



13 | THE THIRTEEN

MATTHEW ROBERTSON | ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

# *On the Migration of Souls*

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2017 | 7:30PM**

St. Columba's Church | 4201 Albemarle Street NW | Washington, DC 20016

# 13 | THE THIRTEEN

Matthew Robertson | Artistic Director

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## CONDUCTOR'S NOTE

Our Sixth Season, *Awakening*, marks a continuation of our commitment to vibrant and exciting performances and music making at its finest. It also begins a focus on the importance of a social context for our programs: the art we make should reflect the world around us and foster empathy in our communities.

In planning tonight's concert, I wanted a program that tells personal and varied stories about community and migration. I came up with a program that features works spread across five centuries and source material tracing its roots from early chant to the African American tradition, from Syria to the music of the Jewish diaspora.

This program is organized into three scenes – roughly correlated with weeping, hoping, and rejoicing – with a trajectory from discord toward a vision of unity. I believe that song has the power to build togetherness, and I hope that you can find community in tonight's concert.

On behalf of The Thirteen, I'd like to thank Margaret Colgate Love for being the Concert Sponsor for *On the Migration of Souls*. Thanks to her generosity, and the generosity of audience members like you, we are able to perform this concert for you tonight. To learn more about how you can support our 2017–2018 season, please talk with one of our Board Members or me tonight, or visit [www.thethirteenchoir.org/donate](https://www.thethirteenchoir.org/donate).

Thank you for coming. I hope that you enjoy this concert as much as we have enjoyed preparing it for you.

–Matthew Robertson

We invite you to take photographs (without flash) and to use social media during the concert.

We politely decline unauthorized audio or video recordings of our concerts.

Please silence all cell phones and other noisemaking devices.

## PROGRAM

### RIVER OF TEARS

**Flow, my tears**

John Dowland (1563–1626), arr. Brian Mummert (b. 1987)

**Deep River**

arr. Harry Burleigh (1866–1949)

**To tell the sea** from *The Syrian Seasons*

Eric Banks (b. 1969) | *East Coast Premiere*

### TOUCH LIGHTLY

**Reconciliation** from *A Procession Winding Round Me*

Jeffrey Van (b. 1941)

**make peace**

David Lang (b. 1957)

**Lo Yisa Goy**

Stacy Garrop (b. 1969)

### A VISION GLORIOUS

**Shenandoah**

arr. James Erb (1926–2014)

**Give me your tired, your poor**

Joshua Fishbein (b. 1984) | *World Premiere*

**Salve Regina**

William Cornysh (d. 1502/1523)

**We Can Mend the Sky (excerpt)**

Jake Runestad (b. 1986)

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

### Flow, my tears

Dowland, arr. Mummert

An aching example of the melancholia popular in music at the turn of the 17th century, *Flow, my tears* quickly became Dowland's musical calling card. Opening with the common Renaissance lament motif of a descending fourth, the work is perhaps inspired by the composer's exile from his native England. This arrangement expands upon the original version for solo voice and lute.

Flow, my tears, fall from your springs!  
Exiled for ever, let me mourn;  
Where night's black bird her sad infamy sings,  
There let me live forlorn.

Down vain lights, shine you no more!  
No nights are dark enough for those  
That in despair their last fortunes deplore.  
Light doth but shame disclose.

Never may my woes be relieved,  
Since pity is fled;  
And tears and sighs and groans my weary days  
Of all joys have deprived.

From the highest spire of contentment  
My fortune is thrown;  
And fear and grief and pain for my deserts  
Are my hopes, since hope is gone.

Hark! you shadows that in darkness dwell,  
Learn to condemn light  
Happy, happy they that in hell  
Feel not the world's despite.

—John Dowland

### Deep River

arr. Burleigh

As one of the first African-Americans to arrange spirituals for the concert hall, Henry Thacker "Harry" Burleigh was a major force in their surge in popularity in the early 20th century. *Deep River* is both Burleigh's expression of grief in the face of his ancestors' forced migration in slavery, and an anticipation of the joy of "that promis'd land," capturing the glory that awaits us after this life.

Deep river, my home is over Jordan,  
Deep river, Lord, I want to cross over into campground.  
Oh don't you want to go to that gospel feast,  
That promis'd land where all is peace?  
Oh deep river.

