

Mostly Miller
Harmonium Choral Society
March 6 & 7, 2004

PROGRAM:

Harmonium Choral Society

Make Me An Instrument of Your Peace (1998)

Murray Spiegel, narrator

No Eye Has Seen (1997)

The Quality of Mercy (2004)

The Mysteries Remain (2000)

For The Beauty of the Earth (2000)

Harmonium Chamber Singers *plus*

Dream Variations

Tituss Burgess, guest soloist

Yes to Blue (2004)

Virginia Johnston

The Daffodils (1996)

A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal (1996)

The Wind Tapped Like a Tired Man (2003)

Trent Johnson

Balm In Gilead

Cassondra Kellam, guest soloist

Harmonium Choral Society

Swords Into Plowshares (2002)

Karl Dixon, guest soloist

Intermission

God is Able (2000)

Cassondra Kellam, Tituss Burgess, guest soloists

Draw Her Home with Music (2002)

Harmonium women; Amy Myers, Mia Kissil Hewitt, soloists

Rejoice in Jerusalem! (2001)

Harmonium men; Jim Casola, Adam Aguanno, soloists

Before Too Long (1999)

Katherine Clark, soloist

Love Brought Me Back! (2002)

Cassondra Kellam, Karl Dixon, guest soloists

Piano: Mark Miller, Joan Tracy

String Bass: Fred Epstein

Drums: David Moore

PROGRAM NOTES:

It seemed appropriate when Artistic Director Anne Matlack took a brief sabbatical this winter to invite Harmonium's Composer-in-Residence **Mark Andrew Miller** to fill in. As well as having composed four works for Harmonium, Mark has sung with the group, and served as Assistant Conductor when Anne was on maternity leave in 1998. He has performed in school shows with Harmonium and accompanied the chorus on the organ. Adding to this relationship of mutual respect, Mark brings a different style and perspective to music, and embraces the chance to perform his own works with this fine choir of friends.

Mark is currently Director of the Gospel Choir at the Marble Collegiate Church in New York City, and is also on the faculty at Drew Theological School in Madison, New Jersey, where he is Director of Music and Instructor of Church Music. From 1999 to 2001 he was Music Associate and Assistant Organist at the Riverside Church in New York City.

Mark is a very active recitalist and conference/workshop leader. Since 1997 he has performed concerts or directed conferences in twenty five states, and internationally in Austria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Puerto Rico, and Bermuda. In July of 2003 he was Music Director of Youth 2003, an international gathering of 10,000 United Methodist Youth in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Composing for the church is one of Mark's passions. In March of 2003, Abingdon Press published his hymn collection, *Amazing Abundance, Hymns for a Growing Church*. In February of 2002 the *Mark Miller Anthem Series* was launched by Abingdon, and since that time over 25,000 copies of his anthems have been sold. In January of 2004, The Marble Community Gospel Choir performed his work, *Let Justice Roll: Song from a Birmingham Jail*, in which the celebrated actor, James Earl Jones was narrator. Mark's organ work, *Toccata on "God Rest Ye Merry"* was featured on National Public Radio's program *Pipe Dreams*.

Mark received his Bachelor of Arts in Music from Yale University and his Master of Music in Organ Performance from Juilliard. As an undergraduate he was the recipient of the Yale Bach Society Prize and in 1989 was first prizewinner of the National Association of Negro Musicians' National Organ Competition.

Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace, based on the prayer of St. Francis, was written for Harmonium's 1998 concert about peace, *PAX!* Mark provided the following notes for the world premiere: "When Anne approached me about a commission for this concert on the theme of peace, I immediately thought of the prayer of St. Francis. I had always been moved by the prayer's powerful witness of love, peace, and justice. As Harmonium tenor Charles Courtney pointed out in rehearsal, the prayer is about action; 'where there is hatred, let me sow love.' The prayer is a challenge for us (not unlike some of the rhythmic motifs challenging the choir!) to be involved, to be used as an agent for change. The choir sings the mantra, 'Make me an instrument of Thy peace,' over which the entire prayer is spoken by a narrator, **Murray Spiegel**. In writing this work I used techniques that are familiar to me: lots of driving syncopation and tight gospel/pop/jazz harmonies." Mark dedicated *Make me An Instrument* to his (then) eight-month old godson, Keenan Ashby.

