



HARMONY *of*



BARBER'S
REINCARNATIONS

& AMERICAN
COMPOSERS

CONNECTIONS

MAY 31 – JUNE 1





presents



HARMONY *of* CONNECTIONS

May 31, 2025 | 7:30 pm

Village Presbyterian Church
Prairie Village, KS

June 1, 2025 | 3:00 pm

St. Mary's Episcopal Church
Kansas City, MO

While you wait for the concert to begin, or during intermission, please use this QR code to take a short survey so we can better understand who is in the audience today. Thank you for your time!



All are invited to join us for a complimentary reception following each performance as we celebrate Te Deum's seventeenth season.

A Note from the Artistic Director

Harmony of Connections invites us to listen for what holds us together—our place in the world, our bonds with one another, and the enduring mysteries that live beyond us. At a time when noise and distraction often draw us apart, this concert offers a quieter call: to tune our ears and hearts to the music of belonging, compassion, and wonder.

The first portion of the program explores our **connection to the Earth**. Meredith Monk's *Earth Seen from Above*, though wordless, evokes spaciousness, breath, and awe through her signature vocal textures—like listening to the turning of the planet itself. Forrest Pierce's *The Old Ground* sets a poem of spiritual ecology: the earth reaching up, alive with possibility, rooted in darkness and hope. In *Shenandoah*, James Erb gives voice to longing—for land, for love, for home—through one of America's most beloved folk melodies, arranged with lush simplicity.

We then turn toward **connection to one another**, beginning with Pierce's *The Darkness Around Us*, which sets a poem by William Stafford as both warning and plea. In a fractured world, it reminds us that small betrayals of attention and empathy have real consequences, and that the voice of conscience is always worth listening for. Samuel Barber's *Reincarnations*, a cornerstone of American choral literature, offers three portraits of human connection: the radiant admiration of *Mary Hynes*, the communal grief of *Anthony O'Daly*, and the tender intimacy of *The Coolin*. Barber's music renders each text with emotional honesty and finely drawn lyricism.

The final portion of the concert broadens into **connection to the shared human experience** through faith, courage, and surrender. Pierce's *The Bell and the Blackbird* offers a gentle invitation: wake to your life or move toward what waits beyond it. Either choice asks everything of us. Anthony Maglione's *A Good Tree*, composed for this concert, gathers together ancient wisdom—from Scripture, from Augustine, from Tagore—into a musical meditation on growth, fruitfulness, and the divine imprint on every human life. The work invites us to examine what kind of tree we are, and whether we are becoming more rooted, more generous, more true.

Finally, Randall Thompson's *Alleluia*, composed in 1940 at the dawn of World War II, closes the concert with a single word. Commissioned as a fanfare, Thompson instead gave the world a lament-turned-prayer: hushed, reverent, and radiant. His *Alleluia* reminds us that sometimes the deepest praise is quiet, reflective, and born from sorrow.

Throughout this concert, our goal is not only to present beautiful music but to create a space where you might feel more connected—to the ground beneath you, to the people around you, and to something larger than us all. In this moment, we hope that choral music becomes more than harmony; we hope it becomes a gesture of healing, a practice of attention, and an expression of joy.

— MCS

Harmony of Connections

Barber's Reincarnations and American Composers

I. Connections to Earth

Earth Seen From Above

Meredith Monk (1987)

The Old Ground

Forrest Pierce (2003)

Shenandoah

arr. James Erb (1926-2014)

II. Connections to One Another

The Darkness Around Us

Pierce (2022)

Reincarnations

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

1. *Mary Hynes*

2. *Anthony O'Daly*

3. *The Coolin*

—intermission—

III. Connections to the Shared Human Experience

The Bell and the Blackbird

Pierce (2021)

A Good Tree

Anthony J. Maglione (2025)

Alleluia

Randall Thompson (1899-1984)

Texts

The Old Ground

It's the old ground trying it again.
Solstice, seeding and birth — it never
gets enough. It wants the birth of a man
to bring together sky and earth, like a stalk
of corn. It's not death that makes the dead
rise out of the ground, but something alive
straining up, rooted in darkness, like a vine.
That's what you heard. If you're in the right mind
when it happens, it can come on you strong;
you might hear music passing on the wind,
or see a light where there wasn't one before.

—Wendell Berry

The Darkness Around Us

If you don't know the kind of person I am
and I don't know the kind of person you are
a pattern that others made may prevail in the world
and following the wrong god home we may miss our star.

For there is many a small betrayal in the mind,
a shrug that lets the fragile sequence break
sending with shouts the horrible errors of childhood
storming out to play through the broken dike.

And as elephants parade holding each elephant's tail,
but if one wanders the circus won't find the park,
I call it cruel and maybe the root of all cruelty
to know what occurs but not recognize the fact.

And so I appeal to a voice, to something shadowy,
a remote important region in all who talk:
though we could fool each other, we should consider—
lest the parade of our mutual life get lost in the dark.

