

NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS

CLARA LONGSTRETH, Music Director



THE RETURN OF SONG

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2021 • 8:00PM

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2021 • 4:00PM

Broadway Presbyterian Church

Broadway and 114th Street

NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS

Clara Longstreth, MUSIC DIRECTOR

David Recca, ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR

Nathaniel Granor, CHAMBER CHORUS ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR

Pen Ying Fang, PIANO

Makoto Nakura, MARIMBA

Keith Bonner, FLUTE

The Word Was God • Rosephanye Powell (b. 1962)

Full Chorus

Quatre petites prières de Saint François d'Assise • Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Men's voices • Scott Wilson, tenor solo in No. 4

David Recca, conductor

Winter Cantata • Vincent Persichetti (1915-1987)

A Copper Pheasant

Winter's First Drizzle

Winter Seclusion

The Woodcutter

Gentlest Fall of Snow

One Umbrella

Of Crimson Ice

The Branch Is Black

Fallen Leaves

So Deep

The Wind's Whetstone

Epilogue

Women's voices • Makoto Nakura, marimba • Keith Bonner, flute

We Will Stand Up • Karen Siegel (b. 1980)

Full Chorus • Pen Ying Fang, piano

INTERMISSION

O Radiant Dawn • James MacMillan (b. 1959)

Deus in adjutorium meum (Psalm 70) • Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Wake Me Up, Lord • Uzee Brown, Jr. (b. 1950)

Nathaniel Granor, conductor

Newborn • Christmas Spiritual, arr. John W. Work (1901-1967)

Soloists: Paul Blanchard, Dana Crowell, Kate Leahy,

Michelle Neary (12/10), Jaime Leifer (12/12)

Adam lay y-bounden • Howard Skempton (b. 1947)

The Chamber Chorus

WORLD PREMIERE, COMMISSIONED BY NAS

I Go Among Trees • Robert Paterson (b. 1970)

I Go Among Trees

March in New England

The Kestrel

Soloists: Robin Beckhard, Barbara Zucker-Pinchoff, Nate Mickelson, John Weidemann

Full Chorus • Makoto Nakura, marimba

The commissioning of this piece, the final one in celebration of our 50th anniversary season, was generously underwritten by Barbara Zucker-Pinchoff and Barry Pinchoff.



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

The use of cameras (including smartphones) and recording devices during the performance is prohibited.

PROGRAM NOTES, TEXTS, AND TRANSLATIONS

Rosephanye Powell is one of America's premier composers of choral music. She is also in demand as a conductor at festivals and workshops across the world. She has received commissions from the American Choral Directors Association, Chanticleer, the St. Olaf Choir, and the American Guild of Organists, among many others. Powell received her bachelor's degree *summa cum laude* from Alabama State, her master's from Westminster Choir College, and her doctorate in vocal performance from Florida State University. She cites important influence from composers Undine Smith Moore and Florence Price.

"The Word Was God," her first published piece (1996), is now in the canon of sacred works. She wrote it for the Philander Smith Collegiate Choir in Little Rock, which her husband conducted; she was accompanist and assistant director. The simple yet striking piece, while inspired by the folk tradition of American spirituals, is not considered a spiritual itself as it was written by a single, known composer.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and
the Word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God.

All things were made by Him that have been made.

Nothing was made He has not made.

French composer **Francis Poulenc** was successful at an early age, but his early music was most often connected to the theater or ballet. As Nick Jones writes in his booklet accompanying an all-Poulenc Robert Shaw disc, "That Poulenc, the cheeky *bon vivant*, should evolve into one of our century's most celebrated composers of sacred choral music was not predicted by anyone, least of all the composer himself."

Poulenc's *Quatre petites prières de Saint François d'Assise* (Four Short Prayers of Saint Francis) for unaccompanied male choir were composed in 1948 for the monastery choir at Champfleury, where Poulenc's grand-nephew was a monk. The simple, rustic prayers (which Poulenc set in French translation) have been treated with complementary simplicity in a restrained style reminiscent of chant, much like the early *Litanies* for women's voices. The composer observed in a radio interview, "Certainly

I venerate Saint Francis, but he intimidates me a bit. In any case, in setting his marvelously touching little prayers to music, I wished to perform an act of humility. Thus, in the fourth piece, for example, a simple tenor solo is heard at the beginning, like a monk leading his brothers to prayer."

