

THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC
VASSAR COLLEGE

Vassar College Choir

Christine Howlett, *conductor*

Noah Kayser-Hirsh '19, *assistant conductor*

Yenne Lee, *guitar*

Susan Brown & James Fitzwilliam, *piano*

Saturday, April 27, 2018

8:00 PM

Skinner Recital Hall

PROGRAM

Vassar College Choir

Serenade to Music

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Shanti Fowler-Puja '22, George Luton '19, Benjamin Prud'homme '22,
Elliot Hoke '22, Caroline Loeb '21, Eli Wassertzug '22, Chris Story '22,
Georgia Hahn '21, Charlotte Katz '21, Jay Leichtman '20,
Chloe Catoya '20, Helen Johnson '21
James Fitzwilliam, *piano*



Northern Lights

Eriks Ešenvalds (b. 1977)

David Petersen '22, *tenor*
Hand chimes & water-tuned glasses

Forth From the Northern Skies (*premiere*)

George Luton (b.1997)

Emily Drossell '19, Chloe Catoya '20, *sopranos*
Susan Brown, *piano*
Christine Howlett, *conductor*



Afternoon on a Hill

Eric Barnum (b. 1979)

Tuttarana

Reena Esmail (b. 1983)

Noah Kayser-Hirsh '19, *conductor*
James Fitzwilliam, *piano*



The Lake Isle

Ola Gjeilo (b. 1978)

Yenne Lee, *guitar*

Kyungyoon Yoo '20, *violin*, Brenna McMannon '21, *violin*,

Isabel Morrison '19, *viola*, Malcolm Callagy '20, *cello*

Susan Brown, *piano*

Hands

Jocelyn Hagen (b. 1980)

Helen Johnson & George Luton, *soloists*

Christine Howlett, *conductor*

TEXTS & NOTES

Vaughan Williams composed *Serenade to Music* for conductor Sir Henry J. Wood in grateful recognition of his services to music. The piece premiered in 1938 at Royal Albert Hall with sixteen soloists who also sang the choral sections. Decades later, Leonard Bernstein conducted this piece with the New York Philharmonic for the opening of Avery Fisher Hall (now recently renamed David Geffen Hall). The soloists included some of the greatest voices of the time: Adele Addison, Lucine Amara, Eileen Farrell, Lili Chookasian, Jennie Tourel, Shirley Verrett-Carter, Charles Bressler, Richard Tucker, Jon Vickers, George London, Ezio Flagello, and Donald Bell.

Serenade to Music

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:
There's not the smallest orb that thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.
Come, ho! and wake Diana with a hymn!
With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear,
And draw her home with music.
I am never merry when I hear sweet music.
The reason is, your spirits are attentive –
The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night
And his affections dark as Erebus:
Let no such man be trusted.
Music! hark!
It is your music of the house.
Methinks it sounds much sweeter than by day.
Silence bestows that virtue on it
How many things by season season'd are

To their right praise and true perfection!
Peace, ho! the moon sleeps with Endymion
And would not be awak'd.
Soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.

- From *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare (1564-1616)



Northern Lights

Eriks Ešēnvalds viewed the northern lights in both Latvia and Norway. He spent time filming and recording images and sounds from his experience. Later, he went on to compose “Northern Lights,” a piece that uses water-tuned glasses and hand chimes to create a celestial texture of sounds. He uses three different texts: a Latvian folk song; text by American explorer Charles Francis Hall (1821-71) who wrote about his explorations; and text by Norwegian explorer and Nobel laureate Fridtjof Nansen (1861-1930) whose words are deeply musical in their descriptions of the aurora borealis.

[Based on a Latvian folk song]

Cik naksnīnas pret ziemeli
redēj' kāvus karojam,
Ē, redēj' kāvus karojam;
Karo kāvi pie debesu,
vedīs karus mūs' zemē.

*Whenever, at night, far in the north,
I saw the souls of the dead soldiers
having their battle up in the sky,
I was afraid:
What if they bring their war to my land,
too?*

Adapted from Arctic Researches and Life Among the Esquimaux, by Charles Francis Hall (New York: Harper & Brothers; 1865)

It was night, and I had gone on deck several times. Iceberg was silent; I too was silent. It was true dark and cold. At nine o'clock I was below in my cabin when the captain hailed me with the words: “Come above, Hall! Come above at once, Hall! THE WORLD IS ON FIRE!” I knew his meaning, and, quick as thought, I rushed to the companion stairs. In a moment I reached the deck, and as the cabin door swung open, a dazzling light, overpowering light burst upon my senses!

