

Harmonium

Choral Society

New Earth

- Earth Song
Orientis Partibus
- Frank Ticheli (b. 1958)
Anon. Medieval conductus, arr. Matlack
- Keter
Emanuel Meli, soloist
- Salamone Rossi (c. 1570-1630)
- Magnificat
Marge Cornell, Marilyn Kitchell, sopranos
Ken Short, Matthew Shurts, tenors
John Lamb, Ted Roper, basses
- Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)
- Rejoice in the Lamb
Gloria Bangiola, soprano; Beth Lohner, alto; Joe Keefe, tenor; Mark Hewitt, baritone
- Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)
- Three Carols
Tyrley, Tyrlow *Sarah Hunter, soprano*
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The Sycamore Tree
- Peter Warlock (1894-1930)
- INTERMISSION
- The Eyes of All
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- Orlando Gibbons (1583-1621)
Stanford Scriven (b. 1988)
Ukrainian carol, arr. Kyrylo Stetsenko (1882-1922)
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- Cantata of the Animals
Jabez Van Cleef, narrator
1. Mother Nature *Beth Shirley, alto*
2. Donkey *Alex Corson, tenor*
3. Cat and Dog *Bethanne Nazareth, soprano; George Aronson, bass*
4. Cows
5. Mouse Trio *Kathy Ornstein, Susan Gepford, sopranos; Greg Jung, tenor*
6. Sheep *Greg Voinier, baritone (ram) and octet**
7. Spider and Worms *Emily Wolper, soprano*
8. Song of the Baby *Jennifer Huang, soprano*
9. Song of Mary *Beth Shirley, alto*
- Elliot Z. Levine (b. 1948)
- Hope for Resolution
- Paul Caldwell and Sean Ivory

New Earth – Program Notes

Notes by Dr. Anne Matlack:

Every holiday concert, I strive to find a theme within the expected Christmas story that is broader than Christian, more than a beautiful story about a baby's birth, which reaches across cultures and musical eras, and allows us to celebrate our common humanity. Over the years, I've tried to have the whole season fit together in some meaningful way. This year, I knew I wanted to end the season with a concert of "Dreams and Visions." This led to a March concert built around "Consider the Heavens." During the summer, it seemed as hard as ever to plan December, as I felt very discouraged over the Gulf oil spill and the state of the environment. What can we do as artists and creative people? The idea of "New Earth" grew out of the pairing of some music and texts that celebrate the season through humility and hope: from the joyful song of a poor young girl, to a donkey ridden into a cathedral; an angel's song declared on earth; trees, flowers, and animals; the hope for peace and renewal of creation; and, this late in the game, the possibility that in singing and the creative process, a "new thing under the sun" can still spring forth. For Harmonium, *The Cantata of the Animals* was the beginning of our commitment to creating new works, and one we would like to share again!

Earth Song, written in 2007, is one of only four published choral pieces by **Frank Ticheli**. The text, also by the composer, speaks to my question of how to proceed creatively in a hurting world. Ticheli is Professor of Composition at the University of Southern California, and is most famous for his concert band works. He recently discussed his composition studies in an interview with bandirector.com: "I went on to get both a masters and doctoral degree in composition from The University of Michigan, where I had the good fortune to study with four different members of the composition faculty. Each exposed me to a different aspect of composition. William Bolcom was a generalist, while Leslie Bassett was wonderful with the details. Going from a lesson with Bolcom to one with Bassett was like switching from large, sweeping brush strokes with a paint brush to detailed precision work under a magnifying glass; their approaches to composition were quite different. William Albright stressed beauty of sound and the importance of taking risks, and George Wilson taught me to respect the integrity of the musical line."

Sing, Be, Live, See...

This dark stormy hour,
The wind, it stirs.
The scorched earth
cries out in vain:

O war and power,
You blind and blur.
The torn heart
cries out in pain.

But music and singing
Have been my refuge,
And music and singing

Shall be my light.

A light of song
Shining strong: Alleluia!
Through darkness, pain and strife, I'll
Sing, Be, Live, See...

Peace.

We move from the pensive to the raucous while singing this oldest known “Donkey Song,” *Orientis Partibus*, a twelfth century conductus (processional) that includes braying noises (“Hey! Sir Ass! Hey!”). The “Song of the Ass” originated in a liturgical play at Beauvais, France, during which the Virgin Mary is seen riding on a live donkey into the cathedral. The discerning contemporary listener may recognize the origins of the children’s carol, “The Friendly Beasts.”

Orientis partibus, adventavit asinus, pulcher et fortissimus, Sarcinis aptissimus. Hez! Hez, Sir Asne, Hez!	In eastern lands, the ass arrived, handsome and strong, fit for burden. Hey! Hey, Sir Ass, Hey!
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Dum trahit vehicula, multa cum sarcinula, illius mandibula, dura terit pabula.	While he pulls carts, many with heavy loads, his jaws grind tough fodder.
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Aurum de Arabia, Thus et myrrham de saba, Tulit in ecclesia, Virtus asinaria.	Gold from Arabia, Incense and Myrrh from Saba, to the church he bore, this virtuous ass.
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Amen dicas, asine, Iam satur ex gramine, amen, amen itera, aspernare vetera.	You say "amen," ass, now it's filled with grass, "amen," "amen" yet again, and reject the old things.
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Salamone Rossi, a violinist and composer active in Mantua at the time of Monteverdi, composed path-breaking collections of Hebrew motets for the synagogue. *Keter* is from *The Songs of Solomon* (published in 1622). The title of the collection is a pun on the composer’s first name, since none of the works is actually from the *Song of Songs*. Editor Joshua Jacobson has provided the following notes: “*Keter* (‘Sanctification’), an ancient Song of Praise from which the *Sanctus* of the mass is also derived, forms the heart of the *musaf* service on Sabbath and holiday mornings in the Italian Jewish liturgy. Rossi’s setting, however, is liturgically incomplete. [He] provided

settings only of the texts that would have been sung by the congregation...the editor has provided chants for the missing passages...taken from 17th century Italian sources.”

