

OUT OF THE DARKNESS

Saturday, April 26, 2025, at 7:30 p.m.
Holy Rosary Church, Seattle

PROGRAM

Arvo Pärt (b. 1935)	Magnificat (1989)
Pärt	Nunc dimittis (2001)
Gabriel Jackson (b. 1962)	Ave Maria (2004)
Thomas Tallis (1505—1585)	Lamentations II
<i>Intermission</i>	
Robert Carver (c. 1485—1570)	O bone Jesu <i>a19</i>
Pärt	The Deer's Cry (2007)
Jeff Junkinsmith (b. 1956)	Tenebrae factae sunt* (2025)
	<i>*World premiere</i>
John Tavener (1944—2013)	As one who has slept (1996)
Tavener	Song for Athene (1993)

WE CONCLUDE OUR 24 | 25 CONCERT SERIES with a program to guide us out of a season of penitence to joy. This program sets Renaissance motets alongside modern choral pieces that draw inspiration from the same spirituality found in our core Renaissance programming.

Music by Estonian composer **Arvo Pärt** (b. 1935) has been in our rotation since our second concert as a group in 2005. My first encounter with his music was from a recording by the Theatre of Voices and The Pro Arte Singers directed by Paul Hillier in 2000—admittedly before my fondness for Renaissance polyphony had fully developed. I had an unexpected emotional reaction to Pärt's music. Driven to understand, on a technical level, how his music affected me so (and to better understand myself), I pursued a music theory degree at the University of Washington to study his compositional techniques.

The most striking aspect of Pärt's music is its commitment to simplicity—a compositional approach centered on the reduction of musical material. Pärt drastically limits harmonic possibilities by restricting melodic movement,

BYRD ENSEMBLE

Artistic Director
Markdavin Obenza

Soprano
Natalie Ingrisano
Jen Milius
Ruth Schauble
Margaret Obenza

Alto
Sarrah S. Doyle
Haley Gabler
Lauren Kastanas
Sophia Nash

Tenor
Jacob Buys
Chad DeMaris
Orrin Doyle
Sam Faustine
Joshua Haberman
Dustin Kaspar
Kurt Kruckeberg
Michael Sederquist

Bass
Peter Alexander
T.J. Callahan
Doug Fullington
Clayton Moser
Willimark Obenza
Matthew Peterson

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ENSEMBLE

Photo Credit: Willi Pixel

Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, B.C., October 2024.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

distilling his music to its potent and profound essence. Pärt's commitment to simplicity developed later in life. As a young composer, he worked in twelve-tone and serialist techniques, which displeased the Soviet artistic authorities, who labeled it Western "formalism" and banned his early compositions. When these more advanced styles became acceptable, Pärt started composing religious music, which further upset the Soviet establishment, sending Pärt into several periods of contemplative silence, during which he studied choral music from the 14th through the 16th centuries. Out of this period of musical soul-searching emerged a compositional style that informed his music beginning in the 1970s—*tintinnabuli* (bell-like). The technique employed one or more instrumental or vocal parts essentially melodic in construction, placed against one or more parts projecting arpeggiations of a major or minor triad—evoking a "tintinnabulation," the ringing of bells.

Pärt's *Magnificat* (1989) is an alternation between passages for full SATB choir and passages for two to

three parts, with a solo soprano voice interpolated throughout. Similarly, Pärt's *Nunc dimittis* (2001) alternates musical passages for full choir and smaller forces according to the paragraphs of the text. The seven-minute Latin canticle is mostly in minor key except on the climax, "lumen" (light), which is highlighted with major key.

Pärt's *The Deer's Cry* (2007) is set to a passage from a 5th century text allegedly written by Saint Patrick—the patron saint of Ireland—who brought Christianity to Ireland. The Deer's Cry tells the story of Saint Patrick, who, knowing that he and his accompanying monks were being ambushed and likely would be killed, led his men through the woods while reciting that prayer. The enemies saw them in the woods as a mother deer with fawns and spared Saint Patrick and his men. Characteristic of Pärt's choral pieces from the first decade of the 21st century, he has distanced himself from strict tintinnabuli technique. The music is in A minor and is mostly homophonic in texture.

