Brush Up Your Shakespeare!

Saturday, October 24, 2020 | 6:30 pm lecture, 7:30 pm concert
Wilmington Public Library

Presented in partnership with Wilmington Public Library, Delaware Shakespeare, and Delaware Humanities.
William Shakespeare needs no introduction. More than four hundred years after his death, his plays are still regularly performed, and much of the English language’s rich lexicon of words and idioms originated from his creative genius. Shakespeare himself made effective use of music - including at least one song in every play - and even broke with tradition by including songs in his tragedies. His works have also provided inspirations for countless composers from their inception to the present day. Our program draws from this rich legacy of musical settings of Shakespeare’s texts, as well as from works inspired by The Bard and his plays.

From Cole Porter’s 1948 musical Kiss Me, Kate comes our concert’s namesake: Brush Up Your Shakespeare. The musical takes a behind-the-scenes look at a production of The Taming of the Shrew, and this comedic number is full of puns and allusions to various Shakespearean plays and characters. The text recommends quoting Shakespeare as the best way to impress ladies, and is sung by two “gangsters,” although they are hardly effective in their attempts to extort money: much like a basso buffo role in a Mozart opera, they provide the comic relief. Also from Kiss Me, Kate comes the solo number I Hate Men which neatly ties into a text from Much Ado About Nothing about the deceit and inconstancy of men: Sigh No More, Ladies.

Fanci is a setting by Benjamin Britten for children’s voices and piano. The text, from The Merchant of Venice, is taken from a scene in which Bassanio, hoping to marry Portia, must choose between a lead, a gold, and a silver casket which one contains her portrait. The song is a disguised clue to help Bassanio choose: “bred,” “head,” and “nourished” all rhyme with “lead.” Britten’s setting gives the text a sense of urgency through the piano’s insistent rhythmic motif, as well as a feeling of ambiguity through the shifting, uncertain tonal centers.

Michael John Trotta’s gorgeous a cappella work Thanks, and Thanks; and Ever Thanks begins with a question, set to a hauntingly beautiful melody: “What song can I sing in thanks for everything? What melody can I bring to respond to everything?” The answer is a rhythmic setting of a single line from Twelfth Night: “I can no other answer make but thanks, and thanks; and ever thanks.” In contrast, Shake It Up, Shakespeare! is pure fun, and is sung (and rapped!) by the Choir School’s music staff to a rockin’ beat.

One important theme of the play As You Like It is cruelty perpetrated by family members: Duke Senior is betrayed by his younger brother, while Orlando is bullied by his older brother. Winter Wind reflects on the fact that sometimes the worst injustices can come from those closest to us. In it, the character Amiens sings of the freezing winter wind, and how it is less cruel than people can be. Brandon Williams effectively evokes the chilling winter wind through swirling, rushing sixteenth note figurations in the piano accompaniment.

This program features several solos, spanning from the earliest musical settings of Shakespeare through iconic art songs of the 19th and 20th centuries. Greensleeves was an exceptionally popular song in Shakespeare’s day, and it is mentioned twice in The Merry Wives of Windsor.

In Act II: “I would have sworn his disposition would have gone to the truth of his words; but they do no more adhere and keep place together than the Hundredth Psalm to the tune of “Green Sleeves.””

And in Act V: “Let the sky rain potatoes; let it thunder to the tune of ‘Green Sleeves.’”

Legend has it that King Henry VIII wrote Greensleeves about his love for Anne Boleyn, but this remains unsubstantiated. Another popular song of the day, Farewell Dear Love was published in a collection of lute songs by Robert Jones in 1600, and is quoted in Twelfth Night. The Anonymous Willow Song published in 1583 is likely the same music which Shakespeare incorporated into Othello twenty years later.
NOTES ON THE PROGRAM (continued)

From British composer Gerald Finzi’s 1942 song cycle for baritone Let Us Garlands Bring come both the dark and dirge-like Come away, come away death, (from Twelfth Night) and the joyful, dancing It was a lover and his lass (from As You Like It). In 5 Ophelia Lieder, Johannes Brahms sets Ophelia’s incoherent delirium from Act IV of Hamlet as a string of short, folksong-like vignettes. According to myth, Franz Schubert wrote the beautiful song An Sylvia (from The Two Gentlemen of Verona) while at a beer garden with friends. The melody suddenly came to Schubert while he was reading a volume of Shakespeare, and he immediately wrote it down on the back of a menu.

