

I Cantori at 20

We didn't plan to turn 20. Actually when we presented our first concert at St. John's Episcopal Church in December of 1991 we were just grateful that an appreciative audience gave us their approval and the confidence to persevere.

We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the wonderfully talented musicians who have sung with us over the years. Without their talent, their musicianship, and their willingness to participate in the somewhat anonymous environment of ensemble singing we would never have made it.

We have been very fortunate to have worked with some phenomenal composers. They are listed elsewhere but we have found them all willing to share their creative talent on the page, and, perhaps more important, some insight into what makes a composer "tick." Without exception they have made a far more generous contribution to our success than we could have had the right to expect or demand.

I hesitate to list the churches which have been willing to host our concerts and our rehearsals (and our library), but without them we could not exist. Armstrong Atlantic State University has also been very helpful in sharing library resources.

We have called ourselves a "professional" musical organization. That is a reference to our approach to what we do. None of the singers or the conductor is paid. Our goal is to make wonderful music together and to leave the choral art better for our having been a part of it.

We now set our sights on 25 (or at least 21!). We are planning on a performance of Benjamin Britten's *Ceremony of Carols* and the Jackson Berkey *Anniversary Carols* for December, and a diverse "Melodies of Love" program the winter.

Most important, we thank you, our audience. Without you there would be no reason for us to exist. Our goal has been to share wonderful choral literature with you, to experiment a little along the way, and perhaps to bring forth an occasional tear, and even a smile or two. Certainly today is no exception! Thank you for being a part of our first 20 years. We hope you will join us for our next decade.

Bob Harris



Robert L. Harris, conductor
Jean Belmont Ford, composer

presents

20TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT

Sunday, June 12 – 3:00 pm
St. John's Episcopal Church

I Cantori – Savannah's premier chamber choir
1991 - 2011

program

Jesu, Dulcis Memoria

Vijay Singh

Jesus, how sweet the very thought, giving true joy to the heart, but sweeter than honey and all else is His presence.

Lay a Garland

Robert Pearsall

Requiem

Zdenek Lukás

American premier performance in 1995

Requiem Aeternam: *Rest eternal grant to them, o Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. A hymn befits thee, o God in Zion, and to thee a vow shall be fulfilled in Jerusalem. Hear my prayer, for unto thee all flesh shall come. Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy.*

Agnus Dei: *Day of wrath, that day shall dissolve the world into embers, as David prophesied with the Sibyl. How great the trembling will be, when the Judge shall come, the rigorous investigator of all things! The trumpet, spreading its wondrous sound through the tombs of every land will summon all before the throne. Day of wrath . . .*

Lacrymosa: *O how tearful that day, on which the guilty shall rise from the embers to be judged. . . Merciful Lord Jesus, grant them rest.*

Hostias: *Sacrifices and prayers of praise, O Lord, we offer to thee. Receive them, Lord, on behalf of those souls we commemorate this day.*

Agnus Dei: *Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world, grant them rest. Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world grant them rest everlasting. A hymn befits thee, o God in Zion, and to thee a vow shall be fulfilled in Jerusalem, for thou art merciful.*

Predicatio

Zdenek Lukás

Commissioned by I Cantori in 1998

Rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted. Blessed are the clean of heart for they will see God. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.

The Last Laugh

Jean Belmont Ford

World premier performance

intermission

At the Round Earth's Imagined Corners

Williametta Spencer

And the White Rose Is a Dove

Williametta Spencer

Commissioned by I Cantori in 1998

The White Rose (John Boyle O'Reilly) *The red rose whispers of passion; the white rose breathes of love. O the red rose is a falcon, and the white rose is a dove. I send you a rose bud with the flush on its petal tips; for the love that is sweetest has a kiss of desire on the lips.*

The Sick Rose (William Blake) *O rose thou art sick! The invisible worm that flies in the night in the howling storm has found out thy bed of crimson joy, and his dark secret love does thy life destroy.*

The Rose Family (Robert Frost) *The rose is a rose and was always a rose. But the theory now goes that the apple's a rose, and the pear is and so's the plum I suppose. The dear only knows what will next prove a rose. But you, of course, are a rose, but you were always a rose.*

How Roses Came Red (Robert Herrick) *Roses at first were white till they could not agree whether my Sappho's breast or they more white should be. But being vanquished quite a blush their cheeks bespread; since which, believe the rest; the roses first came red.*

Three William Butler Yeats Songs

James Mulholland

Commissioned by I Cantori in 2000

Had I the Heavens' Embroiderd Cloths

A Dawn-Song

Down by the Salley Gardens

Danny Boy

arr. Joseph Flummerfelt

Peace I Leave With You

René Clausen

personnel

soprano

Carol Benton
Angelia Jernigan
Senja Peterson
Lana Marie Stark
Catherine Rogers
Kira White

alto

Jan Curtis
Sarah Eliasoph
Edie Hockspeier
Kenna Kinsey
Susan McCain
Carla McCurry

tenor

Randall Canady
Brian Dean
George Fiddler
Billy Wooten

bass

Dan Bolta
Raymond R. Ellis, jr.
Sanford Jones
Gregory Martin
Jack Van Eck

rehearsal accompanist Kelli Horton

Jean Belmont Ford

Jean Belmont Ford, Kansas City composer, specializes in writing chamber and choral music. She received dual Bachelor's degrees in composition and music education from the University of Redlands, in California, in 1961, and her masters and doctoral work in composition at George Peabody College for Teachers (Peabody Conservatory of Music). She has sung professionally in opera and on public television, and has taught composition and voice at the University of Alabama and St. Margaret's Academy in Connecticut.

