

Balance

Saturday, October 8, 2022 • 7:30 p.m.

First Free Methodist Church

Harmonia Orchestra & Chorus

William White, conductor



GIAN CARLO MENOTTI (1911–2007)

Overture to *Amelia al ballo*

SAMUEL BARBER (1910–1981)

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 14

Allegro moderato — *Un poco più mosso* — Tempo I

Andante — *Più mosso* — Tempo I, *ma sempre con moto* — *Meno mosso*

Presto in moto perpetuo

Rachel Lee Priday, violin

— **intermission** —

HUNTLEY BEYER (1947*)

World Out of Balance — WORLD PREMIERE

A Warning from Amos

A Challenge from Machiavelli

A Plea to Mary

We Ask

Children Ask

Injustice Asks

Love Answers

God Answers

What Mother Earth Is Saying

What the Forest Is Saying

What God Is Saying

Oh, Troubles

Oh, Peace

Oh, Mercy

Amen

Ellaina Lewis, soprano

Darrell J. Jordan, baritone

Please silence cell phones and other electronics, and refrain from the use of cameras and recording devices during the performance.

Refreshments will be available in the Fine Center during intermission.

Harmonia Orchestra and Chorus

William White, music director • George Shangrow, founder

1916 Pike Pl. Ste 12 #112, Seattle WA 98101 • 206-682-5208 • www.harmoniaseattle.org

Solo Artists

A consistently exciting artist, renowned globally for her spectacular technique, sumptuous sound, deeply probing musicianship, and “irresistible panache” (*Chicago Tribune*), violinist **Rachel Lee Priday** has appeared as soloist with major international orchestras, among them the Chicago, Houston, National, Pacific, St. Louis and Seattle Symphony Orchestras, Boston Pops Orchestra, Buffalo Philharmonic and Germany’s Staatskapelle Berlin. Her distinguished recital appearances have brought her to eminent venues, including Lincoln Center’s Mostly Mozart Festival, Chicago’s Ravinia Festival and Dame Myra Hess Memorial Series, Paris’ Musée du Louvre, Germany’s Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival and Switzerland’s Verbier Festival.



Passionately committed to new music and creating enriching community and global connections, Rachel Lee Priday’s wide-ranging repertoire and multidisciplinary collaborations reflect a deep fascination with literary and cultural narratives. Recent seasons have seen a new violin sonata commissioned from Pulitzer Prize finalist Christopher Cerrone and the world premiere of Matthew Aucoin’s *The Orphic Moment* in an innovative staging that mixed poetry, drama, visuals and music. She has collaborated often with Ballet San Jose, and was lead performer in “Tchaikovsky: None But the Lonely Heart” theatrical concerts with the Ensemble for the Romantic Century at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Her work as soloist with the Asia America New Music Institute promoted cultural exchange between Asia and the Americas, combining premiere performances with educational outreach in the U.S., China, Korea and Vietnam.

This season, Ms. Priday performs in recital with pianist Bryan Wallick at the University of Washington and Colorado State University. Upcoming concerto engagements include the Springfield Symphony, Pensacola Symphony, Topeka Symphony and Verde Valley Sinfonietta, while recent appearances have included the Pacific Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, Johannesburg Philharmonic, Kwazulu-Natal Philharmonic, Stamford Symphony and Bangor Symphony.

Rachel Lee Priday began her violin studies at the age of four in Chicago before moving to New York to study with the iconic pedagogue Dorothy DeLay; she continued her studies at the Juilliard School Pre-College Division with Itzhak Perlman. She holds a BA in English from Harvard and an MM from the New England Conservatory, where she worked with Miriam Fried. In 2019, she joined the faculty of the University of Washington School of Music as Assistant Professor of Violin. Ms. Priday has been profiled in *The New Yorker*, *The Strad*, *Los Angeles Times* and *Family Circle*. She performs on a Nicolo Gagliano violin (Naples, 1760), double-purpled with fleurs-de-lis, named Alejandro.

