

Edward Elgar, Sospiri, opus 70 Sam Wu, the wind blows full of sand Michael Tippett, A Child of Our Time

Ming Luke, *Music Director* Samantha Burgess, *Assistant Conductor*

Brandie Sutton, *soprano* Sara Couden, *alto* Jonathan Elmore, *tenor* Kirk Eichelberger, *bass*

Friday, January 5, 2024, at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, January 6, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. Sunday, January 7, 2024, at 3:00 p.m.

Hertz Hall, University of California, Berkeley



Welcome to BCCO's 58th year of presenting great choral masterworks while building community and connection through music. As we begin a new year amid so much world turbulence, our performance contrasts war, darkness, and oppression with the hope of healing, light, and renewal. As singers, some of us struggled to find beauty in singing about war and oppression. Under Ming Luke's leadership, we found our voices and our strength in our community. Thank you for joining forces with us.

— Kay Ellyard and Julie Fryckman, Co-Presidents

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EDWARD ELGAR

Sospiri, opus 70

SAM WU the wind blows full of sand (premiere)

INTERMISSION

MICHAEL TIPPETT A Child of Our Time

The concert will last approximately two hours, including one intermission.

Ming Luke, Music Director Samantha Burgess, Assistant Conductor

> Brandie Sutton, *soprano* Sara Couden, *alto* Jonathan Elmore, *tenor* Kirk Eichelberger, *bass*



Lament of the Frontier Guard

from *Cathay* (1915)

Li Po (701–762) — Ezra Pound (1885–1972)

By the North Gate, the wind blows full of sand,

Lonely from the beginning of time until now!

Trees fall, the grass goes yellow with autumn.

I climb the towers and towers

to watch out the barbarous land:

Desolate castle, desolate sky, the wide desert.

There is no wall left to this village.

Bones white with a thousand frosts,

High heaps, covered with trees and grass;

Who brought this to pass?

Who has brought the flaming imperial anger?

Who has brought the army with drums and with kettle-drums?

Barbarous kings.

A gracious spring, turned to blood-ravenous autumn,

A turmoil of wars-men, spread over the middle kingdom,

Three hundred and sixty thousand.

And sorrow, sorrow like rain.

Sorrow to go, and sorrow, sorrow returning,

Desolate, desolate fields,

And no children of warfare upon them,

No longer the men for offence and defence,

Ah, how shall you know the dreary sorrow at the North Gate,

With Rihoku's name forgotten,

And we guardsmen fed to the tigers.

NB: lines in gray are omitted from this musical setting.

MOVEMENTS

Michael Tippett: A Child of Our Time

PART I

- No. 1. The World Turns on Its Dark Side (chorus)
- No. 2. The Argument: Man Has Measured the Heavens (alto)

Interludium

- No. 3. Scene: Is Evil Then Good? (chorus, alto)
- No. 4. Now in Each Nation (bass)
- No. 5. Chorus of the Oppressed: When Shall the Userers' City Cease (chorus)
- No. 6. I Have No Money for My Bread (tenor)
- No. 7. How Can I Cherish My Man in Such Days (soprano)
- No. 8. A Spiritual: Steal Away (chorus)

PART II

- No. 9. A Star Rises in Mid-winter (chorus)
- No. 10. And a Time Came (bass)
- No. 11. Chorus of Persecutors and Persecuted: Away with Them! (chorus)
- No. 12. Where They Could, They Fled (bass)
- No. 13. Chorus of the Self-righteous: We Cannot Have Them in Our Empire (chorus)
- No. 14. And the Boy's Mother Wrote a Letter (bass)
- No. 15. Scene: O My Son! (soprano, alto, tenor, bass)
- No. 16. A Spiritual: Nobody Knows the Trouble I See, Lord (chorus, soprano, tenor)
- No. 17. Scene: The Boy Becomes Desperate in His Agony (bass, alto)
- No. 18. They Took a Terrible Vengeance (bass)
- No. 19. The Terror: Burn Down Their Houses! (chorus)
- No. 20. Men Were Ashamed of What Was Done (bass)
- No. 21. A Spiritual of Anger: Go Down, Moses (chorus, bass)
- No. 22. The Boy Sings in His Prison: My Dreams Are All Shattered (tenor)
- No. 23. What Have I Done to You, My Son? (soprano)
- No. 24. The Dark Forces Rise Like a Flood (alto)
- No. 25. A Spiritual: O, By and By (chorus, soprano)