1.

Salut, Dame Sainte, reine très sainte, Mère de Dieu,
ô Marie qui êtes vierge perpétuellement, élue par le très saint Père
du Ciel, consacrée par Lui avec son très saint Fils bien aimé et
l'Esprit Paraclet,
vous en qui fut et demeure toute plénitude de grâce et tout bien!
Salut, palais; salut, tabernacle; salut, maison;
salut, vêtement; salut, servante; salut, mère de Dieu!
Et salut à vous toutes, saintes vertus qui par la grâce et l'illumination
du Saint Esprit, êtes versées dans les coeurs des fidèles et,
d'infidèles que nous sommes, nous rendez fidèles à Dieu!

*Hail Holy Lady, most holy queen, mother of God,
Mary ever a virgin, chosen by the most holy Father of Heaven, consecrated
by Him with his most holy and most beloved Son and the Holy Paraclete,
thou in whom was vested and remains the fullness of grace and all good!
Hail, palace; hail, tabernacle, hail, dwelling-place;
hail, raiment, hail, handmaid, hail, mother of God!
And hail to all ye holy virtues who, by the grace and inspiration of the Holy
Spirit are poured into the hearts of the faithful and make us, faithless as
we are, faithful to God!*

2.

Tout puissant, très saint, très haut et souverain Dieu; souverain bien,
bien universel, bien total;
toi qui seul est bon;
puissions-nous te rendre toute louange, toute gloire, toute
reconnaissance, tout honneur, toute bénédiction;
puissions-nous te rapporter toujours à toi tous les biens. Amen.

*Almighty, most holy, most high and sovereign God, sovereign, universal
and total good;
Thou who alone art good,
may we offer Thee all praise, all glory, all gratitude, all honour, all blessing;
may we always bring to Thee everything that is good. Amen.*

3.

Seigneur, je vous en prie,
que la force brûlante et douce de votre amour absorbe mon âme et
la retire de tout ce qui est sous le ciel
afin que je meure par amour de votre amour, puisque vous avez
daigné mourir par amour de mon amour.

*Lord, I beg Thee,
let the burning and gentle force of Thy love pervade my soul and withdraw
it from all that is beneath Heaven,
that I might die through love of Thy love,
since Thou didst deign to die through love of my love.*

4.

O mes très chers frères
et mes enfants bénis pour toute l'éternité,
écoutez-moi, écoutez la voix de votre Père:
Nous avons promis de grandes choses, on nous en a promis de plus
grandes; gardons les unes et soupignons après les autres;
Le plaisir est court, la peine éternelle. La souffrance est légère, la
gloire infinie.
Beaucoup sont appelés, peu sont élus, tous recevront ce qu'ils auront
mérité. Ainsi soit-il.

*Dearest brethren,
children blest for all eternity,
listen to me, listen to the voice of your Father:
We have promised great things, we have been promised even greater
things; let us keep the ones and long for the others.
Pleasure is short-lived, pain is eternal. Suffering is light, glory is infinite.
Many are called but few are chosen, and all shall receive what they deserve.
Amen.*

Translations: Tony Whelpton

Vincent Persichetti is one of America's most prolific and widely performed composers. He wrote in a wide variety of forms, including nine symphonies, operas, chamber and keyboard music, and works for opera, band, and chorus. He received commissions from the country's leading orchestras and honors from many foundations, and taught at The Juilliard School for forty years. His biographer in *Grove's Dictionary of American Music* cites his "mastery of compositional technique perhaps unequaled by any American composer" as well as his "propensity for lucid textures...a playful rhythmic vitality, and a pervasive geniality of spirit."

Persichetti's 1964 *Winter Cantata* is unusual in both text and medium. Eleven haikus in translation from the Japanese are set in twelve movements for women's voices, flute, and marimba. Musicologist Walter Simmons writes of the piece, "The work is Japanese in spirit, largely as a result of its own delicate, highly concentrated gestures. The coolness of the flute and the brittleness of the marimba evoke the winter moods and images of the poem."

The work opens with a single tone for flute set against a tone cluster for marimba. This cluster of notes consists of the first five notes of a Phrygian scale (a minor scale with a lowered second), which is a prominent musical motif in two movements. Another motif linking movements is the leap of a minor seventh. The last movement summarizes all that has preceded, with brief quotations from each movement heard in sequence, all woven into a remarkably coherent musical and poetic synthesis. Simmons calls the epilogue a "compositional tour de force."

