

2023-24 CHORALE SERIES



FIRELANDS
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA
CHORALE

Requiem for

THE LIVING

The FSO Chorale & Heidelberg University Concert Choir

Guest Vocalist: Kirsten C. Kunkle, soprano



SATURDAY
APRIL 6



SUNDAY
APRIL 7



7:30 P.M.



4:00 P.M.



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Hello and welcome to the Firelands Symphony Orchestra's seventh concert of the season, Requiem for the Living.

We are featuring the Firelands Symphony Orchestra Chorale, led by Michael Shirtz, the Heidelberg University Concert Choir, led by Dr. Gregory Ramsdell, and soprano Kirsten C. Kunkle. This concert will be presented twice this weekend, Saturday at Trinity UCC in Tiffin, and Sunday at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Sandusky, so good evening or good afternoon!

With the eclipse happening on Monday, I feel that is very important that we have events planned for people to relax, reflect, and refresh while listening to live music. So, thank you to the musicians and directors this evening/afternoon, for providing the opportunity to do just that. I also look forward to hearing the combined choirs as they perform Dan Forrest's beautiful *Requiem for the Living* with the chamber orchestra from the FSO.

If this is your first time hearing the FSO and the FSO Chorale, and want more information on us, please visit our website (www.firelandssymphony.com) for upcoming events. We will soon be announcing our summer schedule as well as our upcoming season for 2024-25. Please come see us again!

Ron Brooker

Ron Brooker, FSO Executive Director

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Guest Artist: Steven Greenman, violin



SATURDAY

APRIL 13



7:30 P.M.



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Who would have thought that over a year ago when planning the season, we'd be presenting this concert on the eve of one the great wonders in our world. Whether it per chance or by divine intervention, we planned a program celebrating celestial and earth themes – never knowing a solar eclipse would majestically shadow our performances. In comparison, our concert may seem small up against Monday's spectacle, but it's really witnessing a part of the greater miracle this weekend brings. People of all ages, all walks of life, coming together to celebrate what unites us most...the skies, the sun, the earth, and our humanity. Whether it be for the brief moments of this concert, or whether it becomes ignited by the sun's awesome power, we hope that the music and message you hear today fills you with joy, love, compassion, remembrance, and rest.

I am excited that the Heidelberg Concert Choir under the direction of my friend and colleague Dr. Gregory Ramsdell is joining us today. Heidelberg's great tradition of choral music is inspiring and includes a long list of successful alumni educators and performers. Following their performance at the beginning of the concert, we center towards a musical meditation as the strings perform "Nimrod" from Elgar's *Enigma Variations* – a hauntingly beautiful melody capturing the endless boundary of stars and galaxies the night sky creates. As the stars escape to the light of the rising sun, we reflect the beauty of earth's glorious vistas as rays crest upon majestic mountain tops and wave painted shores, to the morning dew glistening in the grass as we feel a planet awoken to the break of dawn in *The Ground*. Often, its these every day, ordinary miracles of beauty we forget to acknowledge as we become consumed in the chaos of our day. As Kirsten sings her gorgeous interpretation of *Ave Maria*, let it remind us to reflect on the beauty of our world. Let us be messengers of peace as called upon from St. Francis of Assisi, heard in Matthew Kennedy's *Prayer for Peace*. We commissioned Matthew's piece last fall and we are honored to be able to perform this work again as it so

continued on next page

meaningfully celebrates our theme.

The culmination of the program brings us to the joint performance of Dan Forrest's exceptionally beautiful masterpiece *Requiem for the Living* – a musical experience of remembrance, rejuvenation, and rest created through the celestial viewpoint as our loved ones looking down upon us here on earth. I encourage you to read about the Requiem below to fully understand the grandeur of this work. We hope your experience with us strikes a tone of wonderment, remembrance, compassion, and love for the beauty in our world and beyond.



