COME WITH ME

NOVEMBER 11-13, 2022
At its core, today’s concert is an extended love song, a passionate invitation to “Come with me, under my coat... out on the side of the hill.” And while this ardent is at the heart of our program, so too, in equal measure, is its corollary: loss. A commitment to sharing the most personal of emotions through music is a hallmark of the Romantic period and of tonight’s concert.

Spanning two centuries, the program I developed explores the two central themes of love and loss in four aspects: the devotional, the intimate, the philosophical, and - within Britten’s Sacred and Profane - the amalgam of all these aspects in one work.

While our programmed masterpieces are united by their subject matter, the materials they employ are varied, drawing inspiration from the German Chorale and the American popular song, from Middle English poetry and from Renaissance polyphony. This concert celebrates the musical monuments of Brahms, Britten, Bruckner, and Barber, yet it also sheds light on contemporary composers who are no less visionary.

This is music that wears its heart on its sleeve. My hope is that, if just for this evening, you will let yourself do the same.

With warm wishes,

Matthew Robertson
Artistic Director

The Thirteen thanks our Season Sponsors, J. Penny Clark, Charles Cerf & Cindy Dunbar, and Walter Hill & Cheryl Naulty.

We invite you to take photographs (without flash) and to use social media during the concert. We politely decline unauthorized audio or video recordings of our concerts.

Please silence all cell phones.

DC COMMISSION ON ARTS & HUMANITIES

MSAC
I.

O PRAISE THE LORD

George Walker (1922-2018)

THREE GRADUALS

Locus iste a Deo factus est
Os Justi mediabitur sapientiam
Christus factus est pro nobis obediens

Anton Bruckner (1824-1896)

II.

FLY AWAY I

Caroline Shaw (b. 1982)

REincARNATIONS, OP. 16

I. Mary Hynes
II. Anthony O’Daly
III. The Coolin’

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

SAFE IN THEIR ALABASTER CHAMBERS

World Premiere Performance

Ed Rex (b. 1987)

intermission | ten minutes

III.

ZWEI MOTETTEN, OP. 74

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Warum ist das Licht gegeben Dem Mühseligen?
O Heiland, reiß die Himmel auf

IV.

SACRED AND PROFANE, OP. 91

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

I. St. Godric’s Hymn
II. I mon waxe wod
III. Lenten is come
IV. The long night
V. Yif ic of luve can
VI. Carol
VII. Ye that pasen by
VII. A death

The Thirteen thanks our Concert Sponsors J. Penny Clark and Charles Cerf & Cindy Dunbar for their generous sponsorship of this program. This program is funded by the City of Alexandria, Office of the Arts’ Arts Grant Program, the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, and the Maryland State Arts Council.
O PRAISE THE LORD

George Walker was the first Black composer to win a Pulitzer Prize in music (1996). He was a pianist, organist, a Fulbright Scholar, and the first Black classical musician invited to play with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Known primarily for his instrumental music, Walker also wrote many works for voices, including a mass setting, a cantata, and many anthems. *O Praise the Lord* is a jubilant setting of Psalm 117, employing Walker’s notable use of dissonance (particularly in the second verse) to punctuate this expressive setting of the shortest entry from the Psalmist. Written in a ternary form (ABA), *O Praise the Lord* is a concise but powerful statement of faith and joy.

Praise the Lord, all ye nations:
Praise Him, all ye people.
For His merciful kindness is great towards us:
And the truth of the Lord endureth forever.
O Praise ye the Lord.

THREE GRADUALS

Anton Bruckner was an Austrian composer known for his harmonically rich compositional style, his use of silence, and for pioneering many of the hallmarks of late Austro-German Romanticism through his use of unprepared dissonance, modulation, and large-scale symphonic writing. The *Three Graduals*, however, are stylistically indebted to the polyphonic writing of the Renaissance as well as this musical radicalism of the late 19th century. Bruckner was a devout Catholic and was a proponent of the Cecilian movement, which called for a return to the melodic purity of Gregorian Chant and the style of Renaissance masters such as Palestrina.

*Locus iste*, a predominantly homophonic work, is a study in simplicity. The text recounts Jacob’s reflections after waking from a dream during which he saw a ladder rising to heaven from Earth. This idea is reflected in the bass line, which moves chromatically upward as a metaphor for this ladder.

