



# EMERALD

E N S E M B L E

## SONGS OF NATURE

Thursday, July 11, 2019

8:00 pm

*Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church*

*Seattle, Washington*

**Dr. Gary D. Cannon**

*Artistic Director*

# EMERALD ENSEMBLE

Our Mission:

*The Emerald Ensemble enlightens the mind, uplifts the heart, and enriches the soul through great choral music presented with passion and skill.  
We envision a world made better through great choral music.*

## PERFORMING ARTISTS

**Sopranos:**

Natalie Ingrisano  
Linda Strandberg

**Altos:**

Erica Convery  
Melissa Plagemann

**Tenors:**

Jim Howeth  
Dustin Kaspar

**Basses:**

Gustave Blazek  
Charles Robert Stephens

*Please silence any noise-making devices.*

## LEADERSHIP AND GUIDANCE

Jo Ann Bardeen, Board Secretary  
Joyce C. Kling, Board President

Michael Monnikendam, Board Member  
John Muehleisen, Artistic Advisor

*If you are interested in serving on our board, please see any board member  
or email us at [info@emeraldensemble.org](mailto:info@emeraldensemble.org).*

**Dr. Gary D. Cannon, Artistic Director**

**J. Scott Kovacs, Executive Director**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*With our thanks for your support!*

Rev. Robert Beicke & Michael Monnikendam, *Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church*

Cascadian Chorale, *Artistic Partner*

Marta Chaloupka, *Czech Diction Coach*

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# PROGRAM

## Songs of Nature

Thursday, July 11, 2019

**En la noche entraremos** (2013)

Mari Esabel Valverde (b.1987)

Due North (1991)

Stephen Chatman (b.1950)

1. Mountains
2. Trees
3. Woodpecker
4. Varied Thrushes
5. Mosquitoes

**The Tree** (2003)

Greg Bartholomew (b.1957)

**The Itsy Bitsy Spider** (2002)

Steve Danielson (b.1977)

**In stiller Nacht** (1864)

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

**Esti dal** (1938)

Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967)

**Birds at Winter Nightfall** (2018)

Karen P. Thomas (b.1957)

*intermission*

**My Lord, what a mornin'** (1929)

Harry T. Burleigh (1866–1949)

**V přírodě, op.63** (1882)

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

1. Napadly písně
2. Večerní les rozvázal zvonky
3. Žitné pole
4. Vyběhla bříza běličká
5. Dnes do skoku a do písničky!

**The Delight Song of Tsoai-talee** (1999)

Donald M. Skirvin

**There is sweet music** (1908)

Edward Elgar (1857–1934)

**Winter Ride** (2009)

Mari Esabel Valverde (b.1987)

# PROGRAM NOTES AND TEXTS

## **En la noche entraremos** (2013)

by **Mari Esabel Valverde** (born 1987)

Mari Valverde is one of several fine young American composers making their mark on American choral music. But her soundworld—especially her take on harmony, pacing, and texture—has greater variety and spark of ingenuity than most others in what I would call the post-Whitacre generation. Perhaps this is because she extended her education beyond St Olaf College in Minnesota and the San Francisco Conservatory to two august establishments in Paris: L'École Normale de Musique and the Schola Cantorum. In the last decade she has leapt to become a prominent member of the country's choral establishment, being commissioned by leading choirs such as the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus and, locally, Seattle Men's Chorus and The Esoterics. Valverde lives in Dallas, where she sings and teaches voice, being also expert on the vocal issues of transgender and non-binary students.

As befits one who is a fluent translator of both Spanish and French, Valverde's sonorities and textures are driven by her text. *En la noche entraremos*, written for the International Orange Chorale in San Francisco soon after completing her graduate studies, captures Pablo Neruda's mysterious musings of a couple wandering outside at night, amid apple trees and the stars. Mixed meters and gentle harmonic shifts bring us along on the evening stroll. Tempos relax for important cadences as the lovers take hands or smell the perfume of the stars. In the end, tenor and soprano soloists return us home, and winter passes into spring.

En la noche entraremos  
a robar una rama florida.

Pasaremos el muro,  
en las tinieblas del jardín ajeno,  
dos sombras en la sombra.

Aùn no se fue el invierno,  
y el manzano aparece  
convertido de pronto  
en cascada de estrellas olorosas.

En la noche entraremos  
hasta su tembloroso firmamento  
y tus pequeñas manos y las mias  
robarán las estrellas.

