



VOICEMAIL



SEASON OF PROGRESSIONS COMES TO A CLOSE



When we reflect on the relative normalcy of the past season as live performances have been restored to their pre-pandemic status, and singers and audiences can attend concerts in person, we have regained another opportunity – to work in person with composers who have written new music

expressly for our singers and audiences. The last three concerts in this season provide a full complement of such visiting composers.

At the recent concert held on April 19 at Immanuel Lutheran Church in St Charles, the repertoire for *Despair to Hope* included *Benedicta et Venerabilis*, a familiar composition by former Composer-in-Residence **Yakov Gubanov**, which was previously performed in the 54th season. But what brought him back to St. Louis was the world premiere of his *Campane Pasquali*, a new work specially created for the Chamber Chorus. The audience (and singers) enjoyed these glorious renditions in no small part because Yakov, now residing in Italy, flew to St. Louis in person to supervise the finishing touches to this evocation of the Easter church bells he remembered from his days (in happier times) studying and teaching in Moscow.

We were welcomed to Immanuel Lutheran by **Maggie Warner** and **Dick Deitte**, two of our singers who are also church members. The sanctuary interior is magnificent, having been restored recently after a partial roof collapse. Other pieces sung at the concert included another SLCC commission – the *Stabat Mater* by the late **Stephen Paulus**, which has been revived several times already because of its popularity among singers and listeners alike.

The February concert, *Depth to Height*, held at Third Baptist Church, had also showcased a composer who attended in person, namely **Kerensa Briggs**, our newest Composer-in-Residence. Read more about Kerensa and this concert on page 4.

In fact, the final three concerts of this season will have featured in-person attendances by current or former composers-in-residence because for *Death to Life*, the last concert in this series, **Sasha Johnson Manning** will fly from London to hear the choir reprise her *Requiem*, the master work she wrote in installments for the Chorus over an eight-year period, beginning in 1998.

We are delighted that at this season finale, our first Composer-in-Residence will be able to hear how two of her successors, **Melissa Dunphy** and **Kerensa Briggs**, have maintained the high standards she set two decades ago. This concert is truly a testament to a remarkable tradition of fostering both new music and women composers.

Gill Waltman

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THE SAINT LOUIS CHAMBER CHORUS

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT Live Performances are Back!

During the COVID period, live performances stopped. But they are back, and we can, once again, enjoy live performances of chamber music, jazz, symphonies, operas, theater, and a wide range of artists. Besides the sheer enjoyment that they bring, why should you devote the time and energy and effort to attend a live performance? In the case of our concerts, why should the singers work for weeks to prepare for a single, live concert instead of simply recording their work and letting you listen to it several times, on a disc or from an on-line recording?

A live performance gives both the audience and the artists something unique to share – the opportunity to experience singers performing together in a combination that may never be duplicated in exactly the same way, in exactly the same setting, with exactly the same acoustics. A live performance is a unique and special one-time event, hearing great music together in a shared space. No online experience can

begin to replicate that. And it lives on – we can share our thoughts and reactions to it with friends and others long after the event.

Live concerts let you connect with the artists, friends and other audience members who share your interest in the music and the unique settings in which we perform. On some occasions, you might meet composers of commissioned works in person, as we did in February with **Kerensa Briggs**, in April with **Yakov Gubanov**, and look for **Sasha Johnson Manning** at this Sunday's concert!

Our live concerts give local communities an economic boost when audiences and singers visit a new neighborhood and have a chance to try a new restaurant before or after a concert. I encourage you to continue attending our concerts and supporting other artists of every sort who work hard to give you the opportunity to attend their live performances.

Dick Brickson

KARIN HAGAMAN



Karin began singing when she was eight years old and joined the Episcopal church choir in her hometown of Maplewood, N.J. She was taking piano lessons from the choirmaster, and he let her join early, once he knew she could read well enough to keep up with the words of

the hymns. Her whole family sang together in the choir for a time, and music was always present at home. She also played the clarinet in the school band, plus a little guitar and saxophone (though, oddly, just the soprano and baritone sax – which may be why she didn't continue with the saxophone).

