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All Beethoven



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THE HERO'S JOURNEY Our work this semester was anchored in the language of the hero's journey—the idea that there are identifiable, universal patterns within every story which propel a hero forward. This is an oversimplification, of course, of a much studied and critiqued myth pattern. (Apologies to English majors, mythologists, anthropologists, and all the —ologists everywhere!)

In our core work at MYC in which we use music as a lens to explore big ideas, this theme created endless opportunities for our students to strengthen their noticing muscles and to consider their personal mini hero journeys (connections) to the perspectives uncovered in the music. How does a piece of music announce a call to action, reflect struggle, celebrate transformation, or tenderly appreciate a lesson learned? How do the notes, the text, or the rhythm provide clues about the historic context or composer's perspective?

When these questions are asked within the context of community and students are given space to consider the relevance of the music to their individual circumstances, the result is a widening respect for multiple perspectives and a deepening care for one another. And isn't that exactly what the world needs right now? At a time when we often feel alone in the struggle, what we do every week at MYC—studying music together, asking questions, listening to each other, and exploring together the vastness of creative expression that celebrates our common humanity—becomes a welcome companion on the journey.

Thank you for being here today, for supporting our singers, and for appreciating the myriad ways our MYC community embraces students wherever they are in their own hero's journey. Enjoy the concert (and the program notes)!

OUR PROGRAM NOTES vary in how they reference the hero's journey, but our shared language this semester generally followed this list:

- 1. the ordinary, regular life
- 2. a call or call to action
- 3. the struggle, ordeal, abyss
- 4. the return or transformation
- 5. lessons learned or mined gold

MYC'S WINTER CONCERTS

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SPECIAL THANKS

To our MYC community of singers and to their families who attend rehearsals week after week with enthusiasm, unwavering support, and encouragement—you make all of this possible, thank you!

To our steadfast donors and champions who continue to recognize the value of our work; we are forever grateful!

Finally, to our visionary staff whose deep commitment to our mission is on full display in everything they do, thank you for your thoughtful, collaborative work, and for your deep understanding of what is essential. We are still here because of you.

PLEASE NOTE

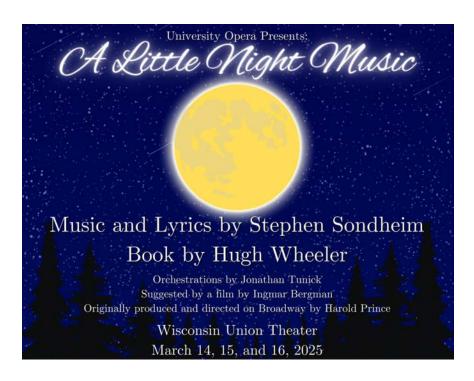
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PURCELL



We Are Weaving our Lives

Alexa Sunshine Rose

We are weaving our lives. We are weaving our hearts and our minds. We are weaving the bright and dark threads of our journey through. We are weaving our lives. We are weaving a blanket of light

This has become our hero's journey theme song in Purcell. It is a beautiful reminder that each of us are on journeys—small and large—every single moment, and that we are fortunate to experience the way our journeys intersect with others. Purcell members noted that it doesn't simply acknowledge the light, easy moments where people connect, but that both "bright and dark threads" are a normal part of our own hero's journeys.

Moh lee hwah (Jasmine Flower) Chinese Folk Song, arr. W. Bisbee (sung in Chinese)

Beautiful jasmine flower Sweet-smelling, beautiful, stems full of buds Fragrant and white, everyone praises Let me pluck you down to give to someone Jasmine flower, jasmine flower

One of the most well known Chinese folk songs, "Moh lee hwah" dates at least to the mid 1700s and the text is a hundred years or more older. At face value, the song seems to explore the beauty of the regular life (status quo) things around us, like a fragrant jasmine flower. At first, the jasmine flower symbolized youth and love and celebrated the precious value of both. As time went on and the song became known worldwide, it became synonymous with Chinese culture and identity and was played at the 2004 and 2008 Olympic games, the transfer of power in Hong Kong and Macau to the Chinese government, and many other official ceremonies. Starting in 2011, the song was used in pro-democracy protests and was actually banned in Internet searches and in online uses, but given its history and relevance in Chinese culture, that ban was hard to maintain. It is interesting to see how a piece of art can be both a representation of regular life and used as a call to action. Ask your Purcell member to share their own writing of the phrase "Moh lee hwah" in Chinese characters. It

was really hard at first, but now many of them can write it on their own without even looking at an example for help—just like the piece started out really hard and unfamiliar and now is a melody that we love. We went on our own mini-hero's journey in learning this piece!

