



FAR IN THE HEAVENS

Choral Music of Stephen Paulus

TRUE CONCORD VOICES & ORCHESTRA
ERIC HOLTAN, CONDUCTOR

Fresh!

REFERENCE
RECORDINGS.

FAR IN THE HEAVENS

Prayers and Remembrances (1-7)

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3 Music, When Soft Voices Die

Kathryn Mueller, soprano

4 Great Spirit

5 In Beauty It Walks

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Matthew Goinz, baritone

Cover painting: *Veils of Stone* (2006) by Patty Paulus

Photo by Nell Ytsma

The world premiere of the late Stephen Paulus's *Prayers and Remembrances* took place on September 11, 2011, in Centennial Hall at the University of Arizona in Tucson. The composer introduced his new work to the audience with these words:

Prayers and Remembrances (2011) was commissioned for the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy by True Concord Voices & Orchestra, Eric Holtan, Music Director, and Mrs. Dorothy Vanek, in loving memory of her husband, Robert Vanek, and in memory of friends of the Vaneks from United and American Airlines who were lost on September 11, 2001.

The idea for *Prayers and Remembrances* began with Eric Holtan. He approached me a few years back with a vision of writing a commemorative work for chorus and orchestra. We had several discussions and emails, especially about the text, and eventually, with the commission in place, I was ready to begin.

My concern was to write a work that would not only honor the 9/11 tragedy and all those who perished, but also one that would address the memories, the grieving and the recovery for anyone dealing with a circumstance in which loved ones had perished. Early on, Eric and I decided we wanted to create a work that would be spiritual but not necessarily religious. The goal was to find a combination of poems that were both secular and sacred—from poets who addressed grief, recovery, and a spiritual focus in life—that would highlight

common beliefs across distinct religious traditions. I ended up with a healthy mix of poets from different cultures, centuries and faiths.

The orchestra is approximately the size of the Mozart *Requiem* (since that was to be the companion work on the concert), with the addition of flute, oboe, horns, harp, and percussion. My approach was to use the orchestra to adorn and emphasize the text. I consider the words such an important part to a piece like this, and my intention, as always, was to make sure the choir could be heard without being overwhelmed by the orchestra.

Throughout the work I have been conscious of trying to bring melodic and harmonic ideas to the fore that would suggest hope, light and a future. To me, this seems to be the hardest thing to accept in any tragedy, whether it involves one person or thousands. So there are sometimes bright, colorful harmonies or melodies in both the orchestra and the chorus: this is not a work meant to wallow in self-pity or dwell in tragedy. I am hopeful that the sounds and words meld, going at least some distance towards repair and healing.

I am so grateful to True Concord Voices & Orchestra and their wonderful director, Eric Holtan, for asking me to create a work for the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy. I hope this piece will have reason to be performed in other situations. And I am especially grateful to Dorothy Vanek for her generosity in commissioning the work. Without patrons and wonderful performers, composers would simply be artists working alone, like a tree falling in the forest when no one is around to hear it. —*Stephen Paulus*

Stephen Paulus's setting of *Nunc dimittis* (2008; rev. 2013)—i.e., the Canticum of Simeon, sung at Compline in the Roman Rite, as the second canticle after the Magnificat in the Anglican Evensong, and after communion in the Lutheran liturgy—was originally written for chorus and organ. During the recording sessions, the composer had an epiphany, suggesting it might be more effective if sung *a cappella*. Over a break, he marked out the brief instrumental interludes and adjusted certain phrases to make the version heard on this recording. All agreed it was the right call. The initial motif—a melodic turn in the alto answered by the soprano over the alto's held note—alternately sizzles with dissonance and resolves to consonance, setting both the mood and theme for the entire piece. The text is sung hymn-style, while various melodic phrases are passed between voice parts. Harmonies drift between consonance and bitonal dissonance. Musical phrases arc and ebb with the text's inherent drama. Coming after the final movement of *Prayers and Remembrances* in the album sequence, *Nunc dimittis* takes on the added role of Greek chorus, turning liturgy to allegory in a message for those departing—not an earthly church service—but this world for the next.

Scored for chorus with oboe and harp accompaniment, *The Incomprehensible* (2009) provides this album's title "Far in the Heavens" in its opening line, as it continues the allegory of departed souls now soaring as angels in heaven,

about to know the “infinite Unknown.” The tempo is bright, the mood playful and free, the texture easy and light throughout, until that awe-filled moment when God’s nearness is anticipated. Those familiar with the HBO series *Six Feet Under* may notice a nod to the solo oboe of its main title theme. Paulus was a fan of both the show and Thomas Newman’s score. *The Incomprehensible* was commissioned and premiered by True Concord.

