

SACRA/PROFANA

SEASON 14 — REIMAGINE

BEAUTY

Reimagined

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2023

7:00PM

St. James By-The-Sea Episcopal Church

743 Prospect Street
La Jolla, CA 92037

PROGRAM NOTES

Most of us have convinced ourselves that if we could just change a couple of things about ourselves, we could be beautiful. Tonight, we ask, what if we were able to recognize the beauty in us, and all around us? Wouldn't our world be a more beautiful place? We invite you to join us in reimagining beauty.

To begin with we hear from the wisdom of the Navajo people, to whom the poetry of this first piece, ***In Beauty May I Walk***, is attributed. Jonathan Dove is a familiar name to those who follow contemporary choral groups like the Crossing or Voces8. Although the composer sticks completely to notes found in a D major scale, he creates a harmonic vocabulary that is at times austere by overlapping the same melody in polyphonic textures. Throughout much of the piece the opening melody is represented in some form or another, sometimes faster (diminution) and sometimes slower (augmentation), and oftentimes in various forms simultaneously. Much like beauty itself.

Born in 1997, Toby Hession is an emerging voice in the rich vocal music scene based in the British Isles. ***She Walks in Beauty*** was premiered by the English supergroup Voces8, and is simultaneously passionate and cool, with a soprano dominated melody and polyrhythms throughout. The combination of shifting tempos, meters and rhythms, along with a modern setting of a 19th century text, make for a timeless depiction of beauty in more ways than one.

Cantos de Primavera (Songs of Spring) is a Spanish language translation of a poem by Nesahualcóyotl, the long ruling 15th century Aztec King. The original poem is in Nahuatl, an indigenous language spoken by over 1 million people today and is rich in the imagery of the "green time of the year." In this poem the beautiful pheasant represents the itinerant musician that goes door to door bringing joy, songs and dances to other locals.

Dirait-on is one of the most famous choral settings, by one of the most famous choral composers of our time. Situated as the final movement of *La Rose Complète*, this piece is composed as a tuneful *chanson populaire* and is favored by school choirs and professional groups alike. The poem describes a blooming rosebud, wrapped around itself in a seemingly endless self-caress, fulfilling the theme of Narcissus himself.

My Brilliant Image

Along with Rumi, the writings of Hafez have transcended their time and place to teach much of the world about love, God, and beauty. This text by Daniel Ladinsky is an excerpt from *I Heard God Laughing: Renderings of Hafiz* and is set beautifully by our own Jasper Sussman who writes about a time that "... everything in my life was cast in shadow. Ladinsky's words became a sort of mantra for me. They reminded me that even in darkness, I am surrounded by light. Even in our worst moments, we're made of beauty. And even when we cannot see it, our worth is unmistakably clear."

Verum Corpus... in the words of Saunder Choi:

"Verum Corpus is a multi-movement work for choir and string quartet and sets the text of Amir Rabiya on the story of transformation, completion, and attainment of the true body. The text is inspired by the story of Caeneus, a mythological hero from Ovid's Metamorphosis. Caeneus was born as Caenis, a woman, who was abducted and raped by Poseidon. Caenis was so distraught, she demanded to be transformed into a man so that she may never be wronged again. Poseidon granted this wish, and gave Caeneus impenetrable skin. He went on to become one of the fiercest warriors in this mythology. In a battle with centaurs, Caeneus was struck down and crushed by tree trunks. He then transformed into a golden winged bird and flew away.

Many of the characters experience trauma in Ovid's Metamorphosis. Amir wanted this to be a poem that addressed that, drawing parallels to the experience of queer and transgender survivors of abuse and marginalization. More importantly, Amir wanted this to also be about how our chosen families love us, and how love can lead us to loving ourselves, and finding freedom.

While collaborating with Amir on this piece, I had asked them if they could incorporate the text of Ave Verum Corpus into the story. Given the conflict between the Christian religion and the LGBTQ+ perspective, I felt that weaving this traditional Eucharistic text into the story would be a poignant reclamation of the trans narrative and a recontextualization of the words "Hail, true body, whose pierced side flowed with water and blood" — offering a different commentary on these seemingly parallel narratives."

August Moonrise beautifully sets a text by Sara Teasdale for cello, piano and choir. The poem immortalizes the fleeting moments of the setting sun and the rising moon. It may be tempting to think that the warmth of the cello and the coolness of the piano represent the sun and moon respectively, but the lush harmonic textures throughout the piece help set the scene and allow the text to stand at the forefront. At its heart it is the realization that the search for external beauty is fleeting and futile, for it cannot be recognized unless it comes from within.