The High Coasts of Barbary Traditional, arr. Jeanne Julseth-Heinrich

A traditional song sung by both British and American sailors in the 19th century, "The High Coasts of Barbary" outlines a conversation between two ships—one a pirate ship and one a man-o-war ship. The story moves from a regular day at sea, to a call to action that results in a battle with the man-o-war as the eventual victor. Purcell members noted that the perspective of the song shifts from the 1st person to a 3rd person view, making them wonder, "Who is the hero supposed to be?"

The Fox Appalachian folk song, arr. Randal Swiggum

This bluegrass gem of a song is an entire hero's journey in one piece! A fox and his family, living their ordinary life experience a call to action (hunger). The struggle is getting to town and back with dinner without being caught, shot, or unsuccessful in finding food. The fox overcomes the struggle by evading the farmer and returns with a "couple o' geese" from the farm. Mrs. Fox and the little ones all eat and declare that the town must be "very fine". This mini-hero's journey is simple enough, but what makes it intriguing is that the fox—typically the villain—is here the sympathetic hero. It brings awareness to the notion of perspective and how whoever is telling the story (or is centering the story) controls the emotional impact of the narrative.

Besides being an interesting story, the rhythmic placement of syllables and open 5th harmonies make it really fun to sing. Thanks to my niece, Naomi, who has so many folk songs in her head that she can find the right song for any concert and for awesome colleague Randy for taking Naomi's suggestion and creating this arrangement

BRITTEN



Voi che sapete (Cherubino's aria from *The Marriage of Figaro*) W.A. Mozart (sung in Italian) (1756–1791)

You who know what love is, Ladies, see if I have it in my heart.

I'll tell you what I'm feeling, It's new for me, and I understand nothing. I have a feeling, full of desire, Which is by turns delightful and miserable.

I freeze and then feel my soul go up in flames, Then in a moment I turn to ice. I'm searching for affection outside of myself, I don't know how to hold it, nor even what it is!

I sigh and lament without wanting to, I twitter and tremble without knowing why, I find peace neither night nor day, But still I rather enjoy languishing this way.

You who know what love is, Ladies, see if I have it in my heart.

In every hero's journey there is a stepping over a threshold or crossing from the known world into a new, unfamiliar world. In Cherubino's aria, that new world is the feelings of a first crush (and all the emotional, physical, and psychological confusion and chaos that comes with it). In this scene from Mozart's sparkling 1786 comedy *The Marriage of Figaro*, Cherubino (the Count's page boy) appeals to two trusted older women, the Countess and her maid Susanna, to explain to him what's going on and why he's a wreck (but a happy wreck). Britten singers themselves have completely fallen for this multi-layered musical delight, as Mozart's many musical details revealed themselves in rehearsal. A few examples: the way the music reels (like Cherubino's moods) between melodic joy and then sudden pain or distress of a weird note or harmony, often in the same phrase. And the sudden dramatic plunging downward on "l'alma avvampar" (my soul is on fire) suggests the new, disorienting feeling of adolescent voice change.

Sirens (Premiere) Britten members, R. Swiggum, Justin Festge Russell

In 1947, when Joseph Campbell first described his idea of the hero's journey as the great "monomyth" of all cultures, it was Homer's *Odyssey* that he often turned to for examples. Odysseus' voyage home to Ithaca was fraught with many dangers, including the sirens—beautiful women who sing a tempting song to lure sailors to their death. Odysseus has his men stop up their ears with beeswax, so they cannot hear the sirens' beautiful singing. But Odysseus himself doesn't want to miss this opportunity and he has himself bound to the mast of the ship. The powerful siren song drives him mad, but his crew keeps rowing, and do not obey his violent cries to unbind him.