Y sigilosamente,  
a nuestra casa,  
en la noche y la sombra,  
entrará con tus pasos  
el silencioso paso del perfume  
y con pies estrellados  
el cuerpo claro de la primavera.

In the night we will enter  
to take a branch in bloom.

We will go past the walls,  
in the darkness of a stranger's garden,  
two shadows in a single shadow.

Winter has not yet passed,  
and the apple tree appears  
transformed all of a sudden  
into a shower of perfumed stars.

In the night we will enter  
up to the glimmering skies,  
and your little hands and mine  
will take the stars.

And discreetly,  
back to our house,  
in the night and the shadow,  
with your footsteps will enter  
the silent step of the fragrance  
and with star-marked feet  
the clear body of spring.

*Translation: the composer*

— Pablo Neruda (1904–1973), “La rama robada,” published in *Los versos del Capitán* (1963)

**Due North:** Five Songs of Nature (1991)  
by **Stephen Chatman** (born 1950)

Stephen Chatman was born in Minnesota and studied at the Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio, the Hochschule für Musik in Germany, and the University of Michigan. His early works are highly modernistic, but it is through his far more approachable choral works that Chatman is best known. Since 1976 he has taught at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, and he is now one of the most prominent choral composers in his adoptive Canada.

Chatman's choral cycle *Due North* celebrates several features of nature specific to the Pacific Northwest. The text is an amalgam of disjointed words and phrases. Chatman effectively paints a sonic portrait of each natural phenomenon. The "jagged, towering" mountains are given strong, brief, leaping phrases, as each new peak takes prominence. The litany of trees appears like a minimalistic patter; in this forest, the trees are apparently closely packed, though the Douglas fir stands most majestic. The third movement seemingly brings a whole colony of woodpeckers—pardon me: a *descent* of woodpeckers—in attack against a dead tree that has been pecked at so much that it is now *double*-dead. Two more varieties of flying fellows follow, which Chatman embraces textlessly.

#### 1. Mountains

Mountains jagged tree-spiked slopes  
radiant peaks stunning mountains  
towering beautiful mountains.

#### 2. Trees

Pine walnut hemlock balsam  
cedar maple sycamore poplar  
Douglas fir

#### 3. Woodpecker

Woodpecker bang tap peck  
banging against a dead bough now double-dead bough  
tap a tap peck a peck knock a knock banging banging  
Tapping woodpecker, bang away!

#### 4. Varied Thrushes

#### 5. Mosquitoes

### *Upcoming Events*

October 4, 2019: Northwest Focus Live on KING-FM

*The Emerald Ensemble will be the first group to perform in KING-FM's new space!*

October 11, 2019: Seattle Sings! Choral Festival

*The Emerald Ensemble has been chosen as one of six choirs to sing in a "welcome home" concert for Morten Lauridsen as he returns to the Pacific Northwest.*

October 26, 2019: "Flower Songs"

*We will feature Lauridsen's "Les chanson de roses" and Benjamin Britten's "Five Flower Songs."*

February 23, 2020: "Songs of Sweden"

*The Emerald Ensemble returns to the Nordic Museum to continue our "Mostly Nordic" series.*

### **The Tree** (2003)

by **Greg Bartholomew** (born 1957)

Too often we learn only of the leaders of an artistic movement and never of the also-rans. For example, I suspect that any of us would struggle to name any nineteenth-century American Transcendentalist other than Emerson or Thoreau. Well, struggle no further, and encounter this poem by Jones Very, a Shakespeare scholar at Harvard during the late 1830s. He was called the group's "dreamy mystic" and was especially close with Emerson, who helped him through a bout of mental illness in 1838 when he believed himself to be the incarnation of Christ. He lived the rest of his life in relative obscurity.

In his sonnet *The Tree*, Very appreciates a hypothetical tree through the seasons, from a spring of budding flowers, through leaf-filled summer, to wintry bareness. Greg Bartholomew composed his setting while attending a workshop at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania. Soon thereafter he shifted away from a partnership at a Seattle law firm to life as a full-time composer. He has since become a staple in Seattle's choral community. *The Tree* deftly represents Bartholomew at his best: always beautiful sonorities, always carefully constructed, always with a deep and rich sense of the feeling behind the text—in this case, the gentle wonder richly felt by a "dreamy mystic."

