



Acknowledgements

The Ambrosia Ensemble gratefully acknowledges the contributions of Tiziana DellaRovere, whose painting *Sacred Birth* appears in the covers graphics on this program and on our concert poster, and Dr. Robert Kyr, without whose support and guidance this concert would not have been possible. We also thank the staff and congregation of Central Lutheran Church and the numerous people in the University of Oregon School of Music and Dance who supported this production.

The Ambrosia Ensemble

The Ambrosia Ensemble is a mixed vocal/instrumental chamber ensemble dedicated to premiering new works of a sacred, introspective, or philosophical nature by contemporary composers. The purpose of the Ambrosia Ensemble is to communicate experiences of emotional transformation and personal insight directly to the audience in an intimate chamber-music setting. Common themes in the works performed by the Ambrosia Ensemble include the beauty of the natural world, ceremony and initiation, mythical archetypes, overcoming challenges, sacred texts, and experiences of personal mysticism.

www.ambrosiaensemble.com

The Ambrosia Ensemble

Presents

Sacred Moments

Original Motets and
Dramatic Arias

Thursday, May 10, 2012
Central Lutheran Church, Eugene, Oregon

Ethan Gans-Morse, Robert Chastain, Directors

Program

Let There Be Fields of Roses

Part I

Sacred Moments

Robert Chastain, Conductor

CHORUS, ANGELS:

Madonna, redeemer of the world,
All creatures rest in Your embrace.
Where there were fields of poppies,
Let there be the sweet scents of roses.
In Your heart, we find peace,
The peace that knows no end.
Amen.

Locus Iste

Anton Bruckner (1824-1896)

~Tiziana DellaRovere

If Ye Love Me

Thomas Tallis (1505-1585)

Ave Verum Corpus

Robert Chastain (b. 1981)

Himno

Diana Rosenblum (b. 1983)

~There will a 5-minute pause as the orchestra sets up.
Please remain seated.~



Black am I and All-Loving

BLACK MADONNA:

Black am I and all-loving,
In the darkness of your suffering,
I blossom to bring you solace.
Like a lotus in the morning sun,
Roots deep in the mud,
Petals upon petals, opening,
Opening, revealing the treasures
Of love given and received.

When you are lost, I come to you.
Take my hand, I walk with you.

When you are ashamed, I stand by you.
Cry the tears that cleanse your soul.

When you are angry, I soothe your fire.
Rest in the comfort of My touch.

When you are afraid, I am with you.
Listen to the beating of My heart.

Black am I and all-loving.
In the darkness of your suffering,
I blossom to bring you solace.
Like a lotus in the morning sun,
Roots deep in the mud,
Petals upon petals, opening,
Opening, revealing the treasures
Of love given and received.

Part II

Excerpts from The Canticle of the Black Madonna Ethan Gans-Morse, Conductor

Prelude and Processional:
“The Litany of the Black Madonna”

Heather Holmqvist, Soprano
Joshua Heying, Tenor

Mara’s Lament: “The Earth is Bleeding”

Catherine Olson, Soprano

The Black Madonna: “Black am I and All-Loving”

Alli Bach, Mezzo-Soprano

*Finale: “Where There Were Fields of Poppies,
Let There Be Fields of Roses”*

Ethan Gans-Morse (b. 1982)



The Ensemble

Ethan Gans-Morse, Robert Chastain, Directors

Choir

Laurel Shetler, Soprano
Sheerya Shivers, Soprano
Kate Killops, Alto
Caitlin M Bradley, Alto
Donovan R Cassell, Tenor
Matt Blumenstein, Tenor
Ethan Gans-Morse, Baritone
Addison Wong, Baritone
Charles Coughlin, Baritone
Noah Brenner, Bass
Robert Chastain, Bass

Orchestra

Esther Fredrickson, Flute
Kenton Gould, English Horn
Jennifer Love, Clarinet
Ivan Olinghouse, Kaila Finlayson, Horn
Dustin Shilling, Sean-Michael Surprenant, Percussion
Rachel Miller, Harp
Bryce Caster, Andrew Stiefel, Violin
Merietta Oviatt, Viola
Ralph Stricker-Chapman, Violoncello
Milo Fultz, Bass

Special Guest Artists

Catherine Olson, Soprano
Heather Holmquest, Soprano
Alli Bach, Mezzo-Soprano
Joshua Heying, Tenor

MARA:

Fleeting with the sea creatures,
Darting here and there to escape,
To escape the uncontrollable advance of blood spilled.
(MEN'S CHORUS: Blood spilled, blood spilled.)
I can touch the fear dripping from your brow,
I can hear the drill of gunfire still in your ears,

MARA and MIXED CHORUS:

The shadow of your memories echoing loudly
In the caves of your soul.

