

MIT CONCERT CHOIR

WILLIAM CUTTER - CONDUCTOR
YUKIKO OBA - PIANIST, ORGANIST

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2021
8 P.M. | KRESGE AUDITORIUM

Halsey STEVENS
(1908-1989)

Jennifer HIGDON
(b.1962)

J.S. BACH
(1685-1750)

Magnificat

The Singing Rooms

Three windows: two versions of the day
Things aren't always
The interpretation of dreams
Confession
History lesson
A word with God
Three windows: two versions of the day

Natalie Lin Douglas, violin

Magnificat

Magnificat
Et exsultavit (Cece Chu, mezzo-soprano)
Quia respexit (Allison Hamilos, soprano)
Omnes generationes
Quia fecit mihi magna (Peter Bryan, baritone)
Et misericordia (Lani Dakyoung Lee,
alto; Haochen Wang, tenor)
Fecit potentiam
Deposuit (Srinivasan Raghuraman, tenor)
Esurientes (Henry Hu, baritone)
Suscepit Israel
Sicut locutus
Gloria Patri
Sicut erat in principio

Yukiko Oba, organ

PROGRAM NOTES AND TEXTS

Of his own music, composer Halsey Stevens writes “Around 1945 I became somewhat concerned about the directions my music was taking and took two years off to effect a ‘reformation.’ I had a few lessons with Ernest Bloch (University of California Berkeley)...who encouraged me to abandon some traditional static compositional devices such as ostinatos, canons, and pedal points. Eventually I found that the process of thematic transformation that I admired in the music of Liszt and Bartok was a way forward in developing my own music.

Scored for string orchestra, solo trumpet, and chorus, Halsey Steven’s Magnificat sets the familiar Biblical passage from Luke 1:46-55 which is Mary’s song of praise and thanksgiving when she learns the news that she will become the mother of God.

Even the opening five-note trumpet figure (we imagine this is the angel delivering the news to Mary) is an excellent example of Steven’s interest in constant transformation. This fanfare-like tune undergoes simple changes in pitch; metric placement; and rhythmic truncation where the final “snap” rhythm becomes its own tiny motive. The text setting is mostly declamatory with a few moments of imitation as well as occasional solo melodies for one of the choral sections. Like many composers of his generation, the use of jazzy syncopated rhythms is convincingly integrated into a musical language similar to Aaron Copland where open fifths and fourths are the foundation of the harmony.

Jennifer Higdon is a three-time Grammy winning composer as well as a recipient of the Pulitzer Prize in music. Her music has been performed by the Philadelphia Orchestra, The Chicago Symphony, The Atlanta Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Minnesota Orchestra and the Pittsburgh Symphony among many other chamber ensembles, choral ensembles, and vocalists.

Higdon received the 2010 Pulitzer Prize for her Violin Concerto with the committee citing the work as “a deeply engaging piece that combines flowing lyricism with dazzling virtuosity.”

Of *The Singing Rooms*, the composer writes: When I was asked by the Philadelphia Orchestra to write a concerto for violin that would include a choral part, I immediately started searching through all sorts of poetry. I looked for several things, the most obvious of which is, the poetry would need to “speak” to me in order for

me to be able to set it to music. Also, the words would need to “invite” setting (in other words, easy to sing comprehensibly... can you imagine what it would be like to try to set the word “onomatopoeia?”...not very singer-friendly). To create the best form for the piece, I needed a group of poems that would not be too long (because I wanted to create different moods within this large work), and that would fit together somehow thematically. I looked for a long time, through poetry from various countries and time periods. But I discovered that sometimes the answer is in your own backyard: walking through the faculty lounge at Curtis one day, I asked Jeanne Minahan, the head of the Liberal Arts Department (who happens to be a poet) if she had anything that I could read. When I got some books of her poetry in my hands, I knew I had found what I was looking for...a series of poems, that resonated with me, and would provide different emotional settings, as if they were lessons in life arranged like different rooms within a house.

The Singing Rooms Program Notes by the composer:

This is a house where the violin sings, the choir sings, and the orchestra sings. Every room is its own sound world. Not an ordinary house, this is the house that we all inhabit: that of life. The beauty of poetry and music is that each person brings their own experience to these art forms, and each reader takes away the message of the poet, mixed with their own story...but we all share these stories...

Three Windows: Two Versions of the Day

Set twice within this piece (at the beginning and at the end), the first musical setting is the emergence of the day, at its very early crescent of light...a more spare entry into this house of “The Singing Rooms”. It is the image and sound of “...cool and sweet, a blue cascade of watered light...”.

Things Aren’t Always

Always shifting, moving...not all things are what they seem.

