



# Sacred Music at Notre Dame

*Presents*

## *Wildgesang*

**A Doctoral Conducting Recital**

**Kari Francis, conductor**

Éjszaka · Reggel (Night · Morning) (1955)

2. Reggel

Gyorgy Ligeti

(1923–2006)

An die Sonne (To the Sun) (1816)

Franz Schubert

(1797–1828)

Deux choeurs (Two Choruses), Op. 68/2 (1882)

2. Les fleurs et les arbres

Camille Saint-Saëns

(1835–1921)

### *Vocal Painting Interlude No. 1*

Sharks in the Rivers (2023)

Kari Francis

(b. 1988)

Vesper Sparrow (2012)

Missy Mazzoli

(b. 1980)

Erin Taylor, soprano

### *Vocal Painting Interlude No. 2*

The Peace of Wild Things (2013)

Jake Runestad

(b. 1986)

The Tyger (1987)

John Tavener

(1944–2013)

Panda Chant II (1984)

Meredith Monk

(b. 1942)

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LaBar Performance Hall, 136 O'Neill Hall of Music  
Thursday, November 16th, 2023, 8 PM

This is a degree recital for the Doctor of Musical Arts.  
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## Personnel

Kari Francis, *Conductor*  
Concordia Vocal Ensemble  
Ellis Anderson, *Collaborative Pianist*

### Soprano

Uche Aghulor – MSM  
Faith Fleming  
Nicole Gerdes – MSM  
Kristina Kummerer  
Jessica Roberts  
Regina Scime – MSM  
Margaret Slavinsky – MSM  
^Erin Taylor – MSM

### Alto

Maria-Viktoria Kovalsky – MSM  
Gabriella Lindhurst – MSM  
Vivian Ng – MSM  
Ginikachukwu Ohaji – MSM  
^Scottie Rogers – MSM  
Alejandrina Tinta Segovia  
Sienna Stribling – MSM  
Joy Yelenosky – MSM

### Tenor

Ellis Anderson  
^Samuel Ary – MSM  
Hyo-Won Chun – MSM  
A.J. Lyon – MSM  
Cristian Ortega – MSM  
Nico Tjoelker – DMA  
Maxwell Trochlil  
Evan Schlicht – MSM

### Bass

^Joseph Balistreri – DMA  
Jeffrey Dean – MSM  
Stephen Drendall  
Richard Gress – DMA  
Desheng Huang – DMA  
Jongsoo Hwang – DMA  
Andrew Nicoll  
Owen Peck – MSM  
Nicholas Schefstad – MSM

*^section leader*

Kari Francis is a student of Dr. Cynthia Katsarelis.



Ellis Anderson is a pianist, accompanist, educator, composer, church musician, and choral singer residing in South Bend, Indiana. He is a piano instructor and collaborative pianist at Saint Mary's College and the accompanist for the choirs in the Sacred Music Program at the University of Notre Dame. He is also the music coordinator at Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church in Edwardsburg, Michigan.

## Land Acknowledgment

I acknowledge my presence in the traditional homelands of Native peoples including the Haudenosaunee, Miami, Peoria, all of the Bodéwadmik / Potawatomi peoples, and particularly the Pokégnek Bodéwadmik / Pokagon Potawatomi, who have been using this land for education for thousands of years and continue to do so.

## Special Thanks

I am deeply indebted to my colleagues in the Sacred Music Program and Concordia Vocal Ensemble: students, staff, and faculty who have contributed significant time, energy, and talent to the realization of this repertoire. Their everyday displays of compassion and support are the lifeblood of this cohort, and for these I am extremely grateful.

I am thankful for the patience, encouragement, and inspiration shared by my conducting teacher, Cynthia Katsarelis, my South Bend Symphony Orchestra mentor Alastair Willis, as well as past teachers Nancy Menk and Mark Doerries. Concordia section leaders Erin Taylor, Scottie Rogers, Sam Ary, and Joe Balistreri were indispensable musical leaders whose attention and efforts were crucial to preparing tonight's repertoire. Concordia additionally benefited from the presence of SMND alumni and community members who generously contributed their voices to the ensemble.

