to display the words to their greatest advantage. And in 2016, singer-songwriter Bob Dylan was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature “for having created new poetic expressions” in his songs. We celebrate the close relationship of song and poetry in this program, which features both sung and recited texts that are evocative, inspiring, thoughtful and thought-provoking.



Wendell Berry

Wendell Berry (b. 1934) is an award-winning poet, novelist, essayist and social and environmental activist. For many years he farmed his own land in his native Kentucky and developed the habit of walking the land on Sunday mornings in thoughtful contemplation, often finding inspiration for what he referred to as Sabbath poems. Composer **Dominick DiOrio** (b. 1984) turned to one of these for *Walking to the Sun*, commissioned for the centennial of Anderson University. DiOrio explains that a centennial is a joyous occasion where we look back to what has been accomplished and forward to dreams yet unrealized. Berry's Sabbath poem 1999 VI captures the sense of uncertainty in walking forward

into the sun, a light that also illuminates the path we have traveled. *Walking to the Sun* is set for chorus, piano, viola, clarinet and crotales (small tuned cymbals). The clarinet and viola are set in duet while the piano provides an ostinato that suggests walking forward. The crotales have an almost mystical sound, appropriate for the Zen-like metaphor of a sun that both reveals and obscures at the same time.

Indian-American composer **Reena Esmail** (b. 1983) works between the worlds of Indian and Western classical music. She holds degrees in composition from the Juilliard School and the Yale School of Music and received a Fulbright-Nehru grant to study Hindustani music in India. She has served as composer-in-residence for the Los Angeles Master Chorale, the Seattle Symphony and Street Symphony. *Even After All This Time* was written for the wedding of singer-conductor Lindsay Pope, a close friend and collaborator. For text, Esmail selected a popular poem from *The Gift, Poems of Hafiz, the Great Sufi Master*, rendered by Daniel Ladinsky. Esmail honors a Persian connection by including phrases from the poem that she had back-translated into Farsi, and in the structure of the piece, with its long sinuous phrases interwoven like threads in a Persian carpet, and a metaphor for the joining of two lives in marriage. While it does not detract from Esmail's elegant and beautiful setting, scholars of Hafiz maintain, with no little heat, that Ladinsky's text is neither translation, paraphrase, nor adaptation of Hafiz and cannot be related to any poetry in Hafiz's large canon.



Reena Esmail

Ladinsky's spare, Zen-like poetry and metaphors of his own devising sprinkled with American slang, are meant to present the spirituality that he perceives in Hafiz in a more understandable idiom.



Dale Trumbore

Brandon Elliott has a multi-faceted career as a conductor, singer, educator and arts consultant. He serves as Director of Choral & Vocal Activities at Moorpark College and is the Founder & Artistic Director of Choral Arts Initiative, an innovative and highly acclaimed chorus specializing in the music of contemporary composers. When he wrote the Artistic Director's Note for a 2016 Choral Arts Initiative concert, he probably never expected it to be set to music, but its expressive words resonated with composer **Dale Trumbore** (b. 1987), who created this beautiful a cappella setting, *Perhaps*, for Choral Arts Initiative's 5th anniversary. As a composer,

Trumbore is best known for her choral and vocal music, which has been widely performed. She is also a prolific writer about the business of being a creative artist. Trumbore has a long history with Choral Arts Initiative – they have performed half a dozen of her works, commissioning her highly regarded secular requiem *How to Go On*, which they also released as their first recording. *Perhaps* is a quiet and introspective piece, only swelling to a crescendo on the word “music.” The music is shaped by the text, with ever-shifting harmonies reflecting its uncertainties, only settling at the final cadence, where the text briefly quotes Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem *To Kathleen*.

Lynn Ungar's eclectic resumé includes being a poet, a Unitarian Universalist minister currently tending an online congregation, a dog trainer, and an avid choral singer. In March, 2020, at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, Ungar was pondering how to keep social distancing from becoming emotional distancing and she came upon the metaphor of the traditional restrictions against work-related activities on the Jewish Sabbath (Ungar is Jewish herself). Rather than treating social restrictions as burdens, embrace them as a devotion, one which fosters a shared sense of community and compassion for the vulnerable. She wrote this into a poem, *Pandemic*, posted it on her Facebook page, and



Dana Wilson

was astounded that it immediately went viral, clearly striking a responsive chord. One of those touched by her poem was composer, writer and educator **Dana Wilson** (b. 1946) Wilson is a prolific and award-winning composer of orchestral, instrumental, chamber, vocal and choral music, which has been performed by ensembles around the world. He holds a doctorate from the Eastman School of Music and currently serves as Charles A. Dana Professor Emeritus at the Ithaca College School of Music. He provided these program notes: “*Pandemic* ... was written during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and asks that we consider it “the most sacred of times” in which we realize “we are connected in ways that are terrifying and beautiful” and that we promise the world our love in new ways. This

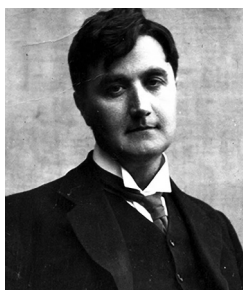
musical setting, also written during the pandemic, tries to capture with chant-like austerity this sacred and restrained approach to life that the epidemic demands of most people,...which then blossoms into compassion and beauty as we commit to a new way of being and dedicating ourselves to the world.” Mendelssohn Chorus has the privilege of presenting the world premiere of this work.



Andrea Ramsey

Andrea Ramsey (b. 1977) is a conductor, music educator and composer of choral music. She previously held teaching positions at The Ohio State University and the University of Colorado, Boulder. Unlike the other pieces in this program, *Stomp on the Fire* contains no text, but it does have an extensive subtext. Ramsay explains, “*Stomp on the Fire* was conceived as an entirely human work, using only the sounds of the voice and the percussive sounds of the body to create an expression of our collective journey. The form of the work is encapsulated in three distinct sections. The opening has a mournful quality – an impassioned wail or cry for humanity. The second section begins a weary struggle against human injustice. This portion grows and layers, becoming quite frenetic and peaking before a percussive transition into the third section which appears in major. Meant to represent the beautiful diversity of humanity and the strength present when that diversity comes together in unity, the rhythmic figures of the angry climactic chords from earlier are mirrored in the final section, but in major, and possessing a sense of strength and cooperation rather than angst. In the final bars of the work, the choir extinguishes the fire with a hiss and a stomp.”

Although **Ralph Vaughan Williams** (1872-1958) professed what his wife called “a cheerful agnosticism,” he had a wonderful facility for setting hymns and religious poetry. In 1904 he accepted the job as editor for a new edition of the Anglican hymnal, contributing such notable hymns as *Sine Nomine* (For All the Saints) and *Down Ampney* (Come Down, O Love Divine). In 1906 he began working on settings of the metaphysical poetry of **George Herbert**, which culminated in his 1911 *Five Mystical Songs*. Herbert (1593-1633) was born into a wealthy and well-connected family. His mother was a patron of the arts and instilled in him a love of learning, music and literature. He played both the lute and violin and his poetry is filled with allusion to music. He attended Trinity College, Cambridge with the idea of entering the priesthood, but his love of learning won out and he stayed on to take his Master’s degree, took a faculty position and was named the university’s Public Orator, a post he held for seven years. In 1627, he resigned his university posts, took holy orders and was appointed rector of a parish in the village of Bemerton, a position, coincidentally, held some 300 years later by Vaughan Williams’ father.



