The Choir of the West

2017 SOUTHWEST TOUR

PACIFIC LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY
RICHARD NANCE, CONDUCTOR
The Choir of the West is the premier choral ensemble of the Department of Music at Pacific Lutheran University, located in Tacoma, Washington. The choir was founded in 1926, and was the third Lutheran college choir to tour extensively throughout the United States. The Choir of the West has toured to Europe, Scandinavia, Japan and China, and has been selected to appear at several regional and national conferences of the National Association for Music Education and the American Choral Directors Association. Most recently, the choir performed at the Northwestern Division ACDA conference in 2012 and the 2013 ACDA National Conference, held in Dallas, Texas. The choir was featured at the 2015 National Collegiate Choral Organization Conference, performing with renowned conductor Simon Carrington.

During summer 2011, Choir of the West competed among choirs from 47 nations at the prestigious Harmonie Festival in Lindenholzhausen, Germany, winning two gold certificates and one silver. In 2015, the choir competed in the Anton Bruckner Choir Competition, held in Linz, Austria. The choir won both the mixed choir and sacred music categories, and was awarded the Anton Bruckner Prize as the most outstanding ensemble in the competition.

Choir of the West is comprised of undergraduate students from a variety of academic disciplines. Members are chosen through a rigorous audition. The choir performs several concerts each year, including shared programs with other PLU ensembles, the annual series of five Christmas concerts (the 2015 concert was filmed for broadcast on PBS), campus ministry services and campus celebratory events. For more information about the Choir of the West, PLU’s music program and to order recordings, please visit the choir’s website: www.plu.edu/choir.
About the Conductor

Richard Nance came to Pacific Lutheran University in 1992 after teaching at Amarillo Texas Community College for seven years. During his time at PLU he has conducted the University Singers, Chorale, Men’s Chorus, Choral Union and, since 2006, the Choir of the West. He teaches the four-semester conducting sequence and supervises student teachers. Nance’s choirs have an international reputation for excellence. Over his collegiate career, they have been selected to appear at eleven division and national conferences of the American Choral Directors Association, National Association for Music Education and Washington Music Educators Association. His choirs have toured Europe and Scandinavia on several occasions, and have won gold awards at competitions in Germany and Austria. They have been the featured choral ensemble at conferences of the World Harp Congress, U.S. Harp Congress, and National Collegiate Choral Organization. Nance received Regency Advancement Awards at PLU in 1999 and 2013, and in 2014 was awarded the KT Tang Faculty Excellence Award for Research. He was awarded the American Prize for choral conducting in 2011 and 2013, and was named the outstanding conductor at the Florence International Choral Festival in 2014. Nance is nationally recognized for his work as a composer, having written the 2002 Raymond W. Brock Memorial Composition for the American Choral Directors Association. His music is published by Walton Music, Hinshaw Music and Colla Voce Music Publishing.
PROGRAM NOTES BY RICHARD NANCE

Though all contemporary, this evening’s concert features music in many different styles, both sacred and secular. We begin with a piece that has been part of the PLU choral tradition for many years, W.B. Old’s double-chorus arrangement of *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*, the greatest of Martin Luther’s hymns. This is followed by a new motet by PLU choral faculty member Brian Galante, *Jubilate Deo*. This highly rhythmic choral fanfare was composed for the Oklahoma State University Concert Chorale (Z. Randall Stroope, conductor). Of this work, Galante says:

Subtitled “A Choral Fanfare,” *Jubilate Deo* features highly rhythmic layered patterns, vertical sonorities of alternating major and minor thirds, and short flirtations with polytonality. The work is one of ecstatic praise, with a text adapted from the *Liber Usualis* and *Book of Common Prayer*.

Next on the program is a set of pieces about the Virgin Mary. Jean Belmont-Ford’s *Ave Dulcissima Maria* comes from her larger work, *Electa*, commissioned by the Phoenix Chorale in 1995. The text is a variant of the familiar *Ave Maria*, and has been attributed to the late Renaissance composer Carlo Gesualdo (1566-1613). Belmont-Ford’s setting is dramatic and intense, with numerous harmonic twists and turns. The second piece in the set is my setting of the *Magnificat* or “Canticle of Mary” taken from the Gospel of Luke. Dancelike rhythms and a lyric soprano solo are used to reflect the sense of awe and wonder Mary must have felt in learning that she was to bear the Savior of the world.

