

2020-2021

Number 8

Radford University
College of Visual and Performing Arts
Department of Music

Presents

Radford University Choral Ensembles

We Shall Overcome

Dr. Meredith Bowen, Conductor



7:00 pm
Davis Performance Hall in the Covington Center

Monday
November 9, 2020

Program to be chosen from selections studied below.

- America the Beautiful "Materna" Samuel Ward
words by Katharine Lee Bates
arr. J. David Moore
Hybrid Instruction All Choir Singers
- Another World is Possible FLOBOTS
Arranged and directed by Erik Lund, Music Education Major
Face to Face Tenors and Basses of Chorale
- Dear Mr. President Pink, Billy Mann, and Kiana Ledé
Arranged and directed by Cierra Bird, Music Education Major
Face to Face Radford Singers Small Group
- Rock Me in Your Arms Holly Near
Arr. Catharine Strom
Farrah Boothe and Ayla Douglas, Music Education Majors
Face to Face Radford Singers Small Group
- Highwomen Amanda Shires, Brandi Carlile, Jimmy Webb
Cierra Bird, Farrah Boothe, and Nichole Wright, Music Education Majors
Student-Led Creative Extension Project
- Rise Arianna Abela
Hybrid Instruction Sopranos and Altos of Chorale
- Ella's Song Bernice Johnson Reagon
Aurora O'Hara, solo
Hybrid Instruction All Choir Singers
- How Can I Cry? Moira Smiley
Directed by Nichole Wright, Music Education Major
Hybrid Instruction Radford Singers Small Group
- One Foot/Lead with Love Melanie DeMore
Directed by Sam Williams, Cyber Security Major
Face to Face Tenors and Basses of Chorale
- We Shall Overcome Civil Rights Gospel Song
Arr. Robert T. Gibson
Jamori Harris, solo
Hybrid Instruction All Choir Singers
- Hope Lingers On Lissa Schneckenburger
Arr. Andrea Ramsey
Hybrid Instruction All Choir Singers

Notes

When the Radford Singers traveled to New York City to sing at Carnegie Hall in February, 2020, little did we know that it was going to be our last traditional choir performance for the foreseeable future. As a global pandemic struck, news began flowing about the dangers of choral singing – that most innately human art form we use for connection – and I learned way more about aerosols, particulate, and a deadly virus than I ever wanted to learn. Everything I love about choral singing was dangerous. No more sitting closely enough to listen to someone else’s sound and sing into it. No more movement to unlock breath and phrasing. No more student-led learning in part circles. No more simple instruction about vowels and consonants. Not enough time to spend on exploring vocal nuances and listening. I couldn’t imagine how my job, career, or massive parts of my identity could survive.

Then George Floyd was killed, protests ensued, and I checked my privilege. I began digging deeper into critical race theory and anti-racist education for my own edification and at the same time thought that we could explore the history of protest music in choir. We’d have to choir in a different way, and with Black Lives Matter at the forefront of current events, I narrowed the focus from the history of protest music to historical context leading up to and including music of the Civil Rights movement. Throughout the semester, the students have been reading about and reflecting on issues that stem from systemic racism and how artists have used music to resist. Indeed, many students had no idea that the police were formed to catch and return runaway slaves prior to the Civil War, that lynching was a form of domestic terrorism during the Reconstruction Era, and that “lynching” is a term that originated in a town right up the street, Lynchburg, VA. They learned about the history and impact of Billie Holiday’s song “Strange Fruit” and connected that with Bernice Johnson Reagon’s “Ella’s Song,” which you’ll hear tonight. They explored popular music that came out in the summer of 2020 as protest against police brutality juxtaposed with a classical choral piece that uses the last words of seven young black men who were shot for no apparent reason. For everyone who completed this contextual work, they were surprised at how little they knew about the history of Civil Rights and the people who fought for equity, access, and inclusion through music.

We had no idea how this semester would play out and professors were asked to have multiple plans in the event we all had to go home after three weeks of school. I devised a plan in which we would lean heavily on individual work and give leadership roles to interested students rather than the typical choir format in which everyone comes to a rehearsal organized and run by the conductor-teacher with very little outside work expected of the student. Four pieces were selected as study material with me: America the Beautiful, Ella’s Song, We Shall Overcome, and Hope Lingers On. These were taught in a hybrid format with some singers in the performance hall – socially distanced with masks and face shields on – and some singers on zoom, muted. We had to clear the

auditorium after 30 mins of aerosol build up to let the HVAC system filter the air, so we had sectionals in different rooms/zoom break-out rooms. Then each ensemble self-organized small groups from within the ensemble to study a piece of resistance music, either in the realm of anti-racist music or other forms of social justice. Chorale chose to have a soprano/alto small group and a tenor/bass small group. Radford Singers chose to have three soprano/alto small groups. University Chorus became Leonard Wekesa's graduate recital choir, learning four Kenyan Choral pieces. You can see that concert on Thursday, November 12. Each group had to choose a piece, arrange it if necessary, learn it, and determine how to record it – using audio and/or video software. Additionally, I've required every singer to complete a Creative Extension. The idea is that people use whatever art medium they're comfortable with to connect the history they've read about with issues they see today. You'll see some of those projects also on display this evening.