One can clearly find the roots of *Os Justi* in the polyphonic masterworks of the 16th and 17th centuries. This work opens with a harmonically rich homophonic texture only to unfold into a glorious and simple fugue, part-Bach in its mathematical ingenuity, part-Palestrina in its flowing lines and simplicity. Bruckner deploys another metaphor in his setting of this text, setting the opening “The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom” to dense and rich harmonic writing, followed immediately by the lighter fugue to “and his tongue speaks what is just.” This dichotomy represents the diverging opinions of musical radicals and purists on how best to serve the Church through music: Bruckner famously displayed great humility towards the other great composers of his time, yet he was also known for the ease with which he interacted with important clergy and churchgoers. Perhaps this setting is meant to reflect the idea that there can be validity in both sides of an argument.

The final gradual, *Christus Factus Est*, again utilizes modern harmonic language and Renaissance-inspired vocal lines. The text, which states “Christ became obedient for us unto death, even death on the cross...” is reflected in the overall structure of this piece, wherein Bruckner modulates chromatically from D-minor to D-flat major, concluding at the moment where
the text mentions the cross. A metaphor for the resurrection, this modernity is again foiled with techniques popular in the baroque, such as terraced dynamics for repeated words (fff – ppp for “quod est super omne – “a name above all names”) and melodic lines modeled after the simplicity of Gregorian chant.

LOCUS ISTE A DEO FACTUS EST
Locus iste a Deo factus est,  
Inaestimabile sacramentum,  
Irreprehensibilis est.
This place was made by God,  
A priceless sacrament;  
It is without reproach.

OS JUSTI MEDITABITUR SPIENTIAM
Os justi meditabitur sapientiam,  
et lingua ejus loquetur judicium.  
Lex Dei ejus in corde ipsius:  
Et non supplantabuntur gressus eus.
The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom,  
And his tongue speaks what is just.  
The law of his God is in his heart,  
And his feet do not falter.

CHRISTUS FACTUS EST PRO NOBIS OBEIDIENS
Christus factus est pro nobis obediens  
usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis.  
Propert quod et Deus exaltavit illum et dedit illi nomen, quod est super omne nomen.  
Christ became obedient for us unto death  
Even to death, death on the cross.  
There God exalted Him and gave Him a name,  
Which is above all names.

FLY AWAY I  
C. Shaw

Caroline Shaw is the youngest recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Music (awarded in 2013 for her work Partita for 8 Voices) and she collaborates with a diverse array of artists, including Kanye West and Renee Fleming. In Fly Away I, she juxtaposes improvisatory lines against a well-known hymn tune fragment, popularized by Gillian Welch and Alison Krauss on the soundtrack of the Coen Brothers film O Brother, Where Art Thou.

When I die Hallelujah, by and by, I’ll fly away.  
I went the way I went,  
You, where you are.  
I, I’ll fly away when I die. Hallelujah, by and by, I’ll fly way.
American composer Samuel Barber produced a vast and varied oeuvre of vocal music that is enduringly beloved by singers and audiences alike. Unlike many composers known for their vocal music, Barber was trained as a singer during his early musical studies, alongside his piano and composition lessons. He was a precocious child, entering the Youth Artist Program at the Curtis Institute of Music at the age of ten, seriously studying voice, piano, and composition there throughout his youth. *Reincarnations,* written while Barber was still a young man, sets a group of poems by James Stephens based on the work of 19th century Gaelic poet Anthony Raftery. About his text, Stephens wrote: “Although these poems are all taken from the Irish of from 100 to 400 years ago, I do not put them forward as translations, for in many places, I have taken no more than a phrase from the original poem, and around this phrase I have, as it were, blown a bubble of verse. My effort in each case has been, not to produce the translation of an old poem, but to give a new poem...”

Apocryphally described as the most beautiful woman of the whole century, *Mary Hynes* inspires the first movement of Barber’s setting of Raftery’s poetry. Barber sets the text with ecstatic lyricism, capturing the urgency and excitement of young love as the poet passionately expresses his adoration for the young beauty. After such a breathless opening, Barber transitions smoothly into the second stanza, and the mood shifts to tranquility while still retaining references to the opening melody at “The blossom of branches.”

