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Our name is pronounced: “**Can-TAME-us**”  
(Latin for “Let us sing”)

**For Timely Release prior to April 28 & 29 Concerts**



**CANTEMUS**

Small Chorus. Grand Sound.

**Cantemus Concerts Explore “Unseen Worlds,” with  
“Mystical” Works by Britten, Holst, di Lasso, Hovland and Perera**

Music Director Jane Ring Frank will lead her second concert with the 38-voice Cantemus Chamber Chorus on the last weekend of April, when she conducts “Unseen Worlds: Voices of the Mystics.” Frank, who joined the group last September, is best known in Boston as the Founder/Artistic Director of Boston Secession, a critically acclaimed, 25-voice professional chorus that broke musical barriers from 1996-2010. This will be keyboardist Jeffrey Mead’s first appearance with Cantemus, accompanying on piano and organ.

“Having spent one concert period with this wonderful group of singers,” Jane Ring Frank said, “I decided to challenge them a bit more this spring with a magical program of works that offer a musical glimpse into that mystery of all mysteries: mysticism.”

The centerpiece, she said, will be Benjamin Britten’s haunting “Rejoice in the Lamb,” which is “one of the best-loved works in the choral canon.” Other works include Group 1 of Gustav Holst’s rousing “Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda,” three movements from Orlando di Lasso’s “Sibylline Prophecies,” and Egil Hovland’s riveting “Saul.” Contemporary Boston composer Ronald Perera’s beautiful “Laudato sie, mi signore,” based on a prayer by the much-loved eccentric mystic Saint Francis of Assissi, rounds out the program.

Why a concert dedicated to “mysticism”? Director Frank explained: “In a Newsweek article (April 13, 1998), 47 percent of Christians said they had personally experienced the Holy Spirit. What, exactly, did they experience? We can ask, did Saint John of the Cross suffer severe depression? Was Saint Teresa psychotic? Could chloroform and mescaline be responsible for mystical altered states? Perhaps, in the end, it is more about the effects of these experiences than the stimuli.”

Frank cited famed psychologist William James, who wrote that the mystical state is defined by four determining qualities: awe; insight; fleeting time periods; and union with God or an ideal. It may also be accompanied by experiences of ecstasy, levitation, visions, and power to read human hearts and to heal, James wrote. Mysticism occurs on some level in most, if not all, of the world’s religions.

“The music we offer you in ‘Unseen Worlds,’” Frank said, “is a reflection of these experiences – mystical texts, thoughts, and principles set to music. This music is about life on the surface – and life below the surface. We will give the audience a wide spectrum of possibilities through choral color, sound and idea. My hope is that with our performance, the audience will have an opportunity to be moved and transformed, because for both the performer and the listener, this music has the capacity to, in essence, rearrange the way we see the world.”

The highlight of the program is Benjamin Britten’s “Rejoice in the Lamb.” The text is based on a poem of the same name written in the mid-18th century by English scholar and poet Christopher Smart (1722-71) while he was confined in a madhouse, beset by debt, delusions and alcoholism. “Whatever the reason for his confinement, and whatever the cause of his illness,” Frank writes in her program notes, “this text remains the most extraordinary and mystical poem written during the 18th century, and the most eloquent of testaments to the creative and spiritual potential of madness.”

She continued, “In the 10 short sections that Britten selected from the poem, Smart summons every known bird, animal, fish and insect, as well as most of the named figures from the Old Testament, to associate with him in his praise of God. The quiet and ecstatic Hallelujah that follows is a haunting moment filled with presence and power. Smart gives us his reason for the entire poem of praise: ‘For at that time malignity ceases, and the devils themselves are at peace.’ Britten responds to Smart’s short respite from madness with a repetition of his rapturous Hallelujah. The whole structure of ‘Rejoice in the Lamb’ is a massive substitute for what cannot be otherwise spoken, written or understood: the name of God,” Frank concluded.

Soloists Stephen W. Cole and Mary Sullivan will join Cantemus for this work.

Cantemus’ “Unseen Worlds” program also includes three of Gustav Holst’s famous “Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda,” written during the English composer’s “Sanskrit” period,

when he made his own translations of Indian religious literature and poetry. The works on this program, written between 1908 and 1910, are based on 3- to 4,000-year-old sacred Hindu prayers, known as the Vedas, still recited today. The Rig Veda are mystical, mythological and poetical accounts of the origin of the world, hymns praising the gods, and ancient prayers for life. Cantemus will sing the primitivistic “Battle Hymn,” then “To the Unknown God,” which builds to a huge climax over martial rhythms. The set concludes with a “Funeral Hymn,” which acknowledges the finality of death, while urging those left behind to embrace life.