Britten members pondered their own "sirens"--often something wonderful and good (like videogames or the Internet or perfectionism) that can become a dangerous, even destructive temptation. What you will hear tonight is a completely original piece, in a hip hop style, combining choral singing and very personal rap lyrics. We owe a debt of gratitude to our coach and co-teacher, Justin, who helped bring this piece to life.

*MYC guest artist Justin Festge Russell is Madison's 2024/25 Youth Poet Laureate. A 2024 graduate of Madison East High School, where he was captain of both the football and rugby teams, he is currently a First Wave Scholar at UW-Madison. First Wave is a nationally renowned, competitive scholarship program offering free tuition for a select cohort of urban arts students in hip hop and social activism. Much of Justin's work as poet, rapper, and musician comes from simply asking questions about the world around him, trying not to take things at face value but find deeper meaning. He also freestyle raps under the name Jexizis and produces music videos.

Currently an education major, Justin hopes to work for MMSD someday as a middle school teacher. He loves to reflect on his own challenging middle school years, including rap circles on the playground with his buddies, and an infamous rap battle with his principal. It was a middle school teacher who got him into writing. "They showed me poetry, they showed me art, and that opened a world for me," he says. "They helped me realize school was not just numbers and reading, but also love and growth. I want to be able to bring that to a kid near me."

HOLST



Hallelujah, Amen

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

"Hallelujah, Amen" is the finale to Handel's 1746 oratorio, *Judas Maccabeus*, the story of the Maccabean resistance to the controlling Seleucid Empire and King Antiochus IV. We imagined this piece like the end of an epic sports film, where the underdogs need one last play to win the game and, in that moment, everything goes into slow motion. They score that goal or catch the touchdown pass or make the full court three and there is a moment of silence before the massive eruption of noise and excitement and joy. The piece begins with celebratory shouts of victory from the basses, to which the tenors, altos, and eventually sopranos all respond with their own victorious cries. The massive outpouring of celebratory polyphony continues throughout the first half of the piece until the many layered polyphony shifts into a homophonic texture.

The writing of this oratorio has an interesting connection to one of our other pieces, "Johnnie Cope," and our upcoming Scotland tour. The early 18th century in Scotland was filled with unrest due to the Jacobite Rebellion, an attempt by James Francis Edward Stuart, and his grandson Bonny Prince Charlie after him, to reclaim the Scottish throne for the Stuarts. While they experienced some success, including the famous Battle of Prestonpans (the battle described in "Johnnie Cope"), the Jacobite Rebellion was eventually crushed decisively at the Battle of Culloden in 1746.

At this same time, Handel was looking for a big hit after suffering from a recent run of poor receptions. He composed *Judas Maccabeus* immediately after the Battle of Culloden and the oratorio was a massive success with the English public, as they resonated with the story of the Maccabeans defeating the Seleucids, just as the British had defeated the Jacobites. This context was another reminder of the power of perspective. For the English, it marked a massive victory—a celebration befitting the victorious shouts of Handel's composition. For the Jacobites and many of the Scottish Highlanders, it was a harrowing defeat, one that is still remembered to this day.

COMBINED CHOIRS



We Are Weaving Our Lives

Alexa Sunshine Rose

Homeland

Mick Hanly, arr. R. Swiggum

What is home? In the hero's journey it is both the familiar world the hero must leave, and also the final destination where the hero returns, bearing hard-won treasure or wisdom. The longing for home, the deep need for a homeland, seems to be universal. Although the homeland in this song is Ireland, the sentiments described are familiar to each of us—an example of the *specific* in a work of art actually making it universal.

song allowed us to dissect this question. What we discovered is that perspective and context are paramount. When we look at this story from Jimmy Grove's perspective, we see Bar'bry Allen as the villain and Jimmy as the hero. He is a poor man slighted by the one he loves, which leads to his eventual death. But when we look at it from Bar'bry's perspective, we see a man who acts disrespectfully to someone he supposedly cares about and then guilts her for not being by his side despite not taking accountability for his actions. The story of Bar'bry Allen and Jimmy Grove reminds us that, while we are all the heroes in our own personal journeys, we can also play a significant role in another hero's journey.

