



## **SKY-BORN MUSIC: THE COMMISSIONING PROJECT**

It is traditional during an anniversary year that a performing ensemble commissions a piece of music in commemoration of that milestone. MCA went a step further by inviting ten composers — one for each of our ten years — to write a new work for us. There are many stories involved in a project such as this, so below you will share in the journey of each piece's "birth," for truly, this has been an *amazing – and deeply personal –* journey.

Sharon A. Hansen, Founder and Music Director

### **1. PADMAPANI ("The Lotus Bearer") (2006)**

**Paula Foley Tillen**

#### **Poetry by Thich Nhat Hanh**

Paula Foley Tillen is cherished composer-in-residence with the Milwaukee Choral Artists, and is a singing member of the ensemble. Tillen is a nationally recognized composer, with compositions and arrangements found in the catalogues of Moon of Hope Publishing, Hal Leonard Publishing, Santa Barbara Music Press, and Treble Clef Music Press. Her composition "The Challenge" was the winner of the 2008 Joe Shepley Choral Composition Competition, sponsored by the Namasté Women's Choir, Los Angeles, CA.

Paula Tillen has been a professional musician in the Milwaukee area for the past thirty years. She has served as music director for many metropolitan area theatre companies, and is active at Milwaukee ComedySportz, where she performs and leads workshops in musical improvisation. Paula is director of music at Southminster Presbyterian Church in Waukesha, WI. In addition, she maintains a private piano studio of about fifteen students; and remains much in demand as a pianist, vocal coach, and accompanist.

She has co-written and composed music for two original theatre pieces that have been produced by Milwaukee's Windfall Theatre. Her choral compositions and arrangements have been featured at the 2007 Michigan All-State Treble Choir and the 2008 North Central ACDA Women's Honors Choir; and at concerts of Concentus Women's Choir (Rochester, NY); Voci Women's Vocal Ensemble (Berkeley, CA); the Lyric Singers of Calvin College (Grand Rapids, MI); Women's Voices Chorus (Chapel Hill, NC); and many others. Her music has also been featured at the 2004 GALA International Festival (Montreal, Canada); at reading sessions at the 2005 American Choral Directors'

Association National Convention; and at the nationally televised Service of Lessons & Carols from the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, (Milwaukee).

Quite frankly, there would not have been a tenth anniversary of the Milwaukee Choral Artists without Paula Foley Tillen. Sharon Hansen believes that she should take much of the credit for the birth of the ensemble. For three years, Paula and Gloria Hansen, singers in another Milwaukee choral ensemble, tried to convince Hansen to form a professional vocal ensemble. The original intent was to establish a professional mixed choir – but when all was said and done, the educational background and professional singing experience of the women who auditioned far surpassed that of the men. Hansen called the women and told them that there was good news and bad news – the good news was that they passed the audition and were accepted into the Milwaukee Choral Artists – the bad news was that it was going to be a different sort of vocal ensemble than originally intended. Hansen remembers fondly that it was Paula who quickly spoke up and said, “What the heck, let’s give it a whirl as a chick choir!” And so the Milwaukee Choral Artists was born.

Tillen chose the poetry of Thich Nhat Hanh (pronounced tick-n'yat-hahn) (b. 1926) for this beautiful setting. Hahn is a Zen Master, poet and author of over one hundred titles in print, and a peace and human rights activist. He is known for championing a movement known as “engaged Buddhism,” which entwines traditional meditative practices with active, nonviolent civil disobedience.

During the Vietnam War, Nhat Hanh set up relief organizations to rebuild bombed and destroyed villages, instituted the School of Youth for Social Service (now, “Program Understanding and Love,” a humanitarian aid organization run by monastics and social workers), founded a Buddhist University and an influential peace activist magazine, and urged world leaders to use nonviolence as a tool.

