



THE
Oratorio
SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA
MICHAEL SLON MUSIC DIRECTOR



THE WORLD CALLED,
AND I ANSWERED

The World Called

Music by Adolphus Hailstork

Text by Rita Dove



Televised thanks to VPM: Virginia's Home for Public Media

Thursday, September 3rd – 8:30 pm and Saturday, September 5 – 6:30 pm

THE WORLD CALLED,
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The World Called, by Adolphus Hailstork

Text: *Testimonial*, by Rita Dove, 1993 United States Poet Laureate

Commissioned by The Oratorio Society of Virginia

Premiered on May 25, 2018

Michael Slon, Music Director

with Christina Pier, Soprano

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Program Notes

We are delighted to present a work which was commissioned for the occasion. It is the creative product of two people who, like so many of us, have chosen to call Virginia home. This collaboration calls upon unique experiences to express the universality of human experience. Dove's poem "Testimonial" is the seventh of eight in "Freedom: A Bird's-Eye View" - a section of her book *On the Bus with Rosa Parks*. The poems in this section speak of expressing the world through youthful eyes: riddles, rhymes, a first book, discovering the library. Hailstork's musical setting of "Testimonial" (which Dove personally helped paint onto a public mural in Charlottesville) is vibrant with the air of discovery, giving us a glimpse of the world unfolding before a young person's senses.

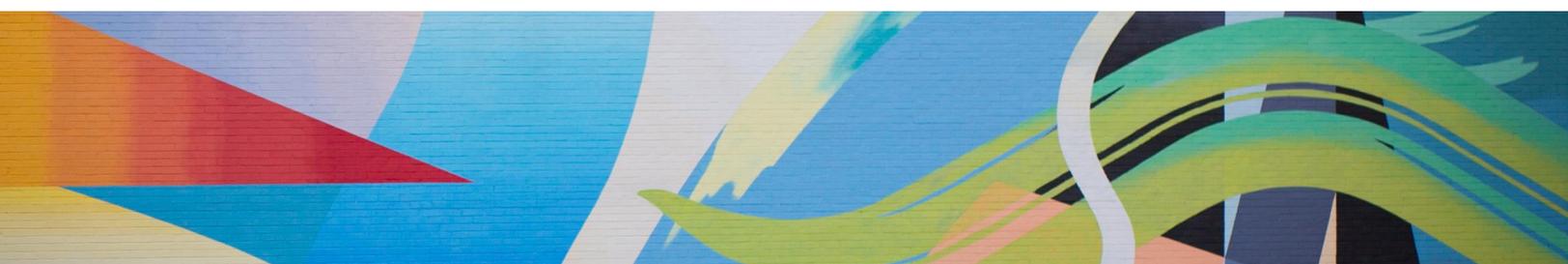
The opening motif gives a taste of what is to come: with a nod to one of the poet's other favorite pursuits - ballroom dancing - Hailstork casts much of the poem with dancelike rhythms. The choral fanfare establishes the theme of the work: "The world called, and I answered" - though this is neither the title nor the first line of Dove's poem. A playful gesture from the woodwinds dispenses with any brief solemnity in the "answer."

The story begins in earnest "back when the world was new." While this phrase could refer to deep time and the planet's beginnings, I think here it rather evokes the sense of discovery in every new human who encounters the wilderness of the world. Hailstork endows this phrase with a distinctive melodic shape that has a mysterious quality; the supporting choral chords draw from a number of distinctly American choral sounds, from close parallel movement to jazz idioms. Pay attention to the care with which he evocatively sets phrases like "just a whisper" and "rank and file."

In the next section, the orchestra in a musically amorphous passage sets up the soloist's entrance, notated in rhythms which sound free and timeless. Slowly, however, both time and thought begin to crystallize, evolving into an irresistible dance, so that by the middle section, Hailstork's music becomes imbued with the ecstatic spirit of a young person whirling through the budding experiences of life.

The reeling suddenly halts, and the narrator/soloist turns meditative...almost reverent. The choir's response contains exquisite musical writing. "Luck leaked out...everywhere" in drips and drabs as the narrator expresses her promise. The music then subsides into an ever more gentle undulation between two chords which finally merge and fade unresolved by the chorus, leaving the resolution to the orchestra.

