

# WHY DO WE STILL GATHER?

Music Compositions by  
Andrew G. Levine  
under the direction of Sarah Fox



Open the door to original music inspired by  
poets, prophets and lifelong friends.  
October 7, 2023 ~ Jesse Lee Church

## **Jesse Lee Church**

207 Main St. Ridgefield, CT 203-438-8791

[www.jesseleechurch.com](http://www.jesseleechurch.com)

We are so excited to present this concert to you tonight as the first in the Jesse Lee Fall Music Series: We Gather Together. Tonight is a celebration of gathering, a contemplation of gathering, questioning and creating gathering... It's been a privilege and a joy to work with Andrew on this concert from its conception up to this night. As you will hear and see in our program, Andrew has an exceptional talent for composition, including composition in many genres! I've learned so much from him and we've had a lot of fun meeting and discussing pieces, planning the flow of the program, imagining. I'm honored he chose me to help with this process. Thank you so much, Andrew.

I'm also honored by the many people who have put so much time and talent into learning and preparing the pieces for tonight's concert. Each of you are contributing your unique voice—either vocally or instrumentally. To me, this is what making music at Jesse Lee is all about. We are here to help people explore, share, and enjoy their voices, in community. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, to every person who is singing in, playing in, or contributing to this concert. You are cherished.

And thank you to each person who has come tonight to bear witness and soak in this beautiful, provoking music. It is your presence which completes the magic of tonight's concert. We are so glad you are here. As you can see in our program, we have a variety of ways you can be involved in Jesse Lee Music—from regularly scheduled programming like choirs and handbells, to attending/participating in other music events in our music series. Come hear the choir from WestConn sing on October 14th, or maybe learn more about Sacred Harp Singing at our singing school on November 10th . We'd love to have you as a continuing or new member of our arts community here. Please join us and help us fulfill our mission: to gather together.

Warmly,  
Sarah Fox  
Director of Music, Jesse Lee Church  
[sarah@jesseleechurch.com](mailto:sarah@jesseleechurch.com)

# We Gather Together

Fall/Winter Music Series at Jesse Lee Church

## **Andrew Levine Composer Concert**

"Why Do We Still Gather"  
Saturday, October 7th 7 PM

## **Sacred Harp Singing School**

Led by Keillor Mose  
Friday, November 10th 7 PM

## **WestConn Chorale performs Selections from their ACDA Concert**

Saturday, October 14th, 5 PM

## **Amahl and the Night Visitors**

An Advent operetta by Menotti  
Friday, December 8th 7 PM  
Saturday, December 9th 7 PM

## **Music and Health**

A follow-up talk from Yale Project  
Dr. Benjamin Doolittle, Director of  
Internal Medicine, Yale Medical  
School  
Sunday, December 10th 2 PM

## **A Festival of 9 Lessons and Carols**

A joint service with Bethel United  
Methodist Church  
and other area churches  
Sunday, December 17th 3 PM

*All events will be held in the sanctuary at  
Jesse Lee Church.*

**Contact Music Director, Sarah Fox with  
questions: [sarah@jesseleechurch.com](mailto:sarah@jesseleechurch.com)**



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## WHY DO WE STILL GATHER?

### Composers Note:

Among the epidemics we are currently facing, and that's a sobering way to begin a sentence, is the epidemic of loneliness. Great Britain has appointed a Minister of Loneliness to find ways to restore connection and build community. Japan has appointed a Minister of Loneliness as well. In the Arts, many theaters and performing arts organizations today report a significant loss of patrons and are adapting to the new norms by choosing to produce less work. Some are going on hiatus, and in some cases, organizations are closing their operation. Religious communities across the spectrum are fighting to nurture and maintain their congregations. We are gathering less and less and choosing to be more and more isolated. If, as poet David Whyte says, 'we are creatures of belonging', what are we losing when we become more solitary creatures? Are we starving an essential part of what makes us human, and is the result deteriorating mental health, and an increase in the feelings of despair and hopelessness? These questions inform the programing of today's concert.

