

cascadian chorale

gary d. cannon
artistic director

WINTER

Saturday, December 11, 2010, 7pm

**St. Margaret's Episcopal Church
4228 Factoria Blvd SE, Bellevue**

Sunday, December 12, 2010, 7pm

**Trinity Parish Episcopal Church
609 Eighth Avenue, Seattle**

WINTER

Christmas Day (1910)	Gustav Holst (1874–1934)
Rorate (2003)	arr. Linda Gingrich (b.1951)
In the bleak midwinter (1905)	Gustav Holst
In the bleak midwinter (1911)	Harold Darke (1888–1976)
Lo, how a rose e'er blooming (2008)	arr. Linda Gingrich
Jesus Christ the apple tree (1967)	Elizabeth Poston (1905–1987)
Choose something like a star (1959)	Randall Thompson (1899–1984)
The first Nowell (1961)	arr. David Willcocks (b.1919)
Please sing with the choir during verses 1, 4 and 6. See lyrics on page 6.	

intermission

Angels we have heard on high (1996)	arr. Linda Gingrich
Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening (1959)	Randall Thompson
A Consort of Choral Christmas Carols (1977)	P.D.Q. Bach (1807–1742)?
1. Throw the Yule log on, Uncle John	
2. O little town of Hackensack	
3. Good King Kong looked out	
Blow, blow, thou winter wind (1973)	John Rutter (b.1945)
Invierno porteño (1969/1994)	Ástor Piazzolla (1921–1992)
	arr. Oscar Escalada (b.1945)
A merry Christmas (1935)	arr. Arthur Warrell (1882–1939)

Ingrid Verhulsdonk, piano

Cascadian Chorale

Gary D. Cannon, conductor

Christmas Day: Choral Fantasy on Old Carols (1910)

by **Gustav Holst** (1874–1934)

The English carol tradition dates back to mid-twelfth-century courtly dances. Not until the fifteenth century was the term especially identified with Christmas. Even then carol texts were generally sung to popular dance tunes, sometimes at secular banquets, and probably didn't form part of liturgical worship. The carol tradition weakened during the Reformation, and received particularly harsh persecution by seventeenth-century Puritan reformers. Carols saw a brief return to vogue in the early 1700s, when many still-popular texts were written. The 1843 publication of Charles Dickens's novella, *A Christmas Carol*, helped enormously to revive the waning tradition. During the Victorian era, carols became firmly entrenched with specific tunes and four-part hymnal harmonizations.

Enter Gustav Holst, English composer of German-Latvian extraction, teacher at St. Paul's Girls' School in the then industrial neighborhood of Hammersmith in west London, and at Morley College, an adult-education center later known for its Socialist sympathies. With such connections as these, it is no surprise that Holst composed frequently for non-professional performers, and *Christmas Day* was indeed written for his students at Morley. After conventional settings of "Good Christian men, rejoice" and "God rest ye merry, gentlemen", Holst takes the unusual step of presenting "Come, ye lofty, come, ye lowly" and "The first Nowell" simultaneously. The music drifts away to the same gentle alto line that began, giving the impression of a group of neighborhood carolers who, having passed by, bid a warm farewell for the season.

Rorate (2003), traditional Scottish carol

arranged by **Linda Gingrich** (born 1951)

Linda Gingrich is a master of all aspects of the choral art: she is an accomplished composer, arranger, teacher, conductor, and singer. Born in Austin, Texas, she moved with her family to Washington State in the late 1950s. After vocal studies at Pacific Lutheran University and the Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle, she proceeded to a conducting degree at the University of Washington. In 1991, Gingrich founded the Issaquah Chorale, which, now re-named Master Chorus Eastside, has become one of the major forces in choral music in the eastern suburbs of Seattle.