- Winston Barham



About the Composer



Adolphus Hailstork received his doctorate in composition from Michigan State University, where he was a student of H. Owen Reed. He had previously studied at the Manhattan School of Music, under Vittorio Giannini and David Diamond, at the American Institute at Fontainebleau with Nadia Boulanger, and at Howard University with Mark Fax.

Dr. Hailstork has written numerous works for chorus, solo voice, piano, organ, various chamber ensembles, band, orchestra, and opera. Among his early compositions are: *Celebration*, recorded by the Detroit Symphony in 1976; *Out of the Depths* (1977), and *American Guernica* (1983). *Consort Piece* (1995) commissioned by the Norfolk (Va.) Chamber Ensemble, was awarded first prize by the University of Delaware Festival of Contemporary Music.

Significant performances by major orchestras (Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York) have been led by leading conductors such as James de Priest, Paul Freeman, Daniel Barenboim, Kurt Masur, Lorin Maazel, Jo Ann Falletta and David Lockington. This March, Thomas Wilkins conducted Hailstork's *An American Port of Call* with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Hailstork's newest works include *The World Called* (based on Rita Dove's poem "Testimonial"), a work for soprano, chorus and orchestra commissioned by the Oratorio Society of Virginia (premiered in May 2018) and *Still Holding On* (February 2019) an orchestra work commissioned and premiered by the Los Angeles Philharmonic. He is currently working on his Fourth Symphony, and *A Knee on a Neck* (tribute to George Floyd) for chorus and orchestra. Dr. Hailstork resides in Virginia Beach Virginia, and is Professor of Music and Eminent Scholar at Old Dominion University in Norfolk.

www.adolphushailstork.com

About the Poet



Rita Dove was born in Akron, Ohio, the daughter of one of the first Black chemists in the tire industry. Dove was encouraged to read widely by her parents, and she excelled in school. She was named a Presidential Scholar, one of the top 100 high school graduates in the country, and attended Miami University in Oxford, Ohio as a National Merit Scholar. After graduating, Dove received a Fulbright to study at the University of Tübingen in West Germany, and later earned an MFA at the Iowa Writers' Workshop where she met her husband, the German writer Fred Viebahn. Dove made her formal literary debut in 1980 with the poetry collection *The Yellow House on the Corner*, which received praise for its sense of history combined with individual detail. The book heralded the start of long and productive career, and it also announced the distinctive style that Dove continues to develop.

In addition to poetry, Dove has published works of fiction, including the short story collection *Fifth Sunday* (1990) and the novel *Through the Ivory Gate* (1992). Dove is also an acclaimed lyricist, and has written lyrics for composers ranging from Tania Leyn to John Williams.

Dove's work is known for its lyricism and beauty as well as its sense of history and political scope. She has had a tremendous impact on American letters, not only through the scope of her poetry, but also through her work as an advocate. She was named US poet laureate in 1993. Just 40 years old at the time of her appointment, she was the youngest poet ever elected to the position. She was also the first African American to hold the title.

Dove is currently Commonwealth Professor of English at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.

About our Music Director



Active as a conductor of choral, orchestral, and operatic repertoire, Michael Slon has served as Music Director of the Oratorio Society of Virginia since 2011. In that time, he has advanced the mission and musicianship of the chorus, and created a series of new artistic partnerships, including a 2014 semi-staged production of Bernstein's *Candide* with Ash Lawn (now Charlottesville) Opera, performances with the Roanoke Symphony, Wintergreen Music Festival, Staunton Music Festival, Charlottesville Ballet, and regional youth choruses, and a "Together in Song" community event to benefit local charities. He is also Associate Professor and Director of Choral Music at the University of Virginia, where he conducts the University Singers, UVA Chamber Singers and guest conducts the Charlottesville Symphony.

Prior to UVA, he served as visiting conducting faculty at the Oberlin Conservatory, and assistant conductor of the Cornell University choruses and Cincinnati's May Festival Chorus, where he prepared and co-prepared choruses for concerts with the Cleveland Orchestra and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.

