



FROM THE PODIUM

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Greetings from the Paducah Singers!

Our upcoming concert is *Pilgrimage: At Home in the World*, and as I considered how to begin this letter to you, I realized that I have been on quite a pilgrimage myself recently, which definitely influenced the repertoire choices for this fall season.

Usually, I am thinking about the next concert's repertoire just as we sing the final note of the current one, but several personal events prevented me from being as focused this time. I retired from Southern Illinois University in May after working there for 20 years as Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities. In June, I sold my house, moved to Paducah, and began a new job. Typing that was far simpler than the actual process. As many of you know, sorting through both an office and a home occupied for 20 years takes lots of work. While I am settled now and finding a real sense of home here in Paducah, it's been a hectic few months, to say the least!

Since I was somewhat "brain dead" from all of these life events, repertoire ideas for the fall concert were in short supply. When Emily and Fowler Black suggested I check which composers might have significant birthdays this year, that search led me to Palestrina, Ravel, Pärt, Rutter and Chilcott. I soon saw how easily we could celebrate choral music from around the globe starting with these five significant birthdays.

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina is one of our favorite Italian Renaissance composers. If you joined us for last year's fall concert, you may remember we sang a portion of one of his extraordinary masses. Born in 1525, we will celebrate his 500th birthday by singing the motet "Exultate Deo." This lively, short work is a perfect example of his genius in writing polyphony that is clear and vibrant.

We will mark Maurice Ravel's 150th birthday by singing the complex *Trois Chansons*, his only composition for a *cappella* choir. Based on his own texts, Ravel wrote the songs while waiting on word to enlist in the French army during World War I. Written in the style of 16th-century chanson, they will fit nicely with 16th-century Palestrina.

Celebrating his 90th birthday just a few weeks ago, Estonian Arvo Pärt's beautiful setting of Psalm 131 and Psalm 117 are among our favorites. We sang the Psalm 117 setting a few years ago, but will be adding Psalm 131 this time. They are the perfect example of Pärt's compositional technique involving a minimalist style partly inspired by Gregorian chant that allows for utter clarity in the sound.

We will honor British composer Bob Chilcott's 70th birthday by performing his multi-movement work, *The Making of the Drum*, which was inspired by his visit to Uganda in 1984. While there, he was given a beautiful drum by the artist who made it. He was struck by the sacredness of the drum -- how it was lovingly presented to him, how it was handled with respect by baggage handlers. In his notes on the piece, Chilcott shared, "*The Making of the Drum* enacts the ritual of constructing the drum, whose component parts are drawn from the surrounding nature -- a nature that gives of itself almost sacrificially." As this rhythmic work is accompanied by hand percussion and marimba, you will have an opportunity to witness some expert percussion playing by the singers in addition to their singing.

Our final birthday celebrant is John Rutter, a mainstay of choral music over the last 50 years, who celebrates his 80th birthday as I write this today...September 24th! If you have been in choirs at all, you have probably sung one of his pieces. He is skilled in writing for every kind of choir, from beginners to the most accomplished professional ones. We will close our concert with his "The Lord Bless You and Keep You."

Since the birthday celebrants hail from several countries in Europe, and Africa was represented in Chilcott's piece, our musical pilgrimage had begun! Joining us on this adventure will be settings of Chinese songs arranged by Jon Washburn, a "Norwegian Alleluia" by Kim André Arnesen, and German-born Brahms's "O Heiland, reiss die Himmel auf." Rounding out the program will be three pieces that tie our pilgrimage idea together: Craig Hella Johnson's arrangement of "Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor," quoting the words on the Statue of Liberty; Mark Miller's adaptation of "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands;" and Stephen Paulus's "Pilgrim's Hymn," a prayer for guidance for the journey.

We hope you will join us for this choral music adventure on Sunday, November 16th at 5:00 p.m. at Immanuel Baptist Church in Paducah. As always, admission is free. Please mark your calendars and invite a friend to join you. *Pilgrimage: At Home in the World* will have something to offer every listener!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Davenport". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping "S" and a long, horizontal flourish at the end.

Dr. Susan Davenport
Artistic Director & Conductor