

Meritage
Vocal Arts Ensemble
and Orchestra

present



Masterworks

from
Ages Past & Present

Brian Dehn, Director



THROUGH FOUR CENTURIES

May 15, 2022 • 4 pm

Anaheim United Methodist Church
1000 S. State College Blvd Anaheim, CA 92806

WELCOME

Dear Friends of Merit ge,

We are very proud to present this performance of *Te Deum* for you. We are also very thankful to the generous donors who helped fund the wonderful orchestra members who are accompanying us today. It's not too late for you to join them! You can still make a donation to Merit ge via our website or at the desk out front to keep choral music in Orange County thriving.

Thank you also for joining us throughout this season. It's been wonderful to be back to live performances, and we look forward to seeing you next season!

Sincerely,

Stephen Schulist, President
Board of Directors, FOCM dba
MERIT GE VOCAL ARTS ENSEMBLE

PROGRAM

Te Deum laudamus, K. 141 (66b) (1769) Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

- I. Allegro (1756-1791)
- II. Adagio
- III. Allegro
- IV. Allegro alla breve

Te Deum in C, VAB 45 (1885) Anton Bruckner (1824-1896)

Chelsea Dehn, soprano

Kate Gremillion, mezzo-soprano

Jerry Bartucciotto, tenor

Randall Gremillion, bass

- 1. "Te Deum laudamus" – Allegro, *Feierlich, mit Kraft*
- 2. "Te ergo quaesumus" – Moderato
- 3. "Aeterna fac" – Allegro, *Feierlich, mit Kraft*
- 4. "Salvum fac populum tuum" – Moderato
- 5. "In Te, Domine speravi" – *Mäßig bewegt*

*****INTERMISSION*****

Festival Te Deum, op. 32 (1944) Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Grace Lee, soprano

- I. Andante con moto
- II. Più mosso ed energico
- III. Tempo primo (Andante con moto)

Te Deum (We Praise Thee, O God) (2011) Dan Forrest (b. 1978)

- I. Praise to the Trinity
Dennis Nasitka, Wendy Stokes, Meghan Riopelle, soloists
- II. Prayers
- III. Praise to Christ

PROGRAM NOTES

The *Te Deum* prayer is one of the oldest and most striking declarations of faith that we have. When you listen tonight, you are hearing how it has inspired composers from four different centuries resulting in very different, but equally beautiful, works of art. When I began selecting repertoire for this concert, I wanted something powerful to close our season—our first full season of working together. The setting of this text specifically by Bruckner is a piece I have wanted to do for years. You will hear the power very clearly, but you will also hear moments of great elegance and beauty. I think this represents Merit age perfectly! We have emerged from this pandemic with a renewed strength and confidence in the power of singing and of creating music together. All the while, knowing elegance and beauty are with us each step of the way.



If one is to program a concert, and the Bruckner setting is already in place, you need to balance his wall-of-sound writing with agility, wit, and nuance, and we can do no better than Mozart. You will hear the lightness and buoyancy that has come to characterize his style. What makes this even more amazing is that he wrote this when he was 13! Mozart was preparing for his first trip to Italy when he wrote his *Te Deum*, his 141st work, no doubt inspired by his teacher, Haydn. It showcases complete understanding of form, expression, and compositional structure. As was typical in the period, this text was divided into four sections. The first *Allegro* is characterized by all the forces together in short but very active phrases. What we perhaps miss as listeners is that the orchestration is quite sparse. In fact, he wrote this for violins, continuo, four brass instruments and timpani—no oboes, no flutes, and more shockingly, no violas!

However, the genius shines through as this gives it a three-pronged soundscape for which to balance with the chorus. It is sufficiently joyful and bombastic without being overpowering. You will hear an efficient use of the text and the opening motif return several times. Listen specifically to the violins as they dance around the block chords of the brass and timpani—musical motion at its finest. The 2nd movement, marked *Adagio*, is short, only six bars, but very dramatic. The 3rd movement, marked *Allegro* again but in $\frac{3}{4}$ time, uses more conversational writing. You will hear call and responses, duets, all over an unrelenting basso continuo part. The final movement, still *Allegro* but moving to a duple meter, is also impressive because Mozart chooses to write a double fugue. You'll hear the tenors on one theme and the sopranos at the same time on their own theme, their 4 or 3 bar phrases, respectively, join on “non confundar,” “let us not be confounded.” Mozart then has the basses echo

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the tenors and the altos echo the sopranos. Then a few bars later, all the themes switch, sopranos sing the tenor line and altos sing the bass line and vice-versa. And this all happens in 30 bars of music! You will hear what sounds like the end a few bars later but is a sort of trick ending. Instead, Mozart gives us the first theme of the double fugue but ending in a fantastic battle of wits between the treble and bass voices. Mozart never brings back the 2nd theme but instead ends with a flourish of dynamic shifts to express the text beautifully. Again, remember he was only 13, this shows his genius, his mastery of composition, and perhaps most of all, his tremendous wit and energy in choral writing.

