

I Should be Glad | Music Created by Women

Eastern Illinois University Choral Ensembles, Howard Eckdahl, Director

Camerata is Eastern's small mixed ensemble that specializes in contemporary and early music. Today's set is a collection of musical fusions with jazz, offering takes on facets of amorous fusions, for better or worse. We make our way from soft rock to folk to country to samba in this set that displays Camerata's virtuosity and expressive range. Michele Weir is our featured arranger: a pianist, singer and collaborator known for her outsized impact on quality writing for jazz education, and her devotion to her craft and her students. She teaches at UCLA.

James, arranged by Michele Weir, is a tune from the Pat Metheny Group's 1981 album *Offramp* and is dedicated to James Taylor; it is one of Matheny's more popular tunes. The tune stays securely in the harmonic realm of popular rock with a dusting of extended tertian harmony (with a split sonority or two) in this arrangement by Michele Weir. *James* opens Camerata's set and features solos by Alana Dove and Brian George.

Kate Janzen's beautiful arrangement of **Scarborough Fair** takes us to the eastern coast of northern England, where this folk tune describes a former lover laying out a series of impossible tasks for a girl to complete before becoming "a true love of mine" (we don't think she has much of a chance). Janzen takes us through two modulations, meter changes, and multiple iterations of unresolved harmony in a sensitive expression of the text's utter impossibility.

*Are you going to Scarborough Fair?
Parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme
Remember me to one who lives there
She once was a true love of mine*

*Tell her to make me a cambric shirt
Parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme
Without no seams nor needle work
Then she'll be a true love of mine*

*Tell her to find me an acre of land
Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme
Between the salt water and the sea strands
Then she'll be a true love of mine*

*Tell her to reap it with a sickle of leather
Parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme
And gather it all in a bunch of heather
Then she'll be a true love of mine.*

Crazy, made into a country standard by Patsy Cline's iconic 1961 recording, responds to the antagonism of the singer in *Scarborough Fair* and describes the frustration with oneself for hanging on too long to a superficial lover. Michele Weir's arrangement escalates the poignancy with close jazz harmonies and rhythmic homophonic swells contrasted with glimpses of counterpoint. *Crazy* was originally written by none other than Willie Nelson who was, at the time, still clean-cut and undiscovered in Nashville writing songs for others. Chris Andrus is our soloist.

*Crazy – I'm crazy for feeling so lonely
I'm crazy – crazy for feeling so blue
I knew you'd love me as long as you wanted
And then someday you'd leave me
for somebody new.*

*Worry – Why do I let myself worry?
Wondering what in the world did I do?
Oh, crazy – for thinking that my love could hold you
I'm crazy for trying and crazy for crying
And I'm crazy for loving you.*

Camerata closes their set with Michele Weir's samba bop on Duke Ellington's **I'm Beginning to See the Light**. Weir blends, in her words, "funky" and "relaxed" samba grooves to reflect the changes in the song's revelatory lyrics. The setting features quick, syncopated interjections of harmony from the choir and rotates through a cast of small solos throughout.

*I never cared much for moonlit skies
I never winked back at fireflies
But now that the stars are in your eyes
I'm beginning to see the light*

*I never went in for afterglow
Or candlelight on the mistletoe
But now when you turn the lamp down
low – I'm beginning to see the light*

*Used to ramble through the park
Shadowboxing in the dark
Then you came and caused a spark
That's a four-alarm fire now*

University Chorus is performing music by another featured creator, **Elaine Hagenberg**. Hagenberg is a composer who is taking the choral world by storm with her gorgeous music that sets beautiful poetry thoughtfully and expressively. About the first piece, **Oh, Think of Me**, she writes:

The simple beauty of a sunrise, a summer breeze, or evening stars can evoke memories of a loved one. “Oh, Think of Me” was inspired by a poem by Frances Anne Kemble to honor the life of fourteen-year-old Joshua Becker. Although the dissonances may remind us of the heartache of saying goodbye, the resolutions and ascending piano lines uplift the soul and return our thoughts to memories of joy.

*When the dawn o'er hill and dale
Throws her bright veil,
Oh, think of me!*

*When the laugh with silver sound
Goes echoing round,
Oh, think of me!*

*When the earth sleeping sound
Swings round and round,
Oh, think of me!*

*When the rain with starry showers
Fills all the flowers,
Oh, think of me!*

*When the wind sweeps along,
Loud and strong,
Oh, think of me!*

*When the night with solemn eyes
Looks from the skies,
Oh, think of me!*

As the Rain Hides the Stars sets a Gaelic text about enduring dark times with the support of another.

