

umeri

DRAKE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI CHOIR
Aimee Beckmann-Collier, conductor

Earth & Sky

Saturday, April 6, 7:30 pm

Sheslow Auditorium, Drake University

Earth & Sky

Earth and Sky is a concert featuring musical reflections on the ways in which we view nature and often memorialize it, while simultaneously contributing to its destruction. Each of the pieces focuses on some aspect of our varied relationships with the natural world, ranging from respect and admiration, consideration of elements of nature as companions to adventure and romance, and a sense of nature as a backdrop for self-reflection, to fear of nature, and a recognition that “the earth is tired.”

Five writers, Richard Rohr, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Debra Rienstra, Ada Limón, and Thomas Berry, provide some thoughts on our vantage points in reference to nature:

Richard Rohr, director of the Center for Action and Contemplation, writes:

The modern and postmodern self largely lives in a world of its own construction, and it reacts for or against its own human-made ideas. While calling ourselves intelligent, we’ve lost touch with the natural world. As a result, we’ve lost touch with our own souls. I believe we can’t access our full intelligence and wisdom without some real connection to nature.

Many of us have a sense of self or identity created by our relationship to ideas, thoughts, and words...We can spend our whole lives rattling around inside of ideas, rarely touching upon what is right in front of us...We spend a majority of our time interacting with thoughts and opinions about everything. We’re almost entirely fixated on our computers, smart phones, news feeds, email, social media, and selfies. This is, of course, an “unnatural” world of our own creation. We don’t even realize that we’ve disconnected ourselves from the only world that people lived in for most of human history.

One of the foundational reasons for our sense of isolation and unhappiness is that we have lost our contact with nature. In the

natural world, there is no theology to agree or disagree with. We don't have to identify as Presbyterian or Lutheran, male or female, conservative or progressive. There is nothing to argue about. It is in contact with all the "givens"—that which has been available to every creature since the Big Bang—that something is indeed given. (*The Soul, the Natural World, and What is*, 2009)

Robin Wall Kimmerer, Potawatomi botanist, reflections on our place in nature:

In the indigenous view, humans are viewed as somewhat lesser beings in the democracy of species. We are referred to as the younger brothers of Creation, so like younger brothers we must learn from our elders. Plants were here first and have had a long time to figure things out. They live both above and below ground and hold the earth in place. Plants know how to make food from light and water. Not only do they feed themselves, but they make enough to sustain the lives of all the rest of us. Plants are providers for the rest of the community and exemplify the virtue of generosity, always offering food...

Many indigenous peoples share the understanding that we are each endowed with a particular gift, a unique ability...It is understood that these gifts have a dual nature, though: a gift is also a responsibility. If the bird's gift is song, then it has a responsibility to greet the day with music. It is the duty of birds to sing and the rest of us to receive the song as a gift.

Asking what is our responsibility is perhaps also to ask, What is our gift? And how shall we use it? (*Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*, 2013)

Author Debra Rienstra considers the destructive role humanity has often played in relation to nature:

If humans didn't exist at all, life would continue on earth. Let's not flatter ourselves: Biologically speaking, the earth does not need us to tend and care for it. Life on earth existed for eons before we arrived. Have we made the earth better by our arrival? "Stewarding" and "caring" are only necessary because humans take things from the earth to survive.

...People have a great deal of freedom to do evil and ruinous things. Human moral responsibility allows us to act immorally and to suffer the consequences of our actions— or, in the case of climate change, to let other people suffer the consequences, at least at first...What can we give back through a pattern of reciprocity to a planet that gives us so much? What will make the more-than-human creation glad that we are here? (*Refugia Faith: Seeking Hidden Shelters, Ordinary Wonders, and the Healing of the Earth*, 2022)

Ada Limón, the 24th poet laureate of the United States, recently commented in an interview published in TIME magazine (March 11, 2024):

When I'm in my darkest space, as a poet and as a human, turning to nature is the one thing that will bring me back to myself. It's very hard to write from a place of fear and isolation. If you can, connect to the natural world—a tree, a shrub, whatever you can set your sight on for a moment. We're not alone.