Ralph Vaughan Williams

The Temple, Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations, is Herbert’s best-known work, a collection of poems that describes a sort of spiritual journey. It is replete with clever metaphors or conceits (the title *The Temple* itself is one), intri-

cate rhyming schemes, and the occasional use of “shape poetry,” in which the arrangement of the printed text itself creates an image. Herbert entrusted the manuscript to a friend shortly before his death and it was published to great popularity. Vaughan Williams selected four poems from *The Temple* (he split the two parts of Easter) for his *Five Mystical Songs*, set for baritone and chorus. The solo baritone is featured in the first four songs, with the chorus adding its assent to his lines. The Anglican liturgy was still very much in Vaughan Williams’ mind, and those choral assents in the first two songs have the character of choir responses, while in the third song the chorus softly hums the plainsong chant *O sacrum convivium* (O blessed banquet), which matches Herbert’s metaphor. The final song, set for chorus alone, is a brilliant and joyous anthem of praise.



Michael Ippolito

Michael Ippolito (b. 1985) is best known for his orchestral and instrumental works, but he has also written highly regarded vocal music. He did his undergraduate studies at the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and graduate studies at The Juilliard School, and currently is Associate Professor of Composition at Texas State University. He provides these notes: “Only three stanzas in length, [*Monotone*] begins as a poem about the beauty of nature, but by the third stanza it has shifted to a much more intimate expression of beauty. My music was inspired by this duality between the impersonal beauty of nature and personal, individual beauty. An unusual feature of this work is that it is scored for choir and viola scordatura, meaning that the strings of the viola are retuned to different pitches, [which allows me] to create different harmonies using open strings, and those harmonies make their way into the choir music as well...[T]he viola is not simply an accompaniment instrument but rather an equal partner in dialogue with the choir.”

Dominick DiOrio has long been an admirer of the University of Michigan Men’s Glee Club and their conductor Eugene Rogers and was looking forward to an opportunity to write something for them, which came to pass with a 2016 commission. He explains, “When we were trying to decide on a text for the commission, I knew I wanted to write music that spoke to an important need in our time. I had been reading about the terrible water crises in Flint, Michigan, and I came to Eugene with this idea. He connected me with the poet **Megan Levad.**”



Megan Levad

Levad holds a BA from the University of Iowa and an MFA in poetry from the

University of Michigan, where she won the Hopwood Award Theodore Roethke Prize. She has published two books of poetry and has written essays, criticism, and opera and song lyrics. She has taught creative writing, directed the visiting writers' series at Michigan and teaches ethics and social justice classes remotely for Boise State University. Levad's poem *Habitat* takes a more global perspective, reminding us that we all share a single habitat, the earth, that all of us are neighbors, and that we cannot sacrifice others for our own comfort. The piece opens with a spoken quotation from political philosopher John Rawls which emphasizes that last point.

Australian-born **Melissa Dunphy** (b. 1980) immigrated to the United States in 2003 and has since become an award-winning and acclaimed composer specializing in vocal, political, and theatrical music. She first came to national attention in 2009 with her large-scale choral work the *Gonzales Cantata*, with its text taken from Attorney General Alberto Gonzales' Senate testimony. Dunphy has been composer-in-residence for the Immaculata Symphony Orchestra, Volti Choral Arts Lab, Volti Choral Institute, and the Saint Louis Chamber Chorus, and has recently completed commissions for Voces8, Cantus, and the BBC Singers. In addition to her concert



Melissa Dunphy

and choral music, she is a Barrymore Award-nominated composer and sound designer working with Philadelphia-area theatres. *A Slice of Pie* was commissioned by Mendelssohn Chorus for the "lost" 2020-21 season. A virtual performance was recorded, but it is receiving its live performance premiere at these concerts. Dunphy explains her inspiration, "I have long admired West Philadelphian social worker, author, and scholar **Feminista Jones**, and the lyrics for *A Slice of Pie* come from the poem of the same name in her chapbook *The Secret of Sugar Water* (2017). Composing this song for the Mendelssohn Chorus in 2020 was a welcome respite from the anxiety of the COVID-19 pandemic; Feminista's words were already full of musical suggestion, and the vintage-inspired jazz standard that resulted practically wrote itself (you might say the process was as easy as pie). It's worth remembering that even in the darkest moments of the last two years, some things have remained constant: the comfort of baked goods, and the bittersweetness of love."



Florence Price

Florence Price (1887-1953) was a pioneering Black composer, teacher, pianist and organist. A precocious talent, she gave her first piano recital at 4 and published her first composition at 11. After graduating from high school as valedictorian at 14, she enrolled in the New England Conservatory of Music, where she negotiated a more extensive curriculum than usually available to women, studying organ, piano, theory and composition. Returning to her native Little Rock, she taught music, married and raised a family, but relocated to Chicago in 1927 after the racial climate in Arkansas became increasingly dangerous for Blacks. Chicago provided her

opportunities for additional studies, and she began to compose more. Her 1929 *Fantasie nègre No. 1 in E Minor* was Price's breakout piece, premiering to great acclaim at the 1930 convention of the National Association of Negro Musicians with pianist Margaret Bonds. She won the prestigious Wanamaker Prize (sponsored by Philadelphia's Wanamaker family) in 1932 for her *Symphony No. 1*, which was premiered by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the 1933 Century of Progress World's Fair. Though she was a major figure in the Chicago Black Renaissance, she was uncomfortable with self-promotion and most of her music remained unpublished and unperformed during her lifetime. She had largely been forgotten when a cache of her manuscripts was discovered in an abandoned house in 2009 and helped fuel a renewed interest in her music.

Price had written three additional *fantasie nègres* in quick succession in 1932 for submission to the Wanamaker competition, and the *Fantasie nègre No. 4 in B Minor* won an honorable mention (she had already won that category with her E minor piano sonata). This B minor *fantasie* was revised three times, the last time fairly extensively, and it is this final version that we will hear. While Price often quoted from African-American music in her works, the spiritual-like first theme and bluesy second theme are both original. The piece ends with a brilliant coda in which both themes are reprised and combined in a bravura ending.

The next two pieces, for baritone solo, feature the words of **Langston Hughes** (1901-1967), poet, novelist, playwright, journalist, and one of the most important voices of the Harlem Renaissance. His poetry celebrated Black life and culture in all its myriad diversity of hopes, joys, desires and dreams. He developed a style called "jazz poetry," in which the rhythms and improvised-sounding free verse suggested jazz or blues music. His output was enormous – sixteen published collections of poetry, a dozen novels or short story collections, plays, Broadway musicals, opera collaborations with Kurt Weill and William Grant Still, children's stories, and two autobiographies.



Langston Hughes



Margaret Bonds

Chicago-born pianist and composer **Margaret Bonds** (1913-1972) was a precocious talent who was introduced to music at an early age by her mother, a music teacher and church musician. She later studied with Florence Price and William Dawson, and at 16 enrolled in Northwestern University, where she received her bachelor's and master's degrees. While still a student, she won first prize in the song division of the 1932 Wanamaker competition, and she appeared as piano soloist in the same Chicago Symphony concert in which Price's *Symphony No. 1* was premiered, the first Black soloist to appear with that orchestra. While at Northwestern, she was allowed to take classes but not live on campus or use university facilities, her first real exposure to systemic racism. She recalled going to the Evanston public library and encountering Langston Hughes'

poem *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*, a poem of affirmation of the Black experience, which proved a great inspiration and comfort to her, and which she would later set. *Three Dream Portraits* is a song cycle composed in 1959, a setting of three short poems which together trace a path from stereotype to acceptance.

