

Rogue Valley Chorale

Presents

"HOW THE WEST WAS SUNG"

The Chorale
at the Corral



Lynn E. Sjolund
Conductor and Musical Director

Andrea Brock
Pianist

CRATERIAN GINGER
ROGERS THEATER

Saturday, May 15, 1999
8:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 16, 1999
3:00 p.m.

ROGUE VALLEY CHORALE

Lynn Sjolund, *conductor*
Doug Wisely, *assistant conductor*

Soprano	Mary Jo Bergstrom	Michael Quirk
Pamela Barlow	Anita Caster	Milton Snow
Anne Canon	Donna Daniels	Rex White
Janet Dolan	Kathleen Davis	
Connie Fisher	Kay Dix	Baritone/Bass
Karen Foster	Charleen Fike	Bud Bergstrom
Kathy Gordon	Judi Harper	Keith Campbell
Leslie Hall	Carol Jacobs	Fred DeArmond
Mary Kay Harmon	Bonnie Miller	Don Dolan
Jennifer Jacobs	Cathy Morrison	Carroll Graber
Julia Lester	Mary Jane Morrison	Paul Hagedorn
Sarah Maple	Diane Newland	John Hunter
Gina McDonald	Marjorie Overland	Gary Lovre
Debra McFadden	Nancy Purdy	David McFadden
Kristi Nelson	Jeannie Saint Germain	Gary Miller
Susan Olson	Doris Sjolund	Jerry Miller
Marilyn Reppert	Marjorie Swanson	Gary Nelson
Carolyne Ruck		Jim Post
Jacque Schmidt	Tenor	Mark Reppert
Phyllis Skinner	John Blackhurst	Eric Smith
Wanda Snow	Andrew Brock	Richard Styles
Darlene VanDenBerg	Dick Frisbie	Dick Swanson
Virginia Van Nortwick	John Gilsdorf	David Uhreen
	Ed Houck	Jim Verdick
Alto	Phil Lind	Michael Wing
Vivian Baures	Bill Matthews	Doug Wisely
Barbara Beers	Eric Overland	

ROGUE VALLEY CHORALE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Philip Lind, <i>president</i>	Karen Foster, <i>vice president</i>
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Barbara Johnson, <i>treasurer</i>	Debra McFadden, <i>librarian</i>

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Margaret Brown	Jerrie Lovre
Mary Ann Byrne	Brian Nelson
Keith Campbell	Diane Newland
Anita Caster	Margaret Reedy
Lee Childs	Jeannie Saint Germain
Charleen Fike	Phyllis Skinner
Gerry Flock	Char Wisely
Marvelle Lawrence	Helenann Ziegler

The performance of Coleridge-Taylor's "Hiawatha's Wedding Feast" is made possible through the generous support of Michael Quirk.

BIOGRAPHS

Lynn Sjolund has served as conductor and music director of the Chorale for all but three years of its 26-year history. Before his retirement from the Medford Public Schools he served as director of choral music and chairman of the Fine Arts Department at Medford High School. He taught for three years at Loyola University of the South in New Orleans, and has also been artistic director and conductor for several Rogue Opera productions. During his tenure with the Chorale, they have performed many major choral works, including Bach's *Mass in B Minor* and *Passion According to Saint John*; Mozart's *Requiem*, *Coronation Mass* and *Solemn Vespers*; Brahms's *Requiem*; Verdi's *Requiem*; Bloch's *Sacred Service*, and Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. He has led the group on three successful tours of Europe, and is in demand as an adjudicator and clinician for choral festivals around the country. His academic degrees are from the University of Oregon, with additional study in Germany.

Andrea Brock, pianist for the Chorale is the Director of Choral Activities at South Medford High School. Ms. Brock studied at the University of Colorado before earning academic degrees from the University of Oregon. She also attended a symposium on accompanying in Lyon, France. While at the University she accompanied the University Singers and has been a regular organist and accompanist since coming to the Rogue Valley. She has accompanied the All-State and All-Northwest Choirs on four occasions. Presently she and her husband, Andrew, share direction of the choir at the First Christian Church.

