

Una
Voce
chamber choir

PORTALS

January 19 & 21, 2024

Unitarian Universalist Church~Brunswick, Maine



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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends of Una Voce Chamber Choir:

We heartily welcome you to Portals! The artistic staff and singers continue to follow the mission of the organization to bring fine, contemporary choral music to you.

I recall back to 2018 when Vox Nova Chamber Choir had sung its final concert. Here was a highly talented group of singers already assembled who had established an exceptional reputation. Would it fall apart and dissolve into other groups? Fortunately, Virgil Bozeman had a vision of how the group could stay together to continue offering fine contemporary choral music. On August 1, 2018 Virgil and several devotees of choral music first met and created Una Voce Chamber Choir

with the mandate to be ready for the first rehearsal in mid September, just 6 weeks away. I was elected by the Board to be the President, a role I have treasured ever since. At the same time, we adopted term limits and as unbelievable as it seems, my second 3 year term expires this June.

While there are still two concert series remaining before the end of my term, I wish to express my appreciation to Virgil, the board members, and the singers for their confidence in me over the past 5 and one-half years. I think back to the several concerts starting with *Through the Long Night* performed at Bowdoin Chapel, then *Seeking What is Yet Unfound*, then *Evensong* performed just 5 weeks before the Covid shutdown, *Intimations of Immortality* in January 2022 after the Covid break, *Ineffable* at this church, *Passio* featuring the little match girl, *you whom my soul loves* at the beautiful Studzinski Hall, and now *Portals*. I continue to be impressed by the talent, professionalism, dedication and artistic abilities of the singers and the board members. I am thankful every day that we have this level of choral music close by in our community.

I am also thankful to our audiences who have supported us every step of the way. Together we have faced poor weather for concerts, varied concert halls, and shutdowns and you have followed our vision through it all. A Choir is nothing without its audience and you are one of the best. On behalf of the singers, we offer you our deepest appreciation!

We also have appreciation for our sponsors whose community spirit enriches us all. Several have been with us for the years; Bath Savings Bank, Kennebec Savings Bank, Well Tree, Now You're Cooking and other companies and individuals have helped us build reserves to ensure the continuation of UVCC for years into the future. I would be remiss if I didn't mention the support from the Onion Foundation and Choral Arts New England. Many supporters make it all work!

Please enjoy Portals !

Sincerely

Scott B Miller

UVCC Board President



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unavocechamberchoir@gmail.org

Dear Friends of Una Voce Chamber Choir,

On behalf of the choir and artistic team, I would like to welcome you to UVCC's 2024 Winter Concert Series, "Portals". Ordinarily, I would spend much of this letter describing the process behind the creation and development of the concert you are about to hear. I will endeavor to do so, but more succinctly than usual, since I would really like to speak about the journey and execution of this program, and the remarkable group of singers who are at the core of everything UVCC stands for.

As with many of our concerts, the title "Portals" is meant to be gestural, and open-ended enough to allow for a variety of textual themes and slants. To me, a successful program is a quiet conversation between performer (as the surrogate for the composer) and audience; not so much telling you a discrete story as providing the canvas onto which this music intersects with your story.

Tonight's concert opens with pieces that highlight different aspects of the immigrant experience, and then moves into works that suggest portals of a different sort: distinct peoples and cultures meeting for the first time, the transmogrification of the natural world to create instruments that can summon the divine, and ruminations on the nature of the gateway between life and death itself. It is a program about journeys (great and greater still), and about taking the risk to find out what lies on the other side of the veil.

For me however, this program, (as much or more than any we have yet attempted) is about the incredible people you see on stage. I have the great fortune to work with one of the finest groups of choral musicians this side of I-495. Each semester, we begin with a program that we know is going to stretch us to the very limit of our skills and preconceptions of beauty and merit. And there is always a point in the semester when we wonder if (like Sisyphus) we will succeed in pushing the boulder 95% of the way up the hill, only to see it roll back to the valley below. If we are about one thing, that 'thing' is risk! This has never been more true than with "Portals". Each piece on this program has tested our mettle in its own unique manner, forcing us to grow in new and exciting (and sometimes uncomfortable) ways. Many groups do this with a few pieces. With UVCC it can be, and is the *entirety* of the program. This is the mission that we share.