Gingrich generally composes to fill a specific programming need with Master Chorus Eastside, as was the case for the present arrangement of *Rorate*. The text is by the Scottish priest, diplomat, and poet William Dunbar (c.1460–c.1520). The first line of Dunbar's poem—*Rorate coeli desuper* ["Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above"]—quotes a traditional Catholic prayer for Advent, the liturgical period leading up to Christmas. As is frequently the case with Renaissance writers, Christian theology blends with ancient Greek mythology and even astrology; in this case, Christ is referred to variously as the Day-star (the star that appears just before dawn), Phoebus (Helios, the god of the Sun), and even Aurora (goddess of dawn). The tune is of traditional Scottish origin, complete with those Celtic hallmarks of ornamental turns and rhythmic vigor. At the beginning and end, Gingrich evokes Scottish bagpipes with the textless lower voices.

In the bleak midwinter (1905)

by **Gustav Holst** (1874–1934)

If you are a choral enthusiast travelling through England, and find yourself in the county of Essex northeast of London, then the delightful, sleepy town of Thaxted is worth a brief visit. There is but one main street, with a comfortable, welcoming pub. Across the street is a building with a small plaque indicating that the composer Gustav Holst, most famous for his orchestral suite *The Planets* (1916), had stayed there on several occasions. In fact, that is quite an understatement. Every Pentecost from 1916 until his death, Holst assembled amateur and professional singers for a choral festival in Thaxted. In this setting were many old English choral works revived and new works premiered. His setting of Christina Rossetti's lines, *In the bleak midwinter*, predates these festivals, but is nevertheless representative of his many beautiful choral miniatures. It first appeared in 1906 in *The English Hymnal*.

In the bleak midwinter (1911)

by **Harold Darke** (1888–1976)

Most tourists tend to flurry from major landmark to major landmark, sparing nary a glance for the equally remarkable sites or events nearby. When planning your next trip to London, you may wish to consider reserving the obligatory visit to St. Paul's Cathedral—a major landmark if ever there was one—for mid-day on a Monday. Walk about ten minutes to the east, and you'll find, nestled among the financial district, St. Michael's Church, Cornhill. St. Michael's is the site of what is probably the world's longest running series of lunchtime concerts, a tradition now ubiquitous in most major cities, but just beginning when Harold Darke became the church's organist in 1916. He played 1,833 mid-day concerts there over the span of fifty years, and thus became one of the most beloved English organists of the twentieth century.

Most of us, however, know Darke solely for his popular setting of the Christina Rossetti poem, *In the bleak midwinter*. When the poem was published posthumously in 1904, it immediately gained attention, and Gustav Holst famously set it for inclusion in *The English Hymnal* in 1906. Darke's setting comes from a few years later, and many modern conductors find it at least the equal to Holst's. It is more a carol-anthem than a congregational hymn-carol, with prominent solo verses for soprano and tenor, and omitting Rossetti's fourth verse. If you enjoy this work, perhaps St. Michael's, Cornhill, isn't such a minor landmark after all.

Lo, how a rose e'er blooming (2008)

arranged by **Linda Gingrich** (born 1951)

fifteenth-century German hymn [Es ist ein' Ros entsprungen]

This traditional hymn is best known in a version by the major German Baroque composer, Michael Praetorius, which appeared in 1609. Since then many composers have taken their hand to it, including Seattle's own Linda Gingrich. (See page 3 for more information about Gingrich.) She here sets the first two verses in the popular 1894 translation by the American musicologist and literary editor Theodore Baker (1851–1934). As in many of her arrangements, here Gingrich with great effectiveness occasionally assigns the melody, or fragments thereof, to the lower voices.

Jesus Christ the apple tree (1967)

by **Elizabeth Poston** (1905–1987)

While a piano student at the Royal Academy of Music, Elizabeth Poston had the advantage of early encouragement from two of England's most prominent composers, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Peter Warlock. Despite successes with early songs and a violin sonata, it was not easy for a woman to earn a living as a composer in interwar Britain. Hence Poston got a job at the BBC's music staff, eventually rising to become director of the European Service's music sector during the Second World War. She became noted as a pianist and scholar, but continued to compose.

Poston's most frequently performed work is *Jesus Christ the apple tree*, setting an anonymous carol that first appeared as early as 1784 in New Hampshire. Apple trees were common in New England, as they are now here in Washington State, and it is logical that a Baptist minister such as Joshua Smith should seek out, or perhaps craft himself, a text that compares Christ to such a pervasive element of nature. The text avers that, just as the apple tree gives shelter to the casual New Englander, so Christ provides respite to a weary soul. Poston composed a sweeping, broad melody, including a dramatic octave leap.