—Traditional Spiritual

### To tell the sea

Banks

A setting of Syrian poet and diplomat Nizar Qabbani's *To tell the sea*, this final piece from Eric Banks' *The Syrian seasons* integrates both the Arabic and English versions of Qabbani's poem. Banks writes in an adapted version of a traditional Arabic *maqam*, or scale, and incorporates a variety of unconventional sounds to paint an auditory picture of the sea. Qabbani spent his later life in exile in Paris; the "you" he references could be either a woman, for whose rights he spent much of his career advocating, or his homeland, for which he longed.

*In the sultry days of summer,  
I stretch out on the sandy shore,  
And immerse myself in thoughts of you.  
If ever I were to tell the sea  
Everything I feel for you,  
It would abandon its shores,  
And its shells,  
And its fish,  
And follow me.*

—Nizar Qabbani, translated by the composer

## Reconciliation

Van

*Reconciliation* is the final movement of *A Procession Winding Around Me*, Jeffrey Van's setting of four sections of Walt Whitman's *Drum Taps*. Written in response to his visits to Civil War camps, Whitman's poetry captures the horror of the destruction of families and uprooting of communities brought about by such conflicts. A guitarist himself, Van leverages the forces that might have been available in one of the camps Whitman visited to paint Whitman's words in sound. We hear Whitman's thankfulness for the healing passage of time juxtaposed with a center section for men's voices in which the narrator is forced to confront the humanity even of his enemy.

Word over all, beautiful as the sky!  
Beautiful that war, and all its deeds of carnage,  
must in time be utterly lost;  
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night, incessantly softly wash again,  
and ever again, this soil'd world;  
For my enemy is dead—a man divine as myself is dead;  
I look where he lies, white-faced and still, in the coffin  
—I draw near, bend down, and touch lightly with my lips  
the white face in the coffin.

—Walt Whitman

## make peace

Lang

*make peace's* text is inspired by the final section of the Kaddish, the Jewish prayer used to mourn the dead, which Lang has transformed into a call to action for the living. The interweaving of text and musical fragments, passed between voices and altered as the piece evolves, creates the otherworldly sound-world that has become Lang's signature. The work builds, demanding our attention, then dissolves, as if continuing its exhortations just out of our auditory reach.

if you can make peace  
make peace

in the heavens  
in us  
in all the world

make peace  
—David Lang, from the mourner's Kaddish

## Lo Yisa Goy

Garrop

Stacy Garrop recalls: "I remember singing this song as a young child in Hebrew school and synagogue, in the context... of praying for the state of Israel. I think we're at a particular point in which people in a lot of different nations could use such a prayer." Garrop's mixing of Hebrew and English emphasizes the universality of her prayers for peace over war, a sense of place over migration, contentedness over fear.

Lo yisa goy el goy cherev  
Lo yilm'du od milchama.

*Nation shall not battle nation,  
There shall be no more war.*

And they shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
and their spears into pruning hooks:  
nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

But they shall sit every man under his vine  
and under his fig tree;  
and none shall make them afraid:  
for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.

V'eyn machrid.

*There is no more fear.*

—Micah 4:3-4

## Shenandoah

arr. Erb

This folk song expresses the longing of every migrant: to see one's homeland again, as beautiful as it remains in one's memory. Commonly sung in the 19th century as the American West was explored and then colonized, it once again conjures up images of water as a metaphor both for the loveliest aspects of home, and for the massive distance separating us from it. Pay special attention in the last verse as the three upper voices cascade over each other on the melody, then seem to melt into the ether as Erb's arrangement ends.

O Shenando', I long to see you,  
And hear your rolling river,  
O Shenando', I long to see you,

'Way, we're bound away,  
Across the wide Missouri.

I long to see your smiling valley,  
And hear your rolling river,  
I long to see your smiling valley,  
'Way, we're bound away,  
Across the wide Missouri.

'Tis sev'n long years since last I see you,  
And hear your rolling river,  
'Tis sev'n long years since last I see you,  
'Way, we're bound away,  
Across the wide Missouri.

—Traditional

## Give me your tired, your poor

Fishbein

The Jewish-American poet Emma Lazarus is well known for her sonnet *The New Colossus*, inscribed at the base of the Statue of Liberty. Recently, growing feelings of xenophobia in the U.S.A. have prompted use of the last stanza from this sonnet *Give me your tired, your poor* as a rallying cry for tolerance towards immigrants and refugees. Jewish-American composers, such as Irving Berlin and Max Helfman (among others) have set this same stanza to music. As the grandson and husband of Jewish immigrants, I offer my own musical setting in solidarity with refugees seeking entry into the U.S.A. and immigrants seeking acceptance in their adopted country.

