



Masterworks Choral Ensemble presents “Love, Lament, Laughter and Light”

By Bob Sundstrom, MCE Writer/Editor

Masterworks Choral Ensemble will soon open its 30th anniversary season – and with a flourish! Mark the date: on Saturday, October 16 MCE presents “Love, Lament, Laughter and Light” at the Washington Center. The four-part concert program is a testament to the power of music to delight, to lift us up, to open our hearts to love, and to touch those dimensions of the soul that music alone can reach.

The concert follows through on each of the four themes invoked in the title. The first part, “Love,” begins with *If Music Be the Food of Love*, with the first line "If music be the food of love, sing on 'till I am filled with joy." This memorable line would seem to sum up the joyous experience of those who sing in Masterworks. The song *Wondrous Love* follows, an arrangement of a traditional hymn from choral legends Alice Parker and Robert Shaw. Also in this section of the concert, piano soloist and youth contest winner Theo Ragan will perform Rachmaninoff's *Prelude in G Minor, Opus 23, No. 5*.

The second part of the concert, “Lament,” presents three heartfelt songs. One is an arrangement of the traditional Appalachian song *Every Night (When the Sun goes down)*, a song about faith transcending sorrow and peace overcoming suffering and pain. The song *From There*, with lyrics by Dina Soraya Gregory, is dedicated to the memory of the lyricist's father. The lyrics run, in part "From there, pray don't sense my saddened heart. Know this, that my loves goes on...." This section of the concert closes with the powerful *If You Search With All Your Heart*, its text based on Jeremiah 29:11-14, with music by Craig Courtney. This deeply personal anthem speaks to God's sustaining mercy in times of deepest grief and sorry.

“Laughter” propels the serious offstage, beginning with *Lambscapes*, four hilarious settings of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" in the styles of a Gregorian Chant, a Handel oratorio, a Schubert art song, and a Verdi aria – all sung

by the Singers Ensemble. *The Fall* is a compact and hilariously ironic song, out of *The Tunnel: Selected Poems*, by eminent prose poet Russell Edson. More laughs erupt from *Grumble Too Much*, a Jamaican folk song with percussion that follows a dialogue between men ("woman is a people grumble too much!") and women ("we don't grumble, no we never ever grumble too much!")

And finally "Light," with five songs, completes the evening's cycle of the four "L's." "Light" begins with *Sure on This Shining Night* by Morten Lauridsen, a contemporary American composer of great renown. "Light" includes *Tu Solus: Many Paths, One God*, a luminous meditation on the oneness of God in all the world's religions. This song is followed by *And in the Evening*, adapted from the poetry of William Blake and rendering musically the mystical nature of dreams juxtaposed with the awe-inspiring vastness of the star-filled night sky. "Light" concludes with Roger Ames' brilliant choral fantasy on the standard, *Amazing Grace*.

Also in October, you can help celebrate Masterworks' three decades of musical excellence at MCE's 30th Anniversary Dinner – Saturday, October 30 from 5pm to 10pm at The Olympia Center downtown. You'll be treated to a superb meal from Panorama's Chambers House Restaurant, and a no-host bar will offer an apt array of celebratory libations. The stylish dinner event includes both a silent auction and live auction (led by famed host and auctioneer, Larry Flynn).

Season and individual concert tickets, as well as tickets for the 30th Anniversary Dinner/Auction, are on sale online now at Masterworks secure website (www.MCE.org). You can also purchase individual concert tickets at the Washington Center Box Office, 512 Washington Street SE, Olympia, (360-753-8586) or online via the Washington Center's website: <https://tickets.washingtoncenter.org/Online/>.

For more information about Masterworks Choral Ensemble, visit the MCE website at www.MCE.org.