

# TO BE CERTAIN OF THE DAWN

STEPHEN PAULUS

## ISRAEL IN EGYPT

(Excerpts) | G. F. HANDEL



Louisville  
MASTER CHORALE

Sunday, October 25, 2015  
Adath Jeshurun Synagogue



October 25, 2015

Dear Friends:

Welcome to the first performance of our 2015-16 season. We are delighted to be presenting *To Be Certain of the Dawn*, a memorial oratorio by Stephen Paulus honoring the liberation of Holocaust survivors and the publication of *Nostra Aetate*, the seminal Vatican II document. (See Millard Dunn's very insightful program notes written for today's performance.) This is a lyrical and moving work that includes cantor, soloists, and a children's chorus in addition to our mixed chorus and orchestra.

We are extremely grateful for a Jewish Community Excellence Grant from the Jewish Heritage Fund for Excellence and the support of Congregation Adath Jeshurun for making this extraordinary concert possible. We are especially honored to have Holocaust survivors with us today and other special guests, including Michael Dennis Browne, the lyricist who gave us the powerful texts of this magnificent work.

We are also pleased to be performing excerpts from Handel's *Israel in Egypt*, his spectacular work telling the story of The Exodus based on biblical texts.

We hope you find today's program to be a meaningful experience for reflection, remembering, and hope for the future.

Sincerely,

Matt Lindblom  
President

Mark Walker  
Artistic Director

## GEORG FRIEDRICH HÄNDEL:

### Israel in Egypt (excerpts)

Interval (10 minutes)

## STEPHEN PAULUS: To Be Certain of the Dawn

Mary Wilson-Redden, *soprano*

Sharon Hordes, *mezzo-soprano*

David Lipp, *cantor and tenor*

Alexander Redden, *baritone*

Louisville Youth Choir

Sunday, October 25, 2015, 3:00 pm

Congregation Adath Jeshurun

2401 WOODBOURNE AVENUE, LOUISVILLE, KY

Mark Walker, CONDUCTOR & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

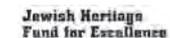
Philip Brisson, ASSOCIATE & ACCOMPANIST

Jack Griffin, CONCERTMASTER & PRODUCTION MANAGER

"This is the task: in the darkest night to be certain of the dawn, certain of the power to turn a curse into a blessing, agony into a song. To know the monster's rage and, in spite of it, proclaim to its face (even a monster will be transfigured into an angel); to go through Hell and to continue to trust in the goodness of God—this is the challenge of the way." - Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel



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Sponsored in part by a Jewish Community Excellence Grant.



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## PRE-CONCERT PROGRAM



**Dr. John R. Hale** is the Director of Liberal Studies and Adjunct Professor of Archaeology at the University of Louisville. Dr. Hale is a graduate of Yale University, with a Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge, and is a distinguished instructor and author. His many awards include the Panhellenic Teacher of the Year Award and the Delphi Center Award.

Many know Dr. Hale for his popular preconcert programs with the Louisville Bach Society before its dissolution in 2011. The Louisville Master Chorale is extremely pleased that he has been able to take time from a very busy schedule to sing in some recent performances and that he is able to present our pre-concert program today. His engaging style and commanding knowledge are respected and appreciated by concertgoers throughout our community.

## LIBRETTI

### GEORG FRIEDRICH HÄNDEL: *Israel in Egypt* (1739)

#### From Part One

##### 1. Recitative (tenor)

Now there arose a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph; and he set over Israel taskmasters to afflict them with burthens, and they made them serve with rigour. (*Exodus 1: 8, 11, 13*)

##### 2. Alto Solo and Chorus

And the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and their cry came unto God. They oppressed them with burthens, and made them serve with rigour; and their cry came up unto God. (*Exodus 2: 23; Exodus 1:13*)

##### 3. Recitative (tenor)

Then sent He Moses, His servant, and Aaron whom He had chosen; these shewed His signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. He turned their waters into blood. (*Psalm cv: 26, 27, 29*)

##### 4. Chorus

They loathed to drink of the river. He turned their waters into blood. (*Exodus 7: 18; Psalm cv: 29*)

##### 5. Air (alto)

Their land brought forth frogs, yea, even in their king's chambers. (*Psalm cv: 30*)

He gave their cattle over to the pestilence; blotches and blains broke forth on man and beast. (*Exodus 11: 9, 10*)

##### 6. Chorus

He spake the word, and there came all manner of flies and lice in all quarters. He spake; and the locusts came without number, and devoured the fruits of the ground. (*Psalm cv: 31, 34, 35*)

##### 7. Chorus

He gave them hailstones for rain; fire mingled with the hail ran along upon the ground. (*Psalm cv: 3; Exodus 9: 23, 24*)

##### 8. Chorus

He sent a thick darkness over the land, even darkness which might be felt. (*Exodus 10: 21*)

## 9. Chorus

He smote all the first-born of Egypt, the chief of all their strength. (*Psalm cv: 36, 37*)

## 10. Chorus

But as for His people, He led them forth like sheep: He brought them out with silver and gold; there was not one feeble person among their tribes. (*Psalm lxxviii: 53; Psalm cv: 37*)

## 11. Chorus

Egypt was glad when they departed, for the fear of them fell upon them.