Rex White is enjoying his first season with the Chorale following his recent move to the valley from Los Angeles. He has sung the roles of Nanki Poo in *The Mikado* with the Simsbury Light Opera Company in Connecticut, the Defendant in *Trial by Jury*, has performed with the Los Angeles Master Chorale under the direction of Roger Wagner, and has been active as a church soloist in Southern California. Mr. White holds degrees from Wheaton College and Azusa Pacific University. He is President of Shiloh Associates, Inc., engaged in real estate and business consulting.

Keith Campbell, retired music educator and founding member of the Chorale, has been a frequent contributor of insightful program notes. Knowledgeable in many aspects of music history, he has a special interest in the development of the musical culture of America.



1999 - 2000 Concert Series

Bach - Mass in B Minor
November 20 and 21, 1999

A Visit to the British Isles
March 4 and 5, 2000

An Old-Fashioned Christmas
December 11 and 12, 1999

A Few of My Favorite Things
May 12 and 13, 2000

PROGRAM

Hiawatha's Wedding Feast

music by
Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
text from
Longfellow's "Song of Hiawatha"

with
Rex White, Tenor

Selections from "The Tender Land"

by
Aaron Copland

Laurie's Song - - - Kathryn Gordon, soprano
Doris Sjolund, pianist
The Promise of Living - - - The Chorale
Stomp Your Foot - - - The Chorale
Andrea Brock and Mark Reppert, pianists

INTERMISSION

Hymns of the Old West

We Shall Walk Through the Valley - - - Arranged by Carroll Graber
Abide with Me - - - Arranged by Carroll Graber
Zion's Walls - - - Adapted by Aaron Copland
The Women of the Chorale
At the River - - - Adapted by Aaron Copland
I Shall Not Be Moved - - - Arranged by Alice Parker

Folk Songs and Cowboy Ballads

with Bill Esser and David McFadden, banjo, guitar and mandolin ;
Doris Sjolund, melodica; John Gilsdorf, harmonica;
Luna Bitzer, flute; Mike Knox, tuba.
Bird's Courting Song - - - Arranged by Barbara Harlow
Red River Valley - - - Traditional Ballad
Diane Newland and John Gilsdorf, soloists
Cowboy Medley - - - Arranged by Carroll Graber
David McFadden and John Gilsdorf, soloists
Down the Oregon Trail - - - Arranged by Carroll Graber
Phil Lind, soloist
Colorado Trail - - - Arranged by Norman Luboff
The Men of the Chorale
The Old Chisholm Trail - - - Arranged by Norman Luboff
The Men of the Chorale
Home on the Range - - - Arranged by Mark Hayes

HIAWATHA'S WEDDING FEAST

by

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

Born August 15, 1875, in London, England

Died September 1, 1912, in Croydon, England

At its publication in 1855, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Hiawatha* was a best-seller, widely translated and admired by both intellectuals and the larger public, but, like the great Iroquois tribes whose disappearance it describes, it has today sunk into virtual oblivion. While it flourished *Hiawatha* influenced music as well as poetry, becoming the vehicle for a trilogy of cantatas by the Afro-Anglo composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor that, with the exception of Handel's *Messiah*, were, through the years prior to World War II, the most popular choral works in England.

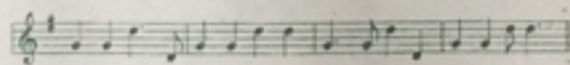
The greatest popularity of this music began twelve years after his death with staged presentations given at the Royal Albert Hall each year from 1924 to 1939. Conductor Kenneth Alwyn, a present-day Coleridge-Taylor advocate, describes these events: "For two weeks every summer all roads to the hall were thronged with capacity audiences and close on a thousand 'Red Indian' performers. These 'braves' and 'squaws' came not from 'the Land of the Dakotas' but from the concrete wigwams of Wapping, Tooting, Penge, Cheam, and Coleridge-Taylor's own village of Croydon—in fact from any village that could send singing braves and squaws to the great 'Pow-Wow' in the Albert Hall Arena under the Great Chief of Music Dr. Malcolm Sargent. In 1939 the War came, and many of the 'braves' changed their war-paint for battledress, and the enormously popular staged performances were never revived."

