

THE YEAR OF JUBILEE

Let all the nations know, to earth's remotest bound: The year of Jubilee is come!

GUEST ARTISTS:

Brianna J. Robinson, soprano
James T. Dargan, baritone and composer
Keidrick Roy, speaker

Central Square Congregational Church, Bridgewater
January 2, 2022, at 10am

PRELUDE - Songs for the People

Music by Rosephanye Powell
Words by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper
Performed by Brianna J. Robinson

WORDS OF WELCOME - Reverend Elizabeth Stotts

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN - Giver of All That Crowns Our Days

(written in response to the Emancipation Proclamation)

Words by Oliver Wendell Holmes
Tune: OLD 100TH, arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams

READING - excerpts from Frederick Douglass's Cooper Institute speech in response to the Emancipation Proclamation, and from "The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass"

Read by Keidrick Roy

HYMN - Blow Ye the Trumpet, Blow (a.k.a. The Jubilee)

Words by Charles Wesley
Tune: LENOX, by Lewis Edson
(as sung by Frederick Douglass on the evening of January 1, 1863)

OLD TESTAMENT READING - Exodus 15 (Song of Moses and Miriam)

Read by Brianna J. Robinson

HYMN - Sound the Loud Timbrel O'er Egypt's Dark Sea

(a.k.a. The Song of Miriam)
Words by Thomas Moore
Tune: AVISON, by Charles Avison
(also sung by Frederick Douglass on January 1, 1863)

READING - Psalm 137

*(as quoted by Frederick Douglass in "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?")
Read by James Dargan*

MUSICAL OFFERING - What to the Slave is the Fourth of July

Music by James T. Dargan
Words by Frederick Douglass
Performed by James Dargan

HYMN - God Speed The Year of Jubilee

Words by William Lloyd Garrison
Music by Walter Saul
(also quoted by Douglass in his July 4th speech)

READING - Leviticus 25

*(this is the passage from scripture where the concept of "the year of jubilee" originates)
Read by Reverend Elizabeth Stotts*

MUSICAL OFFERING - Freedom Reigns

Music arranged by Julia Scott Carey
*Featuring abolitionist lyrics to familiar patriotic songs, along with quotes from Frances
Ellen Watkins Harper, David Walker, William Lloyd Garrison, Harriet Beecher Stowe,
William Wells Brown, Charles Sumner, Sojourner Truth, and Frederick Douglass
Sung by Brianna J. Robinson and James Dargan
Narrated by Keidrick Roy*

SERMON - "Jubilee" in the Bible and in the Abolitionist Movement

Written and Delivered by Keidrick Roy

MUSIC OFFERING - All Things Return

Music by James T. Dargan
Words by Angelina Weld Grimké and Angelina Grimké Weld
*(featuring a letter which Grimké Weld wrote to William Lloyd Garrison, combined with
some poetry by Weld Grimké)
Sung by James Dargan, with Narration by Reverend Elizabeth Stotts*

READING - Boston Hymn by Ralph Waldo Emerson

*(read at the Grand Jubilee Concert in Boston's Music Hall, January 1, 1863)
Read by Keidrick Roy and Brianna J. Robinson*

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN - Trump of Glad Jubilee
Words by John Duncan
Tune: AMERICA (a.k.a. "My Country 'Tis of Thee")

MUSICAL OFFERING - Lincoln Portrait
Music by Aaron Copland
Words by Abraham Lincoln
Narrated by James Dargan

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN - Song of the Abolitionist
Words by William Lloyd Garrison
Tune: AULD LANG SYNE

MUSICAL BENEDICTION - from regular CSCC guest artist Bob Richards

BENEDICTION - Reverend Elizabeth Stotts

POSTLUDE - Songs for the People
Music by Mason Bynes
Words by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper
Performed by Brianna J. Robinson

TEXTS TO OUR MUSICAL SELECTIONS:

SONGS FOR THE PEOPLE by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, 1895

Let me make the songs for the people,
Songs for the old and young;
Songs to stir like a battle-cry
Wherever they are sung.

Not for the clashing of sabres,
For carnage nor for strife;
But songs to thrill the hearts of men
With more abundant life.

Let me make the songs for the weary,
Amid life's fever and fret,
Till hearts shall relax their tension,
And careworn brows forget.

Let me sing for little children,
Before their footsteps stray,
Sweet anthems of love and duty,
To float o'er life's highway.

I would sing for the poor and aged,
When shadows dim their sight;
Of the bright and restful mansions,
Where there shall be no night.

Our world, so worn and weary,
Needs music, pure and strong,
To hush the jangle and discords
Of sorrow, pain, and wrong.

Music to soothe all its sorrow,
Till war and crime shall cease;
And the hearts of men grown tender
Girdle the world with peace.

GIVER OF ALL THAT CROWNS OUR DAYS by Oliver Wendell Holmes, 1863

Giver of all that crowns our days,
With grateful hearts we sing thy praise;
Through deep and desert led by Thee,
Our promised land at last we see.

Ruler of Nations, judge our cause!
If we have kept thy holy laws,
The sons of Belial curse in vain
The day that rends the captive's chain.

Then, Father, lay thy healing hand
In mercy on our stricken land;
Lead all its wanderers to the fold,
And be their Shepherd as of old.

So shall one Nation's song ascend
To Thee, our Ruler, Father, Friend,
While Heaven's wide arch resounds again
With Peace on earth, good-will to men!

BLOW YE THE TRUMPET, BLOW by Charles Wesley, 1750

Blow ye the trumpet, blow!
The gladly solemn sound
let all the nations know,
to earth's remotest bound:

Refrain:
The year of jubilee is come;
return, ye ransomed sinners, home;
return, ye ransomed sinners, home.

Jesus, our great High Priest,
has full atonement made;
ye weary spirits, rest;
ye mournful souls, be glad: [Refrain]

Ye slaves of sin and hell,
your liberty receive;
and safe in Jesus dwell,
and blest in Jesus live: [Refrain]

SOUND THE LOUD TIMBREL by Thomas Moore, 1816

Sound the loud Timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea!
Jehovah has triumphed — his people are free.
Sing — for the pride of the Tyrant is broken,
His chariots, his horsemen, all splendid and brave--
How vain was their boast, for the Lord hath but spoken,
And chariots and horsemen are sunk in the wave.

Sound the loud Timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea;
Jehovah has triumphed — his people are free.

Praise to the Conqueror, praise to the Lord!
His word was our arrow, his breath was our sword —
Who shall return to tell Egypt the story
Of those she sent forth in the hour of her pride?
For the Lord hath looked out from his pillar of glory,
And all her brave thousands are dashed in the tide.
Sound the loud Timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea,
Jehovah has triumphed — his people are free!