*Anthony O'Daly* was an early 19th-century Irish labor activist accused of firing a gun at another man; he was later convicted of the crime and subsequently executed without supporting evidence. In Barber’s setting of Raftery’s poem, the basses intone the name “Anthony” on a single note for 41 measures, like the tolling of a funeral bell, and when Barber finally assigns them more melodic content, the pieces spirals deeper into dissonance, finally climaxing in open fifths on the word “grief.” Barber gradually expands the music through an imitative texture stemming from the bass pedal. Its stark and desperate sound is a dramatic departure from the opening movement.

*The Coolin’*, a common nickname for a loved one, takes its name from the curly lock of blond hair at the nape of a neck. James Stephens wrote of this poem: “I sought to represent that state which is almost entirely a condition of dream, wherein the passion of love has almost overreached itself and is sinking into a motionless languor.” Barber’s tender setting captures this sense of ‘motionless languor’ with a luxurious and warm harmonic language.

**MARY HYNES**

She is the sky of the sun!  
She is the dart of love!  
She is the love of my heart!  
She is a rune!  
She is above the women of the race of Eve,  
As the sun is above the moon!  
Lovely and airy, the view from the hill  
That looks down from Ballylea!  
But no good sight is good, until you see the blossom of branches
ANTHONY O'DALY

Since your limbs were laid out the stars do not shine!
The fish leap not out in the waves!
On our meadows the dew does not fall in the morn,
For O'Daly is dead!
Not a flow'r can be born!
Not a word can be said!
Not a tree have a leaf!
On our meadows the dew does not fall in the morn,
For O'Daly is dead!
Anthony! After you there is nothing to do!
There is nothing but grief!

THE COOLIN'

Come with me under my coat,
And we will drink our fill of the milk of the white goat,
or wine if it be thy will.
And we will talk until talk is a trouble, too, out on the side of the hill;
And nothing is left to do, but an eye look into an eye,
and a hand in a hand to slip;
and a sigh to answer a sigh;
and a lip to find out a lip!
What if the night be black and the air on the mountain chill!
Where all but the fern is still!
Stay with me under my coat,
and we will drink our fill of the white goat,
out on the side of the hill!

SAFE IN THEIR ALABASTER CHAMBERS

E. Rex

Program note by the composer.

Emily Dickinson is perhaps my favorite poet to set to music - her imagery is beautiful, and not a word is wasted. Poem 216, with its central message that the dead are indifferent to the affairs of the living, is no exception. She never settled on a final form for this poem - three totally different alternatives for the second stanza survive. In this setting, I use all of them, for the simple reason that there were none I could bring myself to discard. I hope, when you hear the piece and take in the text, that you agree with this decision.

Safe in their Alabaster Chambers,
untouched by Morning and untouched by noon,
lie the meek members of the Resurrection,
Rafter of Satin and Roof of Stone.

Light laughs the breeze in her Castle above them.
Babbles the Bee in a stolid ear.
Pipe the sweet Birds in ignorant cadence.
Ah, what sagacity perished here!
Springs shake the sills, but the Echoes stiffen.
Hoar is the Window and numb the door.
Tribes of Eclipse in Tents of Marble, Staples of Ages buckled there.

Grand go the years in the crescent above them.
Worlds scoop their arcs, and Firmaments row.
Diadems drop and Doges surrender.
Soundless as dots on a Disc of snow.

ZWEI MOTETTEN, OP. 74  J. Brahms

Unlike the devout Bruckner, Brahms (though well acquainted with scripture and liturgy) was an agnostic. During his lifetime Brahms wrote a great deal of vocal music, and the motets of Op. 74 stand among the most significant.

Written in four sections, Warum ist das Licht gegeben was composed while Brahms was vacationing in the resort town of Pörtschach. The work is dedicated to Philipp Spitta, a notable Bach scholar, and Bach's influence is evident throughout the work. Of the four sections, the first is the most substantial, giving way to a joyful imitative section for six voices in the second section. Despite being full of romantic chromaticism, Warum ist das Licht gegeben is structured like a Bach cantata: it opens with a lengthy chorus before segueing into a fugue-like section, finally ending with a four-voice chorale on a text and tune by Luther.

