



Poems, Letters, and Premieres

Thursday, May 28, 2015, 8:00 PM
Saint Ignatius of Antioch Episcopal Church
552 West End Avenue, New York City

New Amsterdam Singers
Clara Longstreth, Music Director
David Recca, Assistant Conductor
Nathaniel Granor, Chamber Chorus Assistant Conductor
Pen Ying Fang, Accompanist
Andrew Adelson, oboe, English horn

Petites Voix **Francis Poulenc (1899 - 1963)**

La petite fille sage
Le chien perdu
En rentrant de l'école
Le petit garçon malade
Le hérisson

Women's voices

She Weeps Over Rahoon **Eric Whitacre (b. 1970)**

Women's voices with English horn, piano

French Choruses from *The Lark* **Leonard Bernstein (1918 - 1990)**

Spring Song Jason Hill, baritone
Court Song Jason Hill, baritone; Robert Thorpe, tenor
Soldier's Song

Men's voices with drum

Drinking Song (samba) **Matthew Harris (b. 1956)**

Nobody **Michael Dellaira (b. 1949)**

Robin Beckhard, soprano
Chorus with oboe
New York City premiere

INTERMISSION

Six Chansons **Paul Hindemith (1895 - 1963)**

La Biche
Un Cygne
Puisque tout passe
Printemps
En Hiver
Verger

Chamber Chorus

Dear Theo **Ben Moore (b. 1960)**

Allison Gish, soprano; Rebecca Dee, alto;
Nathaniel Granor, tenor; Rick Bonsall, bass
Chamber Chorus
New York City premiere

Four Pastorales

No Mark
Noon
Basket
Wood

Cecil Effinger (1914 - 1990)

Chorus with oboe

Please turn off all phones and other devices during the performance.

PROGRAM NOTES, TEXTS, AND TRANSLATIONS

This concert has no single, overarching theme, but is connected by unusually appealing texts, both in French and in English. The secular poetry chosen by composers from 1936 to 2011 is in some cases dark, but the dark poems are balanced by ones with humor (Poulenc on the hedgehog, Bernstein on love, Matt Harris with his samba *Drinking Song*).

We begin with two works for women's voices, first **Francis Poulenc's** 1936 cycle, *Petites Voix*, subtitled "Five easy choruses for children in 3 parts, on poems of **Madeleine Ley**." The poems may feature children — "the good little girl," "the little sick boy" — but the music demands considerable musical sophistication. Poulenc's settings combine sentimentality with his characteristic humor and charm.

I. La Petite Fille Sage

La petite fille sage est rentrée
de l'école avec son panier.
Elle a mis sur la table
les assiettes et les verres lourds
et puis elle s'est lavée
à la pompe de la cour
sans mouiller son tablier.
Et si le petit frère
dort dans son petit lit cage,
elle va s'asseoir sur la pierre
usée pour voir l'étoile du soir.

II. Le Chien Perdu

Qui es-tu, inconnu?
Qui es-tu, chien perdu?
Tu rêves, tu sommeilles;
Peut-être voudrais-tu
que je te gratte là,
derrière les oreilles,

I. The Good Little Girl

The good little girl came home from
school with her basket.
She placed on the table
the plates and heavy glasses
and then she washed herself
at the courtyard pump
without getting her pinafore wet.
And if her little brother
is asleep in his little crib,
she goes to sit on the
worn stone to see the evening star.

II. The Lost Dog

Who are you, unknown one?
Who are you, lost dog?
You are dreaming, you are dozing;
Perhaps you would like
me to scratch you there,
behind your ears,

doux chien couché
sur le trottoir
qui lève vers mon œil
ton regard blanc et noir?
Qui es-tu, inconnu, chien perdu?

III. En Rentrant De L'École

En rentrant de l'école
par un chemin perdu,
j'ai rencontré la lune,
derrière les bois noirs.
Elle était ronde et claire
et brillante dans l'air.
La la la...

En rentrant de l'école
par un chemin perdu,
avez-vous entendu
la chouette qui vole
et le doux rossignol?
La la la...

IV. Le Petit Garçon Malade

Le petit garçon malade
ne veut plus regarder les images;

Il ferme ses yeux las;
Il laisse ses mains chaudes
traîner sur le drap.
Sa mère ouvre la fenêtre
et le rideau blanc se balance
sur la rue un soir de mai.
Il entend jouer les autres
qui sautent à cloche-pied
en criant sur le trottoir.
Alors il tourne la tête et pleure
en silence dans son petit bras plié.

V. Le Hérisson

Quand papa trouve un hérisson
il l'apporte à la maison.
On lui donne du lait tiède
dans le fond d'une assiette.
Il ne veut pas se dérouler
lorsqu'il entend parler...

nice dog, lying
on the sidewalk,
who lifts towards my eye
your black and white glance?
Who are you, unknown, lost dog?