*Choral de Bêtes* is a four-song cycle by Pasadena composer Christina Whitten Thomas. This collection of poems by Carmen Bernos de Gasztold (1919-1995) is a series of prayers offered by the animals of God’s Kingdom. As each animal contemplates the trials and joys they face in life, they reveal strengths and weaknesses to which we, as human beings, can discover a surprising connection. The composer describes the composition of each movement:

*Prière du Lion* (Prayer of the Lion), the lion’s prayer opens with a kingly cry to God. He appeals to God to understand
the lion’s position as one who must govern by strength, and not love, in order to gain the respect of the other animals. After the opening musical “roar,” I set the text with driving rhythms and edgy harmonies to depict the relentless striving of the lion to govern his subjects.

*Prière de l’Agneau (Prayer of the Lamb)*
The lamb’s prayer is a gentle plea to God for comfort and protection. I set this prayer as a lullaby, creating a soft, soothing texture through a series of overlapping, imitative entrances.

*Prière de la Baleine (Prayer of the Whale)*
The music for the whale’s prayer opens with the altos, tenors and basses singing a repetitive, wave-like gesture. The divisi sopranos commence the prayer in a contemplative duet that floats gracefully over the ATB texture. As the whale’s worries increase over being hunted, the music picks up in intensity and rhythmic urgency.

*Prière de la Gazelle (Prayer of the Gazelle)*
The sopranos take the lead in the lively and energetic prayer of the gazelle. Opening with a rhythmic, multimetric canon, the movement matches the pace of this light-footed animal as she dashes across the plain.

F. Melius Christiansen founded the St. Olaf College Choir in 1901 and conducted it for 30 years. His choir was the first to establish the Lutheran college choral tradition, and its influence was spread around the country through national tours, leading to the establishment of numerous collegiate choral programs, including the one at Pacific Lutheran University. We proudly continue this tradition by regularly performing Christiansen’s hymn arrangements, including *O Day Full Of Grace*, and at the end of our concerts, *Beautiful Savior*.

The second half of our program begins with *Sing We Merrily Unto God Our Strength*, a double-chorus anthem by English composer Martin Shaw (1875-1958). This joyous work features outer sections composed in fanfare-like dialogue between the two choirs, and a middle section of simplified Anglican chant. Shaw was a contemporary of Gustav Holst and Ralph Vaughan Williams, all of who were students of Charles Villiers Stanford at the Royal College of Music. He published more than 300 works during his career.

*Songs of the Aurora* is what I have titled a two-song set of works by Latvian composer Ēriks Ešenvalds. Ešenvalds has long been fascinated with the Northern Lights, and he has traveled to all the Arctic regions to do research about the folk legends and songs handed down through the ages by native peoples, which he incorporates into his music. The two works we will perform this evening feature texts by Arctic explorers Charles Francis Hall (1821-1871) and Fritdjtøf Nansen (1861-1930) along with Sami and Latvian folksongs about the lights. Ešenvalds uses beautiful choral colors and some surprise effects to vividly describe the explorers’ thoughts as they viewed the spectacular display in the sky for the first time. *Northern Lights* was composed for the Choir of the West in 2013, and was premiered on tour and at the American Choral Directors Association National Conference, held in Dallas. PLU will give the U.S. premiere of Ešenvalds’ *Nordic Light Symphony* this March, which the composer will attend.

The British electronic band Depeche Mode created and recorded the song *Enjoy the
Silence in 1990. The song went on to win an award as the “Best British Single” at the 1991 BRIT awards. American composer Eric Whitacre has arranged a distinctly different version of what he describes as “the song of my youth...the song I think of when I think of what it was to be a teenager.” This cover has an almost mystical feel about it, without a trace of the electronic rhythms of the original. The familiar melody is still there, disguised in a warm harmonic wash.

We close our program with three pieces of Americana, beginning with Emma Lou Diemer’s upbeat arrangement of the familiar folk song She’ll Be Coming ‘Round The Mountain. This song is thought to derive from an old Spiritual When The Chariot Comes, from the 1800s. It was sung throughout Appalachia, where the lyrics were changed to the now familiar form. Next in the set is Craig Hella Johnson’s arrangement of the Stephen Foster song Hard Times Come Again No More (1854). Though he was known as one of the great songwriters of his day, Foster endured a number of tragedies in his life, and he died a penniless alcoholic at age 42. The set closes with the rousing bluegrass gospel hymn, Unclouded Day, arranged by Los Angeles composer Shawn Kirchner.