Keter yitnu lach hamoney
mala im kevutsey mata.

Angels shall sing You harmonious praises
in the heav'nly hosts above.

Yachad kulam kedusha
lecha yeshaleyshu
kema sheneemar al yad neviecha
vekaraze el ze veamar:
Kadosh, kadosh, kadosh
Adonai tsevaot,
melo chol haaarets kevodo.

Voices on high with the voices
of those here on earth,
together they shall sing the words of Your prophet
as angels called to one another:
Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God of Hosts,
He fills the whole earth with His glory.

Kevodo maley olam,
Mesharetav shoalim ze laze:
ayey mekom kevodo.

“Holy is the Lord of Hosts,”
the angels sing in celestial accord;
His boundless glory to declare.

Leumatam baruch yomeyru,
Baruch kevod Adonai mimekomo.

The angels' song resounds on earth,
Behold the glory of God from Heav'n above.

Mimekomo yifen leamo
Hamyachadim et shemo,
Erev vavoker tamid bechol yom.

From Heav'n above He shall turn to bless
all those on earth who praise His name,
evening and morning, unceasing singing.

Paamayim beahava beomerim:
Shema Yisrael Adonai eloheynu,
Adonai echad.

Every day with songs of love we shall declare:
The Lord God is our Father,
the Lord God is one.

Echad eloheynu, huavinu, humalkeynu;
humoshieynu, huyashmieynu
berachamav sheynit leeyney kolchai.

Alone and almighty is our Master, is our Father.
He is our savior and our redeemer;
in mercy He shall come to redeem all life.

Lihyot lachem leohim.

He is our God, our deliv'rer.

Ani Adonai eloheychem.

I am the the Lord God, your heav'nly King.

Uvdivrey kodshach katuv lemor:
Yimloch Adonai leolam
elohayich Tsiyon, ledor vador,
haleluya.

In the Holy Scriptures it is written:
The Lord God shall reign, King of Zion,
forever on high, and we shall sing:
hallelujah.

Claudio Monteverdi's compositional style spans the gap between the Renaissance and the Baroque. He himself defined two different kinds of compositional practices: the *prima prattica*, or old style that was still used for much church music, and the *secunda prattica*, the new style that “considers harmony not commanding but commanded, and makes words the mistress of

harmony.” *Magnificat* shows the text painting, virtuoso vocal writing and beginnings of a *basso continuo* characteristic of the *secunda prattica*, the monumental double choir qualities associated with St. Mark’s in Venice, where Monteverdi took over in 1613, and the spirit of his most famous sacred work, the *Vespers of 1610*. Despite its grandiose moments, it also has duets of great intimacy. This is the first of two settings of the *Magnificat* contained in Monteverdi’s second great anthology, *Selve Morale e Spirtuale 1640*. Throughout the collection, Monteverdi provided different settings for different combinations of voices and instruments, or provided alternative ways of performing the same piece. This is particularly true of this setting of the *Magnificat*: the title “*Magnificat primo a 8 voci & due violini & quattro viole overo Quattro tromboni quale in accidente si ponno lasciare*” tells us that it is for eight voices, two violins and four violas or four trombones “which may be omitted at will.” A fully satisfactory performance can be achieved using voices, two violins and continuo, or in our case, two wind players and continuo. The edition we use was prepared by Diana Thompson in 2008 and is available on cpdl.org.

Magnificat anima mea Dominum.
 Et exultavit spiritus meus
 in Deo salutari meo.
 Quia respexit humilitatem
 ancillae suae:
 ecce enim ex hoc beatam
 me dicent omnes generationes.
 Quia fecit mihi magna, qui potens est:
 et sanctum nomen ejus.
 Et misericordia ejus, a progenie in progenies:
 timentibus eum.
 Fecit potentiam in brachio suo:
 dispersit superbos
 mente cordis sui.
 Deposuit potentes de sede:
 et exaltavit humiles.
 Esurientes implevit bonis:
 et divites dimisit inanes.
 Suscepit Israel puerum suum:
 recordatus misericordiae suae.
 Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros:
 Abraham, et semini eius in saecula.
 Gloria Patri, et Filio,
 et Spiritui Sancto,
 Sicut erat in principio, et nunc,
 et semper, et in saecula saeculorum.
 Amen.

My soul doth magnify the Lord:
 and my spirit hath rejoiced
 in God my Savior.
 For he hath regarded the lowliness
 of his handmaiden.
 For behold, from henceforth,
 All generations shall call me blessed.
 For he that is mighty hath magnified me:
 and holy is his Name.
 And his mercy is on them that fear him
 throughout all generations.
 He hath showed strength with his arm:
 he hath scattered the proud
 in the imagination of their hearts.
 He hath put down the mighty from their seat
 and hath exalted the humble and meek.
 He hath filled the hungry with good things
 and the rich he hath sent empty away.
 He remembering his mercy
 hath holpen his servant Israel:
 as he promised to our forefathers,
 Abraham and his seed, forever.
 Glory be to the Father, and to the Son:
 and to the Holy Ghost;
 As it was in the beginning, is now,
 and ever shall be: world without end.
 Amen.