Desolate and uncertain, the dissonant opening piano motifs evoke an image of dismal rain on stark hills. As the text portrays one who is lost and searching for clarity, voices weave and wander, yearning for direction. Then, with the transition to C minor, the piano creates churning triplets of longing and unrest; but at last, [the music] resolves in hope. As the clouds finally part, the sun shines clearly for the first time. The voices enter softly, but with assurance, eventually proclaiming together in confident unison: “Though I may stumble in my going, you do not fall.”

*As the rain hides the stars,
as the autumn mist hides the hills,
as the clouds veil the blue of the sky,
so the dark happenings of my lot*

*hide your shining face from me.
Yet, if I may hold your hand in the darkness,
It is enough, it is enough
though I may stumble in my going, you do not fall.*

Shadow River offers an energetic setting of E. Pauline Johnson's poem of the same name from *Flint in Feather* (1912). Johnson was a Canadian poet of indigenous Mohawk and English descent, and her writings celebrated that heritage. Her voice helped define the identity of Canadian literature. Hagenberg writes:

E. Pauline Johnson's writings are especially striking to me with her dramatic and rich portrayals of nature. In Shadow River, her vivid depiction of a river on a warm midsummer's day is alive with texture and emotion as she contemplates life, love, and her dreams for the future.

*A stream of tender gladness, Of filmy sun, and opal tinted skies;
Of warm midsummer air that lightly lies
In mystic rings, where softly swings
The music of a thousand wings
that almost tones to sadness.
Mine is the undertone; The beauty,
strength, and power of the land*

*Will never stir or bend at my command;
But all the shade is marred or made,
If I but dip my paddle blade;
and it is mine alone.
Midway 'twixt earth and heaven,
A bubble in the pearly air I seem
To float upon the sapphire floor, a dream
Of clouds of snow, above, below,*

*Drift with my drifting, dim and slow,
As twilight drifts to even.
For others fame
and love's red flame,
and yellow gold:
I only claim
the shadows and the dreaming.*

Melissa Dunphy's **Grown Wild** sets text by Melissa Apperson that explores our development and growth. It features independent lines and many striking dissonances as the voices weave together the texture.

*You conjured springtime,
leaf by leaf you brought the girl
and wrapped her in a blue day
and gave her to me*

*Months, years, hear me:
I love this girl, her tendril touch
and climbing dreams, her willingness*

*I'm not her mother, though
I am not the luxurious meadow
We are one, the girl and I, like sky
Grown up – grown wild*

Concert Choir offers music from the rich heritage of unaccompanied choral singing, beginning with a musical evocation of the places such singing has its roots: in the magnificent churches of Europe. “*a Capella*” is an Italian term that translates to “of the chapel” and refers to the tradition of the human voice being the only medium through which music should be heard in a sacred ritual. All of this goes back to the deepest roots of western music, Gregorian chant, and the styles that came from centuries of incremental developments in sacred music. We have artifacts of this ancient music in the form of manuscripts; of special note are the extravagant and beautiful illuminated manuscripts which have visual art decorating the neumes that codified the music of western culture. Caroline Mallonée’s **Light Through Windows** celebrates the beauty found within this culture, from east-facing windows newly ablaze with color in the morning, to elaborately gilded manuscripts, to architecture that has resonated the voices of centuries of choral singers.

*Hushed, grey, a tall cathedral,
Washed in faint morning light.
Day breaks through mullioned windows,
Brushing away the night.*

*Light through windows;
Light through stained-glass windows*

*Tales cast and retold in shades of scarlet
Silver, sky-blue, sea-green, sage
Sun-dappled rose, russet and gold
Revelation in the nave.*

*On a lecture lie scores of sacred music:
Neumes, breves, calligraphy
Rimmed in red, glistening with gold,
Recitation on the page.
Gold on parchment
Gold on ecru parchment*

*Light floods the floor as sunbeams stream in,
Cascading across stone walls
Arches, Apse, and pillars glow: ‘Lux Aeterna’
Like a manuscript gilded, the church is resplendent.
Stories and windows illuminated.*

I Should be Glad is the title piece of the program and celebrates the musical and literary creatives that made the art we are performing today. It sets the poem *Compensation* by Sara Teasdale. Susan LaBarr writes:

Commissioned in honor of the 60th anniversary of the Texas Choral Directors Association, *I Should Be Glad* is a work that attempts to capture the gratitude that many of us feel as we live and work as artists. The poem expresses the sentiment that our hard work is worth the long hours if it means that we are able to put art into the world and make a difference in the lives of others. The introduction of the melodic theme is composed with a simple two-part duet between the upper and lower voices. This simple sound expresses the feeling of loneliness and isolation that we can sometimes feel in our work. It also offers the opportunity to relish in the simple beauty of singing in only two parts - something that we don't often do as adult singers, but that can be quite stunning. In the repetition of the melodic theme, the work expands into four parts, symbolizing how music grows and changes as we touch more and more singers and audience members. Finally, in the second section, we indulge in seven-to eight-part singing. The sopranos remain mostly in unison, to allow the melody to always be prominent over the lower, accompaniment voices. The composition ends with a quiet, prayer-like section on the text, “I should be glad.”

*I should be glad of loneliness
And hours that go on broken wings,
A thirsty body, a tired heart
And the unchanging ache of things,*

*If I could make a single song
As lovely and as full of light,
As hushed and brief as a falling star
On a winter night.*

Edie Hill's **Dog From Duluth** was commissioned by Nancy Menk and the South Bend Chamber Singers. It is a piece that celebrates a truth many of us know: there is little more endearing than a dog's eyes meeting yours and the feeling of trust and adoration that is apparent behind their gaze. Edie Hill writes:

In the late 1990s, I walked into a pet store to purchase dog food for my German Shepherd, Louie. I left with dog food and a new friend for Louie. Gobi was found roaming the streets of Duluth, MN and he was up for adoption at the pet store. I adopted him on the spot, grabbed the food and our family was one being bigger. In 2010 I wrote this text as a journal entry while watching my sweet Gobi follow me with his soft brown eyes. He was in his last days and I had a commission to compose a piece about dogs or cats for the South Bend Chamber Singers. I took the opportunity to write "Dog From Duluth," celebrating Gobi and rejoicing in the precious, innocent spirits that are our animals.

*Innocent, pure, Pure innocence.
Warm soft eyes
Follow me everywhere.
Nose, tail, paw,
Dog from Duluth*

*In your youth
You shredded newspaper!
Nose, tail, paw, ear, heartbeat.
Beautiful creatures that come and go
So quickly...*

Hark, I Hear the Harps Eternal is a treasured piece of the *a Capella* singing tradition. Arranged by Alice Parker, who was the famed arranger-in-residence for the Robert Shaw Chorale, it is a masterclass in making art out of a simple shape note melody. The choral texture begins in a standard arrangement, then reduces before developing into a canonic and sophisticated rhythmic exuberance of anticipated celestial joy.

*Hark I hear the harps eternal
ringing on the farther shore
As I near those swollen waters
with their deep and solemn roar*

*Hallelujah, praise the lamb
Hallelujah, glory to the great I am.*

*And my soul though stained with sorrow,
fading as the light of day;
Passes swiftly o'er those waters
to the city far away*

*Souls have crossed before me saintly
to that land of perfect rest
And I hear them singing faintly
in the mansions of the blest*

To close the concert, we turn again to Elaine Hagenberg, this time with her **Measure Me, Sky**, which is sung by the combined choirs and features Ethan Hayward on piano. Hagenberg writes:

Poetry is often the inspiration for the music I compose. Each piece begins by carefully studying the words, speaking the rhythms, and listening for melodies that will help to convey a story. I want singers and audiences alike to see themselves inside the music—guided by the melodies and the text as one. The effect of the poetry in Measure Me, Sky! is instantaneous. It's as if one's arms have been cast wide, and their eyes turned to the heavens to take in the expanse both around and above. By opening with accented arpeggios that immediately rise into billowing triplet figures, I wanted to launch singers into flight and invite listeners into the same breathless exclamation. I was also inspired to learn that Leonora Speyer first started writing poetry in her forties—not as a young girl. By composing an ascending key change for the final refrain, a new harmonic world is revealed, calling us to venture into the unknown to discover our limitless potential.

*Measure me, sky!
Tell me I reach by a song
Nearer the stars;
I have been little so long.
Horizon, reach out!*

*Catch at my hands,
stretch me taut,
Rim of the world:
Widen my eyes by a thought.*

*Sky, be my depth,
Wind, be my width
and my height,
World, my heart's span;
Loveliness, wings for my flight.*