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace,
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.
O divine master, grant that I may not
so much seek to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love,
for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

No Eye has Seen was originally the second part of a three movement Easter Cantata entitled *Arise*. A simple melody frames the piece; the pastoral quality was intended to complement the more dramatic quality of the outer movements. The work was first scored for flute, harp, piano, string bass, and SATB choir. The text comes from the Christian scriptures which offer words of encouragement and hope to the early church in Corinth. **No Eye Has Seen** received its premiere at the Chatham United Methodist Church in Chatham, New Jersey on Easter Sunday, 1997. In 2001 Mark dedicated the piece to celebrate the wedding of Pinney and Paula Colton, two students who, while attending Drew University, first met when they sang together in the church choir at Chatham Methodist. It was published in 2002 by Abingdon Press in Nashville.

No eye has seen,
no ear has heard,
nor human heart conceived
what God has prepared
for those who love the Lord.

The Quality of Mercy is the fourth composition written by Mark and commissioned by Harmonium. The composer was inspired when he heard a guest on National Public Radio's *Fresh Air* quote the text from Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. This work is in some ways a departure from Mark's more traditional harmonic style, employing meterless phrases, tone clusters, and bi-tonality. He writes, "I wanted to experiment with the boundary between speech and melody while also taking advantage of the choir's considerable skill at performing challenging music." **The Quality of Mercy** was written in January 2004 and receives its premiere at this weekend's performances.

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;
It blesseth the one that gives and the one that takes.

The Mysteries Remain combines images of Greek and Christian symbols with references to both Demeter and Iacchus, along with phrases of the one who is 'red wine and bread', who 'names the living, dead' and is 'the vine'. The poem by H. D. has a built-in rhythm that naturally lends itself to an ostinato pattern in the musical setting. The work was commissioned jointly by Harmonium and the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation Poetry Festival. At the premiere in September 2000, Mark explained, "It is the rhythm of the poem that gave me the idea for the music; child-like yet compelling, a simple folk-like tune that still engages the listener with some harmonic surprises."

The mysteries remain,
I keep the same
cycle of seed-time
and of sun and rain;
Demeter in the grass,
I multiply,
renew and bless
Iacchus in the vine;
I hold the law,
I keep the mysteries true,
the first of these
to name the living, dead;
I am red wine and bread.

*I keep the law,
I hold the mysteries true,
I am the vine,
the branches, you
and you.*

For the Beauty of the Earth was written in 2000 for Keith Morton, a Drew seminary student, in honor of his grandmother. It was first sung that spring at the Riverside Church in New York City by the Riverside Choir during a Sunday service. Although the piece was originally written only for piano and SATB choir, the composer always 'heard' a rhythm section as integral to the work. The hymn, *For the Beauty of the Earth*, with music written by Conrad Kocher in 1838 (and fleetingly quoted in Mark's composition), continues to be very popular in the church Mark was raised in.

For the beauty of the earth,
for the glory of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies.

For the beauty of the earth,
this our grateful hymn of praise,
God of all to thee we raise
our hymn of praise.

For the beauty of each hour,
of the day and of the night,
hill and vale and tree and flower,
sun and moon and stars of light.

Lord of all to thee we raise,
this our grateful hymn of praise.

For the joy of human love,
brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth and friends above,
for all gentle thoughts and mild.

For each perfect gift of thine,
to the world so freely given,
faith and hope, and love divine,
peace on earth and joy in heaven.

The next group of works are for smaller musical forces. Leading off and closing this set will be two solos, while the Harmonium Chamber Singers will sing Mark's settings of poems by William Wordsworth plus pieces by two other talented New Jersey composers, Virginia Johnston and Trent Johnson.

Mark's setting of the Langston Hughes poem ***Dream Variations***, features guest soloist **Tituss Burgess** from the Marble Community Gospel Choir in New York City.

To fling my arms wide
In some place of the sun,
To whirl and to dance
Till the white day is done.
Then rest at cool evening
Beneath a tall tree
While night comes on gently,
Dark like me--
That is my dream!

To fling my arms wide
In the face of the sun,
Dance! Whirl! Whirl!
Till the quick day is done.
Rest at pale evening . . .
A tall, slim tree . . .
Night coming tenderly
Black like me.

