



## Virtual Concert Hall Lesson Plans

<https://www.rider.edu/wcc/academics/choral-studies/virtual-concert-hall>

**Title of Unit/Concert Title:** “Hope in Tomorrow,” selections from the Westminster Williamson Voices concert, *The Stars Now Rearrange Themselves*.

**Authors:** Alexander Miller, Paige Pendleton, and Jason Vodicka

**Grade Level(s):** 9–12

**Description of Unit:** This unit centers on the hope that the future holds better circumstances. Students will use pieces from this concert to analyze and synthesize knowledge they’ve acquired from their past choral experiences to explore the meaning of hope and how it affects the way we go about our daily lives. The goal of this unit is to give students a way to discuss and visualize what hope means to them through the medium of choral music.

**Description of Ensemble:** The Grammy® nominated **Westminster Williamson Voices**, named for the founder of Westminster Choir College, John Finley Williamson, is praised by reviewers on both sides of the Atlantic. Westminster Williamson Voices is the resident choir of the Choral Institute at Oxford (CIO), now in its eighth year and one of the world’s leading institutes for the training of conductors that emphasizes artistry in performance. Founded and conducted by James Jordan, the ensemble has quickly distinguished itself in the choral world for its distinctive artistry, recordings, educational outreach and its mission to perform new music. The choir is recognized as a living choral laboratory. It is one of the few ensembles in the world that use chant as the center of their musicianship study and performance.

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| Lesson 1 |
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**Musical Selection:** “The Burning Ladder” by Sarah Rimkus

**Timestamp:** 1:14:00

**National Standards:**

- **MU:CN11.o.T.IIIa** Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.
- **MU:CN10.o.H.Ia** Demonstrate how interests, knowledge, and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.

**Objectives:**

- Students will analyze and describe poetic text through discussion and personal reflection.

- Students will make connections between text, music, and their own lived experiences.

**Essential Question:** How can we use the knowledge we have acquired in life to inform our decisions in the future?

**Assessment Strategies:**

- The students will summarize and describe the meaning of a poem.
- The students will self-reflect in a video or written journal.
- The students will discuss with a partner.

**Procedures:**

1. Students will read the poem “The Burning Ladder” by Dana Gioia.

Jacob  
never climbed the ladder  
burning in his dream. Sleep  
pressed him like a stone  
in the dust,  
and when  
he should have risen  
like a flame to join  
that choir, he was sick  
of travelling,  
and closed  
his eyes to the Seraphim  
ascending, unconscious  
of the impossible distances  
between their steps,  
missed  
them mount the brilliant  
ladder, slowly disappearing  
into the scattered light  
between the stars,  
slept  
through it all, a stone  
upon a stone pillow,  
shivering, Gravity  
always greater than desire.

- a. The students will be asked to give a brief summary of the poem and describe what the poem means in a short synthesis.
- b. The teacher may share that the story of Jacob’s ladder comes from the book of Genesis, Chapter 28: 10 Jacob left Beersheba and set out for

Harran. 11 When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. 12 He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

2. The teacher will ask the students to develop an answer for the following questions. Responses can be delivered in written or video form:
  - i. Describe an event or time when you faced a major obstacle in your life. Did you overcome that obstacle, or did you shy away from the challenge?
  - ii. Looking back now, what helped you overcome the obstacle? Or if you gave up an opportunity, was it the right decision?
  - iii. What lesson did you learn and how can this help you in/with future events/obstacles? What do you hope to carry with you from what you've learned?
3. Returning to the text, students will consider how a composer might go about setting the words to music. With a partner, students will discuss possible choices for the following elements of music and justify their answers in 1-2 sentences.
  - a. Voicing and instrumentation
  - b. Dynamics
  - c. Tonality (major, minor, or other)
  - d. Tempo or meter
  - e. Musical style (ex. 21st century choral, folk ballad, etc.)
  - f. Texture
  - g. Text painting
4. Students will then listen to the Westminster Williamson Voices sing "The Burning Ladder" by Sarah Rimkus.
  - a. Discuss the following in a journal entry, with a partner, or as a class:
    - i. How does the composer, Sarah Rimkus, choose to set the text? Do her choices agree with yours? Why might she have made her specific compositional decisions?
    - ii. How well do you think the composition expresses the emotional intent of the poetry? Justify your answer with specific examples from the text and/or the music.
    - iii. What do you think Rimkus is saying about the text in the way she sets the poem? Is her interpretation hopeful or defeatist?

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| Lesson 2 |
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**Musical Selections:** "In the Bleak Midwinter" by Steve Pilkington; "Coventry Carol" by John Frederick Hudson.

**Timestamp:** "In the Bleak Midwinter" 0:51:00, "Coventry Carol" 1:04:00

**National Standards:**

- **MU:Re7.2.E.1a** Explain how the analysis of passages and understanding the way the elements of music are manipulated inform the response to music.
- **MU:Re8.1.E.8a** Identify and support interpretations of the expressive intent and meaning of musical works, citing as evidence the treatment of the elements of music, contexts, and (when appropriate) the setting of the text.

**Objectives:**

- Students will compare and contrast two different musical settings of the same text and evaluate the relative success of each setting.

**Essential Question:** How does a composer use their music to honor the meaning of their chosen text?

**Assessment Strategies:**

- Students will complete two comparison charts.
- Students will share their evaluations with the class or teacher.
- Students will create a short campaign video or radio advertisement.

**Procedures:**

1. Students will listen to the Westminster Williamson Voices performance of “In the Bleak Midwinter” by Steve Pilkington and a version of Paul Mealor’s arrangement found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2qQAOHgU18>
  - a. Students will complete the musical comparison chart (see end of plan) on their own or with a partner.
2. Students will be listen to the Westminster Williamson Voices performance of “Coventry Carol” and a version recorded by the Westminster Choir found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YskY-cQyYdo>
  - a. Students will complete the musical comparison chart (see end of plan) on their own or with a partner.
3. With a partner, students will discuss which setting of each text they find to be most compelling and share their answers and justification with the teacher or with the class.
4. Students will then choose one of the pieces to promote in a short video or audio clip. The video or audio clip will be in the style of a campaign advertisement. Students should attempt to convince their audience that their setting is the preferred setting of the text using information from their musical comparison charts.

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| Lesson 3 |
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**Musical Selection:** Choral Improvisation on Coventry Carol

**Timestamp:** 0:56:00

**National Standards:**

- **MU:Cr1.1.E.IIIa** Compose and improvise musical ideas for a variety of purposes and contexts.
- **MU:Cr3.2.E.IIa** Share personally-developed arrangements, sections, and short compositions – individually or as an ensemble – that address identified purposes.

**Objectives:**

- Students will analyze a semi-improvisational choral work, identify its compositional techniques, and notate its form in a manner of their choosing.
- Alone or in small groups, students will compose, produce, and share a new improvisatory composition based on a simple melody using available technology.

**Essential Question:** How much structure is necessary to create an effective piece of improvisatory music?

**Assessment Strategy:**

- Students will share their compositional plans with the teacher or other students for feedback.
- Students will share their compositions with the class or on a site such as YouTube.

**Background Information:**

- “Coventry Carol” is a traditional English carol, likely dating to the 16th century. The text tells of King Herod’s order that all male infants should be killed in order to prevent the ascension of his rival. The text is sung from the point of view of a mother.
- The gayageum (or kayagum) is a traditional Korean instrument with twelve strings. It is related to the Chinese zither (or zheng) and the Japanese koto.
- Countertenor is voice classification for a male who sings in a range similar to that of a contralto or mezzo-soprano. Modern countertenors sing mainly in falsetto but may also employ mixed or chest voice.

**Procedures:**

1. Learn to sing the following melody using text, neutral syllable, or solfege as you are comfortable:

*Traditional English carol*

1. Lul - lay, thou lit - tle ti - ny Child, By, by, lul - ly, lul - lay. Lul -

lay, thou lit - tle ti - ny Child, By - by - lul - ly, lul - lay.

bethsnotes.com

2. Then, listen to the Westminster Williamson Voices recording of “Choral Improvisation on Coventry Carol.” As you listen, write down the improvisation/compositional techniques you hear (You may use musical terms or simply describe what you hear in your own words).

