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Chamber Singers

# Minnesota Music Educators Association Annual Convention

*Minneapolis Convention Center*

*February 13, 1998 — 9:05 AM*



**Dennis Jewett, Director**  
**Jacob Chizzo, Accompanist**



# Program

All Creatures Now are Merry Minded ..... John Bennet (1570-1615)  
Fire, Fire My Heart ..... Thomas Morley (1557-1602)

Chamber Singer Women

Fine Knacks for Ladies ..... John Dowland (1562-1626)

Chamber Singer Men; John Mleziva — baritone

Ecco mormorar l'onde ..... Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)

*Hear the murmuring water; the trembling of the leaves;  
the morning breeze in the trees. The songs of the birds is like  
gentle laughter from the East. For dawn is appearing, reflected  
in the sea, lightening the sky, and making the dew glitter like pearls.  
The light glints from the mountains like gold. O beautiful dawn,  
the morning breeze is your herald. You restore our hearts.*

Zigeunerlieder ..... Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Horch, der Wind klagt

Andy French, Tenor; Janine Brinkman, Soprano; Jessica Timman, Alto

*Listen, the wind complains in the branches sadly. Sweet love, we must part. Good night! O  
how gladly I would stay in your arms. Still, the hour of separation nears. God protect you.  
Dark is the night; no stars give light. Sweet love, trust in God and don't cry. God will lead me  
back to you, then we will be united in the happiness of love.*

Kommt dir manchmal

*Does it come into your mind, sweet love what you once promised me? Deceive me not, leave  
me not. Don't you know how I love you. Love me as I love you, then God's  
grace will stream to you.*

Brauner Bursche furht zum Tanze

*The strong and handsome lad leads to the dance his beautiful, blue-eyed girl. The spurs clang  
together and the gypsy melody begins. He kisses her and holds his sweet dove. He turns her  
and leads her. He shouts and springs. He throws three silver coins and makes the cymbal ring.*

Songs of the Wayfarer ..... John Leavitt (b. 1955)

Let Beauty Awake

Whither Must I Wander

Jonathan Lasch, baritone

The Silver Swan ..... Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)

Un Cygne ..... Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)

*A swan advances on the water enfolding himself like a gliding tableau.  
So at certain moments it seems like a loved one moving in space.  
The swan on the river approaches as the swan of our troubled soul,  
Which swells with the trembling image of happiness and of doubt.*

American Madrigals ..... Kirk Mechem (b. 1925)

New York Girls

Kansas Boys

Birthday Madrigals ..... John Rutter (b. 1945)

It was a lover and his lass

Josh Larson, electric bass; Jeff Bonhiver, drums

# Robbinsdale Armstrong High School Chamber Singers

The Armstrong Chamber Singers is an auditioned chorus of 26 Juniors and Seniors drawn from a choral program of more than 400 students. Also members of the Concert Choir, they rehearse twice a week outside of the school day.

Recent performances include Christmas at the White House, the Washington National Cathedral, the Minnesota Governor's Mansion, and the Dorian Festival. This year they have been invited to perform at the Connecticut State Music Festival in Hartford.

## **SOPRANO**

Janine Brinkman\*  
Jennifer Kelly  
Kristin Santele\*  
Christina Schochow  
Meridee Silbaugh  
Shauna Solomon

## **ALTO**

Quinn Brett  
Melissa Carlson  
Britta Erickson  
Trang Nguyen  
Lauren O'Connor  
Sarah Pickens  
Jessica Timman\*

## **TENOR**

Nick Duelo  
Evan Fishman  
Andy French\*  
Aaron Kline  
Jonathan Lasch  
Chris Laumann

## **BASS**

Adam Davis  
Matt Donald  
Jeff Johnson  
Josh Larson  
Chris Long\*  
John Mleziva  
James Wilson\*

\*MMEA All-State Choir Members

## Dennis Jewett Director

Dennis Jewett is a Choral Director at Robbinsdale Armstrong High School. He taught previously at Plymouth Middle School and Eagan High School. Mr. Jewett serves as High School R&S Chair for MN ACDA. He became Bass Section Leader and associate Music Director of the Sebastian Singers in 1987, performing with them at two ACDA regional and two national conventions. He has conducted numerous honor choirs including the North Central Junior High Honor Choir in Lincoln, Nebraska. He is Music Director at Good Samaritan United Methodist Church in Edina, MN.





