

# THE DENISON SINGERS @ 62

Sunday, June 25, 2023

Swasey Chapel, 2:00 pm

*Susan Billin, pianist and rehearsal pianist  
Meredith Needham, pianist  
Donald Armitage, organist  
William Osborne, conductor*

*program  
our 595<sup>th</sup> performance*

Martin Shaw  
1875-1958

## **With a voice of singing**

Johannes Brahms  
1833-97

**Geistliche Lied**, op. 30  
words by Paul Fleming (1609-40)

Benjamin Britten  
1913-76

**Jubilate Deo** (1961)  
Psalm 99

Jeffrey Masten '86

**Excelsior** (1986)  
words by Walt Whitman

George Swope '69  
1946-90

**Jubilate Deo** (1986)  
Psalm 99

Frank Bridge  
1879-1941

**Adagio in E major** (1905)

R. Michael Daughertry '71

**The water talks to me** (2021)  
words by Rob Smith (2012)

Clifford Davis '72

**O nata lux** (2023)  
from Matthew 17: 1-9

Michael Fauss '72

**Hungry Mungry** (1981)

words by Shel Silverstein

William Howard Doane  
1832-1915

**Tidal Wave** (1874)  
Strike, Strike for Victory  
Shun the Wine  
Drink Water Every One

Gwyneth Walker  
b. 1947

**How Can I Keep from Singing?** (1995)  
words by Rober Lowry (1826-99)

Elliot Borishansky  
1930-2001

**Alma Mater Indelible** (1981)  
words by Paul Bennett (1921-2002)

Anon.

**To Denison**

### **A Bit of History**

More than six decades ago an ad hoc group of students gathered during early September 1961 in the classroom in the basement of the Life Sciences Building (now Higley Hall) that had been directed by the two daughters of William Howard Doane (who gifted the building in his honor) for the perpetual use of what was then the Conservatory of Music. Our goal was to create a new choral ensemble that would complement the activities of the Chapel and Concert Choirs. The resulting Denison Madrigal Singers initially devoted itself to those secular part songs from Renaissance England and Italy. The group's interests quickly widened, leading to a name change and a first tour to alumni clubs during the spring break of 1963. While we appeared frequently on campus, we traveled regularly, at first during those spring breaks, later during January and May Terms, eventually appearing in twenty-four states and the District of Columbia, as well as on a dozen foreign tours across much of Europe, from The Netherlands to Greece, Portugal to Ukraine and Russia, as well as to Venezuela.

The group was formally dissolved when I retired in 2003. However, we survive through our own website and periodic reunions. This will be the 16th such gathering in Granville following a modest beginning in 1979. We also assembled three times in Winston-Salem, NC, where I now live, under the aegis of Arts @ Augsburg [Lutheran Church] festivals. Our host was Donald Armitage, now Cantor Emeritus at Augsburg. Don and his lovely wife Mary established a warm relationship with those who gathered in North Carolina, leading to their status as honorary Denison Singers and their participation in this weekend's events.

Since the group normally totaled sixteen, only 260 can proclaim themselves Denison Singers. Unfortunately, we have lost contact with some and twenty-three have died, but, almost sixty have gathered to celebrate our 62<sup>nd</sup> birthday, geographically coming from 19 states and England, chronologically from the self-styled “geezers” of the late 60s to the “babies” of the early 2000s, boasting doctorates and their own no-longer-so-young babies. Note the two in-house marriages, and our single father-son relationship.

Our thanks to those of you who have joined us this afternoon for the culmination of several days of six rehearsals and much socializing in true Denison style, celebrating our communal legacy. For me The Singers family became a remarkable collection of human beings, notable not only for their accomplishments on campus (e. g., thirteen Presidential Medals), but also for their achievements since then. My pride in them is unbounded.

