

THE WASHINGTON COLLEGE  
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC PRESENTS

# HORIZONS

A CHORUS CONCERT

*Featuring the Washington College Chorus  
performing Monteverdi, Tallis, Mozart, Mendelssohn,  
Whitacre, Hagenberg, Dilworth, and more*

**NOV 19 WED** **ADMISSION**  
7:30PM **IS FREE**

**HOTCHKISS HALL**  
**300 WASHINGTON AVE, CHESTERTOWN, MD 21620**

**DIRECTED BY ALEXIS RENEE WARD**  
**SUSAN SNYDER, ACCOMPANIST**

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# Program Notes

Feel free to listen to tonight's performance and follow along with these program notes to learn more about the composers, countries, languages, and backstories of these wonderful staples of the choral repertoire.

## Program Description

*Horizons* is a program about possibility - the pull of what lies ahead and the promise of what we have yet to discover. Each piece in this concert gives voice to human longing: the search for hope, the courage to dream, and the resilience to keep reaching forward. Across the centuries and styles, composers have written music that carries us beyond the present moment, toward something larger than ourselves. This concert brings those voices together in a celebration of growth, aspiration, and the boundless potential of the human spirit.

*“Dixit Dominus” from Vesperae Solennes De Confessore*

by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (b. 1756)

### Translation (Latin):

*The Lord said unto my Lord:*

*Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.*

*The scepter of your power the Lord shall send forth from Zion:*

*Rule thou in the midst of your enemies.*

*The power to rule is with you in the splendor of the holy ones:*

*I have begotten you from the womb before the rising of the daystar.*

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*The Lord has sworn an oath, and will not repent of it:  
You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedech.  
The Lord at your right hand destroys kings on the day of his wrath.  
He shall judge among the heathen;  
He shall pile up ruins and scatter skulls on many lands.  
He shall drink of the torrent in his way;  
Therefore he shall lift up his head.  
Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end. Amen.*

Composed in 1780 for Salzburg Cathedral, Mozart's *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore* ("Solemn Vespers for a Confessor") was likely written for the feast of St. Rupert, the city's patron saint, and stands as his final major sacred work before leaving for Vienna where he would spend the rest of his life. The six-movement setting of the Vespers psalms and Magnificat blends the ceremonial grandeur of the liturgy with the dramatic flair of the opera house.



For this evening's performance, we will only be performing the first movement, the "Dixit Dominus". This opener bursts forth in D major

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with the fanfare of strings, brass, timpani, continuo, and vigorous choral writing. Mozart alternates bold homophonic proclamations with lively counterpoint, showcasing his mastery of both clarity and complexity. The result is a jubilant and radiant opening movement that captures the splendor of Salzburg's cathedral tradition.

**“Kuumba”**

**by Zanaida Robles (b. 1979)**

**Translation (Swahili):**

*Creativity*



Los Angeles-based composer, conductor, and educator Zanaida Robles wrote “Kuumba” as a celebration of artistic expression and community. The title refers to the sixth principle of Kwanzaa, which honors the human capacity to create and to leave the world more beautiful and beneficial than we found it. Robles, known for her dynamic and socially conscious choral writing, infuses the piece with rhythmic vitality and layered vocal textures that reflect her roots in gospel, classical, and world music traditions.