1. A COPPER PHEASANT

A copper pheasant wakes with shrill-edged cry:
The silver crescent cuts the chilly sky.

Kikaku

2. WINTER'S FIRST DRIZZLE

Winter's first drizzle falls,
The air is raw,
That shivering monkey needs a cape of straw.

Bashô

3. WINTER SECLUSION

Winter seclusion:
on the window pane,
The silver fern of frost has grown again.

Hô-ô

4. THE WOODCUTTER

Within the wintry grove,
my axe-head fell
And bit the bark
how startling was its smell!

Buson

5. GENTLEST FALL OF SNOW

Ah! the first,
the gentlest fall of snow:
Enough to make the jonquil leaves bend low.

Bashô

6. ONE UMBRELLA

One umbrella,
as snowy dusk draws on,
Has come;
one umbrella has come,
and passes by;
and now is gone.

Yaha

7. OF CRIMSON ICE

The rime has frozen overnight
to gems of crimson ice along the buckwheat stems.

Rankô

8. THE BRANCH IS BLACK

The branch is black and bare again;
a crow shook down its coverlet of powdered snow.

Hô-ô

9. FALLEN LEAVES

The winter's fitful gusts, as they expire,
Bring enough fallen leaves to build a fire.

Ryôkon

10. SO DEEP

So deep, the heavy snow since yesterday,
Its drifts remain
Sweep, sweep as you may.

Lzembô

11. THE WIND'S WHETSTONE

Through jagged cedars rips the winter blast,
honed on the cragged ledges as it passed.

Bashô

12. EPILOGUE

A copper pheasant...

Winter's drizzle falls...

seclusion...

within the wintry grove...

Ah! the first, the gentlest fall of snow...

one umbrella...

the rime has frozen...

a crow shook down its coverlet to build a fire ...

so deep...

through jagged cedars...

as it passed.

Misc.

(Texts from Net of Fireflies, translated by Harold Stewart, reprinted by special permission from the Charles E. Tuttle Co, Inc. of Rutland, Vermont, and Tokyo, Japan.)

Composer **Karen Siegel** creates innovative, exciting, and meaningful choral and vocal works. Siegel pioneered live remote choral singing during the COVID-19 pandemic, composing commissions for the medium and leading workshops in online singing. Her works are frequently performed by C4: the Choral Composer/Conductor Collective, which she co-founded in 2005. Siegel's works are featured on albums by the Harmonium Choral Society, the Choir of Trinity College Melbourne, Tonality, and C4; and are published by See-A-Dot, Chestnutoak Press, and the Justice Choir Songbook. Upcoming performances include the Astoria Choir premiering the choral sound installation *Lessons of Stone*, June 2021 at the Noguchi Gallery in Long Island City; and Oxford Opera performing the UK premiere of *The Hat*, a one-act opera with libretto by Zsuzsanna Ardó about the meeting of Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger, November 2022 at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. www.karensiegel.com

Karen Siegel writes: *Inspired by the youth plaintiffs in Juliana vs. the United States who have sued the federal government for infringing on their right to a stable climate, "We Will Stand Up" celebrates the initiative and*

determination of the young activists fighting against climate change.

The piece was commissioned jointly by the ten choirs in the "We Will Stand Up" Commissioning Consortium, and originally scheduled to be premiered March through December 2020 in Arizona, California, Connecticut, Georgia, Massachusetts, New York, Washington State and Wisconsin; all premieres were cancelled due to the pandemic, and some were rescheduled for October through December 2021.

Yes, we will stand up to protect our earth.

Yes, we will stand up to protect our oceans.

Yes, we will stand up to protect our atmosphere.

Yes, we will stand up to protect our future.

We will bring change.

We will bring hope.

We have a right

To a stable climate.

Yes, we will stand up to protect our earth.

Yes, we will stand up to protect our oceans.

Yes, we will stand up to protect our atmosphere.

Yes, we will stand up to protect our future.

Yes!

—Karen Siegel, inspired by the youth plaintiffs in *Juliana vs. the US*

James MacMillan is the leading Scottish composer, with an international career and a catalog of over 200 works in many forms. His operas have been commissioned by the Welsh National Opera, the London Symphony Orchestra, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. His percussion concerto has received 500 performances worldwide. Among the recent highlights of his choral music are *Stabat Mater*, commissioned by The Sixteen and streamed from the Sistine Chapel, and a 40-voice motet, *Vidi Aquam*, streamed in 2021 by NTR Dutch Radio from the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam.