Who determines the hero? Shank's setting of this famous English folk

BRITTEN AND HOLST



Johnnie Cope

Ken Johnston (b. 1960) Poem by Adam Skirving (1719–1803)

Sometimes pieces of music are literally about heroes, and commemorate their valor, or cause us to recall them. Britten figured out early on that the namesake of this song was actually not the hero, however. Sir John Cope (d. 1760) was commander-in-chief of the English army defeated by Bonnie Prince Charlie and his Scottish rebels at the Battle of Prestonpans, September 22, 1745. According to legend, Cope challenged Prince Charlie to a battle and then—losing his nerve-secretly deserted his own troops in the night. "Johnnie Cope" has been "skeired" (mocked) as a coward in this famous poem ever since.

The poem itself, as well-known to Scottish schoolchildren as "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere" was to earlier generations of Americans, was composed by a literate farmer, Adam Skirving, whose fields were trampled in the battle. The martial music, with its fanfares and marching beat, was composed in 2001 by Scottish composer Ken Johnston for the National Youth Choir of Scotland. (Ken has become a good friend to MYC, typically attending at least one of our concerts every tour.) Learning to sing the piece in Scots dialect was a fun challenge, bringing life and energy to the story. The taunting "Are ye waukin' yet?" means "Are you awake yet?"





CHORALIERS



Babylon

Traditional

At the end of *American Pie*, Don McLean's Billboard-topping 1971 album, was this haunting song which captures the deep sense of loss during the Babylonian captivity, one of the defining events in Jewish history. It is a three-line canon (or "round") and on the recording McLean overdubbed his own voice to create the effect of multiple voices singing in counterpoint. It has been discovered that the song is neither a folk song nor original to McLean, but originally written by English composer Philip Hayes and published in 1786. We continue to sing this song many years later so, as one of our singers stated, "we can learn from the past and honor the people whose story we are telling."

The Path to the Moon

Eric H. Thiman (1900–1975) Words by Madeline C. Thomas

English composer Eric H. Thiman set words by Madeline C. Thomas that describe a call to adventure, a longing to sail the path to the moon. The gentle melody is in 6/8 time, creating a sense of the lilting waves as the glistening path runs out to sea. As the song progresses, the singers accept the call to action, vividly imagining a starry night and a seabird skimming the waves where the fishes play, while traveling on for many a day. The singers considered the many ways that the composer created a sense of longing in the music, from the opening octave leap, to the crescendo and ascending sequence on the word "carry," and finally the surprise hemiola at the song's conclusion.

Three Quotes by Mark Twain

Andrea Ramsey (b. 1977)

- I. The Silent Fool
- II. Telling the Truth
- III. My Dear Mother

Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835-1910), more often known by his pen name Mark Twain, was an American author most noted for his novels *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Adventures of Tom Sanyer*. Dubbed

the "Father of American Literature" by William Faulkner, Twain was known for his great wit and profound satire. Composer Andrea Ramsey describes her settings of these three Twain quotes as being "conceived in Twain-esque musical styles with "The Silent Fool" being quasi-ragtime, "Telling the Truth" having the feel of a waltz, and "My Dear Mother" showing a touch of the blues." Performing these pieces gives Choraliers an opportunity to offer a bit of mined gold to the audience and acknowledge that motherhood is a hero's journey.

CON GIOIA



There is a Garden

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)

This piece from Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti* lends itself perfectly to a discussion of the hero's journey cycle. Our hero is trapped in a garden "gone to seed," with weeds, twisted trees, and a black and bare sky. This is the abyss, the ordeal that the hero must navigate along the journey. She hears the voice of her father urging her to come out of the garden and return home—a call to adventure, perhaps, or a helping hand from a guide—but she still cannot find her way out of the garden. She hears another voice, a singer who promises passage to a "shining garden" full of "harmony and grace." Another call? Another guide? There were many differing opinions within Con Gioia about this voice and its call.