Adapted from writings of the Norwegian explorer and Nobel laureate Fridtjof Nansen (1861-1930)

Oh, the whole sky was one glowing mass of colored flames, so mighty, so brave! Like a pathway of light, the northern lights seemed to draw us into the sky. Yes, it was harp music, wild storming in the darkness; the strings trembled and sparkled in the glow of the flames like a shower of fiery darts. A fiery crown of auroral light cast a warm glow across the arctic ice. Again at times it was like softly playing, gently rocking, silvery waves, on which dreams travel into unknown worlds.



We are delighted to premiere “Forth from the Northern Skies” by George Luton ‘19. A Music and Drama double major, Luton’s composition was an outgrowth of his senior thesis in the drama department which was a full-length original musical titled *The Northern Skies* co-written by Luton and Emily Drossell. Similar to the Ešenvalds, he compiled texts from three different authors. He uses rapid key changes, dynamics, use of soloists, and a through-composed style to guide the listener through the dramatic imagery of the text.

Forth from the Northern Skies

Amid the majesty of night,
What splendid vision strikes my eyes,
In glory bursting on the sight,
Forth from the northern skies?

O’er all the widespread northern skies,
How glows and waves that heavenly light,
Magnificently bright!

O for names, thou vision fair,
To express thy splendours rare!
Where dome and arch and column rise
Forth from the northern skies.

Arctic fount of holiest light,
Springing through the winter night,
Rippling o’er the stars as streams,
O’er pebbled beds in sunny gleams.

Yet blest one gleam— one gleam like this,
When all heavens brighten in our sight,
All heavens brighten in our sight.
Arctic fount of holiest light,
Springing through the winter night,
Spreading far behind yon hill
Where the earth lies dark and still.

Nay, beauteous light, nay, light that fills
The whole heavens like a dream of morn,
She smiles to find herself reborn—

O'er all the widespread northern skies,
How glows and waves that heavenly light,
Magnificently bright!

Magnificent, yet mild, it seems,
Not dazzling as the orb of day,
More like the soft moon's silvery beams,
Its calm ethereal ray.

And the long night that was and is
And shall be, vanishes in light,
That heavenly light,
Magnificently bright!

Spreading far behind yon hill
Where the earth lies dark and still,
Rippling o'er the stars as streams,
O'er pebbled beds in sunny gleams,
O for names, thou vision fair,
To express thy splendours rare.

Where dome and arch and column rise
Forth from the northern skies!

*Stephen Greenleaf Bulfinch (1809-1870), Christopher Pearse Cranch (1813-1892),
Dina Craik (1826-1887)*

Senior music major Noah Kayser-Hirsh has studied horn and piano and has played in the Vassar College Orchestra for the past four years. We are delighted to welcome him as assistant conductor this year. He chose two dramatically different pieces to explore, the first of which is by Eric Barnum set to poetry by Vassar alumna and Pulitzer-Prize winning poet, Edna St. Vincent Millay. This is followed by Reena Esmail's vibrant *Tuttarana*. Esmail writes: "The title of this piece is a conglomeration of two words: the Italian word 'tutti', means 'all' or 'everyone', and the term 'tarana' designates a specific Hindustani (North Indian) musical form, whose closest Western counterpart is the 'scat' in jazz. Made up of rhythmic syllables, a tarana is the singer's chance to display agility and dexterity. While a Hindustani tarana is a solo form, I wanted to bring the tarana into an ensemble setting."

Afternoon on a Hill

I will be the gladdest thing

Under the sun!

I will touch a hundred flowers

And not pick one.

I will look at cliffs and clouds

With quiet eyes,

Watch the wind bow down the grass,

And the grass rise.

And when lights begin to show

Up from the town,

I will mark which must be mine,

And then start down!

- *Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)*



Ola Gjeilo's *Lake Isle* is set for 8-part chorus, piano, string quartet, and the unusual yet brilliant choice of an amplified steel-string acoustic guitar. Gjeilo writes: "Guitar is one of my absolute favorite instruments, and while acoustic guitar can sometimes be too soft to be heard properly in a choral context -- amplified, it works beautifully." We are delighted to have one of our newest faculty members, Yenne Lee, perform with us today.

