

The sun is such a powerful force in our world, as well as a metaphor that represents a lot of good as well. We as choral musicians often equate our performances as opportunities to share light with our communities. I decided to build the program around one major work that I have wanted to perform for some time that I believe is perfect for this ensemble. There are three subsets within the program: 1) Praise For Sunlight, 2) Rays of Light, Shining Night, and 3) Sunlight On A Stream.

Praise for Sunlight begins with Eric Barnum's *Afternoon On A Hill*. This piece beautifully leans into text painting thanks to evocative words by Edna St. Vincent Millay, the first woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize in poetry. Following will be a short chorale by Bach, *Lobe den Herren*, from his *Cantata BWV 137*. This hymn tune is used as the source material for Susan Labarr's recent work *For This Joy*. This strophic piece grows slowly from Bach's initial idea, into a new and sublime work full of lush harmony and appreciation for the world around us.

Rays of Light, Shining Night begins with the centerpiece of our program, Lili Boulanger's *Hyme au soleil*. Lili Boulanger was a child prodigy composer in the early 20th century. She was the first woman to win the coveted *Prix de Rome*, despite her career being cut short due to an early, tragic death. This piece will challenge us, but is so powerful and magnificent – worth it! We will perform the work in English. Following is Morten Lauridsen's *Sure On This Shining Night*, a stalwart of the choral canon that is always a joy to perform. Many of you might have sung it before (another stunning text, this time by James Agee, another Pulitzer winner). One of Lauridsen's students is a new force in the choral composition world, Los Angeles composer Zanaida Robles. Next, we will perform her piece *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*. Robles describes her piece by saying "The harmonic treatment and syncopation are derived from popular music styles (rock, pop, etc.)". She accomplishes all this within a familiar choral idiom and text often described as part of "the golden sequence" and used during Pentecost.

Our final set, *Sunlight On A Stream* begins with Canadian composer Stephen Chatman's heartfelt work *Come to me*. This is the first movement of a set he wrote on texts by Christina Rossetti. I performed this piece during my time at Yale's *Norfolk Chamber Music Festival* and it has stuck with me deeply ever since. I am looking forward to introducing it to you if you have not already heard it before. Our concert will close with one of my favorite contemporary arrangers, Shawn Kirchner's driving setting of a familiar hymn tune, *Sweet Rivers*. I believe this powerful piece will allow all of us to share our light and joy with our choral community, sending them out into their days hopefully renewed, refreshed, and re-energized. It is also just a lot of fun to sing.

This program of eight pieces presents six living composers. I believe bringing contemporary voices into choral programming not only allows new and young singers to see themselves more clearly in a choral ensemble but also promotes the work of living artists of today. Showcasing new music is a big part of who I am as a conductor when programming music, while still connecting them to great pieces by composers of the past, such as Bach and Boulanger.