The very personal nature of *I Have Called You By Name* (2010) concerns God’s Biblical covenant with Israel and brings forward the history of (and confusion over) the naming of Jacob, meaning ‘heel holder’ or ‘supplanter,’ because he was born holding the heel of his twin Esau and later supplanted him in birthright through a ruse on their father Isaac. Jacob’s twelve sons became the leaders of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, and Jacob began to be called Israel. Because they are used interchangeably in the Bible, both names ‘Jacob’ and ‘Israel’ appear in the prologue of this work. The unaccompanied chorus delivers the scripture in broad, deliberate strokes, enumerating in the composer’s unique harmonic idiom all the ways God watches over Israel (e.g., the water will not drown you, the fire will not burn you, etc.), and concluding with “and I love you.”

The repeating or ‘rondo’ form taken by the music of *Little Elegy* (2010) suggests a slow-motion swirling eddy in which the speaker, grappling with intolerable loss, wavers between the bittersweet memory of “your smiling face”

and a limbo where “no rose can grow.” Here, emotions collide and time stands still. There is no escape. A master of text selection and elaboration, nowhere more poignant than this elegy, Paulus seizes the true essence of grief in the simplicity of his recurring gestures, and in so doing, reminds us of the wearying emotional whirlpool that engulfs survivors mourning the loss of their loved ones.

The allegorical sequence of themes that links the shorter works on this album—the departure of souls, the unknowable ecstasy of heaven, the assurance of God’s protection and love, and the acknowledgment of grief—comes full circle to music’s sweeping power to soothe and heal. *When Music Sounds* (2012) surges to life with the full vocal range of the *a cappella* chorus, an affirming text, and riveting chromatic harmonies that compel us to find solace and serenity as we “break into distant song.” That is the song heard *Far in the Heavens*. —*Peter Rutenberg*

ABOUT THE COMPOSER AND PERFORMERS

The late **Stephen Paulus** (1949-2014) was hailed as “a bright, fluent inventor with a ready lyric gift” by *The New Yorker*. A prolific composer of over 600 works, he wrote for orchestra, chorus, chamber ensembles, solo voice, keyboard and opera. Commissions from the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Houston Symphony and St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and subsequent performances from the orchestras of Los Angeles, Philadelphia, St. Louis, National Symphony, and BBC Radio affirm high demand for and interest in his music. He served as Composer-in-Residence for the orchestras in Atlanta, Minnesota, Tucson, and Annapolis, and his works have been championed by such eminent conductors as Sir Neville Marriner, Kurt Masur, Christoph von Dohanyi, Leonard Slatkin, Yoel Levi, and Robert Shaw.

A preeminent composer of opera, Paulus wrote twelve works for the dramatic stage. *The Postman Always Rings Twice* was the first American production to be presented at the Edinburgh Festival and has received nine productions to date. Commissions and performances have come from Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Washington Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Berkshire Opera Company, Minnesota Opera, and Fort Worth Opera, among others, as well as many universities and colleges.

His choral works have been performed and recorded by some of the most distinguished ensembles in the United States, including the Dale Warland Singers, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Robert Shaw Festival Singers, Vocal Arts Ensemble of Cincinnati, VocalEssence, Mormon Tabernacle Choir, and dozens of others.

A recipient of both Guggenheim and NEA Fellowships, Paulus was also a strong advocate for his colleagues. He co-founded and was Board Vice-President of the American Composers Forum, the largest composer service organization in the world. Paulus served on the ASCAP Board of Directors as Concert Music Representative from 1990. Described as uniquely American, his musical language was characterized as “irresistible in kinetic energy and haunting in lyrical design” by the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, while *The New York Times* praised him for “melodic patterns that are fresh and familiar at the same time” and scoring that is “invariably expert and exceptionally imaginative in textures and use of instruments.” His music is represented on over fifty recordings.

True Concord Voices & Orchestra, founded in 2004 as Tucson Chamber Artists, draws on the first rank of choral and instrumental musicians from Arizona and the United States. True Concord’s artistic mission is to enrich lives through the transformational power of classical music. It accomplishes this primarily through the performance of masterworks and the diverse

music of the United States, making its New York City debut at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall with Paulus's *Prayers and Remembrances* in September 2015, and its international debut with this recording. True Concord's expanding repertoire includes Bach's *St. John Passion* and *Mass in B-Minor*, Mozart's *Requiem* and *Mass in C-Minor*, Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem*, and Haydn's *The Creation*. It has commissioned new works from Stephen Paulus, Gerald Near, Ola Gjeilo, Paul Crabtree, and others.