To perform Bruckner properly, we truly should be more like 80 singers, but you'll hear us give it our all because where Mozart is about agility and interplay, Bruckner is about sonority and pure power. The sonic onslaught of this, his last large-scale work, is immediate. One can hear how 100 years of composition has changed, and the concept of strength and praise is very different. The orchestra has now doubled in size, we have dedicated soloists, and the dynamic contrast is everywhere from *triple piano* to *tripwle forte* within the first 50 bars! While one could never accuse Mozart of being subtle, Bruckner takes it to an entirely different level. When the words "pleni sunt coeli" appear for the first time, we hear typical Bruckner with his dueling blocks of sound. The treble voice and upper brass are echoed with the lower voices and lower brass along with harmonic shifts that create so much momentum that we need the next 40 bars in unison just to settle back down! We also get a sense of Bruckner's beautiful ear for harmony in this first movement, *a cappella* singing into a 3-part fugue that sees the tenor in the upper part of their range as they cry "tu devicto aculeo," "blunted the sting" of death. Again, great sensitivity returns as the choir sings of the opening heaven to all believers. Is Bruckner expressing doubt, respect, or humility? Whatever his take on the prayer, there is no doubt when it comes to his view of the Almighty when he speaks of God coming to judge. You are encouraged to read along with the text and see how the music lines up. What is he trying to say? What is he trying to express?

Interestingly, in this work, Bruckner ends multiple movements *a cappella*. This is done for perhaps no other reason than to just prepare the next section, letting us know this work isn't over yet. The tenor solo, sung beautifully by Mr. Bartucciotto, uses nearly two octaves to express the wideness of God's people, and you can see how he uses the rest of the quartet and the chorus to represent the "all." The beautiful solo violin is perhaps the truth that dances and entwines



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us all. When Bruckner wishes to represent “all” being included with the saints, “aeterna fac cum sanctus tuis,” he builds unlike nearly all composers before or since. The final 100 bars dance around the “non confundar” concept. He has double fugues, incomplete phrases, many harmonic shifts, high tessituras, extremes of orchestral colors, unequal shaped phrases, and nearly un-singably long phrases. It is a perfect expression of the text, and regardless of if the plea is made in strife or humility, it is loud! In a letter from 1886, one year after the completion of the work, Bruckner himself said, “When the Almighty finally calls me to Him and asks: ‘Where are the talents that I gave you?’, then I will proffer the roll of sheet of music containing my *Te Deum*, and He will judge me mercifully.”

In the span of less than 40 minutes in the Mozart and Bruckner, we are treated to extremes of orchestration, dynamics, tempos, and expression. Composition changed, and it is fascinating to see how choral and orchestral writing evolved. You can see how the vocal mechanism needs to change to perform this repertoire, and the group is doing fantastic work.



As we open the second half, we are treated to the dignified simplicity of Britten’s setting of the text. Though the shortest work on the program, it is no less expressive or beautiful. Britten composed this work in 1944, following a long line of settings in English from the time of Purcell in the late 17th century. Britten’s setting

is characterized by a full commitment to the rhythm of the prose and flow of the poetry. There are ten meter shifts in the first two pages alone! You will hear a simple, unchanging organ accompaniment begin as the choir sets the stage with a unison, chant-like, declaration. The second section sees a dramatic shift in dynamic and rhythmic intensity. Matching the Bruckner in intensity, the choir and organ trade off in flourishes that are terribly exciting. You’ll hear Mozart-like dancing in the soft sections that lead into a climax that gives these seasoned performers rhythmic, modal, and vocal hurdles unlike much else on the program today. The work moves to a restful middle section as our soprano soloist, Ms. Lee, leads us into the humbler part of the prayer. The harmonies start out simple, but through a series of half steps, double sharps, and syncopation, we come to the climax of the prayer when the choir proclaims, “in Thee have I trusted.” We end even more simply than we began as the soprano soloist returns in a final plea for understanding.

