

SPRING 2024  
York County Choral Society  
PRESENTS MUSIC FROM

*the Heart  
of  
America*

BY COPLAND, THOMPSON, WALKER, HOGAN & OTHERS

Sunday, April 14 at 4:00pm  
Unity Presbyterian Church





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## GREETINGS FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Good afternoon, Friends and Patrons of York County Choral Society (YCCS),

We are honored that you have joined us this glorious April afternoon to share in a wonderful musical experience – *Music from the Heart of America*. Set in the beautiful sanctuary of Unity Presbyterian Church, we know you will experience a meaningful and artistic concert performed by 66 dedicated and talented singers from York County and surrounding areas.

Following the highly acclaimed and sold-out inaugural December 2023 concert, Co-Artistic Directors Elizabeth Mixon and Randy Imler are serving as only the third directorship in 42 seasons. Founded in 1981-82 by Drs. David Lowry and Shirley Fishburne, YCCS continues our distinguished history as one of the most successful and long-standing performance groups in our area.

Our sincere appreciation is extended to YCCS patrons and business sponsors. We are performing today only with your support! And a special welcome to our new benefactors! Since last spring, our total number of patrons has increased 31% and we now pair with 18 local business sponsors. We invite others to join us. Please consider making a powerful investment in the arts and culture of our community.

To learn more about this uniquely successful organization, please visit our website - [yorkcountychoralsociety.org](http://yorkcountychoralsociety.org)- for future performance information, patron levels, auditions for singers and more.

With warmest regards and great appreciation to our musicians, supporters, and volunteers,

*Kimberly Lee*  
President, York County Choral Society

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## A Letter From the Artistic Directors

In the great “melting pot” of the United States, *Music from the Heart of America* is both unique to our land and an amalgamation of styles and genres of music from across the globe. Today we are proud to present three distinct types of American music: art music from the 20th and 21st centuries, arrangements of shape-note tunes originating in the 19th century, and concert arrangements of African American spirituals. The composers and arrangers featured in today’s concert are Americans, and the harmonies, textures, and rhythms you will hear in their music are easily identifiable as possessing a uniquely “American” sound. Following is a brief introduction to each type of music featured in today’s concert.

### **American Art Music:**

Over the past 150 years, American classical and art music composers increasingly have become known and respected internationally for their vocal, choral, instrumental, and orchestral music. Today we feature the music of Aaron Copland, Randall Thompson, Samuel Barber, and Florence Price. Each composer has earned an important place in the canon of American art music, and the program notes will provide additional background about these ground-breaking individuals.

As American jazz, blues, and gospel were exported to European dancehalls during, between, and following the world wars of the 20th century, American art music began its journey to international concert venues as well. Following World War II, as the United States assumed a leadership role with European reconstruction, this evolution continued, with American art music being well-received. Today, composers like Copland and Bernstein easily take their places in the concert hall alongside European counterparts like Vaughan Williams, Sibelius, and Holst, who, notably, wrote music based upon melodies and music of their home countries.

### **Shape-Note Tune Arrangements:**

An early music literacy system, later called solfège, originated in Italy in the 11th century. In America, the New England singing schools of the early 19th century adapted a version of this system with the use of uniquely shaped music note heads that corresponded to the notes of a diatonic scale, a scale of seven notes – five whole steps and two half steps – arranged in a specific pattern. “Singing masters” taught this music literacy system, and eventually this method of music learning migrated to the southern states. Also known as “fa-sol-la” singing, each shape-note had a unique name (i.e. “fa”). In the four-note system, the first three note names and shapes were repeated (fa-sol-la-fa-sol-la-mi), and the second set was followed by “mi” or the leading tone to the tonic of the scale.

Shape-note tune books evolved from this system of music reading, and two of the most popular tune books were *Southern Harmony* (600,000+ copies sold), compiled by William Walker of Union and Spartanburg counties in SC, and *Sacred Harp*, compiled by B.F. White, of Spartanburg, SC, and Atlanta, GA.

A majority of *Southern Harmony* tunes were written in three voice parts, with altos and tenors doubling the middle melody line, while most of the *Sacred Harp* tunes were written in four voice parts. The literary themes of these tunes ran the gamut from Biblical laments of grief and suffering to joyful expectation of redemption and heavenly rest. Still in practice today, shape-note tune

singing is unique in that the singers divide into voice parts and face each other in a square, with a song leader in the middle. Singing a cappella, the participants sing the shape-note tune first using fa-sol-la syllables and then repeat the tune using the song's text.

Many of the shape-note tunes included in these tune books have been used as source material for 20th and 21st century choral and orchestral compositions, and over time, this music has become a part of mainstream American classical and concert music. Several of today's concert selections originated in a shape-note tune book. In these instances, the program indicates the tune book as well as the tune's choral or instrumental arranger. More information about shape-note singing and common practice may be found in *A Beginner's Guide to Shape-Note Singing*, by Lisa Grayson, Fifth Edition, 2012.

### **Concert Arrangements of African American Spirituals:**

The African American spiritual, also known as "spiritual," is a song born out of the struggle of enslaved people in the United States. With rhythms and melodies often originating in Africa or the Caribbean, spirituals regularly included Biblical references or stories and were learned and passed to succeeding generations orally. Additionally, subtexts and hidden messages, which only the singers understood, were embedded frequently. Work songs, jubilee songs, call and response songs, sorrow songs, and freedom songs were just some of the types of spirituals that were sung.

