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Light Amid the Darkness, Lawrence University Choirs, February 25, 2017

Lawrence University

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Light Amid the Darkness

Lawrence University Choirs
Phillip A. Swan and Stephen M. Sieck, conductors

Saturday, February 25, 2017
8:00 p.m.
Lawrence Memorial Chapel
**Viking Chorale**

*Lux Aurumque*  
Eric Whitacre  
(b. 1970)  

Maralee Mindock and Rachel Geiger, soprano

*We Rise Again*  
Leon Dubinsky  
(b. 1941)  

arr. Stephen Smith  

Jamil Fuller and Nick Ashley, soloists

*Invictus*  
Joshua Rist  
(b. 1988)  

Adam Korber, cello  

Mara Kissinger and Fox Segal, soloists

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**Cantala**

*Rise Up!*  
Jake Runestad  
(b. 1986)  

2016 ACDA Women’s Choir Consortium Commission  

World Premiere

*Two Friends Like Fireflies*  
Joseph Gregorio  
(b. 1979)  

2014 ACDA Women’s Choir Consortium Commission  

Midwest Premiere

*Northern Lights*  
Ériks Ešenvalds  
(b. 1977)  

Clio Briggs and Emily Richter, soloists

*Even When He Is Silent*  
Kim André Arnesen  
(b. 1980)

*Night, op. 15, no. 2*  
Sergei Rachmaninoff  
(1873-1943)
Mountain Nights, Vol. I
Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967)
Emily Richter, soprano

Only Light, Only Love
Joan Szymko (b. 1957)
Casey Burgess, Caroline Granner, Lauren Smrz, alto
Clio Briggs, Emily Richter, Sarah Servais, soprano

Concert Choir

We Dance!
Dominick DiOrio (b. 1984)
Grace Vangel, soprano

Lethe
Joanne Metcalf (b. 1958)
Concert Choir Commission
World Premiere

If I Were A Swan
Kevin Puts (b. 1972)

Flight Song
Arnesen

From Avodath Hakodesh (Sacred Service)
Ernest Bloch (1880-1959)
Adon Olom
Yonah Barany, baritone, Nicolette Puskar, soprano

Hymne au Soleil
Lili Boulanger (1893-1918)
Deme Hellwig, mezzo-soprano

Éjszaka and Reggel
György Ligeti (1923-2006)
Notes and Translations

**Lux Aurumque** - Charles Anthony Silvestri.

Notes from the composer’s website

After deciding upon the poem by Edward Esch (I was immediately struck by its genuine, elegant simplicity), I had it translated into the Latin by the celebrated American poet Charles Anthony Silvestri. A simple approach was essential to the success of the work, and I waited patiently for the tight harmonies to shimmer and glow. Lux Aurumque was commissioned by the Master Chorale of Tampa Bay, and is dedicated with love to my great friend Dr. Jo Michael Scheibe.

Light, warm and heavy
as pure gold,
and the angels sing softly
to the newborn babe.

**We Rise Again** - Leon Dubinsky - notes from the conductor

We Rise Again is a contemporary song from Canada. Leon Dubinsky wrote the tune for a musical about Canada in 1984, and it became popularized by the Rankin Family in the early 1990s. The natural forces in Nova Scotia (the sea, the wind, the waves) serve the metaphor of endurance beautifully in this arrangement.

Verse 1:
When the waves roll on, over the waters
And the ocean cries,
We look to our sons and daughters
To explain our lives,
As if a child could tell us why,

That as sure as the sunrise,
As sure as the sea,
As sure as the wind in the trees,

Refrain:
We rise again in the faces of our children,
We rise again in the voices of our song,
We rise again in the waves out on the ocean,
And then we rise again.

Verse 2:
When the light goes dark with the forces of creation,
Across a stormy sky,
We look to reincarnation
To explain our lives,
As if a child could tell us why

As sure as the sunrise
As sure as the sea
As sure as the wind in the trees

Refrain

**Invictus** - William Ernest Henley - notes from the composer

I was introduced to the poetry of William Ernest Henley (1849 – 1903) in the spring of 2011, and Invictus instantly captivated me. The text is visceral, bold, and universally relevant, and it lent itself wonderfully to a choral setting. In many places, the piece felt like it was writing itself; it felt like I was discovering something as I was creating it.

