

**Aaron Copland**, born in Brooklyn, New York, had a great impact on American music. The magnitude of his repertoire, the diversity and effectiveness of his compositions, and his diverse involvement in all phases of the American musical scene- especially school, theatre, ballet and motion picture- placed him at the forefront of this activity. He was the first in a long line of American musicians to study in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, who stressed the development of a personal style of composition. In his early works he experimented with symphonic jazz and then the Neoclassical style. He then became more concerned with music that was accessible to the public, and he drew greatly on themes of regional America. His three ballets Billy the Kid, Rodeo, and Appalachian Spring, have become very familiar as concert hall pieces. He also wrote several film scores and patriotic works, such as Lincoln Portrait and Fanfare for the Common Man before experimenting briefly with the atonal twelve-tone technique. The latter part of his career was spent conducting his music all over the world.

The first set of Old American Songs were written for the British tenor Peter Pears and were performed by him at the Aldeburgh Festival in 1950. Their success let Copland to write a second set for baritone, William Warfield which was performed in 1952 at Castle Hill Concerts in Massachusetts. At the request of Copland many of the songs were transcribed for chorus by Irving Fine, R.W. White, and G. Koponen. We also perform two songs transcribed for chorus by David Brunner. They are all based on original American folk tunes including banjo tunes, Shaker songs, a presidential campaign tune, and children's songs.

Widely performed throughout the country, the music of American composer **Gwyneth Walker** is beloved by performers and audiences alike for its energy, beauty, reverence, drama, and humor. Dr. Gwyneth Walker (b. 1947) is a graduate of Brown University and the Hartt School of Music. She holds B.A., M.M. and D.M.A. degrees in Music Composition. A former faculty member of the Oberlin College Conservatory, she resigned from academic employment in 1982 in order to pursue a career as a full-time composer. For nearly 30 years, she lived on a dairy farm in Braintree, Vermont. She now divides her time between her childhood hometown of New Canaan, Connecticut and the musical community of Randolph, Vermont.

Gwyneth Walker has been a proud resident of Vermont for many years. She is the recipient of the 2000 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Vermont Arts Council as well as the 2008 Athenaeum Award for Achievement in the Arts and

Humanities from the St. Johnsbury (VT) Athenaeum. In 2012, she was elected as a Fellow of the Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences. She also received the 2018 Alfred Nash Patterson Lifetime Achievement Award from Choral Arts New England.

A composer since age two, Gwyneth Walker has always placed great value on active collaboration with musicians. Over the decades, she has traveled to many states to work with instrumental and choral ensembles, soloists, and educational institutions as they rehearse and perform her music. A number of these visits have developed into ongoing relationships. In 2018, Walker was named Composer-in-Residence for the Great Lakes Chamber Orchestra in Petoskey, Michigan.

### **River Songs** Commissioned by Assabet Valley Mastersingers, 1996

These are songs about rivers and water. They are based on the traditional American spiritual ("Deep River") and folk songs ("A Mule Named Sal" and "The Water is Wide"), but new material is woven in as part of the ongoing evolution of this repertoire.

Within the framework of *Deep River* the chorus introduces a strain of 'Never been so far from home. River, river carry me on.' Perhaps there is homesickness associated with a river journey. Then chorus sings of 'running the rapids on the Colorado' as a reference to a contemporary form of river adventure. This song expresses not only the spiritual aspects of the familiar "Deep River" song, but also the beauty and fear associated with river travel.

*A Mule Named Sal* presents "The Erie Canal" with a special focus on the beloved yet stubborn 4-legged mode of conveyance! The mule is obviously in charge here! And those who question her authority fall victim to her 'iron toe!'

*The Water is Wide* is presented in a straightforward and traditional manner intended to emphasize the broad, flowing aspects of the song. It then fades into a setting of Lucille Clifton's poem "Blessing the Boats." As a benediction, it closes with the words 'May the tide carry you out. May you kiss the wind. May you open your eyes to water-- water waving forever.'

**Mack Wilberg**, longtime conductor and principal arranger for the Mormon Tabernacle Choir has become well known for his exciting arrangements of folk songs, many for piano 4 hands. His arrangement of *Cindy* became a favorite of festival choirs throughout the world and the two piano accompaniment of

*Shenandoah* masterfully evoke the calm and flowing river to the accompaniment of the beautiful and simple tune of the folk song. AVM will also perform two of Wilberg's American Folk Hymns, "Saints Bound for Heaven" from *Southern Harmony*, and "Death Shall Not Destroy My Comfort" from an 1878 collection *The Olive Leaf*.

A former Professor of Music at Brigham Young University and is active as a composer, arranger, guest conductor and clinician throughout the United States and abroad. His compositions and arrangements are performed and recorded by choral organizations throughout the world. In addition to the many compositions he has written for the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, his works have most recently been performed by such artists as Renee Fleming, Frederica von Stade, Bryn Terfel, the King's Singers, Brian Stokes Mitchell, Audra McDonald, and narrators Walter Cronkite, Edward Herrmann, Peter Graves, and Claire Bloom.

Dr. Wilberg received his bachelor's degree from Brigham Young University and his master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Southern California.