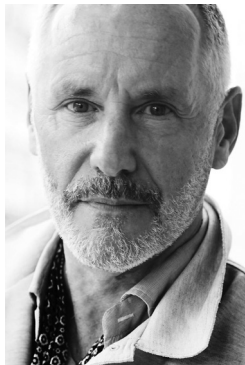


Damien Sneed

Damien Sneed (b. 1979) is a composer, pianist, vocalist, conductor, producer and arts educator who has collaborated with some of the greatest names in jazz, classical, pop, R&B and Gospel music. He is a recipient of the prestigious Sphinx Medal of Excellence, which is presented annually to emerging Black and Latino leaders in classical music. Sneed is the founder and artistic director of Chorale Le Chateau, whose repertoire reflects Sneed's wide range of interests and who collaborated with Wynton Marsalis on the premiere recording of his *Abysinnian Mass* with Sneed conducting. He has composed opera, orchestral, chamber and vocal music.

I Dream a World was composed in 2018 for the Carnegie Hall debut of baritone Justin Michael Austin. The moving text is an extract from Hughes' libretto for *Troubled Island*, the 1939 opera about the Haitian revolution, with music by William Grant Still.

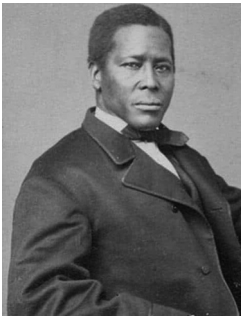
Grammy-nominated oratorio *Sanctuary Road* is the product of powerhouse duo **Mark Campbell** and **Paul Moravec**. Campbell is a prolific and award-winning librettist of opera, musical theater, oratorio and song cycles. He has written libretti for the Pulitzer Prize winning opera *Silent Night* and the Grammy Award winning *(R)evolution of Steve Jobs* and collaborated with composers including Kevin Puts, John Musto, William Bolcom, Missy Mazzoli, and Mason Bates. He has received two Richard Rodgers Awards, the first Kleban Foundation Award for Lyricist, and three Drama Desk nominations, among many other awards. An advocate for contemporary American opera, he created and funds the Campbell Opera Librettist Prize administered by OPERA America. Winner of the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for Music, composer Paul Moravec has composed over 200 orchestral, choral, vocal, opera and chamber works. He has received a Rome Prize Fellowship, Guggenheim Fellowship and three awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, among many others. He has served as composer-in-residence at the American Academy in Rome, artist-in-residence at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, and holds the special position of University Professor at Adelphi University. He has collaborated with Mark Campbell on three oratorios and the opera *The Shining*, and the two have expanded *Sanctuary Road* into an opera scheduled to be premiered in 2022.



Marshall Light



Mark Campbell (top)
Paul Moravec (bottom)



William Still

The libretto for *Sanctuary Road* is adapted from the writings of William Still (1821-1902), an abolitionist, conductor on the Underground Railroad, historian and civil rights activist. Both of his parents had been born into slavery in Maryland. His father was able to buy his freedom and his mother escaped with their two daughters (two sons had already been sold South). With no formal education, Still taught himself to read and write. He moved from New Jersey to Philadelphia in 1844, finding work with the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery and becoming chairman of its Vigilance Committee. As a conductor on the Underground Railroad, he is credited with helping some 800 people reach freedom. In 1850, he was interviewing an escaped former slave, recognized the same story that his mother had told him about her two sons, and realized that he was talking to his own brother. He decided to begin keeping detailed records of everyone that passed through his station to aid in reunification of separated families, publishing them in 1872 as *The Underground Railroad Records*. He would later successfully end segregation on the Philadelphia streetcar system, advocate for universal suffrage, and organize the first YMCA serving Black youth.

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Joel Thompson is a Jamaican-American composer, conductor, pianist, and educator, best known for the choral work, *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed*, which was premiered in November 2015 by the University of Michigan Men's Glee Club and Dr. Eugene Rogers and won the 2018 American Prize for Choral Composition. Thompson's works have been performed by ensembles such as the Seattle Symphony, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra, Atlanta Master Chorale, Los Angeles Master Chorale, EXIGENCE, and the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus. *The Caged Bird Sings For Freedom* takes its text from the **Maya**



Joel Thompson

Angelou poem *Caged Bird*. Angelou (1928-2014) was an enormously influential writer of fiction, autobiographies, essays, screenplays and poetry, a cabaret singer and dancer, actor, director, producer, and social activist. She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the National Medal of Arts and the National Book Foundation's Literarian Award, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and a Tony, won three Grammys for her spoken poetry albums and received more than 50 honorary degrees. Thompson sets the text for chorus, alto solo, clarinet and piano. Thompson's subtle change of text, from "sings of freedom" to "sings for freedom" gives the text a sense of action, that the singing is part of the struggle for freedom. The refrain passes from clarinet to solo to chorus as each in turn takes on the character of the caged bird, passing on the struggle for freedom.

– Michael Moore

The Texts

DiOrio: Walking to the Sun

We Travelers, walking to the sun, can't see
Ahead, but looking back the very light
That blinded us shows us the way we came,
Along which blessings now appear, risen
As if from sightlessness to sight, and we,
By blessing brightly lit, keep going toward
That blessed light that yet to us is dark.

– Wendell Berry

Sabbath Poems 1999 VI

from *This Day: Collected and*

New Sabbath Poems

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Esmail: Even after all this time...

Even
After
All this time
The sun never says to the earth

"You owe
Me."

Look
What happens
With a love like that,
It lights the
Whole
Sky.

– Daniel Ladinsky

The Sun Never Says

from *The Gift, Poems by Hafiz, The Great
Sufi Master*

Penguin Books

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Trumbore: Perhaps

In our lifetime, we will undoubtedly have so
many questions left unanswered,
So many stories will be left untold.
Perhaps we may live an answer or
illuminate a story.
Perhaps we may not.
So we turn to the security of constancy as
dependable as the sea,
nature full of beauty and peace,
music that can teach and inspire.
Perhaps all we can do is seek comfort
in such things as flowers, and song, and
you.

– Brandon Elliott

Wilson: Pandemic

What if you thought of it
as *the Jews consider the Sabbath* –
the most sacred of times?

Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down.

And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.
(*You could hardly deny it now.*)
Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.
(*Surely, that has come clear.*)
Do not reach out your hands.
Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love –
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.

– Lynn Ungar

Text not included in the musical setting.

Vaughan Williams: Five Mystical Songs

No. 1. Easter

Rise, heart; thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise
Without delays,
Who takes thee by the hand, that thou
likewise
With him may'st rise:
That, as his death calcined thee to dust,
His life may make thee gold, and much
more just.

Awake, my lute, and struggle for thy part
With all thy art,
The cross taught all wood to resound his
name
Who bore the same.
His stretched sinews taught all strings, what
key
Is best to celebrate this most high day.

Consort both heart and lute, and twist a
 song
 Pleasant and long:
 Or since all music is but three parts vied,
 And multiplied:
 O let thy blessed Spirit bear a part,
 And make up our defects with his sweet
 art.

No. 2. I Got Me Flowers

I got me flowers to strew thy way:
 I got me boughs off many a tree:
 but thou wast up by break of day,
 And brought'st thy sweets along with thee.

