

Locally Grown II: Program Notes by James Schatzman

This is a program that I am delighted to present. From early on in our country's history great music has been something we imported. European conductors brought music from their country and presented it to us through American orchestras. The vast majority of our choral programs were filled with European master like Mozart, Bach and Palestrina while only sprinkled with American selections. Choral music however began to set a new trend for music involving singers as early as the 1930's. Conductors like Robert Shaw, Alice Parker, Roger Wagner, Norman Luboff, and Fred Waring began generating more interest in American music by writing, commissioning and performing more homegrown talent. More and more American music was being performed – first folk songs, then spirituals and gradually more and more original American compositions. However, there was still a bit of elitism as much of this music was written by recognized choral stars in New York and other great cultural centers of the US.

Today, there a much more robust variety, and with the internet it is easier to get the word out from smaller markets and lesser known venues. A composition from anywhere U.S.A. can become a youtube sensation. I have to say, there is also an emerging desire to take notice of things that are “locally grown.”

In this light we ask, “Who are the Mozarts or emerging Bachs in our own backyard?” The program you are about to hear contains music written by people with local connections and mostly from Racine and Kenosha. For the most part, with the exception of Gerhard Schroth who passed unexpectedly in 1973, they are all still alive and well. Some of these local composers are well established in their fields and some are up and coming. Some of them will be here to witness the performance of their selections. Some pieces are being performed for the first time while others have been sung all over the world.

Two of the most familiar, Gregory Berg and Karel Suchy have been presented numerous times on our programs. *Shepherd's Gloria* was commissioned by the CAS from composer, conductor, teacher and radio personality Gregory Berg. A longtime friend of the chorus, Berg has been featured as bass soloist in CAS presentations of the *Mikado*, Vaughan Williams' *Five Mystical Songs*, a presentation of works by Rogers and Hammerstein and Orff's *Carmina Burana*. We featured his *Requiem* in our last local composers program Berg is committed to new works for the American church that are fresh and accessible. In the *Shepherd's Gloria*, you will hear exhilarating undulations of eighth note groupings that stir feelings of joy and excitement in true American fashion. This work can now be found in the Hal Leonard Catalog.

Karel Suchy, our composer-in-residence, has written two pieces for our program, one of them is a premiere. *Alleluia for Love*, written in 2014 was part of the CAS program Endless Hallelujahs in 2015. Today is the second reading of this wonderful piece. The text is built around the beautiful and sensual text from the bible's Song of Songs, seen by some as a wedding ode premiered as

and sanctification of human sexuality and also as a metaphor for God's love for his people. The rich and warm alleluias set the foundation for this tender poetry. Mr. Suchy's newest composition, "*What do you mean?*" takes a similar format, using the spoken word and singing to tell a more dramatic story. *What do you mean?* Tells the story of one Black Sea German Family who was split up in 1944 as a result of the second world war. The Father went to the front to fight, the family was later forced to flee and in the process got separated, some ending up in Germany and some in work camps of Siberia. The ordeal was written down through the memories of eighteen year old Theresia and her ten year old brother, Johann. The family survivors ended up in Racine after being sponsored by a local farmer. The choir in this composition represents the voice of God as it quotes from the text of the Gospel of Matthew, chapter twenty-five.

Gehard Schroth's selections show a little of his own diversity. *Psalm 100* is a wonderful liturgical introit with a full open sound and a joyous and rich harmony. It is meant to grab the listener's attention and that it does. The second Schroth selection is *The Cold Wind* where he shows his all-around skill in setting an original text to an original tune and surrounds it with a supportive yet nimble piano accompaniment. His music shows a real appreciation for traditional forms while communicating a flair for the dramatic with a dash of subtle tone painting.