## **WHY DO WE STILL GATHER?**

Music Compositions by Andrew G. Levine

Under the Direction of Sarah Fox

**PROPHETS AND PROPHECIES-** *A song cycle for women's quartet  
and children's trio*

Prophecy (Part One)

Annunciation

The Lamb

London

Let Them Not Say

Prophecy (Part Two)

### **THEATER MUSIC**

Due North

Red

There Is No Home Sweet Home for Emma Goldman

Night of the Iguana

*Intermission*

### **MEN I ALMOST KNEW**

when god lets my body be

To Mark Anthony, In Heaven

Mad As The Mist And Snow

Men I Almost Knew

### **INTENTIONS**

**PROPHETS AND PROPHECIES- A song cycle for women's quartet  
and children's trio**

Sung by Jessica Bardelli, Sarah Fox, Bradan Janso, Jeanine Pardey  
Levine, Lyla Murray, Claire Simard, Eliza Yorty

Composer's Note:

I grew up hearing the voices of the Hebrew Prophets (of male and female gender), those intermediaries between the divine and human realms who warn and cajole us, proclaim the righteous path ahead and make it clear that we must be willing to renounce certain behaviors to restore our relationship with God and the world. The prophetic voice dates back to ancient times and appears in the stories that most religions and mythologies claim as foundational. In this cycle of five songs the prophetic voice appears in its many guises- through the angel Gabriel, the intuitions of children, and through the poet-who continues to say the unsayable, which is very much in the prophetic tradition.

**Prophecy**

(italics below indicate a portion of the poem sung at the conclusion  
of the cycle)

Sometimes a child will stare out of a window  
for a moment or an hour—deciphering  
the future from a dusky summer sky.

Does he imagine that some wisp of cloud  
reveals the signature of things to come?  
Or that the world's a book we learn to translate?

And sometimes a girl stands naked by a mirror  
imagining beauty in a stranger's eyes  
finding a place where fear leads to desire.

For what is prophecy but the first inkling  
of what we ourselves must call into being?  
The call need not be large. No voice in thunder.

It's not so much what's spoken as what's heard—  
and recognized, of course. The gift is listening  
and hearing what is only meant for you.

*Life has its mysteries, annunciations,  
and some must wear a crown of thorns. I found  
my Via Dolorosa in your love.*

*And sometimes we proceed by prophecy,  
or not at all—even if only to know  
what destiny requires us to renounce.*

*O Lord of indirection and ellipses,  
ignore our prayers. Deliver us from distraction.  
Slow our heartbeat to a cricket's call.*

*\*In the green torpor of the afternoon,  
\*bless us with ennui and quietude.  
And grant us only what we fear, so that*

*Underneath the murmur of the wasp  
we hear the dry grass bending in the wind  
and the spider's silken whisper from its web.*

by Dana Gioia (1950)

\*these lines of the poem have been omitted in this musical setting.

## **Annunciation**

Even if I don't see it again -- nor ever feel it  
I know it is -- and that if once it hailed me  
it ever does--

And so it is myself I want to turn in that direction  
not as toward a place, but it was a tilting  
within myself,

as one turns a mirror to flash the light to where  
it isn't -- I was blinded like that -- and swam  
in what shone at me

only able to endure it by being no one and so  
specifically myself I thought I'd die  
from being loved like that.

Marie Howe (1950)



## The Lamb

Little Lamb who made thee?  
Dost thou know who made thee?

Gave thee life & bid thee feed.  
By the stream & o'er the mead;  
Gave thee clothing of delight,  
Softest clothing wooly bright;  
Gave thee such a tender voice,  
Making all the vales rejoice!  
Little Lamb who made thee?  
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb I'll tell thee,  
Little Lamb I'll tell thee!

He is called by thy name,  
For he calls himself a Lamb:  
He is meek & he is mild,  
He became a little child:  
I a child & thou a lamb,  
We are called by his name.

