

The St. Martin's Voice

The Newsletter of St. Martin's Chamber Choir

“With Fresh Ears...”

By Timothy J. Krueger, Artistic Director

The title of this concert may sound intimidating – as if this concert consists entirely of atonal music. Although everything on the program was written within the last 60 years, there is nothing particularly challenging about this concert, and it is *guaranteed* to please!

Pride-of-place is given to two extended works. At the end of the first half, we will be premiering a mass setting by New York composer Robert Baksa (b. 1938). Some of you may recall a Cameo Concert we did in 2008 wherein there was actually a vote taken at the end of the concert for the piece people would most like to hear again. In both presentations of that concert, a madrigal by Baksa, to the Shakespeare text “Full Fathom Five,” won overwhelmingly. Mr. Baksa was pleased by this, and offered St. Martin’s the opportunity of premiering a new mass he had just completed, and I was thrilled to accept.

At the end of the second half of the concert, we will present “Son of God,” a set of three motets by English composer



Abbie Betinis, composer

Philip Cannon (b. 1929). Cannon was a student of Vaughan Williams, Hindemith, and Imogen Holst, and it has been an honor, and something of a dream, to correspond with him over the last few months, hearing reminiscences of his teachers, as well as of his friends Gerald Finzi, Edmund Rubbra, and Sir David Willcocks.

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“With Fresh Ears...”

Music of the 20th and 21st centuries

Concert sponsors – Robert & Juanita Kniss (June 11)

Friday, June 11th, 7:30 p.m.

St. John’s Episcopal Cathedral, Denver

Sunday, June 13th, 4:00 p.m.

First Congregational Church, Boulder

Tickets: \$22 General Admission, \$5 Student; \$30 Premium (lim. avail.)

303-298-1970 or www.StMartinsChamberChoir.org

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J.A.C. Redford, a Los Angeles composer who has been associated with film and television scores (most notably *The Trip to Bountiful* and *St. Elsewhere*), has become something of a friend over the years; and this friendship has revealed that he has a side of his compositional self that is much more introspective and personal than that which he composes for films. In that vein is a brief work written in honor of his two sons called "What the bird heard early in the year," to a text by C. S. Lewis. J.A.C. will be in town and present at the Friday night performance.

Abbie Betinis is a young Minnesota composer to whom I was introduced by Jordan Sramek, director of the Rose Ensemble in Minneapolis, and who I have had the pleasure of meeting at a number of national choral festivals since. "*Bar xizam* (Upward I Rise)," a work in ancient Persian, is a very haunting and touching setting of a 14th century poem about being released from bondage, interpreted variously as either the bondage of slavery, of sexism, or even of life.

Other works on the program include works by Zoltán Kodály, Edmund Rubbra, and a tribute to Austin Lovelance, the much-beloved and recently deceased Denver composer and church musician, who honored St. Martin's with frequent attendance at our concerts.

St. Martin's special summer concerts

St. Martin's Chamber Choir is excited to be participating in two great music series this summer.

On Sunday, August 1st, SMCC will join with the **Colorado Music Festival** Chamber Orchestra in a performance of Bruckner's *Requiem in d minor*. Also on the program is Golijov's *The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind*, with Klezmer clarinetist David Krakauer. The Sunday concert will be at Boulder's Chautauqua Auditorium, and the program will be repeated the next evening at the Stanley Hotel in Estes Park. For more information call CMF at 303-449-1397 or visit www.COMusic.org.

St. Martin's will also be appearing on the CenterFest series at the **Arvada Center for the Arts and Humanities**. On Thursday, August 12th the choir will reprise a number of works from its June "With Fresh Ears..." program of 20th and 21st century choral works. Preceding the concert will be a performance by Denver's acclaimed Kim Robards Dance. More information about this concert and about the CenterFest season can be found at SummerAtTheCenter.org or by calling 720-898-7200.

To receive "The Voice" by email only, just send a quick note to info@stmartinchamberchoir.org

Musings from a St. Martin's singer: "Good Vibrations"

"I'm pickin' up good vibrations. It's givin' me excitations."

I've been singing since I was born. While much of that was solo singing, still, most of my singing experiences have been in a choir, or with a group of some sort. It's interesting to reflect not only on the changes in the levels of quality and musicianship of the groups over the years, but also on my own musical experience within these groups.

My earliest choral experiences were in children's choirs in school and church during elementary school. I honestly don't remember an awareness of my part in the whole sound. I think that's difficult for children to grasp. Most kids feel like the center of the universe.