Benjamin Britten, perhaps England’s greatest 20th century composer, is especially known for his vocal works and for choosing unusual texts. Christopher Smart, a high church Anglican 18th century poet, was widely known throughout London as a major contributor to two popular

magazines and a friend to influential cultural icons like Samuel Johnson and Henry Fielding. He wrote a long free-verse manuscript, *Jubilate Agno*, between 1758 and 1763, largely while he was locked in a madhouse for “religious mania.” One whole page of the text begins with the words “Let” while another full page begins with the words “For.” The imagery is vivid and striking. *Jubilate Agno* would not be published until 1939.

In 1943, Britten selected some of Smart’s texts for *Rejoice in the Lamb*, written for the 50th anniversary of St. Matthew's Northampton, where the Vicar was Reverend Walter Hussey, an Anglican priest and patron of the arts. Hussey provided notes for the choral score: “The main theme of the poem, and that of the Cantata, is the worship of God, by all created beings and things, each in his own way.” We think this fits particularly well into a concert with *The Cantata of the Animals*.

The work begins with mysterious unison chorus all on middle C, followed by a quick mixed meter section of “let” texts, concluding with a gentle Hallelujah. The soprano soloist sings about “my Cat Jeoffry,” while Britten uses the organ part to depict the cat “wreathing his body seven times round with elegant quickness.” The alto soloist dramatically sings of the mouse, “a creature of great personal valour,” and again the organ registration suggests the sound of mice. A contrasting tenor soloist sings a slow, gentle praise of flowers. This is followed by the central chorus, in which Smart describes his mistreatment by “the officers of the peace” because he is mentally ill, comparing himself to Jesus: “For I am in twelve Hardships, but he that was born of a virgin shall deliver me out of all.” Philip Brett writes of this section: “At the heart of *Rejoice in the Lamb*, framed by a Purcellian prelude and postlude and cheerful choruses and solos, lies a chilling choral recitative rehearsing the theme of oppression.” Britten also alludes to the composer Dmitri Shostakovich, who was facing censure in the USSR. The DSCH motif (the sequence of notes D, E flat, C, and B, which spell out the composer's name) appears frequently in the organ part, at first quietly and later fortissimo against the thunderous chords accompanying “And the watchman strikes me with his staff.” A bass recitative describes how the letters of the alphabet symbolize different aspects of God. This segues into the Chorus, a “very gay and fast” section about various instruments and “their rhimes” (rhymes), building to a climax at the “Trumpet of God,” followed by a descriptively serene denouement which leads into a reprise of the Hallelujah.

Rejoice in God, O ye Tongues;
Give the glory to the Lord,
And the Lamb.
Nations, and languages,
And every Creature
In which is the breath of Life.
Let man and beast appear before him,
And magnify his name together.

Let Nimrod, the mighty hunter,
Bind a leopard to the altar
And consecrate his spear to the Lord.

Let Ishmail dedicate a Tyger,
And give praise for the liberty
In which the Lord has let him at large.

Let Balaam appear with an ass,
And bless the Lord his people
And his creatures for a reward eternal.

Let Daniel come forth with a Lion,
And praise God with all his might
Through faith in Christ Jesus.

Let Ithamar minister with a Chamois¹,
And bless the name of Him
That cloatheth the naked.

Let Jakim with the Satyr²
Bless God in the dance,
Dance, dance, dance.

Let David bless with the Bear
The beginning of victory to the Lord,
To the Lord the perfection of excellence.

Hallelujah, hallelujah,
Hallelujah from the heart of God,
And from the hand of the artist inimitable,
And from the echo of the heavenly harp
In sweetness magnificent and mighty.
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah.

For I will consider my Cat Jeoffry.
For he is the servant of the living God.
Duly and daily serving him.

For at the first glance
Of the glory of God in the East
He worships in his way.
For this is done by wreathing his body
Seven times round with elegant quickness.
For he knows that God is his saviour.
For God has bless'd him
In the variety of his movements.
For there is nothing sweeter
Than his peace when at rest.

For I am possessed of a cat,
Surpassing in beauty,
From whom I take occasion
To bless Almighty God.

For the Mouse is a creature
Of great personal valour.
For this is a true case--
Cat takes female mouse,
Male mouse will not depart,
but stands threat'ning and daring.
If you will let her go,
I will engage you,
As prodigious a creature as you are.

For the Mouse is a creature
Of great personal valour.
For the Mouse is of
An hospitable disposition.

For the flowers are great blessings.
For the flowers are great blessings.
For the flowers have their angels,
Even the words of God's creation.
For the flower glorifies God
And the root parries³ the adversary.
For there is a language of flowers.
For the flowers are peculiarly
The poetry of Christ.

For I am under the same accusation
With my Savior,
For they said,
He is besides himself.
For the officers of the peace
Are at variance with me,
And the watchman smites me
With his staff.
For the silly fellow, silly fellow,
Is against me,
And belongeth neither to me
Nor to my family.
For I am in twelve hardships,
But he that was born of a virgin
Shall deliver me out of all,
Shall deliver me out of all.