I love thee when thy swelling buds appear,  
And one by one their tender leaves unfold,  
As if they knew that warmer suns were near,  
Nor longer sought to hide from winter's cold;  
And when with darker growth thy leaves are seen  
To veil from view the early robin's nest,  
I love to lie beneath thy waving screen,  
With limbs by summer's heat and toil oppress'd;  
And when the autumn winds have stript thee bare,  
And round thee lies the smooth, untrodden snow,  
When naught is thine that made thee once so fair,  
I love to watch thy shadowy form below,  
And through thy leafless arms to look above  
On stars that brighter beam when most we need their love.

— Jones Very (1813–1880), published in *Essays and Poems* (1839)

### **The Itsy Bitsy Spider** (2002)

by **Steve Danielson** (born 1977)

It takes a special kind of musical mind to draw fresh blood from a children's song with just one verse. Such is Steve Danielson, who last month completed his doctorate in choral conducting at the University of Washington and also conducts the Ensign Symphony and Chorus. A graduate of Brigham Young University in Salt Lake City, Danielson then pursued graduate school at the University of Memphis and taught high school in a Memphis suburb.

A choir at the University of Memphis first performed his *The Itsy Bitsy Spider*, which is more an original composition based on the children's song than an arrangement *per se*. The altos are the spider, ever persistent with an ostinato in 4/4. The soprano melody stretches out the tune in augmentation, as if in 6/4 time, but the tenors sing an offset 6/8. It all sounds complicated, but the effect is ethereal and contemplative. The sun rises in seven-part harmony. And then... the spider climbs again.

*The spider climbed, the spider fell.*

The itsy bitsy spider crawled up the water spout.  
O, down came the rain and washed the spider out.  
Out came the sun and dried up all the rain.  
The itsy bitsy spider, he climbed up the spout again.

**In stiller Nacht**, from *Deutsches Volkslieder* [“German Folksongs”], WoO 34 (published 1864)  
by **Johannes Brahms** (1833–1897)

Few of history’s great composers understood the human voice in a specifically choral guise better than Brahms. In fact, the only steady employment he ever had was as a choir director: for the court choir at Detmold and a women’s choir at Hamburg in the late 1850s, then for the Vienna Singakademie from 1862. He composed several series of unaccompanied choral partsongs for these posts, preparing himself for the universal triumph of *Ein deutsches Requiem* in 1869.

Brahms harbored a deep love for the folk music of German and eastern European peoples, arranging many traditional melodies for solo voice or choir. *In stiller Nacht* was published in 1865 in a set of fourteen original compositions using German folksong texts, but its text is in fact an adaptation of words by Friedrich von Spee, a seventeenth-century German Jesuit priest. The subject matter of the original is Christ’s suffering at the Mount of Olives. Brahms takes a more universal approach to the text, recalling laments of any variety. It is set homophonically, with each of the four vocal parts moving simultaneously. Occasional brief silences underline the speaker’s weeping.

In stiller Nacht, zur ersten Wacht,  
ein Stimm beginnt zu klagen,  
der nächt’ge Wind hat süß und lind  
zu mir den Klang getragen;

Von herbem Leid und Traurigkeit  
ist mir das Herz zerflossen,  
die Blümelein, mit Tränen rein  
hab ich sie all begossen.

Der schöne Mond will untergahn,  
für Leid nicht mehr mag scheinen,  
die Sterne lan ihr Glitzen stahn,  
mit mir sie wollen weinen.

Kein Vogelsang, noch Freudenklang  
man höret in den Lüften,  
die wilden Tier traurn auch mit mir  
in Steinen und in Klüften.

In still night, at the first watch,  
a voice begins to lament;  
the night wind sweetly and gently  
brings the sound to me.

With bitter sorrow and mournfulness  
is my heart melted;  
the little flowers, with pure tears  
do I shower them all.

The beautiful moon wants to set  
from sorrow, and never again to shine;  
the stars, their glittering fades:  
with me they wish to weep.

No birdsong, no joyful sound  
can be heard in the air;  
the wild animals mourn also with me  
among the stones and in gorges.