This semester hasn't been like any I've known since I began teaching in 2000. However, I believe it has been a rich and rewarding experience in different ways: I find great joy in reading students' reflections – especially the light bulb moments; I see certain people more engaged in the process than they've ever been in a “regular” choir class; and I observe students taking risks and working through the very vulnerable stage of putting one's art out into the world. None of this could have been possible without student leaders or work from Professor Dave Rivers, Dr. Matt Cataldi, Allen Connor and crew. They've very patiently taught me much about the recording process I never needed to learn. I was lucky to have Music Business Intern Isaiah Hart as project manager; Music Education majors Cierra Bird, Farrah Boothe, Ayla Douglas, Erik Lund, and Nichole Wright taking arranging and teaching leadership positions; Mark Argueta-Contreras, Megan Kong, and Jessy Gahafer editing many of the visual aspects of the concert; Music Therapy major Riley Jarell's writing the introductions; and guest instrumentalists including Octavio Deluchi on guitar, Kameron Walker on percussion, and Jacob Harrup on bass. Indeed, this semester has taught us that We Shall Overcome on so many levels.

- Meredith Bowen

Another World Is Possible is an inspiring song with a simple, yet powerful message. This piece of music was written by a band called Flobots. Flobots is a socially and politically driven band, and their other music along with their website is a very obvious reflection of that. This band's overall message is actually reflected in this song. Flobots wants everyone to be involved in creating social justice in their community. Being so close to the critical presidential election, when visiting their website I found that the Flobots had voting information at the top of the page, before any information about their own band. Flobots tagline is “Alternative Hip Hop band that believes in the power of the people.” Many choirs have been inspired to sing the Flobots music, especially this song. Our Choir and others are able to do so more easily with the help of the “Justice Choir Songbook”, which has many songs with positive messages like

this one. When arranging this piece for the Radford University tenor and bass singers of chorale, I took great influence from the VocalPoint choir and their youtube video of the performance of this song. The VocalPoint choir and Flobots performed this song with the accompaniment of a drummer and bass player. This song can and should be sung by as many singers as possible. The general message can and should be implied to any positive idea of social justice a community might be inspired by.

- Erik Lund

Dear Mr. President was originally sung by the artists Pink and The Indigo Girls under the Bush Administration in 2006. The song talks about how Bush, at the time of his presidency, knowingly turned a blind eye to all the issues that fellow Americans were going through. The issues they were experiencing were things that we see citizens in the United States still facing today such as putting children in cells, racial injustices, LGBTQ+ rights being taken away, and overall gender inequality that was, and has been perpetrated by our government. This song was recently redone by Kiana Lede in June of this year due to the unjust killing of George Floyd the month prior and the current issues that still surround the murder of Breonna Taylor. Originally, it had come out in 2006 when the Iraq War was at its peak and tensions in the US were high, since this was not long after the attacks of 9/11. The lyrics, while still the same, such as “how do you dream when a mother has no chance to say goodbye?” have changed massively in connotation from when it was originally written to now. At that time, the lyrics were referencing Bush sending off sons and daughters to fight in a war, from which they would never return. However now, the meaning has shifted to how mothers of black children may see their child leave in the morning but will not be able to see them return when day turns to night. The recurring focus is the inequality throughout America and how the government chooses to not acknowledge the problems within its country. This song was taken and rearranged by Cierra Bird, one of whom is singing, to be performed by five voices.

- Cierra Bird

Originally written by Holly Near and Meg Christian, **Rock Me in Your Arms** comes from Near’s first album as an “OUT” lesbian. The album, *Imagine My Surprise*, was recorded in 1978. Near defined her coming out as “an act she defined as going beyond “sexual preference” to embrace cultural and political aspects, among others.” Within the album, other pieces were used to express her political beliefs, but in terms meant for the female listener. For instance, “Kentucky Woman,” the seventh song on the track, spoke of strip mining, but from a female perspective. The album was a combination of her describing her emotional awakening and her union with other women. While working on the album, Near dedicated herself to working only with other women. According to Near, she “made a commitment to work with women, train one another, hire one another, and pay one another.” Her engineer was Joan Lowe, quoted as being “the only woman engineer [she] knew at the time.” As well as having many female instrumentalists and the backup singers, who were Riannon, Linda Tillery, and Teresa Tull. The album, while unique in content from previous

albums, was also unique in the sound. Due to Near no longer working with Jeff Langley, the album sounded closer to a folk album. This is dedicated in a large fashion to Meg Christian, a guest artist on the album and Near's lover. The pieces were far more simplistic than Near had previously brought her audience, thus lending to the connection listeners felt, as well as being catchier.

