

the  
**Orpheus Singers**



**JAMES OLESEN**  
DIRECTOR

*present*

***Across the Centuries-***  
**A Song Recital for Mixed Voices**

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**Songs to Orpheus and Music**  
by Byrd, Ben Weber, and Lassus

**Songs of Nature**  
by Marjorie Merryman, Monteverdi, Brahms and Lassus

**Songs of Wisdom**  
by Lassus, Donald Martino, Alexander Goehr, and Schubert

**Songs at the End of Day**  
by Merryman, Lassus, and Elgar

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**February 27, 2016**  
**Lindsey Chapel Emmanuel Church Boston**

## TO OUR AUDIENCE

*A Cappella* singing in Emmanuel Church's Lindsey Chapel is enhanced by ringing acoustics and visual brilliance, set in outstanding English Gothic architecture.

Our programs dip into the vast centuries-old tradition of contrapuntal works, a tradition that extends across generations of composers from the 10th century forward, from Dufay and Ockeghem through Josquin, Lassus, and Palestrina, to Monteverdi, Lully, Purcell, and Charpentier, through Schütz and Buxtehude to Bach, to Haydn and Mozart, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and Elgar, through Schönberg, Stravinsky, and Webern to Copland, Carter, Wolpe, Merryman, Martino, and Boykan, to name only a very few. We have performed these composers in our eleven years of existence, sometimes in wide-ranging programs, and at other times, in programs of concentrated groups of composers or a single period. Our contribution to the rich Boston musical scene is that of an expanded repertory; our concert programs seldom overlap with those of Boston's other fine choirs.

In our two concert season, we combine skilled volunteer singers with highly trained professionals paid in accordance with Boston's highest professional rate. One of our volunteer singers said, "We sing music we do nowhere else and we get to sing with wonderful professional singers." This mixture of skilled amateur and professional singers is unique in Boston. We rehearse intensively three weeks prior to our concert, and then do not convene again until the next concert period. It is a demanding schedule which, because of the expertise of the singers, works well in meeting our ever-present goal of singing the very best repertory in the very best way.

We are grateful for any tax-deductible financial support you may offer. Please send your check to our treasurer: **Nadja Gould, 36 Adams Avenue, Watertown, MA 02472.**

James Olesen

the  
**Orpheus**  **Singers**

James Olesen, *Director*

***Across the Centuries-***  
**A Song Recital for Mixed Voices**

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**SONGS TO MUSIC AND ORPHEUS**

Musica est Dei donum optimi

*Orlandus Lassus (1532-1594)*

Musica Dei donum optimi

*Orlandus Lassus*

Sonnet to Orpheus

*Ben Weber (1916-1979)*

Come, Woeful Orpheus

*William Byrd (d. 1623)*

**WISDOM SONGS**

O Blessèd Letters

*Alexander Goehr (b. 1932)*

Gallans qui par terre

*Orlandus Lassus*

Gesang der Geister über den Wassern

*Franz Schubert (1797-1828)*

Eternitie

*Donald Martino (1931-2005)*

I N T E R M I S S I O N

**SONGS OF NATURE**

O la, o che buon echo

*Orlandus Lassus*

Ich schwing mein Horn

*Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)*

The Garland

*Marjorie Merryman (b.1951)*

Ecco mormorar l'onde

*Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)*

**SONGS AT THE END OF THE DAY**

Evening

*Marjorie Merryman*

La Nuit froide et sombre

*Orlandus Lassus*

Weary Wind of the West

*Edward Elgar (1857-1934)*

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# TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

## ☞ SONGS TO MUSIC AND ORPHEUS ☞

### MUSICA EST DEI DONUM OPTIMI

Musica est Dei donum optimi.

Music is the gift of the most glorious God.

### MUSICA DEI DONUM OPTIMI

Musica Dei donum optimi  
trahit homines, trahit deos;  
musica truces mollit animos  
tristesque mentes erigit;  
musica vel ipsas arbores  
et horridas movet feras.

Music, gift of the most glorious God,  
draws men, draws gods;  
Music calms savage souls  
and lifts up sorrowful minds.  
Music stirs even the very trees  
and the frightful beasts.

