



The 125th Annual

Concert of Sacred Music

The Auditorium
Northfield, Massachusetts
Sunday, May 5, 2019 ❖ 2:30 PM

*This concert is funded by
the generosity of many donors and
by the Pflug Concert Fund,
courtesy of John Pflug '56.*



“If it makes the shivers go up and down my spine, it’s good singing.” D. L. Moody

Today we celebrate the 125th anniversary of the first Concert of Sacred Music, given on Monday, May 13th, 1895. Sacred Concert, which began as a concert of Christian hymns, has taken place every year since then, in spite of World Wars, quarantines for influenza and the mumps, and the evolution of our community. It is rare that a high school can boast a musical tradition that dates back this far; it seems most appropriate to celebrate this auspicious anniversary with a theme of Joy!

The year after the Northfield Auditorium was completed (in 1894), Mr. Moody, our founder, decided to honor the addition of this building to his schools by having them perform a concert of sacred hymns. Jeremiah Holmes, who sang in the very first Sacred Concert, wrote, “It was given especially for Mr. Moody and he sat downstairs in the big Auditorium. . . Professor A.J. Phillips, our music teacher, was our director and we sang an entire program of the gospel hymns Mr. Moody especially loved. I’m sure he loved it for, when it was over, we were told that he wanted us all to go down the street a short distance to sing for his mother, who still lived in the home where Mr. Moody was born. We gladly trooped down and grouped in front of the house. He sat near the mother he loved so dearly. And now these hundreds of girls and boys whom he was helping to educate were singing their love and gratitude as mother and son smiled at each other.”

From that inspiring beginning, Sacred Concert has remained an important tradition at the School. Over the last 125 years many thousands of students have sat in the seats in the Auditorium to sing and listen to the various choirs and instrumental groups perform. The Auditorium is the one place that all alumni, since 1895, have in common. The first thirty-two Sacred Concerts were purely choral music, in which the entire school sang. In 1919 an orchestra of students, teachers and local instrumentalists was added. The concert became so famous that in 1935 it began to be broadcast nationally over the radio. In 1978 the Alumni Chorus was added to the program. For the last 40 years many alumni have made the pilgrimage back to campus to perform again in this tradition that they love. Over the years the content of the program has evolved to reflect our diverse community. “Sacred” is no longer considered to be specifically Christian; rather, it embraces all traditions, including a broader understanding of what sacred means.

Today we celebrate this history and all the students who have kept it alive these past 125 years. We are proud to be part of a tradition that grows and changes with the school. We are mindful of all the people who have performed in this historic building before us, and those who will do so in the future. It is a privilege to be part of a school that supports the arts and our spiritual journeys. We celebrate this, and invite you to join us in singing with great joy!

Program

We Would Be One

Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)

Words by Samuel Anthony Wright (b.1919)

The audience is invited to stand and join in the singing of the hymn.

We would be one as now we join in singing
Our hymn of love, to pledge ourselves anew
To that high cause of greater understanding
Of who we are and what in us is true.
We would be one in living for each other
to show to all a new community.

We would be one in building for tomorrow
A nobler world than we have known today.
We would be one in searching for that meaning
Which binds our hearts and points us on our way.
As one, we pledge ourselves to greater service,
With love and justice, strive to make us free.

The Creation (Oratorio)

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)

Awake the Harp

The Heavens are Telling

Achieved is the Glorious Work

Half of Haydn's output was vocal music, much of it sacred. He composed *The Creation*, or *Die Schöpfung*, in 1798. *The Creation*, an oratorio (sacred opera) is based on the Creation story from the Old Testament. It is in three sections, the first depicting the first four days of Creation, particularly the creation of the Earth. "Awake the Harp" is the chorus celebrating the creation of the grass, the trees and the flowering plants on the third day. Haydn concluded the fourth day with the jubilant chorus "The Heavens are Telling." This chorus alternates with a trio of archangels, praising the wonder of God's work, and the choir praising the creation of the firmament. The musical texture includes rich homophonic passages and an elaborate fugue to bring the movement to a triumphant close. The second part of the oratorio describes the creation of life on Earth, on days five and six, and ends with the chorus singing "Achieved is the Glorious Work." Haydn employs a repeating double fugue to underscore this amazing achievement with great joy.

