

MIT Chamber Choir
Dr. William Cutter, *conductor*
Karen Harvey, *pianist and assistant conductor*

Saturday, November 15, 2003
Kresge Auditorium, 8pm

PROGRAM

Lagrimae d'Amante al Sepolcro dell'Amata
(Tears of a Lover at the Tomb of the Beloved)

Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)

1. *Incenerite spoglie*
2. *Ditelo voi*
3. *Darà la notte il sol*
4. *Ma te raccoglie*
5. *O chiome d'or*
6. *Dunque amate reliquie*

Cantata No. 161, "*Komm, du süße Todesstunde*"
(Come, thou sweet hour of death)

J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

1. Aria (Anne Hall, *alto*)
2. Recitative (Ahmed Ismail, *tenor*)
3. Aria (David Powell, *tenor*)
4. Recitative (Anne Hall, *alto*)
5. Chorus
6. Chorale

Concerning them which are asleep (1993)

John Harbison (b. 1938)

PROGRAM NOTES

Of the many inspirations for a masterpiece, the death of a beloved muse is surely among the most unfortunate. Alban Berg's Violin Concerto served as a requiem for Manon Gropius, a close family friend who wished to be an actress; the immediate catalyst for Monteverdi's "*Lagrime d'Amante al sepolcro dell'Amata*" ("*Tears of a lover at the tomb of the beloved*") was the passing of Caterina Martinelli, a student of Monteverdi. Like Gropius, Martinelli, a talented singer who was a favorite performer of the court at Mantua, died at the age of eighteen. Although there is no record of any overt romantic involvement between teacher and student, the blow of Martinelli's death, following that of his wife by a mere six months, must have contributed to the overwhelming poignancy and anguish permeating the score.

We cannot be certain exactly when the six madrigals comprising *Lagrime d'amante* were written; at best we can say they were started no later than 1610 and finished before 1614, when they appeared in Monteverdi's *Sixth Book of Madrigals*. The *Sixth Book* represented, like other madrigal collections of the period, a transition between the older polyphonic style and the developing *concertato* or monodic style: dense counterpoint is often closely followed by melodies in a single voice, supported by chords in the other parts. The *Sixth Book* also continues Monteverdi's trailblazing development, introducing such audacious innovations as dominant seventh chords and other dissonant chords without preparation as well as unusual chromaticism.

The work succeeds in spite of the relative weakness of the text, which attempts (but does not quite succeed) in following the pattern of a sestina. Perhaps the most burdensome of poetic forms, a sestina has seven stanzas in which the terminal words of each of the first stanza's six lines are repeated algorithmically throughout the rest of the poem. On the printed page, the usual consequence of these requirements is a pervading sense of awkwardness and artificiality. However, the rigidity of the textual structure provides Monteverdi with the musical opportunity to build a web of motivic ideas recurring throughout the piece. More importantly, because the order in which they appear differs in each movement, their appearance never become tiresome or repetitive.

And, throughout the work's six movements, it is Monteverdi's astonishing text-painting ability that propels the work forward. Who else could depict the flowing of rivers in a mere two bars in "Ditelo, o fiumi," or the despair and torment of Glauco's final cries in the finale? Who else can make heaven sound guilty for stealing the beloved away in the fifth song, after so sweetly asking for the mercy of heaven in the third song? In Monteverdi's music, the overarching purpose is an immediate and uncanny response to the text; in its present guise, it gives us one of the masterpieces of the seventeenth-century madrigal literature.

The theme of death being a welcome release from the travails of this earth is a common one in the cantatas of Bach. With its prominent alto solo, **Cantata BWV 161**, one of the last written in Bach's early Weimar period, is a particularly touching example in the genre and a fascinating example of Bach's delight in blending the ideas of the Song of Solomon and the Apocalypse.

There is ardent longing in the opening alto aria accompanied by the sound of plaintive flutes. Notable also in this aria is the inclusion of the hymn tune "Herzlich tut mich verlangen" in the treble of the organ part, almost acting in dialogue with the soloist. In the ensuing recitative, the

pain of life on earth is set in vivid relief against the comfort of death; the movement ends with a remarkable duet for the voice and solo cello. The tenor aria opens with a simple half-step motive which grows out of the sigh of yearning. In the following recitative, the soul pictures death to itself as a “soft sleep”; and at once the instruments sink downwards in blissful exhaustion. At the idea of resurrection, joy breaks forth and continues in clear tones, while the alto sings “so schlage doch, du letzter Stundenschlag” (“strike then, last hour!”) The chorus concludes with a gentle, lighter-than-air setting of the final chorus and chorale.

