

# *SHEPHERD SINGERS*

*Thomas Jaber, conductor*

*Saturday, April 7, 1990*

*8:00 p.m. in Hamman Hall*

RICE UNIVERSITY

the  
Shepherd  
School  
of Music

## PROGRAM

### ***The Beatitudes* (1989) (Premiere)**

*Ann Rivers Witherspoon*

(b. 1948)

(Text from the Holy Scriptures)

*Diana Burson, mezzo-soprano*

*Andrea Jaber and Debby Joiner, handbells*

### ***Choral Dances from Gloriana***

*Benjamin Britten*

(1913-1976)

(Text by William Plomer)

*I. Time*

*II. Concord*

*III. Time and Concord*

*IV. Country Girls*

*V. Rustics and Fishermen*

*VI. Final Dance of Homage*

### ***Zigeunerlieder, Op. 103***

*Johannes Brahms*

(1833-1897)

(Text after the Hungarian  
of Hugo Conrat)

*I. He, Zigeuner, greife in die Saiten*

*II. Höchgetürmte Rimaflut*

*III. Wißt ihr, wann mein Kindchen*

*IV. Lieber Gott, du weißt*

*V. Brauner Bursche fuhr zum Tanze*

*VI. Röslein dreie in der Reihe*

*VII. Kommt dir manchmal in den Sinn*

*VIII. Horch, der Wind klagt in den Zweigen*

*XI. Weit und breit schaut niemand mich an*

*X. Mond verhüllt sein Angesicht*

*XI. Rote Abendwolken ziehn*

### ***Ellipses* (1989) (Premiere)**

*Richard Lavenda*

(b. 1955)

(Poems by Claudia Cooper)

*I. Two Mourning Doves*

*II. Turn Around*

*III. Burning*

*IV. Once Strong*

*V. On a Garden Wall*

## SHEPHERD SINGERS

### Soprano

Kathleen Avera  
Kristen Baker  
Katharine Fleming  
Heather Ganz  
Gina Goff  
Susanna LeBaron  
Dawn Sheridan

### Mezzo-Soprano

Paula Blackmon  
Diana Burson  
Tricia Elliott  
Kandi Wiley  
  
**Counter-Tenor**  
Jeffrey Nytch

### Tenor

Francisco Almanza  
Erik Leidal  
Kevin Moody  
Michael Nicholson  
Mark Swindler

### Bass-Baritone

Robert Ames  
Angus Bell  
William Burns  
Kent Reep  
Deric Rosenblatt  
Kevin Farmer  
Paul Schleuse  
Alex Stutler

Donald Doucet, piano

## PROGRAM NOTES

***The Beatitudes*** . . . . . Ann Rivers Witherspoon

*The Beatitudes* is a simple, reverent setting of the famous text from the King James version of *The Gospel of St. Matthew*. Its tonal harmonic language supports its near a capella texture and air of serene devotion. The word "Blessed" occurs often, and is treated in different ways to emphasise the diversity of the blessings. Although the tonal context is traditional, tone clusters form the building blocks for some of the harmonic structure. The work proceeds freely, without regard to strict formal designs or constraints, discreetly accompanied by handbells. *The Beatitudes* was written for Chapelwood United Methodist Church.

— Note by Ann Rivers Witherspoon

***Ellipses*** . . . . . Richard Lavenda

I composed *Ellipses* in the summer and fall of 1989 for Thomas Jaber and the Shepherd Singers. I had heard them perform several times, and was impressed with their musicianship and enthusiasm. I was fortunate to be able to collaborate with a wonderful poet, Claudia Cooper, who provided a set of poems that suggested the overall form and flow of the piece. The wide emotional range of the texts required that I compose music that is both lyrical and dramatic; the harmonic and rhythmic language changes in response to particular images or moods in the poetry. Each of the five songs has its own sound: the first is primarily gentle counterpoint; the second a series of aggressive, wave-like canons separated by chorale-style harmony; the third is for women's voices; the fourth is abrupt and jagged, with phrases emerging from silence; and the last is chorale. In each piece, the piano is a fifth voice, commenting on the text, and making its own contribution to the harmony and counterpoint.

