

## Why We Sing

Why do we sing? We sing for many reasons: to express joy, sorrow, reverence, love, and cultural identity; to signal inclusion in a group; to express spirituality; to voice political attitudes; and for family or social bonding. Schubert Chorus members value the camaraderie from singing in a tightly knit group. Artistic Director Philip Pletcher adds, “we sing simply because we love making music and singing together.”

## Interlude Highlights

POP | “It’s a Good Day”  
DOO-WOP | “The Lion Sleeps Tonight”  
BROADWAY | “Someone Like You”  
NEAPOLITAN | “Amorosi Miei Giorni”  
*Madelyn Brodcock, GRCC Intern*

## CHRISTMAS CONCERT DATE SET

The Schubert Male Chorus of Grand Rapids will perform its annual Christmas Concert at the [Calvin University Fine Arts Center](#) on December 14, 2024 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are on sale now.

## PROGRAM NOTES



### *It’s a Grand Night for Singing*

Rodgers & Hammerstein | arr. Rubino

Broadway nobility Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II garnered 42 Tony Awards, 15 Academy Awards, two Pulitzer Prizes, two Grammy Awards, and two Emmy Awards for their popular musicals. Though *Oklahoma!*, *South Pacific*, *The King and I*, and *The Sound of Music* remain their best-known musicals, *State Fair* can claim three movie versions. Iowan Phil Stong’s 1932 novel, *State Fair*, hurdled to the silver screen immediately a year later in 1933 starring Janet Gaynor and Will Rogers – though not in musical format. Musical versions came to the silver screen in 1945 (Jeanne Crain and Dana Andrews) and 1962 (Pat Boone and Ann-Margret) – and at long last to Broadway 1996 – attesting to *State Fair*’s timeless appeal. “It’s a Grand Night for Singing” joins other well-known Rodgers and Hammerstein waltzes, including “A Wonderful Guy” from *South Pacific*, and “Edelweiss” and “My Favorite Things” from *The Sound of Music*. Jerry Rubino’s arrangement remains faithful to the original version, channeling Rodgers’ love of chromatic harmony and Broadway bombast at the song’s conclusion, leaving Chorus members gasping for oxygen with a series of unbroken chords lasting eight full measures.



### *How Can I Keep from Singing?*

Lowry | arr. Quigley | arr. Gilpin

The simplicity and appeal of traditional folk melodies and lyrics often serve as building blocks for hymns, classical compositions, and protest songs. Martin Luther borrowed from popular music for his hymns; Béla Bartók famously used Hungarian folk melodies in his classical compositions; and activists Joan Baez and Woodie Guthrie leaned heavily on the folk tradition for their protest songs in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Though the origins of “How Can I Keep from Singing?” remain murky despite being cited as a “Quaker song,” Baptist minister Robert Lowry – most well-known for “Shall We Gather at the River?” – published the first version of “How Can I Keep from Singing?” in 1868. His lyrics proclaim that “Christ is Lord of heaven and earth” so “how can I keep from singing?” One century later, folk singer Pete Seeger secularized the lyrics (“Love is lord of heaven and earth”), and New Age Irish musician Enya covered the tune in 1991 with made-for-MTV video imagery of political figures and issues of the day (Nelson Mandela, Boris Yeltsin, the Gulf War). The two Schubert versions you are hearing tonight retain Lowry’s Christian messaging – one version in a traditional style and the other in the style of a spiritual.



### *I’d like to Teach the World to Sing*

Backer, Davis, Cook, Greenaway | arr. Ades

While waiting for a flight in Ireland in 1971, admen Bill Backer and Billy Davis watched fellow global travelers chatting and enjoying cool quaffs of Coca-Cola. Inspired by the camaraderie of the multinational tableau, Backer developed an idea of Coke as a global unifier with songwriters Roger Cook and Roger Greenaway, composers of Susan Shirley’s minor British hit “True Love and Apple Pie” (and other hits including “You’ve Got Your Troubles” and “Here Comes that Rainy Day Feeling Again”). To fit Backer’s vision of Coca-Cola as a common international icon, Cook and Greenaway tweaked their lyrics to fit the new Coca-Cola jingle sung by the Hillside Singers – an ensemble created by McCann Erickson solely to record the tune. The song went instantly viral (for 1971), reaching #13 on the Billboard Hot 100 Chart, with its celebration of global youth and catchy pop melody. Hawley Ades’ arrangement evokes The New Seekers 1972 cover, adding a key change from the mostly-white-key F major to mostly-black-key G<sub>b</sub> major. Is this perhaps a formal nod to the lyrics’ multicultural theme – only slightly more subtle than Paul McCartney’s and Stevie Wonder’s 1982 recording of “Ebony and Ivory?”