Shakespeare’s first 126 Sonnets are lovingly addressed to an unnamed young man, referred to only as the “Fair Youth.” Despite an enormous amount of speculation from scholars, the identity of this muse has never been confirmed. In Sonnet 76, Shakespeare addresses the Fair Youth, asking why his writing remains the same; why he continues to churn out sonnet after sonnet with the same structure, all dedicated to the same object of admiration. Shakespeare goes on to answer his own question: that it is his love for this man that keeps him returning to the same subject again and again. In this setting, Norwegian composer Alfred Janson’s background in jazz is apparent in the intricate rhythms and harmonies. The backbone of this piece is a solo for “Baritone or singing actor,” while the choir interjects and comments on the text much like a Greek chorus.

Perhaps one of Shakespeare’s most recognizable texts in popular culture, Double, Double Toil and Trouble comes from a scene in Macbeth in which three witches, in a dark cavern, circle a cauldron and toss in various grotesque ingredients for their mischievous spell. With a tempo marking of Allegro non troppo ma feroce (fast, but fierce) Finnish composer Jaakko Mäntyjärvi’s setting portrays the witches’ manic enthusiasm through shifting irregular meters and a rhythmic ostinato in the bass.

Written by Gabriel Benton, Collaborative Keyboardist
October, 2020

NEXT UP FROM THE CHOIR SCHOOL OF DELAWARE

Sounds of the Season
Sunday, December 13, 2020
Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library
CHOIR SCHOOL OF DELAWARE
presents

BRUSH UP YOUR SHAKESPEARE

Arreon A. Harley-Emerson - Director of Music & Operations
Brittney L. Stanton - Director of Education & Assistant Conductor
Gabriel Benton - Collaborative Keyboardist

PROGRAM

ACT I

Advice to the Players
Hamlet, Act III, Scene 2
Lex B. (Hamlet)

BRUSH UP YOUR SHAKESPEARE
Kiss Me Kate

FANCIE
The Merchant of Venice, Act III, Scene 2
Treble Choristers

FAREWELL, DEAR LOVE
Twelfth Night, Act II, Scene 3
Destiny M. (Soprano)

THANKS, AND THANKS; AND EVER THANKS
Twelfth Night, Act III, Scene 3
Michael John Trotta

SHAKE IT UP SHAKESPEARE
Choir School of Delaware Staff

AND DRAW HER HOME WITH MUSIC
The Merchant of Venice, Act V, Scene 1
Tenor and Bass Voices

GREENSLEEVES
The Merry Wives of Windsor, Act 5, Scene 5
Arr. Dr. Charles Vincent
Aaliyah G. (Treble), Alice Berry (Alto)

I HATE MEN
Kiss Me Kate
Mary Ott (Soprano)

Beatrice on Men
Much Ado About Nothing, Act II, Scene 1
Mariah Ghant (Beatrice)
Delaware Shakespeare

SIGH NO MORE, LADIES
Much Ado About Nothing, Act II, Scene 3
Treble Voices

Ruth Morris Gray

INTERMISSION
PROGRAM (continued)

ACT II

Noblemen in Exile
*As You Like It*, Act II, Scene 1
Bob Weick (Duke Senior)
Delaware Shakespeare

WINTER WIND
*As You Like It*, Act II, Scene 7
Brandon Williams

WAS IST SYLVIA? ("WHO IS SYLVIA")
*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act IV, Scene 2
Franz Schubert

WILLOW SONG
*Othello*, Act IV, Scene 3
Unknown

A LOVER AND HIS LASS
*As You Like It*, Act 5, Scene 3
Gerald Finzi

COME AWAY DEATH
*Twelfth Night*, Act II, Scene 4
Gerald Finzi

SONNET 76
Varsity Singers and Adult Singers
Alfred Janson

FÜNF OPHELIA LIEDER ("FIVE OPHELIA SONGS")
*Hamlet*, Act IV, Scene 5
Johannes Brahms

SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES
*Macbeth*, Act I, Scene 1
Courtney Bopp (Mezzo-Soprano)

DOUBLE, DOUBLE, TOIL AND TROUBLE
*Macbeth*, Act IV, Scene 1
Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

END
ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

The Choir School of Delaware is a comprehensive, multifaceted, year-round program that has a strong legacy of serving and engaging Wilmington’s youth and families through music and mentoring. The Choir School of Delaware has a long tradition of excellence, training young people to lift their voices and enrich their lives for more than 135 years.

The Choir School provides professional musical training, leadership development, language skills, academic support, and college-bound and career mentoring in an intergenerational environment for youth in Wilmington, Delaware and surrounding regions.