In the 1870s, the Fisk Jubilee Singers was the first group to concertize spirituals, bringing attention and international renown to this genre of American music. R. Nathaniel Dett and Harry Burleigh were two of the first composers to write such concert arrangements. In 1929, Burleigh published *Jubilee Songs of the United States*, and, interestingly, he also introduced European composer Antonin Dvořák to spirituals. William Dawson and Jester Hairston made significant contributions to the concertized spiritual arrangement as well. As the 20th century progressed, many sacred and secular musicians blurred compositional boundaries by borrowing and incorporating each other's stylistic nuances into their music. Hence, music styles such as rhythm and blues, jazz, gospel, and even hip-hop may be considered derivative genres of the spiritual.

Hall Johnson and Margaret Bonds are representative of a second generation of concert spiritual composers in the early-mid 20th century. Arguably one of the most well-known composers of spirituals from the late 20th century is Moses Hogan, whose arrangements challenge choral ensembles and thrill audiences. Among others, Uzee Brown, Jr., Undine Smith Moore, André Thomas, Raymond Wise, Rosephanye Powell, Rollo Dilworth, Victor Johnson, and Stacey Gibbs continue the concert spiritual tradition into the 21st century.

### **Conclusion**

While certainly not representative of all sources of choral music composed by Americans, the preceding types of choral music presented in today's program offer a "homegrown" musical perspective which spans the previous two centuries. The York County Choral Society hopes you enjoy this concert originating from the *Heart of America*.

*Elizabeth Mixon and Randy Imler*



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**York County Choral Society Presents**

*Music from*

*the Heart  
of  
America*

**Prelude**

**There is a Happy Land**

HAPPY LAND  
adapted Leonard P. Breedlove  
(b. circa 1803)  
arr George Shearing  
(1919-2011)

**Lotus**

“Lotus Blossom”  
Billy Strayhorn  
(1915-1967)  
arr. Alec Wyton  
(1921-2007)

**Festal March**

Florence Price  
(1887-1953)

Margaret Monroe, *organ*

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**Welcome and Acknowledgements**

Kimberly Lee

## Part I

### Zion's Walls

ZION'S WALLS/*The Social Harp*  
adapted Aaron Copland  
(1900-1990)  
arr. Glenn Koponen  
(1943-2021)

*Come fathers and mothers,  
Come sisters and brothers,  
Come join us in singing the praises of Zion.  
O fathers don't you feel determined to meet within the walls of Zion.  
We'll shout and go round, we'll shout and go round,  
We'll shout and go round, we'll shout and go round the walls of Zion.*

### From *Frostiana: Seven Country Songs*

Randall Thompson  
(1899-1984)

#### The Road Not Taken

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*

*Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,*

*And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

*I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*

#### The Pasture

*I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;  
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away  
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):  
I sha'n't be gone long. – You come too.*

*I'm going out to fetch the little calf  
That's standing by the mother. It's so young  
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.  
I sha'n't be gone long. – You come too.*

## A Girl's Garden

*A neighbor of mine in the village  
Likes to tell how one spring  
When she was a girl on the farm, she did  
A childlike thing.*

*One day she asked her father  
To give her a garden plot  
To plant and tend and reap herself,  
And he said, 'Why not?'*

*In casting about for a corner  
He thought of an idle bit  
Of walled-off ground where a shop had stood,  
And he said, 'Just it.'*

*And he said, 'That ought to make you  
An ideal one-girl farm,  
And give you a chance to put some strength  
On your slim-jim arm.'*

*It was not enough of a garden,  
Her father said, to plow;  
So she had to work it all by hand,  
But she don't mind now.*

*She wheeled the dung in the wheelbarrow  
Along a stretch of road;  
But she always ran away and left  
Her not-nice load,*

*And hid from anyone passing.  
And then she begged the seed.  
She says she thinks she planted one  
Of all things but weed.*

*A hill each of potatoes,  
Radishes, lettuce, peas,  
Tomatoes, beets, beans, pumpkins, corn  
And even fruit trees.*

*And yes, she has long mistrusted  
That a cider apple tree  
In bearing there today is hers,  
Or at least may be.*

*Her crop was a miscellany  
When all was said and done,  
A little bit of everything,  
A great deal of none.*

*Now when she sees in the village  
How village things go,  
Just when it seems to come in right,  
She says, 'I know!'*

*'It's as when I was a farmer –'  
Oh, never by way of advice!  
And she never sins by telling the tale  
To the same person twice.*

## Sure on this shining night

From *Four Songs*, Opus 13, No. 3

Samuel Barber  
(1910-1981)

*Sure on this shining night  
Of star-made shadows round,  
Kindness must watch for me  
This side the ground.*

*The late year lies down the north.  
All is healed, all is health.  
High summer holds the earth.  
Hearts all whole.*

*Sure on this shining night  
I weep for wonder  
Wand'ring far alone  
Of shadows on the stars.  
On this shining night.*

## **My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord**

Spiritual  
arr. Moses Hogan  
(1957-2003)