So while I would usually close by thanking you, our friends and patrons, for your steadfast support of UVCC (and I do!) I very much want to offer my sincerest gratitude to the members of Una Voce Chamber Choir. Your eagerness to open portals to destinations unknown, and your willingness to jump through them with me is an ever-present source of inspiration.

Enjoy!

Virgil



PROGRAM ORDER

The New Colossus

Saunder Choi (b. 1989)

She Will Transform You

Reena Esmail (b.1983)

Nicole Rabata, Flute

A Chain is Broken

Dominick DiOrio (b.1984)

Sam Schuth, Violin

Salvatore Guzzardi, Tenor

Horizons

Peter Louis Van Dijk (b.1953)

Mark Sayre, Baritone

Drew Albert, Tenor

And As To You Death

Vineet Shende (b.1972)

Jon Chellis, Baritone

The Making of the Drum

Bob Chilcott (b.1955)

1. The Skin

2. The Barrel of the Drum

3. The Two Curved Sticks of the Drummer

4. Gourds and Rattles

5. The Gong-Gong

Drew Albert and Shirsten Lundblad, Percussion

The Oak

Becky McGlade (b.1974)

Shannon Allen, Cello

Soul Light

Kim André Arnesen (b.1980)

Poor Wayfaring Stranger

Alexander Lloyd Blake (b.1987)

Jen Caton, Soprano

2023-24 UNA VOCE CHAMBER CHOIR

SOPRANO

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

ALTO

Ashley Albert
Abby Bozeman
Eileen Brown
Claire Berkowitz
Sam Caswell
Covey Crolus
Jean Edmondson
Shira Gersh
Susan Kring
Shirsten Lundblad
Kit Pfeiffer
Beth Preston
Rachel Turner

TENOR

Drew Albert
Steve Amsden
Nate Bates
Rowan Etzel
Robert Gersh
Salvatore Guzzardi
Robert Haines
Scott Hanson
Josh Koelker
Owen White

BASS

Sheldon Bird
Jon Chellis
John Gilmour
Seth Grondin
Matt Jones
Aaron Keller
Del Leonard
Thomas McLaughlin
Ryan Newell
Mark Sayre

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

PROGRAM NOTES

Composed for the LA Choral Lab, Sander Choi's *The New Colossus* is a highly inventive and energetic treatment of the well known sonnet by Emma Lazarus (1849-1897). Choi's setting is minimalist, pulsing with repeated snippets of the text. The use of repeated vocables and rhythmic breathing conveys both the cold and cramped discomfort of the trans-Atlantic journey ("Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses..."), and the restless energy and relief of new arrivals to American shores. This excited opening gives way to a lyrical but harmonically unsettled chorale in the lower voices, punctuated by repeated interjections of the word 'free', before all voices join in a grand proclamation ("I lift my lamp beside the golden door").

"*She Will Transform You* is centered around a beautiful poem of Indian-American author Neelanjana Banerjee. She speaks about the beautiful relationship of an immigrant and her child to their country of origin, and the significant role a child from both cultures has in bridging the divide between them. As a child of immigrants, I have felt both that distance – of being the 'other' in both America and India – and also the resonance of being at home wherever I am. The piece moves in and out of a Hindustani *raga* called *Rageshree* – which has such a lush resonance about it, and is also harmonically grounded in an unusual way (with the 4th instead of the more common 5th, which makes our ear feel like it's never quite 'home') – so it has both a sense of belonging and distance. It's those two feelings – of belonging and distance – and the journey between them, that I wanted to explore in this work." - Reena Ismail

"*A Chain is Broken* is a musical setting of an original poem, *Earth's Anthem*, by Iranian-American author and poet Khashayar Tonekaboni (pen name Terry Pinaud). The poem is a creative reimagining of the poet's own experience of starting a new life in the United States, after he moved here from Iran to study at Indiana University. In the poem, Tonekaboni writes in both Persian and English, as he illustrates the difficulties associated with finding a new way when he was also gradually learning to understand a new language. As the poem progresses, its initial uncertainty turns to feelings of aspiration, optimism, and joy, even while still recognizing that 'with freedom comes a cost'. The music is also aspirational in its trajectory, moving from the opening murkiness in which a tenor soloist is heard over a foggy confusion of English words to an ever more powerful clarity infused with rhythmic propulsion and an energetic drive." - Dominick DiOrio

Composed for the King's Singers in 1995, Peter Louis van Dijk's *Horizons* is inspired by a 500 year old *San* painting of a Dutch galleon. Like other first encounters between peoples during the Age of Exploration, the *San* first considered the Europeans to be like gods, only to realize that these new people would be the cause of their enslavement and extinction. Van Dijk's composition alternates between a sparsely supported and elegantly ornamented melody passed between bass and tenor soloists that conveys the mythology underpinning *San* observations of the Dutch, and a chorale that takes on a haunting quality in its final iteration ("Then they killed us on the far horizon").