I have been fortunate for the chance to learn from and collaborate with the wonderful Ellis Anderson these past three years, and appreciate the depth of musical artistry he brings on a daily basis to the Notre Dame and Saint Mary's communities as a pianist, composer, singer, and more. I am also thankful to my ensemble "families" who have welcomed me into their fold during my time at Notre Dame: Jonathan Hehn and the Basilica Schola, Kevin Vaughn and the choir at Gloria Dei and First English Lutheran Churches, Dan Stowe and Collegium Musicum, and Nancy Menk and the South Bend Chamber Singers.

This recital is in many ways a culmination of coursework, mentoring, and lessons, owing much to Calvin Bower, Heather Wiebe, Gabriel Radle, John Liberatore, Kevin Vaughn, Dan Stowe, Jonathan Hehn, Nancy Menk, Jeshua Franklin, Maxwell Johnson, Kiera Duffy, Stephen Lancaster, Mark Doerries, Peter Jeffery, and Margot Fassler. I am grateful for their boundless support for students and for the Sacred Music Program. Little would be possible without the organizing efforts of Janet Rudasics, Christine Trail, and Carl Sporleder, who oversaw the budget, advertising, and countless other unseen logistical details necessary to bring this recital to fruition. Dr. Daniel Stein and Matt Haines have done much behind the scenes to ensure a myriad technical details run smoothly.

A final special thanks to John Liberatore for advising my thesis on choral improvisation, which has given me the chance to distill years of thoughts, theories, and trial-and-error in teaching choirs to arrange, compose, and improvise on the spot, and has ultimately reminded me of what originally drew me to choral singing.

## Program Notes

“Wildgesang” can be interpreted to mean “wild singing” or “wild song,” deriving not from the academy but from folk traditions. It carries connotations of something untamed, deeply rooted in earthly ritual, reflecting both the plurality and unity of a people. Tonight’s concert presents two musical manifestations of this term: in one manner, through choral composers using metaphorical flora and fauna to express images and emotions; in another, as short pieces realized extemporaneously by the ensemble in reaction to simple prompts. The resulting moments are at turns dazzling, fierce, and unpredictable—in a word, wild.

As the topic of my doctoral thesis, I believe ensemble improvisation is the next great frontier in choral performance and pedagogy. Although a handful of choral improvisation approaches exist, they are often used for imitating a specific historical style, developing a particular skill, or are otherwise positioned on the fringes of repertoire preparation. Lacking a common body of knowledge and procedures, it can be a daunting task for a choir director to introduce ways of creating music in real time with an ensemble. Drawing inspiration from circle singing (as practiced by Bobby McFerrin and his “Voicestra”) and Compline services improvised by The Choir of Trinity Wall Street, my work proposes real time composition tools for the choral ensemble that are as at home in rehearsal as on the concert stage, inviting ensemble members to expand their creativity and share artistic responsibility with the director. In tonight’s performance, improvisatory moments will become the connective tissue between canon works, bridging not only musical material but also emotional states throughout various arcs of the repertoire.

Our concert begins at dawn: labeled “Village Morning” in some collections, Gyorgy Ligeti’s “Reggel” (Morning) illustrates the chaos of ringing church bells and crowing roosters in a five-voice, double fugue. Composed one year before Ligeti fled Hungary for Vienna, Reggel features the intricate wordplay and onomatopoeic rhythms from Sándor Weöres’ (1913-1989) poem mixed with Ligeti’s pentatonic, folk “distortions,” creating a vibrant, sonic snapshot: an imagined, “synthesized folklore” of a generation longing to reconcile its Hungarian identity with the traumas brought on by Hungary’s Socialist regime.

In early nineteenth century Viennese society, it would have been uncouth for men and women to sing secular partsongs together in casual social settings, which makes Franz Schubert’s SATB setting of “An die Sonne” a rarity in his oeuvre. Likely patterned after Haydn’s late part-songs for mixed voices, the nineteen year-old Schubert embellishes Johann Uz’s (1720-1796) rococo paean to the Sun with dotted, Baroque-inspired rhythms that alternate with calmer, more introspective moments as the poem’s speaker reflects on his own mortality.