PART III

- No. 26. The Cold Deepens (chorus)
- No. 27. The Soul of Man (alto)
- No. 28. Scene: The Words of Wisdom Are These (bass, chorus)

Praeludium

- No. 29. General Ensemble: I Would Know My Shadow and My Light (chorus, soprano, alto, tenor, bass)
- No. 30. A Spiritual: Deep River (chorus, soprano, alto, tenor, bass)

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Ellen Moyer
Joyce Muns
Paloma Pavel

Jane Perry
Nancy Perry
James Richter
Bill Sinn
Roberta Spieckerman
Christine Steers
Catharine Tomlins
Ted Vorster
Kevin Westbrooke

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Steven Cohen
Richard Colton
Daniel Companeetz
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Tuba

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Percussion

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Harp

Kristin Lloyd, Principal

Piano

Derek Tam, Principal

ARTISTIC STAFF



Ming Luke, Music Director

With "energy, creativity and charisma not seen since Leonard Bernstein," and "vibrant," "mind-blowing," and "spectacular" conducting, BCCO Music Director Ming Luke is a versatile conductor who has excited audiences around the world. Highlights include conducting the Bolshoi Orchestra in Moscow and Romeo and Juliet and Cinderella at the Kennedy Center, making his English debut at Sadler's Wells with Birmingham Royal, conducting Dvořák's Requiem in Dvořák Hall in Prague, recording the score for a Coppola film, and conducting over a hundred performances at the San Francisco War Memorial with the San Francisco Ballet. He has been recognized nationally for his work with music education and has designed and conducted education concerts and programs with Berkeley Symphony, Houston Symphony, Sacramento Philharmonic, and San Francisco Ballet, and he currently serves as music director of the Merced Symphony, principal conductor of the Nashville Ballet, associate conductor of the Berkeley Symphony, and prinicipal guest conductor of the San Francisco Ballet. Allan Ulrich of the San Francisco Chronicle said, "Ming Luke delivered the best live theater performance I've ever heard of [Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet]," and BCCO's War Requiem was named the best choral performance of 2016 in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Passionate about collaboration with dance companies and deepening the impact of movement to live music, Ming has guested with Boston Ballet, New York City Ballet Orchestra, Nashville Symphony/Ballet, San Diego Ballet, and others, and conducted Orchestre Prométhée in Paris as part of San Francisco's residency with Les Étés de la Danse. Famed dancer Natalia Makarova stated, "Ming has a mixture of pure musicality and a sensitivity to needs of the dancers, which are such rare qualities."

Ming has written, arranged, and performed over 150 education concerts with the Berkeley Symphony and has served on grant panels for the National Endowment of the Arts and the Grants and Cultural Committee of the Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission. An exciting pops conductor, he has created and conducted pops concerts in many venues, from baseball stadiums to picnics with over 4,000 people in attendance, traditional concert halls, and recordings for Major League Baseball.

Ming holds a master of fine arts degree in conducting from Carnegie Mellon University and a bachelor of music degree in music education and piano pedagogy from Westminster Choir College of Rider University.



Samantha Burgess, Assistant Conductor

Conductor Samantha Burgess currently serves as the assistant conductor of the Berkeley Community Chorus and Orchestra in Berkeley, CA. Based in the San Francisco Bay Area, she also regularly cover conducts for the Berkeley Symphony with Music Director Joseph Young, and has appeared as guest clinician with the Community Women's Orchestra in Oakland, CA. She has previously held the position of assistant conductor with the Westerville Symphony (OH), the Galesburg Community Choir (IL), the Oxford University Philharmonia (UK), and the Knox College String Ensemble (IL).

Samantha holds master's degrees in both orchestral conducting and music theory from The Ohio State University, where she was the music director of the Ohio State Community Orchestra and served as an assistant conductor for the Ohio State Symphony Orchestra. While at Ohio State, she was also a graduate teaching assistant in music theory and a member of the Cognitive and Systematic Musicology Laboratory.

On the podium, Samantha combines conducting and her background in music theory research to develop innovative, multimedia performances. Through her study of the performance of musical form and emotional responses to music,

ARTISTIC STAFF

particularly as they pertain to the relationships between the conductor, audience, and performers, she has created immersive lighting designs to showcase musical structure for the audience during a performance. Her research has been accepted for presentation at the Society for Music Theory Midwest Conference, Future Directions of Music Cognition, and the Oxford Conducting Institute International Conducting Studies Conference.