Answers may include:

- a. Repetition
  - b. Layering
  - c. Fragmentation
  - d. Voicing (ex. treble voices vs. bass voices)
  - e. Instrumentation (ex. choir, soloist, gayageum)
  - f. Rhythmic augmentation or diminution
  - g. Alteration of pitch/mode
3. Next, create your own improvisatory composition using a program such as Soundtrap.
    - a. Choose a melody from a folk song or from popular music. As you explore options, consider what qualities make a melody appropriate for improvisation.
    - b. Determine what sounds, voices, and instruments you want to use in your piece (instrumentation).
    - c. Chart out the general form of the piece, indicating which improvisational/compositional techniques you will use.
    - d. Share your plan with a friend or teacher for feedback.
    - e. Assemble your composition and share with the class or via an online platform such as YouTube.

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| Lesson 4 |
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**Musical Selection:** “The Stars Now Rearrange Themselves” by Thomas LaVoy

**Timestamp:** 1:24:00

**National Standards:**

- **MU:Cn10.o.H.IIIa** Demonstrate how interests, knowledge, and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.
- **MU:Re9.1.E.IIIa** Develop and justify evaluations of music, programs of music, and performances based on criteria, personal decision-making, research, and understanding of contexts.

**Objectives:**

- Students will create a visual representation of the message found in “The Stars Now Rearrange Themselves” by Thomas LaVoy.

**Essential Question:** How can emotional intent be transferred across artistic mediums?

**Assessment Strategy:**

- Students will analyze and discuss the meaning of a musical work.
- Students will identify musics that express similar themes.
- Students will submit their visual representations for a completion grade.

**Procedures:**

1. Students will be asked to watch and listen to the piece “The Stars Now Rearrange Themselves.”
2. After the first listen, students will develop a short summary of the meaning/themes of the piece as they perceive them. Students will share their interpretations with a friend or with the teacher.
3. Students will then search for another piece of music that expresses a similar meaning or theme and share it with the class or with the teacher.
4. Once a theme or meaning is developed, the students will construct a visualization using the medium of their choice (painting/drawing, slide presentation, musical map, etc.) to present the theme/mood/message/meaning of the piece.
5. Student submissions may then be combined into a single slide-show to accompany the musical work.

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| Lesson 5 |
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**National Standards:**

- **MU:Re7.1.E.1a** Apply criteria to select music for specified purposes, supporting choices by citing characteristics found in the music and connections to interest, purpose, and context.
- **MU:Re9.1.E.8a** Explain the influence of experiences, analysis, and context on interest in and evaluation of music.

**Objectives:** Students construct and develop a concert program or playlist on the theme of “hope.”

**Essential Question:** How do we use music to convey themes and emotions?

**Assessment Strategy:**

- Students will submit the following for evaluation by the teacher and by a peer:
  - o 5-7 songs with links
  - o Written description/program notes

**Procedures:**

1. Students will develop a concert program or playlist presenting the theme of hope using music from any genre and time period.
2. Students will choose 5-7 songs that describe or present a message of hope or a theme relating to hope.

- i. Students will provide, name of piece, composer/artist, and the text for each piece.
  - ii. Music should be listed in an order that makes thematic/artistic sense.
  - iii. Students will provide links to online recordings or musical scores.
  - iv. Students will also be instructed to provide a written description of why they chose each song and the overall order of the pieces for the concert.
3. Each student will be assigned a peer to then share their program/thematic description and give verbal or written feedback on their projects.
4. A class playlist will then be compiled and shared with the greater school community in order to inspire hopefulness and positivity.



## Musical Comparison Chart

1. Write the title and composer of your two pieces under "Selection 1" and "Selection 2".
2. As you listen, make notes on the musical elements listed under each selection.
3. After listening, decide if the composers made the same, similar, or different choices.

| Selection 1:            | Same,<br>similar,<br>or<br>different? | Selection 2:            |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Voicing/Instrumentation |                                       | Voicing/Instrumentation |
| Texture                 |                                       | Texture                 |
| Form                    |                                       | Form                    |
| Timbre                  |                                       | Timbre                  |
| Dynamics                |                                       | Dynamics                |
| Tempo                   |                                       | Tempo                   |
| Emotional Impact        |                                       | Emotional Impact        |

WESTMINSTER COLLEGE OF THE ARTS OF RIDER UNIVERSITY

# Westminster Choir College

PRESENTS

## The Stars Now Rearrange Themselves

*Music for Hope in Approaching the Season of Hope*

Westminster Williamson Voices

James Jordan, *conductor*

Gregory Stout, *accompanist*



Sunday, November 3, 2019

3 p.m.

Bristol Chapel

Westminster Choir College

Princeton, N.J.

*“To soothe and spiritualize, and, as far as may be, solve the mysteries of death and genius, consider them under the stars at Midnight.”*

— *Walt Whitman, from his personal diary while writing Leaves of Grass*

*“Art offers, too, this metaphorical power of broken bread. Art is a cultural meal. It is served to be received in universal terms. Art can even be a rite, or at least a gesture, toward identifying the divide and then, possibly, offering a place of healing even in the midst of despair.”*

— *Makoto Fujimura, from Silence and Beauty, (p.207)*

*“Poetry is a life-cherishing force. And it requires a vision—a faith, to use an old-fashioned term. Yes, indeed. For poems are not words after all, but fires for the cold, ropes let down to the lost, something as necessary as bread in the pockets of the hungry. Yes, indeed.”*

— *Mary Oliver, from A Poetry Handbook, (p. 122)*

I am always stopped short when the serendipity of the world speaks to musicians through some kind of mystical happening. These “happenings” seem to come at the precise moment when we as artists are searching for answers about life through the music we make. This entire program was born out of such events.

A year ago, Westminster Williamson Voices joined “The Scattered Light Consortium,” along with Jo-Michael Scheibe at USC (The USC Thornton Chamber Singers) and Jamie Glasgow (The Glasgow School of Art Choir). I was attracted to this concept not only for the composers — who are dear friends — but because they were to set poems by one of America’s greatest poets, Dana Gioia. When the two works arrived from composers Sarah Rimkus and Thomas LaVoy, I had, as they say, “the wind knocked out of me.” While both poems could be interpreted using a broader life perspective, both settings spoke to me and the choir in ways that were immediately deep and profound. Both works provide light and hope to all of us who are living through this change at Westminster into something unknown.

I think it is a common human thing that, when life challenges us, we look toward the stars for wisdom and answers. We look elsewhere for the abundances and peace that sometimes one’s focus toward the heavens brings to us. Looking toward the stars and the heavens many times clears our vision so that we can feel authentically with our hearts. And, most notably, carols during the Advent and Christmastime seem also to embody that spirit of mystical searching for hope and wonder. And perhaps, there is no better musical spiritual entry point for all of this than chant. So, today’s program leads us musically — beginning with simple chant — through the journey and stories that carols bring to the answers in both *The Burning Ladder* of Sarah Rimkus and *The Stars Now Rearrange Themselves* of Thomas LaVoy. With the stunning Gioia poetry, Jacob’s ascent is on a ladder whose rungs are twisted because of the obstacles of life; climbing upward and forward is a challenge. And in *The Stars Now Rearrange Themselves* Gioia asks again to look into the heavens so that we “can see light beneath a closed door.” All of today’s music reflects our hope for the future as we climb a crooked ladder leading, hopefully, to a brighter new time for our beloved college, with hopes that each of us can see a glimmer of light behind what seems a very closed door.