The Sun arising in the East,
 Though he gave light, and the East
 perfume:
 If they should offer to contest
 With thy arising, they presume.

Can there be any day but this,
 Though many suns to shine endeavour?
 We count three hundred, but we miss:
 There is but one, and that one ever.

No. 3. Love Bade Me Welcome

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew
 back,
 Guilty of dust and sin.
 But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow
 slack
 From my first entrance in,
 Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
 If I lack'd any thing.

A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here:
 Love said, You shall be he.
 I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
 I cannot look on thee.

Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
 Who made the eyes but I?

Truth, Lord, but I have marr'd them: let my
 shame
 Go where it doth deserve.
 And know you not, says Love, who bore the
 blame?

My dear, then I will serve.
 You must sit down, says Love, and taste
 my meat:
 So I did sit and eat.

No. 4. The Call

Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life:
 Such a Way, as gives us breath:
 Such a Truth, as ends all strife:
 Such a Life, as killeth death.

Come, my Light, my Feast, my Strength:
 Such a Light, as shows a feast:
 Such a Feast, as mends in length:
 Such a Strength, as makes his guest.

Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart:
 Such a Joy, as none can move:
 Such a Love, as none can part:
 Such a Heart, as joys in love.

No. 5. Antiphon

Let all the world in every corner sing,
 My God and King.

The heavens are not too high,
 His praise may thither fly:
 The earth is not too low,
 His praises there may grow.

Let all the world in every corner sing,
 My God and King.

The Church with Psalms must shout,
 No door can keep them out:
 But above all, the heart
 Must bear the longest part.

Let all the world in every corner sing,
 My God and King.

– George Herbert
*The Temple, Sacred Poems and
 Private Ejaculations* (1633)

Ippolito: Rain Song

The monotone of the rain is beautiful,
 And the sudden rise and slow relapse
 Of the long multitudinous rain.

The sun on the hills is beautiful,
 Or a captured sunset sea-flung,
 Bannered with fire and gold.

A face I know is beautiful –
 With fire and gold of sky and sea,
 And the peace of long warm rain.

– Carl Sandburg
Monotone
 from *Chicago Poems*
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DiOrio: Let us plant our gardens now

"[Justice] does not allow that the sacrifices imposed on a few are outweighed by the larger sum of advantages enjoyed by the many."

– John Rawls

A Theory of Justice, Revised Edition
Copyright © 1971, 1999 Belknap Press

Neighbor, let us find nature.
Near us, in us. Nurture
the wild freedom of the human creature.
No longer sacrifice some among our
numbers

to a twisted idol, exiled from clear, cool
water,
wholesome earth, sun-warmed air,
and bees, and time enough to grow. No
longer offer

gilded alibis as we make whole
communities canaries,

whose silence has until now been their
song. Neighbor, we are kind, kin, ken. We
will all enter
a commons, this only earth and air and
water,
in the end. Let us plant our gardens now,
together, where we live.

– Megan Levad

Habitat

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Dunphy: A Slice of Pie

My apple pie is sweeter
I use the same cinnamon and nutmeg
The same apples, every time
When you bite into it
Your eyes close
And you relish it with delight
Her pie is peach
And you convince her that you love it
Love her
Just the same
But her peaches are in season
Now, at least
When autumn comes
You come calling
For my sweeter apple pie
And I'm the fool who believes your lies

– Feminista Jones

from *The Secret of Sugar Water*
PIAH Publishing, Philadelphia

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Bonds: Three Dream Portraits

Minstrel Man

Because my mouth
Is wide with laughter
And my throat
Is deep with song,
You do not think
I suffer after
I have held my pain
So long?

Because my mouth
Is wide with laughter,
You do not hear
My inner cry?
Because my feet
Are gay with dancing,
You do not know
I die?

– Langston Hughes (1925)

Dream Variations

To fling my arms wide
In some place of the sun,
To whirl and to dance
Till the white day is done.
Then rest at cool evening
Beneath a tall tree
While night comes on gently,
Dark like me –
That is my dream!

To fling my arms wide
In the face of the sun,
Dance! Whirl! Whirl!
Till the quick day is done.
Rest at pale evening...
A tall, slim tree...
Night coming tenderly
Black like me.

– Langston Hughes (1924)

I, Too

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table

When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed –
I, too, am America.

– Langston Hughes (1926)

I Dream a World

I dream a world where man
No other man will scorn,
Where love will bless the earth
And peace its paths adorn
I dream a world where all
Will know sweet freedom's way,
Where greed no longer saps the soul
Nor avarice blights our day.
A world I dream where black or white,
Whatever race you be,
Will share the bounties of the earth
And every man is free,
Where wretchedness will hang its head
And joy, like a pearl,
Attends the needs of all mankind –
Of such I dream, my world!

– Langston Hughes
from *Troubled Island* (1939)

all poetry from
The Collected Works of Langston Hughes
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Moravec: Sanctuary Road

1. Write

[Soprano]
Sarah Grace...
A slave all her days...
Separated from her family...
Ellen Craft...
Sold three times.

[Mezzo-soprano]
Clarissa Davis...
Born in Martinsburg...
A slave all of her life...
A slave all of her days.

[Tenor]
Wesley Harris...
Talbot Johnson...
Fled from Richmond...
On horseback all night.

[Baritone]
Barnaby Grigby...
Isaac Jackson...
Fled from Charleston...
Samuel Green.

[William Still]
"The Underground Railroad.
A record of facts,
Authentic narrative, letters, et cetera,
Narrating the hardships,
Hairbreadth escapes,
And death-struggles,
Of the slaves in their efforts of freedom,
As related by themselves and others,
Or witnessed by the author;
Together with sketches of
Some of the largest stock-holders
And most liberal aiders and
Advisors of the road,
By William Still."

[Mezzo-soprano]
Escaped on the roof of a train...
Cordelia Loney...
Emiline Chapman...
Charlotte Giles.

[Tenor]
Wesley Harris...
On horseback all night...
On foot...
On a steamer...
Talbot Johnson...
A slave all of his life...
John Henry Pettifoot.

[Soprano]
Separated from her family...
Henry Brown...
Owner had five-hundred slaves...
Edmundson Turner.

[Baritone]
Isaac Jackson...
Fled from Charleston...
Fled from Atlanta...
Hid in a cave for one year.

[William Still]
Write it down.
Write it.

Write.
 Record.
 Recount.
 Chronicle.
 Write.
 Write it down
 Every word.
 Every word they say,
 Every detail.
 Every sentence
 Every phrase
 Every syllable.
 Write it down.
 Write it.
 Write.

 Set it to paper.
 Preserve every story,
 every fact,
 Every event.
 Preserve, collect,
 Compile every testimony.

 [Soprano]
 Clarissa Davis...
 Harriet Eglan...
 Ellen Craft...
 Mary Epps...
 Our struggles,

 [Mezzo-Soprano]
 Cordelia Loney...
 Sarah Grace...
 Our struggles,

 [Tenor]
 Isaac Jackson...
 Sam Green...
 Robert Carr...
 Our stories,

 [Baritone]
 Emiline Chapman...
 Charlotte Giles...
 Our testimony...
 Our testimony...

 [Ensemble]
 Our sacrifices.

 [William Still]
 From cities and plantations,
 Rice swamps and cotton fields,
 Kitchens and mechanic shops,
 From cruel masters, and kind masters,
 They arrived.