Today Americans are most likely to encounter *Hiawatha* in an unlikely source: Dvorák's *New World Symphony*, an orchestral narrative of two scenes from Longfellow's poem. Dvorák's symphonic setting is now virtually all that is left of the Longfellow musical legacy.

Unlike Dvorák, who botched *Hiawatha* as an opera, then sneaked it into a symphony, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor envisioned an appropriate form for the poem from the beginning: a gigantic cantata, lucidly orchestrated, with the text entrusted to a chorus that rarely rests. The focus on choral forces gives the work a chantlike ambience that seems to fit these "tales of strange adventure" better than the more formal format of grand opera.

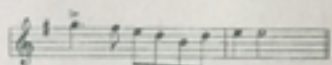
Coleridge-Taylor's *Scenes from the Song of Hiawatha*, consisting of "Hiawatha's Wedding Feast" (1898), "The Death of Minnehaha" (1899), and "Hiawatha's Departure" (1900), contain two of the three scenes that had already made their way into Dvorák's Symphony. But while the Dvorák version feels like poetry, *Scenes from the Song of Hiawatha*, with its literal approach, straight-forward harmony, and avoidance of mystery, seems like epic prose.

"Hiawatha's Wedding Feast," the showiest and most dramatic piece in the set, premiered at the Royal College of Music, under the direction of Sir Charles Stanford. Composers usually find the writer to match their aesthetic, and Longfellow's poetry, with its trochaic meter and dronelike repetitions, is precisely the language of Coleridge-Taylor, who made a virtue of repetition. Sometimes criticized for lack of counterpoint and sonata-form development, his compositional style is based almost entirely on constant, fluid variations of a few themes. "Hiawatha's Wedding Feast" is, with the exception of its centerpiece, the eloquent love-song "Onaway, Awake, Beloved," through-composed. But its form bears some resemblance to a rondo, the engaging principal subject of which the composer Edward Elgar said, "jigged in the vacuities of my head."

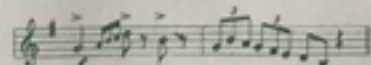


Principal Subject

The episodes that contrast with the principal subject use the second and third ideas shown below. These ideas are heard throughout the work in various transformations and/or combinations. All three ideas are introduced in the opening pages.



Second Idea



Third Idea

Coleridge-Taylor manages to avoid the potential monotony of Longfellow's trochees (poetic metric feet that consist of a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable). As Booker T. Washington, one of the earliest and most perceptive admirers of Coleridge-Taylor put it, the work holds the attention through its "haunting melodic phrases, bold harmonic scheme, and vivid orchestration." For better or worse, the poem is simply there, all of it, clearly enunciated, and rendered without irony or condescension.

The end of the century saw in the United States talented African-Americans laying the foundations of a black musical nationalism. Acknowledging their indebtedness to Dvorák, who had set the American classical music world on its Eurocentric ear when he said, "In the Negro melodies of America I discover all that is needed for a great and noble school of music," these musicians collected and published black folksong, drew on black folk idioms, and turned to racial themes in their songs, program music and dramatic works. Another

inspiration was Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. *Hiawatha* had a political resonance for its composer, and Coleridge-Taylor became a committed spokesperson for black liberation. He was greatly influenced by the black American poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar, some of whose poems he set, and by the Fisk Jubilee Singers of Nashville. He zealously studied the writings of African-Americans W.E.B. DuBois, Frederick Douglass, and Booker T. Washington. In 1904 he made his first of three visits to the United States, where there were Coleridge-Taylor Societies which not only performed his music, but also symbolized the respect given to a young black man who was succeeding in a white society. He met and encouraged many black American composers, he lunched with President Theodore Roosevelt at the White House, and he conducted the New York Philharmonic, whose members described him warmly as "the black Mahler." The climax of the visit was a three day Coleridge-Taylor festival in Washington and Baltimore, the centerpiece being the composition which had made him famous: *Hiawatha*.