John Tavener (1944—2013) is often classified as a member of the mystical minimalists, along with Arvo Pärt, Henryk Górecki, and a number of others. Tavener, not to be confused with Tudor composer John Taverner, like Pärt underwent a musical and spiritual reformation. After accepting the Orthodox Christian faith, he developed a new musical style—independent of Pärt—one that favored a slow, minimalist unfolding of melodic material. The inspiration for Tavener's best known work, *Song for Athene* (1993), came to mind while at the funeral of a family friend, Athene Hariades. Tavener had heard her reading Shakespeare in Westminster Abbey, and after her funeral he developed the idea of writing a song which combined words from the Orthodox funeral service and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The most notable performance of *Song for Athene* was at the Westminster Abbey funeral service for Princess Diana of Wales in 1997, sung as her coffin was carried from the nave. Tavener describes *As one who has slept* (1996) as the "awe, silence, and expectation" which characterize the Liturgy of St. Basil, celebrated on the morning of Great and Holy Saturday, when death is trampled by the Resurrection. The main choir, which sings the text twice, followed by Alleluias, is shadowed by a second, singing a choral drone.

We are pleased to premiere a new work by **Jeff Junkinsmith** (b. 1956), *Tenebrae factae sunt* (Darkness fell), commissioned by the Byrd Ensemble. Scored for SSATB, the motet portrays the darkness that covered the Earth during the crucifixion, culminating in the moments just before Jesus took his final breath. Junkinsmith is an American composer best known for his choral music. His harmonic and contrapuntal language draws on influences such as Josquin and Dufay, as well as Bartok, Keith Emerson, early Genesis, Stravinsky, and Ralph Vaughan Williams, along with Ian Anderson and James Taylor. Jeff's music has been performed extensively in the US and Europe, most recently at Canterbury Cathedral in London. His work for piano four-hands, *Rashomon*, was performed to enthusiastic audiences in Eastern Europe and in the United States. In addition to his compositional pursuits, Junkinsmith has enjoyed a long and successful career as a pianist for ballet and modern dance classes. Over the course of a forty-five year journey, he has worked with the likes of Mark Morris, Twyla Tharp, Martha Graham Company, Paul Taylor Company, and Violette Verdy. He currently works at Pacific Northwest Ballet.

Gabriel Jackson (b. 1962) is one of Britain's most popular contemporary composers known for his choral liturgical pieces. He evokes a variety of styles to create a distinctly modern sound, parts of his music referencing Josquin, Tavener, and even Stravinsky. *Ave Maria* (2004) demonstrates Jackson's typical style through the setting of this popular text. Upper and lower voices are in a musical conversation throughout the piece while navigating through unexpected changes in key and texture. Simple homophonic textures eventually give way to more free-form rhythmic polyphony, eventually blooming in the last sentence of the prayer with two soaring Soprano soloists, improvisatory in nature, above the chordal chanting of the main choir.

Thomas Tallis (1505—1585) composed under four successive Tudor monarchs (Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I) during a period of extreme political and religious instability. Henry VIII wanted to divorce Catherine of Aragon, so he broke away from the Catholic Church in 1534, paving the way for the Protestant Reformation in England, which favored simpler forms of writing and introduced sacred music in the vernacular. The Reformation flourished until Mary I's accession in 1553. Mary I, a devout Catholic determined to crush the Protestant faith, restored the Catholic Rite to the English church during her brief reign, and the compositional style reverted back to the more elaborate and florid writing prevalent earlier in the century. There is no better way to plumb the depths of penitence than with Tallis's setting of the *Lamentations* (II). The musical style suggests they were composed during Elizabeth I's reign. Tallis captures a heavy, solemn mood in this 15-minute setting of the *Lamentations*, one of Tallis's most treasured works.

We know very little of **Robert Carver**'s (c. 1485—1570) life. We know that he was a Scottish Canon regular and a composer who spent much of his life at Scone Abbey. Carver joined the Augustinian community at Scone until about 1559, when the abbey was destroyed by Protestant Reformers. By examining examples of Carver's signature found in a charter book for the abbey, we know he was also the scribe for the Carver Choirbook, which contains all of his surviving compositions, including the 19-part motet *O bone Jesu*.

Some historians believe it was written for James IV, who over the course of his life atoned constantly for plotting to overthrow his father, James III (who eventually was murdered by a group of rebels). James IV never got over his guilt for being involved and every year during Lent wore an iron chain garment around his waist, next to the skin, adding weight every year. Penitent letters to his personal chaplain survive in which he asks for soul-saving advice. Some think he commissioned *O bone Jesu* as part of that atonement. The text is well suited: "O good Jesus, have mercy upon us, for thou hast created us, thou hast redeemed us by thy most precious blood. O most compassionate Jesus, we beseech you by that precious blood which you willingly shed for sinners, that you might wash away our wickedness and look upon us miserable and unworthy sinners imploring your name." The text is penitential enough already, but even more suggestive is that it is altered from the quoted text and changed to be in the first person: Have mercy upon me, that you might wash away my wickedness. Opening delicately with only two voices, Carver expands to incorporate the entire 19-voice choir in the span of only 30 seconds.

