

Williams College Concert and Chamber Choirs
This Love Between Us
May 3, 2019

Concert Notes

Almost two years ago, I wrote down the following questions on a yellow legal pad: “How is cultural difference in choral music portrayed by the composer and interpreted by the performer? What does it mean to sound like a woman? How can we talk about choral music in a way that includes and honors difference? How do gender and cross-cultural identity intersect in choral music? What other aspects of identity are worth considering?” These questions were inspired by my feminist musicology class, in which I had been wrestling with theoretical texts by Susan McClary, Suzanne Cusick, and Olivia Bloechl. The main takeaways I gathered from these scholars were that a) music is inseparable from culture and b) because music is inseparable from culture, the way we have elevated certain musics at the expense of others plays into a white, male, heteronormative system that privileges certain voices while devaluing others. This concert program does not seek to reconcile this schism, as it would be reductionist to assume that cross-cultural music is the answer to long-standing societal issues. Rather, I wish to create a space to explore this schism, and to amplify the voices of composers who have sought to reconcile the divide. Whether this has been done skillfully or not is worthy of thoughtful, engaged discussion, understanding that not all people will come to the same conclusion.

Béla Bartók was one of the first to collect and transcribe Eastern European folk songs. While his work preserved music that otherwise would have been lost, he sought to “elevate” folk music to the level of art song through his virtuosic piano accompaniments, an aim rooted in Hungarian nationalist sentiment. Estonian composer Veljo Tormis also had nationalist aims, but his were in an effort to create and preserve Estonian music during Soviet Occupation. David Lang’s “evening morning day” stands in stark contrast to Bartók and Tormis; his minimalist style seeks to sanitize any cultural connection, creating a language that is “universal.” I would argue that Lang’s disassociation from culture is in itself a cultural statement. *Saro* by Joshua Shank redefines an English folk song for the modern era. He uses *Saro* as a platform to support marriage equality and refugee protection. Both Sydney Guillaume and Reena Esmail create compound musical styles that access the resonant spaces between Western classical music and the musical traditions of their cultural heritage.

I am most inspired by Reena Esmail, who has not only created a hybrid musical style, but has used this style to reconcile her identity as a woman composer. As a successful woman of color, she uses her success to open doors for others who might not otherwise gain access. This is most visibly seen through her work with Street Symphony, a Los Angeles-based music organization founded by Macarthur Fellow Vijay Gupta for the Skid Row community. Esmail’s appeal and influence is inextricably linked to her gender and cultural identities. It is *because* she is a woman that she knows what it feels like to be a second-class citizen. It is *because* she is an Indian-American that she knows what it feels like to be an outsider. And yet, it is also *because* of her woman-ness that she seeks to elevate the words, works, and innate value of women. And it is *because* of her Indian-ness that she is able to identify with parts of the population that historically have been marginalized and/or forgotten. It is *because* of the other parts of her identity that she has sought a musical language that removes the stigma of the Other entirely, disposing of this myth and revealing the connectedness between all living beings. She does not dismiss the differences between people. She honors them. She asks us to remain rooted in our individuality and unique cultural identity, and yet to reach out to another. “The lamps may be different, but the Light is the same.” Esmail has done something extraordinary. She has created a musical utopia, a space in which her woman-ness and Indian-American-ness are honored, celebrated, revered. She has flipped the paradigm and put the voice of the Other at the center.

–Lindsay Pope

Four Slovak Folk Songs

Béla Bartók (1881–1945)

1. Wedding Song from Poniky

Zadala mamka, zadala dcéru
Daleko od sebe,
Zakázala jej, prikázala jej:
Nechod' dcéro ku mne.

The mother sent her daughter
Far from herself
She banned her, she commanded her:
Don't return to me.

Ja sa udelám ptáčkom jarab'ym,
Poletím k mamičke,
A sadnem si tam na zahradečku,
No bielu laliju.

I will change into a blackbird,
Flit to my mother's,
And perch there in her garden,
On the white lily.

Vyjde mamička: Čo to za ptáčka,
Čo tak smutne spieva?
Ej, hešu hešu, ptačku jarab'ý,
Nelámaj laliju!

The mother comes out: Who is this bird,
Who sings so sadly?
Oh shoo, shoo, blackbird,
Don't break my lily!