The ecological theologian Thomas Berry (1914–2009) reflects on our much-needed connection with nature:

What do you see when you look up at the sky at night at the blazing stars against the midnight heavens? What do you see when the dawn breaks over the eastern horizon? What are your thoughts...in the autumn when the leaves turn brown and are blown away?...when you look out over the ocean in the evening? What do you see?

Many earlier peoples saw in these natural phenomena a world beyond ephemeral appearance, an abiding world, a world imaged forth in the wonders of the sun and clouds by day and the stars and planets by night, a world that enfolded the human in some profound manner. This other world was guardian, teacher, healer—the source from which humans were born, nourished, protected, guided, and the destiny to which we returned...

We have lost our connection to this other deeper reality of things. Consequently, we now find ourselves on a devastated continent where nothing is holy, nothing is sacred. We no longer have a

world of inherent value, no world of wonder, no untouched, unspoiled, unused world. We think we have understood everything. But we have not. We have *used* everything. By “developing” the planet, we have been reducing Earth to a new type of barrenness... (*Selected Writings on the Earth Community*, 2009)

There is an awe and reverence due to the stars in the heavens, the sun, and all heavenly bodies; to the seas and the continents; to all living forms of trees and flowers; to the myriad expressions of life in the sea; to the animals of the forests and the birds of the air. To wantonly destroy a living species is to silence forever a divine voice. (*The Dream of the Earth*, 1988)

To preserve this world of our origins from destruction, our great need is for renewal of the entire Western religious-spiritual tradition...We need to move from a spirituality of alienation from the natural world to a spirituality of intimacy with it...to a spirituality of the divine as revealed in the visible world about us, from a spirituality concerned with justice simply to humans to a justice that includes the larger Earth community...

We cannot save ourselves without saving the world in which we live...We will live or die as this world lives or dies...No other revelatory experience can do for the human what the experience of the natural world does. (*The Christian Future and the Fate of the Earth*, 2009)



Earth & Sky

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- Come to the Woods
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(b. 1986)
- I Go Among Trees
Giselle Wyers
(b. 1969)
- Walking on the green grass
Michael Hennagin
(1936-1993)
- Ancient Prairie
Ēriks Ešenvalds
(b. 1977)
- John Helmich, violin
- O Schöne Nacht, Op. 92, no. 1
Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)
- In the Night We Shall Go In
Imant Raminsh
(b. 1943)
- Michele Senger, cello
- The Heavens' Flock
Ēriks Ešenvalds
(b. 1977)
- Kasar mie la gaji
Alberto Grau
(b. 1937)

Program Notes and Texts

Come to the Woods – Jake Runestad, with text by John Muir (1939–1914)

Jake Runestad, a Minneapolis-based composer whom American Public Media has dubbed a “choral rock star,” has received commissions and performances from leading ensembles throughout the United States and Europe. A student of Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Kevin Puts, Runestad also studied with acclaimed composer Libby Larsen. *Come to the Woods*, with text by the great American naturalist John Muir, forms the centerpiece for this concert’s consideration of the relationship between humans and nature.

John Muir was co-founder of the Sierra Club and is often referred to as one of the “patron saints” of American environmental activism. His biographer, Steven Holms, commented that Muir “profoundly shaped the very categories through which Americans understand and envision their relationships with the natural world.” Born in Scotland, Muir emigrated to the US at the age of eleven and spent his adolescent years in Wisconsin. He studied at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, but did not receive a degree since he simply took whatever courses most interested him. He eventually became an explorer of nature and spent years living in Yosemite, Alaska, and other “wild places.”