— Note by Richard Lavenda

## BIOGRAPHIES

*THOMAS JABER is Director of Choral Activities and Assistant Professor of Vocal Coaching at The Shepherd School of Music. In addition to the responsibilities of coaching graduate students and seniors, Mr. Jaber conducts two choral groups at the Shepherd School, the Rice Chorale and the Shepherd Singers. Before his recent move to Houston, Mr. Jaber was Music Director of the Opera Theatre of Temple University for two seasons. He has earned degrees in piano from Arkansas State University and Indiana University, and was granted the Performer's Certificate in Accompanying from the Curtis Institute of Music, where he was a member of the faculty from 1976 to 1988. Mr. Jaber was also a vocal coach and conductor at Philadelphia's Academy of Vocal Arts from 1977 to 1986. He was chosen as vocal coach for the Opera Company of Philadelphia/Luciano Pavarotti International Competition and also served as assistant chorus master for the Opera Company of Philadelphia.*

*In addition to Children's Opera Outreach programs, Mr. Jaber has appeared in recital with many of the Philadelphia area's finest performers. As a keyboard artist, he was the continuo organist in recording three cantatas of J.S. Bach with Helmuth Rilling, performed solo organ recitals in the Middle East and with the Concerto Soloists Chamber Ensemble of Philadelphia, and for ten seasons was head of the Accompanying staff at the Fred Waring Summer Music Workshops. From 1978 to 1988, Mr. Jaber was the Organist and Choirmaster of the First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia.*

*ANN RIVERS WITHERSPOON began her composition studies with Anne K. Gebuhr at Houston Baptist University. She entered The Shepherd School of Music in 1984 and has studied with Ellsworth Milburn, George Burt, and Daniel Börtz, a visiting professor from Sweden. She has received several scholarships, honors, and awards, and in 1988 received her Master of Music degree. She is currently pursuing her Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the Shepherd School.*

*The Houston Symphony Orchestra premiered Ms. Witherspoon's work **The Conch** in 1988. Later this month violist Rifat Qureshi will premiere her **Fantasy for Viola**. Her works have been featured on concerts during the annual Festival of American Contemporary Music at Rice University and at the Conference of The Society for Composers. Last fall, Kenneth Goldsmith and Lawrence Wheeler commissioned and premiered her **Rhapsody for Violin and Viola** at the University of Houston. Ms. Witherspoon is currently working on a string orchestra piece commissioned by the Galveston Symphony Orchestra to be premiered during 1990-91.*

*RICHARD LAVENDA's music has been played by orchestras, chamber ensembles, and soloists nationwide. He has received commissions from, among others, the Houston Symphony Orchestra, Bricolage, Duo Vivo, and Duo Patterson. His music is published by Norruth Music, Inc. A native of New Jersey, Dr. Lavenda received his education at Dartmouth College, Rice University, and The University of Michigan, where he completed a doctorate in 1983. From 1983-87 he was Assistant Professor of Music at Texas Wesleyan College in Fort Worth. He joined the faculty of The Shepherd School of Music in 1987 and is currently Assistant Professor of Composition and Theory.*

*CLAUDIA COOPER (b. 1957) had her formal education in Ann Arbor, London, Cincinnati, and Houston. As a writer, she was commissioned by Sumiyo Ender for **Seventeen Haiku** and Richard Lavenda for **Ellipses**. Her other works include short stories, a children's novella, and numerous poems.*

## TEXT

### *Choral Dances from Gloriana* . . . . . Benjamin Britten (Text by William Plomer)

#### I. *Time*

Yes he is Time, lusty and blithe! Time is at his apogee! Although you thought to see a bearded ancient with a scythe. No reaper he that cries "Take heed." No reaper he, time is at his apogee! Young and strong in his prime! Behold the sower of the seed!

#### II. *Concord*

Concord is here our days to bless and this our land to endue with plenty, peace and happiness. Concord and time each needeth each: The ripest fruit hangs where not one, but only two can reach.

#### III. *Time and Concord*

From springs of bounty, through this county, streams abundant, of thanks shall flow where life was scanty, fruits of plenty, swell resplendent, from earth below! No Greek nor Roman queenly woman knew such favour as she whose presence is our pleasure. Gloriana hath all our love!

#### IV. *Country Girls*

Sweet flag and cuckoo flower, cowslip and columbine, kingcups and sops-in-wine, flower-de-leuce, and calaminth, harebell, and hyacinth, myrtle and bay and rosemary, Norfolk's own garlands for her Queen.

#### V. *Rustics and Fishermen*

From fen and meadow in rushy baskets they bring ensamples of all they grow. In earthen dishes their deep-sea fishes; yearly fleeces, woven blankets; new cream and junkets, and rustic trinkets on wicker flaskets, their country largess, the best they know.

#### VI. *Final Dance of Homage*

These tokens of our love receiving, O take them Princess great and dear, from Norwich city you are leaving, that you afar may feel us near.

*Zigeunerlieder, Op. 103* . . . . . Johannes Brahms  
(Text after the Hungarian  
of Hugo Conrat)

I. *He, Zigeuner, greife in die Saiten*

Hey, strike up, gypsy! Play the song of the faithless maid! Make the strings cry, complain — sad, fearful, 'till a hot tear wets this cheek!

