

THE WASHINGTON COLLEGE  
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC PRESENTS

# DREAMSONG

## A CHORUS CONCERT

*Featuring the Washington College Chorale performing  
Brahms, Reena Esmail, William Dawson, Andre Thomas,  
Elaine Hagenberg, Rollo Dilworth, and more*

**APRIL 22 WED** **ADMISSION**  
7:30PM **IS FREE**

**HOTCHKISS RECITAL HALL**  
**GIBSON CENTER FOR THE ARTS**  
**300 WASHINGTON AVE, CHESTERTOWN, MD 21620**

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

*This performance is supported by a grant  
from the Kent Cultural Alliance.*

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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, languages, and backstories of these wonderful staples of the choral repertoire.

## Program Description

*Dreamsong* explores the fragile and powerful space between reality and imagination. In dreams, we confront what we fear, what we love, and what we cannot yet name. The music in this program draws from that same well, shaping sound into something deeply human and quietly transcendent. Spanning centuries and styles, these works offer glimpses of inner worlds, where memory, hope, and longing intertwine. Together, they form a tapestry of sound that invites us to listen not only with our ears, but with the deeper, dreaming part of ourselves.

“O Sonno”

by Cipriano de Rore (b. 1515)

### Translation (Italian):

*O sleep, O that quiet child of peaceful, fresh and shadowy night;*

*O afflicted mortals' comfort; sweet oblivion of ills so grave*

*That life is harsh and tedious;*

*Give succor to my heart now, which languishes and has no rest,*

*And raise these frail and weary limbs.*

*Envelop me, O sleep, and spread and rest your dark wings over me.*

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Cipriano de Rore (1515-1565) was one of the most influential composers of the late Renaissance, particularly known for his expressive madrigals and his role in shaping the Venetian School at St. Mark's Basilica. His setting of "O Sonno" ("O Sleep") reflects the era's fascination with the emotional power of text, a hallmark of the madrigal tradition.



The poem is a plea to sleep itself, personified as a gentle and almost divine force, to bring rest and release from suffering. Like many madrigals of the period, the music closely mirrors the text, using shifting harmonies and carefully shaped lines to heighten its emotional intensity. De Rore was especially admired for pushing the boundaries of chromaticism and text expression, and in "O Sonno", we hear an early glimpse of that bold, searching style.

*"Wiegenleid" Op. 49, No. 4* by Johannes Brahms (b. 1833)

**Translation (German):**

*Good evening, good night, canopied with roses,  
Bedecked with carnations, slip beneath the coverlet.  
Tomorrow morning, if God will, you shall be woken again.*

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Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) composed “Wiegenlied”, Op. 49, No. 4 in 1868, and it has since become one of the most recognizable melodies in Western music. Often simply known as “Brahms’ Lullaby”, the piece was originally written as a gift for a close friend on the birth of her child, adding a layer of personal warmth to its enduring simplicity.

Despite its widespread familiarity, the song is carefully crafted, with a gently rocking accompaniment that evokes the motion of a cradle. The melody’s ease and intimacy reflect Brahms’ gift for writing music that feels both natural and deeply expressive. Over time, “Wiegenlied” has transcended its original context, becoming a universal symbol of comfort, tenderness, and the quiet ritual of song at the close of the day.

“Sunāō (सु ना औ) : Āō (आ ओ)”

by Reena Esmail (b. 1983)

**Translation (Hindi):**

*Come*

*Come on*

*Come and sing us a tune*

*Bring your own voice*

*And show us a different style*

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Reena Esmail (b. 1983) frequently explores the intersection of Western and Indian musical traditions, creating works that invite both performers and audiences into new sonic worlds. “Āō (आ ओ)” is the first movement of “Sunāō (सु ना औ)”, a set of three pieces designed to introduce singers to the Hindu/Urdu language and elements of Hindustani musical style.



