



MIDDLEBURY
PERFORMING ARTS SERIES
P R E S E N T S

Choral Chameleon: Music for Chameleons

FRIDAY, MARCH 3, 2023
MAHANEY ARTS CENTER, ROBISON HALL





CHORAL CHAMELEON

music for chameleons

A Concert Inspired by a Truman Capote Short Story

Choral Chameleon Ensemble

Vince Peterson, Artistic Director

Program

Music for Chameleons

In quoscumque locos **Orlando di Lasso**

The Door **Andrew Maxfield**

Les Chansons des Roses **Morten Lauridsen**

- I. En une seule fleur
- II. Contre qui, rose
- III. De ton rêve trop plein
- IV. La rose complète
- V. Dirait-on

Children of Eden **Stephen Schwartz (arr. Audrey Snyder)**
Alyssa Venora, soloist

Guest House **Edward Thompson**

Pieces of My Heart **Lauren Bydalek**
Molly Rabuffo and Matthew Robbins, soloists

Virtual Insanity **Jamiroquai (arr. Mark Brymer)**

Threads of Joy **Dale Trumbore**

Both Sides Now **Joni Mitchell (arr. Vince Peterson)**
Greta Moorhead, soloist

A replay of this concert is available on demand until 7:30 PM ET on Sunday, March 5 at
<http://go.middlebury.edu/Chameleon-Concert/>

This residency is possible thanks to support from the Paul Nelson Performance Endowment and the Rothrock Family Residency Fund.

A note from Artistic Director, Vince Peterson

During the pandemic shutdown, a meme floating around on social media said: "Things are not getting worse. Things are being uncovered. We must hold each other tightly and continue to pull back the curtain." Around the same time, I found a short story by Truman Capote called "Music for Chameleons." Of course, the title piqued my interest. Reading this short eight-page story reminded me of how forward-thinking, and ahead of his time Capote was. This story, which only has two characters, is nothing but a conversation. The conversation is happening between two people who could not be more different from one another: in race, class, age, gender, interests, and social status.

As one reads the story, there is an increasing understanding for the reader that although certain things are being discussed in a seemingly ordinary manner within this conversation, the actual substance of it is bubbling below in the subtext. This made me think about how we face many long-overdue social reckonings in our shared communities in this era of human civilization. It also made me think about how it's natural for human beings to shy away from difficult conversations: especially about accepting change. We sometimes veil our true feelings and meaning behind what is easier to say aloud. We do this instead of summoning the courage to say what needs to be expressed directly in small, intimate, meaningful conversations. We do this instead of doing what the meme said: "hold each other tightly and continue to pull back the curtain."

I started Choral Chameleon to start a conversation in the concert music and choral music communities: to challenge the status quo, stand up against inequality, and show budding choral musicians in the next generations that they don't have to follow the widely prescribed path often forcibly expected of them in order to be successful in the business of musicking. Now, fifteen years later, I hope we can collectively keep up our momentum as an influential company of artists exploring this extraordinary art form. This program is the beginning of a longer choral soliloquy on this topic. I hope you find it resonant.

Thanks for being here with us this evening!

Texts, Translations, and Program Notes

DI LASSO In quoscumque locos

(translated by Vince Peterson)

In quoscumque locos videam contraria cerno.

Illi nigra placent illi sed displicet album.

*Illa viro mulier vult vivere foedere juncta.
Musica cantores amat et celebratur ad ipsas.
Est incredibilis penitus mutatio rerum
sic breve quod legitur longum pronuntiat ille,
quotquot sunt homines totidem sententiae habentur.*

In whatever places I look, I see opposites.
A person likes black but dislikes white,
A person may want to be united with another forever
(while another may not).
Music loves its singers and is celebrated by them.
It is incredible (to behold) how things profoundly change.
Thus what is complex is overly simplified because
there are as many opinions in the world as there are people.

MAXFIELD The Door
Poem by Miroslav Holub
(translated by Ian Milner)

Go and open the door.
 Maybe outside there's
 a tree, or a wood,
 a garden, or a magic city.

Go and open the door.
 Maybe a dog's rummaging.
 Maybe you'll see a face,

or an eye,
or the picture
 of a picture.

Go and open the door.
 If there's a fog
 it will clear.

Go and open the door.