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Choose something like a star

by **Randall Thompson** (1899–1984)

No. 7 from *Frostiana: Seven Country Songs* (1959)

Randall Thompson has often been hailed as the dean of American choral music. Early in his career, Thompson focused on orchestral works, with three finely crafted symphonies, but by the 1940s he turned predominantly to the choir. Thompson's many illustrious positions included the directorship of Philadelphia's acclaimed Curtis Institute and a professorship at Harvard. His many choral compositions form the core of the American repertory, ranging from the idyllic *The Peaceable Kingdom* to the boisterously patriotic *The Testament of Freedom*. His brief *Alleluia* remains perhaps the most frequently performed piece of American choral music. Not bad for a chap who, as an undergraduate, had failed in his first audition to join the Harvard Glee Club: he later quipped, "My life has been an attempt to strike back." Thompson's compositional style is very meticulous—often almost every note on the page has an articulation or related marking—and yet the overall effect is of a spontaneous and sincere reaction to the text.

Frostiana is one of Thompson's most beloved works. Delightful and urbane, it is a collection of "Seven Country Songs" on texts by the great American poet Robert Frost. The cycle was composed in the summer of 1959 to fulfill a commission for the bicentennial of the incorporation of Amherst, Massachusetts. Thompson himself conducted the premiere, which was sung by a volunteer ensemble drawn from throughout the township, not unlike the Cascadian Chorale. Both Thompson and Frost were adopted New Englanders, and Frost was suitably impressed by the work to direct his estate not to allow other composers to set his poems to music, a ban which continues, more or less, today. In 1965, Thompson orchestrated the work, and even later made an arrangement for band. Through the course of the 2010–11 season, we will perform the complete original version, with its demanding role for solo piano.

"Choose something like a star", the concluding movement of *Frostiana*, has a tripartite structure, in which the opening and closing sections place the sopranos on a repeated D, settled above the choir as a star rests above the skies. At the very end, as we are gently encouraged to "be staid", the choir rests on a long-held D as well. In the dramatic middle section, Thompson aptly depicts both the frustration inherent in the eternal quest for knowledge and the calm required to resolve the quest satisfactorily. As is so often the case in Frost's poetry, the meaning of this text is intentionally obscured. The star can be interpreted religiously as symbolic of a deity, or scientifically as representative of all knowledge. Or perhaps both interpretations are valid, and a myriad beyond. Thompson's genius lies in that his music, like Frost's text, lets the listener decide.

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The first Nowell (1961), traditional English carol

arranged by **Sir David Willcocks** (born 1919)

The first Nowell may date as early as the thirteenth century, and some historians posit that the carol became associated with, or was created for, the so-called Chester mystery plays, a series of semi-theatrical productions held during the season of Corpus Christi in the English town of Chester. Its earliest recorded appearance, however, is an eighteenth-century broadside newspaper printed in Cornwall, at the far west of England. There are even questions about the accuracy of that broadside and subsequent publications: the tune we now know may be a conflation of the original melody and its descant, or of several versions of the folk song. We will present this carol in a version made by the noted British choral conductor Sir David Willcocks, which itself first appeared in the seminal 1961 volume *Carols for Choirs*.

Please sing with the choir during verses 1, 4 and 6.

Verse 1

The first Nowell the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay, keeping their sheep,
In a cold winter's night that was so deep:
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
Born is the king of Israel!

Verse 4

This star drew nigh to the northwest;
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest;
And there it did both stop and stay
Right over the place where Jesus lay:
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
Born is the king of Israel!

Verse 6

Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heav'nly Lord,
That made heav'n and earth of naught,
And with his blood mankind hath bought:
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
Born is the king of Israel!

∞ intermission ∞

Angels we have heard on high (1996)

arranged by **Linda Gingrich** (born 1951)

In the early 1980s, while choir director at Boulevard Park Presbyterian Church in Burien, Linda Gingrich first had the idea of placing a solo quartet in the choir loft, in order to echo the choir below, while singing the carol *Angels we have heard on high*. About a decade later, she crafted an original arrangement based on that idea. In this final version, which became her first published work, the quartet's echo gradually encroaches on the full choir's initial statements. The tune is a traditional French carol, with the original text *Les anges dans nos campagnes* ["Angels in our fields"]. (See page 3 for more information about Gingrich.)