The word sunāō (सु ना औ) translates roughly as “sing for me” or “let me listen”, reflecting the act of sharing sound and inviting others into a musical experience. In “Āō (आ ओ)”, meaning “come”, the music becomes a gentle invitation, beckoning singers and listeners alike to engage with unfamiliar sounds through openness and curiosity. With its focus on evolving vowel shapes, sliding patterns, and fluid vocal lines, the piece emphasizes listening as an active, communal act, reminding us that music is not only something we perform, but something we offer and receive.

“By Night”

by Elaine Hagenberg (b. 1979)

**Text:**

*Deep in the tarn the mountain a mighty phantom gleamed.*

*She leaned out into the midnight and the summer wind went by.*

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*The scent of the rose on its silken wing and a song its sigh.  
And in depths below, the waters answered some mystic height,  
As a star stooped out of the depths above with its lance of light.  
And she thought, in the dark and the fragrance,  
How vast was the wonder wrought  
If the sweet world were but the beauty born in its Maker's thought.*



Elaine Hagenberg (b. 1979) sets a text by Harriet Prescott Spofford (1835-1921), whose richly imaginative poetry often blurs the line between the natural and the fantastical. In “By Night”, darkness becomes not a place of rest, but of possibility, an invitation into mystery, beauty, and transformation.

Hagenberg’s setting brings this sense of adventure to life through vivid musical narrative. A driving, almost galloping accompaniment propels the music forward, as soaring vocal lines trace the exhilaration of discovery. In contrast, a more reflective middle section offers a moment of stillness, inspired by Spofford’s image of “beauty born in its Maker’s thought”, before the music surges once more into a sweeping, cinematic expression of wonder. Both poet and composer invite us beyond the familiar, into a world where night awakens the imagination, and the unknown becomes something to embrace.

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## “Stars I Shall Find”

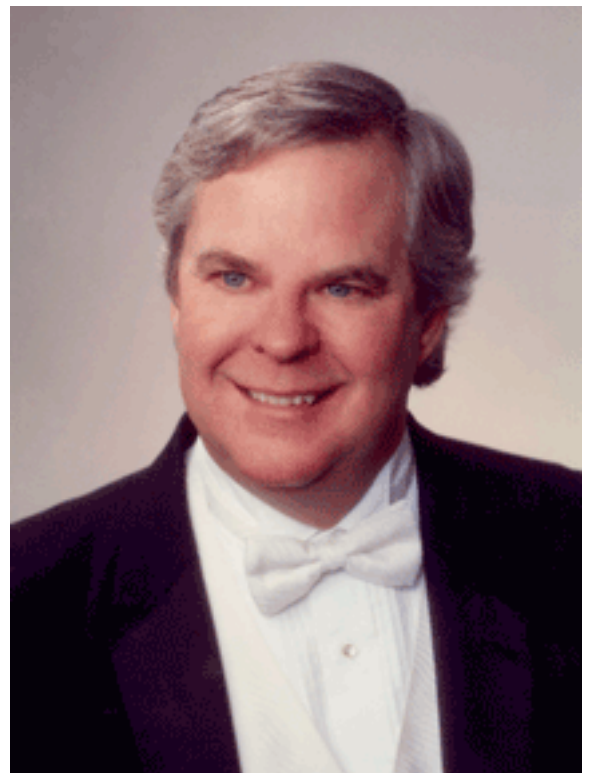
by David Dickau (b. 1953)

### Text:

*There will be rest, and sure stars shining  
Over the rooftops crowned with snow  
A reign of rest, serene forgetting.  
The music of stillness holy and low.  
I will make this world of my devising  
Out of a dream in my lonely mind,  
I shall find the crystal of peace, above me  
Stars I shall find*

David Dickau (b. 1953) sets a poem by Sara Teasdale (1884-1933), whose writing often reflects a deep sensitivity to beauty, longing, and the search for meaning. In “Stars I Shall Find”, Teasdale turns to the night sky as a source of quiet assurance, suggesting that even in moments of uncertainty or sorrow, something steady and luminous remains.

Dickau’s setting captures this sense of hope with warmth and clarity, allowing



the text to unfold naturally through expressive yet transparent choral writing. At the same time, the music resists easy resolution: lingering dissonances and expressive non-chord tones, particularly in the inner voices, create a sense of suspension, as if the harmony itself is reaching, searching, and not quite ready to settle. In this way, the stars become more than distant lights. They emerge as symbols of persistence, wonder, and the human need to believe in something beyond the present moment.