For it is important that awake people be awake,
or a breaking line may discourage them back to sleep;
the signals we give — yes or no, or maybe —
should be clear: the darkness around us is deep.

—William Stafford

Reincarnations

1. Mary Hynes

She is the sky of the sun!
She is the dart of love!
She is the love of my heart!
She is a rune!
She is above the women
of the race of Eve,
as the sun is above the moon!

Lovely and airy
the view from the hill
that looks down from Ballylea!
But no good sight is good,
until you see
the blossom of branches
walking towards you, airily.

2. Anthony O'Daly

Anthony!
Since your limbs were laid out
the stars do not shine!
The fish leap not out
in the waves!
On our meadows the dew
does not fall in the morn,
for O Daly is dead!

Not a flow'r can be born!
Not a word can be said!
Not a tree have a leaf!
On our meadows the dew
does not fall in the morn,
for O Daly is dead!
Anthony!

After you
there is nothing to do!
There is nothing but grief!

3. *The Coolin*

Come with me, under my coat,
and we will drink our fill
of the milk of the white goat,
or wine if it be thy will.

And we will talk,
until talk is a trouble, too,
out on the side of the hill;
And nothing is left to do,
but an eye to look into an eye,
and a hand in a hand to slip;
and a sigh to answer a sigh;
And a lip to find out a lip!

What if the night be black!
And the air
on the mountain chill!
Where all but the fern is still!

Stay with me, under my coat!
and we will drink our fill
of the milk of the white goat,
out on the side of the hill!

—James Stephens (after the Irish of Raftery)

The Bell and the Blackbird

The sound
of a bell
still reverberating.

or a blackbird
calling
from a corner
of the
field.

Asking you
to wake
into this life
or inviting you
deeper
to one that waits.

Either way
takes courage,
either way wants you
to be nothing
but that self that
is no self at all,
wants you to walk
to the place
where you find
you already know
how to give
every last thing
away.

The approach
that is also
the meeting
itself,
without any
meeting
at all.

That radiance
you have always
carried with you
as you walk
both alone
and completely
accompanied
in friendship
by every corner
of the world
crying
Allelujah.

—David Whyte

A Good Tree

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit,
neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

You have made us for Yourself, O Lord,
and our heart is restless until it rests in You.

The shroud that covers me is a shroud of dust and death;
I hate it, yet hug it in love.
My debts are large, my failures great, my shame secret and heavy;
yet when I come to ask for my good,
I quake in fear lest my prayer be granted.

Ye shall know them by their fruits.
Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?
Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit;
but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.
A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit,
neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.
Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down,
and cast into the fire.
Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit,
neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

You have made us for Yourself, O Lord.

—Matthew 7: 16-20 (KJV)
— St. Augustine's "Confessions" (Book 1)
— Rabindranath Tagore's "Gitanjali"
— Psalm 8:3-4 (KJV)

Soprano

Mackenzie Beeton
Lucy Conklin
Paige Flenniken
Rupal Gupta
Sarah Powers
Jenny Smith

Alto

Zachary Cope
Tara Curtis
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Annie Kuzma
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Julia Sharp

Tenor

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Bass

Ryan Layton
Benny Martinson
Josh Markley
Evan Nelson
Asher Tillman
Ben Wheeler



Meet Te Deum!

Scan this QR code to read about the singers you've enjoyed this evening.

Dr. Matthew Christopher Shepard has forged a unique and dynamic career that spans concert halls, academic institutions, and faith communities. As a professional conductor of both orchestras and choirs, he has become a sought-after musical leader, known for his intellectual curiosity, fearless programming, and magnetic leadership. His career also includes guest conducting and lecturing in musicology and church music in both collegiate and secondary school settings, as well as leading worship services in Christian and Jewish communities.

Dr. Shepard is the founder and conductor of Te Deum, recognized as one of the premier choral ensembles in the Midwest. He is a passionate advocate for new choral music, having premiered dozens of pieces by both emerging and established composers. His expertise in early music has garnered national attention, and his work has been featured twice in *Early Music America*. He frequently presents lectures on historical chant performance, music history, and Renaissance performance practice. With Te Deum, he has delivered period performances of monumental Baroque works, including Buxtehude's *Membra Jesu Nostri*, J.S. Bach's *St. John Passion*, and Bach's *B-Minor Mass*.

As an orchestral conductor, Dr. Shepard recently served as the Interim Director of Orchestras at Illinois State University and has led notable ensembles such as The Philharmonia of Greater Kansas City, the Kansas City Civic Orchestra, and the Kansas City Baroque. He has previously served as orchestra director at Benedictine College and conductor of the University of Illinois Philharmonia Orchestra.

Dr. Shepard's musical journey began in woodwinds and voice. He holds an undergraduate degree from William Jewell College, two master's degrees in both choral and orchestral conducting from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Dance, and a doctorate from the University of Illinois, where he held teaching assistantships for both choral and orchestral ensembles. His additional conducting studies include fellowships at the Conductors Institute at Bard College Conservatory under Maestro Leon Botstein and the Oregon Bach Festival Composers Institute.



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