PROGRAM

In Beauty May I Walk *Jonathan Dove*

She Walks in Beauty *Toby Hession*

Cantos de Primavera *Diana Syrse Valdes*

Dirait-on *Morten Johannes Lauridsen*

My Brilliant Image *Jasper Sussman*

Soloist: Jasper Sussman, Soprano

— INTERMISSION —

Verum Corpus *Saunder Choi*

West Coast Premiere

August Moonrise *Blake R. Henson*



JUAN CARLOS ACOSTA *Artistic Director*

Juan Carlos Acosta has been serving as the principal conductor of SACRA/PROFANA since 2015 and has continued the legacy of visionary programming and musical excellence founded by Krishan Oberoi. Under his leadership the ensemble has given notable premieres of works by composers such as Sarah Kirkland Snider, Kim André Arnesen, Ola Gjeilo, Saunder Choi, Sarah Rimkus, and was featured in the live world premiere of the film "Star Trek Beyond" with a score by Michael Giacchino. Active nationally, regionally, and locally as a speaker and presenter, Juan Carlos has made presentations or served as clinician for the Choristers Guild, the American Guild of Organists, the San Diego Arts Mega conference, the California and American Choral Directors Association. Together with composer Brandon Waddles, Juan Carlos and SACRA/PROFANA were awarded the inaugural Diverse Voices Collaborative Grant through the ACDA, which will be premiered at the Summer Choral Inten-

sive in July 2023. In addition to his role with SACRA/PROFANA, Juan Carlos is the Director of Music Ministries at the Village Community Presbyterian Church, where he directs the Chancel Choir, the Village Community Chorale, and Youth Choir, and has led two international tours. Juan Carlos has previously served on the music faculty of the University of San Diego, Cuyamaca College, and the Chula Vista School for the Creative and Performing Arts.



AARON BURGETT *Assistant Conductor*

Aaron Burgett — an active director, composer, and performer — received his Bachelor's degree in Music Composition from PLNU, his Master's degree in Choral Conducting from SDSU, and now enjoys teaching and performing in a variety of styles. He has taught at schools and churches throughout San Diego County, working with students anywhere from the age of five to eighty-five. Currently, Aaron is the Director of Choral Worship at Solana Beach Presbyterian Church, as well as the Assistant Conductor of SACRA/PROFANA. When not making music, Aaron can be found filming weddings with his wife (Madeleine), playing fetch with their dog, or enjoying the Southern California sun on various outdoor adventures.

In Beauty May I Walk

Music by Jonathan Dove

Text: Navajo prayer

In beauty may I walk
All day long may I walk
Through the returning seasons
Beautifully joyful!

Beautifully will I possess again
Beautifully joyful birds

On the trail marked with pollen may I walk
With grasshoppers about my feet may I walk
With dew about my feet

With beauty before me
With beauty behind me
With beauty above me
With beauty all around me

It is finished in beauty

She Walks in Beauty

Music by Toby Hession

Text by George Gordon Byron

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes;
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express,
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

Cantos de Primavera (Songs of Spring)

Music by Diana Syrse Valdés

Text by Nezahualcóyotl (adapted by the composer)

Translation by the composer

En la casa de las pinturas

Los cascabeles se hacen oír,
A ellos responden
Nuestras sonajas floridas
Sobre las flores canta
El hermoso faisán,
Su canto despliega
En el interior de las aguas
Aél responden
Varia dos pájaros rojos:
Tú eres el cantor.
En el interior de la casa de la primavera
Alegras a las gentes
Flores que embriagan
Flores preciosas
Tú eres el cantor
En el interior de la casa de la primavera.

*In the house of the paintings
The bells are sounding,
And our flowery
Timbrels respond to them
Above the flowers a beautiful
Pheasant sings,
Its singing unfolds
Inside the waters
To him a variety of
Red birds respond:
You are the singer
Inside the house of the spring
You make people happy
Flowers that make us drunk
Precious flowers
You are the singer
Inside of the house of the spring.*

Dirait-on

Music by Morten Lauridsen

Text by Rainer Maria Rilke, from Les Roses

English translation by Barbara and Erica Muhl

Abandon entouré d’abandon,
tendresse touchant aux tendresses...
C’est ton intérieur qui sans cesse
se caresse, dirait-on;

se caresse en soi-même,
par son propre reflet éclairé.
Ainsi tu inventes le thème
du Narcisse exhaucé.

Abandon surrounding abandon,
tenderness touching tenderness...
Your oneness endlessly

caresses itself, so they say;
self-caressing

through its own clear reflection.
Thus you invent the theme
of Narcissus fulfilled.

My Brilliant Image

Music by Jasper Sussman

Text by Hafiz

Translation by Daniel Ladinsky, from “I Heard God

Laughing: Renderings of Hafiz”

One day the sun admitted,
I am just a shadow.
I wish I could show you
The Infinite Incandescence
That has cast my brilliant image!

I wish I could show you,
When you are lonely or in darkness
The astonishing Light
Of your own Being!

Verum Corpus

Music by Saunder Choi

Text by Amir Rabiyyah

- I. How Did You Know Me So Quickly?
- II. You Are No Son of Mine
- III. Ave Verum Corpus (I Became a Swan)
- IV. In the Trial of Death
- V. Whole

When we first met. We used no words.
Only the language of eyes.
How did you know me so quickly?
I thought you too beautiful for me,
But you cooed I see you, I want, I need
you are my world and that was everything...