As a result of his lifelong commitment to nonviolence, Thich Nhat Hanh was banned by both non-Communist and Communist governments. Exiled from Vietnam in 1966, Nhat Hanh set off on a mission to spread engaged Buddhist thought around the globe. When Nhat Hanh came to the United States in 1966 for the first of many humanitarian visits, he met with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and persuaded him to oppose the Vietnam War, fueling the launch of the peace movement. In 1967, Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr. King nominated Nhat Hanh for the same honor.

Thich Nhat Hanh, often described as the most beloved Buddhist teacher in the West, wrote this poem in 1976 after visiting the Ajanta Buddhist cave monuments in India.

Flowers in the Sky, Flowers on Earth.  
Lotuses bloom as Buddha’s eyelids.  
Lotuses bloom in a human heart.  
Holding gracefully a lotus in his hand,  
the bodhissattva brings forth a universe of art.  
In the meadows of the sky, stars have sprung up.  
The smiling, fresh moon is already up.

The jade colored trunk of a coconut tree  
reaches across the late-night sky.  
My mind, traveling in utmost emptiness,  
catches suchness on its way home.  
Listen, listen.  
This wonderful sound brings me back to my true home.

## **2. POTTER'S CLAY (2007)** **Poetry by Naomi C. Rose**

**Paul Fowler**

Paul Fowler has degrees in voice, composition, and theater from Ithaca College, and a Masters of Music in composition from the University of Michigan. His music has received the First Music Award, the ASCAP Young Composer Award, the Swan Composer Award (Honorable Mention), and the Louis Smadbeck Composition Award. He writes, "By exploring symbols and stories from around the world, [my] concert music seeks to remind its listeners of the universal experiences of the human spirit and its path through time." Fowler currently lives in the southwest with his family, Hannah and baby Luca Sönarn. On stage for the premiere of Paul's piece was MCA ensemble member Marj Fowler, his proud mother.

For many years, Sharon Hansen has been hearing proud stories from Marj and Dean Fowler about the educational and career path of their talented son, Paul. Fowler's first love in music was the classical voice. Both of his parents sing opera – Marj and Dean have been long time members of the Florentine Opera Chorus - and at a young age, Paul began studying voice with his mother's teacher, Milwaukeean Patricia Crump.

Paul writes: "The poetry of POTTER'S CLAY was written by my good friend Naomi Rose. It ends the first story found in her award winning children's book, Tibetan Tales for Little Buddhas," with a forward by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Throughout the story, Naomi weaves a mantra from the Buddhist tradition, "Om mani padme hum." This mantra is spoken to Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva (or enlightened being) of compassion, who vowed to hear all the prayers of all sentient beings and postpone his own enlightenment until every being on earth achieved nirvana. In some renderings of Avalokitesvara's story, Buddha endows him with 11 heads and 1,000 arms so that he may better hear and assist those who suffer. His mantra, "Om mani padme hum," manifests compassion, good fortune, and purifies negative karma."

Life is like a potter's clay,  
Changing shape from day to day.  
As stars sparkle in the sky,  
Light and dark go quickly by.  
What's the future? No one knows,  
(So) Be at peace with how life goes.

### 3. A PRAYER FOR PEACE (2008)

Paula Foley Tillen

#### Poetry by Poetry by Thich Nhat Hanh

Paula Foley Tillen is cherished composer-in-residence with the Milwaukee Choral Artists, and is a singing member of the ensemble. (See track 1, PADMAPANI, for more information about the composer and poet.)

In beauty, sitting on a lotus flower, Lord Buddha, quiet and solid.  
Your humble disciple, calm and pure of heart,  
Forms a lotus flower with the hands, and offers this heartfelt prayer:  
Homage to all Buddhas in the ten directions.  
Because of your love for all people, have compassion on us.  
Help us to remember we are just one family, North and South.  
Help us rekindle our compassion and brotherhood.  
May your compassion help us to overcome our hatred.  
Humbly we open our hearts to you:  
Water the flowers of our spirits with your deep understanding.  
Humbly we open our hearts to you: Help our hearts grow light.  
Homage to all Buddhas in the ten directions.  
Because of your love for all people, have compassion on us.  
May the merit of this prayer be transformed into peace.  
May each of us realize this, our deep aspiration.