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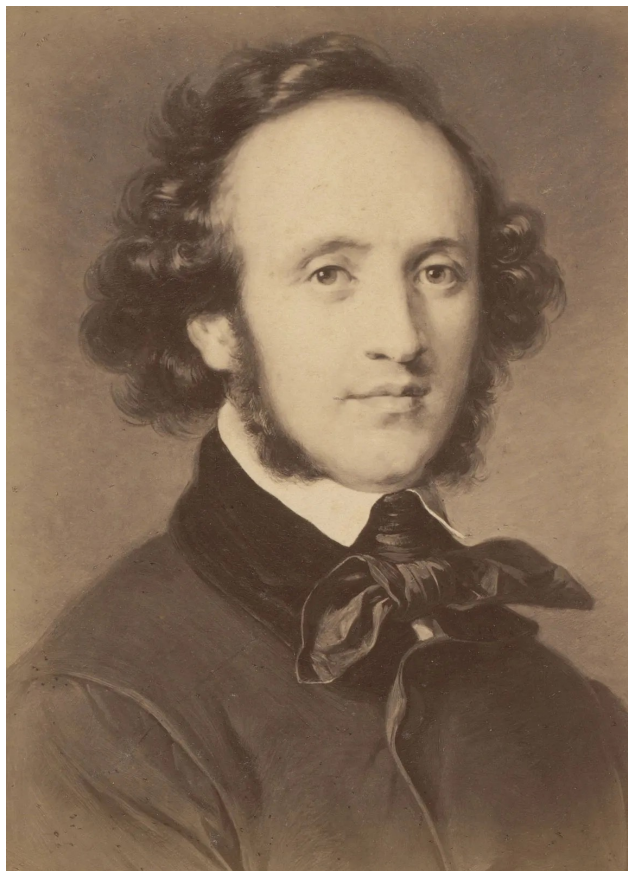
## “Verleih uns Frieden”

by Felix Mendelssohn (b. 1809)

### Translation (German):

*Graciously grant us peace, Lord  
God, in our time;*

*There is no one else who could  
fight for us but you, our God,  
alone.*



Felix Mendelssohn composed “Verleih uns Frieden” around 1831, during his early years in Berlin. The work sets Martin Luther’s brief German paraphrase of the ancient Latin prayer “Da pacem, Domine”, a plea for divine peace that has resonated across the centuries of European sacred music. Mendelssohn’s setting, though modest in length, is remarkable for its serenity and depth. He builds the piece gradually by beginning with a simple, hymn-like melody slowly adding voices and layers of accompaniment until it blossoms into a radiant expression of hope.

## “Dona Nobis Pacem”

by Palestrina (b. 1525)

### Translation (Latin):

*Give us peace.*

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The beloved canon “Dona Nobis Pacem” is often attributed to Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, though its true authorship remains uncertain. Unlike Palestrina’s more elaborate polyphonic Mass settings, this simple four-part round likely emerged later, inspired by his transparent contrapuntal style and the serene spirituality associated with his music. The

Latin text forms the final line of the *Angus Dei* from the Mass Ordinary, a universal plea for peace that has echoed through centuries of sacred song. The work’s enduring appeal lies in its purity and accessibility: each voice enters in imitation, creating a gently unfolding harmony that endures as a small, yet powerful, musical prayer for peace.

“If Ye Love Me”

by Thomas Tallis (b. 1505)

**Text:**

*If ye love me, keep my commandments*

*And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter,*

*That he may abide with you forever. Even the spirit of truth.*

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Composed around 1565, “If Ye Love Me” is one of the most enduring works of the English Renaissance master Thomas Tallis, who served under four monarchs during one of the most turbulent eras in English religious history. Written in English rather than Latin, the anthem reflects new Protestant ideals of clarity and direct communication that emerged during the Reformation under Edward VI. Tallis sets the text from John 14:15-17 with graceful simplicity, ensuring that every word of the message is intelligible and sincere.

“And Joy Is Everywhere” by Andrea Ramsey (b. 1977)

**Text:**

*And joy is everywhere!*

*In the Earth’s green covering of grass, in the blue serenity of sky,*

*And joy is everywhere!*

*In the reckless exuberance of the Spring;*

*In the severe abstinence of gray Winter;*

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*And joy is everywhere!  
In the living flesh that animates our  
bodily frame;  
In the perfect poise of the human figure,  
noble and upright,  
In Living; And joy is everywhere!  
In the exercise of all our powers; In the  
acquisition of our knowledge;  
In fighting evil; Joy is there everywhere,  
Joy is everywhere, everywhere!*

The text by Bengali polymath, Rabindranath Tagore, is an excerpt from his philosophical essay, “Sadhana: The Realization of Life”, a thoughtful work on selfhood, the universe, morality, and beauty. This musical setting by American composer, Andrea Ramsey, reminds us to look for the joy present in our daily lives. Ramsey’s music moves through buoyant rhythms and luminous harmonies that mirror the vitality of the text.

