

Una
VOCE
chamber choir

Passio

January 20 & 22, 2023
Meetinghouse Arts ~ Freeport, Maine



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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello Friends of Choral Arts:

The singers and board members of Una Voce Chamber Choir are excited to welcome you to the area's newest performance venue, Meetinghouse Arts. The project is a collaboration between the First Parish Church, who continue to hold services, and the Arts & Cultural Alliance of Freeport, who have established an art gallery and performance space when church is not in service. As far as we know, this type of sharing of space is unique in Maine.



The idea was born from a group of townspeople who saw a need for a medium-sized venue and the group was thrilled to partner with the Church to achieve this ambitious endeavor. The group held town wide meetings to gauge the interest in such a project, and, finding it feasible, started the hard work of fundraising. This work became harder in 2020 as the COVID restrictions came into play right in the middle of fundraising. The group worked through the difficulties with more than 200 individuals contributing plus local businesses, the Town of Freeport and grant money to raise the funds for remodeling.

While this is the area's newest venue, it is not new. This is the third location of the First Parish Church, the first two having burned. Built in 1895, you'll notice the ship type construction, a manner of building well known in Freeport at that time. The beams have been updated with a new sound system and LED lights which you will enjoy during the concert. Behind the walls, the floor has been updated to meet code with 2 hour fire rating, a new air ventilation system, wiring, and insulation. First Parish Church and Meetinghouse Arts are planning for at least another 125 years!

In UVCC community news, we mourn the passing of a long-time supporter of the Choir. Una Voce Chamber Choir dedicates this concert to the memory of our beloved friend and patron Micki Gersh, who died on December 26, 2022, at age 85 following a long battle with cancer. In August of 2022, she gave the choir a generous monetary gift that enabled us to establish a scholarship fund so that any singer who passes the audition can participate without regards to the cost of tuition. Micki's legacy will help sustain the Choir for years to come.

I hope you will enjoy the performance of Passio!

Scott

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unavocechamberchoir@gmail.com

PROGRAM ORDER

Quem Vidistis Pastores (from *Quatre Motets pour les temps de Noël*) Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Puer Natus est Nobis Ivo Antognini (b. 1963)

Tres Nanas Cántabras Javier Busto (b. 1949)

1. El mi niño tiene sueño
2. Duérmete, que viene preguntando
3. El mi niño se ha dormido

Rouxinol do Pico Preto (from *Cradle Songs*) Steven Stucky (1949-2016)

The Little Match Girl Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875)
Maya Williams, Guest Reader

the little match girl passion David Lang (b. 1957)

1. Come, daughter
2. It was terribly cold
3. Dearest heart
4. In an old apron
5. Penance and remorse
6. Lights were shining
7. Patience, patience!
8. Ah! perhaps
9. Have mercy, my God
10. She lighted another match
11. From the sixth hour
12. She again rubbed a match
13. When it is time for me to go
14. In the dawn of morning
15. We sit and cry

Home (from *The Sacred Veil*) Eric Whitacre (b. 1970)

You Rise, I Fall

Child of Wonder

Drew Albert, Associate Conductor

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.”

2022-23 UNA VOCE CHAMBER CHOIR

Soprano	Alto	Tenor	Bass
Emma Akrawi	Abby Bozeman	Drew Albert	Sheldon Bird
Emily Anderson	Eileen Brown	Steve Amsden	Jon Chellis
Stephanie Bernier	Claire Berkowitz	Nate Bates	John Gilmour
Marsene Caswell	Covey Crolius	Rowan Etzel	Matt Jones
Jennifer Caton	Jean Edmondson	Robert Gersh	Aaron Keller
Jeannie Giberson	Shira Gersh	Sal Guzzardi	Del Leonard
Caroline Koelker	Susan Kring	Robert Haines	Thomas McLaughlin
Erika Leighton	Shirsten Lundblad	Scott Hanson	Jacob Sagrans
Fiona Vella	Kit Pfeiffer	Josh Koelker	
Denise Meiler	Karen Topp		
Susan Purcell	Rachel Turner		
Hillary Shende			

