

Scott Ordway's The Duter Edge of Youth A Choral Opera

Saturday, March 2, 2024 4:00 pm

The Cathedral Church of St. Paul 138 Tremont St., Boston

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Welcome, friends new and old,

We are delighted you are here. A choral organization is at its heart a community, one that doesn't stop in the front row of the singers, the orchestra or the conductor. It is inseparable from you, our audience, our friends, our family.

We are fortunate to have a diverse season of music to share with you this season—reflective of the talents and interests of our four outstanding candidates as we head to the conclusion of our new Music Director search. From Italy to Harlem, Boston to Leipzig and beyond, together with you, we'll explore joy,



love, sorrow, growing up, fear and freedom. We're committed to the journey and we hope you'll join us for it.

These are challenging times for the performing arts. The Covid pandemic has made a significant dent in audiences and expectations are high for music organizations to expand their traditional repertoire. The BBC board is focused on the growth of an engaged community experiencing the wonder of fine choral music ancient and modern, well known and seldom heard. We are on a firm footing and committed to our goals.

You can read all about our five-year plan at bbcboston.org/about/strategicplan. You'll see that we don't expect success to be just about us—it's about engaging with and enriching the larger community, as we do right now with our Bridges partner, the Boston Public Library and our English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) chorus. It's also about you. We need your presence at our concerts and we'd love your support as a donor or a concert sponsor. You can reach out to our Executive Director, Susanne Powers for more information on how to help us, or simply contribute online.

So, please enjoy the season and the sense of community we hope this brings to you. We're looking forward to celebrating our 50th anniversary soon and being led into new music by an amazing new Music Director. What an exciting next few years we will have!

Craig Hughes



Thank You!

Back Bay Chorale's mission is to share the power of voice, advancing the spirit of community. We are grateful for your presence with us at this performance. Thank you also to our generous individual and corporate donors for your financial support, and to our program advertisers. Please offer them your patronage and mention Back Bay Chorale. The Back Bay Chorale is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your donation is tax deductible to the maximum extent allowed by law.

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The Back Bay Chorale gratefully acknowledges the support of the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. Mail: PO Box 170051 • Boston, MA 02117 Phone: 617.648.3885 Email: info@bbcboston.org Web: bbcboston.org

Welcome BBC Friends,

This is not your typical concert, and I am so glad you are here to experience this wonderful and unusual project!

Winter flew by for me, as time is wont to do when your heart and mind are fully immersed in an enjoyable and challenging project. Preparing for a concert and discovering new music and art is the ultimate antidote to "waiting season," as this gardener calls it.

Tackling a work that has only been performed once is an experience that requires unparalleled focus. Written in 2020, this work

had its World Premiere by The Thirteen in Washington DC in 2022.

We are thrilled to be able to feature the two original soloists from the World Premiere. With their extra level of ease and familiarity, the brilliance of the music will reach straight for your heart. I hope your imagination is stirred and your heart is touched, by the music, the story, and the performers.

You, our audience, are at the heart of everything we do. Your support, your applause, and your presence are invaluable to us. You are not just spectators; you are part of our musical family. We invite you to share your likes, suggestions, or general feedback with us. It is important to us to hear which were your favorite moments or where we can improve. To do that, we invite you to share your feedback by survey which you can find tonight in the pews, or you can access by QR code.

I am grateful you chose to spend the afternoon with us, and I hope this concert makes you smile, makes you sing, and sends you home with a full and happy heart. We hope to see you at Sanders Theatre on May 10th for our last concert of the season with Caron Daley.



Musically yours,

Susanne Powers



The Outer Edge of Youth (*New England Premiere*) Saturday, March 2 • 4:00 pm • The Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Boston

Back Bay Chorale • Amy Nicole Broadbent, soprano • Emily Marvosh, mezzosoprano • Back Bay Chorale String Ensemble • Emily Isaacson, guest conductor