Michael Shirtz, Chorale Director and Conductor

About Requiem for the Living

A Requiem, at its core, is a prayer for rest – traditionally, for the deceased. The five movements of Dan Forrest's *Requiem for the Living*, (2013), however, form a narrative just as much for the living, and their own struggle with pain and sorrow, as for the dead. The opening movement sets the traditional Introit and Kyrie texts – pleas for rest and mercy – using ever-increasing elaborations on a simple three-note descending motive. The second movement, instead of the traditional Dies Irae, sets scriptural texts that speak of the turmoil and sorrow which face humanity, while yet invoking musical and textual allusions to the Dies Irae. This movement juxtaposes aggressive rhythmic gestures with long, floating melodic lines, including quotes of the Kyrie from the first movement. The Agnus Dei is performed next (a departure from the usual liturgical order) as a plea for deliverance and peace; the Sanctus, following it, becomes a response to this redemption. The Sanctus offers three different glimpses of the "heavens and earth, full of Thy glory", all of which develop the same musical motive: an ethereal opening section inspired by images of space from the Hubble Space Telescope, a stirring middle section inspired by images of our own planet as viewed from the International Space Station, and a closing section which brings the listener down to Earth, where cities teem with the energy of humanity. The Lux Aeterna which then closes the work portrays light, peace, and rest – for both the deceased and the living.

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A performer, composer, and conductor, Michael Shirtz is known for his versatility with jazz, contemporary, and classical music audiences. Credited as a “songsmith” with his interpretations as a vocalist and pianist, Shirtz has worked with numerous artists, including Melissa Manchester, Ellen

Winters, Elizabeth von Trapp, Evelyn Wright, and music director/producer for Maureen McGovern. Performing frequently as a guest artist and with Michael Shirtz Quartet, his most recent album and show “Blue Skies” were released in 2018. With a passion for fostering creativity and collaboration, Shirtz has emerged as a respected figure in both the jazz and choral communities as a conductor and educator. His work as a composer contains music for choir, orchestra, musical theatre; including the oratorio *In God’s Light* (2005), the cantata *The Solemn Blessings* (2009), *Jazz Impressions on Reflections* (2003), *Sailing the Bay Jazz Suite* (2009), *Hymn to the Earth Jazz Suite* (2010), *Gift of a Generation* (2014), the musical *Sparkler* (2016), *Headliner The Musical* (2018), *Prayer for New Hope* (2021), and *To Rise Above: The Journey of a Tuskegee Airman* (2022).

An active vocal coach and music director for educational, repertory theatre, and pops music productions, he has served on the faculty/staff of Capital University Conservatory of Music, American Music Academy, Terra State Community College, Lakeside Chautauqua, and director-in-residence with Pellissippi State-Knoxville. Shirtz received a Bachelor of Music in Jazz Studies from Capital University and Master of Music in Conducting from California State University, Los Angeles. Shirtz serves as associate director/producer for the Tri-C JazzFest & Performing Arts Series, producer of JAZZ@8, conductor of the Symphony Chorale and Firelands Symphony School of Music, and on faculty at Heidelberg University School of Music & Theatre. Shirtz is a member of ASCAP, African American Jazz Caucus, American Choral Directors Association, Jazz Education Network, and an advocate for mental health awareness. Shirtz is a Prima Music Foundation Artist.



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Dr. Gregory Ramsdell

Director, Heidelberg University Concert Choir

Dr. Greg Ramsdell serves as the Director of Choral Activities and Professor of Choral Music Education at Heidelberg University. In this capacity, he conducts the Concert Choir, the Chamber Singers, and the University-Community Chorus. In addition to his conducting responsibilities, he teaches courses in beginning voice, conducting, and secondary choral methods.

Greg received his undergraduate and graduate degrees in music education from Bowling Green State University. In 2006, he earned his DMA in choral conducting performance with honors from the University of Kansas. His DMA document, "Paradise Lost and Regained: Poetic and Musical Images of Paradise, Sin, and Redemption in Mid- twentieth Century Choral Settings of Cecilia Odes by Benjamin Britten and Norman Dello Joio," was nominated for the Julius Herford Prize, the award given to the outstanding doctoral terminal research project in choral music.

Greg has conducted junior high and high school honor choirs in Colorado, Kansas, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, and has adjudicated large ensemble choral contests in Kansas, Arkansas, and Ohio. His research has been presented at state and national conferences of the American Choral Directors Association. During the spring of 2018, Dr. Ramsdell received Heidelberg's prestigious Ream-Paradiso Distinguished Teaching Award, and in the spring of 2021, the student body recognized him with a Faculty Member of the Year Award. Under Dr. Ramsdell's direction, the Concert Choir has undertaken yearly domestic tours, and in the spring of 2019, the choir undertook an international tour that included performances in Budapest, Hungary; Brno, Czech Republic, and Prague, Czech Republic. In 2022, the Concert Choir was honored with an invitation to perform at the Ohio Music Educators Association's annual professional development conference, and in February 2023, Greg was named the recipient of Heidelberg's Jane Frost-Kalnow Professorship in the Humanities.