Written fifteen years earlier, the second motet O Heiland reiß is a set of chorale variations on the 17th century chorale by the same name. Brahms uses several imitative tools to vary the chorale material. In the second variation, the sopranos sing the melody while the lower three voices sing a three-part canon of similar material. The third variation takes the canon and translates it into triple meter. The fourth is an inversion, or the same material written backwards. The final variation is perhaps the most dramatic: combining the prior approaches, Brahms sets the theme to a double canon in inversion.

WARUM IST DAS LICHT

Warum ist das Licht gegeben dem Mühseligen,
und das Leben den betrübten Herzen;
die des Todes worten und kommt nicht,
und grüben ihn wohl
aus dem Verborgenen;
die sich fast freuen und sind fröhlich,
daß sie das Grab bekomen?
und dem Manne, daß Weg verborgen ist,
und Gott vor ihm denselben bedecket?

Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery,
and life unto the bitter in soul;
which long for death, but it cometh not;
and dig for it more than
for hidden treasures;
which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad,
when they can find the grave?
Why is the light given to a man whose way is
hid, and whom God hath hedged in?
Lasset uns unser Herz samt den Händen aufheben zu Gott im Himmel.

Siehe, wir preisen selig, die er duldet haben.
Die Geduld Hiob habt ihr gehört, und das Ende des Herrn habt ihr gesehen; denn der Herr ist barmherzig und ein Erbarmeter.

Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin, in Gottes Willen,
Getrost ist mir mein Herz und Sinn, sanft und stille.
Wie Gott mir verheißen hat: der Tod ist mir Schlaf worden.

Let us lift up our heart with our hands, unto God in the heavens.

Behold, we count them happy, which endure.
Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.

With peace and joy I travel to the place, according to God’s will; my heart and soul are comforted, gently and quietly.
As God has promised me, death has become sleep to me.

O HEILAND, REIß DIE HIMMEL AUF

O Heiland, reiß die Himmel auf, herab, herab, vom Himmel lauf!
Reiß ab vom Himmel Tor und Tür, reiß ab, wo Schloß und Riegel für !

O Gott, ein’ Tau vom Himmel gieß; im Tau herab, o Heiland, fließ.
Ihr Wolken, brecht und regnet aus den König über Jakobs Haus.

O Erd, schlag aus, schlag aus, o Erd, daß Berg und Tal grun alles werd.’
O Erd’, herfür dies Blümlein bring,
O Heiland, aus der Erden spring.

O Saviour, tear open the heavens, flow down to us from Heaven above!
Tear off Heaven’s gate and door, tear off every lock and bar!

O God, a dew from heaven pour; in that dew, O Saviour, downward flow. You clouds, break and rain down the King of Jacob’s house.

O Earth, burst forth, burst forth, O Earth, so that mountain and valley all become green.
O Earth, bring forth this little flower; O Savior, spring forth out of the earth.

Here we suffer the greatest distress, before our eyes stands bitter death. Ah, come lead us with your powerful Hand; from this misery to our Father’s land.

Therefore we all want to thank you, our Redeemer, forever and ever. Therefore we also want to praise you at all times, always, and forever.
Amen.

Hie leiden wir die größte Not, vor Augen steht der bitter Tod; ach komm, führ uns mit starker Hand; von Elend zu dem Vaterland.

Da wollen wir all’ danken dir, Unserm Erlöser, für und für.
Da wollen wir all’ loben dich je altzeit immer und ewiglich.
Amen.

O Heiland, O Heiland, O Heiland.
In 1973 an ailing Britten underwent heart surgery, which subsequently caused a small stroke, ending his career as a performing pianist. While Britten was no stranger to poor health, his close friend and personal nurse Rita Thompson noted that the composer's demeanor substantially darkened after the stroke. Correctly believing that he was close to death, Britten went so far as to organize a macabre party for his friends to say goodbye. Soon afterward he would die of congestive heart failure. It is in this context that Britten, the most celebrated English composer since Purcell, wrote Sacred and Profane for his partner, the tenor Peter Pears.