### “The Dream Keeper”

by Rollo Dilworth (b. 1970)

#### Text:

*Bring me all of your dreams,  
You dreamers,  
Bring me all of your  
Heart melodies  
That I may wrap them  
In a blue cloud-cloth  
Away from the two-rough  
fingers  
Of the world.*



Rollo Dilworth (b. 1970) sets the poetry of Langston Hughes (1920-1967), one of the central voices of the Harlem Renaissance. Hughes’s work often speaks to the preservation of hope, identity, and inner life, particularly in the face of hardship.

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In “The Dream Keeper”, the speaker offers a quiet but powerful invitation: to gather one’s dreams, wrap them carefully, and protect them from a world that may not always understand or nurture them. Dilworth’s setting reflects this sense of care and reverence, with gentle lyricism and a warm, enveloping sound that mirrors the act of holding something fragile and deeply personal.

At its heart, the piece is both a lullaby and a declaration, reminding us that our dreams are not only worth keeping, but worth guarding with intention and love.

## “Fire”

by Katerina Gimon (b. 1993)

Katerina Gimon (b. 1993) is known for her bold, rhythmically driven choral writing and her ability to harness the raw, physical energy of the human voice. In “Fire”, she explores sound as something elemental, volatile, unpredictable, and impossible to contain.

Driven by insistent rhythms, percussive textures, and striking vocal effects, the piece captures fire not only as a natural force, but as a symbol of urgency, transformation, and release. The music builds in waves, rarely settling, as



overlapping lines and driving momentum create a sense of constant motion and intensity.

In contrast to the stillness and introspection found elsewhere on this program, “Fire” feels immediate and visceral, an eruption of sound that demands to be experienced in the moment, reminding us of the power and unpredictability that lies within both nature and ourselves.

“Soon Ah Will Be Done”

by William Dawson (b. 1899)



**Text:**

*Soon ah will be don' a-wid de troubles ob de worl'*

*Goin' home t'live wid God.*

*I wan' t'meet my mother, I'm goin' t'live wid God.*

*Soon ah will be don' a-wid de troubles ob de worl'*

*Goin' home t'live wid God.*

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*No more weepin' an' a-wailin', I'm goin' t'live wid God.*

*Soon ah will be don' a-wid de troubles ob de worl'*

*Goin' home t'live wid God.*

*I wan' t'meet my Jesus, I'm goin' t'live wid God.*

William L. Dawson (1899-1990) was a pivotal figure in the preservation and elevation of the African American spiritual, bringing these deeply rooted songs into the concert hall with rich, expressive arrangements. “Soon Ah Will Be Done” is drawn from the spiritual tradition, where music served as both a source of comfort and a powerful expression of faith, resilience, and longing.

The text speaks of release, of being “done” with the troubles of the world, and has often been understood as a reflection of both earthly suffering and the hope for peace beyond it. Dawson’s setting honors this duality, balancing moments of quiet introspection with surges of emotional intensity. Through expressive phrasing and layered choral textures, the music gives voice to a profound yearning for rest, freedom, and transcendence.

**“I Dream a World”**

**by André J. Thomas (b. 1952)**

**Text:**

*Of such I dream, of such I dream!*

*I dream a world where man*

*No other man will scorn,*

*Where love will bless the earth*

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*And peace its paths adorn  
I dream a world where all  
Will know sweet freedom's way,  
Where greed no longer saps the soul  
Nor avarice blights our day.  
A world I dream where black or white,  
Whatever race you be,  
Will share the bounties of the earth  
And every man is free,  
Where wretchedness will hang its head  
And joy, like a pearl,  
Attends the needs of all mankind  
Of such I dream, I dream a world!*



André J. Thomas (b. 1952) sets a text by Langston Hughes (1902-1967), whose vision of justice, dignity, and hope continues to resonate across generations. In “I Dream a World”, Hughes imagines a future shaped not by division or inequality, but by compassion, freedom, and shared humanity.