Ta dali ste m'na za chlapa zlého
Do kraja cudzieho;
Veru mne jezle, mamička milá,
So zl'ym mužom byti.

I have been sent to an evil man,
To a foreign land;
It is truly bad for me, dear mother,
With such an evil man.

2. Song of the Hayharvesters from Hiadel

Naholi, naholi,
Na tej širočine
Ved'som sa vyspala,
Ako na perine

High, high
On that broad expanse
There to sleep,
As on a feather bed

Už sme po hrabaly,
Čo budeme robit'?
S v'ršku do doliny
Budeme sa vodit'.

We have already raked [the hay]
What shall we do?
From the peak to the valley
We will walk there

3. Dancing Song from Medzibrod

Rada pila, rada jedla
Rada tancovala,

She likes to drink, she likes to eat
She likes to dance

Ani si len tú kytličku
Neobrancovala,

But she doesn't like
To mend and sew

Nedala si štyri groše
Ako som ja dala,

I paid four Groschen [coins]
And then paid more

Žeby sit y tancovala,
A ja žeby stála,

So you could dance
And I could remain

4. Dancing song from Poniky

Gajdujte, gajdence
Pôjdeme k frajerce!
Ej, gajdujte vesele,
Ej, že pôjdeme smele!

Pipers will be piping
We will go swing with our partners!
Play gaily,
That we will go boldly!

Zagajduj gajdoše!
Ešte mám dva groše:
Ej, jedon gajdošovi,
A druh ý krčmárovi.

Piper, pipe!
I still have two Groschen:
One for the piper
And a second for the innkeeper

To bola kozička,
Čo predok vodila,
Ej, ale už nebude,
Ej, nôžky si zlomila.

She was a little goat,
Whose skin now blows forth
She is no longer
But she leads us in dance

—*Trans. Daniel Kennedy*

Hungarian composer Béla Bartók was the nineteenth century's leading promoter of folk music. Bartók was a master transcriber who spent much of his career traveling throughout Eastern Europe to collect folk songs, around which he based many of his compositions. These folk influences were manifested in Bartók's compositions in a variety of ways—he uses both melodies directly taken from folk sources and also composes his own melodies in similar styles. The Four Slovak Folk Songs fall into the former category, with each song prominently featuring a folk melody collected from the towns of Poniky, Hiadel, and Medzibrod from the region of present-day Slovakia.

The first of these four songs is the centerpiece of the set; in fact, it is longer than the subsequent three songs combined. Wedding laments are common in many Eastern European traditions; they rather universally describe the grief of a bride's separation from her family and home. In Bartók's setting, the soprano carries the folk melody throughout, accompanied by mostly non-functional harmonies that support the movement's somber mood.

The next three folk songs are by contrast very lighthearted. While it is not known how faithfully Bartók preserved any rhythms he heard in the harvesting song, the 5/8 meter written in his arrangement gives the music a lilting, peasant feel. The third song, a dance, passes the melody between parts; its additive structure (a new voice part enters with each repetition of the melody) represents different groups entering to join in the festivities. This leads easily into the fourth movement, another celebratory dance in which Bartók paints a rustic ensemble scene with homophonic singing and spirited exclamations of "Hej!" in the bass line.

—*Erin Kennedy*

Spring Sketches

Veljo Tormis (1930–2017)

Sulavad tuules
kajakad ja kõik hääled.
avarus meri

Melting in the wind
seagulls all voices
openness the sea

Ees pingil raamat
selja taga õunapuul
lehtivad pungad

Ahead on the bench a book
behind on the apple tree
buds leafing out

Pungades okste
läbi paistab tohutu
õhtune taevas

Through the branches
laden with buds
the immense evening sky

Istuksin terve
öö õites toominga all
aga need sääsed

I would sit all night
under the blossoming bird-cherry tree
but for those mosquitoes

Murdunud mõõgal
näe lehvib kollane leek
päike lööb trummi

On the broken sword
fluttering a yellow flame
the sun beats a drum

Piip ammu kustus
haopinul suigatas ätt
kägu veel kukub

The pipe gone out long ago
the old man dozed off on the brush pile
cuckoo still calling

—*Jaan Kaplinski (b. 1941)*

Estonian composer Veljo Tormis wrote 500 choral works, mostly a cappella, rooted in his Estonian cultural heritage. During the Soviet Occupation and Russification of Estonia, Tormis was active in the Singing Revolution—traditional song festivals which, in the 1980s–90s, became political protests. Even before the 1980s, many Estonians preserved their cultural identity through traditional music. Tormis’s choral works are written exclusively in Estonian, inspired by the Estonian folk tradition, and/or set texts by contemporary Estonian writers.