— *James Jordan*

*Note: The Westminster Williamson Voices CD this year uses the title that is shared with this program: The Stars Now Rearrange Themselves. All of the works heard on this program will be recorded for release in 2020.*

### **Pedagogical Legacy of the Westminster Williamson Voices**

The Westminster Williamson Voices has been at the forefront in the choral world with many of the major innovations in choral pedagogy in the past 20 years. From its rehearsal process using Harmonic Immersion Solfege and Intonational Solfege, (both documented in major textbooks) to the use of Gregorian Chant as a regular part of its musical training, (as documented in the text *Discovering Chant*) the choir’s innovations are used throughout the musical world. This year, a book to accompany its CD, *Silence into Light*, details for conductors the rehearsal processes, interpretative decisions and approaches to both diction and choral sound that have become a hallmark of this choir. This year, all these pedagogies will be shared with teachers in mainland China through residencies in Shanghai and Beijing by Dr. Jordan and Kathy Shaw, conductor of the Westminster Concert Bell Choir.

Over the past two years — beginning with sessions at the Choral Institute of Oxford in 2018, led by renowned conductor Gary Graden — the choir has developed an approach, and more importantly, a pedagogy to detail choral improvisation as both a performance medium and a tool for expanding the choral artistry and expression of any choral ensemble. Utilizing principles of critical pedagogy, these approaches have been led by composers within the choir: Ari Carillo, Christian Koller, Guillermo Passarin, Alex Tomlinson and Sam Schiebe. Last summer, the choir recorded a 95-minute video documentary of the extraordinary artistry and craft of improvisation at Oxford as taught and created by Gary Graden from St. Jakob’s in Stockholm, Sweden. That video and the comprehensive accompanying book *Improvisation through Chant* will be published in June 2020. Many of its chapters were written by members of the choir.

This concert has threads of chant, as well as chant improvisation throughout and chant was at the core of the literature selection for this program. The works by gifted American composer Anthony Maglione and British composer Peter Relph, in addition to the improvisation designed by our “in house” composers, share this exciting new frontier with the audience.

### A Welcome to Jay Carter, *countertenor*

This and future performances, as well as the choir's new recording of *The Stars Now Rearrange Themselves* to be recorded in January, 2020, will feature our newest faculty member, Jay Carter. We all welcome Dr. Carter to Westminster as a collaborator, mentor and friend. We are deeply fortunate that he decided to join our communal Westminster journey with such willingness, passion and excitement.

## Program

### I.

Chant: *In Solemnitatibus Et Festis (Cum Jubilo)*  
Ave, Maris Stella

XXI/XI  
Anthony Maglione  
(b. 1978)

Text: Marian Vesper Hymn  
Plainsong, Mode I

*For Westminster Williamson Voices*

#### AMERICAN PREMIERE

Composed for Westminster Williamson Voices and my mentor, colleague, and friend James Jordan, this setting of “Ave, maris stella” is based on the ancient plainsong vesper hymn to Mary. It is inspired by my work as Choirmaster at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Kansas City, Missouri, where chant plays an integral part of our Anglo-Catholic worship.

— Anthony J. Maglione

*Anthony Maglione's companion piece to Ave Maris Stella, using the chant from the Missa Cum Jubilo and titled Salvation to All That Will Is Nigh, commissioned for Jay Carter and the Westminster Williamson Voices, will be recorded in January and performed in the spring.*

*Ave, maris stella,  
Dei Mater alma,  
atque semper virgo,  
felix caeli porta,*

*Sumens illud Ave  
Gabrielis ore,  
funda nos in pace,  
mutans Hevae nomen.*

*Solve vincla reis,  
profer lumen caecis,  
mala nostra pelle,  
bona cuncta posce.*

*Monstra te esse matrem,  
sumat per te preces,  
qui pro nobis natus,  
tulit esse tuus.*

*Virgo singularis,  
inter omnes mitis,  
nos culpissolutos,  
mites fac et castos.*

Hail star of the sea,  
loving Mother of God,  
ever a virgin,  
happy portal of heaven.

Receiving that “Ave” [Hail]  
from Gabriel's mouth,  
confirm us in peace  
by changing the name of Eve.

Break the chains of sinners,  
bring light to the blind,  
drive away our evils,  
ask for good.

Show yourself a mother,  
may he accept prayers through you,  
he who, born for us,  
chose to be yours.

O unique Virgin,  
meek above all,  
make us, absolved from sin,  
Gentle and chaste.

*Vitam praesta puram,  
iter para tutum,  
nos culpīs solutos,  
mites fac et castos.*

*Sit laus Deo Patri,  
summo Christo decus,  
Spiritu Sancto,  
Tribus honor unus. Amen.*

Grant us purity of life,  
meek above all,  
make us, absolved from sin,  
Gentle and chaste.

Praise be to God the Father,  
highest honor to Christ,  
to the Holy Spirit,  
Three in one. Amen.

## II.

### Solitude

James Whitbourn  
(b. 1963)

Text: St. John Henry Newman (1801 – 1890)  
Gregory Stout, *piano*

#### AMERICAN PREMIERE

*Solitude* is a setting of an early poem by St. John Henry Newman, the 19th-century Oxford priest who was declared a saint by Pope Francis in 2019. The work was commissioned by Oriel College, Oxford, where Newman was a fellow from 1822 until 1845, and was first performed by the Chapel Choir and guitarist Craig Ogden on May 12, 2019, prior to Newman's canonization but following the Pope's declaration.

The original version for SATB and guitar is the composer's preferred scoring, provided that the choir and performance venue are of a suitable size to allow the guitar part to be performed without amplification. The intimate confines of Oriel College Chapel, with its wood-paneled interior, provided exactly such a space. For larger choirs, however, or those performing in larger venues, the piano version may be preferable. There is a second vocal scoring for upper voices and piano or harp. The instrumental element of the composition is informed first by the possibilities of the guitar writing, however, affecting such factors as the key choice, the harmonic sequences employed and the ostinato patterns used. The vocal writing is also influenced by the initial scoring, with care being taken not to overwhelm the sometimes delicate but always beautifully expressive qualities of the guitar, striving instead for an interplay between voices and instrument.

The poem itself was written in 1818 when Newman was an undergraduate at Trinity College, Oxford. He imaginatively and powerfully introduces a theme — solitude — that was to become one of the recurring themes in his later influential writings.

— James Whitbourn

There is in stillness oft a magic power  
To calm the breast, when struggling passions lower;  
Touch'd by its influence, in the soul arise  
Diviner feelings, kindred with the skies.  
By this the Arab's kindling thoughts expand,  
When circling skies inclose the desert sand;  
For this the hermit seeks the thickest grove,  
To catch th' inspiring glow of heavenly love.  
It is not solely in the freedom given  
To purify and fix the heart on heaven;  
There is a Spirit singing aye in air,  
That lifts us high above all mortal care.  
No mortal measure swells that mystic sound,  
No mortal minstrel breathes such tones around, —  
The Angels' hymn, — the sovereign harmony  
That guides the rolling orbs along the sky, —  
And hence perchance the tales of saints who view'd  
And heard Angelic choirs in solitude.  
By most unheard, — because the earthly din  
Of toil or mirth has charms their ears to win.  
Alas for man! he knows not of the bliss,  
The heaven that brightens such a life as this.

**Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence (2019)**Sam Scheibe  
(b. 1999)Branson Yeast, *cello*  
Gregory Stout, *piano***WORLD PREMIERE**

*Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence* is a traditional French hymn found in the Liturgy of St. James. Often sung at Christmas, the hymn easily elicits the season's elements of drama, mystery and majesty. This setting includes references to the works of Russian composer Sergei Rachmaninoff whose works resonate with dramatic sympathies of the hymn.

— Sam Scheibe

1. Let all mortal flesh keep silence,  
And with fear and trembling stand;  
Ponder nothing earthly minded,  
For with blessing in His hand,  
Christ our God to earth descending  
Comes our homage to demand.

2. King of kings, yet born of Mary,  
As of old on earth He stood,  
Lord of lords, in human vesture,  
In the body and the blood;  
He will give to all the faithful  
His own self for heavenly food.

3. Rank on rank the host of heaven  
Spreads its vanguard on the way,  
As the Light of light descendeth  
From the realms of endless day,  
Comes the powers of hell to vanquish  
As the darkness clears away.

4. At His feet the six-winged seraph,  
Cherubim with sleepless eye,  
Veil their faces to the presence,  
As with ceaseless voice they cry:  
“Alleluia, Alleluia  
Alleluia, Lord Most High!”