THE TENDER LAND

by

Aaron Copland

Born November 14, 1900, in New York City

Died December 2, 1990, in North Tarrytown, New York

It took opera a long time to find its way in America as a native art form. The spectacular success of the Hollywood cinema and the Broadway musical meant that while Europe created cultivated art music for the stage, America ragged, swung, boogied and rocked. American symphonists were able to borrow from popular idioms such as jazz and folk song. Opera, however, requires a verbal language, and its audiences long clung to the prejudice that Italian and German were the dialects of high musical art.

An early attempt to create a colloquial American opera was George F. Bristow's *Rip Van Winkle* (1855), the first American grand opera on a national subject. At the turn of the twentieth century, Charles Wakefield Cadman, Victor Herbert, Walter Damrosch, even Scott Joplin, composed "American" operas, but they failed to find a permanent place in the repertory. It wasn't until the postwar era that American composers took a revitalized interest in opera. Led by Carlisle Floyd and Douglas Moore, they defied the prevailing Eurocentric prejudice, and cast their works in an American form midway between Broadway and classical opera and presented them in new venues.

In 1952, Aaron Copland accepted a commission to write an opera for television. For this venture, he decided to compose a relatively small work, something appropriate not only to television but also for regional companies and universities.

For his librettist, he turned to Erik Johns, who had until then pursued a dual career as a painter and dancer. Copland suggested as a starting point something based on James Agee's *Let Us Praise Famous Men*, and, in particular, the accompanying photographs of Walker Evans. Conceived as a photo-essay about tenant farmers in the Deep South, Agee and Walker spent several weeks in a small Alabama town, interviewing and photographing three families. The book brought a moving humanity to the subject of poverty in the rural South, and the opera's characters of Ma Moss and Laurie are based on Evan's photographs of a "passive and stony" mother and her daughter "not yet hardened by the grim life" (in Agee's book, the twenty-seven-year-old Annie Mae Gudger, and her ten-year-old daughter, Maggie Louise). Johns moved the setting to Kansas, and placed the time of the action in the dust bowl period of the mid-1930's.

Completed in the spring of 1954, Copland and Johns were unable to locate an interested network to produce a television opera; the work was premiered by the New York City Opera on April 1, 1954, and was presented at Tanglewood in August of that same year.

The Tender Land tells of life on the farm during the Depression, the hardships of isolation, the power and danger of young love, and the bonds of family and community. But the opera has less to do with stage action than with a musical exploration of the inner thoughts and feelings of the characters, particularly Laurie and her desire for independence, and the mother who must accept Laurie's decisions and look to her younger daughter for the continuation of the family cycle. The powerful image of the mother and daughter of Walker Evan's photograph clearly inspired the plot of *The Tender Land*, but it is the music that brings to life the desires and joys of the rural farm characters.

Johns and Copland decided on an operatic form in which set pieces—solos, duets, and so forth—are embedded within a continuous flow. Some of these set pieces are longer and more self-contained than others, but none ends conclusively enough to induce applause (except for "Stomp Your Foot," and even here Copland apparently hoped to minimize any interruption by eliding in the next section).

The poignant aria "Once I Thought I'd Never Grow," which has taken on a life of its own as "Laurie's Song," is sung on her first stage entrance, the night before her high-school graduation exercises. She stands at the gate, feeling the horizon beckon.

"The Promise of Living" is a quintet for all five leads and the finale for Act I. For two decades Copland's work had emphasized communal solidarity and social accommodation, and this is the opera's culmination of such idealism. The ensemble is based on "Zion's Walls," one of three folk songs that Copland incorporated into the opera.

The boisterous "Stomp Your Foot" is part of a party celebrating Laurie's graduation from high school and is based on the folk song "Cottage by the Sea."

For a number of years, Copland hoped to compose another piece for the lyric stage but could not find a libretto that suited him. "I admit that if I have one regret," he stated in his memoirs, "it is that I never did write a 'grand opera.'" What he *did* write was *The Tender Land*, a work that has established itself as one of only a few American operas in the repertory, with a score containing some of his most passionate and evocative music.