Spring Sketches sets haikus by the Estonian poet Jaan Kaplinski. It is part of larger set of works entitled *Nature Pictures*, which includes four collections, each representing a different season. Tormis’s love for the natural world blurs the lines between sacred and secular, and is reminiscent of Estonia’s paganist ancestry. Tormis brings this collection of vignettes to life through creative text painting. In the first movement, the altos’ rocking, scalar patterns represent the wind and the waves, while the sopranos high interjections are the seagulls overhead. In the third movement, a soloist sings the haiku while each accompanying voice sustains a single note born from her melody; each entrance signifies a beam of light peeping through the branches. Movement four paints a delightful evening scene that is rudely interrupted by mosquitoes; unexpected, biting minor chords represent the mosquito’s sting.

—*Lindsay Pope*

evening morning day

david lang (b. 1957)

heaven earth
earth darkness deep waters
light light
light light darkness
light day darkness night evening morning day

firmament waters waters waters
firmament waters firmament waters firmament
firmament heaven evening morning day

waters heaven place land
land earth waters seas

earth grass herb seed fruit-tree fruit seed earth
earth grass herb seed tree fruit seed
evening morning day

lights firmament heaven day night signs seasons days years
lights firmament heaven light earth
lights light day light night stars
firmament heaven light earth
day night light darkness
evening morning day

waters creatures birds earth firmament heaven
sea-monsters creature waters birds
waters seas birds earth
evening morning day

earth creatures cattle things beasts earth
beasts earth cattle every-creeping-thing
man image likeness dominion fish sea birds air cattle earth every-creeping-thing
man image image male female
earth dominion fish sea, birds air earth every-creeping-thing
herb seed earth tree fruit tree seed
beast earth bird air earth every-creeping-thing life herb
every-thing evening morning day

—after genesis, chapter 1

“I wanted to make a piece about the creation story but I didn't want to highlight one religion's or culture's narrative over another. It was important for me to try to find something universal, something present in all stories, or common to all cultures. I hit upon the idea of making a kind of checklist of everything that needed to be created to get the world to this point, without each individual culture's stories or myths or exoticisms. I went back to the first chapter of Genesis, to see what I could get out of my own culture's story, and I stripped away all the descriptions, adjectives, connectors and motivators. All that is left of Genesis in my text are the nouns, leaving a dispassionate list of everything created, in the order in which it is mentioned.”

—*David Lang*

Saro

Joshua Shank (b. 1980)

I came to this country Eighteen and forty nine.
I thought myself lucky for to be alive.
I looked all around me. No one could I see
That could compare to muh pretty Saree.

If I were a turtledove, had wings and could fly
Far away to my Saro's lodging I'd fly a straight line.
I'd lay in her arms for all of the night
And watch through the windows for the dawn's first light.

But her parents they won't have me as I understand,
They want some freeholder and I have no land.

Oh Saro pretty Saro, am I on your mind?
Your parents they told me to leave you behind.

I wish I was a poet, could write in fine hand.
I'd write my love a letter, one she'd lone understand.
I'd send it by the water, where the islands overflow,
And dream of pretty Saro wherever I go.

'Tis not this long journey that grieves me for to go.
'Nor the country that I'm leavin' nor the debts I owe.
There's one thing that grieves me and bears on my mind.
That's leavin' my darlin' pretty Saro behind.

