

CANTEMUS

SMALL CHORUS. GRAND SOUND.

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

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**Chorus Commemorates Three Decades of Song with
“Cantemus Turns 30:
Celebrating Artists of the North Shore”**

The last weekend of April, the Cantemus chamber chorus will close out its third decade of musicmaking on the North Shore with a pair of anniversary concerts: “Cantemus Turns 30: Celebrating Artists of the North Shore” is a program of songs written by renowned contemporary composers and based on texts by some of the area’s best-known poets.

As a highlight of this 30th anniversary season, Cantemus has commissioned a new choral work by Brandeis University’s Composer/Resident Scholar Ruth Lomon, entitled *Contemplations*. Cantemus will premiere the work at their concerts next December.

Begun in 1982 as an eight-member madrigal group that performed at church services in exchange for rehearsal space, Cantemus has grown to 40 members, with a budget that lets them rent rehearsal and performance venues, engage guest artists often for their twice-yearly concerts, and commission works written expressly for them.

From its inception, Cantemus has been directed by some of the area’s best choral conductors. From Founding Conductor Edward Lundergan through Robert Ruplenas, Robert Dean, Robert Littlefield, and Michelle Montgomery Muth, to John Hoffacker, Gary Wood and, now, Music Director Jane Ring Frank. Frank is well known in the Boston area as the Founder/Artistic Director of the critically acclaimed professional chorus Boston Secession.

Now completing her second year with Cantemus, Frank is in a unique position to honor the group on its anniversary: “As this much loved chorus celebrates its birthday, I am grateful to share the milestone with a marvelous and committed group of singers and a faithful audience, who has seen Cantemus through a musical journey three decades long. Cantemus has grown and thrived, struggled and triumphed, and it is my great pleasure to now conduct this resilient,

— more —

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talented and dedicated group.”

Cantemus opened its anniversary season last December with concerts entitled “Twilight in New England: A Celebration of New England Composers.” Developing the program for these April concerts presented a bigger challenge for Frank. Though her original plan was to include both North Shore composers and North Shore poets, she confesses: “I came up short on the North Shore composers end. I found the answer in programming those masters of wordplay and meaning, poets and writers who have inhabited the North Shore.” Most of the composers are from New England.

The writers she selected are Nathaniel Hawthorne (Salem), Robert Frost (Lawrence and Amesbury), Anne Bradstreet (Ipswich and Andover), and John Greenleaf Whittier (Amesbury). Their compelling texts were set to melodies and harmonies by New Englanders Randall Thompson, Gwyneth Walker, Ronald Perera and Daniel Pinkham.

Composer Randall Thompson selected seven poems by one of the North Shore’s favorite sons, Robert Frost, and created *Frostiana, or Seven Country Songs*. “There is deceptive simplicity in Frost’s poetry, with its straightforward language and rhyming schemes, resulting in an undercurrent of wonder, even in the most mundane of human activities,” Frank explained. “Thompson responds by providing seven exquisitely crafted movements that perfectly catch the meaning and cadence of the poetry.” Cantemus will perform two of the most famous songs, “The Road Not Taken” and “Choose Something Like a Star.”

New England composer Ronald Perera also captures Frost’s love of the natural world in his collection *North Country*, a setting of five early Frost poems.

Often called “America’s first poet,” Anne Bradstreet was born in 1612 in England but sailed to Massachusetts in 1630, first living in Cambridge, then Newtowne and then Ipswich, before moving to Andover. In 1650, without her knowledge, Anne’s brother-in-law John Woodbridge took her manuscript poems to England to be published under the title *The Tenth Muse, Lately Sprung Up in America*, by a “gentlewoman in those parts.” Boston composer Daniel Pinkham’s 1995 *The Tenth Muse* is a richly textured setting of five of Bradstreet’s lyrical nature and love poems.

Two of Bradstreet’s poems, “If ever two were one” and “The Cooling Shadow,” are reprised on the program in settings by Vermont composer Gwyneth Walker and Charlene Archibeque, respectively. It is poetry by Bradstreet that inspired Ruth Lomon to create the *Contemplations* song cycle that Cantemus will perform next winter.

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“I knew I wanted to include Hawthorne on the program,” Frank said, “but it wasn’t easy finding one of his poems set to music. His lovely ‘Address to the Moon,’ truly an ode to that orb of night, is set by composer and arranger John Purifoy. It is filled with expressive melodic phrases, accompanied by nuanced Chopinesque harmonies.”

Rounding out the anniversary concert will be a text by Haverhill poet John Greenleaf Whittier. A Quaker devoted to social causes and reform, Whittier worked for a series of abolitionist newspapers and magazines. The text for Gwyneth Walker’s *The Tree of Peace* has been adapted from Whittier’s poem “O Brother Man.”

The group will perform “Cantemus Turns 30” on Saturday, April 27 at 7:30 p.m., at Christ Church of Hamilton-Wenham, 149 Asbury Street, Hamilton; and on Sunday, April 28 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.

Cantemus gratefully acknowledges funding support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the Hamilton-Wenham, Newbury and Newburyport Cultural Councils.

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



FYI: Cantemus’ 38 members come from 19 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, Scott Hufford, Paul Kelly, Rachel Small. **Bradford:** Mern Ebinger. **Essex:** Betsy Vicksell. **Georgetown:** Patti Clark. **Gloucester:** Ed Mowrey. **Hamilton:** Marcy Homer, Peggy Russell. **Haverhill:** Bill Holloway. **Ipswich:** Gary Freeman, Anne Maguire, Dorothy Monnelly, Nat Pulsifer, Sr. Pat Rolinger, Debby Twining. **Lynnfield:** Priscilla March, Melanie Richard. **Melrose:** Accompanist Jeffrey Mead. **Newbury:** Judy Fayre, Nancy Weinberg. **Newburyport:** Richard Blumenscheid, Claire Cayot, Gary Lubarsky, Justin Turner. **Peabody:** Marjorie Short. **Shirley:** Cheryl Hayden. **Wenham:** Jamie Cabot, David Geikie, Elizabeth Lebel, Charlie Tyson. **West Newbury:** Michael Fosburg, Susan Nash. **Durham, NH:** Sydney van Asselt. ##