## 12. Chorus

He rebuked the Red Sea, and it was dried up. He led them through the deep as through a wilderness. (*Psalm cvi: 9*)

But the waters overwhelmed their enemies, there was not one of them left. (*Psalm cvi: 11*)

## From Part Two

### 30. Soprano Solo and Chorus

Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. (*Exodus xv: 21*)

# TO BE CERTAIN OF THE DAWN

Libretto by Michael Dennis Browne

## I. RENEWAL

**Sh'ma Yisrael! (Hear, O Israel)**

### **Cantor**

*Sh'ma Yisrael! Adonai Eloheinu  
Adonai Echad!  
Barukh sheim K'vod malchuto  
l'olam va'ed.*

*[Hear, O Israel: Adonai our God,  
Adonai is One.  
Blessed is the name of God's  
glorious reign for ever and ever.]*

### **Teshuvah (Returning)**

#### **Chorus**

Create a great emptiness in me.  
Send a wind.  
Lay bare the branches.  
Strip me of usual song.

Drop me like a stone,  
send me down unknown paths,  
send me into pathlessness;  
drop me like a stone  
so that I go where a stone goes.

Send me down unknown paths,  
send me into pathlessness,  
into the lost places,  
down into echoes  
to where I hear

voices, but no words:  
a place of weeping  
below any of earth's waters.  
Teshuvah,  
Teshuvah,  
Teshuvah.

### **Soprano, Tenor**

Give me difficult dreams  
where my skills will not serve me;  
make bitter  
the wines I have stored.

### **Chorus**

Begin the returning.  
Teshuvah,  
Teshuvah,  
Teshuvah.

### **First Blessing**

#### **Children's Chorus**

Adonai! Adonai, Adonai, Adonai,  
Adonai!

Who gives us our hearts,  
and as they open,  
so You fill them.

Hope. We thank You for our hope.  
Adonai, Adonai,

Who gives us our dreams,  
and as they blossom,  
so we praise You.

Dreams. We thank You for our dreams.

### **Kingdom of Night**

#### **Chorus**

Holy God,  
Who found no strength in us  
to be Your power.  
How should we think of ourselves?  
How should we think ourselves  
Your hands, Your feet?  
How should we be Your heart?

On the day You called to us,  
in the kingdom of night  
where You kept calling,  
how did we heal one another  
in Your name?  
How did we think we might  
be recognized as You  
in all we failed to do?

### **Cantor**

*[recites the mourner's Kaddish]*

### **Chorus**

In the kingdom of night  
where, again and again,  
out of the mouths of children,  
You kept calling, calling.

### **Children's Chorus, Chorus**

Adonai, Adonai, Adonai.

Calling and calling and calling  
and calling  
in the kingdom of night.

Adonai!

### **V'a Havta Le Reacha Kamocho**

#### **Cantor**

*V'a havta le reacha kamocho.  
[You should love your neighbor as yourself.]*

## II. REMEMBRANCE

### **Two Little Girls in the Street**

#### **Soprano, Mezzo-soprano**

Two little girls  
we are just  
two little girls  
in the street  
sisters?

what do you think?

maybe so  
maybe not  
maybe so

we're a little bit curious  
about the camera  
we're not so unhappy  
about the camera

(who is it  
we wonder  
who is  
looking at us  
just the two of us?)

here we are!

do you like the skirt?  
what do you think of the coat?  
pretty red coat!  
it's Tuesday  
so I get the coat for the day  
Leah is wearing the skirt

### **Chorus**

Jews may not be citizens.  
Jews may not meet in public places.

### **Soprano, Mezzo-soprano**

why bread  
in both my hands?

why does Leah have  
nothing at all?

she has one hand  
on the back of my neck  
she's holding onto me

the other hand's empty  
just in case  
just in case

hands are for holding onto  
for filling up  
and never for hurting us  
hands are for giving us things

what do you think of our shoes???