MARA:

The earth is bleeding, and so am I,
For the abandoned heart,
For the shattered soul.
Where are you my love?
I worked so hard, alone,
Waiting for your return.

The earth is bleeding, and so am I.
I mourn the loss of our love.

~Tiziana DellaRovere

Mara's Lament "The Earth is Bleeding"

MARA:

The earth is bleeding,
Where are you my love?
The earth is bleeding,
The wound is open
Where the steel punctured her veins,
Deep in her crevices,
Where the gifts are held,
Too precious to be stolen.
The earth is bleeding, and so am I.
Fire burning on water,
The fumes of metal melting
On the salty foam of the ocean.
I feel the innocent ones, ensnared,
I see their frantic thrashing!

MARA and WOMEN'S CHORUS:

Where are you my love?

Text & Poetry

Locus Iste

*Locus iste a Deo factus est,
inaestimabile sacramentum;
irreprehensibilis est.*

This place was made by God,
a priceless sacrament;
beyond reproach.

~Gradual prayer from the Dedication Mass



If Ye Love Me

*If ye love me,
keep my commandments,
and I will pray the Father,
and he shall give you another comforter,
that he may 'bide with you forever,
e'en the spirit of truth.*

~ John 14: 15-17

Ave Verum Corpus

*Ave verum corpus, natum
de Maria Virgine,
vere passum, immolatum
in cruce pro homine,
cuius latus perforatum
fluxit aqua et sanguine:
esto nobis praegustatum
in mortis examine.*

*O Iesu dulcis, O Iesu pie,
O Iesu, fili Mariae.
Miserere mei.
Amen.*

Hail, true Body, born
of the Virgin Mary,
who having truly suffered, was sacrificed
on the cross for mankind,
whose pierced side
flowed with water and blood:
May it be for us a foretaste [of the Heavenly banquet]
in the trial of death.

Oh sweet Jesus, Oh pious Jesus,
Oh Jesus, son of Mary,
have mercy on me.
Amen.

~14th Century Catholic Prayer

Black like the belly of the whale,
Black like a hidden secret,
Black like a night of love,
Black like the singularity that contains all,
Black like the unborn,
Black like deep rest in safe surrender,
Black like forgotten memories we want to remember,
Black like an orchid,
Black like our longing that is never quenched,
Black like the void from which all creatures take life,
Black like the inner chambers of the heart.

ANGELS:

Black Madonna,
Filled with the luminosity of golden love,
Not in the sky above,
But here on earth below You live
In the beauty and the suffering
Of human life.
Like leaves in the wind,
We quiver for Your compassionate caress.
The Father longs for you.
He finds solace in Your embrace,
And all creation is still.

~Tiziana DellaRovere

The Litany of the Black Madonna

MALE ANGEL AND FEMALE ANGEL:

Madonna, fragrance of the universe,
Creation beyond creation,
From the celestial heavens,
Descend deep into the human soul,
Not in the sky above, but here on earth below,
Embrace Your restless children.
Shed Your mantle of cerulean blue,
And darken Your skin with the burnt amber
Of earthly compassion.
Moisten the soil of our hearts
With the sweet nectar of Your love.