Soprano **Ellaina Lewis** demonstrates an extensive range of vocal and dramatic ability. Originally from Washington, D.C., she now makes her home in Seattle. In addition to Seattle Opera, where she sang the role of Strawberry Woman in *Porgy and Bess*, she has performed with Puget Sound Opera, Tacoma Opera, Seattle Choral Company, Everett Philharmonic, Sammamish Symphony, ArtsWest, Northwest New Works Festival, NOISE (Northwest Opera in Schools, Etc.), Ladies Musical Club, Cascade Symphony and Pacific Northwest Ballet School. Ms. Lewis has sung Violetta in Verdi’s *La Traviata*, Amina in Bellini’s *La Sonnambula*, Monica in Menotti’s *The Medium*, the title role in Scott Joplin’s *Treemonisha*, Erzulie in Flaherty’s *Once on This Island*, Pamina in *The Magic Flute* and Gertrude in *Hansel and Gretel*. Concert engagements include Haydn’s *Creation*, Mozart’s *Exsultate Jubilate* and Villa Lobos’ *Bachianas Brasileiras* No. 5. Ms. Lewis has on many occasions blended her love of singing and her passion for dance, collaborating with S.D. Prism Dance Theater and contributing vocal improvisations as dancers interpret the choreography of the company’s founder, Sonia Dawkins. Among her premieres are the title role in *Sally Hemings* (an opera and film production by Garrett Fisher) and the role of Simona in *Night Flight* with Book-It Repertory Theatre.



Baritone **Darrell J. Jordan** has been praised for his “shining, beautiful voice” (*Broadway World*), “expressive baritone and facial expressions” (*The SunBreak*), and as “the star of the show” (*Columbia Heart Beat*). He holds a BA in both Psychology and Music and MM in Voice Performance from the University of Missouri, and a DMA in Voice Performance from the University of Washington. Before matriculating at the UW, he served on the faculty at the University of Missouri, Swinney Conservatory of Music, Columbia College and Stephens College. This season he sings Harlequin in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Barn Opera, Montano in *Otello* with Pacific Northwest Opera, Don Fernando in *Fidelio* with Puget Sound Concert Opera, *Carmina Burana* with Tacoma City Ballet, and Bach’s *Magnificat* with Harmonia. Recent engagements include Tacoma Opera, Wilmington Concert Opera, Missouri Symphony, Southside Philharmonic, Toledo Symphony, Thalia Symphony and Olympia Chamber Orchestra. He can be heard on the CD *St. Lawrence Psalter* as well as two upcoming albums from the Seattle Art Song Society, and is a member and co-artistic director of the nationally recognized, award-winning vocal chamber ensemble Vox Nova.



Maestro's Prelude

Dear Listeners,

Welcome the first concert of our 2022–2023 season! We're so happy to have you join us for this most fascinating program, which we're calling "Balance."

Our season theme is "Dialogue" and we begin this evening with works by a pair of composers who were very much in dialogue with each other: Gian Carlo Menotti and Samuel Barber. They met as students at the Curtis Institute of Music in 1928 and fell in love. They lived together in a sort of common-law marriage for the next four decades, and they exerted a profound influence on each other's music.

Menotti was the more theatrically inclined of the two, mainly composing opera, often to his own libretti. His flashy overture to *Amelia al ballo* ("Amelia at the Ball") shows just how much panache he inherited from the Italian tradition that was his birthright. Although Barber did compose three operas (two with libretti by Menotti) today he is chiefly remembered for his orchestral works.

Barber's violin concerto stands out as one of his major accomplishments in any genre, and indeed one of the great American compositions of the 20th century. There's no question that the vocal music that suffused the Barber–Menotti residence made its way into this lusciously melodic score, and we are thrilled to have an artist of the caliber of Rachel Lee Priday — now a local luminary! — to perform it with us.

The second half of our program tonight is given over to a world-premiere oratorio by Harmonia's good friend Huntley Beyer. Huntley performed as an oboist in our orchestra for many years, giving him an insight into the inner workings of a choral-orchestral ensemble that is rare among contemporary composers. He has written several major works for Harmonia during the past four decades (!) and this is his latest masterpiece.

World Out of Balance was commissioned by Doug and Dana Durasoff, longtime Harmonia choristers and supporters, and Doug will be singing in our bass section tonight. The Durasoffs collaborated with Huntley intensely over the course of several months to select the texts and craft the organizational layout of the work. The sources vary widely, from traditional prayers to modern poetry to freeform patter by the composer himself.

