



PRESS RELEASE

Seattle Pro Musica

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Run through March 5, 2005

SEATTLE PRO MUSICA

Karen P. Thomas, conductor

presents

Libera

Music of Liberation and Peace

Libera features sacred music for choir and organ on the theme of liberation – expressing the desire of humankind to seek social justice and peace. Scottish composer James MacMillan’s riveting *Cantos Sagrados* on Latin American liberation theology poetry addresses contemporary issues of political repression and the “disappearances” of political prisoners in Latin America. His *A Child’s Prayer* was written in response to the tragic killings of a group of children at the Dunblane Primary School in Scotland in 1996. Libby Larsen’s *May Sky* is a beautiful new work set to haiku written by Japanese Americans in the internment camps during WWII. Canadian David MacIntyre’s *Ave Maria* was inspired by the experiences of Bosnian children during the conflicts in the Balkans. Also included are Michael Tippett’s *Spirituals* from *A Child of our Time* and Samuel Barber’s hauntingly beautiful *Agnus Dei*, as well as settings of *By the waters of Babylon* by Palestrina and the 18th-century Russian composer Artemy Vedel.

Seattle Pro Musica, winner of the national 2003 Margaret Hillis Achievement Award for Choral Excellence, is widely considered to be one of the finest ensembles in the Pacific Northwest – American Record Guide ranks it “among America’s very best choirs.” Choir and Organ magazine (Great Britain) writes: “Seattle Pro Musica presents a cappella singing at its best...” Seattle Pro Musica is a resident ensemble of St. James Cathedral.

Friday, March 4, 2005 • 8:15 pm

Saturday, March 5, 2005 • 8:00 pm

St. James Cathedral 9th & Marion, Seattle

General: \$18 advanced purchase reserved passes - \$21 at the door

Seniors: \$13 advanced purchase reserved passes - pay as able at the door

Student: \$10 advanced purchase reserved passes - pay as able at the door

Call (206) 781-2766 for reserved passes or order online at www.seattlepromusica.org

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The program of *Libera* features contemporary works addressing such issues as political repression and the “disappearances” of political prisoners in Latin America, the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, and the experiences of children in war-torn Bosnia. These new works are juxtaposed with pre-20th-century works dealing with the effects of war and oppression. The message of the concert program is one of remembrance, hope and compassion – especially exemplified in such works as Samuel Barber’s *Agnus Dei* and Karen P. Thomas’ setting of the hymn *How can I keep from singing*.

James MacMillan’s *Cantos Sagrados* was premiered in 1990. The composer writes: “In writing this work I wanted to compose something which was both timeless and contemporary...the three poems are concerned with political repression in Latin America and are deliberately coupled with traditional religious texts to emphasize a deeper solidarity with the poor of that sub-continent. The voices in Ariel Dorfman’s poems belong to those who suffer a particular type of political repression: the ‘disappearance’ of political prisoners.” MacMillan’s strongly-held religious and political beliefs coupled with social concerns inform both the spirit and subject matter of his music. Deeply impressed by Latin American liberation theology, he explored ways in which a Roman Catholic faith, socialist sympathies and feelings about homeland could be brought together productively in music, using a directly expressive style.

Libby Larsen’s *May Sky* is based on Haiku poetry written by Japanese-Americans living in American internment camps during World War II. Larsen writes of her thought process in composing *May Sky*: “Our cultures need to talk, not through Beethoven but through our own words! There are things that we can say that we rarely have the opportunity to say to each other... Since I am American, and since the world War II effort in America included the internment of Japanese-Americans, I wanted to facilitate the voices of their poets through this piece, *May Sky*. I decided to compose a work which combines the metric and the non-metric world as a metaphor for free spirit and hope as more powerful than regulation.”

David MacIntyre’s setting of *Ave Maria* was inspired by the experiences of Bosnian children who reported having sightings of the Virgin Mary during the civil war in the 1990’s. MacIntyre was struck by the celebratory, exultant nature of these visitations and the necessity of connecting with the feminine nature of the Divine.

Included on the program are settings of spirituals from Sir Michael Tippett's *A Child of our Time*, an oratorio written between 1938 and 1941 when Nazi persecution of European Jews was assuming genocidal proportions. The story of the oratorio is based on a true story of a young Polish Jew in Paris whose parents were suffering Nazi persecution - in desperation the young boy killed a minor official. Throughout the oratorio Tippett weaves the message that all people must seek within themselves to act with compassion rather than vengeance.