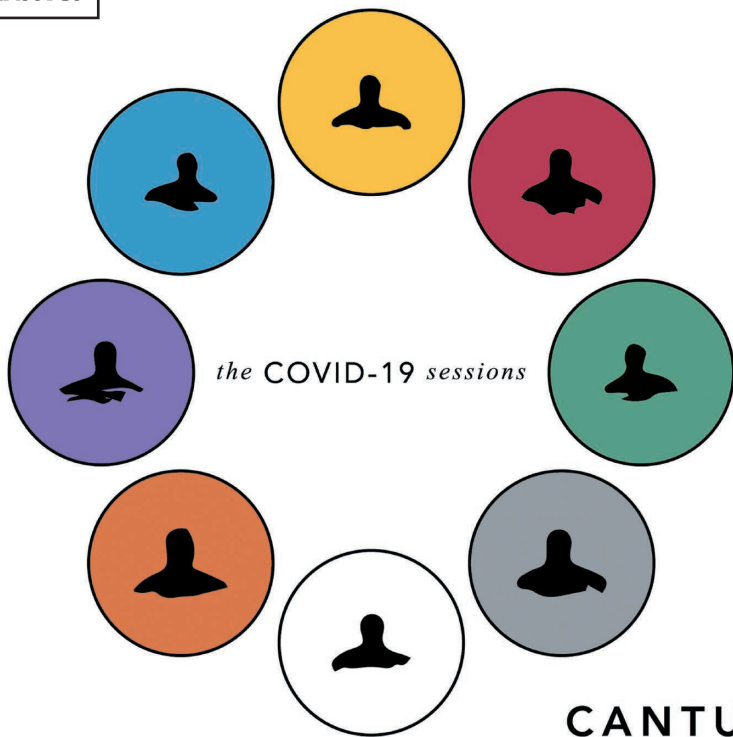


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THE COVID-19 SESSIONS

1	Finlandia	Jean Sibelius	[2.38]
2	Darest, O Soul	Mari Esabel Valverde	[3.07]
3	Sunayama	Shinpei Nakayama, arr. Jacob Christopher	[3.14]
4	Steal Away	Traditional, arr. Stacey V. Gibbs	[4.08]
5	Gryning vid havet	Hugo Alfvén	[4.23]
6	Shenandoah	Traditional, arr. Marshall Bartholomew; James Erb	[4.12]
7	O Frondens Virga	Hildegard von Bingen, arr. Chris Foss	[3.04]
8	Lux Aurumque	Eric Whitacre	[3.50]
9	It's strange about stars...	Melissa Dunphy	[3.12]
10	Stars	Ēriks Ešenvalds	[5.46]
11	Beyond	Chris Foss	[5.41]
12	Be Like the Bird	Abbie Betinis	[2.15]
13	this brightening silence	Kathleen Allan	[4.38]
14	Wanting Memories	Ysaÿe M. Barnwell	[4.50]
15	Ave Maria	Franz Biebl	[5.10]
16	There's a Meeting Here Tonight	Bob Gibson, Alex Hassilev, and Glenn Yarbrough, arr. Cantus	[2.57]
17	That Which Remains	Andrea Ramsey	[3.00]
18	Yonder Come Day	Traditional, arr. Paul John Rudoi	[3.08]
19	Lullabye (Goodnight, My Angel)	Billy Joel	[4.18]
Total timings			[73.31]

CANTUS

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THE COVID-19 SESSIONS

Recorded on March 17, 19, and 20, 2020 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the COVID-19 sessions came together quickly as society began to shut down amidst the growing coronavirus disease outbreak in the United States.

Cantus' tour dates and home concerts were being canceled, and it was clear there would be only a limited window in which to sing together before the world went on pause. What would social distancing and prohibitions on large gatherings mean for vocal music, our communities, and the world at large?

"We honestly thought it was possible this might be the last time we could all sing together," says bass Chris Foss.

The artists of Cantus recorded these 19 tracks with an enormous amount of uncertainty about what the next weeks and months would bring. The repertoire that was chosen is a mix of pieces they would have performed in concert and on tour that spring, along with works that have come to be inextricably linked to Cantus, like Ysaÿe M. Barnwell's "Wanting Memories," Franz Biebl's "Ave Maria," and Sibelius' "Finlandia." The COVID-19 Sessions

were first shared online in the spring of 2020 and racked up millions of views from grateful fans glad to have new music from Cantus.