A virtuoso organist, pianist, and teacher, Camille Saint-Saëns was a lifelong student of Viennese classical models. His adherence to conservative musical structures meets with his impressionistic style in works like his Opus 68, which comprises two settings for mixed *a cappella* chorus. Authoring both the music and texts, “Calme des Nuits” (Calm of the night) and “Les fleurs et les arbres” (The flowers and the trees) are miniature odes to the splendor and palliative powers of Nature. Just three years later, his orchestral works from 1886—Third Symphony (“Organ”) and “Le carnaval des animaux” (The Carnival of the Animals)—would represent to many the height of Saint-Saëns’ artistic career.

As described by the MacArthur Foundation, the writing of U.S. poet laureate Ada Limón “counterbalances grief with wonder in works that heighten our awareness of the natural world and our connections to one another.” My own encounter with Limón’s poem “Sharks in the Rivers” cathartically uncovered poignant and difficult memories from my decade living in New York City prior to coming to South Bend. I finally had the

chance to set Limón's text while taking John Liberatore's Creative Composition course last spring, and continued revising the piece over the summer at the Walden Creative Musicians retreat. Originally written for chorus, whisperers, and violin obbligato, tonight's version has been reimagined specifically for Concordia's collaborative pianist, Ellis Anderson.

Originally conceived for new music vocal superstars Roomful of Teeth, Missy Mazzoli's "Vesper Sparrow" combines birdsong-derived motives with fragments of the poem "Sparrow" by Iranian-American poet Farnoosh Fathi. These elements coalesce over a foundation of bright, open intervals that imitate a style of Sardinian overtone singing known as *cantu a tenore*.

Farmer, poet, and essayist Wendell Berry has been described as a modern-day Thoreau, his diverse writings offering commentary on American history and the fractured American psyche, with an emphasis on the need for stewardship of nature and farmlands. Commissioned by the Young New Yorkers Chorus, Jake Runestad's choral setting of Berry's "The Peace of Wild Things" was the first composed in his *American Triptych* series, in which Runestad creates musical meditations on the poetry of Berry, Henry David Thoreau, and John Muir.

William Blake penned "The Tyger" as the counterpart to "The Lamb," two poems reflecting the dichotomous and complex relationship between "experience" and "innocence" as well as Blake's lifelong contemplation of the dualisms and contradictions inherent to human nature. Like Blake, English composer John Tavener composed his well-known setting of "The Lamb" before friend and choral director Phillip Brunelle commissioned "The Tyger." This *a cappella* work is rooted in the low drones and ringing sonorities of Eastern Orthodox liturgical tradition, replete with musical and metaphorical mirrorings of motives across different vocal lines, eventually blossoming into thirteen parts before dramatically referring back to "The Lamb" at its climax.

"Panda Chant II" is just one of many ensemble sequences in Meredith Monk's iconic interdisciplinary work "The Games: A Science Fiction Opera" (1982). Set on a far-off, future planet, the story unfolds through playful reenactments that at first evoke childlike innocence, but are ultimately overshadowed by oblique references to the horrors of a nuclear holocaust. What is left of humanity struggles to reconstruct partially remembered Earthly rituals, which become the basis for the energetic claps, stamps, and ululations of this communal work.

Throughout this array of styles, regions, and moments in history, ruminating on themes from Nature offers us a chance to connect with the splendor of the present, reflect on the past, and look toward the future. Noticing natural marvels, struggles, and surprises can both inspire introspection or break us out of self-imposed limits, leading us to discover the wonder of our own, inner *wild*.

## Texts and Translations

### Reggel (“Morning”) (Sándor Weöres, 1913–1989)

Már üti, üti már,  
a torony a hajnalban.  
Az időt bemeszeli a korai kikeriki:  
reggel van!  
Már üti már! Reggel, ah!

*Ring, tick-tock, tick-tock, bell!  
And the clock ticks, wishing well.  
In the dawn, cock-a-doodle-doo,  
the cock cries and the duck too,  
Ring well, bell!*

### An die Sonne (Johann Peter Uz, 1720–1796)

O Sonne, Königin der Welt,  
Die unser dunkles Leben erhellt,  
O Sonne, Königin der Welt,  
Die unser dunkles Rund erhellt,  
In lichter Majestät;  
Erhab’nes Wunder einer Hand,  
Die jene Himmel ausgespannt  
Und Sterne hingesät!