The Interpretation of Dreams

As life sometimes moves in dreamlike fashion, I decided to set this with a gentle sort of “boat rocking” sensation (the poet refers to a dream on a boat). I also decided that I would set this poem three times, because of its brevity, and because of its position as the third poem in this set.

Confession

The fragility of handing over a confession to another is sometimes anxiety producing. This anxiety is mirrored in the opening of this movement, but calms at the moment that the choir unfolds with the opening stanza referring to the dream of sleeping within a flower (which I pictured as opening and expanding). An interesting note, Pleiades is mentioned in the 3rd stanza...its meaning: an open star cluster in the constellation Taurus, which consists of several hundred stars, with only 6 visible to the human eye. I found this particular tidbit fascinating mostly because, before reading the definition, I had written a 6-note figure for the violin that occurs repeatedly within this movement, in different guises. I confess that sometimes I don't know where the music comes from, but I'm often startled by its appropriateness to the moment of putting note to page.

History Lesson

Falling gestures...rising gestures....the difference between (as the poet says) the "...brief pause between despair and comfort...". Of all the movements, this is the shortest...a mere 3 minutes. Why? It was an intentional decision to reflect on how we seem to remember the lessons of history for such short amounts of time.

A Word with God

For a composer, it is intimidating to think of how one sets into music such a thing as speaking to God. Certainly many other composers have done so throughout history. But I loved the idea of starting it as an intimate conversation, so I wrote a duet between the English Horn and the Solo Violin, which eventually evolves into a series of emotions and conversations, adding voices and varying degrees of urgency.

Jeanne Minahan opens this poem with an Irish Proverb: "Your feet will bring you to where your heart is". I chose to place this wonderful proverb at the end of this movement, because after the poem, "A Word with God", I wanted to carry the listener back to the original room of three windows, now with a new view of the day...at its end... and inevitably, your feet will bring you to where your heart is.

Three Windows: Two Versions of the Day

The 2nd setting of this poem presents the second version of the day: a view at the close of a day in life...a return to the original room, but with wisdom gained and all seen in a new light.

Scored for five-part chorus, five vocal soloists, and a chamber

sized orchestra, Bach's Magnificat was the first major liturgical composition on a Latin text by the composer.

Unlike the Stevens, which is a single movement, Bach decided to create thirteen individual movements for each line of the Magnificat text, thereby allowing for an incredible variety of tempi, textures, keys, as well as vocal and instrumental combinations. Each movement is dazzling in its virtuosity and invention. Each movement captures the essence of the meaning of the text that feels at once astonishing but also genuine and heartfelt. This is the miracle of Bach.

TEXTS

MAGNIFICAT (Luke 1: 46-55)

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour
Because He hath regarded the humility of his handmaid: for
behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy
is His name.

And His mercy is from generation unto generations to them that
fear Him.

He hath shewed might in His arm: He hath scattered the proud in
the conceit of their heart.

He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the
humble.

He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath
sent empty away.

He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful of His mercy.

As He spoke to our fathers; to Abraham and his seed forever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,

As it was in the beginning is now, and ever shall be, world without
end. Amen.

THE SINGING ROOMS (Jeanne Minahan)

Three windows: two versions of the day

Three windows offer two versions of the day,
the first: cool and sweet, a blue cascade
of watered light,

the second: bright heat barely held back

by the venetian blind.

Inside, the blue falls across
the small kitchen (a breeze
at your back), and angles
into the living room where
the table and two chairs swim.

Things Aren't Always

Not every newborn cries in hunger, not every dog barks in alarm.
Musicians, on a whim, break our hearts, lovers take the blame.

The Interpretation of Dreams

If I told you my dream (the one on a boat);
if I told you how I read your dream with a cello: a new laugh, an old
hush

Confession

Once I slept all night without dreaming in the body of a small
summer flower; buttercup, yellow and damp, circling me with
warmth. And I've taken tears from an earthen bowl, Clay pressed
in a curve of rib and hip. I drank and sang in sweet drunkenness.
Once I dressed in luminous dust and set myself spinning in the
Pleiades just to be unseen among the seen. I admit I've listened to
the whistling of God, kissed the lips that were not mine or yours. If
I tell you these things now, you must hold them in your palms as I
have seen you hold water; cupped and uncontained. Give me such
forgiveness as that: liquid, poured out, uncondemned for being so
clear.