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

by **Randall Thompson** (1899–1984)

No. 6 from *Frostiana: Seven Country Songs* (1959)

Randall Thompson made the present setting as part of his choral cycle *Frostiana*. (See page 5 for more information about Thompson and *Frostiana*.) The poetic scene here is a simple one: a man with his horse, travelling on a long journey, pauses briefly near a forest to watch the snow fall. The poem is a miniature masterpiece, with a sophisticated but simple rhyme scheme, and Thompson responds in kind. The music alternates between a pianistic depiction of slow and delicate snowfall in 4/4 time and the men's reflections in a lilting 6/8. The final line is punctuated by silences which re-enforce just how sleepy the rider is.

A Consort of Choral Christmas Carols (published 1977)

by **P.D.Q. Bach** (1807–1742)?

reverently edited by **Professor Peter Schickele** (born 1935)

Ever since 1953, when he discovered an eighteenth-century manuscript in service as a strainer in a south German coffee percolator, Professor Peter Schickele of the University of Southern North Dakota at Hoople has, much to the dismay of musicians everywhere, failed to keep the cat in the bag. That manuscript was of the *Sanka Cantata*, composed by P.D.Q. Bach, the hitherto unknown “last and least of the twenty-odd children of J.S. Bach.” Through Professor Schickele's subsequent discoveries over the last fifty years, it has slowly emerged that P.D.Q. Bach wrote extensively in every genre. Opera houses have been cursed with *Hansel and Gretel* and *Ted and Alice* and *The Abduction of Figaro*. Orchestras have unwisely undertaken the *1712 Overture* and the *Fanfare for the Common Cold*. Pianists have inexplicably embraced *The Short-Tempered Clavier*. Even the *Sinfonia Concertante*—scored for lute, balalaika, ocarina, left-handed sewer flute, double-reed slide music stand, and strings—has found an occasional outing.

Unfortunately, P.D.Q. Bach even inflicted his efforts upon choirs, gifting them most notably with the *Liebeslieder Polkas*, the *Missa Hilarious*, and two dramatic oratorios, *The Seasonings* and *Oedipus Tex*. Despite our better judgment, we here offer *A Consort of Choral Christmas Carols*, to texts penned perhaps by the composer himself or his publisher, Jonathan “Boozey” Hawkes. These thankfully secular carols illustrate as well as any other works just how bad a composer P.D.Q. Bach was. In the first carol, “Throw the Yule log on, Uncle John”, he requires each of the four choral sections to sing different texts simultaneously, thereby rendering unintelligible the sub-plot hidden in the alto line: “Fuzzy Wuzzy was a bear...” The hymn-like “O little town of Hackensack” begins decently enough, but soon P.D.Q. Bach's poor voice-leading results in painfully dissonant harmonies, and the final four-bar phrase has one bar too many. As for “Good King Kong looked out”, let's just say that Kong, the gigantic cinematic ape, was no Wenceslas. At least P.D.Q. Bach had enough courtesy to keep these pieces short.

Blow, blow, thou winter wind

by **John Rutter** (born 1945)

No. 4 from *When Icicles Hang* (1973)

John Rutter wrote his first Christmas carol while a schoolboy, and has stated that early in his career “carols were my calling cards.” In the early 1970s, he was given responsibility for editing *Carols for Choirs 2*, the sequel to a highly successful anthology of carols old and new by major and minor English composers. Two further volumes have since followed, always with a strong Rutter fingerprint. Since then, he has established a major international reputation, including large-scale works for chorus and orchestra, such as *Gloria* (1974), *Requiem* (1985), and *Mass of the Children* (2003). While some may pigeon-hole his works as “light music”, their melodiousness, fine craftsmanship, and sheer joy have guaranteed their continued popularity.