Even if there's only
the darkness ticking,
even if there's only
the hollow wind,
even if
nothing
is there,
go and open the door.

At least
there will be
a draft.

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"Go," says Miroslav Holub, "and open the door." Go where? Open which door? To my ears, Holub's playful text is an invitation – maybe even a good-natured dare – for us to open ourselves to the unknown and unfamiliar. Sure, he teases us with some whimsical imagery – maybe there's a magic city or a rummaging dog on the other side of the door – but he leads us to a profound realization: even if "nothing" is there, it's still worth opening the door, if only to let in the breeze. Even though we live in a hyperconnected era that can bring us into contact with just about anyone or anything, it's easy tacitly to dismiss "unfamiliar" as bad. We do it all the time with "othered" people and ways of living, even "other" countries. To the extent that a certain fearful mania grips so many people these days, let's fight back, if for no other reason than our own sanity and joy, by opening the door!

Also, there's a certain jauntiness in the text. It's fun, it's mysterious, it's as cheerful as it is urgent. I wanted to mirror those qualities in the shifting moods and colors of the music. There are Gospel- and Appalachia-inspired shouty bits and there quiet, pondering, foggy bits. All in all, the theme of "going" and "opening" guided my design decisions. Finally, given the playful spirit of (the English translation of) Holub's text, I gave myself permission to be playful with the sounds of the words themselves, like stretching and contorting the diphthong "eye" (ah-ee) and playing up the fact that the interior "f" of draught/draft (breeze) actually sounds like a draft if you let it!

– Andrew Maxfield

LAURIDSEN Les Chansons des Roses
Poems by Rainer Maria Rilke
(translated by Barbara and Erica Muhl)

I. En une seule fleur

It is we, perhaps, who proposed
that you replenish your bloom.
Enchanted by this charade,
your abundance dared.

You were rich enough to fulfill
yourself a hundred times over in a single flower;
such is the state of one who loves ...
But you never did think otherwise.

II. Contre qui, rose

Against whom, rose,
have you assumed
these thorns?
Is it your too fragile joy
that forced you
to become this
armed thing?

But from whom does it protect you,
this exaggerated defense?
How many enemies have I
lifted from you
who did not fear it at all?
On the contrary, from summer to autumn
you wound the affection
that is given you.

III. De ton rêve trop plein

Overflowing with your dream,
flower filled with flowers,
wet as one who weeps,
you bow to the morning.

Your sweet powers which still are sleeping
in misty desire,
unfold these tender forms
joining cheeks and breasts.

IV. La rose complète

I have such awareness of your
being, perfect rose,
that my will unites you
with my heart in celebration.

I breathe you in, rose, as if you were
all of life,
and I feel the perfect friend
of a perfect friend.

V. Dirait-on

Abandon surrounding abandon,
tenderness touching tenderness ...
Your oneness endlessly
caresses itself, so they say;

self-caressing
through its own clear reflection.
Thus you invent the theme
of Narcissus fulfilled.

In addition to his vast output of German poetry, Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) wrote nearly 400 poems in French. His poems on roses struck me as especially

charming, filled with gorgeous lyricism, deftly drafted and elegant in their imagery. These exquisite poems are primarily light, joyous and playful, and the musical settings are designed to enhance these characteristics and capture their delicate beauty and sensuousness. Distinct melodic and harmonic materials recur throughout the cycle, especially between Rilke's poignant "Contre qui, rose" (set as a wistful nocturne) and his moving "La rose complète". The final piece "Dirait-on" is composed as a tuneful chanson populaire, or folksong, that weaves together two melodic ideas first heard in fragmentary form in preceding movements.

—Morten Lauridsen

SCHAWRTZ Children of Eden
Lyrics by Stephen Schwartz

Like this brief day
My light is nearly gone
But through the night
My children you will go on
You will know heartache
Prayers that don't work
And times of bitter circumstances
But I still believe in second chances

Children of Eden
Where have we left you
Born to uncertainty
Destined for pain
Sins of your parents
Haunt you and test you
This your inheritance
Fire and rain

Children of Eden
Try not to blame us
We were just human to error prone
Children of Eden will you reclaim us
You and your children to come

Someday you'll come home
Children of eden
Where is our garden
Where is the innocence
We can't reclaim
Once eyes are opened
Must those eyes harden
Lost in the wilderness
Must we remain