We wondered, how can you be the voice of the singer, helping the hero out of the abyss? We had many discussions about how to be a helper on someone else's journey and, throughout the semester, compiled a list of examples of being a hero's guide. Sometimes, a gentle reminder is enough to help the hero on their journey; other times, we might need to spend time talking with the person in need to help them feel like they are not alone. We practiced these skills each week, and reflected on each rehearsal—both our own ability to be a helper for others, and how we saw other Con Gioia members helping one another. Just as all of us are heroes in our own journeys, we can be the guide on someone else's journey. We have the power to be the voice, beckoning gently to safety and refuge.

Caroling, Caroling

Alfred Burt, arr. Drew Collins Words by Wihla Hutson

This classic Christmas song, popularized by the great Nat King Cole, is one of the pieces we worked on for the Madison Symphony Orchestra Christmas concert. The hard work required in preparation for this concert was its own hero's journey for all of us. For many Con Gioia singers, this was the largest performance opportunity of their lives so far. The idea of singing on the Overture Hall stage with a full symphony orchestra, a symphony chorus, and for an audience of over 2,000 people was something we could only imagine at the beginning of the rehearsal process. But we had heard the call from MYC and MSO and had to set out on our journey, leaving the ordinary world behind and venturing into the special world. We knew there would be trials ahead-every hero's journey has struggles and ordeals-and there were certainly times when learning this music felt like we were the hero stuck in the abyss. Fortunately, just as there are struggles in the hero's journey cycle, we know there is a return once the hero has overcome their ordeal. We had some helpers along the way, including older singers from Capriccio who had performed in the MSO concert before and could lend their expertise and wisdom. And in the end, we returned home to the ordinary world having learned something new about ourselves and having been changed by the new experiences we had.

As we looked to connect this specific piece of music to our semester theme of The Hero's Journey, we thought about the different signposts in the hero's journey cycle that best aligned with the story being told in this piece. Our prevailing idea was that this piece is a strong depiction of the call to adventure, or in this case, a "call to celebration." We, the carolers, go walking through the snow, our joyous voices ringing loud and clear to call all of our community to celebrate together. The tolling of the bells, a frequent representation of a call, only strengthens this interpretation.

Everywhere Christmas Tonight

Joseph Martin

Words by Phillips Brooks and J. Paul Williams

This cheerful call to celebration is another one of our MSO Christmas concert selections. As with "Caroling, Caroling," we discussed where it might fall in the hero's journey cycle. Some of us saw it as another connection to the call, another example of a call to celebration, as we repeatedly say "come celebrate Christmas, wherever you are tonight." Others thought of this piece as a representation of the return, the hero having come back from a life-changing journey and the whole community rejoicing with them.

CAPRICCIO



Stand in that River

Moira Smiley (b. 1976)

An active composer and performer, Moira Smiley has carved out her own niche of choral music over the years, one influenced by the American folk tradition and often coupled with thought-provoking text. Smiley describes "Stand in that River," an original composition written in 2003, as having an "American folk-hymn style à la the Carter Family." We find ourselves in the abyss during the introduction, wondering "Where is hope? Where do the waters run clear?" not knowing where to go from here. The remainder of the song reminds us that when the storms of human life are raging, we have the constant change of rivers to soothe us. Smiley's lyrics speak clearly to our shared human experience, inspiring us to embrace one another and believe in the power of positivity as we cast away troubles and navigate a way forward.

Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind

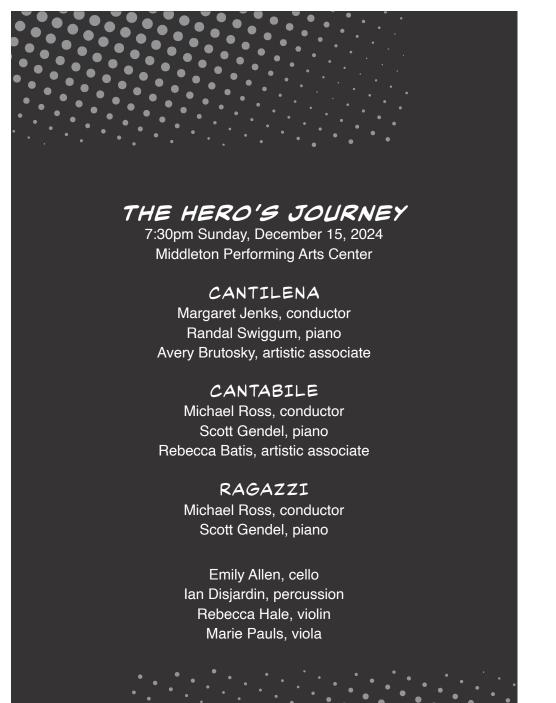
Sarah Quartel (b. 1982)