### ONE VOICE

Manilow | arr. Metis

Regardless of one’s musical taste – whether it leans more toward The Rolling Stones or Rachmaninov – Barry Manilow served as a coming-of-age soundtrack for late baby boomers in the 1970s. One could not escape the gravitational pull of chart-toppers such as “I Write the Songs,” “Mandy,” and “Copacabana” that saturated AM radios from coast to coast. Though “One Voice” did not break into the top-40 charts or receive significant airtime, the hallmarks of Manilow’s signature musical formula – abundant use of the circle of fifths, key change for the final chorus, bombastic ending – remain present in his 1979 song. What’s different with “One Voice” is that Manilow recorded his tune *a capella* – though Frank Metis’ arrangement adds instrumentation to undergird the lush harmonies with two key changes to generate musical momentum. Manilow’s lyrics depict the role of the individual vocalist as a catalyst for change – a glossier, air-brushed version of overt protest songs from bards like Neil Young and Janis Joplin: “One voice singing in the darkness ... facing the unknown ...” Manilow ends the song by underscoring the power of music as an agent for societal change: “It takes that one voice and everyone will sing.”



## I Could Have Danced All Night

Lerner & Loewe | arr. Stickles

From cave drawings in India of dance dating back 15,000 years, to the 1000-year-old Spanish Flamenco, to today's Hip Hop, dance has served as an integral part of human history. Among prehistoric humans, dance may have been essential to communication and survival, though it has since evolved into an art form purely for enjoyment and social bonding. From the European Renaissance through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, highborn debutantes and their blue-blooded suitors could devote time to learn prescribed dance steps to signal their highborn status. Popular music in the 20<sup>th</sup> century relaxed many of the formulaic rules around "correct" dancing methods. In *My Fair Lady*, based on George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, Eliza Doolittle remains caste-bound by the strictures of Edwardian society with her lower-class cockney diction. Having learned "proper" English from Professor Henry Higgins, Eliza feels unshackled to take the true test for upper-class membership: dancing at an embassy ball and interacting with royalty. Eliza gleefully sings, "I could have danced all night ... I could have spread my wings and done a thousand things I've never done before."



## The Sound of Music

Rodgers & Hammerstein | arr. Warnick

The Alps span 750 miles and eight countries - from France to Austria - though it is specifically the Austrian Alps around Salzburg that have provided musical inspiration for centuries. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, the most famous Salzburger, infused his compositions with passages first performed loudly and repeated softly as if music were echoing off a distant mountain. Though viewed by the Viennese aristocracy as a provincial backwater, Salzburg remains a global musical capital with its famous Salzburg Festival. The Trapp family competed in their first musical competition in 1934 in Salzburg and subsequently toured western Europe before the Anschluss - the Nazi annexation of Austria in 1938. The Trapps (also called "von Trapps" to denote their noble origins) served as the inspiration for the Broadway version and subsequent movie adaptation of Richard Rodgers' and Oscar Hammerstein's final musical, *The Sound of Music*. Though the songs are 100% American, the song "The Sound of Music" nods to Mozart's Alpine musical "echo" in the opening bars, memorializing the magic of the Austrian Alps and affirming that "the hills are alive with the sound of music with the songs they have sung for a thousand years."