Samantha has conducted in masterclasses and competitions both in the USA and abroad, most recently in July 2022, where she finished as a semi-finalist in the International Academy and Competition for Orchestral Conducting with the Chamber Orchestra of Cascais and Oerais. She has also participated in the New York Conducting Workshop, the London Conducting Workshop, and the George Hurst Conductor's Course at the Sherborne Summer School of Music.



Taide Ding, Accompanist

An avid chamber musician and collaborative pianist, Taide Ding began his musical studies at age 4 in Tokyo, Japan, and studied stateside in his pre-college years with Dr. Ian Hominick, during which he was named an MTNA National Finalist among other accolades. In addition to degrees in computer science and economics, Taide holds a certificate in piano performance from Stanford, having studied solo piano with Dr. Frederick Weldy and Dr. William Wellborn, as well as chamber and collaborative piano with Dr. George Barth and Laura Dahl. While at Stanford, Taide performed with the Stanford Philharmonia and Stanford Collaborative Orchestra both as a concerto soloist and as an orchestral pianist, as well as with the Stanford Light Opera Company and numerous instrumentalists, vocalists, and chamber groups. He is a recipient of the Carol and Peter Polk Music Award, the Blew-Culley-LaFollette Prize, and the Butler Prize in Piano Performance, as well as a winner of the Stanford Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition and the Stanford Mozart-Haydn Concerto Competition.





Sam Wu, Composer

Sam Wu's music deals with the beauty in blurred boundaries. Many of his works center around extra-musical themes: architecture and urban planning, climate science, and the search for exoplanets that harbor life. Selected for the American Composers Orchestra's EarShot readings and the Tasmanian Symphony's Australian Composers' School, Sam has won an ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Award and first prize at the Washington International Competition. He also received Harvard's Robert Levin Prize and Juilliard's Palmer Dixon Prize. Sam's collaborations span five continents. He has worked with the orchestras of Philadelphia, New Jersey, Minnesota, Sarasota, Melbourne, Tasmania, and Shanghai; with New York City Ballet, The Kennedy Center, National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing, and Sydney International Piano Competition; the Lontano, Parker, Argus, ETHEL, and icarus Quartets; conductors Osmo Vänskä, Case Scaglione, and Benjamin Northey; and violinist Johan Dalene and sheng virtuoso Wu Wei. Sam has been

featured on the National Geographic Channel, Business Insider, Harvard Crimson, *Sydney Morning Herald, Asahi Shimbun, People's Daily*, CCTV, among others.

Originally from Melbourne, Australia, Sam holds a bachelor degree in music and East Asian studies from Harvard University, a master of music degree in composition from The Juilliard School, and pursues his doctor of musical arts degree in composition at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music. His teachers include Tan Dun, Anthony Brandt, Pierre Jalbert, Chaya Czernowin, and Richard Beaudoin.

GUEST ARTISTS



Brandie Sutton, soprano

Hailed by *Opera News* for her "sumptuous, mid-weight soprano," and by *The New York Times* for her "warm, ample voice," "ravishing performance," and "distinctive earthy coloring," Brandie Sutton was destined for a musical career. Her love of performing, together with her persistence and tenacity, have afforded her opportunities to portray some of opera's most endearing soprano roles, most recently as Violetta in Verdi's *La Traviata* with Virginia Opera, Zerbinetta in Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Lakes Area Music Festival, La Fée in Massenet's *Cendrillon* at The Metropolitan Opera, and Gilda in Verdi's *Rigoletto* with New York City Opera. Some notable house debuts also include Seattle Opera, Spoleto Music Festival, Detroit Opera, Fort Worth Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Semperoper Dresden, Palacio de Bellas Artes, and Opera Maine. Concert appearances include Richmond

Symphony Orchestra, South Florida Symphony Orchestra, Royal Danish Symphony Orchestra, Amarillo Symphony, Radio Orpheus Symphony Orchestra in Moscow, and Krasnoyarsk Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra.

Brandie has appeared as a guest soloist with Wynton Marsalis's Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. She has appeared several times at Carnegie Hall with such artists as Cyrus Chestnut and The Cecilia Chorus of New York. This summer she premiered the title role in Sneed and Chilton's reimagining of Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*, commissioned by Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. Next season she will again return to The Metropolitan Opera.

Brandie's fervent interest in social justice also engages her outside of the opera house. She has participated in events for the Equal Justice Initiative and has been immortalized as a hologram in the organization's Legacy Museum, in Montgomery, Alabama, where she appeared in concert with Andra Day, BeBe Winans, and John Legend for its opening ceremonies.