“In researching for this piece, I listened to many different renditions of the tune. I wanted to be explicit about why they were apart, so I decided to use the tradition of adapting the story for my own means and find a new tale hidden with the hundreds of years of Saro's stories. I had recently watched a documentary about an LGBT man who was denied access to his partner's funeral by what would have been his in-laws, and this seemed like a story that Saro could somehow find her way in to. The lyrics for this piece are a patchwork of different versions with a few lines of my own thrown in to serve the narrative and, in my adaptation, Saro's parents and the lowly station of her love are the culprits for their separation. What I always think of when I hear this tune is the experience of a person immigrating to the United States and what it must have been like for them to leave someone they loved thousands of miles away. We all have a Saro somewhere in our lives, and from immigrants processing through Ellis Island in 1905 to a Hispanic boy in 2014 wearing a t-shirt that says, ‘Don't Deport my Mom,’ it's clear that sometimes things still don't go the way we want them to. In this moment, our lives are defined by one heartbreaking event: saying goodbye.”

–Joshua Shank

Dominus Vobiscum

Sydney Guillaume (b. 1982)

Gran Mèt-la avèk nou,
Li la nan mitan nou,
Li la nan fon kè nou, Amen,
Amen, Aleluya.

The Lord is with us,
He is among us,
He is in the depths of our hearts, Amen, Amen,
Alleluia.

Depi nan tan benmbo
Nap mache, nap chèche, nap mande:
Ki lè, ki tan, ki jou,
Limie-a va leve pou vin delivre nou?

Since the beginning of time
We have been searching, seeking, asking:
When will the light come,
at last, to deliver us?

Limie lapè-a,
Limie la verite-a,
Limie la joua-a,
Limie lespwa-a,
Limie lanmou-a,
Limie la vi-a.

The light of peace,
The light of truth,
The light of joy,
The light of hope,
The light of love,
The light of life.

Jodia an nou chante:
“Dominus vobiscum.”

Today, let us all sing:
“Dominus vobiscum.”

Gran Mèt-la avèk nou,
Li la nan mitan nou,
Li la nan fon kè nou,
Amen, Amen, Aleluya.
Mache, chèche, mande:
Li la nan mitan nou;
Mache, chèche, mande:
Li la nan fon ke nou.
Amen, Amen, Aleluya.

The Lord is with us,
He is among us,
He is in the depths of our hearts,
Amen, Amen, Alleluia.
Search, seek, ask:
He is among us;
Search, seek, ask:
He is in the depths of our hearts.
Amen, Amen, Alleluia.

—Gabriel T. Guillaume

Composer and choral conductor Sydney Guillaume was born in Haiti and emigrated to the United States. His choral music blends his Haitian cultural heritage with his studies within the Western classical and contemporary musical realms. His website states that his music “promotes human values and is full of heart and passion. Many of his choral works, most with original poetry by his father Gabriel T. Guillaume, have fostered an awareness of the beautiful Haitian culture and continue to serve as an ambassador for his native country.” *Dominus Vobiscum* depicts a religious procession and the soloist represents the priest leading a prayer. The poet asks where beauty resides in the midst of struggle, concluding that beauty can be found in the heart of each person.

It is significant that this sacred poem is written in Haitian Creole. Until the late 1980s, Catholic church services in Haiti were conducted in French, creating an intentional socioeconomic and racial divide between those who were fluent in French—the colonial language—and those who spoke Haitian Creole, a language created by those brought to Haiti through slavery. Guillaume’s setting of his father’s poem reclaims each person’s right to access a personal relationship with God.

—Lindsay Pope

Intermission

This Love Between Us: Prayers for Unity

Reena Esmail (b. 1983)

This Love Between Us is a piece about unity. Its seven movements juxtapose the words of seven major religious traditions of India (Buddhism, Sikhism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism and Islam), and specifically how each of these traditions approaches the topic of unity, of brotherhood, of being kind to one another. The texts come either straight from canonical religious writings or from poets who write through the lens of their religion. Each text is itself a union: it is set simultaneously in English and in its original language (with the exception of the Christian text, where the Malayalam is a translation), so you can hear the beauty of the original and grasp its meaning through translation. Each movement also contains a unique combination of Indian and Western classical styles, running the continuum from the Christian movement, which is rooted firmly in a baroque style, to the Zoroastrian movement, which is a Hindustani *vilambit bandish*. Each of the other movements live somewhere in between these two musical cultures in their techniques, styles and forms. But even more than uniting musical practices, this piece unites people from two different musical traditions: a sitar and tabla join the choir and baroque orchestra. Each of the musicians is asked to keep one hand firmly rooted in their own tradition and training, while reaching the other hand outward to greet another musical culture.

