



# DENISON UNIVERSITY

## Department of Music

### THE DENISON SINGERS TURN GOLDEN

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Sunday, June 26, 2011

Swasey Chapel, 1:30 pm

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

*program*

Gwyneth Walker

**How Can I Keep From Singing?** (1995)  
*words from a Quaker Hymnal (c. 1800)*

Johannes Brahms

**Geistliches Lied**, opus 30  
*words by Paul Fleming*

Randall Thompson

**Alleluia** (1940)

Irving Fine

**Father William** (1942)  
*words by Lewis Carroll*

Clifford Davis

**The Road to Damascus**  
*words from Acts 9: 1–5, 15*

R. Michael Daugherty

**Miracles**  
*words by Walt Whitman*

William Stevens

**Three Sacred Songs You Won't Hear in Church**  
Saint Stephen & Herod  
*traditional English words*  
Satan's Kingdom  
*traditional folk hymn*  
The Bells of Hell  
*WWI Marching Song based on  
! Corinthians 15:55*

César Franck	<b>Choral in A minor</b> (1888)
César Franck	<b>Psalm 150</b> (1890)
Thomas Vautor	<b>Sweet Suffolk Owl</b>
Samuel Barber	<b>The Coolin</b> , opus 16/3 <i>words by James Stephens</i>
Thomas Morley	<b>Sing we and chant it</b>

### **The Denison Singers**

Almost a half century ago, September 1961, an ad hoc group of students met in a music classroom in the basement of what was then the Life Science Building. The goal: organizing a new choral ensemble that would complement the activities of the Chapel and Concert Choirs (the former providing music for the weekly Chapel services, the latter presenting major works with orchestra). The result: The Denison Madrigal Singers, some of whose founding members are on the stage today, a group initially devoted to the presentation of those secular partsongs from Renaissance Italy and England in particular. However, our interests widened almost immediately, leading to a name change and a first tour, of alumni clubs, during the spring vacation of 1963. While The Singers appeared regularly on campus, sometimes collaborating with ensembles of Columbus Symphony musicians, The Early Interval (Columbus-based instrumental specialists in music of the Renaissance and Baroque) and various members of the Denison jazz faculty, the group toured regularly, first during spring breaks and then during the January and May terms, eventually appearing in twenty-four states and the District of Columbia, as well as on a dozen foreign tours that took us to The Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, what was then Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Ukraine, Russia, Greece and Venezuela.

The ensemble was formally disbanded when I retired in 2003. We mounted a reunion here that June and returned to Granville three years later to mark our 45<sup>th</sup> birthday. I moved to Winston-Salem, North Carolina to become music director of the Piedmont Chamber Singers, which led to three gatherings of The Singers there under the aegis of Arts at Augsburg [Lutheran Church] festivals. Our principal hosts for these ventures were two gentlemen who have joined us this weekend: Don Armitage, as of a year ago Cantor Emeritus of Augsburg, and Bill Stevens, who was the guiding force behind the Augsburg festivals, but who earlier had served on the Denison music faculty from 1976 to 1980, and was thus a mentor to a generation of Denison Singers, several of them on stage this afternoon. Both established a warm relationship with those who gathered in Winston-Salem, leading to their election by acclamation as honorary Singers.

Since during its formal forty-two history the group normally totaled only sixteen (a notable exception being a Bach *Mass in B minor* with an expanded chorus of twenty-four), only 260 people can call themselves Denison Singers (only a large handful actually majored in music, while a smaller handful have gone on to successful careers as professional musicians). Unfortunately, fourteen of that total have died and we have lost track of four others. So, somewhere between a quarter and a third of the remaining 242 have gathered this weekend for our 588<sup>th</sup> performance, coming from twenty-three states, the District of Columbia, England and Jordan (John Leistler obviously receives the prize for having traveled the greatest distance).

Our thanks to those of you who have joined us this afternoon for the culmination of several days of six intensive rehearsals, plus much equally intense socializing, for us a memorable celebration of our communal legacy. For me The Singers became a remarkable group of human beings, notable not only for their accomplishments on campus (e. g., a small host of presidential medals, including four in one year), but for their achievements since then, too numerous to mention. My pride in them is unbounded.