*Translation: GDC*

— after Friedrich von Spee (1591–1635)

*Without craftsmanship, inspiration is a mere reed shaken in the wind. It is not hard to compose, but what is fabulously hard is to leave the superfluous notes under the table. If there is anyone here whom I have not insulted, I beg his pardon.*

~Johannes Brahms

**Esti dal** ["Evening Song"] (1938)  
traditional Hungarian folksong  
arranged by **Zoltán Kodály** (1882–1967)

The three strings of Zoltán Kodály's life—as composer, educator, and ethnomusicologist—were constantly interwoven. He first came to prominence together with his fellow Hungarian Bela Bartók as collectors of folksongs and professors at the Academy of Music in Budapest in the first decade of the twentieth century. In the mid-1920s, he began concentrated efforts to improve the musical teaching of all Hungarian youth, which would three decades later result in over seven hundred pedagogical exercises. The watershed year of Kodály's compositional life was 1926, when his *Psalmus hungaricus* (1923) was first heard outside of Hungary. Major international successes followed with the orchestral *Háry János* Suite (1927), *Dances of Galánta* (1933), *Budavári Te Deum* (1936), and *Peacock Variations* (1939). His strictly tonal musical language, at odds with prevailing European trends, was rooted in his belief in folksong; Bartók called Kodály's compositions "the most perfect embodiment of the Hungarian spirit."

In the 1930s, Kodály began to apply these various influences and successes to unaccompanied choral music, most notably with *Mátrai képek* (1931) and *Jézus és a kufárok* (1934). The present *Esti dal* is, strictly speaking, a folksong arrangement, but it has the same originality that he applies to his original works. Above wordless chords in the lower voices, the sopranos take on the role of a wanderer who prepares for sleep in the forest at night. The other voices join in for an evening prayer.

Erdű mellett estvéledtem,  
Subám fejem alá tettem,  
Őszszetöttem két kezemet,  
Úgy kértem jó Istenemet:

Én Istenem, adjál szállást,  
Már meguntam a járkálást,  
A járkálást, a bujdosást,  
Az idegën földön lakást.

Adjon sten jó éjszakát,  
Küldje hozzám szent angyalát,  
Bátoritsa szívünk álmát,  
Adjon Isten jó éjszakát.

Near the forest with the evening twilight,  
I have placed my cloak under my head,  
I have put my two hands together,  
in this way to pray to my good God:

My God, give me a place to rest;  
already I am weary of wandering,  
of wandering, of hiding,  
of living in a foreign land.

Give me, O God, a good night;  
send to me your holy angel;  
encourage my heart's dreams;  
give me, O God, a good night.

*Translation: GDC*

*The music of the people is like a rare and lovely flower growing amidst encroaching weeds. Thousands pass it, while others trample it under foot, and thus the chances are that it will perish before it is seen by the one discriminating spirit who will prize it above all else. The fact that no one has as yet arisen to make the most of it does not prove that nothing is there.*

~Antonin Dvorak



**Birds at Winter Nightfall** (2018)

by **Karen P. Thomas** (born 1957)

Do you enjoy writing poetry? Do you welcome a challenge? Then try writing a triolet. It consists of merely eight lines, typically of eight syllables each. The rhyme scheme is crucial: *abaaabab*. But this isn't quite complex enough. The first, fourth, and seventh lines are identical, as are the second and eighth. Hence the opening and closing couplets are identical. With the repeated lines indicated by capital letters, you could call the overall scheme: *ABaAabAB*. Go try it. Don't worry, I'll wait.

Thomas Hardy's brilliant triolet *Birds at Winter Nightfall* is told from the point of view of the titular birds themselves. They note the snowfall increasing in intensity and the dearth of nutritious berries. They even gaze inside, seeing the one who used to cast crumbs to them on the lawn. Karen Thomas, one of Seattle's most prominent choral conductors and composers, begins her setting indoors with the second and third lines of text. The world is sparse, yes, but not quite desperate. When she proceeds outdoors ("Around the house..."), the birds' confusion and concern are fully revealed. Our performance marks only the second time that Thomas's *Birds at Winter Nightfall* has appeared publicly, as it was premiered just last December by the combined forces of Harvard Glee Club and Radcliffe Choral Society.

Around the house the flakes fly faster,  
And all the berries now are gone  
From holly and cotoneaster  
Around the house. The flakes fly!—faster  
Shutting indoors that crumb-outcaster  
We used to see upon the lawn  
Around the house. The flakes fly faster,  
And all the berries now are gone!

— Thomas Hardy (1840–1926)

**My Lord, what a mornin'** (1929)

African-American spiritual

arranged by **Harry T. Burleigh** (1866–1949)

When the great Czech composer Antonín Dvořák lived in New York for two years, he became exceedingly homesick for his native Bohemia. In this mindset, he met the African-American baritone Harry Burleigh, who introduced him to slave spirituals. Dvořák promptly declared that, if his host country wished to find its own uniquely American musical style, they had best develop it from the traditions of its black culture. He was eventually proven right as jazz and rock music steadily emerged. Burleigh's own arrangements of spirituals, however, are rather traditional, handling these magnificent melodies almost as Dvořák would handle a Bohemian folksong. Burleigh composed over 265 vocal works, mostly settings of spirituals as solo art-songs. The choral version of *My Lord, what a mornin'* is a fine example of Burleigh's writing: the text is clear, the harmonies straightforward and subtle. It is also a tone-poem for unaccompanied voices, beginning gentle as the sky barely shifts in color, gaining drama in the middle section as the sun steadily emerges from the horizon, arriving at full glare for the return to the opening section, and finally closing softly, as the day proceeds with bright calm.

My Lord, what a mornin', when the stars begin to fall.  
Done quit all my worldly ways, join that heavenly band.  
My Lord, what a mornin', when the stars begin to fall.

**V přírodě**, opus 63 (1882)

by **Antonín Dvořák** (1841–1904)

If you know of Dvořák, it is surely for his symphonies, tone-poems, concertos, and other purely orchestral works. Or possibly you know a wee bit of his chamber music, a few art-songs, and an opera aria or two. Yet he was one of history's greatest choral composers, especially noted for his orchestral *Stabat mater* (1877) and *Requiem* (1890). I confess a soft spot for the little-known cantata *The Spectre's Bride* (1884), with its alternating spookiness and drama, and the liturgical beauty of the Mass in D (1887). But Dvořák's unaccompanied choral music is virtually unknown outside his native Bohemia. Perhaps this is because many find the Czech language to be intimidating, but singable English translations do exist and this delightful music remains regrettably obscure.

The cycle *V přírodě*, which is various translated as *Amid Nature*, *In Nature*, or *Songs of Nature*, is not to be confused with the orchestral overture of the same name (opus 91, written in 1891), itself usually translated as *In Nature's Realm*. Here are five miniatures as attractive as they are well crafted. What is now the third song was written on January 24, 1882, and the next day came the second and fourth. He had initially intended these as a three-song cycle, but then, on February 26, added two more. Not bad for three days' work.

The resulting five songs of *V přírodě* unsurprisingly embrace the Germanic approach to unaccompanied choral writing he would have known well through his friendship with several choirs in Prague. But there is also a certain liveliness, wit, and pace more appropriate to Bohemian folksong, such that the fourth and fifth songs could almost be country dances. Throughout his life, Dvořák was drawn to the natural world. In choosing these five poems from his countryman Vítězslav Hálek's eponymous volume, Dvořák leaned toward those that mingle music together with nature. Thus in the first poem, a dewy dusk inspires soul-fed music so deep that it intermingles both joy and sorrow. Its two successors anthropomorphize elements of nature as musicians themselves. The third song is especially clever with this, as repeated softening phrases depict the breeze rustling through the rye field. The composer kept a summer home at Vysoká, a rural village south of Prague, whence he wrote that he "cherished and loved [his garden] like divine art." Thus the cycle's finale brings forward what Dvořák called "God's beautiful nature," as all of divine creation intermingles amid a lively dance: human levity, after all, is also part of nature.

1.

Napadly písně v duši mou,  
nezavolány, znenadání,  
jako když rosy napadá  
po stéblokadeřavé stráni.

Kol se to mihá perlami,  
i cítím dech tak mladý, zdravý,  
že nevím, zda jsou radost má,  
či pláč mé duše usedavý.

Však rosu luna zrodila,  
a není písním v duši stání:  
tekou co slast a slza má,  
a den se chystá ku svítání.

Music descended on my soul,  
not called for, unexpectedly,  
like when dewdrops fall  
on a grass-covered hillside.

All around, it is glistening with pearls,  
and I feel a breath so young, so wholesome,  
that I do not know, whether it is my joy  
or my heart-breaking lament.

But the moon brought forth dewdrops,  
and the music finds no rest in my soul:  
it is flowing, like bliss and like my tear,  
and the day prepares itself for sunrise.

2.