Sacred and Profane is an enigmatic and brilliant set of eight miniature works, and, as the title suggests, they are songs that explore emotional extremes, each highly concentrated in its approach to its subject matter. Setting texts in old English, the collection moves quickly and with ease from one mood to another, opening with a stately and regal ode to the Virgin Mary before about-facing to a pointed and dissonant (and somewhat mystifying) song about the natural world, wherein we hear the quickly rustling wings of birds and swimming fish of the medieval text expressed in Britten's evocative writing. The work continues in the vein of the natural with Britten painting the coming of Spring with bright harmonic colors and a joyful timbre. The fourth miniature opens with the same melodic material as the third, however it is quickly interrupted by the tenors and basses, who snuff out the joy of spring with their interpretation of the harsh winter wind.

Settings five and six usher in a return to the sacred, and a departure from some of the more strident writing of the previous two movements in favor of an ethereal and sustained soprano melody in the fifth and haunting, halting, choral writing in the sixth. Both songs exhibit some of Britten's most adventurous harmonic writing: each of these songs are influenced by jazz harmony and inflected with unexpected dissonance. The work concludes with a song about death, wherein the sickly Britten approaches his own death with a twinkle in his eye, ending the work with the lines "of all this world I don't care one jot" with the appropriate textural lightness and good-humoredness.

**ST. GODRIC'S HYMN**

_Sainte Marye Virgie,_
_Moder Jesu Christes Nazarene,_
_Onfo, schild, help thin Godric,_
_Onfang,_
_ bring heylich with thee in Godes Riche._

_Sainte Marye, Christes bur_
_Maidenes clonhad,_
_moderes flur,_
_Dilie min sinne, rix in min mod,_
_Bring me to winne_
_with the self God._

St. Mary, The Virgin
mother of Jesus Christ of Nazarene,
receive, defend and help thy Godric,
having received,
bring on high with thee in God's kingdom.

St. Mary, Christ's bower,
Virgin among the maidens,
flower, of motherhood,
blot out my sin, reign in my heart,
and bring me to bliss
with that selfsame God.
I MON WAXE WOD

Foweles in the frith,
The fisses in the flod,
And i mon waxe wod;
Mulch sorw I walke with
For beste of bon and blod.

Birds in the wood,
the fish in the river,
and I must go mad:
much sorrow I live with
for the best of creatures alive.

LENTEN IS COME

Lenten is come with loye to toune,
With blusmen and with briddes roune,
That all this blisse bringeth.
Dayes eyes in this dailes,
Notes swete of nightlegales,
Uch fowl song singeth.
The threstelcok him threteth oo.
Away is huere winter wo
When woderofe springeth.
This fowles singeth ferly fele,
And witteth on huere wynne wele,
That all the wode ringeth.

Spring has come with love among us,
with flowers, and with the song of birds,
that brings all this happiness.
Daisies in these valleys,
the sweet notes of nightingales,
each bird sings a song.
The thrush wrangles all the time.
Gone is their winter woe
when the Woodruff springs.
These birds sing, wonderfully merry,
and warble in their abounding joy,
so that all the wood rings.

The rose raileth hire rode,
The leves on the lighte wode
Waxen all with wille.
The mone mandeth hire ble,
The liye is lassom to se,
The fennel and the fille.
Wowes this wilde drakes,
Miles murgeth huere makes,
Ase strem that striketh stille.
Mody meneth,
so doth mo;
ichot ich am on of tho
For love that likes ille.

The rose puts on her rosy face,
the leaves in the bright wood
all grow with pleasure.
The moon sends out her radiance,
the lily is lovely to see,
the fennel and the wild thyme.
These wild drakes make love,
animals cheer their mates,
like a stream that flows softly.
The passionate man complains,
as do more:
I know that I am one of those
that is unhappy for love.

The mone mandeth hire light,
So doth the semly sonne bright,
When briddes singeth breme.
Deawes donketh the dounes,
Deores with huere deme rounes
Domes for to deme.
Wormes woveth under claude,
Wimmen waxeth wouder proude,
So well it wol hem seme.
Yef me shall wonte wille of on,
This wunne wele I wole forgon,
And wint in wode be fleme.