III. Coming Home from School

Coming home from school
by an unknown road
I met the moon,
behind the black woods.
She was round and bright
and shining in the air.
La la la...

Coming home from school
by an unknown road
did you hear
the owl flying
and the sweet nightingale?
La la la...

IV. The Sick Little Boy

The sick little boy
doesn't want to look at pictures
anymore;
He closes his tired eyes;
He lets his hot hands
trail on the sheet.
His mother opens the window
and the white curtain floats
over the streets on a May evening.
He hears the others playing
and jumping at hopscotch
and shouting on the sidewalk.
Then he turns his head and cries
silently into his little folded arm.

V. The Hedgehog

When daddy finds a hedgehog
he brings it home.
We give it warm milk
in the bottom of a plate.
He doesn't want to unroll
while he hears talking...

Mais si nous quittons la cuisine
il montre sa tête maligne,
et si je me tais un instant
je l'entends boire doucement.

But if we leave the kitchen
he shows his mischievous head,
and if I am quiet a moment
I hear him softly drinking.

Translation: Beatrice Brewster

Eric Whitacre is a composer who has harnessed his musical gifts to the media possibilities of our own age, conducting virtual online choirs of individual voices. He has achieved international attention as composer, conductor, TED presenter, and clinician. His choral works are regularly heard at festivals and competitions; he has received commissions from many groups, and has conducted, played in, or assisted more than 30 musical theater and operetta productions.

“She Weeps Over Ragoon,” for women’s voices, English horn, and piano, was written in 1993. The composer writes of his commission from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas:

After a fairly lengthy search for text, I stumbled across **James Joyce’s** *Pomes Penyeach*, a beautiful and melancholy collection of poetic microcosms written very early in his prolific career. That year our Northern Nevada winter was particularly desolate, and I found that “She Weeps” was simply a natural extension of the barren surroundings and my subsequent mood. The piece seemed to write itself quickly and with few revisions, and its eventual warmth in the midst of such a bleak text kept me company through a cold and rainy January.

Rain on Ragoon falls softly, softly falling,
Where my dark lover lies.
Sad is his voice that calls me, sadly calling,
At grey moonrise.

Love, hear thou how soft,
How sad his voice is ever calling,
Ever unanswered, and the dark rain falling,
Then as now.

Dark too our hearts, O love, shall lie and cold
As his sad heart has lain
Under the moongrey nettles, the black mould
And muttering rain.

Here is how David Recca describes the next piece.

In 1955, by then no stranger to writing for the Broadway stage, **Leonard Bernstein** set out to compose incidental music for

The Lark, an adaptation by American playwright **Lillian Hellman** of a play by **Jean Anouilh**. Writing for the seven-member ensemble New York Pro Musica, Bernstein's choruses with French and Latin texts are used to punctuate the retelling of the life and trial of Joan of Arc through a series of first-person flashbacks. The music itself is vaguely reminiscent of the early Renaissance time period in which the saint lived. Nevertheless it displays an identifiably Bernstein sound, with its jazzy harmonies, irregular rhythms, and highly memorable melodies. Today's performance will feature only the choruses with French texts arranged for men's voices by Minnesota composer **Craig Carnahan**. The first piece, "Spring Song," contrasts a beautifully lyrical and rhythmically free baritone solo with sections of exuberant choral passages accompanied by percussive clapping. It also noticeably references the Parisian chanson "Revey venir du printemps" by the 16th-century composer **Claude Le Jeune**. The second piece, "Court Song," features two soloists over drone-like ostinato patterns of open harmonies for the chorus. The last piece, "Soldier's Song," is a raucous song of praise on the name of Joan which fades to a quiet end with a tune of whistling soldiers.

Spring Song

Revey venir le printemps.
Laudate Dominum. Alleluia.

Spring is returning
Praise the Lord. Alleluia.

Court Song

Fi, mari, de vostre amour.
Cor j'ai ami,
noble et de bel atour.
Tout l'aime aussi.
J'ai ami, noble et de bel amour.

Beware, my dear husband,
for I have a lover!
He is both beautiful and noble.
I love him totally.
I have a lover, beautiful and noble
love!

Ne sert de nuit,
Sert de nuit et de jour,
Tout l'aime aussi.

He serves me not just by night,
but day and night,
I love him totally.

Soldier's Song

Vive la Jeanne,
la jolie, jolie Jeanne!

Long live Joan,
the pretty, pretty Joan!

New Amsterdam Singers first performed works of **Matthew Harris** in 1993. We have since performed most of his six volumes of *Shakespeare Songs*, as well as *Lorca Songs*, *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, and *Object Lessons* for women's voices. In 1993 NAS

recorded five of his *Shakespeare Songs*; recently this *a cappella* series has been recorded by several professional choirs.

