

Saturday, April 14, 2018, 8pm  
First Congregational Church, Berkeley

## Armenian State Chamber Choir

### PROGRAM

- Mesrop Mashtots (362–440) Անկանիմ առաջի քո  
I Kneel Before You (A hymn for Lent)
- Grikor Narekatsi (951–1003) Հավուն  
The Bird (A hymn for Easter)
- Komitas (1869–1935) Սուրբ, սուրբ  
Holy, Holy
- Հարսանեկան երգեր (Շար Ա)  
Rustic Wedding Songs (Suite A, 1899–1901)  
Երկնից, գետնից, Prayer  
Մերիկ ջան հալալ, The Bride's Farewell  
Թագվորի մեր, դ՛ուս արի,  
To the Bridegroom's Mother  
Թագվոր բարով, The Bridegroom's Blessing  
Էն դիզան, Banter  
Առննմ երթամ իմ յարը, Dance
- Ե՛լ, ե՛լ  
Rise Up! (1899–1901)
- Հո՛ւմ արեք, սարե՛ր ջան  
O Mountains, Bring Breeze (1913–14)
- Լոռու գութաներգ  
Plowing Song of Lori (1902–06)
- Գարուն  
Spring  
(1902, Poem by Hovhannes Hovhanisyan)
- John Tavener (1944–2013) Song for Athene
- Alfred Schnittke (1934–1998) Three Sacred Hymns  
Богородице Дево, радуйся,  
Hail to the Virgin Mary  
Господи помилуй, Lord, Have Mercy  
Отче Наш, Lord's Prayer

*INTERMISSION*

## PROGRAM

David Haladjian (b. 1962)	Missa Memoria Kyrie Christe Gloria Dies Irae Tuba Mirum Patrem Sanctus
Daniel Elder (b. 1986)	Lullaby (from <i>Three Nocturnes</i> )
Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943)	Sure on this Shining Night (Poem by James Agee)
Robert Mlkeyan (b. 1961)	Armenian Folk Tunes Մշո Գորսնի, Gorani of Moosh Մայրամ, Mayram Խիլո, Kheeyo Մարալ, Maral

*This performance is made possible, in part,  
by Patron Sponsors Roger Strauch and Dr. Julie Kulhanjian Strauch.  
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### Armenian State Chamber Choir

Robert Mlkeyan, *artistic director and principal conductor*  
Armen Arabyan, *executive director*

Soprano	Alto	Tenor	Baritone/Bass
Nvard Aloyan	Lianna Abrahamyan	Razmik Baghdasaryan <sup>3,4</sup>	Aram Avetisyan <sup>4</sup>
Nune Atanasyan	Susanna Abrahamyan	Vahe Begoyan	Hakob Ghazaryan
Anahit Hovhannisyian	Susanna Galstyan	Artur Brutyan	Armen Grigoryan <sup>2</sup>
Era Hovsepyan	Naira Hovhannisyian	Vrezh Gharibyan <sup>2</sup>	Hovhannes Grigoryan <sup>3,4</sup>
Marine Mkrтчyan	Gayane Mlqeyan	Harutyun Khachatryan	Gagik Martirosyan
Marine Saghatelyan	Lusine Ordukhanyan <sup>5</sup>	Mikhail Tovmasyan	Mavrik Mkrтчyan <sup>3,4</sup>
Sofya Sayadyan <sup>1,2</sup>	Ashkhen Tadevosyan <sup>2</sup>		Armen Tovmasyan
	Lusya Vardanyan		Arno Zargaryan

<sup>1</sup> Soloist for The Bird, Wedding Songs.

<sup>2</sup> Missa Memoria

<sup>3</sup> Soloist for Plowing Song of Lori

<sup>4</sup> Soloist for Gorani of Moosh

<sup>5</sup> Soloist for Mayram

<sup>6</sup> Contributor to program notes and translations

### Acknowledgements

Artin Der Minassians; University of California, Berkeley, Armenian Alumni (UCBAA); Armen & Nelly Der Kiureghian; Adam & Rita Kablanian; Bryan & Valina Agbabian; Anonymous; Eleanore Aslanian; Karnig & Santoukht Mikaelian; Jack & Marie Saroyan; Armen Sedrakian & Ruth Alahydoian; KZV Armenian school in San Francisco; La Mediterranee restaurant in Berkeley; Cynthia Avakian; David Balabanian; Michael & Heghine Boloyan; Edward Goshian; Caline Soghikian; Anonymous; Knight of Vartan; Joseph Bezdjian; Hasmig & Antranik Cingoz; Jirair & Christina Moughamian; Zaven Kanneian & Janet Yeghissian; Evelyn Boyd; John & Anahid Kerkezyan; Allen & Erika Odian; Sonia Tajirian; Joan Bardez; Norma Kaufman; Charles Tateosian; Haleh Hatami; Armena Petrosova.