### SONNET TO ORPHEUS

Only one who has lifted the lyre  
among shadows too,  
may divining render  
the infinite praise.

Only who with the dead has eaten  
of the poppy that is theirs,  
will never again lose  
the most delicate tone.

Though the reflection in the pool  
often swims before our eyes:  
know the image.

Only in the dual realm  
do voices become  
eternal and mild.

*Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926)  
translated by M.D. Herter Norton*

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## COME, WOEFUL ORPHEUS

Come, woeful Orpheus  
with they charming lyre,  
and tune my voice  
unto thy skillful wire.

Some strange chromatic notes  
do you devise  
that best with mournful accents  
sympathize.

Of sourest sharps  
and uncouth flats  
make choice,  
and I'll thereto  
compassionate my voice.

## ❧ WISDOM SONGS ❧

### O BLESSÈD LETTERS

O blessèd letters that combine in one  
All ages past and make one live with all,  
By you we do confer with who are gone,  
and the dead living unto council call;  
By you the unborn shall have communion  
of what we feel, and what doth us befall.

*Samuel Daniel (1562 - 1619)*

### GALLANS QUI PAR TERRE ET PAR MER

Gallans qui par terre et par mer,  
Allez aux noces et aux fêtes,  
Aimez tant que voudrez aimer,  
Vous n'y romprez que vos têtes;

Folles amour font les gens bêtes.  
Salomon sa loi denia,  
Sanson en perdit ses lunettes;  
Bienheureux est qui rien n'y a.

Gallant ones who by land and sea  
Go to weddings and feasts,  
Love as much as you want,  
you'll only break your heads;

The follies of love make people stupid.  
Solomon denied his own law,  
Samson lost his glasses;  
Happy are they who have none of it.

*François Villon (1431-1463)*

## GESANG DER GEISTER ÜBER DEN WASSERN

Des Menschen Seele  
Gleicht dem Wasser:  
Vom Himmel kommt es,  
Zum Himmel steigt es,  
Und wieder nieder  
Zur Erde muss es,  
Ewig wechselnd.

The souls of mankind  
Are like the water:  
They come from heaven,  
To heaven they rise,  
And again they  
Must down to earth,  
Always changing.

Strömt von der hohen,  
Steilen Felswand  
Der reine Strahl,  
Dann stäubt er lieblich  
In Wolkenwellen  
Zum glatten Fels,

Gushes from the high,  
Steep rock wall  
The pure stream,  
Then delicately turns to spray  
In cloud-waves  
On the flat rocks,

Und leicht empfangen  
Wallt er verschleiernd  
Leiserausend  
Zur Tiefe nieder.  
Ragen Klippen  
Dem Sturz entgegen,  
Schäumt er unmutig  
Stufenweise  
Zum Abgrund.

And gently welcomed  
It flows, stealing,  
Lightly rushing  
Down to the deep.  
Looming crags  
Oppose the fall,  
It foams angrily  
Crag by crag  
To the abyss.

Im flachen Beete  
Schleicht er das Wiesental hin,  
Und in dem glatten See  
Weiden ihr Antlitz  
Alle Gestirne.

In the flat bed  
It steals through the valley meadow,  
And in the smooth lake  
All the stars  
Gaze at their faces.

Wind ist der Welle  
Lieblicher Buhle;  
Wind mischt von Grund aus  
Schäumende Wogen.

Wind is the waves'  
Loving sweetheart;  
Wind mixes from the bottom  
Boiling waves.

Seele des Menschen,  
Wie gleichst du dem Wasser!  
Schicksal des Menschen,  
Wie gleichst du dem Wind!

Souls of mankind,  
How you are like the water!  
Fate of Mankind,  
How like the wind!

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)*

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## ETERNITIE

O Yeares! and Age! Farewell:  
Behold, I go,  
Where I do know  
Infinitie to dwell.

And these mine eyes shall see  
All times, how they  
Are lost i'th' Sea  
Of vast Eternitie.

Where never Moone shall sway  
The Starres, but she,  
And Night, shall be  
Drown'd in one endlesse Day.