By steamer, by skiff,
 By train, on foot,
 Shipped in a crate,
 They arrived.

 [Ensemble and Chorus]
 Our testimony,
 Our stories cannot be forgotten.
 Our testimony,
 Our stories will be repeated,
 Over and over.
 Our testimony will never be forgotten.
 Our struggles,
 Our triumphs,
 Our sacrifices,
 Will be remembered,
 Remembered.

 [Baritone and Chorus Baritones]
 Our testimony,
 Our stories cannot be forgotten.
 Our testimony,
 Our stories will be repeated,
 Over and over.
 Our testimony will never be forgotten.
 Write it down.
 Even if it costs you your life.
 Every word they say
 Every word,
 Every detail will be remembered.
 Remembered.

 [William Still]
 Their testimony will never be forgotten.
 Even if it costs you your life.
 Write it,
 Write,
 Write,
 Write it down.
 Every word they say,
 Every word, every detail.
 Dip the quill in the well.
 Draw, draw from it deeply,
 Deeply, and write.
 Write it down.
 Write it,
 Write.
 Record.
 Recount.
 Chronicle.
 Write,
 Write it,
 Write,
 Write.

7. This Side Up

[Baritone]

They can't seem to read.

They don't seem to know.

The crate I'm in.

It says: "THIS SIDE UP WITH CARE"

This side up with care.

In big, big letters.

To clarify: This side up is above me,
Not below.

Been on a cart,

On a train,

On a steamer,

And on a train again.

It'll be twenty-six hours since I had myself

Nailed in a shipping crate.

It'll be twenty-six hours of being thrown

This way and that,

Of not seeing the light of day,

Of not moving a muscle,

Of not saying a word,

Twenty-six hours of breathing through a
Hole in this box

No bigger than a button.

My brain may burst from being

Upside down.

And my eyeballs may explode.

But it's worth every second,

Every second of those twenty-six hours,

Even if I'm caught,

Even if I'm beaten,

Even if they hang me from a tree,

For just a chance,

For the slightest chance,

The dimmest hope,

For just a chance,

The slightest chance,

The dimmest hope that this crate,

This crate I mailed myself in arrives

Safe and sound in Philadelphia.

Philadelphia.

Now if only these fools could READ.

8. I Waited

[William Still]

And when the crate arrived here in
Philadelphia,

we pried it open,

and up stood Henry Brown.

[Baritone (Henry "Box" Brown)]

How do you do, gentlemen?

[William Still]

He said, then sang a psalm.

[Baritone (Henry "Box" Brown)]

I waited patiently for the Lord.

[Chorus]

I waited,

I waited patiently for the Lord,

And He inclined unto me,

And heard my calling.

17. Finale

[William Still]

Five years since I hid these records.

Five years,

Five terrible years since the start of the war.

And fearing the outcome,

Concealed them in a shelf in
Lebanon Cemetery.

The war is done.

The records must be recovered.

Gently, gently,

So that they don't fall apart.

Gently and pray that no moisture or mice

Got in to trouble the page,

To trouble the fate of their testimony.

Survived.

Survived.

Survived.

Every page,

Every record,

Every handbill,

Every account,

Every letter,

And here,

The best letters,

The ones from Canada,

Sent when they got there.

Sent when they first knew freedom.

Sent when they first saw their new flag

And shook hands with the lion's paw.

[Mezzo-soprano]

Dear Mister Still...

I take this method of informing you...

In health and mind...

[Tenor]

My dear friend Mister Still...

Excuse me for not writing sooner...

As I don't write myself...

[Baritone]
 Dear brother in Christ...
 As I don't write myself...

[Soprano]
 Dear Sir...
 That I am well...

[Ensemble]
 I arrived safe into Canada...
 I arrived on Friday last...
 And I am happy to tell you I am well...

[William Still]
 Write it.
 Recount every word.
 Record every syllable.

[Tenor]
 Shaking hands with the lion's paw.
 Hear that big cat roar.
 I'm unbound,
 Unchained,
 Unshackled.
 A slave no more.

[William Still]
 Every word they say.
 Every detail.
 Every phrase.
 Every syllable.
 Write every story,
 Every detail...

[Ensemble]
 Much pleased with Toronto...
 Made a good start...
 Endeavored to make every day
 Tell for itself...
 I will open a shop for myself...
 I go to work this morning...
 Went right to work at the Willard House...

[Mezzo-soprano and Soprano]
 Sixteen dollars a month...

[Ensemble]
 Five dollars a week...
 I shall, with the help of the Lord,
 Go to school...
 I have no master in Canada,
 But I am my own man...
 Learning to read and write...

[Mezzo-soprano and Soprano]
 The wedding takes place on Saturday...

[Ensemble and William Still]
 Shaking hands with the lion's paw.
 In the nick of time.
 Fin'ly found a place
 Where freedom is not a crime.

[Ensemble]
 I wish all in bondage were as
 Well off as I am...
 I must request from you to write
 A few lines to my wife...
 If my brother is well send him on
 For I have a place for him...
 Send me word if any of our friends
 Have been passing through...
 I am grateful for my liberty...
 Obligated to you for all you have done and
 For your kindness...
 When I was in distress and
 Out of doors you took me in...
 I was hungry and you fed me.

[Soprano and Tenor]
 For these things
 God will reward you.

[Mezzo-soprano and Baritone]
 I hope to meet you all again.

[Soprano and Tenor]
 If not on Earth may we so live

[Ensemble]
 that we shall meet in that happy land
 where tears and parting are never known.

[Chorus]
 Shaking hands,
 Shaking hands with the lion's paw.

[Ensemble and Chorus]
 Here I know I'll stay.
 The sky,
 The land,
 The whole world is mine today.

[Ensemble and William Still]
 Shout from every roof top,

[Ensemble and Chorus]
 Loud as can be,
 Joyfully,
 Finally come true...

[Ensemble and William Still]
 Free.
 Free.

One sweet little word.
Everyone must hear,
Everyone must know.

[Chorus]
Thou shalt not deliver
Unto his master the servant
Who has escaped his master
Unto thee.

[All]
Shout from every rooftop,
Loud as can be:
Free.

– Mark Campbell
inspired by
The Underground Railroad Records
William Still (1872)

Thompson: The Caged Bird Sings for Freedom

A free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wing
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the
sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright
lawn
and he names the sky his own
But a caged bird stands on the grave of
dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

– Maya Angelou
Caged Bird
from *Shaker, Why Don't You Sing?*
Random House
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A limited number of copies of Elizabeth Scanlon's
critically acclaimed poetry collection **Lonesome Gnosis**
will be available for purchase in the lobby.



Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia receives state arts funding support through a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

The Performers

Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia

Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia has a rich and storied history as one of the nation's premiere choral ensembles and a vital part of Philadelphia's cultural environment. Founded in 1874 as an eight-voice male chorus and now in its 148th season, MCP is led by its 14th Artistic Director & Conductor Dominick DiOrio. MCP welcomes all gender identities and includes over 110 singers of all ages and backgrounds, drawing from seven counties in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. Many singers have degrees in music, work in musical professions, or study voice privately, and all have previous choral experience.

From its earliest days, MCP has been dedicated to artistic excellence by performing both the significant works of the past and the music of today at the highest levels. The Chorus has enjoyed a long performing relationship with the Philadelphia Orchestra, beginning with a 1904 performance of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* and continuing with more than 100 concert appearances. MCP's discography includes more than 20 commercial recordings (including the Grammy-nominated 1985 recording of Persichetti's *Winter Cantata*), with the latest, *Fetter & Air*, released in January on the Navona Records label.