His daughter, Elizabeth Schroth-Sellers is also an accomplished musician. A conductor and professor of movie music at California State University, she and her students have won awards for media composition. She wrote *Child of Heaven* as an undergraduate at St. Olaf, where she was soprano section leader of the famed St. Olaf Choir. She got her degree for orchestral conducting from Northwestern University. She was awarded a doctorate for her professional contributions to the field of film music. Her professional duties have included work as Reserve Conductor with the Denver Symphony, Associate Conductor of the Breckenridge Music Institute and Festival and Assistant Conductor of the Denver Concert Chorale and Orchestra.

Two selections in today's program are written by retired educator, Antonio Rodrigues-Pavao. After graduate studies at the University of Illinois he began his professional teaching career at Wayland Academy in Beaver Dam. He came to Racine to teach at Horlick High School in 1977. Antonio built one of the finest school choirs in Wisconsin and created the famous Madrigal Feast which has been presented for over 40 years. His first selection, *Time Is*, a selection using one of Henry van Dyke's most famous poems is, ironically, the shortest piece on the program. Its brief nature brilliantly impacts the power of the sentiment. It was read at the funeral of Princess Diana, for the British victims of 911, and as the closing remarks in Bob Johnson's 2013 novel, *Child of Time*. His second composition on this program is a setting of a poem by American

poet e. e. cummings. *sam was a man* is a whimsical and charming text about Sam and his demise.

Another composer making his debut on our concert series is Gary Aubry. Born in Ohio, Gary Aubry attended Asbury College in Kentucky where he earned his degree in music education, studying under James Curnow. He lived for a few years in Indiana and moved to Wisconsin in 1990 to work for Hal Leonard Corporation. Music has been a passion for most of his life. Mr. Aubry has been directing music for almost 40 years. He has directed church choirs, concert bands, orchestras and jazz ensembles through the years. Most recently Mr. Aubry was the director of the Bay View United Methodist Choir from September 2000 until June of 2011. Mr. Aubry currently conducts the Cantare Chorale in Milwaukee. *Peace* is set to a text by British poet Alfreds Noyes as he yearns for the simpler life. The music paints a picture of serenity that can take the listener on a journey from the challenges of life to a calm rest by a serene lake, far from the noise and hustle of the city.

Donald J. Young received his Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and his Masters of Music from Arizona State University-Tempe. He has studied composition with Donald Andrus, Mike Leckrone, Lawrence Hartzell, Ronald Lo Presti, and August Wegner. He is currently the Director of Bands and Chairman of the music department at William Horlick High School in Racine and adjunct instructor of music for UW- Parkside. He is active as a guest composer and conductor throughout Wisconsin. The CAS is honored to feature one of his compositions. *Rejoice In the Lord* is a wonderful combination of strength and lilting joy.

Christian James Jesse, born in 1994, is the youngest of our featured composers today. He is currently finishing up his Masters of Music at Southern Methodist University. He attended UW-Oshkosh where he studied with Dr. Eric Barnum. In 2018-19 he was composer in residence with the Irvine Symphony Orchestra. He also received a first prize in the 2016 Wisconsin Alliance for Composers' Student Composer Competition, the 2016 UW-Oshkosh Concerto Competition, and 2017 Edna and Judson Loomis Prize in Music. His selection, *There Is No Rose* is a traditional English text, set in a fresh and original way. Its lush and modern harmonies make a fine effect and evoke a lovely feeling of peace and beauty as the sounds wash over our ears.

James Machan is an organist, church musician, composer and music educator who graduated with a degree in music education from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and holds a master's degree in organ and church music from Northwestern University. This was followed by studies at the Royal School of Church Music in England. He served as the school choirmaster in Waukesha for more than thirty years. He was organist and music director at various churches and is Minister of Music at Martin Luther Church in

Oconomowoc. As a composer, Machan is mainly known for works and arrangements for choir. We will present his spiritual arrangement of *Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho*. This lively tune is skillfully arranged for 6 part unaccompanied choir. And is a fitting close to our program.

Again, this experience has left me wanting to know more about our many local composers. You can expect to hear more from them in the future and more of them from us. Please sit back and enjoy.

Piano – Randy Fischer

Trumpet – Patricia Badger

Readers – Dan Stika, Georgine Kudrna, Sarah Barbian



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