Originally composed in 2013 by Vineet Shende, Professor of Music at Bowdoin College, *And as to you, Death* is an expansive and breathtaking setting of Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself* (Section 49). Richly textured and harmonically dense, Shende's work is a masterclass in creating a unified experience through motivic development. Two motives; stacked perfect fourths, and the interval set M2-M3-m3 (with its inversion) form the foundational material for the composition.

And as to you, Death opens wordlessly and serenely, with the ‘stacked fourths’ fashioned into an elegant and modal melody that floats above droning lower voices. After a brief chorale-like opening phrase (“And as to you, Death, and you bitter hug of mortality”), the melody is subject to a brief fugue, with each successive voice part entering a minor-third higher (“it is idle to try to alarm me”). This opening gives way to a *con moto* section in lilting compound meter, with lower voices rocking underneath the now-familiar melodic line (“To his work, without flinching the accoucheur comes...”). Wordless serenity briefly returns before a more extended fugal section on a variation of the main theme, with voices entering from low to high separated by a perfect fourth (“I smell the white roses, sweet-scented and growing”). After yet another version of the stacked-fourths motive (“I reach to the leafy lips”) Shende introduces the interval set, passed in descending order from high to low voices (“No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before”), and immediately launches into an aleatoric middle section supporting a baritone solo (“I hear you whispering there”). Tenors and altos intone the interval set quietly and in random tempi (“ten thousand times”), while sopranos ‘ping’ individual pitches from the opening melody, and basses create overtones on a low drone.

The *con moto* section reappears, with both motives making appearances in the soprano. Now, Shende’s development of small materials reaches its full-flowering conclusion, as the serene opening is reimagined and expanded in the compound meter of the *con moto*, with outer voices entering in varying rhythmic permutations of the opening melodic motive, and surrounding the chorale melody in the middle voices (“I ascend from the moon, I ascend from the night”). The climax of the work flows from the amassing of forces, as the descending M2-M3-m3 interval set in the soprano and alto voices is mirrored by its own m3-M3-M2 inversion, ascending in the bass and tenor voices. This astonishing effect brilliantly captures the grandeur of Whitman’s ultimate message (“I perceive that the ghastly glimmer is noon-day sunbeams reflected”). Life and death are mirrors of each other, feed each other, and are separated only (if at all) by “exquisite flexible doors”. After a return of the opening fugue, the interval set and inversion open into a magnificent sonority of stacked fourths containing nine (!) pitches of the chromatic scale (“from the offspring great and small”), before giving way to serene introspection.

“In 1984 I was very fortunate to visit Uganda, where a drum maker made me a beautiful drum with a snakeskin head. I’ll never forget sitting in the plane to come home and seeing by chance the baggage handlers loading my drum with incredible respect and care. The drum to them is a living spirit. The poems (Edward Kamau Braithwaite) I set are a celebration of how that spirit is brought to life. The piece enacts the ritual of constructing the drum, whose component parts are drawn from the surrounding nature - a nature that gives of itself almost sacrificially. We hear how the goat is killed for its skin, how the tree, which bleeds cedar-dark when cut, bestows the drum’s body, and how the sticks and rattles are taken, all to begin a new life as companions to the gods, music, and the dance.” - Bob Chilcott

Becky McGlade’s *The Oak*, composed for chorus and solo cello, is a setting of Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s eponymous poem. McGlade effortlessly captures the monometer of Tennyson’s verse, and the simple profundity of his message (“Live thy life, like yon oak...”). Smartly written choral parts support a cello line of surpassing beauty. Kim Andre Arnesen’s *Soul Light* sets a poem by two Pennsylvania high school students. Its uplifting message is a perfect vehicle for Arnesen’s lush style, reminding us that our souls “light the path we cannot see”, and when joined with others “ignite to manifest humanity’s brilliance”.