### 4. LAKE SONG (2007)

Paul Carey

#### Poetry by Colette Inez

Chicagoan Paul Carey's music has been performed by choirs worldwide and across America, and has garnered prize-winning acclaim in prestigious composition competitions. In 2000 Mr. Carey founded *Vox Caelestis*, a professional women's chamber choir known for adventurous programming, outreach in the community, and a college scholarship fund established to help young singers. In 2005 Mr. Carey resigned his position with the group in order to turn his attention to full-time composition: his now more than 100 choral compositions are published by Oxford, Walton, Roger Dean, Santa Barbara, Colla Voce, and Kjos. His music is also available directly at [www.paulcarey.net](http://www.paulcarey.net).

Carey and Hansen met as a result of their connection to women's professional vocal ensembles. Hansen attended one of the *Vox Caelestis* performances in Chicago, and Carey attended an MCA concert in Milwaukee – and the rest is history. MCA has performed Carey's music on a number of occasions, and Carey is a composer in Hansen's Choral Music Series published by Santa Barbara Music Press. Paul's LAKE SONG is a beautiful musical setting of a poem by Colette Inez that evokes the mysteries of nature and life, and talks of the inevitability of death.

Ev'ry day our name is chang'd,  
Say stones colliding into waves.  
Go read our names on the shore,  
Say waves colliding into stones.  
Birds o'er water call their names  
To each other again and again

To say where they are.  
Where have you been, my small bird?  
I know our names will change one day  
To stones in a field of anemones and lavender.  
Before you reach the farthest wave,  
Before our shadows disappear in a starry blur,  
Call out your name to say where we are.

## 5. SIGH NO MORE, LADIES! (1961)

Kirke Mechem

### Poetry by William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, II, 3.

Kansas native Kirke Mechem, a prolific composer with a catalogue of over 250 works, enjoys an international presence, as ASCAP recently registered concert performances of his music in 42 countries. He is also often referred to as the "dean of American choral composers." Mechem's compositions cover almost every genre, but vocal music is the core of his work. His three-act opera, *Tartuffe*, has had 300 performances in six countries. Mechem's talents have been acknowledged through numerous honors, including retrospectives, grants, commissions and special anniversary performances. They have come from, among many others, the United Nations, the National Gallery, the National Endowment for the Arts, the American Choral Directors Association, the Music Educators National Conference and the National Opera Association (lifetime achievement award).

Kirke Mechem's busy commissioning schedule would allow no time for a special composition written especially for the Milwaukee Choral Artists. Sensing the group's disappointment, Kirke sent a copy of a score that he wrote in 1961 to Sharon Hansen, with the following note:

"I know of no actual "premiere" of my piece *Sigh No More, Ladies...* Iva Dee Hiatt and the Smith College Ladies, to whom it was dedicated, never performed it. At the very least, you could say that you have rediscovered a forgotten piece--one of the composer's favorites, which he has never before heard in concert." So MCA presents the world premiere of eminent composer Kirke Mechem's "SIGH NO MORE LADIES," with the hope that he will enjoy hearing the piece performed for the first time in the forty-seven years since he wrote it.

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more;  
Men were deceivers ever;  
One foot in sea and one on shore,  
To one thing constant never;  
Then sigh not so,  
But let them go,  
And be you blithe and bonny;  
Converting all your sounds of woe  
Into hey nonny, nonny.  
Sing no more ditties, sing no more,  
Of dumps so dull and heavy;  
The fraud of men was ever so

Since summer first was leavy,  
Then sigh not so,  
But let them go,  
And be you blithe and bonny;  
Converting all your sounds of woe  
Into hey nonny, nonny.