In spite of the work's title, I find that the composition offers a genuine balance of heartfelt emotion and clangorous cynicism, a vacillation that resonates deeply with me. I'd hazard to guess that many of you are familiar with this dance of optimism and pessimism as a part of everyday life, as we bemoan the reality of the present and hope for something better in the future.

Whatever you take away from tonight's performance, I hope that it will spark a conversation — and a fruitful one — and that you'll be back with us as the dialogue continues throughout this season.



Program Notes

Gian Carlo Menotti

Overture to *Amelia al ballo*

Menotti was born July 7, 1911, in Cadegliano-Viconago, Italy, and died February 1, 2007, in Monte Carlo, Monaco. Composed in 1936 and 1937, his opera Amelia al ballo had its world premiere on April 1, 1937, at the Philadelphia Academy of Music with students from the Curtis Institute conducted by Fritz Reiner. The overture requires pairs of woodwinds (plus piccolo), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (xylophone, triangle, cymbals, tambourine and gong), harp and strings.

At age 17, Italian-born Gian Carlo Menotti enrolled at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied composition with Rosario Scalero and piano with Vera Resnikoff. "I arrived and spoke very little English," he told the BBC in 1982. "The very first person I met in the school was Sam Barber. He was the only pupil there who spoke fluent French and some Italian. And so of course we became friends immediately and became friends for life." After returning to Curtis following a visit to South America at the end of the semester, their relationship "really blossomed," as Menotti told his biographer, John Gruen. "Suddenly I realized I adored him and he adored me. It became a very intense friendship. It was love. We were very, very happy."

Menotti eventually began to make regular visits to Barber's childhood home in West Chester, about 30 miles from Curtis, where he was "immediately adopted by my family," according to Sam. Barber and Menotti travelled to Europe in the summer of 1929, where they stayed at Menotti's family home, returning the next three summers. After Menotti graduated from Curtis in 1933, he and Barber visited Italy before settling for several months in Vienna, where they rented rooms at Brahmsplatz 4 from an aging Czech baroness and (according to Barber) "wasted a lot of time going to wild parties." The baroness was fond of regaling her boarders with "wonderful tales of the great balls being given in Vienna" during her youth. "In one corner to her bedroom," Menotti recalled, "there was the most incredible dressing table made of porcelain and full of little cupids and ribbons and flowers. . . . It was this dressing table which gave me the idea for *Amelia al ballo*, and in my libretto that dressing table plays a prominent part."

Between May 15 and November 1, 1936, Barber and Menotti rented a cottage overlooking Lake St. Wolfgang at an estate about 35 km east of Salzburg. "It was one of the happiest times of our lives," according to Menotti. "Sam took to the woodshed, and it was there he wrote his *Adagio for Strings*. And it was in that house that I started the actual composition of *Amelia al ballo*," his first mature opera. Early the following year, he completed the work while staying at the Maine estate of Mary Louise Bok, founder of the Curtis Institute, who engineered Amelia's premiere at Curtis that spring (on a double bill with Darius Milhaud's 1926 opera *Le pauvre matelot*) and to whom Menotti dedicated the work.

After a successful debut in Philadelphia (in an English translation from Menotti's own Italian libretto), *Amelia Goes*

to the Ball found its way to the Metropolitan Opera in March 1938, with *The New York Times* praising its “young composer who has made an extremely brilliant and amusing start as a musician of the lyric theater.” On the strength of *Amelia*, NBC commissioned a radio opera, *The Old Maid and the Thief*, and this in turn led to later successes such as *The Medium*, *The Telephone*, *The Consul* and *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.

“The plot of *Amelia*” according to the New York Philharmonic program book for a 1962 performance of the overture, “is pure farce. The heroine has finished dressing for a ball when her husband comes to her room with a love letter he has intercepted and demands her lover’s name. Amelia promises to tell, but only on condition that her husband takes her to the ball. He agrees and leaves, revolver in hand, in search of the lover. While he is gone, the lover takes refuge in Amelia’s room, where he is trapped by the returning husband. The revolver fails to go off, so the men decide to talk it over. Amelia, growing more and more impatient, finally breaks a vase over her husband’s head and calls for help. The police arrive. Amelia hastily explains that she was molested in her room by a strange man (her lover), who attacked her husband as he came to her defense. The lover is arrested, the husband carried off to the hospital, and the police commissioner escorts Amelia to the ball.”