## Armenian Folklore by Artin Der Minassians

Armenian folklore is one of the richest in the world. Despite countless wars and constant destruction by foreign aggressors, many songs have survived and have been passed down from generation to generation. The main categories are work-related songs, ritual songs (“Dseesashar”), lyrical love-songs, lullabies (“Ororotsayin”), songs of sorrow and nostalgia for loved ones (“Pandukht”), dance songs, and songs of chivalry and heroism.

Armenian folk songs were originally accompanied and supported by group-dancing without any musical instruments. Over time, when the words were forgotten, musical instruments became a part of the folk tradition. At times, many people—even an entire village—would participate in circle dancing. Dancers would stand side by side in a circle while linking each other’s pinkies, and the circle would rotate counterclockwise as the dance progressed. For instance, the song “Mayram” is a “G’hovend,” which means “giant crowd,” seen, from a distance, as if a giant mass of people were shifting.

The songs of traditional Armenian rustic weddings were of particular interest to Komitas. In 1905, as part of a lecture in Tbilisi, Komitas mentioned, “They [the wedding songs] are so many and so mysterious. Their number reaches 78 so far. . . . One important group of the wedding songs is called ‘Dsaghkots.’ These are songs that are sung by the friends of the bride, in which they praise her, comparing her life to a tree, a flower, the moon, etc. But other songs are about the groom, mothers-in-law, the groom’s bachelor and married friends, and so on. A few of them are riddles and happy entertaining songs.”

Some of Komitas’ arrangements, although based on folk motifs, convey a deeper and more philosophical meaning. “Rise Up!” is one example. Although the text suggests that it’s a farmer singing the song to his old and ill oxen, it is also the composer’s cry to his old and beaten Armenian nation, begging it to rise and thrive. You may notice a similar metaphor in “O Mountains, Bring Breeze,” as well.

In an article about the “Plowing Song of Lori” (1914), Komitas mentions that in Lori (North-Eastern Armenia) they still use the old-style patriarchal plow. Since it is not possible for a single person to work such plows, a few families team up together and set up one plow with 12 yokes. After the preliminary arrangements, they set out from the village to their fields after dinner to do the plowing. The plowing process starts by a plowman or the senior plowboy calling the yoked animals by exclaiming, “Ho!” Then he adds the actual prayer words, praising God. They then continue, in a lively and joyful style, encouraging the yoked animals. This usually is followed by a leisurely and tender melody during which each animal is caressed and flattered by its name (e.g., Prere, Peryugi, Shimal, Lachin). They continue singing until the plow reaches the edge of the field, where they greet the oxen to let them know that the rest period is near. The animals soon are able to rest until the plowboys move the plow, turn it around, and place it in the mouth of the next furrow.

Regarding “Gorani of Moosh,” it should be noted that the meaning of word “Gorani” is unclear. It could be derived from the word “koo-ran,” which is related to rites and ceremonies from the pagan era. Or, it could be related to dance-like movements of worship. Or, it may simply be “Goran,” which means “dancing.”

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The Armenian State Chamber Choir (ASCC) was founded in 2000 thanks to the sponsorship of the Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Foundation. A professional choir of mixed voices, ASCC has a primary mission of bringing choral masterpieces of Armenian composers to life and sharing them with its audience worldwide.

ASCC brilliantly performs works of Komitas (1869–1935), the father of Armenian classical music, as well as those of the contemporary Armenian composers. Over the years, the choir has performed world premieres by Armenian composers including Tigran Mansurian, David Haladjian, and Edward Hayrapetian.

ASCC has toured in Argentina, Canada, Georgia, Greece, Lebanon, and the United Kingdom. In 2006 the ensemble took part in the International Festival of Modern Music at the Donizetti Opera Theatre in Bergamo, Italy, and performed several concerts in the White Hall and Catherine Palace in Saint Petersburg, concluding the Year of Armenian Culture in Russia. In 2007 the choir took part in a memorable concert at the Council of Europe Concert Hall in Strasbourg, France.