WHAT TO THE SLAVE IS THE FOURTH OF JULY? by Frederick Douglass, 1852

What to the American slave is your 4th of July? What to the slave is your 4th of July? A day that reveals that your celebration is a sham, your national greatness, your sounds of rejoicing, your denouncing of tyrants, your shouts of liberty and equality, your prayers and hymns, sermons and thanksgivings, a mere fraud. A thin veil to cover up crimes that would disgrace a nation of SAVAGES. There is no nation on earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States at this very hour. This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn.

“By the rivers of Babylon, we sat down. We wept when we remembered Zion. For they that carried us away captive required, required of us a song, saying ‘sing us the songs of Zion.’ But how can we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?”

Would you have me argue that man is entitled to liberty? that he is rightful owner of his own body? How should I look, dividing and subdividing a discourse, to show that men have a natural right to freedom? speaking of it relatively and positively, negatively and affirmatively. To do so would be to make myself ridiculous: There is no one beneath the canopy of heaven who does not know slavery is wrong.

So I say, and let every man join in saying it,
“God speed the hour, the glorious hour
When none on earth shall exercise a lordly pow’r,
Until that year, day, hour arrive,
With head and heart and hand I’ll strive
To break the rod and rend the gyve,
The spoiler of his prey deprive.
And never from my chosen post
Whate’er the peril or the cost Be driv’n.
So witness heav’n, so witness heav’n, so witness heav’n!”

GOD SPEED THE YEAR OF JUBILEE by William Lloyd Garrison, 1845

God speed the year of jubilee,
The wide world o'er!
When from their galling chains set free,
Th' oppress'd shall vilely bend the knee,
And wear the yoke of tyranny
Like brutes no more.
That year will come, and freedom's reign,
To man his plundered rights again
Restore.

God speed the hour, the glorious hour,
When none on earth
Shall exercise a lordly power,
Nor in a tyrant's presence cower;
But to all manhood's stature tower,
By equal birth!
That hour will come, to each, to all,
And from his Prison-house, to thrall
Go forth.

Until that year, day, hour, arrive,
With head, and heart, and hand I'll strive,
To break the rod, and rend the gyve,
The spoiler of his prey deprive —
So witness Heaven!
And never from my chosen post,
Whate'er the peril or the cost,
Be driven.

FREEDOM REIGNS

Narrated (Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, 1857):

Could we trace the record of every human heart, the agitation of every immortal soul, perhaps we would find no man so imbrued and degraded that we could not trace the word liberty either written in living characters upon the soul or hidden away in some nook or corner of the heart. The law of liberty is the law of God, and is antecedent to all human legislation. It existed in the mind of the Deity when He hung the first world upon its orbit and gave it liberty to gather light from the central sun.

Sung (E.A. Atlee, 1844):

Oh say do you hear, at the dawn's early light,
The shrieks of those bondmen whose blood is now streaming,
From the merciless lash, while our banner in sight

With its stars, mocking freedom, is fitfully gleaming?
Do you see the backs bare?
Do you mark every score
Of the whip of the driver trace channels of gore?
And say, doth our star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave?

Narrated (David Walker, 1829):

America is more our country, than it is the whites — we have enriched it with our blood and tears. The greatest riches in America have arisen from our blood and tears: — and will they drive us from our property and homes, which we have earned with our blood? They must look sharp or this very thing will bring swift destruction upon them.

Sung (E. A. Atlee, 1844):

Shall we ne'er hail the day when as freemen shall stand
The millions who groan under matchless oppression?
Shall Liberty's shouts in our heav'n rescued land,
Ne'er be shared by the slave in our blood-guilty nation?
Oh, let us be just,
Ere in God we dare trust,
Else the day will o'er take us when perish we must;
And our star-spangled banner at half mast shall wave
O'er the deathbed of Freedom, the home of the slave.

Narrated (William Lloyd Garrison, 1854):

Convince me that one man may rightfully make another man his slave, and I will no longer subscribe to the Declaration of Independence. Convince me that liberty is not the inalienable birthright of every human being, of whatever complexion or clime, and I will give that instrument to the consuming fire. I do not know how to espouse freedom and slavery together.

Sung (published in "The Harp of Freedom," ed. George Whitefield Clark, 1856)

My country! 'tis for thee,
Dark land of slavery,
For thee I weep;
Land where the slave has sighed,
And where he toiled and died, To serve a tyrant's pride,
For thee I weep.

Narrated (Harriet Beecher Stowe, 1852):

The longest way must have its close, the gloomiest night will wear on to a morning.

Sung (published in "The Anti-Slavery Harp," ed. William Wells Brown, 1854)

Sp'rit of Freemen, awake!
No truce with Slavery make,
Thy deadly floe;

In fair disguises dressed,
Too long hast thou caressed
The serpent in thy breast,
Now lay him low.

Narrated (William Wells Brown, 1853):

They boast that America is the “cradle of liberty.” If it is, I fear they have rocked the child to death.

Sung (Mrs. J. G. Carter, 1846)

Ye sons of freemen wake to sadness
Hark! hark, what myriads bid you rise;
Three millions of our race in madness
Break out in wails, in bitter cries.

Narrated (Charles Sumner, 1860):

Say, Sir, in your madness, that you own the sun, the stars, and the moon; but do not say that you own a man, endowed with a soul that shall live immortal, when sun, and moon, and stars have passed away.

Sung (Mrs. J. G. Carter, 1846)

Must men whose hearts now bleed with anguish,
Yes, trembling slaves in freedom's land,
Endure the lash, nor raise a hand?
Must nature 'neath the whip-cord languish?
Have pity on the slave,
Take courage from God's word;
Pray on, pray on,
All hearts resolved;
These captives shall be free.

Narrated (Sojourner Truth, 1862):

I carry no weapon; the Lord will preserve me without weapons. I feel safe even in the midst of my enemies, for the truth is powerful and will prevail.

Sung (Mrs. J. G. Carter, 1846)

O Liberty! can man o'er bind thee?
Can overseers quench thy flame?
Can dungeons, bolts, or bars confine thee,
Or threats thy Heav'n-born spirit tame?
Too long the slave has groaned, bewailing
The pow'r these heartless tyrants wield;
Yet free them not by sword and shield,
For with men's hearts they'r unavailing;
Have pity on the slave,
Take courage from God's word;

Toil on! toil on!
All hearts resolved;
These captives shall be free!

Narrated (Frederick Douglass, 1863):

What a glorious day when Slavery shall be no more in this country, when we have blotted out this system of wrong, and made this United States in fact and in truth what it is in theory — the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave.

Sung (Edna Dean Proctor, 1863):

John Brown died on a scaffold for the slave;
Dark was the hour when we dug his hallowed grave;
Now God avenges the life he gladly gave;
Freedom reigns today!

John Brown's body lies a'mould'ring in the grave;
Bright, o'er the sod, let the starry banner wave,
Lo! for the millions he perished all to save
Freedom reigns today!