II. *Hochgetürmte Rimaflut*

Mountainous Rima waters, how you are muddy! On the bank I stand, cry loud for you, my love! Waves flee, waves pour, roar at me on the shore, let me forever on Rima's bank weep for her!

III. *Wißt ihr, wann mein Kindchen*

Do you know when my love is loveliest? When her sweet lips jest, laugh and kiss. Mine you are, maiden, tenderly I kiss you, for me alone sweet heaven made you! Do you know when I like my lover best? When he holds me with his arms about me. Mine you are, my love, tenderly I kiss you, for me alone sweet heaven made you!

IV. *Lieber Gott, du weißt*

Dear God, you know how often I have rued that once I gave my love a tiny kiss. My heart decreed that I must kiss him. All my life I'll think of that first kiss. Dear God, you know how often on still nights I've thought in joy and pain of my beloved. Love is sweet, though regret is bitter, to him my poor heart stays ever true.

V. *Brauner Bursche fuhrt zum Tanze*

A bronzed lad leads to dance his fair, blue-eyed lass, boldly clashes his spurs, the csardas begins; he kisses and caresses his sweet dove, whirls her, guides her, shouts for joy, leaps; throws three shining silver florins on the cymbalom, making it resound.

VI. *Röslein dreie in der Reihe*

Three little roses in the row bloom so red, no law against boy going to girl! If, dear God, there were, the fair wide world were long since done for. Staying single is what would be a sin! The fairest lowland town is Kecskemet, there many a maid is neat and nice! Find yourselves a bride there, friends, woo her, set up your home, drain cups of joy.

### VII. *Kommt dir manchmal in den Sinn*

Do you sometimes recall, my sweet, what once you vowed to me with sacred oath? Do not deceive me, do not forsake me, you do not know how much I love you; love me as I love you, then down on you God's grace will pour!

### VIII. *Horch, der Wind Klagt in den Zweigen*

Listen, the wind is crying in the trees full of sorrow; sweet love, we have to go apart, good night. Oh, I would love to rest in your arms, but the farewell hour is close. It is so good to be with you. So dark is the night; no star is shining. Sweet love do not cry, believe in God. Someday when God brings me back to you, we will stay together in love and happiness.

### IX. *Weit und breit schaut niemand mich an*

Nobody cares for me, and if they hate me, I don't care. Only my dear one shall love me always. Only my dear one shall kiss me and take me in her arms until the end of time. No star is shining in the night and no flower is blooming and smelling good. Your eyes are flowers to me and the shining of the stars. They are shining so friendly and blooming only for me.

### X. *Mond verhüllt sein Angesicht*

The moon is hiding his face, sweet love, I am not angry at you. If I make you sad, say "how could I love you?". My heart burns hot for you, no tongue will let you know. Soon we fall in love together, soon, like birds, soft and sweet.

### XI. *Rote Abendwolken ziehn*

Red clouds of evening sail the sky longingly to you; my love, my heart burns, heaven shines in glowing splendour, and day and night I dream of none but my sweet love.

# ELLIPSES

I.

Two mourning doves mirror  
Themselves near enough to touch  
Yet do not  
Their melodies enlase  
Cool rainfall echoes gently  
Songs melancholy without reason  
They drop to the earth  
And begin the cycle  
Soaring away together  
It does not matter where  
They do not look back  
To see the sprouted seed  
They know it is

II.

Turn around  
Pebble over shell tumbles  
Slowly crushed to sand each  
Assault of the water  
Redefines the limits  
Reforms the shore  
A wide-eyed miracle hungers  
For clarity to sculpt  
The sand into dreams  
Each tower a defiance  
Of the wind and the tide  
Every grain a question

III.

Burning passion  
Breathless swirl embracing  
Sweet silvery madness  
Craving wings  
A whisper touch reaches  
The center tormenting  
Tantalizing to delight  
Gentle hands hold  
This cradled heart expanding  
To impossible heights  
Irrevocably to eager  
Precious surrender

IV.

Once strong harmony is severed  
Pieces of fuel for a blaze  
Too hot to offer warmth  
Dare to look into the heat  
See what cannot be captured  
Neglected It is  
A voice screaming in the dark  
Demanding in fury  
And begging in desolation  
To be heard until  
Midnight fire weep cinders  
Into nothing

V.

On a garden wall rests  
Tranquil serenity  
Watching as rocks  
Crumble one by one  
Marking the passage knowing  
It does not matter anymore  
Toil devotion proven  
Pleasure long taken  
In the boldness of creation  
Hard edges softened  
Skin touching gray stone  
Leave the present pose  
Infinity is come