With a history of promoting new music, the Choir School of Delaware recently premiered commissions from Tim Brent and Rollo Dilworth, and performed Missa Brevis by Philip Stopford in master class with the composer in November 2019. The Choir School also collaborates with internationally renowned ensembles such as The Swingles and VOCES8. Last season, the Choir School has partnered with Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library alongside Philip Stopford for a lecture and performance of music written by or for the British Monarchy in A Royal Affair. In March of 2020, the Choir School were featured performers at the American Choral Director’s Association Eastern Division Conference.

For more information about the Choir School of Delaware’s transformative program and 2020-2021 season, please visit www.choirschoolofdelaware.org.

Arreon A. Harley-Emerson, Director of Music and Operations, was appointed to the Choir School of Delaware in June, 2013. In this position, he is responsible for the musical components of the renowned Choir School program as well as the day-to-day operations of the organization.

Arreon began singing with Doreen Falby and the Peabody Conservatory Children’s Chorus at the age of seven, then joined the Columbia Pro Cantare, under the directorship of Frances Dawson. He then returned to the Peabody Children’s Chorus, where he served as a conducting intern for three years.

Arreon graduated with honors from Goucher College in Baltimore, Maryland, with bachelor’s degrees in Music Theory & Composition and Vocal Performance (opera). There he studied piano with Dr. Lisa Weiss, voice with Mrs. Betty Ridgeway, and Conducting with Dr. Elisa Koehler. He received masters of music degrees in Choral Conducting and Vocal Performance from the University of Delaware, where Arreon studied Conducting with Dr. Paul Head and Voice with Dr. Noel Archambeaut.

Arreon has conducted in St. Peter’s (Vatican City), The Kimmel Center for the Arts (Philadelphia) and the Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall (Baltimore). He has sung with Columbia Festival Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Delaware Symphony Orchestra, and Baltimore Opera Company. Arreon is also an avid lover of musical theater and has performed in more than twenty theatrical productions including: *Kiss Me Kate*, *Company*, *Ragtime*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *The Curious Savage*, *Bye Bye Birdie*, *Up the Down Staircase*, *Once Upon a Mattress*, and *Me and My Girl*.


Brittney L. Stanton studied music education with a concentration in choral arts at McDaniel College in Westminster, MD, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Music, magna cum laude. Additionally, Ms. Stanton holds a Master of Science degree in Teaching, also from McDaniel College. Her experience as an educator in a variety of settings has strengthened her abilities to tailor her teaching to individual student needs. As a highly-trained soprano and a dedicated, experienced teacher, her goal is to support students of all ages and abilities in developing strong music literacy skills and a life-long love of the arts.

In 2019, Ms. Stanton began her role at the Choir School of Delaware, where she serves as Director of Education and Assistant Conductor.
ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

Gabriel Benton enjoys a multifaceted career in music as an early music specialist, accompanist, church musician, and educator. Deeply passionate about music of the baroque and earlier eras, he studied harpsichord performance at Oberlin Conservatory and The Juilliard School. As a harpsichordist, he frequently performs with his ensemble Corda Nova Baroque as well as with ensembles across the country, including American Baroque Orchestra (New England) and American Bach Soloists (San Francisco.) With the latter, he has recorded two CD’s.

Past collaborations include Venice Opera Project, Juilliard415, Yale Baroque Opera Project, York Symphony Orchestra, and New World Symphony. Gabriel also has over a decade of experience as a choral accompanist and church musician. He holds a degree in organ performance from Yale University’s Institute of Sacred Music, and is currently organist at Grace United Methodist Church in Wilmington in addition to his role as Collaborative Keyboardist at the Choir School of Delaware.

ABOUT THE SCHOLARS

Kristen Poole received her BA from Carleton College (1989) and her MA and PhD from Harvard University (1991, 1996); she is currently completing a Master’s of Sacred Theology (STM) from the United Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia, specializing in historical theology. Her research focuses on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English literature and culture, with a particular focus on religious history and the history of science. She is the author of two books, Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton: Figures of Nonconformity in Early Modern England (Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Supernatural Environments in Shakespeare’s England: Spaces of Demonism, Divinity, and Drama (Cambridge University Press, 2011). At the undergraduate level she has taught courses on Renaissance Literature, Shakespeare, Queen Elizabeth, early modern women writers, Milton, the history of “Shakespeare,” and literary theory.