"O Radiant Dawn," written in 2007, is one of fourteen motets written for the Strathclyde University Chamber Choir. The text is taken from the fifth "O Antiphon," part of a group of seven antiphons recited or chanted during vespers, December 17-23.

O Radiant Dawn
Splendour of eternal light
Sun of Justice:
Come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of
death.

Isaiah had prophesied, 'The people who walked in darkness have
seen a great light;
Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone.'
Amen.

Benjamin Britten is the foremost British composer of his time, and probably of all time. His *Deus in adjutorium meum*, an a cappella setting of Psalm 70, was written in 1945 as introductory music for a play by Ronald Duncan, *This Way to the Tomb*, which was staged as a masque and anti-masque. The subject of the masque was the temptation of St. Anthony, a Christian monk and ascetic, and the anti-masque included 1940s pop music.

Psalm 70 is a lament, a prayer for deliverance from personal enemies. In the opening section, men's and women's voices echo the melody in a canon, with entrances piling up as the plea becomes more insistent. Britten uses canon again for "Avertantur" and ends with slithery major/minor harmonies depicting the enemies who gloat over the psalmist. The central section of the work is a quiet, radiant song of praise, "Magnificetur." Another plea for God's help follows, and the piece closes with the melody from the first section heard in canon between soprano and tenor, while the alto and bass voices are heard in a repeated ostinato pattern.

Deus in adjutorium meum intende,
Domine ad adjuvandum me festina.
Confundantur et revereantur,
Qui quaerunt animam meam.
Avertantur retrorsum, et erubescant,
Qui volunt mihi mala.
Avertantur statim, erubescences,
Qui dicunt mihi: Euge.

Exsultent et laetentur in te omnes qui quaerunt te,
Et dicant semper: Magnificetur Dominus: Qui diligunt salutare tuum.

Ego vero egenus et pauper sum:
Deus adjuva me.
Adjutor meus et liberator meus es tu:
Domine ne moreris, ne moreris.
Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto.
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper.
Et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

*Make haste, O God, to deliver me;
Make haste to help me, O Lord.
Let them be ashamed and confounded
That seek after my soul.
Let them be turned backward and put to confusion
that desire my hurt.
Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame
that say, "Aha, aha."*

*Let all that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee;
And let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified.
But I am poor and needy:
Make haste unto me, O God,
Thou art my help and my deliverer.
Glory to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost,
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever
shall be for ever and ever. Amen.*

It would be easy to mistake "Wake Me Up, Lord" for a traditional African American spiritual dating back hundreds of years. Published in 1995, with music by Uzee Brown Jr. and lyrics by Ja A. Jahannes, this composition features musical and textual hallmarks of the genre, including a penchant for hidden complexity.

Uzee Brown Jr. left his small town of Cowpens, SC in 1972 to enroll at Morehouse University with the intention of studying medicine. After a whirlwind freshman year of singing and touring with the Morehouse Glee Club under Wendell Whalum, Brown found his calling in the study of music. Brown is a noted operatic performer, educator, conductor, and composer. For 12 years, he led the famed choir at Ebenezer Baptist Church (where Martin Luther King Jr. served as co-pastor decades before). His music has been featured in Spike Lee films, and he was commissioned to compose a setting of "We Shall Overcome" as part

of NPR's global celebration of Dr. King's 70th birthday in 1999. Brown's compositions center on and elevate African American music, especially spirituals. He currently serves as chair of the Department of Music at Morehouse College and is founder/director of the Uzee Brown Society of Choraliers.

In a 2020 interview, Brown described the power of religious music to function beyond entertainment, "as therapy, as a kind of balm for things in life that don't go right." Later, in discussing spirituals, he raised the importance of lyrics. "Never underestimate the profundity of what may seem to be a simple message on the surface. That was the same mistake that was made by the slave owners during the days of slavery when they failed to understand the multiple layers of dialogue that were taking place in these simple songs."