MCP has had a long and significant commitment to commissioning new music, presenting 70 commissioned works over the past 30 years alone, including pieces by Pulitzer Prize winning composers David Lang, Jennifer Higdon and Caroline Shaw. Many of these works have entered the repertoire with multiple subsequent performances. Five have been commercially recorded, and our 2014 commission, Julia Wolfe's *Anthracite Fields*, was awarded the 2015 Pulitzer Prize in Music.

Recognizing that choral music is a living art, MCP has pushed the boundaries of traditional performances by integrating elements such as dance, choreography, videography, and audience movement into our programs to create an immersive experience. The Philadelphia Inquirer wrote about *Turbine*, a site-responsive work performed at the Philadelphia Water Works with a score by Byron Au Yong and choreography by Leah Stein, that "...it's hard to imagine that anyone walked away from *Turbine* unchanged." This imaginative programming has won MCP two ASCAP/Chorus America Awards for Adventurous Programming in 1992 and 2013. When MCP was honored to host the 2019 Chorus America Annual Conference, it welcomed the attendees with the Philadelphia premiere of Tan Dun's evocative soundscape *Water Passion According to St. Matthew*.

In addition to programming our own concert season, MCP serves as a musical incubator for early career professional singers and conductors through our section leader and apprenticeship programs. MCP develops programs and activities that leverage each individual's skill set as they continue to hone their craft. Many MCP singers and conductors have gone on to major professional careers, including singers Eric Owens, Tamara Matthews and Laura Heimes, and conductors David Hodgkins (Coro Allegro), Iris Levine (VOX Femina), and Julia Zavadsky (Nashirah).

Dominick DiOrio, Artistic Director

Dominick DiOrio became the 14th Artistic Director of the Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia in 2020. An imaginative and enthusiastic conductor and composer, he has won widespread acclaim for his contributions to American music. Whether leading an ensemble or crafting a new score, he brings equal passion to his work in vocal and instrumental music, and he has been recognized with The American Prizes in both Choral Composition (2014) and Choral Performance (2019, with NOTUS).

DiOrio believes that singing together brings people joy. He has conducted ensembles around the world, from the Houston Chamber Choir and Choral Arts Initiative in the USA to Allmänna Sångern and Ars Veritas abroad. A strong advocate for new music, he has collaborated with many of today's leading composers including Paquito D'Rivera, Tawnie Olson, Caroline Shaw, Moira Smiley, Christopher Theofanidis, and the late Swedish composer Sven-David Sandström. Committed to diversity, inclusion, and representation in artistic programming, DiOrio proudly programs works that reflect the gender, ethnic, and racial diversity of our world and he strives to amplify the voices of composers from underrepresented populations.

His love for contemporary repertoire spans the gamut of path-breaking works from the 20th and 21st centuries, including James MacMillan's *Seven Last Words*, Steve Reich's *The Desert Music*, David Lang's *the little match girl passion*, Sofia Gubaidulina's *Sonnengesang*, and Krzysztof Penderecki's *St. Luke Passion*, which he had the honor of preparing for the composer in November of 2017. Equally at home with music of earlier eras, he has also conducted performances of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, Mozart's "Great" *C Minor Mass*, Mendelssohn's *Psalm 42*, Vaughan Williams' *Five Mystical Songs*, Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, and Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*.

As a composer, DiOrio has been hailed for a keenly intelligent, evocative style, which shows "a *tour de force* of inventive thinking and unique colour" (*Gramophone*). His music has been praised for its "depth of vision, mastery of compositional technique, and unique style" (*The American Prize*). His over 50 published works have appeared at major venues around the world including the Sydney Opera House, Lincoln Center, and Carnegie Hall — as well as in Austria, Canada, China, Finland, Hong Kong, Ireland, South Korea, Sweden, and the UK. He writes music for singers and players of all ages and experiences, and his recent commissioning partners include the Children's Chorus of Washington, the Worcester Youth Orchestras, the Cincinnati Vocal Arts Ensemble & Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, The Choral Arts Society of Washington, "The President's Own" United States Marine Band, and several universities including Princeton, Smith, and the Universities of Michigan, Oregon, and Illinois.

DiOrio believes in the power of education to change lives and impact our communities. In addition to his work in Philadelphia, he is also a member of the choral conducting faculty at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, where he



Synthia Steinman

leads the select, new music chamber chorus NOTUS. He has elevated NOTUS to national acclaim through commissions, recording projects, and invited performances at regional and national conferences of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA). NOTUS was also one of only 24 choirs in the world selected by competitive audition to perform at the 12th World Symposium on Choral Music in Auckland, New Zealand, before it was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

DiOrio is deeply committed to strengthening the choral field by empowering others, and he recently completed a term as president-elect and president of the National Collegiate Choral Organization (2018-2021). He has also previously served as treasurer of NCCO (2014-2017), as chair of ACDA's Composition Initiatives Standing Committee (2016-2020), and as a member of the board of directors for Chorus America (2015-2018). He earned the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in conducting from the Yale School of Music, as well as the MMA and MM in conducting from Yale and the BM in composition *summa cum laude* from Ithaca College. He proudly credits his mentors Janet Galván, Simon Carrington, and Marguerite Brooks for serving as model leaders, and for making him the person that he is today.

Heather Mitchell, Assistant Conductor

Heather Mitchell is ecstatic to be appointed Assistant Conductor and Chorus Manager for the Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia. She is currently the Artistic Director of the Hopewell Valley Chorus, an alto for the Manhattan Choral Ensemble, the conductor of the Montclair Community Choir, and most recently served as Conductor-in-Residence at Manhattan Concert Productions. As a choral singer, she has performed with many professional and notable groups that include The Bach Choir of Bethlehem, Manhattan Chorale, Coro, Tucson Chamber Artists, and the Tucson Symphony Orchestra.



With a focus on unknown repertoire, Heather founded the professional choir FIVE LINES to bring attention to works by major composers that have been overlooked. In the spirit of FIVE LINES, she made her Carnegie Hall debut conducting the rarely performed Schumann *Requiem*, Op. 148 with the Masterwork Festival Chorus and the New York City Chamber Orchestra. She was the author of "A Reconsideration of the Performance of the Chorales in J.S. Bach's *Passio secundum Johannem*, BWV 245," a featured article in the American Choral Directors Association's Choral Journal, that defines the proper performance practice of Bach's chorales. In 2006, she earned the Emerging Conductor Award from the Minnesota Chorale and has been sought out as a guest lecturer, clinician, and judge for collegiate programs and choral festivals like the Arizona Music Educators Association, All-American Music Festival, and OrlandoFest. Her teaching spans children's, collegiate, community, and professional choirs. Heather holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in choral and orchestral conducting from the University of Arizona and a Master of Music degree in choral conducting from Saint Cloud State University, in Minnesota. Outside of music, she is a professional photographer in the NYC metro area, an avid hiker, and tries to bake everything.