For the sparkling overture, Menotti expanded upon material from the sequence following Amelia’s calls for help, as servants and neighbors rush to investigate the commotion, with a brief, more expansive central episode deriving from the preceding trio, in which Amelia, her husband and her paramour sing about the mysterious nature of love

Samuel Barber

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 14

Samuel Osmond Barber II was born March 9, 1910, in West Chester, Pennsylvania, and died January 23, 1981, in New York. He composed this work during 1939 and 1940. Albert Spalding was the soloist at the premiere on February 7, 1941, with Eugene Ormandy conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra. Barber slightly revised the orchestral accompaniment in 1948, and violinist Ruth Posselt introduced this final version in Boston on January 7, 1949, with Serge Koussevitzky conducting the Boston Symphony. In addition to solo violin, the score calls for pairs of woodwinds, horns and trumpets, timpani, snare drum, piano and strings.

When, on October 1, 1924, Mary Louise Bok (néé Curtis) opened the Philadelphia music school named after her father, the second student through the door was 14-year-old Samuel Barber. The precocious young musician had some years earlier served notice to his mother that he “was not meant to be an athlete. I was meant to be a composer and will be I’m sure.” At Curtis he studied piano with Isabelle Vengerova, voice with Emilio de Gogorza and composition and theory with Rosario Scalero. By the time he met Gian Carlo Menotti, he had developed a “lovely baritone” that he would briefly put to use as a professional singer.

Barber’s compositions at Curtis leaned heavily on chamber music, including a serenade for string quartet (his Op. 1), *Dover Beach* for baritone and string quartet, and a

cello sonata, but during his 1931 visit to Menotti’s Italian home he began writing his first published orchestral work, the Overture to *A School for Scandal*, which would attain great popularity, and two summers later produced *Music for a Scene from Shelley*. These works led to his winning the Prix de Rome in 1935, resulting in two years of study at the American Academy in Rome, where he composed his Symphony No. 1. A November 5, 1938, broadcast performance by Arturo Toscanini of Barber’s *Adagio for Strings* and first *Essay for Orchestra* brought widespread recognition.

In early 1939, Barber received his first major commission. Samuel Fels (whose wife Jennie May helped found the Curtis Institute and whose company manufactured Fels-Naptha soap) was the guardian and patron of an Odesa-born violinist, Iso Briselli, who had attended Curtis at the same time as Barber, and Fels wanted to sponsor the creation of a new work for Briselli to play. “I should be glad to write a piece for violin and orchestra of about 15 minutes duration,” Barber wrote to Fels on May 4, outlining a \$1,000 fee (with half to be paid in advance) and promising a completion date of October 1. Eugene Ormandy immediately agreed to perform the concerto, sight unseen.

That summer Barber and Menotti spent July in England and Scotland before travelling to Switzerland, where in early August they arrived at “a little village in the Engadine, beautiful snow mountains all around.” Here he began his “violin piece” but long hikes in the Swiss Alps often took precedence: “I’ve been working daily, and it is going slowly,” he wrote. The composers made plans to relocate to France (“Switzerland is much too expensive and the French franc is low”) but the looming invasion of Poland by Nazi Germany prompted warnings for all Americans to leave Europe posthaste. Barber and Menotti secured passage aboard the SS Champlain, arriving in New York on September 1.

Barber “was surprised to see on landing that the first performance” of his concerto “was already announced for January.” On September 11 he arrived in the Poconos, where he continued composing through the original October 1 deadline. Receiving news that his father was ill, he returned to West Chester, but was able to deliver the first two movements to Briselli by October 15. “During my father’s illness,” Barber later wrote to Fels, “I worked very hard in far from ideal circumstances and finished the last movement, the violin part of which I sent to Iso about two months before the scheduled Philadelphia premiere.”