*Robert Herrick (1591-1674)*

## 🌿 SONGS IN NATURE 🌿

### O LA, O CHE BUON ECCHO!

O la, o che buon eccho!  
Pigliamoci piacere!  
Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!  
Ridiamo tutti.

O buon compagno, che voi tu?  
Vorria che tu cantassi una canzona.  
Perchè? perchè sì?  
Perchè non?  
Perchè non voglio.  
Perchè non voi?  
Perchè non mi piace!

Taci, dico!

Taci tu!

O gran poltron!

Signor, sì!

Orsu, non più. Andiamo!

Addio, buon eccho, rest' in pace!

Basta! Basta!

O, la, what a good echo!

Let's take our pleasure!

Ha, ha ha, ha, ha!

Let's all laugh.

O good companion, what do you want?

I want you to sing a song.

Why? why yes?

Why no?

Because I don't want to,

Why don't you want to?

Because I don't like to!

Be quiet, I say!

You be quiet!

You big loafer!

Yes, sir!

Come on, no more, Good bye!

Good bye, good echo; rest in peace!

Enough! Enough!



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## ICH SCHWING MEIN HORN IN'S JAMMERTHAL

Ich schwing mein Horn in's Jammertal;  
Mein' Freud' ist mir verschwunden,  
Ich hab' gejagt, muss abelahn,  
Das Wild läuft vor den Hunden.  
Ein edel Thier in diesem Feld  
Hatt' ich mir auserkoren,  
Dass schied von mir als ich wohl spür,  
Mein Jagen ist verloren.

Fahr hin, Gewild, in Waldes Lust!  
Ich will dich nimmer schrecken  
Mit Jagen dein Schneeweisse Brust;  
Ein Ander muss dich wecken  
Mit Jägers Schrei und Hundebiss,  
Dass du nit magt entrinnen;  
Halt dich in Hut,  
Mein Tierle gut!  
Mit Leid scheid ich von hinnen.

Kein Hochgewild ich fahen kann,  
Das muss ich oft entgelten,  
Noch halt ich stät auf Jägers Bahn,  
Wie wohl mir Glück kommt selten.  
Mag mir nit g'bührn ein Hochwild schön,  
So lass ich mich begnügen  
An Hasenfleisch, nit mehr ich heisch,  
Das mag mich nit betrüben.

I blow my horn in the vale of woe;  
my joy has vanished;  
I've hunted, but must abandon it,  
the deer runs before the hounds.  
A noble beast in this field  
had I chosen,  
It runs from me, even as I track it,  
My hunt is lost.

Run forth, deer, into forest's joy!  
I will never frighten  
your snow-white breast with hunting;  
Another must waken you  
With hunter's cry and hound's bite,  
Which you might not outrun;  
Stay on guard,  
my good beast!  
With sorrow, I leave from hence.

No noble beast can I capture,  
This I often suffer,  
Yet I hold faithfully to the hunter's path,  
E'en though success comes seldom.  
If I can't merit a noble, beautiful beast,  
Then let me be content  
With hare's flesh, no more I ask,  
That I may not grieve.



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## THE GARLAND

Dry grass, sing me a new song.  
The end of summer's majesty,  
The great green voice of the earth grows still  
Before sleep.

A brown leaf, red-lined yellow,  
Still hinting of green --  
The last leaf --  
Falls to the slumbering earth.

Sleeping earth, wake; look --  
The ice-blue sky,  
Bright icicles,  
White miracle of silent snowflakes filling the gray streets --  
All a bright cold dream!

Stirring, waking, thrusting of new spring stems,  
Of crocus, hyacinth.  
Warm spring-scent wakens the earth.  
Wakens the earth.

Ah! Sing me a new green song of summer,  
Weave me a bright garland of blossoms and first fruits;  
I will wear it and walk.  
Over the burnt brown hills,  
The empty orchards and gardens --  
There will I scatter my song.  
Scatter the brittle leaves of my dying garland.  
Dry grass, sing!  
Sing me a new song.