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### **A Few Observations, Poems and Translations**

This afternoon's program is designed to celebrate both the renovation of the Swasey organ and our tradition of presenting new music written for us by our in-house composers and others. Unfortunately, the former is not complete. Many updates behind those handsome plaster screens, but Dr. Armitage will need to deal with the antiquated, bruised console dating from 1969. Time will permit the presentation of only five works written for us, but we need to acknowledge contributions by Corey Babb and Judy Hildesly (both on stage today), Daniel Meyer, Paul Chihara, Elliot Borishansky, Ching-chu Hu and others.

Note that the **Britten** was written in the year that gave birth to The Denison Singers. Learn that **Britten** was a composition student of Frank **Bridge**. Also, that Robert **Lowry** was a colleague of William Howard **Doane**, both prominent in the field of Gospel music. We know Doane as a Cincinnati industrialist, good Baptist, and generous supporter of Denison, but he churned out literally hundreds of evangelical songs gathered into published collections, a tiny silver of which you will hear this afternoon. Those knew him were so fond of loveable George **Swope** that we could almost forgive his lack of organization. At the first performance of this piece he was composing just a step ahead of our rehearsing. His score ends with a postscript: “completed 2:31 P.M. June 26, 1986 somewhere in Granville, Ohio.” We are much indebted to Dr. Bill Stevens, a former Denison faculty member, for creating a more useable, digitized version of the Swope manuscript, and Dawson Kimbell '25 for his digital version of *Excelsior*.

Just a few words about the **Brahms**: The piece is constructed by pairs of canons, a canon the highfaluting relative of the simple round (Row, row, row your boat). In a round voices enter successively, all singing the same tune. Brahms creates canons in which the sopranos start, the basses follow, not at the lower octave, but at the ninth, an octave plus a step. Altos and tenors are paired likewise, but with a different melody.

Then, in the extended Amen, the pairs are flipped, basses followed by altos, sopranos by tenors. If all of this seems too arcane, just ignore it and relish the ravishing result.

### **Brahms/Fleming: Sacred Song**

Let nothing ever grieve you; be at peace. Whatever God ordains.  
Accept it gladly, my soul!

Why do you want to worry today about tomorrow?  
The One is Lord of all; He also gives to you that which is yours.

In all things be not inconstant; stand firmly;  
Whatever God ordains is and signifies the best. Amen.

### **Masten/Whitman**

*Leaves of Grass, 1881-82 edition*

Who has gone farthest? for I would go farther,  
And who has been just? For I would be the most just person of the earth,  
And who most cautious? for I would be more cautious,  
And who has been happiest? O I think it is I--I think no one was ever happier than I,  
And who has lavish'd all? for I lavish constantly the best I have,  
And who proudest? For I have reason to be the proudest [daughter] alive--for  
I am the son of the brawny and tall-topt city,  
And who has been bold and true? for I would be the boldest and truest being  
of the universe.  
And who benevolent? for I would show more benevolence than all the rest,  
And who has receiv'd the love of the most friends? for I know what it is to receive  
the passionate love of many friends . . .  
And who thinks the amplest thoughts? for I would surround those thoughts,  
And who has made hymns fit for the earth? for I am mad with devouring ecstasy  
to make joyous hymns fit for the whole earth.

### **Daugherty/Smith: Under Sail**

The water talks to me in measured rhythms of wave against hull.  
Its beat stirs a gull from her fascination with a floating meal.  
She has been wary of my approach, wondering how close I will come.  
The white sails are my wings, but I am bound to the intersection  
of wind and wave; I can go no higher.  
Gull knows my earthbound frame.  
Grudgingly she unfolds her arms mounting up, embracing the sky.  
She takes to air, circles the mast, and sets down in her place.  
She cries out to tell me I am only an annoyance.  
Her voice syncopates the rhythm of the water.

### **Davis: O nata lux**

O born light of light, Jesus, redeemer of the world,  
Mercifully deem worthy and accept the praises and prayers of your supplicants.