PROGRAM

A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD ............. Martin Luther (1483-1546)/arr. W.B. Olds (1874-1948)

JUBILATE DEO ................................................................................................................. Brian Edward Galante (b. 1974)

Jubilate Deo!
Jubilate Deo omnis terra!
O be joyful! Serve the Lord with gladness;
Come before his presence with a song.
Know this: the Lord himself is God;
he himself has made us, and we are his.
Enter his gates with thanksgiving, into his courts with praise!
For the Lord is good;
his mercy is everlasting;
his faithfulness endures from age to age.
Jubilate Deo!

SONGS OF MARY

1. Ave Dulcissima Maria ................................................................. Jean Belmont-Ford (b. 1939)
   Hail, sweetest Maria,
   true hope and life, sweet comfort!
   O Maria, flower of virgins,
   pray for us to Jesus.

2. Magnificat ............................................................. Richard Nance (b. 1955)
   Haley Kim or Mollie Parce, soloist
1. **Prière du Lion** *(Prayer of the Lion)*

   Lord, I am King, that is the law.
   You know that it is difficult to wear a crown.
   Some people, in their leadership, recommend love.
   How naïve!
   I know how to rule over the creatures,
   they have respect only for strength.
   Let us say that fear is good.
   And for me to make the plain tremble with my roar;
   how delightful!
   Yet I would not do anything baseless or mean.
   I know the price of a noble heart.
   That is why, Lord, I love your grace
   and try to measure up to it.

2. **Prière de l’Agneau** *(Prayer of the Lamb)*

   A spindle on four legs which frays on the bushes,
   Lord, I am Your lamb in the softness of my wool.
   My bleating sends its high-pitched sound into the heart of the ewe.
   My fleece throws its curly shadow on the cut grass.
   Look, Lord, my joy leaps, but I need the care of my mother.
   Let me run towards her, hesitating with my wavering footsteps,
   so I might gather some of her tenderness.
   Ah! Do not allow, Lord, that one sad day I will miss her!

3. **Prière de la Baleine** *(Prayer of the Whale)*

   What could contain me, Lord, if not Your ocean?
   Without a doubt a divine joke is my size.
   Am I not a little bit ridiculous with my blubbery appearance?
   A peaceful leviathan, with a fountain on my nose,
   and a nourishing diet.
   In my case the only problem is to choose
   between the air and the water.
   Chased for my body oil,
   I dread the whalers and their harpoons of iron
   who pursue me without mercy.
   I did not ask to have such a large body.
   Where can I hide from the desires of these men?
   Oh! Lord, that some fortunate dive
   will allow me to emerge into eternal peace.
4. **Prière de la Gazelle** (*Prayer of the Gazelle*)

   Quick, light, my heart surrounded by savage fears,
   everyday ready to spring up in pursuit of the wind,
   at the smallest noise, at the softest cry,
   I bless You, Lord, for not limiting my space.
   So that I may escape on my slender legs
   and bound away like an arrow,
   my little hooves barely touching the ground.
   It is not that I scorn the peace of Your waterhole
   but my life, Lord, will always race along the pathway
   towards the refuge of Your love.

**O DAY FULL OF GRACE** .............................................. arr. F. Melius Christiansen (1871-1955)

**INTERMISSION**

**SING WE MERRILY UNTO GOD OUR STRENGTH** ......................... Martin Shaw (1875-1958)

**SONGS OF THE AURORA** ................................................................. Ėriks Ešenvalds (b. 1977)

1. **Rivers of Light**
   Soloists: Gillian Dockins or Kiana Norman-Slack
   Nathan Robe or Ethan Moon

2. **Northern Lights**
   Soloists: Josh Carlisle or Austin Schend

   **Latvian folk song:**
   Whenever at night, far in the north I saw the kāvi soldiers (Northern Lights)
   having their battle, I was afraid, perhaps they might bring a war to my land too.