Julian Yates received his B.A. (Hons.) in English Language and Literature from St. Anne’s College, Oxford University in 1990 and PhD in English Literature from UCLA in 1996. He specializes in Medieval and Renaissance British Literature, literary theory, material culture studies, and questions of ecology / environmental humanities. He is the author of some thirty five essays on Medieval and Renaissance literature and culture, questions of ecology, the posthuman, and literary theory; and author or editor of four books: Error, Misuse, Failure; Object Lessons from the English Renaissance (Minnesota, 2003), which was a finalist for the Modern Language Association's Best First Book Prize in 2003; What’s the Worst Thing You Can Do To Shakespeare (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), co-authored with Richard Burt; Object-Oriented Environments in Early Modern England (Punctum Books, 2016), co-edited with Jeffrey Jerome Cohen; and Of Sheep, Oranges, and Yeast: A Multispecies Impression (University of Minnesota Press, 2017). He is currently embarked on two projects: a book on Shakespeare’s dramaturgy and contemporary ecologies of refuge titled “Cosmopolitan Shakespeares;” and, with Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, a study of the legacies of Noah’s Ark in contemporary accounts of global warming, Noah’s Arkive: Groundless Reading from the Beginning to the End of Time.
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Nahshon Colon
Aaliyah Griffin-Bowden
Indira Jaikaran
Makeda Livingston
Destiny Maguta
RaaYan Rollins-Walker

Junior Varsity (Intermediate)
Taiylor Nole
Jada Nganga
Arianna Walker

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Rosalee Ayres
Khali Bailey
Khyanne Bailey
Josiah Campbell
Connie Miller
Katelyn Tedesco-Musacchio
Wilson Wardwell

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Mary Ott
Peggy Sacher

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Alice Berry
Joan Bobnick
Courtney Bopp
Linda Emerick
Tabe Mase
Trisha Melton
Jane Moss

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Alex de Aguiar Reuter

Bass
Ross Forney
Erik Potteiger
Benjamin Rowe
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We Tell The Story
Wednesday, June 16, 2021 | 6:00 pm
DuPont Country Club
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100% of elementary and middle school choristers were promoted to the next grade level

90% of Choir School students were determined as reading ready or reading proficient

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98% of students maintain or advance in overall academic studies

0 students expelled from school

0 students entered into the juvenile justice system

Choir School students attend classes 14% more school days than their peers

100% of students participate in wellness and personal development programs offered through a partnership with ChristianaCare and the Choir School

The Choir School of Delaware appeared in the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) Eastern Division conference held in Pittsburgh, PA in 2018 and will appear again at the Rochester, NY conference in 2020. Furthermore, the Choir was invited to perform during an interest session at the 2019 National Conference in Kansas City, MO.
We Tell The Story
2020-2021 Subscription Series

Brush Up Your Shakespeare!
Saturday, October 24, 2020 | 6:30 pm lecture, 7:30 pm concert | VIRTUAL CONCERT
Our virtual season kick off celebrates the genius of William Shakespeare, featuring players from the Delaware Shakespeare ensemble. Join us for a pre-concert lecture exploring Shakespearean text.
Presented in partnership with Wilmington Public Library, Delaware Shakespeare, and Delaware Humanities.

Sounds of the Season
Sunday, December 13, 2020 | 4:00 pm
Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library
We are excited to be Artists-in-Residence with our friends at Winterthur! This concert is sure to warm your heart this holiday season. We will sing the tale of “A Christmas Carol” by Charles Dickens and other traditional favorites.
Admission for subscribers includes Winterthur Yuletide House Tour. Make us a part of your family’s holiday tradition!

Stories of Freedom & Justice
Sunday, February 28, 2021 | 4:00 pm
Grace Episcopal Church
One of Wilmington’s most anticipated annual Black History Month events, our program features poetry from authors of color including Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Gwendolyn Brooks, Langston Hughes and Delaware’s twin poet laureates.

Annual Gala: We Tell The Story
Wednesday, June 16, 2021 | 6:00 pm
DuPont Country Club
Our annual cabaret fundraiser features “We Tell the Story,” a musical theatre revue by Tony Award-winning songwriting duo Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens. Our most anticipated performance of the year, it’s a fun-filled event you won’t want to miss! Proceeds benefit our Annual Fund.

SPECIAL EVENT
Fables, Folklore, & Fairytales*
Sunday, April 25, 2021 | 4:00 pm
Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library
Sure to appeal to every child and child at heart, join us for our second concert as Winterthur’s Artists-in-Residence. You will hear your favorite fables, fairy tales and nursery rhymes, but with a musical twist.
* Please note that this concert is not part of the subscription package.

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