

CANTEMUS

SMALL CHORUS. GRAND SOUND.

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Our name is pronounced: “Can-TAME-us”
(Latin for “Let us sing”)

For Timely Release prior to December 1 & 2 Concerts

On 30th Anniversary, Cantemus Concerts Invoke “Twilight in New England”

“As Cantemus moves into its 30th anniversary year,” says Music Director Jane Ring Frank, “I have an opportunity to look back on my first year with this lovely chorus, to reflect on its rich and varied history and to envision with its members a future filled with possibility and excellence, renewed energy and discipline.”

On December 1 and 2, “Twilight in New England: A Celebration of New England Composers,” the first concert of the chamber chorus’ fourth decade, will celebrate this new energy by re-visiting some of New England’s most esteemed historical composers and highlighting some contemporary stars: William Billings, Randall Thompson, Amy Beach, James Woodman and Gwyneth Walker. Keyboardist Jeffrey Mead will accompany the group on piano and organ.

On April 27 and 28, Cantemus will cap off its birthday festivities with “Cantemus Turns 30: Celebrating Artists of the North Shore,” featuring more works by New England composers with texts by New England poets. Highlighting those concerts will be the world premiere of a commissioned work by Boston composer Ruth Lomon with text by Anne Bradstreet, considered by many to be America’s first published poet.

The “Twilight” concerts in December have as their centerpiece James Woodman’s cantata “The Midwife’s Tale,” commissioned and first performed by Boston Cecilia in 1996. The cantata sets mystical excerpts from the Arundel Manuscript, an 8th-century collection of legends about the life of Christ, in which a midwife to Mary at Christ’s birth tells of her astonishing experience:

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the birth she has witnessed is *not* one of a human child, for Mary has given birth “to Light!”

*Witness to Light’s birth, I stood lost in wonder,
marveling, fearful, Light’s new Life beholding:
child, born of starlight... an infant, lightning incarnate*

— 8th c. text, from “*The Midwife’s Tale*”

Randall Thompson’s *The Nativity according to Saint Luke* is a musical drama in seven scenes with text taken from the first two chapters of St. Luke’s Gospel. Marked by traditional form and cheerful spirit, “And the Child Grew” reveals the miracle of incarnation. “My Soul Doth Magnify the Lord (Magnificat)” is Mary’s flowing and mysterious response to that which is being asked of her. “Nowel” is a contemplative carol, announcing the joy of the season.

New England composer Gwyneth Walker is represented by two jubilant works, *Ring Out, Wild Bells*, with words by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, and *I Thank You God*, adapted from the E. E. Cummings poem “i thank you God for most this amazing day.”

Recognized as America’s first successful woman composer, Amy Beach, or Mrs. H.H.A. Beach, was born in 1867 in Henniker, New Hampshire. A pioneer, she was the first American woman to compose a symphony, the *Gaelic Symphony*, premiered in 1896 by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. In 1886 she began work on her *Grand Mass in E-Flat*, which Cantemus performs in this concert. Premiered by the Handel and Haydn Society in 1892, it was not performed publicly again until the 1980’s. The *Grand Mass* reflects the late Romantic period in the breadth of its conception, its exploration of unexpected harmonic relationships, chromatic meanderings, long soaring melodies, and dynamic diversity.

A tanner by trade and completely self-taught in music, William Billings was America’s leading 18th-century composer. He lived in Boston during the Revolutionary War era and was active in patriot circles. In his time Billings was acclaimed as a master teacher of choral singing, and he published several collections of music for use as textbooks. “I am the Rose of Sharon,” based on a text from the *Song of Solomon*, and “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night” were published in 1778. “Shiloh” uses an old Testament text and adopts the singing idioms of the shape-note tradition of North America.

“For fun and just because,” Frank confessed, “I have added three pieces that illuminate universal themes of birth, heritage, children and new beginnings. Although not a New Englander (and therefore a thematic outlier), Ysaye M. Barnwell is one of America’s most respected

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educators, composers, arrangers, and performers, best known for her 33-year association with the acclaimed group Sweet Honey in the Rock. "On Children," with text by Kahlil Gibran, "We Are..." and "Breaths" are among her best arrangements. These pieces call on our grandmother's prayers, our grandfather's dreamings, and the breath of our ancestors, filling us with imagination and endless possibilities," Frank concluded.

Cantemus will perform "Twilight in New England" on Saturday, December 1 at 7:30 p.m., at Christ Church of Hamilton-Wenham, 149 Asbury Street, Hamilton; and on Sunday, December 2 at 4:00 p.m. at St. Paul's Church, 166 High Street, Newburyport.

Tickets are available online at <http://www.mktix.com/ccc>, or fans can save \$2 on advance tickets purchased at The Book Rack in Newburyport, Nazir's of Wenham, Norris Gallery / MiXtMedia in Ipswich, the Book Shop of Beverly Farms, Toad Hall in Rockport and Gloucester Music. Tickets at the door are \$20 for adults, \$17 for seniors. Admission is free for students 21 and under. For details, visit www.cantemus.org, or phone 1-888-CHORUS 1.

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Cantemus is a member of the Greater Boston Choral Consortium, a cooperative association of diverse choral groups in Boston and the surrounding areas.

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MASSACHUSETTS CULTURAL COUNCIL

FYI: Cantemus' 42 members come from 20 communities on the North Shore, Cambridge and New Hampshire:

Cambridge: Music Director Jane Ring Frank. **Manchester-by-the-Sea:** Isabella Bates. **Beverly:** Dick Church, Bill Gelwick, Paul Kelly, Richard Salandrea, Rachel Small. Scott Hufford. **Bradford:** Mern Ebinger. **Essex:** Betsy Vicksell. **Georgetown:** Patti Clark. **Gloucester:** Ed Mowrey. **Hamilton:** Marcy Homer, Peggy Russell, Donna Gale. **Haverhill:** Bill Holloway. **Ipswich:** Gary Freeman, Hugh McCall, Anne Maguire, Dorothy Monnelly, Nat Pulsifer, Sr. Pat Rolinger, Debby Twining. **Lynnfield:** Priscilla March, Melanie Richard. **Melrose:** Bill Dowdall, accompanist Jeffrey Mead. **Newbury:** Nancy Weinberg. **Newburyport:** Richard Blumensheid, Claire Cayot, Gary Lubarsky, Justin Turner. **Peabody:** Marjorie Short. **Salem:** Blair Bailey. **Shirley:** Cheryl Hayden. **Wenham:** Jamie Cabot, David Geikie, Betsy Lebel, Charlie Tyson. **West Newbury:** Michael Fosburg, Susan Nash. **Durham, NH:** Sydney van Asselt. ##