*Harper Monroe (b. 1951)*

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## ECCO MORMORAR L'ONDE

Ecco mormorar l'onde  
e tremolar le fronde  
a l'aura mattutina e gl'arborselli.  
E sovra i verdi rami i vagh'augelli  
cantar soavemente  
e rider l'oriente.

Here the murmuring of the waves,  
and the trembling of the branches  
and the very trees in the morning breeze.  
And on the green branches the pretty birds  
sing so sweetly,  
and the East smiles.

Ecco già l'alb'appare  
e si specchia nel mare  
e rasserena il cielo  
e'imperla il dolce gielo  
e gl'altri monti indora.

Behold the dawn appears,  
and is reflected in the sea,  
and the sky brightens,  
and makes the dew as pearls,  
and the high mountains as gold.

O bella e vagh'aurora  
l'aura è tua messaggiera,  
e tu de l'aura  
ch'ogn'arso cor ristaura.

O fair and radiant dawn,  
the breeze is your messenger,  
and you of the breeze  
that each parched heart restores.

*Torquato Tasso (1544-1595)*

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## SONGS AT THE END OF THE DAY

### EVENING

The evening slowly puts on robes  
held out for it by a rim of ancient trees;  
You watch, and the lands divide from you,  
one rising to heaven, one falling;

leaving you to neither quite belonging,  
not so dark as the house cloaked in silence,  
not so surely aimed at the eternal  
as a star which forms each night and climbs --

leaving you (without words to untangle)  
your frightened, vast and ripening life,  
which now confined, now embracing,  
grows to stone within you, or to star.

*Rainer Maria Rilke translated by Marjorie Merryman*

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## LA NUIT FROIDE ET SOMBRE

La nuit froide et sombre  
Couvrant d'obscur ombre  
La terre et les cieux,  
Aussi doux que miel  
Fait couler du ciel  
Le sommeil aux yeux.

The night, cold and murky,  
Covering with dark shadow  
The earth and sky,  
As sweet as honey  
Pours from the sky  
Sleep to our eyes.

Puis le jour suivant  
Au labeur duisant,  
Sa lueur expose;  
Et d'un tein divers,  
Ce grand Univers  
Tapisse et compose.

Then the following day  
Leading to labor,  
Its light spreads;  
And with many colors  
This great universe  
Weaves and composes.

*Joachim du Bellay (b. ca. 1522 - 1560)*

## WEARY WIND OF THE WEST

Weary wind of the west  
over the billowy sea —  
Come to my heart, and rest!  
Ah, rest with me!  
Come from the distance dim  
Bearing the sun's last sigh;  
I hear thee sobbing for him  
Through all the sky.

So the wind came,  
Purpling the middle sea,  
Crisping the ripples of flame —  
Came unto me;  
Came with a rush to the shore,  
Came with a bound to the hill,  
Fell, and died at my feet —  
Then all was still.

*T.E. Brown (1830-1897)*

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## P R O G R A M   N O T E S

### ACROSS THE CENURIES-

#### *A Song Recital for Mixed Voices*

In 1955, Randall Jarrell wrote this about Wallace Stevens and his poetry: "Minds of this quality of genius, of this breadth and delicacy of understanding, are a link between us and the past, since they are for us the past made living; and they are our surest link with the future, since they are the part of us which the future will know."

This is the poem of Samuel Daniel (d.1619) set by Alexander Goehr (b. 1932) in his "O Blessèd Letters" on tonight's program:

*"O blessèd Letters, that combine in one  
All ages past, and make one live with all:  
By you we doe conferre with who are gone,  
And the dead living unto counsell call:  
By you th' unborne shall have communion  
Of what we feele, and what doth us befall."*

Our way of acknowledging and honoring the truth of these statements is to bring music from the past and present together in the hope that our small effort will help deliver these finely wrought works into the future. Lassus' music is not much heard even though he is regarded as one of the most accomplished composers of the late Renaissance. Monteverdi's music has gained many performances in the past forty-plus years, but not his madrigals as much as his larger-scale pieces. Brahms and Schubert are known by their many-movement works and solo songs, but not as much by their *a cappella* choral works. The same is true for Elgar's music. Marjorie Merryman's music is played

today, and we hope its combination of lyricism and interior strength will give it a future. In spite of winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1974, Donald Martino's music is rarely played now though this bears no relation to its intrinsic beauty and strength. Although Ben Weber's music was admired and played in the 1940s and 1950s, only a small number of musicians know it now. All this music is too beautiful, too expressive and too important to let go.

