

# hitting the high Notes

A Newsletter From  WILLIAMSPORT  
CIVIC CHORUS

Volume 18, No. 3 Mar., 2016  
Barbara Hemmendinger, editor

## A Must See: Jenkins' Japanese Fusion "Requiem" and Dance

The Williamsport Civic Chorus will perform Sir Karl Jenkins' *Requiem* on Sunday, April 24, 2016, 3 pm, in the Williamsport Area High School auditorium, the first time this piece has come to northcentral Pennsylvania.

Jenkins is a Welsh composer whose classical and contemporary works have met with great acclaim in both the United Kingdom and abroad. His *Requiem* is a modern work (2005), rich in melody and respectful of the great choral traditions of the past. It is also a work of our time with its hip-hop rhythms and inclusive, multi-cultural influences, especially those from the Orient.

In addition to programming this thoroughly engaging music,



Music Director Michael Connor has commissioned original choreography from Jaclyn Gailit-Lutz,

which has made the piece even more evocative as her Turning

(Continued on page 4)

## Our guest shakuhachi flautist has disciplined hands and mind

We are fortunate to have Nora Nohraku Suggs playing the shakuhachi flute in our upcoming concert. Zen Buddhist monks first developed shakuhachi music exclusively as a tool to seek spiritual enlightenment. Though simple in design, its flute is considered to be one of the most difficult instruments to play. It can take months just to produce a resonant tone and decades to master the many subtle and complex techniques that give the music its special sound.

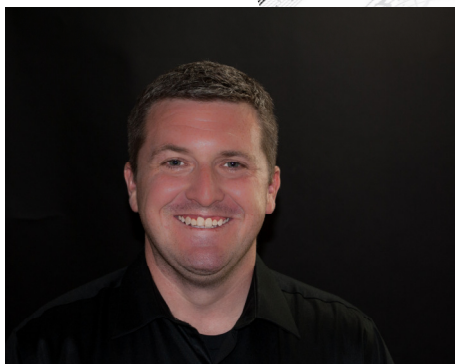
Dr. Suggs is a graduate of Houston's Rice University and the Baylor College of Medicine, with extensive private education in music and degrees in biology, English literature, medicine, and surgery. A global performer, she is now active as a teacher, recitalist, and chamber musician in Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley where she directs the chamber music ensemble SATORI, and also performs and records with the Fairfield Duo, a classical guitar and flute duo,

She has served on the music faculties at Moravian College and the Music School of the Lehigh Valley, and she currently hosts a large private studio.

Dr. Suggs studies shakuhachi with *Dai-Shihan* James Nyoraku Schlefer. She received her *Jun Shihan* shakuhachi accreditation from his New York City *Kyo-Shin-An* dojo and her *Shihan* from the studio of *Dai-Shihan* Kurahashi Yoshio II in Kyoto, Japan. 🎵



## Know the Score



**Michael Connor**

Karl Jenkins is quite possibly the best-kept secret in classical music. In 2004, he was the top-selling living composer of this genre in the United Kingdom, and current global sales of his uniquely styled choral works reach into the millions.

Jenkins defies categorization. His music combines different designs, often collecting Western classical attitudes through arrangement, world or cultural vocals, effervescent percussion, and the use a custom-created, phonetic sound. He views this diverse approach as more fusion than classical. Jenkins devotes little time worrying about music criticism, because he senses that the critics have not "crossed the boundaries I've crossed," and he desires his music to be considered not within the limitations of something else, but as something fresh, something unforeseen, which is frequently just what happens.

In his *Requiem*, Jenkins takes the established shape of a requiem and remolds it textually and melodiously. He slants this "song of death" by fruitfully merging two differing viewpoints--Latin text embodying the West, and the Japanese haiku

characterizing the East. Haiku enthusiasts are likely to find haiku in unpredicted places, and in the *Requiem* by Karl Jenkins, a celebrated Welsh classical composer, it might at first seem improbable. It is actually amazing that no prior composer had apparently conspired to integrate Japanese mortality poems (*jisei*) with the requiem musical form, a mass for the dead. Nevertheless, this is just what Jenkins accomplished, and with much sensation. In an exciting, pleasing, and at times robust requiem, Jenkins offers five death haiku set in lush musical backgrounds, sprinkled with traditional Latin movements. The haiku are resonated, in Japanese, by females. This voicing makes it easy to distinguish the haiku during the work, and it highlights what comes across as a thoughtful feminine quality to the poems themselves. Each poem is sung numerous times, with sometimes drone-like variants, and frequently with a shakuhachi flute countermelody. The haiku portions make up 18 of the *Requiem's* 55 minutes, and they are largely among the composition's more private sections. The five haiku are accredited to Banzan, Isshō, Kaga-no-Chiyo, Hokusai, and, Gozan, and the printed English interpretations appear to be acquired from Yoel Hoffmann's *Japanese Death Poems* (Boston: Tuttle, 1986). Hoffmann, however, is not credited for the translations.