Orlando di Lasso’s “Prophetiae Sibyllarum” (or “Sibylline Prophecies”), composed around 1560, are based on cryptic half-pagan, half-Christian poems written by a 5th-century B.C. prophetess, or “sibyl.” In motet composition, di Lasso combines dazzling vocal textures, imitation, voice pairing, harmonic clarity and solidity. Cantemus will perform the colorful prologue and the Persian and Libyan Sibyls. In its chromaticism, the music is an attempt to produce magic – a musical form of alchemy. “Now if it is true – di Lasso’s intention to evoke alchemical transformation – the music will actually be magic itself,” Frank grinned.

In his stirring work *Saul*, contemporary Norwegian composer Egil Hovland presents a haunting and piercing vision of the moment when Saul, at the peak of his destruction and persecution of Christ’s followers, hears what he believes is God’s voice asking, “Why do you persecute me?” Saul immediately changes his name to Paul and joins the Church as an apostle, spreading Jesus’ teachings throughout the known world. Hovland gives the chorus the voice of an impassioned God, while a narrator maintains the biblical thread.

Boston composer Ronald Perera is known for his settings of texts by authors as diverse as Dickinson, Joyce, Shakespeare, Updike and Francis of Assisi. The work Cantemus will sing, “Laudato sie, mi signore,” a movement from his dramatic cantata *Canticle of the Sun*, sets a fragment from Saint Francis’ beautiful, triumphant and most famous canticle.

“Unseen Worlds” marks keyboardist Jeffrey Mead’s first appearance with Cantemus. Mead, who resides in Melrose, is organist at the First Congregational Church in Winchester, MA. He has applied his organ, harpsichord and piano skills as church music director and

*Cantemus “Unseen Worlds: Voices of the Mystics” page 4*

organist, recitalist, chamber musician, and orchestra member. Mead holds degrees in Organ Performance and Classical Civilization from Oberlin College and Conservatory, and a Master’s degree from Westminster Choir College, with post-graduate studies at the New England Conservatory and the North German Organ Academy in Bremen, Germany.

Performances of “Unseen Worlds: Voices of the Mystics” will be on Saturday, April 28 at 7:30 p.m., at Christ Church of Hamilton-Wenham, 149 Asbury Street, Hamilton; and on Sunday, April 29 at 4:00 p.m. at St. Paul’s Church, 166 High Street, Newburyport. Regular audience members should note that the Saturday concert is once again being held at Christ Church in Hamilton, where the group has performed many times over the years. Directions are posted on the Cantemus.org website.

Tickets are available online at <http://www.mktix.com/ccc>, or fans can save \$2 on advance tickets purchased at The Book Rack in Newburyport (as of April 14), Nazir’s of Wenham, Norris Gallery / MiXtMedia in Ipswich, the Book Shop of Beverly Farms, Toad Hall in Rockport and Gloucester Music. Tickets at the door are \$20 for adults, \$17 for seniors. Admission is free for students 21 and under. For details, visit [www.cantemus.org](http://www.cantemus.org), or phone 1-888-CHORUS 1.

Cantemus gratefully acknowledges funding support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the Newburyport and West Newbury Cultural Councils.

Cantemus is a member of the Greater Boston Choral Consortium, a cooperative association of diverse choral groups in Boston and the surrounding areas.

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**FYI:**

**Cantemus’ 40 members come from 18 communities on the North Shore + Cambridge and New Hampshire:**

**Cambridge:** Music Director Jane Ring Frank. **Manchester-by-the-Sea:** Isabella Bates.

**Beverly:** Dick Church, Bill Gelwick, Paul Kelly, Pamela Morris, Richard Salandrea, Rachel

Small. **Byfield:** Doug Guy. **Essex:** Betsy Vicksell. **Gloucester:** Ed Mowrey. **Hamilton:** Marcy

Homer. **Haverhill:** Bill Holloway. **Ipswich:** Gary Freeman, Lisa Freeman, Hugh McCall, Anne Maguire, Abigail Miller, Dorothy Monnelly, Nat Pulsifer, Sr. Pat Rolinger, Debby Twining.

**Lynnfield:** Priscilla March. **Melrose:** Bill Dowdall, accompanist Jeffrey Mead. **Newbury:**

Nancy Weinberg. **Newburyport:** Richard Blumensheid, Claire Cayot, Gary Lubarsky. **Peabody:**

Marjorie Short. **Rockport:** Marcia Siegel. **Shirley:** Cheryl Hayden. **South Hamilton:** Peggy

Russell. **Wenham:** Jamie Cabot, David Geikie, Betsy Lebel, Charlie Tyson. **West Newbury:**

Michael Fosburg, Susan Nash. **Durham, NH:** Sydney van Asselt. ##

*Shorter “calendar” item follows >>>>*

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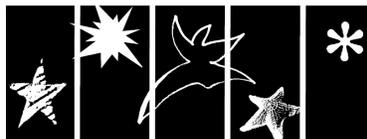
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