



Choral Arts Society of Southeastern Wisconsin

**Program Notes: *From Lament to Alleluia* Featuring Composer-in-residence Karel Suchy
premiering April 18, 2021**

“Bedford Sonus I” utilizes the acoustic and architectural features of the Frances Bedford Concert Hall at UW-Parkside, and integrates these features as part of the instrumentation. Research for the work involved study of the architectural and structural design, including the acoustical properties of the room. This research also included discussions with the designers (architect, planner) and with those who use the hall (music faculty, performers). The selection and placement of the instruments and performers were determined with focus on the features of the hall. The score includes chorus, piano, organ, timpani and three groups of handbells. Musical themes, tonality, and lyrics are inspired by “The Ten Books on Architecture” by Marcus Vitruvius Pollio (born c. 80-70 BC, died after c. 15 BC). Vitruvius described bronze resonating vessels tuned to modes termed “enharmonic,” “chromatic” and “diatonic and placed in specific locations in theaters to amplify the voices of actors. The tonal structure of “Bedford Sonus I” reflects these modes. Lyrics include words relating to sound and spaces.

“What do you mean?” uses spoken word and singing to tell a dramatic story. One Black Sea German Family was split up in 1944 as a result of the Second World War. The Father went to the front to fight. The remaining family was later forced to flee and was separated in the process, some ending up in Germany and some in the work camps of Siberia. The family survivors ended up in Racine, WI. In this composition, memories of eighteen year old Theresia and her ten year old brother, Johann tell of their ordeal in spoken word, and the chorus represents the voice of God as it quotes from the text of the Gospel of Matthew, chapter twenty-five.

Karel Suchy says of **“Understanding”**: “Scientific research and engineering developments are generally guided by positive intentions. The fruits of these endeavors may be misused, and the negative consequences may not immediately be realized. This topic has been a personal concern which has guided my studies and work. “Understanding” is a prayer for direction when applying our own imperfect creativity in God’s world, with lyrics based on Job 38. The sections in 4/4 meter represent the voice of God speaking to Job. God asserts that our world is His creation and reminds Job that human understanding is limited. The music is stately, and reflects the firm, yet tender approach that a father would take with a child. The sections in 6/8 meter



repeat a simple prayer, reflecting the voice of the individual and of all humanity seeking deeper faith, growth, and understanding of God's creation. The changes in meter convey a sense of urgency, motion, and excitement."

"American Oratorio" is written in six movements. Each movement has two segments, each of which is 30 seconds long, typical to a TV commercial slot. The text is sung and spoken. The structures are built to convey a pattern from chaos to unity. The wide range of quotes by Americans, about Americans, paints a decidedly nonpartisan view of our society.

"Lament for Love" musically interprets the words of Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950) and Pablo Neruda (1904-1973). The composition evokes various moods created by the loss of love in ten musical vignettes. Occasional "flare-ups" of dissonance in the choral parts ("sparks" of harmony) and division of the bass part in octaves enhance the emotional expressions of love and despair. "What lips my lips have kissed" begins in a romantic and wistful mood, and then progresses through sorrow, hope, then sorrow again. "The Song of Despair" brings us through moods of deep sorrow, dark cold emptiness, brokenness and anger, discord, struggle, resolution, and finally, beauty and ultimate hope. The female voice invites, "so I wait for you like a lonely house till you will see me again and live in me. Till then my windows ache." The male voice responds, "I want to do with you what spring does with the cherry trees."

"Alleluia for Love" uses the beautiful and sensual text from the Bible's Song of Solomon, seen by some as a wedding ode and a sanctification of human sexuality and also as a metaphor for God's love for his church.