- Ayla Douglas

Arienne Abela, the founder and director of both the Detroit Women's Chorus and Detroit Justice Choir, has made a tremendous impact on the music industry, specifically music regarding empowerment and justice. Her song, **Rise**, matches those values and aspirations perfectly; the lyrics of the song address many issues that have been a part of not only our nation's past, but also present. Her goal in writing this piece was to inspire and encourage her audiences to rise up above the negativity, hatred, and dividedness of our world. This song covers many topics, some being women's rights, equality, and religious freedom. Abela's song is one of great emotion and power as the lyrics are used to motivate listeners to become unified and empowered by one another. Abela is not only a propeller of change by her own compositions, she took change to a new level by hosting high-quality concerts and using the proceeds to give to communities in need through the organization that she co-founded, 'House of Clouds'. The organizers of the Justice Choir saw Abela's work and asked her if she would be willing to use her music to support their movement. Abela obliged, and created 'Rise' outlining her hopes of what the United States will one day stand for. This song really spoke to us because of the state that our country is in right now with Covid-19 regulations and just the fact that we can't be together like we used to but, in this new world, we need to rise up and take it on one day at a time.

- Cierra Bird

Radford University Choral Ensembles

Dr. Meredith Bowen, Conductor

Personnel:

Octavio Deluchi, Guitar
Jacob Harrup, Bass

Kameron Walker, Percussion
Dr. Matthew Cataldi, Piano

Sopranos:

Cierra Bird
Sandy Wright
Maddie Mohler
Natalia Carlton
Bethany Davis
Maggie Doherty
Bridget Hanscom
Megan Kong
Marjorie Price
Tatiana Nikolaev
Grace Sharrett
Sarah Miller

Altos:

Farrah Boothe
Kyler Jackson
Riley Jarrells
Adelyn Keenan
Emma Parker
Elizabeth Shelor
Y'Vonne Thomas
Ayla Douglas
Jessy Gahafer
Cienna Lindsay
Nichole Wright
Aurora O'Hara

Tenors:

Mark Argueta-Contreras
Jamori Harris
Isaiah Hart,
Johnson Payne
Erik Lund
Dylan Jones
Timothy Redmon

Basses:

Angelo Cline
Henry Hoover
Ryan Lewis
Grant McDonel
Carson Turnage
Leonard Wekesa
Sam Williams
Coleton Yopp

2020-2021 DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC SCHOLARSHIPS

DR. EUGENE C. FELLIN ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP IN MUSIC

Brittany Rypkema

LLEWYN H. GARDNER ENDOWED STUDENT EXCELLENCE FUND

Matthew Bandman, Ryan Hubbard

WALTER C. & IRENE A. GOODYKOONTZ ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

Bryan Dowd

MARION S. GRAY SCHOLARSHIP

Natalia Carlton, Maggie Doherty, Peyton Gilmer, Cienna Lindsay, Emma Ross, Beth Shelor

JILL LOBACH GRAYBEAL ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

Matthew Rhoten

INGRAM/LEE ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

Austin Eichelberger, Gavin Marchon, Christopher Rader

LOGAN MUSIC THERAPY ENDOWMENT

DR. NICOLO LOMASCOLO SCHOLARSHIP

Seth Shepard

DOUGLAS MAY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Isaiah Hart

MUSIC DEPARTMENT ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

Anderson Lee, Carlissa Martin, John Ouimette, Myles Thomas, Megan Vaughn, Dillon Wilson

JOHANN & MARILYN NORSTEDT SCHOLARSHIP FOR VOICE

Farrah Boothe, Jessica Gahafer

DR. KATHRYN GARLAND OBENSHAIN MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP

Isaac Petty, Garrett Wiseman

PRESSER FOUNDATION AWARD

Madison Jones

MYRNA H. ROCKWELL SCHOLARSHIP IN MUSIC

Riley Jarrells, Alison Moody

JASON ROOKER MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP IN MUSIC THERAPY

Bethany Dye, Bradley Greiner, Kyler Jackson, Thomas Marchon, Sarah Miller, Alyssa Neimeier, Tatiyana Nikolaev, Natalie Pulliam, Kaylan Rowe, Hannah Zacharias

SHING/MAH SCHOLARSHIP

Megan Kong

COURTLAND ALEXANDER STEWART & DIANA GORMAN STEWART MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP

Hudson Crowe, Milo Wilson

ROBERT S. TRENT ENDOWED CLASSICAL GUITAR SCHOLARSHIP

Octávio Deluchi

FRANK & MARY VICKERS ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

Van Hofmann

ARTS SOCIETY SCHOLARSHIP

Jason Byrley, Emma Parker, Abraham Richard

The use of photographic or recording devices is strictly prohibited.

Please turn off electronic devices, including CELL PHONES during the performance.

Latecomers will be seated at the first convenient pause in the program. Audience members who must leave before conclusion of the program are requested to do so between program items in order not to disturb others.

Ushers provided by Mu Phi Epsilon, Sigma Alpha Iota and Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia.