



CREATION

Dan Forrest

Sunday, May 17, 2026 | 7:00 p.m.

Athens First United Methodist Church

THIS CONCERT IS GIVENTO THE GLORY OF GOD
and in honor of Sandy and Rick Bostelman
for 80 wonderful years of collective kindness
and spirit of sharing by Blaine Bostelman.



CREATION

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This work is a musical journey — an evocative exploration of wonder, beauty, and the divine artistry embedded in all life. From the mysterious hush before time to the intricate rhythms of the natural world and the exuberance of humanity, *Creation* invites us into a vision of unity, reverence, and sacred interconnectedness where every being, moment, and breath is part of a larger, transcendent whole.

PROGRAM NOTES AND TEXTS

I. INTROIT

Veni, creator Spiritus	<i>Come, Creator Spirit,</i>
Mentes tuorum visita,	<i>Visit the souls of your devoted,</i>
Imple superna gratia	<i>With your divine grace fill</i>
Quae tu creasti pectora.	<i>The hearts which you have created.</i>

(from Veni, creator Spiritus, ancient liturgy)

Introit ushers the listener into a mysterious world before the dawn of time, as chants of *Veni, Creator Spiritus* arise and are mixed with the introduction of the key musical themes for the entire work.

II. THE DANCE BEFORE TIME

Vox Domini	<i>The voice of the Lord</i>
Dominus super aquas.	<i>Lord over the waters.</i>
In principio Deus...	<i>In the beginning, God...</i>

(from Psalm 29 and Genesis 1)

The Dance Before Time begins without pause, with the “spirit moving upon the face of the waters.” A soprano solo begins the narrative, “in principio Deus,” amidst swirls of themes from this movement and the previous one, and creative energy builds, waiting to be unleashed.

III. THE LION SINGS

...Creavit.	...created.
Credo in unum Deum	<i>I believe in one God,</i>
Patrem omnipotentem,	<i>The Father almighty,</i>
factorem coeli et terrae,	<i>maker of heaven and earth,</i>
Visibilium omnium	<i>of all things visible</i>
et invisibilium	<i>and invisible.</i>
<i>(from Genesis 1 and Credo, ancient liturgy)</i>	

The Lion Sings alludes to a well-known Lion in famous English children's literature, Aslan of *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis, who sang a world into existence. A well-read listener will hear every musical detail from that story happening, from the baritone soloist singing the Lion's song, to the sun bursting into light, the unfurling of all green things, and eventually all animals coming to life in a raucous barndance celebrating the joy of all creation.

We then encounter several tableaux representing the days of creation; each sets a Scriptural or liturgical text as commentary on the beauty of that part of creation, inspired by various experiences from the composer's travels.

IV. LIGHT

Ego sum lux mundi,	<i>I am the light of the world,</i>
Ego sum lumen vitae.	<i>I am the light of life.</i>
Qui sequitur me	<i>Who follows me</i>
sed habebit lumen vitae.	<i>shall have the light of life.</i>
<i>(from John 8)</i>	

Refrain

Et vidit Deus	<i>And God saw the</i>
[lumen/caelum/astra/ creaturas/opus],	<i>[light/sky/stars/ /creatures/work],</i>
quod opus esset bonum.	<i>that the work was good.</i>
Tota pulchra,	<i>Wholly beautiful are you,</i>
tota es,	<i>entirely,</i>
et macula non est in te.	<i>and there is no stain in you.</i>
Alleluia.	<i>Alleluia.</i>
<i>(from Genesis 1 and Tota Pulchra Es, ancient liturgy/Song of Solomon 4)</i>	

Light, inspired by countless sunrises, sets "I am the light of the world; who follows me shall have the light of life" as an exuberant dance in asymmetrical meter.

The initial melody from the Introit then returns as a coda with new text combining "...and God saw that it was good" from Genesis with words from the Song of Solomon – a love song to an unspoiled creation: "wholly beautiful are you, entirely, and there is no stain in you." This **refrain** is then heard after each day of creation, transformed into that movement's unique musical style.

V. SKY

Quoniam videbo
caelos tuos...
Caeli enarrant
gloriam Dei.
Opus manus eius
adnuntiat firmamentum.
(from Psalms 8 and 19)

*When I behold
your heavens...
the heavens are telling
the glory of God.
The firmament declares
the work of his hands.*

Refrain

Sky is inspired by the expanse of the open sky. As the first tribute to Haydn's beloved oratorio, *Creation* (1798), melodic themes from his *The Heavens Are Telling* are interwoven (in slow motion) with modern harmonization and new material throughout this movement.

VI. THE GARDEN

Vinea mea electa,
ego to plantavi.
Locus iste a Deo factus est,
inaestimabile sacramentum;
irreprehensibilis est.
(from Vinea me electa and Locus Iste, ancient liturgies)

*My chosen vineyard,
I planted you.
This place was made by God,
a priceless holy place;
it is without fault.*

Refrain

The Garden is an expression of the composer's love of various gardens in the world, from New York (Central Park) to Singapore (Botanical Gardens) to his own #forrestgardens. This setting reimagines the meaning of sacred texts to express the priceless beauty of green spaces; the *Locus Iste* here refers not to a cathedral, but to the sacred sanctuary of a garden. The music slowly twines around itself, almost like time-lapse photography of plants unfolding shoots and leaves.

VII. MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua. Hosanna in excelsis. (from <i>Sanctus</i> , ancient liturgy)	<i>Heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Hosanna in the highest.</i>
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Refrain

The Music of the Spheres invokes the concept of “musica universalis” - the “music of the heavens” that the ancients believed was created by the orderly and proportional motion of the stars and planets in space, as well as “vox caelestic” - the voice of the heavens” that speaks in the night sky. The *Sanctus* text is set here as a four-part mensuration canon, where each melodic subject entrance is twice as slow as the previous one; eventually we hear the same melodic line at four different speeds simultaneously, picturing the clock-like precision of the stars and planets moving through space.

VIII. WINGS

Oh that I had wings like a dove- wings of the morning- then I would fly.
(from *Psalms 55, 139*)

Wings represents the “flying creatures” portion of day five, with text from the Psalms. The music begins delicately, like a newly hatched butterfly first unfolding its wings and fanning them, then gradually builds to the moment where it bursts into flight and is carried on the wind until it disappears from sight. The main melodic ostinato in the accompaniment of this movement is an example of *augenmusik*- music for the eyes- where the musical page looks like the ideas being described: its instrumental melodic contour outlines the line-drawn shape of a bird in flight.

IX. DEEP BLUE

Vidi aquam egredientem, et omnes ad quos pervenit aqua ista salvi facti sunt, et dicent, alleluia! (from <i>Vidi Aquam</i> , ancient liturgy)	I saw water flowing, and all to whom this water came were saved, and shall say Alleluia!
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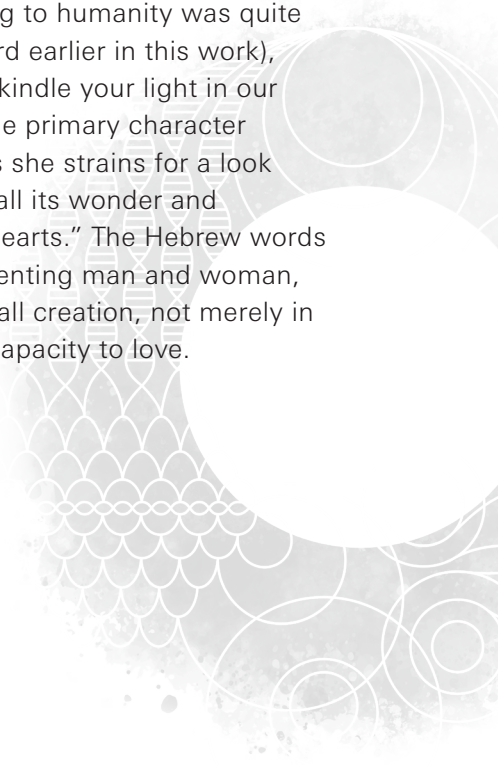
Refrain

Deep Blue then turns to the “deep sea” portion of day five, with liturgical text “I saw water flowing...” The mysteries of the deep are invoked with low thick textures and constantly flowing water and waves. Eventually, “Alleluias” arise from the depths, like a whale breaching the surface of the ocean.