**Magnificat**Peter Relph  
(b. 1992)Jay Carter, *countertenor***WORLD PREMIERE**

*Magnificat* is an exploration of improvised chant, inspired by a conversation I had with the conductor of Westminster Williamson Voices James Jordan. In setting the text, I used simple musical ideas from which to build intensity: two soprano soloists singing melodic lines over slowly evolving chant fragments in the rest of the choir. The piece then slowly increases in harmonic and melodic complexity up to the climactic “Gloria.”

— Peter Relph

*Magnificat ánima mea Dóminum.  
Et exultávit spíritus meus:  
in Deo salutári meo.  
Quia respéxit humilitátem ancíllae suae:  
Ecce enim ex hoc beátam me  
dicent omnes generatiónes.  
Quia fécit mihi mágna qui pótens est:  
et sánctum nómen eius.  
Et misericórdia eius in progénies  
et progénies timéntibus eum.  
Fécit poténtiam in bráchio suo:  
dispérsit supérbos mente cordis sui.  
Depósuit poténtes de sede:  
et exaltávit húmiles.  
Esuriéntes implévit bonis:  
et dívites dimísit inánes.  
Suscépit Ísrael púerum suum: recordátus misericórdiae suae.  
Sicut locútus est ad patres nostros: Ábraham,  
et sémini eius in saecula.  
Glória Patri, et Filio, et Spíritui Sancto,  
Sicut erat in princípío, et nunc, et semper,  
et in saecula saeculórum. Amen.*

My soul doth magnify the Lord.  
And my spirit hath rejoiced  
in God my Saviour.  
For he hath regarded: the lowliness of his handmaiden;  
For behold, from henceforth;  
all generations shall call me blessed.  
For he that is mighty hath magnified me:  
and holy is his Name.  
And his mercy is on them that fear him:  
throughout all generations.  
He hath shewed strength with his arm:  
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.  
He hath put down the mighty from their seat:  
and hath exalted the humble and meek.  
He hath filled the hungry with good things:  
and the rich he hath sent empty away.  
He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel:  
As he promised to our forefathers, Abraham  
and his seed for ever.  
Glory be to the Father, and to the son; and to the Holy Ghost;  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall  
be: world without end. Amen.

## INTERMISSION

### III.

Kit Smart's Carol

Gerald Custer  
(b. 1953)

Text: Christopher Smart

The Nativity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

Although Christopher Smart (1722 – 1770) was universally considered mad by his contemporaries, he was more likely afflicted by manic-depressive disorder compounded by a benign religious obsession. Perhaps the diarist and lexicographer Samuel Johnson said it best (as he frequently did), “They told me Kit Smart was mad because he desired people to pray with him in the street and because he wore dirty shirts. As for the first, sir, I would as life pray with Kit Smart as with any man. And as for the second, I have no great passion for clean linen myself.”

Smart's poetry is shot through with passion, faith and exuberance — characteristics abundantly found in the most famous musical setting of his work, Benjamin Britten's cantata *Rejoice in the Lamb*. “Kit Smart's Carol” takes its verses from the poet's less well-known text “The nativity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (For anyone who might inquire, a “spink” is a small bird similar to the modern finch, and an “ouzel” is a blackbird, related to the common black European thrush.) The rhythm ♪♪♪ should be sung with slight detachment between the eighth notes when it occurs.

— Gerald Custer

Where is this stupendous stranger?  
Prophets, shepherds, kings, advise.  
Lead me to my Master's manger,  
show me where my Savior lies.  
Nature's decorations glisten  
far above their usual trim;  
Birds on box and laurel listen  
as so near the cherub's hymn.

Spinks and ouzels sing sublimely,  
 “We too have a Savior born.”  
 Whiter blossoms burst untimely  
 on the best Mosaic thorn.  
 God allbounteous, allcreative,  
 whom no ills from good disuade,  
 is incarnate, and a native  
 of the very world he made.

**Brightest and Best**

Sarah Rimkus  
 (b. 1990)

Text: Reginald Haber (1783 – 1826)

**AMERICAN PREMIERE**

“Brightest and Best” is a contemporary carol setting, appropriate for performance at Christmas or Epiphany. It is a musical reimagining of the 19th-century hymn of the same title, which describes the travels of the Wise Men to see the baby Jesus, following that brightest of stars in the sky all the way. The words use vivid imagery to create a strong sense of urgency, placed into an equally strong and regular four-bar hymn pattern. My setting uses lilting rhythms and a suspended harmonic backdrop to sonically paint the Magi’s journey for the listener.

— Sarah Rimkus

Brightest and best of the stars of the morning,  
 Dawn on our darkness and lend us Thine aid;  
 Star of the East, the horizon adorning,  
 Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.  
 Cold on His cradle the dewdrops are shining;  
 Low lies His head with the beasts of the stall;  
 Angels adore Him in slumber reclining,  
 Maker and Monarch and Savior of all!  
 Say, shall we yield Him, in costly devotion,  
 Odors of Edom and off’rings divine,  
 Gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,  
 Myrrh from the forest, or gold from the mine?  
 Vainly we offer each ample oblation,  
 Vainly with gifts would His favor secure;  
 Richer by far is the heart’s adoration,  
 Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.  
 Brightest and best of the stars of the morning,  
 Dawn on our darkness and lend us Thine aid;  
 Star in the East, the horizon adorning,  
 Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

**In the Bleak Midwinter**

Steve Pilkington

Julianne Fournier, *soprano*  
 Gregory Stout, *piano*

American composer and Westminster Sacred Music faculty member Steve Pilkington is a composer of profound harmonic craft and human insight. His arrangement of *I Wonder as I Wander* has become almost an iconic Christmas work after being written for the Westminster Chapel Choir I conducted in 1996. The Westminster Williamson Voices recorded his *Coventry Carol* (Naxos) written for the choir I prepared for a Christmas program titled “A Royal Christmas” with Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer. What is singularly remarkable about his music is this mixture of traditional harmonies mixed with a rich jazz-influenced musical language that manages to illuminate, in sound, the conflicts and challenges of life and living. If one listens into his music you will hear questions asked, spiritual mysteries explored, and life’s challenges exposed as part of both living and belief. While he is my colleague and friend, I cherish his musical voice, especially in this piece, which has many messages for those of us at Westminster, and in general, for those of us looking for a brighter, more hopeful future in this “bleak midwinter.”

— James Jordan

In the bleak mid-winter  
 Frosty wind made moan;  
 Earth stood hard as iron,  
 Water like a stone;  
 Snow had fallen, snow on snow,  
 Snow on snow,  
 In the bleak mid-winter  
 Long ago.

Heaven cannot hold him,  
 Nor earth sustain;  
 Heaven and earth shall flee away  
 When He comes to reign;  
 In the bleak mid-winter  
 A stable-place sufficed  
 The Lord Almighty,  
 Jesus Christ.

What can I give him,  
 Poor as I am?  
 If I were a Shepherd  
 I would bring a lamb  
 If I were a Wise Man  
 I would do my part,  
 Yet what I can I give Him,  
 Give my heart.

*Note to Audience: The next two works will be performed without interruption*

### Choral Improvisation on Coventry Carol

Christian Koller  
 Guillermo Passarin  
 Sam Scheibe  
 Alex Tomlinson

Jay Carter, *countertenor*  
 Sangmi Kang, *gayageum*  
 Christian Koller, *conductor*

### Coventry Carol (2019)

John Frederick Hudson

### Traditional English Carol

*For James Jordan and Westminster Williamson Voices*

Wendy Darr, *soprano*  
 Alexandra Thomas, *soprano*  
 Gregory Stout, *piano*

### WORLD PREMIERE

Coventry Carol is a traditional English carol from the 16th century taken from the Gospel of Matthew about the massacre of innocents: King Herod ordering all male infants under the age of two in Bethlehem to be killed. The telling of this story is through the form of a lullaby sung by mothers of the doomed children. This carol gained wider exposure after being featured on a BBC Christmas broadcast in 1940 shortly after the bombing of Coventry Cathedral when the carol was sung in the bombed-out ruins. Thus again, affirming its association with conflict and tragedy.