*In the Lord, in the Lord. My soul's been anchored in the Lord.*

*My soul's been anchored in the Lord.*

*Before I'd stay in hell one day, I'd sing an' pray myself away.*

*My soul's been anchored in the Lord.*

*Goin' 'bout an' pray an' never stop, Until I reach the mountain top.*

*My soul's been anchored in the Lord.*

*Do you love Him? O yes! Do you love Him? Hallelujah!*

*Do you love Him? O yes!*

*God almighty. Are you anchored? Oh yes!*

*Yes, I'm anchored, my soul's been anchored in the Lord.*

*Yes, Will you serve Him? Oh yes! Will you serve Him? Hallelujah!*

*Will you serve Him? Oh yes!*

*God almighty. Are you anchored? O yes!*

*Yes, I'm anchored, my soul's been anchored in the Lord. Hallelujah!*

*Will you praise Him? Oh yes! Will you praise Him? Hallelujah!*

*Will you praise Him? Oh yes!*

*God almighty! Are you anchored? Yes, I'm anchored.*

*Lord, I'm anchored. Oh yes! Lord, I love You. Oh yes!*

*Yes, I'll serve You. Oh yes! Lord, I'll praise You. Oh yes! Hallelujah!*

*My soul's been anchored in the Lord,*

*God almighty, my soul's been anchored in the Lord.*

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## **Instrumental Interlude**

### **Adoration**

Price  
arr. Peter Simcich  
(b. 1956)

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## Part II

### Little Innocent Lamb

Spiritual  
arr. Stacey V. Gibbs  
(b.1962)

*Lamb, little innocent Lamb,  
I'm a-gonna serve him till I die.  
Little Lamb, little Lamb, little innocent Lamb  
I'm gonna serve him till I die, gonna serve him till I die.*

*Little Lamb, oh, little Lamb,  
I'm a-gonna serve him till I die.  
Oh, innocent Lamb,  
I'm gonna serve him till I die, gonna serve him till I die.*

*Hypocrite, hypocrite, tell me what he'd do?  
I'm a-gonna serve him till I die.  
He'll talk about' me, and he'll talk about' you,  
Yes, I'm gonna serve him till I die, gonna serve him till I die.*

*Little Lamb, oh, little Lamb,  
I'm a-gonna serve him till I die.  
Oh, innocent Lamb,  
I'm gonna serve him till I die, gonna serve him till I die.*

*Satan's got a slippery, slippery shoe,  
Yes, I'm a-gonna serve him till I die.  
If you don' mind he's gonna slip it on you,  
Yes, I'm gonna serve him till I die, gonna serve him till I die.*

*Ain' no dyin' over dere,  
No dyin', no cryin' in dat heavenly lan',  
Ain' no dyin' over dere in dat heavenly lan',  
Dere'll be joy, sweet joy.*

*Little Lamb, oh, little Lamb,  
I'm a-gonna serve him till I die.  
Oh, innocent Lamb,  
I'm gonna serve him till I die, gonna serve him till I die.*

*Take one brick from Satan's wall,  
I'm a-gonna serve him till I die.  
Satan's wall is gonna tumble an' fall,  
I'm gonna serve him till I die, gonna serve him till I die.*

*Lamb, little Lamb, oh, innocent, oh, little Lamb,  
Gonna serve, gonna serve my Lord, till I die.  
Lamb, innocent Lamb,  
Serve him, gonna serve him,  
Serve him, innocent, innocent Lamb!*

## My Shepherd Will Supply My Need

RESIGNATION/*Southern Harmony*  
arr. Mack Wilberg  
(b. 1955)

*My Shepherd will supply my need;  
Jehovah is His name;  
In pastures fresh he makes me feed,  
Beside the living stream.  
He brings my wand'ring spirit back,  
When I forsake his ways,  
And leads me for his mercy's sake,  
In paths of truth and grace.*

*The sure provisions of my God  
Attend me all my days;  
O may Thy house be mine abode  
And all my work be praise!  
There would I find a settled rest  
While others go and come,  
No more a stranger, nor a guest,  
But like a child at home.*

*When I walk through the shades of death,  
Thy presence is my stay;  
One word of thy supporting breath  
Drives all my fears away.  
Thy hand, in sight of all my foes,  
Doth still my table spread;  
My cup with blessings overflows,  
Thine oil anoints my head.*

*No more a stranger, nor a guest,  
But like a child at home.*

## Hark, I Hear the Harps Eternal

Allison Odom, soprano

INVITATION/*Southern Harmony*

arr. Alice Parker  
(1925-2023)

*Hark, I hear the harps eternal Ringing on the farther shore,  
As I near those swollen waters, With their deep and solemn roar.  
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, praise the Lamb.  
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Glory to the great I AM.*

*And my soul though stained with sorrow, Fading as the light of day,  
Passes swiftly o'er those waters To the city far away.  
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, praise the Lamb.  
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Glory to the great I AM.*

*Souls have crossed before me, saintly, To that land of perfect rest;  
And I hear them singing faintly In the mansions of the blest.  
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, praise the Lamb.  
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Glory to the great I AM.*

*Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, praise the Lamb.  
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Glory to the great I AM.*

## My Song in the Night

EXPRESSION/*Sacred Harp*  
Wilberg

*O Jesus, my Savior, my song in the night,  
Come to us with Thy tender love, my soul's delight,  
Unto Thee, O Lord in affliction I call,  
My comfort by day and my song in the night.*

*O why should I wander an alien from Thee,  
Or cry in the desert Thy face to see,  
My comfort and joy, my soul's delight,  
O Jesus my Savior, my song in the night.*

*My comfort and joy, my soul's delight,  
O Jesus, my Savior, my song in the night.*

## Ain't Got Time to Die

George Klaeren, *tenor*

Spiritual  
Hall Johnson  
(1888-1970)