His ensembles have worked with artists including Moses Hogan, Bobby McFerrin, Meredith Monk, Peter Phillips, and Franz Welsch-Must, and commissioned composers including Stephen Paulus, Forrest Pierce, Adolphus Hailstork, Judith Shatin, and Eric Whitacre.

Also a pianist, composer, and writer, Dr. Slon holds degrees from the Indiana University School of Music and Cornell University. His first book, *Songs from the Hill*, has been cited in a variety of other publications, and his work on Leonard Bernstein has recently appeared in the *Choral Journal* and also won the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) Julius Herford Prize. As a composer, he had a 2019 residency at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and recently had work presented by the Vocalis Chamber Choir at NYC's Merkin Hall, and at the 2018 ACDA Eastern Convention.

About the Soloist

Active American soprano Christina Pier has been hailed by Opera News for her “big, gleaming soprano and impressive coloratura,” and has received great critical and audience acclaim for her work on opera and concert stages. 2019 season highlights include performances of Micaela in Bizet’s *Carmen* with Opera Carolina and Toledo Opera; Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 with the Tallahassee Symphony; Brahms’ *Ein deutsches Requiem*, and Hailstork’s *The World Called* with the Oratorio Society of Virginia; and Handel’s *Messiah* with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra.

A Grand Finals Winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Ms. Pier has taken the operatic stage as Senta in *Der Fliegende Hollander* with Virginia Opera; the title role in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Virginia Opera; Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* with the Santa Fe, Sarasota, Nashville, and Eugene Operas; Contessa Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Minnesota Opera; Micaela in *Carmen* with Florida Grand Opera, Opera Carolina, Princeton Festival, and Toledo Opera; Marguerite in *Faust* with Eugene Opera; and Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* with Florida Grand Opera. She also understudied the title role in Gluck’s *Iphigénie en Tauride*, and Fiordiligi in Mozart’s *Così fan tutte* with Lyric Opera Chicago.



Ms. Pier has been recognized by numerous prestigious awards. She was named Gilbert Artist at Florida Grand Opera, and was a finalist for two years for the Richard Tucker Career Grant. She is the recipient of a George London Award, Sullivan Award, two Charles A. Lynam awards, and two Palm Beach Opera Competition Awards. Originally from Flagstaff, AZ, Ms. Pier received her BM and MM in voice at Indiana University, and began her career under the tutelage of legendary soprano Virginia Zeani. She resides with her family in Charlotte, NC, and is on the voice faculty at University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

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About The Oratorio Society of Virginia



The Oratorio Society of Virginia presents a variety of music each year, including classics from the greatest composers, such as Bach's *Mass in B minor*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Vaughan Williams' *A Sea Symphony*, and Handel's *Coronation Anthems*, as well as modern choral compositions and opera. Recent collaborative partners have included the UVA University Singers, Charlottesville (previously Ash Lawn) Opera, Wintergreen Music Festival, Roanoke Symphony Orchestra, Charlottesville Ballet, Charlottesville Symphony, Zion Union Baptist Church Choir, Staunton Music Festival, and a number of regional youth and school choral ensembles. As part of our 50th anniversary celebration in 2018, we also had the honor of commissioning composer Adolphus Hailstork to set the poetry of former U.S Poet Laureate and UVA professor Rita Dove, resulting in the world premiere of *The World Called*.

Our commitment to excellence allows our volunteer organization to present in some of the area's finest venues, including the historic Paramount Theater on the Downtown Mall, Old Cabell Hall at the University of Virginia, First Presbyterian Church, and the Martin Luther King Jr. Performing Arts Center.

But no matter where or what we're performing, we take the stage with the same mission: To unite our voices in an effort to express the best of the human spirit and spark a transformation among all who are in attendance. Through performing the songs and stories that have filled the histories of choruses, we seek to embody a work of art that connects our community through the emotions we all share.

We believe music has the power to inspire, and we want to share it with you.