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Kirsten C. Kunkle, soprano

Guest Vocalist

Kirsten C. Kunkle is thrilled to be serving as the Firelands Symphony Orchestra Chorale Artist in Residence this season! A voting citizen of the Mvskoke Nation, she has been lauded as the leading Native American soprano in today's classical music world. Kunkle is the Co-Founder and Artistic Director of Wilmington Concert Opera, a women and minority run opera company based in Wilmington, Delaware. Favorite roles include creating the role of Charlotte Corday in "Girondines," Dido in "Dido and Aeneas," Magda in "The Consul," Mimì in "La bohème," and the title role in "Suor Angelica." Other career highlights include performing at Carnegie Hall, being featured in the role of Arabella in the NAXOS world premiere recording of Johann Strauss II's operetta "Blindekuh," writing for OPERA AMERICA magazine, and premiering her first opera libretto, "Girondines," with composer Sarah Van Sciver. She was commissioned and premiered her new art song "Reclaim the Land" at Yellowstone National Park's 150th anniversary, which has been featured on "All Things Considered" on NPR and BBC Radio. She is extremely involved in new music and will be premiering the role of Ipp'osi' in the first opera written entirely in the Chickasaw language, "Shell Shaker" by Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate. 2023 marked her performance debut and a composition commission with Chicago Fringe Opera for "Chicago Currents" and stage direction, choreography, and performance debut with Mission Opera in Los Angeles for the West Coast Premiere and first staging of "Girondines." With the Toledo Choral Society, Kunkle has recently performed as the soprano soloist for The Seven Last Words of Christ, the world premiere of the Great Lakes Cantata for the Centennial Jubilee, Considering Matthew Shepard, and will be returning for her third season as soprano soloist for Handel's Messiah. In 2024, she will have her composition debut with New Music Chicago and performance debut with CityMusic Cleveland. She received her bachelor degree from Bowling Green State University and her master and doctoral degrees from University of Michigan. Please visit www.kirstenckunkle.com for more information.

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Matthew Kennedy

Composer

The music of composer Matthew Kennedy (b. 1987) contains disarming simplicity, often seeking out dark places with an uninhibited wonder and spirit of exploration. His work has been performed on five continents and received critical acclaim including honors and commissions from ASCAP, BMI, Opera on Tap, College Music Society, Boston Musica Viva, Hartford Opera Theater, bassist Robert Black, Dynamic Music Festival at NYU, as well as residencies at Marble House Project (VT), Atlantic Center for the Arts (FL), Hambidge Center (GA), Crosshatch Center for Art and Ecology (MI), and the Mayapple Center for the Arts and Humanities (CT). Recent activities include performances and lectures at Bowling Green New Music Festival, New Music Gathering at Boston Conservatory, Indiana State University Contemporary Music Festival, Duke University, New Music on the Bayou, University of Virginia, Constantinides New Music Ensemble (LSU), Florida Flute Association, Northwestern University New Music Conference, and the North American Saxophone Alliance International Conference.

His works are published through Just a Theory Press, NewMusicShelf, Parma Recordings, Soundset Recordings, and Ink & Coda Journal. Matthew holds degrees from The Hartt School (DMA), Butler University (MM), and Anderson University (BA), where his primary teachers have included Michael Schelle, Robert Carl, Larry Alan Smith, Elizabeth Brown, and Manuel Sosa. Matthew, a native of rural Indiana, currently serves as Assistant Professor of Composition and Theory at Heidelberg University, having previously taught at University of South Florida and The Hartt School. He resides in Tiffin, Ohio with his wife, studio artist Erin Kennedy, and four children. You can find out more about the Music of Matthew Kennedy at www.kennedycomposer.com





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CONCERT PROGRAM



Requiem for the Living | April 6, 2024 at 7:30 p.m. / April 7, 2024 at 4 p.m.

The Firelands Symphony Orchestra Chorale & Chamber Orchestra
Michael Shirtz, Director & Conductor

The Heidelberg University Concert Choir
Dr. Gregory Ramsdell, Director & Conductor

Kirsten C. Kunkle, soprano

Nyon Nyon.....Jake Runestad

Unclouded Day.....Shawn Kirchner

Never Let Go.....Rob Dietz

Heidelberg University Concert Choir

Nimrod (from Enigma Variations).....Edward Elgar

Chamber Orchestra Strings

The Ground (from The Sunrise Mass).....Ola Gjeilo

Symphony Chorale & Chamber Orchestra Strings

Translation from Latin text:

Heaven and earth are full of your glory, Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who come in the name of the Lord...
Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world...
Grant us peace.

