



SACRA/
PROFANA

A Love That Lifts Up

Celebrating 15 Seasons of Vocal Excellence

The End is the Beginning

Juan Carlos Acosta, Artistic Director

Sunday September 17, 2023
3:00 PM

First Presbyterian Church

MEET THE CONDUCTOR

Juan Carlos Acosta is a critically acclaimed American conductor specializing in contemporary vocal music who has led world and regional premieres of choral works by Anthony Davis, Saunder Choi, Sarah Kirkland Snider, Kim Andre Arensen, Branon Waddles, and many others. He served as chorus master for the live world premiere of the film *Star Trek: Beyond* (Michael Giacchino) and the live premiere of music from the television series *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power* (Bear McCreary). In addition to contemporary works, Juan Carlos has conducted nearly twenty different masterworks for choir and orchestra, and served as musical director and conductor for six productions of *All Is Calm: the Christmas Truce of 1914*, including San Diego Opera's award-winning production, which was hailed as "excellent" by *Broadway World*, "masterfully conducted" by the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, and "nothing short of amazing" by *OperaWire*. Juan Carlos has made conducting appearances with the New York City Opera, Vancouver Chamber Choir, San Diego Opera, Bodhi Tree Concerts, and the Los Angeles Choral Lab. In addition to his role as Artistic Director, Juan Carlos serves as the Director of Worship at the Village Community Presbyterian Church, where he directs the Chancel Choir, Village Community Chorale, and Youth Choir.

PROGRAM

How to Go On

Dale Trumbore (b. 1987)

I'll Be On My Way

Adam Davis, Violin

Shawn Kirchner (b. 1970)

Intermission

Requiem

Herbert Howells (1892-1983)

O Eternal Beauty

Christopher Ducasse

PROGRAM NOTES

Death, loss, and grief are simultaneously the most universal of human experiences, and the most personal. To begin our fifteenth season as a group, and the beginning of the First Presbyterian Church Concert Series, we start at the end. Poets have mused that death is a doorway, the threshold between existence and eternity. Today's program explores three unique and personal musical takes on this idea.

Dale Trumbore's *How to Go On* is sometimes described as a "secular requiem," though a choral song cycle is perhaps a more fitting description. In her own description Ms. Trumbore writes "Threading solo voices in and out of the choral texture, *How to Go On* asks how we confront our own mortality after a loss, and how, in the face of that knowledge, we bring quiet grace back into our daily lives. Ultimately, this work finds beauty, catharsis, and solace in the words of three living poets: Barbara Crooker, Amy Fleury, and Laura Foley."

As a counterpoint to this piece, we offer Shawn Kirchner's *I'll Be On My Way*. This piece was inspired by a near-death experience that Mr. Kirchner had while walking to church choir rehearsal and is rooted in the deep personal faith in what lies on the other side of death's door. Kirchner is a composer of great acclaim and widespread appeal, who writes in what might best be described as Americana Folk Music. Kirchner has mentioned that this piece could just as well be sung by Dolly Parton as it could be a choir, and we offer it as an uplifting end to the first half of our program.

Herbert Howells is considered to be one of the most highly regarded composers of the Anglican Choral tradition, and yet is not widely known by classical audiences. Unlike his slightly senior contemporaries Edward Elgar, Gustav Holst, and Ralph Vaughan Williams who composed a mix of church music as well as sweeping orchestral repertoire, Howells' primary focus was that of music for choir and organ.

Composed in the years 1932-1933, the *Requiem* is believed to have been composed for the choir of Kings College, Cambridge. It is unknown why, but the piece was not delivered or performed by the choir during that period. In 1935 Howells lost his nine year old son to polio and used some of the material from the Requiem in his *Hymnus Paradisi* dedicated to his late son. The *Requiem* was published shortly before the composer's death in 1983 and has become in that time one of the most highly regarded works of its kind. In a highly unusual move for a *Requiem*, it is set for a cappella choir with a mixture of traditional Latin texts, as well as English excerpts drawn directly from scripture. The result is something that draws on the hope found in the Christian belief in the resurrection and eternal life, manifested in the expressive capability of the human voice. In the forty years since its publication, it has become a cherished part of the choral repertoire.

To tie this connection between the secular and the sacred, life and death, grief and hope, we present Christopher Ducasse's setting of *O Eternal Beauty*. Mr. Ducasse is a Haitian-born composer, conductor, singer, pianist, and violinist who recently completed a Masters in Conducting from the McGill School of Music in Montreal. The lush and expressive setting of this text perfectly ties together the three other perspectives in a satisfying conclusion.

This program was inspired in part, by participation in the annual Interfaith Vigil hosted by the San Diego Rescue Mission in memory of those unhoused people who died on the streets in the previous year. We have been moved by the dignity and honor given to those individuals who died on the streets alone in our city by that service. We dedicate this performance to those individuals and ask that you join us in support of those who are doing the work to address the issues of mental health, drug addiction, poverty, and homelessness, particularly our friends at the San Diego Rescue Mission.

TEXT

“How to Go On” Dale Trumbore

HOW

How can we go on, knowing the end
of the story?

—Barbara Crooker,
excerpt from “Some Fine Day,”
The Pittsburgh Quarterly, 2007.

HOWEVER DIFFICULT

However difficult you think it might be,
it is yours, this life,
even the failures
are yours,
even the garden, though it be unkempt,
is yours.

—Laura Foley,
excerpt from “Autumn Musings,”
Mapping the Fourth Dimension, 2006.

TO SEE IT

We need to separate to see
the life we’ve made.

We need to leave our house
where someone waits for us, patiently,
warm beneath the sheets.