An Institute Professor in Music and Theater Arts at MIT, John Harbison is one of America’s most prominent composers. Among his principal works are four string quartets, three symphonies, the Pulitzer-Prize-winning 1987 cantata *The Flight Into Egypt*, and three operas, including *The Great Gatsby*, commissioned by The Metropolitan Opera and premiered to great acclaim in December 1999. More recently, the Boston Symphony Orchestra premiered his *Requiem* as a Centennial commission this past spring.

Harbison’s music is distinguished by its exceptional resourcefulness and expressive range. He has written for every conceivable type of concert performance, ranging from the grandest to the most intimate, pieces that embrace jazz along with the pre-classical forms. He is considered to be “original, varied, and absorbing—relatively easy for audiences to grasp and yet formal and complex enough to hold our interest through repeated hearings—his style boasts both lucidity and logic” (*Fanfare*, 1993). Harbison is also a gifted commentator on the art and craft of composition and was recognized in his student years as an outstanding poet (he wrote his own libretto for *Gatsby*). Today, he continues to convey, through the spoken word, the multiple meanings of contemporary composition.

Harbison has been composer-in-residence with the Pittsburgh Symphony; the Los Angeles Philharmonic; the Tanglewood, Marlboro, and Santa Fe Chamber Festivals, and the American Academy in Rome. His music has been performed by many of the world’s leading ensembles, and more than thirty of his compositions have been recorded on the Nonesuch, Northeastern, Harmonia Mundi, New World, Decca, Koch, Centaur, Archetype, and CRI labels.

Harbison’s motet “**Concerning them which are asleep**” was composed for the choir of Emmanuel Church and its music director Craig Smith to honor rector Bill Wallace and the congregation of Emmanuel Church. This beautiful six-voice motet features many of the hallmarks of the composers style—rich harmonies derived from juxtapositions of symmetrical chords and melodic figurations as well as a prominence of strict contrapuntal procedures, especially canons.

—William Cutter and Ahmed E. Ismail

TEXTS and TRANSLATIONS

Lagrima d'amante al sepolcro dell'Amata

1.

Incenerite spoglie, avara tomba
Fatta del mio bel sol terreno Cielo.
Ahi lasso! I'vegno ad inchinarvi in terra!
Con voi chius' è il mio cor' amarmi in seno
E notte e giorno vive in pianto,
In foco, in duol' in ira il tormentato Glauco.

O ashes of my beloved, the stingy tomb illumined by my earthly sun is now my heaven. Alas, I grieve. I come to bury you in the earth. My heart is buried with thee as my love is buried within my breast. And night and day Glauco lives in tears, in fire, in pain, in bitterness and torment.

2.

Ditelo, o fiumi, e voi ch' udiste Glauco:
L'aria ferir di grida in su la tomba
Erme campagne, e'l san le Ninfe e'l Cielo;
A me fu cibo il duol, bevanda il pianto,
Poi ch'il mio ben copri gelida terra,
Letto o sasso felice il tuo bel seno.

O rivers and you who hear Glauco, rend the air with cries over this tomb and barren fields, cries heard only by the Nymphs and the skies. Anguish became my food and tears my drink. Rocks are my bed where I dream of your beautiful breast since frozen earth has covered my beloved.

3.

Darà la notte il sol lume alla terra,
Splenderà Cintia il dì prima che Glauco,
Di baci, d'honorar, lasci quel seno
Che nido fu d'amor, Che dura tomba
Preme; nè sol d'alti sospir, di pianto
Prodighe a lui saran le fere e'l Cielo.

The sun will light the earth by night and the moon by day before Glauco will cease to kiss, to honor this breast which was the nest of love, now crushed by the weighty tomb. May the heavens be kind to him, now alone with the pain of his weeping.

4.

Ma te raccoglie, o Ninfa, in grembo il cielo.
Io per te miro vedova la terra,
Deserti i boschi, e correr fiumi il pianto.
E Driade e Napee del mesto Glauco
Ridicono i lamenti, e su la tomba
Cantano i pregi de l'amato seno.

Receive her, O Nymphs, in the lap of heaven. I look to thee, for the earth is widowed, deserted
are the woods, and the rivers are filled with tears. The Dryads and the Nymphs echo sorrowful
Glauco's lament and sing over his beloved's breast.

5.

O chiome d'or, neve gentil del seno,
O gigli de la man, Ch'invido il cielo
Ne rapì, Quando chiuse in cieca tomba,
Chi vi nasconde? Ohime! povera terra!
Il fior d'ogni bellezza il sol di Glauco
Nasconde? Ah muse qui sgorgate il pianto.

O golden hair, o delicate snowy breast, o lily-white hand that envious heaven has stolen, though
locked in this blind tomb, who can hide thee? Ah me! Poor earth—will thou hide the flower of
beauty, the sun of Glauco? Ah muses, shed your tears.

6.