Poor Wayfaring Stranger, the well-known American gospel song that has served as the musical through-line for this program, is presented (in full) in a brilliant arrangement by Alexander Lloyd Blake. Blending folk and jazz styles, Blake’s thoughtful setting for a *cappella* chorus and soprano solo continuously and deftly alternates between straight and swing rhythms.

ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP

Virgil Bozeman IV, Artistic Director

Raised in Honolulu, Hawaii, Virgil graduated from Cony High School in Augusta, Maine. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Music Literature and Performance from Northeastern University, where he studied choral conducting with Dr. Joshua Jacobson. During his time at Northeastern, he served as Student Conductor of the NU Choral Society, sang with the world-renowned Samir Chorale of Boston, and was named the university's inaugural Gideon Klein Scholar. Virgil holds a MM in Choral Conducting from the University of Illinois, where he continued his conducting studies with Dr. Fred Stolzfus, Dr. Don V Moses and Dr. Chester Alwes. He served as Assistant Conductor of the University of Illinois Concert Choir, and the school's top auditioned undergraduate chorus. Upon returning to Maine in 2000, Virgil accepted a position as Middle/High School Choral Music Teacher in Richmond, a position he has held ever since. Since 2003, he has been the Senior Choir Director at South Parish Congregational church, UCC in Augusta. From 2006-2020, Virgil served as Artistic Director of the Greater Freeport Community Chorus. Last year he was appointed Chorus Master for Opera Maine. He has been an active member of the Maine Music Educators' Association, serving as Chairman of MMEA District III and Vice-President (Choral Music) for the MMEA State Executive Board. In 2018, Virgil was named MMEA District III Educator of the Year. Virgil lives in Richmond with his wife Abby.

Drew Albert, Assistant Conductor

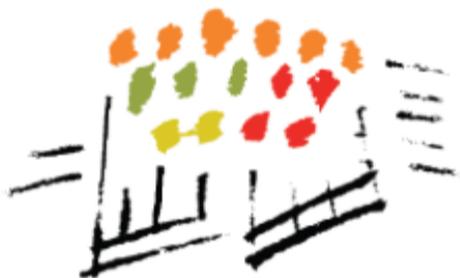
Drew Albert is a native Mainer, born and raised in Millinocket. He graduated from the University of Maine in Orono with a degree in Music Education. There Drew had the privilege of studying with Dr. Dennis Cox and served as the music director of the Maine Steiners, and the Assistant Conductor of the University of Maine Singers. Although he started his musical training as a percussionist, choral and vocal music became his biggest passion while an undergrad. He contributed his time performing with the chamber choir "Euphony," directed by Jeff Hallowell, as one of his biggest musical influences of that time. The group specialized in contemporary a cappella choral music.

Drew has been teaching high school music since 2011 and has taught instrumental and vocal ensembles as well as a wide range of general music courses. He is an active adjudicator, clinician, and guest conductor throughout the state. He has served as Choral Music chair in the Maine Music Education Association and is the secretary and membership chair of the Maine chapter of the American Choral Directors Association. In 2022 Drew joined the Camden Hills Regional High School faculty, teaching vocal music. He directs three choirs that are very active in Maine choral music. Drew is also the Music Director for Camden Hills' fall musical. Now the father of a wonderfully beautiful and silly toddler, Eloise, and a part-time graduate student at the University of Southern Maine, Drew has his hands full outside of work and Una Voce. He and his immensely talented choral director wife, Mrs. Ashley Albert, live in Gardiner.

Kellie Moody, Accompanist

Maine native and resident of Standish. She is a graduate of the University of Southern Maine, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Music, studying piano with Laura Kargul and voice with Judith James. She also studied with Ed Reichert, learning to music direct and conduct pit orchestras from the keyboard. She has since worked closely with USM, accompanying auditions, degree recitals, ensembles, juries, and music directing for the Musical Theatre program. She has played countless college, high school, and community shows and played in the pit at Arundel Barn Playhouse and Maine State Music Theater. She is an active musician throughout the state, working with vocalists, instrumentalists, high school ensembles, district and state festivals, competitions, and summer camps. She serves as pianist/praise team vocalist at Mountainside Community Church in Falmouth. In addition to Una Voce, she accompanies ChoralArt, Greater Freeport Community Chorus, Southern Maine Choral Music Academy, Southern Maine Junior Music Academy, and Southern Maine Music Academy. When she's not playing piano, she's usually hanging out with her beloved dog, Winston.

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