

#### Voices of NEC:

### Arise, be enlightened!

## NEC Symphonic Choir & Chamber Singers

Erica J. Washburn, conductor

with
Viza3 Quartet
Yeji Lim, Bowen Chen, violin
Rituparna Mukherjee, viola
Alexander Davis-Pegis, cello

Changjin Ha, Lingbo Ma, and Rafe Schaberg, piano

Monday, March 11, 2024 7:30 p.m. NEC's Jordan Hall

#### PROGRAM

#### Hildegard von Bingen

(1098-1179)

arr. Felicia Sandler

#### Laus Trinitati

#### Michael Gandolfi

Winter Light (2011)

Falling Snow

Opal

Vizaz Quartet

Yeji Lim, Bowen Chen, violin Rituparna Mukherjee, viola Alexander Davis-Pegis, cello

#### **Arthur Shepherd**

(1880-1958)

Four-hand piano arrangement by Changjin Ha and Lingbo Ma.

Psalm 42 (1950)

solo quintet:

Jialin Han, soprano

Grace Navarro, Baian Chen, alto

Valentine Umeh, tenor McLain Weaver, bass

Lingbo Ma, Changjin Ha, piano

NEC Symphonic Choir

Brief Pause

George W. Chadwick

(1854–1931)

Commemoration Ode (1928)

Rafe Schaberg, piano

Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol

from Devran (2017)

I. Ey gönül neylersin sen bu cihanı

Daniel Pinkham

(1923–2006)

After the storm a star

from Love Can Be Still

Star and pulsar discovered "waltzing"

[N.Y. Times, Dec. 22, 1972]

from Four Poems of Norma Farber (1978)

Lingbo Ma '24 DMA

Stand with us (2021, rev. 2023)

World Premiere

Ashley Chen, soprano

Kati Agócs

Arise, be enlightened! (2023)

U.S. Premiere

**NEC Chamber Singers** 

#### We are deeply grateful to

Bob Winters, Rayna DeYoung, and the Concert Halls staff; Lisa Nigris and the Recording and Performance Technology staff; Felicia Sandler, Michael Gandolfi, Mehmet Sanlıkol, and Kati Agócs for their rehearsal time;

the members of the Vizaʒ Quartet—Yeji Lim, Bowen Chen, Rituparna Mukherjee, and Alexander Davis-Pegis;

and our pianists Changjin Ha, Lingbo Ma, and Rafe Schaberg.

Tonight's program, the first in a 3-year concert series for the Choral Department titled *Voices of NEC*, celebrates contributions to the choral canon from current and former NEC faculty. As March is Women's History Month, our program is bookended by three wonderful current composers: Felicia Sandler, Lingbo Ma, and Kati Agócs.

The Symphonic Choir opens with **Felicia Sandler**'s *Laus Trinitati*. Featuring a text by Hildegard von Bingen, the work is presented tonight as a centering piece – an opportunity for the performing musicians, and listeners, to gather their thoughts and focus their minds on the beauty and wonder that is the human instrument.

Next on the program is NEC's Chair of Composition, **Michael Gandolfi**'s two-movement choral work *Winter Light*, which includes string quartet. While the strings in movement I, Falling Snow, elicit images of a gentle, swirling snowfall, empty spaces left by footprints in the delicate snow, and temple bells ringing, the choir share's Amy Lowell's elegiac lyrical poem, encouraging the listener to reflect on life's transitory nature and whether we will be remembered after we're gone. Movement II, Opal, the tangible, seen representation of the love shared by Lowell and her life partner Ada Dwyer Russell, is "characteristic of the 'Ada poems' in its invocation of the poet's correspondent in images of flowers, as well in the 'sometimes ecstatic, sometimes painful' duality present in the women's relationship. It acknowledges and embraces love's potential for both fulfillment and frustration in its extraordinary apposition of heat and cold, pleasure and pain, in the same moment." (Dana Bonstrom)

Closing the Symphonic Choir half of the program, the ensemble presents **Arthur Shepherd**'s rarely heard *Psalm 42*. Shepherd enrolled at NEC at the age of 12 in 1892 and graduated with a diploma in composition in 1897. He was, in fact, the only student that year to earn a diploma in that concentration. At 29 he was invited to return to NEC (1909) as a faculty member by George Chadwick. Having accepted the post, he was then under the mentorship of Chadwick, and several other faculty, and he remained on at the college until 1920.