Mr. Harris works in all genres, including opera. The New York City Opera performed scenes from *Tess* on its American Composers Showcase Series. The National Endowment for the Arts has twice awarded him fellowships, as have the New York Foundation for the Arts, Tanglewood, Meet the Composer, and the MacDowell and Yaddo colonies.

For his 2006 *Drinking Song*, the last of a set of love songs for men's voices, Harris uses a light-hearted verse of **W.B. Yeats**, and calls it a quasi-samba.

Wine comes in at the mouth
And love comes in at the eye;
That's all we shall know for truth
Before we grow old and die.
I lift the glass to my mouth,
I look at you, and I sigh.

Composer **Michael Dellaira** was educated both in philosophy and music, and has recently specialized in vocal works. He has written three operas, *The Secret Agent*, *The Death of Webern*, and, earlier, *Cheri*, which has been much performed. He has been commissioned by American Opera Projects to write a new opera, *The Leopard*, with librettist J.D. McClatchy. Dellaira's works are recorded on the C.R.I., Opus One, and Albany labels. In 2008 NAS performed his *a cappella* work, *Masters on the Movies*, at Merkin Hall. The critic and composer Eric Salzman writes of Dellaira, "He has created a personal musical language that combines the harmonic vocabulary and rhythmic interest of rock music with the technical rigor of the best modern classical music."

Dellaira has written the following notes on his 2011 work, *Nobody*, for chorus and oboe:

"I'm Nobody! Who are you?" So begins one of **Emily Dickinson**'s best-known poems. Though her question is rhetorical, it's hard not to detect in these words just a touch of sarcasm. And who can tell if she's being straight with us later in the poem when she says, "how dreary, to be Somebody."

"Nobody" is based on four of Dickinson's poems, each containing the word "nobody." In "Have you got a Brook in your little heart?" Dickinson tells us "nobody knows that any brook is there," and yet describes the brook as only someone who knows it can. Is the brook known only to her? She's certainly not, then, a nobody.

In “On such a night,” Dickinson again reflects on what nobodys we are, noting how quietly each of us passes from existence, without fanfare, so quiet “that nobody might know.” And in the poem “When they come back – if Blossoms do,” Dickinson asks what tomorrow brings. Will she see it? And will anybody care? This is heady, if gloomy, stuff. Yet Dickinson’s language (note, for example, the way she plays off “nobody” with the words “anybody” and “somebody”) and her rhythms are as disarmingly direct as a folk song. That’s partly why I’ve tried to infuse the sensibility of folk music into each of the four sections.

The chorus is, as ever, our window into humanity. You, me, the person next to you, the crowd: a collection of anybodys and somebodys — and nobodys. Then there’s the oboe, who, like Dickinson herself, keeps a slight distance from the crowd (her claim to being nobody notwithstanding). Like her, the oboe is the keen observer, answering questions we didn’t realize we’ve asked. (And by the way, it’s hard to say “nobody” without hearing the faint echo of the word “oboe.”)

Commissioned by The Syracuse Vocal Ensemble, “Nobody” is inspired by *White Heat*, Brenda Wineapple’s moving book about the friendship of Emily Dickinson and Thomas Wentworth Higginson. My thanks to The New Amsterdam Singers and Clara Longstreth for this New York City premiere of “Nobody” and for their many suggestions and corrections along the way; I echo Ms. Dickinson’s reply to Mr. Higginson, after he’d edited some of her poems: “Thank you for the surgery. It was not so painful as I supposed.”

Nobody

I’m Nobody! Who are you?
Are you – Nobody – too?
Then there’s a pair of us!
Don’t tell! They’d advertise – you know!

How dreary – to be – Somebody!
How public – like a Frog –

To tell one’s name – the livelong June –
To an admiring Bog!

Have you got a Brook in your little heart?

Have you got a Brook in your little heart,
Where bashful flowers blow,
And blushing birds go down to drink –

And shadows tremble so –

And nobody knows, so still it flows,
That any brook is there,
And yet your little draught of life
Is daily drunken there –

Why – look out for the little brook in March,
When the rivers overflow,
And the snows come hurrying from the hills,
And the bridges often go –

And *later*, in *August* it may be,
When the meadows parching lie,
Beware, lest this little brook of life,
Some burning noon go dry!

When they come back – if Blossoms do
When they come back – If Blossoms do –
I always feel a doubt
If Blossoms can be born again
When once the Art is out –

When they begin, if Robins may,
I always had a fear
I did not tell, it was their last Experiment
Last Year,

When it is May, if May return,
Had nobody a pang
Lest in a Face so beautiful
He might not look again?