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For those familiar with the original carol, the melody is evocative and haunting with, most notably, the use of the Picardy third on the final chord. My setting of this text begins with a soprano solo softly telling the story of these children. Throughout the piece, the soloist continues to sing the lullaby “Lully, lullay” over the choir as if mourning the doomed children. Harmonically, there is a preverbal nod to the Picardy third of the original setting with both major and minor (a split third) chords occurring simultaneously. This tension (or ‘wrong notes’) adds to the haunting nature of the melody and also to the anguish of the impending doom of the young children.

Though Christmas carols are usually perceived to be “of good cheer” and to “fill one with joy,” this carol, similarly, is not completely in darkness. There are moments in the storytelling where we are called upon to remember these young innocents. This modern setting attempts to provide a current commentary not only in the re-telling of the story of the Gospel of Matthew, but also in bringing awareness to conflict and tragedy around the world. True to the original, my setting ends with a Picardy third suggesting light and hope on the horizon.

— *John Frederick Hudson*

Lully, lullay, thou little tiny child,  
Bye bye, lully, lullay.  
Thou little tiny child,  
Bye bye, lully lullay.

O sisters too, ho may we do  
For to preserve this day  
This poor youngling for whom we sing,  
“Bye bye, lully, lullay”?

Herod the king, in his raging,  
Charged he hath this day  
His men of might in his own sight  
All young children to slay.  
That woe is me, poor child, for thee  
And ever mourn and may  
For thy parting neither say nor sing,  
“Bye bye, lully, lullay.”

#### IV.

#### Music Composed For The Scattered Light Consortium

The Glasgow School of Art Choir  
Jamie Sansbury, *conductor*

The USC Thornton Chamber Singers  
Jo-Michael Scheibe, *conductor*

Westminster Williamson Voices  
James Jordan, *conductor*

## WORLD PREMIERE

## The Burning Ladder

Sarah Rimkus  
(b. 1990)Text: *The Burning Ladder* (2019) by Dana Gioia

The story of Jacob's ladder comes from the book of Genesis, Chapter 28:

10 Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. 11 When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. 12 He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13 There above it stood the Lord, and he said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. 14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. 15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

16 When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it." 17 He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

The story of Jacob's Ladder is a familiar one to many of us. During a night of sleep in the desert while on a journey to escape his brother Esau, Jacob has a vision of a ladder to heaven with angels ascending and descending its rungs. However, as in many of his poems, Dana Gioia reimagines this well-known trope with a questioning attitude, asking why Jacob did not ascend the ladder to heaven himself when he had the chance. The poem captures the motion of the angels and the ladder with its fragmented lines and its run-on sentence, while still showing Jacob's inertia in the first and final lines. I was instantly attracted to this modern take on an ancient story and its sense of urgency. I fragmented and stacked short lines from the poem incrementally to recreate the visual effect of the poem's text and the image of an enflamed ladder. The individual vocal lines creep upward while the overall harmonies descend. The result is, I hope, a dramatic musical depiction of Gioia's enigmatic and thought-provoking storytelling.

— Sarah Rimkus

Jacob  
 never climbed the ladder  
 burning in his dream. Sleep  
 pressed him like a stone  
 in the dust,  
     and when  
 he should have risen  
 like a flame to join  
 that choir, he was sick  
 of travelling,  
     and closed  
 his eyes to the Seraphim  
 ascending, unconscious  
 of the impossible distances  
 between their steps,  
     missed  
 them mount the brilliant  
 ladder, slowly disappearing  
 into the scattered light  
 between the stars,  
     slept  
 through it all, a stone  
 upon a stone pillow,  
 shivering, Gravity  
 always greater than desire.

## The Stars Now Rearrange Themselves

Thomas LaVoy  
(b. 1990)Text: *The Stars Now Rearrange Themselves* (2019) by Dana GioiaElizaveta Smolyaninova, *soprano*

*The Stars Now Rearrange Themselves* was composed as a part of the Scattered Light commission consortium in collaboration with American poet Dana Gioia and fellow composer Sarah Rimkus. The work translates Gioia's muted imagery and symbolism into an otherworldly, dream-like musical atmosphere saturated with harmonic ambiguity. The image of "a missing ring" is musically interpreted as deliberately placed negative space in each voice of the choir. When these moments of individual silence last for one full measure or longer, those bars have been stricken from the score entirely, leaving a void in the physical representation of the music. While these voids are in themselves invisible to the audience, the chorus member sees a portion of their own part having been riven from the whole. This should have a subtle but important effect on the mood in which this piece is performed, underscoring Gioia's portrayal of something we know to be missing, unseen or inscrutable.

— Thomas LaVoy

The stars now rearrange themselves above you  
but to no effect. Tonight,  
only for tonight, their powers lapse,  
and you must look toward earth. There will be  
no comets now, no pointing star  
to lead where you know you must go.

Look for smaller signs instead, the fine  
disturbances of ordered things when suddenly  
the rhythms of your expectation break  
and in a moment's pause, another world  
reveals itself behind the ordinary.  
And one small detail out of place will be  
enough to let you know: a missing ring,  
a breath, a footfall or a sudden breeze,  
a crack of light beneath a darkened door.

## About the Artists

Grammy-nominated conductor **JAMES JORDAN** is recognized and praised throughout the musical world as one of America's pre-eminent conductors, recording artists, writers, music psychologists and innovators in choral music. He was described as a "visionary" by the *Choral Journal*, which cited his book *Evoking Sound* as a "must read." His more than 40 books explore both the philosophical and spiritual basis of musicianship, as well as aspects of choral rehearsal teaching and learning and are considered to be essential books in the conducting profession. At Westminster Choir College he is professor and senior conductor, where he conducts the critically acclaimed Westminster Williamson Voices. He is also director of the Westminster Conducting Institute and co-director of the Choral Institute at Oxford. (rider.edu/Oxford) He is artistic director and conductor of the professional choral ensemble The Same Stream (thesamestreamchoir.com)

His recordings with the Westminster Williamson Voices have garnered wide critical acclaim on both sides of the Atlantic. *Choir and Organ*

wrote about their Grammy-nominated recording *Annelies*, "Jordan's instinctive understanding of the score makes this a profound and emotionally charged experience." 2018–2019 marked the release of two new recordings with him as conductor: *Silence into Light* with the Westminster Williamson Voices and *Songs of the Questioner* featuring the music of Thomas LaVoy, Dan Forrest, Peter Relph with The Same Stream Choir (thesamestreamchoir.com). The 10 CD's under his direction are available through iTunes and Amazon. His work with The Same Stream Choir has also been seen in a video documentary and profile released by J.W. Pepper and can be seen at thesamestreamchoir.com. This season, two recordings will be released with The Same Stream Choir: *Serenity: The Music of Paul Mealor* and *To Hold the Light* on the Spiritum label. Two recordings by the Westminster Williamson Voices will also be released: *Aurora* and *The Stars Now Rearrange Themselves*. Both recordings feature groundbreaking performances using choral improvisation.

Dr. Jordan's career and publications have been devoted to innovative educational changes in the choral art, which have been embraced around the world. 2019–2020 marks Dr. Jordan's publication of his 60th book: *The Musician's Being*, with Dominic Gregorio, marking the 20th anniversary of the landmark book *The Musician's Soul*. Additional releases include *Movement Warm-ups for Choral Ensembles*; *Silence Into Light: A Conductor's Guide*; *Conductor as Architect* and *Discovering Improvisation through Chant*, co-authored with Gary Graden, James Whitbourn and Isabella Burns along with Westminster students Ari Carillo, Christian Koller, Guillermo Passarin, Alex Tomlinson, Jessica Forbes and Katrina Roberts. This year will also see the publication of three books on the choral-warm-up and conducting published in Mandarin for Mainland China conductors and teachers.