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### **The Program**

Chosen in large part by the participants, what you will hear represents a microcosm of the history of the group, as well as what could reasonably be mastered in a few days.

We performed several major cycles by Vermont-based Gwyneth Walker, but this stirring setting of a Quaker text seemed the ideal curtain-raiser, a well as a sort of credo. Over the years we sang a variety of sacred and secular chamber works by Brahms, represented this afternoon by this enormously intense "Spiritual Song," whose translation appears below. The Thompson *Alleluia* has become a universal standard in the choral repertory. It was written for the opening in 1940 of the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood in western Massachusetts. I had the memorable pleasure of performing it there with the composer conducting in 1965 at a ceremony marking the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the BMC. Thompson announced then that we would sing it the way he intended, which we hope to replicate this afternoon. The work was created just after the Fall of France and Thompson has described it as "tinged with sadness, like a prayer for peace. . . It has a disembodied spiritual quality about it, a hushed and prayerful mood. This is not a shouting kind of 'Alleluia.'" That mood will abruptly change with Irving Fine's rambunctious response to Carroll's words from *Alice in Wonderland*; be assured that any resemblance of his Father William to the author of these notes is purely coincidental.

The following pieces were all written for The Singers, the first two receiving their initial performances this afternoon. Cliff has earlier contributed six works to our repertory, all of them as heartfelt and intense as this response to the narrative of Saul who becomes Paul. Michael, who went on to receive a doctorate in composition from Ohio State and serve on the faculty of Coastal Carolina

College has enriched our repertory even more with a dozen earlier works, including extended cycles written for our tours of Romania and Spain. He notes that this powerful response to Whitman was written for our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, remarking that, "Now that's a miracle worth celebrating!" Bill is also a prolific composer in a variety of genres. It was a performance of his *Patrick of Ireland* that first drew us to Winston-Salem in the spring of 2004. This work, amply demonstrating his remarkable sense of humor, was first heard in a performance by The Singers at Augsburg in September 2009.

To get The Singers off their feet momentarily and to allow Don Armitage to strut his stuff as an organist, an interlude in the form of one of Franck's most striking organ works. Don will then have to work even harder in the companion piece, since we are using an edition I published (long out-of-print) that attempts to project the full effect of the original orchestral accompaniment, which is far more involved than what appears in standard editions.

We conclude with three secular partsongs, two of them from the English madrigal tradition, thus marking our beginnings as an ensemble (the Morley is technically a ballett, with its repetitive sectional structure and "Fa la" refrains). The Barber is the last of a set of three *Reincarnations*, written in 1940 to poetry by James Stephens (1882–1950) from 1918, based on earlier poetry by Anthony Rafferty (1784–1835). Subtitled "The Fair Haired One," its gentle, pastoral nature reflects Stephens' opening language: "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." We hope our diction will offer sufficient clarity to the English texts, since printing them all didn't seem practical. However, one bit of clarification: Vautor's sweet Suffolk owl is described as "so trimly dight, with feathers like a lady bright," dight in this case meaning dressed or adorned.

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Johannes Brahms: *Geistliche Lied (A Spiritual Song)*, opus 30 (1856)  
words by Paul Fleming (1609–40)  
translation by Ron Jeffers

Laß dich nur nichts nicht dauern  
Mit Trauren,  
Sei stille;  
Wie Gott es fügt,  
So sei vergnügt,  
Mein Wille!

Let nothing ever  
grieve you,  
be at peace;  
Whatever God ordains,  
accept it gladly,  
My soul!

Was willst du heute sorgen  
Auf Morgen?  
Der Eine  
Steht allem für;  
Der gibt auch dir  
Das Deine.

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

Sei nur in allem Handel  
Ohn Wandel,  
Steh feste;  
Was Gott beschleußt,  
Das ist und heißt  
Das Beste.  
Amen.