For H is a spirit
And therefore he is God.
For K is king
And therefore he is God.
For L is love
And therefore he is God.
For M is musick
And therefore he is God.
And therefore he is God.

For the instruments are by their rhimes,
For the shawm⁴ rhimes are lawn fawn and the like.
For the shawm rhimes are moon boon⁵ and the like.
For the harp rhimes are sing ring and the like.
For the harp rhimes are ring string and the like.
For the cymbal rhimes are bell well and the like.
For the cymbal rhimes are toll soul and the like.
For the flute rhimes are tooth youth and the like.
For the flute rhimes are suit mute and the like.
For the bassoon rhimes are pass class and the like.
For the dulcimer rhimes are grace place and the like.
For the clarinet rhimes are clean seen and the like.
For the trumpet rhimes are sound bound soar more and the like.

For the trumpet of God is a blessed intelligence
And so are all the instruments in Heav'n.
For God the Father Almighty plays upon the harp
Of stupendous magnitude and melody.
For at that time malignity ceases
And the devils themselves are at peace.
For this time is perceptible to man
By a remarkable stillness and serenity of soul.

Hallelujah, hallelujah,
Hallelujah from the heart of God,
And from the hand of the artist inimitable,
And from the echo of the heavenly harp
In sweetness magnificent and mighty.
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah.

- 1- soft suede leather
- 2- half man/half goat creature
- 3- to ward off
- 4- medieval oboe-like instrument
- 5- jovial

Peter Warlock was a pseudonym of Philip Arnold Heseltine, an Anglo-Welsh composer (mainly of songs), editor of early music, and music critic. He was mostly self-taught in music, admiring Frederick Delius and Roger Quilter, and strongly influenced by Elizabethan music and poetry as well as by Celtic culture. (Personally his life was wild and messy - he was once arrested for riding a motorcycle naked, died of a possible suicide at 36, and had his life fictionalized in literature and movies.) The *Three Carols* come from a prolific time (1920-23) when he was living at home in Wales, and when he also composed his most acclaimed song cycle, *The Curlew*.

Tyrley Tyrflow

About the field they pipèd right,
So merrily the shepherds began to blow.
Adown from heaven that is so high.
Tyrley, tyrflow...

Of angels there came a company
with merry songs and melody,
The shepherds anon gan them aspy.¹
Tyrley, tyrflow...

The shepherds hied² them to Bedlem
To see that blessèd sun his beam.
And there they found that glorious leme³.
Tyrley, tyrflow...

Now pray we to that mekè child,
And to his mother that is so mild,
The which was never defiled.
Tyrley, tyrflow...

That we may come unto his bliss,
where joy shall never miss.
Then may we sing in Paradise.
Tyrley, tyrflow...

I pray you all that be here
For to sing and make good cheer
In the worship of God this year.
Tyrley, tyrflow...

1- the shepherds began to see them

2- to go quickly

3- light

Balulalow

Oh my dear hert, young Jesus sweet,
Prepare thy creddil in my spreit,
And I sall rock thee in my hert
And never mair from thee depert.
But I sall praise thee evermore
With sangis sweet unto thy glor':
The knees of my hert sall I bow,
And sing that richt Balulalow.

Oh my dear heart, young Jesus sweet
Prepare thy cradle in my spirit
And I shall rock thee in my heart
And never more from thee depart.
But I shall praise thee ever more
With sweet songs unto thy glor(y):
The knees of my heart shall I bow,
And sing that right Balulalow.

The Sycamore Tree

As I sat under a sycamore tree,
I looked me out upon the sea
A Christmas day in the morning.

I saw three ships a-sailing there,
The Virgin Mary and Christ they bare
A Christmas day in the morning.

He did whistle and she did sing,
And all the bells on earth did ring,
A Christmas day in the morning.

And now we hope to taste your cheer,
And wish you all a happy new year,
A Christmas day in the morning.

Orlando Gibbons was one of the greats of the Golden Age of English Music. He was a boy chorister at King's College, Cambridge, organist of the Chapel Royal (1619), "Musician for the Virginals" in James I's Private Music, and organist at Westminster Abbey (1623-1625). Gibbons excelled as a composer of instrumental music - keyboard solos and chamber music for viols - but is best known for his church music and madrigals. *The Eyes of All* is a verse anthem (solo groups alternating with full chorus).

The eyes of all wait upon Thee, O Lord,
and Thou givest them their meat in due season.
Thou openest Thine hand,
and fillest all things living with plenteousness.
The Lord is righteous in all His ways,
and holy in all His works.
The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him,
yea, all such as call upon Him faithfully.
He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him,
He also will hear their cry, and will help them.

The Lord preserveth all them that love Him,
but scattereth abroad the ungodly.
My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord,
and let all flesh give thanks unto His holy name
for ever and ever.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.

Stanford Scriven is in the class of 2011 at St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN. The St. Olaf Choir premiered his composition, *Christ the Apple Tree*, during Christmas Festival 2009. It was nationally broadcast and taken on tour. Conductor Anton Armstrong was initially skeptical, since there is already a famous setting by Elizabeth Poston, but he says he was awestruck by Scriven's absolutely sparkling setting and eagerly programmed the St. Olaf Choir to sing it.