Sara Couden, alto

Praised by *Opera News* for her "unusually rich and resonant" voice, contralto Sara Couden is a premiere interpreter of operatic, chamber, and song repertoire. Her latest triumphs include a role debut as Nurse in Dukas's rarely performed masterwork *Ariane et Barbe-bleue* with West Edge Opera, as well as company debuts with the Philadelphia Orchestra as Mother/Chinese Cup/Dragon Fly in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra as the alto soloist in Julia Perry's *Stabat Mater*, and with the Charleston Symphony in Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. Sara also recorded her debut solo album, the complete vocal works of Artur Schnabel, on the Steinway & Sons label. Her 2022–23 season includes a return to the Metropolitan Opera to cover Mrs. Sedley in Britten's *Peter Grimes* and company premieres with the Seattle Symphony in Handel's

Messiah, the California Symphony in songs by Mahler, and the Eureka Symphony in Mozart's Requiem.

Sara is a graduate of the Lindemann Young Artist Program at the Metropolitan Opera and an alumna of the Marlboro Music Festival, Music@Menlo, Music Academy of the West, and the Institute for Young Dramatic Voices. She holds a master of music degree with honors in opera from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and an artist diploma in early music, chamber music, and oratorio from the Yale School of Music and Institute of Sacred Music.



Jonathan Elmore, tenor

Tenor Jonathan Elmore is establishing himself as an interpreter of both staged works and song. Most recently, Jonathan performed the role of Danilo in Lehár's *Die lustige Witwe* with the Indiana University Opera and Ballet Theatre, and Ferrando in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* with Summer Opera Tel Aviv. During his time at Indiana University, Jonathan has also performed the roles of Guard in Ran's *Anne Frank*, Ouf in Chabrier's *L'étoile*, Ralph Rackstraw in Gilbert and Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore*, as well as Secondo Soldato in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*. Alongside his mainstage roles at Indiana University, Jonathan has participated in the chorus for Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, and Still's *Highway 1*, *USA*. Upcoming engagements include the role of Adolfo Pirelli in the Opera Theatre's Spring 2024 production of Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*.

Jonathan is currently a doctor of music degree candidate at Indiana University, where he also earned his master of music degree in voice and is currently studying with soprano Heidi Grant Murphy. A Southwest Virginia native, Jonathan received his bachelor of arts degree in vocal performance at Virginia Tech under the tutelage of tenor Brian Thorsett. Jonathan is also an active collaborative pianist and currently maintains a roster of 13 vocalists at Indiana University whom he regularly coaches and accompanies.



Kirk Eichelberger, bass

Bass Kirk Eichelberger has been praised for "commanding the stage at every turn" (San Francisco Chronicle) and his "resonant bass and riveting stage presence" (Dayton City Paper). This season, Kirk sees repeat engagements at Livermore Valley Opera as Candy in Floyd's Of Mice and Men and Sarastro in Mozart's Die Zauberflöte, and he returns to Opera Cultura as El General in Armienta's La Llorona. His 2022–23 season included returns to Manitoba Opera as Alidoro in Rossini's La Cenerentola and to Livermore Valley Opera as Angelotti in Puccini's Tosca, as well as performing Sarastro with the Santa Rosa Symphony.

On the concert stage, Kirk's engagements have included Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*, Handel's *Messiah*, Brahms's *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, Bach's *B Minor Mass*, and Haydn's

Creation. A regular recitalist with Lieder Alive in the Bay Area, Kirk has performed Schumann's Dichterliebe, Mahler's Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen, Brahms's Vier ernste Gesänge, Strauss' Rückert-Lieder and Wolf's Michelangelo-Lieder.

Further roles include The Emperor in Tan Dun's *Tea* and Don Fernando in Beethoven's *Fidelio* with Opera Philadelphia, Mephistophélès in Gounod's *Faust* with Opera Grand Rapids, Sparafucile in Verdi's *Rigoletto* with Vancouver Opera, and Ferrando in Verdi's *Il trovatore* with both Opera Manitoba and Lyric Opera of Kansas City. Kirk made his Metropolitan Opera debut in Prokofiev's *The Gambler*.

Kirk was a national finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and the MacAllister Awards for Opera Singers. Kirk holds a master of music degree in vocal performance from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and a bachelor of music degree in vocal performance from Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

PROGRAM NOTES

BCCO's repertoire for this concert series was originally programmed in 2019, but its performance was delayed by the pandemic. It is uncanny how the present has come into distressing alignment with the subject matter of these works. Sam Wu's setting of an ancient Chinese warrior's reflection on a war-scarred landscape, and Michael Tippett's wrestling with the forces that shape the shadow and light in humanity represent evocative responses to conflict – art that speaks to us now.