Glory, glory hallelujah!
Glory, glory hallelujah!
Glory, glory hallelujah!
Freedom reigns today!

John Brown's soul through the world is marching on;
Hail to the hour when oppression shall be gone.
All men will sing, in the better ages' dawn,
Freedom reigns! Freedom reigns! Today!

ALL THINGS RETURN

Sung ("Death" by Angelina Weld Grimké)

When the lights blur out for thee and me,
And the black comes in with a sweep,
I wonder — will it mean life again, or sleep?

Sung ("Vigil" by Angelina Weld Grimké)

You will come back, sometime, somehow;
But if it will be bright or black
I cannot tell; I only know
You will come back.

Does not the spring with fragrant pack
Return unto the orchard bough?
Do not the birds retrace their track?

All things return. Some day the glow
Of quickening dreams will pierce your lack;
And when you know I wait as now
You will come back.

Narrated (Letter to William Lloyd Garrison, by Angelina Grimké Weld, 1835)

Philadelphia, 8th month, 30th, 1835.

Respected Friend:

I can hardly express to thee the deep and solemn interest with which I have viewed the violent proceedings of the last few weeks. Although I expected opposition, yet I was not prepared for it so soon—it took me by surprise, and I greatly feared Abolitionists would be driven back in the first onset, and thrown into confusion. So fearful was I, that though I clung with unflinching firmness to our principles, yet I was afraid of even opening one of thy papers, lest I should see some indications of compromise, some surrender, some palliation.

The ground upon which you stand is holy ground: never—never surrender it. If you surrender it, the hope of the slave is extinguished, and the chains of his servitude will be strengthened a hundred fold. But let no man take your crown, and success is as certain as the rising of to-morrow's sun. But remember you must be willing to suffer the loss of all things—willing to be the scorn and reproach of professor and profane. You must obey our great Master's injunction: "Fear not them that kill the body, and after that, have nothing more that they can do." You must, like Apostles, "count not your lives dear unto yourselves, so that you may finish your course with joy."

My mind has been especially turned towards those, who are standing in the fore front of the battle; and the prayer has gone up for their preservation—not the preservation of their lives, but the preservation of their minds in humility and patience, faith, hope, and charity—that charity which is the bond of perfectness. If persecution is the means which God has ordained for the accomplishment of this great end, Emancipation; then, in dependence upon Him for strength to bear it, I feel as if I could say, LET IT COME; for it is my deep, solemn, deliberate conviction, that this is a cause worth dying for. I say so, from what I have seen, and heard, and known, in a land of slavery, where rests the darkness of Egypt, and where is found the sin of Sodom. Yes! LET IT COME!

BOSTON HYMN by Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1863

The word of the Lord by night
To the watching Pilgrims came,
As they sat by the seaside,
And filled their hearts with flame.

God said, I am tired of kings,
I suffer them no more;
Up to my ear the morning brings
The outrage of the poor.

Think ye I made this ball
A field of havoc and war,
Where tyrants great and tyrants small
Might harry the weak and poor?

My angel,—his name is Freedom,—
Choose him to be your king;
He shall cut pathways east and west,
And fend you with his wing.

Lo! I uncover the land
Which I hid of old time in the West,
As the sculptor uncovers the statue
When he has wrought his best;

I show Columbia, of the rocks
Which dip their foot in the seas,
And soar to the air-borne flocks
Of clouds, and the boreal fleece.

I will divide my goods;
Call in the wretch and slave:
None shall rule but the humble,
And none but Toil shall have.

I will have never a noble,
No lineage counted great;
Fishers and choppers and ploughmen
Shall constitute a state.

Go, cut down trees in the forest,
And trim the straightest boughs;
Cut down trees in the forest,
And build me a wooden house.

Call the people together,
The young men and the sires,
The digger in the harvest field,
Hireling, and him that hires;

And here in a pine state-house
They shall choose men to rule
In every needful faculty,
In church, and state, and school.

Lo, now! if these poor men
Can govern the land and sea,
And make just laws below the sun,
As planets faithful be.

And ye shall succor men;
'T is nobleness to serve;
Help them who cannot help again:
Beware from right to swerve.

I break your bonds and masterships,
And I unchain the slave:
Free be his heart and hand henceforth
As wind and wandering wave.

I cause from every creature
His proper good to flow:
As much as he is and doeth,
So much he shall bestow.

But, laying hands on another
To coin his labor and sweat,
He goes in pawn to his victim
For eternal years in debt.

To-day unbind the captive,
So only are ye unbound;
Lift up a people from the dust,
Trump of their rescue, sound!

Pay ransom to the owner,
And fill the bag to the brim.
Who is the owner? The slave is owner,
And ever was. Pay him.

North! give him beauty for rags,
And honor, South! for his shame;
Nevada! coin thy golden crags
With Freedom's image and name.

Up! and the dusky race
That sat in darkness long,—
Be swift their feet as antelopes,
And as behemoth strong.

Come, East and West and North,
By races, as snow-flakes,
And carry my purpose forth,
Which neither halts nor shakes.

My will fulfilled shall be,
For, in daylight or in dark,
My thunderbolt has eyes to see
His way home to the mark.

TRUMP OF GLAD JUBILEE by John Duncan, 1856

Trump of glad jubilee,
Echo o'er land and sea,
Freedom for all:
Let the glad tidings fly,
And every tribe reply,
Glory to God on high,
At slavery's fall.

Free, too, the captive mind
By darkness long confined
In slavery's night.
Truth's glorious reign extend,
Virtue with freedom blend,
And full salvation send
With freedom's light.

LINCOLN PORTRAIT by Abraham Lincoln (additional text by Aaron Copland)

(Lincoln quotes taken from Annual Message to Congress, 1862; Lincoln-Douglas debates, 1858; unknown, taken Lincoln's collected works; and Gettysburg Address, 1863)

"Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history."

That is what he said. That is what Abraham Lincoln said.

"Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this congress and this administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance or insignificance can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down in honor or dishonor to the latest generation. We, even we here, hold the power and bear the responsibility."

He was born in Kentucky, raised in Indiana, and lived in Illinois. And this is what he said. This is what Abe Lincoln said.

"The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves and then we will save our country."

When standing erect he was six feet four inches tall, and this is what he said. He said: "It is the eternal struggle between two principles, right and wrong, throughout the world. It is the same spirit that says 'you toil and work and earn bread, and I'll eat it.' No matter in what shape it comes, whether from the mouth of a king who seeks to bestride the people of his own nation, and live by the fruit of their labor, or from one race of men as an apology for enslaving another race, it is the same tyrannical principle."

Lincoln was a quiet man. Abe Lincoln was a quiet and a melancholy man. But when he spoke of democracy, this is what he said.

He said: "As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy."

Abraham Lincoln, sixteenth president of these United States, is everlasting in the memory of his countrymen. For on the battleground at Gettysburg, this is what he said:

He said: "That from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion. That we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain. That this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth."