Shakespeare's song lyric from As You Like It is sung by the courtier Amiens as a commentary on the ordeal of the exiled Duke, who has been banished to the forest by an ambitious and jealous brother. It states that physical suffering caused by the piercing winter wind is preferable to the inner suffering caused by man's ingratitude. Yet the celebratory chorus declares that while "Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly... This life is most jolly." Where are we on the hero's journey? This atmospheric setting is sprightly and uplifting, with the composer asking the singers to perform it with "a bit of frost and a knowing smile." Has the hero been transformed and come to a place of understanding? The final chord with its open fifth may leave you wondering.

Sesere Eeye

Traditional, from the Torres Strait Islands

The Torres Strait Islands are situated between the northernmost tip of Australia and Papua New Guinea. There are more than one hundred tropical islands in the Torres Strait, about a fifth of which are populated. Although traditional Torres Strait Islands music virtually disappeared with the arrival of Christian missionaries in 1871, a modern style of music, which is strongly Polynesian in origin, took its place and a unique singingbased musical culture developed over the years. Island Song (as the locals call it) consists of a rich heritage of song dealing with matters of everyday life - fishing, weather, the sea, the behavior of animals and insects, domestic life and agriculture. Most songs are short and are traditionally repeated three or four times, with improvised harmonization inherent to the style. "Sesere Eeve" is a stand-up dance with clapping motions that mimic a kingfisher bird diving into the water to catch its prey.



CANTILENA



Chant for a Long Day

Stephen Hatfield (b. 1956)

Based on two monophonic chants traditionally sung by women—the Mersiyet from Pakistan and the "waulking songs" from the island of Barra in the Hebrides (islands to the west of Scotland)—Hatfield draws elements of physical, mental, and spiritual survival common to people across time periods and cultures. Cantilena singers were immediately intrigued by the many questions of the mysterious texts and sounds, and the bundle of contradictions presented in the piece. It is both very simple and complex, speaks of loneliness in a powerfully confident way, and depicts both isolation and power in numbers. In essence, we found aspects of the hero's journey from women past, present, and future.

The Lord is My Strength and My Song

George Fredrick Handel (1685–1759)

The oratorio *Israel in Egypt* (which this chorus is from) is essentially one large hero's journey. After an extended period of slavery in Egypt, a leader rises up and calls on the rulers to let the Israelites go free. There is a series of plagues, each one sung about with extensive text painting—from jumping frogs, to pounding hail, to the buzzing flies and locusts, and then finally darkness and death. The Israelites left Egypt, but were pursued until the sea parted so that they could pass, but swallowed up their enemies. "The Lord is My Strength and My Song" is the very decorated (we called it maximalist) celebration duet that is sung when the hardships and abyss are overcome and the people celebrate their return to a new life that is free.

Technically, the piece is incredibly vocally complicated and requires huge flexibility, freedom and vocal agility. It is no small feat for young treble voices (or mature vocal professionals). As a standard in treble repertoire, it may be the first, but probably not the last time these students encounter this work on their own musical journeys.

"We are not made, we are not created, to hold this on our own."

One element of the hero's journey often present amid the abyss or the struggle is a mentor or some type of helper. Even when it seems like we are completely on our own, we often—sometimes in retrospect—see that there were circumstances, people, or even ideas that helped us get through the darkest of times. This piece was the first that we learned this season and the one that continued to bring comfort as we explored some really heavy, difficult music during an emotional season.