Little Lamb God bless thee.  
Little Lamb God bless thee.

William Blake (1757-1827)

## London

I wander thro' each charter'd street,  
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.  
And mark in every face I meet  
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,  
In every Infants cry of fear,  
In every voice: in every ban,  
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear

How the Chimney-sweepers cry  
Every black'ning Church appalls,  
And the hapless Soldiers sigh  
Runs in blood down Palace walls

But most thro' midnight streets I hear  
How the youthful Harlots curse  
Blasts the new-born Infants tear  
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse

William Blake (1757-1827)

## Let Them Not Say

Let them not say: we did not see it.  
We saw.

Let them not say: we did not hear it.  
We heard.

Let them not say: they did not taste it.  
We ate, we trembled.

Let them not say: it was not spoken, not written.  
We spoke,  
we witnessed with voices and hands.

Let them not say: they did nothing.  
We did not-enough.

Let them say, as they must say something:

A kerosene beauty.  
It burned.

Let them say we warmed ourselves by it,  
read by its light, praised,  
and it burned.

Jane Hirschfield (1953)

## THEATER MUSIC

### Composer's Note:

I started working professionally as a music director in the theater in 1988 after discovering the medium in which music, language, dance, and acting all come together to tell compelling stories. In 2019 MaryAnn Frank and I collaborated on a show called *Spinning*. The show takes a sometimes sober and sometimes hilarious look at what it is to experience and survive the numbing grief that comes with losing one's dearest love. As good fortune would have it, *Spinning* was produced at Long Wharf Theatre and it launched our writing partnership. After writing a 10-minute musical called *Dora Dreams of Fire*, produced by Prospect Theatre in NYC, we set about writing a show that takes place in Vienna at the turn of the last century. Our protagonists are three consequential women of history: Alma Schindler, who we encounter just before she is to marry the formidable composer, Gustav Mahler; Emma Goldman, thrown out of America for her anarchist exploits, who has come to Vienna to learn the craft of midwifery as a means of securing financial solidity; and the youthful Ida Bauer, who is suffering from a mysterious paralysis, and whose psychoanalyst is developing a new theory about the power of dreams to reveal what lies underneath the conscious mind. Tonight, we hear one song from *Spinning*, and two songs written for the character of Emma Goldman in *Vienna, 1905*.

### **Due North**, from *Spinning*

Lyrics by MaryAnn Frank

Performed by MaryAnn Frank, Sarah Fox, and Gunnar Sahlin

### **Red**, from *Vienna, 1905*

Lyrics by MaryAnn Frank

Performed by Claire Simard, Sarah Fox, and Beryl Diamond Chaconne

### **There Is No Home Sweet Home for Emma Goldman**, from *Vienna, 1905*

Lyrics by MaryAnn Frank

Performed by Claire Simard and Sarah Fox

## **Night of The Iguana**

### **Composer's Note:**

In the early 2000s my wife, Jeanine, and I moved to Savannah, GA to work for The Savannah College of Art and Design. I was the resident music director and from time to time was asked to compose incidental music for theater productions. One such occasion was for a production of Tennessee Williams' *Night of the Iguana*, helmed by our dear friend Bruce Roach. Later on, I took several themes that underscored scenes in the play and wove them into this concert piece for violin and piano.

Performed by Beryl Diamond Chacon, violin and Liang-Fang Chang, piano

## **Men I Almost Knew**

Performed by John Brink, tenor, and Liang-Fang Chang, piano

### **Composer's Note:**

While living and working in Savannah, GA I pursued a Masters of Music in composition at the University of Georgia Southern, in Statesboro- about an hour away. Discovering my musical voice, I fell in love with composing, especially in the genre that is known as art song. For my graduate recital, I wanted to create a song cycle that explored several archetypal energies associated with masculinity. After setting poems by e.e. cummings, William Carlos Williams, and W.B. Yeats, I searched but couldn't find the 'next poem'. My instructor at the time, Michael Braz, urged me to write the last poem myself, the kind of frightening invitation accompanied by some kind divination. I called my poem, *Men I Almost Knew*, which became the name of the cycle. This is the first time the full cycle is being performed since that Georgia Southern graduation recital in 2004.