I was further inspired when I studied the historical context of this text. William Ernest Henley fought a lifelong battle for his health, contracting tuberculosis of the bones as a child that necessitated the amputation of his left leg below the knee. When the disease later spread to his other leg and his doctors insisted on removing it as well, Henley challenged their diagnosis and sought a second opinion. His pursuit led him to meet Dr. Joseph Lester, a pioneer in the development of antiseptic surgery. After an arduous twenty-month hospital stay at The Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, Henley's leg was saved as his health – at least partially – was restored. It was there he penned his most famous work, Invictus (Latin for “invincible,” or “unconquerable”).

As crippling as Henley’s struggle with disease was, it is apparent that it did not get the best of him. Friends described him as a radiant, larger-than-life-character, with a great red beard, clever wit, and “a laugh that rolled like music.” 19th-century poetry critic Arthur Symons wrote, “Mr. Henley, [out] of all the poets of the day, is the most strenuously certain that life is worth living, the most eagerly defiant of fate, [and] the most heroically content with death.”
His zeal for life and self-determinacy is so brilliantly expressed in his Invictus, and it is my hope that this spirit and ideal may continue to inspire and embolden as it is expressed through this piece.

Out of the night that covers me,
      Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
      For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
      I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
      My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
      Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
      Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
      How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
      I am the captain of my soul.

**Rise Up!** – Susan B. Anthony (selected texts from her speeches and writings)
Rise up!

There shall never be another season of silence.
Deepen your sympathy then convert it to action.

Think your best thoughts,
speak your best words,
do your best work.

There is so much yet to be done.
Rise up!
Two Friends Like Fireflies – program notes by the composer

In the fall of 2015, I was at work on this commission – using a text entirely different from the one used for this work – when the plight of Syrian refugees began to enter the public consciousness in the United States. Concomitant with the rise in public awareness of the Syrians’ predicament was an increase in uncharitable and hostile rhetoric toward and aggressions against the refugees and Muslims in general, perpetrated by leaders and laypeople alike. Saddened deeply, I found myself abandoning my original plan for the commission, instead poring over works of several outstanding Syrian-American poets. Though I enjoyed reading texts by many excellent writers, I felt a particularly strong affinity for the poetry of Dr. Mohja Kahf. “Two Friends Like Fireflies” is an ode to friendship inspired by two women who, once introduced to each other by Dr. Kahf, overcame a generational divide and differing backgrounds and ethnicities to find much common ground and, through conversation, arrive at many profound insights about life.

I have two friends who hum like fireflies,
Form with their bodies symphonies of light
Made of music, they are, and of clay,
A mixture of the earth and Milky Way

If I let them, they can reach into my chest
And give me back the nugget of my self
Dizzied by them, I am, as if the sea
Rose from both shores, gently drowning me

Dizzied by them I am, as if by wine
And they have been my friends as long as time
~ Mohja Kahf (b. 1967)

Northern Lights – program notes by the composer

Kāvi are a mythological manifestation of the Arctic Lights, sometimes also called the Northern Lights. In olden times, people believed they were the restless spirits of fallen warriors, still engaged in great battles in the sky. Located far enough from the North, people of Latvia saw the Northern Lights quite rarely: in the northern sky, low on the horizon and mostly in a faint green color. If they witnessed the lights in red color, the activity of the Northern Lights had to be extremely strong that night; in those nights the picture was more impressive because the Northern Lights were visible higher in the sky. Therefore the ancient people of Latvia
connected the picture to fighting, a battle in the sky – and hoped that the war would not reach their land.

Having read the journals written by both Charles Francis Hall and Fridtjof Nansen, 19th century Arctic explorers, I was taken by the beauty with which they described the Northern Lights they had witnessed almost every night. And when in December of 2012, being beyond the Polar Circle in Northern Norway, I myself experienced significant displays of Aurora Borealis, a music started to arise in me echoing Hall’s and Nansen’s testimonies and the ancient Latvian folksong: Whenever at night, far in the north I saw the Kāvi soldiers (Northern Lights) having their battle, I was afraid, perhaps they might bring a war to my land, too.