Inspired by Ralph Waldo Emerson, the American essayist, lecturer, philosopher, abolitionist, and poet who led the Transcendentalist movement, Muir spent time with Emerson in 1871. Their conversations led Emerson to offer Muir a teaching position at Harvard. Muir declined and said, “I never thought of giving up God’s big show for a mere professorship.”

Muir spent his life studying botany and geology and wrote ten volumes about aspects of the natural world. He was dedicated to preservation and, after accompanying President Theodore Roosevelt on a visit to Yosemite (Roosevelt had asked Muir to show him “the real Yosemite”), Muir convinced the president that the best way to protect Yosemite, and other areas that subsequently became national parks and forests was through federal control and management.

Muir believed that nature was the primary source for understanding God and he often used words such as “glory” and “glorious” to suggest that light was taking on a religious dimension. Holms, his biographer, commented, “It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the notion of glory in Muir’s published writings, where no other single image carries more emotional or religious weight.”

In 2020 Michael Brune, the executive director of the Sierra Club, wrote a controversial editorial accusing Muir of racism. Following the publication of that editorial, African-American board members accused Brune of misrepresenting Muir. Aaron Mair, the first Black president of the Sierra Club, wrote:

...While some of Muir’s colleagues promoted White supremacist and exclusionary views regarding national parks and forests, Muir spoke out about the importance of making these areas accessible and encouraging all people to experience them, writing, “Few are altogether deaf to the preaching of pine trees. Their sermons on the mountains go to our hearts; and if people in general could go into the woods, even for once, to hear the trees speak for themselves, all difficulties in the way of forest preservation would vanish.” He came to believe deeply in the equality of all people, writing, “We all flow from one fountain Soul. All are expressions of one Love. God does not appear, and flow out only from...favored races and places.”

*Another glorious day, the air as delicious
To the lungs as nectar to the tongue.*

*The day was full of sparkling sunshine,
and at the same time enlivened with one of
the most bracing wind storms.*

*The mountain winds bless the forests with love.
They touch every tree, not one is forgotten.*

*When the storm began to sound,
I pushed out into the woods to enjoy it.
I should climb one of the trees for a wider look.*

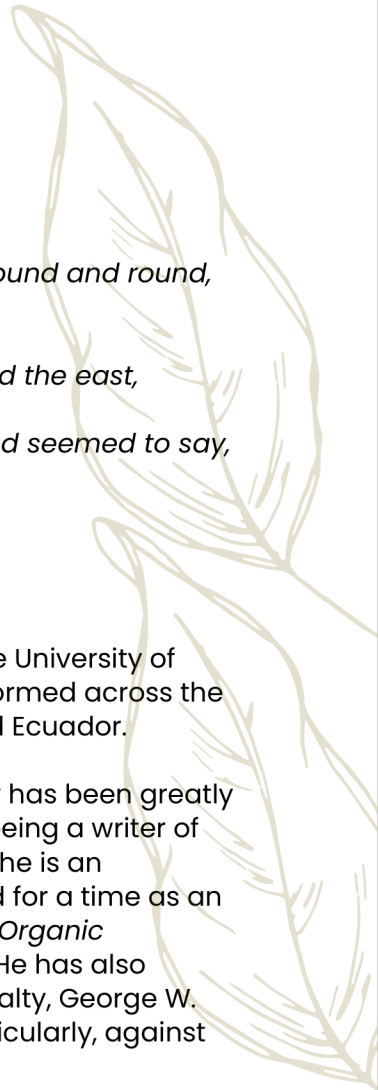
*The sounds of the storm were glorious with
wild exuberance of light and motion.
Bending and swirling backward and forward, round and round,
In this wild sea of pines.*

*The storm-tones died away, and turning toward the east,
I beheld the trees, hushed and tranquil.
The setting sun filled them with amber light, and seemed to say,
"Come to the woods, for here is rest."*

**I Go Among Trees – Giselle Wyers, with text by
Wendell Berry (b. 1934)**

Giselle Wyers is Director of Choral Studies at the University of Washington. Her compositions have been performed across the US and in Germany, Latvia, Holland, Poland, and Ecuador.