Scott ORDWAY b. 1984	The Outer Edge of Youth
D. 1984	Prologue
	Act I: 1a. Two Boys Enter the Forest: Introduction John Kornet, tenor I; Mike Trogolo, tenor II
	Act I: 1b. Two Boys Enter the Forest: Chorale
	Act I: 1c. Two Boys Enter the Forest: Dialogue
	Act I: 2a. The Foxes' Wedding: Introduction Maya Bloom, soprano I; Jen Herrmann, soprano II
	Act I: 2b. The Foxes' Wedding: Interlude (Wedding March of the Foxes)
	Act I: 2c. The Foxes' Wedding: Dialogue
	Act I: 2d. The Foxes' Wedding. Chorale - On the Nature of Love (The First Argument)
	Act I: 2e. The Foxes' Wedding. Chorale - On the Nature of Love (The Second Argument)
	Act I: 3a. The Orchard and the Falling Snow. Introduction Sabrina Sarmiento, alto II ; Molly McCleary, alto I
	Act I: 3b. The Orchard and the Falling Snow. Monologue and Response - Sebastian's Longing
	Intermission
	Act II: 4a. The Bear in the Trap. Introduction Irvin Heifetz, bass I Wayne Wilkins, bass I; Justin Buie, bass II
	Act II: 4b: The Bear in the Trap. Dialogue and Response
	Act II: 4c. The Bear in the Trap. Monologue
	Act II: 4d. The Bear in the Trap. Chorale
	Act II: 4e. The Bear in the Trap. Dialogue
	Act II: 4f. The Bear in the Trap. Monologue (The First Goodbye)
	Act II: 4g. The Bear in the Trap. Chorale
	Act II: 5a. Awakening. Introduction John Kornet , tenor I; Mike Trogolo, tenor II
	Act II: 5b. Awakening. Monologue and Chorale

This concert is made possible thanks in part to the generosity of InetServices.



Synopsis

The Outer Edge of Youth A Choral Opera



Super-titles are provided for this performance. The libretto is also available on our web site. Please use the QR Code to find the page on your mobile device. You may also go directly to bbcboston.org/edge-libretto.

Please take the time to silence your electronic devices. Audio or video recording of any portion of this concert is not permitted.

PROLOGUE. Before humans walked upon the surface of the earth, the birds all sang from high above.

ACT I SCENE 1. On an afternoon walk through their small town, two boys at the very end of childhood— Sebastian and Nicholas—hear voices coming from the forest near their home. As they approach, they realize that they can understand the birds who sing deep in the woods. The birds invite them to enter the forest.

SCENE 2. During a sun-shower, the boys witness a foxes' wedding ceremony and ask the birds what force binds these mysterious creatures together.

SCENE 3. Though the sun is still shining, it begins to snow gently. As the boys move deeper into the forest, they discover an unlikely thing: an apple orchard growing in a large clearing. The ground is littered with white apple blossoms. A strong wind causes the petals to rise up, swirling around the boys and meeting the falling snow at the horizon. The boys—especially Sebastian—are overwhelmed by the silent beauty of their surroundings, and ask the birds how they can adequately express their gratitude for what they see and feel. The birds disappoint the boys by telling them that the beauty of creation is and must always remain a mystery, and question the wisdom of the game they are playing by speaking to the boys.

ACT II SCENE 4. In a second clearing, the boys encounter a bear caught in a trap. Her leg is badly broken and she is whimpering in pain. Her two young cubs nestle at her side, uncomprehending. None of them will survive. The two boys—

but Nicholas especially-are overwhelmed by the compassion they feel for the bear and her young ones. The sight of this suffering is too much for them, and they angrily ask the birds why they have shown them such a brutal thing. The birds explain that compassion for other creatures is a distinctly human quality, and that they should celebrate their intuitive urge to help and care for other living things. The boys are beside themselves with grief and reject this teaching. Sebastian leaves in anger. Nicholas remains behind, begging the birds to transform him into one of them so that he can be free of the pain he feels as a human. They agree, and he is transformed into a bird, leaving behind his capacity for empathy and compassion, but also finding a sense of peace that eluded him as a boy.

SCENE 5. Sebastian finds himself at the far edge of the forest, looking out over the sea. He notices that Nicholas is missing and asks the birds where they have taken him. While he can still hear their song, he can no longer understand their words. He mourns the loss of his friend, but intuitively understands that he must have chosen to remain in the forest. Knowing that Nicholas was always restless and never truly at peace, Sebastian takes comfort in imagining his friend at home with the birds in a way that he never could have been among humankind.



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HE OUTER EDGE OF YOUTH IS A CHORAL OPERA, A GENRE WHICH I conceive as work of vocal theater that can be presented in concert or semi-staged by a chamber choir, or in a fully-staged version by an opera company. It is more dramatic and character-driven than a traditional oratorio, but more poetic, contemplative, and abstract than most contemporary opera.

The story concerns two young boys, Nicholas and Sebastian, who find that they can understand the voices of the birds in the forest near their home. They wander into the woods, engaging the birds in a conversation that addresses the questions which are most urgent to them in those late years of youth when we first begin to perceive the wideness and great beauty of the world.