## **6-8. THREE EMILY DICKINSON SONGS (2007)**

**George Mabry**

### **Poetry by Emily Dickinson**

The first of two composers hailing from the Volunteer State, Tennessean George Mabry, has been the director of the Nashville Symphony Chorus since 1998 and is professor emeritus of music at Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, Tennessee. Mabry is a published composer and arranger of numerous choral and instrumental compositions. He was also the former director of entertainment for Opryland U.S.A. in Nashville. While at Opryland, his musical shows toured the Soviet Union under the auspices of the U.S. State Department and made three White House appearances for the President of the United States.

George Mabry is a professional colleague of Hansen: they met at a choral conference in Tennessee. Mabry invited Hansen to work at Austin Peay State University with his collegiate choirs, and Hansen reciprocated, inviting Mabry to work with high school singers at the UWM High School Honor Festival. She has performed a number of his pieces throughout the years with many of her choirs. His THREE EMILY DICKINSON SONGS flow as if they had a solo voice in mind – perfect for the solo singers of the Milwaukee Choral Artists. Emily Dickinson was known as a recluse - but these poems seem to indicate that her imagination was anything but that.

#### **6. HEART, WE WILL FORGET HIM!**

Heart, we will forget him! You and I, tonight!  
You may forget the warmth he gave,  
I will forget the light.  
When you have done, pray tell me  
That I my thoughts may dim;  
Haste! Lest while you're lagging,  
I may remember him!

#### **7. GOING TO HIM**

"Going to him! Happy letter! Tell him—  
Tell him the page I didn't write;  
Tell him I only said the syntax,  
And left the verb and the pronoun out.  
Tell him just how the fingers hurried,  
Then how they waded, slow, slow, slow;  
And then you wished you had eyes in your pages,  
So you could see what moved them so."

"Tell him it wasn't a practised writer,  
You guessed, from the way the sentence toiled;  
You could hear the bodice tug, behind you,  
As if it held but the might of a child;  
You almost pitied it, you, it worked so.  
Tell him—No, you may quibble there,  
For it would split his heart to know it,  
And then you and I were silenter."

"Tell him night finished before we finished,  
And the old clock kept neighing 'day!'  
And you got sleepy and begged to be ended—  
What could it hinder so, to say?  
Tell him just how she sealed you, cautious,  
But if he ask where you are hid  
Until to-morrow, — happy letter!  
Gesture, coquette, and shake your head!"

#### **8. WILD NIGHTS!**

Wild nights! Wild nights!  
Were I with thee,  
Wild nights should be  
Our luxury!  
Futile the winds  
To a heart in port,  
Done with the compass,  
Done with the chart.  
Rowing in Eden!  
Ah! the sea!  
Might I but moor  
Tonight in thee!

#### **9. SKY-BORN MUSIC (2007)**

**Paula Foley Tillen**

##### **Poetry by Ralph Waldo Emerson**

Paula Foley Tillen is cherished composer-in-residence with the Milwaukee Choral Artists, and is a singing member of the ensemble. (See track 1, PADMAPANI, for more information about the composer.)

Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem, SKY-BORN MUSIC, has special significance. When Paula started thinking about writing a piece for MCA's Tenth Anniversary Concert, she read through a vast number of poems. She sent Hansen a copy of a text that had appealed to her, which she found in a "Poem A Day" calendar. The poem was for the date August 22 – Hansen's birthday. There was no question that this was the exact verse that Paula should set – and a more beautiful merging of word and music could not be imagined. Paula and Milwaukee Choral Artists member, Leslie Fitzwater, have been performing together for more than fifteen years, and it was for Leslie that she wrote the solo.

Let me go where'er I will,  
I hear a sky-born music still:  
It sounds from all things old,  
It sounds from all things young,  
From all that's fair, from all that's foul,  
Peals out a cheerful song.  
It is not only in the rose,  
It is not only in the bird,  
Not only where the rainbow glows,  
Nor in the song of woman heard,  
But in the darkest, meanest things  
There always, always something sings.  
'Tis not in the high stars alone,  
Nor in the cup of budding flowers,  
Nor in the redbreast's mellow tone,  
Nor in the bow that smiles in showers,  
But in the mud and scum of things  
There always, always something sings.