## **Second Blessing** **Children's Chorus**

*Barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu*

*Melech ha-olam.*

*[Praised are You, Adonai our God,  
Ruler of the Universe.]*

Adonai, Adonai,

Who gives us apples,  
Who gives us bread  
we give to one another.

Sunlight. We thank You for  
sunlight.

## **Where Was the Light?** **Chorus**

Where was the light we should  
have been?  
Moons we are, ghosts we were;  
No way for anyone to know  
that great sun shone.

And everywhere such wounds.

## **Old Man, Young Man** **Baritone, Tenor**

You can keep standing there  
if you want  
I'm going to stay  
sitting here with my back  
against this tree

and smiling to see you  
just being so young

maybe it's something  
you're saying to me  
(I don't remember)

maybe it's because  
I am father  
to your mother

*Zayde, tell me that story again*  
*[zayde: grandpa]*

maybe that's not really  
a smile on my face  
maybe I'm half-asleep  
and I'm having a dream  
where I'm leaning against a tree  
and Rachel's boy is standing  
slender in sunlight  
talking with me

*When you were a boy*  
*and you fell in the river*  
*and nobody heard you –*  
*tell me again!*

## **Chorus**

Jews may not attend school.  
Jews may not marry outside their race.

## **Baritone, Tenor**

I want this dream  
to go on and on  
and things are still good  
or good enough  
in this world of summer  
nothing so bad  
has happened to us

not under these trees  
where you stand  
your back to the camera

young child of a man  
young child of my child  
talking with me

as if you were made of sunlight  
as if you were made of leaves

*And suddenly, Zayde, you knew*  
*how to swim!*

## **Third Blessing**

### **Children's Chorus, Soprano**

*Barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu*

*Melech ha-olam.*

*(Praised are You, Adonai,*  
*Ruler of the Universe.)*

Who gives us our mouths,  
Who gives us air  
and every breath we breathe.

Our songs. We thank You  
for our songs.

## **This We Ask of You** **Chorus**

This we ask of You –  
You who brought us into being –  
which tasks are ours? which labors?  
which joys? which dances?  
which instruments of Yours  
do we become?

## **Du sollst deinen Nächsten lieben** **wie dich selbst**

### **Chorus, Cantor**

*Du sollst deinen Nächsten lieben*

*wie dich selbst.*

*V'a havta le reacha kamocha.*

*[You should love your neighbor as yourself.]*

## **Three Coats**

### **Mezzo-soprano, Tenor**

I'm wearing  
two jackets and a coat

I have curls hidden  
under my knitted cap  
am I a girl or a boy?

it doesn't matter!

(a girl)

under the coats  
there's a shirt,  
it's buttoned up, too

(I'm a boy)  
and I'm wearing  
a scarf  
between my shirt and vest

I just wish  
it didn't hurt  
where my tooth came out  
didn't look so bad

and if only I wasn't  
so sleepy today  
(bad dreams)

and if only  
father didn't look  
so scared last night  
when we heard  
the knocking on the door

## **Chorus**

Jews may not keep animals.  
Jews may not ride bicycles.

## **Mezzo-soprano, Tenor**

(it was just the wind)

so –

a shirt  
a scarf  
a jacket  
a vest  
a coat  
I'm a boy!  
I'm a bundled-up boy!

## **Fourth Blessing** **Children's Chorus**

*Barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu*

*Melech ha-olam.*

*(Praised are you, Adonai our God,*  
*Ruler of the Universe.)*

We praise You for the lives before us,  
we praise You for the lives to come,  
whether we will see them or not.  
Every life. We thank You for  
every life.  
We praise You! We praise You!

## **Breathe in Us, Spirit of God**

### **Chorus, Tenor, Baritone**

In the time of the breaking of glass,  
the tearing of roots,  
the splitting of every little temple  
of hope, the heart,  
breathe in us, Spirit of God,  
so that we may strengthen,  
so we may grow and be known  
by our love.

## **Boy Reading**

### **Baritone**

I'm looking down  
from far away  
I'm high up on a branch  
looking down  
on the book

so many little characters  
all of them keys  
says Mama

keys to all the doors  
I want to open  
I want to open them all

I like the way  
the characters are

sometimes I think I see  
looks on their faces  
(they're looking at me)

### **Chorus**

Jews may not imagine.  
Jews may not dream.

### **Baritone**

they'll take me  
into the stories  
where I want to go

I had a dream  
where I grew so heavy  
I fell out of the tree  
down down  
into the characters  
and they covered me over  
and no one could find me

they never found me

### **Chorus**

And everywhere such wounds.

Wear this star.

Wear this star.

Wear this star.