Shepherd's setting of Psalm 42, penned by a psalmist who bemoaned the trials

and tribulations they were required to endure in life, was an apropos choice for Shepherd. Composed just a few years prior to his death, he had experienced his own share of hardships: a year of military service toward the end of World War I (during his faculty tenure at NEC), the collapse of his marriage after his return to civilian life, and the beginning of distancing himself from his Latter-Day Saint faith, while continuing to explore his own personal relationship with God. It is easy to hear in Shepherd's writing the ways in which the text spoke to him, opening with a deeply personal desire of inward peace, transitioning through intense angst, to ultimately finding not only solace, but joy in his spiritual journey. Originally composed for orchestra and chorus, the orchestral parts have since been lost, and so in true NEC fashion, we have decided to reimagine the accompaniment. Chang Jin Ha and Lingbo Ma, both composition majors with backgrounds in piano performance, have written a 4-hand accompaniment for this evening.

The Chamber Singers open the second half of this program with **George Chadwick**'s *Commemoration Ode*. Chadwick set only a handful of the 523-lined James Russell Lowell poem, which was written for the Harvard University Commemoration Day on July 21, 1865; a service to honor the lost lives of Harvard students and alumni during the Civil War. James Russell Lowell, who was a Professor of Literature at Harvard at the time of the poem commission, had lost several of his students during the war, as well as five younger family members, three of whom had been awarded distinction for ability and heroism.

In Lowell's own words, this is how the poem came about:

Two days before the commemoration, I told my friend (Prof. Child) that it was impossible – that I was as dull as a door-mat. But the next day something gave me a jog, and the whole thing came with a rush. I sat up all night writing it out clear. But enough strength had gone out of me to make me weak for a fortnight afterward," – "literally making me lean and so nervous I was weeks in getting over it"

It is reported that a friend of Mrs. Lowell's gave her version of the account: Mrs. Lowell told me that after Mr. Lowell had agreed to deliver the poem, he had tried in vain to write it. The last evening before the date fixed, he said to her, 'I must write this poem tonight. Go to bed and do not make me feel that I am keeping you up.' He began it at ten o'clock. At four in the morning he came to her door and said, 'It is done and I am going to sleep now.' She opened her eyes to see him standing haggard and actually wasted by the labor and excitement which had carried [him] through a poem of 523 lines in six hours.

(Prof. Newell D. Gilbert, for Parker's Penny Classics)

Chadwick captured just a snippet of Lowell's sentiment in this accompanied part-song, but in its short performance run-time one can hear the drums and march of war, the celebratory fanfare of trumpets, and the deeply felt sentiment of enduring appreciation for all Union (and future) soldiers who gave their life in the pursuit of freedom for all.

**Mehmet Sanlıkol**'s "Ey gönül neylersin sen bu cihanı", the first of his two-movement work *Devran*, is a brilliant composition that has presented traditional western-classical choirs the opportunity to explore Sufi, Mevlevi, the political and social stereotyping of Muslims and the Islamic faith, as well as the beauty that is Türkçe, the Turkish language, which is spoken by 90-100 million peoples.

As one ages one begins to truly understand the saying, "life is all about connections." In this case, however, connections are not about whom you know and how they can advance your career, but whom you know and how they can influence you, helping to shape you into the human you are meant to become. Next on the program are two works by **Daniel Pinkham**, one of Sanlıkol's favorite NEC professors whom he also came to know as a person.

The majority of Pinkham's extensive choral oeuvre is sacred in text. This is unsurprising to anyone who knew him; he was, after all, the organist at King's Chapel in Boston for 42 years. What is surprising is the handful of secular texts for SATB chorus that he did write, with the majority being settings of poetry by Norma Farber. How Farber and Pinkham came to know one another personally, if at all, is unknown, though they both spent the second half of their lives in Boston. It is said in Farber's obituary that she was a soprano, and so it is entirely possible their paths crossed musically. What can be said of the connection between the two is that Pinkham had a great affinity for her poetry, which runs the gamut from love, nature, childhood, etc. The two selections on this program are from different choral cycles but are linked through the life span of a star; an astrological element which provides light in times of darkness for humankind, from the human perspective of scientific discovery and what that means for the advancement of understanding the larger universe.

Pinkham's dense, stacked homophonic passages of *After the Storm a Star* allude to the calm that exists immediately following the chaos of a violent storm, the time when human beings can first survey the destruction left behind. The gentle light of the star offers "a grace of glow", consolation to the earth from a celestial neighbor.

Star and Pulsar Discovered Waltzing is a chromatic tour-de-force. While it's easier to visually interpret the 'pulse' on the printed page of the score, if one listens carefully, the unison, to two-part, to three-part, to four-part divisi can be discerned, creating a musical 'pulse' of sound.