SONG OF THE ABOLITIONIST by William Lloyd Garrison, 1843

I am an Abolitionist!
I glory in the name:
Though now by Slavery's minions hiss'd
And covered o'er with shame,
It is a spell of light and power—
The watchword of the free:—
Who spurns it in the trial-hour,
A craven soul is he!

I am an Abolitionist!
Then urge me not to pause;
For joyfully do I enlist
In Freedom's sacred cause:
A nobler strife the world ne'er saw,
Th'enslaved to disenthral;
I am a soldier for the war,
Whatever may befall!

I am an Abolitionist!
Oppression's deadly foe;
In God's great strength will I resist,
And lay the monster low;
In God's great name do I demand,
To all be freedom given,
That peace and joy may fill the land,
And songs go up to heaven!

ABOUT OUR GUEST ARTISTS:

JAMES T. DARGAN, BARITONE AND COMPOSER

James Dargan is a creative artist and self-described authenticity addict from the Southeastern U.S. He is based in New York City, where he performs both as soloist and in ensembles, plays the violin, composes, writes, teaches, and translates poetry and prose from several languages. Mr. Dargan, a singer since he was a child, performs his social justice-themed programs “Oh, Glory!” and “Ladies Only” anywhere and everywhere. He also teaches on spirituals and other Black music, and he is honored to embody his family tradition of telling truthful stories. He is a founding member of the consortium Ring Shout.

KEIDRICK ROY, SPEAKER

Keidrick Roy is a PhD candidate working at the intersection of political theory, intellectual history, and literature. He has led community discussions about the history of race, slavery, and abolitionism in the United States by examining our present moment within its broader historical context. His interdisciplinary scholarship is forthcoming in *English Literary History*, and his public history writing is forthcoming as part of *America: The Atlas*, published by Smithsonian Books and The Bright Press. Keidrick's public scholarship has additionally been featured by CBS Sunday Morning, the Harvard Gazette, the Public News Service, the Christian Science Monitor, the Chicago Review of Books, and the National Football League.

Keidrick is also committed to the work of museum curation and documentary film production to encourage public reflection and dialogue. At the American Writers Museum in Chicago, he is the curator and project lead for "Dark Testament," an upcoming exhibition that puts the writings of African Americans from the Civil War to the Civil Rights Movement in conversation with contemporary Black writers and thinkers. He has also served as an exhibition curator for Frederick Douglass's writings and speeches. At Harvard University's Houghton Library, Keidrick is curating an exhibition on the Nazi racial state, which will debut in 2022. In addition, he is the executive producer of an upcoming documentary film on race and art in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

An Outstanding Academy Educator honoree as an Instructor of English at the United States Air Force Academy, an award-winning Teaching Fellow at Harvard, and a former military nuclear operations officer, Keidrick has received research support from the Ford Foundation, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Pat Tillman Foundation, and Harvard's Center for American Political Studies.

For more information, including how to get in touch, visit www.keidrickroy.com.

BRIANNA J. ROBINSON, SOPRANO

Soprano Brianna J. Robinson is a graduate of Ohio Wesleyan University with degrees in Vocal Music Performance and Black World Studies. She received her master's degree in Performance and Literature from the Eastman School of Music in May of 2018. Currently in her second year as an Emerging Artist with the Boston Lyric Opera, Brianna made her debut as Lucy in Gregory Spears' *Fellow Travelers* in November of 2019. Last season, she covered Ofgen, Moira and Jenine in the East Coast premiere of Paul Rodgers' *The Handmaid's Tale*. She served as a Rising Artist with Pegasus Early Opera in the summer of 2017, singing the role of Witch #1 in Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. At the Eastman School of Music, she was been involved in the production of Massenet's *Cendrillon* and Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Riders to the Sea*. Brianna's Eastman Opera Theater debut as the Empress Ottavia in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* was praised by the Rochester City Newspaper as "a true force." She was involved in the Baroque performance ensemble, Collegium Musicum, singing the title role in Caccini's *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina*. Her most recent project with Shelter Music Boston, singing the role of Florence Price in "Florence Comes Home" by Francine Trester, was praised by the Boston Musical Intelligencer and the Boston Classical Review.

Her recent concert engagements include the Brahms's Requiem alongside the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Bach's Ascension Oratorio and Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Dona Nobis Pacem* with the Westminster Presbyterian Church of Buffalo. Along with her work in America, Brianna has also participated in international programs such as the Berlin Opera Academy and Opernfest Prague.

THE YEAR OF JUBILEE

Some Historical Background on the Music and the People Represented in our Program

As the clock ticked towards midnight on the evening of January 1st, 1863, Tremont Temple in Boston was tightly packed with a crowd of people who were anxiously awaiting news of Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, which the president had vowed would go into effect on the first of the year. Among the horde stood the famous orator and abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who many years later, in his third autobiography, described his feelings of "both hope and fear" as he waited for the news of the proclamation: "Our ship was on the open sea, tossed by a terrible storm; wave after wave was passing over us, and every hour was fraught with increasing peril. Whether we should survive or perish depended in large measure upon the coming of this proclamation." Over the course of the evening, the crowd had passed the time by listening to speeches by noted abolitionists William Wells Brown, Anna Elizabeth Dickinson, and Frederick Douglass himself, whose usual extended eloquence was made uncharacteristically brief for the occasion -- as Douglass explained, "speaking or listening to speeches was not the thing for which the people had come together. The time for argument was passed. It was not logic, but the trump of jubilee, which everybody wanted to hear. We were waiting and listening as for a bolt from the sky, which should rend the fetters of four millions of slaves; We were watching, as it were, by the dim light of the stars, for the dawn of a new day; we were longing for the answer to the agonizing prayers of centuries. Remembering those in bonds as bound with them, we wanted to join in the shout for freedom, and in the anthem of the redeemed."

They also sang. A Black preacher whom Frederick Douglass described as "a man of wonderful vocal power" led everyone in the hymn "Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea," a setting of Thomas Moore's poetic paraphrase of Miriam's Song, the Old Testament song of praise sung by the Israelites when they had finally escaped from captivity in Egypt. And Frederick Douglass led the crowd in "Blow Ye the Trumpet, Blow" Charles Wesley's triumphant hymn of liberty and jubilation: "Blow ye the trumpet, blow!...let all the nations know...The year of jubilee is come...Ye slaves of sin and hell, your liberty receive."