—Program note by Joshua Fishbein

Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

—Emma Lazaraus, "The New Colossus"

## Salve Regina

The *Salve Regina*, one of four Catholic antiphons dedicated to the Virgin Mary, dates to the 11th century and emphasizes the Christian view of all humans as migrants: exiles from Eden, to which we long to return. While scholars argue over whether William Cornysh the Elder or his son was the composer, this Salve is undeniably one of the most innovative gems of the Eton Choirbook, leveraging all the tools of the day to emphasize the earnestness of Cornysh's desire for salvation. Listen for the way Cornysh puts musical exclamation marks around the first statement of the name "Jesus:" all the voices join, a structural signpost that is repeated on the three subsequent "O" statements emphasizing Mary's virtues and arguably elevating her to a similar plane of importance as Christ.

Salve Regina, mater misericordiae:  
vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.  
Ad te clamamus, exsules filii Hevae,  
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes  
In hac lacrimarum valle.

Eia ergo, advocata nostra, illos tuos  
Misericordes oculos ad nos converte  
Et Iesum benedictum fructum ventris tui  
Nobis post hoc exsilium ostende:

Virgo mater ecclesiae,  
Aeterna porta gloriae,  
Esto nobis refugium  
Apud Patrem et Filium,  
O clemens!

Virgo clemens, virgo pia,  
Virgo dulcis, O Maria,  
Exaudi preces omnium  
Ad te pie clamantium,  
O pia!

*Hail, Queen, mother of mercy,  
life, sweetness, and our hope, hail!  
To you we cry, exiled children of Eve,  
To you we sigh, groaning and weeping  
In this valley of tears.*

*Therefore, oh our advocate,  
Turn your merciful eyes to us,  
And Jesus, the blessed fruit of your  
womb,  
Show us after this exile.*

*Virgin mother of the church,  
Eternal gate of glory,  
Be for us a refuge  
Before the Father and the Son,  
O forbearing one!*

*Gracious virgin, loving virgin,  
Sweet virgin, O Mary,  
Hear the prayers of all  
Who piously cry out to you,*

Cornysh

Funde preces tuo nato,  
Crucifixo, vulnerato,  
Et pro nobis flagellato,  
Spinis puncto, felle potato.

O dulcis Maria, salve.

*O holy!  
Pour out your prayers to your Son,  
Crucified, wounded,  
And scourged for us,  
Pierced by thorns, with vinegar to drink.*

## We Can Mend the Sky (excerpt)

Runestad

In conceiving *We Can Mend the Sky*, Runestad asked his sister to solicit poetry from her students at the Minnesota International Middle School about their experiences. Many of these students are Somali refugees whose families who came to the USA in what Runestad calls "a valiant act of love." One of these poems, by Warda Mohamed, became the core text for *We Can Mend the Sky*; it pairs dreams for "a world free of violence, hunger, suffering" with a realization that "this world," our world, falls woefully short of the one Mohamed describes. By pairing her poem with Somali proverbs, one of which we hear in this excerpt, Runestad has aimed to create "a musical depiction of one's journey as an immigrant and an affirmation of hope as we all embrace the diversity around us."

Now awake in this world  
I beg, let my dream come true.

-Warda Mohamed, "Let My Dream Come True"

If we come together, we can mend a crack in the sky.

-Somali proverb

## THE THIRTEEN

Sarah Moyer, soprano

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Allie Faulkner, soprano

Clare McNamara, mezzo-soprano

Doug Dodson, countertenor

Megan Roth, mezzo-soprano

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Cory Klose, tenor

Jacob Perry, tenor

Jackson Williams, baritone

Brian Ming Chu, baritone

Andrew Padgett, bass-baritone

William Simms, lute and guitar

Brian Mummert

*Assistant Conductor*

Samantha Scheff

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Matthew Robertson

*Artistic Director*

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

### The Thirteen

Described as having “a tight and attractive vocal blend and excellent choral discipline” (American Record Guide), The Thirteen is an all-star professional choir known for inspired and powerful live performance. Since its founding in 2012, the choir has been at the forefront of bringing invigorating performances to the American choral community in repertoire ranging from the Renaissance to the Romantic, from Bach to Bruckner; and from Gregorian chant to the world premieres of new American composers.