In addition to her many commissions, Jean has received numerous Meet the Composer and NEA subsidized grants, two Barlow International Competition prizes and an annual National Public Radio Lucien Wulsin Award for Best New Music.

Jean's music has been internationally performed, recorded and critiqued for many years, and she has been honored by inclusion in the performing schedules of such noteworthy groups as the BBC Singers, the Emerson String Quartet, and Chanticleer. With a mix of humor and justifiable pride she says that her music "has been performed on every continent but Antarctica."

Music publishers who list her titles are: Alfred Publishing Co. Inc., The Lorenz Corporation, and Alliance Music Publications, Inc.

In 2009 Jean's 21 minute work *Electa* was featured on the Phoenix Chorale recording conducted by Charles Bruffy entitled "Spotless Rose." This CD won the Grammy for Best Small Ensemble Performance of the Year.

Dr. Robert Harris

A native Californian, he received his bachelors and masters degrees in vocal performance from the Conservatory of the University of the Pacific. Opera performances included the lead baritone roles in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *La Traviata*, *Il Trovatore*, *Les Contes d'Hoffman*, *Faust*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *l'Incoronazione di Popea*. Oratorio appearances included Walton's, "Belshazzar's Feast," Orff's "Carmina Burana," the "1610 Vespers" by Monteverdi as well as numerous Bach cantatas.

He earned his doctorate in conducting from the University of Washington, studying under Rodney Eichenberger and Abraham Kaplan, former chorus master of the New York Philharmonic. Conducting credits included Haydn's "Creation," "The Bartered Bride" by Smetana, Purcell's "Dido and Aeneas," and "Die Fledermaus" by Johann Strauss Jr.

He joined the AASU faculty in 1981 as Director of Choral Activities. Under his leadership the Armstrong choirs appeared on numerous occasions with the Savannah Symphony Orchestra, and presented several modern premiers of Baroque choral works edited for those performances by Dr. Harris. The Armstrong Vocal Chamber Ensemble made three European tours, the third being the subject of an Emmy winning documentary by Georgia Public Television.

He has conducted on-site research at the British Library in London, Trinity College, in Dublin, as well as the Library of Congress, Houghton and Loeb Libraries on the Harvard campus, the Newberry in Chicago and the New York and Boston Public Libraries.

He has also presented numerous lectures dealing with the music and art from Theresienstadt, the Nazi concentration camp in Czechoslovakia. In addition to music, recordings and art work he has an extensive collection of artifacts and video which he has filmed on site.

I Cantori

In December of 1991, with a concert of Christmas music, sixteen singers embarked on a journey which has now continued for 20 seasons. Founded by its current conductor, Dr. Robert L. Harris, the group has specialized in presenting concerts of diverse and unusual choral repertoire.

Over the years, *I Cantori* has presented such varied programs as a concert devoted to Spanish composers, several programs devoted to music by American composers, and two programs made up entirely of music by women composers. *I Cantori* has also presented a historically accurate performance of Handel's *Messiah*, and a fully staged performance of Gian Carlo Menotti's beloved Christmas opera, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. *I Cantori* presented benefit concerts for the Lucas Theater renovation and Savannah's public radio station, WSVH. On several occasions the choir joined with the Savannah Symphony Orchestra on Masterworks concert, and for the last two seasons has had the privilege of performing on Hilton Head Orchestra concerts.

Due to a concern about the questionable quality of a great deal of the new choral music being published today, *I Cantori* has made a strong commitment to bringing newly composed choral music of high quality to the repertoire. To that end *I Cantori* has embarked upon an active program of commissioning new compositions by leading choral composers and making it available to the choral community through the *I Cantori Series* through National Music Publishers. Among the composers commissioned by the group are Daniel Pinkham, Peter Schickele, Williametta Spencer, James Mulholland, Vijay Singh, Robert Young, Vaclav Nelhybel, Bonia Shur, Randall Reese and the eminent Czech composer Zdeněk Lukáš. With the exception of Nelhybel who had passed away prior to the premier of his composition all of the composers came to Savannah to work with the group and attend the premier.

Also included in the series are early music editions prepared by Dr. Harris, including works by Alessandro Scarlatti, Nicola Porpora, Francesco Durante, Moravian duets by Antonín Dvořák, and a piece composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart at the age of nine. There are over 40 titles in the *I Cantori Series*.