

# The MIT Concert Choir

Dr. William Cutter, Music Director

Joseph Turbessi, pianist

## *The Music of Alice Parker* Hymns SPIRITUALS Folk Songs



**Friday, December 7, 2012**

**Kresge Auditorium, MIT**



MIT Concert Choir

PROGRAM

Featuring the Music of Alice Parker (b. 1925)

HYMN TUNES

- Saints Bound for Heaven (Traditional) Arr. Alice Parker  
Robert Shaw (1916-1999)
- Wondrous Love (Traditional) Arr. Parker/Shaw
- Hymn Charles Ives (1874-1954)
- Hark, I Hear the Harps Eternal (Traditional) Arr. Parker

*Lauren Burke, soprano & Anders Kaseorg, baritone*

SPIRITUALS

- My Lord, What a Mornin' (Spiritual) Arr. H.T. Burleigh (1866-1949)
- I Got Shoes (Spiritual) Arr. Parker / Shaw
- There's a Light (Shaker Melody) Arr. William Cutter (b.1956)
- Elijah Rock (Spiritual) Arr. Jester Hairston (1901-2000)

FOLK MUSIC

- St. Paul's Suite, Op. 29 Gustav Holst (1874-1934)
1. Jig
  2. Ostinato
  3. Intermezzo
  4. The Dargason

- My Gentle Harp (Irish) Arr. Alice Parker
- Rebecca Bogers, harp*
- Old Grandma (Canadian) Arr. Parker

*Zhu Zhu, conductor  
Joseph Turbessi, pianist*

**Irish Folk Song**  
("You'll wander far and wide")

Arr. Arthur Foote (1853-1937)

**Three Hungarian Folk Songs**

Arr. Matyas Seiber (1905-1960)

1. The Handsome Butcher
2. Apple, Apple
3. The Old Woman

**Auprès de ma Blonde (French)**

Arr. Parker / Shaw

In my father's garden the lilacs are blooming:  
All the birds in the world come to make their nests.

Close to my blond how good it is to be!

All the birds in the world come to make their nests:  
The quail, the turtle-dove, and the pretty partridge.

The quail, the turtle-dove, and the pretty partridge,  
And my pretty dove that sings day and night.

And my pretty dove that sings day and night:  
That sings for the maidens who have no husband.

**What Shall We Do With the Drunken Sailor (English)**

Arr. Parker / Shaw

*Tommy Barth, conductor*

**CHRISTMAS**

**Bethlehem Down**

Peter Warlock (1894-1930)

*Rachel Fernandes, Maria Elena Martinez - sopranos*  
*Kelly Alioth Drinkwater, Aishwarya Narayan - altos*  
*Bhaskar Balaji, Victor Abraham Morales - tenors*  
*Chris Jones, Troy Welton - basses*

**From Seven Carols for Christmas**

Arr. Parker

1. O Come, Emmanuel
2. Away in a Manger
3. So Blest a Sight – *Julia Berk, soprano; Troy Welton, bass*
4. Good Christian Men, Rejoice

## PROGRAM NOTES

*“Alice Parker is a national treasure: America’s reigning queen of choral music.”*

American Record Guide

*My twenty-years’ experience with Robert Shaw, an immersion in folk music of many kinds, has had a profound effect on my own understanding of song. I learned to see each tune as a small universe, setting up its own rules of pitch and rhythm, mood and dance. If I understand that universe, and work within it for my setting, the result is an organic whole that allows the original melody to flourish. So in this program, I explore the vitality of early-American Hymns and Spirituals, a soaring Irish lament, a saucy Canadian lyric, a lilting French love-song, and the nostalgia of familiar Christmas Carols.*

**- Alice Parker**

I have known the choral music and arrangements of Alice Parker since I was a high school singer and dare say that she was one of my inspirations for becoming a choral composer. Though barely able to read music at the time, I realized how logical and eminently singable each and every choral part is in her music. They seemed intuitive, beautiful, lyric, and wonderfully memorable.