Ja A. Jahannes's work includes poems, articles, oratorios, libretti for opera and symphony, and lyrics for over 100 songs. As an early pioneer in the field of Black psychology, Jahannes taught in several universities across Africa, and for many years as a professor at Savannah State University in Georgia. He was also the pastor at Savannah's Abyssinia Missionary Baptist Church. About "Wake Me Up, Lord," Jahannes wrote that the text "was intended for my musical play, Yes, Lord. It was a funeral song to be sung at the death of the protagonist, a famous minister, to signal that death is not final, but there is the promise of eternal life."

In a 2014 Martin Luther King Day address, Jahannes recalled the popular and folk music of the 1960s and '70s that propelled the movements for justice and civil rights. "There were secret codes in the words of [that] music. Those codes were invented in the music, in the rhythms, just like during the period of enslavement when we sang songs like 'Steal Away' and 'Down by the Riverside.'"

As you listen to "Wake Me Up, Lord," we invite you to examine the music and lyrics – simple and repetitive on the surface – for multiple meanings.

– *Nathaniel Granor*

**Wake me up, Lord, when it's over.
When the shouting is done and the course is run,
Wake me up, Lord, when it's over.
When your promise is fulfilled, and your Child has come home,
Wake me up, Lord, when it's over.**

John Wesley Work, born to a family of professional musicians, was a distinguished composer, educator, choral director, and ethno-musicologist. He studied at Fisk University, Columbia University and The Juilliard School, and later received an honorary doctorate from Fisk. He directed the Jubilee Singers from 1947-1956 and taught at Fisk until his retirement in 1966. (Clara Longstreth's parents counted John Work a family friend in the 1950s.)

Fisk and the Library of Congress sponsored field studies in 1941-42 that documented African-American culture and music in the Mississippi Delta Region. John Work co-directed these studies.

"Newborn" was published as a Christmas spiritual, arranged by John W. Work.

Newborn! Newborn!
O my good Lord.
Newborn Baby born in a manger
Tell all the members you're New Born.

Baby born in Bethlehem
O my good Lord.
Jesus born the Son of Man!
Tell all the members you're New Born.

Star in the east on Christmas morn
O my good Lord.
Lead us where our Jesus is born
Tell all the members you're New Born.

Wasn't that a mighty day
O my good Lord.
Little Jesus born to show me the way!
Tell all the members you're New Born.

Wise men came to see the sight
O my good Lord.
Mary and her Baby in Holy Light,
Tell all the members you're New Born.

English composer **Howard Skempton** used an anonymous English carol for his spritely carol, "Adam lay y-bounden." This piece is one of two dozen choral works by Skempton, an interesting figure who was a composer and performer on piano and accordion. Musicologist Hermann-Christoph Müller has described Skempton's music as "the emancipation of the consonance." Skempton was known for his emphasis on melody, yet he organized the Scratch Orchestra, dedicated to performing experimental contemporary music, including works of John Cage. He wrote chamber music, songs, piano work, and several orchestral compositions, including a concerto for hurdy-gurdy and percussion.

Adam lay y-bounden
Bounden in a bond;
Four thousand winter
Thought he not too long.

And all was for an apple
An apple that he took
As clerkés finden written
In their-é book.

Ne had the apple taken been
The apple taken been
Ne haddé never our Lady
A been heaven's queen.

Blessed be the time
That apple taken was!
Therefore we may singen
Deo Gratias!

Robert Paterson has won awards for his music in virtually every classical genre. The Classical Recording Foundation at Carnegie's Weill Hall named Paterson Composer of the Year in 2011, and his works have appeared on National Public Radio's Best of the Year lists for classical music and regularly feature on radio playlists across the United States. *AXS.com* calls him "a modern day master" and *The New York Times* called his "Lux Aeterna" the "highlight of the program."

Paterson's music has been performed by over one hundred choirs and ensembles, including Musica Sacra in NYC, the Chamber Choir

of Europe, Atlanta Master Chorale, Albany Pro Musica, The Esoterics, Nashville Opera, Minnesota Orchestra, American Composers Orchestra, Vermont Symphony Orchestra, Delaware Symphony, Austin Symphony, Louisville Orchestra, Buffalo Philharmonic, and the American Modern Ensemble.

Recent commissions include *Listen* for the Ember Choral Ensemble, *Ghost Theater* for the Albany Symphony, and a consortium commission from the Eastman Wind Ensemble and eleven other wind ensembles for a new work to be premiered in 2021. Paterson's debut choral album, *Eternal Reflections*, was released by Musica Sacra and Maestro Kent Tritle in 2015.