If I am there – One does not know
What Party – One may be
Tomorrow, but if I am there
I take back all I say –

On such a night
On such a night, or such a night,
Would anybody care
If such a little figure
Slipped quiet from its chair,

So quiet – Oh how quiet,
That nobody might know

But that the little figure
Rocked softer – to and fro –

On such a dawn, or such a dawn –
Would anybody sigh
That such a little figure
Too sound asleep did lie

For Chanticleer to wake it –
Or stirring house below –
Or giddy bird in Orchard –
Or early task to do?

There was a little figure plump
For every little knoll,
Busy needles, and spools of thread –
And trudging feet from school –

Playmates, and holidays, and nuts –
And visions vast and small.
Strange that the feet so precious charged
Should reach so small a goal!

Paul Hindemith was a versatile musician — performer, teacher, and composer. Born in Germany, he was professor of composition at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin when a campaign started against him in 1934. His “sins” were his membership in an international group of atonal composers, the “immorality” of his operas, and his association with Jews. After several years of battling boycotts of his music, Hindemith left Germany and settled in Switzerland, where he spent two years before moving to the United States in 1940. He taught at Yale University from 1940 to 1953, becoming a U.S. citizen in 1946.

Hindemith wrote *Six Chansons* (Six Songs) on poems of **Rainer Maria Rilke** as a result of an accident of fate that brought him and Rilke together posthumously, so to speak, in Switzerland in 1939. The German poet had moved to Paris in the early years of the 20th century, but with the outbreak of World War I he was banished from France. After some time in Italy, Rilke moved in 1919 to Valais, Switzerland, where he lived until his death in 1927. During those years he wrote nearly 400 poems in French. A local musician and choral director who had known Rilke showed Hindemith the poems and asked him to write some songs for his chorus. Hindemith agreed, writing the *Six Chansons* in four days.

Hindemith believed strongly that music should be useful and practical, serving the performer’s need rather than the composer’s desire

for self-expression. He wrote, “The performing amateur who seriously concerns himself with musical matters is quite as important a member of our musical life as the professional.” This is why he invested care in music he composed for such groups as the amateur choir in the Swiss canton of Valais.

Hindemith had come to know German Renaissance choral music in 1927 during a visit to a musical week sponsored by a youth movement. The *Six Chansons* are also very much part of a later tradition of choral writing in Germany, when Schumann and Mendelssohn wrote secular part songs, usually for four voices, often in sets of six, usually homophonic rather than contrapuntal, as these are. These six short songs are related in subject matter, with two on texts about animals and two on the seasons; the final one, on the orchard, had been Rilke’s title for the volume of 59 quatrains from which the poems are taken, *Vergers*. Carefully worked out key relationships and contrasting moods yield a result that seems utterly natural and spontaneous.

La Biche

O la biche; quel bel intérieur
d’anciennes forêts
dans tes yeux abonde;
combien de confiance ronde
melée à combien de peur.
Tout cela, porté
par la vive gracilité
de tes bonds.
Mais jamais rien n’arrive
à cette imposable
ignorance de ton front.

Le Cygne

Un cygne avance sur l’eau
tout entouré de lui-même
comme un glissant tableau;
Ainsi à certains instants
un être que l’on aime
est tout un espace mouvant.
Il se rapproche doublé
comme ce cygne qui nage
sur notre âme troublée
qui à cet être ajoute
la tremblante image
de bonheur et de doute.

The Doe

O doe, what limpid depth
of ancient forests
in your eyes abounds;
So much full confidence
Mingled with so much fear.
All of this borne
By the quick grace
Of your bounding.
Yet never will anything
Disturb that unpossessive
Innocence of your forehead.

The Swan

A swan advances on the water
All surrounded by itself
Like a gliding picture;
Thus, at certain moments,
A being whom one loves
Is all a moving space.
He approaches, mirrored
Like the swan who swims
On our troubled soul
Which adds to this being
The trembling image
Of happiness and of doubt.

Puisque Tout Passe

Puisque tout passe, faisons
la mélodie passagère;
celle qui nous désaltère
aura de nous raison.
Chantons ce qui nous quitte
avec amour et art;
Soyons plus vite
que le rapide départ.

Printemps

O mélodie de la sève
qui dans les instruments
de tous ces arbres s'élève,
accompagne le chant
de notre voix trop brève.
C'est pendant quelques mesures
seulement que nous suivons
les multiples figures
de ton long abandon,
ô abondante nature.
Quand il faudra nous taire,
d'autres continueront.
Mais à présent, comment faire
pour te rendre mon
grand coeur complémentaire?

En Hiver

En hiver, la mort meurtrière
entre dans les maisons;
elle cherche la soeur, le père
et leur joue du violon.
Mais quand la terre remue,
sous la bêche du printemps,
la mort court dans les rues
et salue les passants.

