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THE  
SAINT LOUIS  
CHAMBER  
CHORUS

# VOICEMAIL



## DARKNESS TO LIGHT

The season's first concert was held on Oct 2 in the glorious setting of the St. Louis Abbey, one of our most favored venues for its sound that reverberates evenly around the circular space.

Following the season's theme of Progressions, the program featured a repertoire focused on darkness and light, both in its spiritual and scientific meaning. The concert opened with *Vox Dicentis: Clama*, an energetic motet by English composer Edward Naylor. The program included light-related pieces by Thomas Tallis and Leo Sowerby and

a challenging piece by our visiting composer **Dobrinka Tabakova**. She tackled the unusual scientific and non-lyrical text *Einstein Considered Light* by, as **Philip Barnes** suggested, "setting a melody above sustained drones, similar perhaps to a bagpipe." The first half of the concert ended with *The Music of Light*, a SLCC commission from the 60th season by the late Steven Stucky.

After the intermission the Chorus started with the better-known *Hail, Gladdening Light* by Charles Wood, another British composer. The choir then sang works by Jiri Rychnovsky (from the 16th century), John Rutter, Dan Forrest, and a second piece by Leo Sowerby.

Tabakova's new composition and world premiere was a *Missa Brevis*, commissioned by **Dr. John and Becky Hubert**, and performed in the presence of the composer. In his review (see page 3) George Yeh called this piece "the centerpiece of the concert," and said that "Even with an encore, the chorus finished under the wire, ahead of the hourly chimes of the Abbey. This made for a satisfying end to a very fine afternoon of choral singing from the SLCC, well up to their usual standard and commitment under Mr. Barnes' direction, and a strong start to this new SLCC season."

Tabakova had traveled from London to spend a busy weekend in St. Louis, meeting singers, board members and subscribers, and attending rehearsals. She was also interviewed on Classic 107.3 radio by Julie Schuster and taught a class to students at John Burroughs School.

What did Dobrinka think of her visit? She commented that she'd had an unforgettable time in St Louis: "Working with you [Philip Barnes] and the choir has been soul-nourishing and inspirational. The concert yesterday will stay with me for a long time. You created a really special atmosphere and I'm so grateful for the heartfelt performance."

**Gill Waltman**

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT - LIVE PERFORMANCES

Thanks to all of you who attended our live concert in October and who are coming to *Water to Wine*, our live performance in November. We've missed these during the COVID-19 period, and I am happy that, together, we can celebrate the return of live performances of music in St. Louis this year. St. Louis has so many wonderful settings for live music and so many wonderful groups that perform live music, including our symphony, jazz musicians, chamber music instrumental and choral groups, and opera theater. It is wonderful to see St. Louis audiences coming back to enjoy the concerts and to support the musicians.

Live performances bring us something unique to share - the opportunity to experience singers performing together in a combination that will never be duplicated in exactly the same way, in exactly the same setting, with exactly the same conditions. A live performance

is a one-time event, unique and special - and we get to share it!

I am looking forward to our *Water to Wine* concert this week. The Chorus gave our subscribers a unique opportunity on Saturday to attend the dress rehearsal for the concert. The Chorus rehearsed in a new entertainment space at Parker's Table Wine Shop at Oakland and Yale in Richmond Heights. Where better to rehearse for a wine-themed concert than in a wine shop!! With its exposed brick walls, its tin ceiling and concrete floor, it was a great setting for unaccompanied singing. And - we could all enjoy a glass of wine during the rehearsal!

So, enjoy the concert. Let's all keep going to live concerts - let's all help live music and live arts thrive in St. Louis.

**Dick Brickson**

## KEVIN WARNER



Music has always been a part of Kevin's life. He grew up with a father who sings and plays guitar and persuaded him to sing for his friends when he was a toddler as a bit of a novelty. They lived in Madrid and Kevin was bilingual for his first 4 or 5 years. He remembers singing

a rendition of the Ritchie Valens' La Bamba regularly in Spanish as a little kid!

Since then, Kevin has lived in a number of places and singing with others was a common theme. He has been in choirs almost continuously since the age of 5 and taken many instrument lessons (piano, guitar, ukulele, Irish penny whistle) but is most comfortable as a singer. Kevin admits that he was never a great student but excelled when it came to music classes. He earned a Bachelor of Music in vocal performance from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts where he performed in 15 operas and sang in several local choirs in Winston Salem.