History Lesson

How brief the pause between despair and comfort. How eternal.
How small the space between window and frame. How cold the
wind. Teach me which of the stars have shifted. Tell me where error
crept in. Show me the overlooked weed, infection, accounting
mistake. Adjust my glasses, hearing, fingertips. Point me to the
abandoned faith. When the day dims light the largest fire, cliff high.
And when they tell the story of these sad times Remember we lit
that fire to spare the other ships these treacherous rocks.

A word with God

And, finally, we ask ourselves, where did we spend our days, whose
voice turned our heads, hushed, thrilled, entered, lingered, left us?
Standing on a far shore, uncertain of the hour or day. In a quiet not
quiet. I walk towards you, I walk away, my feet pull me back. Wild

One, your magnetic love draws me (polar eclipse and warm), you are the paradox towards which I tend, you are the ache, I don't need to speak, You are the name, the name of all names. "Your feet will bring you to where your heart is."

Three windows: two versions of the day (reprise)

2021/2022 MIT CONCERT CHOIR ROSTER

SOPRANO

Rachel Ai '25
Kailey Bridgeman '24
Shirley Xuyan Chen (G)
Cecilia Esterman, staff
Arlene Godfreedy-Igwe '22
Ananya Gurumurthy '23
Allison Hamilos (G)
Lucy Hao '24
Missy Hill '23*
Letong Hong
Xinghui Hu '25
Joanne Im (G)
Alli Keys (G)
Disha Kohli '25
Audrey Norris (G)
Arianna Pero '25
Zahra Rasouli
Alexandra Sherman '24
Stacey Terman
Julia Wang (G)
Adela Zhang (G)

ALTO

Masarah
Ahmedhussain '24

Cece Chu (G)
Melissa Du '25
Freya Edholm '23
Eva Goldie '24*
Rachel Tianyi Guo (G)
Amanada Horne '22
Amanda Hornick (G)
Rory Knight '24
Kathryn Kummel '25
Ariel Largen '25
Jessie Lee '24
Lani Lee (G)
Lydia Light '22
Aimee Maurais (G)
Alexandra Martirosian '22
Mercy Oladipo '23
Eco Rodriguez '22
Haruka Sakurai
Zipei Tan '24
Sarah Wandia '22
Wen Li Yau '24
Xinyi Zhang (G)

TENOR

Richard Canty '23
Zhixing Chen '25
Ruilin Lia (G)

Sanjeev Mahadeo '23
Ben Owen-Block '23
Justin Mazzola Paluska
Kevin Pho '22
Srinivasan
Raghuraman, alum*
Haochen Wang (G)
Sally Zhao '25
Alan Zhu '23

BASS

Carles Boix (G)
Peter Bryan
David Dai '25
Arthur De Belen '23
Kaibo Feng, staff
Andy Fong '25
Henry Hu (G)
Baran Mensah '24
Brian Minnick '25
Feng Qiu '25
Omar Santiago Reyes '22
Eloi Schmauch (G)
Josh Sweet '24
Nektarios Winter (G)
Adrian Wittmann '23
Derrick Xiong '23*

*section leader

ORCHESTRA

FLUTE

Emma Rose Bauman
Agita Arista

OBOE

Alexis Mitchell
Paul Ragaller

ENGLISH HORN

Paul Ragller

CLARINET

Monica Duncan
David Angelo

BASSOON

Gabe Ramey
Susie Telsey

FRENCH HORN

Karlee Kamminga
Hannah Messenger
Emma Steger
Emma Staudacher

TRUMPET

Tim Deik
Kimmie Sabio
Liz Jewell

TROMBONE

Kar-Chun Chiu
Skye Dearborn

BASS TROMBONE

Sean McCarty

TUBA

Bradley Geneser

HARP

Maria Rindenello-
Spraker

PERCUSSION

Daniel Pooley
Sam Metzger
Mason McDonald

VIOLIN I

Greta Myatieva
Tetiana Zhmendak
Sarah Zahorodni
Evan Hjort
Caroline Smoak
Thomas Cooper
Peter Paetkau

VIOLIN II

Ali Zhiyue You
Caroline Leguía
Olga Kaminsky
Justus Ross
Bennett Astrove
Eric Mrugala
Kiana Garvey

VIOLA

Kaedyn Colton
Bryan Tyler
Roselyn Hobbs
Anabel Tejada
Nathan Emans

CELLO

Thomas Rodman
Ming-Hui Lin
Lisa Yasui
José Quezada
Jerrel Martin
Mia Tsai

BASS

Alyssa Peterson
Isabel Atkinson

ABOUT THE MIT CONCERT CHOIR

As MIT's large student chorus, the Concert Choir performs major works from the standard repertoire each semester, as well as a variety of shorter and lesser-known pieces. The Choir has a rich history originating with the all-male Glee Club in 1884 and continuing with the MIT Choral Society from 1923 until the formation of the Concert Choir under John Oliver in 1989. William Cutter, who came to MIT in 1990 as John Oliver's assistant and rehearsal pianist, assumed the direction of MIT's choral program upon Mr. Oliver's departure in 1996.