### **Borishansky/Bennett**

Alma mater indelible, Your sunlit hill and sky, Your flow'ring green fields and  
All they signify. Knowledge harvested as wisdom, Dreams and deeds made one

By gifted men and women in Granville at Denison.

I will care for you so long as there's a sky above.

I'll walk free throughout the world, Nourished by faith and love.

So long as a field is green, I will treasure you, for you taught me

To cherish what is beautiful and true.

### **To Denison**

To Denison, we raise our song, Fair college on the hill,  
The name that sets our souls on fire And makes our senses thrill.

To Denison, my Denison, In praise our voices swell,

The scenes of happy college days, The home we love so well.

### **Participants** (\*spouse, \*\*daughter)

Janet Allison '69, Brentwood, TN

Dr. Corey Babb '04, Tulsa, OK

Christine Wagner Baugh '79, Akron, OH

Valerie Siegel Bertoglio '69, Colorado Springs, CO

Susan Rumer Billin '69, Moscow, ID

Christopher Collette '91, Philadelphia, PA

Audra Russo Comes '04, Columbus, OH

Paul Cummings '73, Perrysburg, OH

Clifford Davis '72, Mount Vernon, OH

Jennifer Dawes '88, Thornville, OH

Gerald Edmonson '89, Orlando, FL

Susan Engle '72, West Lafayette, IN

Barbara Wendnagel Ewing '67, Pittsboro, NC

Phillip Ewing '69, Pittsboro, NC

M. Michael Fauss '73, Brookhaven, GA

Susan Clarke Finney '79, Versailles, KY

Dr. Heidi Middendorf Flanagan '83, Carrboro, NC

James Gentner '70, Wickford, RI

Judith Pistor Hildesley '66, London, England

Joy Worcester Hire '74, Granville, OH  
Kenneth Horner '84, Chagrin Falls, OH  
Sandra Kidd-Prestridge '85, Wadsworth, OH  
Dr. Stephen Knisely '98, Berea, OH  
Christina Juergens '94, Alexandria, VA  
Richard Kauffman '86, Hainesport, NJ  
Lauren Kronish Klayman '89, Highland Park, IL  
\*\*Maggie Kruse, Fairfield, CT  
Margaret Mills Kruse '86, Fairfield, CT  
Scott Kruse '89, Fairfield, CT  
Jeffrey Langner '02, Worthington, OH  
Anne Lattime '90, Long Beach, CA  
John Leistler '86, Deerfield, MA  
Sarah Leibowits '89, New York, NY  
Michael Lewis '79, Forney, TX  
Joan St. Sauveur Luley '82, Kingwood TX  
John Macdonald '79, Conway, NH  
Amy Macdonell '79, Indianapolis, IN  
Dr. Jeffrey Masten, '86, Chicago, IL  
Tracy Mayhew Miller '83, Heath, OH  
H. Perry Mixer '78, Charlotte, NC  
Bryan Morrow '03, Englewood, CO  
Jeffrey Morrow '69, Parker, CO  
Meredith Park Needham '78, Granville, OH  
William Nesbitt '78, Baltimore, MD  
Cynthia Owens '84, Durham, NC  
Robert V. Palmer '73, Rochester, NY  
Michael Pantaleo '92, Akron, OH  
Stephanie Robinson '87, Hampton, GA  
Dr. Sarah Enterline Roch '02, Northboro, MA  
Paul Spencer '76, Bloomfield, NJ  
Dr. Jack Stopa '03, Brighton, MA  
Dr. Jack Treharne '70, Winter Park, FL  
\*Dr. Mary Wagner, St. Louis Park, MN  
Richard Wagner '77, St. Louis Park, MN  
Karen Cozart Walker '79, Terra Haute, IN  
Wanda Wilson '91, Pittsburgh, PA  
Elizabeth Wright '87, Pittsburgh, PA  
David Zivan '88, Chicago, IL