Lehigh University Choral Arts
Steven Sametz, Artistic Director
Sun Min Lee, Associate Director

FOREVER THINE
On October 25 & 26, 2013

Program

O Clap Your Hands (1920)  Ralph Vaughan Williams  (1872-1958)

Three Biblical Love Songs (2012)  premiere  Steven Sametz  (b. 1954)

I.  David et Jonathan (David and Jonathan)
II.  Entreat Me Not To Leave You
    Sage Lutton, mezzo-soprano
    Jessica Madow, hammered dulcimer
III.  Rise Up, My Fair One

brief pause


I.  Introit (Requiem Aeternam)
II.  Kyrie eleison
III.  Offertory (Domine Jesu Christe)
IV.  Sanctus – Benedictus
V.  Pie Jesu
    Sage Lutton, mezzo-soprano
VI.  Agnus Dei
VII.  Communion (Lux aeterna)
VII.  Libera me
IX.  In Paradisum

Notes on the Program

Ideas about “the eternal” tend to be abstract. History teaches us that there was much that came before us, and philosophy speculates on what will come after. Most of us have enough to do thinking about today and tomorrow; there’s rarely enough time to get our heads around the idea of “forever.” We’ve got enough to do being human without thinking about the longer timeline of humanity.
When we speak of things being Biblical, we’re usually talking, well, on a Biblical scale – grand and long lasting. Yet interestingly, the stories presented are usually personalized: a parable about a leper, Lazarus, teaches about everlasting life; pictures of war are brought home to us by the story of a hero slain; and eternal love is portrayed by the individuals who love, be it the love of Jonathan for David, the dedication of Ruth for Naomi, or the passions expressed in the Song of Songs.

And when we confront not the abstraction of death, but the loss of someone close to us, we are called to see the limits of mortality and ponder if those close to us are with us always. We are lifted out of the present. Those we love and those we lose are ours forever and we are theirs: “Forever Thine.”

Music – technically very much bound up in time with tempo markings and meters – is perhaps the best art form at taking us into the realm of the timeless. Be it love songs or a Requiem, abstract ideas are given voice through harmony and melody.

We hope that you enjoy tonight’s presentation and that you will stay with us – always, or at least through our 2013-14 season, when we will be presenting our Christmas Vespers, a varied spring a cappella repertoire and an all-Beethoven program in April.

**Ralph Vaughan Williams  *O Clap Your Hands***

Ralph Vaughan Williams began studying violin and piano at the age of six. He would go on to study with major composer-teachers of the era, including Charles Villiers Stanford Hubert Parry, and Maurice Ravel. Ravel commented that of all his students, Vaughan Williams was the only one who didn’t compose like Ravel.

Vaughan Williams’ style became associated with the English pastoral school, exhibiting what Peter Akroyd, writing in *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination*, summarized as “ostensibly familiar and commonplace, yet deep and mystical as well as lyrical, melodic, melancholic, and nostalgic yet timeless.” There are indeed qualities of the familiar, the melodic and the mystical in *O Clap Your Hands*, composed shortly after Vaughan Williams returned from serving in the Royal Medical Corp in France during WWI. The work was premiered in 1920 at Westminster Abbey in London. The text is taken from Psalm 47 (verses 1, 2, and 5–8) and has become a staple of the choral repertoire. We offer it tonight as a fanfare to open the Lehigh Choral Arts 2013-2014 season.

**Steven Sametz  *Three Biblical Love Songs***

The *Three Biblical Love Songs* offers three aspects of Biblical love: Jonathan’s love for David (Book of Samuel); Ruth’s love of Naomi (Book of Ruth) and the sensual love found in the Song of Songs. The choruses were composed at different times during 2012 and the third was the result of a commission from the Cheyenne Chamber Singers. Tonight’s presentation is the premiere of all three as a set in a revised and newly orchestrated version for strings, harp, hammered dulcimer, choirs and mezzo-soprano soloist.

**Maurice Duruflé  *Requiem***

Maurice Duruflé was educated as a choirboy at the Rouen Cathedral. This was, in Duruflé’s words, “the turning point in his life.” His love of the Christian rites, the Gregorian chant he learned as a boy, and his early training as an organist would inform
his composition all through his life. As a composer, Duruflé was his own harshest critic. Subjecting his work to continuous revision, he completed only fourteen works in his lifetime.

The *Requiem*, opus 9, was completed in 1947 in its original version for solo, choir, orchestra and organ. A transcription of the orchestra part was realized later for organ alone as well as for the reduced orchestral version we are presenting this evening.

Duruflé wrote, “This Requiem is composed entirely on the Gregorian themes of the Mass for the Dead. Sometimes the musical text has been respected in full, the orchestra intervening only to sustain or to comment on it; sometimes I was simply inspired by it or sometimes removed myself from it altogether; for example, in certain developments suggested by the Latin text, namely in the *Domine Jesu Christe*, the *Sanctus* and the *Libera me*. Generally speaking, I tried to get the particular style of the Gregorian themes firmly set in my mind.

“I also endeavored to reconcile as much as possible the Gregorian rhythm, as has been established by the Benedictines and Solemnes, with the demands of modern metrical notation. The rigidness of the latter, with its strong beats and weak beats recurring at regular intervals, is hardly compatible with the variety and fluidity of the Gregorian line, which is only a series of rises and falls.

“The strong beats had to lose their dominant character in order to take on the same intensity as the weak bests in such a sway that the rhythmic Gregorian accent or the tonic Latin accent could be placed freely on any beat of our modern tempo.

“As for musical form of each of the pieces composing this Requiem, it is generally inspired by the form proposed by the liturgy. The organ has only an incidental role. It intervenes, not to accompany the choirs, but only to underline certain accents or to make one momentarily forget the all too human sonorities of the orchestra. It represents the idea of peace, of Faith, and of Hope.

“This *Requiem* is not an ethereal work which sings of the detachment from earthly worries. It reflects, in the immutable form of the Christian prayer, the agony of man faced with the mystery of his ultimate end. It is often dramatic, or filled with resignation, or hope or terror, just as the words of the Scripture themselves which are used in the liturgy. It tends to translate the human feelings before their terrifying, unexplainable or consoling destiny.

“The Mass includes the nine parts of the Mass of the Dead: the *Introit*, *Kyrie*, *Domine Jesu*, *Christe*, *Sanctus*, *Pie Jesu*, *Agnus Dei*, *Lux aeterna*, *Libera me*, and finally *In Paradisum*, the ultimate answer of Faith to all the questions, by the flight of the soul to Paradise.”

Duruflé dedicated the Requiem to the memory of his father.