The notes accompanying the tracks are a time capsule back to those uncertain first months of the pandemic. They are directly quoted from the original postings of each video and the date of original post has been included for reference. They not only lend context for the pieces, but for the performances and initial reception of the sessions as well.

Cantus' vision is to give voice to shared human experiences, and these performances were an offering from the ensemble in solidarity with their community at a time of great turmoil and unease. The pieces span a wide breadth of emotion, from joy to sorrow to wonder to pain. The performances themselves are informed by the emotional states in which they were recorded — heightened at different times in different ways.

"We made the COVID-19 Sessions as an offering to our community," said Foss. "But with the tremendous audience response, we were reminded how deeply art matters, especially in times like those we have endured since those chilly March days, when we made a choice to respond to fear and uncertainty by doing what we love, which is making music together."

FINLANDIA

Jean Sibelius

March 21, 2020

We couldn't think of a more meaningful piece to kick off the COVID-19 Sessions, recorded during this time of isolation and uncertainty. We have been performing this song since nearly the ensemble's beginning some 25 years ago, and we hope it reminds you that you are not alone. We are in this together.

This is my song, O God of all the nations,
a song of peace for lands afar and mine.
This is my home, the country where my heart is;
here are my hopes, my dreams, my holy shrine;
but other hearts in other lands are beating
with hopes and dreams as true and high as mine.

My country's skies are bluer than the ocean
And sunlight beams on cloverleaf and pine
But other lands have sunlight too and clover
And skies are everywhere as blue as mine
O hear my song Thou God of all nations
A song of peace for their land and for mine

DAREST O, SOUL

Mari Esabel Valverde

April 7, 2020

Mari Esabel Valverde's *Darest, O Soul* is a piece from our touring show *One Giant Leap*. In that program it helped to celebrate the scientific luminaries who dared to walk toward the unknown.

Walt Whitman's poem offers fresh urgency during this pandemic:

Darest thou now O soul,
Walk out with me toward the unknown region,
Where neither ground is for the feet nor any path
to follow?
No map there, nor guide,
Nor voice sounding, nor touch of human hand,
Nor face with blooming flesh, nor lips, nor eyes,
are in that land.
I know it not O soul,
Nor dost thou, all is a blank before us,
All waits undream'd of in that region, that
inaccessible land.
Till when the ties loosen,
All but the ties eternal, Time and Space,
Nor darkness, gravitation, sense, nor any bounds
bounding us.

Then we burst forth, we float,
In Time and Space O soul, prepared for them,
Equal, equipt at last, (O joy! O fruit of all!) them to
fulfil O soul.

SUNAYAMA

Shinpei Nakayama, arr. Jacob Christopher

March 24, 2020

We had been preparing this arrangement of a simple and beautiful Japanese folk song for our spring show, *There Lies the Home*, before it was postponed. Amidst the uncertainty of this crisis, we find reassurance in the constants, be they waves crashing on a shore or the inevitable dawning of a new day.

*umi wa arami mukoo wa sado yo
suzume nake nake moo hi wa kureta
minna yobe yobe ohoshi sama detazo*

The sea is rough and stormy. Over there is Sado Island.
Sparrows call out while the sun's light fades.
Come! Come, everyone, the bright stars are out!

*kurerya sunayama shionari bakari
suzume chirijiri mata kaze areru*

When it is dark on the sand dune the waves crash
upon the shore.
The sparrows scatter and the weather continues
to deteriorate.

*minna chirijiri moo daremo mienu
kaero kaeroyo gumiwara wakete*

Everyone scatters, now no one can be seen.
Let's go! Let's go home through the silverberry
field.

*suzume sayonara sayonara ashita
umi yo sayonara sayonara ashita*

Goodbye, sparrows. Goodbye until tomorrow.
Goodbye, sea. Goodbye until tomorrow.

Hakushu Kitahara

STEAL AWAY

Traditional, arr. Stacey V. Gibbs

March 28, 2020

We programmed Stacey V. Gibbs' arrangement of *Steal Away* for our spring show *There Lies the Home*, which had focused on journeys by sea. It was part of a set highlighting the forced travel of Africans in slave ships to the United States and their realities after arrival.