In the first of three central episodes, the boys question the nature of love. The birds present two competing hypotheses. In the first case, they suggest that love arises between two people as a result of the actions they take toward one another, that caring for someone causes you to love them more and better, that when you sacrifice some part of yourself for another person that the sacrifice is repaid by the love which develops in the aftermath. When the boys are dissatisfied with this response, the birds suggest alternately that love is a kind of inexplicable divine spark that manifests as a bond between humans, a phenomenon whose mystery is fundamentally impenetrable.

In the next scene, the boys are confronted by a landscape of astonishing beauty. Overwhelmed by their aesthetic response, they ask the birds how they can properly express their gratitude for what they see and feel. Both boys understand things in a basically secular way: it does not occur to them to thank God for the created world. In their instinct to gratitude, though, they experience the space that the divine might once have occupied. When they ask the birds who they can thank for all of the beauty in the world, the birds reply that they have no better insight into this question than does any other living creature, and that the boys must content themselves with the mystery.

In the fourth scene, the boys confront the tension between the intense, often immobilizing compassion that is felt by the very young and the necessary inurement to the suffering of others which one develops as an adult in order to function in a world that is rife with pain, inequality, and injustice. At the opera's conclusion, this tension leads to the boys parting ways. Sebastian is able to develop this hardness to the suffering of others that allows him, in a way, to enter into the world of adulthood. Nicholas, on the other hand, is not. He begs the birds to transform him into one of their own and he remains in the forest, singing and flying, without suffering and without regret.

In my own soft way, the opera is also a polemic against the monolithic depiction of masculinity in our culture, which is largely the same regardless of whether that masculinity is being celebrated or critiqued. I have sought to create a work which focuses instead on the inner lives of boys and young men as I experienced boyhood myself: quietly, observantly, disinclined to violence,



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competition, and confrontation, in love with language and sound, at odds with other boys, desperately searching for beauty, and at the edge of a dark and mysterious forest (in my case, the redwood forests of the Santa Cruz Mountains in Northern California).

The opera does not focus on deeds, actions, or accomplishments. Instead, it celebrates the imaginative world of two young boys who think, and discuss, and feel. As the narrator, voiced by a tenor in Scene 1 observes, "Neither had the gift of strength. / Neither had the gift of action. / Neither had a taste for violence. / These are the ones who listen." The questions proposed by the boys—and by the work—are both naïve and sentimental. They are the questions of a young mind and they are those of a consciousness freshly awakened to the breadth and the richness and the complexity of the world beyond the domestic sphere which is the domain of early youth. While we ask such questions with decreasing frequency as adults, and while we lose patience with the impossibility of resolving their contradictory and unsatisfying answers, I refuse to believe that they are invalid. When I am alone, and at peace, and silent, and still, they are the questions which emerge from the deepest places of my being with the most burning and ecstatic urgency. I turn for help to the young people in my life, whether these be my daughters (aged 4 and 1) or the somewhat older imagined children in this work, to help me keep asking them aloud and in earnest.

- Scott Ordway, Philadelphia, Spring 2022



Scott Ordway

OMPOSER AND MULTIMEDIA ARTIST Scott Ordway (b. 1984) has become recognized for his boundary-defying, mixed-media projects, creating widelyacclaimed work that has been called "exquisite" (*The New York Times*) and "arresting" (*Gramophone*), "hypnotic" (BBC) and "a marvel" (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*). Heard on major stages around the world, his compositions revel in their multi-disciplinary reach, and reflect his vast creative curiosity.



Drawing on his deep interest in literature, languages, and the humanities, Ordway's remarkably diverse works often fuse his music with text, video, digital soundscape, photography, and experimental theater to explore an eclectic array of contemporary, often urgent themes about ecology, architecture, protest and revolution, and urban life. In recent years, he has focused on the relationship between landscape and culture.

Hailed as "an American response to Sibelius" by *The Boston Globe*, his compositions have been commissioned or performed by the Hong Kong, Buffalo, and Colorado Springs Philharmonics; Tucson Symphony; Hong Kong Arts, Beijing Modern, Bang on a Can, and Aspen Music Festivals; Tanglewood New Fromm Players; Berlin's Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler; Sweden's Norrbotten NEO; Yale Institute of Sacred Music; The Thirteen; Lorelei and SOLI Chamber Ensembles; Jasper, Momenta, Daedalus, and Arneis String Quartets; University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archeology and Anthropology; and Haverford College's Hurford Center for the Arts and Humanities. His music is also heard on the Acis and Naxos labels.