Ave Maria (from Cavalleria Rusticana).....Pietro Mascagni /arr. Cunha

Kirsten C. Kunkle, soprano | Chamber Orchestra Strings

Translation from Italian text:

Hail Mary, holy Mother, Guide the feet of the wretched who implores thee
Along the path of bitter grief and fill the hearts with faith and hope.
O merciful Mother, thou who suffered so greatly, See, ah! See my anguish.
In the cruel torment of endless weeping, Ah! Do not abandon me.
Hail Mary! Oppressed by grief, do not leave me, O Mother, have mercy!
O Mother, have mercy! Oppressed by grief, do not leave me.

A Prayer for Peace (Commissioned and Premiered 2023).....Matthew Kennedy

Kirsten C. Kunkle, soprano | Symphony Chorale & Chamber Orchestra

Text based on Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace.
Where there is hatred let me sow your love.
Where there is injury, pardon, where there is doubt, faith resides.
Where there is despair and darkness, Hope and Light are there.
And where there's sadness, Joy!
O' Divine Master! Grant that I may so much seek to as to console.
To be understood, as to understand. To be loved, as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned.
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

CONCERT PROGRAM



Requiem for the Living (2013).....Dan Forrest

Kirsten C. Kunkle, soprano | Heidelberg University Concert Choir
Symphony Chorale & Chamber Orchestra

I. Introit-Kyrie

Translation from Latin text:

*Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.
Hear my prayer, for unto Thee all flesh shall come.
Lord have mercy; Christ have mercy;
Lord have mercy.*

II. Vanitas Vanitatum

*Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!
Merciful Lord Jesus, grant them rest.
Full of tears,
he said, Let the day perish wherein I was born.*

III. Agnus Dei

*Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us; grant them rest.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,
grant us peace; have mercy on us; grant them rest.*

IV. Sanctus

*Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.
Hosanna in the highest!*

V. Lux Aeterna

Simon Fletcher, tenor solo

*May light eternal shine upon them, O Lord,
in the company of Thy saints forever:
for Thou art merciful.
Let perpetual light shine on them.*

*Come unto me,
all ye who labor and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.*

*Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.
Grant us peace.*

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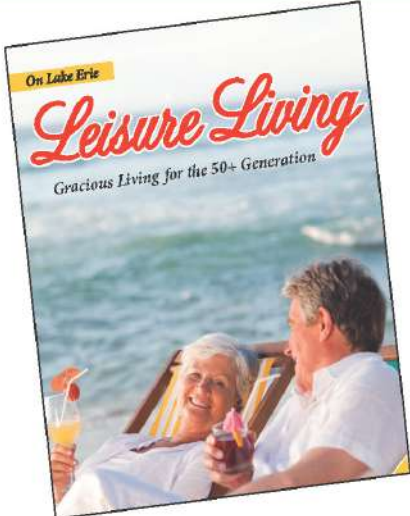
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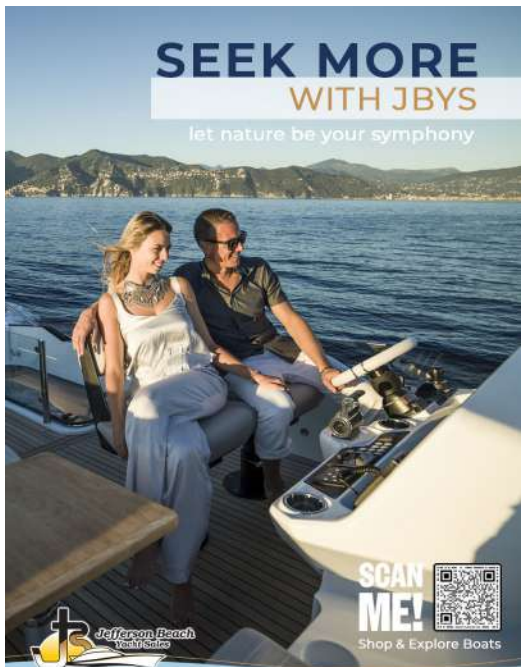
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CHORALE VOCALISTS