A native and current resident of Kentucky, Berry has been greatly influenced by the natural world. In addition to being a writer of poetry, fiction, and essays, as well as an editor, he is an environmental activist and farmer. Berry served for a time as an editor and writer for Rodale Press, including for *Organic Gardening and Farming* and *The New Farmer*. He has also pursued activism in the areas of the death penalty, George W. Bush's post 9/11 international strategy, and, particularly, against



coal mining and burning. In fact, he removed his papers from the archives of the University of Kentucky, where he had earned both bachelor's and master's degrees and had served on the English faculty, because of its close association with coal interests.

Berry describes himself as "a person who takes the Gospel seriously" and has criticized Christian organizations and institutions for failing to challenge cultural complacency about environmental degradation. Part of his spiritual practice is to take walks on Sunday mornings and his "Sabbath Poems," from which the poem we are singing is taken, have been the result. Berry has written poems for this ongoing collection for many years. Marc Hudson, in the *Sewanee Review*, suggests that these poems, which have been published in a continuing series, are "in some sense, devoted to dwelling, to living thoughtfully in one place."

Giselle Wyers' notes about the poem suggest that she sees the speaker as one who "goes through the process of viewing nature as something foreign and fearful, to recognizing it as part of oneself." Perhaps, in a larger sense, the poem is a reflection on fear itself and the ways that being reflective and quiet, as well as developing a sense of place, can help us to deal with our fears, whether they are about unresolved feelings, uncomfortable thoughts, things we haven't gotten done (and its association with multi-tasking and "making stuff happen/getting stuff done"), or other fears having to do with the desire to be liked and loved, employed, recognized, good at something, etc.

Berry's choice of framing in musical terms our dawning understanding of ourselves and our world, comfort in our own skin, and growth in our ability to seek and be peace ("I hear my song at last and I sing it") is, of course, particularly meaningful to Umeri singers.

*I go among trees and sit still.
All my stirring becomes quiet around me like circles on water.
My tasks lie in their places where I left them, asleep like cattle.
Then what is afraid in me comes and lives awhile in my sight.
What it fears in me leaves me, and the fear of me leaves it.
It sings, and I hear its song.*

*Then what I am afraid of comes.
I live for a while in its sight.
What I fear in it leaves it, and the fear of it leaves me.
It sings, and I hear its song.
After days of labor, mute in my consternations,
I hear my song at last, and I sing it.
As we sing the day turns, the trees move.*

Walking on the Green Grass – Michael Hennagin, with text from an American folk song

Hennagin, a composition student at the Curtis Institute, as well as at the Aspen and Tanglewood Festivals, was a pupil of Darius Milhaud and Aaron Copland. He began his professional career as a Hollywood composer and arranger for films and television and was a professor of composition at the University of Oklahoma from 1972 until his death. This piece is based on a double ostinato (two repeating patterns) heard in the tenor and bass parts in the opening and closing sections, with a soprano/alto melody overlaid. The center section is written in a contrasting key and features rapidly changing meters and timbral shifts. All of these features create a lighthearted and accessible piece, with the grass serving as the basis for dancing, singing, and romance, which, of course, are often the subjects of folk songs.

*Walking on the green grass, walking side by side.
Walking with a handsome beau, I shall be his bride.
Now we form a round ring, the men are by our sides;
Dancing with a handsome beau, I shall be his bride.*

*Now the king upon the green shall choose a girl to be his queen.
La la la la la la la, leads her out, his bride to be.
And kiss her one, two, three.*

*Now take him by the hand, your king, and let him swing you 'round
the green,
Oh now we'll go around the ring, and ev'ry one will swing.*

Ancient Prairie – Ēriks Ešenvalds, with text by Bai Juyi (772–846)