In recent years, the Concert Choir has toured in Spain, Budapest, Vienna, and Lausanne, and performed in numerous collaborations with the smaller MIT Chamber Chorus, the MIT Symphony Orchestra, the MIT Wind Ensemble, the choirs of Brown, Tufts and Brandeis Universities, and the orchestras of Tufts University and Wellesley

College. In 2002, the MIT Concert Choir was invited to perform with the Boston Pops under Keith Lockhart for MIT's Tech Night at the Pops. Often featuring the finest guest soloists along with student soloists, the student singers of the group regularly expose the MIT community to a wide range of choral music literature.

ABOUT THE MIT CONCERT CHOIR DIRECTOR

DR. WILLIAM CUTTER is Director of Choral Programs at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he conducts the MIT Concert Choir and Chamber Chorus. He currently teaches harmony and ear training at Boston Conservatory and is Artistic Director of the Boston Conservatory Summer Vocal/Choral Intensive. He has previously held academic posts at the Boston University School for the Arts, the University of Lowell, the Walnut Hill School for the Arts, and the North Carolina Summer Institute of Choral Art. He is in demand as a guest conductor and adjudicator throughout the United States and Canada.

He has served as music director and conductor of the Brookline Chorus, Chorus Master and Associate Conductor of the Boston Lyric Opera Company from 2002-2007, conductor of the Boston University Young Artists Chorus of the Tanglewood Institute, music director and conductor of the Opera Laboratory Theater Company, as well as founder and music director of the vocal chamber ensemble CANTO. As assistant to Maestro John Oliver for the Tanglewood Festival Chorus from 1993 to 2017, Cutter served as rehearsal conductor or chorus master for various programs of both the Boston Symphony and the Boston Pops. He has served as chorus master for productions by the Boston Symphony, Tanglewood Festival Chorus, Odessey Opera, the Boston Pops, and the Montreal Symphony Chorus.

Other guest conducting appearances include The Walnut Hill School for the Arts (2016-2017), Massachusetts Intercollegiate Choral Festival (2015, 2016), North Carolina Summer Institute of Choral Art (2014), New England Conservatory Chamber Singers (2007), Chorus Pro Musica in Boston (2010), and the Boston Choral Ensemble (2011). With advanced degrees in composition, Cutter maintains an active career as a composer. Recent premieres include Ocean Blues for chorus and alto saxophone (2018) by the Mansfield University Chamber Singers, "Sing Noel" (2015) with The Boston Pops. He has had other commissions and premieres by The Chatham Chorale, the Illinois State University School of Music Orchestra, Cantata Singers, PALS Children's Chorus, Monmouth Civic Chorus, the New Jersey Gay Men's Chorus, the New World Chorale in Boston,

Melodious Accord of New York City, and Opera Omaha. His primary composition teachers included Pulitzer Prize winning composers David del Tredici and Bernard Rands.

As a professional tenor, he has sung with the premiere vocal ensembles in Boston, including the Handel and Haydn Society, Cantata Singers, Boston Baroque, Emmanuel Music, and the Harvard Glee Club. He has been a featured soloist on the Cantata Singers Recital Series and the MIT faculty recital series.

SOLOIST BIOS

Cece Chu (B.S. '21, M.S. '22) has been a member of the MIT Concert Choir since her freshman year. She is delighted and honored to make music with the incredible Dr. Cutter and her talented fellow musicians, and considers singing with the Concert Choir and Chamber Chorus to have been her greatest joys at MIT. She previously performed as a soloist with the Choir in Beethoven's Mass in C Major (Fall 2019). Outside of rehearsal, she spends her time reading, baking bread, and studying electrical engineering.

Allison Hamilos ('12, PhD '21, MD '23) is an MD-PhD student in the Harvard-MIT program in health science and technology (HST) where she earned her PhD in neuroscience in 2021. She has been grateful to learn and grow with the incomparable Dr. Bill Cutter in the MIT Concert Choir and Chamber Chorus since she was an MIT undergraduate (2010-2011). She was thrilled to rejoin the MIT Concert Choir in 2018, where she has since served as a soloist, soprano section leader, vice president, president, and current co-president. She studies classical voice with Eiji Miura with whom she has been an MIT Emerson/Harris Vocal Scholar from 2019-2022. She was honored to receive the 2020 John Oliver Choral Award, and she is thrilled to sing Quia Respexit with the MIT Concert Choir!