The concept of "the year of jubilee," which forms the refrain of Charles Wesley's hymn, originates from the scripture passage Leviticus 25, in which the Lord instructs Moses to hallow a special Sabbath year in which the "trumpet of jubilee" will sound to "proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof" (a quote which is inscribed on the Liberty Bell in Pennsylvania), and in which "ye shall return every man unto his possession." The broader theme of "jubilee" was therefore extremely important to the abolitionists, not merely for its general meaning of celebration, but for its deeper meaning as a tribute to God-given liberty. Many churches had special jubilee celebrations in their New Years' services in 1863, as they were urged to do in a letter

which circulated in both England and America, written by William Evans, Chairman of the London Emancipation Society: "We respectfully urge upon you the propriety of giving prominence to the subject of negro emancipation in the religious services, which, in this country at least, always herald the advent of a new year. The 1st of January, 1863, will form the commencement of a new era in American history -- an era in which the whole power and authority of the Federal Government will be employed, for the first time, to effect the overthrow of a system that embodies in itself every iniquity known to man. It is, therefore, a day eminently worthy of special recognition on the part of the great religious communities."

The gathering in Tremont Temple was not the only high-profile jubilee celebration in Boston that day. In Boston Music Hall that afternoon, a "Grand Jubilee Concert" was held to mark the occasion when, as stated in the concert's program, "the soil of America, hallowed anew by the sacrifice of so much heroic blood, shall no longer be trodden by the foot of a slave." Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote and delivered a new poem, "Boston Hymn" to mark the occasion, and the newly-formed Handel and Haydn Society chorus sang Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus." Later that evening, the wealthy abolitionist George Luther Stearns held a "John Brown Party" at his Medford estate, at which Julia Ward Howe delivered a reading of her beloved patriotic poem, "Battle Hymn of the Republic" in front of a newly-unveiled bust of John Brown, the radical abolitionist whose mission Stearns had proudly helped to fund.

Frederick Douglass summarized the mammoth implications of the proclamation in a speech he gave shortly afterwards at the Cooper Institute (note: a "bondman" is an old-fashioned term for an enslaved person): "It is a mighty event for the bondman, but it is a still mightier event for the nation at large, and mighty as it is for the both, the slave and the nation, it is still mightier when viewed in its relation to the cause of truth and justice throughout the world. It is in this last character that I prefer to consider it. There are certain great national acts, which by their relation to universal principles, properly belong to the whole human family, and Abraham Lincoln's Proclamation of the 1st of January, 1863, is one of these acts. Henceforth shall that day take rank with the Fourth of July." The comparison of January 1st with July 4th is especially interesting because both holidays had complex and conflicting connotations for Douglass. July 4th was the topic of one of Douglass's most famous speeches (which will be featured on our program) in which he contrasted what the holiday meant to white Americans with what it meant for those who were enslaved. January 1st, meanwhile, was a traditional day for enslaved people to be hired out to new masters. Douglass had entered the darkest phase of his life on a New Years Day in his teens, when he was hired out to a brutally punitive man named Edward Covey. In her autobiography, the formerly enslaved Harriet Jacobs contrasted the meaning of New Years Day for white Americans with its meaning for enslaved people (as Douglass had similarly done for July 4th): "O, you happy free women, contrast your New Year's day with that of the poor bond-woman!...If time were counted by heart-throbs, the poor slaves might reckon years of suffering during that festival so joyous to the free."

Even as Douglass celebrated the Emancipation Proclamation, he noted how it failed to live up to the Biblical ideal of liberty as presented in Leviticus 25: "It was not a proclamation of 'liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof,' such as we had hoped it would be, but was one marked by discriminations and reservations. Its operation was confined within certain geographical and military lines." Indeed, the Emancipation Proclamation liberated only the slaves in the states currently in rebellion against the United States, not those in the loyal border states. Slavery itself would not be declared illegal throughout the United States until the passage of the 13th amendment on January 31st, 1865, and even then, the amendment made an exception for slavery as punishment for crime, paving the way for other forms of exploitation. While Confederate apologists like to point out that the Emancipation Proclamation did not free a single slave, the truth is much more nuanced. The Emancipation Proclamation officially declared emancipation to be a central tenet of the war, which helped to prevent England and France from recognizing the Confederacy as an independent nation, as both countries had already abolished slavery (for example, British statesman John Bright urged the people of his country in a speech shortly after the passage of the Emancipation Proclamation, "Do not then give the hand of fellowship to the worst foes of freedom that the world has ever seen," calling the Confederacy "a conspiracy whose fundamental institution, whose corner-stone, is declared to be felony, and infamous by the statutes of their country.") The proclamation meant that as the Union army advanced, it could liberate more and more people. And it was intrinsically linked with military service by formerly enslaved people, which helped to pave the way for Black citizenship and enfranchisement (which would not be unequivocally granted until the passage of the 14th amendment in 1868). As argued by historian John Burt in his book "Lincoln's Tragic Pragmatism": "In 1862, in choosing his main arguments for emancipation, Lincoln did not emphasize that emancipation would bring the war to the economy of the South, or that emancipation would strike at the root cause of the war, but argued instead that emancipation would clear the way for military service by former slaves...Lincoln's method made emancipation irreversible. If one frees slaves to make economic war, one may enslave them again to rebuild the economy of a restored Union. But one can never re-enslave people into whose hands one has put rifles...In choosing this apparently modest argument about enlistment over more morally and apparently charismatic ones, Lincoln chose the one ground for emancipation most likely to make a case for black citizenship later."

Frederick Douglass saw the long-term implications of the proclamation as being far greater than its narrowly limited immediate impact: "For my own part, I took the proclamation, first and last, for a little more than it purported, and saw in its spirit a life and power far beyond its letter. Its meaning to me was the entire abolition of slavery, wherever the evil could be reached by the Federal arm, and I saw that its moral power would extend much further. It was, in my estimation, an immense gain to have the war for the Union committed to the extinction of slavery, even from a military necessity... [The war] was no longer a mere strife for territory and dominion, but a contest of civilization against barbarism."

The extent to which Lincoln's decision to issue the Emancipation Proclamation was motivated by moral conviction versus military necessity is debatable. Lincoln had always been strongly morally opposed to slavery, stating in an 1858 speech, "I have always hated slavery, I think as much as any Abolitionist." And yet, in spite of being known as the "Great Emancipator," Lincoln is in fact *not* counted as an abolitionist. He conducted his presidential campaign on a platform of preventing the spread of slavery to new territories but not interfering with it where it already existed, as outlined in his 1860 Cooper Union Address and his 1861 First Inaugural Address, a speech that's conciliatory and compromising aspects angered Frederick Douglass to the point that he planned to abandon the United States in disgust, booking a one-way ticket to Haiti and then cancelling that ticket a month later, when the first shots of the Civil War were fired at Fort Sumter (Douglass had already typeset his announcement of his planned Haiti trip for publication in the May 1861 issue of his monthly paper, when the war broke out and he decided to stay in the country. He therefore published his plans — and the retraction of his plans — side by side in his newspaper, stating, "The last ten days have made a tremendous revolution in all things pertaining to the possible future of the colored people of the United States... This is no time for us to leave the country." And so, one can literally see the "tremendous revolution" happening in real time in Douglass's writing). In any event, it is a sad statement about the state of the country at the time that an unequivocal and uncompromising abolitionist would almost certainly have not been elected president, and would almost certainly not have won the war. Without the support of the slaveholding border states, victory would have been impossible. While Douglass remained critical of Lincoln throughout the war and beyond, he did come to acknowledge the necessity of Lincoln's compromises with slaveholders. As Douglass stated in a 1876 speech in memorial of Lincoln: "Had [Lincoln] put the abolition of slavery before the salvation of the Union, he would have inevitably driven from him a powerful class of the American people and rendered resistance to rebellion impossible... Considering the necessary means to ends, and surveying the end from the beginning, infinite wisdom has seldom sent any man into the world better fitted for his mission than Abraham Lincoln."