Večerní les rozvázal zvonky,  
a ptáci zvoní k tiché skrejši:  
kukačka zvoní na ty větší,  
a slavík na ty líbeznější.

Les každou větev písni kropí  
a každý lístek jeho dítě,  
na nebes strop jim lampu věší  
a stříbrné z ní táhne nitě.

A každá nit na konci spánek,  
sny jako jiskry v stromech skáčí,  
jen laňka se sebe je strásá  
a před lesem se v rose máčí.

Teď usnuli i zvoníkové,  
les dýchá v prvním zadřimnutí,  
a jestli slavík zaklokotá,  
to ze spánku je prokouknutí.

Teď všechno spí, i laňka dřímá,  
i zvonky visí do vybdělé,  
noc kráčí jako všeho dozvuk,  
tak příroda si k spánku stele

The evening wood has released its bells,  
and the birds ring before silently hiding away,  
the cuckoo rings the larger bells,  
and the nightingale the sweeter ones.

The wood besprinkles every branch with a song,  
and every leaflet is its child,  
it hangs for them a lamp on heaven's ceiling,  
and draws from them silver threads.

And every thread ends in sleep,  
dreams jump like sparks in the trees,  
only the young doe sheds them off  
and soaks itself in the dew in front of the wood.

Now also the bell-ringers have fallen asleep,  
the wood breathes in its first slumbering,  
and when the nightingale warbles,  
then it is just an eye blinking from its sleep.

Now all is sleeping, the young doe slumbers as well,  
also the bells are hanging silently till waking up,  
the night proceeds like everything's echo,  
thus nature prepares for its sleep.

3.

Žitné pole, žitné pole,  
jak to zraje vesele!  
Každý klásek muzikantem,  
klasů jak když nastele.

Hedbávným to šatem šustí,  
větrík v skočnou zadupe,  
slunce objímá a líbá,  
jen to v stéblu zalupe.

Za motýlkem včelka šeptem,  
zda kdo v chrpě nevězí,  
a ten cvrček posměváček  
s křepeličkou pod mezí.

Žitné pole, žitné pole,  
jak to zraje vesele,  
a má mysl jako v tanci,  
jak když písni nastele.

Rye field, rye field,  
how merrily it is ripening!  
Every straw is a musician,  
the whole field is full of them.

It swishes like a silken dress,  
the breeze stamps in a dance,  
embraced and kissed by the sun,  
crackling in the straw.

Whispering, a bee asks to a butterfly,  
if the bluebottle is not yet occupied,  
and a mocking cricket hides  
with a quail under a balk.

Rye field, rye field,  
how merrily it is ripening,  
and my thoughts are like dancing,  
full of songs.

## 4.

Vyběhla bříza běličká,  
jak ze stáda ta kozička,  
vyběhla z lesa na pokraj,  
že prý už táhne jara báj.

Vyběhla jako panenka,  
tak hebká a tak do tenka,  
že až to lesem projelo,  
a vše se touhou zachvělo.

A táhne šumem jara báj,  
vzduch jak na houle, na šalmaj,  
vzduch samá vůně, vzduch samý květ  
a mladý úsměv celý svět.

Hned každý strom zelený šat  
svátečně jme se oblíkat,  
a každá haluz, každá snět  
chce novou řečí rozprávět.

A jak by k hodům zavolal,  
přilítli hosté z blíž i dál,  
a za den, za dva širý kraj,  
a celý svět byl jara báj.

Out ran a silver birch,  
like a goat from the herd,  
it ran out from the wood to its edge,  
proclaiming the tale of spring.

It ran out like a maiden,  
so supple and slim,  
that it pervaded the wood,  
and all trembled with desire.

And the tale of spring spreads in a whisper,  
the air sounds like a violin, like pan-pipes,  
the air is full of fragrance, it is full of flowers,  
and the entire Earth is one youthful smile.

Right away, every tree prepares  
to festively dress up in green,  
and every twig, every sprig,  
is eager to engage in the new talk.

And as if they were invited for a feast-meal,  
guests from near and far came flying hither,  
and after one or two days the wide land, yes,  
the entire Earth itself was one tale of spring.

## 5.

Dnes do skoku a do písničky!  
Dnes pravá veselka je boží,  
dnes celý svět a všechno v párku  
se vedou k svatebnímu loži.

