SOLARIS VOCAL ENSEMBLE WITH SEATTLE MODERN ORCHESTRA: QUEST

Friday, February 10, 2017 - 7:30pm
Meany Studio Theater
$20 ($10 students/seniors)
Buy Tickets

Solaris Vocal Ensemble is led by faculty conductor Giselle Wyers (Photo: Joanne DePue).

Solaris Vocal Ensemble (Giselle Wyers, director) joins forces with Seattle Modern Orchestra (Julia Tai, Jeremy Jolley, co-directors) to present “Quest,” an evening of contemporary art music, with music by Ted Hearne, Stuart Dempster, and Julia Wolfe. With guest composer/trombone Stuart Dempster.

PROGRAM:

Julia Wolfe: Thirst
Stuart Dempster: Choral Riffs
Ted Hearne: Mass for St. Mary's
Josquin des Prez: Huc me Sydereo

PROGRAM DETAIL

JULIA WOLFE: THIRST

Solaris Vocal Ensemble joins with Seattle Modern Orchestra to present the Northwest premiere of Julia Wolfe's Thirst, one of the parts of Water, an eight-part work by Michael Gordon, David Lang, and Julia Wolfe. In this powerful music with its nervous repetitive rhythms and swelling and receding chords, one can feel the
intensity of the need for water (the thirst). In addition to choir which splits at times to twelve parts in the
chords, the imaginatively deployed chamber orchestra includes electric guitar, vibraphone, piano, strings,
woodwinds and brass. *Thirst* draws on text from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah: the poor and the needy
seek water a thirsty man dreams he drinks in his dream but when he wakes he is faint and his soul longs for
water Open the rivers in high places Open the fountains in the valleys I will make the wilderness a pool of
water and the dry land springs of water I will pour water on the thirsty land and the floods upon the dry
ground on the thirsty land.

**SOLARIS VOCAL ENSEMBLE**

Solaris Vocal Ensemble aims to encourage a renaissance of innovation in the field of choral music. The
group's debut project, sponsored by the Royalty Research Fund of University of Washington, was the
commissioning of four new choral works, some utilizing electronics, by established American composers.
These works were performed and recorded in 2012 by twelve of Seattle's finest vocal artists, and released on
the Albany Records label under the title *Floodsongs*. Learn more about *Floodsongs* [here](#).

**SEATTLE MODERN ORCHESTRA**

Founded in 2010, Seattle Modern Orchestra (SMO) is the only large ensemble in the Pacific Northwest solely
dedicated to the music of the 20th and 21st centuries. Led by co-artistic directors Julia Tai and Jérémy Jolley,
SMO commissions and premieres new works from an international lineup of composers, in addition to
presenting important pieces from the contemporary repertoire that are rarely if ever heard by Seattle
audiences. The ensemble “operates at that exciting cusp between old and new, between tradition and
innovation” (Vanguard Seattle) curating new sounds and experiences for concert goers in the region.

SMO provides audiences with performances of the best in contemporary chamber and orchestral music, and
develops radio talks, lectures, and other forms of outreach in an accessible and inviting format all designed to
expand the listener's appreciation and awareness of the music of today.

