

## CWC Spring 2024 Program Notes

### ***AFTER the RAIN: MUSIC for the JOURNEY***

This afternoon's program, *After the Rain: Music for the Journey*, represents a straightforward concept: "The journey not the arrival matters." (T. S. Eliot). Although the word "journey" may be overused today, it fits our program, which begins and ends where it started. We use a frame of storytelling to put an eye to the textures and vicissitudes of the journey.

Storytelling is central to human existence. We build journey narratives every day, attempting to make sense of our lives: Little Red and her journey to Grandma's house; Hansel and Gretel and their crumbs on the path; Dorothy in Oz; Alice in Wonderland; Cymbeline; Dante; Odysseus; Luke Skywalker; Harry Potter. Poet Charles Wright reminds us, "The journey is always into the unknown, into the mystery and darkness..."

Today we offer a program of hope for the heroine's journey. Our concert begins with a stunning piece by Jocelyn Hagen, *This Sky Falls*. The poetry by Julia Klatt Singer uses our worst fear, "the sky falling," as the catalyst for a beautiful journey, and, ultimately, for flight, for freedom. Gwyneth Walker's *Maid of Constant Sorrow* is based on the familiar American folk song, *Man of Constant Sorrow*. This is a very simple melody, but the message is a mournful one. The soul is troubled – a restless sojourner, at best. Inspired by the empowering poem by Rabbi Ruth Sohn, Elaine Hagenberg's *Song of Miriam* describes the journey of a young woman who finds bravery amid uncertainty and fear. Middle Eastern harmonies paint an expansive desert landscape, while the voices search for faith and risk taking the first step.

Stephen Chatman's *In the Glow of the Moon* sets the delightful poetry of Tara Wohlberg. The piece is evocative, romantic, and calm. Setting the stage for relationship and for connection, the moon bathes the journey in glowing and brilliant light. *Love Is a Rain of Diamonds* features poetry by May Swenson and is set to music by New England composer Gwyneth Walker. Weaving piano and voices, the piece is cleverly scored to sound like pinpricks of light reflecting off of the many facets of a diamond. Harriet Prescott Spofford's poem *By Night*, set by Hagenberg, depicts a young woman who discovers a bold new world of thrilling and awe-filled wonder when she ventures beyond her familiar walls.

Setting words by Chief Dan George, Sarah Quartel's *After the Rain* optimistically reminds us that there is beauty to be found in times of trouble and that difficult days will not last forever. This sensitive piece uses triplets against duplets to give a sense of fluidity to the melodic phrasing. The Spiritual, *I'm on My Way*, was made famous by the great Gospel singer Mahalia Jackson. The repeated phrase, "I'm on my way to Canaan Land," represents the journey of enslaved peoples toward hope, healing, and freedom – either in this life or the next. Anthony Trecek-King crafted this arrangement to honor Jackson's accomplishments, and to share this powerful message with the world. And finally, we return to *This Sky Falls*. That most frightening thing has happened, but a falling sky provides the springboard for flight achieved, basking in the freedom of a glorious, sustained glide.

I'll end where I started, with a T. S. Eliot quote:

“We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.”

Thank you for joining us today. As always, we are grateful to each one of you for walking the journey with Concord Women's Chorus. I look forward to greeting you at the reception on the patio in front of the church!

With gratitude and best wishes,  
Jane Ring Frank  
Artistic Director, Concord Women's Chorus