Ms. Parker has occupied herself with a quest for these qualities in melody and in poetry for the better part of her long and distinguished career. She seems to be able to marry all of these elements with ease, consummate artistry and skill.

Known as the primary arranger for, and collaborator with Robert Shaw for the famed Robert Shaw Chorale, the two hundred and twenty three Parker/Shaw arrangements of folksongs, spirituals, and hymns form an enduring repertoire for choruses all around the world. The arrangements were mostly the work of Alice Parker, with Mr. Shaw serving principally as a scrupulous editor!

The Parker/Shaw collaboration came about in 1948, when the Robert Shaw Chorale first toured the United States and was signed to an exclusive recording contract by RCA Victor. Shaw wished to record only choral masterworks, but RCA Victor also wanted recordings of the Shaw Chorale performing light popular music, in the hope that these would sell well to the American public, and thus fund the Chorale’s recordings of classical music. As Shaw considered the limited time available in his schedule for producing such arrangements, he remembered Parker’s facility in research, her background in composition, and her easy-going temperament. He approached her with the suggestion that she seek out appropriate melodies and texts, and compose a series of arrangements that the two could rework together before the recording session. Shaw believed that the best approach would be to produce albums of folk materials that would be both attractive to singers and listeners as well as inexpensive to produce since this music is in public domain.

For the first project of Easter carols, Parker went to the Music Division of the New York Public Library and was delighted to find an abundance of melodies and texts that suited their needs. During the next few months, Parker prepared a sheaf of sketches, which she played for Shaw at their next meeting. Shaw listened to the whole set, and, according to Parker, reworked them in a way more demanding than any she had ever seen. "Each note, word, and phrase had to be just right. Each voice part had to invite the singer into the phrase. He allowed no splitting of voice parts, no new and 'interesting' harmonizations, no effects for effects' sake." The texts were to be expressed artfully, and the melodies were to be respected for their original beauty. Parker had majored in composition in college, but no one, she says, had ever subjected her pieces to this kind of detailed reworking.

Parker used this metaphor herself when she said in 1996, "It finally struck me that I had experienced a Medieval-style apprenticeship in Renaissance compositional techniques, a rarity in the twentieth century musical world. I had learned the craft of writing for voices, which, in a strange and wonderful way, released my own compositional ideas."

**Alice Parker** received professional training at Smith College and at the Juilliard School successively as a composer, conductor and teacher. Her work is founded on the interaction of these fields, and their extension into writing, theorizing and mentoring. It is founded upon the conviction that music is first and foremost *sound*, and that a paper diagram is a very imperfect medium for its transmission.

Her over fifty years' experience in teaching has given her the ability to express her ideas in clear and memorable language. Her love of poetry and of the lyric line in both words and songs undergirds her understanding. She has identified techniques that work for composers, performers and teachers. She inspires any group which works with her into wonderfully musical, expressive and communicative singing.

As Artistic Director of Melodious Accord, Alice Parker's artistic vision and leadership is at the foundation of the organization's activities. Below is a brief statement of that vision.

*"I believe that melody is the foundation of human music-making, and that song issuing from one human throat is the essential first-step to a musical life. I am fascinated with the combination of words and music, thus I have concentrated on choral and vocal works, using the very best texts that I can find. Chamber music involving small groups of voices and instruments is a favorite medium.*

*I am a devotee of folk songs from many cultures, as well as the rediscovery of Christian hymns from many centuries. Melodies which last teach me about the nature of melody itself, and I never tire of composing, arranging, conducting and teaching from these ever-flowing sources."*

From "A Set of Three Short Pieces" (1904) **Charles Ives's** setting of a "Hymn" shows the composer at his most lyrical and most expressive. Hymn tunes and traditional

songs were a rich source of tonal imagery for the American modernist composer. He combined the American popular church music traditions of his youth with European art music. He was fond of the compositional techniques such as polytonality, polyrhythm, tone clusters, aleatoric elements as well as quartertones, foreshadowing many of the musical innovations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Henry Thacker Burleigh** is one of the most beloved African American baritones, composers, and arrangers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was instrumental in developing a characteristically African American Spiritual by arranging these traditional songs for mixed chorus. His arrangement of “My Lord, What a Mornin’” is a classic of the choral repertoire.