Ēriks Ešenvalds, an internationally-known composer from Latvia, is Head of the Department of Composition at the Latvian Academy of Music, where he has taught since 2004. He has served as visiting artist at Trinity College, Cambridge, and his works have been premiered by renowned ensembles such as the Boston Symphony, Gewandhaus Leipzig, The King's Singers, BBC Proms, Choir of Merton College, Oxford, Bavarian Radio Choir, and other ensembles in Europe, the US, Australia, New Zealand, and China. Ešenvalds served as a clinician for the Drake Choir and Chamber Choir in the State Choir Room in Riga, Latvia, during those ensembles' tour to the Baltic countries in 2016. In 2019, he visited Drake to rehearse his *I Traveled the Old Road*, which was commissioned and premiered by the Drake Choir in May of that year. Ešenvalds, a native of a small village in Latvia, is attracted to texts about various aspects of nature.

The text of this piece was written by a Chinese poet who lived during the Tang dynasty. While serving as a minor governmental official, Bai Juyi wrote over 2800 poems, which were admired in his lifetime for their accessible style and commentary on everyday life.

*The prairie overflows with grass's rolling billows,
As the year comes and goes, it withers and grows.
The wild fire can never burn it out of view,
When the vernal breeze arises, it appears anew.*

*Its balmy odors drift across the path time-worn,
Its luster of green extends to the town forlorn.
Again as I see my friend along the road depart,
I feel the grass is deep in sorrow as my heart.*

O Schöne Nacht – Johannes Brahms, with text by Georg Friedrich Daumer (1800–1875)

Brahms, known universally as one of the titans of classical music, is regarded as a master of the symphonic style in the second half of the nineteenth century. But his choral music is perhaps the best

indicator of his wide-ranging abilities, which included contrapuntal skill, economy of means, structural clarity, and evocative accompaniments. Brahms was well-versed in choral music, having served as conductor of several choirs, including a choral society in Detmold, a women's chorus in Hamburg, and the highly-regarded Singakademie in Vienna. His compositions involving choral forces, in addition to *Ein deutsches Requiem* (*A German Requiem*), include the lovely *Liebeslieder* and *Neue Liebeslieder Waltzer*, and a number of vocal quartets, as well as a cappella pieces.

The text of *O Schöne Nacht*, written in 1874, is from Daumer's *Polydora* (as were the texts for the *Liebeslieder* and *Neue Liebeslieder Waltzer*), which contained German translations of "folk" poetry. Daumer's lyric is, on its surface, a lovely, innocent picture of a moonlit night, its silence broken only by the call of the nightingale. Only in the last line, as the young man sneaks away quietly to his love, does it explicitly become a love poem. To a nineteenth-century speaker of German, however, the "nightingale" line was a double entendre.

*Oh lovely night!
In the sky, magically, the moon shines in all its splendor;
around it, the pleasant company of little stars.*

*Dew glistens brightly on green stems;
in the lilac bush, the nightingale sings lustily.
The youth steals away quietly to his love.
Oh lovely night!*

In the Night We Shall Go In – Imant Raminsh, with text by Pablo Neruda (1904–1973) (transl. Donald D. Walsh)

Raminsh was born in Latvia and emigrated to Canada in 1948. A violin student at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, he also studied with the acclaimed choral conductor Elmer Iseler. After earning his undergraduate degree, Raminsh enrolled at the Mozarteum in Salzburg for two years, where he pursued instruction in composition, violin, and conducting.

He returned to Canada and established the music department at the College of New Caledonia in British Columbia, where he founded a chamber orchestra, a youth symphony, and a chamber choir.

Pablo Neruda, often considered the national poet of Chile, won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971. Recognized as a poet by the time he was thirteen, he also occupied many diplomatic positions and served one term as a senator for the Chilean Communist Party. When Communism was outlawed in Chile in 1948, a warrant was issued for his arrest. Neruda went into hiding for months and eventually escaped to Argentina, where he became an advisor to Salvador Allende. When Neruda died, Pinochet, who had overthrown Allende, denied permission for his funeral to be a public event, but thousands of Argentinians disobeyed the curfew and crowded the streets to honor him.