Noch heute seh’ ich deinen Glanz,  
Mir lacht in ihrem Blumenkranz  
Noch heute die Natur.  
Der Vögel buntgefiedert Heer  
Singt morgen mir vielleicht nicht mehr  
Im Wald und auf der Flur.

Ich fühle, dass ich sterblich bin,  
Mein Leben welkt wie Gras dahin,  
Wie ein verschmachtet Laub.  
Wer weiss, wie unerwartet bald  
Des höchsten Wort an mich erschallt:  
Komm wieder in den Staub!

### To the Sun (tr. Richard Wigmore)

*O sun, queen of the world,  
who lights our dark lives –  
O sun, queen of the world,  
who lights our dark round  
in shining majesty;  
sublime marvel of a hand  
which spread out the distant heavens  
and strewed the stars within them!*

*Today I can still see your radiance;  
in its garlands of flowers  
nature still smiles upon me today.  
Tomorrow the bright-feathered hosts of birds  
may never again sing to me  
in the woods and the meadows.*

*I feel that I am mortal;  
my life withers away like grass,  
like languishing leaves.  
Who knows how unexpectedly, how soon  
the voice of the Almighty will ring out to me:  
‘Return to the dust!’*

### Les fleurs et les arbres (Saint-Saëns)

Les fleurs et les arbres,  
Les bronzes, les marbres,  
Les ors, les émaux,  
La mer, les fontaines,  
Les monts et les plaines  
Consolent nos maux.

*The flowers and the trees,  
The bronzes, the marbles,  
The golds, the enamels,  
The sea, the waterfalls,  
The mountains and the plains  
Console our pain.*

Nature éternelle,  
Tu sembles plus belle  
Au sein des douleurs !  
Et l'art nous domine,  
Sa flamme illumine  
Le rire et les pleurs.

*Eternal nature,  
You seem more beautiful  
To a heart in sorrow,  
And art reigns over us,  
Its flame illuminates  
the laughter and tears.*

**Sharks in the Rivers** (Ada Limón, b. 1976)

We'll say unbelievable things  
to each other in the early morning—

our blue coming up from our roots,  
our water rising in our extraordinary limbs.

All night I dreamt of bonfires and burn piles  
and ghosts of men, and spirits  
behind those birds of flame.

I cannot tell anymore when a door opens or closes,  
I can only hear the frame saying, Walk through.

It is a short walkway—  
into another bedroom.

Consider the handle. Consider the key.

I say to a friend, how scared I am of sharks.

How I thought I saw them in the creek  
across from my street.

I once watched for them, holding a bundle  
of rattlesnake grass in my hand,  
shaking like a weak-leaf girl.

She sends me an article from a recent *National Geographic* that says,

*Sharks bite fewer people each year than  
New Yorkers do, according to Health Department records.*

Then she sends me on my way. Into the City of Sharks.

Through another doorway, I walk to the East River saying,

*Sharks are people too.*  
*Sharks are people too.*  
*Sharks are people too.*

I write all the things I need on the bottom  
of my tennis shoes. I say, Let's walk together.

The sun behind me is like a fire.  
Tiny flames in the river's ripples.

I say something to God, but he's not a living thing,  
so I say it to the river, I say,

*I want to walk through this doorway*  
*But without all those ghosts on the edge,*  
*I want them to stay here.*  
*I want them to go on without me.*

*I want them to burn in the water*

**Vesper Sparrow** (words excerpted from "Home State" by Farnoosh Fathi, b. 1981)

what will come so soon to my golden door  
when asleep all sides  
I am a shattered horse  
asleep in the glass pajamas of man

**The Peace of Wild Things** (Wendell Berry, b. 1934)

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

**The Tyger** (William Blake, 1757–1827)

Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright  
In the forests of the night.  
What immortal hand or eye



Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies  
Burned the fore of thine eyes?  
On what wings dare he aspire?  
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art,  
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?  
And when thy heart began to beat,  
What dread hand? And what dread feet?

What the hammer? What the chain?  
In what furnace was thy brain?  
What the anvil? What dread grasp  
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,  
And watered heaven with their tears,  
Did he smile his work to see?  
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright,  
In the forests of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Dare frame thy symmetry?

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