Yes to Blue is one of the two pieces on the program not written by Mark, but by another young New Jersey composer, **Virginia Johnston**. Ginny is currently Managing Director of the Philharmonic Orchestra of New Jersey, and Minister of Music at the Springfield Emanuel United Methodist Church along with her husband, pianist Dan Crisci. She has led the Triad Ensemble, a 20-voice mixed choir, for eight seasons and co-chaired the annual *Canticles for Life AIDS Benefit* concerts for seven years. As a singer song-writer, Ginny performs solo and with her folk/rock band *Mosaic*. Her works have been performed by the NJ Percussion Ensemble, the New Music Consort, the Society for New Music, and the New Jersey Youth Symphony.

Poet **Jim Haba** is the Poetry Director of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, designing and producing all nine biennial Dodge Poetry Festivals. Ginny writes the following about setting **Yes to Blue** to music: I was given a copy of Bill Moyers's *Fooling with Words: A Celebration of Poets and Their Craft*. In the opening Acknowledgments section, there was Jim Haba's *Yes to Blue*, which immediately resonated with me. I have always maintained that the wonderful mystery of creativity can be revealed - ever so slightly - through color. I hope this setting - a marriage of color, words and music - will give a glimpse of the timeless, renewing power of art."

Yes to blue after trying
to separate green from yellow
and hoping that everything
will get simpler each time
you bring an idea closer
to the light which is always
changing, always being
born
day after day
year after year
again and again
now.

The next work, which he composed in 1996, is Mark's setting of Wordsworth's classic poem ***The Daffodils***.

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils,
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A Poet could not be but gay
In such a jocund company!
I gazed - and gazed - but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Mark dedicated *A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal*, another Wordsworth poem he set to music in 1996, "to all those who have a hard time getting up in the morning."

A slumber did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears:
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

The Wind Tapped Like a Tired Man is the other work on the program not composed by Mark. This setting of the Emily Dickinson poem was written last year by another young New Jerseyan, Trent Johnson, organ recitalist, conductor and composer. Trent has written works for piano, organ, chorus, orchestra and chamber ensembles. Recent compositions include *Concerto for Trumpet*, *The Pascal Lamb*, *Visions* for organ, and *Outback* for didgeridoo and piano. He is a 2001 recipient of the Meet the Composer Grant sponsored by the New York String Society. A graduate of Peabody Institute at Johns Hopkins University and the Juilliard School, Trent is the current director of music and arts at the First United Methodist Church in Westfield, and conductor of the Oratorio Singers and Orchestra of Westfield. (Biographical notes taken from *The Montclair Times* dated March 26, 2003 and a Kean University press release dated March 20, 2003.)

The Wind -- tapped like a tired Man --
And like a Host -- "Come in"
I boldly answered -- entered then
My Residence within

A Rapid -- footless Guest --
To offer whom a Chair
Were as impossible as hand
A Sofa to the Air --

No Bone had He to bind Him --
His Speech was like the Push
Of numerous Humming Birds at once
From a superior Bush --

His Countenance -- a Billow --
His Fingers, as He passed
Let go a music -- as of tunes
Blown tremulous in Glass --

He visited -- still flitting --
Then like a timid Man
Again, He tapped -- 'twas flurriedly --
And I became alone --

The last number in this set is Mark's setting of the American Negro spiritual ***There Is a Balm in Gilead***, featuring guest soloist **Cassandra Kellam**, also from the Marble Community Gospel Choir.

REFRAIN

There is a balm in Gilead
To make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead
To heal the sin-sick soul.

Sometimes I get discouraged,
And think my work's in vain;
But then the Holy Spirit
Revives my soul again.

If you cannot preach like Peter,
If you cannot pray like Paul,
Just tell the love of Jesus,
And say He died for all.

Since arriving at the Marble Collegiate Church in September 2002, Mark has had many great opportunities to write for the Marble Community Gospel Choir. In November of that year Marble Church hosted their annual "Trialogue Sunday," in which Rabbi Ronald Sobel and Imam Al-Hajj Talib 'Abdur-Rashid from New York City converse with the church's pastor, Rev. Dr. Arthur Caliandro, during the sermon. ***Swords Into Plowshares***, a piece whose text comes from prophet *Isaiah* in the Hebrew scriptures, was written especially for this service. The composer

hopes that this gospel work embodies some of the hopes and dreams of those three great religions. The piece features guest soloist **Karl Dixon**, also from the Marble Community Gospel Choir.

