

KANNAMMA

A CONCERT OF THANKSGIVING

presented by

Toronto Mendelssohn Choir

OCTOBER 10, 2020

Kannamma is made possible by the generous support of Marilyn Isaac Stewart. We are grateful to her and to all of our donors and government supporters.

PROGRAM

CANTATA BWV 29, VIII. “SEI LOB UND PREIS MIT EHREN”

by Johann Sebastian Bach

WHAT DOES GRATITUDE INSPIRE? TO THE TUNE OF J.S. BACH’S “JESU JOY OF MAN’S DESIRING”

[arr. Suba Sankaran]

KYRIE BASED ON THE ADAGIO OF THE “MOONLIGHT SONATA”

by Ludwig van Beethoven

[arr. G. B. Bierey]

BECAUSE

by John Lennon and Paul McCartney

[arr. Suba Sankaran]

GRACIAS A LA VIDA

by Violeta Parra

PURVI TILLANA

by T. S. Bhagavatar

KANNAMMA

by Suba Sankaran

DONA NOBIS PACEM

by Dylan Bell

CANTATA BWV 29, II. “WIR DANKEN DIR, GOTT, WIR DANKEN DIR”

by Johann Sebastian Bach

PERFORMERS

SIMON RIVARD, CONDUCTOR

SUBA SANKARAN, GUEST CURATOR AND VOCAL SOLOIST

MATTHEW LARKIN, ORGAN

GERGELY SZOKOLAY, PIANO

JENNYLYND JAMES, VISUAL ARTIST

DYLAN BELL, GUITAR

TRICHY SANKARAN, SOUTH INDIAN CLASSICAL PERCUSSION (MRDANGAM)

SUPRIYA NAYAK, ODISSI DANCER

ORCHESTRA WITH PLAYERS FROM THE TORONTO SYMPHONY YOUTH ORCHESTRA AND THE TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

TMC PROFESSIONAL CORE

TORONTO MENDELSSOHN CHOIR

Simon Rivard's appearances for the 2020-2021 season have been generously underwritten by an anonymous donor.

TEXT, TRANSLATION & NOTES

CANTATA BWV 29, VIII. "SEI LOB UND PREIS MIT EHREN"

Sung in German

*Sei Lob und Preis mit Ehren
Gott Vater, Sohn und Heil'gem Geist!
Der woll in uns vermehren,
Was er aus Gnaden uns verheißt,
Daß wir ihm fest vertrauen,
Gänzlich verlaß'n auf ihn,
Von Herzen auf ihn bauen,
Daß uns'r Herz, Mut und Sinn
Ihm tröstlich soll'n anhangen.
Drauf singen wir zur Stund:
Amen, wir werd'n's erlangen,
Gläub'n wir aus Herzensgrund.*

*May there be praise and glory and honour
for God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit!
May it be his will to increase in us
what he promised us through his grace,
so that we firmly trust him,
surrender ourselves wholly to him,
build on him in our hearts,
so that our heart, spirit and mind
steadfastly depend on him.
For this reason we sing now:
Amen, we shall achieve this,
we believe from the bottom of our hearts.*

WHAT DOES GRATITUDE INSPIRE?

*What does gratitude inspire?
Think of what you're thankful for,
Family, beauty, love and nature,
Heals and strengthens body and soul.*

*Some will put their words to action
with the fire of life impassioned,
Stand up for what they believe -
understanding, joy and peace.*

*Through the way where hope is guiding
Hark, what peaceful music rings,
Pure expression we're providing,
Truth in creativity,*

*Music - beauty's fairest pleasure,
Our community's great treasure,
Thus, we sing as one for you
Our pursuit of artful adventure,
Sweet surrender
Together, we shall get through.*

KYRIE

Sung in Greek (Latin transliteration)

*Kyrie eleison,
Christe eleison,
Kyrie eleison.*

*Lord have mercy,
Christ have mercy,
Lord have mercy.*

BECAUSE

*Because the world is round, it turns me on.
Because the wind is high, it blows my mind.
Because the sky is blue, it makes me cry.
Ah, love is old, love is new,
Love is all, love is you.*