*Lord, I keep so busy praisin' my Jesus, Ain' got time to die.  
'Cause when I'm healin' de sick, I'm praisin' my Jesus, Ain' got time to die.  
'Cause it takes all o' ma time to praise my Jesus, all o' ma time to praise my Lord.  
If I don' praise Him de rocks gonter cry out, "Glory an' honor, glory an' honor!"  
Ain' got time to die.*

*Lord, I keep so busy workin' fer de Kingdom, Ain' got time to die.  
'Cause when I'm feedin' de po', I'm workin' fer de Kingdom, Ain' got time to die.  
'Cause it takes all o' ma time to praise my Jesus, all o' ma time to praise my Lord.  
If I don' praise Him de rocks gonter cry out, "Glory an' honor, glory an' honor!"  
Ain' got time to die.*

*Lord, I keep so busy servin' my Master, Ain' got time to die.  
'Cause when I'm givin' my all, I'm servin' my Master, Ain' got time to die.  
'Cause it takes all o' ma time to praise my Jesus, all o' ma time to praise my Lord.  
If I don' praise Him de rocks gonter cry out, "Glory an' honor, glory an' honor!"  
Ain' got time to die.*

*Now won't you git out o' ma way, lemme praise my Jesus?  
Git out o' ma way! Lemme praise my Lord.  
If I don' praise Him de rocks gonter cry out, "Glory an' honor, glory an' honor!"  
Ain' got time to die!*

## Instrumental Interlude

### Amazing Grace

NEW BRITAIN/*Southern Harmony*  
arr. Duane Funderburk  
(b. 1954)

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### Part III

#### The Eternal Gates

HALLELUJAH/*Southern Harmony*  
arr. Howard Helvey  
(b. 1968)

*The eternal gates lift up their heads, the doors are opened wide,  
The King of glory is gone up unto his Father's side.  
And I'll sing hallelujah, and you'll sing hallelujah,  
And we'll all sing hallelujah when we arrive at home.*

*And ever on our earthly path a gleam of glory lies,  
A light still breaks behind the cloud that veils Thee from the eyes.  
And I'll sing hallelujah, and you'll sing hallelujah,  
And we'll all sing hallelujah when we arrive at home.*

*Lift up our hearts, lift up our minds, and let Thy grace be giv'n,  
That, while we live on earth below, our treasure be in heav'n;  
And I'll sing hallelujah, and you'll sing hallelujah,  
And we'll all sing hallelujah when we arrive at home.*

*That, where Thou art at God's right hand, our hope, our love may be:  
Dwell in us now, that we may dwell forevermore in Thee.  
And I'll sing hallelujah, and you'll sing hallelujah,  
And we'll all sing hallelujah when we arrive at home.*

#### From Heavenly Home: Three American Songs

##### Angel Band

William Bradbury  
(1816-1868)  
arr. Shawn Kirchner  
(b. 1970)

*The latest sun is sinking fast,  
My race is almost run,  
My strongest trials now are past,  
My triumph is begun.*

*O come angel band,  
Come and around me stand,  
O bear me away on your snow-white wings  
To my immortal home,  
Bear me away on your snow-white wings  
To my immortal home.*



*I know I'm near the holy ranks  
Of friends and kindred, dear,  
I've brushed the dew on Jordan's banks,  
The crossing must be near.*

*O come angel band,  
Come and around me stand,  
O bear me away on your snow-white wings  
To my immortal home,  
Bear me away on your snow-white wings  
To my immortal home.*

*I've almost gained my heav'nly home,  
My spirit loudly sings,  
The Holy Ones, behold they come,  
I hear the noise of wings.*

*O come angel band,  
Come and around me stand,  
O bear me away on your snow-white wings  
To my immortal home,  
Bear me away on your snow-white wings  
To my immortal home.*

## **Unclouded Day**

J.K. Alwood  
(1828-1909)  
arr. Shawn Kirchner

*O they tell me of a home far beyond the skies,  
They tell me of a home far away,  
And they tell me of a home where no storm clouds rise:  
O they tell me of an unclouded day.*

*O the land of cloudless days,  
O the land of an unclouded sky,  
O they tell me of a home where no storm clouds rise:  
O they tell me of an unclouded day.*

*O they tell me of a home where my friends have gone,  
They tell me of a land far away,  
Where the tree of life in eternal bloom  
Sheds its fragrance through the unclouded day.*

*O the land of cloudless days,  
O the land of an unclouded sky,  
O they tell me of a home where no storm clouds rise:  
O they tell me of an unclouded day.*

*O they tell me of a King in His beauty there,  
They tell me that mine eyes shall behold  
Where He sits on a throne that is bright as the sun  
In the city that is made of gold.*

*O the land of cloudless days,  
O the land of an unclouded sky,  
O they tell me of a home where no storm clouds rise:  
O they tell me of an unclouded day.*

# Program Notes

## Prelude

**There Is a Happy Land** originated when 19th century Georgia singer Leonard P. Breedlove (born circa 1803) adapted Andrew Young's 1838 text to a Hindustani air in 1850. Known for his strong bass voice and knowledge of music as a singing school teacher, Breedlove was instrumental in spreading *Sacred Harp* singing throughout Georgia and surrounding states. The arranger of today's rendition of the piece is British jazz pianist George Shearing (1919-2011), composer of over 300 works, including the jazz standard "Lullaby of Birdland." Shearing moved to America in 1947 and later in life became interested in classical music, performing with many famous orchestras. In the late 1970s, Shearing produced a collection of American folk hymn settings, which represent his only publication in the classical church music genre. Shearing was blind from birth, so he recorded these settings on piano to be transcribed. He and Dale Wood, then editor of Sacred Music Press, worked together to adapt the pieces to organ, producing these distinctive jazz-influenced settings.