His residencies, master classes and guest conducting have taken James Jordan throughout the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia. He made his Carnegie Hall debut in 2015, conducting the New York premiere of Paul Mealor's *Stabat Mater*. He is also the conductor/artistic director of a new professional choir, The Same Stream ([thesamestreamchoir.com](http://thesamestreamchoir.com)). In November 2015, Dr. Jordan conducted the world premiere of Paul Mealor's First Symphony: *Passiontide*, in Scotland. In 2016, he conducted the Westminster Williamson Voices in a performance of Arvo Pärt's virtuosic *Kanon Pokajanen* in the MetLiveArts series at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The teaching and learning pedagogies that James Jordan has developed throughout his life through his books, focusing on applications to choral music of Music Learning Theory developed by Edwin Gordon, as well as new innovations in conducting pedagogy and voice science applied to the choral rehearsal, are used around the western world. Recently, Dr. Jordan has begun, through innovative seminars and online instruction, to advance music education in mainland China through partnerships with WeMusic ([we-music.com](http://we-music.com)), The Chinese Happiness Foundation and the philanthropy of Chinese pop artist Jason Zhang. His passion is to spread, with the help of Zhang and the Happiness Foundation, his life's work concerning modern music education based upon Music Learning Theory and share it live and via online courses delivered directly to music teachers in the under-privileged areas of China, bringing music to millions of Chinese children.

James Jordan has been honored as a distinguished alumnus of Temple University, where he has been inducted into the University's Hall of Fame. In 2016, he received the distinguished alumni medal from Susquehanna University. He was awarded the distinguished Doctor of Music degree by the University of Aberdeen in Scotland in 2014 to honor his artistry and contributions to choral music throughout the world. The University, established in 1485, has awarded degrees throughout its history to only two Americans: Dr. Jordan and Morten Lauridsen. He shares this honor with Gustav Holst, Benjamin Britten and Dame Joan Sutherland.

**JAY CARTER** has gained a reputation as one of the nation's finest countertenors. A frequent collaborator with both period and modern ensembles, he is recognized as a leading interpreter of late Baroque repertoire and has been lauded for his luminous tone, stylish interpretations and clarion delivery. Though a specialist in the earlier

repertoire, Carter has premiered modern works by John Tavener, Augusta Read Thomas, Chester Alwes and Anthony Maglione. As an avid recitalist he presents works from outside the standard countertenor repertory including works by Schumann, Poulenc, Wolf and Howells.

In recent seasons he has routinely appeared with acclaimed conductors Nicholas McGegan, Ton Koopman, John Butt, John Scott and Matthew Halls. Highlights of the recent seasons include his Lincoln Center debut with Masaaki Suzuki and the Bach Collegium Japan in Bach's *Weinachts-Oratorium*, Vivaldi opera arias and *Gloria* with Nicholas McGegan and the Saint Louis Symphony and Bach's *Johannespassion* with Daniel Hyde and the Choir of Men and Boys at St. Thomas Church. In addition to concert appearances he has also served as a primary soloist with the Portland-based Bach Virtuosi Festival alongside faculty artists from Juilliard, Eastman and Yale.

As a scholar and clinician, Carter frequently presents masterclasses and lecture recitals for colleges, universities, and presenting organizations throughout the United States. He has a decade of experience in higher education, focusing intently on student-centered and career-centered studio work that is applicable to solo and ensemble application. He holds graduate degrees from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music and the Yale School of Music and Institute of Sacred Music, where he was a pupil of Simon Carrington, Judith Malafronte and James Taylor. He received his undergraduate degree from William Jewell College, where he studied voice with Arnold Epley.

**SANGMI KANG** is an assistant professor of music education at Westminster Choir College of Rider University. Prior to her appointment, she taught music education courses at the University of Florida as well as pre-K to 12th grade general music in South Korea and the United States.

Dr. Kang's research interests include world music pedagogy, intercultural approaches in music education, technology for music learning and creativity in music composition. She has had articles published in the *Journal of Research in Music Education*, *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, *Psychology of Music*, *Music Educators Journal*, *General Music Today*, and *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education*. She has also presented her work at international, national and regional conferences, such as the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) Music Research and Teacher Education National Conference, the International Symposium on Assessment in Music Education (ISAME), the Asian-Pacific Symposium for Music Education Research (APSMER), the Society for Music Teacher Education (SMTE) conference, American Educational Research Association (AERA) conference, and the Florida Music Educators Association (FMEA) conference.

Dr. Kang is a pianist and a professional performer on the gayageum (a traditional Korean stringed instrument). She has performed at several institutions, among them the University of Florida, the Harn Museum of Art, Duke University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She received her Ph.D. in music education from the University of

Florida, a master's degree in music education and bachelor's degree in music with a focus on gayageum performance, from Seoul National University in South Korea.

**THOMAS LAVOY** is an award-winning composer of contemporary concert music. His work is known the world over for striking a balance between emotional depth and compositional craft, grounded in the power of words and music in tandem. His hallmark sound has been shaped by a broad performance career as a choral singer, pianist, percussionist and singer-songwriter — a practical and multi-faceted education that has long informed his sense of line and melody, large and small-scale forms, and the important relationship between rhythm and harmony. Dr. LaVoy received his undergraduate degree at Westminster Choir College in Princeton before moving abroad and completing his Ph.D. in music composition at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, where he was a choral scholar in the Chapel Choir of King's College, Aberdeen.

Dr. LaVoy's choral works have been commissioned and performed by choirs across the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as in mainland Europe, Asia and Oceania. Following the Carnegie Hall debut of his *White Stones* in 2016, he received a commission from the John Armitage Memorial (JAM) in London to produce a substantial work for the BBC Singers. The resulting work, *O Great Beyond*, was premiered at the annual JAM on the Marsh festival by Nicholas Cleobury and the BBC Singers, and broadcast on BBC Radio 3's *In Concert*. The 2017 – 2019 seasons have seen numerous commissions and have featured Dr. LaVoy as composer-in-residence with Voce (Conn.), Laudamus Chamber Chorale (Col.), Arts District Chorale (Texas), Redeemer Bryn Mawr (Pa) and The Ridgefield Chorale (Conn.), among others.

Dr. LaVoy often looks to our collective human past for inspiration, composing new works based on the writings of people whose voices have been forgotten or neglected by history. His keen interest in the intersection of art and history began with a 2013 commission from the Marquette Symphony Orchestra to compose *A Child's Requiem*, a collaboration with poet Esther Margaret Ayers to mark the 100th anniversary of the 1913 Italian Hall disaster in Calumet, Mich., in which 73 people lost their lives when a man shouted "Fire!" in a crowded room on Christmas Eve. Since then, Thomas has completed a number of other historically-driven compositions — a commission for Scottish baritone Niall Anderson based on his great-grandfather's prisoner-of-war diaries from WWI, a Westminster Choir College commission setting the last letter of Sullivan Ballou from the American Civil War and a companion work to Benjamin Britten's *Rejoice in the Lamb* based on the life and writings of Nancy Luce, the "Chicken Lady" of Martha's Vineyard.

Dr. LaVoy is a founding member and composer-in-residence of The Same Stream, a professional choir based in Philadelphia and conducted his output, with the 2018 release of *Songs of the Questioner* and the upcoming 2019 release of *O Great Beyond*. His music is primarily published by GIA Publications in Chicago, with additional individual publications from Walton Music and G. Schirmer. He also owns and operates his own publishing company, Hewitt Hill Music.

**SARAH RIMKUS'** choral works have been performed extensively across the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe. Recent commissions include works for Amuse Singers, The Cambridge Chorale, and Con Anima Chamber Choir. Many of her works are sacred, often taking inspiration from the British choral tradition, including a mass setting in both Latin and Scottish Gaelic premiered by the Cathedral Choir of St Andrews, Aberdeen in June 2017. She often compiles and edits her own texts and writes on important historical or contemporary events and themes.