On the adoption of their new name, Eric Holtan explains, "The original, early 14th century meaning of *concord* was 'hearts together.' Shakespeare later described the emotional impact of music as 'true concord'—something we strive to achieve in our music making between composer, performer and listener." With this album, True Concord seeks to bring together hearts from Tucson with those from around the world, through the power of music by one of America's greatest and most beloved composers, Stephen Paulus.

Eric Holtan, founder and music director of True Concord Voices & Orchestra, launched his professional music career at age 12 as a church organist. A native of Minnesota, he studied organ, voice and conducting at Gustavus Adolphus College, earning a master's degree in choral conducting from the University of Iowa, and the doctor of musical arts degree in choral and orchestral conducting from the University of Arizona. His doctoral research focused on the role of the 'chorale' form in Mendelssohn's oratorios and symphonies as a reflection

of the musical and religious influences on the composer. Holtan's principal conducting teachers include Karle Erickson, William Hatcher, Bruce Chamberlain and Thomas Cockrell, with additional studies with Donald Portnoy, Otto-Werner Mueller, David Hayes, Duain Wolfe, Vance George, and Dale Warland. Holtan has served as assistant director of the Tucson Symphony Orchestra Chorus and associate conductor of the Southern Arizona Symphony Orchestra. He is Minister of Music, Art and Liturgy at Dove of Peace Lutheran Church in Tucson.



From left: Peter Rutenberg, producer; Eric Holtan, conductor
and Stephen Paulus, composer



True Concord Voices & Orchestra



TRUE CONCORD VOICES & ORCHESTRA

Eric Holtan • Music Director & Conductor

Matthew Goinz • Assistant Director

Elena Miraztchiyska • Rehearsal Accompanist

SOPRANO

Erika Burkhart

Rachel Carlson

Leann Conley-Holcom

Jessica Cooper

Rebecca Duren

Carol Platt Jennings

Kathryn Mueller

Margot Rood

TENOR

L. H. Brown

Paul D'Arcy

Erik Gustafson

Matthew Holter

Owen McIntosh

Patrick Michael Muehleise

Steven Soph

Alan Stevens

ALTO

Mary Gerbi

Kerry Ginger

Emily Lau

Thea Lobo

Emily Marvosh

Gina McCann

Naomi DeVries Pomerantz

Keely Rhodes

BASS

Cameron Beauchamp

Ryan Downey

Ronald Lee Downs

David Farwig

Dusty Francis

Matthew Goinz

Joshua Hillmann

Philip Moody

VIOLIN I

Benjamin Nisbet,
concertmaster
Ellen Chamberlain
Anna Gendler
Alicia Hagerman

VIOLIN II

Emma Noël Votapek
Joseph Rousos-Hammond
David R. Rife
Wynne Rife

VIOLA

Ann Weaver
Christina Swanson
Melissa Hamilton
Rebecca McKee

CELLO

Anne Gratz
Theodore Buchholz
Robert S. Chamberlain

BASS

James P. Karrer
Ken Marrs

FLUTE

Alexander Lipay

OBOE

Sara Fraker

CLARINET

Andrew Braden
Marianne Shifrin

BASSOON

Rebecca Cain
Jessica Campbell

HORN

Johanna Lundy
Victor Valenzuela

TRUMPET

Betsy Bright
Jason Carder

TROMBONE

Moisés Paiewonsky
Joseph Muñoz

TIMPANI

O. Homero Cerón

PERCUSSION

Dieter Schodde

HARP

Christine Vivona

NOTE: All singers
sing on all tracks;
all orchestra
members play on
tracks 1 through 7.

PRAYERS AND REMEMBRANCES

I. They Are All Gone

Henry Vaughan (1621-1695)

They are all gone, into the world of light!
And I alone sit lingering here;
Their very memory is fair and bright,
And my sad thoughts doth clear.
It glows and glitters in my cloudy breast,
Like stars upon some gloomy grove.
I see them walking in an air of glory,
Whose light doth trample on my days.
O holy Hope, and high Humility!
High as the heavens above!
And yet, as angels in some brighter dreams
Call to the soul when man doth sleep,
So some strange thoughts transcend our
wonted themes,
And into glory peep.
O Father of eternal life, and all
Created glories under Thee!
Resume Thy spirit from this world of thrall
Into true liberty.

II. Lord, Make Me An Instrument

St. Francis of Assisi (c.1181-1226)

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not
so much seek to be consoled, 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.

III. Music, When Soft Voices Die

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory;
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heap'd for the belovèd's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

IV. Great Spirit

trans. John Yellow Lark

Oh, Great Spirit, whose voice I hear
in the wind,
Whose breath gives life to all the world,
Hear me! I come to you as one of
your many children.
I am small and weak.
I need your strength and your wisdom.
May I walk in beauty.
Make my eyes behold the red and
purple sunset.