This piece is also a union for me. The time I spent studying at both Yale and Juilliard have been the foundation of my career as a Western composer. And my Fulbright year, studying Hindustani music in India opened my ears and mind to the world of Hindustani classical music. One day in late 2015, after months of pleading with embassies, government officials and agencies, I finally lost the battle for the visa I needed to return to India, simply because my grandfather had moved his family to Pakistan in the 1950s. I have never been more heartbroken in my life. The pain of being from two places is that, wherever you are, you always miss the other place. And somehow, as if in answer to my despair, the very next day I received the email asking me to write this piece — the one you will hear today. If it is impossible to be in both places at once, or at all, I have strived every day since then to create this hybrid, united world in my music. I wrote *This Love Between Us* through some of the darkest times in our country and in our world. But my mind always returns to the last line of this piece, the words of Rumi, which are repeated like a mantra over affirming phrases from each religion, as they wash over one another: “Concentrate on the Essence. Concentrate on the Light.”

–Reena Esmail

I.

All beings tremble before violence
All fear death
All love life
See yourself in others.
Then whom can you hurt?
What harm can you do?

For he who seeks happiness
By hurting those who seek happiness
Will never find happiness

For your brother and your sister, they are like you
They, too, long to be happy

Never harm them.
And when you leave this life
Then you will find happiness too

–*Dhammapada* (Buddhist text)
Danda Vagga 10:129-132
English and Pali

II.

How can we call someone evil, when all are the creation of One?

–*Guru Granth Sahib* (p.1238)
English and Gurumukhi

III.

Owe no man anything but to love one another.
For he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law.

For, Thou shalt not kill
Thou Shalt not steal

Thou Shalt not bear false witness
Thou shalt not covet
And if there be any other commandment, it is comprised in this word:

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

The love of our neighbor hath no evil.
Love, therefore, is the fulfilling of the law.

The night is passed and the day is at hand.
Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light.

—*Bible*
Romans 13:8-13
English and Malayalam

IV.

All humankind would know its own lineage and stock;
never would a brother be abandoned in love by his brother nor a sister by her sister.

—*Pahlavi Rivayat* (8a8)
English and Pahlavi

V.

This love between us goes back to the first humans;
It cannot be annihilated
as the river gives itself into the ocean
what is inside me moves inside you.

For the one who sees all beings in the Self and the Self in all beings,
Harbors no hatred;
To the seer,
all things become the Self.
What delusion, what sorrow can there be
for the one who beholds such oneness?

Are you looking for me?
I am in the next seat
My shoulder is against yours.
The Lord is inside you, and also inside me;
just as the sprout is hidden in the seed.

—*Isa Upanishad* (verses 6-7) and selections from Kabir
English and Hindi

VI.

If the mind is sinful,
blamable,
intent on works,

acting on impulses,
producing cutting and splitting, quarrels, faults and pains,
if it injures living beings,
if it kills creatures,
then one should not employ such a mind in action.

If the speech is sinful, blamable,
intent on works,
acting on impulses,
producing cutting and splitting, quarrels, faults and pains,
if it injures living beings,
if it kills creatures,
then one should not utter that sinful speech.

–*Acharanga Sutra* (Jain text)
Part 3: Lecture 15
English and Adha Maghadi

VII.

The lamps may be different, but the Light is the same
All religions, all this singing, one song.

I have bestowed on each one a unique mode of worship,
I have given every one a unique form of expression.
I look not at the tongue and speech,
I look at the spirit and the inward feeling.

Religions are many, God is one.
The lamps are different, but the Light is the same: it comes from Beyond.

Concentrate on the essence, Concentrate on the Light.

Om̐ shāntī shāntī shāntī
Sādhu Sādhu
Wahēgūrū
Āmīn
Āmeñ
Wāj Bāj
Concentrate on the Light.

