



SEWANEE
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH

Nationally-renowned
choral ensemble Kinnara presents

PASSION



DAVID LANG
THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL PASSION

HEATHER GILLIGAN
SOUTHERN DISSONANCE:
PORTRAITS FOR A NEW SOUTH
(WORLD PREMIERE)

MONDAY, JANUARY 17, 2022
4 P.M. | ALL SAINTS' CHAPEL

KINNARA

J.D. Burnett, *artistic director*

ABOUT THE REPERTOIRE

In early 2020, Kinnara commissioned American composer Heather Gilligan to write an approximately 25 minute long multi-movement work, *Southern Dissonance: Portraits for a New South*, for four singers and percussion. Drawing texts from famous Georgian civil rights activists, including Martin Luther King Jr., Alice Walker, John Lewis, Jimmy Carter, and Stacey Abrams, with an opening text by Langston Hughes, this work compactly and impactfully comments on the social issues facing the current and new America.

Of the work, Gilligan writes “This work is about progress and persistence, about standing firm. Uniting texts by a variety of writers and political figures from the Civil Rights Movement to present day, it weaves together themes that are as relevant now as they were then. The song cycle begins and ends with the question of a dream deferred, offering a musical setting of the 1951 poem by Langston Hughes. It visits a re-working of the civil rights song, We Shall Not Be Moved, words that were sung on the Pettis Bridge in 1965 during the Selma-to-Montgomery March. Passages from Martin Luther King, Jr., John Lewis, Jimmy Carter, and Stacey Abrams explore issues of voter rights and the idea of standing one’s ground. Abrams points out the “loopholes for suppression” embedded in the voter-rights amendments; Lewis asks, “How long can we be patient?” and King reminds us that freedom is “in our hands” as we march toward justice. Carter wonders how we can rebuild trust in the institutions of our democracy, while Alice Walker offers a poetic recounting of the righteousness and justness of Carter himself, working to cure blindness while building houses for the poor, “speaking what to you is true.” Abrams reminds us, “You cannot have those things you refuse to dream of.” In the end, we return to the question, what happens to a dream deferred? And we hope that, with each struggle, with each fight, when we stand our ground, when we make measured progress while refusing to retreat, maybe we’ll come closer to realizing that dream.”

The work will be premiered in concert alongside David Lang’s Pulitzer Prize Award-winning composition, *the little match girl passion*, based on the 1845 Hans Christian Andersen story, “The Little Match Girl.” Influenced by Johann Sebastian Bach’s St Matthew Passion (1727), the work won the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2008. In 2019, writers of *The Guardian* ranked the *little match girl passion* the 15th greatest work of classical music since 2000, with Andrew Clements calling it “one of the most original vocal works of recent times. Extracts from Andersen’s story and from St Matthew’s gospel are interleaved with closely woven vocal writing, that is [...] often comfortingly tonal and hauntingly affecting.”

Kinnara performed *the little match girl passion* to two sold-out houses in Atlanta at the end of 2019 prior to the pandemic, noted as "breathtakingly beautiful" by *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*.

CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

Chelsea Helm, soprano
Wanda Yang Temko, alto
Cory Klose, tenor
Steven Berlanga, bass
Caleb Herron, percussion

KINNARA'S MISSION

Grounded in the belief that communal singing is inherently connective for singers and listeners, Kinnara crafts exemplary musical experiences that speak to the modern soul and creates space for professional ensemble work in America.

ABOUT KINNARA

Comprising some of the finest ensemble and solo singers in the country, Kinnara is one of the nation’s premier professional chamber choirs. Under the direction of J.D. Burnett, who also serves as associate director of choral activities at the University of Georgia, the choir performs a wide variety of standard choral repertoire from all eras.

For more information, visit kinnara.org.