Elgar: Sospiri

You will hear more about the works from the stage, but briefly, our concert opens with the strings playing Elgar's Sospiri (Sighs). It is filled with melodies at turns wistful, rhapsodic, yearning, distant, or questioning before finishing in a more hopeful sonority.

Wu: the wind blows full of sand

We are delighted to premier Sam Wu's the wind blows full of sand, a work commissioned by BCCO in 2019 when Sam was awarded first prize in our most recent Emerging Composer Competition. The piece opens with a vision of vast, austere landscape. Soon, references to "bones white" intrude as the first hints of a calamitous human history laid upon the land. This leads to a full recollection of that awful conflict. As the work comes to a close and our gaze once again widens to the wind and sands, we're left to ponder if the memories (the lessons?) have left any permanent mark on the land – or will they be forgotten?

The libretto for the wind blows full of sand is based on a poem by the 8thcentury Chinese poet Li Po as reimagined in English by Ezra Pound. While we believe that the artistry in this work derives from Sam Wu, then Li Po, and then Ezra Pound, the connection to Pound is inescapable. Pound's contributions to literature have unavoidably been colored by his descent into committed, vicious, and public antisemitism. Especially in the context of a concert program containing Tippett's A Child of Our Time, which grew out of Tippett's horror at the events leading up to the Holocaust, it feels essential to acknowledge Pound's distasteful history.

Tippett: A Child of Our Time

Composed between 1939 and 1941 and premiered in 1944, A Child of Our Time was catalyzed by Tippett's reaction to the murder of a German diplomat in Paris by a Jewish refugee, Herschel Grynszpan, an event that was used by the Nazis as a pretext for the widespread destruction, looting, and assaults against Jewish institutions and the Jewish population in Germany and Austria that is known as "Kristallnacht." Tippett's conception was an oratorio, structured in three parts, that recalls the arc of Handel's Messiah. Part I presents the forces of oppression at play in the world, Part II recounts the arc of a story that includes a Grynszpan-like figure buffeted by these forces and striving to weave his path among family and enemies alike, and Part III considers the reconciliation of the dark and light forces within us into something hopeful.

Interestingly, though Tippett was motivated by events of 1938, A Child of Our Time never refers to a specific setting, nor mentions Herschel Grynszpan, Jews, Nazis, Paris, or Germany directly. Perhaps this abstraction reveals his desire for a more universal appreciation of the underlying predicaments. At one point, Tippett's libretto refers to "pogroms in the east, lynchings in the west" as an expression of the far-reaching scope of the work. Indeed, Tippett includes as chorales his arrangements of five African-American spirituals that he had first encountered on LPs. Their incorporation has drawn charges of cultural appropriation. However, Tippett seems to have been struck by how directly they spoke to the essential universality of oppression and resistance that he was addressing in A Child of Our Time.

Afterword

The preparation of this concert program proved to be difficult for many of us. At a time of tumultuous domestic and international struggle, it has been especially challenging to sing out the violent and pernicious exhortations of a mob or sing of the oppression of peoples that may be connected to our own history. While we often gather to sing as a musical refuge from daily events, art doesn't deal only with the beautiful in our world, and finding a haven this season has required navigating a fraught path together.

THANK YOU!

BCCO GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE FOLLOWING GENEROUS DONATIONS May 1, 2022, to December 1, 2023

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THE ELIZABETH PIGFORD LEGACY SOCIETY

BCCO's Legacy Society comprises individuals who have included BCCO in their estate plans. The Society is named in memory and recognition of Betty Pigford, a supremely capable and charming member of the chorus and its board of directors for many years who helped shape many of BCCO's most important initiatives. We would be pleased to include you among the group of individuals who, as members of the Legacy Society, are sustaining BCCO for future generations. For more information, please email development@bcco.org.

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BERKELEY COMMUNITY CHORUS & ORCHESTRA



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CONCERT ANNOUNCEMENTS

We maintain a mailing list exclusively for concert announcements – no more than four emails per year. If you would like to join this list, please email manager@bcco.org or visit bcco.org.

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We hope you enjoyed the concert. You can be assured that all of us on stage were delighted to perform for you. For almost 60 years, BCCO has been open to singers of all abilities and has presented free concerts to the Berkeley community. We're extremely proud of the fabulous artistic staff, orchestra, and soloists who share these performances with us.

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