–Rumi (along with affirming phrases in other religions)

Featured Performers

Devesh Chandra has been learning the tabla since the age of 3. He learned Northern Indian Classical Music by accompanying his mother, Veena Chandra. His first spoken words were the syllables of table—Dha Dha Tita. Devesh is fortunate to have grownup surrounded by iconic figures of Indian Music. Devesh accompanied his mother on her visits with the late Ustad Vilayat Khan. Devesh is a sought after tabla player and educator. In addition to tabla solos and playing with Indian classical music, he has collaborated and worked with musicians across a broad range of musical genres from Western Folk and Western Classical to Flamenco and Jazz as well as Latin Music. Devesh has collaborated with notables such as Sumitra Guha, Anup Jalota, Susie Ibarra, Tarun Bhattacharya, Brian Mellick, Alex Torres. He has also composed music for modern dance, most notably his highly acclaimed commission House of Fables for the Ellen Sinopoli Dance Company. He has performed at a wide array of music festivals in both the US and abroad including Wanderlust, The NYS Fair and Friendly Gathering. Devesh regularly visits schools and colleges and teaches students of all ages from elementary school to college students about Indian Classical Music and Tabla. Devesh teaches tabla as an Artist Associate at Williams College. He is an ambassador for Tabla and Indian Classical Music for his generation and makes the music relatable and accessible to a wide audience. In addition to this, Devesh and Veena Chandra conduct a yearly community arts project which exposes public at large to Indian Classical music. Devesh and Veena Chandra together run The Dance & Music School of India which Veena Chandra founded over 30 years ago. Devesh's innovative and imaginative approach makes his performances enthralling to both Western listeners and Indian classical purists. His approach to the tabla is the confluence of all the unique influences of his upbringing. Devesh believes the tabla has the rare ability, as a percussion instrument, to very accurately convey a wide range of emotions.

Veena Chandra is an internationally renowned sitarist, composer, teacher and choreographer. She is the founder and director of the Dance and Music School of India in Latham, NY (celebrating 27 years) where she teaches Indian classical music. Born in Dehra Doon, Valley of the Himalaya Mountain Range, Veena was inspired to play music by her Father, her first Guru. He loved sitar so much that he named her Veena, after the precursor to the sitar, in hopes that she would learn music. He was 95 years old when he passed away in 2010 and his hopes have validated themselves many times over as evident by the international acclaim & respect given to Veena Chandra. She continued learning sitar with Shri Satish Chandra, a disciple of Ravi Shankar. Being invited by Pt Ravi Shankar to his concerts she was inspired by his music. She earned master's degrees in music (stood third all over India in MMUS.) and sociology and a bachelor's degree in teaching. She has been in the international Who's Who since 1997. Mrs. Chandra has taught at Agra, Dayalbagh universities and colleges in India teaching sitar and sociology. She has been performing and teaching sitar for the last 55 years. She continued her advance training under the late Ustad Vilayat Khan Saheb. Ustad Vilayat Khan Saheb very much enjoyed listening to her Sitar and grew very close to Veena and her son Devesh. She is a recipient of a New York State Folk Art Grant 2003, and Artists Decentralization Grant and several SOS & Meet the Composer grants. Currently she does lecture-demonstrations and performances at numerous performance halls, music festivals, colleges, universities, & schools in the U.S. and India. She has received artist award as a composer through the Albany League of Arts in 2002. She has received several years of Community Arts Grants (2000, 2001, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012) through The Arts Center, Troy and NYSCA. She has several CDs to her credit, including two very popular recordings with renowned Pandit Bikram Ghosh on tabla. Veena Chandra's 2009-2010 India tour was in part sponsored by NYSCA and The Arts Center of the Capital Region. Veena Chandra has a rare ability to communicate the beauty and complexity of North Indian Classical music to the western listener. She is noted for her skill and sensitivity in the meend (bending of wire) and her ability to produce vocal sounds on the sitar. She characterizes the music of the sitar and tabla as relaxing and reflective of instincts and emotions. She explains that there is a triangular relationship between the artist, the art and the audience. She blends herself into the art and presents herself to the audience through the music. The power in her music is vitalizing and healing to the body, clarifying to the mind, and food for the soul. Listening to her magnificent, heavenly music on the sitar will not leave you untouched. Veena Chandra is Artist Associate in Sitar at Williams College.

