



Una
Voce
chamber choir

Ineffable

June 24 & 26, 2022

Unitarian Universalist Church - Brunswick

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello Friends of Choral Arts:

I can't express what a joy it is to present *Ineffable* to you today! This exceptional concert has been years in the making and the singers are excited to be able to bring it to you.

Ineffable is a word used to describe things too great or extreme to be expressed in words. Or perhaps, incapable of being expressed, indescribable or unutterable. However you describe it, this concert will have no words. We are sure you will enjoy this adventure in choral exploration while continuing to pursue the mission of bringing fine, contemporary music to the mid-coast of Maine.

As the past semester has evolved, Una Voce has continuously watched the developments of the COVID-19 virus and has made adjustments as appropriate. We greatly appreciate that you have taken precautions with vaccinations and masks to help protect the audience and performers.

We have many people to thank for their support of Una Voce Chamber Choir. We wish to thank Choral Arts of New England for their belief in our program. We thank the Onion Foundation for being very generous. We continue to be indebted for the continued support of the companies and people you see in our program and we wish to mention our newest supporter, Hancock Lumber, for coming on board in January.

I will add that the Una Voce board made the most of 2021 by strengthening the operating principles of the group. With the leadership of Hannah Gathman of Promenade Productions, the board undertook a months-long strategic planning process to finetune and codify our Vision and Mission which were added to our website at UnaVoceChamberChoir.org. We also codified our Values to help others know who we are and what we believe. All of these are now part of our bylaws. Within our mission we commit ourselves to inventive programming and *Ineffable* demonstrates our commitment to that mission and to you.

Now, prepare yourself to enjoy *Ineffable* and we hope to see you again!

Scott

Scott B Miller
Board President
unavocechamberchoir@gmail.com



PROGRAM ORDER

Past Life Melodies
La Lluvia (The Rain)

Drew Albert, Conductor

Sarah Hopkins (b. 1958)
Stephen Hatfield

To Be Sung of a Summer Night on the Water
Fantaisie a Bouche Fermée
Chanson a Bouche Fermée

Frederick Delius (1862-1934)
Jehan Alain (1911-1940)

Solfeggio

Arvo Pärt (b. 1935)

Tears, Apples, and Stones

Jonathan David

Spiegel im Spiegel

Arvo Pärt

Ben Noyes, Cello
Kellie Moody, Piano

Concerto for Cello and Voices (D. 144)

Alan Ridout (1934-1996)

- I. Threnody
- II. Estampie
- III. Sarabande

Ben Noyes, Cello

Gabriel's Oboe (from The Mission)

Ennio Morricone (1928-2020)
Arr. Craig Hella Johnson

Ben Noyes, Cello
Kookie McNerney, Oboe

Nyon, Nyon

Drew Albert, Conductor

Jake Runestad (b. 1986)

El Hambo

Jaakko Mäntyjärvi (b. 1963)

Pal-So-Seong (8 Laughing Voices)

Hyo-Won Woo (b. 1974)

2021-22 UNA VOCE CHAMBER CHOIR

Soprano

Emma Akrawi
Emily Anderson
Stephanie Bernier
Marsey Caswell
Jennifer Caton
Jeannie Giberson
Caroline Koelker
Erika Leighton
Denise Meiler
Susan Purcell
Hillary Shende
Fiona Vella

Alto

Ashley Albert
Claire Berkowitz
Abby Bozeman
Jean Edmondson
Shira Gersh
Susan Kring
Shirsten Lundblad
Beth Preston
Rachel Turner

Tenor

Drew Albert
Steve Amsden
Nate Bates
Rowan Etzel
Robert Gersh
Robert Haines
R. Scott Hanson
Josh Koelker

Bass

Sheldon Bird
Jonathan Chellis
John Gilmour
Matthew Jones
Del Leonard
Fhiwa N'Dou
Patrick Sylvia

Virgil Bozeman IV, Artistic Director
Drew Albert, Assistant Director
Kellie Moody, Accompanist

2021-22 UNA VOCE CHAMBER CHOIR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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MISSION STATEMENT

"UNA VOCE CHAMBER CHOIR promotes contemporary choral literature through excellence in performance practice, inventive programming, and innovative collaborations, engaging and fostering new and diverse compositional voices, audiences, and singers."

