

choral works of
MICHAEL G. CUNNINGHAM
KÜHN CHOIR | MAREK VORLÍČEK, CONDUCTOR

WISDOM LOVE ETERNITY

n Navona
Records

FINE MUSIC

A PSALM OF LIFE Opus 138, No.1 (1988)

This is the first of a suite of five pieces in the collection *The Poet's Book of Wisdom*. The poetry is by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Each of the poems seems more about advice in good living, rather than in elusive poetic allusion. Each poem has a "word musicality" that invites an actual musical setting.

COME, HOLY SPIRIT Opus 67a (1975)

The text is from the Catholic Liturgy, and is one of seven or so sequences left in the Liturgy by the Council of Trent in the 1500's. It is used during Pentecost, and is sometimes called the Golden Sequence. This version does not use the melodic double-versicles found in the ancient form. Here there is a clear harmonic plan with 20th-century lines that move and "bump" against one another dissonantly. So in order to assist the singers, the lines are reinforced instrumentally, as was common in the Medieval and Renaissance periods.

GNOSIS Opus 38 (1970) (Women's chorus)

If any poem in this collection touches on eternity it is this one from the 1800's C.P. Cranch. Again and again the text reminds the reader of the impermanence of life. Each line tries to connect and interpret daily experiences and feelings with higher, long-term meaning. Since the word gnosis means mystical knowledge, the implication is that answers to man's insecurities and anxieties are to remain unanswered and pondered in a timeless, unyielding continuum.

SHALL I COMPARE THEE? Opus 188 (1997)

This is, of course, one of Shakespeare's more favored Sonnets. In it the author seems to reassure the reader that the insecurities and anxieties alluded to in *Gnosis* (above) are assuaged, if not completely eliminated through the possible love of one individual for another.

THE NIGHTINGALE Opus 7d (1964) (Women's chorus)

The text is an anonymous translation of *Sonnet 43* by the 1300's poet, Francesco Petrarch. The high emotional content seems to minimize the passing of some 600 years. In order to create a sense of bird-like chatter and flight, the singers are frequently used in an almost instrumental manner.

TO DAFFODILS Opus 76 (1976)

Robert Herrick's never-dying poem from the 1600's also expresses the same concerns found in the above *Gnosis*. Here there is perhaps an even greater emphasis on the brevity of life, but with a certain reliance on the comfort of prayer.

POSIES Opus 139 (1988)

These four poems by Scottish poet Robert Burns (1759-96) were set to music that uses the harp as accompaniment. As is shown in a few of his poems, Burns might qualify as one of the most passionate of poets. Even though 220 years old, these verses come to life with universal imagery and emotion. In his short 37 years, Burns was able to pass along quite a bit of human feeling.

ANALECTS Opus 288 (2014)

Here are eight brief poems (1500s to 1900s), each by a different poet. In musical order, they are Sir Walter Raleigh, Francis Quarles, Edger Allan Poe, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, John Banister Tabb, Francis William Bourdillon, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and Robert Frost. The topics, sometimes humorous, range from time, love, mind or memory, death, life, and solitude.

THE WEST WIND Opus 17 (1961/2015)

The music for this score was composed in 1961. The text for this particular version uses portions of P. B. Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*. This score employs section whispering.

MEMORIAL CONCERT MASS Opus 287 (2014)

A Mass for the dead need not be called a Requiem, especially when, as in this Mass, the Dies Irae is not used. Here the standard Mass sections ("Kyrie," "Sanctus/Benedictus," and "Agnus Dei") are used, along with propers from an older version of the rite that were originally sung and spoken. "The Lord's Prayer" and the "Great Amen" are also interpolated. While the "Kyrie" here is quite joyous, the other sections become increasingly solemn and staid. The final section attempts to express the inexpressible.