Elijah, Opus 70 (Oratorio)

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

For the Mountains Shall Depart

THE TENORS AND BASSES OF ALUMNI CHOIR

Lift Thine Eyes

THE SOPRANOS AND ALTOS OF ALUMNI CHOIR

He Watching Over Israel

THE NMH SINGERS AND THE SELECT WOMEN'S ENSEMBLE

Mendelssohn was a child prodigy who was often compared to Mozart. As a young boy, Mendelssohn composed symphonies and chamber works. From a wealthy family, Mendelssohn had the resources to put on concerts in his home. Through these concerts he brought the music of both Bach and Schubert out of obscurity and reintroduced it to Germany. In 1845 the Birmingham Music Festival commissioned him to compose an oratorio. Mendelssohn, whose ancestry is Jewish, was drawn to the story of the prophet Elijah, whose story epitomized the evolution of Jewish faith. In the oratorio “Lift Thine Eyes” is sung to Elijah to restore his desperate spirit. This song is followed by the hopeful chorus “He Watching Over Israel,” reminding Elijah that God will not let him down. The baritone solo, “The Mountains Shall Depart,” sung by all the basses and tenors today, is a gorgeous testimony that the covenant of peace that God has made with the people shall not be removed. The soprano and alto voices in “Lift Thine Eyes,” as well as the tenor and bass voices in “The Mountains Shall Depart” are meant to remind us of the pre merger Sacred Concerts, when the two different schools, Northfield and Mount Hermon, came together to perform. The combined voices in “He Watching Over Israel” represent the voices of the combined schools.

Variations on a Theme of Haydn

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

Arranged by Leidig

Brahms was a deliberate and self-critical composer. Knowing that he was the heir apparent to Beethoven's legacy, he took his time premiering new pieces. *Variations on a Theme of Haydn* was written when he was 40 and is the first set of independent variations for orchestra by any European classical composer. The principal tune, “St. Anthony,” was actually probably not written by Haydn, but by one of his students, Ignatz Pleyel. It is believed that the success of this piece gave Brahms the confidence needed to finish his first symphony, which premiered three years later.

THE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AND CONCERT BAND

The Eyes of All Wait Upon Thee

Jean Berger (1909–2002)

Psalm 145:15,16

Jean Berger was a German-born pianist, composer, and music educator who composed extensively for choral ensemble and solo voice. He lived in France for many years and in 1943 became a U.S. citizen. His songs include settings of Langston Hughes and Emily Dickinson. He has set this psalm homophonically (everyone singing the same words at the same time) with lush harmonies, creating a sense of calm for the listener.

THE NMH SINGERS

She Piped For Us

Libby Larsen (b.1950)

Poem by Charles A. Wilson

Libby Larsen is one of the most influential composers in the United States today. Her music is widely commissioned, performed, and recorded by professional orchestras and choirs, as well as amateurs. She lives in Minneapolis, where she pursues two paths: one as a composer and the other as an advocate for American music. “She Piped for Us” comes from a set of three pieces (Today This Spring) that were commissioned in remembrance of two women who succumbed to breast cancer. The texts are hopeful and joyous, and this is reflected in Larsen’s music. The text for “She Piped for Us” is by Charles A. Wilson; it was part of his eulogy for one of the women for whom the piece was composed. The set was premiered in 1995.

THE SELECT WOMEN’S ENSEMBLE

The Holberg Suite

Edvard Grieg (1843–1907)

Prelude

Most famous for his “Piano Concerto in A Minor,” Edvard Grieg was the premier Scandinavian composer of the late 19th century. His love of Norwegian folk music and his affinity for tuneful writing made him a national treasure. “The Holberg Suite” was written in 1855 for the Holberg bicentenary in Norway. Ludvig Holberg was an 18th-century Scandinavian playwright who wrote comedies in the vein of Molière and Plautus.

THE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Antigua Canción (*Old Song*)

Kirstina Rasmussen Collins (b. 1976?)