The Oratorio Society Singers (2018 performance)

Soprano

Rachel Abdella
Kimberly Allen
Ellen Bessell
Joanne Billups
Christine Buttermann
Meagan Carrick
Melody Z. Day
Kate Donovan
Meghan Froom Cridlin
Violet Houser
Heidi M. Kupke
Heather LaMay
Celia Lankford
*Kimberly Lauter
*Margaret O'Bryant
Rachel Odom
*Suzanne Schaeffer
Theresa Scruggs
Hannah Slayton
Alanna Smith
Katie Somers
Denise Sopko
Sharon Utz
Kiri Van Lengen-Welty
Leah Wayner
Kate Wisbey

Alto

Sheila Borger
Marie Callahan
Wendi Dass
Nancy Davis-Imhof
Carol Diggs
Jennifer Gaden
Angela Herstek-Zongilla
Julia Hilkey
Libby Hobbs
*Karen Honeycutt
*Kelly Kennedy
*Diane Kingsbury
Linda Leshowitz
Karen Marsh
Joanie McGuire
Liz McQuade
Erin Palombi
Lily Perkowski
*Katy Sinclair
Michelle Taylor
Joy Tobias
Caroline Wilhelm
Amanda Williams

Tenor

Timothy Allen
Wayne Arrowood
Winston Barham
Jim Boyd
Dorian Brown
*Drene DeGood
Mirna Dickey
Rob Gardner
John Jesus
Carrol Kinsey
*George Nowacek
Ben-David Warner

Bass

Jason Boehmer
Andreas Broscheid
*Matthew Buttermann
Matthew Carter
Josh Crockett
Cody Davis-Meadows
Bob Dickman
Ron Gaykema
*Steve Harris
Craig Schneiders
*Frank Sherwood
Yuji Shinozaki
Fred Simon
Lloyd Snook
David Tate
*Jan Tobias
Matt Zimmerman

**Member, Board of Directors*

Staff:

Daniel Hine, Rehearsal Pianist
David Perry, Executive Director

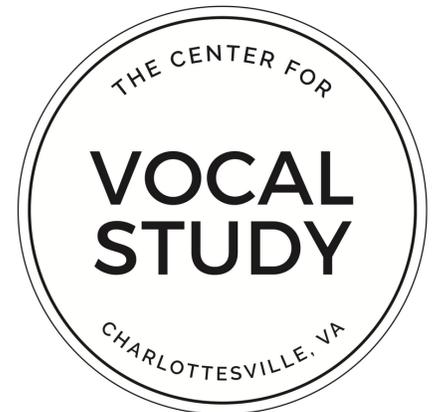


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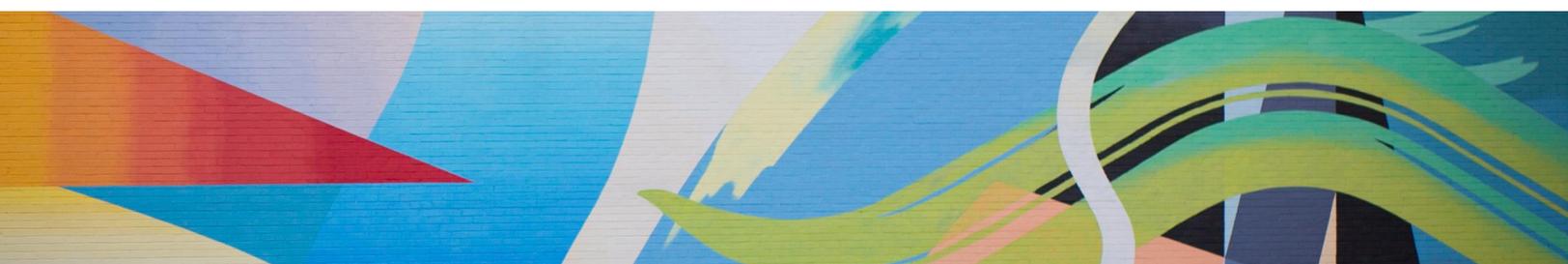
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In these strange times when Covid19 keeps us apart from each other and unable to travel to see relatives and friends, the transformative power of great choral music is more important than ever. Hear the joy and join our community of choral musicians by following The Oratorio Society of Virginia at our website and on social media. We may not be able to hold concerts right now, but we remain committed to bringing music to our community through live streams of upcoming works, television broadcasts and video clips at our YouTube channel. Your personal donation or business support of our organization will ensure that we can continue to promote musical excellence to a diverse and growing audience.

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www.oratoriosociety.org