An active conductor, Ordway has held posts with the Syzygy New Music Ensemble (NYC) and Eugene Contemporary Chamber Ensemble (Oregon), and was Associate Conductor of the Juventas New Music Ensemble, an ensemble-inresidence at the Boston Conservatory. As a champion for the music of our time, he has presented more than 50 new works by young and emerging composers, in addition to many of his own large-scale works.

Ordway has degrees from the University of Pennsylvania, University of Oregon, and University of Puget Sound, and has also trained at the Freie Universität Berlin and Accademia Chigiana in Siena. He is Associate Professor of Music Composition at Rutgers University, and previously taught at the Curtis Institute of Music and Bates College.



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Emily Isaacson guest conductor/music director finalist

R. EMILY ISAACSON IS KNOWN FOR forging a rapport with audiences and musicians alike. Considered a leader in arts entrepreneurship, she is "Artist of the Year" by the Maine Arts Commission, one of the "50 Mainers Leading the State" by *Maine Magazine*, and the "2018 face of Women's Work" edition by *Maine Women Magazine*.

Isaacson is the founder and artistic director of Classical Uprising, a performing arts company that



believes classical music must rise up, challenge current norms, and re-envision where, how, and for whom we are making music. With over 50 concerts and events year-round, Classical Uprising serves over 6,000 musicians and music lovers through its programs: Oratorio Chorale: symphonic chorus presenting five programs (16 concerts) a year; Portland Bach Experience, a series of immersive classical music festivals; and Horizon Voices: four ensembles for grades k-12 developing the next generation of creative citizens

Isaacson's performances have been heralded as "one of the most moving musical events of the decade" (*Portland Press Herald*), "little short of phenomenal" (*Maine Classical Beat*), and "not just music...the full panoply of human creative endeavor" (*Wiscasset Newspaper*).

In 2008, Isaacson helped to launch Roomful of Teeth, a GRAMMY®-Awardwinning vocal ensemble which received the 2014 GRAMMY for Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance, and whose *Partita for 8 Voices* was awarded the 2013 Pulitzer Prize in Music.

Isaacson holds a bachelors in English from Williams College; a masters degree in musicology from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland; a masters degree in conducting from the University of Oregon; and a doctorate from the University of Illinois. Her dissertation, "The Binding of Isaac: Comparative Musical Perspectives on Conflict and Faith in the Age of Modernity," focuses on the music of Israeli composers Aharon Harlap and Menachem Zur and American composer Steve Reich. Additional research projects have taken her to Cuba, Sweden, Estonia, and Italy.

Isaacson started the music department for the Cesar Chavez Public Charter Schools in Washington, D.C. in 2005. In 2014, she helped launch the Snow Pond Community Music School in central Maine. Isaacson serves as a guest conductor and clinician at choral festivals through New England. Isaacson belongs to Beyond Artists, a coalition of artists that donates a percentage of their concert fees to organizations they care about, and she supports the Natural Resources Council of Maine and Alight Humanitarian Relief.



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AMY NICOLE BROADBENT SOPRANO

CCLAIMED FOR VIBRANT AND ENGAGING PERFORmances of oratorio, art song, opera, and chamber music, Amy Nicole Broadbent is a sought-after interpreter of a wide range of vocal music, from the music of Bach and Handel through newly-composed works. Broadbent has performed as a soloist for the Oregon Bach Festival, Staunton Music Festival, Bach Choir of Bethlehem, Washington National Cathedral, Washington Bach Consort, The Thirteen, Folger Consort, Reading Choral Society, Washington



Master Chorale, and New Dominion Chorale, and as a recitalist for Dumbarton Concerts (upcoming), Music on the Lake, and the Chautauqua Institution. She created the role of Sebastian in Scott Ordway's opera, *The Outer Edge of Youth*, her recording of which was acclaimed by *Opera News* (Critic's Choice), *Gramophone*, and *BBC Music Magazine*.

A multi-faceted musician devoted to ensemble music, Broadbent is a founding member of vocal quartet The Polyphonists, and has lent her voice to award-winning ensembles including The Crossing, Seraphic Fire, True Concord, The Choir of Trinity Wall Street, Santa Fe Desert Chorale, and the Choir of the Basilica. She is passionate about promoting and programming classical music written by women, and her own compositions and arrangements have been performed at venues including the White House, Washington National Cathedral, and the Basilica of the National Shrine. From 2018–2020, Broadbent served as Assistant Conductor for the Victorian Lyric Opera Company, where her conducting was hailed as "stellar... a balletic piece of choreography" (Ruby Griffith Award) in performances of *The Gondoliers, Princess Ida, H.M.S. Pinafore*, and *The Pirates of Penzance*. She is the Assistant Conductor of the U.S. Navy Sea Chanters, the official chorus of the U.S. Navy. Broadbent studied voice and conducting at the University of Maryland, and her teachers include Elizabeth Daniels, Gran Wilson, Carmen Balthrop, and Edward Maclary.