**Lotus** is Alec Wyton's organ arrangement of Billy Strayhorn's "Lotus Blossom." Born in 1915, Strayhorn had a close musical partnership with Duke Ellington. When Duke Ellington died in 1974, his funeral was held in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, where Alec Wyton served as organist. In making funeral arrangements, Ellington's sister Ruth asked Wyton to improvise on "Lotus Blossom" during communion. Some years later, Ruth requested that Wyton transcribe and publish his improvisation. In 1987, he published it as "Lotus."

**Festal March** was composed by Little Rock, Arkansas, native Florence Price (1887-1953), who began study at an early age at the New England Conservatory of Music and became the first black American woman to gain recognition as a composer of symphonic music. Price was a prolific composer in other genres; her output also includes chamber works, art songs, and piano and organ music. She wrote several larger works for organ as well as short pieces such as "Festal March," which were meant to be played by the amateur organist. Many of her shorter organ pieces reflect her African American heritage, using melodies that recall spirituals or employ jazz harmonies. However, "Festal March" is an academic march inspired by English compositions. The form is designed to allow for optional repetitions in the event a procession is longer or shorter than anticipated.

## Part I

**Zion's Walls** is a revivalist tune with words and melody credited to John G. McCurry (1821-1886), a Georgia farmer who, in 1855, compiled *The Social Harp*, a shape-note tune book of 222 folk songs. The tune was later published in 1943 by George P. Jackson in *Down East Spirituals*. Famously adapted by Aaron Copland as a vocal solo, "Zion's Walls" appeared in Copland's second set of *Old American Songs* (1952) along with "The Little Horses," "The Golden Willow Tree," "At the River," and "Ching-a-Ring Chaw" as well as in his 1954 opera *The Tender Land*. Today's choral version of the piece was arranged from Copland's adapted version by noted professor, arranger, trumpeter, and pianist Glenn Koponen (1943-2021) and retains Copland's trademark sound, perfectly described as the "voice of the American landscape."

**The Road Not Taken, The Pasture, and A Girl's Garden** are from *Frostiana: Seven Country Songs* by Randall Thompson. A graduate of Harvard and the Eastman School of Music, Thompson taught at the Curtis Institute of Music, Harvard, and the University of Virginia. He composed three symphonies and extended choral-orchestral works, including *The Testament of Freedom, Frostiana, The Peaceable Kingdom, and A Concord Cantata*. His popular anthems include "The Last Words of David," "Alleluia," and "Glory to God in the Highest." It is notable that Leonard Bernstein, another leading American composer, was Thompson's student.

Thompson was commissioned to write a composition celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Town of Amherst, Massachusetts. American poet Robert Frost had lived in Amherst, and the town suggested setting one of Frost's poems, "The Gift Outright," for the composition. Thompson and Frost were friends, and Thompson instead chose seven other poems by Frost, entitling the composition *Frostiana: Seven Country Songs*. Today, the Society presents three pieces from this suite. Thompson conducted the premier in 1959 and later orchestrated the collection in 1965.

**The Road Not Taken** is perhaps one of Frost's best-known poems. When set to Thompson's music, the melodic line, harmonies, and simple rhythmic structure suggest a walk in the woods as a nostalgic reflection of the past with little regret for choices made.

**The Pasture** is scored for men's chorus and reflects the warmth, simplicity, and ordinary experience of a pasture. Much like an impressionistic painting, the prose depicts a subtle picture of water and leaves in a spring, a calf with its mother, and an invitation to the listener to join in the encounter with nature's beauty.

**A Girl's Garden** is written for women's chorus, with a majority of the piece in unison. The tale is spun of a girl who asks her father for a plot of land in which to plant a garden. The garden isn't much, and the girl's maturity and growth are significantly greater than that of her crops — "a miscellany." It is a hard-work lesson of life which she is happy to share with others, but "never...to the same person twice!"

**Sure on this shining night** was composed by Samuel Barber, a leading American neo-romantic composer of the mid-20th century, who is perhaps best known for his *Adagio for Strings* (1936) as heard in the movie *Platoon* (1986). Although his use of dissonance and chromaticism increased in later compositions, Barber's music has a lyrical and harmonic quality which harkens to an earlier musical period. "Sure on this shining night" is set to a portion of the text from James Agee's poem "Descriptions of Elysium." Barber scored the piece originally as an art song for voice and piano but adapted it for mixed choir in 1961. The poignant, yet relatively unadorned accompaniment and harmonic movement, coupled with the interwoven vocal lines of Barber's music, amplify Agee's poetic language of natural beauty and nostalgia on a crystalline evening.

**My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord** was recognized by a 2019 *BBC Music Magazine* article as “one of the six best choral arrangements of spirituals.” The strong rhythmic cadence of this piece, together with the call and response pattern of the text, leads to a resounding “Hallelujah!” This setting is by Moses Hogan, who is acknowledged widely as one of the foremost arrangers of American spirituals in the latter 20th century. His early musical influences included his uncle and father, who were musical leaders in the family’s New Orleans church. Hogan was a graduate of Oberlin Conservatory of Music and studied at Juilliard. From 1980 until his death at the age of 45 in 2003, he increasingly developed the a cappella concert spiritual, with more than 80 choral and vocal arrangements credited to his name.