CHORUS, ANGELS:

Madonna, smooth like black alabaster,
Black like the folds of the earth,
Black like the infinity of the night sky,
Black like the sorrow that breaks the heart open,
Black like the mystery we never unveil,
Black like eyes shut,
Black like the space between galaxies,
Black like a panther alone in the forest,
Black like the deep sea,
Black like the roots of our soul,

Himno

*Yo sé un himno gigante y extraño
que anuncia en la noche del alma una aurora,
y estas páginas son de ese himno
cadencias que el aire dilata en las sombras.*

*Yo quisiera escribirle, del hombre
domando el rebelde mezquino idioma,
con palabras que fuesen a un tiempo
suspiros y risas, colores y notas.
Pero en vano es luchar; que no hay cifra
capaz de encerrarle, y apenas, ¡oh!, hermosa!,
si teniendo en mis manos las tuyas
podría al oído cantártelo a solas.*

~ Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer

I know a strange gigantic hymn
that announces dawn in the night of the soul,
and these pages are cadences of this hymn
that the air diffuses into shadows.

I wanted to capture it, taming
the rebellious, stingy language of men,
with words that were at the same time
sighs and laughter, colors and notes.

But the struggle is in vain; there is no code
able to confine it, and barely, oh my beauty!
if holding your hands in mine,
could I sing it softly to you alone.

~ Translation by Howard A. Landman



The Canticle ~ of the ~ Black Madonna

An Opera-Oratorio in Two Acts

Libretto by Tiziana DellaRovere
Music by Ethan Gans-Morse

The Canticle of the Black Madonna is a work of art that provides an avenue for healing through music, poetry, and rituals that catalyze the restoration of the human soul. As told through Tiziana DellaRovere's beautiful and poetic libretto, the story takes place in modern Louisiana at the time of the 2010 oil spill as Adam, a war veteran suffering from PTSD, returns home from Afghanistan to his young wife, Mara. The narrative unfolds through the dramatic tension created by Adam's symptoms of PTSD, the destruction of the environment from the oil spill, the shock and confusion of Mara, and the mystical realm of the Black Madonna. As these elements collide with each other in a seemingly destructive way, their redemption is found through love and the grace-filled compassion of the Black Madonna. Adam is faced with the challenges and scars of modern warfare, but his struggles are those of all men: coming to terms with himself as a husband, father, son, provider, and guardian, while reclaiming his shattered sense of his own innate goodness. His wife, Mara, struggles similarly with contemporary issues of ecological destruction, her husband's war traumas, and the tension between supporting her husband and protecting herself from his violent outbursts which threaten her very life.

Mara serves as a universal depiction of the challenges that women face as the sustainers of life. Like Mara, many women react to the horrors of war and environmental devastation with a tangible pain which they feel on both a personal and collective level. The Black Madonna is the compassionate aspect of the Divine who suffers with and within humanity, and at the same time contains the resolution of all conflicts through the soothing embrace of her infinite wisdom and love.

A central theme of *The Canticle of the Black Madonna* is that when we are faced with challenges too large to overcome as ordinary individuals, we reach for the realm of the sacred and long for the healing embrace of the Universal Mother, the mysterious, merciful love of the Black Madonna. This healing embrace is more than a literary, religious, or psychological metaphor; it is a living, tangible connection with a vibrant life-force that each person carries within. Many of us, during our darkest nights, discover a sense of inner grace, a mysterious force that saints and mystics have explored, which we can only express through art and poetry. This ineffable divine presence ultimately holds the key to true, lasting healing and the revitalization of the human soul.

We are enormously pleased to present this "sneak preview" of the following scenes from *The Canticle of the Black Madonna*: "*The Litany of the Black Madonna*," which will serve as the opening procession of the chorus and the angels, "*Mara's Lament*," in which Mara expresses her pain about the suffering of the animals and mourns the loss of her husband's love, "*Black Am I and All-Loving*," in which the Black Madonna appears as the embodiment of healing love in times of deepest despair, and "*Let There Be Fields of Roses*," a concert piece written especially for tonight's performance that elaborates on a portion of the text from Act II, describing the literal and symbolic transformation of the real-life heroin-producing Afghani poppy fields into fields of Damask roses, creating new economic possibilities for Afghani farmers to sell the valuable rose oil extracts.

The Canticle of the Black Madonna will be presented in a "workshop" format in the fall of 2012 in Eugene, and will be premiered with a professional cast, crew, costumes, and dramatic staging in the spring of 2013. If you would like to learn more about this production and sign up to receive email updates about the November 2012 and spring 2013 productions, please visit

www.canticleoftheblackmadonna.com