The *Requiem* includes use of taiko drums, harp (especially beautiful in "In Paradisum," which closes the *Requiem*), and, as Jenkins says in his liner notes, "even a hip-hop rhythm in the *Dies Irae*!" Our audience will experience all this uniqueness and more.

May I also take this opportunity to thank all the members of the Williamsport Civic Chorus who work

meticulously to make our concerts run smoothly. In particular, special thanks our Board, whose members design and produce our publicity posters and program, procure orchestra members, obtain performance venues, make sure the choir has concert attire, fundraise in fun ways, organize and secure rehearsal spaces, and so on and so on. Williamsport is fortunate to have such an organization, and I am privileged and grateful for my inaugural year with the Chorus. Here is to many more! Bravisimo, WCC! 🎵



"Know the Score" is provided for the enjoyment of our readers by Michael Connor. Currently in his inaugural year as music director of the Williamsport Civic Chorus, Michael comes to us from the Harmonia Gesang Verein, where he is entering his third year as conductor. He holds a master's degree in education with music specialization from Bucknell University, serving as a graduate assistant to Dr. William Payn there. Connor currently teaches choral music at Central Mountain Middle School in Clinton County and has also appeared as a frequent vocal soloist with the Chorus and with numerous other performing organizations. Along with his wife Denise, Michael is a proud parent of Aidan, Gabrielle, and Liam.

The Williamsport Civic Chorus receives state arts funding support through a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

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[williamsportcivicchorus.org](http://williamsportcivicchorus.org)



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## 72<sup>nd</sup> SEASON

**Regional Premiere:**  
**Karl Jenkins' *Requiem***

**Sunday, Apr. 24, 2016**  
**3 pm**

**Williamsport Area High School**  
**Auditorium**



Turning Points School of Ballet

## Looking Ahead to 2016-17

**Saturday & Sunday, Nov. 12-13: Veterans' Salute** — in Lock Haven and Williamsport, we honor those who served.

**Sunday, Feb. 15, 2017: The Body Electric** — there are many connections between choral music and athletics.

**Sunday, May 7, 2017: A Collaboration with the Uptown Music Collective** — celebrating our diverse community and diverse genres.



**Elise Mark**, soprano, originally from Tampa, Florida, has performed around the globe. She holds a bachelor of music in vocal performance from the University of Florida, and a master's in music for vocal performance from Temple University. She has been featured in many operatic roles including with the New York Lyric Opera at Carnegie Hall, and she will be performing the role of Adele in *Die Fledermaus* this August with the Pennsylvania Lyric Opera.



**Sara Phinney Kelley**, mezzo-soprano, performs as a soloist with choirs around the country. She is currently a member of the Susquehanna Valley Chorale under Director William Payn. A voice student of Richard Kennedy, Sara was also the vocalist for the State College-based Celtic band Callanish, with whom she made three recordings. She lives in Lewisburg with her husband and daughter, serving as the religious educator for the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Susquehanna Valley.



**Joanna Rees**, alto, holds a bachelor of arts degree from Covenant College in Georgia and has returned to her *alma mater*, Northumberland Christian School, where she currently teaches high school math and accompanies the choir. She has performed as a soloist for the Susquehanna Valley Chorale under the direction of William Payn, the Williamsport Chamber Choir under the direction of Kent Weaver, and the Lycoming Baroque Choir under the direction of Christopher Jackson.



**Aidan Connor**, boy soprano, is in 5<sup>th</sup> grade at McCall Middle School, where he is a member of the choir and a tuba player in the band. Aidan has been seen in Montoursville Area High School's productions of *Shrek the Musical* (Little Shrek) and *Pippin* (Theo), and in CTL's Sprouts' production of *Let Your Hair Down Rapunzel* (King Furaday).



**WILLIAMSPORT  
CIVIC CHORUS**

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REGIONAL PREMIERE:

"REQUIEM" by Karl Jenkins

Sunday, Apr. 24, 3 pm

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



 **WILLIAMSPORT CIVIC CHORUS NEWSLETTER** 

"The Williamsport Civic Chorus is an open community of singers dedicated to making fine music accessible to all through education, participation, and inspiration."

*(Continued from page 1)*

Pointe School of Ballet dancers perform alongside the singers. As the owner of that studio for the past 11 years, Ms. Gailit-Lutz commented that her choreographic vision began to resonate from heart and soul as soon as she heard the Jenkins' score. Nonetheless, the talent, creativity, and open-mindedness of her students are further sources of inspiration.

In addition to dance, Mr. Connor has slated renowned vocal

soloists (see insert on page 3) and orchestral accompaniment that notably includes Dr. Nora Suggs from the Lehigh Valley on shakuhachi flute, Urie Kline on taiko drum, and Mikela Hoffman playing the harp. This performance is a gem that will delight people of all ages and tastes in music.

Tickets may be purchased at The Otto Book Store, R.M. Sides Family Music Center, and at the door. As always, children ages 12 and under will be admitted free. 