My arrangement of “There’s a light” is the second of a set of three Shaker melodies set for chorus and piano. This setting for women’s chorus was orchestrated for strings especially for this performance.

I first became fascinated with the music of the Shakers while on the faculty of the Boston University Tanglewood Institute in Lenox, MA. The nearby town of Hancock, NY had one of the few remaining Shaker Villages whose mission it was to preserve the many agricultural, social, and artistic contributions of this unique religious sect. I spent a fair amount of time at the village and on one visit discovered a Shaker songbook for sale in the gift shop. I was thrilled to find such a rich trove of simple melodies and decided to try my hand at arranging a few of my favorites.

Most Shaker music is monodic, that is to say, composed of a single melodic line. The tunes and scales recall the folksongs of the British Isles and their contours often possess an extraordinary grace, beauty and simplicity.

Like Burleigh, **Jester Hairston** was a multi-talented artist. He worked as a choral conductor in the early stages of his career. His work with choirs on Broadway eventually led to his singing and acting in plays, films, radio programs and television shows. He was a founding member of the Screen Actors Guild. His classic arrangement of the spirited “Elijah Rock” has become a staple of the African American Spiritual repertoire.

**Gutav Holst’s** “St. Paul’s Suite” was written in gratitude to the St. Paul’s Girl’s School which had built a soundproof studio for him. The Suite consists of four tuneful, folk-flavored, and highly imaginative movements for string orchestra.

A Harvard graduate and the first important American composer to be trained entirely in the U.S., **Arthur Foote’s** music was considered “Romantic” and “European”. He excelled in writing for strings, here showcased in his lovely arrangement of an Irish Folk Tune.

**Matyas Seiber** studied with noted composer Zoltan Kodaly, with whom he toured Hungary and collected folk songs. His music is eclectic in style, showing the influences of American Jazz, the rhythms of Bartok, and the thorny chromaticism of Schönberg. His “Three Hungarian Folksongs” are all based on melodies collected “in the field” with Kodaly.

“Bethlehem Down” is a choral anthem or carol composed in 1927 by the Anglo-Welsh composer **Peter Warlock** set to a poem written by journalist Bruce Blunt. While recognized as a beautiful, haunting and reverent piece of music, it was actually composed to finance a heavy bout of drinking. Warlock and Blunt submitted the carol to a contest sponsored by the Daily Telegraph and won!

*Program notes by William Cutter & James Edward Taylor*

**William Cutter**, Director of Choral Program. M.M., D.M.A., Composition, Boston University School for the Arts. His major teachers included David Del Tredici and Bernard Rands. He has held academic posts at Boston University, The University of Lowell, and the Walnut Hill School. Currently director of choral activities at MIT and the Director of Choral Studies at the Boston Conservatory where he teaches graduate conducting and is the Artistic Director of the Boston Conservatory Summer Vocal/Choral Intensive Program for high school singers. Cutter served as the chorus master for the Boston Lyric Opera Company for seven seasons and is also assistant to John Oliver for the Tanglewood Festival Chorus where he has prepared the chorus for recording sessions and TV tapings for Keith Lockhart, John Williams and the Boston Pops. He has been guest conductor of the New England Conservatory Chamber Singers and the Chorus Pro Musica of Boston. In August of 2010, Cutter prepared the Montreal Symphony Chorus for a performance of Haydn’s “Creation” for Maestro Kent Nagano and the Montreal Symphony. Later that same month, he prepared the women of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus for a performance of Holst’s “The Planets” for Maestro David Zinman at Tanglewood with the Boston Symphony. As a professional tenor, he has sung with Boston’s premiere choral ensembles including the Handel and Haydn Society, The Cantata Singers, Boston Baroque, and Emmanuel Music. His music is published by E.C. Schirmer, Lawson-Gould, Roger Dean Publishing and Alfred Educational Publishers.