### **when god lets my body be**

from each brave eye shall sprout a tree  
fruit dangles therefrom

the purpled world will dance upon  
between my lips which did sing

a rose shall beget the spring  
that maidens whom passions wastes

will lay between their little breasts  
my strong fingers beneath the snow

into strenuous birds shall go  
my love walking in the grass

their wings will touch with their face  
and all the while shall my heart be

with the bulge and nuzzle of the sea

e.e. cummings (1894-1962)

## To Mark Anthony, In Heaven

This quiet morning light  
reflected, how many times  
from grass and trees and clouds  
enters my north room  
touching the walls with  
grass and clouds and trees.  
Anthony,  
trees and grass and clouds.

Why did you follow  
that beloved body  
with your ships at Actium?  
I hope it was because  
you knew her inch by inch  
from slanting feet upward  
to the roots of her hair  
and down again and that  
you saw her  
above the battle's fury --  
clouds and trees and grass --

For then you are  
listening in heaven.

William Carlos Williams (1883-1963)

## **Mad As The Mist And Snow**

Bolt and bar the shutter,  
For the foul winds blow:  
Our minds are at their best this night,  
And I seem to know  
That everything outside us is  
Mad as the mist and snow.

Horace there by Homer stands,  
Plato stands below,  
And here is Tully's open page.  
How many years ago  
Were you and I unlettered lads  
Mad as the mist and snow?

You ask what makes me sigh, old friend,  
What makes me shudder so?  
I shudder and I sigh to think  
That even Cicero  
And many-minded Homer were  
Mad as the mist and snow.

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)



## Men I Almost Knew

These are men I almost knew  
These are men whose deeds set my heart on fire.  
These are men who toil, yet fight,  
Rage, yet bring delight to a world gone mad!

I was a boy who hated men.  
Then hist'ry turned my gaze- I found a hero.  
In battle brave, he fought like ten.  
Wounded in time, and so I searched again.

My hero sur-faced one cool night.  
A brilliant man of words, a different sort of might.  
A man both wise, and very clever.  
Clever but never caring what was right.

He's a crazy maker! Yes, he is.  
Make you care, then make you swear  
you'll never worship, again!

I read of men advanced in age.  
And when those men have passed through boyhood days.  
They have acquired a certain wisdom.  
Do men exist to soar, or flounder in a maze?

Homer and David and Antony,  
These men continue to shine.  
In night dreams, I plead, "please, counsel me".  
These men take wing.  
My heroes sing a tune that's sweet and fine.

A man I saw just yesterday  
Had some-thing of that spark- the hero's gaze.  
I think he's real.  
I hated men.  
He must be.  
Yes, yes! He's real!

Andrew G. Levine (1955)

## **Intentions (World Premiere)**

sung by: Peter Bachman, Chris Barnabo, Ed Chapman, Gregory Lorenz, Dr. John Michniewicz, Doug Planker, Paul Schmidt, Jake Young; Liang-Fang Chang, piano, Gunnar Sahlin, cello