Oh my precious children
If you think of us try not to blame us
We were just human to error prone
Children of Eden you will reclaim us
You and your children to come
Someday you'll come home

THOMPSON Guest House
Poem by Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

BYDALEK Pieces of My Heart
Poem by Lauren Bydalek

I have left pieces of my heart
All across the world
And I have been working my whole life
Just to leave where I've come from

Searching for answers
To the questions I didn't know
Craving freedom
From the black and white routine

Some have the path fall before them
Some are caught, entangled
Venturing to make a way
In a journey not foreseen

And now that I've wandered a distance away
I don't even know where I'd go
Besides the places that I've been
Or the one that I call home

Taking for granted
The wide open spaces
Ignoring the sky
Brimming with kaleidoscope sunsets

I have left pieces of my heart
All across the world
But they're not left in the places I've been
They're with the people I've met

The inspiration for this piece came out of a period of major transitions in my life. The lyrics tell a story of where I've been and my relationship to where I grew up. When I was young, I always wanted to leave Nebraska, but over the years, I've come to appreciate it more and more. I had taken for granted the simplistic beauty of the plains of the midwest. Beyond that, I've come to realize home isn't as much a place as it is a feeling. I truly believe I've left a little of myself with everyone who I have connected with over the years.

– Lauren Bydalek

JAMIROQUAI Virtual Insanity
Lyrics by Jamiroquai

Yeah, it's a wonder man can eat at all
When things are big that should be small
Who can tell what magic spells we'll be doing for us
And I'm giving all my love to this world
Only to be told
I can't see, I can't breathe
No more will we be

And nothing's gonna change the way we live
'Cause we can always take, but never give
And now that things are changing for the worse, see
Whoa, it's a crazy world we're living in
And I just can't see that half of us immersed in sin
Is all we have to give these

Futures made of virtual insanity, now
Always seem to be governed by this love we have
For these useless, twisting, of our new technology
Oh, now there is no sound, for we all live underground

And I'm thinking what a mess we're in
Hard to know where to begin
If I could slip the sickly ties that earthly man has made
And now every mother can choose the color
Of her child, that's not nature's way

Well, that's what they said yesterday
There's nothing left to do, but pray
I think it's time to find a new religion
Whoa, it's so insane
To synthesize another strain
There's something in these futures
That we have to be told

Futures made of virtual insanity...

TRUMBORE Threads of Joy
Poem by Laura Foley

I have noticed joy
how it threads below
the darkness.
Have you seen it too?
And have you heard it,
how it speaks
the unspeakable,
the bliss?
A kind of silence, a light
beneath pain.
Have you noticed?
It rises like fingers
and then—look!
it presses through.

I've always loved when songs about happiness are set in a minor key — think Nina Simone singing “Feeling Good” — and the harmonic language acknowledges that we can't have joy without recognizing its opposite.

Threads of Joy has similar undertones, and this setting of Laura Foley's text by the same name is not just an exultation of happiness. Rather, it recognizes how we emerge from darkness and pain back into light, and the music captures this duality in ever-shifting, prismatic harmonies.

Threads of Joy was commissioned by the Hopkins High School Concert Choir (Philip Brown, conductor). This score is published in Hal Leonard's Mark Foster Series.

—Dale Trumbore

MITCHEL Both Sides Now
Lyrics by Joni Mitchell

Rows and flows of angel hair
And ice cream castles in the air
And feather canyons everywhere
I've looked at clouds that way

But now they only block the sun
They rain and they snow on everyone
So many things I would have done
But clouds got in my way

I've looked at clouds from both sides now
From up and down and still somehow
It's cloud illusions I recall
I really don't know clouds at all

Moons and Junes and Ferris wheels
The dizzy dancing way that you feel
As every fairy tale comes real
I've looked at love that way

But now it's just another show
You leave 'em laughing when you go
And if you care, don't let them know
Don't give yourself away

I've looked at love from both sides now
From give and take and still somehow
It's love's illusions I recall
I really don't know love at all

Tears and fears and feeling proud
To say, "I love you" right out loud
Dreams and schemes and circus crowds
I've looked at life that way

But now old friends are acting strange
They shake their heads, they say I've changed
Something's lost, and something's gained
In living every day

I've looked at life from both sides now
From win and lose and still somehow
It's life's illusions I recall
I really don't know life at all