PURVI TILLANA

Sung in Sanskrit

*Nisada Risaba Gandhara Madhyama
Dhaivata Sadjā Pancamo Dattānudatta
Svarita prajaya Pranavakara
Nitya Niramaya Nirmala Nigamanta Prati bhava
Nirupama Niravadi sukhada
Nirisa Nirasa Niranjani Nirguna Brahmasmi*

Commentary by Suba Tillana is a compositional form emerging from the dance genre of South India. It is usually fast-paced and rhythmically energetic, and uses South Indian solfege syllables, drum and dance syllables. It is in the melodic mode Purvi, with a rhythm cycle of three beats. In this Tillana, the composer has combined both the vocal solfege and the rhythmic solfege. The seven notes sa ri ga ma pa dha ni correspond to the western solfege do re mi fa sol la ti. Each of the solfege syllables comes from the first letters of their respective individual phrases, such as ni from nishada, ri from rishaba, ga from gandhara, and so on. In practice, one would sing only the svara (solfege) syllables and not the entire phrase. Here, the composer has used all seven phrases in their entirety as part of the text of the tillana. Furthermore, he points at the evolution of the scale that originated from Vedic chant, with three notes udhatta, anudhatta and svarita (the note above, the note below, and the central note, respectively) in the text. He also refers to the powerful Indian mystic syllable OM (the Pranava mantra), the nada, or universal sound. The rhyming and rhetorical use of the syllable ni that follows the syllabic words, epitomizes the ultimate philosophical and spiritual truth, namely the worship of the Hindu creator-god, Brahma, that is, beyond form, shape, religion, etc., and that which is within oneself (Brahma asmi) and not elsewhere.

KANNAMMA

Oh Kannamma
The Universe, so deep, so wide,
I contemplate your love and derive pleasure,
Oh Kannamma
Your lips like founts of ambrosia,
your eyes brimming with moonlight,
Your body like pure gold,
Oh Kannamma.

I lead my earthly existence in time,
Without any distraction of mind,
Feeling like God in Heaven divine.

My sweet soul, I will cherish forever,
in my lips, there is sweet nectar.
As I utter your name,
Kannamma.

You are my will, You are my mind,
You're the eternal flame that grows from the fire of Life.
My Kannamma.

Commentary by Suba The text is an English translation and adaptation of the love poem, Kannamma, by Tamil poet Bharathiar. The term kannamma is a universal term of endearment, akin to “the apple of my eye” as expressed by a mother to her child, by a devotee to God, or in this case, from a person to their lover. The song is in a raga malika or garland of ragas (shifting melodic modes). Most harmonies stay within the confines and construction of the prescribed ragas with the exception of the last verse which uses more “outside” harmonies. The whole text is in English, except for the syllables in verse 3, which are sound syllables found in South Indian improvised singing, i.e., Nam, Ta, Ree. This work was commissioned by the Jubilate Singers.

DONA NOBIS PACEM

Sung in Latin

Dona nobis pacem gratiam et humilitatem.

Grant us peace, grace and humility.

Commentary by Simon This piece is another fusion, a mix between the great Renaissance contrapuntal techniques, Indian classical music and jazz harmonies. It is set in Charukesi, a Carnatic raga resembling a melodic minor mode with a very characteristic major third — listen for it.

CANTATA BWV 29, II. “WIR DANKEN DIR, GOTT, WIR DANKEN DIR”

Sung in German

Wir danken dir, Gott, wir danken dir
und verkündigen deine Wunder.

*We thank you, God, we thank you
and proclaim your wonders.*



“This fully-virtual concert has a beautiful arc that takes us on a journey that reminds us that – first and foremost – though we are apart, we find our voices and our identities through the coming together of community and the nexus of artistic minds and creativity. With all of this in mind, we give thanks by way of our Thanksgiving concert.” –Suba Sankaran

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