**Lingbo Ma** is currently a DMA candidate at the Conservatory and teaching Composition for Non-Majors. She has been mentored by Felicia Sandler, Michael Gandolfi, Mehmet Sanlıkol and Kati Agócs, and has also served the institution as a staff pianist within the Choral Department for several years. Her work this evening, *Stand with us*, is a profound statement charging all to stand as allies and to support marginalized communities.

**Kati Agócs**' *Arise, be enlightened!* requires choristers to think beyond the boundaries of traditional text and instead say more with sound via consonant and vowel pairings, partnered with a mixed-meter rhythmic drive and bright, clean timbre. Her work embraces many of the choral techniques that have become popular over the past several decades, but the unique soundscape she builds with these methods is fresh, giving an ancient language an exciting new voice.

— *Erica J. Washburn* 

#### von Bingen, arr. Sandler Laus Trinitati

Hildegard von Bingen was a woman of many talents - a composer, abbess, writer, confidante and counselor, scientist, physician. philosopher, poet, and visionary. Many modern readers of her writings, and modern listeners of her music, find in Hildegard a kindred spirit for our times. Her imagery is vibrant and green, and her understanding of God is expansive - encompassing both masculine and feminine traits as well as features of the natural world around us. I am grateful to be able to add my voice with hers in this song of praise to the blessed trinity. — *Felicia Sandler* 

Laus Trinitati
quae sonus et vita.
Accreatrix omnium,
vita ipsorum est;
Et quae laus
Angelicae turbae —
Et mirrus splendor arcanorum
Quae hominibus ignota sunt est;
Et quae omnibus vita est.

Hildegard von Bingen

Praise to the Trinity, which is sound and life.
Creator of all that is, all that has life within it;
And which is the praise of the angelic throng –
And the marvelous mysterious splendor, that humankind cannot understand;
And which is in all that is alive.

#### Gandolfi Winter Light

Amy Lowell, at the time of her death in 1925, was widely lionized as America's greatest poet, and was awarded the 1926 Pulitzer Prize for Literature for the posthumously pubished collection, *What's O'Clock*. Within a decade, however, she was, if not wholly forgotten, almost universally dismissed as a poet of any significance. The age of poetry that Lowell had dominated and declaimed on behalf of became, thereafter, the age of Pound, and Eliot, and Yeats. D. H. Lawrence—whom she championed, anthologized, underwrote, and advised—is now taught in freshman expository writing clases; Lowell has been relegated (and only in the last decade or so) to graduate seminars in queer poetics.

Why is this so? Several former champions and future biographers have suggested that Amy Lowell's poetry needed Amy Lowell's presence in order to get over with her audience. She *was* a formidable and tireless presence in public readings and debates. Her appearances were events: first would appear, carried in over the

heads of the audience, the large custom table she required, above which would be installed a blindingly powerful reading lamp that had a tendency to overpower primitive electrical systems. Finally, the poet herself would arrive: at five feet tall and two hundred fifty pounds, carrying a large basket filled with color-coded eyeglasses, an armload of books and papers, and, perhaps (the audience ever hopeful) one of the slender cigars she favored. Her "performances," and her unstinting advocacy of the modern vernacular, were responsable for an explosion in the popularity of American poetry in the first decades of the twentieth century.

- Excerpted from Notes of "Winter Light" by Dana Bonstrom

#### **Falling Snow**

The snow whispers around me
And my wooden clogs
Leave holes behind me in the snow.
But no one will pass this way
Seeking my footsteps,
And when the temple bell rings again
They will be covered and gone.

#### Opal

You are ice and fire,
The touch of you burns my hands like snow.
You are cold and flame.
You are the crimson amaryllis,
The silver of moon-touched magnolias.
When I am with you,
My heart is a frozen pond
Gleaming with agitated torches.

Amy Lowell

#### Shepherd Psalm 42

As the hart panteth after the water brooks, So panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?

My tears have been my meat day and night,
While they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?
When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me;
For I had gone with the multitude,
With the voice of joy and praise,
With a multitude that kept holyday.

O my God, my soul is cast down within me: Therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites from the hill of Mizar.

Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy water spouts; All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me, Yet the Lord will command his loving kindness in the daytime, And in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.

I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? And why go I in mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones mine enemies reproach me; While they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?

Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him
Who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

#### Chadwick Commemoration Ode

Salute the sacred dead,
Who went and who return not.
Say not so! We rather seem the dead that stay'd behind.
Blow, trumpets, all your exultations blow!
For never shall their aureoled presence lack:
They come transfigured back,
Secure from change in their high-hearted ways.
Beautiful evermore, and with the rays
Of morn on their white Shields of Expectation.