**Joseph Turbessi** is active in the greater Boston area as a solo and collaborative pianist, organist, and chamber musician. He has performed with Boston area ensembles Boston New Music Initiative, Juventas, and Lorelei; and has performed solo recitals on the Jamaica Plain and Equilibrium concert series. He is a strong advocate for new music, has premiered a number of works by young composers and has performed in new music festivals in Oregon and Italy. Turbessi also accompanies choirs at MIT and the Boston Conservatory, and serves as music director at Belmont United Methodist Church.



**Tommy Barth** is a graduate student of Choral Conducting at Boston Conservatory where he studies with Dr. William Cutter. He previously studied at Boston University where he earned Bachelor's degrees in Music Theory and Composition and studied conducting with Dr. Ann Howard Jones. He is honored to be working with the men of the MIT Chorale and would like to thank Dr. Cutter for his guidance and wisdom.

**Zhu Zhu** was born in Guangdong province, China. She graduated from The Shanghai Conservatory of Music and has studied music with her parents since 5 and piano since 1997 with Dan Zhao Yi.

Since graduating from the Shanghai conservatory, Ms. Zhu has been awarded several honors including participation in conducting masterclasses with the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra, the Taipei National Symphony, and the Radio Symphony Orchestra of Stuttgart.

Ms. Zhu is currently an MM in choral conducting student at the Boston Conservatory studying with Dr. Cutter.

# MIT Concert Choir Fall 2012

## **SOPRANOS**

Danielle Espinosa  
Di Liu  
Elizabeth Attaway  
Emily TenCate  
Ge (Jackie) Chen  
Jennifer Huang  
Julia Berk  
Lauren Burke  
Lillian McKinley  
Linda Xu  
Marcela Rodriguez  
Maria Elena Martinez  
Mary Munro  
Masha Kulikova  
Megan O'Leary  
Miriam Gershenson  
Noele Norris  
Rachel Fernandes  
Sonal Mukherjee Shah  
Xiao Yun Chang

## **ALTOS**

Aish Narayan  
Catherine Olsson  
Elana Ben-Akiva  
EunYoung (Alice) Choi  
Katherine Fang  
Kelly Alioth Drinkwater  
Lily Chen  
Monica Ruiz  
Nicole Glabinski  
Purnima Balakrishnan  
Theodora Kunicki  
Veronica Chu

## **TENORS**

Bhaskar Balaji  
Harry Richman  
Jae Jin Kim  
Justin Mazzola Paluska  
Stephan Boyer  
Suhas Vijavkumar  
Victor Morales

## **BASSES**

Alex Ji  
Anders Kaseorg  
Andrew Xu  
Ben Gunby  
Chris Jones  
Damien Jiang  
Ian Burek  
Joseph Chism  
Mike Walsh  
Paul Kreiner  
Troy Welton  
Will Waste  
Yoni Stoller

## **Violin 1**

Egle Jarkova  
Maini da Silva  
Jessica Amidon  
Jorge Sosa  
Chia-Li Ho

## **Violin 2**

Joshua Newburger  
Sheena Gutierrez  
Alexandra Stoica  
Barbara Hughey  
Seol Kyung Bae

## **Viola**

Bryan Tyler  
Vanessa Buttolph  
Josquin Larsen  
Christian Hoschek

## **Cello**

Javirer Caballero  
Jamie Clark  
Edevaldo Mulla

## **Bass**

Victor Holmes  
Zac Camhi

## **Harp**

Rebecca Bogers