Briselli’s violin coach, Albert Meiff, complained to Fels that the first two movements were not “gratifying for a violinist to perform” and suggested wholesale changes to the solo part. In the new second edition of *Samuel Barber: The Composer and His Music*, Barbara Heyman argues that Briselli did not initially share these reservations, but “was under considerable pressure to conform to his coach’s viewpoint.” Yet, as Briselli himself told Marc Mostovoy in 2002, “I was disappointed when I received the third movement from Sam.” He felt it was too short and did not fit with the first two movements, asking Barber to rewrite the finale. Barber declined. “I could not destroy a movement in which

I have complete confidence," the composer wrote to Fels, "out of artistic sincerity to myself." In the end, Barber and Briselli agreed to disagree. There is no record of Fels paying Barber his remaining \$500, but he apparently did not press the composer for a refund of the advance.

Over the next few months, Barber had more than one violinist read through the concerto and put the finishing touches on the score in July 1940. The following month he approached Albert Spalding, who was on the lookout for an American concerto to add to his repertoire. "He took it on the spot," Barber wrote at the time, while privately confiding: "He's no Heifetz, but we shall see." The composer need not have worried, as critics praised Spalding's playing at the February 7, 1941, premiere with Ormandy and the Philadelphians, who took the work to New York four days later. Reviews were somewhat more mixed about the piece itself, but by the time of a 1944 performance by Roman Totenberg with Leopold Stokowski and the New York City Symphony, Olin Downes in *The New York Times* called it "the work of a young American composer who has something to say and says it honestly without egotism, and therefore produces some genuine and interesting music."

In November 1948, Barber made some modifications to the orchestral accompaniment, fixing "an unsatisfactory climax in the [second movement] and some muddy orchestration in the finale," in preparation for a January 1949 Boston Symphony performance (on an all-American program that also featured music of Sowerby, Harris, Copland and E.B. Hill). The concerto did not immediately become ensconced in the repertoire, but during the 1980s a resurgence of interest in music by mid-century American Romantic composers focused new attention on the work and today it ranks as *the* American concerto for violin and orchestra.

Barber himself considered the work "lyric and rather intimate in character." Its G-major opening movement "begins with a lyrical first subject announced at once by the solo violin, without any orchestral introduction," à la Mendelssohn's E-minor concerto. Michael Steinberg contends that "Barber was surely a vocal composer by nature — and here, like Mozart, he is composing vocal music for an instrument." Solo clarinet introduces the dotted-rhythm second subject and development of both themes ensue. "This movement as a whole has perhaps more the character of a sonata than concerto form," Barber wrote, and indeed there is no extended, flashy cadenza (neither here nor later on).

The central movement, beginning in C# minor, "is introduced by an extended oboe solo," says Barber. Here the slow movement of Brahms' violin concerto (which also begins with solo oboe) appears to be the obvious model. "The violin enters with a contrasting and rhapsodic theme, after which it repeats the oboe melody of the beginning."

The A-minor finale, "a perpetual motion, exploits the more brilliant and virtuoso characteristics of the violin." Although it lasts just over four minutes, Barber tests the soloist with virtually non-stop running triplets — while keeping listeners off balance with frequent shifts of meter.

— Jeff Eldridge

Huntley Beyer

World Out of Balance

William Huntley Beyer was born November 17, 1947, growing up in New Jersey; he currently resides in Redmond. Dedicated to Douglas and Dana Durasoff, World Out of Balance receives its world premiere this evening. The score (composed over a two-year span beginning in May 2020) calls for chorus, soprano and baritone soloists, pairs of woodwinds (with one flute doubling piccolo), horns and trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (snare drum, bass drum, conga drum, xylophone, vibraphone, vibraslap, wood block, tambourine, cowbell, suspended cymbal), harp and strings.

Huntley Beyer met George Shangrow (founder of the group now known as Harmonia) in 1969 in the classroom of harpsichordist Sylvia Kind at the University of Washington, where Beyer had come to pursue a graduate degree in composition. George played harpsichord and Huntley played both oboe and recorder. A friendship quickly developed and they began performing sonatas and trio sonatas together. Both enjoyed improvising, and would often crack each other up with "improvisational challenges" that involved ever-more-absurd levels of ornamentation.

Beyer began performing with Shangrow's Seattle Chamber Singers not long after the group's first official concert in June 1969, playing oboe and writing a *cappella* piece for the ensemble. When George formed an orchestra — originally called the Broadway Chamber Symphony (named after the performance hall where they first gave concerts) and later known as the Broadway Symphony and then Orchestra Seattle — in 1979, Huntley became a founding member, playing oboe for about 15 years while continuing to perform chamber music with George.

