



Program Notes & Translations

Dry Your Tears, Afrika is from the powerfully dramatic Steven Spielberg movie *Amistad*, with uplifting and inspiring music written by John Williams (b. 1932). For the text, Williams used a poem by Bernard Dadié entitled “*Dry Your Tears, Africa; Your Children Are Coming Home*,” which the composer found in a volume of West African poetry. The poem, originally in French, was translated from the Mende, the native tongue of the Africans portrayed in the film.

Composer (and frequent FCCC guest) Nick Page chose three very simple variations for the lovely Zulu lullaby, *Thula S'thandwa*. The piece begins with a Mozartian setting followed by a two-against-three pattern in the piano that is based on the mbira (thumb piano) music of Zimbabwe. The ending quotes the “*Rock-a-bye Baby*” theme.

Charles Albert Tindley, who composed *The Storm Is Passing Over* in 1927, was considered by many to be the “grandfather” of Gospel music. He also wrote the text of the original version of *We Shall Overcome*.

Sing Me to Heaven, by contemporary composer Daniel Gawthrop (b. 1949), has captured the heart and imagination of many singers and listeners over the last few years. The text is remarkable in that it elicits many different interpretations from those who examine it.

In my heart's sequestered chambers lie truths stripped of poet's gloss.

Words alone are vain and vacant and my heart is mute.

In response to aching silence memory summons half heard voices,

and my soul finds primal eloquence and wraps me in song.

If you would comfort me, sing me a lullaby. If you would win my heart, sing me a love song.

If you would mourn me and bring me to God, sing me a requiem, sing me to heaven.

Touch in me all love and passion, pain and pleasure,

Touch in me grief and comfort.

Sing me a lullaby a love song, a requiem. Love me, comfort me, bring me to God:

Sing me a love song, sing me to heaven.



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With *Ave Maria* by Otto Fischer we continue our survey of various settings of this devotional text. In recent memory we have performed settings by Schubert, Biebl, Kodaly and Andriessen. This version includes the text “*Ave Maria*” simply as a refrain. The verse is in Hungarian: “*I wish I were a little bell, I'd sing a beautiful melody, and the Earth and sky would sing with me. This little bell is within my soul, the melody is the sound of my heart.*”

The well-known spiritual *Plenty Good Room* speaks of hope and the inclusiveness of God. Early artists who recorded this song include James Cleveland, Roland Hayes and The Original Gospel Harmonettes.

You and Me is a bluegrass song by Sara Watkins, an American singer-songwriter and fiddler. Watkins debuted in 1989 as fiddler and founding member of the progressive bluegrass group Nickel Creek along with her brother Sean and mandolinist Chris Thile. In addition to singing and fiddling, Watkins also plays the ukulele and the guitar, and also played percussion while touring with The Decemberists. The Chamber Singers had a wonderful collaboration with Sara in December 2014 in which we performed the backup parts to *You and Me*.

Jubilate Deo is a song of rejoicing by German composer Michael Praetorius (1571 – 1621). The theme is stated once in unison, followed by a three-part canon, creating the rich, polyphonic cathedral-like quality of a Renaissance motet. This was the opening selection of our Premiere Concert on December 17, 1995!

Rejoice in the Lord, Alleluia.

I'm Goin' Up a Yonder is one of the most powerful songs we have performed in our twenty years. It was composed by Walter Hawkins from the point of view of a slave woman who is on the auction block with her young child. They are about to be sold to different owners, never to see each other again until they are “*up a yonder*.”



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John Newton (1725 – 1807), who penned the text of *Amazing Grace* in 1772, first worked as a slave trader in Africa and later moved on to a position of captain on slave ships. A violent storm at sea brought about his conversion to Christianity. He later became an Anglican minister who fought for the abolition of the slave trade in England. As with other hymns of this period, the words were sung to a number of tunes before they became linked to the now familiar variant of the tune “*New Britain*,” of which the composer is unknown. The melody is believed to be Scottish or Irish in origin.

Total Praise is Richard Smallwood's anthemic mega-hit from his album *Adoration*. With stunning choral harmony, each syllable brings another beautiful chord, forming a progression through the lyrical line. It starts off peacefully and gradually builds more tension. With the word “*storm*” you can feel the energy that has built up and is then released as the choir lets loose on “*You are the source of my strength; You are the strength of my life.*” Following that climax, there is a descending line that goes straight into another high point of the song, the dramatic “*Amen*” done in four inversions.

The Lion Sleeps Tonight, first recorded as *Mbube* by The Tokens, is a long time FCCC favorite. We enjoyed performing this on tour last summer with *Insingizi*, a group from Zimbabwe. We invite the audience to join in the second time through!



Fairfield County Children's Choir
P.O. Box 110588 Trumbull, CT 06611 • 203 414-4292 • www.SingFCCC.org

Fairfield County Children's Choir
Jon Noyes, Music Director & Founder presents...

By Special Request!

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Norwalk, CT

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For audition and ticket information, please contact us at:



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PROGRAM

Fairfield County Youth Choir

Bridge Over Troubled WaterPaul Simon, arr. Shaw
Clear WaterRobert I. Hugh

Chorus

The AtticRobert I. Hugh
You Are My SunshinePaul Rice
Feel GoodTyson & Scott, arr. Baker

Chorale

Hotaru KoiJapanese Folk Song
Hallelujah *from "Shrek"*Leonard Cohen, arr. Emerson
Didn't My Lord Deliver DanielSpiritual, arr. Emerson

Concert Choir

Dry Your Tears, Afrika *from "Amistad"* . . .John Williams
Thula S'ThandwaZulu Lullaby, arr. Nick Page
The Storm is Passing OverCharles A. Tindley, arr. Baker

Chamber Singers

Sing Me To HeavenDaniel E. Gawthrop
Ave MariaOtto Fischer
Plenty Good RoomSpiritual, arr. John Maggs
You and MeSara Watkins

Combined Choirs

Jubilate DeoMichael Praetorius
I'm Goin' Up a YonderWalter Hawkins, arr. Sirvatka
Amazing GraceJohn Newton
Total PraiseRichard Smallwood
The Lion Sleeps TonightSolomon Linda



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Welcome to the Twentieth Annual Spring Concert of the Fairfield County Children's Choir! As we celebrate the final months of our anniversary season, we look back on all that we have experienced through the years and look forward to many more years of wonderful music-making with our amazing choristers. Thousands of children have participated in our mission "to provide a musical experience that is challenging, rewarding and enjoyable." It is our hope that through our music we have touched not only our choristers, but also many thousands more, from the chorister's families to our audience members. Tonight's concert is special in that our members and audience selected the music through a survey that was disseminated in the fall. We know you will agree that they have chosen well!

To celebrate this anniversary we have invited our alumni to join us on stage for fourteen of tonight's pieces. We welcome them back to sing with us again!!!!



The hit song **Bridge Over Troubled Water** by Paul Simon has had a deep impact on many lives. Written in 1969 and released in 1970, it won Song of the Year as sung by Art Garfunkel in 1971. Today we are performing a popular Gospel arrangement by Kirby Shaw. This song received the most votes in our survey!

Clear Water, by our good friend Rob Hugh, was commissioned by the FCCC in 2001 for the 350th Anniversary of the founding of the city of Norwalk, Connecticut and was first performed here as part of the festivities. It includes text by John Masefield and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

The Attic is the first piece commissioned by the FCCC, from our 1996-1997 season. The process of supporting new music by living composers is important and exciting, and the FCCC has been privileged to be involved in many world premieres. Fifth grader Jenny Bemis, a former student of Rob Hugh, wrote the text of *The Attic*. It is an allegory, masterfully full of hidden meaning. The opening describes a dark, musty place where one might feel afraid. With the words "But then again, maybe.." the tempo and mood abruptly change to reflect a brighter outlook. Indeed, we discover there are myriad possibilities in an attic.

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The message of Jenny's poem, complemented by Rob Hugh's music, is:
*don't be afraid to try new things,
you just might be surprised at what you discover!*

You Are My Sunshine, one of the most popular lullabies of the past 50 years, was first recorded in 1939. There are numerous attributions, with Paul Rice considered the original composer. With this song we wish all moms a happy Mother's Day!!

Gospel music originated in the Black churches of the urban north in the 20th century. Gospel songs have a known composer with a tradition descended from spirituals and urban blues infused with improvisation and instrumental accompaniment. **Feel Good** is a contemporary gospel song, one of many in the FCCC repertoire. "I've got to tell everybody, I feel good!"

Hotaru Koi is a lively Japanese song which translates "Come firefly, come! Over there the water is nasty; over here the water is sweet."

In the movie "Shrek" **Hallelujah** is performed by John Cale. When later released on CD, the soundtrack album included a performance by Rufus Wainwright. It was a song originally written and sung by Leonard Cohen but it has been covered many times by various other artists such as Allison Crowe and Jeff Buckley. We hope you enjoy our version of this classic!

Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel is set here in a spectacular arrangement by Roger Emerson. The African-American Spiritual represents a large portion of American music that provides the choral musician with a unique opportunity to experience great music and its connection to American history. Spirituals are folk songs, that is, they have no known composer. They have been handed down orally through many generations. The earliest "concert" performances of spirituals date back to 1865 when the *Fisk Jubilee Singers* of Fisk University toured Europe and the United States to help raise funds for the school. This tour was met with enormous support and success and is largely responsible for the birth of this wonderful genre of music that is so popular today.