Paterson's awards include the A.I. duPont Composer's Award from the Delaware Symphony, a three-year Music Alive grant from the League of American Orchestras and New Music USA, and fellowships to Yaddo, the MacDowell Colony, Aspen Music Festival, the Atlantic Center for the Arts, and the Copland House.

In 2005, Paterson founded the American Modern Ensemble (AME), which spotlights contemporary music via lively thematic programming. He serves as artistic director for AME as well as house composer, frequently contributing new pieces to the ensemble. In 2018, Paterson co-founded the Mostly Modern Festival (MMF), an annual, three-week summer music festival at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, NY that highlights contemporary music. He also founded American Modern Recordings (AMR), an affiliated record label that is distributed by NAXOS. Paterson's recordings are also featured on the Capstone, Centaur, Summit, and Riax labels.

Born in 1970, Paterson was raised in Buffalo, New York, the son of a sculptor and a painter. Although his first love was percussion, he soon discovered a passion for composition, writing his first piece at age thirteen. In the late 1980s, Paterson pioneered the development of a six-mallet marimba technique, and he has written numerous pieces utilizing this technique. He released the first-ever album of six-mallet music, *Six Mallet Marimba* in 2012 (AMR) at a sold-out show at the Rubin Museum in Chelsea, NYC.

Paterson holds degrees from the Eastman School of Music (BM), Indiana University (MM), and Cornell University (DMA) and has given master classes at numerous colleges and universities. He resides in New York City with his wife, Victoria, and son, Dylan. For more information, visit robertpaterson.com.

Here are the composer's notes on *I Go Among Trees*:

Perhaps because I have fond memories of hiking in the Adirondack Mountains when I was young, I have always been drawn to forests and meadows. There is something deeply satisfying about spending time among trees, meadows, and in nature, and away from the urban environment. I Go Among Trees consists of settings of three poems that celebrate this terrain, and the poets I chose all express a profound affection for the natural world in their writings.

The first movement, I Go Among Trees, is a setting of a poem from a book of poetry entitled A Timbered Choir by Wendell Berry. In this contemplative, zen-like poem, Berry expresses the meditative feelings of being alone among the trees, and of being afraid and experiencing fear, all while using the metaphor of singing and songs to express a connection to both the outside world and feelings inside oneself. By the end of the poem, the narrator is able to let go and is at peace with these feelings.

The second movement, March in New England, is based on the poem of the same name by May Sarton. The scene describes the transition from the colder, harsher months of winter, to the greener, more colorful months of spring. The words in the final stanza, with the image of rushing "to break the trees open" and the "torrents of English spring" help to provide a climactic ending to the movement.

The poem for the final movement, The Kestrel, is by the English poet John Frederick Freeman, and was suggested to me by Barbara Zucker-Pinchoff. Barbara liked the poem because it reminded her of the meadows around her family's country house, and specifically of the kestrels that take up residence there. The percussive sounds the choir makes remind me of kestrels flapping their wings. Barbara was kind enough to invite me and my family out to her house, so I saw the meadow with my own eyes, and this helped provide inspiration.

I Go Among Trees was commissioned by the New Amsterdam Singers, Clara Longstreth, Music Director, in honor of the chorus' 50th Anniversary and the 65th Birthday of Barbara Zucker-Pinchoff.

– Robert Paterson

I. I GO AMONG TREES

I go among trees and sit still.
All my stirring becomes quiet
around me like circles on water.
My tasks lie in their places
where I left them, asleep like cattle.

Then what is afraid of me comes
and lives a while in my sight.
What it fears in me leaves me,
and the fear of me leaves it.
It sings, and I hear its song.

Then what I am afraid of comes.
I live for a while in its sight.
What I fear in it leaves it,
and the fear of it leaves me.
It sings, and I hear its song.

After days of labor,
mute in my consternations,
I hear my song at last,
and I sing it. As we sing,
the day turns, the trees move.

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II. MARCH IN NEW ENGLAND

Here in New England where the ice still grips
And pussy willows have not put on fur,
The masts are earthbound of the sleeping ships,
And only clammers on the beaches stir.
All seems exhausted by its own withholding,
Its own withstanding. There is no unfolding.
Even the new moon promises no better
Than a thin joke about much colder weather.