- Markdavin Obenza

ABOUT THE BYRD ENSEMBLE

The Byrd Ensemble, directed by Markdavin Obenza, is a professional ensemble that specializes in the performance of Renaissance polyphony. Since founded in 2004, the Seattle-based ensemble has garnered international acclaim from publications for its performances, described by John Rutter as "a fine group that has achieved an enviable standard of tuning, blend, and ensemble," "pure and radiant" (Gramophone), and "rich, full-voiced, and perfectly blended" (Early Music America). The Byrd Ensemble presents a concert series in Seattle and tours across the United States.

The Byrd Ensemble is represented by Artist Manager Marianne LaCrosse of Suono Artist Management (marianne@suonoartistmanagement.com).

ABOUT MARKDAVIN O BENZA

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MARKDAVIN O BENZA is a choral director, recording producer, singer, and composer. He is also the director of Seattle-based choral ensemble Radiance, specializing in the performance of American choral music, and is the Director of Choral Activities at Trinity Parish Church in Seattle, WA. As a producer for independent record label Scribe Records, Markdavin has produced CD recordings for over 40 choirs and soloists, of which several have been reviewed in *Gramophone*, *Early Music America*, *Early Music Review*, and *Fanfare*.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR BYRD ENSEMBLE

We are currently firming up our upcoming 2025-2026 concert season, which we hope to announce in May 2025. We are excited to present our biggest concert season yet, which will include a tour to the mid-west, East Coast, and Victoria B.C. with a special program to be announced for May 2026. We also plan to commission a new work to premiere next season in October 2025.

In June, we have been engaged for two recording projects with Scribe Records to record music by Kevin Siegfried and Jeff Junkinsmith.

In July, we go to Ávila, Spain, to host our seventh annual Renaissance course. Out of 60 applicants (which came in the first week after announcement) we have accepted 38 singers and a record number of first-timers. We are excited to welcome singers from Washington, California, Oregon, Canada (Vancouver, Nova Scotia, Manitoba), Idaho, New York, Kansas, Iowa, Germany, and France.

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

Magnificat (1989)

Magnificat anima mea Dominum,
et exsultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutare meo,
quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae.

Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes
generationes,
quia fecit mihi magna, qui potens est,
et sanctum nomen eius,
et misericordia eius a progenies in progenies
timentibus eum.

Fecit potentiam in brachio suo,
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui;
deposuit potentes de sede et exaltavit humiles;
esurientes implevit bonis et divites dimisit inanes.

Suscepit Israel puerum suum, recordatus
misericordiae, sicut locutus est ad patres nostros,
Abraham et semini eius in saecula.

Magnificat anima mea Dominum.

Arvo Pärt (b. 1935)

*My soul doth magnify the Lord.
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
Because he hath regarded the humility of his
handmaid;
for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me
blessed.
Because he that is mighty, hath done great things to
me; and holy is his name.
And his mercy is from generation unto generations, to
them that fear him.*

*He hath shewed might in his arm: he hath scattered
the proud in the conceit of their heart.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath
exalted the humble. He hath filled the hungry with
good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He hath received Israel his servant, being mindful of his
mercy:
As he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed
for ever.
My soul doth magnify the Lord.*

Nunc dimittis (2001)

Nunc dimittis servum tuum,
Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace,
quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum,
quod parasti ante faciem omnium populorum,
lumen ad revelationem gentium
et gloriam plebis tuae Israel.

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto,
sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper,
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

Pärt

*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according
to thy word:
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;
A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people
Israel.*

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
Both now and always, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.*

Ave Maria (2004)

Ave Maria, gratia plena,
Dominus tecum.
Benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.
Sancta Maria, Mater Dei,
ora pro nobis peccatoribus,
nunc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.

Gabriel Jackson (b. 1962)

*Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and in the hour of our death. Amen.*

Lamentations II

DE LAMENTATIONE JEREMIAE PROPHETAE:

GHIMEL. Migravit Juda propter afflictionem ac multitudinem servitutis, habitavit inter gentes, nec invenit requiem.

DALETH. Omnes persecutores eius apprehenderunt eam inter angustias: Lugent, eo quod non sunt qui veniant ad solemnitatem. Omnes portae eius destructae, sacerdotes eius gementes, virgines eius squalidae, et ipsa oppressa amaritudine.

