



Sacred & Profane, A Chamber Chorus present

I Hope You're Doing Well: Health & Harmony

Virtual Concert Broadcast | Saturday, December 19, 2020 | 6pm

PROGRAM

<i>There is a Balm in Gilead</i>	Traditional Spiritual arr. Stacey V. Gibbs
<i>Ana El Na</i>	Karen Siegel
<i>Frè O</i>	Traditional Haitian arr. Sten Källman
<i>I Hope You're Doing Well</i>	Dale Trumbore
<i>Beatitudes</i>	Arvo Pärt
<i>Sure on this Shining Night</i>	Morten Lauridsen



PROGRAM NOTES & TEXTS

From Artistic Director, Rebecca P.N. Seeman:

When our world turned upside down last March, Sacred and Profane was confronted with the need to make a decision — take a hiatus until we could safely sing together again, become an online social club of sorts whose musical activity would consist of singing pieces together while on mute, or forge into this new reality of singing together online. We took the latter option and have chosen to take musical risks, innovate, make mistakes, learn, and grow. We have committed to making music together, to nurturing our musical connections with one another, and to share that music with our audiences.

We've put together a season of all kinds of musical experiences. We are creating virtual choir videos of compilations of singers' individual videos and singing remote pieces where we sing together in real time online, embracing the latency, or lag time, that comes with making music on Zoom. We've sampled various internet platforms for making music together and learned how to work with new modes of technology, acquired USB microphones and learned how to set microphone levels specifically for each piece. We've debated whether to attempt to sing rhythmically in sync or whether to accentuate the lag time. We've sung on mute while one person sings live. We've sung along with guides and recordings. We've been frustrated with the limitations of singing through technology and missed the wonderful energy of singing together in the same space, but at the same time we've relished the opportunity to come together on Monday nights as we always have, talk and connect, and sing beautiful, moving music.

And now we are excited to share that music with you! When I began ruminating on this season, it was clear that we would still be in the throes of the coronavirus through the end of 2020 and possibly beyond. What I didn't know was that cases would be surging in the United States as we broadcast our concert. Our first concert of our 43rd season – ***I Hope You're Doing Well: Songs of Health and Harmony*** – feels particularly needed in this unusual holiday season, when we all need a good dose of “health and harmony.”



There is a Balm in Gilead

There is a balm in Gilead
To make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead
To heal the sin-sick soul.

Sometimes I feel discouraged,
And think my work's in vain,
But then the Holy Spirit
Revives my soul again.

If you cannot sing like angels,
If you can't preach like Paul,
You can tell the love of Jesus,
And say He died for all.

In the past few years, I've often turned to **Stacey Gibbs'** remarkable arrangements of traditional African American spirituals. Sacred and Profane sang his *Follow the Drinking Gourd* in December of 2017 and his *Soon I Will Be Done* in March of 2019. ***There is a Balm in Gilead*** speaks clearly to this moment and our longing for healing. The text refers to the Hebrew bible book of Jeremiah, in which Jeremiah appeals for a healing balm or a physician to heal the people of Israel. The balm itself has been interpreted to refer to a spiritual medicine. After the last few years of division in our country and the last several months of the pandemic, spiritual and physical healing feel equally needed.

African American spirituals have a rich history. Because enslaved people were often forbidden to read anything but the Bible, spirituals are made up of direct and adapted scripture. As Karen Cook Bell writes, enslaved people saw in scripture "a God who took the sides of the victims of history, rather than one who simply established the existing social order. [So] African American spirituals not only appropriated the tools of the enslaver's language to resist slavery, but also relied upon African American folk culture to critique the southern slave system." As W.E.B. Du Bois writes, "through all the sorrow of the Sorrow Songs there breathes a hope – a faith in the ultimate justice of things. The minor cadences of despair change often to triumph and calm confidence. Sometimes it is a faith in life, sometimes a faith in death, sometimes assurance of boundless justice in some fair world beyond. But whichever it is, the meaning is always clear: that sometimes, somewhere, men will judge men by their souls and not by their skins."

Many thanks to Rachael Roueché for her assistance researching and writing these notes.