The moon sends out her light,
so does the fair, bright sun,
when birds sing gloriously.
Dews wer the clowns,
animals with their secret cries
for telling their tales.
Worms make love underground,
women grow exceedingly proud,
so well it will suit them.
If I don’t have what I want of one,
all this happiness will abandon,
and quickly in the woods be a fugitive.
THE LONG NIGHT
Mirie it is, while summer ilast,
With fughees song.
Oc nu necheth windes blast
And weder strong
Ey! ey! what this night is long!
And ich, with well michel wrong,
Soregh and murne and fast.
Pleasant it is, while summer,
with the birds’ song.
But now the blast of the wind draws nigh
and severe weather.
Alas! How long the night is!
Alas! With very great wrong,
sorrow and mourn and fast.

YIF IC OF LUVE CAN
Whanne ic se on Rode
Jesu, my lemmman,
And besiden him stonden
Marye and Johan,
And his rig iswouden,
And his side istungen,
For the luve of man:
Well ou ic to wepen,
And sinnes for to leten,
Yif ic of luve can.
When I see on the Cross
Jesu, my lover,
and beside him stand
Mary and John,
and his back scourged,
and his side pierced,
for the love of man,
well ought I to weep
and sins to abandon,
If I know of Love.

CAROL
Maiden in the mor lay,
In the mor lay;
Sevenight fulle,
Sevenight fulle,
Maiden in the mor lay;
In the mor lay,
Sevenightes fulle and a day.
Welle was hire mete.
What was hire mete?
The primerole and the –
The primerole and the –
Welle was hire mete.
What was hire mete?
The primerole and the violet.
A maiden lay on the moor,
lay on the moor;
a full week,
a full week,
a maiden lay on the moor;
lay on the moor;
a full week and a day.
Good was her food.
What was her food?
The primrose and the-
the primrose and the-
Good was her food.
What was her food?
The primrose and the violet.
Welle was hire dring.
What was hire dring?
The chelde water of the –
The chelde water of the –
Welle was hire dring.
What was hire dring?
The chelde water of the welle-spring.
Good was her drink.
What was her drink?
The cold water of the-
the cold water of the-
Good was her drink.
What was her drink?
The cold water of the well-spring.
Ye that pasen by
Ye that pasen by the weye,
Abidet a little stounede.
Beholdet, all my felawes,
Yef any me lik is founde.
To the Tre with nailes thre
Wol fast I hange bounde;
With a spere all thoru my side
To mine herte is mad a wounde.

A Death
Wanne mine eynhen misten,
And mine heren sissen,
And my nose coldet,
And my tung foldet,
And my rude slaket,
And mine lippes blaken,
And my muth grennet,
And my spotel rennet,
And mine her riset,
And mine herte griset,
And mine honden bivien,
And mine fet stivien -
All to late! all to late!
Wanne the bere is ate gate.

Thanne I schel flutte,
From bedde to flore,
From flore to here,
From here to bere,
From bere to putte,
And the putt fordut.
Thanne lyd mine hus uppe mine nose.
Of al this world ne give I it a pese!

When the eyes get misty,
and my ears are full of hissing,
and my nose gets cold,
and my tongue folds,
and my face goes slack,
and my lips blacken,
and my mouth grins,
and my spittle runs,
and my hair rises,
and my heart trembles,
and my hands shake,
and my feet stiffen-
All too late! All to late!
When the bier is at the gate.

Then shall I pass
from bed to floor,
from floor to shroud,
from shroud to bier,
from bier to grave,
and the grave will be closed up.
Then rests my house upon my nose.
For the world I don't care one jot.

-Program notes by Gilbert Spencer.
THE THIRTEEN

The Thirteen is a professional choir and orchestra celebrated for reimagining the potential of vocal music from many periods. Praised for performing with “striking color and richness” that “transfigures the listener” (The Washington Post), and “a tight and attractive vocal blend and excellent choral discipline” (American Record Guide), for a decade the ensemble has been at the forefront of invigorating performances of masterworks ranging from early chant to world premieres and the centuries in between.

The Thirteen’s growing discography includes the newly released “The Outer Edge of Youth;” “Truth & Fable,” which was released in October 2019; “Voice Eternal,” which was pre-nominated for a Grammy® award; “Snow on Snow,” a critically-acclaimed Christmas album; “RADIANT DARK,” a compendium of late Tudor works that reached #28 on the iTunes Classical Charts; and The Thirteen’s debut recording “...to St. Cecilia.”