Verger

Jamais la terre n'est plus réelle
que dans tes branches, ô verger
blond
ni plus flottante que dans la dentelle
que font les ombres sur le gazon.

Since All is Passing

Since all is passing,
let's make a passing tune.
The one which quenches our thirst
Will get the better of us.
Let us sing what will leave us
With our love and art;
let's be quicker
than the most rapid departure.

Springtime

O melody of the sap
Which rises in the instruments
Of all these trees,
Accompany the song
Of our too-brief voice.
For a few measures only
We follow
The multiple patterns
Of your fancy,
O abundant nature.
When we must be stilled,
Others will continue.
But for now, how can I
Render you my
Full heart in return?

In Winter

In winter, murdering Death
Enters the houses,
She seeks out the sister, the father,
And plays her violin for them.
But when the earth stirs,
Under the spade of spring,
Death runs in the streets
And greets the passers-by.

Orchard

The earth is never more real
Than in your branches, o blond
orchard,
Nor more floating than in the
lacework
Which your shadows make on the
grass.

Là se rencontre ce qui nous reste,
ce qui pèse et ce qui nourrit

avec le passage manifeste
de la tendresse infinie.
Mais à ton centre la calme fontaine,
presque dormant en son ancien rond,
de ce contraste parle à peine,
tant en elle il se confond.

There we find what remains to us,
That which weighs and that which
nourishes
With the manifest passage
Of infinite tenderness. But at your
center the calm fountain,
Almost asleep in its ancient ring,
Of this contrast scarcely speaks,
So much in one is the other merged.

Translation: Beatrice Brewster and Clara Longstreth

This is the season in which New Amsterdam Singers discovers the compelling romantic voice of **Ben Moore**, who graduated from Hamilton College and earned an MFA from The Parsons School of Design. The full chorus sang “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” in March, and the Chamber Chorus now sings a longer *a cappella* work, *Dear Theo*, in its New York City premiere. Moore’s songs are at the center of his work. They have been performed by Deborah Voigt, Frederica von Stade, Robert White, Susan Graham, and Audra McDonald, among others. He has also composed songs for the Metropolitan Opera, especially comic material for gala occasions.

Dear Theo is a setting of selected passages from the letters of **Vincent Van Gogh** to his brother Theo. The work weaves together major emotional themes of their 18-year correspondence. The post-Impressionist artist was born in the Netherlands, but lived most of his life in France. Ben Moore has written an eloquent preface on Van Gogh and the letters:

Little appreciated during his lifetime, Vincent van Gogh is widely regarded as one of history’s greatest painters and a vital contributor to the development of modern art. His brother Theo ran a successful art gallery in Paris and provided unfailing financial support to Vincent throughout his career, allowing him to devote himself entirely to painting. Their lifelong friendship is recorded in the hundreds of letters they exchanged from August 1872 until July 1890 and is the source for most of what is known about the thoughts and beliefs of the artist.

Van Gogh spent his early adulthood working for a firm of art dealers, traveling between The Hague, London, and Paris. An early aspiration was to become a pastor, and from 1879 he worked as a missionary in a mining region in Belgium where he produced his first major works. Finally dedicating himself exclusively to art, he moved to Paris in 1886 and discovered the French Impressionists. Later he moved to the south of France where his work grew brighter in color and where he developed the unique

and highly recognizable style which became fully realized during his stay in Arles in 1888. He hoped his fellow artists would join him there and help found a school of art. Paul Gauguin did join him briefly, but his relationship with Vincent ended in a rift. Van Gogh suffered from a mental illness which has been a subject of much speculation since his death. Despite a tendency to portray him as irrational or insane, it is clear from the letters that he possessed a keen and subtle mind, and that his bouts of sickness were a source of deep frustration for him leading, ultimately, to his suicide.

The letters provide a unique insight into the artistic development and passions of one of the greatest figures in the history of art. They tell a deeply poignant, human story of an artist struggling against poverty, illness, family and societal expectations, and his own volatile personality. They are also philosophically rich and, at times, vividly descriptive and poetic — even in translation. The combination of these qualities has, for me, made them beautifully suited to music.

This piece for SATB chorus is based on selected passages from the letters, which I have adapted from the original English translation (translated from their original French or Dutch), which express major emotional themes that run throughout the correspondence. I have tried particularly to emphasize the poignant fact that Vincent would never know the tremendous value and influence his art would eventually acquire, and how, for instance, in August of 1883 he could write that what he wanted was to leave ‘a souvenir’ to express the depth of his feeling. The words to the first song are based on letters from 1888. Other passages are based on or adapted from letters dated April ’88, July ’82, December ’81, August ’83, and August ’87, among others. It should be noted that in certain cases I have modified the translations and repeated certain words or phrases to allow for a more regular musical structure. In each case I strived to maintain the spirit and intention of van Gogh’s original words.

