

# HOUGHTON COLLEGE

GREATBATCH SCHOOL OF MUSIC

presents

Victoria K. Pitre

soprano

In

## Songs of Overcoming

Assisted by

Chantalle Falconer, piano/violin

Dr. Sharon Johnson, piano

Kathryn Register, mezzo-soprano

Kendall Register, baritone

Recital Hall

Center for the Arts

Thursday, April 27th, 2017

8:00 p.m.

Race for the Sky:

Richard Pearson Thomas

*Voices of 9/11*

(b.1957)

To the Towers Themselves

How My Life Has Changed

Meditation

don't look for me anymore

Victoria Pitre, soprano  
Chantalle Falconer, violin  
Dr. Sharon Johnson, piano

### *Intermission*

Sometimes I Feel Like  
a Motherless Child

J. Rosamond Johnson  
(1873-1954)

Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit

Deep River

Victoria Pitre, soprano  
Chantalle Falconer, piano

*Farewell, Auschwitz*

Jake Heggie

VII. Farewell, Auschwitz

(b.1961)

Victoria Pitre, soprano  
Kendall Register, baritone  
Kathryn Register, mezzo-soprano  
Chantalle Falconer, piano

Steal Away

J. Rosamond Johnson  
(1873-1954)

Victoria Pitre, soprano  
Chantalle Falconer, piano

### **Race for the Sky: *Voices of 9/11***

Written by **Richard Pearson Thomas (b. 1957)** to commemorate the tragedy of September 11, 2001, this music is set to poetry penned by a variety of authors in its aftermath, found in memorial shrines in New York. With haunting melodies and dissonant harmonies, this piece leaves the listener with a deep emotional imprint of collective, incomprehensible loss. The first movement is set to an anonymous poem collected by the NYC Parks Department, and paints the irony of taking something valuable for granted, and then grieving it once it's gone. The second movement, "How My Life Has Changed, was written by Hilary North, who worked for a company located in the South Tower, and was late for work the day of the tragedy. This movement features a repeated rhythmic figure in the piano, which runs underneath like a perpetually disturbed heartbeat, as the singer lists name after name of people they can no longer encounter. The third movement is violin and piano only, and is appropriately titled "Meditation." There is a motive introduced at the beginning that reappears throughout in this lyrical movement. "Don't look for me anymore" is a poem written by Alicia Vasquez from the perspective of someone who has already passed, and wants their loved one to go on with their life and not continue searching for them at the cost of the others left behind. In a heart-wrenching lullaby, the speaker expresses reciprocal grief with the bereaved as she watches her loved one suffer her loss, and implores him to stop searching for her. At the end there is the bittersweet assurance that the bereaved is capable of caring for those who are left in her stead.

**J. Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954)** was born in Jacksonville, Florida, and was a formidable early African American composer, and actor. He was a Broadway performer, and also founded the New York Music School Settlement for Colored People in 1918. He arranged over 150 spirituals, four of which are featured on this program. Born out of the heart-wrenching experience of African slaves in captivity to their American owners, these spirituals are a

powerful testament to God's provision in the midst of oppression and struggle.

**Sometimes I feel like a Motherless Child** is a traditional arrangement of this strophic lament. The first and third verses are identical, but the second verse asserts "Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone, way up in the heavenly land". This takes our earthly troubles and sense of loss, and contrasts them with the healing we will experience in Heaven.

**Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit** is a hopeful look at God's presence even in the midst of tragedy. The third verse states "Jordan river, chilly an' cold, chill-a my body but not my soul.", and is followed immediately by the refrain of " Ev'ry time I feel de spirit movin in my heart, I will pray". Despite life's struggles, the singer is moved to worship and conversation with the Lord because of their trust in His ultimate goodness.

**Deep River** is another look at the Jordan River, and the singer's desire to cross it to get to that "promised land-that land, where all is peace". The fermatas and lingering nature of this spiritual in particular paint the longing for the fulfillment of God's promise to provide a place for us at his feet in Heaven.

### ***Farewell, Auschwitz: VIII. Farewell, Auschwitz***

**Jake Heggie (b. 1961)** "Farewell, Auschwitz" is a work commemorating the writings of the remarkable Krystyna Zyulska, who was imprisoned in Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1943. Having hidden her Jewish identity and joined the Polish resistance, Krystyna was arrested as a political prisoner. To pass the horrific time, she wrote poignant and satirical song lyrics which she set to popular tunes of the day, and they spread in popularity throughout the camp, gaining her favor with her captors. She was appointed to work in the Effektenkammer, which was the room of personal effects. She completed inventory of the possessions of incoming women and children before they were sent to their deaths. Many of her writings completed during that time are collected in her *Wiazanka z Effektenkammer* (Medley from the Effektenkammer), and it is from these that most of the text of

"Farewell, Auschwitz" is drawn. The texts are adapted into English by Gene Scheer, who collaborated with Jake Heggie on an earlier dramatic work, *Another Sunrise*, which also commemorates Krystyna's writings and bravery. *Farewell, Auschwitz* is considered its companion.