## **10. SOFT VOICES, SWEET VIOLETS, AND ROSE LEAVES (2007) Poetry by Percy Byssche Shelley**

**Jackson Berkey**

Jackson Berkey may be better known by his work as featured keyboard artist on the Mannheim Steamroller *Fresh Aire* and platinum Christmas recordings, but he is a world-class composer in his own right. Berkey's published catalog offers more than 300 compositions for solo voice, solo instruments, choir, orchestra, and chamber groups. With roots in classical music, he has won a variety of composition awards and publishes with Walton Music Corporation, SDG Press®, and Plymouth Music. His catalog of works receives hundreds of performances and recordings from professional choral and chamber music ensembles such as The Los Angeles Master Chorale, the Fukuii (Japan) Renaissance Ensemble, and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

In 1977, Sharon Hansen was a middle school music teacher in Omaha, Nebraska. One of Hansen's young students wanted her to attend a concert that his Dad was involved with, something called "*Fresh Aire—Mannheim Steamroller.*" To appease her seventh-grader's recommendation, Hansen bought a ticket and attended the show. (Jackson Berkey was the pianist in that group, as was a bass player named Eric Hansen – we'll leave you, gentle reader, to surmise the rest.) Fast forward many years, and "*Fresh Aire/Mannheim Steamroller*" is touring less and less (usually only at Christmas) – and the musician-members have found new career directions. Jackson had always been involved in choral music, since the days when he was the accompanist for the Norman Luboff Chorale. (Jackson's wife, Almeda, was the group's soprano soloist; Chip Davis, the creative force behind *Mannheim Steamroller*, was also a singer in the Chorale.) Almeda has been a choral director for many years, and Jackson was always there, writing and arranging for her ensembles. When *Fresh Aire* started touring less and less, he began writing more and more. As a result,

he has emerged as one of America's most performed choral composers in the past twenty years. His poignant setting of Percy Byssche Shelley's "SOFT VOICES, SWEET VIOLETS, AND ROSE LEAVES" evokes some of the mystical moments of those *Fresh Aire* days, taking all of us back to another time and place . . .

Music, when soft voices die,  
Vibrates in the memory;  
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,  
Live within the sense they quicken.  
Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,  
Are heap'd for the beloved's bed;  
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,  
Love itself shall slumber on.

## 11. NAHUATL HYMN TO THE ALL-MOTHER (2007)

Gilda Lyons

### Traditional Nahuatl prayer, adapted by Gilda Lyons

New Yorker Gilda Lyons is active as composer, vocalist, and visual artist. She received The ASCAP Foundation's *Charles Kingsford Fund Commission* for a new work scheduled for premiere in the 2008/09 season. Her compositional output includes a one-act opera, orchestral works, choral music, vocal solos, and a string quartet. Lyons also continues her work in the visual arts, focusing largely on installation pieces that layer natural elements with fabricated objects. She received her Ph.D. in Music Composition from the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

The story around Lyons' NAHUATL HYMN TO THE ALL-MOTHER is a tale of interweavings and past connections. In 2005, MCA was privileged to partner with Milwaukee's internationally-acclaimed contemporary music group, *Present Music*, in the world premiere of Daron Hagen's "Flight Music." Hagen was born in Milwaukee and attended Brookfield Central High School. He is considered one of the leading American composers of his generation, whose works have been performed internationally by world-class orchestras, opera companies, chamber ensembles, and soloists. At the time of the premiere, MCA was pleased to make acquaintance with both Daron and his wife Gilda Lyons. Since Daron was fully engulfed in writing a work for Seattle Opera and had no time for other commissions, Sharon asked Gilda, a talented composer in her own right, if she would be interested in writing a piece for MCA's tenth anniversary.