The text for *Jesus Christ the Apple Tree* was written by an anonymous New England poet from the late 18th century. Scriven said in a Minnesota Public Radio interview that he was drawn to the text because of its message and simple style. "In my mind, the poet is a simple, honest individual attempting to depict the wonder of the Son of God in a way that is understandable by all. Thus, I sought the same in composing this piece," Scriven says. "I wanted to create a sense of peace and assurance in the music that could speak to everyone, even those who know nothing about music technically, because this is how I see the text." It is published by earthsongs.

The tree of life my soul hath seen,
laden with fruit and always green;
the trees of nature fruitless be,
compar'd with Christ the apple tree.

This beauty doth all things excel,
by faith I know, but ne'er can tell
the glory which I now can see,
in Jesus Christ the apple tree.

For happiness I long have sought,
and pleasure dearly I have bought;
I miss'd of all, but now I see
'tis found in Christ the apple tree.

This fruit doth make my soul to thrive,
it keeps my dying faith alive;
which makes my soul in haste to be
with Jesus Christ the apple tree.

I'm weary'd with my former toil,
here I will sit and rest a while;
under the shadow I will be,
of Jesus Christ the apple tree.

Musica Russica editor Valdimir Morosan has provided the following notes for *Nebo i zemlia*:
“The Ukrainian people have an extraordinarily rich heritage of carols—literally hundreds of tunes and texts, mostly devoted to Christmas...some carols were preserved in standard published collections of devotional, extra-liturgical songs, while others were collected in villages by musical ethnographers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Both collections served as fruitful resources for composers such as **Kyrylo Stetsenko**, who produced over a hundred arrangements of Ukrainian carols.” Also of note, Stetsenko’s life was constantly affected by political events. He published his own choral arrangement of the Ukrainian national anthem without Russian censor approval in 1911, and the printer (A. Chokolov) took the blame fully, and as a result, was sentenced to death! In 1911, urged by his uncle, Stetsenko became an Orthodox priest. He returned to Kyiv as soon as the Russian Revolution of 1917 began. When the Ukrainian National Republic was declared, Stetsenko was made head of the Music Section in the Ministry of Education and created two national choirs. (I am indebted to my voice student, Irene Sawchyn, for help with this carol.)

Nebo i zemlia, nebo i zemlia
Nini torzhestvuyut.
Yangholi liudiam, yangholi liudiam
veselo spraznuyut.

Heaven and earth, heaven and earth
rejoice today.
Angels and people, angels and people,
joyfully celebrate together.

Refrain:
Hristos rodivsia, Bogh voplotivsia,
yangholi spivayut, tsari eprekayut,
poklin viddayut, pastiri ighrayut,
chudo, chudo podvidayut.

Refrain:
Christ is born, God becomes incarnate,
Angels sing, Kings approach,
making their bow, shepherds make merry,
proclaiming this wonder.

Vo Vifleyemi, vo Vifleyemi
vesela novina,
chistaya Diva, chistaya Diva
porodila Sina.
Refrain

In Bethlehem, In Bethlehem, there is
joyous news,
the pure Virgin, the pure Virgin
has given birth to a Son.

“V nebi rozhdenniy, v nebi rozhdenniy”
i mi zaspivaymo,
vishniomu Boghu, vishniomu Boghu
poklin viddaymo.

“He is born in Heaven, he is born in Heaven,”
we also sing,
to the Most High God, to the Most High God
we shall make our bow.

Refrain

Pavel Chesnokov wrote over 500 choral works, 400+ of which are sacred, fed by his experience as a teacher of singing at Moscow Synodal School, precentor in several Moscow churches, and, from 1920-1944, professor of choral music at Moscow Conservatory. *Spaseniye sodelal* is one in a cycle of ten Communion Hymns (op. 25) composed by Chesnokov during his tenure as precentor at the Church of the Holy Trinity “at the Mud Baths” in Moscow. This is a richly sonorous harmonized setting of a traditional Kievan chant with the extremes of range (vocal, dynamic, and emotional) that are characteristic of Russian sacred music.

Spaseniye sodelal yesi
posrede zemli, Bozhe.
Alliluiya, alliluiya, alliluiya.

Salvation is created
in the midst of the Earth, O God.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Elliot Z. Levine has been the baritone for the Western Wind Vocal Ensemble since its inception in 1969. He has appeared as a soloist with such groups as Musica Sacra, the Rome Opera, La Fenice, the Mannes Camerata, Music at Ascension, the Ensemble for Early Music, the Folger Consort, and the Kalamazoo Bach Festival. He received his M.M. from the Manhattan School of Music, his B.A. from Queens College, and has also studied at the Orff School in Salzburg. He has trained in conducting with Robert Hickok and in composition with Robert Starer at Brooklyn College. He has been awarded five Meet-the-Composer Grants and has had compositions commissioned by the Harmonium Choral Society, St. Mary the Virgin Church, Cerddorion Vocal Ensemble, the Church of St. Luke in the Fields, Temple Israel Center and the Western Wind Vocal Ensemble.

Since 1980, he has been a conductor and coach at Western Wind Workshops at such institutions as Dartmouth and Smith Colleges, the University of Massachusetts, and ACDA choral conferences around the country. He has taught at CCNY and Upsala College. Levine is the cantor at Temple Emanuel in Great Neck, NY and sings at the Church of St. Luke in the Fields in New York City. Levine’s music is published by Shadow Press, Harold Flammer Inc., E. Henry David, Plymouth, Colla Voce, and Willis Music.