We need to don a sweater, a coat, mittens,
wrap a scarf around our neck,
stride down the road,
a cold winter morning,
and turn our head back, to see it—
perched on the top of the hill, our life
lit from inside.

—Laura Foley

RELINQUISHMENT

I am looking at pale blue ponds of melted ice
on a frozen river
and in them perfect clouds passing.
Wind sends ripples along the water
and trees cut sharp lines into the sky. Soon
it will be gone, all of it
and I will be sitting in darkness,
sitting by a dark window, glad
for having seen this earth,
her elegant grace,
how she turns away from the sun.
And I will be learning, again,
how to give it all up by simply turning.
How to give it up to darkness,
all you love. All of it.
How to give it up again and again.

—Laura Foley,
from *Syringa*, 2007.

KNOWING THE END

How can we go on, knowing the end
of the story?

—Barbara Crooker,
excerpt from “Some Fine Day,”
The Pittsburgh Quarterly, 2007.

SOMETIMES PEACE COMES

Sometimes peace is like this:
endless and gentle and soft
and no compulsion to go
anywhere. And even the fire
you walked through,
even the trail of ashes
is gone, not even a memory
in your heart, and even the sun is still,
unmoving and quiet,
and you have stepped into
a place beyond time,
beyond sadness and form.

A wide, high plain
where in the endless, deep silence
you find out what it is, what it is,
and your part in it.

—Laura Foley

WHEN AT LAST

When at last I join the democracy of dirt,
a tussock earthed over and grass healed,
I’ll gladly conspire in my own diminishment.
Let a pink peony bloom from my chest
and may it be visited by a charm of bees, who will
then carry the talcum of pollen
and nectar of clover to the grove where they hive.
Let the honey they make be broken
from its comb, and release from its golden hold,
onto some animal tongue, my soul.

—Amy Fleury,
from *Sympathetic Magic*, 2013.

“I’ll Be On My Way” Shawn Kirchner

When I am gone, don’t you cry for me,

Don’t you pity my sorry soul.
What pain there might have been
Will now be past and my spirit will be whole.

I’ll be on my way,
I’ll have left my feet of clay upon the ground,

I will be glory bound,
I'll be on my way.

When I am gone, please forgive the wrongs
That I might have done to you;
There'll be no room for regrets up there,
High above, way beyond the blue.

I'll be on my way,
I'll have laid my frown and all my burdens
down,
I'll be puttin' on my crown,
I'll be on my way.

When I am gone, don't you look for me
In the places I have been;
I'll be alive, but somewhere else,
I'll be on my way again!

I'll be on my way,
I will lift my wings and soar into the air,
There'll be glory ev'rywhere,
I'll be on my way.

“Requiem” Herbert Howells

Salvator mundi

O Saviour of the world,
who by thy cross and thy precious blood
hast redeemed us,
save us and help us,
we humbly beseech thee, O Lord.

II. Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd:
therefore can I lack nothing.
He shall feed me in a green pasture:
and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort.
He shall convert my soul:
and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness for
his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk in the valley of the shadow of
death, I will fear no evil:
thy rod and thy staff comfort me.
Thou shalt prepare a table before me against them
that trouble me:
thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup
shall be full.
But thy loving-kindness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

III./V. Requiem aeternam

Requiem aeternam dona eis.
Et lux perpetua luceat eis.
Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine.
Eternal rest grant unto them.
And let light perpetual shine upon them.
Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

IV. Psalm 121

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills:
from whence cometh my help.
My help cometh even from the Lord:
who hath made heaven and earth.
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved:
and he that keepeth thee will not sleep.
Behold, he that keepeth Israel:
shall neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord himself is thy keeper:
he is thy defence upon thy right hand;
so that the sun shall not burn thee by day,
neither the moon by night.
The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil:
yea, it is even he that shall keep thy soul.
The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy
coming in:
from this time forth and for evermore.

VI. I heard a voice from heaven

I heard a voice from heaven,
saying unto me, Write,
From henceforth blessed are the dead
which die in the Lord:
even so saith the Spirit,
for they rest from their labours.

“O Eternal Beauty” Christopher Ducasse

O Eternal Beauty O Eternal Beauty,
ever ancient, ever new,
you have shattered the old order of death
by your rising, healing eyes earth-blinded,
binding humanity and divinity forever.
—Shannon DeGrave

PERFORMERS

Sopranos

Shea Perry
Jasper Sussman
Rebecca Ung
Libby Weber
Lauren Zinke

Altos

Lanett Grant
Lara Korneychuk
Ellie Mout
Elly Roseberry
Meghan Rossi

Tenors

Andrew Bearden
Aaron Burgett
Samuel Stephen Buse
Michael Sakell
Kurt Wong

Basses

Uriah Brown
Adam Davis
Jonathan Gonzales
Kevin Martin
Richard Stanford

Accompanist

Rachelle Butler

Still to Come in Season 15

Tickets available at sacraprofana.org.

A Light in the Darkness

Friday, Dec. 15, 2023, 7:00 p.m.
Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church
3459 Manchester Ave, Cardiff, CA 92007

The Hope of Loving

Saturday, Feb. 24, 2024, 3:00 p.m.
Christ United Presbyterian Church
3025 Fir St, San Diego, CA 92102

Cathedral of Trees

Saturday, Apr. 20, 2024, 7:00 p.m.
St. Mark's United Methodist Church
3502 Clairemont Dr, San Diego, CA 92117

A Space to Belong

A World Premiere

Saturday, Jun. 1, 2024, 7:00 p.m.
St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral
2728 Sixth Ave, San Diego, CA 92103

SACRA/PROFANA inspires love for the choral arts by delivering dynamic performances, dedicated educational outreach, and advocacy for social justice through music.

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