The Thirteen draws its artists from among the finest ensembles in the world, including Chanticleer, Seraphic Fire, Apollo's Fire, Conspirare, I Fagiolini, Opera Philadelphia, Boston Early Music Festival and Trinity Wall Street. The choir's peerless singers are best described by National Public Radio commentator M.D. Ridge: “to talk about the remarkable abilities and sound of the individual singers would... be like trying to say which whitecaps on the ocean reflect the sun most beautifully, or which leaves on a tree dance most gracefully with the wind... I stand in awe.”

The Thirteen's growing discography includes “Voice Eternal,” which was recently submitted for a Grammy® award, the critically-acclaimed Christmas album “Snow on Snow,” “RADIANT DARK,” which features the finest works of the late Tudor period and reached #28 on the iTunes Classical Charts, as well as The Thirteen's debut recording “. . . to St. Cecilia.”

In past seasons, The Thirteen has performed and been in residency at Yale University, Bowling Green State University, Eastern Illinois University, the University of Central Oklahoma, The University of York, The University of Tampa, Virginia Wesleyan University, St. Ambrose University, Southern Illinois University – Carbondale, Guilford College, as well as concerts throughout the United States.

The Thirteen is committed to educating and inspiring the next generation of musicians, and frequently coaches students at the high school and collegiate levels in masterclass, workshop and collaborative performance sessions.

For more information about The Thirteen, please visit [www.TheThirteenChoir.org](http://www.TheThirteenChoir.org)



## Matthew Robertson

Matthew Robertson, praised for his “sensitive and nuanced” conducting, is noted as the driving force behind the all-star professional choir, The Thirteen. As Founder and Artistic Director of The Thirteen, he has conducted the ensemble throughout the United States and on multiple recordings.

Robertson's 2017-2018 with The Thirteen sees twelve performances in seven states, repertoire spanning more than half of a millennium, and numerous world and regional premieres. Robertson will lead residencies at Yale University, Virginia Wesleyan College, and Campbell University. Highlights of his 2017-2018 season include performances of Handel's *Messiah*, Brahms' *Requiem*, and much of J.S. Bach's oeuvre. Mr. Robertson will serve as a guest clinician throughout the East Coast and collaborate with many of the finest musicians of his generation, including members of the Metropolitan Opera, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, Seraphic Fire, Apollo's Fire, Trinity Wall Street, Opera Philadelphia, Washington National Opera and more.

Robertson's 2016-2017 season saw the release of *Voice Eternal* on the Affetto Records label, distributed by Naxos International; performances of Arvo Pärt's *Passio*, Handel's *Messiah*, Vivaldi's *Gloria*, and Lauridsen's *Lux Aeterna*; and a series of organ concerts throughout the metropolitan Washington area.

From 2010-2012 Robertson served as Assistant Conductor for the Westminster Symphonic Choir, conducting the choir in performance and assisting in preparation for concerts with the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra and the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, for such conductors as Yannick Neget-Seguin, Peter Schreier, Alan Gilbert and Jacques Lacombe.

Mr. Robertson was the Robert P. Fountain Scholar at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, earning a degree in Organ Performance. While at the Oberlin Conservatory he conducted the Oberlin College Choir, College Singers, Musical Union, Conservatory Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra. In 2008, Mr. Robertson founded and conducted the Oberlin Bach Society – an elite group of instrumentalists and singers who performed the music of Bach and his contemporaries throughout Ohio. In January 2007 and 2009, he served as Music Director of the Oberlin Winter Term Orchestra and Choir, performing full-length choral-orchestral concerts.

Robertson received his M.Mus. in conducting from Westminster Choir College where he studied with Andrew Megill and Joe Miller. He has also worked with such luminary conductors as Norman Scribner, Stan Engebretson, Robert Spano, Joseph Flummerfelt, Gary Graden and JoAnn Falletta.

A Washington, DC native, Robertson serves as Director of Music at Bradley Hills Church, in Bethesda, MD. Additionally active as an organist, Mr. Robertson has performed throughout the United States and in Western Europe.

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The Thirteen's supporters receive unparalleled access to the ensemble's music-making with the best seats at performances and other exclusive opportunities. Above all, supporters breathe life into The Thirteen's season, providing incredible music to audiences across the Washington, D.C. area and the United States.

The Thirteen Chamber Choir, Inc. (EIN 46-3738034) is a non-profit corporation with 501(c)(3) tax exempt status.

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