You caressed the scars on my chest, the ones my father left
Soon, I told you: how he raised his sword and plunged it into
me. How he screamed “You’re no son of mine,”

Hail, true body

Whose pierced side

Flowed with water and blood

I became a swan, flew into the heavens.
Dropped down and found you.
May it be for us a taste of things to come

Once I was yours, I became what you willed.
You wanted a horse. I became your steed.
I shrank. I thanked. I’d plead. And thanked.
Who knew the toll this war would take?
The violence began again. An eruption. Broken plates. Bruises.
In the trial of death, you left me.
Strangers, coming home found me
Strangers sang my spirit back to me—they fed my light *Hail*

true body, which having truly suffered

Hail the body which returns to its truest state
In dying, I returned. In dying, I created myself whole.

August Moonrise

Music by Blake R. Henson

Text by Sara Teasdale

The sun was gone, and the moon was coming
Over the blue Connecticut hills;
The west was rosy, the east was flushed,
And over my head the swallows rushed
This way and that, with changeful wills.

I heard them twitter and watched them dart
Now together and now apart
Like dark petals blown from a tree;
The maples stamped against the west
Were black and stately and full of rest,

And the hazy orange moon grew up
And slowly changed to yellow gold
While the hills were darkened, fold on fold
To a deeper blue than a flower could hold.

Down the hill I went, and then
I forgot the ways of men,
For night-scents, heady, and damp and cool
Wakened ecstasy in me
On the brink of a shining pool.

O Beauty, out of many a cup
You have made me drunk and wild
Ever since I was a child,
But when have I been sure as now
That no bitterness can bend
And no sorrow wholly bow
One who loves you to the end?
And though I must give my breath
And my laughter all to death,
And my eyes through which joy came,

And my heart, a wavering flame;
If all must leave me and go back
Along a blind and fearful track
So that you can make anew,
Fusing with intenser fire,
Something nearer your desire;

If my soul must go alone
Through a cold infinity,
Or even if it vanish, too,
Beauty, I have worshipped you.

Let this single hour atone
For the theft of all of me.

TONIGHT'S PERFORMERS

SOPRANO

April Fisher
Calieanne Grossheim
Shea Perry
Jasper Sussman
Libby Weber

TENOR

Andrew Bearden
Aaron Burgett
Tony Malerich
Daniel Moyer
Kurt Wong

STRING QUARTET

Wes Precourt, *Violin*
Nicole Sauder, *Violin*
Hanah Stuart, *Viola*
Joanna Morrison-Pernela, *Cello*

ALTO

Sonja Brun
Jiachae McGee
Ellie Mout
Michelle Risling
Meghan Rossi

BASS

Uriah Brown
Adam Davis
Adam Ferrara
Thomas Lokensgard
Zlatoslav Sokolov

ACCOMPANIST

Adam Ferrara

NEXT PERFORMANCES

- Saturday, April 29, 2023 — 5:00PM*

Garden Party

- Friday, May 19, 2023 — 7:00PM*

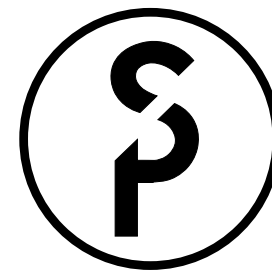
Togetherness Reimagined, First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

- Saturday, July 15, 2023 — 7:00PM*

SCI Concert, Point Loma Nazarene University

**Dates, times, and locations are subject to change.*

ABOUT SACRA/PROFANA



SACRA/
PROFANA

SACRA/PROFANA awakens and nurtures enthusiasm for the choral art through vibrant performances and focused education outreach. Our debut album, *Elegies & Ecstasies*, was released in 2012, and in 2014 SACRA/PROFANA produced the world premiere recording of when we were children by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer David Lang, available on the Cantaloupe Music record label. Our second album, *A Longing for Christmas*, was released in 2021.

SACRA/PROFANA has accomplished remarkable things in 14 seasons, including numerous world and U.S. premieres and collaborations with leading regional arts organizations: San Diego Symphony, Art of Élan, San Diego Opera, California Ballet, and many more. SACRA/PROFANA also has performed with many artists of worldwide renown, including the legendary Irish band the Chieftains, producer Carlton Cuse (of ABC's hit show *Lost*), composer Michael Giacchino (*Star Trek*), and composer Alan Menken and lyricist Stephen Schwartz in the development of Disney Theatrical's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* at La Jolla Playhouse.

We are pleased that our 2022-23 Season includes innovative choral programming, renewed collaborations with local and regional artists/groups, and service to our community through unforgettable performances and education programs that change choral students' lives.

STAFF

Juan Carlos Acosta, *Artistic Director*

Krishan Oberoi, *Founding Director & Principal Guest Conductor*

Aaron Burgett, *Assistant Conductor*

Becca Ung, *Chorus Manager*

Jamie Swann, *Operations Assistant*

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We are grateful to our supporters for their generous contributions! Please join us in thanking them for being an important part of what we do. Total donations February 1, 2022 to January 31, 2023. Please let us know if your information is listed incorrectly.

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