Singing was Karin's primary musical focus in college. She majored in English Literature at Harvard University, but also studied music theory and spent every spare moment in rehearsals with two singing groups: the mixed-voice chorus, and a co-ed *a cappella* group, which she also directed during her senior year. After graduation, Karin stayed in Boston for several years and sang with a small ensemble called Capella Alamire, which specialized in performing the works of Franco-Flemish composers of the Renaissance, even occasionally singing from copies of the original manuscripts (though this was an arduous experience, and she can no longer read 'mensural notation').

Karin moved to St. Louis in 1995 and spent one season with the Chamber Chorus, before deciding she wanted to shift gears and experience major choral works with the St. Louis Symphony Chorus. She attended graduate school at Washington University, earning masters' degrees in business and social work. This training

launched a career in urban redevelopment efforts, with practice crossing the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors.

Karin is now partner with EMD Consulting, a St. Louis-based consultancy focused on serving nonprofit organizations to build capacity and develop leadership. Prior roles include president and CEO of Grand Center, the nonprofit organization tasked with promoting and enhancing St. Louis's premier arts district; director of project development with the Cortex Innovation District in St. Louis; major project manager with St. Louis Development Corporation, the economic development organization for the City of St. Louis; and seven years as a consultant with Development Strategies, a St. Louis-based firm with a focus on economic development, real estate development, and community development.

Competing demands of work and family left Karin with little time for serious choral singing, leading her to take a "short break" when her first child was born in 2003 – which somehow stretched into an 18-year hiatus. When she made the decision to step down from the lead role at Grand Center and transition to a more flexible work life as a consultant, she vowed to find her way back to singing.

The Saint Louis Chamber Chorus felt in many ways like a return to Karin's roots. Her earliest singing was embedded in the English choir tradition, so she appreciated the influences of this background in **Philip Barnes**. She also longed for the purity of an unaccompanied vocal ensemble. So, Karin nervously walked into an audition for the Chamber Chorus in summer 2021 and was beyond thrilled to be accepted and find herself once again part of an extraordinary ensemble of wonderful singers.

DOM MOOG



Dom is a second-year medical student at Washington University and sings bass II in the Chorus. He is originally from the suburbs of Minneapolis, Minn., with an early interest in music. He was enchanted by the Disney princesses

whose voices somehow read his life aloud while telling their own stories. His original diva was Ariel from *The Little Mermaid*, and she inspired him to sing. Although always singing from a young age, his formal musical training began with piano lessons at age 9 and continued through high school. He picked up the clarinet in 6th grade playing through high school, under the direction of **Amy Powers**. She was the most passionate individual Dom had ever met, and he told her that someday he wanted to be as passionate about something as she was about music and teaching band.

Dom also sang bass II in the school's extracurricular jazz choir and in the concert choir. After graduation, Dom moved to Los Angeles where he majored in gender studies at the University of Southern California. Within a month of arriving, he joined Reverse Osmosis, an *a cappella* group. He sang with them through graduation, directing the group in 2018 and 2020. During his sophomore year of college, and needing more music in his life, he auditioned for, and was accepted into, the USC Chamber Singers under the direction of **Dr. Jo-Michael Scheibe**. Dom says he made some of his best friends and had incredible experiences with this group, working with some of the

most talented musicians. "My first year, we performed **Craig Hella Johnson's** "Considering Matthew Shepard," which was a massive undertaking and one of the most meaningful performances of my life."

The choir also toured Eastern Europe that year, performing in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and two cities in Poland. Other highlights from Dom's time with the USC Chamber Singers include performing at Walt Disney Concert Hall, singing with Voces8, and several recording sessions that taught him so much about professional musicianship. "In the spring of 2020, we would have performed with The Eagles and toured Taiwan and Thailand, but alas, the world had other plans!"

After graduating from USC and his time with the Chamber Singers ended, Dom had a brief hiatus from organized music after applying to medical school. Six months after starting medical school, Dom auditioned with the St. Louis Chamber Chorus. He says he is grateful because it has introduced him to wonderful people, allowed him to continue to grow his musicianship and feed that part of his soul, and opened up other opportunities for singing and community in this city.

While music is not inherently a part of Dom's professional plans as he pursues the field of psychiatry, it informs so much of what he does. "My experiences in communities of music have given me such a perspective on the importance of artistic and creative expression on wellness, mental health, and spirituality. We need to love and nurture the music inside us to be whole, happy, and well, and that is absolutely an integral part of my approach to human healing."