Dashon Burton, Bass-Baritone

Bass-baritone Dashon Burton has established a vibrant career, appearing regularly throughout the US and Europe. A multiple award-winning singer, Mr. Burton won his second Grammy Award in 2021 for Best Classical Solo Vocal Album with his performance in Dame Ethyl Smyth's masterwork *The Prison* with The Experiential Orchestra (Chandos). He also received top prizes in the ARD International Music Competition, the Oratorio Society of New York's Vocal Competition, and Bach Bethlehem Vocal Competition. As an original member of the groundbreaking vocal ensemble Roomful of Teeth, he won his first Grammy Award for their inaugural recording of all new commissions, including Caroline Shaw's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Partita for 8 Voices*. His other recordings include *Songs of Struggle & Redemption: We Shall Overcome* (Acis), the Grammy-nominated recording of Paul Moravec's *Sanctuary Road* (Naxos); *Holocaust, 1944* by Lori Laitman (Acis); and Caroline Shaw's *The Listeners* with the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra. He opened the 2021–22 season with the Handel & Haydn Society of Boston led by Marin Alsop for Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*, which he will repeat later this season with the Nashville Symphony and Giancarlo Guerrero. He will make several notable orchestral debuts, including with the Chicago Symphony in Handel's *Messiah* led by Nicholas McGegan, with the Los Angeles Philharmonic with Michael Tilson Thomas for the maestro's new song cycle *Meditations on Rilke*, with the Pittsburgh Symphony performing Dvořák's *Te Deum* as led by Manfred Honeck, and Verdi's *Requiem* with the Seattle Symphony and Thomas Dausgaard. Operatic engagements in recent seasons have included Strauss' *Salome* at the Salzburg Festival led by Franz Welser-Möst, Peter Sellars' production of Claude Vivier's *Kopernikus* throughout France and Germany, Sarastro in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, and Jupiter in Rameau's *Castor et Pollux* with Les Talens Lyriques. Mr. Burton received a Bachelor of Music degree from Oberlin College and Conservatory, and a Master of Music degree from Yale University's Institute of Sacred Music. Deeply passionate about education and bringing as much music as possible to the next generation, he is proud to be a member of the board of Chorus America, a service organization devoted to advocating for the power of collective song.



Tatiana Daubek

Elizabeth Scanlon, Poet

Elizabeth Scanlon is the Editor in Chief of *The American Poetry Review*. She is the author of *Whosoever Whole* (forthcoming, Omnidawn), *Lonesome Gnosis* (Horsechief Books, 2017), *The Brain Is Not the United States/The Brain Is the Ocean* (The Head & The Hand Press, 2016) and *Odd Regard* (ixnay press, 2013). She is a Pushcart Prize winner and her poems have appeared in many magazines including *Boston Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Colorado Review*, *Crazyhorse*, and others. She lives in Philadelphia.



Doris Hall-Gulati, Clarinet / Soprano Saxophone

Clarinetist Doris Hall-Gulati became a 2018 Grammy Award winner as clarinet soloist on The Crossing's recording of Lansing McLoskey's oratorio *Zealot Canticles*. Her latest recording is with Lyric Fest on Kile Smith's *In This Blue Room* for Albany Records. She has performed in music festivals and on multiple series as soloist and chamber musician throughout the world. Doris is also a member of the Fulbright-Heys awarded ensemble Trio Clavino, performing throughout the US, Europe and Asia. After being awarded First Prize in the Louise D. McMahon International Music Competition, Doris gave her New York City debut, performing the world premiere of John Carbon's *Rhapsody for Clarinet*



and Orchestra at Avery Fischer Hall, Lincoln Center, with Gerard Schwarz and the New York Chamber Symphony. About the performance, Allan Kozinn of The New York Times wrote, "... a demandingly agile clarinet line, played with both virtuosity and nuance by Doris J. Hall-Gulati, wove its way through a variegated orchestra fabric." Ms. Hall-Gulati made her Carnegie Hall debut playing with the Alaria Chamber Ensemble. In addition to her position as Principal Clarinet in The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, The Ocean City, NJ Pops Orchestra and the PA Philharmonic Orchestra, Doris is Principal Bass Clarinetist of Opera Philadelphia and Assistant Principal/Bass Clarinetist with the Lancaster Symphony. In 2011, Doris became an Artist-in-Residence at Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, PA and joined the faculty of the Lancaster Bible College in 2015.

Sarah Sutton, Viola

Sarah Sutton has an international profile as both a performer and teacher. As a performer she has brought music to some of the most eminent figures in the history of our time. She has played a command performance for the late Pope John Paul II; was invited to perform at the State Banquet and Celebrations in honor of Nelson Mandela and Queen Elizabeth II, not to mention performances for Diana, Princess of Wales, The Duchess of York and the Duchess of Kent. Her playing has been described by the Saanen Post (Switzerland) as "enthraling", captivating audiences with her "range of emotion and the darkly melancholic timbre of the instrument".



Geoffrey Glass Studios

Ms. Sutton has performed throughout Europe, North and South America. She has appeared as both soloist and principal violist with the Camerata Lysy Gstaad (Switzerland), and played at many prestigious venues, including the Palais des Beaux Arts (Brussels), Teatro Colon (Buenos Aires), the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Royal Albert Hall and St John's Smith Square (London). Festivals include solo and chamber performances at the Summer Music Festival at Blackthorpe Barn (UK), the Menuhin Festival, Alpen Gala, and Verbier Summer Academy (Switzerland),

and Tanglewood (USA). An avid chamber musician, Ms. Sutton has collaborated with the Carmina Quartet as Guest Violist in performances as part of the Rencontres Musicales (Switzerland). She has appeared as a soloist with the New World Symphony and Nicholas McGeegan, and The College of New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, among others.

As an orchestral player, Ms. Sutton has held the Principal Viola position with the New World Symphony (directed by Michael Tilson Thomas) and was a member of the Florida Philharmonic Orchestra. She has been a guest Sub-Principal with the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden (UK), participating in the historic EMI recording of *Tristan and Isolde* with Antonio Pappano and Plácido Domingo, and the new production of *Das Rheingold*, which has been broadcast live on BBC TV and BBC Radio 3. Sarah has been a member of the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia (formerly the Concerto Soloists) and also appears as Guest Principal Violist with the Princeton Symphony and guest artist with the Philadelphia Orchestra. She also performs regularly with the Philly Pops and is a member of the Camerata Philadelphia.

Born in England, Ms. Sutton is a graduate of the Yehudi Menuhin School of Music (UK), where she studied with Lord Yehudi Menuhin, Simon Rowland-Jones, Yuko Inoue and Mauricio Fuks. She went on to accept a full scholarship at the International Menuhin Music Academy (Switzerland) where her teachers were Johannes Eskaer and Maestro Alberto Lysy. Ms. Sutton went on to study with Alan DeVeritch at Indiana University, where she was his Assistant. Ms. Sutton resides in the Philadelphia area with her husband, William Wozniak, and son Edward.

Phillip O'Banion, Percussion

Phillip O'Banion is Associate Professor and Director of Percussion Studies and ensembles at Temple University. O'Banion performs frequently with the Philadelphia Orchestra and other symphonic orchestras, new music groups, and theater productions. He is a percussionist with Orchestra 2001 and Network for New Music, and principal of the Mann Center Orchestra. O'Banion has appeared as performer and conductor in concerts presented by the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, and is a frequent collaborative guest with the Philadelphia Orchestra Percussion Group (POPG).