This piece holds a special meaning for me since, as a painter myself, I have been moved and inspired by van Gogh’s work since early childhood. I also believe that whether one is an artist, a musician, or an appreciator of art, one cannot help but feel a connection to this man who, through great financial and personal hardship, maintained a passion for his work and for life in general.

Dear Theo, my brother, if only you had been there when I saw the red vineyard, all red like red wine. In the distance it turned to yellow, and then a green sky with the sun, and the earth after the rain, violet, sparkling yellow here and there where it caught the reflection of the setting sun. (November 1888)

Oh Theo, brother... I think that I must have a starry night with cypresses, in blue and yellow light, or surmounting a field of ripe corn... there are such wonderful nights here... I am in a continual fever of work! (April 1888)

But what am I in the eyes of most people? – a nobody, no position in society...never will have. In short, the lowest of the low. (July 1882)

I found a woman, not young, not beautiful. But oh, she had a charm for me. It's not the first time I was unable to resist that feeling of affection, yes affection and love for those women, who are so damned and condemned. I do not condemn them... Would you think that I have never felt the need for love? We talked about her life, about her cares, about her misery...about everything... (December 1881)

Often I think of your little one, Theo... and what he means to you now in your life...surely it's better to have a child than to expend all one's vigor as I have... but, for myself, that desire is gone. (July 1890)

At times I feel already...broken, and what will come of it I do not know... my deepest hope remains the same, as you well know, that I might be a lighter burden in your life...but I can see a time that's just on the horizon, a time when you might show my pictures with no shame. (Summer 1887)

It's true I'm often sick and troubled, but there is harmony inside of me. For in the poorest little hut I see a picture, and I believe that very soon you will be proud to show my work; you will be satisfied...you will have something for your sacrifices, brother. (July 1882)

When I'm at work I feel an unlimited faith in art, and that I shall succeed...and when doubt overwhelms me I try to defeat it by setting to work once again. (July 1883)

Poverty is at my back, but I'm still at work. (October 1885)

Gauguin and I... our arguments are electric! (December 1888)

When that delirium of mine shakes...all I dearly love, I do not accept it as reality. (February 1889)

One thing I know... in these few years I have left, I must leave a souvenir that I might offer in the shape of drawings and pictures. In just a few short years I need to make something with heart and love in it...to say to those who care to see that

this man felt deeply. (August 1883)

I know I'll never do what I intended... Success requires a nature unlike mine... my strength has been depleted far too quickly, but for others I see a chance for something more... (September 1889)

*The texts are based on or adapted from the first English translation of letters written by Vincent van Gogh to his brother Theo, entitled *The Letters of Vincent van Gogh (Constable, 1927)* as reprinted in Simon & Schuster's volume of the same title, edited by Mark Roskill. A majority of the letters in the collection were translated by van Gogh's sister-in-law, Johanna van Gogh-Bonger, who died in 1925.

The name **Cecil Effinger** will not be a familiar one to most concertgoers. He was a most interesting man, and well known in his home state of Colorado. He grew up in Colorado Springs, studied music in the U.S. and in France with the legendary Nadia Boulanger. He was an educator, performer, and inventor as well as a prolific composer of 125 works, including symphonies, operas, chamber, and choral works.

Effinger was first oboist of the Denver Symphony Orchestra. He was Chairman of the composition and theory departments at the University of Colorado at Boulder. He was a conductor of a U.S. Army band stationed in Denver, and taught his troop to sing as they marched from table to class. (They made their little journey in one-tenth the time it had taken before they sang on their way.)

In an interview, Effinger told of his composing life. He once received a letter from a church offering him \$1,000 for a commission, with one stipulation. The committee would like the piece to consist at least 60% of triads. (He did not accept that commission.) Of the *Four Pastorales* on our program, by far his best known composition, he said ruefully, "I've got the *Four Pastorales* which has gone hog wild all over the place! It's done time and time again..., and others that I think are just as good, somehow don't find their way."

In 1954 Effinger invented a "Music Writer," which was a typewriter for music. It was a very successful tool that helped composers produce legible parts for players, a very early precursor of today's computer programs like Sibelius and Finale. In 1969 he invented the "Tempo Watch," which is still sold and used today, and has never been improved upon. (It tells a conductor or player what the metronome marking is, at any moment, in a recorded or live performance.)