*In the night we shall go in,
we shall go in to steal a flow'ring branch.*

*We shall climb over the wall
in the darkness of the alien garden,
two shadows in the shadow.*

*Winter is not yet gone,
and the apple tree appears suddenly changed,
into a cascade of fragrant stars.*

*In the night we shall go in,
we shall go in up to its trembling firmament,
and your hands,
your little hands and mine will steal the stars.*

*Silently to our house
in the night and the shadow,
perfume's silent step,
and with starry feet
the clear body of spring.*

**The Heavens' Flock – Ēriks Ešenvalds, with text by
Paulann Petersen (b. 1942)**

See previous notes about Ēriks Ešenvalds

This piece was commissioned by Ethan Sperry and the Portland State Chamber Choir, with text by Oregon's poet laureate, Paulann Petersen.

Paulann Petersen, Oregon Poet Laureate from 2010 through 2014, has written seven full-length books of poetry, most recently *One Small Sun* from Salmon Poetry in 2019. Her poems have appeared in many journals and anthologies, including *Poetry*, *The New Republic*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Willow Springs*, *Calyx*, and the online *Poetry Daily*. She was a Stegner Fellow at Stanford University and the recipient of the 2006 Holbrook Award from Oregon Literary Arts. In 2013 she received Willamette Writers' Distinguished Northwest Writer Award.

When the Drake Choir prepared this piece to rehearse it with Ēriks Ešvalds in the State Choir Room in Riga, Latvia in 2016, and as Umeri prepared it for this concert, the singers reflected on the text as a statement about humanity's relationship with the stars and the meaning of light in darkness, but also saw it as a call to create beauty as a part of a collaborative community. They considered the following statement by Mother Teresa: "We cannot all do great things. But we can do small things with great love."

As they reflected on the "smallness" of human life as contrasted with the vastness of the solar system, and what it means to create light, in small ways, for others, one singer wrote: "...Music is what brought us together and music is our way of giving back what we have been given in joyful times together and in genuine human connections. The music that we have made is the fire we have built together...In a time of great darkness and hatred in the world, we have made something generous and glowing and precious. It may not be an enormous inferno, but we made it together. I think it is important to both recognize light and make light, regardless of how small that light or how overwhelming the darkness."

Stars, you are the heavens' flock, tangling your pale wool across the night sky.

Stars, you're bits of oily fleece catching on barbs of darkness to swirl in black wind.

You appear, disappear by thousands, scattered wide to graze but never straying.

While I, a mere shepherd of these words, am lost.

*What can I do but build a small blaze and feed it with branches the
trees let fall:
That twiggy clatter strewn along the ground.
And lichen crusting such dead limbs glows silver, grows white.
The earth—food for a fire so unlike and like your own.
Oh, what can I do but build a small blaze.*

Kasar mie la gaji – Alberto Grau, with text from the African Sahel

Alberto Grau has been one of Venezuela's most influential contemporary choral composers and one of the most significant Latin American conductors of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Grau founded the Schola Cantorum de Caracas, which toured internationally (and sang in Des Moines several times in the 1990s), winning major choral competitions. Grau was a founding board member of El Sistema, the Foundation for Children and Youth Orchestras and Choruses, an equity-based music program whose motto is "music for social change," which was made famous by one of its participants, the conductor Gustavo Dudamel, who is currently the conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and who will become the conductor of the New York Philharmonic in 2026. Grau's books on choral composition and choral conducting have served as primary reference materials for several generations of musicians. He has served as a guest conductor and adjudicator at choral festivals in Europe and North America, as well as in Latin America.