RAGAZZI



The Vagabond (from Songs of Travel)

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

Along with Sir Edward Elgar and Benjamin Britten, Ralph Vaughan Williams was one of the composers most responsible for the reemergence of British classical music in the 20th century. A notable contributor in virtually every field of composition, his *Songs of Travel*, written between 1901 and 1904, represent his first major foray into song-writing. Drawn from a volume of Robert Louis Stevenson poems of the same name, the cycle offers a rather different take on the wayfarer cycle. "The Vagabond," the first song in the cycle, introduces the traveler, heavy chords in the piano depicting a rough journey through the English countryside. (*Program notes by Ahmed Ismail*)

Song of Peace

Vincent Persichetti (1915-1987)

"...a work that is saying more about less instead of less about more" - Vincent Persichetti, when asked in an interview to describe what makes a successful musical work.

In this short and impactful piece, Persichetti weaves a deceptively simple melody throughout. The melody itself rises and falls mostly by steps, but includes one raised pitch, giving it an extra sense of urgency. That melody is sometimes rhythmically augmented - it moves twice as slowly, creating a sense of calm within the surge of the original melody.

Everyone knows the name Rosa Parks, but far fewer know Ella Baker. And that's how Ella would have wanted it. Although she was probably the most influential Black woman in the Civil Rights Movement, she worked diligently behind the scenes to guide young activists, from 1930 when she joined the Young Negroes Cooperative League, through the 1950s struggle against Jim Crow laws, the sit-ins and 1961 Freedom Rides, to her work with Martin Luther King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Born in Virginia in 1903, Ella traced her sense of mission and social justice to her grandmother who, as an enslaved woman, had been whipped for refusing to marry a man chosen for her by the slave owner. Her grandmother's pride and resilience in the face of racism and injustice was a driving force throughout Ella's life.

Ella was tough and disciplined, and demanded the best from those who worked with her, young and old. They nicknamed her "Fundi"—a Swahili word for the one who masters a skill with the help of the community, and then passes it on to the next generation. One of those she mentored was the young Bernice Johnson Reagon, who would later form Sweet Honey in the Rock, the Grammy-winning African American women's a capella group. Reagon wrote "Ella's Song" for the 1981 film, *Fundi: The Story of Ella Baker*, and it is still one of Sweet Honey's most famous songs.

The lyrics to "Ella's Song" are entirely the words of Ella Baker, including the striking opening lines, from a speech Baker gave in the "Freedom Summer" of 1964, after hearing the news of the murder of three young voting rights workers, the infamous "Mississippi Burning."

"Until the killing of Black men, Black mothers' sons, becomes as important to the rest of the country as the killing of a White mother's son—we who believe in freedom cannot rest."

Ella Baker worked tirelessly in the fight for human rights right up until her death on December 13, 1986, her 83rd birthday. We honor her hero's journey, as well as Bernice Johnson Reagon's, and understand that the journey continues.

Billy Bragg, arr. Scott Gendel

I kept the faith and I kept voting - not for the iron fist, but for the helping hand...

Billy Bragg, English singer, songwriter, and political activist, wrote this classic folk/punk anthem in 1985. Inspired by the 1984-1985 miner's strike in the UK, Bragg donated a portion of album sales to the striking miner's fund. "Revolutions do not start in record shops. But if you write a song like 'Between the Wars', you have to come up with the actions to meet it."

Our beloved colleague Scott Gendel wrote this arrangement especially for Ragazzi because, as Scott recently noted, "I believe strongly in its message, and just because I love it so much. What a song to share with young people."

Kin

Timothy Takach poem by Michael Dennis Browne

"There is something intangible about getting...together to sing. It's empowering...and totally unique...To me, this poem embodies what it's like to sing in a room full...Most people will never know what that feels like. But that's okay. Because we know." -from the composer, 2015.

Why do you come to choir every Sunday night? What draws you to singing in Ragazzi? Who are your kin? These were questions our singers often discussed. Takach's choral setting of this simple poem tries to capture these intangibles.

CANTABILE



All the music you will hear sung by Cantabile tonight was arranged or composed by female or female-identifying composers.

Ise Oluwa (sung in Yoruba)

Traditional Yoruba song as sung by Sweet Honey in the Rock

God's work will never be destroyed.

