



RAISING A SONG TO THE GOD OF LIFE

In response to the imminent closing of 82 parishes in the archdiocese of Boston, Ellen Oak has composed a new musical setting of the Te Deum. It will be performed and recorded on September 11, at the Jesuit Urban Center in Boston's South End, by musicians gathered from the wider metropolitan area. Some sing for the joy of singing, some for spiritual reasons, some are professional singers. There are practicing and former Catholics, other Christians, and people of varied religious traditions. All are joining together in this critical time to raise their voices and spirits in freedom, power, beauty, and community. People are welcome to sign on to participate until September 7. Send email to ellenoak@wisdomatplay.com.

ABOUT OAK'S SETTING OF THE TE DEUM

As the "re-configuration" of the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Boston proceeded this summer, Oak wanted to take all that she was feeling within and around her, and channel it into an act of Spirit, freedom and creativity. She decided to write a setting of the Te Deum, and to invite people to join their voices and spirits together to perform and record it.

The Te Deum is one of the most ancient Christian songs of praise. It is traditionally sung at first light on Sunday mornings, and on special occasions, to give thanks for some particular blessing. Oak chose to work with it at this time as a kind of kaddish practice: that right in the midst of death and grief the faithful claim for themselves, and proclaim with all creation, the goodness and saving love of God in an act of outrageous praise. God sings us into being, works justice, and bears new life. And we with God.

Oak's setting of the Te Deum layers five performing forces:

Schola singing the ancient chant of the Te Deum in Latin, with reconstructed proportional rhythm

Chorus singing a six-part round in English (Oak wrote the translation/paraphrase), with each line of the round sounding one section of the ancient Te Deum

Assembly singing one line as a musical "ground." This line is built by taking one measure from each line of the round

Organ providing harmonic support and improvisational flourish

Djembe drums providing rhythmic depth and strength to support processional singing

After 9/11 Oak will post an MP3 of the performance, and a PDF file of the score, on her website, www.wisdomatplay.com. It is her intention to offer this art for free as a resource of sung prayer in these challenging times. The piece can be performed and used in a variety of ways. Details will be on the website.

The text of the assembly's line, which grounds the whole piece, is this:

O, You holy, holy, holy Three-in-One! We, your body, risen Christ, we bless you, now and forever!

On the dedication page, Oak has written:

For the children, women, and men of the archdiocese of Boston

We are the body of the risen Christ.
O death, where is your victory?
O grave, where is your stinging?
All that we suffer we shall transform:
This body will rise up,
Rise up singing.

ABOUT ELLEN OAK

Ellen Oak (MM, MAR, Yale University) is a singer, conductor, composer, and liturgist. Oak teaches and leads worship in the Worship, Theology and the Arts, and the Faith, Health and Spirituality programs at Andover Newton Theological



School; and serves as minister of music at Our Lady Help of Christians Parish in West Concord, and at St. Isidore's in Stow. She has conducted the Boston Gay Men's Chorus and the Boston Women's Rainbow Chorus; and been Director of Music at Saint John's Seminary in Boston. Oak is currently doing research for a book on the history and future of the cantor in the American Catholic church; and creating a series of performances to explore the spiritual passion of a wide range of women. For more information, please visit www.wisdomatplay.com.

Contact Person:

Ellen Oak

14 Lincoln Street, Maynard, MA 01754

ellenoak@wisdomatplay.com

978.897.0495

Copyright © 2004-2006 Archdiocese of Boston; all rights reserved