From the journals of Arctic explorers Charles Francis Hall (1821-1871) and Fridtjof Nansen (1881-1930):

It was night and I had gone on deck several times. Iceberg was silent; I too was silent. It was true dark and cold. At nine o’clock I was below in my cabin, when the captain hailed me with the words: “Come above, Hall, come above at once, Hall! The World is on fire!” I knew his meaning, and quick as thought, I rushed to the companion stairs. In a moment I reached the deck, and as the cabin door swung open, a dazzling light, overpow’ring light burst upon my startled senses! Oh, the whole sky was one glowing mass of colored flames, so mighty, so brave! Like a pathway of light the northern lights seemed to draw us into the sky. Yes, it was harp-music, wild storming in the darkness; the strings trembled and sparkled in the glow of the flames like a shower of fiery darts. A fiery crown of auroral light cast a warm glow across the arctic ice. Like a pathway of light the northern lights seemed to draw us into the sky. Again at times it was like softly playing, gently rocking, silvery waves, on which dreams travel into unknown worlds.

Even When He Is Silent – notes from the composer

“Even When He Is Silent” was commissioned in 2011 by the St. Olaf festival in Trondheim, Norway. The assignment was to write a work in two separate versions – one for SATB choir and one for SSAA choir, unaccompanied.

The text was found written on a wall at a concentration camp after World War II. Imagining what that person went through makes the words so powerful. As I read them, it was a Credo – when everything is dark and difficult in life you might wonder where God is, or if God is there at all. This is about keeping faith in God, love, and hope. I think of the sun as a metaphor for hope.
Even without thinking of metaphors, the text has a deep meaning. Even if people take away your freedom, your friends, the people you love – they cannot take God away from you.

The SSAA version of “Even When He Is Silent” was premiered just a few days after the terrorist attacks in Oslo and Utøya. It was one of the works being performed at a Conversation in the Nidaros Cathedral with Bishop Tor Singsaas and actor Liv Ullmann on July 30, 2011. It was premiered by the Nidaros Cathedral Girls’ Choir and conductor Anita Brevik. The SATB version was premiered on November 26, 2011, by the Nidaros Cathedral Boys’ Choir and conductor Bjørn Moe.

I believe in the sun even when it’s not shining.
I believe in love even when I feel it not.
I believe in God even when He is silent.

**Night** - Vladimir Ladyzhensky - notes from the conductor

“Night” was written early in Rachmaninoff’s career (1895, when he was only 22), after he enjoyed his first brush with fame from the successful Prelude in C# minor for piano. The ensemble’s discussions of this work have centered on the text’s celebration of the liminal space between night and dawn, between major and minor, and on the restorative aspect of night/sleep.

Softly night comes in on dusky wings, taking flight across the land, and from somewhere drifts a dreary song, drifts a song made dark by a tear. Go away, you melancholy tune. Soon the night will fall away. The triumphant resurrected day will bring happiness to all. Meanwhile, weary dreamers are renewed in the mystery of sleep. Crimson dawn will seep across the sky and dissolve itself in blue.

**Mountain Nights, Vol. 1** - notes from the conductor

Fellow Hungarian composer Béla Bartók said of Zoltán Kodály in 1928:

*If I were to name the composer whose works are the most perfect embodiment of the Hungarian spirit, I would answer, Kodály. His work proves his faith in the Hungarian spirit. The obvious explanation is that*
Educator, ethnomusicologist, and composer, Kodály (1882-1967) was a major force in 20th century music. This selection is one of five textless compositions entitled “Mountain Nights” for women’s choir. We as choral singers usually build our interpretation of a work around the text; here we are given nothing but the suggestion in the title and the music itself.

**Only Light, Only Love** - Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Notes from the composer**

The historic nomination of an African American man for the Presidency of the United States was most certainly in my consciousness as I set this quote. I am struck by the sheer, beautiful logic of Dr. King’s words.