This concert of choral songs from across many centuries is like an anthology of poems, gathered together from many eras to form one volume. The words of these songs depict human interests that bear relevance in all centuries without regard to fashions or trends: reverence for music; the ever-present concern for the soul and dying; being in nature at the break of day or longing for the return of summer as winter approaches, and feelings at the end of a day - meditating on one's own meaning, anticipating the dawn with the fall of night, or experiencing newly arrived calm. We're hoping you will have time and inclination to read through the poetry of tonight's concert on pages 2 - 9 before the music begins.

A compositional practice holds these pieces together. They are permeated by the Western contrapuntal way of composing, a way that began eleven centuries ago and has lasted through all the musical and social changes of the ensu-

ing centuries. This way is as relevant to the pieces by Donald Martino, Marjorie Merryman, and Ben Weber as to those of Lassus, Byrd, Monteverdi, Schubert, and Elgar. In this technique, voices share melodic importance. As they progress together, independent in rhythm and melody, they form chords, and these, following their own rules developed over

the past four centuries, work in constant synchronization with the voices to form levels of musical meaning. When composers with a high degree of talent, craft and imagination create such pieces, we are given works that inspire wonder.

—James Olesen

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## JAMES OLESEN, *Music Director*



James Olesen has sung in choruses since elementary school and conducted them since high school. His conducting repertory stretches from Dufay and Josquin through Beethoven and Schubert to Schoenberg and Shifrin. He has guest conducted locally with Emmanuel Music in its ongoing Bach Cantata series at Emmanuel Church, the Griffin Ensemble in works of Mario Davidovsky and Allen Anderson, and the Cambridge Symphony Orchestra. He has prepared choruses for the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, the Prague Symphony, and the Boston Philharmonic. He was Resident Conductor of the Michigan Youth Symphony at the University of Michigan and the Livonia Youth Symphony in Michigan. As a conductor, he has recorded for Composers Recording, Inc. and as a professional chorister, for RCA, Nonesuch, CRI, and Columbia, and concertized under conductors Leonard Bernstein, Robert Shaw, Leopold Stokowski, Loren Maazel, Josef Krips, Thomas Schippers, William Steinberg, Charles Munch, Thomas Dunn, Gustav Meier, and Michael Tilson Thomas. As a singer, James Olesen has performed the song cycles, *Die Schoene Muellerin* and *Winterreise* of Schubert and *Dichterliebe* and *Liederkreis, Op. 39* of Schumann, and was founder and director of a different Orpheus Singers, a vocal quartet that concertized in New England and in Boston area public schools for Young Audiences, Inc. of Massachusetts in the late 1960's. He has taught at the Commonwealth and Buckingham Schools. His BA is from the University of Chicago and DMA from the University of Michigan, where his principal teachers were Gustav Meier and Thomas Hilbish. He was director of choruses at Brandeis University from 1972 to 2014.

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**Orpheus**  **Singers**

James Olesen, *Music Director*



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Susan Halliday  
Margaret Johnson  
Sarah Moyer  
Annie Simon  
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Hannah Davis  
Nadja Gould  
Joan L. Griscom  
Katherine Growdon  
Teri Kowiak  
Kamala Soparkar  
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**TENOR**

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Geoffrey Fine  
David McSweeney  
Alexander Nishibun  
Jason Wang

**BASS**

John Graef  
Joel Hencken  
Brett Johnson  
Ari Nieh  
Benjamin Pfeil  
Will Prapestis  
Steven Ralston



## CONCERT HISTORY

### **DEBUT CONCERT NOVEMBER, 2005**

PALESTRINA *MISSA BREVIS*, FRENCH CHANSONS, AND WORKS OF SCHUETZ, STRAVINSKY, DONALD MARTINO, AND PETER MAXWELL DAVIES; Lindsey Chapel, Emmanuel Church, Boston.