X. ISH ISHAH

Digitus Dei dexterae,	<i>Finger of God’s right hand,</i>
Tu rite	<i>You are the one</i>
promissum Patris.	<i>duly promised by the Father.</i>
Accende lumen sensibus,	<i>Enkindle your light in our minds,</i>
Infunde amorem cordibus.	<i>Infuse love in our hearts.</i>
<i>(from Veni, Creator Spiritus, ancient liturgy)</i>	

Ish Ishah was inspired by Michelangelo’s famous painting, *The Creation of Adam* (seen in this program). Its finger of God reaching to humanity was quite possibly inspired by the *Veni Creator Spiritus* text (heard earlier in this work), in the stanza sung here: “Finger of God’s right hand...kindle your light in our minds, infuse love in our hearts.” Many believe that the primary character visible on God’s arm in the painting is Eve; her face as she strains for a look at Adam reflects the first stirring of human love, with all its wonder and complexity – the moment God “infuses love into our hearts.” The Hebrew words *Ish Ishah* are taken from the Genesis narrative, representing man and woman, and this setting presents humanity as the pinnacle of all creation, not merely in their intellect or the beauty of their form, but in their capacity to love.



XI. DO IT AGAIN

If something goes on endlessly repeating itself,
it might feel like mere clockwork.

We might feel that if the universe was personal, it would vary -
that if the sun were alive, it would dance.

But perhaps...the sun rises every morning because he never gets
tired of rising.

His routine might be due not to lifelessness, but to a rush of life.

Children, with their endless energy, always want things repeated
and unchanged...they always say, "Do it again."

What if God has this eternal vitality, and is strong enough to exult in
repetition:

Perhaps God says every morning, "Do it again" to the sun;
and every evening, "Do it again" to the moon,
...but has never gotten tired of it.

It may not be necessity that makes all daisies alike;
perhaps God makes every daisy, one at a time,
because he has never grown tired of making them.

This grand show is eternal.
It is always sunrise somewhere;
a shower is forever falling;
vapor is ever rising.
Eternal sunrise,
eternal sunset,
eternal dawn and gloaming,
on sea and continents and islands,
each in its turn,
as this round earth rolls.

*Adapted from G.K. Chesterton and John Muir
(used by permission)*

Do It Again is a musical underscore for narration from two of the composer's favorite passages of writing about this earth: one from English philosopher G. K. Chesterton and one from the environmental advocate John Muir. The music reprises a theme introduced in the Introit but not heard again until now, thus musically picturing the sense of "do it again."

XII. BOUNDLESS

Laudate, luces,

Laudate, caela,

Laudate, horti et ast'res!

Laudate, creaturae,

Laudate, filii!

Praise him, lights,

Praise him, skies,

Praise him, gardens and stars!

Praise him, creatures,

Praise him, children!

Refrain

Boundless unleashes a torrent of musical themes, all piling on top of each other, in a finale celebrating the diversity yet wholeness of all creation. The title refers both to the limitless joy found within the movement as well as the seemingly limitless number of themes (from within this work and beyond) which all tumble together. Amidst all this celebration, all possible themes and subjects are recapitulated in a celebration whose joy can only be described as *boundless*.

Dan Forrest

is Composer-in-Residence at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina. Born in 1978, Dr. Forrest is known as one of America's leading composers. He received his doctorate in composition from the University of Kansas and holds a masters in piano performance. He enjoys spending time with his wife and three kids, and garden landscaping.



JASMINE HABERSHAM, SOPRANO

American soprano **Jasmine Habersham** is a versatile and dynamic performing artist whose voice has been hailed as “exquisite” by Broadway World and possessing a “well controlled, silvery tone [with] an alluring presence” by Opera Today. In the 2025-2026 season, Ms. Habersham is pleased to return to Lyric Opera of Chicago for *Carmina Burana* under the baton of Mo. Enrique Mazzola, following her Chicago début as Ashley in Mazzoli/Vavrek’s *The Listeners*, dubbed a “standout performance” by Chicago’s *Splash Magazine*. Also this season, she débuts as Musetta at Austin Opera,

returns to Dallas Symphony for their wildly popular Holiday Pops program, returns to Rochester Philharmonic for Mahler’s *Fourth Symphony*, débuts with Phoenix Symphony as featured soloist in their Holiday Pops program, and gives recitals at the Warner-Robbins Community Concert Association, Fabian Concert Series, and Macon Concert Association.

Ms. Habersham’s 2024-2025 season saw her return to Minnesota Opera as Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette*, which is quickly becoming one of her signature roles. With Chicago Opera Theatre, she originated the lead role of Claudette Colvin in the world premiere of Barnes/Mouton’s *She Who Dared* to unanimous acclaim. *The Chicago Tribune* raved, “Habersham’s explosive, easily combustible soprano captures Colvin’s fire,” while *Musical America* observed, “Habersham’s clarion soprano perfectly captured the girl’s fiery impatience for righteous battle... Mouton also gives Claudette a touching aria and Habersham sang it with ruefully soft edge.” Additionally, she shone as Adina in *L’elisir d’amore* with Florida Grand Opera, and made several débuts on the concert stage - with Kansas City Symphony as soprano soloist in Handel’s *Messiah*, with Savannah Philharmonic in Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony*, with Fort Worth Symphony in their Holiday Concert, with Alabama Symphony Orchestra in *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, and with Charleston Opera Theatre for their *Serenata Romantica* program.

Recent seasons include leading roles with Opera San Jose, The Atlanta Opera, Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, Nashville Opera, Central City Opera, Opera North (UK), Madison Opera, Minnesota Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Utah Opera, Seattle Opera, Berkshire Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Cincinnati Opera, Kentucky Opera, Cincinnati Opera Fusion, and Utah Festival Opera. Additionally, she was seen in concert with multiple orchestras including Fresno Philharmonic, Baltimore Symphony, Virginia Symphony Orchestra, Syracuse Orchestra, Rochester Philharmonic, Dallas Symphony, and Mercer-Macon Symphony with festival appearances at The Glimmerglass Festival and the Phoenicia International Festival of the Voice.

A finalist in the Lotte Lenya Competition, Ms. Habersham has won numerous awards including 2nd Place in the 2018 Southeast Regional Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, The Strauss Award in the National Orpheus Competition, the John Alexander Memorial Award from University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and the Young Artist Guild Award from Central City Opera. Ms. Habersham trained at several esteemed young artists programs including The Glimmerglass Festival, Central City Opera, Kentucky Opera, and the Brevard Music Center. She received her Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Performance at Shorter College and her Master of Music and Artist Diploma from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.



ISAIAH FEKEN, BARITONE

Described by the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* as “Gifted with a powerful baritone and expressive features he utilizes well,” American baritone **Isaiah Feken** is a sought-after performer across the U.S. A regular performer of dramatic works, Isaiah has appeared with Central City Opera, Des Moines Metropolitan Opera, Opera Colorado, Des Moines Ballet, Crested Butte Music Festival, and Pittsburgh Festival Opera. This summer Isaiah will return to Central City for his fourth season, performing in *The Ballad of Baby Doe* and *Masterclass*. Equally active as a soloist, Isaiah’s recent performance credits include Elijah in *Elijah* with Western Carolina University, Mahler’s *Songs of a Wayfarer* with Blue Ridge Orchestra, and the baritone soloist in Handel’s *Messiah* with Athens FUMC in 2024.

Isaiah currently serves as an Assistant Professor of Voice at Western Carolina University where he recently directed the world premiere of *Shelton Laurel*, an opera based on the works of award-winning author Ron Rash. Before coming to WCU, Isaiah was the Artistic Director/Principal Conductor of Drake Opera Theatre in Des Moines, IA. Isaiah is also the director of the Haywood Choral Society based in Waynesville, NC and a member of Blue Ridge Consort, a choral ensemble that performs across western North Carolina. Isaiah has been the recipient of Central City Opera’s Robert Orth Award, Opera Colorado’s Harold Noblom Award, and the Denver Lyric Opera Guild’s Mary Wise Memorial Award. A native of Tulsa, Oklahoma, Isaiah received his Bachelor’s from the University of Tulsa, later earning his Master’s and Doctorate from the University of Georgia, where he studied under Frederick Burchinal.

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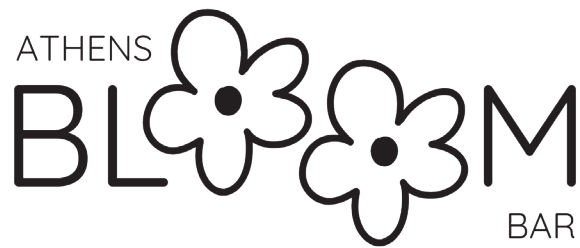
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3:00 P.M.

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