The popularity of Effinger's pastorales was probably helped by the lovely, romantic oboe part, and by the poetry of **Thomas Hornsby Ferrill** (1896 - 1988) who was Colorado's Poet Laureate from 1979 until

his death. His poetry was admired by Robert Frost and Carl Sandburg. Ferrill had a day job as Director of Public Relations at the Great Western Sugar Company. He and his wife published a weekly paper, *The Rocky Mountain Herald*, from 1939 until 1972. Ferrill's words are engraved on the Colorado State Capitol: "Here is a land where life is written in water... Look to the green within the mountain cup."

No Mark, the first of the pastorales, is a 1984 sonnet contrasting the memorials for folk heroes with the absence of one for an anonymous airman shot down over the ocean. *Noon* portrays the summer heat of the prairie; the choral writing is appropriately languid. *Basket* is elegiac and mysterious. The fourth, *Wood*, is a sonnet whose beginning may refer to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and whose end is part myth, part song of triumph.

No Mark

Corn grew where the corn was spilled
In the wreck where Casey Jones was killed,
Scrub-oak grows and sassafras
Around the shady stone you pass
To show where Stonewall Jackson fell
That Saturday at Chancellorsville,
And soapweed bayonets are steeled
Across the Custer battlefield;
But where you die the sky is black
A little while with cracking flak
The ocean closes very still
Above your skull that held our will

O swing away, white gull, white gull;
Evening star, be beautiful.

Noon

Noon is half the passion of light,
Noon is the middle prairie and the slumber,
The lull of resin weed, the yucca languor,
The wilt of sage at noon is the longest distance any nostril knows.
How far have we come to feel the shade of this tree?

Basket

The children out of the shade have brought me a basket
Very small and woven of dry grass
Smelling as sweet in December as the day
I smelled it first.

Only one other ever
Was this to me, sweet birch from a far river,

You would not know, you did not smell the birch,
You would not know, you did not smell the grass,
You did not know me then.

Wood

There was a dark and awful wood
Where increments of death accrued
To every leaf and antlered head
Until it withered and was dead,
And lonely there I wandered
And wandered and wandered.

But once a myth-white moon shone there
And you were kneeling by a flow'r,
And it was practical and wise
For me to kneel and you to rise,
And me to rise and turn to go,
And you to turn and whisper no,
And seven wondrous stags that I
Could not believe walked slowly by.

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Upcoming Performances

Chorfest USA: A Celebration of American Music
Harold Rosenbaum, Artistic Director
June 14, 2015, 3-9 PM at Symphony Space.
Free and open to the public.

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NAS CDs can also be obtained by mail from New Amsterdam Singers, P.O. Box 373, New York, NY 10025. Please add \$3 for shipping and handling on mail orders. CDs and tapes of selected NAS performances are also available.

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NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS is incorporated as a nonprofit charitable organization under the laws of the State of New York. Contributions are tax-deductible. Dues and ticket sales meet only half of our annual expenses. Donations of any size are gratefully accepted and should be mailed to New Amsterdam Singers, Inc., Box 373, Cathedral Station, New York, NY 10025. A copy of our latest annual report is available upon written request.

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At the conclusion of our thirtieth-anniversary capital campaign, NAS established a restricted endowment fund to help provide a steady source of income and stability. Thanks to the generosity of more than a hundred donors, we achieved a sizable beginning principal balance. Additional gifts by check, stock transfer, or bequest are most welcome.

NAS Online

Visit www.nasingers.org for the latest chorus news. The site includes a list of the many commissions and premieres that New Amsterdam Singers has been proud to present (click on “repertoire”). For updates on our concerts, tours, and benefits, photo galleries of chorus events, alumni news, etc., “like” us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.

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About the Artists

The NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS, now in its forty-seventh year, is known for the breadth and variety of its repertoire. Specializing in *a cappella* and double chorus works, the chorus sings music ranging from the 16th century through contemporary pieces, including many it has commissioned. Recent world premieres include compositions by Paul Alan Levi, Elizabeth Lim, and Ronald Perera. American and New York City premieres in the current decade have included works by Einojuhani Rautavaara, Matthew Harris, Steven Stucky, Kirke Mechem, Stephen Sametz, Kitty Brazelton, Clare Maclean, Alex Weiser, Sheena Phillips, and Judith Shatin.

NAS performed with the New York Philharmonic under Leonard Bernstein, at Alice Tully Hall as a guest of Clarion Concerts, and with the American-Russian Youth Orchestra under Leon Botstein at Tanglewood and Carnegie Hall. In 1999, NAS appeared with Anonymous Four and the Concordia Orchestra in Richard Einhorn's *Voices of Light* at Avery Fisher Hall, under Marin Alsop. In 2006 NAS performed *Voices of Light* at the Winter Garden of the World Financial Center, with Anonymous Four and the Ensemble Sospeso under David Hattner, for broadcast on WNYC's "New Sounds."