Kasar mie la gaji was written in 1990 for an international mobilization to save the earth. Its text ("the earth is tired") is a saying of the people of the Sahel, a region of Africa spanning 3,670 miles from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea. It is a semi-arid region that separates the Sahara Desert in the north from the tropical savannas to the south. Countries within the Sahel, which means "coast" in Arabic, include Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria.

The United Nations estimates that eighty percent of the agricultural areas of the Sahel are already affected by climate change and that the temperature in the region is rising 1.5 times faster than the global average. The area is destabilized by human trafficking as well as the trafficking of drugs and weapons.

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DRAKE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI CHOIR

Aimee Beckmann-Collier, conductor
Ben Hoskins, piano

Soprano

Megan Barrett
Katelyn Mardis
Emily Roeder
Kelly
Schnackenberg
Elizabeth Watson

Alto

Amy Deist
Sarah Florian
Megan Houge
Emma Ksiazak
Kayleigh Koester
Maggie Parker
Chelsea Rink
Betsy White

Tenor

Jon Barrett
Trevor Bridge
Seth Hammond
Justin Scheel
Tanner Smith

Bass

Jacob Fross
Ian Ksiazak
Daniel Minnie
Thomas Riordan
Kyle Roeder
Ben Schultz
Bryn Start

Support

We hope you'll consider donating to Umeri, which is entirely supported by audience gifts. You may donate online by using the QR code to the right, at <https://alumni.drake.edu/umeri> or give your contribution to singers stationed at the doors following the concert.



Contributors to Umeri during this 2023–24 season include:

John Armstrong	Diane Mohrfeld
Mary K. Beckmann	Bob and Janice Myers
Virginia Bennett	Rev. Steve Orr
Rev. Frank Bognanno	Sue and Ron Pogge
Barbara and John Cortesio	Rev. Nipin Scaria
Cory Claussen	Derek Self and Gabbi Sarcone
Mary Beth and Steve Craig, M.D.	Ben Schultz
Teresa and Tim Dunbar	Jeff Smidt
Rev. Timothy Fitzgerald	Carol Stewart
Marianne and Frank Ksiazak	Dana and Peter Wenstrand
Laurie and Brent Mardis	David Watson
Tom and Evelyn McKnight	Kathi and Larry Zimpleman

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St. Catherine of Siena Parish and Student Center
Jacob Lemons, Drake University
Joni Kinnan, Drake University
Betsy White, Drake University

About the Choir

Founded in November 2019, Umeri is an ensemble of alumni of the Drake Choir, Drake University. Seventy-five alumni of the choir live in the Des Moines metro area and, since its inception, fifty-five of them have participated in Umeri. Alumni who have sung in the choir graduated from Drake in the years 1992 through 2022 and represent all Colleges of the University and a plethora of academic disciplines. As alumni, the singers are contributing to the Greater Des Moines community in many professional areas, including education, health care, public relations, finance, marketing, accounting, sports administration, and the arts.

Among their employers are a number of school districts, as well as the Meredith Corporation, Wells Fargo, Nationwide Insurance, US Cellular, Des Moines Performing Arts, the Iowa Arts Council, Iowa Public Radio, ACLU of Iowa, Principal Financial Group, Drake University, Target, the Iowa Events Center, Make-a-Wish Iowa, the Iowa Center for Economic Success, the Iowa High School Girls Athletic Union, the West Des Moines Chamber of Commerce, UnityPoint, and Veterans Hospital of Central Iowa.

Umeri, which takes its name from the Latin word for “shoulders,” because Drake Choir members were frequently reminded that they stood on the shoulders of those who came before them, is a project-based ensemble. The choir rehearses 6–8 times preceding a concert, thus requiring a high level of musical independence and advance preparation on the part of each member. Umeri presents three concerts per year. For further information, contact Dr. Aimee Beckmann-Collier (aimee.beckmann-collier@drake.edu).

“Even a wounded world is feeding us. Even a wounded world holds, giving us moments of wonder and joy.”

Robin Wall Kimmerer (*Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*, 2013)