In past seasons, The Thirteen has performed and been in residence at Yale University, Bowling Green State University, Eastern Illinois University, the University of Central Oklahoma, York College, The University of Tampa, Virginia Wesleyan University, St. Ambrose University, Southern Illinois University - Carbondale, Guilford College, as well as concerts at colleges and concert series throughout the United States. In 2018 The Thirteen was awarded the Greater Washington Area Choral Excellence award for Most Creative Programming.

The Thirteen is committed to educating and inspiring the next generation of musicians, and frequently coaches students at the high school and college levels in masterclass, workshop and collaborative performance sessions.

For more information about The Thirteen, please visit www.TheThirteenChoir.org

WHAT’S IN A NAME?

When Matthew Robertson founded The Thirteen in 2013, he initially imagined a collaborative ensemble that performed and toured with twelve singers and one conductor, making music that was best suited for that configuration. Since then, The Thirteen's artistic ambitions have outstripped our name, and we now perform with varying numbers of musicians as required by the music we program, from eight to 50. This led us in 2022 to add “Choir & Orchestra” to our name. Still, while our numbers may expand or contract according to the music we perform, our commitment to touching each member of our audience remains unchanged. So too does our commitment to the collaborative music-making environment that was the initial inspiration for our name, The Thirteen.
MATTHEW ROBERTSON

American conductor Matthew Robertson (b. 1986) is the founder and driving force of the professional choir and orchestra The Thirteen, which he has led in more than two hundred concerts, two dozen concert tours, seven commercial recordings, and numerous world premieres. Noted for boundary-defying performances that “transfigure the listener” (The Washington Post), for his “incisive tempos and dramatic pacing,” (Washington Classical Review) and “flowing lines and dramatic climaxes” (Fanfare Magazine, UK), Robertson’s kaleidoscopic artistic vision has led to acclaimed performances of a vast and varied repertoire, often featuring inspired use of staging and multimedia. Robertson’s boundless imagination led to The Thirteen’s winning the Most Creative Programming Award from the Greater Washington Area Choral Music Awards.

Recognized as a leader in the field, Robertson advances the frontier of vocal music performance, reimagining music from the entirety of the classical music canon. Equally at home in well-loved classics and contemporary works, Robertson tackles works by Renaissance and Baroque masters and contemporary composers with equal aplomb. For example, Robertson’s curation of Monteverdi’s end-of-life magnum opus Selva morale resulted in three well-received concerts in The Lost Vespers series, while his performance of contemporary composer David Lang’s the little match girl passion was praised by Anne Midgette of The Washington Post: “In contrast to the Tallis Scholars’ slightly dry sound, The Thirteen sings with striking color and richness.” Robertson’s zeal for reinterpreting masterpieces has led to staged performances of J.S. Bach’s St. John Passion and Johannes Brahms’ Requiem, and the use of projected images in Kile Smith’s The Consolation of Apollo and Scott Ordway’s The Outer Edge of Youth.

Drawing on his deep commitment to addressing important issues of our time, Robertson’s programming frequently tackles the topics of ecology and systemic racism. His concerts Sing Willow (2020), From Tree to Shining Tree (2019), and Ordway’s Outer Edge (2022) addressed the existential threat of climate change. His staged 2021 performance of J.S. Bach’s St. John Passion addressed the theme of systemic racism and was called “an indictment of injustice” (The Washington Post). He frequently commissions underrepresented voices, including composers Juhi Bansal, Melissa Dunphy, Lori Laitman, Trevor Weston, and Jonathan Woody. In 2019 he created The Thirteen’s Vocal Fellows Program, an initiative for young singers from underrepresented demographics that debuted in 2021.

Committed to fostering the next generation of musicians and music lovers, Robertson has led educational residencies at more than twenty colleges and universities, including Yale University and The University of Maryland – College Park (where he led a staged performance of Johannes Brahms’ Requiem). He has also directed educational outreach for young people throughout the Washington, D.C. region, including with the LGBTQ+ teen choir, GenOUT.

