

QUINTESSENCE: CHORAL ARTISTS OF THE SOUTHWEST

MATTHEW GREER, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR • CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF SONG

AMERICANA

Folk Songs, Spirituals, and Bluegrass

Saturday, October 15 at 5PM

Immanuel Presbyterian Church

*** * * 114 Carlisle Blvd. SE * * ***

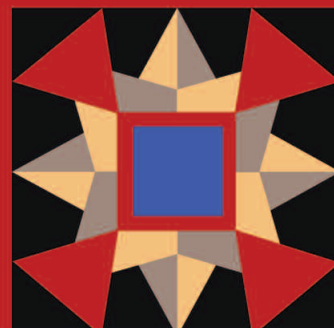
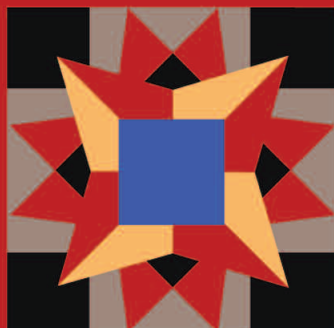
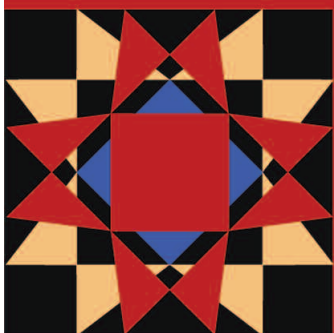
Sunday, October 16 at 3PM

St. John's United Methodist Church

*** * * 2626 Arizona St. NE * * ***

Fiddle, banjo, mandolin, and Quintessence!
Our 25th anniversary season opens with beautiful and rough-hewn music of America, featuring folk songs, spirituals, and the New Mexico premiere of Carol Barnett's *The World Beloved: A Bluegrass Mass*.

QUINTESSENCE
CHORAL ARTISTS OF THE SOUTHWEST



ABOUT THE MUSIC

As a kid in Catholic school, I used to play the banjo at Mass.

This was because of a confluence of cultural factors. First of all, I grew up in the 70s, when the liturgical reforms of Vatican II were being exploited to their fullest. Centuries of inaccessible Latin rites seemed to be dropped overnight in favor of the With-It Folk Mass, and there was an immediate demand for church musicians who could imitate the stylings of the Partridge Family. Nuns threw off their habits and took up brightly colored polyester clothing and (in the unfortunate case of my fourth-grade teacher) the electric bass.

Secondly, my parents had let me quit piano in favor of banjo lessons, because in every way possible I wanted to be like Steve Martin. I took lessons for four years – long enough to do a creditable rendition of the theme from “The Beverly Hillbillies” – but I eventually came to the sorry conclusion that the banjo was not ever going to impress girls. I should have stayed with it.

But I did join the folk group in my parish and played at Mass every week. It was, in a word, bad.

So it was with some skepticism that I checked out a new mass setting that a colleague recommended: Minnesota composer Carol Barnett’s *The World Beloved: A Bluegrass Mass*. But as soon as I heard the piece, I couldn’t wait to do it. The traditional mass texts (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei) are all present, but in most cases are reimagined in English by the poet and playwright Malisha Chamberlain, and juxtaposed with stanzas of an original folk hymn (“It’s true, God loved the world so dear . . .”), performed by the band and their lead singer. The piece is unique, and it’s wonderful.

Speaking of unique: the other multi-movement work on our program takes its name from a magazine column. “Americana” was the most popular monthly feature in H.L. Mencken’s *The American Mercury* magazine in the late 1920s and early 30s. The column was made up entirely of excerpts from other publications: newspaper articles, classified advertisements, tracts, pamphlets, etc., which Mencken thought were representative of the lamentable state of American culture.

For his 1932 choral suite, composer Randall Thompson chose several entries from Mencken’s column to set to music, verbatim. The texts include: a single belligerent sentence from a Protestant sermon; a newspaper advice column written by a fortune-teller; an anti-drinking leaflet by the National Women’s Christian Temperance Union; and a classified ad for a self-published collection of inspirational poetry (“ . . . all abrim with Joy, Love, Faith, Abundance, Victory, Beauty, and Mastery!”) I know of no other piece like it.

Rounding out our program is a colorful motet by the first truly American composer, William Billings; a choral arrangement of one of Aaron Copland’s beloved *Old American Songs*; a set of four superb hymn and spiritual arrangements by Alice Parker and Robert Shaw; and a better-known piece of Randall Thompson, his eloquent setting of Robert Frost’s “Choose Something Like a Star.” None of these feature the banjo, alas. (Or the accordion, fortunately.)

MATTHEW GREER

PROGRAM

Zion's Walls

Aaron Copland
(1900-1990)

Hark, I Hear the Harps Eternal
God Is Seen
Come Away to the Skies
I Got Shoes

arr. Alice Parker (b. 1925)

O Praise the Lord of Heaven

William Billings
(1746-1800)

Americana (1932)

Randall Thompson
(1899-1984)

- I. Let Every Tongue
- II. The Staff Necromancer
- III. God's Bottles
- V. Loveli-Lines

INTERMISSION

The World Beloved: A Bluegrass Mass

Carol Barnett
(b. 1949)

- I. Ballad: Refrain
- II. Kyrie
- III. Ballad: First Verse
- IV. Gloria
- V. Ballad: Second Verse and Refrain
- VI. Credo
- VII. Sanctus
- VIII. Ballad: Third and Fourth Verses
- IX. Agnus Dei
- X. Art Thou Weary (Instrumental)
- XI. Benediction
- XII. Conclusion

Rebecca Rotello and Nick Prior, choral soloists

Chrystal Anderson, lead singer

Gregg Daigle, mandolin/banjo; Phillip Coonce, fiddle

Amy Gillespie, guitar; Maren Hatch, bass

Love and Pizen (Variations on "Springfield Mountain")

Kirke Mechem
(b. 1925)

Choose Something Like a Star (from *Frostiana*)

Randall Thompson

Light of a Clear Blue Morning

Dolly Parton, arr. Craig Hella Johnson

Meredith Wilder, soloist

Jerome Jim, flutist

Please silence your cell phones before the performance begins.

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Friday, December 9, 2011, 7 pm
& Sunday, December 11, 2011, 3 pm
CHRISTMAS CONCERT & CD LAUNCH

PVNM returns to the Cathedral of St. John following their sold-out *Messiah* performance last Christmas season to celebrate the launch of their NEW Christmas CD. Featured on the program is Benjamin Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols* as well as carols from around the globe.

Friday, March 23, 2012, 7 pm
& Sunday, March 25, 2012, 3 pm
G. F. HANDEL'S MESSIAH

Polyphony will again be joined by an all male quartet of soloists: NYC based male soprano Eric Brenner, NYC countertenor Patrick Fennig, tenor Javier Gonzalez from Los Angeles, and baritone Edmund Connolly from London, UK.

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Sunday October 23 St. James Episcopal Church, Taos New Mexico 4PM

Friday October 28 Las Placitas Presbyterian Church, Placitas New Mexico 7:30PM

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