Ana El Na

<i>Ana el na r'fa na lanu</i>	Please G-d heal us
<i>r'fuat hanefesh</i>	with renewal of the soul

– Traditional Hebrew prayer, adapted by Karen Siegel, with translation assistance from Jenny Labendz and Rabbi Robert Scheinberg

*Mi Sheberach Avoteinu: Avraham, Yitzhak,
v'Yaakov, v'Imoteinu: Sarah, Rivka, Rachel
v'Leah,
Hu yivarech v'yirapei et hacholim.
HaKadosh Baruch Hu yimalei rachamim
aleihem,
l'hachalimam, u-l'rap'otam, l'hachazikam, u-
l'chay-otam.
V'yishlach lahem m'herah r'fuah shlemah,
r'fu-at hanefesh u-r'fu-at hagoof,
v'chazek et y'dei ha-oskim b'tzorcheihem,
b'toch sh'ar cholei Yisrael v'yoshvei tevel
hashta ba'agalah u-vizman kariv, v'no-mar,
Amen.*

May the One who blessed our patriarchs:
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and our
matriarchs: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and
Leah,
bless and heal those who are ill.
May the Holy Blessed One overflow with
compassion upon them,
to restore them, to heal them, to strengthen
them, to enliven them.
And will speedily send them complete
healing,
with renewal of the soul and of the body,
and strengthen the hands of those who are
taking care of them,
along with all those who are ill among the
people of Israel and all humankind,
soon, speedily and without delay, and let us
say, Amen.

– Contemporary version of traditional Hebrew prayer, with Hebrew assistance from
Jenny Labendz

My original plan for our 2020-2021 season included a concert of music from the Jewish tradition. I programmed **Karen Siegel's *Ana El Na*** (Please G-d heal us) as a procession. Karen is a member of the C4 Choral Composer/Conductor Collective, an ensemble based in New York that instantly became a leader in remote singing when the pandemic hit. Last spring, Karen began writing music to be sung remotely, including a re-arrangement of her *Ana El Na*, a plea for healing that has been sung in her synagogue in New Jersey for years. Who could have predicted that a work I had already intended for this season would suddenly become so fitting in this moment, and written by the composer who has more than any other made singing together online during the pandemic a mission? I'm pleased to offer this piece that not only asks healing for those who are ill, but also remembers the members of the medical community who are our heroes of the moment in its plea to "strengthen the hands of those who are taking care of them." This piece has special resonance for me as a Jewish woman and it was a pleasure to coach the Hebrew pronunciation with my Israeli stepmother, Avital Agam. It's also been particularly wonderful to hear our own Adam Lange give all his heart to the moving text in the solo recitation.



Frè O

Frè O O Brother

Frè o di nou, di maladia pa gaya na jwe, na rele.	O Brother, you tell us your sickness will not be healed.
Ou malad mwen di yo.	We are playing (the drums and singing) and weeping.
Na jwe Papa Dambala eh!	You are sick – I will tell the others.
Mape mande Dambala Wedo gade nou.	We are playing the drums and singing to Papa Dambala!
Nou tout chante Ayida Wedo men pitit ou yo!	We are asking Papa Dambala to look after us. We all sing to Ayida Wedo: “See your children!”

Sacred and Profane has embraced the music of Sweden for years, but this moment calls us to augment the voices of Black and Brown communities and composers. **Sten Källman’s** work with Haitian music presented a perfect opportunity to embrace both of these missions at once, and his *Frè O* is particularly fitting for our concert. A Swedish multi-instrumentalist, arranger, and conductor, Källman has lived in Haiti on and off since the late 1960s, working with the people and developing a deep connection to Vodou culture and music. Källman’s Gothenburg-based choir, Amanda, has championed his arrangements of Haitian music and he has toured extensively with his all-Swedish Vodou band, Simbi. Our own Swedish tenor Tomas Hallin sang with Amanda a number of years ago. Sten’s notes in his score present this work perfectly:

The Republic of Haiti was created in 1804 by slaves who revolted against France, believing that the message of the French Revolution that all men are free and equal brothers was as true for the black man as it was for the white man. Modern Haitians are descended from generations of intermarriage between a variety of West African nations, with some influence from the French and the Taino Indians. Similarly, Haitian cultural life is a rich mix of these influences, and the Vodou religion has become an effective synthesis of Christianity and West African beliefs. In my experience, Vodou has been vastly misunderstood by most Western nations.

Vodou is practiced mainly by poorer, rural Haitians as a way of creating a collective community between the extended family and the nature spirits that they believe respond to singing and dancing. These Haitians are also Christians who believe in one God – the Vodou spirits appear and are pictured in similar ways to Catholic Saints and are used as symbols representing the various aspects and emotions of man. Vodou spirits are worshiped only through singing, dancing, and drumming. I have watched as the music at these gatherings creates a sense of warmth and security in a community that helps people become completely free to

express themselves, revealing the true dignity of the human spirit. It is this sense of freedom and community that we all seek through group singing, and this music confirms for me that people express the same basic emotions with their music wherever and whenever they live.