As a teacher, I've struggled to help kids become aware of their integral value to the whole group, even while kids today have very few opportunities to experience whole-group endeavors.

By late high school I became more aware of the sound I created in conjunction with the voices around me. Some directors used voice-matching, placing singers together strategically by their tone qualities. I became more attuned to which voices I sounded better next to and which ones made my own tone seem inferior...and I found this fascinating.

In college choirs, I first experienced moments of the magical blend that sends shivers up the spines of singers and audience alike. They were just moments, though, and I strained to hear when it might occur again. I

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realized that it wasn't something I could make happen myself. It was dependent on the singers in the group, our placement, and the ministrations of the director. It became a sort of choral Holy Grail that I yearned for and sought after.

The first time I experienced it with the Colorado Chorale was on a tour through Europe, in a high school gymnasium in Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia. We were singing Pablo Casals' *O Vos Omnes*, and I was able to do one of those (at that time) unusual things: sing, and yet at the same time, step back and listen to the whole. That whole gave me goose bumps! I tried to analyze it: What exactly is this "magical blend?" It's BALANCE, of course: all the voices even, no voice part overpowering the others; being able to hear the low basses as easily as the melody in the soprano line. It's also BLEND OF TONE: everyone creating the same type of tone coloring which prevents individual voices from sticking out, but creating a very pleasing overall sound. But it's something else, and in the years since then, I've been trying to define what that something else is.

Final Feasts of St. Martin for 2009-10

June 27th: Edgy

An afternoon of cutting-edge chamber music in a stunning modernist Cheesman Park high-rise, accompanied by red wines, champagne and decadent chocolates.

Cost: \$60 per person

July 17th: A Journey into a World of Wines

In an elegant Denver home setting, and with each wine accompanied by just the right hors d'oeuvre, this delicious tasting is led by William Norris, the features editor of *Colorado Wine News*.

Cost: \$100 per person

For more information please call 303-298-1970, e-mail info@StMartinsChamberChoir.org, or visit www.StMartinsChamberChoir.org. Make your reservations by phone or through the SMCC website!

In no other choir have I as often experienced the "magical blend" than in St. Martin's. You, who have attended SMCC concerts, know exactly what I'm talking about: those moments when the sound is something not of this world, something divine!

In the last few years I've also noticed that with a singer next to me there can come a moment when we not only balance and blend, but it's like the very vibrations of our voices get in synch with each other, and suddenly it's as if there are more than two voices woven together in a lovely *mélange*. The additional vibration hums powerfully in my head and makes me think, "Wow! What just happened?" Our two voices merge to create a third sound and suddenly, the whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts.

I recently discussed this with a fellow St. Martin's singer, and she knew exactly what I was talking about. She has experienced it with the violin as well as voice, and the effect creates a buzz of overtones in her head. It was wonderful to have this phenomenon validated by another singer, and know that it's not just a figment of my own imagination.

So perhaps that "additional something else" is precisely that: a synchronizing of the vibrations of our voices that creates a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts. This same friend said that it is audible and measurable. On the very last note of the very last track on the SMCC's CD "A Marian Christmas" (the Biebl "Ave Maria,") if you listen closely, you can hear a high B \flat , and it's an overtone: *no one* was singing that beautiful note. Is this something we can cultivate, something we can control and make happen? Doubtful...and perhaps all the more precious and thrilling when it does. I'll certainly be listening for it more closely in the future. How about you?

You can support St. Martin's with:

- Individual donations or pledged support
- Donation of a unwanted vehicle
- Contributions to the Mark Sheldon Fund
- Purchasing CDs or downloading SMCC music
- Attending performances (of course!)

Call 303-298-1970 or visit
www.StMartinsChamberChoir.org for more info.







St. Martin's Chamber Choir
 2015 Glenarm Place, Denver, CO 80205
Sixteenth Concert Season, 2009-10

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“With Fresh Ears...”

Music of the 20th and 21st centuries

-  World premiere of the *Latin Mass* by Robert Baksa
-  Performances of rarely heard 20th century works by Philip Cannon, Zoltán Kodály, and Edmund Rubbra
-  *Bar xizam* (“Upward I rise”) by emerging Minnesota composer Abbie Betinis
-  Other recent works by J.A.C. Redford and Austin Lovelace

Where & When:

Friday, June 11th, 7:30 p.m.,
 St. John's Episcopal Cathedral,
 1350 Washington St., Denver

Sunday, June 13th, 4:00 p.m.
 First Congregational Church
 1128 Pine St., Boulder

St. Martin's Chamber Choir' 16th Season is sponsored by:

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