So many of us have been moved in our lives by the deep emotionality of traditional spirituals. Some of the richest and most compelling art is borne out of real human tragedy and suffering. Although we at Cantus cannot truly empathize with the enslaved person's experience, we are grateful to share this beautiful music, and we remember this terrible history.

"This coded spiritual depicts the trials of slaves while simultaneously communicating opportunities to escape bondage and persecution. It was also a song of hope sung in the working fields and worship services of the oppressed as they longed for freedom and heaven." Stacey V. Gibbs

I ain't got long to stay here,
When my work down here is done an' my race
down here is run,
Then I'll steal away home.

Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus.
Steal away, steal away home.
I ain't got long to stay here.

My Lord, he calls me, he calls me by the thunder.
The trumpet sounds within-a my soul.
I ain't got long to stay here.

GRYNING VID HAVET

Hugo Alfvén

Bonus track

We originally programmed *Gryning vid havet* by Hugo Alfvén as the dramatic closing piece to the first half of our show *There Lies the Home*, a program about voyages at sea.

Alfvén's piece starts calmly before building to a nearly unsustainable climax, with the last six bars sung at a double forte at the extremes of the vocal range to mimic the terror and excitement of an ocean storm.

*Blankt som en sköld av koppar och stål ligger havet,
men djupt under ytan går strömmen stark.
Allt är så tyst, som om livet själv låg begravet
under de nattsvarta åsarnas mark.
Stiger ej morgonen snart över bergen?
Himlen är röd, det är ett hot i den vredesrodnande
färgen.
Stormen skall komma, stormen från havet.
Stormen ryter och skrattar, stormen slår,
manligt härlig och stark.*

Shiny as a shield of copper and steel lies the sea,
but deep below the surface the current is strong.
Everything is so quiet, as if life itself was buried
under the land of the night-black ridges.

Does not the morning soon rise over the
mountains?

The sky is red, it is a threat in the angry red color.
The storm is coming, the storm from the sea.
The storm roars and laughs, the storm strikes,
masculine glorious and strong.

SHENANDOAH

Traditional, arr. Marshall Bartholomew; James Erb
May 9, 2020

Certain songs are imbued with meaning through their shared history among singers and listeners. *Shenandoah* certainly holds a special place for us and our audience; we have spent hours with it in rehearsal, toured with it internationally, and performed it with the students in our High School Residency program.

The isolation wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic prompted us to look forward with hope to that time when we could share this song and others with our communities near and far.

O Shenandoah, I long to see you,
And hear your rolling river,

O Shenandoah, I long to see you,
'Way, we're bound away,
Across the wide Missouri.

I long to see your smiling valley,
And hear your rolling river,

I long to see your smiling valley,
'Way, We're bound away,
Across the wide Missouri.

'Tis sev'n long years, since last I see you,
And hear your rolling river,

'Tis sev'n long years, since last I see you,
'Way, we're bound away,
Across the wide Missouri.

O FRONDENS VIRGA

Hildegard von Bingen, arr. Chris Foss
May 12, 2020

Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179) is one of our earliest and best-known female composers. She was an influential religious figure and composer at a time when it was nearly impossible for a woman to have a say in public or spiritual life.

She has been sainted by the Roman Catholic Church and continues to be an important figure in music history.

Her compositions have stood the test of time, and we performed *O frondens virga* as a part of our 2019 Holiday program, *Three Tales of Christmas*, helping to tell the story of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Christmas; or, The Good Fairy*.

*O frondens virga,
in tua nobilitate stans
sicut aurora procedit:
nunc gaude et letare
et nos debiles dignare
a mala consuetudine liberare
atque manum tuam porrigere
ad erigendum nos.*

O blooming branch,
you stand upright in your nobility,
as breaks the dawn on high:
Rejoice now and be glad,
and deign to free us, frail and weakened,
from the wicked habits of our age;
stretch forth your hand
to lift us up aright.

LUX AURUMQUE

Eric Whitacre

March 31, 2020

We brought this piece back into repertoire specifically to share it with all of you. Eric Whitacre and his compositions need no introduction in our field, and millions of listeners have enjoyed his music across the world.