I heard a village in Haiti sing *Frè O* and was overcome with the power of this expression of grief. As a man lies dying from illness, his relatives appeal to the Vodou spirits Dambala, the serpent, and Ayida, the rainbow. These married spirits are very old images brought from West Africa to Haiti and symbolize our connection to the past, the present, and the future, which we feel more strongly in the face of an impending death. I hope the beauty and the simplicity of the music speaks for itself.

I am grateful for the support of the individuals who helped make our performance of *Frè O* more genuine and meaningful. Haitian percussionist Daniel Brevil recorded the text for us so we would have a native speaker to emulate. Daniel also connected me with members of the local Haitian music community, including Yagbe Onilu, a percussionist, scholar, and spiritual guide who spoke with us about Vodou culture, and Jeff Pierre, the remarkable Haitian percussionist who you see in our virtual choir video. Many thanks also to Wade Peterson, a college friend and percussionist who helped me connect with musicians, and to our own Rachael Roueché, who led additional discussions about the rich tradition of Vodou and provides the moving solo you'll hear in our video.



I Hope You're Doing Well

I hope you're doing well
I hope you're safe and happy
I hope you're doing well
I hope you're healthy and safe
I hope you're happy and well
I hope you're staying sane in such uncertain times
I hope you're doing well
I hope you're doing well
I hope you're safe and happy and well
I hope you're doing well
I hope you're healthy and safe
or as much so as possible right now.

Los Angeles based composer **Dale Trumbore** has taken the choral world by storm in recent years and this young composer's works are now championed by the country's finest vocal

ensembles. I will never forget hearing the remarkable Aeolians of Oakwood University sing her *In the Middle*, with Dale on the piano, at the American Choral Directors Association conference in March 2019. Sacred and Profane was planning to present that piece as part of a concert with piano this coming March and we hope to bring that to you soon. Thankfully, Dale has written a number of pieces that can be sung remotely, including her of the moment *I Hope You're Doing Well*. This piece calls for the conductor to sing with the choir, and it's been a delight for me to have the opportunity to join in the music making as a singing member of the choir.



Beatitudes

From Matthew 5:3–12

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.
Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you
and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.
Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven:
for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.
Amen.

Sacred and Profane has regularly turned to Estonian composer **Arvo Pärt's** music for comfort and healing, most recently in our 40th anniversary concert in May 2018 with his *Da pacem Domine*, which served as a balm to follow his countryman and friend Veljo Tormis' powerful cry against the ravages of war, *Curse Upon Iron*. For this concert, I chose his ***Beatitudes***. Composed for Theater of Voices in 1990, *Beatitudes* is one of Pärt's first English language settings. The text, from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, offers comfort to those who are persecuted or who suffer, promising relief and celebration in the afterlife. I couldn't have imagined a more perfect poem for this year in which we've witnessed and condemned police violence against African Americans and seen Black and Brown people disproportionately affected by the coronavirus. C4 Ensemble performed a remote version of *Beatitudes* in their May online concert, in which they embraced asynchronous singing, inspiring me to bring the piece to S&P. We've tried different approaches to singing this work, alternating between augmenting the asynchronous reality of singing together online and trying to align rhythmically as much as

possible. Of all of our works in this concert set, this one has challenged us most, but we've learned how to hear each other in new ways and we've leaned into the beauty and substance of the text.



Sure on This Shining Night

Text: James Agee

Sure on this shining night
Of starmade shadows round,
Kindness must watch for me
This side the ground.

The late year lies down the north.
All is healed, all is health.
High summer holds the earth.
Hearts all whole.

Sure on this shining night
I weep for wonder
Wandering far alone
Of shadows on the stars.

I first came to know James Agee's masterful poem ***Sure on This Shining Night*** through Samuel Barber's remarkable setting for voice and piano. I've always enjoyed the alliteration Agee employs in the words "sure, shining, shadows," then in "healed, health, high, holds, hearts, whole" and again in "weep, wonder, wandering." I find it delightful to massage those consonants into expressive meaning when singing that piece. **Morten Lauridsen's** much-loved setting of that text for piano and voice was an obvious choice for our concert, and several S&P singers have remarked how good it feels to sing this nurturing and warm work. We hope it leaves you feeling equally cradled and comforted this holiday season.



Sacred & Profane, A Chamber Chorus is an a cappella chamber choir founded in 1977 committed to enriching and inspiring its members and the broader community by exploring the breadth of traditional and emerging choral repertoire through authentic and exemplary performances.

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