It is interesting that Florence Price’s 1937 arrangement of “My Soul’s Been Anchored in the Lord” was performed by contralto Marian Anderson to close her Lincoln Memorial concert in 1939. Anderson, as an African American, was not allowed to sing inside Constitution Hall due to her race, so she performed on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

## Instrumental Interlude

**Adoration**, a work originally written for organ, is by Florence Price, whose compositional work was rediscovered in 2009 when many of her manuscripts and correspondence were found in an abandoned home outside of St. Anne, Illinois. “Adoration” has become one of Price’s best-known works, and as the piece has gained a wider audience, it has been arranged for strings, winds, and mixed instrumental forces. Only three and a half minutes in length and sounding like a solemn hymn with jazz-influences, “Adoration” presents a legato and forward-facing melodic line. The accompaniment supports the melody, with interplay between lower and upper instruments. In A-B-A form, “Adoration” modulates from tonic to the subdominant and then returns to the tonic in a reprise of the A section.

## Part II


**Little Innocent Lamb**, an African American spiritual, lacks no subtlety in its contrasts between the trials of earthly living and the lack thereof in the life to come. Best known for his arrangements of spirituals, composer Stacey Gibbs demonstrates his superb ability to retain the authenticity of a work while saturating it with new and exhilarating energy. With only slight adaptations, Gibbs’ arrangement of “Little Innocent Lamb” retains the familiar spiritual’s text, as three times it juxtaposes earthly evil and hardships with the declaration that such circumstances cannot shake one’s faith in the Savior and eternal freedom to come. The dynamic contrasts, rhythmic drive, and clever chromaticism that Gibbs infuses into this piece paint the picture of freedom from bondage and the everlasting joy that awaits.

**My Shepherd Will Supply My Need** is an American folk hymn employing the RESIGNATION shape-note tune from *Southern Harmony* and the text of Psalm 23, paraphrased by Isaac Watts (1674-1748), who is known as the “father of English hymnody.” Like many folk pieces, the tune uses only the pentatonic scale and is fairly repetitive, which is part of its beauty. In this arrangement for four-part divisi choir, Mack Wilberg retains the simplicity of the original tune while at the same time enhancing it with the use of obligato instruments to complement the somewhat austere sound of the ostinato pattern in the accompaniment. Wilberg is a prolific composer and choral arranger and has served as the Music Director of the (Mormon) Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square since 2008. His compositions have been performed across the globe and at the funerals of three American presidents.

**Hark, I Hear the Harps Eternal** was arranged by prodigious American composer Alice Parker, who was a graduate of Smith College and Juilliard. She is known for her choral arrangements of hymns, folk songs, and spirituals for the Robert Shaw Chorale, and “Hark, I Hear the Harps Eternal” was arranged for Shaw’s choir. In a 2015 NPR interview, Parker said, “Music isn’t on the page... it can’t be correct on the page because there’s no sound on the page. It has to be correct to the song, correct to the ear.”

“Hark, I Hear the Harps Eternal,” as with much of Parker’s music, begins simply but quickly transforms into a multi-layered composition with imitative entrances and complex rhythms. The text presents a recently departed saint standing at the river Jordan, hearing the sounds of heaven “on the farther shore.” As this saint’s soul passes over the waters toward the heavenly city, the sounds of the redeemed continue, joining together in a great proclamation: “Hallelujah, Praise the Lamb, Glory to the great I AM.”

**My Song in the Night** is likely a compilation of parts of several different sources but is based originally on the tune EXPRESSION in the first edition (1844) of *Sacred Harp*. The text is attributed to Caleb Jarvis Taylor, a Methodist minister and songwriter from Kentucky. Wilberg has arranged this piece in a lush, romantic style with elements of dissonance heard in resolving minor second intervals. “My Song in the Night” is the title piece of Wilberg’s suite of *Five American Folk Hymns*, which includes four shape-note tunes and a spiritual.



fa sol la fa sol la mi fa

FOUR-NOTE SHAPE-NOTE SCALE

**Ain't Got Time to Die** was composed by Hall Johnson, who wrote the text and music as a new composition – not as an arrangement of a pre-existing African American spiritual. A graduate of Allen University in Columbia, SC, Johnson also studied at Juilliard and the University of Pennsylvania. In his early career, he was a professional violinist and violist but transitioned to choral music in the late 1920s. Johnson and his choir were featured in more than 30 Hollywood films including Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Dumbo*.

In “Ain't Got Time to Die,” the soloist communicates his passionate praise of, work for, and service to “my Jesus,” and the choir responds to the soloist in like fashion. The fervent, faithful, and collective work for “the Kingdom” is such that the soloist clears the path — “Now won't you get out o' my way” — and the ensemble concludes that this higher calling leaves “no time to die.”

## Instrumental Interlude

**Amazing Grace** is arguably one of the most well-known Christian hymns in history. In 1772, Englishman John Newton penned the now familiar lyrics of the piece. However, it was not until 1835 that William Walker paired these lyrics with the tune NEW BRITAIN in *Southern Harmony*. Using this well-known tune, American pianist, composer, and arranger Duane Funderburk wrote this beautifully engaging arrangement for piano, solo violin, and chamber orchestra. Funderburk has composed numerous chamber, orchestral, and choral arrangements, many based on American hymn tunes. In addition to serving as collaborative pianist at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, Washington, he serves as the Director of Instrumental Music at Lake Avenue Church in Pasadena, California.