## **Interlude: Veil of Tears**

### **Orchestra**

## **Hymn to the Eternal Flame**

### **Chorus, Children's Chorus, Soprano~**

Every face is in you,

Every voice,

Every sorrow in you,

Every pity,

Every love, every memory,

Woven into fire.

Every breath is in you,

Every cry,

Every longing in you,

Every singing,

Every hope, every healing,

Woven into fire.

Every heart is in you,

Every tongue,

Every trembling in you,

Every blessing,

Every soul, every shining,

Woven into fire.

## **III. VISIONS**

### **B'Tselem Elohim (Image of God)**

#### **Mezzo-soprano**

I would like to be walking with you  
in the cool of the evening.

#### **Children's Chorus**

*I will pour out My spirit on all flesh;  
your sons and your daughters  
shall prophesy,  
your old men shall dream dreams,  
and your young men shall see  
visions.*

#### **Mezzo-soprano**

Walking with you in the streets  
of that city  
we have imagined and dreamed.

## **Source of All Life**

### **Chorus**

Source of All Life,

beyond all names we have

for You,

how should we do

all that must be done

unless we see through Your eyes?

### **Soprano, Baritone**

Not evening.

Maybe in the heat of noon.

Or midnight with its winds.

Not a time of our choosing.

### **Children's Chorus**

*Do not fear, I am with you;*

*I will bring your offspring*

*from the east,*

*and from the west I will gather you;*

*I will say to the north, 'Give*

*them up,'*

*and to the south, 'Do not withhold;*

*bring My sons from far away*

*and My daughters from the ends*

*of the earth.'*

### **Soprano, Baritone**

Maybe a rain,

running down the leaves,

running over the stones,

down the roots of the trees

We are walking there.

### **Chorus**

Source of All Life,

these eyes and faces

are You among us

as we labor to repair this world.

### **Soprano, Mezzo-soprano, Tenor, Baritone**

Maybe stars,

those faithful ones

that do not step down.

We will walk by their light,

and ask for forgiveness

for smallness of dreams.

I would like to be walking with you

in the cool of the evening,

I would like to be walking

in the streets of that city

we have dreamed and imagined;

there we are walking.

## **Voices of Survivors**

### **Soprano**

'I see the people, the places –

they live in my memory –

the faces of the people who

meant so much to me.'

*[Felicia Weingarten, survivor]*

### **Tenor**

'Why did I survive? The Rabbi

said: "God kept you on earth

to write the story."'

*[Henry Oertelt, survivor]*

### **Baritone**

'I dream of a sculpture of a

bird – I try to touch it. I wake

up touching the bird. I think

it is a miracle.'

*[Robert Fisch, survivor]*

### **Mezzo-soprano**

'I have lived in a world with no

children... I would never live

in a world of no children again.'

*[Hinda Kibort, survivor (zl; of blessed memory)]*

## **V'a Havta Le Reacha Kamocho**

### **Chorus, Children's Chorus, Cantor**

*V'a havta le reacha kamocho.*

*[You should love your neighbor as yourself.]*

Libretti prepared by Millard Dunn

## ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP



**MARK WALKER**, Louisville Master Chorale's Conductor and Artistic Director, has extensive experience in Choral Conducting, Organ Performance, Choral Music Education, and Liturgical Church Music. He currently serves as Organist and Director of Music at Church of the Holy Spirit in Louisville. He has served parishes in Kentucky, Tennessee, Texas, and North Carolina and has taught in schools in Kentucky and North Carolina. Walker previously served as Assistant Conductor for the Louisville Bach Society. Walker holds a Bachelor's Degree in Music from Western Kentucky University and a Master's Degree in Organ Performance from East Carolina University.

His conducting experience with extended choral-orchestral works includes compositions by Bach, Handel, Mozart, Vivaldi, Pergolesi and contemporary composers Rutter and Lauridsen. As an organ recitalist, Walker has performed extensively throughout the Eastern and Southern U.S. He regularly serves as conductor and organist for various Diocesan events in Louisville, and during the summer of 2011 served as both choral conductor and guest organ recitalist for the National Associations of Pastoral Musicians Conference. He also served as Dean of the Louisville Chapter of the American Guild of Organists in 2011-12.



**PHILIP BRISSON**, Louisville Master Chorale's Associate and Accompanist, is Director of Music and Organist at the Cathedral of the Assumption in downtown Louisville, the country's oldest inland Catholic cathedral in continuous use. In addition to leading the Cathedral's traditional worship, he manages the Cathedral's Keltly Endowed Concert Series and has led the Cathedral Choirs in this country and on concert tours in Europe. Prior to his work with the LMC, he was Chorusmaster for the Kentucky Opera and

prepared choruses for performances of works ranging from Verdi to Floyd. As a teacher, Dr. Brisson has served on the faculties of Bellarmine University and Indiana University Southeast. Brisson has a BM in Organ Performance from the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College, CUNY, a Master's Degree in Sacred Music from Westminster Choir College and a Doctorate in Organ Performance from the Eastman School of Music.

As an organ soloist, he has given recitals in 35 states and has appeared with the Louisville Orchestra as guest soloist. Brisson is active in the American Guild of Organists and also founded the concert artist cooperative EastWestOrganists.com, which represents several prominent young American organists.



**JACK GRIFFIN** is Concertmaster and Production Manager with the Louisville Master Chorale. He has held the Principal Viola position with the Louisville Orchestra since 1984, having joined the Orchestra during high school. He received his Bachelor's Degree from the University of Louisville and has also studied at The Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music and Indiana University.

Griffin owns Commonwealth Musicians which provides ensembles such as string quartets, jazz ensembles and other musicians for functions such as weddings and corporate events.

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## SOLOISTS



**MARY WILSON-REDDEN**, *soprano*, has been a featured performer in the Louisville area for over 20 years. In addition to serving as resident soloist with the Louisville Bach Society, she has performed with groups including the Louisville Youth Choir, the Bellarmine Schola Cantorum, Kentucky Opera and the Louisville Chorus. She has toured internationally with the Stephen Foster Story and the Louisville Vocal Project. A graduate of Western Kentucky University with a Bachelor's Degree in Music Performance, she is a soloist with the Choir of Calvary Episcopal Church.



**CANTOR SHARON HORDES**, *mezzo-soprano*, received a Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Performance from Indiana University School of Music. While a student at IU, Cantor Hordes performed with the Opera Chorus as well as in a Studio Opera. She relocated to Louisville — the hometown of her husband, George Schuhmann — to teach Hebrew and Judaica classes at Eliahu Academy. She became the cantor of Keneseth Israel in 2008. Cantor Hordes will record her debut solo album of Ladino and traditional Sephardic music, *Mi Coração Sopira*, in January 2016.



**CANTOR DAVID LIPP**, *tenor*, was born in Madison, Wisconsin, and grew up in Jerusalem, Haifa and Minneapolis. Before embarking on his current career, Cantor Lipp was an actor performing in local and regional theatre in the Midwest. He graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Performance from the University of Minnesota. He came to Congregation Adath Jeshurun as Hazzan in 1994 and has established a reputation as an inspiring leader of worship and transmitter of Jewish musical tradition, ancient to contemporary.



**ALEXANDER REDDEN**, *baritone*, is a veteran soloist in and around the greater Louisville area. He has been featured as a soloist with the Louisville Bach Society, Kentucky Opera, Louisville Vocal Project, Louisville Chorus, Louisville Youth Choir, Bellarmine University, the Youth Performing Arts School Choirs, Calvary Episcopal Church and the Stephen Foster Story. He toured Italy with the Louisville Vocal Project, performing concerts in many historic venues including St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Music from Western Kentucky University.



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Viki Perry  
Randy Peters  
Nancy Potter  
Mary Redden  
Martha Richardson  
Stephanie Smith  
Maddie Wardell  
Diane Watkins  
Maria Whitley  
Nancy J. Wright  
Ruth J. Wright  
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Reynolds

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Ruby Bevan  
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George DeChurch  
Millard Dunn  
Stephen Ellis  
Robert Powell  
Gregg Rochman  
Adam Seibert  
Marius Serban  
Jonathan Smith  
Wesley Thomas  
Matthew Williams

### BASS

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John Erb  
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John R. Hale  
Frederick Klotter  
Rob Lane  
Alan Luger  
John O'Neil  
Laurence Pittenger  
Ben Ragsdell  
Alexander Redden  
Hans Sander  
William Schauf  
Joe Scheirich

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### VIOLIN I

Jack Griffin  
Isabella Christensen  
Ana Sarbu  
Patti Sisson

### CELLO

Yoonie Choi

### CLARINET

Andrea Levine  
Marilyn Nije

### TROMBONE

Brett Shuster

### DOUBLE BASS

Patti Docs

### BASSOON

Matthew Karr

### TIMPANI/ PERCUSSION

John Harris

### VIOLIN II

Elisa Spalding  
Jon Mueller  
Evan Vivic

### HARP

Louisa Ellis

### FRENCH HORN

John Gustley

### FLUTE

Kathy Karr

### TRUMPET/ SHOFAR

Stacy Simpson

### PIANO

Grace Baugh-Bennett

### VIOLA

Meghan Casper  
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## COMPOSER AND LYRICIST

**STEPHEN PAULUS (1949-2014)** was a prolific American composer of classical music. He wrote over 600 works for chorus, opera, orchestra, chamber ensemble, solo voice, concert band, piano, and organ, receiving premieres and performances throughout the world as well as a Grammy nomination for Best Contemporary Classical Composition in 2015. Stephen Paulus passed away in October, 2014 from complications of a stroke, but his music continues to be frequently performed.