### **OCTOBER 2006**

ENGLISH MADRIGALS, SONGS, BALLETS, AND AMERICAN CHORAL SONG; University Lutheran Church, Cambridge.

### **FEBRUARY 2007**

A CAPPELLA BRAHMS, A PART OF HIS HERITAGE AND LEGACY; Lindsey Chapel, Emmanuel Church, Boston.

### **OCTOBER 2007**

ITALIAN A CAPPELLA VOICES, MUSIC OF THE 16TH, 17TH, AND 20TH CENTURIES; Lindsey Chapel, Emmanuel Church, Boston.

### **MARCH 2008**

IRVING FINE MEMORIAL CONCERT; Brandeis University.

### **SEPTEMBER 2008**

CHORAL POLYPHONY: GUILLAUME DUFAY TO ELLIOTT CARTER; Lindsey Chapel, Emmanuel Church, Boston.

### **APRIL 2009**

A JUDEO-CHRISTIAN MUSICAL TRADITION, MONTEVERDI, BOYKAN, AND WOLPE; Lindsey Chapel, Emmanuel Church, Boston; Beth El Temple Center, Belmont.

### **OCTOBER 2009**

THE SPIRIT ASCENDS, HAYDN, BOYKAN, AND PALESTRINA; Lindsey Chapel, Emmanuel Church, Boston.

### **APRIL 2010**

MUSIC OF ELGAR AND WEELKES; Lindsey Chapel, Emmanuel Church, Boston.

### **OCTOBER 2010**

Concert shared with Zamir Chorale and Spectrum Singers; Emmanuel Center, Boston.

### **OCTOBER 2010**

LONGING FOR THE DIVINE, PSALMS SETTINGS FOR VOICES; Lindsey Chapel, Emmanuel Church, Boston.

### **FEBRUARY 2011**

SCHUBERT PART-SONGS WITH PIANO, SCHUBERT FANTASY IN F MINOR; (*Leslie Amper, Randall Hodgkinson*); Parish Hall, Emmanuel Church, Boston.



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## **NOVEMBER 2011**

**FRENCH BAROQUE CLASSICS;** Motets with orchestra of Jeane-Baptiste Lully and Marc-Antoine Charpentier; Parish Hall, Emmanuel Church, Boston.

## **FEBRUARY 2012**

**AMERICAN MODERNS;** Choral songs with piano of Elliott Carter, Andrew Imbrie, and Irving Fine, (*Karen Harvey*, guest pianist); Parish Hall, Emmanuel Church, Boston.

## **NOVEMBER 2012**

**SUPPLICATIONS AND SONGS;** Songs of Edward Elgar, Prayers and Songs of Alexander Goehr, Anthems of Henry Purcell, (*Michael Beattie*, organ and *Lynn Nowels*, cello); Lindsey Chapel, Emmanuel Church, Boston.

## **FEBRUARY 2013**

**THE GERMAN LIED TRADITION;** Part Songs for Voices, A Cappella and with Piano, (*Jean Anderson-Collier*, piano); The Parish Hall, Emmanuel Church, Boston.

## **OCTOBER 2013**

**WIT AND WISDOM;** Lieder for Many Voices of Lassus, Haydn and Schubert (*Leslie Amper*, piano) The Parish Hall, Emmanuel Church, Boston.

## **MAY 2014**

**MODERNS;** Stravinsky Hindemith, Schönberg, Debussy; Mass by Igor Stravinsky for mixed chorus and double wind quintet; Parish Hall, Emmanuel Church, Boston.

## **OCTOBER 2014**

**THE ITALIAN MADRIGAL, EARLY AND LATE;** Verdelot, Arcadelt, Monteverdi, Dallapiccola; Lindsey Chapel, Emmanuel Church, Boston.

## **SEPTEMBER 2015**

**HOMAGE TO THE RENAISSANCE; MASS FOR FOUR VOICES, 1650** by Claudio Monteverdi, **MISSA CHORALIS**, by Franz Liszt; Lindsey Chapel, Emmanuel Church, Boston.

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