



VOICEMAIL

November 2018

Melissa Dunphy and the SLCC

Audience members were fortunate to enjoy not only a new composition by **Melissa Dunphy**, but also her presence at the May concert at the end of her three-year term as composer-in-residence. In her review, **Sarah Bryan Miller** stated:

SLCC composer-in-residence Melissa Dunphy concluded her term with this concert and the world premiere of *Suite Remembrance*. Dunphy, the composer of the remarkable *What do You Think I Fought for at Omaha Beach?*, chose four texts (from an 18th century German dance of Death, Isaiah, Emily Dickinson and Psalm 30) and set them using the distinctive rhythms of four Renaissance dances (saltarello, gavotte, sarabande and gigue). The result is engaging, ranging from the melancholy to the sprightly; this is a work that will certainly be picked up by other choirs.

Melissa says she cherished her time with the Chorus and promises to be back soon with more of her beautiful music.

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Melissa Dunphy and Philip Barnes

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Message from the President

by Dick Brickson

Early in October, soprano **Kris Suntrup** and her husband **Craig** generously donated a food and wine event at Sunny Meadows, their farm in Sullivan Missouri, as a fundraising opportunity for the Chorus. Our singers, supporters and audience members were given the chance to join in the event. Tickets were offered at our concerts last May and this October, and on-line through our website. A dozen of us were lucky enough to reserve space for this special occasion. Sunny Meadows is delightful. We shared a lovely late afternoon and evening with other Chorus-lovers tasting a wide range of superb wines, a beautiful array of appetizers and a terrific dinner. Kris personally selected the wines. They came from the Old World (from Bordeaux and Burgundy in France and Veneto and Verona, in Italy) and the New World (from Napa, in California, and from the Willamette Valley in Oregon). The rain held off, and we rode our hay wagon for the last leg under a rainbow and a stunning sunset. Special events to benefit the Chorus are arranged from time to time but not all are as innovative as this one. The generosity of the Suntrups is well-known and being able to share the experience with Craig, Kris and their friends and family added to the overall enjoyment of the evening.

Enjoy the new season and its theme, *States of Being*. I am looking forward to the November concert (Cheer) at the Tap Room and hope you are all planning to join us at our December concert (Fulfillment) on December 23 in Dogtown.

Meet the Singers — Christina Kruger

Christina was born and raised in Freeport, Ill., and is the first musician of her family! She fully intended to pursue only band in high school, playing clarinet. A couple of friends signed her up for choir auditions and she went along with it. She was hooked immediately, thanks to an enthusiastic director.

The top ensemble at her high school doubled as the chamber choir and show choir. She went on two week-long tours in her junior and senior years to Colorado and Alabama, singing in both school gymnasiums and gorgeous cathedrals. These tours solidified her love of choral music (and travel!) and she decided she wanted to study music in college.

Christina attended Millikin University in Decatur, Ill., graduating with a bachelor's degree in vocal performance in 2016. Between her sophomore and junior year she attended Centro Studi Italiani in Italy, taking two semesters of Italian before the month-long immersion to prepare. She admits that it was her first time flying and her first trip out of the country! The program was based in Urbania, a small town in the Marche region. The residents spoke very little English, so Christina says it was a fantastic challenge to communicate in theirs! They visited small towns in the surrounding area as well as larger tourist cities, embracing their rich history. She was there primarily to study the language and culture, not music, but was fortunate to see an opera in the mini Colosseum-like Arena di Verona.



Christina Kruger

Christina enjoyed another European trip shortly following graduation when her collegiate choir toured Spain. She flew on to Italy after that, trading tourist Italy for more gritty, authentic locations. Pompeii and Naples were her favorite places, though she hopes to return to Barcelona in the future.

Besides her love of performing, Christina is also a passionate conductor. She began working as music director at Mt. Zion Presbyterian Church during her time at Millikin. She now holds the Director of Music position at St. John

United Church of Christ, managing the music ministry as well as a small private voice studio. Christina is an active singer in the area, performing with the St. Louis Symphony Chorus as well as St. Peter's Episcopal Church. She made her St. Louis opera debut with Union Avenue Opera in H.M.S. Pinafore this past summer and currently studies with local soprano **Leann Schuering**.

Fellow Millikin alumna **Mary Chapman**, encouraged Christina to audition for the Chorus. She loves being part of this choir and quite enjoys Philip's occasional historical asides mid-rehearsal. The Chorus brings to light many outstanding female composers, hopefully encouraging aspiring young women as well as other performing ensembles to follow suit with such programming.

In her spare time, Christina can be found relaxing with her lap cat, trying new plant-based recipes, or lifting weights at the gym. Health and fitness aside, she is unlikely to turn down a post-rehearsal beer!

Meet the Singers — Rob Levinson

Rob was born and raised in St. Louis, the youngest of three siblings. His mother, a singer and pianist, used to sing and play for them as far back as Rob can remember. She filled their home with wonderful classical music, Broadway, jazz, and other genres, and he attributes his passion for music to this early exposure.