This harsh world locks itself up in the season.
It is clearly not the time and not the place

To ask for summer love, for more than reason,
To hope to lift the cloud from any face.
Look at the trees, how even they determine
To hold their leaves back under the tough skin.
"Keep snug" is their advice, and they endure,
For frost is on the way again for sure.

Yet in New England before spring I've seen
The sea unfold as sumptuous as silk,
Have watched the cold world tilt back into green,
And watched the waves spill out like foaming milk—
Till the eye, starved for color and for light,
Wept at such majesty beside such blight,
Would rush to break trees open, and to bring
To this locked world torrents of English spring!

March in New England by May Sarton, from *Collected poems: 1930-1993*.
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III. THE KESTREL

In a great western wind we climbed the hill
And saw the clouds run up, ride high and sink;
And there were shadows running at our feet
Till it seemed the very earth could not sit still,
Nor could our hearts be still, nor could we think
Our hearts could ever be still, our thought less fleet
Than the dizzy clouds, less than the flying wind.
Eastward the valley and the dark steep hill
And other hills and valleys lost behind
In mist and light. The hedges were not yet bare
Though the wind picked at them as he went by.
The woods were fire, a fire that dense or clear
Burned steady, but could not burn up the shadows
Rooted where the trees' roots entangled lie,
In darkness; or a flame burned solitary
In the middle of the highest of brown meadows,
Burned solitary and unconsuming where
A red tree stooped to its black shadow and
The kestrel's shadow hunted the kestrel up the hill.

We climbed, and as we stood (where yet we stand
And of the visioned sun and shadow still drink)
Happiness like a shadow chased our thought
That tossed on free wings up and down the world;
Till by that wild swift-darting shadow caught
Our free spirits their free pinions furled.
Then as the kestrel began once more the heavens to climb
A new-winged spirit rose clear above the hills of time.

By John Freeman, from Wild Heart, in the public domain

Notes © Clara Longstreth 2021

Thanks to Nathaniel Granor, who contributed the notes on "Wake Me Up, Lord."

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 "Our Music").

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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 can be made online (nasingers.org/support-nas) or mailed to New Amsterdam Singers, Inc., P.O. Box 373, Cathedral Station, New York, NY 10025. A copy of our latest annual report is available upon written request.

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We mourn the passing of chorus members Scott Gillam and Mike Zimmerman since our previous public concert.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS, now in its fifty-fourth 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.

In addition to the works by Carol Barnett, Lisa Bielawa, and Ben Moore commissioned for the group's fiftieth anniversary, recent world premieres include compositions by Matthew Harris, Paul Alan Levi, Elizabeth Lim, Robert Paterson, and Ronald Perera. American and New York City premieres in the previous decade included works by Robert Paterson, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Matthew Harris, Abbie Betinis, Steven Stucky, Kirke Mechem, Steven Sametz, Kitty Brazelton, Clare Maclean, Alex Weiser, Sheena Phillips, and Judith Shatin. In 2016 NAS performed Frank Martin's oratorio *Golgotha* with professional orchestra and soloists as guests of Trinity Church Wall Street. This concert, under the direction of Clara Longstreth, marked the first time the work was heard in New York City in over sixty years.

NAS has 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. NAS appeared with Anonymous Four and the Concordia Orchestra in Richard Einhorn's *Voices of Light* at Avery Fisher Hall, under Marin Alsop, in 1999; in 2006 NAS performed *Voices of Light* at the Winter Garden of the World Financial Center, with Anonymous Four and Ensemble Sospeso under David Hattner, for broadcast on WNYC's *New Sounds*.

NAS has appeared 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. On recent tours the chorus appeared in Turkey, Scandinavia, Croatia, Spain, Russia and the Baltics, Argentina and Uruguay, South Africa, Greece, Iceland, and Denmark, and most recently in Bulgaria in 2019. In 2010 NAS was pleased to receive permission from the State and Treasury Departments to tour Cuba on a cultural visa.

Clara Longstreth is the founder and Music Director of New Amsterdam Singers and has led the group for its past fifty-four seasons. Under her direction, NAS has become known as one of the premier avocational choruses in New York City. 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."