After graduation, he moved to Saint Louis singing with a variety of local groups including Bach Society, Chamber Chorus, Early Music Missouri, Collegium Vocale, and St. Peters Episcopal Church.

When not singing, most of Kevin's life has revolved around food, agriculture, and sustainability. He spent most of his twenties working for Fair Shares, his family's food hub, which aggregates seasonal local food from small farmers in Missouri and Illinois and distributes shares to around 350 St. Louis families every week. During his time there he became entrepreneurial and found other ways to engage with the food community. He started an organic tortilla company, served as

president of Slow Food Saint Louis, and was voted in as the Midwest agribusiness representative for USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program where he reviewed hundreds of grants and made funding and policy decisions for the region.

Around 2016 Kevin started worrying more and more about climate change and realized he wanted to have a bigger global impact with his work in sustainable agriculture but wasn't quite sure how to make the jump beyond his existing experience in local and regional food systems. Looking to pivot his career, Kevin was accepted into the accelerated MBA program at the University of Oxford and spent a year in England on full scholarship as a Skoll Scholar for Social Entrepreneurship. He moved back to Saint Louis in 2018 to work remotely for a professional services company in California that focuses on sustainability auditing and consulting. Kevin oversees the sustainable and regenerative agriculture certification programs there and manages 4 teams that operate auditing programs on 6 continents. "It sounds more exciting than it is! I spend ~30 hours a week on Microsoft Teams meetings, but I feel a real sense of purpose in the work that I do around environmental sustainability and worker justice."

The pandemic limited Kevin's musical experiences to playing guitar and singing to his children - quite rewarding personally, but not the same as singing with others. "I'm super excited to be rejoining the Chamber Chorus this year. Obviously, it is a strong musical group, but what really brought me back is the people. They are especially kind and that is not always a given. If the isolation of Covid has taught me anything, it is the power and importance of community, which is why I so value the Chamber Chorus."

**Gill Waltman**

## SUZANNE AND SIENNA HAUBEIN



The upcoming November concert includes a novelty for the Chorus - the first time a parent and child will sing together! **Suzanne Haubein** has been with the Chorus for 26 years, long enough for her daughter, **Sienna Haubein** to join her.

**Suzanne** grew up listening to her parents' classical records and her father singing around the house as the mood struck him. In school, her favorite classes quickly became choir and band, and she enjoyed recorder, piano, and guitar lessons. In high school, she concentrated on singing, musicals, madrigals, and solo/ensemble competitions. As a senior, she earned a spot in the Missouri All-State Choir with a vocal scholarship and a place in Southeast Missouri State University's top choir - the highlight of her college career. A trip to New Orleans for a choral festival gave her a rare chance to sing in an octet with friends on Bourbon Street, just for fun - they may even have made some money!

Singing became a treasured hobby and uplifting activity for Suzanne after college but working left little time for it. After moving to St. Louis, she joined a community chorus which was enjoyable, but not challenging. In 1996, she found the St. Louis Chamber Chorus and auditioned for **Philip Barnes**. Initially, she was given an alternate soprano position and took private voice lessons with **Dr. Sandra Bouman**. Since then, she has been a full member, now an alternate.

During those 26 years Suzanne has loved the challenges and unique opportunities the Chamber Chorus provides. Singing with the choir and continually taking

voice lessons also gave her the courage to present two vocal recitals. Suzanne married Mark, a music lover, became a Master Gardener, started her own successful preschool music business, and had 3 children. She has loved watching all three excel in music and theater. When her oldest daughter, Sienna, chose teaching music as a career she was overjoyed!

When Sienna moved back to St. Louis, Suzanne encouraged her to audition for SLCC. This coming concert is the first they will sing together, and Suzanne is elated to share the challenging and beautiful music the Chorus experience provides. And as a bonus, she gets to see Sienna at least once a week!

**Sienna** enjoyed growing up in a home full of music. Her parents took her with her siblings to as many different musical experiences as they could. She performed in many musicals during middle and high school and participated in choir from 5th grade through her undergraduate years at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. In college, Sienna sang with the Luther College Nordic Choir, Luther College's top choir.

After graduation, Sienna moved to Saint Louis to start her teaching career. At the behest of her mother, she auditioned for Saint Louis Chamber Chorus so that she could retain some of the challenging musical experiences to which she had grown accustomed. Since joining SLCC, Sienna has found a new home as an alternate within the ensemble. The music provides the perfect challenge for her (she sings soprano or alto!) and allows her to stay connected to such repertoire because her day job as an elementary music teacher does not involve music of the same caliber.