He is a gracious collaborator, and we had the pleasure to sing with Eric at the American Choral Directors Association's National conference here in Minneapolis a few years ago. He's also been in attendance at several of our performances over the years. At every opportunity he is quick to offer words of encouragement and appreciation, and he is always interested in discussing ways to make music more accessible and inspiring.

*Lux,
Calida gravisque pura velut aurum
Et canunt angeli molliter
modo natum.*

Light,
warm and heavy as pure gold
and the angels sing softly
to the new-born baby.



IT'S STRANGE ABOUT STARS...

Melissa Dunphy

May 5, 2020

It's strange about stars is the second piece by Melissa Dunphy that we have programmed. We had the pleasure to perform *What do you think I fought for at Omaha Beach?* on our 2016 touring show, and we met Melissa on tour that same year after a performance at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. We have been energized to work with her again.

It's strange about stars helped to tell the story of *The Little Match Girl* in our 2019 Holiday program, *Three Tales of Christmas*. We chose the piece as an aural setting for the moment in which the girl's vision of a lighted Christmas tree is transfigured into the stars of the night sky.

It's strange about stars ...

You have to be still when they look at you.

They push your song inside of you with their song.

Their long silvery rays

sink into you and do not hurt.

It is good to feel them resting on you

like great white birds...

and their shining whiteness

doesn't burn like the sun —
it washes all over you
and makes you feel cleaner'n water.

From Sun-Up (IV. Betty) by Lola Ridge (1920)

STARS

Ēriks Ešenvalds

April 14, 2020

The beauty and loneliness in Sara Teasdale's poem *Stars* are eloquently captured in composer Ēriks Ešenvalds' setting. We have all gazed up at the night sky with wonder at its majesty.

We chose to record in the underground Westminster parking garage first for its acoustic, which gives the piece a stunning aural dimension. With the lockdown, it has almost become a metaphor for those of us feeling increasingly trapped and isolated. We sing a song about the stars, 50 feet underground.

Alone in the night

On a dark hill

With pines around me

Spicy and still

And a heaven full of stars
Over my head
White and topaz
And misty red;

Myriads with beating
Hearts of fire
The aeons
Cannot vex or tire;

Up the dome of heaven
Like a great hill
I watch them marching
Stately and still

And I know that I
Am honored to be
Witness
Of so much majesty

BEYOND

Chris Foss

May 19, 2020

The act of looking up at the night sky is a most humbling experience. Humanity has been stargazing for millions of years, and yet we still feel wonder and awe every time we step outside into the starry night. Even today, with all that

science has discovered about the world and the universe, we don't have very far to go at all to feel small and insignificant.

No one captured that sentiment better than Katherine Lee Bates (of *America the Beautiful* fame) when she composed her poem *Beyond* more than a hundred years ago. When faced with the unknown, we can all aspire not to be afraid, but to be curious. Perhaps our greatest defense against fear is the question mark.

Colossal orb of space,
Sparkling with diamond
Of countless star on star,
All whirling with wild grace
In their enwoven dance
Illimitably far,
What lies beyond
Your vasty hollow girdled by that bright
River of stellar spray
We call the Milky Way?
Immeasurable ball,
Compassed and clasped in light,
Can you be all,
A flock of fireflies circling in the night,
A maze of jewels that the toss of Chance
Let fall,

Sun, planet, asteroid,
One globe of glories in the utter void?

What lies beyond?
Does the sheer Dark immerse
Infinity, drowning the last faint gold
Of fleeting comets, lost and vagabond?
Or is this astral universe,
All that our utmost vision may behold,
But one amidst a host of star-strewn spheres,
Each zoned with its own stream
Of softer gleam,
Perchance each dowered with wonder, love and tears?

What lies beyond?
The puny human heart still stirs
Against those flaming barriers,
That proud, impenetrable dome
Of fire and ether, seeking for a home,
A Soul that shall respond
To all its questions, longings and despairs.
Is space but raiment that the Spirit wears,
A gem-embroidered mantle to conceal
And yet reveal
In splendors of surprise
Beauty ineffable,
Immanuel?
Or shall we rise,
Higher than the dream of Dante ever trod,

From star to star, from empyrean on
To empyrean, till the sun that shone
Over our vexed mortality be wan,
Through life on life, eternal range
From form to form, from change to change,
To find the Unknown God?