Her recent piece for The Esoterics, commissioned as the national winner of their Polyphonos competition, set the words of two survivors of the Japanese exclusion during World War II, a deep part of the history of her Pacific Northwest home. Her works have been featured on BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM and performed at venues such as Buckingham Palace and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. She has publications with GIA and Walton Music, and self-publishes many of her scores. She also has a strong interest in chamber works and the intimate communication of individual players in this medium. She has recently completed commissions for Red Note Ensemble and The Ligeti Quartet, commissioned by the Sound Festival and the Cheltenham Music Festival. Her choral works strongly inform her instrumental works and vice versa, particularly in the case of the highly vocal and expressive family of string instruments. Her string orchestra piece *Trapped in Amber*, inspired by Kurt Vonnegut and Slaughterhouse-Five, won the Morton Gould Young Composer Award in 2014. She has also recently written works for acclaimed soprano and visual artist Jillian Bain Christie and renowned U.K. organist Roger Williams, MBE.

Dr. Rimkus recently completed her Ph.D. in music composition at the University of Aberdeen with Phillip Cooke and Paul Mealor after completing her master's degree in composition with distinction at the University of Aberdeen in 2015. She earned her B.M. in composition magna cum laude in 2013 at the University of Southern California, where she developed her love of working with text and the voice while studying with Morten Lauridsen and Stephen Hartke. As a teaching assistant and active musician in Scotland, she developed her passion for the education of young composers and supporting the work of her students and peers. She has taught composition privately to high school students in Aberdeen through the Sound Festival and has taught extensively on music courses at the University. She served as sole instructor and course coordinator for second-year composition on multiple occasions and developed and taught a new course on the life and works of George Crumb. As artistic director of Spectrum New Music Ensemble, she conducted and coached performances of contemporary chamber works, including 13 world premieres of compositions by Aberdeen students of various degree levels.

**SAM SCHEIBE** is an up and coming composer in the Greater Tri-state area. Mr. Scheibe is currently pursuing his bachelor's degree, studying both music composition and music education at Westminster Choir College. Under the Tutelage of Dr. Stefan Young, Dr. Joel Phillips, and Dr. James Goldsworthy, Sam hopes to bring the various facets of his education to light in his composition.

Sam's collegiate career has seen numerous premieres on and off

the Westminster Choir College campus, including choral works, instrumental works and several art songs commissioned by fellow students. At the end of Mr. Scheibe's freshman year, he saw his first major choral work published by GIA publications, premiered by the Westminster Williamson Voices and later recorded with the choir for publication by GIA.

**JAMES WHITBOURN** is an internationally-renowned composer recognized by *The Observer* as "a truly original communicator in modern British choral music." A graduate of Magdalen College, University of Oxford, his career in music began in the BBC, for whom he has worked as composer, conductor, producer and presenter. His compositional output is admired for its direct connection with performers and audiences worldwide and for its ability to "expand the experience of classical music beyond the edges of the traditional map of classical styles" (Tom Manoff, NPR).

His largest composition is the concert-length choral work *Annelies*, which sets words from *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Other notable works include *Luminosity*, written for the Westminster Choir College and the Archedream dance ensemble, *Son of God Mass* for saxophone, choir and organ and *The Seven Heavens* for choir and orchestra — a portrayal of the life of C. S. Lewis in the imagery of the medieval planets.

His choral works have been performed in many prestigious venues, and have been presented on acclaimed recordings, including four complete discs of his choral music. Of the latest of these — *Annelies* (Naxos) — *Gramophone* writes "the greatest accomplishment here is that James Whitbourn has written some music of great beauty," *Choir and Organ* adding, "Whitbourn's devastatingly beautiful and restrained treatment of the subject matter makes it all the more poignant."

Whitbourn has been commissioned to compose the music to mark several national and international events, including music for the broadcast of the funeral of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother and music for the national commemoration of 9/11 at Westminster Abbey — subsequently performed in New York on the first anniversary of the attacks. His commissions have included a work for the enthronement of the Bishop of Salisbury and for the anniversary of the foundation of the Belfast Philharmonic.

He is popular on both sides of the Atlantic as choral advisor and also enjoys a profile as a conductor and producer, with three GRAMMY nominations to his name (including Best Choral Performance for *Annelies*, 2014) among many other international awards.

James Whitbourn is senior research fellow at St. Stephen's House, Oxford and a member of the faculty of music in the University of Oxford. His principal publisher is Chester Music, London. In today's program, James Whitbourn's inaugural publication with Oxford University Press, *Solitude*, will be heard for the first time by American audiences.

**GREGORY STOUT** is a second-year graduate student in accompanying and vocal coaching. He completed his Bachelor of Music in Music Education (choral emphasis) at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, studying piano with Dr. George Kiorpes. More recently, he has collaborated with area singers on recording and performance projects and served as accompanist

for the choirs of Drew University in Madison, N.J. In addition to accompanying Westminster Williamson Voices — including at the 2019 Choral Institute at Oxford — he also accompanies solo singers at Westminster. Mr. Stout is honored to study piano with Dr. James Goldsworthy.

Cellist **BRANSON YEAST** is a native of Houston, Texas, and a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music and the Juilliard School. His performances as a chamber musician, soloist and orchestral musician have brought him to Chicago, London, Lucerne, Hamburg, Heidelberg, St-Jean-de-Luz (broadcast on RadioFrance), and across the northeastern United States. While at Curtis, Branson was the last student of the late David Soyer of the Guarneri Quartet, a Jacqueline du Pré Memorial Fellow, and his graduation recital aired on WHYY Television. He also toured with the Grammy-award winning ensemble Eighth Blackbird, including a memorized production of *Pierrot Lunaire* and a performance with the Pacifica String Quartet. His passion for contemporary music has led him to make dozens of premieres of new works, including many chamber music and solo performances with ballet companies such as BalletX. Mr. Yeast is a protégé of cellist Wendy Warner and was recently named Principal Cello of Opera Philadelphia.

#### WESTMINSTER WILLIAMSON VOICES

"We would call Williamson Voices a Rolls-Royce of choirs..."  
*Daniel Hyde, Conductor Designate, King's College Choir, Cambridge*

The Grammy® nominated Westminster Williamson Voices, named for the founder of Westminster Choir College, John Finley Williamson, is praised by reviewers on both sides of the Atlantic. Westminster Williamson Voices is the resident choir of the Choral Institute at Oxford (CIO), now in its eighth year and one of the world's leading institutes for the training of conductors that emphasizes artistry in performance. Founded by James Jordan, the ensemble has quickly distinguished itself in the choral world for its distinctive artistry, recordings, educational outreach and its mission to perform new music. The choir is recognized as a living choral laboratory. It is one of the few ensembles in the world that use chant as the center of their musicianship study and performance. This emphasis has grown out of its residencies and study at the Choral Institute at Oxford. In 2014, the choir embarked on a three-year project studying the performance practice and spirituality surrounding the works of Arvo Pärt in conjunction with the Arvo Pärt Project. This project culminated in the performance of his monumental *Kanon Pokajanen* as part of the prestigious METLIVE series at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the Temple of Dendur and at the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul in Philadelphia.

Reviewers on both sides of the Atlantic are of one voice in praising the ensemble for its world premiere recordings on the Naxos label. *Gramophone* magazine has described the Westminster Williamson Voices as an ensemble of "intimate and forceful choral artistry," with a tone that is "controlled and silken in sustained phrases as they are vibrantly sonorous in extroverted material." The *American Record Guide* praised the ensemble as "without peer." The *Choral Journal* has described the Westminster Williamson Voices an ensemble of "supreme

artistry” and a choir that performs with “truth and precision.” And from the publication of the Arvo Pärt Project: “The Westminster Williamson Voices under his (Jordan’s) direction “are coming into their own in the American choral scene both here and abroad.”

In July 2013, the Westminster Williamson Voices performed as part of the world-wide Britten 100 celebration with the 50th anniversary re-enactment performance of the premiere of *St. Nicolas* in the Lancing College Chapel in Sussex, where the work was premiered with the composer conducting. In 2013, the choir also gave its UK debut performance at Oxford as part of the Westminster Choral Institute at Oxford and the SJE Artist series. In 2015, the choir performed Bernstein’s *Chichester Psalms* under the baton of the newly appointed director of King’s College, Cambridge, Daniel Hyde, on the day of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the works’ premiere.