NAS appears internationally under Ms. Longstreth's direction. The chorus has sung at the Irakleion Festival in Greece; the Granada Festival in Spain; the International Choral Festival at Miedzyzdroje, Poland; the Festival of the Algarve in Portugal; Les Chorégies d'Orange in France; and the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod in Wales. More recently the chorus appeared in Turkey, Scandinavia, Croatia, Spain, Russia and the Baltics, and Argentina and Uruguay. In 2010 NAS was pleased to receive permission from the State and Treasury Departments to tour Cuba on a cultural visa. In 2013 NAS performed in South Africa.

CLARA LONGSTRETH has conducted New Amsterdam Singers since its formation in 1968. She has served on the faculty of Rutgers University, where she conducted the Voorhees Choir of Douglas College. A student of conductor G. Wallace Woodworth at Harvard University, Ms. Longstreth trained for her master's degree at the Juilliard School under Richard Westenburg. Further study included work with Amy Kaiser and Semyon Bychkov at the Mannes College of Music, and with Helmuth Rilling at the Oregon Bach Festival.

In 1997, Ms. Longstreth guest-conducted the Limón Dance Company in performance with NAS and the Riverside Choir. In 2000 she conducted NAS and the Mannes College Orchestra in the folk opera *Down in the Valley* during Symphony Space's "Wall to Wall Kurt Weill" program. In 2005 she conducted the Park Avenue Chamber Symphony in a joint performance with NAS of Paul Alan Levi's *Mark Twain Suite*. She is a frequent guest conductor at the annual Messiah Sing-In at Avery Fisher Hall and at the summer sings of the West Village Chorale, the New York Choral Society and other choruses. In February 2006 Ms. Longstreth presented a lecture-demonstration on "Adventures in Programming" at the Eastern Division Convention of the American Choral Directors Association. In 2007 she was engaged to serve as consultant on contemporary music to Hunter High School under a new program funded by the New York State Music Fund. In

2009 she received an Alumnae Recognition Award from Radcliffe College for her founding and longtime direction of New Amsterdam Singers.

Ms. Longstreth has served as adjudicator of choral festivals, conducted the Riverdale Country School choral groups for many years, and conducted the Juilliard Chorus and Orchestra at Alice Tully Hall. Of Ms. Longstreth's programs, Allan Kozinn wrote in the *New York Times*: "When a director takes up the challenge of building a cohesive program around a broad theme, we are reminded that programming can be an art."

DAVID RECCA joined NAS as Assistant Music Director in September 2014. Also a pianist, he has a Doctorate of Musical Arts degree in Choral Conducting from the Yale School of Music and Yale Institute of Sacred Music. He has been on faculty at Purchase College, State University of New York, where he directed the Purchase College Chorus, founded the Purchase Chamber Singers, and taught a variety of music theory and ear training courses. He holds a master's degree in choral conducting from Eastman School of Music, a performer's certificate in vocal coaching, and an undergraduate degree in composition from Purchase College. He was also the director of the early music ensemble *Madrigalia Via*, whose sounds were hailed as "sinfully blissful" by the *Wall Street Journal*. He lives in Danbury, CT with his wife Sarah.

ANDREW ADELSON can be heard playing both oboe and English horn in orchestras, chamber music ensembles and as a soloist in the U.S. and abroad. He has been the solo English horn/oboe with the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra since 2000. He has also performed with the New York Philharmonic, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Brooklyn Philharmonic, American Symphony Orchestra, Riverside Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Mexico City Philharmonic. As a chamber musician, Mr. Adelson has performed with the Aspen Wind Quintet and Bargemusic. He can be heard playing on recordings on the Delos and Koch labels. He earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees at the Juilliard School, where he studied with John Ferrillo and Elaine Douvas. His connection with Juilliard has continued through teaching master classes in Interpersonal and Ensemble Skills for the Orchestral Player as well as master classes in instrument repair. He has also taught at New Jersey City University, Drew Summer Music and Manhattan School of Music. Mr. Adelson has played on Broadway in the pit orchestras for *The King and I, 1776*, and *The Sound of Music*. He has spent summers playing in Tanglewood, Interlochen and Waterloo Music Festivals and as a chamber music coach and performer at Rencontres Musicales Internationales at Sainte-Foy-la-Grande, France.

PEN YING FANG studied with Paul Hoffmann and Barbara Gonzalez-Palmer, earning a BM and MM in Piano, at Rutgers University. Ms. Fang has accompanied many prominent artists in master classes, including Keith Underwood, Evelyn Glennie, Brian Macintosh, and Christopher Arneson. In 2007 she played at the Florence Voice Seminar in Florence, Italy. Currently she serves as a staff accompanist at Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey, and teaches piano students in the central New Jersey area.

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