O'Banion has been involved in the commission or premiere of over sixty new works in the solo and chamber music genres. He has appeared internationally in Europe, Canada, South America, and across the United States. Mr. O'Banion can be heard on recordings with the Philadelphia Orchestra on the Deutsche Grammophon label. His solo album for percussion and electronics, *Digital Divide*, and his recording of Adam Silverman's marimba concerto *Carbon Paper and Nitrogen Ink* are available through BCM+D records. As director and conductor of the Philadelphia Percussion + Piano Project he leads exciting chamber music projects from the 20th and 21st centuries. The group's recent releases include *Radiant Outbursts: (In)Human Progress* in 2020 and *No Strings Attached:*

Percussion Music by Marc Mellits in 2021. Both projects feature world premiere recordings, as well as Bernstein's *Halil* and George Antheil's *Ballet Mècanique*.

Professor O'Banion has been involved with Percussive Arts Society international conference for many years, as chair of the symphonic committee, and as a contributor to the new music and literature review column for the publication *Percussive Notes*. He has appeared at numerous PAS conventions, Days of Percussion, and international music festivals. O'Banion also serves as faculty member and percussion coordinator for the Sewanee Summer Music Festival in Tennessee.

Ting Ting Wong, Piano

Ting Ting Wong is honored to be in her sixth season as collaborative pianist with Mendelssohn Chorus. In great demand as a vocal coach and accompanist, she serves on the musical staff in vocal studies at Curtis Opera Theater, Curtis Institute of Music, and at The Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia. She has served as chorus pianist with Opera Philadelphia and Temple University.

She currently serves as music director at Newtown Square Presbyterian Church and the Union League Voices of Philadelphia. Ting Ting also maintains a busy schedule giving recitals to the community and teaching in her private coaching studio.

Born and raised in Hong Kong, Ting Ting holds two Master's degrees: one in piano performance from Carnegie Mellon University, where she also earned a piano pedagogy certificate, and one in piano accompanying and coaching from Temple University, where she studied with Mr. Lamber Orkis and Dr. Charles Abramovic.



John Myers

Sam Tower, Director

Sam Tower (she/her) has worked in Philadelphia as a freelance director, arts administrator, and consultant for the performing arts since 2010. She is most passionate about staging new works, ensemble-driven process, performance for young people and families, and the power of live theatre to connect communities. Tower is the Co-Artistic Director of Ninth Planet where she creates and produces experimental theatre that centers people of color, women, queer and trans people in Philadelphia. She has received regional and national support for her work as a director and producer, including a 2017 Independence Fellowship in the Arts. Tower holds a BFA from University of the Arts, training from Headlong Performance Institute, and years of invaluable hands-on experience and professional mentorship.



Kate Raines

Margaux Cattelona, Stage Director

Margaux Cattelona (she/her) is a Philadelphia-based arts administrator and stage manager. She is currently working as FringeArts' Finance Associate while pursuing her Master's in Business Administration from her alma mater, Drexel University, where she received a B.S. in Entertainment & Arts Management. Margaux is incredibly thankful to Lis Galassini and Flo Gardner for the opportunity to stage manage in person again! Here's to new beginnings and telling stories together again. Up next: Assistant Stage Manager for Inis Nua's *Folk* in April.



Mary Bond, Conducting Apprentice

Mary Bond is delighted to join the Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia through the John P. Leonard Conducting Apprenticeship Program for the 2021-2022 Season. Mary is a first year Master's student and Teaching Assistant studying Choral Conducting at Temple University under the tutelage of Dr. Paul Rardin. Previously, Mary served as the Choral and Theatre Director at Antioch High School in Nashville, TN from 2017-2021. While in Nashville, she sang in the Nashville Symphony Chorus and was selected as alto section leader. Mary received her undergraduate degree in Music Education from Xavier University in 2016, and has served educational and leadership roles in chorus organizations such as the Cincinnati Boychoir, Poco a Poco Young Artist Training Festival, Madisonville Youth Chorus, and the Cincinnati Youth Choir.



Erik Stenswold, Conducting Apprentice

Erik Stenswold is a lifelong musician, singer, and the current Director of Music and Choral Activities at St. Augustine Preparatory School, and Choir Director of First Presbyterian Church in Hamilton Square. Stenswold performs extensively as a professional singer; he first appeared as a soloist at Carnegie Hall in 2017, and continues to perform with professional ensembles, most notably as a baritone in Choral Chameleon. Stenswold has studied choral conducting under Simon Carrington, Dr. Jason Thoms, and Vince Peterson; and has performed with amateur and professional choral ensembles both domestically and abroad. As a composer, Stenswold has had works performed by Scape Trio, as well as church choirs, high schools, and colleges across the east coast; and he continues to write for the ensembles at St. Augustine Prep and Hamilton Square. Stenswold holds a Bachelor's Degree in Vocal Performance from Concordia College, NY, and a Master's Degree in Choral Music Education from Hunter College.



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 Meg Oravetz
 Gina Polite
 Jennifer Rafferty
 Rebecca Rendsburg
 Sharon Rhinesmith*
 Gabrielle Rinkus
 Julia Scott
 Jennifer Sheffield
 Maria Sisto
 Jane Uptegrove
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 Aiko Whiting

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 Campbell Holder
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 John H. Luttenberger, III
 Josh Matthias-Long
 Joshua McCord
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 Jeff Schwartz
 Michael Robert Smith*
 D'quan Tyson*
 Steve Ullman
 Zach Zaitlin
 Luke Zhu

Bass

Evan Birnholz
 Paul Burgmayer
 Tyler Cudia
 Lucas DeJesus*
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 John Kohlhas
 James Lamb
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 Daniel Rosen
 Dan Simpson
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 Thomas Sutton
 Rich Tolsma
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* Section Leaders

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SAVE THE DATE

MENDELSSOHN MEDLEY

Sunday ■ May 22, 2022 ■ 1 to 4 pm

The Oaks Cloister
5829 Wissahickon Drive
Philadelphia PA 19144

BEYOND THE BINARY

*"There are more things in heaven and earth
than are dreamt of in your philosophy."*

Music by
Andrea Clearfield

Libretto by
Ellen Frankel

Custom Percussion Instruments by
David Kontak

Featuring
Cookie Diorio as 'The Oracle' and
Square Peg Round Hole

With additional music by
Carlos Cordero, Moira Smiley,
and **Zanaida Robles**



*In an innovative partnership with the
University of Pennsylvania GRASP LAB*

WORLD PREMIERE PERFORMANCE

Sunday • May 15, 2022 • 7pm

The Fillmore Philadelphia • 29 East Allen Street



MENDELSSOHN
CHORUS
OF
PHILADELPHIA



REUNION

Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia's 148th Season

DOMINICK DiORIO, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR & CONDUCTOR

Three programs that bridge the divide between the known and the unknown...

Three evenings of reflection after a time of upheaval...

Three chances to sing together once more...

Join us and be part of our reunion.

A FEAST OF CAROLS

*Seek the healing light,
share your songs of hope.*

MCP's holiday tradition with
organist **Andy Kotylo**
& **Timberdale Brass**

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Chestnut Hill

Dec 11, 2021 (two performances)

OUR STORY IS NOT OVER

*We grieve, we process,
we begin to rebuild.*

Featuring
Dashon Burton, baritone &
Elizabeth Scanlon, poet

Suzanne Roberts Theatre
Broad Street

Mar 17 & 19, 2022

BEYOND THE BINARY

*"There are more things in heaven and
earth than are dreamt of
in your philosophy."*

A world premiere by
Andrea Clearfield
with **Square Peg Round Hole**
& **Cookie Diorio**

The Fillmore • Fishtown
May 15, 2022



We want to hear from you!

Please scan the QR code and
take our audience survey.