Watching his older siblings join choir ahead of him encouraged Rob to do the same, starting early in middle school and taking voice and piano lessons a few years later. As a senior in high school he studied music theory and music composition, was in the concert choir and show choir and helped found the school's men's *a cappella* group.

Rob decided to pursue music and voice in college. Given his ultimate love for music theory and composition, he majored in music composition at Mizzou. He was influenced by many different composers of varying styles. His largest choral influence was **Eric Whitacre**. Being an advocate of choral music, Rob greatly appreciated Whitacre's approach to writing and his unique emotive and expressive style. In college, he became intrigued by the music and counterpoint of Bach, as well as the unique sounds and techniques of Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Shostakovich—a few of the many composers who influenced his own musical style and pallet.

Throughout college, Rob was a major contributor and section leader for numerous choirs and a vocal jazz group and helped found Mizzou's first men's *a cappella* group. He was a regular member of the Mizzou



Rob Levinson

Show-Me Opera troupe, taking the lead in numerous operas. He also toured across Italy, Hungary, Austria and the Czech Republic. After graduating, he took several years off from studying and performing music, but continued tinkering with composing and piano playing.

Rob and **Becky**, who started dating 17 years ago after freshman year of high school, have been married almost ten years and are the proud parents of **Maya** (6) and **Lilah** (2). Following Maya's birth, Becky saw a Facebook advertisement for bass auditions in the Chamber Chorus. She encouraged Rob to audition, knowing that music had been such a driving factor in his life. He says "I auditioned, made it, and the rest is history. I am so happy to have returned to choral music, and now, in my fourth season with the group, I look forward to countless future years."

One of Rob's favorite aspects of the choir is the incredible insight and history that Philip provides on a regular basis, as well as the thoughtful approach to his programming. "This adds an entirely new depth to the music that we perform, having true context into the composers, history and time period."

Rob is a brokerage licensed Learning & Development consultant for Wells Fargo Advisors and one of their former licensed traders and quality assurance analysts. He says spending time with his family is his true 'passion' and biggest 'hobby'. Outside of choir, and some piano and composing, his favorite musical exposure is when he sings his daughters to sleep every night.

Eriks Esenvalds Commission

Our latest commission, heard on September 30, was from Latvian maestro **Eriks Esenvalds** who traveled from Riga to St. Louis for its premiere. The composition was underwritten by **Nancy Kranzberg** and **Alison Ferring** as a thanksgiving for their good friend **Alice Sherwood**. Nancy, Alison & Alice have long known one another, and so Eriks's chosen text, *On Friendship*, was ideally suited for the occasion. It was the perfect gift for the Chamber Chorus, with whom Alice sang for many seasons.



From left: Philip Barnes, Alison Ferring, Alice Sherwood, Nancy Kranzberg and Eriks Esenvalds.

Noteworthy Notes

Great Reviews of *St. Louis Classics*

From *Choir & Organ* (November/December 2018)

"The Saint Louis Chamber Chorus is extremely adept at singing testing works in foreign languages. The main body of this eclectic programme comes from composers born during the 19th century. The singers give an exhilarating performance of Granville Bantock's *Invocation to Pan* and a penetrating interpretation of Kodaly's retelling of Jesus throwing the moneylenders out of the temple, *Jesus es a Kufarok*. The commissioned piece is by **Bob Chilcott**, who was asked to intertwine two diverse texts and agreed to marry the text of Gibbons's *Silver Swan* with one by the Roman poet Catullus on the death of his brother. Chilcott's *Silver Swan* is one of his most poignant pieces, expressively conveyed. There are many goodies to savour here, particularly Schoenberg's *Friede auf Erden*, in which Schoenberg takes the first steps towards casting aside his old romanticism in search of a new direction. It's beautifully performed by the Saint Louis Chamber Chorus."

The critic for the *American Record Review* (September 2018) remembers reviewing this choir: "In an anthology of new music they had commissioned (May/June 2008) I came away wishing I had heard them in more substantial works crafted by higher profile composers. Well, that's what we have here."

"Orlando Gibbons's *Silver Swan* (the one we all did in college) sounds lush and lovely with these 50 handsome voices setting the plaintive mood. It's paired with **Bob Chilcott**'s heart-rending setting of another text inspired by the same graceful bird. Bantock's *Invocation to Pan* is a neo-pagan affair full of intense mood swings that are brought off with commendable flair. I also tip my cap to this expressive, high-energy *Friede auf Erden*. (What an absolute bear that is to sing!) Granted, the Gretchaninoff sounds more redolent of St. Louis (or New York, where the composer lived) than St Petersburg. The dominant impression is of an able choir giving its best in a varied and valuable program that includes the first-ever recording of Vaughan Williams's *O Praise the Lord of Heaven!*"



Suntrup food and wine event at Sunny Meadows.

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concerts, tickets or auditions:

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