In 2009, on the occasion of the 140th birthday anniversary of Komitas' birth, ASCC recorded two CDs at Saghmosavank Monastery, featuring selected sacred and secular choral works by the master composer. That same year saw appearances in the Gaveau Concert Hall and Saint-Louis Church in Paris, Haus der Kulturen der Welt (House of the World Cultures) in Berlin, and in venues in Geneva and Zurich. The video recordings of the concerts in France and Switzerland were edited into a documentary that was later aired on various Armenian public television and satellite channels.

ASCC released *Ars Poetica* on ECM Records in 2006, featuring the choral concert written by Tigran Mansurian and based on 10 poems by Yeghishe Charents. The World Music Council awarded the CD a five-star rating. The inclusion of *Ars Poetica* in *Gramophone*, a prestigious music catalogue that has reported on the most outstanding classical albums since 1923, may be considered one of the choir's most significant achievements.

In 2009 ASCC staged a live performance of Alfred Schnittke's Choir Concerto for a documentary directed by Hovik Hakhverdyan titled *In Search of Naregatsi*. Devoted to St. Gregory of Narek and his famous *Book of Lamentations*, the documentary features conversations among intellectuals, interspersed with musical pieces performed by the choir and fragments from the *Book of Lamentations*, recited by the renowned Armenian theater artist Sos Sargsyan.

In addition to its frequent concerts and tours, ASCC participates in charity projects by performing in educational institutions in rural areas of Armenia, introducing the choral culture to a wider national audience.

**Robert Mlkeyan** (b. 1961, Armenia) is an Honored Artist of Armenia, "Movses Khorenatsi" medal recipient, as well as Armenia's second-degree medal recipient for the services provided to his motherland. He received his primary music education in the music school named after Mirzoyan in Armenia. He then studied conducting in Saint Petersburg. Mlkeyan continued his graduate studies in the class of Emin Khachatryan at the Komitas State Conservatory of Music in Yerevan, Armenia.

In 1992 he was appointed artistic director and principal conductor of the Gyumri State Symphonic Orchestra and Gyumri Chamber Choir, positions he held for eight years. Mlkeyan has been the artistic director and principal conductor of the Armenian State Chamber Choir since 2000. The group has toured internationally and performed in London, Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Geneva, Brussels, Aleppo, Damascus, Latakia, Tbilisi, Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Hanover, Frankfurt, Strasbourg, Toronto, and Ottawa.

In 2015, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, the National Orchestra and Choir of Mexico performed Tigran Mansurian's Requiem and Viola Concerto under Mlkeyan's leadership (soloist Kim Kashkashyan). Within the framework of the same events, he also appeared in concerts in Switzerland, with Bern's Orchestra and Children's Choir, as well as in Lebanon, Argentina, and Greece.

Mlkeyan has appeared in many prestigious concert venues, including St. Louis Cathedral, Salle Gaveau (Paris), White Hall, Smolny Cathedral, Glazunov Hall (Saint Petersburg), the EU Hall "Salle Schwietzer at the Palais de la Musique et des Congres" (Strasbourg), Teatro Donizetti Opera House (Bergamo), Frauenkirche Church (Dresden), Teatro Colon (Buenos Aires), and Megaron Concert Hall (Athens).

Robert Mlkeyan has composed numerous choral arrangements of folk songs and of music written for theater performances.

**Mesrop Mashtots** (362–440), was an early medieval Armenian linguist, theologian, statesman, and hymnologist. He is best known for

inventing the Armenian alphabet, which was a fundamental step in strengthening Armenian national identity. Mesrop Mashtots was born in a noble family in the settlement of Hatsekats in Taron and died in Vagharshapat (today's Etchmiadzin). His biographer, Koryun, mentions that Mashtots received a good education and was versed in the Greek and Persian languages. Because of his piety and learning Mesrop was appointed secretary to King Khosrov IV.

Armenia, so long the battleground of Romans and Persians, lost its independence in 387, and was divided between the Byzantine Empire and Persia, about four-fifths being given to the latter. Western Armenia was governed by Byzantine generals, while an Armenian king ruled, but only as feudatory, over Persian Armenia. The principal events of this period are the invention of the Armenian alphabet (c. 405 AD), the revision of the liturgy, the creation of an ecclesiastical and national literature, and the readjustment of hierarchical relations. Mesrop is one of the three men who are prominently associated with this work, together with Patriarch Isaac and King Vramshapuh, who succeeded his brother Khosrov IV in 389.