## Program Notes



While vocal chamber music may have always existed in some form, the late Renaissance in Europe brought a flowering of compositions for small groups of singers. The rediscovery of "earthly reality" brought with it an interest in the ideas and writings of antiquity and the idea that art must imitate nature. An effort to paint every subtlety of the text gave rise to musical devices that quickly became codified and even stereotyped. It became customary when describing pain to write dissonance. Likewise laughter could be written as "fa la" refrain. These devices are often referred to as "madrigalisms." It is from this idea that this program grows. It will begin with popular works from the late sixteenth century and later show influences on music in the centuries to follow.

John Bennet's "All Creatures Now Are Merry-Minded" was published in 1601 in a set of works entitled The Triumphes of Oriana, a collection of madrigals and balletts presumably intended to honor Queen Elizabeth I (each ends with the refrain "Long live fair Oriana"). The Italian idea of word-painting is clearly heard in the setting of the word "merry," as well as "yond bugle was well winded" and "birds over her do hover." There is no indication that professional madrigal singers were employed in England. English madrigals were designed more for private use of the new gentry and the rising middle classes. The texts of all three of the English madrigals selected are more popular and less esoteric than many of the Italian counterparts they imitated. "Fire, Fire My Heart" is an excellent example of Thomas Morley's composition. He is considered the most popular, prolific, influential, and Italianate of the English madrigalists. Heard here in an arrangement for women's voices, the listener can observe the "fire" motive as well as the dissonance used to describe the torment of the singers. In "Fine Knacks for Ladies" we hear a frivolous song of an Elizabethan traveling salesman set by John Dowland which merges the style of the madrigal with the solo lute song. The men sing in the style of the King Singers with countertenors singing soprano and alto parts.

The Madrigal is not only an important source of vocal chamber music; it was the form in Europe which allowed for innovation and development of musical style. Historically significant as a master of the Madrigal and a transitional figure in the development of Baroque forms and style was Claudio Monteverdi. "Ecco mormorar l'onde" is taken from his Second Book of Madrigals which was published in 1590 when Monteverdi was only 23. It is a study of masterful word-painting while expressing the mood of the poetry as a whole.

The program moves more than two hundred years to three selections from the Zigeunerlieder or gypsy songs of Johannes Brahms. Here as in his piano and orchestral works Brahms attempts to capture the ethnic dances and stories in musical pictures. The wind in the trees (reflecting the inner turmoil of the lovers) is heard throughout the first selection both in the voices and the piano. The third song, "Brauner Bursche..." creates musical images of boots and spurs, swirling skirts, and dancing with abandon. Between the two a quiet soaring love song.

Contemporary Kansas composer, John Leavitt, gives us a beautiful choral setting of the Robert Louis Stevenson's Song of Travel. Two selections from that work for choir, baritone solo, and piano have been selected for this program. "Let Beauty Awake" is set with light fresh vocal lines accompanied by a sparkling, effervescent piano score. In contrast the second selection begins with the lonely howling of the winter wind. The middle section recalls the happiness of childhood but returns to the hollowness of the realization that home is not there anymore.

We return to two madrigal-like musical settings of poems about a swan. The poems are similar and each composer seems to be attempting to create the image of a beautiful swan gliding effortlessly across the water, but the musical language especially the harmonic colors are fully 300 years apart.

More than twenty years ago, Kirke Mechem composed a set of American Madrigals which were widely performed at concerts during the Bicentennial Celebration. These compositions are based on American folk songs masterfully crafted into choral pieces using madrigal forms and word painting. The effect is much like a Copland symphonic work.

When John Rutter was asked to write a piece as a tribute to the jazz musician and composer, George Shearing, he set out to compose a set of contemporary madrigals which were published in 1995 as Birthday Madrigals. Most have well-known Elizabethan counterparts as is the case for the new setting of the first in the set, "It Was a Lover and Lass."