SLCC has offered a much-needed outlet for Sienna, and she is thrilled to be able to sing such a wonderful repertoire with her mother. She is grateful to the choir for helping to strengthen their bond as mother and daughter and as fellow ensemble members.

**Gill Waltman**

## TABAKOVA COMMISSION - THE CONCERT CENTERPIECE

In his review, George Yeh (KDHX) described the *Missa Brevis* by **Dobrinka Tabakova**, a new commission by the SLCC in its world premiere performance, as the "centerpiece of the concert."

"The text of the Mass has inspired many composers over the centuries ... so a hefty corpus of settings exists as a challenge for any composer to meet, and to add to their company. Happily, Ms. Tabakova is more than up to the challenge. Her new work is well worthy of joining the on-going catalog of "Missae Breves." ...She treats the text with fine variety, and with some interesting and slightly unorthodox choices. ... Overall, she has composed a substantial choral work whose challenges the SLCC met with their customary aplomb.

While clearly a challenge for the chorus by default, as is the nature of world premieres, Ms. Tabakova's harmonic language is definitely audience-friendly in the best sense, accessible without "writing down" to the audience. The work deserves repeated hearings, and hopefully will receive fresh performances from other choirs in due course." (See full review at [www.kdhx.org](http://www.kdhx.org))



# NOTEWORTHY NOTES

## SPLENDID ACOUSTIC AT THE ABBEY

Long-time followers of the Chorus relish the Chorus performing at the Abbey perhaps as much as do the singers themselves. The sound is warmly supported by the generous echo which magically sustains their chords without obscuring the clarity of individual vocal lines.

Complementing that is a sense of all-enveloping light produced by the 360 degrees of translucent walls that Gyo Obata designed more than 50 years ago, but which are still radical in their vision. Performing from the monks' stalls, the Chorus produces a sound which reverberates evenly around the circular space, which ensures that there are few, if any, bad seats for the audience. That, and the generous welcome that the monastic community always offers the Chorus, makes this one of our favorite venues in St. Louis.

**Philip Barnes**

## Saint Louis Premieres - A REVIEW

Here are a few extracts from a complimentary review of our most recent CD, "Saint Louis Premieres" written by Donald Rosenberg and published in GRAMOPHONE.

"The Saint Louis Chamber Chorus stand out for many reasons, among them a mellifluous approach to ensemble-singing that benefits everything their collective voices touch. The group deserves a special round of applause for its devotion to expanding the choral repertoire."

"Several themes bind the works on the new disc – marriage, friendship, imbibing, spirituality, dancing – and they share musical immediacy, warmth and clarity of texture."

"A particularly spirited set of pieces is Robert Walker's *The Ale Songbook*, replete with bagpipe drones, cautionary sentiments and whimsical activity via verses by Poe, Burns and friends. Sasha Johnson Manning provides another view of the drink in her touching *It is not for kings, Lemuel*. To end the disc, the four beautifully compact songs that comprise Melissa Dunphy's *Suite Remembrance* take splendid advantage of the ensemble's exceptional flexibility and cohesion."

## KDHX RADIO - FM-88.1

KDHX radio station in St. Louis maintains an online site for classical music reviews, and this is especially valuable to us for coverage of our performances. Another advantage is its generous allowance on how much can be written, so the recent review by **George Yeh** was extensive and complimentary in its description of our October performance at the Abbey.

## RE-CHOIRED LISTENING – CLASSIC FM-107.3

In addition to airing various interviews of visiting composers, such as the recent one by **Julie Schuster** when **Dobrinka Tabakova** was here for her world premiere in October, Classic 107.3 also features a special weekly program called *Re-Choired Listening with Philip Barnes*. So far Philip has devised and presented over 250 episodes bringing his audience the best in choral music from St. Louis and around the world. His recent topics range from one on French music, another on music for Royal funerals, to two on cat-related works! (Who knew that Wolfgang Amadeus was a cat-lover!) Tune in to listen to this weekly delight every Wednesday or listen anytime via SoundCloud.

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Want to learn more? Contact Katie Sandquist at [info@chamberchorus.org](mailto:info@chamberchorus.org) or 636-458-4343

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