*“Sfogava con le stelle”* by Claudio Monteverdi (b. 1567)

**Translation (Italian):**

*One who was lovesick cried out his pain to the stars in the night*

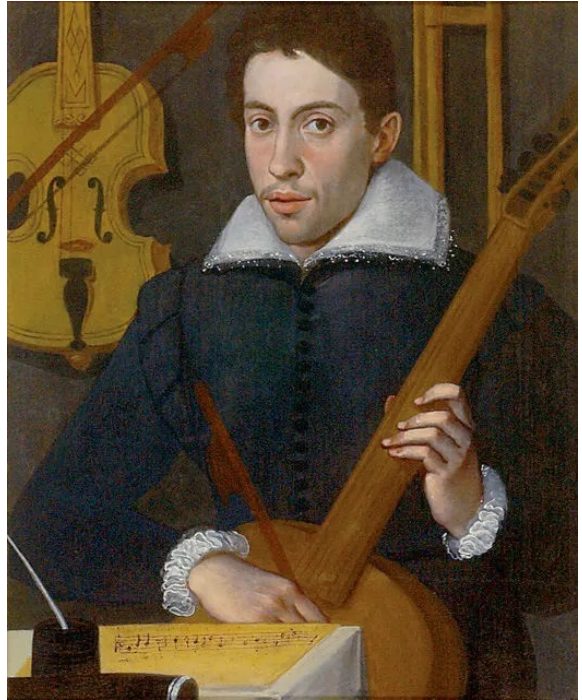
*And said looking up to them:*

*O you beautiful pictures of my loved one*

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*Just as you show me when you are gleaming,  
Her outstanding beauty, show her also how I burn for her  
And make her with your golden face as merciful to me  
As you make me love her.*

Published in 1603 as part of Monteverdi's *Fourth Book of Madrigals*, "Sfogava con le stelle" exemplifies the expressive depth of the late Renaissance madrigal. The text by Ottavio Rinuccini tells of a lover pouring out his sorrows to the stars and attempting to enlist their help. Monteverdi captures this emotional transformation with exquisite word painting, suspensions, and harmonic daring: all hallmarks of his transition toward the early Baroque style.



The music alternates between tender intimacy and passionate outcry, mirroring the poem's oscillation between grief and longing. In this short but profound madrigal, Monteverdi demonstrates his mastery of turning human emotion into musical drama, bridging the worlds of Renaissance polyphony and Baroque expressiveness.

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# "The Yearning"

by Craig Courtney (b. 1948)

## Text:

*There is a yearning in hearts weighed down*

*By ancient grief and centuries of sorrow.*

*There is a yearning in hearts that in the darkness find*

*And in the shades of death abide, a yearning for tomorrow.*

*There is a yearning, a yearning for the promised One,*

*The First-born of creation.*

*There is a yearning for the Lord who visited His own,*

*And by His death for sin atoned to bring to us salvation.*

*Emmanuel, Emmanuel, within our hearts, the yearning.*

*Emmanuel, Emmanuel, within our hearts, the yearning.*

*There is a yearning that fills the hearts of those who wait*

*The day of His appearing.*

*There is a yearning when all our sorrows are erased*

*And we shall see the One who placed within our hearts the yearning*

*Emmanuel, Emmanuel, within our hearts, the yearning.*

*Emmanuel, Emmanuel, within our hearts, the yearning.*

*Emmanuel, Emmanuel, within our hearts, the yearning.*

Composed in 2011, "The Yearning" is one of Craig Courtney's most poignant and widely performed works. The piece gives voice to the

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deep human longing for peace, love, and divine presence. With text by Susan Bentall Boersma, the anthem rises and falls in aching waves, its harmonic language shifting between dissonance and resolution to mirror the text's restless searching.

Courtney, long associated with the acclaimed sacred-music publisher Beckenhorst Press, is known for writing expressively and creating music that feels emotionally expansive without being musically



overwrought. “The Yearning” sits squarely in that tradition and echoes centuries of Advent texts looking to the future.

