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Composers Selected in First-Ever Michigan Choral Composition Competition

Two composers have been selected in the first-ever Composition Competition sponsored by the Michigan Choral Commission Consortium. Announced this past winter, the competition aimed to encourage and celebrate women composers, in celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote in 1920. Michigan was one of the first states to vote to ratify.

Fourteen composers submitted compositions in two categories - Emerging Composers and Established Composers. The emerging composers were asked to write for mixed (SATB) choir, a cappella or with piano, and the established composers wrote for treble (SSAA) choruses.

The winning pieces will be featured in this year's consortium series, and will have the opportunity for many performances from some of the finest choirs from across Michigan. In addition, they will receive cash prizes and the possibility of interaction with the choirs. The winning compositions were selected by three of the finest Michigan conductors - also all women, and representing high school, university, and community chorus experience. Lyn CieChanski (Ann Arbor Skyline High School) Dr. Kimberly Dunn Adams (Western Michigan University) and Ginny Kerwin (retired Executive Director of MSVMA) all praised the strength and diversity of the fourteen submitted compositions.

In the Established Composer category, the winning composition is "Seeing the Same Stars" by Dr. Ellen Gilson Voth, a conductor and composer, educator and keyboard artist. She will receive a \$1000 cash prize.

In the Emerging Composer category, the winning composition is "One Nation" by Abbey Monreal, a composer and music education major at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. She will receive a \$250 cash prize.

For more information on the composers and their pieces, please see page 2.

For press inquiries or to join the consortium, email mc3@jedscott.com



Dr. Ellen Gilson Voth leads an active career as conductor and composer, educator and keyboard artist. Currently she is Artistic Director of the Farmington Valley Chorale based in Simsbury, CT, a large symphonic chorale of 80-100 members, performing major works with orchestra through the Farmington Valley. A regularly commissioned composer of choral music and art song, Voth's works are published by Oxford University Press, ECS Publishing, Colla Voce, and Santa Barbara Music Publishing, and frequently appear at regional and national conferences of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA). She regularly coaches composers, individually and in workshop settings, on the art of arranging and composing for choirs.

For seven years Voth served as Artistic Director of Novi Cantori, a professional chamber choir based in Springfield, MA - known for its innovative programming, for providing opportunities for composers to refine works-in-progress, and for forging community connections throughout the Pioneer Valley and Hartford regions. Voth has taught at several colleges and universities including Western Connecticut State University (Danbury, CT); Westfield State University (Westfield, MA); Western New England University (Springfield, MA); Gordon College (Wenham, MA); and Ithaca College (Ithaca, NY).

Currently Voth serves on the boards of CT-ACDA as well as Choral Arts New England. She is a singing member of CONCORA (Connecticut Choral Artists), active as a guest conductor and clinician, and performs regularly as a pianist and organist. Voth received her DMA degree from The Hartt School, Univ. of Hartford (CT), and lives with her family in West Hartford, CT.

About “Seeing the Same Stars”

When I started thinking about texts to set for the Michigan Choral Commission Consortium, I kept coming back to the words of Sojourner Truth (ca. 1797-1883) ...a woman who endured unspeakable hardship and became a beacon for human rights for all people, including women's right to vote. Sojourner Truth remembered the stars her mother saw, and how they spoke comfort and solace to her even through her separation from her family. It was humbling to write words to follow hers for the second part of the piece...”We all look to the same stars, with hope that one day, all of us can see them clearly, and reach them as if to touch them.” What stands between us and our neighbors, in being able to see the same stars, “shimmering in a cloudless sky”?



Abbey Monreal is a composer/arranger from Milwaukee, WI. She is currently studying for a Bachelor's in Music Education-Choral at the University of Wisconsin- Eau Claire with a Fine Arts Administration Certificate. While at UW-Eau Claire, she is also studying composition and has had opportunities to orchestrate for the cabaret show on campus. Abbey's works have been performed in a variety of settings, including her piece “Water Music”; which was selected to be performed at the Women Composers Festival of Hartford, Connecticut in 2017.

About “One Nation”

“One Nation” uses text from both the Bible and the Quran to illustrate the similarities between the two religions. Phrases such as “love your enemies” and “do good to those who hate you” speak of treating others with unconditional kindness and respect, no matter how different from you they may seem. In these times of hate and uncertainty, it is important to keep in mind that we are all still people. We all deserve love, equity, and respect. Hopefully, this piece helps remind people to care about those who look, think, and act differently than they do.