Over the decades, George and his ensembles premiered numerous Beyer compositions, including three of his four symphonies, a flute concerto (*Toot Sweet*), the powerful *St. Mark Passion* and a song cycle (*The Turns of a Girl*), along with various choral-orchestral works: *Songs of Illumination*, *Mass of Life and Death* and *Requiem for the Children*. Members of Harmonia premiered his wind quintet in 2011, a piano trio in 2016, and a brass quintet in 2019. Later that year, William White conducted the first performance of *Circumference*, a choral-orchestral work that, in the words of the composer, "reflects and celebrates George's life and musical passion and leadership."

Of his newest composition, Beyer writes: "It all started two and a half years ago, when William White asked me if I would contribute a future composition up for bidding at Harmonia's 2020 virtual auction. A short piece, maybe five minutes, for a chamber ensemble. Now, Harmonia has provided many opportunities over the years for me to premiere my compositions. Starting in the 1980s, I've written symphonies, chamber works, choral works and large compositions involving both orchestra and chorus for this group to premiere. It's also a group I love, having spent many years as a second oboist there. So when Will asked if I would make this kind of donation, my answer was an unhesitating yes.

“As it turns out, my composition was indeed ‘purchased,’ with Doug and Dana Durasoff providing the winning bid. I was open to any small ensemble. Doug, being a bass in the Harmonia Chorus, wanted to include voice. So we decided on soprano and bass, violin, cello and piano. Doug sent over lyrics for five movements. At this point I realized the piece would be longer than five minutes, but it sounded like a fun project, so I began writing.

“After a few movements were done, Doug said to me one day, ‘Hey, wouldn’t a choir be great singing this?’ I thought, ‘Why not?’ And maybe a choir would be benefited by more of an accompaniment than a piano trio. What about an orchestra? Well, if it was OK with Will . . . which it was! And then it’s as if the piece took on a life of its own.

“We decided to add more lyrics and movements. Finally, it became a 15-movement piece for orchestra and chorus with soprano and bass soli. Called *World Out of Balance*, it is about the forces of Darkness threatening to overwhelm what is good. The world is a frightening place, one full of selfishness, greed, injustice, unscrupulousness, violence, hunger, racism, oppression, climate change and the plight of children. What is the response of the Light? This piece provides no ‘answer’ to the problems we face, but does present another way of looking at life, one full of love, humility, justice, the sanctity of earth, mercy, the balm of nature, and the presence of the divine in all things. This is presented as a lure away from the dark side into a more fulfilling life. It creates a larger vision of the world, a larger space in which what is dark can be contained and transcended.

“The work is structured to express this dark/light dichotomy in four parts. Each part begins with a movement or two whose lyrics reflect the existence of evil and injustice, and is followed by a movement or two whose lyrics reflect a response from love and mercy. Each part is discernible from the others by the consistency of its titles. The first part involves a person: ‘A Warning from Amos,’ ‘A Challenge from Machiavelli,’ ‘A Plea to Mary.’ The second part uses the binary opposition of asks and answers: ‘We Ask,’ ‘Children Ask,’ ‘Injustice Asks,’ ‘Love Answers,’ ‘God Answers.’ The third part is distinguished by ‘What _____ Is Saying’: ‘What Mother Earth Is Saying,’ ‘What the Forest Is Saying,’ ‘What God Is Saying.’ The fourth part has titles beginning with ‘Oh’: ‘Oh, Troubles,’ ‘Oh, Peace,’ ‘Oh, Mercy.’ And finally there is a concluding ‘Amen.’

“The music for each movement reflects the emotional thrust of its lyrics. ‘A Warning from Amos’ is a fiery piece about injustice and about taking ‘wrongdoers to court, knowing ‘how many are your crimes and how monstrous your sins.’ The music is suitably accusatory. ‘A Challenge to Machievelli,’ from an Ogden Nash poem, is a witty, tongue-

in-cheek way of representing an unscrupulous character. The lyrics are from the point of view of someone who admires Machiavellian behavior, so the music laughs along in its jazzy way. ‘A Plea to Mary’ uses the Ave Maria text, and is a lyrical, lovely musical prayer for help and refuge.