## Part III

**The Eternal Gates** incorporates HALLELUJAH, a shape-note tune composed by William Walker and found in *Southern Harmony*, but with different text. American composer and arranger Howard Helvey pairs it here with Irishwoman Cecil Frances Alexander's (1818-1895) hymn text by the same title and the anonymous refrain “And I'll sing hallelujah...” Known particularly for his choral music, Helvey maintains the rugged flavor from the shape-note tradition in this piece, especially by employing only the scale degrees used in the original melody itself. Six pitches in total are used throughout “The Eternal Gates” as well as the original HALLELUJAH tune: those of a major scale without the seventh note. Helvey saturates the work with a folk hymn-like strong emphasis on beat one, but as is his nature in arranging, he adds a twist of flavor, in this case, by overlapping this expected pulse with unexpected off-beat emphases, thus enhancing the piece's texture and highlighting its text.

**Angel Band** and **Unclouded Day** are from *Heavenly Home: Three American Songs*, a cycle of settings of three beloved 19th century religious songs, written by composer, arranger, and pianist Shawn Kirchner. Reared with his triplet brother and sister in Iowa, Kirchner is an active musician in Los Angeles where, for a three-year term, he served as Composer in Residence for the Los Angeles Master Chorale. Also active as a singer, he has sung with the Chorale as a tenor for 20 seasons. As noted on his website, “Kirchner’s music finds a middle ground between classical choral and instrumental traditions and the inheritance of the folk, carol, and hymn traditions.” Thus, he has a strong interest in folk music and has written choral arrangements of many traditional songs, with *Heavenly Home* praised by the *LA Times* as “arranged with mastery.” He credits his principal creative mentors, poet and banjo-playing songwriter Steve Kinzie and American choral composer matriarch Alice Parker, for his inspiration.

**Angel Band**, the second song of the *Heavenly Home* cycle, is described by Kirchner as its heart. It is an eight-part setting of American William Bradbury’s much-loved tune, set to Jefferson Hascall’s text in 1862, just six years before Bradbury’s death. In Kirchner’s arrangement, women’s and men’s choruses sing the first two verses of the piece and then combine on the awe-inspiring final verse. Employing a four-octave choral range where voices serve not only as the conduit for the tune, but also the accompaniment, “Angel Band” is at the same time both simple and rich with melodies and counter melodies interwoven for breadth and depth of sound.

**Unclouded Day**, the final piece in Kirchner’s *Heavenly Home*, is a rousing choral arrangement of Rev. J. K. Alwood’s piece by the same title. Alwood (1828-1909), an itinerant preacher in the United Brethren of Christ, wrote the tune and text over a period of a day and a half in 1885 after a late-night horse ride. During this ride he witnessed an inspiring sight in the sky: a rainbow against a dark cloud, covering half the sky, while the other half was flawlessly clear. When he awoke the next morning, he already had the song’s chorus in his head. Although originally arranged as a cappella piece, Kirchner later composed a dynamic string and banjo-like piano accompaniment, accentuating the contrapuntal textures written for the voices. This music is just plain fun.



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## Musical Staff & Featured Performers

### **Elizabeth Mixon, Co-Artistic Director/Conductor**

Mrs. Elizabeth Mixon was appointed Co-Artistic Director and Conductor of the York County Choral Society in August 2023. She served as an educator in the South Carolina public school system for 31 years with 18 of those years in choral music education and 13 years in leadership and test administration.



Following one year of elementary teaching and eight at the middle school level, Elizabeth joined the faculty of Northwestern High School where she served as the Visual and Performing Arts Department chairman from 2002-2007. Under her direction from 1999-2008, the Northwestern High School Troubadours of Rock Hill ranked first in six of the South Carolina Music Educators Association (SCMEA) AAAA yearly festivals and, by audition, regularly placed numerous students into the South Carolina All State Choirs. In addition to their popular Winter and Spring multi-evening concerts and yearly performance trips, Troubadours served as a demonstration choir for the 2004 American Choral Directors Association Convention (Nashville, TN) and a 2007 guest choir for the SCMEA convention (Charleston, SC). In the 2003-2004 school year, Elizabeth guided the process to Northwestern High School being named a 2004 National Grammy Signature School of Excellence in the Arts.

A South Carolina lowcountry native and resident of Rock Hill, SC, since 1988, Elizabeth holds a Bachelor of Music degree in Voice Performance from Furman University (Greenville, SC), a Master of Music Degree in Choral Conducting from the Eastman School of Music (Rochester, NY), and a Master of Arts in Teaching in Music Education degree from Winthrop University (Rock Hill, SC). She studied voice with Ms. Gail Schoonmaker, Dr. Trudy Fuller, and Dr. Carol Allred and conducting with Dr. Bigham Vick, Jr., and Mr. Donald Neuen, both of whom she credits as being instrumental in building her technique and leadership skills as well as her understanding of ensemble growth and development. Elizabeth has served as clinician for the South Carolina Music Educators Association SSA clinic, the Rock Hill School District Middle School Honors Choir, and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of SC and the Presbyterian Association of Musicians' Festival by the Sea. Staying true to her roots, she is an active church musician at Ebenezer Presbyterian Church, Associate Reformed. She and her husband, Ben, have two adult daughters, both of whom live in Rock Hill.