St. Mesrop also produced several liturgical compositions. He is buried at a chapel in Oshakan, a historical village southwest of the town of Ashtarak. St. Mesrop is listed officially in the Roman Martyrology of the Roman Catholic Church; his feast day is February 17. The Armenians read his name in the Canon of the Mass and celebrate his memory on February 19.

**Grikor Narekatsi** (Gregory of Narek, 951–1003) was an Armenian monk, poet, mystical philosopher, theologian, composer, and saint of the Armenian Apostolic Church and Catholic Church. He is considered Armenia's first great poet, and was the author of a mystical interpretation on the Song of Songs and numerous poetic writings. His *Book of Prayers*, also known as *Book of Lamentations*, a long mystical poem, has been translated into many languages. The book, the work of his mature years, remains one of the definitive pieces of Armenian literature. He was declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Francis in 2015.

Gregory was born c. 950 to a family of scholarly churchmen. His father, Khosrov, was an archbishop. He lost his mother very early, and was educated by his cousin, Anania of Narek, who was the founder of the monastery and school of the village. At a young age, Gregory entered the Narek Monastery, known as Narekavank, on the southeast shore of Lake Van in Vaspourakan (Greater Armenia, now Turkey) and spent almost all of his life in the monastery. The monastery was completely destroyed in the 20th century after the Armenian Genocide.

A leader of the well-developed school of Armenian mysticism at Narek Monastery, Gregory set out to find an answer to an imponderable question: what can one offer to God, our creator, who already has everything and knows everything better than we could ever express? To this question, posed by the prophets, psalmists, apostles, and saints, he gives a humble answer—the sighs of the heart—expressed in his *Book of Lamentations*. In 95 prayers, Gregory draws on the potential of the Classical Armenian language to translate feelings of suffering and humility into an offering of words thought to be pleasing to God. Calling it his last testament—“its letters like my body, its message like my soul”—it is an edifice of faith for the ages, unique in Christian literature for its rich imagery, its subtle theology, its Biblical erudition, and the sincere immediacy of its communication with God. For Narekatsi, peoples' absolute goal in life should be to reach to God, and to reach wherever human nature unites with godly nature, thus erasing the differences between God and men and the difficulties of earthly life. According to him, mankind's assimilation with God is possible not by logic, but by feelings. The actual date he wrote the book is unknown, but he finished it around 1001–1002, one year prior to his death.

**Sghomon Sghomonyan—Komitas** (1869–1935), was born in Anatolia, Turkey, in the town of Kütahya. He lost his mother when he was less than one year old and ultimately became an orphan when he was 11. In 1881 the priest of Kütahya had to leave for Etchmiadzin to be ordained a bishop. At the request of the Catholicos he

brought the gifted orphan boy with him to study at the Etchmiadzin Church Seminary. Twelve-year-old Soghomon was selected out of the other 20 orphans to study at the seminary. As it was forbidden to speak Armenian in Turkey at that time, the boy spoke Turkish and when being greeted by the Catholicos Gevorg IV, he replied, "I don't speak Armenian. If you wish I will sing." Then with his fine soprano voice he sang an Armenian "sharakan" (sacred hymn) without understanding the words. Due to his aptitude, Soghomon learned perfect Armenian in a short time.

In 1893, after studying at the seminary, he was ordained a "Vardapet" (priest) and acquired his new name, Komitas, the name of the outstanding poet of the seventh century and the author of "sharakans." At the seminary Komitas was assigned to teach music. Along with these activities, Komitas organized a choir and an orchestra of Armenian traditional instruments. In 1895 he left for Tbilisi, Georgia to study at its musical college. However, after meeting the composer Makar Yekmalyan, who had received his education at the conservatory of Saint Petersburg, he changed his mind and began studying and taking a course on harmony with the composer. These studies became foundational to his understanding of European composition techniques.

The following events of Komitas' life are related to Europe's main center of music, Berlin, where he studied at the private conservatory of Professor Richard Schmidt, with financial sponsorship of the Armenian oil magnate Alexander Mantashyan. During these years he had an opportunity to "communicate" with European music, continually enriching his experience and knowledge. Upon the invitation of the International Music Association, he held lectures devoted to Armenian sacred and contemporary music as compared with Turkish, Arabic, and Kurdish music.

Renowned musicians like Vincent d'Indy, Gabriel Fauré, and Camille Saint-Saëns fell in love with Komitas' creative work. After a concert in Paris, Claude Debussy exclaimed excitedly, "Brilliant father Komitas! I bow before your musical genius!"