Harmonium commissioned Elliot Levine to write *Cantata of the Animals* (*Animalium Cantata*) in 1996. The work is based on a text by poet and chorus member Jabez Van Cleef. It was premiered Christmas 1996, and proved to be a joy for both the chorus and the audience. It is scored for flute, oboe/English horn and cello, as well as chorus parts: tambourine, body percussion and five handbells. *The Cantata of the Animals* was commissioned especially with the following ideas in mind: variety of choral textures, a challenging yet accessible style, lots of solos, interesting yet small (i.e. not expensive) orchestration, chorus percussion/bell parts, and audience participation (a Harmonium concert tradition).

That year, Harmonium received each movement week by week, up until the week before the concert! When the work finally came together as a whole, we were thrilled at how well it fulfilled the mission to be a new work for the Christmas season, a piece which is not overly Christ-centric, is challenging, yet accessible, and sets a high-quality text. Elliot exceeded all our expectations and his work illuminated the text we’ve come to love. Everyone present at the premiere felt they were

hearing something that would be around for a long time. By performing it again, we hope to help make that happen.

A session about *The Cantata of the Animals* was presented at the Chorus America National Conference in California in June 1997 as part of the American Showcase of new work. The following February (1998), by competitive audition, Harmonium was invited to sing the work in Providence, Rhode Island for the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) Eastern Division Convention, where the performance received a standing ovation. The work has subsequently been performed by many other groups including the Yale Camerata, the Westminster Singers, and Tokyo Voices. For its Japanese premiere, the text was translated and some corresponding adaptations were made to the score.

Scene 1: Mother Nature and Chorus, begins with the conductor (with handbell) and an oboist walking from the back of the hall. Mother Nature (mezzo) sings from the center. The opening theme is lyrical and modal with a recitative-like middle section.

NARRATOR:

Mother Nature explains humankind's fall from grace.

MOTHER NATURE:

When humankind were wild life
Among the trees and birds,
They did not think in sentences,
They did not speak in words.

Every thought that came and went
Was sung upon the air.
They wrapt themselves in songs of love
And wore them in their hair.

With all the other animals
They thought in music too.
They lived their lives in harmony
And their cares were few.

Then over many thousand years
These humans lost their song,
Forgot the music in their souls
And mistook right for wrong.

Scene 2: Donkey and Men's Chorus, with oboe and cello, is in 5/8 to represent the limping gait of the tired donkey.

NARRATOR:

Mary and Joseph approach Bethlehem after a long day of traveling. Their heavily laden donkey, who is hungry and tired, laments that he cannot rest.

DONKEY:

See how wide the plain,
And see, the night is long:
Comes over me my pain,
I need to sing my song--

Come unto me, come unto me,
Ye that travail and are heavy laden,
Come unto me.

See how they shine,
See how they shine,
The stars in the eyes of the beautiful maiden,
See how they shine.

Before I see tomorrow,
I'll hear the Baby's cry,
Leave behind this sorrow,
My hunger satisfy.

Scene 3: Cat and Dog, introduces the flute (from the middle of the hall) with tambourine and soprano soloist (cat) in a freely meandering theme, in dialogue with the square plodding dog (bass) solo. These two disparate universes come together to follow the star, and the themes collide and then merge.

NARRATOR:

On the way into the village, a stray cat follows the people with their donkey. When they arrive at the inn, the innkeeper says there is no room for them. The inn-keeper's dog argues with the cat. Then a bright star appears in the sky, calling them to stay in a nearby stable.

CAT:

We do not care your beds to try
O ye of little grace,
Under the stars we choose to lie,
Choose to lie, choose to lie
While we forsake this place.

For we are born of spirit free
And love to live alone--
We need no hospitality,

(Not from thee, not from thee)
Until our nine are done.

DOG:

To master I will faithful be
Within this fortress sure,
And not your flights of fancy see,
Fancy see, fancy see,
While safe these stones endure.

So go and house ye with the sky
In your forsaken place,
By him who feeds me I will lie
(I will lie, I will lie).
Beside him will I chase.

CAT & DOG:

It's plain to see we different are,
Your ways I do not love.
But if we follow yonder star,
Yonder star, yonder star,
Our semblance shall improve.

For though the world be strip'd and pied¹
And deck'd with diverse end,
Methinks that stranger by your side,
By your side, by your side,
Shall grow to be your friend.

1- having markings of two or more colors

Scene 4: Chorus of Cows, is lyrical and poignant, as a three-part women's chorus sings with the sparse yet haunting accompaniment of English horn and cello.

NARRATOR:

Before occupying the stable, Joseph releases the small herd of cows who were housed within. The cows celebrate their freedom with a song.

CHORUS OF COWS:

Long ago men bowed before
Our royal golden sire,
And bright-bejewel'd high priests bore
Their obsequies¹ of fire.

But now we dwell in bondage sure
And die that men may live;
Our meat and milk they may secure
And we their chains receive.

So let us joy in freedom sweet
And savor purer air;
This Babe hath made our lives complete
And banished ev'ry care.

Now let us praise this famous Man
With all his creatures and his clan,
And let us do the best we can
To end no worse than we began.

1- an abject offering of obedience

Scene 5: Mouse Trio and Chorus, brings comic relief as the trio of mice appear accompanied by a pseudo-baroque trio of instruments occasionally quoting “three blind mice.”

NARRATOR:

Joseph has cleaned the stable and gone to look for swaddling clothes. Three mice appear from the straw. They sing songs to amuse Mary until Joseph returns.