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EMILY MARVOSH MEZZO-SOPRANO

MERICAN CONTRALTO EMILY MARVOSH HAS ESTABlished a reputation as a singing actress with excellent musicianship, a "plum-wine voice," and "graceful allure," on national and international stages. Recent solo appearances include the Handel and Haydn Society, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Rhode Island Philharmonic, Charlotte Symphony, Huntsville Symphony Orchestra, Tucson Symphony Orchestra, and John Davenant's *Macbeth* with the Henry Purcell



Society of Boston, as well as solo recitals in Tucson and the Boston area. Awards include the prestigious Adams Fellowship at the Carmel Bach Festival, the American Prize in the Oratorio and Art Song divisions, and second place in the New England Regional NATSAA competition. In the 2022-2023 season, she was the inaugural Resident Artist with the Lexington (MA) Symphony.

Marvosh's contributions to 21st century repertoire and performance include world premiere performances with The Thirteen, Juventas New Music, Shoreline Music Society, the Manchester Summer Chamber Music Festival, and the Hugo Kauder Society. She is a member of the Lorelei Ensemble, which promotes innovative new music for women. With Lorelei, she has enjoyed collaborations with composers David Lang and Julia Wolfe, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, A Far Cry, Duke Performances, and major symphony orchestras in Boston, Chicago, Nashville, and San Francisco.

A frequent recitalist and proud native of Michigan, Marvosh created a chamber recital celebrating the history and culture of her home state, which won a St. Botolph Club Foundation Emerging Artist Award. Additional solo performances in Michigan are planned for the 2023–2024 season.

Marvosh belongs to Beyond Artists, and she supports Rosie's Place and the Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music through her performances. She holds degrees from Central Michigan University and Boston University.



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HENRY WEINBERGER REHEARSAL ACCOMPANIST

ENRY WEINBERGER HAS ACCOMPANIED musicians in the Boston area for many years. Former positions include accompanying the MIT Chorus under the direction of Bill Cutter, and working with Betsy Burleigh and the Master Singers of Lexington. Weinberger received a Master of Music in Piano Performance at the New England Conservatory, where he studied



with Leonard Shure and Lorna Cooke DeVaron. His other principal teachers were Victor Rosenbaum at Brandeis University and John Moriarty.

Weinberger has played rehearsals under the batons of Seiji Ozawa, Arthur Fiedler, Kurt Masur, and John Williams. He has served on the faculty of the Longy School in Cambridge, where he was the music director of the opera department and taught classes in vocal repertoire and diction for singers. Weinberger made a career change in 1989, when he became a nurse. He worked at Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates for twenty-four years, where he specialized in the care of people with HIV, hepatitis C, and other infectious diseases.

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Corrections

If you are listed incorrectly, are mistakenly missing from this list, or would like to be removed from this page, please let us know at info@bbcboston.org, and we will make the appropriate corrections.



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Led by Riikka Pietiläinen Caffrey, Community Engagement Coordinator, our Bridges program partners with the Boston Public Library to provide a musical experience to help Boston area residents develop their English speaking skills. The Bridges ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) Chorus provides students with an opportunity to make vocal music, improve their English language skills, and develop friendships with singers. The program helps immigrants, refugees, and others to become integrated with the Boston community. These in-person classes are FREE for all participants, and no previous music skills are required. The Bridges ESOL Chorus has performed at the Boston Public Library Fund, our Christmas concerts, and at U.S. Naturalization Ceremonies.

Dr. Riikka Pietiläinen Caffrey was

born in Kemi, Finland, and sang and toured with the acclaimed Finnish choir

Philomela, She immigrated to the U.S. to pursue music studies. While in New York. she founded and conducted Las Sirenas, a women's chamber choir, at



the City College of New York, premiering works by American and Finnish composers. She has held academic positions at American University in Beirut, Lebanon, Whitman College in Walla Walla, WA, and Bunker Hill Community College in Boston. She is Associate Professor of the Practice and Director of Choral and Vocal Performance at Boston College.

To learn more, visit bbcboston.org/bridges

Cynthia Young* Cynthia Brown Dottie Pitt* Euisun Jang Haeun Choi Hye-seung Kang Kenise Phanord Kristin Kulash* James Xu

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