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I am aware of no fewer than 20 settings of the Te Deum done in the last 15 years alone. In finding something to compliment Mozart's energy and efficiency, Bruckner's monumental sonic landscape, and Britten's elegance and sensitivity, I wanted something that spoke gently to our 21st century ears. I looked at Jenkins, Argento, MacMillan, Rutter, Pärt, and Zelenka, but it was the Forrest that jumped out as something we needed to explore. Much like the prayer itself, there are poetic images that arise from finding disparate settings of the same text. Numbered in the prayer are angels, the earth, heaven itself, cherubim and seraphim, apostles, martyrs, and the Church. It mentions the birth, Mary, death, resurrection, and a second advent to judge the world. Regardless of a faith perspective, we can appreciate the drama of the story and the strength in the poetry itself and how this has inspired hundreds of settings.



Forrest has chosen to divide the Te Deum into three separate sections. He took what seems like a mountaintop view as he takes certain lines of text and switches them a bit, making the middle more reflective and the outer two movements more joyous and uplifting. You will hear the work begin with an almost chantlike opening, but with modern harmonies. While all of it is tonal and pleasing to the ear, he still has many lines that mimic the text itself, called text-painting, along with complimentary keys and typical musical forms.

Of the work, Forrest says: “the first movement is a fairly sectional treatment of the text, unified by the recurrence of the opening chant-like motif. The text emphasis on corporate worship (“We praise Thee...”) is emphasized by the slow gathering of forces towards the first triumphant statement of that line of text, as if people from every kindred, tongue, and nation were assembling to worship. The main theme of the second movement shares a hidden connection to the opening chant theme but unfolds in a different sound-world, evoking a Renaissance motet style at times as it works towards its own climax. The third movement lets loose a torrent of mixed meters and changing meters in its own sound world of speech rhythms before finally giving way to one long last musical gesture of the first theme, unifying the entire work.”

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Through this entire concert, we get a special glimpse of the choral arts. We see a group of words and how it inspired four different composers, over 400 years and three different continents, and what was then created. We are then asked to sing and perform with agility, sonority, nuance, and breadth. We have so enjoyed preparing this concert as it was challenging in the most beautiful of ways—vocally, musically, textually, and logistically! Each of these settings is so different, but so beautiful. We have enjoyed this exploration and hope you have too. This concert closes our season, and we are already hard at work on our next. We thank you for your attendance and your continued support. Meritage is a proud member of this community, and we look forward to exploring the beauty of music with you next season.



Brian Dehn
Artistic Director



TE DEUM TEXT & TRANSLATION

*Te Deum laudámus:
te Dominum confitémur.
Te ætérnum Patrem omnis terra venerátur.*

*Tibi omnes Angeli;
tibi cæli et univérse potestátes.
Tibi Chérubim et Séraphim
incessábili voce proclamánt:
Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,
Dóminus Deus Sábaoth.*

*Pleni sunt cæli et terra
majestátis glóriæ tuæ.
Te gloriósus Apostolórum chorus;*

Te Prophetárum laudábilis númerus;

*Te Mártýrum candidátus laudat exércitus.
Te per orbem terrárum
sancta confitétur Ecclésia:
Patrem imménsæ majestátis;
Venerándum tuum verum et únicum Fílium;
Sanctum quoque Paráclitum Spíritum.
Tu Rex glóriæ, Christe.
Tu Patris sempitérnus es Fílius.
Tu ad liberándum susceptúrus hóminem,
non horruísti Virgínis úterum.*

*Tu, devícto mortis acúleo,
aperuísti credéntibus regna cælórum.*

Tu ad dexteram Dei sedes, in glória Patris.

*Judex créderis esse ventúrus.
Te ergo quæsumus, tuis fámulis súbveni,
quos pretiósó sáanguine redemísti.
Ætérna fac cum sanctis tuis
in glória numerári.
Salvum fac pópulum tuum, Dómine,
et benedic hæreditáti tuæ.
Et rege eos, et extólle illos usque in ætérnum.
Per singulos dies benedicímus te.
Et laudámus nomen tuum in sáeculum,
et in sáeculum sáeculi.
Dignáre, Dómine,
die isto sine peccáto nos custodíre.
Miserére nostri, Dómine, miserére nostri.*

*Fiat misericórdia tua, Dómine, super nos,
quemádmódu sperávimus in te.
In te, Dómine, sperávi:
non confúndar in ætérnum.*

