

PROGRAM NOTES/May 11, 2019
CONCORD WOMEN'S CHORUS: *Searching Love*

*When days of beauty deck the earth
Or stormy nights descend,
How well my spirit knows the path
On which it ought to wend.*

Emily Brontë (1818-48)

Brontë's enigmatic, painterly description of her wild and beloved moors invites us to celebrate the great rhythms of nature. Welcome to *Searching Love*, Concord Women's Chorus' musical evocation of the season of longer days and new beginnings. In today's concert of expressive melodies, dynamic contrasts and powerful poetry, what most excites me is our collaboration with the Carlisle Middle School Chorus, conducted by Valerie Thomforde. The young people here represent the school's Advanced Choir – a select group chosen from the larger Middle School Chorus. The group will join us on Ola Gjeilo's *Seasons*, a gorgeous setting of Charles Anthony Silvestri's timeless nod to all four seasons.

I owe a word of thanks to CWC member and Carlisle resident Ellen Materne, who gave me the wonderful opportunity to meet and work with Valerie. At the end of February, I visited one of Valerie's rehearsals. Simply put, it was inspiring. With calm and assured leadership, Valerie demonstrated her students' growing sight-reading skills and their unbridled passion for learning. They sang in tune; they sang with joy – all in. You will hear them collaborate with us on a few pieces, and you will hear them on their own! Days of beauty indeed.

Along with Gjeilo's unfolding *Seasons* and his sweeping, new setting of Brontë's *Days of Beauty*, you will hear two pieces from one of my favorite new finds – Canadian composer Ramona Luengen. Dr. Luengen has composed extensively in the choral genre and has been commissioned and recorded by Canada's finest choirs as well as the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation). She is widely published, oft-performed and well-received. *Celebremus*, written in 1997, was commissioned by Canada's Elektra Women's Choir. It is a setting of a text taken from the 13th century manuscript *Carmina Burana*, meaning "Songs of Beuern." The *Codex Beranus* is the most famous and extensive surviving collection of 254 pagan and sensual medieval Latin poems. *Celebremus* is a drinking song and attempts to recapture the festive nature of the text through the use of dance-like rhythms, an allusion to chant, and exuberant piano figuration. In direct contrast, you will hear Luengen's poignant setting of Joy Kogawa's *How the Blossoms Are Falling*, another Elektra commission. Luengen tells us, "There is such exquisite delicacy and beauty in all of Joy's writing, but in this particular poem we sense fulfillment coupled with an underlying wistfulness, a looking back on nature's life cycle as fruit grows from seed to ripeness, moving from fragile birth to rich maturity."

Ralph Vaughan Williams implores us to "sing and be merry" in his *Folk Songs of the Four Seasons* [1950]. Today we give you the Prologue and, naturally, the "Spring" section, comprising four smaller pieces that integrate two vital elements in Vaughan Williams' musical character: his strong support for amateur music making and his lifelong love for English folksongs. We also

give you a few movements of his jaunty cantata *In Windsor Forest*, adapted from the composer's opera *Sir John in Love* (written between 1924 and 1928). The choruses are mostly based on Shakespearean texts – exuberant and droll and clever.

The title of today's concert comes from Kim André Arnesen's romantic and melodic *Searching Love*. Euan Tait's poetic lyrics were written in response to a photograph of a compelling woman; the piece is a serene celebration of love's challenging gaze. With a few other surprise compositions, it is my sincere hope that you enjoy this program filled with warmth, joy and hope for brighter days. The addition of the Carlisle Middle School Chorus certainly reminds us that our future is in very good hands.

As always, I thank you for your continued support of CWC. It is each one of you that makes our music making worthwhile. I look forward to seeing you at the reception and “wish you a joyful May!”

Jane Ring Frank
Artistic Director