This well-known traditional Yoruba song captures the feeling of "forever" - the idea that creation (or music) will never end. This arrangement was first sung by the incredible acapella group Sweet Honey in the Rock on their 1989 album *All for Freedom*.

Le Colibri (sung in French)

Ernest Chausson (1855–1899) Arranged by Mari Esabel Valverde (b. 1987)

The green hummingbird, the king of the hills, seeing the dew and the bright sun Shine on its nest woven from fine grass, Like a cool beam, darts into the air.

In haste, it flies to the neighboring springs, Where the bamboo makes the sound of the sea, Where the hibiscus with its divine fragrance Opens and brings to the heart a wet flash.

Toward the golden flower, it descends, has lain, And sups so much love from the rosy cup That it dies without knowing if it could have finished it.

On your bare lips, oh my beloved, My own soul would sooner have died From the first kiss on which it left its scent. - LeConte De Lisle (1818–1894) Chaussons's art song, presented here in a setting by the composer Mari Valverde, uses the metaphor of a hummingbird to explore themes of courtship and love. Chausson set his original art song in 5/4 - the unexpected, odd number of beats in each measure leads to a sense of suspense and uncertainty.

No Fairy-Tale Here

Zanaida Robles poem by Robyn Watson

Kayah McCants, Phoebe Yancey, spoken word

This powerful work portrays the incredible writing and artistry of Ida B. Wells and her fight against racism and oppression. Set by contemporary poet Robyn Watson, the text uses sharp sarcasm and biting emotion to underline its central themes. Robles' setting of the poem is sharply attentive to the text, using gospel-like and neo-soul choral language along with spoken word poetry to powerfully connect Wells' historic work to the continued struggle against systemic racism.

Its Motion Keeps

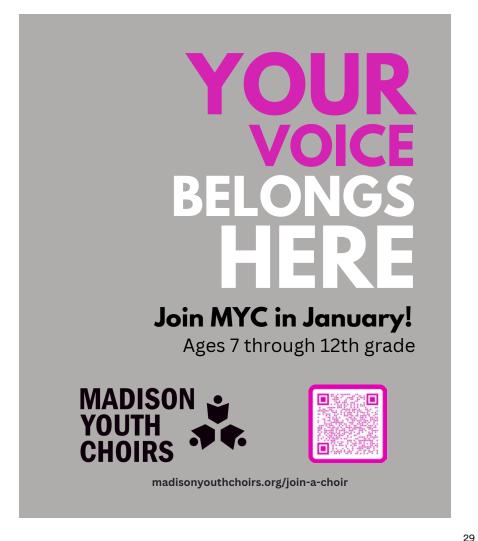
Caroline Shaw (b. 1982)

Britten's attraction to his native English folk songs and hymns comes through in so much of his music, from his choral and opera works to his chamber music and vocal arrangements. Taking a step in that direction, and then sideways and back and around, "Its Motion Keeps" is based on the words from the first verse of the American shape note hymn Kingwood, found in *The Southern Harmony* (1835) and other early 19th century hymn books. (Very likely it is a text that immigrated from England.) It begins with a palindromic viola pizzicato line that gestures to the continuo lines of Henry Purcell, to whom Britten wrote several homages. The choir echoes this contour at first and soon splits into swift canonic figures like those found in "This Little Babe" from Britten's Ceremony of Carols, eventually expanding into the "swirling spheres" above string arpeggiations in a texture that recalls the vivace movement of his second string quartet (one of his homages to Purcell). The ecstatic double choir section evokes the antiphonal sound of the early English choral tradition, with harmonies overlapping overhead in the reverberant stone cathedrals, creating brief dissonances while one sound decays as the next begins. The last line, "Time, like the tide, its motion keeps; Still I must launch through endless deeps," is just one of those perfect, beautiful lyrics — resilient and bittersweet. (*Notes by the composer*)

What Happens When a Woman?

Alexandra Olsavsky

Only 60 out of 193 total UN member states have ever had a woman leader. The female and non-binary members of Cantabile take this personally. What happens when a woman takes power? Maybe someday we will find out.



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