### Composer's Note:

Back in 1989 I attended a workshop centered in what was loosely called The Men's Movement. Robert Bly, an established poet and the author of *Iron John*, Michael Meade, a dynamic storyteller and mythologist, and Jungian psychologist, James Hillman, created a body of work that explored masculine archetypal energies through myth, poetry, story and ritual. That two-day workshop was an almost out-of-body experience- very powerful for my soon-to-be forty-year-old self. Out of that gathering was formed a men's group that began to meet twice a month. Thirty-five years later we are still meeting- our format, membership and way of being together an amalgamation of subsequent group iterations and tweaks. When the pandemic began we intuitively knew that we needed each other to stay grounded. Weekly zoom calls eventually gave way to bi-weekly online gatherings that allowed for members who had moved out of the area to join us again. Eight early members of the group began a new journey to find ways to meet virtually that were rich and meaningful. One of the things we came up with was a way to close our meetings: each man states in one or two sentences the heart of his intention: how will he live out the approaching weeks until we meet next time? At some point, I knew I wanted to write a work that expressed what men 'of a certain age' had to say about their lives. I asked the men in the group if they would allow me to record the 'intentions' section of our meeting and out of these recordings the text of this piece has been crafted.

To breathe.  
To rest.  
To stay present.  
To know God loves me.  
To inhabit my body.  
This is my intention 'til next  
time.

My intention is to become aware  
of my isolation,  
And to know when I'm headed  
down a road  
I don't want to be on.

That's not how I want to live my  
life.

Here's my intention:  
to be seen. To fully allow myself  
to be human and deeply seen.

To see.  
To witness.  
To be part of your journey.

To take care of the boy  
who lives inside.  
To assure him he is safe.  
I will take care of you.  
That is my intention 'til next  
time.

To make time  
so there's time for me.  
I can do my work.  
I'm alive when I am alone  
doing my art.  
Making Art is my intention-  
always.  
Making Art is who you are.

When I remind myself to breathe  
Then the 'crazy' is gone!  
Then I'm me!  
It's so clear-  
but I have to breathe!  
I will remember to breathe.

I'm loving my new country  
ah Mexico!  
I watch the light  
when morning comes,  
it's clear to me  
blessings abound all around.  
I'm aware  
how short our time is and I want  
to take them in.  
I pray my body lets me.  
But that is my intention.

Al-ways to lead with my truth,  
and to remember that I can have  
fun.

I want to let go of my need to  
know all things.

And remember:

Trust the process.

And for the ones we lose,  
how it still seems un-real.

I can never...

I will try to see

How it might be

that I still can be

Father to my very lost son.

I know that loss

I know that loss so well.

I don't give up

I keep a light on.

Balance.

For me it is balance-  
the secret to claiming all that  
surrounds us.

I don't want to go back to that  
place

where I see everything that's  
been lost.

No, at this point I just want the  
balance

to create a world where I can just:

Be in the natural world.

Be in the wild,

leave on a whim,

and go to the woods

to climb, to swim

To see diff-'rent places.

To be with my wife,

and to take one step closer to our  
vision,

and go to that quiet place

to stay in balance.

Why do we still gather after all  
these years?

After thirty years?

What's the use of gathering?

When we still have fears

After all these years?

To witness.

To honor.

To walk alongside you.

And hold you.

And carry you.

When darkness enfolds you.

To hear your truth  
again, and again

and to hold you to task  
in the company of Men.

Ah Day-ah  
Ah Tay-Ah  
Ah Day-Ah  
Too-dah-day Ah Day-Ah

This is my intention  
'til next time.

## **THANK YOUS:**

My deep gratitude goes out to:

My wife, Jeanine, and my son, Garrett, who are the treasures of my life and who make it possible for me to follow my vision. To Sarah, whose creative mind initiates so many invitational projects and who then produces the projects and makes the music and magic happen. To Frank, Ed, Robert, Bob, Perry, Paul and R.D. for allowing me to capture and make public their words, spoken in intimacy and safety. To the men who have sung the text and never blinked about the task of embodying those eight brave voices. To all our performers, who have breathed life into these works and given their talent and attention to the music and songs. To the staff of Jesse Lee, who lead an inspiring community of worship every day of the year. To all who have gathered and who know that we need each other and need to keep gathering as mirrors to one another, and in recognition of our deep and limitless humanity.

Andrew Levine



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203-438-8791

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*Join us for worship!*

8:00AM Sundays—Communion Service in the Chapel

9:30AM Sundays—Worship/Sunday School in the Sanctuary