HETH. Facti sunt hostes eius in capite, inimici illius locupletati sunt; quia Dominus locutus est super eam propter multitudinem iniquitatem eius: parvuli eius ducti sunt captivi ante faciem tribulantis.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

Thomas Tallis (1505—1585)

FROM THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH THE PROPHET:

3. Judah has gone into exile because of affliction and hard servitude; she dwells now among the nations, but finds no resting place; her pursuers have all overtaken her in the midst of her distress.

4. The roads to Zion mourn, for none come to the appointed feasts; all her gates are desolate, her priests groan; her maidens have been dragged away, and she herself suffers bitterly.

5. Her foes have become the head, her enemies prosper, because the LORD has made her suffer for the multitude of her transgressions; her children have gone away, captives before the foe.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return unto the Lord your God.

Intermission

O bone Jesu

O bone Jesu, O piissime Jesu, O dulcissime Jesu,
O Jesu fili virginis Mariae plenus pietate
O dulcis Jesu secundum magnam misericordiam tuam
miserere mei.
O clementissime Jesu deprecor te per illum sanguinem
pretiosum quem pro peccatoribus effundere voluisti ut
abluas iniquitatem meam et in me respicias miserum et
indignum peccatorem et hoc nomen Jesum invocantem.
O nomen Jesu, nomen dulce, nomen Jesu, nomen
dilectabile, nomen Jesu, nomen suave, quid enim est Jesus
nisi salvator?
Ergo bone Jesu propter nomen tuum salva me ne peream
et ne permittas me damnari quem tu ex nihilo creasti.

O bone Jesu ne perdat me iniquitas mea. Rogo te, piissime
Jesu, ne perdas me quem fecit tua bonitas.
O dulcis Jesu, recognosce quod tuum est et absterge quod
alienum est.
O amantissime Jesu, O desideratissime Jesu,
O mitissime Jesu, O Jesu, admitte me intrare regnum tuum,
dulcis Jesu.

Robert Carver (c. 1485—1570)

O good Jesus, O most holy Jesus, O most sweet Jesus,
O Jesus, son of the Virgin Mary, full of piety,
O sweet Jesus, according to your great mercy have mercy
upon me.
O most compassionate Jesus, I beseech you by that precious
blood which you willingly shed for sinners that you might
wash away my wickedness and look upon me, miserable and
unworthy sinner imploring this name of Jesus.
O name of Jesus, sweet name, name of Jesus, beloved name,
name of Jesus, sweet name, for what is Jesus if not our
saviour?
Therefore good Jesus through your name save me that I shall
not perish and suffer me not to be damned whom you
created out of nothing.
O good Jesus, let not my sin destroy me. I beg you, most holy
Jesus, forsake not me whom your love has made.
O sweet Jesus, accept what is yours and reject that which
offends you.
O most beloved Jesus, O most longed for Jesus,
O most gentle Jesus, O Jesus, permit me to enter into your
kingdom, sweet Jesus.

The Deer's Cry (2007)

Pärt

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,
Christ in me, Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.
Christ with me.

Tenebrae factae sunt (2025) *(world premiere)*

Jeff Junkinsmith (b. 1956)

Tenebrae factae sunt, dum crucifixissent Jesum Judaei:
et circa horam nonam exclamavit Jesus voce magna:
Deus meus, ut quid me dereliquisti?

*Darkness covered the Earth when Jesus was crucified
and about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice:
"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"*

Et inclinato capite, emisit spiritum.
Exclamans Jesus voce magna, ait:
Pater, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum.

*He bowed his head and gave up his spirit.
Jesus, crying out again with a loud voice, said:
"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."*

As one who has slept (1996)

John Tavener (1944—2013)

As one who has slept, the Lord has risen
And rising he has saved us. Alleluia.

Song for Athene (1993)

Tavener

Alleluia. May flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.
Alleluia. Remember me, O Lord, when you come into your kingdom.
Alleluia. Give rest, O Lord, to your handmaid, who has fallen asleep.
Alleluia. The Choir of Saints have found the well-spring of life and door of Paradise.
Alleluia. Life: a shadow and a dream.
Alleluia. Weeping at the grave creates the song:
Alleluia. Come, enjoy rewards and crowns I have prepared for you.
Alleluia.

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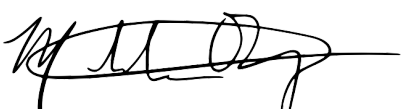
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Markdavin Obenza, Artistic Director