BE LIKE THE BIRD

Abbie Betinis

April 28, 2020

“Be like the bird that, pausing in her flight awhile
on boughs too slight, feels them give way beneath
her – and sings – knowing she hath wings.”

Abbie Betinis' *Be Like the Bird* with text from Victor Hugo is a song we were particularly excited about including on the COVID-19 Sessions. We hope that Abbie's intention, combined with this cultural moment and our underground performance setting, will have special resonance for you. Here is Abbie's program note in full:

“I wrote this canon just after completing cancer treatment for the second time. My family and I sent it out as our annual Christmas card in 2009. And – while I couldn't have foreseen it at the time – it would turn into my mantra over the next year, while I underwent a third cancer diagnosis and bone marrow transplant.

“My cousin Sarah Riley and I discovered the text quite by accident. In October 2009, our grandfather, the Rt. Rev. John H. Burt (aka Christmas reveler and merry-maker, lover of music and literature, and inspiring leader and activist) had died. After his funeral, and after an impromptu family round-sing (common in the Burt family), Sarah and I were sitting on Grandpa's old couch, reading through some of the sermons he had written and delivered throughout his long life. Sarah is co-director of an incredible program called High Rocks, a comprehensive and unique school for girls founded by her mom, Susan Burt, in the mountains of rural West Virginia.

“Sarah and I realized that Grandpa had quoted this lovely Victor Hugo text in a few sermons over the years, always to inspire courage in the face of adversity. It struck me as a surprisingly hopeful text befitting a difficult year, but it also moved me to tears to think of the work that my Aunt Susie and now my cousin herself, sitting there next to me on the couch, are doing to change the world – one girl at a time.

“So I dedicate this carol to High Rocks for Girls. May High Rocks continue to educate, empower, and inspire each girl to know that ‘she hath wings.’”

THIS BRIGHTENING SILENCE

Kathleen Allan

May 23, 2020

Kathleen Allan's *this brightening silence* was a piece originally commissioned by Newman Sound Men's Choir in honor of the 100th anniversary of the Newfoundland Sealing Disaster. The text was composed by her husband Benton Roark and she describes the piece as “a poetic depiction of loss and hope.”

We prepared this piece as a part of our spring show, *There Lies the Home*, as a moment to remember lives lost at sea and specifically refugees escaping Syria by boat to the coast of Greece.

—
hush now for soon will come our grey angel
on wings of canvas rising from the foam
she'll draw us up across her bow, hold us fast
and point us home

and in the meanwhile we make our exchanges
breath for spirit, salt for ice, flesh for stone, words
yet unbroken
for olden ways of blood memory
as our life's storm fades
from this brightening silence

now as one
we cradle in the bow, stretching full its worth to
strain oblivion
to force a crack that grows
splintering death itself to pieces

while she, with us safely stowed in her berth
lifts her wing o'er the breaking flocks
that fall way beneath us
as our light rushes in

WANTING MEMORIES

Ysaÿe M. Barnwell

April 25, 2020

Ysaÿe M. Barnwell's *Wanting Memories* is a deeply moving text and composition, and it is a favorite within the ensemble and with our audiences. Ysaÿe M. Barnwell and Sweet Honey in the Rock® have been inspirations for Cantus for much of the ensemble's history. Their commitment to social justice and relevant programming along with their incredible artistry are attributes that inform and inspire our own music-making.

Each time we perform this piece, it strikes us in new ways, and we hope it can be a moment of reflection and gratitude during this time of isolation.

I am sitting here wanting memories to teach me,
To see the beauty in the world through my own eyes.
I am sitting here wanting memories to teach me,
To see the beauty in the world through my own eyes.

You used to rock me in the cradle of your arms,
You said you'd hold me till the pains of life were gone.
You said you'd comfort me in times like these and
now I need you,
Now I need you, and you are gone.

I am sitting here wanting memories to teach me,
To see the beauty in the world through my own eyes.
Since you've gone and left me, there's been so
little beauty,
But I know I saw it clearly through your eyes.

Now the world outside is such a cold and bitter place,
Here inside I have few things that will console.
And when I try to hear your voice above the storms
of life,
Then I remember all the things that I was told.

I am sitting here wanting memories to teach me,
To see the beauty in the world through my own eyes.
I am sitting here wanting memories to teach me,
To see the beauty in the world through my own eyes.