**MICHAEL DENNIS BROWNE (B.1940)** is a professor emeritus at the University of Minnesota, where he has taught for thirty-nine years. As a librettist, he has written many texts for music, working principally with composer Stephen Paulus. Their post-Holocaust oratorio, *To Be Certain of the Dawn*, was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in music by the Minnesota Orchestra. We are pleased that he is with us for today's performance and greatly appreciate the production support he has provided.

## LOUISVILLE YOUTH CHOIR



Louisville Youth Choir, a nonprofit performing arts organization, was established in 1967 to create a passion for singing among young people. LYC annually draws over 100 auditioned youth from throughout the metropolitan area, and its musical repertoire includes many styles and cultures. It is led by Terri E. Foster, Artistic/Executive Director and Dr. Louie L. Bailey, conductor. Two LYC ensembles will be singing the part of the childrens choir in *To Be Certain of the Dawn*.

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## PROGRAM NOTES

### ISRAEL IN EGYPT (1739)

Georg Friedrich Händel (1685-1759):

According to Donald Jay Grout, Handel's Oratorios "are not to be regarded as church music. They are intended for the concert hall, and are much closer to the theatre than to the church service." This certainly holds true for *Israel in Egypt* (1738) which, however, is unusual among Handel's work for two reasons: it is one of two works whose text is taken entirely from scripture (the other is the *Messiah*) and more than any other work it is driven by its choruses. And remarkable choruses they are, many of them double choruses, and all of them famous for representing with both voices and orchestra the images evoked by scripture, most vividly the plagues visited on the Egyptians. While Grout suggests that "the somewhat literal representation of frogs, flies, lice, [and] hail . . . is amusing rather than impressive," he also points out that "*He sent a thick darkness* is remarkable equally for its unusual form, its strange modulations, and its pictorial writing." And the oratorio ends with Miriam's triumphant song from the fifteenth chapter of Exodus, set for soprano solo and double chorus.

Handel gives us a dramatic experience on the scale of Cecil B. DeMille's *Ten Commandments*. The oratorio deals exuberantly with one of the most sacred experiences in Jewish scripture and liturgy. It has never been as popular as the *Messiah*, but it is interesting that for years the earliest sound recording of a musical performance was a recording of *Israel in Egypt*, made on Edison wax cylinders, June 29, 1888, at the Crystal Palace in London..

### TO BE CERTAIN OF THE DAWN (2005)

Stephen Paulus (1949-2014) and  
Michael Dennis Browne (b. 1940)

The vocal score of *To Be Certain of the Dawn* calls the work "A Holocaust memorial oratorio rooted in themes and subjects of mutual interest to the Jewish and Christian faith communities and written in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camps and the 40th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* (*In Our Times*), a landmark Vatican II document that condemns blaming the Jews for the death of Christ." This simple description does not come close to the achievement of such a monumental work.

*To Be Certain of the Dawn* is the result of a close collaboration between the composer Stephen Paulus (1949-2014) and the librettist Michael Dennis Browne (b. 1940), who explains that Fr. Michael O'Connell of the Basilica of Saint Mary in Minneapolis commissioned "Stephen Paulus and myself to [write a work to] commemorate the deaths of Jewish children in the Shoah." Browne's involvement consisted of much more than providing the words: From the time of the commission until the completion of the work, he "had many discussion[s] and intense conversations with Stephen Paulus." He also met many times with Fr. O'Connell and Rabbi Marcia Zimmerman. He wrote the words that Paulus would set to music, but much more importantly he helped shape the work itself.

On a visit to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., Browne first encountered the photographs of Roman Vishniac. In the early 1930s the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee asked Vishniac, who according to a popular Berlin Rabbi in the early 30s "is never seen without a camera; it's part of him," to travel to several eastern European countries in order to photograph impoverished Jewish communities as part of a campaign to raise money to help them. Between 1935 and 1938 Vishniac went to Poland, the Carpathians, Slovakia, Lithuania, and Hungary, photographing daily life as he found it. In 1939, Vishniac needed to make sure that his negatives got out of Germany. They first went with Vishniac's father to Paris and then with another friend from Marseilles to Cuba to Miami, where they were confiscated by U.S. Customs. It was not until Vishniac and his family were able to get to the United States in late 1940 that he was reunited with the negatives. He had taken 16,000 photographs. Only 2,000 survived.