“‘We Ask’ shakes its fist at God for a lack of help and presence, and the music is full of tricky meters, angular rhythms and dissonant harmonies. ‘Children Ask’ is an *a cappella* movement concerning the plight of children. It uses parts of the Requiem text, the lyrics from the spiritual ‘Steal Away,’ and my own lyrics concerning children being killed and starved. ‘Injustice Asks’ is a purely orchestral interlude of rage and sadness responding to the previous movement. ‘Love Answers’ is taken from an Auden poem about romantic love, but the context here is that love for one another is what is needed in this world. ‘God Answers’ is a Biblical verse expressing that the right response to injustice and the way to live on the earth is ‘to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly on the earth.’

“‘What Mother Earth Is Saying’ is a diatribe from a Gary Snyder poem about the destruction of the earth by power-hungry, greedy companies and systems. A notable excerpt is:

How can the head-heavy, power-hungry politic scientist
Government two-world Capitalist-Imperialist
Third-world Communist paper-shuffling male
non-farmer jet-set bureaucrats
Speak for the green of the leaf? Speak for the soil?

‘What the Forest is Saying’ is about the salvation of nature. It says that it is the forest that will save you from being lost in your life. If you are lost, you must learn the names of birds and bushes, and let the forest find you. ‘What God Is Saying’ has God speaking to the anxious humans, telling them that God is there in everything, if you know to look. ‘Can’t you see me standing before you cloaked in stillness?’ ‘I grow strong in the beauty you behold.’

“‘Oh, Troubles’ is a light-hearted old poem about God and sin, and how the ‘other side’s winning.’ In the middle of this movement is a Gilbert and Sullivan-style patter about climate change and racism. ‘Oh, Peace’ advises us, when fear gets to be too much, ‘fear of what my life and my children’s lives may be,’ to go and rest in nature, in the peace of wild things. ‘For a time, I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.’ ‘Oh, mercy’ is another a cappella movement, one that uses the words of the hymn ‘There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy.’

“Finally, there’s a concluding ‘Amen.’ It ends the work on a joyful, almost light note. It is a celebratory movement, in which there is laughter and rejoicing. For in the end, isn’t that what we must do?”

Comprehensive classical concert listings for Seattle.

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7:30 PM, DECEMBER 9 & 10, 2022

CHRISTMAS LESSONS & CAROLS

5:30 PM, DECEMBER 18, 2022

PERGOLESI'S STABAT MATER

7:30 PM, MARCH 10, 2023

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Vocal Texts

A Warning from Amos

You that turn justice to poison and throw righteousness to the ground, you hate the one who brings the wrongdoer to court and abominate those who speak nothing less than truth. I know how many are your crimes and how monstrous your sins.

— Amos 5: 7, 10, 12

A Challenge from Machiavelli

Oh to be Machiavellian, oh to be unscrupulous,
oh, to be glib!
Oh to be ever prepared with a plausible fib!
Because then a dinner engagement or a contract
or a treaty is no longer a fetter,
Because liars can just logically lie their way out of it if they
don't like it or if one comes along that they like better;
And do you think that conscience prickles?
No, it tickles.

— Ogden Nash, from "Golly, How Truth Will Out!"

A Plea to Mary

Ave Maria gratia plena, Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed are thou among women. Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Sancta Maria mater Dei, Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

We Ask

How long must I cry for help but you do not hear?
Or cry out to you "violence" but you do not save?
Why do you make me look at injustice
and why do you tolerate wrongdoing?
Destruction and violence are before me;
There is strife, and conflict abounds.
So the law is paralyzed and justice never prevails.
The wicked surround the righteous,
so that justice is perverted.

— Habakkuk 1: 2-4

Children Ask

Lux aeterna luceat eis Domine.
Requiem. Every day our grief pulses
Children leaving, children gone in death.
Steal away, I ain't got long to stay here.
Domine, there are millions that go every year,
Many die from hunger, wasting away,
Steal away to Jesus, I ain't got long to stay here.
Blue birds and skies belie the truth
Of bombs that fall of shells that strike.
Schools that were noisy now are silent.
Sometimes an illness comes into their lungs and
They end up gasping for breath.
Requiem aeternam, dona eis Domine,
Every day my grief is renewed.
Every day I say that I will forget

But the longer the years pass

I remember them more.

Requiem aeternam, dona eis Domine.