Thomas’ setting unfolds with a sense of warmth and sincerity, allowing the text to speak with clarity and purpose. The music grows organically, building from gentle lyricism into a fuller, more expansive sound, as if the dream itself is taking shape before us. Rather than dramatic contrast, the power of the piece lies in its

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steadiness and its quiet insistence that such a world is not only possible, but worth striving for.

“John the Revelator”

by Paul Caldwell & Sean Ivory



**Text:**

*O tell me who is that writin’?*

*John the Revelator, writin’ in the book of seven seals.*

*O tell me what is he writin’?*

*‘Bout the Revelation, writin’ in the book of seven seals.*

*When John looked over Calvary’s hill,  
Heard a rumbling’ like a chariot wheel.*

*Well, tell us, John, what did you see?*

*I saw a beast rising from the sea!*

*Tell me who is that writin’?*

*John the Revelator, writin’ in the book of seven seals.*

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*O tell me what is he writin'?*  
*'Bout the Revelation, writin' in the book of seven seals.*  
*Talk to us John! What's the good news?*  
*The crippled can walk; the dumb are singin' the blues.*  
*Oh John, in the graveyard, whadaya see?*  
*The dead are dancing' all around me.*  
*Tell us: Who is writin'?*  
*Tell us: What he's writin'?*  
*Tell us: Who is writin'?*  
*Tell us: Why he's writin'?*  
*Tell us: Who is writin'?*  
*Time for revelation and for jubilation.*  
*Tell us what you're writin', read it to us, John!*  
*Well, just tell it in your book, John.*  
*Well, just tell it in your precious book, John.*  
*John, write it down in that book of seven seals. John!*

“John the Revelator” is a traditional African American spiritual rooted in the apocalyptic imagery of the Book of Revelation, where John the Divine receives visions of the end times. Shaped by oral tradition and later influenced by blues and gospel styles, the song is known for its driving rhythm and call-and-response intensity.

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This arrangement by Paul Caldwell and Sean Ivory amplifies that energy through layered textures, sharp dynamic contrasts, and an insistent pulse. The repeated questions, “Who is writin’”, becomes a kind of musical fixation, building urgency and momentum throughout until the piece transforms prophetic vision into something visceral and electrifying for performers and audience alike!

## “The Awakening”

by Joseph Martin (b. 1959)

### Text:

*I dreamed a dream, a silent dream of a land not far away.*

*Where no birds sang, no steeples rang, and teardrops fell like rain.*

*I dreamed a dream, a silent dream.*

*I dreamed a dream of a land so filled with pride*

*That every song, both weak and strong, withered and died.*

*I dreamed a dream.*

*No alleluia, not one hosanna, no song of love, no lullaby.*

*And no choir sang to change the world.*

*No pipers played; no dancers twirled.*

*I dreamed a dream, a silent dream; Silent. Silent...*

*Awake! Awake! Awake! Awake!*

*Soli Deo Gloria! Awake! Awake!*

*Awake! Awake, my soul and sing! The time for praise has come.*

*The silence of the night has passed; a new day has begun.*

*Let music never die in me! Forever let my spirit sing!*

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*Wherever emptiness is found, let there be joy and glorious sound.*

*Let music never die in me! Forever let my spirit sing!*

*Let all our voices join as one to praise the Giver of the song!*

*Awake! Awake! Let music live!*

*Let music live! Let music live!*



Joseph M. Martin (b. 1959) composed both the music and text for “The Awakening”, a work beloved by choirs around the world for its dramatic arc and powerful message. The piece begins with a haunting vision: a silent world where music has vanished: no song, no praise, no shared voice to bring meaning or connection. This “dream” is not one of wonder, but of absence, where even the strongest expressions of the human spirit have withered away.

What follows is a sudden and urgent turning point. The call to “Awake!” breaks the silence, and the music surges to life, transforming into a joyful and emphatic affirmation of song, community, and praise. As the closing work of *Dreamsong*, “The Awakening” becomes a return from that silence, an insistence that music must live, not only in performance, but within all of us.

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