From the conductor

These famous lines are so often quoted on the internet that we may forget their broader context. Dr. King delivered these words as part of an extensive address to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference on August 16, 1967 in Atlanta. In the speech, King first acknowledges the tremendous progress the organization has made in dismantling segregation laws in the South (notably through the Civil Rights Act of 1964). Then, he poses the question:

*Where do we go from here? First, we must massively assert our dignity and worth. We must stand up amid a system that still oppresses us and develop an unassailable and majestic sense of values.*

He advocates for a “psychological freedom” in which Blackness is beauty and strength and empowerment. He notes that “power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic.” And so he calls for a new look at the economic systems in America that were designed for the purposes of exploitation, calling neither for communism (“which forgets the individual”) nor capitalism (which “forgets that life is social”), but for a system that gives everyone dignity and opportunity. To get there, he recommits himself to nonviolence, for he has already “seen too much hate”. Instead, he is resolved that “hate is too great a burden to bear. I have decided to love. If you are seeking the highest good, I think you can find it through love.”
“Darkness cannot drive out darkness;  
Only light can do that.  
Hatred cannot drive out hatred;  
Only love can do that.”

**We Dance!** – Dominick DiOrio and Janet Galvan  
Alleluia! We dance!  
We dance in the sparkle of the wondrous night sky!  
We dance to the music our voices raised high!  
We dance to sweet laughter, so fast we can fly!  
Alleluia! We dance!

**Lethe** – Joanne Metcalf  
I come from the land of shadows  
I stand on the shore of a bitter dream  
the storm did not end  
the flood took us all  
let me wake and forget  
let me drink from the waters of Lethe  
let me hear the music of another land  
let me drink from the waters of Lethe  
let me run like a river to the great, still sea  
I walked through the dark wood  
I heard the raging of the Furies  
I saw the shade of things to come  
I heard the signal but I did not run  
let me drink from the waters of Lethe  
let me hear the music of another land  
let me drink from the waters of Lethe  
let me run like a river to the great, still sea  
sing me to sleep  
I will dream no dreams  
let me wake and forget  
let me drink from the waters of Lethe
let me hear the music of another land
let me drink from the waters of Lethe
let me run like a river to the great, still sea

If I Were a Swan – Fleda Brown

I would ride high above my own white weight. I would ride through the lightening of the earth and the darkening, stillness and turbulence coming on in the core of me, and spreading to the hard rain, to the dazzle. Leaves would turn, but I would keep my eyes in my head, watching for grasses. This is what I would know deeply: the feathering of my bones against the bank. For the rest, I would be the easiest wave, loving just enough for nature’s sake. The world would move under me and I would always be exactly where I am, dragonflies angling around my head. Under the black mask of my face, I would think swan, swan, which would be nothing but a riding, a hunger, a ruffle more pointed than wind and waves, and a hot-orange beak like an arrow.
Flight Song – Euan Tait
Reflections on "Flight Song" by Andrew Crane, conductor – BYU Singers

The text embodies so much of what we believe and value - that music helps us to communicate the full range of our deepest feelings, whether it be joy, exhilaration, and love, or pain, sadness, and discouragement. These emotions that we experience become our “Flight Song,” and that song helps us to fly and rise above the trials and tribulations that we face in our lives. This song also helps us to connect and share love and encouragement with others around us, so that they may fly together with us. We hope that the powerful melodies and messages of this piece will bring healing, light, love, and comfort to your soul.

All we are we have found in song:
you have drawn this song from us.
Songs of lives unfolding fly overhead, cry overhead;
longing, rising from the song within.
Moving like the rise and fall of wings,
hands that shape our calling voice
on the edge of answers you’ve heard our cry, you’ve known our cry:
music’s fierce compassion flows from you.
The night is restless with the sounds we hear,
is broken, shaken by the cries of pain:
for this is music’s inner voice
yes, we hear you, all you who cry aloud,
and we will fly, answering you,
so our lives sing, we will fly, wild in spirit we will fly.
like a feather falling from the wing,
fragile as a human voice,
afraid, uncertain, alive to love,
We sing as love,
afraid, uncertain, yet our flight begins as song.