**ENJOY THE SILENCE** ................................................................. arr. Eric Whitacre (b. 1970)
   Soloists: Marissa Moultrie or Natalie Breshears

**THREE AMERICAN SONGS**

1. **She'll Be Comin' Round The Mountain** ............................... arr. Emma Lou Diemer (b. 1927)

2. **Hard Times Come Again No More** ........................................ Stephen Foster (1826-1864)
   arr. Craig Hella Johnson (b. 1962)
   Soloists: Cassie Willock, Gillian Dockins, Ethan Wiederspan, Nathan Robe
   or Ally Atwood, Lydia Bill, Dylan Harm, Luke Hartley

3. **Unclouded Day** ................................................................. arr. Shawn Kirchner (b. 1970)

**BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR** ................................................................. arr. F. Melius Christiansen (1871-1955)
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SOPRANO

Ally Atwood Sr. Musical Arts Wenatchee, WA
Natalie Breshears So. Vocal Performance Puyallup, WA
Haley Kim Jr. Vocal Performance Puyallup, WA
Julie Landes Sr. Music Education Lacey, WA
Marissa Moultrie Sr. Vocal Performance/Anthropology Tacoma, WA
Mollie Parce Sr. Vocal Performance Enumclaw, WA
Emily Shane So. Computer Science/Music Bermerton, WA
Cassandra Willock Sr. Vocal Performance Shoreline, WA

ALTO

Lydia Bill Jr. Musical Arts Gig Harbor, WA
Rachel Bridges Fr. Nursing Maple Valley, WA
Gillian Dockins So. Musical Arts Portland, OR
Alicia Hoag Sr. Vocal Performance Normandy Park, WA
Morgan Myers So. Music Education Sammamish, WA
Kiana Norman-Slack Sr. Communication and Theatre Spanaway, WA
Hannah Rausch Sr. Music Education Great Falls, MT
Cat Tyler Fr. Vocal Performance Olalla, WA

TENOR

Daniel Beal Jr. Computer Science Keizer, OR
Joshua Carlisle Jr. Vocal Performance Tacoma, WA
Dylan Harm Sr. Vocal Performance Boise, ID
Logan Kropp So. Music Education Great Falls, MT
Sean Murphy Jr. Computer Science/Music Tacoma, WA
Austin Schend Jr. Music Composition Lakewood, WA
Nicholas Stevens Jr. Vocal Performance Washougal, WA
Ethan Wiederspan So. Computer Science Puyallup, WA
BASS

Karl Eickhoff  So.  Undeclared    Albuquerque, NM
Michael Greer  Jr.  Musical Arts    Tacoma, WA
Luke Hartley  Fr.  Music Education   Newberg, OR
Ethan Moon  Fr.  Undeclared    Honolulu, HI
Nathan Robe  Sr.  Vocal Performance   Vancouver, WA
Aron Roberts  Sr.  Religion    Olympia, WA
Dalton Rouse  Jr.  Music Composition   Puyallup, WA
Manuel Tirado  Sr.  Music Composition   Auburn, WA

Take the Choir of the West home with you this evening!

$15

Recordings are available in the lobby during intermission and following tonight’s concert.

Please keep this program if you wish, or you may return it for use at another concert in the boxes provided in the lobby.
About the University

Pacific Lutheran University is a comprehensive institution with an enrollment of about 3,300, including international students from two dozen countries. Located in a unique scenic region on the Pacific Rim, the university’s campus is 40 miles south of Seattle in suburban Tacoma, Washington. The university offers students a unique blend of academically rigorous liberal arts and professional programs that prepare them for a lifetime of success — both in their careers and in service to others. A full range of liberal arts academic programs are offered — such as psychology, history and the natural sciences — with professional study in the arts and communication, business, education, nursing, social work and physical education. Master’s degrees are offered in five fields. PLU is committed to developing in all students an understanding of the intercultural and intellectual richness of the world. More than 40 percent of students spend time studying abroad.

The Department of Music at PLU is a nationally recognized center for musical learning, serving and sharing. The Mary Baker Russell Music Center, with its exquisite Lagerquist Concert Hall and state-of-the-art rehearsal and learning facilities, brings together talented, cohesive faculty, outstanding students, and enthusiastic audiences to experience the art and industry of music. Every student at PLU who wishes to participate in exciting activities can be accommodated regardless of major. Degree programs include Bachelor of Arts (music and liberal arts), Bachelor of Musical Arts (music combined with an outside field), and Bachelor of Music (in performance or composition). The Bachelor of Music Education is offered for those intending to become music teachers in the public schools.