Joshua Gurwitz is a tenor based in Albany, NY. He most recently performed as Eisenstein in the Williams Opera Workshop production of *Die Fledermaus*. Other recent performances include Joe Boyd in *Damn Yankees* and the tenor soloist for J. S. Bach's *Christ Lag in Todesbanden* (BWV 4). In 2018, Mr. Gurwitz was the winner of the Advanced Division of the Joel Dolven Vocal Awards, a competition run by the Mendelssohn Club of Albany, NY. This summer, Mr. Gurwitz will be premiering the role of Jaime Sabartes Gual in a new opera, *The Weeping Woman*. This new work, written by Michael Dilthey and Brian Leahy Doyle and produced by the Greylock Opera Collective, is based on the life of Pablo Picasso's muse, Dora Maar.

Erin Nafziger is a frequent soloist with the Williams Chamber Players and The New Opera Company, and has been featured in performances at both the historic Colonial Theater and Adams Memorial Theater of New England. Roles include Elle in *La Voix Humaine*, Nella in *Gianni Schicchi*, Micäela in *La Tragédie de Carmen*, Mimì in *La Bohème*, Countess Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Belinda in *Dido and Aeneas*, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, and Soeur Constance in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*. Her recent concert performances include Brahms' *Requiem*, Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*, Stravinsky's *Les Noces*, Handel's *Messiah*, and Orff's *Carmina Burana*, among others. She received First Place in the Aspen Music Festival Concerto Competition, Third Place in the Bel Canto Foundation Competition, was a recent finalist in the New Hampshire Opera Idol Competition and the recipient of the Francesco and Hilda Riggio Award of the New England Metropolitan Opera National Council Competition. She is thrilled to be making her debut this season at Ozawa Hall in Lenox, MA as soprano soloist in the Schubert *Mass in G* in addition to her debut with the Berkshire Symphony as soprano soloist in Mahler's 4th Symphony.

Praised by critics for his standout performances with his warm and burnished tone (The Straits Times, Singapore), **Tianhui Ng** has performed to critical acclaim as a soloist with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra and the Philharmonic Chamber Choir of Singapore. A versatile artist, he is the Music Director of the Mount Holyoke Symphony Orchestra, the Pioneer Valley Symphony and the Victory Players, a new music ensemble supported by the Massachusetts International Festival of the Arts. His passion for interdisciplinary and intercultural music-making is richly evident in his current project with the Victory Players, *El Puerto Rico*, which celebrates the rich cultural heritage of Puerto Rico with residencies, commissions, workshops, dialogues, and a variety of performances sharing the stage with salsa artists, students and many civic entities in western Massachusetts. Other musical adventures have led to performances of music for ballet, film, theatre, installation art, modern dance, animation, sculpture and even sand painting. This year, he looks forward to his first season with the Boston Opera Collaborative, conducting the Boston premiere of Stefan Weisman's *Scarlet Ibis*, a preview of Cerise Lim Jacob and Jorge Sosa's, *I Am A Dreamer Who No Longer Dreams*, in a collaboration between Juventas and White Snake Productions, and a debut at the Singapore International Festival of the Arts with Handel's *Oreste*. For more information please visit: ngtianhui.com

Known for her "rich character portrayals" and "versatile voice," mezzo-soprano **Megan Roth** enjoys a varied career performing opera, oratorio, art song, and chamber music, with repertoire spanning from early to contemporary music. Most recently, Megan performed the role of Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with Summer Garden Opera in Virginia and as Meg in *Little Women* with MassOpera, where she was praised for her "warm and sonically sumptuous Meg." Other recent engagements include soloist in Copland's *In the Beginning* with Vox Humana in Dallas, Texas, Handel's *Messiah* with the Rhode Island Civic Chorale and Orchestra, and *Dixit Dominus* with the Metropolitan Chorale. As an active chamber musician, Megan performs with several renowned national ensembles including the GRAMMY® winning ensemble *Conspirare* out of Austin, Texas, GRAMMY® nominated *True Concord* and *Skylark Vocal Ensemble*, *Lorelei Ensemble*, and *Yale Choral Artists*. Upcoming engagements include Tisbe in *La Cenerentola* with Boston Midsummer Opera. Megan belongs to *Beyond Artists*, a coalition of artists that donates a portion of their concert fee to organizations they care about. She is supporting REACH Beyond Domestic Violence, a local organization that provides safety and support to survivors of abuse with this performance. www.meganroth.com