I think on the things that made me feel so
wonderful when I was young.
I think on the things that made me laugh, made
me dance, made me sing.
I think on the things that made me grow into a
being full of pride.
I think on these things, for they are true.

I am sitting here wanting memories to teach me,
To see the beauty in the world through my own eyes.
I thought that you were gone, but now I know
you're with me,
You are the voice that whispers all I need to hear.

I know a please a thank you and a smile will take
me far,
I know that I am you and you are me and we are one,
I know that who I am is numbered in each grain
of sand,
I know that I've been blessed again, and over again.

I am sitting here wanting memories to teach me,
To see the beauty in the world through my own eyes.
I am sitting here wanting memories to teach me,
To see the beauty in the world through my own eyes.

AVE MARIA (ANGELUS DOMINI)

Franz Biebl

April 18, 2020

Cantus began 25 years ago at St. Olaf College in Minnesota with four undergraduate students. They first expanded their number to seven to sing this very song.

Those founding members were inspired by the chamber process, and those collaborative tenets inform everything we do at Cantus to this day. The Franz Biebl *Ave Maria* has become an audience and ensemble favorite at Cantus for the way it so beautifully captures the power of voices joined in song.

*Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariae,
Et concepit de Spiritu sancto.*

*Ave Maria, gratia plena,
Dominus tecum,
Benedicta tu in mulieribus
Et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus.*

*Maria dixit: Ecce ancilla Domini,
Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.*

Ave Maria...

*Et verbum caro factum est
Et habitavit in nobis.*

Ave Maria...

*Sancta Maria, mater Dei,
Ora pro nobis peccatoribus
Nunc et in hora mortis nostrae.
Amen.*

Hail Mary (The Angel of the Lord)
The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary,
and she conceived by the Holy Spirit

Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord:
be it unto me according to thy word.

Hail Mary...
The Word was made flesh,
and dwelt among us.

Hail Mary...

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death.
Amen.

Based on Luke 1: 26-38 and John 1:14

THERE'S A MEETING HERE TONIGHT

**Bob Gibson, Alex Hassilev, and Glenn Yarbrough,
arr. Cantus**

April 4, 2020

One of the things we treasure most about
ensemble singing — and singing with Cantus
specifically — are the strong bonds of community
that are built while interpreting and performing
music together.

Bob Gibson's *There's a Meeting Here Tonight*,
made famous by the gospel duo Joe and Eddie, is
one of our absolute favorite expressions of the joy
of singing together.

During this time of pandemic, this may be one of
the things that we are missing the most — being
able to make music together.

There is a meeting here tonight!

Well there's a meeting here tonight,
There's a meeting here tonight,
I can tell by your friendly face
there's a meeting here tonight.

Well I went down in the valley one day,
met old Satan on my way.

What do you reckon old Satan did say?
He said, "Turn back, young man
You're too young to pray."

Satan got mad and I am glad,
Lost a soul he thought he had.
Satan is a liar and a conjuror too,
You better watch out brother he'll conjure you.

Well there's a meeting here tonight,
There's a meeting here tonight,
I can tell by your friendly face
there's a meeting here tonight.

THAT WHICH REMAINS

Andrea Ramsey

June 13, 2020

Andrea Ramsey's *That Which Remains* is the
perfect sentiment for the COVID-19 Sessions.
Helen Keller's text beautifully expresses how
so many of us are feeling about our musical
communities amidst this pandemic: "What we
have once enjoyed, we can never lose."

What we have once enjoyed, we can never lose,
a sunset, a mountain bathed in moonlight
the ocean in calm and in storm,
we see these, love their beauty,
hold the vision to our hearts.
All that we love deeply becomes part of us.
Life is overlord of death,
life is stronger than death,
and love can never lose its own.

YONDER COME DAY

Traditional, arr. Paul John Rudoi

April 11, 2020

Yonder Come Day, Paul John Rudoi's arrangement
of the traditional Georgia Sea Island melody and text,
is infused with energy and hope for a brand-new day.

Paul's narrative arrangement is not just another
medley of spirituals. His choice to combine *Yonder
Come Day*, a spiritual championed by Bessie Jones
and the Georgia Sea Island Singers, with specific
spirituals well known for coded messages was
intentional, shedding light on the hope required
to move beyond the horrific atrocities millions
encountered because of American slavery, Jim
Crow-era tactics, and more.