James Russell Lowell, (1819–1891) Ode Recited at the Harvard Commemoration 1865

#### Sanlıkol Devran

The title of this piece, *Devran*, in Turkish has a number of meanings including the world, life, fate, time, the times we/people live in as well as whirling/turning. It is often used in Sufi (Islamic mysticism) literature and it is also included in the text of the second movement, which will not be performed tonight, where it seems to reference the Mevlevi (so-called "whirling") dervishes – the followers of the 13th c. mystic, Rumi.

The piece was composed in response to the stereotyping of Muslims in today's politics. The aim was to honor pluralism within Islamic culture with a motet-like choral piece, the staple of Renaissance period European Christian music, while using texts written by Turkish Sufi dervishes.

The musical idea behind the piece was to combine Renaissance polyphony and several Middle eastern musical elements into an artistic whole. More specifically, while the imitative style of 16th century counterpoint is the main influence, the Middle Eastern *makam* (mode) tradition and selected Turkish Sufi music elements help shape the overall musical tone. For example, the first movement incorporates *zikir*, a form of Sufi worship where the names of God are repeated often with musical patterns.

— *Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol* (2017)

Ey gönül neylersin sen bu cihanı (vay) Kala sanma sana bu mülk-i fani

Ne alır gidersen dünya evinden Söyüne bir gün ömrün şem'danı

Hani şol aleme sultan olanlar

Koyuban gittiler nam-u nişanı

Felekler tacını başından almış

Türab etmiş nice sahib-kıranı

Hakiki gafil olma aç gözünü Ecel erir vermez bir gün amanı

Ali Ufki, Mecmua-i Saz-u Söz (ca. 1650)

additional text: Ya Allah, ya Rahman, ya Batın, ya Cabbar

#### Pinkham After the storm a star

After the storm a star came closer, craned and conned the damage below, Leaned through dusk, an earthward gazer Handing down a grace of glow; Neighborly, laid luminous fingers over a languished, littered shore: after the storm, stars once strangers shared the reckoning and repair.

Norma Farber

O soul, why do you care for this world? Don't think that this mortal wealth will remain with you.

Whatever you end up doing in this world
One day the light of your life will be
blown out.

Where are those who became sultans in this world?

They are all gone with their reputations and distinctions left behind.

Destiny took their crowns from their heads

And turned those powerful rulers into earth.

Don't be a real fool, open your eyes,
One day death will come and not let you
ask for mercy.

Translation by Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol

O God, O the Compassionate, O the Hidden, O the Mighty.

#### Pinkham Star and pulsar discovered "waltzing"

The star and the pulsar are waltzing way out in their luminous far constellation Are whirling in heavenly Hercules orbiting round one another Meanwhile the pulse of the pulsar is beating one beat to a second And yet sometimes more slowly and sometimes more swiftly Depending on where in its cyclic abandon celestial It's circling around its companion like changes of pitch in the resonant blast Of a horn coming toward you and whoosh whizzing by you while Pulsar and star still continue their waltzing those one-two-three one-two-three one-two-three partners on farthermost space their amenable dance floor O were we that star and that pulsar O were we those waltzers we'd take the same pleasure In wheeling around and around in our sheer circulation.

Norma Farher

#### Ma Stand with us

This piece was initiated at the 2021 Choral Chameleon Institute, a summer music festival directed by Vince Peterson in Brooklyn in which I participated. Living close by Lincoln Center, I walked past an anti Asian hate poster on one of the walls almost every day after Covid-19 hit. The poster was made up of a colorful cartoon portrait of an old Asian man and the following words: Stand with us.

When I conceived this choral piece in June 2021, I wanted to make it relevant to myself as well as the current times. Thus, I took the three words from the poster, added a few other lines, used it as the text and set it to music. "Us" represents all individuals and communities that are unique, strong-willed, and inspirational but have also been the most vulnerable, underrepresented and undervalued. — *Lingbo Ma* 

Stand with us.
Stand with us.
I'm not weak, but I need your strength.
"Rise, above the clouds of ignorance, narrowness, and selfishness." \*
Let love drive out hate.
Let light drive out darkness.
Let hope and trust prevail.
(Hope, love, trust.)

I'm not weak but I need your strength. So stand with us. Stand with us.

\*quote from Booker T. Washington, The Story of My Life and Work:

<sup>&</sup>quot;We all should rise, above the clouds of ignorance, narrowness, and selfishness."