Adon Olom from Avodath Hakodesh (Sacred Service)
Notes from the conductor

Ernest Bloch’s early career shared composing and teaching especially well. He left Switzerland to tour in America in 1916 as a violinist, and when the tour fell through, he ended up teaching at the newly founded Mannes School in NY. Bloch then became a founding director of the Cleveland Institute for Music in 1920, and then left in 1925 for the San
Francisco Conservatory of Music. Bloch moved back to Switzerland in 1930, and over the next three years he wrote the Sacred Service for a synagogue in San Francisco. Bloch left Europe in 1940 because of the war, and taught at Cal-Berkeley until retiring in a small town in Oregon.

Bloch’s Sacred Service was the first of its kind – a symphonic oratorio of the complete Shabbat service. And, like Catholic Mass settings of Haydn or Beethoven, it is not a work that could be realistically performed in actual worship – it was meant to be a universal opus.

The prayer “Adon Olam” is one of the most important prayers in the service. Depending on the tradition, it is sung at the end of Sabbath, at the end of festival morning services, and in Bloch’s tradition, at the end of evening services, and it is almost always chanted at the eve of atonement (the Kol Nidre service). Sometimes it is read in the room of a dying person; and sometimes it is sung at the beginning of morning prayer. In effect, it is a prayer that dwells in the liminal space between night and remarkably well.

Eternal master, who reigned supreme,
Before all of creation was drawn;
When it was finished according to his will,
Then "King" his name was proclaimed to be.
When this our world shall be no more,
In majesty he still shall reign,
And he was, and he is,
And he will be in glory.
Alone is he, there is no second,
Without division or ally;
Without beginning, without end,
To him is the power and sovereignty.
He is my God, my living redeemer,
Rock of my affliction in time of trouble.
He is my banner and refuge
Filling my cup the day I call.
Into his hand I commit my spirit
When I sleep, and I awake
And with my spirit, my body.
The Lord is with me, I will not fear.
Hymne au Soleil - C. Delavigne  
(Abridged) Notes from Colette Ripley

Lili Boulanger (1893-1918) was born into a family of distinguished musical heritage. Her paternal grandmother Marie-Julie Boulanger was an opera singer, her Russian mother Raissa was a singer who came to Paris to study with her father Ernest Boulanger (1815-1900), who himself was an opera composer, violinist and singing teacher at the Paris Conservatoire and had won the prestigious Prix de Rome in 1835. Her older sister Nadia (1887-1979), a student of Louis Vierne and Gabriel Fauré and winner of the second prize in the 1908 Prix de Rome competition, was to become one of the foremost teachers of composition in the twentieth century.

A bout with bronchial pneumonia in 1895 had left Lili’s immune system permanently damaged and she was only able to compose sporadically the rest of her life due to recurring episodes of Crohn’s disease.

In 1909, sensing the possibility of her early death, Lili decided to devote herself to becoming a composer, studied with Georges Caussade and Paul Vidal of the Paris Conservatoire, and entered the Prix de Rome competition in the spring of 1912. Illness forced her to withdraw from the competition, but she resolved to continue her preparation by composing several works for orchestra and chorus. Hymne au soleil, completed in July of 1912, was the first of these pieces.

The text is an extract from the play Le Pariah (1833) by Casimir Delavigne (1783-1849), a French playwright who also wrote dramatic and lyric poems in a semi-Romantic style. The “God” mentioned in stanza two is Helios, the God of the Sun. Word-painting also appears frequently, most notably in the dramatic resurgence of the sun rising into full splendor at il s’élance! and in the contrapuntal independence of the seven spirited steeds.

Let us bless the power of the resurging sun.  
With all the universe, let us celebrate its return.  
Crowned in splendor, it rises, it soars aloft.  
The awakening of the earth is a hymn of love.

Seven steeds, which the God can scarcely keep in check,  
Set fire to the horizon with their burning breath.  
O abundant sun, you appear!
With its fields in flower, its mountains, its dense woods,
The vast sea burning with your fire,
The universe younger and fresher,
The mists of morning are sparkling with dew.