Because of her interest in native South American cultures, Lyons decided to set to music a Nicaraguan Nahuatl prayer in praise of the All-Mother, protector of life. Well, that is what she told us then. Shortly before the world premiere in 2008, Gilda informed us that when she was crafting the Nahuatl hymn, she found out she was pregnant. She wrote: "It was a time when I didn't even dare say the words out loud with the little life inside me being so very new. In revisiting the work as the premiere approaches, I see just how clearly I embedded all of my prayers from those first weeks into this piece. I write you now with a great big healthy belly full of baby; we've just begun our 9th month

and look forward with great excitement to a due date projected for 1 day before the premiere of this Nahuatl Hymn to the All Mother, February 15th. I love that as you offer up the premiere of this new work, a new life is due to accompany it."

Ahuiya! Ahuiya!  
Hail to our Mother,  
Hail to the Goddess,  
who poured forth bounteous flowers,  
who scattered the seed of the maguey,  
as she came forth from Paradise.  
Ahuiya! Ahuiya!  
Hail to our Mother,  
Hail to the Goddess,  
who caused yellow flowers to blossom,  
who was plumed with the crest of eagles,  
as she came forth from Paradise.  
Hail! Hail! Ahuiya!  
We sing praise to you, the Goddess,  
who nourishes beasts in the desert,  
who feeds the green herbs of this earth,  
who summons the Quetzal to song,  
who comforts this newborn child –  
the little jewel you care for when weeping –  
as she cries out to you.  
Ahuiya! Ahuiya!  
Hail to our Mother,  
Hail to the Goddess,  
who shines in the thick of the thorn bush,  
whose bounty was granted to all things,  
as she came forth from Paradise.  
Hail! Hail! Ahuiya!

## **12. THE MESSAGE (2008)**

**James Quitman Mulholland**

### **Poetry by Christopher Cranch**

James Mulholland, one of the most published, performed, and commissioned composer/arrangers of his generation, creates for three passions - music, text, and life. Children's choirs, high school ensembles, choral associations, and universities throughout the world regularly perform and commission his choral music. Since 1995, he has received and completed one hundred and twenty-four commissions. Over his career he has written over six hundred compositions. Besides his personal writing, he accepts approximately twelve commissions a year, in addition to his schedule of clinics, workshops, and conventions, while maintaining his primary duties as Professor of Music at Butler University. Currently celebrating his forty-fifth year on the faculty of Butler University, in Indianapolis, Indiana, James Mulholland continues to inspire countless singers around the globe with his mastery of the compositional craft.

If you would ask any choral director to name the top ten living composers whose music is most likely to be performed, James Mulholland would definitely be on their list, as he is esteemed by choral musicians the world over. For MCA's commissioned work, Mulholland chose a poem of American poet Christopher Cranch, perhaps not a household name as American poets go. Cranch was a Unitarian minister, poet, author, artist, and member of the American Transcendental movement, which promoted new ideas in literature, religion, culture, and philosophy that emerged in New England in the early to middle nineteenth century. Cranch published poetry throughout his life, and was also a landscape painter of some acclaim. His art works in the style of the Hudson River School have been praised for their serenity and a true relation to nature.

Cranch's poem, "THE MESSAGE," is likewise a serene vision of nature, comparing the beautiful, pure song of a bird to man's highest aspiration of peace, nobility, and human grandeur. Mulholland perfectly marries this grand text with his grand music.

Waking from sleep, I heard, but knew not where,  
A bird, that sang alone its early song.  
The quick, clear warble leaping through the air,  
The voice of spring, that all the winter long  
Had slept, Now burst in melodies as strong  
And tremulous as Love's first pure delight;  
I could not choose but bless a song so warm and bright.  
Sweet bird! The fresh, clear sparkle of thy voice  
Came quickening all the springs of trust and love.  
What heart could hear such joy, and not rejoice?  
Fresh message from the Beauty Infinite  
That clasps the world around and fills it with delight!  
It sang of freedom, dimmed by no alloy;  
Peace, unpossessed upon our troubled sphere;  
A world of noble beings born to cheer  
The wilderness of life, and prove the fact  
Of human grandeur in each thought and word and act.  
I could not choose but bless a song so warm and bright.  
That clasps the world around and fills it with delight!