#### Agócs Arise, be enlightened!

*Arise, be enlightened!* is a short motet for unaccompanied chorus commissioned by Ensemble ArtChoral in Montréal (Matthias Maute, artistic director) with support from the Canada Council for the Arts. This piece sets an excerpt from Isaiah 60:1-2:

"Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee;

the Lord shall rise upon thee indeed, and his glory shall be seen within thee."

The first half of the piece is a setting of the words in Latin. In the second half, the music goes beyond words. A kind of cosmic scat takes over, with wordless syllables conveying a feeling of transcendence.

— Kati Agócs

Surge illuminare Jerusalem, Quia venit lumen tuum, Et gloria Domini Super te orta est.

Super te autem orietur Dominus, Et gloria ejus in te videbitur. Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem, For thy light is come, And the glory of the Lord Is risen upon thee.

The Lord shall rise upon thee indeed, And His glory shall be seen within thee.

Isaiah 60:1-2

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#### Erica J. Washburn

Director of Choral Activities

Conductor and mezzo-soprano Erica J. Washburn has been Director of Choral Activities at New England Conservatory since 2009. Known for her student-centric approach to classroom and rehearsal instruction, and commitment to the performance of new music, she is the recipient of several outstanding alumni awards, including the distinguished honor of induction to the Westminster Choir College Music Education Hall of Fame.

As a conductor, Washburn has worked with Kansas City, MO based Cardinalis, the Yale Schola Cantorum, the East Carolina University Women's Chorale, and the Eastman Women's Chorus. She is a sought-after guest clinician who frequently leads state and regional festival choruses, and spent five summers as a conductor and voice faculty member for the New York State Summer School of the Arts School of Choral Studies.

Under her direction the NEC choirs have been featured on several live and prerecorded broadcasts, including the North Carolina based station WCPE Great Sacred Music, WICN Public Radio, and WGBH Boston. The choirs can also be heard in collaboration with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project on the BMOP/Sound recording *Paul Moravec: The Blizzard Voices* and, most recently, with the Tanglewood Festival Chorus and the Boston Symphony Orchestra on their Deutsche Grammophon recording of Shostakovich *Symphony No. 13* (released in October 2023)

Washburn's stage credits include appearances as Madame Lidoine in Francis Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, Rebecca Nurse in Robert Ward's *The Crucible*, Mother/Allison in the premiere of Lee Hoiby's *This is the Rill Speaking* and others. Her recital and orchestral solo credits are numerous, and her live premiere from Jordan Hall of the late Richard *Toensing's Night Songs and Evening Prayers* with the New England Conservatory Symphonic Winds can be heard on Albany Records.

#### **Upcoming Choral Concert**

NEC SYMPHONIC CHOIR & CHAMBER SINGERS, Erica J. Washburn, conductor "Great Music for a Great Space: Sanctuary" Shaw To the Hands; Corigliano Fern Hill Thursday, April 25, 2024 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

#### **Upcoming Concerts at NEC**

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## JAZZ COMPOSERS' WORKSHOP ORCHESTRA, Frank Carlberg, director Nicole Mitchell, Residency Concert Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

NEC New Music Ensemble, Stefan Asbury, conductor Turnage Blood on the Floor Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Brown Hall

LIEDERABEND LXXI: *This is the place - Voices of Exile and Exodus* Tanya Blaich and Cameron Stowe, directors Wednesday, March 13, 2024 at 6:00 p.m., Williams Hall

NEC Symphony, Hugh Wolff, conductor Esmail RE | Member; Thompson An Act of Resistance; Shostakovich Symphony No. 5 Wednesday, March 13, 2024 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

SONATA NIGHT 50, Music for Cello and Piano a collaboration with the cello studio of Yeesun Kim Thursday, March 14, 2024 at 6:30 p.m., Burnes Hall

HUMPERDINCK: Hansel and Gretel
performed by NEC Undergraduate Opera Studio, Michael Meraw, artistic director
Steven Goldstein, stage director

Thursday-Friday, March 14-15, 2024 at 7:30 p.m. Plimpton Shattuck Black Box Theatre

FACULTY RECITAL: Kenneth Radnofsky, saxophone Monday, March 25, 2024 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

Tuesday Night New Music New music by NEC composers, performed by their peers Tuesday, March 26, 2024 at 7:00 p.m., Burnes Hall

NEC SAXOPHONE ENSEMBLE: Kenneth Radnofsky, director *Tuesday, March 26, 2024 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall* 

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Latecomers will be seated at the discretion of management.



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