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

In Memory of Maxine "Micki" Gersh *Sep. 20, 1937 - Dec. 26, 2022*

The Una Voce Chamber Choir dedicates this concert to the memory of our beloved friend and patron Micki Gersh, who died at age 85 on December 26, 2022 following a long battle with cancer. The mother and grandmother of two members of our choir, Micki came to every concert. In August of 2022, she gave the choir a generous monetary gift that enabled us to establish a scholarship fund so that any singer who passes the audition can participate without regards to the cost of tuition. Micki's legacy will help sustain the Choir for years to come, and we hope you will join us in honoring her today. May her memory be a blessing and an inspiration to us all.



PROGRAM NOTES

Since David Lang's program notes to **the little match girl passion are essential to understanding his work, they are included in their entirety in the middle of these notes (VB)*



When I made the decision to program David Lang's Pulitzer Prize winning masterpiece **the little match girl passion**, I was keenly aware of both the challenges and opportunities in programming a full concert around this conceptually distinctive and musically evocative work. It is a long work (35 minutes) that doesn't lend itself to easy pairing with other substantial pieces - it has its own gravitational pull that

needs to be respected, and like gravity, one ignores it at one's own peril. The task before Drew (Albert) and I therefore was to extend the program outward from Lang's central themes, commenting and expanding upon them in much the same way that he did with Hans Christian Andersen's story; consciously evoking the relationship between Andersen's protagonist and Jesus in a manner that (hopefully) would seem appropriate to Lang. One such theme is witness, with shepherds, birds, townsfolk, loved ones (and us) occupying important places in the larger unfolding narrative

During this process I have felt a deep connection to the liturgical calendar. We are currently in the season of Epiphany, the celebration of God's manifestation and revelation in the form of the baby Jesus. It is also the season that immediately precedes the penitential season of Lent, which culminates in the Passion. As Lang has chosen to evoke the suffering of Jesus through the story of the Little Match Girl, I choose to contemplate what is divine and pure in the Little Match Girl through the prophetic story of Jesus' birth. Through lullabies I want to imagine an earlier time in her life when she was loved, cared for, and sung to; to know her as something more than the protagonist of her own tragic story.

We will open with two pieces that set scripture from Christmas and Epiphany. **Quem Vidistis Pastores** (Shepherds, what have you seen?) is the second of four Motets pour le Temps de Noël by Francis Poulenc (1899-1963). Poulenc's writing is angular, declamatory and sparkling, giving way to Ivo Antognini's **Puer Natus est Nobis** (Unto Us a Child is Born), a lyrical and densely harmonic setting of Isaiah 6:9. The program immediately transitions into a small set of cradle songs. Javier Busto's **Tres Nanas Cantabras** (Three Cantabrian Lullabies) are the essence of simplicity, delicately setting charming images of an infant falling asleep ("one eye is closed and the other can't stay open") and quietly wicked humor ("Look, here comes El Cuco, inquiring amongst the houses where the

crying child is"). The opening portion of the program concludes with Steven Stucky's unsettling treatment of the Brazilian lullaby **Rouxinol do Pico Preto** (Nightingale with the Black Beak). Making use of octatonic and whole-tone scales, Stucky builds an ostinato on the word "rouxinol", musically depicting the obstinate chirping of a nightingale interrupting a (grand?) mother's lullaby.

Lang: I wanted to tell a story. A particular story, in fact: the story of *The Little Match Girl*, by the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen. The original is ostensibly for children, and it has that shocking combination of danger and morality that many famous children's stories do. A poor young girl, whose father beats her, tries unsuccessfully to sell matches on the street, is ignored, and freezes to death. Through it all she somehow retains her Christian purity of spirit, but it is not a pretty story.

What drew me to *The Little Match Girl* is that the strength of the story lies not in its plot but in the fact that all its parts - the horror and the beauty - are constantly suffused with their opposites. The girl's bitter present is locked together with the sweetness of her past memories, her poverty is always suffused with her hopefulness. There is a kind of naïve equilibrium between suffering and hope.