Ve zvonku květném mušky tančí,  
pod travou brouček křídla zvedá,  
a vody šumí, lesy voní,  
a kdo je nemá, srdce hledá.

Na nebi zapalují svíce,  
na západě panenské rdění,  
a slavík již to ohlašuje,  
ten velkněz, u velebném znění.

Dnes velká kniha poesie  
až dokořán je otevřena,  
dnes každá struna všehomíru  
na žert i pravdu natažena.

A nebe skví se, vzduch se chvěje,  
dnes jedna píseň světem letí,  
dnes zem a nebe jeden pohár,  
a tvorstvo při něm ve objetí.

Today, let's dance and sing!  
Today is a truly divine feast,  
today the whole Earth and all in pairs  
lead one another to the wedding bed.

In the bluebell flower midges are dancing,  
under the grass a beetle puts up its wings,  
and the waters are sparkling, the woods are scenting,  
and who has no sweetheart, is looking for it.

In the sky candles are being lit,  
in the west appears a maidenly blushing,  
and the nightingale is already announcing it,  
that high priest, with a solemn sound.

Today the great book of poetry  
is widely opened,  
today every string of the universe  
is tended toward jest and truth alike.

And the sky is shining, the air is vibrating,  
today one song is pervading the Earth,  
today Earth and Heaven are like one cup,  
and Creation is entangled in deep embrace.

**The Delight Song of Tsoai-talee**, from *Songs of the Equinox and Solstice* (1999)  
by Donald M. Skirvin

The grandfather of poet N. Scott Momaday fought at the Battle of Little Big Horn; he recalled: “Custer looked whiter than ever!” Momaday himself was born into the Kiowa nation in Oklahoma but raised in Arizona, where his parents taught at various reservations, thus exposing him to Navajo, Apache, and Pueblo cultures as well. When he was a boy, he was brought to Devil’s Tower in Wyoming, a sacred place where he received his Kiowa name: Tsoai-talee—Rock Tree Boy. Eventually, this offspring of Custer’s better became the first Native American to gain major prominence as a writer, securing the Pulitzer Prize in 1969 for his novel *House Made of Dawn*. He eventually tenured at UC Santa Barbara, UC Berkeley (where he created the Indian Studies program), Stanford, and the University of Arizona, and held brief residencies at Princeton, Columbia, and Lomonosov Moscow State University in the then USSR. He now lives in Oklahoma again and serves as the state’s Poet Laureate.

The text of Momaday’s poem *The Delight Song of Tsoai-talee* recalls a ritual passage to adulthood. With the simple repeated declaration “I am,” Tsoai-talee (that is, Momaday himself) joins with all that surrounds him and adds to these observable phenomena an element of the mystical. Seattle composer Don Skirvin’s unmeasured, mercurial music zips past, overflowing with the poet’s rapture and *joie de vivre*: a true joy in living.

I am a feather on the bright sky  
I am the blue horse that runs in the plain  
I am the fish that rolls, shining, in the water  
I am the shadow that follows a child  
I am the evening light, the lustre of meadows  
I am an eagle playing with the wind  
I am a cluster of bright beads  
I am the farthest star  
I am the cold of the dawn  
I am the roaring of the rain  
I am the glitter on the crust of the snow  
I am the long track of the moon in a lake  
I am a flame of four colors  
I am a deer standing away in the dusk  
I am a field of sumac and the *pomme blanche*\*  
I am an angle of geese in the winter sky  
I am the hunger of a young wolf  
I am the whole dream of these things

You see, I am alive, I am alive  
I stand in good relation to the earth  
I stand in good relation to the gods  
I stand in good relation to all that is beautiful  
I stand in good relation to the daughter of Tsen-tainte\*  
You see, I am alive, I am alive

— N. Scott Momaday (born 1934), first published in *Angle of Geese and Other Poems* (1974)

\* *pomme blanche* = prairie turnip, a staple food of Plains tribes

Tsen-tainte = White Horse (c.1840/5–1892), a daring Kiowa warrior and chief

**There is sweet music**, from Four Choral Songs, opus 53 (1908)  
by **Sir Edward Elgar** (1857–1934)

Modern audiences tend to think of Sir Edward Elgar as the pinnacle of Victorian music: stoic, stodgy, honest, honorable, noble, and, let's face it, maybe a bit pretentious. But a more detailed reading of his major works—the famed *Enigma Variations* (1899), the two symphonies and concertos, the three great oratorios—reveals a passionately beating heart. This alternative side of the upright English gentleman is also powerfully heard in some of his shorter choral works, including the partsong *There is sweet music*.