Tonight we are presenting the last of the 7 movements, also titled "Farewell, Auschwitz," which delves into some of the horrific details of the camps and disbelief that accompanies them, but ends on a triumphant note of hope and victory. The piano accompaniment truly paints the drama of the text, with its full texture and plodding chords. The piece starts off with the main theme in the solo baritone voice, and then builds until all three voices sing it at the end, ending in a Picardy third that highlights the triumph of hope.

**Steal Away** is another **J. Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954)** arrangement of a traditional spiritual. This text looks ahead to end times when all the redeemed will be called home to Jesus, and celebrates the brevity of our time on earth in context with eternity in heaven.

- 5 The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of  
compassion.
- 6 The LORD protects the unwary; when I was brought low, he  
saved me.
- 7 Return to your rest, my soul, for the LORD has been good to  
you.
- 8 For you, LORD, have delivered me from death, my eyes from  
tears, my feet from stumbling,
- 9 that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

Psalm 116:5-9

**We would like to thank the Houghton College administration for its  
faithful support of the Greatbatch School of Music.**

***Shirley A. Mullen***, President  
***Jack Connell***, Provost and Dean of the Faculty  
***Vincent Morris***, Chief Financial Officer  
***Greatbatch School of Music Faculty, Staff, and Administration***

Victoria Pitre, a student of Dr. Katie Martin, is performing this recital in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance.

As a courtesy to the performer and your fellow audience members, please be a decent human and ascertain that all cell phones, watch alarms, and pagers are either turned off or set for silent operation. Flash photography can be very disconcerting to performers and is not permitted during the performance. Thanks for your cooperation.

**Richard Pearson Thomas (b. 1957)**

***Race for the Sky: Voices of 9/11***

*To The Towers Themselves (Anonymous)*

They were never the favorites,  
Not the Carmen Miranda Chrysler  
Nor Rockefeller's magic boxes  
Nor the Empire, which I think would have killed us all if she fell.  
They were the two young dumb guys,  
Beer drinking  
Downtown MBA's  
Swaggering across the skyline,  
Not too bright.  
Now that they are gone,  
They are like young men  
Lost at war,  
Not having had their life yet,  
Not having grown wise and softened with air and time.  
They are lost like  
Cannon fodder  
Like farm boys throughout time  
Stunned into death  
Not knowing what hit them  
And beloved  
By the weeping mothers left behind.

*How My Life Has Changed (Hilary North)*

I can no longer flirt with Lou.  
I can no longer dance with Mayra.\*  
I can no longer eat brownies with Suzanne Y.  
I can no longer meet the deadline with Mark.  
I can no longer talk to George about his daughter.  
I can no longer drink coffee with Rich.  
I can no longer make a good impression on Chris.  
I can no longer smile at Paul L.  
I can no longer confide in Lisa.  
I can no longer work on a project with Donna R.  
I can no longer get to know Yolanda.  
I can no longer call the client with Nick.  
I can no longer contribute to the book drive organized by Karen.  
I can no longer hang out with Millie.  
I can no longer give career advice to Suzanne P.

I can no longer laugh with Donna G.  
I can no longer watch Mary Ellen cut through the bull.  
I can no longer drink beer with Paul B.  
I can no longer have a meeting with Dave W.  
I can no longer leave a message with Andrea.  
I can no longer gossip with Anna.  
I can no longer run into Dave P. at the vending machine.  
I can no longer call Steve about my computer.  
I can no longer compliment Lorenzo.  
I can no longer hear Herman's voice.  
I can no longer trade voice mails with Norman.  
I can no longer ride the elevator with Barbara.  
I can no longer say hello to Steven every morning.  
I can no longer see the incredible view from the 103<sup>rd</sup> Floor of the South Tower.  
I can no longer take my life for granted.

*don't look for me anymore (Alicia Vasquez)*

don't look for me anymore  
it's late and you are tired  
your feet ache standing atop the ruins of our twins  
day after day searching for a trace of me  
your eyes are burning red  
your hands cut bleeding sifting through rock  
It's my turn, I'm worried about you  
watching as you sift through the ruins of what was  
day after day in the soot and the rain  
I ache in knowing you suffer my death  
don't look for me anymore  
hold my children as I would  
hold my sisters, hold my brothers  
hold my children for me  
since I can't bring them up with the same love you gave me  
and I'll rest assured  
you're watching my children  
don't look for me anymore  
go home and rest...

Please note that some liberties have been taken by the composer in setting these texts to music.

\*Mayra pronounced as in hi not hay.



**Jake Heggie (b. 1961)**

***Farewell, Auschwitz: VII. Farewell, Auschwitz***

*(text adapted by Gene Scheer from Krystyna Zywulska)*

Take off your striped clothes, kick off your clogs.  
Stand with me, hold your shaved head high.  
The song of freedom upon our lips will never, never die.

Is it something from which you wake?  
A nightmare or a fairytale?  
No! It really happened.  
No! We were there!  
We were there!  
We were there!

Five chimneys belching smoke.  
On burning flesh and blood we'd choke.  
Yes! It really happened.  
Yes! We were there!  
We were there!  
We were there!

Farewell, Auschwitz, and savage Birkenau  
When winter winds blow through the empty barracks  
Our song will linger.  
And everyone will know.

Take off your striped clothes, kick off your clogs.  
Stand with me, hold your shaved head high.  
The song of freedom upon our lips will never, never die.