In addition to his ubiquitous carols, Rutter explored the winter season in his early cycle for chorus and orchestra, *When Icicles Hang*. The text of the fourth movement is from Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Jaques has just completed his famed “All the world's a stage” speech, lamenting the futility of life as he and his liege, Duke Senior, live in exile. The duke then requests a song, and his cousin Amiens responds with these delicate words. Rutter perceives this context well, infusing Amiens's empty affirmations that “life is most jolly” with cold, joyless melancholy.

Invierno porteño [Winter of Buenos Aires] (1969)

No. 4 from *Las cuatro estaciones porteñas* [The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires] (1964–70)

by **Ástor Piazzolla** (1921–1992)

arranged for mixed chorus (1994) by **Oscar Escalada** (born 1945)

Born in the coastal Argentine city of Mar del Plata, Ástor Piazzolla was raised in New York City. Returning to Argentina at age seventeen, Piazzolla played the bandoneón (which is related to the accordion) in prominent tango bands while studying with Alberto Ginastera, Latin America's leading modernist composer. After a year of further studies with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, he found his unique compositional voice by infusing jazz and classical elements into dance forms, thereby creating a style termed *nuevo tango*. This "new tango" quickly became popular in the West, but met with some resistance in Argentina. Political oppression in his homeland led Piazzolla to settle in Rome and Paris, and indeed several of his works—including the famed *Libertango*—have political overtones.

Buenos Aires is the beating heart of Argentina: its undisputed center of government, culture, population, commerce, industry, religion, tourism, and sport. With over thirteen million people in its metropolitan area, the city is comparable in population to Los Angeles or London. Located at the estuary of the Rio de la Plata, which drains one-fifth of the river-water in South America, Buenos Aires is also one of the world's most important ports. Indeed, its denizens are simply called *porteños*: people of the port. Piazzolla spent much of his life in the city, and was thus intimately familiar with its temperaments and seasons. In the 1960s, Piazzolla crafted a cycle of *Las cuatro estaciones porteñas* as a conscious homage to the famous *Four Seasons* violin concertos by Baroque composer Antonio Vivaldi. In fact, ever since classical musicians began taking up Piazzolla's works in the 1980s, these two cycles have been frequently performed together. Over the course of the 2010–11 season, the Cascadian Chorale will present all four of Piazzolla's *Estaciones porteñas*.

Piazzolla's original standard instrumentation for the *nuevo tango* was a quintet of bandoneón, violin, piano, electric guitar, and string bass, though his music has been arranged for various types of instrumental configurations. In the 1980s, Argentinean conductor Oscar Escalada began arranging Piazzolla's tangos for chorus. Escalada employs scat syllables as the text, reinforcing the link between *nuevo tango* and jazz. In *Invierno porteño*, he gives the piano a prominent role, including a chromatic solo cadenza and an extended middle section in which the choir merely supplies back-up chordal structure as the piano undertakes to sing the melody.

A merry Christmas (1935)

arranged by Arthur Warrell (1882–1939)

Arthur Warrell was organist and choirmaster at several prestigious churches in Bristol, a port city in the west of England. This same region is the source for the present traditional carol, which is well known for its refrain, "We wish you a merry Christmas." Warrell's quicksilver arrangement is his only work frequently heard today, and its popularity is largely due to its inclusion in *Carols for Choirs*. Perhaps his version inspired a rather later rendition by the Muppets, with Animal's insistent demand: "Won't go!" Did anyone bring figgy pudding?

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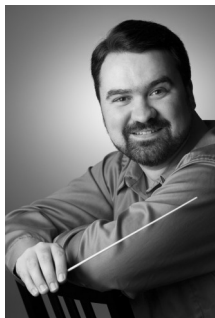
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Program notes by Gary D. Cannon

Program produced by Barb Fraley

Gary D. Cannon, Conductor



Gary D. Cannon is one of the Northwest's most dynamic choral personalities, active as a conductor, singer, composer and musicologist. He is, since 2008, Artistic Director of both the Cascadian Chorale and the Vashon Island Chorale. Also in 2008, the Early Music Guild invited him to found and direct a Renaissance choir, Sine Nomine. In 2010, he debuted as Principal Conductor of Vashon Opera, in performances of Copland's *The Tender Land*. He has been Chorusmaster for the Northwest Mahler Festival since 2001. He has served as Choir Director at Bethel Lutheran Church in Shoreline, and St. Thomas More Catholic Church in Lynnwood. Cannon has also conducted the Annas Bay Chamber Choir, the Kirkland Choral Society, and several ensembles at the University of Washington.