In September 1899 Komitas returned to Etchmiadzin and immediately began his musical work. In a short period, he radically changed the system of teaching music in the seminary, organized a small orchestra, and advanced the quality of the choir. He visited various regions of Armenia, notating thousands of Armenian, Kurdish, Persian, and Turkish songs. He started serious scientific research work, studied Armenian secular and sacred melodies, and worked on deciphering Armenian "khazes" (neumes) and the theory of voices.

Komitas focused on the themes of folk music and revealing the content of folk songs. His interest led to an inescapable conflict between Komitas and the Church. Gradually, the indifference of new leaders, the negative attitude of a backward group of church figures, gossip, and slander poisoned the life of the composer. The conflict became so tense that Komitas sent a letter to the Catholicos begging to discharge him and allow him to create and live quietly. This request remained unanswered, and the persecution of Komitas became more obvious. In 1910 he left Etchmiadzin for Constantinople, where he expected to find an environment that would understand, protect, and encourage his activities; and where he would be able to fulfill his dreams. Komitas hoped to establish a national conservatory, but he failed to accomplish this plan (as well as many others). His inspired ideas were met with the indifference of the local authorities. Despite these setbacks, in Constantinople he organized a large choir and called it "Gousan" (singer).

During World War I, the government of Young Turks initiated their monstrous program of violent and inhumane extermination of a segment of the Armenian people. In April 1915 Komitas was arrested along with several outstanding Armenian writers, publicists, physicians, and lawyers. He was deported to Anatolia, where he became a witness of the brutal extermination of the nation's brightest minds. Although, by intervention of influential figures, Komitas was returned to Constantinople, the nightmare he had experienced left a deep, ineradicable impression on his soul. Komitas remained in seclusion from the outer world,

absorbed in his gloomy and heavy thoughts—sad and broken.

In 1916 Komitas' health deteriorated, and he was put in a psychiatric hospital. However, there was no hope that he would recover. The genius of Armenian music found his final shelter in Paris, in the suburban sanatorium Vil-Jouif, where he spent almost 20 years of his life. On the October 22, the life of the Great Komitas came to an end. In the spring of 1936 his remains were transported to Armenia and buried in Yerevan in the Pantheon of prominent art figures. No less tragic was the destiny of Komitas' creative legacy. Most of his manuscripts were destroyed or lost.

**Sir John Kenneth Tavener** (1944–2013) was an English composer, known for his extensive output of religious works. Tavener first came to prominence with his cantata *The Whale*, premiered in 1968. He was described by the media as “the musical discovery of the year” and “among the very best creative talents of his generation.”

Tavener was born in Wembley, London. His parents ran a family building firm and his father was also an organist at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Frognaal, Hampstead. At the young age of 12, he heard Igor Stravinsky's most recent work, *Canticum Sacrum*, which he later described as “the piece that woke me up and made me want to be a composer.” Tavener became a music scholar at Highgate School (where a fellow pupil was John Rutter). In 1961 he became organist and choirmaster at St. John's Presbyterian Church, Kensington (now St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Church), a post he held for 14 years. Tavener entered the Royal Academy of Music in 1962, where his tutors included Sir Lennox Berkeley. During his studies there he decided to give up the piano and devote himself to composition.

Tavener suffered from considerable health problems throughout his life, which left him very frail. He died in 2013 at his home in Child Okeford, Dorset.

“Song for Athene” is Tavener's best known work, having been performed by the Westminster Abbey Choir conducted by Martin Neary at

the funeral service of Diana, Princess of Wales. Commissioned by the BBC, it was written in April 1993 as a tribute to Athene Hariades, a young half-Greek actress who was killed in a cycling accident. Tavener said of Hariades: “Her beauty, both outward and inner, was reflected in her love of acting, poetry, music, and of the Orthodox Church.” He had heard her reading Shakespeare in Westminster Abbey, and after her funeral, developed the idea of composing a song that combined words from the Orthodox funeral service and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

**Alfred Garrievich Schnittke** (1934–1998) was a Soviet and German composer. He was born in in the Volga-German Republic of the Russian SFSR and began studying music in 1946 in Vienna, where his father had been posted. Schnittke's experience in Vienna gave him “a certain spiritual experience and discipline” for his future professional activities. In 1948 the family moved to Moscow. Schnittke completed his graduate work in composition at the Moscow Conservatory in 1961 and taught there for a decade. He converted to Christianity and possessed deeply held mystic beliefs, which influenced his music.

