

THE MYSTIC RIVER CHORALE AND MYSTIC CHAMBER SINGERS

Wonderous Love

Frank Martignetti - Conductor
Michelle Beaton - Accompanist
Silvio Interlandi - cello
M. Elizabeth Martignetti - horn

All Creatures Now John Bennet
Wondrous Love arr. Shaw/Parker

Brezo..... William P. Gorton
Isabella Zagare, soloist

“What More Do I Need?”
from *Saturday Night*..... Stephen Sondheim
Gretchen Leming, soloist

When You're Away..... Paul Sjolund

Mi Chamochah..... Allen Naplan
Isabella Zagare, soloist

Prayer of St. Ignatius Loyola..... Sandra Gay
Ubi Caritas Maurice Duruflé
Upon Your Heart Eleanor Daley

One Perfect Rose..... Paul Sjolund

Love Songs: Songs on Texts by Women Poets Libby Larsen
4. “Dear Love” (Willa Cather)
5. “At April” (Angelina Weld Grimké)

Intermission

SUNDAY, JANUARY 17, 2010 • 3:00 PM • HARKNESS CHAPEL, CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

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“The Little Things You Do Together”
from *Company*..... Stephen Sondheim
Michelle Mencer, soloist

She Moved Through the Fair Irish Folksong, arr. David Mooney
Nadine Gorrell, soloist

And So It Goes Billy Joel, arr. Kirby Shaw

Your Little Hands..... Paul Sjolund

O Mistress Mine Robert Washburn
Verano Porteño Astor Piazzola, arr. Escalada

“Not Getting Married Today”
from *Company*..... Stephen Sondheim
Gretchen Leming, soloist

Careless Talk Paul Sjolund
Heart, We Will Forget Him..... James Mulholland

In the Night We Shall Go In..... Imant Raminsh
Amor Que Une con el Amor Grandisimo..... Paul Basler
Thomas Meisenzahl, soloist

Finis

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NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

This afternoon's program is not an afternoon of love songs, or blues, or humor at love gone awry. Nor is it a program of hymns and psalms. It is a program of all of the above and more. It is songs about that "wondrous love", broadly defined—our drive and desire towards another, towards something beyond ourselves, towards the divine.

One of my favorite spiritual writers is Ronald Rolheiser, a Canadian Catholic priest. In his book *The Holy Longing*, Rolheiser discusses the fundamental human condition of desire—something written about by writers as diverse as Freud, Jung, Thérèse of Lisieux and various New Age gurus:

Whatever the expression, everyone is ultimately talking about the same thing—an unquenchable fire, a restlessness, a longing, a disquiet, a hunger, a loneliness, a gnawing nostalgia, a wildness that cannot be tamed, a congenital all-embracing ache that lies at the center of human experience and is the ultimate force that drives everything else. This dis-ease is universal....sometimes it hits us as pain-dissatisfaction, frustration, and aching. At other times it's grip is...a deep energy, as something beautiful, as an inexorable pull...toward love, beauty, creativity, and a future beyond our limited present." (4-5)

Thus, our all of our deepest and most profound longings, be they for human love, worldly success, or for a felt sense of the divine, are all at the root one and the same. Our culture tends to partition them; the desire for God is the purview of religion, while human love or drive for excellence in our endeavors has nothing to do with the divine. By contrast, this concert explores the concept of desire in its broadest form.

This program emerged from one I proposed during my initial interview with the Chorale's search committee in the fall of 2007. Little did I know then that I would get the opportunity to program this concert with the Chorale in winter 2010, that we would begin rehearsing it one week after my own wedding, or that my wife would

be joining me on the stage this afternoon. All of this only adds to my delight. As I enter my second year working with this wonderful group of people, I am truly blessed. I hope you enjoy and are touched by the fruits of our collaboration this afternoon. Please come again, and bring a friend!

Our program begins with two pieces celebrating earthly and divine love. *All Creatures Now* is an English madrigal from the Renaissance celebrating love, fertility, spring, and Queen Elizabeth I, often referred to as “Oriana.” The early American hymn *Wondrous Love* meditates on the unimaginably vast love shown by God, as Christ “laid aside His crown for my soul” so that “when from death I’m free, I’ll sing on.”

The American musical theater composer Stephen Sondheim is known for his often cynical songs about love, but in his early and long-unproduced *Saturday Night*, “What More Do I Need?” provides an ebullient and exuberant expression of newly requited love.

Punctuating our program this afternoon are a series of short musical vignettes by American composer Paul Sjölund. These pieces set satirical poems by Dorothy Parker and other lesser-known American poets. These pieces were written for the Norman Luboff Choir in 1969.

Returning to the sacred, *Mi Chamochah*, written by Allen Naplan, expresses amazement and joy at the wonders God has done. This piece was the winner of the 2001 Guild of Temple Musicians’ Young Composers Award. *Prayer of St. Ignatius* was written in 1997 by my friend and colleague Sandra Gay. Ignatius was the founder of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuit order) and this text, which he added to the second version of his famous *Spiritual Exercises*, issues a striking call for unmitigated self-giving and sacrificial love. Duruflé’s exquisite setting of the Gregorian chant *Ubi Caritas* sets the chant melody antiphonally, gently cradled by long, sustained organ-like chords. The set concludes with Canadian composer and church musician Eleanor Daley’s integration of texts from the Song of Songs and the gospel of John in her motet *Upon Your Heart*.

The first half of our program concludes with pieces by contemporary Minneapolis-based composer Libby Larsen. These *Love Songs* set five

texts looking at love from the perspective of a female poet. Each of the five is very different from the others, and this afternoon we present two of the set. In the composer's own words:

More known for her prose than her poetry, Willa Cather's deeply moving "Dear Love" is set as an adagio, a cappella in clear, rich, warm chords.

"At April" by Angelina Weld Grimké is a wild, driving dance of spring, youth, and freedom.

Our second half begins with a song from the musical *Company*, which explores marriage and relationships through a series of vignettes about Bobby, a 35-year old commitment-phobic bachelor, his three girlfriends, and his friends, five married couples. "The Little Things You Do Together" takes a sardonic view of marriage.

She Moved Through the Fair tells the story of a lost love, who visits her betrothed at night as a ghost. Hauntingly, she tells him that "it will not be long, love, 'till our wedding day." Billy Joel's famous ballad *And So It Goes* meditates on the risk one takes beginning a new relationship, even one you know is doomed from the start.

The next five pieces chronicle a relationship: the wooing, through words and dance, the fear of commitment, the slip of the tongue, and the grieving at its end. There is love, humor, and pathos along the way.

Our concert concludes with two exquisite settings of Spanish poems by the Chilean Pablo Neruda and Californian Gabriel Navar. I urge you to ponder the translations yourself as you hear this beautiful music.

— Frank Martignetti