

Other works being performed:

THIS WILL BE OUR REPLY TO VIOLENCE by Aaron Robinson

On the evening of Monday, November 25, 1963, the United Jewish Appeal of Greater New York held its annual fundraising event at Madison Square Garden. Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson was originally scheduled to speak, but cancelled. The event instead became a memorial to President John F. Kennedy, who had just been assassinated three days earlier. In his stead, conductor-composer Leonard Bernstein delivered prepared remarks which would later be called *An Artist's Response to Violence*. Within the address, a single line gave strength in the face of unspeakable tragedy to those gathered: "This will be our reply to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before."

Bernstein's powerful response remained unknown until 1982 when it was published in his book *Findings*. For many, it became a beacon of hope for those in distress: The World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, Hurricane Sandy, the Newtown massacre and the Boston Marathon bombings.

On the night of Friday, November 13, 2015, in Paris, France, and the city's northern suburb, Saint-Denis, a series of coordinated terrorist attacks occurred. In the days that followed, a single expression of emotion emerged: "number with sorrow". It was this phrase that reminded composer Aaron Robinson of the speech Leonard Bernstein gave some 52 years prior; which used the same three words.

Extracting the phrase, "...this will be our reply to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly

than ever before...” to be used as a calming, meditative mantra within an *a cappella* anthem, the work was written within a few days. The purpose was to set a universal theme in a musical form that did not associate itself with any one particular event, but which, in turn, could be performed in times of tragedy to offer solace and comfort.

This is the first time the Leonard Bernstein Estate has ever granted a composer permission to set these words to music.

DIFFERENT WAYS TO PRAY by Mohammed Fairouz

In September, 2014, a consortium of colleges and choral ensembles commissioned Arab-American composer Mohammed Fairouz to write a multi-movement work. The commissioning organizations were Cantori New York, Dickinson College, Franklin and Marshall College, Georgia State University, Grinnell College, Middlebury College, Spectrum Singers, Vanderbilt University’s Blair School of Music, and Bowdoin College.

Mr. Fairouz’s composition, *Different Ways to Pray*, was completed in 2015 and has been performed by the various ensembles through agreement with the composer’s management, First Chair Promotion.

The first movement is sung in Arabic. We are grateful to Chorus member Aban Zirikly, formerly of Damascus, Syria, now living in Maine, for his translation of the text and coaching of the Chorus in Arabic pronunciation.

The second movement is sung in English. We are grateful to Stacy Rohrer, Academic Department Coordinator in the Dickinson College Department of Music for sharing this material:

In his essay, “Poems and Prayers,” composer Mohammed Fairouz meditates on the shared traditions between Arabs and Jews: “With our shared musical and linguistic DNA, one of the most powerful things we have in common is the fact that we grow up with so many of the same stories. We have developed a shared history and culture in the region. Our languages have cross-pollinated, and just as Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaic [are linguistically related], we have developed a united mythology and set of traditions.” During a 2012 visit to Dickinson College, it was a conversation about this text that hatched the idea for Different Ways to Pray—a choral work for collegiate students that could be an Islamic companion piece to the more standard liturgical repertory. Fairouz began with the Du’a, the act of supplication that is a conversation between Allah and the faithful, choosing a standard Arabic text of personal mourning. In the process of composition, he reached out to Arab-American poet, Naomi Nye, whose observational poem “Different Ways to Pray” captures and celebrates the diversity of Islamic prayer and Muslim life. Nye graciously offered to write a new poem for the commission as a personal Du’a of her own. As she describes, “Every Day” is a memorial to her father, Aziz Shihab (whose name is invoked in our opening Du’a): “He was my beloved Palestinian father. ... The thought of such a simple elegy being arranged with music, considering lines sung and notes held felt exhilarating, a meditative tribute to a gentle man [and] a newspaper journalist...who worked all his life for increased knowledge, encouraging more peace and understanding— deeply frustrated by wasteful cycles of violence. ... These songs feel like energetic prayers to me—secular prayers—joyful anthems of daily conviction and persistence.”

The third and final movement is also sung in English. It is a setting of parts of another poem by Naomi Shihab Nye entitled “Different Ways to Pray,” from *Words Under the Words: Selected Poems* (Portland, Oregon: Far Corner Books, 1995). We have

chosen to print Ms. Shihab Nye's entire poem rather than just the lyrics selected by Mr. Fairouz. The parts set to music appear in italics. (See texts and translations section above.)

Mohammed Fairouz was born in New York in 1985. He began composing at an early age and studied at the New England Conservatory of Music and the Curtis Institute of Music. His teachers have included Gunther Schuller, Halim El-Dabh, György Ligeti, Richard Danielpour and John Heiss. His compositions include opera, symphonies, vocal and choral works, chamber music and solo compositions. As an artist involved with major social issues, Fairouz seeks to promote cultural communication and understanding. He has been a member of the faculty at Northeastern University in Boston and now lives in New York City.

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT DIED IN VAIN: REQUIEM FOR A NEW WORLD also by Aaron Robinson

REQUIEM was originally composed under the title "An American Requiem" and dedicated to Anthony Antolini and Down East Singers in 1997. For this premiere performance, it has been reconstructed and re-orchestrated. As a result of this new version, the work was given the new subtitle "REQUIEM FOR A NEW WORLD".

The NEW WORLD within the title is a reflection of America and its music. The inspirations for many of the themes, rhythms, and harmonies found throughout the movements were taken directly from the rich cultural heritage which can be heard in the music of American composers such as Bernstein, Copland, Barber and Williams; and the genres of the Broadway stage, the symphony hall, the American film score, and sacred repertoire.

The historical speeches that accompany REQUIEM speak to the title's preface: "FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT DIED IN VAIN";

taken in part from Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. They memorialize those who have given the greatest sacrifice to our country. For this performance, the speeches were selected specifically by the composer. However, REQUIEM FOR A NEW WORLD is not beholden to these recorded narratives. Whoever wishes to perform the work is encouraged to choose historical speeches that either mark great upheaval within the country or to honor individuals who have lost their lives for love of country.

For this occasion, the composer has chosen:

- Martin Luther King, Jr. - I Have a Dream speech, August 28, 1963
- Franklin D Roosevelt - Infamy speech to joint session of Congress, December 8, 1941
- John F Kennedy - Inaugural speech, January 20, 1961
- Abraham Lincoln - Gettysburg Address (Carl Sandburg)
- Edward Kennedy - Robert F Kennedy eulogy, June 8, 1968
- Chief Joseph - Surrender speech, Bears Paw Battle, October 1877
- Patrick Henry - Liberty speech, Second Virginia Convention, March 23, 1775
- Walter Cronkite - President John F Kennedy assassination, November 22, 1963
- Ronald Reagan - NASA Space Challenger Address to the nation, January 28, 1986