Poem by Francisco Xavier Alarcón (1954–2016)

Each of us carries
In our chest
A song
So old
We don't know
If we learned it
Some night
Between murmurs
Of fallen kisses
Our lips
Surprise us
When we voice
This song
That is singing
And crying at once

Rasmussen Collins grew up in the Midwest singing in school choirs and writing pop songs. She pursued her musical education at the University of Southern California, where she studied composition with Morten Lauridsen. She also studied with Weston Noble, one of the premier choral educators, at Luther College. Ms. Collins has been commissioned to write music for Harvard, the San Francisco Choral Society and the Peninsula Women's Chorus, for whom this piece was composed in 2018. Francisco Xavier Alarcón was a Chicano poet and educator. He was born in California, and during his childhood he straddled the line between cultures, spending time living with his parents outside of Los Angeles and his other relatives in Guadalajara, Mexico. This diverse upbringing would significantly influence Alarcón's work, leading him to become, as he says, a "binational, bicultural and bilingual writer." He has published numerous poetry collections and a number of award-winning children's books. Kirstina Rasmussen Collins has captured the lyrical and haunting nature of Alarcón's poem with a beautiful melody set to a rocking, repetitive accompaniment.

THE SELECT WOMEN'S ENSEMBLE

El Helwa Di (*The Beautiful One*)

Edward Torkian (b.1952)

This beautiful one woke up to knead dough early in the morning
And the rooster crows: “ku ku ku ku” at early dawn.
Let us go on and make our living by the name of God, oh, workers!
May your morning be a good one, oh, Master Ateyya.

This morning came, oh dear Lord,
And there is not a penny in the pocket
But the mood is calm and peaceful
Among the mistreated workers.

Patience has gone on for too long
Due to the constant bad situation.
You, who have a lot of money,
The poor people also have a generous God.

Hands together, Abu Salah,
Because you will live happily trusting in God.
Rely upon the Lord
Come on, time is passing.

The sun is rising, and everything belongs to God!
Go seek your living, count on God.
Go carry your shovel and tools and let us go.

Hold yourself strong, Abu Salah,
Fight hard and you will live quiet!
Rely upon the Lord
Come on, the time is passing.

The melody of the song El-Helwa Di was created by Egyptian composer Sayyid Darwish (1892–1923) in Egyptian Arabic, to lyrics by Badih Khayri. Torikian arranged this song for a cappella mixed chorus, combining harmonic and contrapuntal styles, and rhythms and effects from different traditions. This song represents Egyptian life at the beginning of the twentieth century. Early in the morning, a beautiful woman wakes up to prepare the bread of the day. In the meantime, the sound of the rooster is heard — “ku, ku, ku” — and the entire neighborhood awakens. People begin to begin to greet each other happily. Their pockets are empty of money, but their mood is calm and peaceful, convinced that hope and patience are good virtues in life, and that God is always present in the hearts of poor people.

Jerusalem

Text by William Blake (1757–1827)

C. Hubert Parry (1848–1918)

Arranged by Joseph T. Elliott Jr. (1929–2017)

The audience is invited to stand and join in the singing of the hymn.

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the Holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?
And did the countenance divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrow of desire.
Bring me my spear! O clouds unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!
I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In ev'ry green and pleasant land.

Let There Be Love

Poem by Alfred Noyes (1880–1958)

Jake Runestad (b.1986)

Angels, where you soar
Up to God's own light,
Take my own lost bird
On your hearts tonight;
And as grief once more
Mounts to heaven and sings,
Let my love be heard
Whispering in your wings.

Jake Runestad has become one of the most performed and commissioned composers in the United States in the last ten years. He was dubbed a “choral rockstar” by American Public Media. His teachers have included Pulitzer-Prize winning composer Kevin Puts, and acclaimed composer Libby Larsen (composer of “She Piped For Us”).

The Concert Choir learned this piece this past winter for our concert focusing on gun violence. The members of the group fell in love with it and wanted a broader audience to hear the soothing, hope-giving text and the extraordinary way Runestad set it.

THE CONCERT CHOIR

I Sing Because I'm Happy

Charles H. Gabriel (1856–1932)

Words by Civilla D. Martin (1866–1948)

Arranged by Kenneth Padon

Adapted by Rollo Dilworth (b.1970)

This is a gospel-style interpretation of the wonderful hymn, “His Eye is on the Sparrow.” It was originally performed and recorded by the Georgia Mass Choir. This version is an arrangement that Rollo Dilworth, one of America’s revered choral composers and Gospel music arranger, did for his own choir.