There are many ways to tell this story. One could convincingly tell it as a story about faith, or as an allegory about poverty. What has always interested me, however, is that Andersen tells this story as a kind of parable, drawing a religious and moral equivalency between the suffering of the poor girl and the suffering of Jesus. The girl suffers, is scorned by the crowd, dies and is transfigured. I started wondering what secrets could be unlocked from this story if one took its Christian nature to its conclusion and unfolded it, as Christian composers have traditionally done in musical settings of the Passion of Jesus.

The most interesting thing about how the Passion story is told is that it can include texts other than the story itself. These texts are the reactions of the crowd, penitential thoughts, statements of general sorrow or shock or remorse. These are devotional guideposts, the markers for our own responses to the story, and they have the effect of making the audience more than spectators to the sorrowful events onstage.

In a traditional Passion these responses can have a huge range - in Bach's **Saint Matthew Passion** these extra texts range from famous chorales that his congregation was expected to sing along with to completely invented characters, such as the "Daughter of Zion" and the "Chorus of Believers." The Passion format - the telling of the story while simultaneously commenting upon it - has the effect of placing us in the middle of the action, and it gives the narrative a powerful inevitability.

My piece is called **the little match girl passion** and it sets Hans Christian Andersen's

PROGRAM NOTES, CTD.

story The Little Match Girl in the format of Bach's **Saint Matthew Passion**, interspersing Andersen's narrative with my versions of texts of the crowd and character responses in the Bach. The libretto is by me, after texts by HC Anderson, HP Pauli (the first translator of the story into English, in 1872), Picander (the nom de plume of Christian Friedrich Henrici, the librettist of the Bach), and the Gospel according to Saint Matthew.

The word "passion" comes from the Latin word for suffering. There is no Bach in my piece and there is no Jesus - rather the suffering of the Little Match Girl has been substituted for Jesus', (I hope) elevating her sorrow to a higher plane.

Bozeman: This evening's concert ends with three choral excerpts from Eric Whitacre's **The Sacred Veil**, a monumental collaboration between the composer and his close friend, the poet Charles Silvestri. Approached by Whitacre to compose reflections on the loss of his wife (she died of ovarian cancer at age 36), Silvestri's poetry captures the intensity of their love affair, the pain and grief of her passing, and his attempt to find peace and comfort in his loss. The music exhibits much of the harmonic language and choral effects we have come to expect from Whitacre, but here they are employed with a restraint that shows the composer's maturation, and a thoughtfulness that amplifies Silvestri's deeply personal lyrics without overwhelming them. The inclusion of these works is our attempt both to bring the passion story out of the realm of the fabulistic and into a familiar context (the passing of a loved one), and finally to move the witness from the periphery to the center of the story. Like Silvestri, for a brief window we also sense the disappearance of the thin veil between life and death. We too bear witness and are changed.

GUEST ARTISTS

Maya Williams - Guest Reader

Maya Williams (ey/they/she) is a Black multiracial nonbinary suicide survivor who is currently the seventh poet laureate of Portland, Maine. They were one of three artists of color selected to represent Maine in The Kennedy Center's Arts Across America series in 2020 and were listed as one of The Advocate's Champions of Pride in 2022. You can follow more of eir work at mayawilliamspoeet.com

Christopher Akerlind - Lighting Design

Christopher Akerlind is a well known theatrical set and lighting designer who makes his home in Portland ME. He has designed over 650 productions at Theater, Opera, and Dance companies in the US and around the world. Locally he has created lighting for both Opera Maine and Portland Stage Company.

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 Zamir 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 Stoltzfus, Dr. Don V Moses and Dr. Chester Alwes. He served as Assistant Conductor of the University of Illinois Concert Choir, 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. 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 Farmingdale with his beautiful wife Abby.