Lake Isle

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee;
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

- *William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)*



Hands

Jocelyn Hagen was commissioned by the International Federation of Choral Music to write a piece for the World Choral Symposium in Barcelona in July of 2017. The theme for the symposium was “The Colors of Peace,” and she was tasked with creating a new work based on that theme, to be sung by the Vocal Art Ensemble of Sweden. In reaction to the deep divide seen in the United States and, sadly, across the globe, Hagen realized she wanted to write a piece that was about the act of uniting and coming together. The simple yet intimate gesture of holding hands was the impetus for this piece. “Hands” is a vocalise – a song without words. It can be sung on any vowel and in any style.

VASSAR COLLEGE CHOIR

Christine Howlett, *conductor*
Noah Kayser-Hirsh, *assistant conductor*
Susan Brown & James Fitzwilliam, *piano*

Soprano

Margaret Bigler '22
Chloe Catoya '20
Emily Drossell '19
Shanti Fowler-Puja '22*
Cailley Gerald-Yamasaki '21
Georgia Hahn '21*
Helen Johnson '21*
Charlotte Katz '21*
Caroline Loeb '21

Tenor

Elliot Hoke '22
Brian Hong '19
Rongzhi Hu '22
Anthony Lanzillo '22
George Luton '19*
David Petersen '22*
Benjamin Prud'homme '22*
Daniel Rosen '19
Adam Weil '22

*solo trio singers in
Serenade to Music

Alto

Penny He '22
Jay Leichtman '20
Anna Lockhart '20
Gracie Nayman '22
Emma Rys '21
Sophie Sieckmann '22*
Alison Verdesca '22*
Sarah Ziegler '22

Jennifer Gee '20 (JYA)

Bass

Noah Alpers '22
Remy Beauregard '19*
Connor Healy '22
Noah Kayser-Hirsh '19
Sam Lovell '21
Chris Story '22*
Eli Wassertzug '22*

Dong Min Jhang '20 (JYA)
William Yuze Li '20 (JYA)
Aidan Andersen '20 (JYA)

A native of South Korea, Vassar College faculty member **Yenne Lee** is a classical guitarist who enjoys playing other genres of music. By arranging and playing popular songs for the classical guitar, she wants to expand the audience base of the instrument, hoping that it will lead to more people learning it.

Her first album, *Beautiful* (2016), features her own arrangements of popular songs from the 1970's. Her second album which will be released in 2018 features her own classical interpretation of some jazz standards. The first arrangement she completed for this jazz album was *Autumn Leaves*, which she recorded a video with Guitar Salon International for their YouTube channel in 2017. The video has gotten over 10 million views as of April 2019.

She received a doctorate from Manhattan School of Music under the tutelage of the Grammy-winning musician David Starobin. Her dissertation was on Fernando Sor's fantasies and their Romantic features. She studied with Michael Newman at Mannes College of Music and has a Bachelor's degree from Seoul National University. She was a prizewinner in the Indiana International Guitar Competition in 2013 and in numerous competitions back in Korea. She recorded for Sony Classical Korea as the first guitar of Botticelli Guitar Quartet in 2008.

Her recent performances include the New York Guitar Seminar at Mannes, Vietnamese American Classical Guitar Society, and Korean American Guitar Society. She teaches guitar at Vassar College and Rutgers University Mason Gross School of the Arts Extension Division. www.yennelee.com



Please silence all cell phones or other personal electronic devices and refrain from texting. Use of these instruments will disturb other audience members and cause interference with in-house recording and webcasting.

Upcoming Skinner Concert Events

Sunday, April 28 at 3pm

Vassar College & Community Wind Ensemble

James Osborn, *conductor*

Thursday, May 2 at 8pm

Vassar College Chamber Ensembles

Eduardo Navega, *director*

Friday, May 3 at 8pm

Vassar College Orchestra

Eduardo Navega, *conductor*



Thursday, May 23 at 7:30pm

Todd Crow, piano

Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall

visit music.vassar.edu for more information

Sunday, June 9 at 3pm

Hudson Valley BachFest 20th Anniversary Season

Magnificat BWV 243 and Fürchte dich nicht BWV 228

Laura Ramsey Russell & Edward Lundergan, *conductors*

Sunday, June 30 at 3pm

The 4 B's: JS Bach, Bela Bartok, Leonard Bernstein, Derek Bermel

Jennifer Frautschi, *violin*, Moran Katz, *clarinet*, Thomas Sauer, *piano*

Saturday, July 20 at 12pm

Cappella Festiva Summer Choral Festival

Christine Howlett and Susan Bialek, *conductors*



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