### **13. WADE IN THE WATER (2006)**

**Marion Verhaalen**

#### **Traditional; additional verses by Marion Verhaalen**

Milwaukee's very own Marion Verhaalen wears many hats, as educator, piano teacher, composer, and world researcher on the music of Camargo Guarnieri. The Milwaukee Choral Artists has a very deep connection with Sister Marian and her music – it is because of her that MCA Music Director Sharon Hansen discovered the more than 100-year long musical heritage of Milwaukee's School Sisters of St. Francis. The Milwaukee Choral Artists has recorded a compilation of that music, and continues to champion the work of the talented sister musicians of St. Joseph Convent. Verhaalen's music reflects her deep spirituality, mysticism, sensitivity, and love of life. She writes, "I was

familiar with only the lovely refrain, so I created the verses - both text and music. About a year ago I heard it "somewhere" and there were other verses.... now lost in space.... My original was a cappella, but my publisher, Santa Barbara Music Press, asked for an accompaniment, which the published version includes." Verhaalen's WADE IN THE WATER has become one of MCA's signature pieces.

Wade in the water, wade in the water, children,  
Wade in the water, God's gonna trouble the water.  
It was at the temple of Bethseda, in the city of Jerusalem,  
that a pool there knew the presence of the Lord  
when an angel came down. Wade in the water...  
Wade in the water, wade in the water, children,  
Wade in the water, God's gonna trouble the water.  
The blind and lame were waiting, were waiting for the waters to move,  
for the first one into the water  
would be healed of every wound.  
Wade in the water, wade in the water, children,  
Wade in the water, God's gonna trouble the water.  
O Lord, let me enter the water;  
Let me feel your healing love.  
Let your angel of mercy touch me,  
And wash my sin away.  
Wade in the water, wade in the water, children,  
Wade in the water, God's gonna trouble the water.

#### **14. HOW CAN I KEEP FROM SINGING (2007)**

**David Bridges**

##### **Poetry by Robert Lowry**

David Bridges (our second "Volunteer") is an Adjunct Professor of General Music Education at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro. He has composed music on commission for the Tennessee Symphony Orchestra, The Murfreesboro Youth Orchestra, Belle Voci, Nashville Chamber Singers, Belmont University Chamber Singers, Stones River Chamber Players, Nashville Children's Choir and others. Dr. Bridges has had more than 100 of his compositions for choir, handbells, and instruments published and recorded by national firms and labels.

The origins and genesis of HOW CAN I KEEP FROM SINGING invokes a valuable life lesson; "Be careful what you say about someone, because they might be sitting right in front of you!" In 1997, Sharon was guest clinician at the Tennessee Choral Directors' Association Summer Convention, presenting four pieces and describing her method for working on them. One of the selections was an Early American Folk Hymn, "Bow Down Low." She was extolling the virtues of the composition, the sensitivity of the composer, and the wonderful marriage of word and music – and gushed that she wished that she knew the composer. From the back of the room came the words – "Well, now you do," and Dr. David Bridges stood up and introduced himself! Ever since that time, Sharon and Dr. Bridges have been professional colleagues, even working together at the Tennessee Arts Academy in Nashville. In setting the beautiful

hymn text, "HOW CAN I KEEP FROM SINGING," David Bridges sensitively captures Robert Lowry's exquisite poetry.

My life flows on in endless song;  
Above earth's lamentation  
I hear the sweet though far off hymn  
That hails a new creation:  
Through all the tumult and the strife  
I hear the music ringing;  
It finds an echo in my soul—  
How can I keep from singing?  
What though my joys and comforts die?  
The Lord my Savior liveth;  
What though the darkness gather round!  
Songs in the night He giveth:  
No storm can shake my inmost calm  
While to that refuge clinging;  
Since Christ is Lord of Heav'n and earth,  
How can I keep from singing?  
I lift mine eyes; the cloud grows thin; I see the blue above it;  
And day by day this pathway smoothes  
Since first I learned to love it:  
The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart,  
A fountain ever springing:  
All things are mine since I am His—  
How can I keep from singing?