Dunque amate reliquie un mar di pianto
non daran questi lumi al nobil seno
D'un freddo sasso? Ecco l'afflitto Glauco
Fa rissonar Corinna il mar e'l Cielo
Dicano i venti ogn'hor dica la terra,
Ahi Corinna! Ahi morte! Ahi tomba!

Cedano al pianto i detti amato seno
A te dia pace il Ciel, pace a te Glauco
Prega honorata tomba e sacra terra.

Therefore, lovers, unleash a sea of tears; for do they not light the noble heart of this cold stone?
Here the afflicted Glauco utters Corinna's name to the skies, crying each hour to the winds and
the earth: O Corinna! O death! O tomb!

Let words yield to tears, beloved heart. Let heaven give thee peace and peace to Glauco,
praying at thy honored tomb and sacred earth.

Komm, du süße Todesstunde

1. Aria (Alto)

Komm du süße Todesstunde,
Da mein Geist
Honig speist
Aus des Löwen Munde;
Mache meinen Abschied süße
Säume nicht,
Letztes Licht
Dass ich meinen Heiland küsse.

Come, thou sweet hour of death, when my soul feasts on honey from the mouths of lions; make my parting sweet, and tarry not, final light, that I may embrace my Savior.

2. Recitative (Tenor)

Welt! Deine Lust ist Last,
Dein Zukker ist mir als ein Gift verhasst
Dein Freudenlicht
Ist mein Komete, und wo man deine Rosen bricht,
Sind Dornen ohne Zahl
Zu meiner Seele Qual.
Der blasse Tod ist meine Morgenröte
Mit solcher geht mir auf die Sonne
Der Herrlichkeit und HimmeIswonne.
Drum seufz ich recht von Herzensgrunde
Nur nach der letzten Todesstunde
Ich habe Lust bei Christo bald zu weiden,
Ich habe Lust von dieser Welt zu scheiden.

World, thy delights are burdens, thy sweetness is to me as poison loathed, thy joyful light is my dire omen, and where one once did pick roses are thorns without number to torment my soul. Pale death is my rosy morning; with it will rise for me the sunlight of splendor and of heavenly pleasure. I sigh then from the bottom of my heart but for my final hour of dying. It is my wish to pasture with Christ, it is my wish to leave this world behind.

3. Aria (Tenor)

Mein Verlangen ist,
den Heiland zu umfassen
Und bei Christo bald zu sein.
Ob ich sterblich' Asch und Erde
Durch den Tod zermalmet werde,
Wird der Seele reiner Schein
Dennoch gleich den Engeln prangen.

My desire is to embrace my Savior now and to be with Christ. Though as mortal earth and ashes, I am by death ground to ruin; nonetheless, will my soul's pure luster shine like the angel's glory.

4. Recitative (Alto)

Der Schluß ist schon gemacht,
Welt, gute Nacht!
Und kann ich nur den Trost erwerben,
In Jesu Armen bald zu sterben:
Er ist mein sanfter Schlaf.
Das kühle Grab wird mich mit Rosen decken,
Bis Jesus mich wird auferwecken,
Bis er sein Schaf
Führt auf die süße Lebensweide,
Daß mich der Tod von ihm nicht scheide.
So brich herein, du froher Todestag,
So schlage doch, du letzter Stundenschlag!

My end is certain: world, farewell! And I have only this for comfort, to die within the arms of Jesus: there is my gentle sleep. The cooling grave will cover me with roses till Jesus shall re-awaken me, till he shall lead his sheep into life's sweet pasture. There even death will not keep me from him. So now, break forth, thou happy day of death! So strike then, thou stroke of the final hour!

5. Chorus

Wenn es meines Gottes Wille,
Wünsch ich, daß des Leibes Last
Heute noch die Erde fülle,
Und der Geist, des Leibes Gast,
Mit Unsterblichkeit sich kleide
In der süßen Himmelsfreude.
Jesu, komm und nimm mich fort!
Dieses sei mein letztes Wort.

If it be my God's intention, I wish that my body's weight might today make the earth fuller, and my ghost, my body's guest, life immortal take for raiment in the sweet delight of heaven. Jesus, come and take me. May this be my final word.

6. Chorale

Der Leib zwar in der Erden
Von Würmern wird verzehrt,
Doch auferweckt soll werden,
Durch Christum schön verklärt,
Wird leuchten als die Sonne

Und leben ohne Not
In himmlischer Freud und Wonne.
Was schadt mir denn der Tod?

The flesh now in earth lying by worms will be consumed, yet it shall be awakened through the glory of Christ, and shine bright as the sunlight and live without distress in heavenly joy and pleasure. What harm can come to me then, death?