“Shine on Me”

by Rollo Dilworth (b. 1970)

**Text:**

*Shine on me, shine on me; I wonder if the lighthouse will shine on me*

*Is a light shining above? Is it shining above in the heavens for me?*

*I'm wonderin', wonderin', wonderin' if there's a light*

*That is shining above in the heavens for me.*

*Shine on me, shine on me, I wonder if the lighthouse will shine on me*

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Composer, conductor, and educator Rollo Dilworth is one of today's leading voices in choral music, celebrated for bridging the traditions of African American spirituals, gospel, and contemporary concert repertoire. A professor of choral music at Temple University in Philadelphia, Dilworth is deeply influenced by the legacy of his mentor Robert Ray, whose *Gospel Mass* helped bring gospel idioms into the concert hall.



In “Shine on Me”, Dilworth reimagines the traditional spiritual as a radiant expression of hope and renewal. The repeated plea for light becomes both a prayer and a metaphor for new beginnings. As the music grows in energy and joy, the listener feels the same upward pull the text invokes: a reaching toward light, possibility, and the promise of brighter days ahead.

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# “Sing Gently”

by Eric Whitacre (b. 1979)

## Text:

*May we sing together, always*

*May our voice be soft*

*May our singing be music for others*

*And may it keep other aloft*

*Sing, sing gently, always*

*Sing, sing as one, as one*

*May we stand together, always*

*May our voice be strong*

*May we hear the singing and*

*May we always sing along*

*Sing, sing gently, always*

*Sing, sing as one*



Composed in 2020 during the early months of the global pandemic, “Sing Gently” was written by Eric Whitacre for his Virtual Choir 6, which united over 17,000 singers from 129 countries in a single digital

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performance. The piece was conceived as a balm for a world in isolation, an offering of comfort, connection, and collective hope through music. Its text, written by Whitacre himself, is a reminder of the power of empathy and listening, even from afar.

Built on softly shifting harmonies and Whitacre's signature luminous dissonances, the piece feels weightless, almost suspended in air. As voices weave together in quiet unity, "Sing Gently" evokes a sense of healing and renewal. It reminds us that even in distance, our shared song can carry us toward the light.

## "Bonse Aba"

by Victor C. Johnson (b. 1978)

### Translation (Bemba):

*All who sing with the spirit*

*Have the right to be called the  
children of God*

Composer and educator Victor C. Johnson is widely known for his accessible yet vibrant choral writing that blends global influences with expressive lyricism. His arrangement of "Bonse Aba" is based on a traditional Zambian song celebrating the joy of communal singing



and the unity it brings. The text is drawn from a Bemba proverb and is a song of celebration popular throughout Zambia.

Johnson's rhythmic setting, with its lively percussion and layered vocal lines, radiates inclusivity and joy. Its rhythmic drive and exuberant repetition invite both singers and audience into a shared experience of energy and praise. "Bonse Aba" reminds us that music transcends boundaries of language, culture, and belief, lifting every voice toward a wider, brighter world of connection.

*"Measure Me, Sky!"*

by Elaine Hagenberg (b. 1979)

**Text:**

*Measure me, sky!*

*Tell me I reach by a song*

*Nearer the stars;*

*I have been little so long.*

*Horizon, reach out!*

*Catch at my hand, stretch me taut.*

*Rim of the world:*

*Widen my eyes by a thought.*

*Sky, be my depth,*

*Wind be my width and my height.*

*World, my heart's span;*

*Loveliness, wings for my flight.*



“Measure Me, Sky!” is one of Elaine Hagenberg’s most uplifting and expansive works, setting an exuberant poem by Leonora Speyer that dares the soul to reach beyond all limits. Hagenberg, celebrated for her luminous choral textures and deeply human expressivity, captures the poem’s spirit of aspiration through soaring melodies, sweeping harmonies, and a rhythmic vitality that seems to lift the listener off the ground.

The music mirrors Speyer’s imagery of wings, wind, and boundless flight, each phrase stretching upward toward light and freedom. As the final piece of *Horizons*, “Measure Me, Sky!” serves as both culmination and benediction: a radiant celebration of human potential and the unending desire to rise, to dream, and to discover what lies beyond the horizon.

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