Una
VOCE
chamber choir

~ Cover artwork courtesy of Jason Picard ~

PROGRAM NOTES (OR AN OLD-FASHIONED APOLOGY)

"For I consider that music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to express anything at all, whether a feeling, an attitude of mind, a psychological mood, a phenomenon of nature, etc...Expression has never been an inherent property of music." - Igor Stravinsky, Autobiography (1936)

The question of meaning in music is a complicated one, that of meaning in music with text doubly so. For most listeners, musical meaning is connected to an emotional response elicited by a given piece. When it comes to vocal music, many listeners rely on the sung text as an important clue in deciphering what a composer might 'mean' by their musical decisions. But the relationship between text and music is not always straightforward. Consider the following story as a kind of thought experiment.



When Eric Whitacre originally composed *Sleep*, it was a setting of the seminal Robert Frost poem, "Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening". Unbeknownst to (and unfortunately for) Whitacre, his artistic representatives had been unsuccessful in securing from Frost's estate the right to use this (or any other Frost) poem. Whitacre was stuck with a completed piece that had no words. Scrambling, he asked his friend, the poet Charles Anthony Silvestri, to compose a new poem; one with identical meter (iambic tetrameter), rhyme scheme and the exact number of stanzas as Frost's "Stopping By the Woods". Thus, *'Whose woods these are I think I know, his house is in the village though'* became *'The evening hangs beneath the moon; a silver thread on darkened dune'*. A listener may experience a different emotional response, **but if Whitacre's music didn't actually change, did its meaning?**

Herein lies the real challenge for vocal music lovers in developing an accurate understanding of its meaning. On one hand, opera aficionados would rightfully bristle at the suggestion that the meaning of the music is not *intimately* tied to the libretto; composers from Monteverdi to Wagner took great pains to write vocal lines and instrumental accompaniment that heightened the dramatic import of the libretti they adopted for use. On the other hand, much of Protestant hymnody has been built on the practice of troping new sacred texts to existing music, sacred or secular. This is the exact reason why hymnals index hymn texts by metric structure: a cheeky church musician can thus get their choirs and congregations to sing the words 'O come, o come Emmanuel' to the Navy Hymn (Melita), or 'Eternal Father, strong to save' to the music of that classic Advent carol. Put another way, does the hymn tune *Amazing Grace* take on a different meaning if one sings the text from the theme to Gilligan's Island? If there is a relationship between text meaning and musical meaning, it is at best a tenuous one.

This evening's program, *Ineffable*, is an attempt to examine this tenuous relationship; to get at this question of meaning in vocal music. Instead of choosing music with newly troped words, we have selected choral works entirely devoid of text to begin with (a kind of controlled experiment). *Past Life Melodies* draws on vocables that evoke a kind of ecstatic and communal music making that predates the written word. *La Lluvia* and *Nyon*, *Nyon* require voices to imitate the sounds of instruments, ancient (pan flute) and

contemporary (synthesizers). *Tears, Apples, and Stones* was composed for a Holocaust remembrance art installation at a deconsecrated synagogue in Hungary. Employing a High Holy Days niggun (a wordless devotional melody) as a *cantus firmus*, the composer abstracts (to haunting effect) the titular text (“Könnyek, Almák, Kövek”) by setting only its vowel sounds. Composed near the end of his life, Alan Ridout’s *Concerto for Cello and Voices* is more closely related to a Baroque dance suite. He asks the chorus to play the role of orchestra; singing, shouting, clapping, and stomping to support a virtuosic cello line. *El Hambo* uses the phonemic content familiar in Scandinavian languages, but the “words” are mere nonsense. Hyo-Won Woo’s *8 Laughing Voices* is a breathtakingly original composition that juxtaposes tiny musical vignettes and the laughter that inspired them.

Without the benefit of language, are we somehow freed to experience the human voice differently? You are encouraged to listen to this program as you would any concert of purely instrumental music; where the search for meaning is not short-circuited by text or program, but rather found predominantly in the organization of musical elements. Consider the possibility that, as Stravinsky clarified a quarter-century later, music doesn’t express “any transcendental idea *in terms of music*...rather, music expresses *itself*”. Enjoy tonight’s program on its own terms; its variety of musical textures, articulations and tempi. Allow yourself to be transported to emotional spaces familiar and new, remembering it wasn’t a lyric that brought you there.