We praise thee, O God:
we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.
All the earth doth worship thee,
the Father everlasting.
To thee all Angels cry aloud;
the Heavens, and all the Powers therein.
To thee Cherubin and Seraphin,
continually do cry,
Holy, Holy, Holy,
Lord God of Sabaoth.
Heaven and earth
are full of the Majesty of thy glory.
The glorious company of the Apostles
praise thee;
The goodly fellowship of the Prophets
praise thee.
The noble army of Martyrs praise thee.
The holy Church throughout all the world
doth acknowledge thee;
The Father of an infinite Majesty;
Thine honourable, true, and only Son;
Also the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.
Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ.
Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.
When thou tookest upon thee
to deliver man, thou didst not
abhor the Virgin's womb.
When thou hadst overcome
the sharpness of death, thou didst open
the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.
Thou sittest at the right hand of God,
in the glory of the Father.
We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge.
We therefore pray thee, help thy servants, whom
thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.
Make them to be numbered with thy Saints
in glory everlasting.
O Lord, save thy people
and bless thine heritage.
Govern them, and lift them up forever.
Day by day we magnify thee.
And we worship thy Name,
ever world without end.
Vouchsafe, O Lord,
to keep us this day without sin.
O Lord, have mercy upon us,
have mercy upon us.
O Lord, let thy mercy lighten upon us,
as our trust is in thee.
O Lord, in thee have I trusted:
let me never be confounded.



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Organ

Mark Salters



ABOUT OUR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



BRIAN DEHN

Brian Dehn has conducted his ensembles in some of the world's most remarkable venues including Carnegie Hall, the Sistine Chapel, St. Mark's in Venice, St. Peter's in Rome, St. Mathias in Budapest, St. Tomaskircke in Vienna, St. Patrick's and The Riverside Church in New York, St. Anne's Cathedral in Sydney, St. Mary's Church in Cambridge, St. Patrick's and St. Mary's in Dublin, and the Beijing Central Conservatory. His selection of top-quality repertoire and special work with vocal development has him in frequent demand as a guest clinician with choirs throughout California and the Western United States.

Dehn is also founder and artistic director of Meistersingers, a semi-pro group also based in Orange County. He is currently pursuing his Doctorate of Musical Arts at Claremont Graduate University, where he has been awarded the Department and Blaisdell fellowships. He recently completed 15 years of teaching at the high school level where his ensembles were awarded consistent "Superior" ratings, and invitations to prestigious festivals around the state, including an invitation to perform at the 2018 ACDA Western Region Convention. He took his programs on performance tours to New York, Spain

and Portugal, San Francisco, China, Italy, Ireland, England, and Australia. For over 20 years he has also held positions as Director of Music for a variety of Southern California churches, currently serving as Director of Music Ministry for First Christian Church of Orange.

As an accomplished tenor soloist, Dehn has performed in Chicago Symphony Hall for Chapman University, The New Century Singers, The California Women's Chorus, Pasadena Pro Musica as well as soloist for many other professional music ensembles, colleges and churches throughout Southern California. An accomplished ensemble singer in his own right, he has performed with Zephyr, De Angelis, and the Los Angeles Master Chorale.

Dehn maintains membership in a number of music organizations including the American Choral Directors Association, International Federation of Choral Music, Music Educators National Conference, California Music Educator's Association (where he was a presenter in 2016), Chorus America, and the National Association of Church Music, where he served as board member for Church Literature. He lives in Orange, California, with his wife, Chelsea, and their two sons.

ABOUT OUR ACCOMPANIST



MARK SALTERS

Mark Salters is opera co-director, vocal coach, and pianist at California State University, Fullerton. Originally from New York, he served on the coaching staff of the Opera Department at the University of Michigan under Gustav Meier. Prior to that, he was on the faculty of the Yale University graduate opera program headed by noted director Tito Capobianco.

Salters has accompanied master classes by many well-known singers and coaches, including Frederica Von Stade, Roberta Alexander, Vladimir Chernov, Carlo Bergonzi, Sherill Milnes, Madame Régine Crespin, Richard Bonyngue, Rodney Gilfry, George Shirley, Carol Neblett, Horst Günther, Marni Nixon, Paul Sperry, Richard Pearlman, Lili Chookasian, as well as many others. In addition, he has worked with conductors and directors from Los Angeles Opera, New York City Opera, Frankfurt Opera, St. Louis Opera, and the

Metropolitan Opera. He has also served on the music staffs of the University of Connecticut, Opera Theater of Connecticut, and the Long Wharf Theater in New Haven, Connecticut.

Currently, Salters regularly accompanies the National Association of Teachers of Singing symposiums in Los Angeles and Orange County, as well as the Classical Singers Association classes and concerts. He has also worked for Opera Pacific, Opera Ala Carte, Cal State Long Beach, Pacific Chorale, Pacific Symphony, Riverside Opera, Southland Opera, and the Intimate Opera Company. He also serves as Director of Music and Principal Organist at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton church in Irvine.

As an active freelance accompanist, Salters regularly accompanies many of the finest young vocal artists of the Los Angeles area in recitals and competitions.

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Vocal Arts Ensemble

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