Drew Albert, Assistant Conductor

Drew currently is the high school vocal conductor at Camden-Hills Regional High School. Most recently, he was at Noble High School in North Berwick and Maranacook Community High School in Readfield, where he conducted concert choir, chamber choir, concert band and jazz band, as well as on the school's theater productions. Drew has participated in several District honors festivals, and recently took singers to All-Easterns, as well as bringing his entire chamber choir to New York City last year. In the summer of 2019 he joined the conducting staff of the Wescustago Youth Chorale.

Kellie Moody, Accompanist

Kellie Moody is a 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 shows 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 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 Music Academy, and Southern Maine Choral Music Academy. When she's not playing piano, she's usually hanging out with her beloved dog, Winston.



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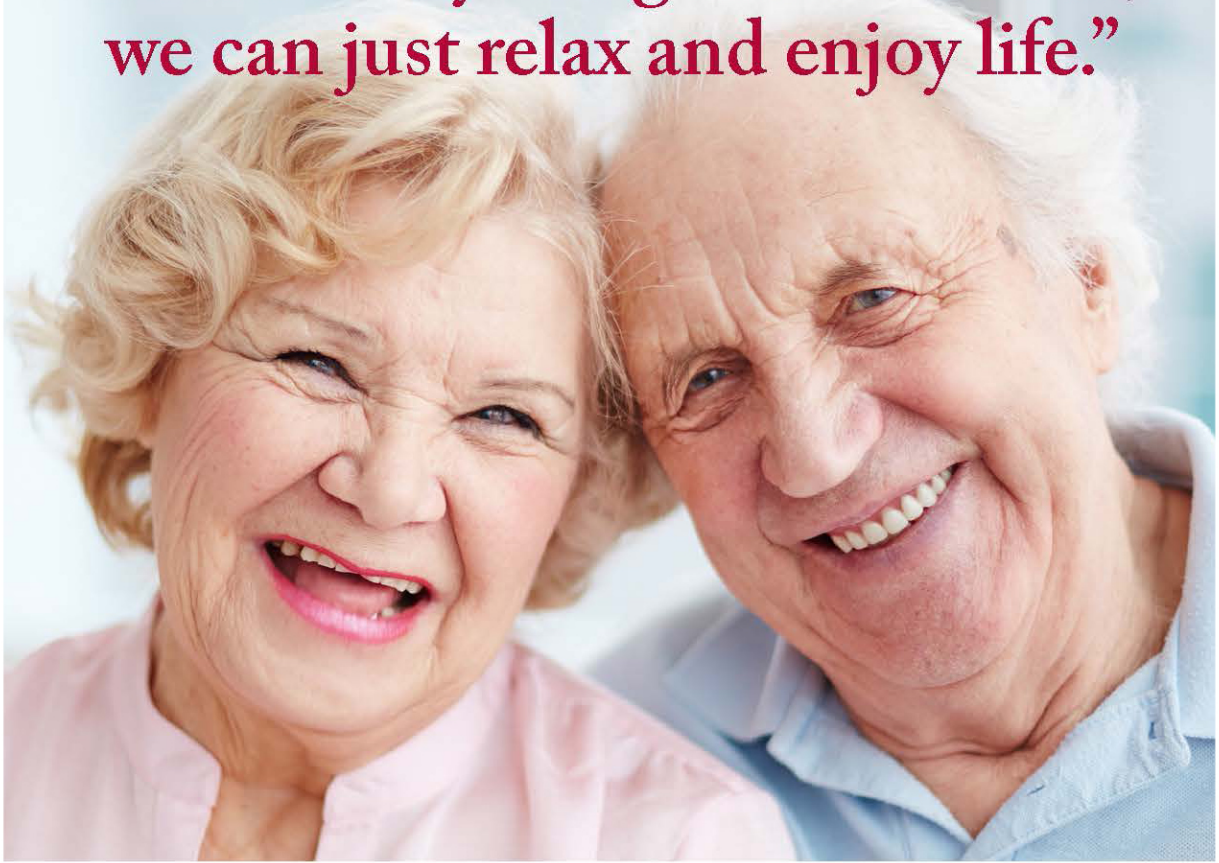


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