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

*participants*

John Keith Aikens '88, Decatur, GA  
Janet Allison, '69, Brentwood, TN  
Christine Wagner Baugh '79, Akron, OH  
Valerie Siegel Bertoglio '69, Carmel, IN  
Susan Rumer Billin '69, Moscow, ID  
Dr. Steven Black '76, Gainesville, FL  
Chelsea Braden '94, Parma Heights, OH  
John Butterfield '77, Salisbury, MD  
Leila Bunnell Carlson '64, St. Michaels, MD  
Audra Russo Comes '04, Columbus, OH  
Paul Cummings '73, Perrysburg, OH  
Amy DeWall Dadmun '80, Fox Point, WI  
Dr. R. Michael Daugherty '71, Jacksonville, NC  
Clifford Davis '72, Mount Vernon, OH  
Jennifer Dawes '88, Twinsburg, OH  
Nicholas DiVirgilio '81, Frostburgh, NY  
Barbara Wendnagel Ewing '67, Pittsboro, NC  
Philip Ewing '69, Pittsboro, NC  
Michael Fauss '72, Atlanta, GA  
Susan Clarke Finney '79, Versailles, KY  
Dr. Heidi Middendorf Flanagan '83, Carrboro, NC  
James Gentner '70, Washington, DC  
Jon Gibson '95, Cincinnati, OH  
Seth Gilmore '96, Hanover, NH  
Kristopher Habeman '96, Palisades, NY  
Jane Walker Hallett '68, Tuscon, AZ  
\*Winthrop Hallett '68, Tuscon AZ  
Donna Dehner Harler-Smith '66, Lincoln, NE  
Judith Pistor Hildesley '66, London, England  
Dr. Teresa Hill-Hornsby '93, Fort Thomas, KY  
Joy Worcester Hire '74, Granville, OH  
Kenneth Horner '84, Chagrin Falls, OH  
Christina Juergens '94, Alexandria, VA  
Dr. Michelle Kahlenberg '98, Ann Arbor, MI  
Dr. Margaret Padelford Karns '65, Dayton, OH  
Richard Kauffman '86, Hainesport, NJ

Elaine Harwood Klemen '64, Chicago, IL  
Sharon DeVane Knode '87 Soyesset, NY  
Margaret Mills Kruse '86, Fairfield, CT  
Scott Kruse '89, Fairfield, CT  
Jeffrey Langner '02, Dublin, OH  
John Leistler '86, Amman, Jordan  
Michael Lewis '79, Forney, TX  
John Macdonald '79, Conway, NH  
Amy MacDonell '79, Indianapolis, IN  
Dr. Jeffrey Masten '86, Chicago, IL  
Dr. Charles, Melville '65, Atlanta, GA  
Tracy Mayhew Miller '83, Heath, OH  
H. Perry Mixter '78, Greer, SC  
Sherry Wiltman Murray '72, Pittsburgh, PA  
\*Bethany Needham, Austin, TX  
Meredith Park Needham '78, Granville, OH  
William Nesbitt '78, Baltimore MD  
Martha Nordsieck '73, Cincinnati, OH  
Cynthia Owens '84, Pittsboro, NC  
Robert V. Palmer '73, Rochester, NY  
Michael Pantaleo '82, Canoga Park, CA  
Nicole Bieisadecki Petrarca '96, Akron, OH  
Stephanie Robinson '87, Hapton, GA  
Dr. Sarah Enterline Roch '02, Ashland, MA  
Dr. Maegan Swartwout Sady '03, Rockville, MD  
Janice Grossi Sivertsen '70, Wayne, NJ  
Paul Sivertsen '68, Wayne, NJ  
Margaret McGoun Steffen '96, Medina, OH  
Dr. Jack Stopa '03, Brighton, MA  
Dr. Todd Sullivan '83, Flagstaff, AZ  
Clare Hutchinson Toledo '03, Chicago, IL  
Debra Vanderlinde '72, New York, NY  
The Rev. Richard K. Wagner '77, St. Louis Park, MN  
Karen Cozart Walker '79, Terre Haute, IN  
Wanda Wilson '91, Pittsburgh, PA  
David Zivan '88, Indianapolis, IN

\*honorary groupies