All Best,
Virgil

Thank You To Our Benefactors

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Special Thanks

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Ampleforth Abbey (North Yorkshire, England) for allowing UVCC to perform

Alan Ridout’s *Concerto for Cello and Wordless Voices*.



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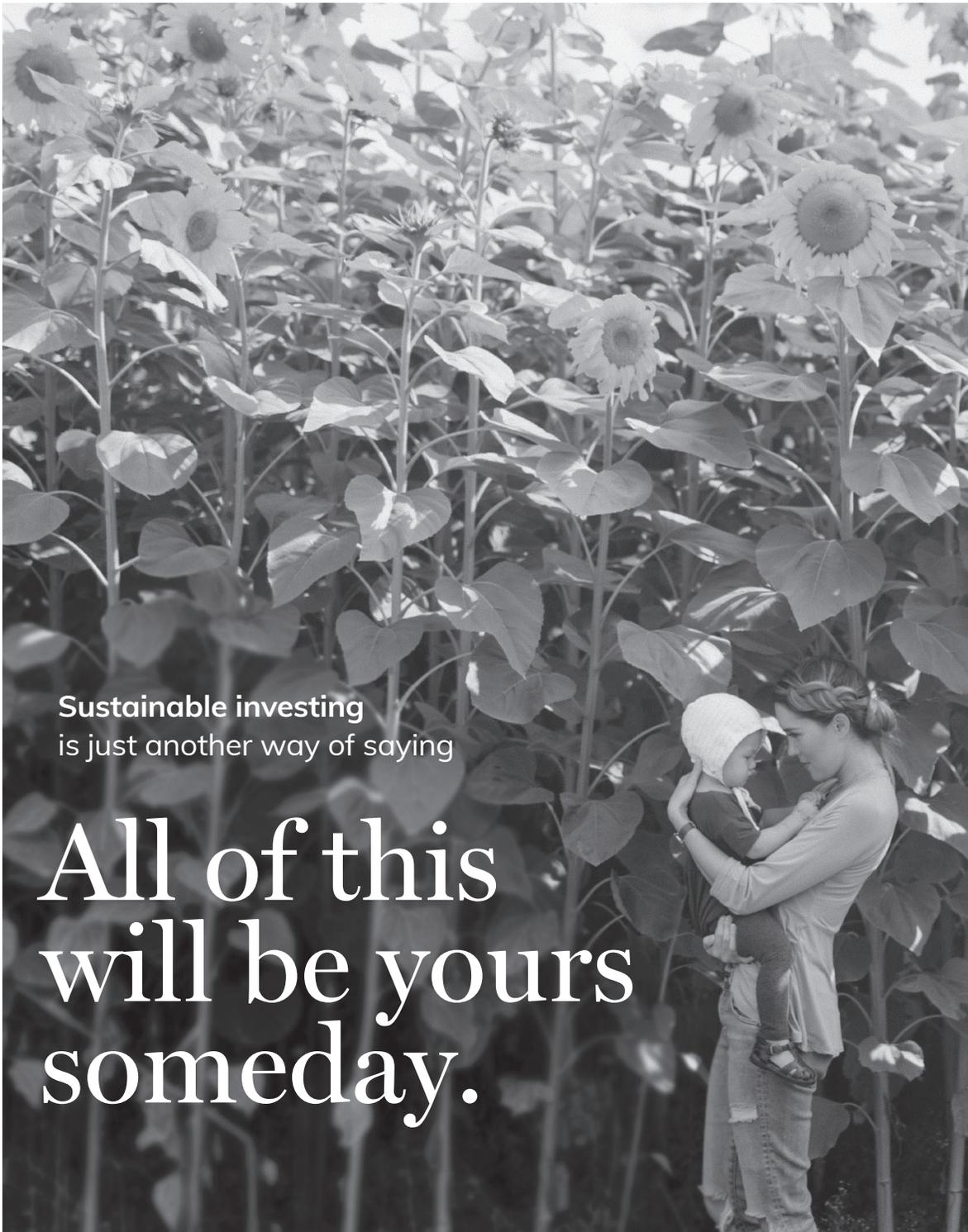
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