They shall turn their swords into plowshares
And their spears into pruning hooks,
They shall turn their swords into plowshares
Neither shall they learn war anymore.
Make me an instrument of peace.
Make me, Lord, make me, Lord,
An instrument of peace.

Diana Solomon-Glover, soprano soloist of the Riverside Church Choir, first approached Mark in the spring of 2000 to ask him to write a piece for her. In July of that year, Solomon-Glover premiered ***God Is Able*** at the Riverside Church in its original 'soprano solo' form. Mark was moved to write the piece after reading a prayer in the *United Methodist Hymnal* that had been adapted by Martin Luther King, Jr. ***God Is Able*** was published in 2002 as part of the *Mark Miller Anthem Series* at Abingdon Press in Nashville. **Cassandra Kellam** and **Tituss Burgess** are the guest soloists.

When you've fallen in despair,
there's a sadness you can't bear,
just remember there's a God who cares.
Don't be afraid, God is able.

Do addictions bind you tight,
Do you lack the strength to fight?
God will surely set you free.
Why be afraid? God is able.

Hallelujah! Say amen!
O hallelujah! Shout again.
Hallelujah! O praise the Lord,
God is able, surely God is able.

Are you mourning a loved one's loss,
grief and pain your constant cross?
All your burdens God can bear.
Don't despair, God is able.

Is life's twilight coming near?
Is it death that you fear?
God gives power to endure.
God is able, surely God is able.

Draw Her Home with Music, for sopranos and altos, uses another text by Shakespeare, from the *Merchant of Venice*. It was commissioned by Summit, New Jersey's Concord Singers (Michael Sanflippo, Director) and premiered in December 2002. This text was also the inspiration for Rogers and Hammerstein's *The Sound of Music*. The soloists are **Amy Myers** and **Mia Kissil Hewitt**.

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here we will sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night
Becomes the touches of sweet harmony.

Come, ho, and wake Diana with a hymn!
With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear.
And draw her home with music.

Rejoice in Jerusalem! for tenors and basses, was commissioned by the Gay Gotham Chorus of New York City (Jonathon Babcock, Conductor) and premiered in a December 2001 concert at the Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew in Manhattan. Written to address September 11, it uses the biblical text from the *Psalm*s and the prophet *Isaiah* to convey a message of consolation and hope for the future of the city. The soloists are **Jim Casola** and **Adam Aguanno**.

I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in my people.
No more will we hear in it the sound of weeping or the cry of distress.
I will lift up my eyes to the hills; from where will my help come?
Help comes from the Lord, who made the heavens and the earth.
The Lord will keep your coming and going, now and forever more.

Harmonium commissioned **Before Too Long** for their December 1999 concert, *The Advent of a New Age*. The poem, by 14-year-old Alena Synková, is found in *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. It was preserved in manuscript in pencil on a scrap of yellowed paper. Alena Synková was born in Prague on September 24, 1926, and deported to Terezin on Dec. 22, 1942. She returned home after the liberation. The text is sad yet amazingly hopeful. Many of Harmonium's members had the incredible experience of actually singing this piece at Terezin when touring Eastern Europe in 2002. The soloist is **Katherine Clark**.

I'd like to go away alone
Where there are other, nicer people,
Somewhere into the far unknown,
There, where no one kills another.

Maybe more of us,
A thousand strong,
Will reach this goal
Before too long.

Love Brought Me Back! was written for Easter 2002 and first performed by the Marble Community Gospel Choir at Marble Collegiate Church. It was inspired by a sermon delivered by the senior pastor of the Riverside Church, Jim Forbes. This powerful gospel song celebrates that the power of love will ultimately triumph over fear and hate. **Karl Dixon** and **Cassandra Kellam** are the guest soloists.

Fear and hatred had done their very worst,
despair had had its day.
Sorrow and sadness were hangin' in the air,
the gloom would not go away.

But early Sunday morning
the women saw the Lord
and there they heard him say,
“I’m back!”

“Hallelujah, I’m back!
Don’t you know that
death could not hold me,
love is what owns me.”

“Just here to tell ya,
God’s got one last word,
and that’s love, love, love,
love brought me back!”