Michael Dennis Browne found himself particularly moved by Vishniac's photographs of children, collected posthumously in the book *Children of a Vanished World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). From this collection he selected four photographs and then wrote words for them. What are these children thinking? What would they say to this man with the camera? What would they say to us? In performance, these four photographs are often projected on a screen above the orchestra and chorus. After *To Be Certain of the Dawn* was finished, Browne insisted that, "The faces of the children are the sun, moon and stars of this work." They are also, literally, the heart of the work, since the central section of this three-part work is built around them.

Stephen Paulus (1949-2014) was a prolific and much loved composer. According to the biography on his website he wrote "over 600 works for chorus, opera, orchestra, chamber ensemble, solo voice, concert band, piano, and organ." Perhaps his best known work is the "Pilgrim's Hymn," which he first composed as the final chorus of *The Three Hermits*, an opera he and Michael Dennis Browne wrote in 1997. On the advice of his friend Kathy Romey, conductor of the Minnesota Chorale and Head of Choral Activities at the University of Minnesota, Paulus rearranged the piece for a double chorus and published it as a separate work. It has become a favorite of high school and college choruses, it shows up frequently in their choral music contests, and will be part of them for the rest of their lives. It was also sung as part of the musical preludes for the funerals of both Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan.

In a 1996 interview with Beverly Taylor (*Choral Journal*, March 1, 1997), Paulus said that in choral music “the combination of words and music heightens the meaning of either the poem or the music; it stretches beyond what purely instrumental music can do.” He describes his own music as “colorful, anchored in tonality but not without dissonance, used sometimes in obvious, sometimes in more subtly prepared ways.” And according to Taylor, “He places a priority on the rhythmic aspect of his music. He feels that rhythm is the anchor, and that it is vital to all composition.” Furthermore, it is important to him that “audience members . . . take something away from the shared experience” of listening to music, of experiencing a “commonality of feeling.”

*To Be Certain of the Dawn* depends on our knowing what happened in Germany and eastern Europe from 1933 to 1945. It does not teach us about the holocaust, does not show us images of the death camps and mass graves. Paulus and Browne understand that we have seen those pictures and heard those stories. What they give us are prayers, blessings, images of children *before* the onslaught of the Shoah, voices of Nazis chanting hatefully the consequences of the Nuremberg laws of 1935, and finally the voices of survivors.

The piece begins in our present time with a call to prayer, a cleansing of the self, and a confession of guilt. The word *Teshuvah* in the first chorus is often translated as “repentance,” although it means, literally, “return.” Michael Dennis Browne explains: *Teshuvah* is “a statement about the clearing, widening, deepening, cleaning house, *scouring* that has to take place within, so that we can start to travel toward the deepest part of ourselves, looking for a new beginning as partners in faith.” In “Kingdom of Night” we take the first step by acknowledging that in the face of the brutal murder of millions we stood by and did nothing.

The second section takes us into the past in order to show us images of children who will almost certainly suffer and die, and it lets us hear the voices of their murderers. The third section brings us back to the present and shows us the way to redemption.

In addition to the orchestra, there are three groups of singers: an adult chorus, a children’s chorus, and four soloists. There is also a cantor, whose voice appears sometimes alone and sometimes woven into the texture of the other voices.

The role of the adult chorus changes, sometimes penitent Christians, sometimes Nazis, sometimes Jews, and sometimes Jews and Christians together.

Michael Dennis Browne wrote out instructions for the children’s chorus in order to help them understand what roles they play: “You are young Jewish people in 1930s Europe, praising God (“Adonai”) for all the things that are given to you . . . [You are] the desperation of those who call out for help in the endless nights in the death camps.” These two voices are brought together, along with the voices of the adult chorus, in the “Hymn to the Eternal Flame.”

About the children’s chorus in the third section Browne tells us that an inner voice had said to him, “Give the children the scriptures.” He instructs the children that in the third section they are “singing Wisdom, words taken directly from the Hebrew Scriptures, the promises of the Divine brought to us through the words of the prophets.”