## **Dr. Randy Imler, Co-Artistic Director/Conductor**

An active musician for more than 35 years, Randy Imler has served as Director of Music at Ebenezer Associate Reformed Presbyterian (ARP) Church in Rock Hill, Steele Creek Presbyterian (PC-USA) Church in Charlotte, and St. Stephen's Lutheran (ELCA) Church in Lexington, SC. Randy was an adjunct professor of music at Winthrop University from 2007-2014, conducting the Collegiate Choir and Jazz Voices. He was elected to the Winthrop Board of Trustees in 2014 and works as Executive Director of the Catawba Regional Council of Governments, a regional planning and economic development organization.



Randy holds Bachelor of Arts and Master of Music degrees from Winthrop University, where he studied with Jerry Helton, Donald Rogers, and Robert Edgerton. He earned Master of Business Administration and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees (conducting) from the University of South Carolina, where he studied with Larry Wyatt and David O'Shields. While at USC, he won first place in the 2007 USC Graduate School Competition, Performing Arts Category, with a performance of choral arrangements derived from William Walker's *Southern Harmony*.

Randy has prepared choirs for major works including the combined USC choirs for performance of Mozart's *Davidde Penitente* (K. 469) with the South Carolina Philharmonic Orchestra. While at Winthrop he prepared and conducted the Collegiate Choir and University Orchestra in Faure's *Requiem in d minor* (Op. 48). Under his direction, the Winthrop Jazz Voices were a featured ensemble at multiple SC Allstate Choral Festivals. Church choirs under his leadership have been included in the Presbyterian Church-USA National General Assembly and the Billy Graham crusades. Randy also has served as a clinician of York County honors choirs and as an adjudicator of choirs at the Carowinds Festival of Music.

Randy and his wife, Tracy, live in Tega Cay, SC. They have three adult children and enjoy spending time with family, on Lake Wylie, and at the beach.



## Vocal Soloists

**George Klaeren** was raised in Rock Hill and attended university for advanced degrees in history (Kansas) and theology (Oxon) before returning to his hometown. He currently researches and publishes articles on the history and intersection of science and religion. A lifelong choral singer, soloist, and piano enthusiast, he has sung with choirs across the US, Spain, and England, including numerous university and church choirs. This is his first year with the York County Choral Society.

**Allison Odom**, a Rock Hill native, received a Bachelor's degree in Music Education from Furman University and a Master's of Music in Choral Conducting from Winthrop University. She is a member of Oakland Baptist Church where she is involved with the Music Ministry and teaches at the Day School. Allison also enjoys teaching and performing with Showtime Theatre Company. Her greatest joys are her husband of 20 years, Chris, and their 15 year old twin sons, Bailey and Carter.

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## Instrumentalists

**Organ:** Margaret Monroe

**Piano:** Zinorl Broñola

**Violin 1:** Joseph Meyer, Kari Giles, Emily Chathan

**Violin 2:** Lenore Leggatt, Alicia Bowen, Clare Hare Grogg

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## **Zinorl Broñola, Accompanist**

Mr. Zinorl Broñola is currently an instructor and collaborative pianist of various courses at Winthrop University's Department of Theatre and Dance, and is the collaborative pianist at Winthrop University's Department of Music for the Winthrop University Chorale and voice and instrumental repertory classes. He serves as the Director of Music at Epworth United Methodist Church and Cornerstone United Methodist Church in Rock Hill, SC, and is the Lifenotes Band Director at St Philip Neri Catholic Church in Fort Mill, SC for the contemporary mass. He earned his bachelor's degree in piano performance from the Bulgarian State Academy of Music in Sofia, Bulgaria and his master's degree in piano performance at Winthrop University in Rock Hill, SC.



He is a native of Manila, Philippines, and throughout his young adult years has won prestigious awards and distinctions both nationally and internationally as a solo pianist. His achievements include winning first prize at the 1981 National Music Competitions for Young Artists and the 1990 International Piano Competition for Young Pianists held in Marsala, Sicily, Italy. Mr. Broñola also is the recipient of the 1990 Young Achievers' Award in Music which was awarded to him by the National Commission on Culture and the Arts in Manila, Philippines, and he was featured as a guest artist on Philippine radio and television on many occasions. In 1981, at the age of eleven after winning his first national piano competition, he was discovered by then First Lady of the Philippines, Imelda Marcos, and was invited frequently to perform at the presidential palace. In 1982, he was a part of her official delegation as an ambassador of goodwill and solo artist to Russia, Morocco, and the United States. His other performances abroad include concerts in Bulgaria, Poland, and in Italy where he was featured both by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Philippine Embassy in Rome.

After completing his master's degree in 2005 at Winthrop University, he has continually played an active part in the life of the university and the surrounding communities through performance in solo and collaborative music, accompanying in statewide conferences and festivals such as the South Carolina All State Choirs, the annual summer intensive dance classes for Charlotte Ballet, and for local organizations such as the Rock Hill Community Theatre and the Rock Hill Ecumenical Chorale. He has also served as orchestra conductor for several musical theatre productions at Winthrop University.

# York County Choral Society Personnel

*\*denotes founding member*

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Katie Britton, CEO



(704) 678-0859  
✉ [katie@finesseleadership.com](mailto:katie@finesseleadership.com)  
🌐 [www.finesseleadership.com](http://www.finesseleadership.com)  
📌 Finesse Leadership Services