Ms. Longstreth studied conducting with G. Wallace Woodworth at Harvard University and with Richard Westenburg at the Juilliard School, from which she received her Master's Degree. She also studied with Amy Kaiser and Semyon Bychkov at the Mannes College of Music, and with Helmuth Rilling at the Oregon Bach Festival. Ms. Longstreth has been a frequent adjudicator at choral conferences, and was selected to present a lecture-demonstration on "Adventures in Programming" at the Eastern Division Convention of the American Choral Directors Association. In 2009 she received an Alumnae Recognition Award from Radcliffe College for her founding and longtime direction of New Amsterdam Singers. Ms. Longstreth has also served on the faculty of Rutgers University, and as a guest conductor of the Limón Dance Company, the Mannes College Orchestra, and the popular Messiah Sing-In performances at Avery Fisher Hall.

Makoto Nakura is a marimbist whose artistry and virtuosity have been mesmerizing audiences for more than a quarter of a century. In 1994, Makoto moved from his native Japan to New York City, becoming the first marimbist to win first prize in the prestigious Young Concert Artists International Auditions. His critically acclaimed performances around the world have included venues in London, Paris, Berlin, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Seoul, Montreal, Mexico City, Sao Paulo and Buenos Aires.

In the U.S., he has performed for audiences in 41 of the 50 states, with orchestras such as the New York Chamber Symphony, the Chicago Sinfonietta and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra; as a recital soloist, his long list of appearances includes Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall and Washington's Kennedy Center. A television portrait of Nakura was shown on CBS News Sunday Morning throughout the U.S.

Born in Kobe, Japan, Nakura began to play the marimba at the age of eight. He earned both Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Musashino College in Tokyo and continued his studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London from which he was named an Associate.

His latest CD, *Tears and Prayers*, won the “New Prominent Master” award from the Japan Association of Professional Recording Studios in 2019. His other solo CDs include four discs devoted to works especially written for him (*Ritual Protocol*, *Triple Jump*, *Tsuneya Tanabe Works for Marimba*, and *Wood and Forest*) and two discs of the transcriptions of Bach (*Bach Beat* and *Bach Beat II*).

Keith Bonner has performed in a wide variety of ensembles, ranging from symphony and opera orchestras to small chamber groups as well as Broadway shows, movies, and television. He is currently principal flute of both the Greater Bridgeport Symphony and Riverside Symphony as well as a member of the Borealis Wind Quintet. He performs regularly with the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, the New Jersey and Stamford (CT) Symphony Orchestras, and the New York City Ballet Orchestra. As soloist, Bonner has performed concertos by Nielsen (Lincoln Center), Gluck, Telemann, Bach, Doppler and Mozart with various orchestras in the New York metropolitan area and across Japan with the New York Symphonic Ensemble. He has also performed much chamber music for flute with the Lenape Chamber Ensemble, Harlem Chamber Players, Carolina Chamber Music Festival, and Wind Soloists of New York.

Bonner maintains an active freelance career in New York City and has played in the Broadway pits of over a dozen productions. He has been on the teaching faculty of Brooklyn College and the 92nd Street Y and currently teaches flute at the Special Music School and is on the coaching faculty of the New York Youth Symphony. He was a board member of the New York Flute Club from 2006 until 2012. Bonner holds a bachelor’s degree from the Manhattan School of Music and a Professional Studies Diploma from the Cleveland Institute of Music.

David Recca is a lecturer at the Conservatory of Music at Purchase College, SUNY, where he directs the Purchase Chorus and Purchase Chamber Singers; is a frequent guest conductor of the Purchase Symphony Orchestra; and teaches a variety of undergraduate courses including music history, music theory, ear training, and conducting. He is the newly appointed Artistic Director of the New York City Master Chorale. He is also the Artistic Director of the Southern Connecticut Camerata, and the Assistant Music Director of the New Amsterdam Singers. He has served as assistant conductor to Mercury Opera

Rochester, principal assistant conductor to the Yale Camerata, and artistic director to Madrigalia Via, whose performances were hailed as "sinfully blissful" by the Wall Street Journal. He has prepared choirs for conductors such as Helmuth Rilling, David Hill, Masaaki Suzuki, Simon Carrington, Erwin Ortner, and Sir Gilbert Levine. He holds a Doctorate of Musical Arts degree in Choral Conducting from the Yale School of Music, a Master of Music degree in Choral Conducting from the Eastman School of Music, and a Performer's Certificate in Vocal Coaching and a Bachelor of Music degree in Composition from Purchase College.

Pen Ying Fang studied with Paul Hoffmann and Barbara Gonzalez-Palmer, earning B.M. and M.M. Degrees 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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