MICHAEL G. CUNNINGHAM was born in Warren MI in 1937 and holds music degrees from Wayne State University, the University of Michigan, and Indiana University. After limited teaching appointments at four different universities, he remained Professor of Theory and Composition at the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire from 1973 to 2006. Information on his various music theory and composition textbooks can be found on his website:

www.scoredreamer.com

Since 1958 Cunningham has created a large catalog of various types of music for all manner of performer combinations and situations. Four previous albums of orchestral works performed by European orchestras are currently available from Navona Records: **PARAGONIA**, **SONIC FLIGHT**, **COLONNADE**, and **GALLERY**.

**All tracks recorded at the Prague Academy,
in Prague, Czech Republic**

Tracks 1, 3, 4 & 11-18

recorded October 30, 2014

Session Producer: Bob Lord

Session Engineer: Aleš Dvořák

Track 2 recorded June 18, 2012

Session Producer: Vít Micka

Session Engineer: Aleš Dvořák

Track 5 recorded June 19, 2012

Session Producer: Vít Micka

Session Engineer: Aleš Dvořák

Tracks 6 & 20-29 April 15, 2015

Session Producer & Engineer: Aleš Dvořák

Tracks 7-10 recorded November 24, 2012

Session Producer: Vít Micka

Session Engineer: Aleš Dvořák

Track 19 recorded June 16, 2015

Session Producer: Ondřej Urban

Session Engineer: Aleš Dvořák

Executive Producer: Bob Lord

Audio Director: Jeff LeRoy

Recording Session Manager: Matt Konrad

Editing, Mixing: Shaun Michaud

Mastering: Nate Hunter, Shaun Michaud

Production Engineer: Nate Hunter

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Choral works of Michael G. Cunningham

Kühn Choir | Marek Vorlíček, conductor on all tracks

- 1 **A PSALM OF LIFE** HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW 5:06
- 2 **COME HOLY, SPIRIT** 4:04
Kateřina Čermáková; Josef Jarábek; Nela Durníková;
and Veronika Hofmanová, clarinets
- 3 **GNOSIS** CHRISTOPHER PEARSE CRANCH 4:35
- 4 **SHALL I COMPARE THEE?** WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE 3:46
- 5 **THE NIGHTINGALE** FRANCESCO PETRARCH 4:43
Jaroslav Šaroun, piano; Alena Hellerová, soprano soloist;
Michaela Šrůmová, soprano soloist
- 6 **TO DAFFODILS** ROBERT HERRICK 5:09
- POSIES** ROBERT BURNS
Hana Müllerová-Jouzová, harp
- 7 **THE WINTER IS PAST** 3:06
- 8 **A RED, RED ROSE** 2:39
- 9 **ON SENSIBILITY** 2:29
- 10 **THE LAZY MIST** 3:37

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ANALECTS

- 11 **EVEN SUCH IS TIME** SIR WALTER RALEIGH 0:59
- 12 **ON THE WORLD** FRANCIS QUARLES 0:57
- 13 **TO ONE IN PARADISE** EDGAR ALLAN POE 1:28
- 14 **MEMORY** THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH 0:53
- 15 **EVOLUTION** JOHN BANISTER TABB 0:51
- 16 **THE NIGHT HAS A THOUSAND EYES** FRANCIS WILLIAM BOURDILLON 0:52
- 17 **LIFE** PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR 1:22
- 18 **ACQUAINTED WITH THE NIGHT** ROBERT FROST 1:45
- 19 **THE WEST WIND** PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY 5:17

MEMORIAL CONCERT MASS

- 20 **INTROIT** 1:45
- 21 **KYRIE** 1:23
- 22 **COLLECT** 1:33
- 23 **GRADUAL / TRACT** 1:23
- 24 **OFFERTORY** 1:36
- 25 **SECRET** 0:37
- 26 **SANCTUS** 1:43
- 27 **THE GREAT AMEN** 0:24
- 28 **THE LORD'S PRAYER** 1:35
- 29 **AGNUS DEI** 2:25
- 30 **CLOSING PRAYERS** 2:22



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