SASHA JOHNSON MANNING REQUIEM AT SEASON FINALE



The sixth and final concert of our season *Progressions* will take place on Sunday, May 28th. This last 'progression' is called *Death to Life*, and has a *Requiem* at its core, one

written expressly for the Chorus by British composer **Sasha Johnson Manning**. Those familiar with the Chorus know that Sasha served from 1998-2006 as our first Composer-In-Residence. Starting that first year, she composed a new movement over the next eight-year period, selecting texts from both sacred and secular sources. These include Latin prayers, a Spanish poem by St. John of the Cross, and poems by Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman. Sasha is intimately familiar with the high level of expertise

and competence of our singers, and each text and movement makes use of different timbres of the choir, from a separate chorus for high and low voices, to a combination of these forces in a double choir movement.

Sasha will fly here from the UK for the performance. The concert will also feature several pieces that explore man's quest for a savior, both religious and political, with pieces by **Thomas Tallis, Frederick Ouseley, Kerensa Briggs** and **Melissa Dunphy**.

We are happy to return to the beautiful and resonant St. Margaret of Scotland Church in the Shaw neighborhood, where the Chorus' own **Orin Johnson** serves as Director of Music and Liturgy. While not a new venue for us, we haven't performed there in almost twenty years.

Philip Barnes

NOTEWORTHY NOTES

DEPTH TO HEIGHT CONCERT IN FEBRUARY

It was wonderful to be back in the familiar setting of Third Baptist Church, where all our virtual performances during Covid were live streamed using recorded music from our archive, interspersed with live interviews by **Philip Barnes**. It was also the venue for our recent CD recording sessions. On February 19, a respectably large audience arrived in person for the *Depth to Height* concert, the fourth in this season's *Progressions* series.



A highlight of the performance was the *Height in Depth Suite*, an elegant song cycle written by our newest Composer-in-Residence, **Kerensa Briggs**. It was commissioned with funds from the estate of **Sarah Bryan Miller** and her longtime friends **Linda and Bruce Ryder**. Traveling from London for the concert, Kerensa was given a warm welcome and said that she was delighted with the choir's interpretation of her work. The repertoire also featured two earlier SLCC commissions: *Aus Tiefer Not* by **Carl Rütti**, and *Exaltabo* by **Magnus Williamson**.

Another highlight that day was the reception held after the concert. We have not hosted such an event since before Covid. This gave audience members the opportunity to talk to others who share their love of the Chorus, to meet some of the singers and board members, and a chance to meet Kerensa in person.

Kerensa has followed up this first commission for the Chamber Chorus, heard at Concert 4, with a new composition called "Ode to a Savior". This piece sets a Sophoclean chorus translated by **Philip Barnes** and will be premiered at Concert 6 at St. Margaret of Scotland Church on May 28.

Gill Waltman



The Chorus viewed from the balcony at Third Baptist Church. This was the venue for the February 19 concert and the subsequent recording sessions. (Photo courtesy of Pastor Tommy Simons.)

NEW RECORDING SESSION HELD IN FEBRUARY

At the end of February, the Chorus devoted four evenings to its latest recording. Once again, **Gary Cole** of Regent Records flew from the UK to work with engineer **Daniel Ruder** to capture our distinctive sound in works specially written for us. The repertoire came from nearly three decades, starting with **Ivan Moody's** interpretation of the medieval mystic, Hildegard of Bingen, and ending with one of our most recent commissions, the *Missa Brevis* of **Dobrinka Tabakova**.

Since two of the selections required keyboard accompaniment (piano and organ), we chose Third Baptist Church as our setting for the recording, and greatly appreciated their welcome. Winter is always a challenging time to record, what with colds, flu, and then COVID, but the Chorus came through splendidly: the new disc/download promises to be one of our best. Look for its release in 2024!

Philip Barnes

SLCC COMMISSIONS GO FAR AND WIDE

Our commissions are intended to add to, and enrich, the wider choral repertoire, and it's always a delight when other choirs choose to perform music that was originally written for us and for St. Louis. Recently, this was true in Washington when the choir of the National Cathedral sang **Melissa Dunphy's** *Alpha and Omega* at its main Easter morning service: this was written for us back in 2015.

And then word has come that this summer the German choir, Cantabile Regensburg, is to record **Carl Rütti's** *Aus Tiefer Not*, which we premiered in 2006. Theirs will be the second to be recorded on disc, as Carl's piece features on our latest CD recorded this past February.

Philip Barnes

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