Schnittke created a new style that has been called “polystylism,” in which he juxtaposed and combined music of various styles, past and present. He once wrote, “The goal of my life is to unify serious music and light music, even if I break my neck in doing so.”

In 1982, after many years of spiritual reflection, Schnittke decided to be baptized a Catholic while visiting Vienna. Nonetheless, while in Russia he continued to observe Russian Orthodox rites. Two years later he composed *Three Sacred Hymns*, a set of three choral pieces very much within the Russian orthodox sacred style. Schnittke wrote his Choir Concerto in 1985, setting texts from the *Book of Lamentations* by the Armenian mystic Gregory of Narek.

In 1985 Schnittke suffered a stroke that left him in a coma. He was declared clinically dead on several occasions, but recovered and continued to compose. As his health deteriorated, Schnittke started to abandon much of the extroversion of his polystylism and retreated into a more withdrawn, bleak style, quite accessible

to the lay listener. In 1990 Schnittke left the Soviet Union and settled in Hamburg. He suffered several more strokes before his death on August 3, 1998, in Hamburg. He was buried, with state honors at the Novodevichy Cemetery in Moscow, where many other prominent Russian composers are interred.

**David Haladjian** (b. 1962, Armenia) is a composer, conductor, and music educator. He studied composition, musicology, conducting, and piano at the Yerevan State Conservatory of Music. His postgraduate study was completed with a dissertation and licentiate in composition and musicology. While still a student, Haladjian worked for Armenian state television and radio as a music editor. In 1985 he became a member of the Composers Union of the former USSR and two years later, he was appointed as the conductor of the Yerevan State Conservatory Choir.

Haladjian took advanced training in Riga, Latvia with conductor Guido Kokars and composer Paul Dambis. He then traveled to Switzerland, where he continued his studies in electro-acoustic music at the Music Academy in Basel and at the Musikhochschule Zürich. His compositions have been performed at various concerts and music festivals in Armenia, Germany, France, Spain, The Netherlands, Italy, the United States, Israel, Japan, Latvia, Russia, and Switzerland. He has also composed soundtracks for motion pictures.

Haladjian has been the conductor of Ananun choir since its founding in 1993. The choir has won a number of awards at choral festivals and has become indispensable to the cultural life of Dietikon, Switzerland. Haladjian is also the choir director of the Pfäffikon & Maur Church Choirs and the Akusma choir of Baden. He currently teaches at the music school of Zumikon and at the Conservatory of Zürich.

**Daniel Elder** (b. 1986, USA) is a prolific writer of vocal and instrumental music who combines these genres to create forms and aesthetics that are at once lyrical and textural, with roots drawn particularly from the impressionist movement.

Critics have hailed his works as “deeply affecting” and “without peer,” with emotional evocations ranging from lush lyricism to jagged polyphony. Elder’s compositions have won wide recognition and been performed by the Simon Carrington Chamber Singers, Cantus, the Grammy-winning Eric Whitacre Singers, and many others. The first commercial album of his choral works, *The Heart’s Reflection: Music of Daniel Elder*, was released in 2013 by Westminster Choir College (Princeton, NJ) and Naxos of America. Elder currently resides in Nashville, TN as a full-time freelance composer. He is published internationally by Carus Verlag, Edition Peters, GIA Publications, Hal Leonard, Imagine Music, Walton Music, and Wingert-Jones Publications, while also self-publishing his newest releases through J.W. Pepper.

**Morten Johannes Lauridsen** (b. 1943, USA) was composer-in-residence of the Los Angeles Master Chorale (1994–2001) and has been a professor of composition at the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music since 1967. In 2006 he was named an American Choral Master by the National Endowment for the Arts. In 2007 he received the National Medal of Arts from President George W. Bush in a White House ceremony, “for his composition of radiant choral works combining musical beauty, power, and spiritual depth that have thrilled audiences worldwide.”

Lauridsen’s musical approaches are very diverse, ranging from direct to abstract in response to various characteristics (subject matter, language, style, structure, historical era, etc.) of the texts he sets. His music has an overall lyricism and is tightly constructed around melodic and harmonic motives. His works have been recorded on more than 200 CDs, five of which have received Grammy nominations, including *O Magnum Mysterium* by the Tiffany Consort, *A Company of Voices* by Conspirare, *Sound the Bells* by the Bay Brass, and two all-Lauridsen discs entitled *Lux Aeterna* with the Los Angeles Master Chorale led by Paul Salamunovich and *Polyphony* with the Britten Sinfonia conducted by Stephen Layton.