Make my hands respect the things that
you have made,

And my ears sharp to hear your voice.

Make me wise so that I may know
the things

That you have taught your children —
The lessons that you have hidden
in every leaf and rock.

Make me strong, not to be superior to
my brothers,

but to be able to fight
my greatest enemy: myself.

Make me ever ready to come to you
with straight eyes, so that

When life fades as the faded sunset
My spirit will come to you without shame.

V. In Beauty It Walks

Traditional Navajo Prayer

As I walk, the universe is walking with me.
In beauty, it walks before me.
In beauty, it walks behind me.
In beauty, it walks below me.
In beauty, it walks above me.
Beauty is on every side.
As I walk, I walk with Beauty.

VI. Eternity

William Blake (1757-1827)

He who bends to himself a joy
Does the winged life destroy;
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in eternity's sunrise.

VII. Grant That We May Love

Hebrew (Leviticus 19:18)

Mohammed (c.570-632)

V'ahavta l'reiacha kamocho.
(Love others as you love yourself.)

O Lord, grant us to love Thee;
grant that we may love those
 that love Thee;
grant that we may do the deeds
 that win Thy love.
Make the love of Thee be dearer
 to us than ourselves,
make the love of Thee be dearer
 to us than our families,
than wealth, and even than cool water.

Nunc dimittis

Luke 2:29-32; Lesser Doxology

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart
in peace; according to thy word.
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
Which thou hast prepared before the face of
 all people,
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles,
 and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
 and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever
 shall be,
world without end, Amen.

The Incomprehensible

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Far in the Heavens my God retires:
My God, the mark of my desires,
And hides his lovely face;
When he descends within my view,
He charms my reason to pursue,
But leaves it tir'd and fainting in
th' unequal chase.

Or if I reach unusual height
Till near his presence brought,
There floods of glory check my flight,
Cramp the bold pinions of my wit,
And all untune my thought;
Plunged in a sea of light I roll,
Where wisdom, justice, mercy, shines;
Infinite rays in crossing lines
Beat thick confusion on my sight,
and overwhelm my soul!

Great God! behold my reason lies
Adoring: yet my love would rise
On pinions not her own:
Faith shall direct her humble flight,
Through all the trackless seas of light,
To Thee, th' Eternal Fair, the infinite Unknown.

I Have Called You By Name

Isaiah 43:1-4

But now says the Lord —
He who created you, O Jacob,
He who formed you, O Israel:
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you.
I have called you by name;
You are mine.
When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
And through the rivers,
they shall not overwhelm you.
When you walk through fire,
you shall not be burned;
and the flame shall not consume you.
I am the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.
Because you are precious in my sight,
and honored, and I love you.”

Little Elegy

Elinor Wylie (1885-1928)

Withouten you
No rose can grow;
No leaf be green
If never seen
Your sweetest face;
No bird have grace
Or power to sing;
Or anything
Be kind, or fair,
And you nowhere.

When Music Sounds

Walter de la Mare (1873-1956)

When music sounds, gone is the earth I know,
And all her lovely things even lovelier grow;
Her flowers in vision flame, her forest trees,
Lift burdened branches, stilled with ecstasies.

When music sounds, out of the water rise
Naiads whose beauty dims my waking eyes,
Rapt in strange dreams burns each enchanted face,
With solemn echoing stirs their dwelling-place.

When music sounds, all that I was I am
Ere to this haunt of brooding dust I came;
And from Time's woods break into distant song
The swift-winged hours, as I hasten along.



Far in the Heavens was made possible through the signal generosity of Mrs. Dorothy Vanek of Tucson, Arizona. Mrs. Vanek also sponsored the commissioning of *The Incomprehensible* and *Prayers and Remembrances*, working closely with Eric Holtan and Stephen Paulus on the selection of texts for the latter. Hailed as “Tucson’s savior of classical music” by the *Arizona Daily Star*, she was named “Outstanding Philanthropist” by the Southern Arizona Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals in 2010 in recognition of her tremendous philanthropy throughout the Tucson community. Her support of True Concord has been nothing short of transformational, for which everyone in the organization continues to be immensely grateful.

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Eric Holtan rehearses *Prayers and Remembrances*

STEPHEN PAULUS



Prayers and Remembrances commemorates the 9/11 tragedy with a bold musical and spiritual journey across centuries and cultures. Music's power to heal is evident in all the choral works recorded here under the supervision of the late Stephen Paulus (1949-2014) just weeks before a stroke silenced the prolific and beloved American composer. These world premiere recordings hail the international debut of Arizona-based True Concord Voices & Orchestra.