About the Artists

Choral Chameleon Ensemble

Mi Na Shin, Soprano
Alyssa Venora, Soprano
Michelle Coladonato, Soprano
Molly Rabuffo, Soprano
Annie Beliveau, Alto
Mariko Watt, Alto
Kelly Baxter Golding, Alto
Greta Moorhead, Contralto
Matthew Robbins, Tenor
Kameron Ghanavati, Tenor
Matthew Finkel, Tenor
Alex McCoy, Tenor
Ari Messenger, Baritone
Keith Sisterhenm, Baritone
Richard Berg, Bass-Baritone
Jared Graveley, Bass



Choral Chameleon is a next-gen choral music company championing new music and embracing immersive performance with visual art, movement, taste, texture and more. Its interdisciplinary artistic collaborations invite all to take part and experience the shared human connections of music.

Composed of a professional ensemble, a chorus of avocational and professional singers, and an Institute for composers and conductors of choral music, Choral Chameleon is on a mission to reinvent and broaden the boundaries of choral music to create new possibilities with the artistic community at large.

Since its inception, Choral Chameleon has premiered 250+ original compositions and arrangements. Exploring the connections between choral music and the arts has led to new musical motifs, like the blending of an Indian raga with John Mayer's classic Bigger Than My Body, and new appreciations of well-known songs, like Sting's Fragile.

Founder and artistic director Vince Peterson was the 2018 recipient of the Chorus America Louis Botto Award for Innovation and Entrepreneurial Zeal. Choral Chameleon was the 2015 recipient of Chorus America/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming. And the ensemble was honored to be the first (2017-2018) Artist Group in Residence at National Sawdust. It is one of the only choral music organizations in New York City to be directly funded by The National Endowment for the Arts.

Vince Peterson, Artistic Director, is a respected choral conductor, composer, and teacher of music in the United States. His 20-year hybrid career spans the worlds of choral music, theater, sacred music, and music education. He has, however, established himself most prominently in the world of choral music, notably having founded the "shape-shifting" vocal ensemble Choral Chameleon in 2008. Across his work, he is responsible for presenting nearly 300 premieres of new choral and theater music in the last fifteen years and has won critical acclaim in The New York Times, Time Out New York, The New York Concert Review, I Care If You Listen, The Examiner, and other publications. He is also a recipient of the prestigious ASCAP/Chorus America Award for Adventurous Programming.

In 2003, Peterson earned the BM in Composition from San Francisco Conservatory of Music under the tutelage of celebrated composer Conrad Susa. He has also studied composition with David Conte, Elinor Armer, and Philip Lasser. In 2007, he earned a Double MM in Composition and Choral Conducting from Mannes College of Music where he studied under

pioneer conductor, Mark Shapiro as well as composer David Loeb. Upon receipt of his Master's Degree, he was awarded the singular Music Teacher's League Award for 2007.

As a prolific arranger, Peterson has received seven commissions to date from the multi-Grammy® Award-winning ensemble Chanticleer, whose YouTube videos of his work have garnered over half a million views. Several of his choral arrangements and original compositions have become staples for choirs across the United States. Distinguished performance venues include Chicago Symphony Hall, San Francisco's War Memorial Opera House, Bartok National Concert Hall in Budapest, New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Carnegie Hall, among others.

A recognized thought-leader in the music world, The New York Times called Peterson "authoritative beyond his... years," and The Brooklyn Eagle praised his work as "a stunning symphony of the spiritual and secular," while hailing him as a solo performer "with depth and vigor" who "provided a universal context which resonated with his audience."

In 2018, Vince was awarded the Louis Botto Award for Innovative Action and Entrepreneurial Zeal by Chorus America, a lifetime distinction he shares with only fifteen of the most influential choral musicians in the United States.

He has been Artistic Director of Empire City Men's Chorus since 2014, and led the group through its 25th Anniversary Season.

<http://choralchameleon.com>



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Middlebury College sits on land which has served as a site of meeting and exchange among indigenous peoples since time immemorial. The Western Abenaki are the traditional caretakers of these Vermont lands and waters, which they call Ndakinna, or "homeland."

We remember their connection to this region and the hardships they continue to endure.

We give thanks for the opportunity to share in the bounty of this place and to protect it.