Peter Bryan (G) is a graduate student at MIT, studying Electrical Engineering. This is his second year with the MIT Concert choir. He has previously sung with the Stanford University Singers and the Memorial Church Choir at Stanford University.

Henry Hu ('21, G) is an MEng student in Computer Science at MIT studying natural language processing. Henry has sung with the MIT Concert Choir for all 9 of his semesters. He also has previously sung with the Chamber Chorus, including this semester. His previous solos with the Concert Choir include performances in Cutter's "Love Poem for Ostarra" and Beethoven's Mass in C Major. He is a previous winner of the John Oliver Choral Award. Henry also enjoys playing the piano and swimming.

Tenor Srinivasan Raghuraman is a PhD alum from MIT EECS. He has been singing with the MIT Concert Choir and the MIT Chamber Chorus, performing as a soloist in Bach's G minor mass, Bach's Cantata 191, Vaughan William's "Serenade to Music", Britten's "Chorimaster's Burial" (Winter Words) and more. He was also an Emerson Voice Scholar and is pursuing training in western classical voice under Kerry Deal. Outside of MIT, he has sung in the chorus for the Odyssey Opera's production of Maid of Orleans (Tchaikovsky) in September 2017 and Queen of Sheba (Gounod) in September 2018, Boston Pops and the VCI program at the Boston Conservatory in the summer of 2017. Srini is a professional Carnatic vocalist (a form of classical music in India) for the past decade and a half. He also plays the Veena (an Indian stringed instrument) and the piano, and enjoys composing music in his spare time.

Lani Lee ('21, G) is a first-year graduate student in the Department of Mechanical Engineering. This is her eighth semester singing in the MIT Concert Choir, where she has served as alto section leader, publicity chair, and co-president. She was featured as a soloist with MIT Concert Choir in Beethoven's Mass in C Major in 2019 and with MIT Chamber Chorus in Bach's Mass in A Major in 2020. She currently studies Classical Voice with Kerry Deal in the Emerson/Harris Program.

Haochen Wang (G) is a PhD student in Physics studying cosmology with Dr. Kiyoshi Masui at MIT. Haochen completed his undergraduate degree in Astronomy and Mathematics along with a minor in Musical Studies from the University of Southern California (USC) and graduated as a salutatorian of USC Class of 2019. He has sung with the USC Thornton Chamber Singers for all four years during his undergraduate study and has collaborated with many professional ensembles including Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Pacific Symphony, and the Rollings Stones. Along with the USC Thornton Chamber Singers, he performed in the Baltic countries and Poland in 2018 and sang as a soloist in Desenclos's Requiem in 2019, which was recorded and published in the album Gregorian Meditations by Centaur Records. Since arriving at MIT, Haochen has been singing with the MIT Chamber Chorus and recently joined the MIT Concert Choir. He is also an Emerson Voice Scholar and is studying voice with Dr. Kerry Deal and piano with Timothy McFarland. He is thrilled to be singing with the MIT Concert Choir and making music with Dr. Bill Cutter!

SPECIAL THANKS TO

MTA Events Office, Natalie Lin Douglas for bringing her artistry to this program, Jeanne Minahan (poet of "The Singing Room" for driving from Philadelphia to hear this performance, and for my colleagues Fred Harris and Adam Boyles for their constant support and supreme collegiality.

UPCOMING MTA CONCERTS

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3

8:00PM | KRESGE AUDITORIUM
7th Annual Prism Concert Spectacular
MIT Wind Ensemble

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4

12:00PM | 3:00PM | KILLIAN HALL
Emerson/Harris Strings Recitals

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5

11:00AM | KILLIAN HALL
Emerson/Harris Winds Recitals

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5

2:00PM | KILLIAN HALL
Emerson/Harris Piano Recitals

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5

5:00PM | 7:00PM | KILLIAN HALL
MIT Chamber Music Society Recitals

MONDAY, DECEMBER 6

5:00PM | 7:00PM | KILLIAN HALL
MIT Chamber Music Society Recitals

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 7

5:00PM | 7:00PM | KILLIAN HALL
MIT Chamber Music Society Recitals

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8

5:00PM | 6:30PM | KILLIAN HALL
MIT Chamber Music Society Recitals

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9

7:00PM | KRESGE AUDITORIUM
MIT Chamber Music Society Recitals

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10

7:00PM | KILLIAN HALL
MIT Vocal Jazz Ensemble

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 11

7:00PM | KRESGE AUDITORIUM
Global Music Day

TICKETS & INFORMATION AT:
mta.mit.edu/events