Robertson’s growing discography with The Thirteen includes seven commercially released albums. He enjoys a fruitful relationship with Acis Records: Truth & Fable received four stars from Choir & Organ and Fanfare when it was released in September 2019, and Ordway’s Outer Edge was just released in September 2022. In 2023 Robertson will release The Thirteen’s recording of Monteverdi’s Vespers of 1610 with Dark Horse Consort and the Children’s Chorus of Washington.

Robertson also serves as Director of Music at Bradley Hills Church in Bethesda, MD. Leading the Bradley Hills Choir and Orchestra of the Hills, Robertson has performed much of J.S. Bach’s oeuvre; the requiems of Brahms, Duruflé, Fauré, and Mozart; Arvo Pärt’s Passio, Buxtehude’s Jesu membra nostri, Carissimi’s Jephte, and many other masterworks. Robertson is a Trustee of the Denyce Graves Foundation, has also served on the Board of the DC area chapter of the American Choral Director’s Association, and the faculty of Oberlin’s Baroque Performance Institute. Robertson holds a M.M. in conducting from Westminster Choir College in Princeton, NJ, where he studied with Andrew Megill and Joe Miller, and was the Robert P. Fountain scholar at Oberlin Conservatory where he studied with Bridget Reischl and Robert Spano. A native Washingtonian, Robertson’s early musical formation included studies with Norman Scribner and J. Reilly Lewis.
The Thirteen is committed to a diverse and multi-generational audience. Yet this does not always translate to financial security. The fact is, The Thirteen depends on your donations for its existence. Under 15% of our operating budget comes from ticket sales.

We ask that, if you appreciate our artistry, you consider making a commitment to The Thirteen and give as you are able. It means a great deal to us to expand our musical family. Join us in making music.

What are some suggested giving levels? The Thirteen appreciates a donation of any size, but we list some milestones below. All contributors of $50 or more will be listed in our programs.

To donate, please visit TheThirteenChoir.org and click on “Donate,” or send your check payable to The Thirteen to:

**The Thirteen**  
P.O. Box 32065  
Washington, DC 20007

The Thirteen gratefully accepts tax-deductible donations of appreciated securities, transferred from your brokerage account directly to ours. The gifts are not only tax-deductible, but since they are transferred directly, you do not need to sell them and will not pay capital gains tax on sales. Please contact todd@thethirteenchoir.org for the appropriate letters and instructions to carry out this kind of donation.

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Following a decade of groundbreaking musical achievement and artistic accomplishment, The Thirteen has launched a fundraising campaign to lay the groundwork for our next stage of growth.

The Building for Tomorrow campaign is an opportunity for those who believe in The Thirteen, and in our commitment to artistic excellence, to lead in this growth. We hope you will choose to give to this campaign in a significant and transformative way in addition to your generous annual support.

To learn more about this important initiative, or to make a pledge or donation, visit www.thethirteenchoir.org/donate or send an email to info@thethirteenchoir.org.

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LEGACY SOCIETY

Help ensure The Thirteen’s future through a bequest in your estate. The Thirteen’s Legacy Society recognizes our cherished friends who have included The Thirteen in their long-range financial plans with a gift or trust arrangement.

If you have made a bequest to The Thirteen, please let us know so that you can be recognized as a member of The Thirteen’s Legacy Society. Your gift will serve as an inspiration for others.

For more information about making a gift to The Thirteen through your will or trust, or if you have already included The Thirteen in your plans, please contact Todd Stubbs at: todd@thethirteenchoir.org.

LEGACY SOCIETY
J. Penny Clark
Dr. Patricia Stocker
“...elegant musical performance, which Robertson molded with incisive tempos and dramatic pacing.”

- Choir & Organ
HOST A MUSICIAN

Did you know that many of The Thirteen’s musicians are drawn from around the country? When they travel here for a concert week, they need a place to stay! To save costs and build community ties, The Thirteen asks you, our audience members, to consider opening your homes to our wonderful artists. Hosts are asked to provide a private bedroom for about six days and are offered two free tickets to one of our concerts in thanks.

For more information, please speak with Managing Director, Todd Stubbs, or send an email to todd@thethirteenchoir.org. Thanks for your support of The Thirteen!