**STUART DEMPSTER, GUEST COMPOSER**

Stuart Dempster, sound gatherer, trombonist, composer, didjeriduist, et al, and professor emeritus at
University of Washington, has recorded for numerous labels including Important, Taiga, and New Albion. The
latter includes “In the Great Abbey of Clement VI at Avignon”—a "cult classic”—and “Underground Overlays
from the Cistern Chapel” consisting of music sources for a 1995 Merce Cunningham Dance Company
commission. Grants are several, including being a Fulbright Scholar to Australia (1973), receiving an NEA
Trombone: A Definition of Its Idioms* was published in 1979 (reprint edition 1994). Commendations include
Golden Ear Awards: Deep Listening (2006) and Earshot Jazz (2009); International Trombone Association
Lifetime Achievement Award (2010). As a founding member of Deep Listening Band, he produced the first
three recordings as well as three more recent recordings, including “Great Howl at Town Haul” CD and two LP
projects from the January 2011 DLB residency at Town Hall Seattle, with major support by UW School of
Music and DXARTS. DLB celebrated its 25th anniversary year on 5 October 2013 with “Dunrobin Sonic Gems” a
spectacular concert near Ottawa in the amazing Dunrobin Sonic Gym (think five foot gongs!). DLB celebrated
further with release of the concert CD “Dunrobin Sonic Gems” on Deep Listening, October 2014. In early 2015
he received two commissions, the first from dancer Holley Farmer and University of Washington Dance
Program, and the second from artist Ann Hamilton and Henry Art Gallery.

**GISELLE WYERS, DIRECTOR**

Giselle Wyers is the Donald E. Petersen Associate Endowed Professor of Choral Music at the University of
Washington, where she conducts the University Chorale and teaches courses in choral conducting and voice.
University Chorale's debut CD, *Climb*, won third prize in the collegiate division of the American Prize for Choral
Performance in 2012, and their CD Refuge is currently in the finals for the same award. University Chorale's
2008 performance of the *Genesis Suite* with Seattle Symphony was termed “brilliant” by the *Seattle Times*.

Under her direction, University Chorale has enjoyed high profile performances for the President of Latvia as
well as the Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden. The chorus tours regularly; recent trips have taken them to
San Francisco as well as Estonia, Finland and Latvia. They have collaborated in performances with Seattle
Symphony Spring and Holiday POPS (2015), National Medalist of the Arts Ann Hamilton, British singer-songwriter Imogen Heap, the national touring company of It Gets Better, and Sapience Dance Collective.

As a guest conductor, Wyers has led high school honor choirs and all-state choruses in New York (Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center), Georgia, Connecticut, Nebraska, Texas, Washington, Alaska, Idaho, and Vancouver, Canada. She has conducted semi-professional ensembles across the United States and in Germany, the Netherlands, Estonia, and Sweden.

Wyers is a leading national figure in the application of Laban movement theory for conductors. Each summer she team-teaches choral conducting with James Jordan at Westminster Choir College, and has led workshops on Laban across the United States. She has published two substantive articles on the subject, both published through GIA Publications in the textbooks *Music for Conducting Study* (Jordan/Wyers) and *The Conductor's Gesture: The Language of Movement* (Jordan/Wyers).

Wyers' choral works are published by Santa Barbara Music Publishing Company as part of the "Giselle Wyers Choral Series," and have been performed in the United States, Canada, Cuba, and across Europe. She has been commissioned by such choruses as Chamber Choir of Europe, A Capella Koor Cantabile of Netherlands, Choral Arts Ensemble, Dolce Canto Chamber Choir, Georgia Tech Chamber Singers, University of Tennessee Men's Chorus, Cambridge Chamber Singers, Cascadian Chorale, Cantori Chamber Singers of William and Hobart Smith Colleges, and Central Bucks HS choir in Pennsylvania.

Wyers' dedication to exposing audiences to the music of contemporary American composers has led to publications in various national journals. She is especially interested in exploring how modern composers use music as a form of peace-making and social justice. "Waging Peace through Intercultural Art in Kyr's Ah Nagasaki," appears as the cover article of the May 2008 *Choral Journal*, and discusses how the act of creating and premiering a musical work can serve as a gesture of reconciliation between cultures. Her professional vocal ensemble Solaris specializes in the performance of contemporary American choral literature, and they have released a full album on Albany Records.

Wyers holds a D.M.A. in conducting from the University of Arizona, where she studied with Maurice Skones, and minored in historical musicology with John Brobeck. She earned a master's degree from Westminster Choir College, where she founded the Greater Princeton Youth Chamber Orchestra, and a bachelor's degree from UC Santa Cruz, where she founded the San Lorenzo Valley Community Chorus and Orchestra.