ELI CARROLL '19, BASS AND JACOB SMITH '21, DRUMSET
THE CONCERT CHOIR AND THE ALUMNI CHOIR

Common Ground

Paul Winter (b.1939)

Voices are calling round the earth
Music is rising in the sea
The spirit of morning fills the air
Guiding my journey home.

Where is the path beyond the forest?
Where is the song I always knew?
I remember it just around the bend,
In the village music never ends.

In a circle of friends, in a circle of sound
All our voices will blend when we touch
Common ground.

Voices are calling round the earth
Music is rising in the sea
The spirit of morning fills the air
Guiding my journey home.

Here is the path beyond the forest,
Here is the song I always knew
I remembered it just around the bend,
In the music the village never ends.

In a circle of friends, in a circle of sound
All our voices will blend when we touch Common ground.

In 2005, Paul Winter and his Consort, spent a week at Northfield Mount Hermon sharing their brilliant music. The group did master classes with our students and performed for the student body. This week long residency culminated in a remarkable performance. They transformed James Gym into a performance venue, building a large “music tree” in the center, which was surrounded by six small stages. Instead of having an audience, the audience became part of the performance. Traveling from stage to stage they were invited to participate in the music making through chant, drumming and playing unusual instruments that had been created from recycled material. During his residency, Paul Winter taught this song to the Concert Choir. It speaks directly to who we are: “All our voices will blend when we touch common ground.”

THE STUDENT BODY, THE CONCERT AND ALUMNI CHOIRS, MEMBERS OF THE JAZZ ENSEMBLE,
AND THE WORLD PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

Jubilate Deo

Dan Forrest (b.1978)

Psalm 100, Latin Vulgate

O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands:
Serve the Lord with gladness,
And come before his presence with a song.
Be ye sure that the Lord he is God;
It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves;
We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
O go your way into his gates with thanksgiving,
And into his courts with praise;
Be thankful unto him,
And speak good of his name.
For the Lord is gracious,
His mercy is everlasting;
And his truth endureth from generation
To generation.

Dan Forrest is considered to be another “rockstar” in the world of choral music. He has received numerous awards and distinctions, including the ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer’s Award and the American Choral Director’s Association Raymond Brock Award. He composed the large work, *Jubilate Deo*, in 2016; we are performing the first movement this afternoon. “*Jubilate Deo* brings to life the global aspects of Psalm 100 by setting it in seven different languages and drawing from a wide spectrum of musical influences. The result is a stunning, global celebration of joy, as all the earth sings as one, ‘omnis terra, jubilate!’” (from danforrest.com).

Northfield Benediction

Lucy Rider Meyer (1849–1922)

The congregation is invited to remain seated and join in the singing of the hymn.

The Lord bless thee and keep thee,
The Lord make his face shine upon thee,
And be gracious unto thee,
And be gracious unto thee.
The Lord lift up his countenance,
His countenance upon thee,
And give thee peace,
And give thee peace.

The “Northfield Benediction” was sung for the first time on February 5, 1885, at the birthday celebration of Betsey Moody, the mother of Dwight Lyman Moody. The Bible text was set to a tune by Lucy Rider Meyer, a one-year teacher in the religious studies department, specifically for this occasion. The celebration also marked the official opening of Marquand Hall. The “Northfield Benediction” has been part of Sacred Concert since 1925, when it first appeared on the program at the Mount Hermon School for Boys.

To Heather Card and the Advancement staff for their enthusiasm, hard work and support, to Susan Podlenski, Gail Doolittle, Gretchen Licata and all the amazing Plant and Property staff for their many hours of help; to Roberto Irueta for his Spanish coaching, to Julia Wiggins and the Moody Center, who have generously opened the Auditorium to us.

*This concert is being digitally recorded by Legrandice.
CDs are available for \$21. Contact the music office at 413-498-3281
or email srhenow@nmhschool.org to place an order.*



Sheila L. Heffernon
Director of Choral Music

Steven Bathory-Peeler
Director of Orchestral and Band Music

Ronald Smith
Director of Jazz and World Music

Craig K. Sandford
Accompanist

Emma Chaffee '21
Emily Cloutier '21
Chloe Key '21
Choir Managers