Furthermore, Lincoln's adamancy on banning the expansion of slavery into new territories (an issue on which he felt so strongly that it inspired him to reenter politics in 1858 after a long break, in order to attempt to defeat Senator Stephen Douglas, the author of the Kansas-Nebraska Act which had opened up the possibility of new territories entering the union as slave or free states based only on popular sovereignty) was more than a fight against slavery where it did not yet exist — it was a means of slowly smothering the slave power as it already existed. As argued in the book "The American Slave Coast" by Ned and Constance Sublette, the institution of slavery in the United States was wholly dependent, both politically and economically, on a policy of aggressive expansionism. Not only did every new slave state guarantee more pro-slavery representation in the federal government, but every increase in slave territory increased demand for enslaved labor and therefore the slaveholders' wealth. At the time the Civil War began, the total monetary value ascribed to the human beings the slaveholders claimed ownership of was more than nine times the total monetary value of all the currency in circulation in the United States (approximately four billion dollars

and \$435.4 million, respectively). But the enslaved population was increasing by about 25% per decade, which meant that without an ever-increasing base of people who were willing and able to pay for enslaved laborers — and an ever-increasing territory in which those people could live — the slaveholders' wealth would sharply depreciate. It was basically a massive pyramid scheme that was going to implode sooner or later. The abolition of slavery was bound to create economic upheaval for the white people of America, even those who did not recognize or acknowledge the ways in which they benefited from the system, which was why it was so significant that, in his second inaugural address, Lincoln vowed that the war would continue if necessary “until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk.” Once you recognize the political and economic motivations behind 19th-century American expansionism, and what was really at stake, certain things about the antebellum period make more sense — like why so many people were willing to fight to the death over whether Kansas would enter the union as a slave or free state; or why John Quincy Adams' final publicly spoken word (when he had become an anti-slavery member of the House of Representatives after his presidency) was an emphatically shouted “No!” in protest to a vote related to the Mexican American War; or why in his most violent and controversial speech, in Faneuil Hall in 1849, Frederick Douglass said, “I would not care if, tomorrow, I should hear of the death of every man who engaged in that bloody war in Mexico.”

I feel that Lincoln and Douglass make an interesting pairing because, while Lincoln is frequently accused of issuing the Emancipation Proclamation more from a politically expedient aim than from a moral standpoint, Douglass was also accused of “expediency.” However, in Douglass's case, it was for the reverse reason — he was accused of expediency for his belief in saving the Union and his espousal of the United States Constitution, an accusation which came from some of the more radical abolitionists, most significantly William Lloyd Garrison. Garrison, who had been one of Douglass's closest allies until the early 1850s, believed that moral suasion and nonviolence was the method to abolish slavery, and he turned away from political action and from any participation in a system he believed was inherently flawed. His motto was “no union with slaveholders,” and he believed that disunion was the only possible solution to avoid a moral compromise with slaveholders. As an interesting contrast, in Douglass's 1852 July 4th speech (after the rift with Garrison had occurred) Douglass said, “interpreted as it ought to be interpreted, the Constitution is a glorious liberty document”; meanwhile, in his own July 4th speech two years later, Garrison stood in front of an upside-down U.S. flag that was draped in black crepe, called the Constitution a “covenant with death and an agreement with hell,” and then burned a copy of it. Douglass discussed the accusations of “expediency” from the Garrisonians, and defended himself against them, in his 1857 speech in response to the Dred Scott decision. By all logic, the Dred Scott decision should have been a low point in Douglass's prewar years, because the decision negated not only Douglass's constitutional views but also his humanity, ruling as it did that the Black people of our nation had “no rights which the white man was bound to respect.” And yet, Douglass opened his speech by stating, “my hopes were never brighter than now.” The defiant optimism of that statement is only one of the surprising things he said in that speech,

though, as in discussing his constitutional views, he stated, “The American people have made void our constitution by just such traditions as Judge Taney and Mr. Garrison have been giving to the world of late, as the true light in which to view the Constitution of the United States. I shall follow neither.” On the one hand, it’s kind of shocking that, in the wake of the Dred Scott decision, Douglass would be drawing an equivalency between the author of that decision and the radical abolitionist who was his formerly closest ally. But on the other hand, it makes perfect sense, in light of Douglass’s interpretation of the Constitution and his sense of moral responsibility to the enslaved people in the South — the Garrisonian view would mean “leaving the slaves in their chains,” as Douglass said in his speech, for the sake of white northerners’ moral purity. And that’s why I think Garrison (as much as he was a hero and worthy of veneration) didn’t fully understand the necessity which led Douglass to his views. Because it takes a certain amount of privilege to never compromise, to value moral suasion over violent resistance even if the results are much slower, to emphasize radical statements over action, and to always prioritize moral purity over expediency. And so, that reference to the Constitution as a “glorious liberty document,” which is so frequently taken out of context as a demonstration of patriotism, is really a statement of defiance. Because in the one little phrase which proceeds it, “interpreted as it ought to be interpreted,” Douglass denounces everyone who believes slavery is constitutionally supported and therefore cannot be abolished, as well as the Garrisonians who believe it’s constitutionally supported and that therefore disunion is necessary.