Éjszaka (Night) - Sándor Weöres - notes from the conductor

Born in 1923 in Transylvania, György Ligeti was a Jewish man who lived through the Nazi and Stalinist occupations of Hungary, and fled Hungary in 1956 (the year after writing this work). He studied violin at the conservatory in an environment where people expected choral music to sound like Kodály and incorporate folk traditions. This composition is situated precisely in between his Kodály-influenced period and his mature period, sharing aspects of each. When Ligeti moved to Darmstadt, he developed a musical language focused on micropolyphony and clouds or clusters of sound. (Many listeners will recognize his “Lux Aeterna” from Stanley Kubrick’s 2001, for example.) In Éjszaka, Ligeti builds clouds of individualized lines from the C major scale; in Reggel, Ligeti builds a cluster of individual lines from neighboring pentatonic scales. The independence of the lines, however tonal each one may be, produces a disorienting sound, foreshadowing Ligeti’s future works.

Thorny huge jungles, mystery forests, infinite wilderness: still!
Boundless and endless and still!
Beats of my heart in endless silence.
Darkness, night.

Reggel (Morning) - Sándor Weöres

Ring, tick-tock, tick-tock, bell!
And the clock ticks wishing well.
In the dawn, cock-a-doodle-doo,
the cock cries and the duck too,
Ring well, bell!
Viking Chorale
Stephen Sieck, director
Zoey Lin, accompanist

Soprano I
Emeline Brady
Maren Dahl
Willa Dworschack
Rachel Geiger
Cecilia Kakehashi
Pari Singh
Isabel Vazquez-Thorpe
Yidi Zhang

Soprano II
Jena Bliss
Scotia Dettweiler
Lily Greenfield
Mara Kissinger
Elizabeth Lynch
Maralee Mindock
Rebecca Minkus
Katie Mueller
Sarah Olsen
Kenzie Reed
Gianna Santino
Maria Santos
Shelby Siebers
Abby Simmons
Haley Stevens
Miriam Thew
Forrester
Rebecca Tibbetts
Jessie Zelaya

Alto I (cont’d)
Kellyn Gagner
Georgia Greenberg
Tashi Haig
Sara Larsen
Callie Ochs
Kendra Pankow
Molly Reese
Emily Stanislawski
Yilin Zhu

Alto II
Chloe Braynen
Gabrielle Claus
Michele Haebelin
Christina Hanson
Vicky Liang
Kate Martenis
Jocelyn Scherbel
Fox Segal
Daphne Thomas
Maxine Voss
Bethany Wolkoff
Rebecca Yeazel
Claire Zimmerman

Tenor I
Jasper Farin
Jorgan Jammal
Jeremiah Jensen
Adam Jiumaleh
Victor Montanez-Cruz
Logan Willis

Tenor II (cont.)
Aaron Pelavin
Hyung-Ju Suh
Joseph Wetzel

Bass I
Damon Allen
Theo Arden
Nick Ashley
Saahil Cuccia
Jung Hoon Choi
Joseph Dennis
Tommy Dubnicka
Nick Fahrenkrug
Jamil Fuller
Alexander Hadlich
Ben Klein
Robert Meiser
Kiet Nguyen
Erik Nordstrom
Pelard Pierre
Daniel Quiroga
Daniel Vaca
Jack Walstrom
Cameron Wilkins
Nathan Williams

Bass II
Julian Cohen
Stephen Deeter
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Liam Fisher
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Gabi Makuc, accompanist

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Luke Honeck
Nolan Ramirez
Jackson Rosenberry

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Christian Messier
Kyle Schleife

Baritone
Yonah Barany
Christian Clark
David Fisher
Nathan Gornick
Ben Hanson
Alex Quackenbush

Bass II
Nathan Brase
Kip Hathaway
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Adam Galambos, for Hungarian assistance  
Josh Kowitz, LU ’12, for assistance with the Bloch

As a courtesy to the artist and to those in attendance, please be aware that sounds such as whispering and the rustling of programs and cellophane wrappers are magnified in the hall. Please turn off all watch alarms, pagers, and cellular telephones. And please, no flash photography.