In December 1907, Elgar and his wife undertook a visit to Rome, ostensibly to work on his First Symphony. But like all composers through history, at times he put aside his more ambitious works to respond to commissions that actually paid: in this case, for choral miniatures. The four resulting partsongs for unaccompanied mixed chorus are among the most challenging in the repertoire. *There is sweet music* presents a particularly special challenge, being apparently the first music ever published that proceeds in two simultaneous keys. Sure, the experimental modernist Charles Ives had pulled this trick already, but his efforts were entirely unknown. It is hard to imagine a circumstance where Elgar and Ives were equally innovative, but here it is!

The men are in G major throughout, the women in A-flat major (the key of the First Symphony; one wonders if this music originated as a symphonic sketch). These are among the most harmonically distant keys one could choose. The miracle of *There is sweet music*, however, is that it never *sounds* particularly dissonant; exotic, sure, even downright funky, but never unpleasant. The choral writing is orchestral in conception: it would be a fascinating exercise to transcribe the men's voices for strings and the women's for winds. Elgar's precise articulation marks provide variety to a pervasively gentle scene.

There is sweet music here that softer falls  
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,  
Or night-dews on still waters between walls  
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;  
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,  
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;  
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.  
Here are cool mosses deep,  
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,  
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,  
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

— Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892)

**Winter Ride** (2009)  
by **Mari Esabel Valverde** (born 1987)

*The composer writes:*

In my search for poets, I am oriented toward women, queer folk, people of color, and authors skilled in imagery, and with Amy Lowell, we conveniently have three of four. What is more, her poem *A Winter Ride* falls into the category of solstice-themed literature, riding the fence between suggestions of what is secular and what is sacred. [...]

Sometimes winter-inspired art is paired with symbols of death before rebirth, dismissing the healing, enhancing quality of sharp cold and restful darkness. Here, winter is bold, ephemeral, colorful, mysterious, and nourishing, a spiritual yet natural experience. It opens with a statement of the inexpressible pleasure of “running” through white snow. Save a moment to revel in the brightness of the light, this expression sweeps us off our feet and carries us away. And within such engulfing rapture is a message of thankfulness for life and for living.



Who shall declare the joy of the running!  
 Who shall tell of the pleasures of flight!  
 Springing and spurning the tufts of wild heather,  
 Sweeping, wide-winged, through the blue dome of light.  
 Everything mortal has moments immortal,  
 Swift and God-gifted, immeasurably bright.  
 So with the stretch of white road before me,  
 Shining snowcrystals rainbowed by the sun,  
 Fields that are white, stained with long, cool, blue shadows,  
 Strong with the strength of my horse as we run.  
 Joy in the touch of the wind and the sunlight!  
 Joy! With the vigorous earth I am one.

— Amy Lowell (1874–1925)



Dr. Gary D. Cannon is one of Seattle’s most versatile choral personalities, active as conductor, singer, and musicologist. Since 2008 he is Artistic Director of the 90-voice Vashon Island Chorale and of the Cascadian Chorale, a prominent chamber choir in Seattle’s Eastside suburbs.

In 2016 he founded a versatile professional choir, the Emerald Ensemble. At the invitation of the Early Music Guild, he founded and directed a Renaissance choir, Sine Nomine (2008–15). He has conducted for Vashon Opera three times, and has also directed Anna’s Bay Chamber Choir, Choral Arts Northwest, Earth Day Singers, Kirkland Choral Society, and the Northwest Mahler Festival.

As a tenor soloist, he has appeared with Pacific Northwest Ballet as well as several regional orchestras and choirs. He provides pre-concert lectures for Seattle Symphony and writes program notes for choirs across the country. Cannon is formerly an instructor at Whatcom Community College (2004–6), where he received the Faculty Excellence Award. His independent musicological research emphasizes early-twentieth-century British music. A California native, Dr. Cannon holds degrees from the University of California at Davis and the University of Washington.

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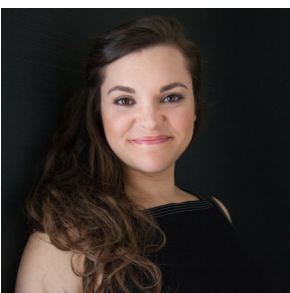
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