Ultimately, the piece is a testament to the courage of the enslaved, a statement of hope for anyone marginalized, and a small part in the continuing conversation about our shared American history.

Oh day, Yonder come day.
Day done broke inna my soul, Yonder come day.
Good mornin' day, Yonder come day.
A brand new day, Yonder come day.
Oh come on child,

Hush, hush, somebody's callin' my name.
Oh my Lord, oh my Lord what shall I do?

Oh day, Yonder come day.
I was on my knees, Yonder come day.
When I heard him say, Yonder come day.

Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus.
Swing low, sweet chariot, comin' for to carry me home.

Day done broke inna my soul, Yonder come day.

LULLABYE (GOODNIGHT, MY ANGEL)

Billy Joel

Bonus track

We've sung Billy Joel's *Lullabye (Goodnight, My Angel)* many times over the years, and it has a way of seeping into your soul. It's a song about that most fundamental relationship between a parent and a child.

Billy Joel's words are at once heartwarming and heart-rending to any parent who has held their child and sung them to sleep.

Lyrics not included here due to copyright reasons.





Jacob Christopher *tenor*
Alberto de la Paz *tenor*
Alexander Nishibun *tenor*
Paul Scholtz *tenor*
David Geist *baritone*
Sam Kreidenweis *baritone*
Chris Foss *bass*
Samuel Green *bass*

Now in its 27th season, the “engaging” (*New Yorker*) low-voice ensemble Cantus is widely known for its trademark warmth and blend, innovative programming and riveting performances of music ranging from the Renaissance to the 21st century. The *Washington Post* has hailed the Cantus sound as having both “exalting finesse” and “expressive power” and refers to the “spontaneous grace” of its music making. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* called the group nothing short of “exquisite.”

As one of the nation’s few full-time vocal ensembles, Cantus has come to prominence



© Nate Ryan

with its distinctive approach to creating music. Working without a conductor, the members of Cantus rehearse and perform as chamber musicians, each contributing to the entirety of the artistic process.

Cantus enjoys a vigorous schedule of national and international touring, in addition to home concerts in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota. Cantus has performed at Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center, UCLA, San Francisco Performances, Atlanta’s Spivey Hall and Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival.

In the 2020-21 season, Cantus stayed true to its artistic vision and commitment to innovation in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, producing seven all-new online programs that reached audiences spanning 50 states and seven countries, and garnering praise for how “the sheer quality of singing somehow melted the barriers of online communication” (*Star Tribune*). The ensemble adapted its award-winning education programs to the pandemic, working virtually with high schools and universities both locally and nationally. In addition to the *COVID-19 Sessions*, Cantus released *Manifesto* on the Signum Classics label in summer 2021. The album includes world premiere recordings of works by Ysaÿe M. Barnwell, David Lang, Sydney

Guillaume, Libby Larsen, Sarah Kirkland Snider, and others.

Committed to the expansion of the vocal music repertoire, Cantus actively commissions new music and seeks to unearth rarely performed repertoire for low voices. Cantus has received commissioning grants from New Music USA, the National Endowment for the Arts, Chorus America, American Composers Forum and Chamber Music America. In line with Cantus’ ongoing commitment to fostering new works and expanding the repertoire for tenors, baritones, and basses, the ensemble has partnered with composer and former Cantus bass Timothy C. Takach and Graphite Publishing on the Cantus Choral Series, distributing Cantus’ signature arrangements and compositions for ensembles everywhere to perform and enjoy.

Cantus has a rich history of collaborations with other performing arts organizations, including the Minnesota Orchestra, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Boston Pops, Chanticleer, Sweet Honey in the Rock®, Lorelei Ensemble, Theater Latté Da and the James Sewell Ballet. The ensemble is heard frequently on both classical public radio nationwide and on SiriusXM Satellite Radio. Cantus has released 20 recordings with Signum Classics as well as on the group’s self-titled label.

ALSO AVAILABLE ON SIGNUMCLASSICS



MANIFESTO
Cantus
SICCD686

"Beautifully performed throughout, the album's a powerful hymn to human connection in its many forms." BBC Music Magazine

"What energy Cantus brings to it. One of the most compelling male voice ensembles around." Choir & Organ

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www.cantussings.org

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