MOUSE TRIO:

We are the humble and meek,
We are the ones who squeak,
We haven't got very large brains,
But we know to come in when it rains.
At the risk of sounding quite droll,
We welcome you to our hole.
Whatever your needs
(For straw or for seeds)
We certainly won't be blind,
No, we certainly won't be blind.

FIRST MOUSE:

I think that farmer's wife was cruel
To treat those poor blind mice so terribly.
Let's lock her up with crusts and gruel¹
And let her suffer most unbearably.

SECOND MOUSE:

If a brother or sister mouse be naked
And in want of daily food,
And someone says to them,
"Go in peace, be warmed and filled"
Yet you do not give them
What is necessary for the body,
What does it profit?
Faith without works is dead in itself—
Show me your faith without works:
I from my works will show you my faith.
You believe in God? You do very well.
The devils also believe, and tremble.

THIRD MOUSE:

Blest be the meek,
For they shall the earth inherit.
Prais'd be the Father,
Son and Holy Spirit.

1- a thin soup

Scene 6: Chorus of Sheep, is another lyrical movement with sheep waking shepherds, represented by a quartet (or octet) of singers answering the chorus from afar.

NARRATOR:

A sleeping flock of sheep is awakened by a choir of angels in the sky. The sheep, led by a large ram, sing to their shepherds and drive them forth to Bethlehem.

CHORUS OF SHEEP:

From the purging of the flood
Both sheep and folk did multiply
Until this surging of the blood
Did human time defy,
Did time defy.

And though both sheep and humankind
Now creep in herds toward certain end,
Yet this bright moment out of mind
Doth our poor souls defend
Our souls defend.

So sheepish men, now get ye hence,
Get ye hence by yonder star.
Rise and shine! Fold up your tents!
Begin our journey far,
Our journey far!

RAM:

“Find your tongue and sing to me
Let the sky your voices fill—
To God on high may glory be
And to all men good will,
All men good will.”

Scene 7: Spider and Chorus of Worms, in lilting 6/8, depicts a web-spinning spider (soprano soloist) in circular curlicues of woodwinds, while the worms (ATB chorus) crawl below.

NARRATOR:

A spider, high in the haymow above, sees the baby born and the gathering of the animals. The spider encourages the worms in the roofbeams to join with all the other animals in the singing.

SPIDER:

I am the eye that sees
Above the stable bare,
Man and animal
The Baby's name declare.

I weave the world a web
To send the message hence,
That from each tug of Grace
Comes sinners' recompense.

WORMS:

We are the worms concealed
Within our channel deep:
Now is our Truth revealed
While all the world's asleep.
Let us leave earthly wood
And seek the holy tree,
Therein to find our good
And live eternally.

SPIDER:

The purpose of this web
Is teaching us to be
The hinges of God's great
Potentiality.

WORMS:

The purpose of these things
With Grace our self doth cloak;
So God's vibration rings
Amid the chord of oak.

Scene 8: Song of the Baby, is the most dissonant and challenging movement for the chorus. Set for SSA/TTBB *a cappella* (except for four handbells) with a high soprano solo, it builds to a bi-tonal climax which resolves to b-flat minor and then back to the opening whole-tone handbell theme.

NARRATOR:

The baby sings a song.

SONG OF THE BABY:

O fish, green fish
Are you a part of this water?

O bird, blue bird
Are you a part of this air?
O worm, pink worm
Are you a part of this earth?

O moth, white moth
Are you a part of this flame?

O note, clear note
Are you a part of this music...

ALL:

Are some born to lead,
some follow?
Is this the law the one God gave?
Only some in dirt should wallow?
Some be master, some be slave?

These are things
I see with my eyes,
My eyes see me seeing them, too.

See the other dispensation—
All are equal in God's eye—
Those who rule in every nation
Be made subject when they die.

Thrones and jewels first descended
In the minds of hermits worn.
When the reign of kings has ended
Shall a simple Babe be born

In a place to lick and nuzzle
Here upon the stable floor--
Leaving us to stare and puzzle.
Bending to him, we adore.

Scene 9: Song of Mary, is a fitting denouement, recalling many themes from the opening movements, and a mezzo as Mary (recalling Mother Nature of the first scene), who invites all creation to join in the song (audience).

NARRATOR:

Mary sings to the Baby, and is joined by all the creatures in this place.

SONG OF MARY:

I will bend the knee of my heart
And offer the hands of my will,
For a new thing under the sun
Now doth my soul and body fill.

Arise all creatures now and shine,
Here you behold your own true light—
For a new thing under the sun
Has come to be with us this night.

Come all creation, gather here
According to Thy Song
For a new thing under the sun
Will lead us all the life long.

Libretto Notes by Jabez Van Cleef

Our culture is deeply infused with lines from old verses that create, with four beats, small universes:

*Tyger Tyger burning bright
Water water everywhere
I heard a fly buzz when I died
Oh God our help in ages past
Into my heart an air that kills
She dwelt among untrodden ways*

This may be the most familiar meter we have. I decided it's the right one for telling a story that could be equally well understood by everyone. Plain language is the best way to reach ordinary people. I think some poets make language more obscure or complicated than it needs to be as a way of including themselves in the understanding and excluding others. The rules I set for myself began with these two principles: that I would use this very familiar meter, with some variations, and that I would use the simplest possible words.