In any event, Lincoln and Douglass came together when the two objectives of the war, saving the Union and abolishing slavery, became unequivocally connected, and what was morally right and what was politically strategic melded together, because (as Douglass had stated in his Dred Scott speech), “what is expedient in this instance is right.” And while Lincoln had been willing to compromise over the course of the war to maintain the loyalty of the border states, at the most important hour of his presidency, he showed his true character by not compromising at all. On August 22nd, 1864, journalist and politician Henry Jarvis Raymond wrote Lincoln a letter stating that his chances of re-election were very bleak, due to “the want of military successes” and the perception in the public mind that the war was being needlessly extended “until slavery is abandoned.” Raymond offered Lincoln a very tempting suggestion of proposing peace to Jefferson Davis on the “sole condition of acknowledging the supremacy of the constitution” (i.e. without the abolition of slavery being a condition of the end of the war). Raymond explained that such a proposal would be merely strategic, that Davis would be certain to reject it, thus improving the public perception of Lincoln. Lincoln considered the proposal, writing and then immediately revoking a letter to Raymond saying “you will proceed.” A few days earlier, in a private meeting on August 19th, Lincoln had stated that if he allowed anyone who had risked their life to fight for the Union to be afterwards re-enslaved, Lincoln would be “damned in time and in eternity.” On that same day, Lincoln had also met with Frederick Douglass, who said Lincoln showed “a deeper moral conviction against slavery than I had ever seen before in anything spoken or written by him.” And so in those dark days of uncertainty, Lincoln prepared to lose his position for the next four years, but to take his place in eternity, to become “everlasting in the memory of his countrymen” (to quote Aaron Copland’s

“Lincoln Portrait”). The day after receiving Raymond’s letter, Lincoln wrote and sealed a letter, known as the “Blind Memorandum,” vowing to do his “duty to so cooperate with the President elect, as to save the Union between the election and the inauguration,” asking the members of his Cabinet to sign it without having read it. There’s not a clear answer as to why he didn’t want his cabinet to see the contents of the letter at the time — perhaps he didn’t want them (or anyone they might leak the letter’s contents to) to know the extent of his pessimism, or it was a test of their loyalty to him. I think, though, that it was a vow written first and foremost to himself, made irrevocable by the weight of his cabinet’s signatures, and by their blind faith and unswerving trust. True leadership shows its colors not only in times of triumph but, perhaps even more importantly, in times of defeat.

Of course, Lincoln’s prospects for re-election began to grow brighter shortly afterwards. Lincoln and Douglass had their third and final in-person meeting on the evening of Lincoln’s second inauguration (after the White House police had tried their hardest to prevent Douglass from entering on account of his race, not because they had received any orders to do so, but because, as stated by Douglass, “they were simply complying with an old custom, the outgrowth of slavery, as dogs will sometimes rub their necks, long after their collars are removed, thinking they are still there.”). As Douglass approached, Lincoln exclaimed loudly enough for the surrounding crowd to hear, “Here comes my friend Douglass...There is no man in the country whose opinion I value more than yours.” Replying in reference to Lincoln’s second inaugural address, Douglass answered, “Mr. Lincoln, that was a sacred effort.” Those would be the last words Douglass ever had the chance to speak to the president, who was assassinated the following month.

And so, today, in our special worship service, “The Year of Jubilee,” we honor the legacies of Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, and everyone who fought to extend the inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to all human beings equally.

One of the most substantial pieces on our program (it is the second longest work, after Aaron Copland’s “Lincoln Portrait”) is a selection of abolitionist songs and quotes arranged by me, entitled “Freedom Reigns.” Singing in general was quite important to the abolitionists, as communal singing by amateurs was a larger part of the culture in the nineteenth century than it is today. Numerous abolitionist songbooks were published in the years leading up to the Civil War, including one published in Boston in 1848 by well-known abolitionist and author William Wells Brown, “The Anti-Slavery Harp.” Poetry and song lyrics were also published in every issue of William Lloyd Garrison’s newspaper “The Liberator.” While some abolitionist songs used original melodies, they were more commonly contrafacta, or new words set to previously-existing familiar tunes. Abolitionist songbooks, or “songsters,” took their melodies from hymn tunes, folk songs, patriotic songs, and even minstrel songs (such as what was perhaps the most popular abolitionist song of all, “Get Off the Track” by the Hutchinson

Family Singers, set to the melody of “Old Dan Tucker,” in which case the subversion of the racist overtones of the minstrel genre was part of the political message of the music). In “Freedom Reigns,” I used only the abolitionist versions of patriotic songs — “The Star-Spangled Banner,” “My Country ’Tis of Thee,” “La Marseillaise,” and “John Brown’s Body” (better known as “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” after Julia Ward Howe’s alternate lyrics to it). I think it’s important to note that several of our nation’s most common patriotic songs, such as “My Country ’Tis of Thee,” and even more importantly “The Star-Spangled Banner,” which we tend to look upon as untouchable and sacred, are already *contrafacta*. Francis Scott Key’s poem “Defense of Fort McHenry,” which became the lyrics to our national anthem, was not the first text set to our anthem’s melody — in fact, Francis Scott Key’s words aren’t even the first American patriotic text set to the melody (it was preceded by Robert Treat Paine’s song “Adams and Liberty,” among other settings). Setting new words to existing tunes, or new tunes to existing words, is part of the art of hymnody. One musicologist has found over one hundred different texts to “To Anacreon in Heaven,” the melody of “The Star-Spangled Banner” (I have personally found five different abolitionist versions of it, as well as over a dozen abolitionist versions of “My Country ’Tis of Thee”), so treating those songs as untouchable and unalterable is in fact ahistorical and displays a disregard for the tradition of hymnody as an art form.

While some abolitionist lyrics to familiar tunes were wholly independent of the original lyrics, keeping only the song’s melody intact, some were clearly inspired by the original lyrics, modifying the text to transform the song’s original vision of American liberty into a new vision of liberty for the enslaved. Of all the songs used in “Freedom Reigns,” the one which is most clearly derived from the original version is “Oh Say, Do You Hear,” the 1844 abolitionist version of “The Star-Spangled Banner” by Baptist minister E.A. Atlee, published in “The Liberator” as well as other abolitionist newspapers of the time. Atlee’s version closely parallels Key’s text, ending with the chilling warning, “Oh, let us be just, ere in God we dare trust, Else the day will o’er take us when perish we must, And our star-spangled banner at half mast shall wave, O’er the deathbed of freedom — the home of the slave.” It may be hard to hear our national anthem set to alternate words describing our nation as “the deathbed of freedom” — but just imagine how much harder it would have been to hear it described as “the land of the free” over and over again, if you were doomed to a life in bondage. Furthermore, Atlee’s prophesy is conditional — the United States will become the “the deathbed of freedom” unless we fight for justice on earth before daring to place our trust in God.

The two verses of “My Country ’Tis of Thee” which follow are actually taken from two different abolitionist versions of the tune, one of which is considerably more optimistic than the other, and one of which much more closely parallels and protests against the original lyrics (changing the original’s “sweet land of liberty” into “dark land of slavery,” and changing “of thee I sing” into “for thee I weep”).