## WHEELS OF A DREAM

Ahrens & Flaherty | arr. Leavitt

The Model T, produced in Detroit from 1908 to 1927, provided emerging middle-class Americans with the freedom to travel and the ability to earn a living wage and break the shackles of one's social caste at birth. Coalhouse Walker, leading protagonist in the novel and musical *Ragtime*, buys a Model T having understood the physical and social significance of Henry Ford's automobile. In "Wheels of a Dream," Coalhouse and his partner Sarah sing a duet - inspired by the writing of Booker T. Washington - to their son capturing the physical ("we'll go down south ... then we'll travel on from there - California or who knows where") and social ("any man can get where he wants to if he's got some fire in his soul") dimensions of mobility. Composer Stephen Flaherty and lyricist Lynn Ahrens originally titled the song "America's Child" - a reference to Coalhouse's and Sarah's baby boy. John Leavitt's arrangement remains faithful to the original Broadway version with its A-B-A structure and plenty of key changes to drive musical tension. In the middle B section, the piano's arpeggiated sixteenth notes resemble birds in flight - the ultimate metaphor for mobility and freedom!



## O Love

Matheson & Hagenberg | arr. Hagenberg

As Greek philosophers began shaping Western thought, the lexicon of Ancient Greek required increasing nuance to convey complex ideas. Up for the challenge, Ancient Greek featured seven words expressing "love" - including *eros* (romantic love) and *agape* (Godly or eternal love). Scottish minister George Matheson (1842-1906) counted himself awash in *agape*, though unlucky in *eros*. When Matheson was in his late teens, his fiancée and sole earthly love cancelled their wedding because of Matheson's emerging blindness. Matheson's sister Jane stepped in to tend to his care as his blindness progressed. Years later, on the eve of Jane's wedding and facing the prospect of living alone without his sister, Matheson reflected on his joy (*agape*) and grief (*eros*), which became the inspiration for the lyrics of "O Love." Elaine Hagenberg's 2016 music captures Matheson's emotion with an impassioned melody accompanied with a plaintive cello *obligato*. The lyrics hint at a water theme - symbolic for Matheson's tears - citing "ocean depths" and "tracing the rainbow through the rain;" the rainbow here symbolizes God's mercy prevailing in the midst of sorrow.



## THE AWAKENING

Martin

Joseph Martin composed "The Awakening" as a musical elegy in remembrance of his junior high school choir teacher, who was found murdered in her choir room. Martin's tone painting journeys from a dark, silent wasteland ("no choir sang to change the world") to a music-filled realm ("the silence of the night has passed"). His three sections remain unique in tempo, rhythm, and modality to reflect the meaning of the lyrics. Other famous examples of this technique - called program music - include Schubert's chilling "Der Erlkönig" ("The Elf King") and Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*. The first section depicts a dystopian nightmare ("I dreamed a dream") with eerie tonality and a slow, unmetered tempo; the second section represents daybreak ("Awake! Awake!") with a faster, regular tempo; the third section represents a hymn of praise with a hopeful feel ("Let music live!"). Martin's requiem does not repeat any sections typical in verse-chorus structure; his "through-composed" form shares musical DNA with Copland's *Appalachian Spring* and Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody." The first tenor descant in the second section references J.S. Bach's frequent inscription of "Soli Deo Gloria" ("glory to God alone") in his musical compositions.



## WHY WE SING

Gilpin

Though music has been used as a protest vehicle to effect change inside one's own country, music has also been adopted as a tool of cultural diplomacy - a.k.a. "soft power" - to effect change and promote national interests outside one's national borders. The phenomenal rise of K-Pop and Korean hit TV and big-screen dramas like *Parasite* attest to the arts' ability to sway public opinion about a country and its values. America wielded its arsenal of soft power during the Cold War to help part the Iron Curtain - albeit ever so slowly. Van Cliburn's winning of the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow in 1958 opened the door for later musicians to perform in the Soviet Union and its satellites, including the University of Michigan Symphony Band in 1961, Elton John in 1979, Bruce Springsteen in 1988, and the New York Philharmonic in Pyongyang in 2008. In "Why We Sing," Greg Gilpin's formulaic, easy pop musical structure (abundant use of the circle of fifths, key change for the final chorus, bombastic ending - à la Barry Manilow!) belies his complex message affirming that "music builds a bridge; it can tear down a wall; music is a language that can speak to one and all."