In his *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* (Second Edition), Wordsworth justified a new way of writing poetry: that by writing about ordinary people and incidents, using language as plain as possible, the emotional content would be able to shine through the words. Wordsworth believed that poetry must show particularity, not ambiguity; it must be written in the language of real people, not special poetic language; and that the essence of poetry is not in the language, but in the innermost feelings of the observer who writes the poem, which, he said, is equivalent to the voice of nature.

I believe that Wordsworth was reacting to centuries of poetic efforts to assert that beauty is equivalent to, or enhanced by, ornamentation. He wanted the expression of beauty to become more direct and fundamental.

The French art historian Emile Male, in his book *Religious Art*, describes how depictions of the nativity changed in the 12th century:

“As conceived during the later centuries of the Middle Ages, the Nativity was a scene full of humility, silence and fervor. The Newborn lay naked upon the ground, more destitute than the poorest among the children of men, while the kneeling virgin, her hands clasped, worshiped Him, and Saint Joseph looked at him with awe. The ox and ass served to recall the fact that the Son of God was born in a stable. This poor, abandoned family, ignored by the rest of the world, deeply moved the heart. In contrast, by the seventeenth century, the Child is no longer shown naked upon the ground, but wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in an ample basket full of hay. His mother kneels before him, but she does not join her hands in prayer. Rather, she draws apart the swaddling clothes to reveal the newborn Babe, showing Him to the shepherds who gaze and wonder at the Savior announced by the angel. Saint Joseph stands in the shadows, and the animals are not always in evidence.”

I noticed the absence and silence of the animals and decided to do something about it. It's easy to tell the story of Christmas as seen by animals because they were there. Even in the parts where they weren't, it's convenient to imagine other animals into existence. To me, the animals are more important than the shepherds, the townspeople or the kings, because the animals were there first. They are the first witnesses.

As the story moves along, there is a kind of gathering of forces. I like to see it as a convergence, a drawing together. So I have drawn together the virtues of Christmas by having them typified in the songs of the animals. Christmas is a time of rest from labor. The donkey, with his limited perception, understands that a moment of rest is coming. In the succeeding scenes, the animals celebrate other virtues. Christmas is a time of reconciliation, of opposites being pulled towards the same center. The dog and cat, who typify mutual aversion in our minds, are able to lay aside their differences and suggest that we all try to make friends. The cows celebrate a momentary release from oppression. The mice typify humility and express the need for all creatures to share, especially in the voice of the second mouse, who quotes directly from the Epistle of James (James 2:14-19).

In a role reversal from the usual Christmas story, the sheep wake up their shepherds and drive them to Bethlehem.

When all these creatures are gathered in the stable, the spider and worms attempt to explain the reason or "purpose" of the event. While their expression may be true, it is not complete. The essence of the birth is a mystery and cannot be expressed in terms of reason. When the baby sings to the animals, I hear the voice of God expressed for the first time as a human voice, proclaiming the mystery of its own consciousness of itself. The animals in chorus declare their equal membership in this consciousness, as part of the great community of all sentient creatures. Mary (and the Mary in every one of us) then bows before the instant of creation contained within her own flesh.

I hope the way I see this story reaches you with something new; and that the message, if there is a message, stays in your mind like a remembered tune. I have read that many people remember a metrical or musical text better than prose, through the ear rather than the eye. The hymn *Adoro Devote*, by Thomas Aquinas, here translated from the original, expresses this idea:

*Taste and touch and vision to discern Thee fail,
Faith, that comes by hearing, pierces through the veil.*

Paul Caldwell and **Sean Ivory** have been working together for several years to make fabulous arrangements of spirituals and other multi-cultural music (Harmonium performed their version of *Go Where I Send Thee* in 2002 and *John the Revelator* in 2005). They began arranging music together spontaneously in the early 1990s when they were both working with a community-based youth choir in Grand Rapids, MI. Their musical partnership was further cultivated from 1993 to 1997 during summers spent together at the American Boychoir School in Princeton, NJ. Sean currently directs the Grand Rapids Symphony Youth Chorus, and is also the choral director at Forest Hills Central High School, and an affiliate artist with the Youth Choral Theater of Chicago.

Paul is Artistic Director of the Youth Choral Theater of Chicago. They provide the following notes about *Hope for Resolution*: “In its juxtaposition of a European chant melody and an anti-apartheid song from South Africa, this piece is a celebration of diversity. The arrangement reflects our respect for divergent musical styles and points us towards our innate (though sometimes neglected) potential for peaceful coexistence.”

Of the Father's love begotten,
E'er the worlds began to be.
He is Alpha and Omega,
He the source, the Ending He.
Of the things that are, that have been,
and that future years shall see,
evermore and evermore.

Oh, that birth, forever blessed,
when the virgin, full of grace,
by the Holy Ghost conceiving,
bare the Savior of our race.
And the babe, the world's redeemer,
first revealed his sacred face,
evermore and evermore.

O ye heights of heav'n, adore him,
Angel hosts his praises sing,
Pow'rs, dominions, bow before him,
And extol our God and King.
Let no tongue on earth be silent,
ev'ry voice in concert ring
evermore and evermore.

Thula sizwe, ungabokhala,
uJehovah wakho uzokunqobela.
Inkululeko, sizoyithola,
uJehovah wakho uzokunqobela.

Nation, do not cry.
Jehovah will protect us.
We will attain freedom.
Jehovah will protect us.