— Huntley Beyer, Requiem text,
and the spiritual "Steal Away"

Injustice Asks

Love Answers

I'll love you, Dear, I'll love you
Till China and Africa meet
And the river jumps over the mountain
And the salmon sing in the street.
I'll love you till the ocean
Is folded and hung up to dry
And the seven stars go squawking
like geese about the sky.
The years shall run like rabbits,
For in my arms I hold
The Flower of the Ages,
And the first love of the world.
— W.H. Auden, from "As I Walked Out One Evening"

God Answers

God has told you, o mortal, what is good; and what does God require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly on the earth.

— Micah 6:8

What Mother Earth Is Saying

An owl winks in the shadows
A lizard lifts on tiptoe, breathing hard,
Young male sparrow stretches up his neck,
big head, watching —
North America, Turtle Island, taken by invaders
who wage war around the world.
May ants, may abalone, otters, wolves and elk
Rise! And pull away their giving
from the robot nations.
Solidarity. The people.
Standing Tree People!
Flying Bird People!
Swimming Sea People!
Four-legged, two-legged, people!
How can the head-heavy, power-hungry politic scientist
Government two-world Capitalist-Imperialist
Third-world Communist paper-shuffling male
non-farmer jet-set bureaucrats
Speak for the green of the leaf? Speak for the soil?
The robots argue how to parcel out [our] Mother Earth
To last a little longer
like vultures flapping,
Belching, gurgling,
near a dying Doe.
An owl winks in the shadow
A lizard lifts on tiptoe,
breathing hard,

The whales turn and glisten
plunge and
Sound, and rise again
Flowing like breathing planets
In the sparkling whorls
Of living light.

— Gary Snyder, from "Mother Earth"

What the Forest Is Saying

Stand still. The trees ahead and bushes beside you
Are not lost. Wherever you are is called Here,
And you must treat it as a powerful stranger,
Must ask permission to know it and be known.
The forest breathes. Listen. It answers,
I have made this place around you.
If you leave it, you may come back again, saying Here.
No two trees are the same to Raven.
No two branches are the same to Wren.
If what a tree or a bush does is lost on you,
You are surely lost. Stand still. The forest knows
Where you are. You must let it find you.

— David Wagoner, "Lost"

What God Is Saying

I am, you anxious one.
Don't you sense me, ready to break
into being at your touch?
My murmurings surround you like shadowy wings.
Can't you see me standing before you
cloaked in stillness?
Hasn't my longing ripened in you from the beginning
as fruit ripens on a branch?
I am the dream you are dreaming.
When you want to awaken, I am that wanting:
I grow strong in the beauty you behold.
And with the silence of stars I enfold
your cities made by time.

— Rainer Maria Rilke, "I Am, O Anxious One"

Oh, Troubles

God's plan made a hopeful beginning
But we spoiled our chances by sinning.
We trust that the story
Will end in God's glory
But at present the other side's winning.
Catastrophic situations calculations and predictions
Ocean acidification causing lack of calcification causing
Lack of coral reefs, good grief says Charlie Brown.
Forests cut carbon glut ozone shot planet hot
Glaciers are melting oceans rising cities sinking bye bye

Houston Venice Miami Jakarta New Orleans Rotterdam
Fires and floods hurricanes severe droughts
Time to panic time to listen to the science for reliance.
Immigration nightmare as kids are taken from their parents
In immigrant imprisonment ordered by our government
Life is rent blood is spent Black lives matter families shattered
Lives cut short out of breath into death don't forget
George Floyd 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 and 46 seconds
God's plan made a hopeful beginning
But we spoiled our chances by sinning.

We trust that the story
Will end in God's glory
But at present the other side's winning.
But hopefully . . . not for long!

— Anonymous and Huntley Beyer

Oh, Peace

When despair grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting for their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

— Wendell Berry, "The Peace of Wild Things"

Oh, Mercy

There's a wideness in God's mercy
like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in God's justice
which is more than liberty.
There's no place where earthly sorrows
are more felt than in God's heaven
There's no place where earthly failings
have such kindly judgment given.
For the love of God is broader
than the measures of our minds;
And the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.
If we lived our faith more fully
we would surely learn God's love
And our world would find its healing
in the goodness of our God.
— Frederick Faber, "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy"

Amen

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