



Grace Chorale of Brooklyn Accepting Letters of Interest for Choral Commission

BROOKLYN - February 20, 2018 - As part of its commitment to commissioning new works, Grace Chorale of Brooklyn under the direction of Jason Asbury announces its 2018 Commission Project. The Chorale encourages composers of diverse backgrounds to submit a letter of interest regarding the following concept.

OVERVIEW

Grace Chorale's spring 2019 concert - *A Long Dark Shadow: Honoring the Centennial of the Red Summer of 1919* - will explore aspects of race relations in the United States over the past century. The year 2019 marks the centennial of the Red Summer of 1919 when a series of deadly racial conflicts in more than 30 American cities led to hundreds of people, most of them black, being killed or lynched, thousands of African-American businesses being destroyed and tens of thousands being forced to flee their homes.

The Great Migration had just begun. A seminal period in our history, it involved the relocation north and west of 6 million African-Americans from the southern United States over the next 60 years. Spurred by limited economic opportunities, segregation laws and violence by the KKK, African-Americans began finding employment in cities that were experiencing labor shortages due to World War I. However, returning white soldiers resented the African-Americans who were given the jobs they once held. African-American soldiers, in turn, resented not receiving the same peacetime benefits as white soldiers. Tensions reached a boiling point in 1919 when the racially-motivated attacks began. Lasting from May to October, the period of these conflicts became known as the "Red Summer." Fast forward one hundred years - what progress have we made? The Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 all led to reforms; however, many parallels remain between the race matters of 1919 and those of today.

The spring 2019 concert will give voice to the "long dark shadow" of racism in the United States and will consist of two parts. We will begin with the great African-American composer William Grant Still's choral ballad, "And They Lynched Him on a Tree." This ground-breaking piece of music on lynching in America was conceived by eminent members of the Harlem Renaissance, and premiered by the New York Philharmonic in 1940. The composition calls for a small orchestra and narrator along with a soloist to play the mother of the victim, a "white chorus" to depict the mob, a "black chorus" that discovers the lynching, a male narrator, and a small orchestra.

COMMISSION DESCRIPTION

In response to Still's work and as part of the Chorale's commitment to commissioning new works, we will commission two composers, ideally from diverse backgrounds, to work collaboratively to compose a multi-movement piece (approximately 30 minutes in duration) for SATB chorus that gives voice to the challenges around race in America today. The composers will be selected based on their willingness to examine the historical context of the Red Summer, to grapple with the subtleties of racism in America today and to collaborate on a composition that explores the ways in which racism manifests itself today. Instrumentation for the



piece will be determined by the composers, who will work together to choose a text. The composers will be expected to attend a minimum of three rehearsals in Brooklyn.

STIPEND

Each composer will be awarded a \$4,500 stipend.

TIMELINE

April 2, 2018-Deadline for letters of interest

May 1, 2018-Composers announced

December 15, 2018- Delivery date

April 2019- Premiere Date TBD (Two performances in Brooklyn)

ABOUT GRACE CHORALE OF BROOKLYN

The mission of Grace Chorale of Brooklyn is to promote and cultivate the art of choral singing in Brooklyn by:

- **Presenting** a wide variety of choral music, including newly commissioned works, to audiences through concerts, partnerships and educational outreach
- **Offering** amateur singers the opportunity to study the art of choral singing under dynamic and professional leadership
- **Engaging** public support for these endeavors

Grace Chorale of Brooklyn is a community chorus based in Brooklyn. Our members are a group of singers who bring diverse musical experiences and backgrounds to the group and all share a love of choral music. We are a 75-member chorus with smaller ensembles drawn from our ranks. Under the baton of music director Jason Asbury, the Chorale is committed to serving the wider Brooklyn community by presenting various traditions of choral music. Our concerts include well-known and little-known masterpieces of choral literature from Early Music to Contemporary composers.

GCB presents two or three concerts a year in Brooklyn neighborhoods, and is dedicated to performing a wide range of music, including the music of living composers with an emphasis on performing newly commissioned work.

HOW TO APPLY

A letter of interest that responds to the criteria outlined above can be sent to commission@gracechorale.org by Monday, April 2, 2018. Composers should also submit two choral compositions that reflect their body of work.