Concerning them which are asleep

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren,
Concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not,
Even as others which have no hope.
For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again,
Even so them also which sleep in Jesus
Will God bring with Him.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord,
That we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord
Shall not prevent them which are asleep.
For the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout,
With the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God,
And the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive
And remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds
to meet the Lord in the air. So shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.
—I Thessalonians 4, 13-18

BIOGRAPHIES

Karen Harvey is well-known to New England audiences as a solo artist and collaborative performer. Currently an Affiliate Artist at MIT, she formerly served on the musical staffs of Boston University and the New England Conservatory of Music, and has taught on the faculties of the University of Massachusetts in Dartmouth, the North Shore Conservatory, and Endicott College. A two-time recipient of Tanglewood Music Center Fellowships, Ms. Harvey has been a featured soloist with the Lowell, Salem, and Merrimack Valley Philharmonic Orchestras, among others. For her solo recital of twentieth-century piano music at the Wang Center, she was hailed as a “pianist with an infinite supply of fingers” (Joseph Fiske, *Boston Herald*). In addition to her keyboard activities, Ms. Harvey is Music Director of the SRO Players in Lowell and the Holiday Classics at Faneuil Hall Marketplace, and currently serves as Director of Music Ministry at the United Church of Christ in Norwell.

Dr. William Cutter is Lecturer in Music and Director of Choral Programs at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he is conductor of the M.I.T. Concert Choir and Chamber Chorus. A member of the conducting faculty at the Boston Conservatory for the past four years, he conducts the Boston Conservatory Chorale and teaches graduate conducting. He has also held academic posts at the Boston University School for the Arts, the University of Lowell and the Walnut Hill School for the Arts and served as music director and conductor of the Brookline Chorus, an auditioned community chorus of eighty voices, for five seasons. Dr. Cutter currently serves as the artistic director for the Boston Conservatory Summer Choral Institute for high school vocalists and was recently appointed Chorus master and Associate Conductor of the Boston Lyric Opera Company as well as chorus master for the Boston Pops Holiday Chorus.

For four summers he was conductor of the Boston University Young Artists Chorus of the Tanglewood Institute, and was music director and conductor of the Opera Laboratory Theater Company, as well as founder and music director of the vocal chamber ensemble CANTO which specialized in contemporary choral music.

As assistant to John Oliver for the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, he has prepared choruses for John Williams and Keith Lockhart and the Boston Pops. In May 1999, he prepared the chorus for two television tapings and their recently released *A Splash of Pops* which featured the premiere of “With Voices Raised” by the composer of the Broadway musical *Ragtime*, Stephen Flaherty. In August 2002, Cutter prepared the Tanglewood Festival Chorus for their performance of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony under the baton of Sir Roger Norrington.

Dr. Cutter has also served on the faculty of the North Carolina Summer Institute of Choral Art and is in demand as a guest conductor and adjudicator throughout the United States and Canada. In 2002, he was asked to serve as a choral consultant for the Boston Symphony’s educational outreach program.

With degrees in composition, Cutter maintains an active career as a composer with recent performances by the Monmouth Civic Chorus, the New Jersey Gay Men’s Chorus, the Boston Pops, the New World Chorale in Boston, Melodious Accord of New York City, and Opera Omaha. His music is published by E.C. Schirmer, Boston; Lawson and Gould, New York; Alfred Educational Publishers, Los Angeles; Roger Dean Publishers, Wisconsin; Shawnee Press; Pennsylvania; and Warner/Chappell of Ontario, Canada.

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 has been a recitalist on the MIT faculty performance series singing the music of Britten, Schubert, and Ives. He has taught voice at the New England Conservatory Preparatory School.

MIT CHAMBER CHORUS

Sopranos

Ana Margarita Albir
Andria Balogh
Elisabeth Hon
Ashley Kim
Karolina Netolicka
Caitlin Smythe

Altos

Ada Au
Katrina Cornell
Tulasi Khandan
Ethel Machi
Katie Olsen
Marissa C. Perales
Melike Yersiz
Shuo Zhang

Tenors

Jesse Byler
Sie Hendrata Dharmawan
Michael Forbes
Kevin Hunt
Andrew Iannaccone
Dave Kloster
Sam Maurer
David Poland
Brian M. Wong
David Zych

Basses

David Blum
Jared A. Casper
Tyler Griffith
William Hawkins
Ahmed E. Ismail
David Karger
Joshua Li
Percy Liang
Uwe Ohler
Kenneth Roraback

Michael J. Walsh
Jonathan Wolfe

Soloists

Anne Hall, *mezzo-soprano*, is a fifth-year graduate student in economics at MIT.

Ahmed Ismail, *baritone*, is a sixth-year graduate student in chemical engineering at MIT.

David Powell, *tenor*, is a sophomore vocal performance major at the Boston Conservatory of Music.