

# SHIMMERING NIGHT

SONGS OF  
MYSTERY AND  
WONDER

WORKS BY BRITTEN,  
GJEILO AND COHEN

BRITTEN: *A CEREMONY OF CAROLS*

SONGS OF MYSTERY AND WONDER:

WHITACRE: *LUX AURUMQUE*

BRITTEN: *HYMN TO THE VIRGIN*

GJEILO: *SERENITY (O MAGNUM MYSTERIUM)*

HAGENBERG: *MUSIC OF STILLNESS*

INTERMISSION .....

WORKS BY ROBERT S. COHEN

*THE SERENITY OF SNOW (WORLD PREMIERE)*

*SLEEP, BABY, SLEEP*

GJEILO: *LUMINOUS NIGHT OF THE SOUL*

TROTTA: *VENI, VENI EMMANUEL*

Please turn off all cell phones for the duration of the program. Flash cameras  
(distracting to performers) and video recordings are not permitted.

# PROGRAM NOTES

JASON C. TRAMM, D.M.A.

## SHIMMERING NIGHT: SONGS OF MYSTERY AND WONDER

Tonight's program invites us into a world shaped by light, mystery, and spiritual reflection — a journey through music that dwells between earth and heaven. From ancient sacred texts to contemporary musical visions, these works explore awe, tenderness, solitude, and the deep serenity found within night. Across 20th- and 21st-century choral landscapes, we encounter tender lullabies, radiant harmonies, haunting chant, and magnificent luminosity as composers Benjamin Britten, Ola Gjeilo, Robert Cohen and others illuminate the stillness of winter and the quiet wonder of the human spirit.

### BRITTEN — A CEREMONY OF CAROLS, OP. 28

Benjamin Britten's beloved *Ceremony of Carols* is one of the great treasures of 20th-century choral repertoire. Composed in 1942 during Britten's Atlantic voyage back to England from the United States during World War II, the work grew from his chance discovery of a book of medieval poems. Originally scored for treble choir and harp, these movements capture both ancient mysticism and bright modern energy.

Britten moves fluidly between moods: the jubilant procession "Hodie Christus natus est," the playful dance rhythms of "Wolcum Yole!," the fiery "This Little Babe," and the breathtaking purity of "There is No Rose." The harp interlude — a nod to Britten's affinity for early musical forms — serves as a moment of reflective stillness amid celebration. Rooted in medieval texts yet unmistakably modern in harmony and texture, this piece transforms the Christmas story into something intimate and emotionally urgent.

## SONGS OF WONDER AND MYSTERY

This contemplative set explores the beauty of sacred mystery through these deeply atmospheric works.

### WHITACRE — LUX AURUMQUE

Eric Whitacre's music is known for its shimmering harmonic language and rich, luminous textures. *Lux Aurumque* ("Light, warm and heavy as pure gold") sets a short Latin poem reflecting on the birth of holy light into the world. Built on long, sustained harmonies that unfold like slowly opening wings, the piece invites stillness — a prayer of suspended time.

### BRITTEN — HYMN TO THE VIRGIN

Written when Britten was just 16, this exquisite double-chorus motet is a masterpiece of youthful inspiration. One chorus sings in English and the other responds in Latin, creating an intimate dialogue between humanity and the divine. Its floating harmonies and devotional purity reveal Britten's lifelong fascination with sacred expression.

### GJEILO — SERENITY (O MAGNUM MYSTERIUM)

Norwegian composer Ola Gjeilo's setting of the ancient Christmas chant *O Magnum Mysterium* is rich and cinematic. Accompanied by a solo cello, the music glows with gentle harmonic warmth as it meditates on the miracle of Christ's birth. Gjeilo's lush sound world merges the emotional resonance of film music with timeless choral tradition.

### HAGENBERG — MUSIC OF STILLNESS

Elaine Hagenberg has emerged as one of today's most compelling voices in contemporary choral writing. *Music of Stillness* sets the peace-filled text of poet Sara Teasdale. Hagenberg writes long, lyrical lines and gentle waves of harmony that build to an ecstatic peak before descending again to quiet. The music reminds us that beauty often lives in simplicity — in stillness itself.

### WORKS BY ROBERT COHEN

Tonight we are honored to feature works by renowned American composer, **Robert S. Cohen**, whose music balances emotional immediacy with lyrical craftsmanship.

## THE SERENITY OF SNOW (WORLD PREMIERE)

Composed especially for this performance, Cohen's newest work evokes the tranquil beauty of a winter snowfall. Delicate harmonies and expanding textures create a musical landscape of silence and purity — snow as both a physical and spiritual phenomenon.

## SLEEP, BABY, SLEEP

This tender lullaby pairs simplicity with emotional warmth. Rocking rhythms, gentle cadences, and soothing harmonic movement create a comforting musical embrace.

## GJEILO — LUMINOUS NIGHT OF THE SOUL

Inspired by the poetry of St. John of the Cross and Charles Anthony Silvestri, this powerful work for choir, strings, and piano is both dramatic and mystical. Gjeilo's cinematic style shines through in glowing harmonies and sweeping melodies. The music reflects the soul's journey out of darkness into divine illumination — a transformation from longing to transcendence.

## TROTTA — VENI, VENI EMMANUEL

The concert closes with Michael John Trotta's thrilling setting of the ancient Advent chant. Trotta builds from a single, haunting line into a powerful rhythmic statement. Layered patterns and bold harmonies renew this timeless melody with fresh urgency. The piece is a call to anticipation — hope rising through darkness toward the coming of light.

# LUMINOUS NIGHT OF THE SOUL



**LONG BEFORE MUSIC WAS SUNG BY A CHOIR,  
LONG BEFORE SILVER WAS SHAPED IN THE FIRE  
LONG BEFORE POETS INSPIRED THE HEART  
YOU WERE THE SPIRIT OF ALL THAT IS ART**

**YOU GAVE THE POTTER THE FEEL OF THE CLAY  
YOU GIVE THE ACTOR THE RIGHT PART TO PLAY  
YOU GIVE THE AUTHOR A STORY TO TELL  
YOU ARE THE PRAYER IN THE SOUND OF A BELL**

**PRAISE TO ALL LOVERS WHO FEEL YOUR DESIRE  
PRAISE TO ALL MUSIC WHICH SOARS TO INSPIRE  
PRAISE TO THE WONDERS OF THY ARTISTRY  
OUR DIVINE SPIRIT, ALL GLORY TO THEE  
(CHARLES ANTHONY SILVESTRI)**

**O GUIDING NIGHT!  
O NIGHT MORE LOVELY THAN THE DAWN!  
O NIGHT THAT HAS UNITED  
THE LOVER WITH HIS BELOVED,  
TRANSFORMING THE BELOVED IN HER LOVER**

**(ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS POEM -  
DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL)**