The soloists sing the roles of individuals, first the children (and one adult) in the photographs of Part Two, pieces that Browne calls “meditations on the faces.” There are four of them: “Two Little Girls in the Street,” “Old Man, Young Man,” “Three Coats,” and “Boy Reading.” In Vishniac’s collection *A Vanished World* (1983), he explains several of his pictures, including the photograph that inspired Browne’s meditation “Three Coats.” Vishniac comments, “These boys were interested in me, a stranger in their village. I was friendly and smiled at them and spoke to them in their mama-loshen—their mother tongue, Yiddish. I came from far away and might tell them stories they had never heard, about places they had never been.” Roman Vishniac loved these people, his people. And even though he could not save them, he could save his images of their world. He could save their faces.

The Yad Vashem children’s memorial in Jerusalem contains an underground room lit by tiny flickering candlelight, one light for every child who died in the holocaust. A voice reads the name of every child, first in English, then in Hebrew, and in Yiddish. The image of these tiny lights accompanies the singing of the “Hymn to the Eternal Flame,” which ends Part Two.

And then in Part Three the soloists sing the voices of survivors, the texts of which come directly from conversations Michael Dennis Browne had with three people who survived the Shoah and the daughter of a fourth.

The last projected image we see is a large, tight group of children gathered around the central figure of a girl, all of the children looking up at the camera expectantly. Michael Dennis Browne believes that this picture might have been taken at Terezin (in German, Theresienstadt), a concentration camp the Nazis used for propaganda purposes, to show the world what would appear to be a happy Jewish community. It is a beautiful photograph. They are beautiful children. And with that image we hear sung in Hebrew by both the adult and children’s choruses, “You should love your neighbor as yourself.”

*To Be Certain of the Dawn* opens and closes with the blowing of a shofar. At the beginning, this is followed by “Sh’ma Yisrael! [Hear, O Israel: Adonai our God, / Adonai is One.]” At the end the shofar is preceded by the third repetition of “You Should Love Your Neighbor as Yourself,” sung in Hebrew. This verse appears twice earlier in the piece: at the end of Part One, sung in Hebrew by the Cantor, and then at the center of Part Two sung in German by the chorus and again in Hebrew by the Cantor. Its position in each section reflects the importance of this commandment to the meaning of the entire oratorio. And with that commandment, the oratorio ends.

In a post-9/11 world the first paragraph of *Nostra Aetate* could sound naïve or ironic: “In our day, when people are drawing more closely together and the bonds of friendship between different peoples are being strengthened, the church examines more carefully its relations with non-Christian religions.” Stephen Paulus acknowledges that difficulty musically, which he explains near the end of his dialogue with Michael Dennis Browne in *To Be Certain of the Dawn: Beyond the Notes* (which is available on YouTube) that at the very end he adds “in a subtle way . . . a couple of [dissonant] intervals.” But the tritone created by the basses in the three measures before the consonance of the final measure is pianissimo and very subtle indeed. You have to listen very closely to hear it. And, instead of compromising the spiritual journey we have just taken, it may well enrich it. We still live in a fallen world.

Near the end of *Nostra Aetate* we find, “We cannot truly pray to God the Father of all if we treat any people as other than sisters and brothers, for all are created in God’s image. People’s relation to God the Father and their relation to other women and men are so dependent on each other that the Scripture says ‘They who do not love, do not know God’ (1 Jn 4:8).” The bonds of friendship mentioned in the first paragraph might not be as strong now as the writers of *Nostra Aetate* felt in 1965. But the statement here in the penultimate paragraph of the document is still true. The photographs in part two of *To Be Certain of the Dawn* are heartbreaking not in and of themselves but because they show us what could have been. And the commandment at the end of the oratorio sends us out into the world.

Program notes by Millard Dunn

## PHOTOGRAPHY

The visual images being projected during today’s performance of *To Be Certain of the Dawn* were chosen by Stephen Paulus, the composer, and Michael Dennis Browne, the lyricist. These are the faces of the children whose voices we hear in Part Two of the work, some of the faces Michael Dennis Browne calls “the sun, moon and stars of this work.”

Photographs 1-4 on the following page were taken by Roman Vishniac, ca. 1935-38 and are © Mara Vishniac Kohn, courtesy International Center of Photography. Photographs 5-6 were provided by Andrew Paulus, the composer’s son, and are unattributed.



1. Two friends shyly approach the photographer, Lodz, ca. 1935-38



2. An Orthodox father visits his son, [TOZ (Society for Safeguarding the Health of the Jewish Population) summer camp, probably Otwock], ca. 1935-37



3. Friends, Trnava, ca. 1935-38



4. In cheder (Jewish elementary school), Mukaceva, ca. 1935-38



5. The children's memorial at the Yad Vashem memorial in Jerusalem



6. The children at Terezin (Theresienstadt)

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