The ensemble has established itself as a voice of composers of our time, and it has been acclaimed for its creative programming and collaborations with other art forms. Most notable were the ensemble’s performance at The Philadelphia Cathedral of Eric Whitacre’s *Leonardo Dreams of His Flying Machine* with the renowned Spiral Q Puppet Theater and the premiere of James Whitbourn’s *Luminosity* with The ArcheDream Blacklight Dance Theater Company of Philadelphia.

The choir has premiered more than 40 choral works and presented several early performances and premieres by noted composers Jackson Hill, William Duckworth, Paul Mealor, Tarik O’Regan, Roger Ames, Robert Moran, Blake Henson, Jaakko Mäntyjärvi, Ugis Praulins, Gerald Custer, James Whitbourn, Thomas LaVoy, Cortlandt Matthews, Kile Smith, Thomas LaVoy, Anthony Bernanducci, Anthony Maglione, Sam Scheibe, Dan Forrest, Sarah Rimkus and John Hudson. The choir has premiered three major works by British composer James Whitbourn that have attracted international attention. In 2007, it performed the world premiere of the chamber version of *Annelies*, the first major choral setting of *The Diary of Anne Frank*. In 2008, it shared in a commission of *Luminosity*, a work for triple choir, dancers, viola solo, organ and tanpura. In 2010, the choir premiered Whitbourn’s *Requiem Canticorum*. Past seasons have also included performances of Debussy’s *Nocturnes* with The Princeton Symphony Orchestra conducted by Rossen Milanov. In 2013, the choir performed the US premiere of Paul Mealor’s *Crucifixus* for choir, orchestra and baritone soloist at Carnegie Hall. In April 2014, the choir made its Lincoln Center debut at Alice Tully Hall performing James Whitbourn’s *Annelies*.

The choir has also assembled an impressive recorded discography, with more than 12 recordings. Releases in the past five years have topped all major charts including Billboard and Apple Music. The choir has recorded more than 50 choral masterworks on the *Teaching Music through Performance* CD box sets that are used by conductors around the world. The ensemble can also be seen and heard in the DVD *The Empowered Choral Rehearsal: Choral Masterclasses with Simon Carrington*. The choir has seven world premiere recordings to its credit, including its 2011 recording on the Naxos label, *Living Voices: The Music of James Whitbourn*. James Whitbourn’s *Annelies*,

performed with The Lincoln Trio; Arianna Zukerman, soprano and Bharat Chandra, clarinet, was released by Naxos in 2013 and received a GRAMMY nomination in 2013 for “Best Choral Performance.” London’s *Guardian* newspaper wrote about the recording “The performance as a whole...is well prepared and palpably committed as befits a premiere recording.” *Gramophone* lauded Williamson Voices on the *Annelies* recording as “exhilarating” and described the ensemble as singing “with a precision and finesse normally found in the best of the UK’s large chamber choirs.”

In 2016, the choir released its third recording on the Naxos label, *Carolae*. The choir also released another recording, *A Hole in the Sky* on the GIACHoralworks label late that summer. Both CD’s charted on Billboard iTunes and Amazon Classical List. *The Guardian* in the UK listed *Carolae* as one of the five best Christmas CD releases for 2016, calling the performance a “knockout.” In 2017, the choir released *Silence to Light*. That disc includes movements from the Arvo Pärt *Kanon Pokajanen*, as well as definitive performances of Eric Whitacre’s *Lux Arumque*, Jackson Hill’s *When Spring is Born at Last* and the James Whitbourn’s *Pater Noster*. A DVD release of the *Kanon Pokajanen*, filmed at their Philadelphia Basilica performance, is planned for 2019.

In February, 2019, Westminster Williamson Voices released *Ola Gjeilo: Sunrise Mass*. This disc features the new string orchestra version of *Sunrise Mass* with an ensemble composed of 24 players from The Philadelphia Orchestra, the Opera Orchestra of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Chamber Orchestra. The disc also has other works by Gjeilo, in addition to Mendelssohn and Duruflé motets and Gregorian Chant. 2020 will see the release of *Aurora* featuring a monumental 10-minute choral improvisation.

Since 2013, the Westminster Williamson Voices has served as the resident choir for the Choral Institute at Oxford. ([rider.edu/oxford](http://rider.edu/oxford)) and will return there in 2020 for its ninth year. This choir has inspired and taught more than 200 conductors since the inauguration of the program. In addition to serving as the ensemble in residence, for the past two years the choir has been a part of the Oxford Festival of the Arts, and has shared the stage of that series with Tenebrae and Voces8. Last summer, the choir performed *Annelies*, conducted by the composer, James Whitbourn.

In spring 2020, the choir will present concerts in Princeton and at the Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul in Philadelphia, performing the world premiere *Flower Songs*, the last work of William Duckworth, described by *The New York Times* as the “father of post-minimalism,” and entrusted to James Jordan to premiere before Duckworth’s passing in 2012. The choir will also perform commissioned works by Thomas LaVoy and Sam Scheibe, as well as *The Consolation of Apollo* by American composer Kile Smith. The Philadelphia Basilica Concert will feature a live immersive experience by renowned Japanese-American artist Makoto Fujimura ([makotofujimura.com](http://makotofujimura.com)) who knew William Duckworth, his work, and his profound interest in music history.

**Westminster Williamson Voices**James Jordan, *conductor*Karl Cepeda, *graduate assistant conductor*Gregory Stout, *accompanist***SOPRANO**

Haley Califano, *Dix Hills, NJ*  
 Chloe Crosby, *Bridgewater, NJ*  
 Taylor Cullen, *Moorestown, NJ*  
 Wendy Darr, *Little Rock, AR*  
 Francesca Fioravanti, *Wilmington, DE*  
 Julianne Fournier, *North Attleboro, MA \**  
 Amia Langer, *Fanwood, NJ*

Anna Matone, *Bridgewater, NJ*  
 Natasha McFarland Rhoads, *Spring City, PA*  
 Laura Millon, *Reston, VA*  
 Madison Murphy, *Levittown, PA*  
 Paige Pendleton, *Pennsville, NJ \**  
 Kyra Pitagno, *Babylon, NY*  
 Juliet Rafanelli, *Westbury, NY*

Hannah Schreffler, *Hamburg, PA*  
 Kathryn Smith, *Lumberton, NJ*  
 Elizaveta Smolyaninova, *Brooklyn NY*  
 Alexandra Thomas, *State College, PA*  
 Olivia Venier, *Gardiner, NY*  
 Casey Wichman, *Herndon, VA*  
 Lindsey Wildman, *Santa Cruz, CA*

**ALTO**

Alicia Barry, *Huntingdon Valley, PA*  
 Annamaria Caputo, *Medford, NJ*  
 Morgan Cerbone, *Sayreville, NJ*  
 Emily Chant, *Shamong, NJ*  
 Sarah Engel, *Rochester, NY*

Abigail Flanagan, *Scotch Plains, NJ*  
 Leah Kun, *Easton, PA \**  
 Samantha Lobasso, *West Babylon, NY*  
 Julianna Massiello, *Yardley, PA*  
 Kaitlyn Newman, *Cortland, NY*

Lydia Reifsnnyder, *Mount Desert, ME*  
 Sarah Swahlon, *Carlisle, PA*  
 Caroline Voyack, *Moorestown, NJ \**  
 Kelly Zuzic, *Waretown, NJ*

**TENOR**

Noah Bram, *Westfield, NJ*  
 Christian Koller, *Cape Coral, FL \**

Guillermo Paserin, *Factoryville, PA \*\**  
 Jorddy Romero, *Newark, NJ*

**BASS**

Karl Cepeda, *Piti, Guam*  
 Alexander Miller, *Dingmans Ferry, PA \**  
 Anthony Pinkerton, *Orlando, FL*

Sam Scheibe, *Moorestown, NJ \**  
 Marcus Timpane, *Berkeley, CA*  
 Alex Thomlinson, *Dahlonega, GA*

Gabriel Woods, *Dryden, NY*

\* Indicates section leader

\*\* Indicates chant tutor

Roster approved 9/18/2019

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