As a tenor, Cannon has appeared as a soloist with Pacific Northwest Ballet, Seattle Philharmonic, and the Auburn, Rainier, and Eastside symphony orchestras. He also sings regularly with The Tudor Choir and Choral Arts. He has performed with the Kronos Quartet, the Seattle Opera Chorus, and members of the Tallis Scholars. He sings frequently for video game and film soundtracks and trailers. Cannon is formerly an adjunct instructor at Whatcom Community College, where he received the Faculty Excellence Award. His musicological research emphasizes twentieth-century British music. He holds degrees from the University of California–Davis and the University of Washington, where he is currently researching a doctoral dissertation on the early life and works of William Walton.

Ingrid Verhulsdonk, Piano



Very active as a freelance accompanist in the area, Ingrid is also principal organist at Sacred Heart Church in Bellevue and accompanist for The Market Street Singers of Ballard. She holds degrees in piano performance from the University of Washington and the University of Hawaii. She is on staff at the University of Washington drama department, and has been a regular accompanist with Northwest Opera In Schools, Etcetera (NOISE) and Cornish College of the Arts.

Linda Gingrich, Composer-in-Residence



Linda Gingrich wears many hats as a musician—conductor, teacher, author, lecturer—but it is her work as a composer that has had the most far reaching impact. Her compositions have been performed around the Puget Sound region and across the country by high school, college, youth, church and community choirs, and the score of at least one piece has been carried overseas to Iceland. She brings well-honed skill to her choral compositions due to her many years as a choral conductor and her instinctive, deeply ingrained sensitivity to the rhythm and beauty of words. And she sometimes unleashes a sense of humor and playfulness in her work that reveals her joy in music and makes her pieces a delight to sing.

Dr. Gingrich has D.M.A. and Master's degrees in choral conducting from the University of Washington and a bachelor's degree in voice from Cornish College of the Arts. She is best known locally as the founder, conductor and artistic director of Master Chorus Eastside.

Cascadian Chorale Members

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Nancy Dain-Smith
Barb Fraley
Joscelyne Gray
Anita Gross
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Paula Rattigan
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Our Mission

is to express and nurture a love of choral music by:

- inspiring and educating our singers, our audience and the broader community;
- presenting quality performances of fine choral music from various historical, cultural and stylistic traditions; and
- collaborating with composers, professional musicians and other arts organizations.

Our Vision

a community engaged in great choral music performed with passion and skill.

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Coming up in “The Season of Seasons”



Love, flowers, birdsong... no season brings as much color to our lives and surroundings as spring. Works by Randall Thompson, Composer-in-Residence Linda Gingrich, and Artistic Director Gary Cannon celebrate the joys of love. Music of Morten Lauridsen adorns French poetry by Rainier Rilke in a musical bouquet devoted to the rose, that most beautiful of flowers. We will celebrate newborn birth both literal and figurative in premiering a new work by major American composer William Hawley. Favorite madrigals by Monteverdi, Morley, Gershwin and P.D.Q. Bach evoke the season's brightness and levity. In honor of our rainy home, we include Edward Elgar's gentle *The Shower*. After all, this is a tribute to spring.



The morning sunrise, a day in the garden, a game of baseball... summer may be short-lived in the Northwest, but its pleasures are deeply loved. Samuel Barber's choral masterpiece, *Reincarnations*, captures both the season's calm and intense moments. Eric Whitacre's *A boy and a girl* depicts two young lovers alone at the beach. Music by Ástor Piazzolla, Harry Burleigh, Henk Badings, Randall Thompson, and the Cascadian Chorale's own Chris Fraley highlight various elements of the season. We will close the concert, and the season, with an overture: Composer-in-Residence Linda Gingrich's arrangement of Rossini's *William Tell Overture*. Surely there is no sunnier piece to celebrate the brilliance of summer!

*Visit www.CascadianChorale.org for complete information
and to purchase tickets.*