Firelands Symphony Orchestra Choral

Michael Shirtz, Director & Conductor

Soprano

Karen Bacni
Melissa Cullen
Betsy Dupler
Bev Hart
Virginia Mamere
Samantha Stack-Gonzalez
Diane Stalling

Mezzo-soprano

Kathy Below
Connie Camicom
Mary Foland
Susan Fritz
Cyndi Hinline
Megan Kaufman
Lindsey Lemons
Cynthia Mira
Carol Phillips
Tina Showalter
Angela Young

Alto

Deb Agee
Deborah Billow
Patricia Breault
Wendy Brown
Sheryl Cawrse
LouAnn Cebull
Sarah Christophel
Karen Gerold
Judy Hoffman
Sari Kelley
Cynthia Klein
Brenda Knipp
Deb Lovins
Hannah Mathias
Beverly Mendoza
Deborah Randall
Yvette Rash
Fonda Robinson
Olga Trumpower
Carrie Jo Wahl
Terri Wilhelm

Tenor

Ron Brooker
Robin Mygrant
Pamela Sayre
William Shannon
Tom Thorbahn
Marianne Weaver

Bass

Ron Blake
Taylor Colaizzi
Tom Curry
Lou Engler
Ellen Hanck
Dave Kocsis
Nathan Loudenslager
Rick Noderer
Chris Petersen
Guy Thiboutot

The Firelands Symphony Chorale is an auditioned choir of singers that serves as chorus-in-residence for the Firelands Symphony Orchestra. Under the direction of Michael Shirtz, the chorale performs with the orchestra throughout the season, as well as presents additional concerts and choral festival performances.

Performing classical, contemporary, and American music programming, the group provides singers the opportunity for concentrated study, rehearsal, and performance of repertoire, as well as educational programs for singers and choir directors to support regional choral ensembles.

HEIDELBERG VOCALISTS

Heidelberg University Concert Choir Dr. Gregory Ramsdell, Director & Conductor

Soprano I

Elizabeth Brantley
Sophia Lee
Grace Thomas
Jaislynn Woodall
Abbey Yarris

Soprano II

Katherine Albright
Morgan Boyer
Sarah Clemens
Alexandria French
Lily Jensen
Sarah Jewell
Natalie Kwasny
Lauren Price
Bertha Saucedo

Alto I

Rebecca Eppard
Sydney Fortney
Hannah Lewis
Kathrine Sayre
McKenna Williams
Ashtyn Wolph

Alto II

Belle Lawrence
Vaiden Mallonn
Syd Mendez
Lara McNeil-Yeckel
Emma Raber
Emma Rettig
Becca Young

Tenor I

Simon Fletcher
Payton Luikart
Cole Miller
Jer Marshall

Tenor II

Lucas Ballinger
Jacob Frankart
Ellis Herner

Bass I

Rylan Clarkson
Dermot Healy
Jayce Porter
Jacob Reuter
Caleb Silvia
Aaron Wilson

Bass II

Eric Evans
Daniel Owen
Elijah Shiley

The Heidelberg University Concert Choir is the premiere mixed choral ensemble of Heidelberg University's School of Music. Annually, the choir masters an eclectic repertoire of choral literature representing major choral genres, historical eras, and cultural traditions. Highlights of the year include the choir's collaboration with the University-Community Chorus and Orchestra each December in performances of Handel's Messiah and other traditional holiday favorites and the annual spring tour. The choir is open by audition to all Heidelberg University students, regardless of major.

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Alivia Gaskins

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Patrick Prejean
Jacob Campbell
Eva Mondragon
Lydia Plaut

Cello

Nataliya Pshenychna
Gayle Klaber
Mingyao Zhao
Brian Shifflet

Bass

Tom Flowers
Rachel Kost
(Steven Brija)

Flute

Kim Zaleski

Oboe

Jesse Martin

Horn

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Emily Laurance

Organ

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Joyce Amborski

Gary and Susan Armstrong

Tim and Kathy Armstrong

Lauretta Bain - In honor of Rebecca
Bain

Phil and Margaret Barbour - In
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Melinda Beatty - In honor of Kenzie
Beatty

Keb and Barb Bell

Don and Amy Bennett - In memory
of David Boor

Barbara Berg

Ann Bingham

Lynn Bragg

Ned and Sharon Bromm

Gerilynn Bryan

Jill Bryan

Jim and Sandy Cairelli

Linda Carino

Sue Cloak - In memory of Rita

Coffman

Molly Carver and Paul Coleman

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Tom and Karen Clemons

Sue Cloak

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