The abolitionist version of La Marseillaise is actually not derived directly from France’s national anthem as it is sung today, but rather from a 1798 “translation” (in the loosest sense of the word, using significant poetic license) of the Marseillaise by Irish poet and

playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan, called “Ye Sons of Freedom Wake to Glory.” Sheridan’s version was allegedly sung by the hordes at the Irish Rebellion of 1798. His words eliminate much of the war-like imagery in the original, while still encouraging people to take up arms to fight for liberty, referring to liberty as “our sword and shield.” Sheridan’s version of the Marseillaise travelled from Ireland to England and America, Perhaps most significantly in the U.S., Sheridan’s version of the Marseillaise was sung at an Independence Day concert on the National Mall in Washington D.C. on July 4th, 1861, in the early months of the Civil War, as one of several “Songs of Freedom” chosen to bolster support for the Union cause. Sheridan’s words to the Marseillaise formed the inspiration for the abolitionist version of the tune, set by a poet identified only as “Mrs. J.G. Carter,” which was published in “The Anti-Slavery Harp” (turning Sheridan’s opening line “Ye Sons of Freedom Wake to Glory” into the much more pessimistic “Ye Sons of Freeman Wake to Sadness”). In the abolitionist version of the Marseillaise, all traces of militarism and nationalism are removed. Where Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s version of the song had included the line “To arms, to arms, ye brave,” Mrs. J.G. Carter’s version uses the line “Have pity on the slave.” And rather than the “March on” of Sheridan’s version, Carter’s version states “Pray on” or “Toil on.”

The final song used in Freedom Reigns, “The President’s Proclamation,” was written in response to the Emancipation Proclamation, by poet Edna Dean Proctor, published in “The Liberator” in January of 1863. Proctor used the tune which we today associate with Julia Ward Howe’s poem “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.” However, before Howe had penned her text to the tune, the tune was already being sung by Union troops as they marched into battle (and even before that, the tune had actually had a history as a camp meeting song). The original Civil War text to the tune, “John Brown’s Body,” became one of the most widely sung tunes of the Civil War. For instance, when the news of Confederate Richmond’s fall reached the Massachusetts State House, all the members of the state legislature celebrated by “singing the John Brown song, everyone present uniting with great emphasis in the chorus. At the close, three hearty cheers were given for John Brown as the forerunner to universal liberty” (as described in the April 7, 1865 issue of “The Liberator”).

While Proctor’s lyrics were written as a tribute to the Emancipation Proclamation, the real hero of her text is John Brown. The radical, militant abolitionist John Brown, who is best known for his raid on the federal Armory at Harpers Ferry, was a deeply polarizing figure from the moment he was captured, viewed either as a traitor or a messiah. Facing interrogation in the immediate aftermath of the raid, as he still lay inside the Armory, wounded and doomed to certain execution, he stated that his object had been “to free the slaves, and only that.” In fact, that had been his only aim in life since 1837, when, in response to the murder of abolitionist journalist Elijah Lovejoy, Brown had vowed, “Here, before God, in the presence of these witnesses, from this time, I consecrate my life to the destruction of slavery.” While the raid itself was not a success in any immediate sense, its impact on the fight for liberty is impossible to overstate. In a November 11th speech (before Brown’s verdict was officially decided) Ralph Waldo Emerson referred to Brown as “the Saint, whose fate yet hangs in suspense, but whose martyrdom, if it shall be perfected, will make the gallows as glorious as the cross.”

Several decades later, in his biography of John Brown, W.E.B. Du Bois would refer to Brown as “the man who of all Americans has perhaps come nearest to touching the real souls of black folk.” In the months following the raid, dozens of poems inspired by Brown were published in abolitionist journals. Many people did continue to disavow the violence that Brown felt was justified, viewing him as a madman or a terrorist. However, as one Unitarian preacher, Edwin Wheelock, said in reference to those sentiments: “He is a fanatic! He is a traitor! He is a madman! Yes, and the fanatics of this age are the star-crowned leaders of the next. And the madmen of today are the heroes of tomorrow.”

The original version of John Brown’s Body was poetically unsophisticated, even including a reference to giving Jefferson Davis diarrhea in some versions. However, the tune was so rousing, and the sentiments so inspirational, that multiple poets and ministers wrote more refined versions. The most famous set of alternate lyrics, of course, was Julia Ward Howe’s “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” While Julia Ward Howe’s lyrics removed all references to John Brown, she was intrinsically linked to his mission and legacy — her husband, Samuel Gridley Howe, had been one of the “secret six” who funded Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry. Edna Dean Proctor’s version may not have quite the poetic sophistication of Howe’s version, but it centers the text on the martyred abolitionist whose legacy gave the tune its power. Proctor’s version is a celebration of the reign of freedom, but she uses future tense when she speaks of “the hour when oppression shall be gone,” when “all men will sing in the better age’s dawn,” showing that the fight against oppression was an ongoing process, which would continue as long as “John Brown’s soul through the world is marching on.”

In general, there were three primary reasons why the abolitionists appropriated the patriotic rhetoric of America’s civil religion in their music, literature, and oratory: a sincere belief in the principles on which our nation was founded, even when the reality had failed to live up to the ideal; the desire to evoke feelings of shame in the audience or reader by reminding them of the hypocrisy of feeling pride in American liberty while one-eighth of the nation’s population was held in bondage; or a justification for the necessity of bloodshed and violence in the fight for freedom, just as bloodshed and violence had been a necessity in the American Revolution. Of the three reasons, the first requires the least explanation, but it is wise to remember not to discount or underestimate the genuine reverence some abolitionists felt for American ideals, even as they remained deeply critical of our country’s failures. In the preface to his songbook “The Harp of Freedom,” George Whitefield Clark described how the inspiration for his collection of anti-slavery freedom songs came from the ideals of liberty sought in the American Revolution: “And now, when the spirit of ’76 is again abroad — kindling anew in the hearts of thousands the determination to stand manfully by the principles of Freedom for which our Forefathers sacrificed their fortune and their lives, the emotions thus awakened, gush forth naturally in song.” And in the final spoken quote of my piece, in which Frederick Douglass anticipates the “glorious hour” when the United States will be “in fact and in truth what it is in theory — the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave,” I interpret Douglass’s echo of Francis Scott Key’s words as a genuine vision of hope, and a genuine belief that the true spirit of those words will prevail, in spite of their

original vision of freedom having excluded Douglass's race, and in spite of their having been written by someone who was himself a slaveholder.

As to abolitionists' invoking patriotic rhetoric in order to highlight hypocrisy, perhaps the earliest and most emphatic example is in David Walker's 1829 "Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World," a thunderous and radical abolitionist manifesto. In his Appeal, Walker used the Declaration of Independence as a weapon with which to assert the rights of Black people, declaiming: "See your Declaration, Americans!!! Do you understand your own language? Hear your language, proclaimed to the world, July 4th, 1776 — 'We hold these truths to be self evident — that ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL!! that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness!!' Compare your own language above, extracted from your Declaration of Independence, with your cruelties and murders inflicted by your cruel and unmerciful fathers and yourselves on our fathers and on us." The same passage from the Declaration of Independence was quoted on the title page of William Wells Brown's novel "Clotel" (the first novel published by a Black author in the United States), a story which is based on Thomas Jefferson's slaveholding legacy; the choice to quote Jefferson's words on the title page was therefore a bold statement of Jefferson's hypocrisy. Later in the novel, Brown quotes Jefferson's description of slavery as "a bondage, one hour of which is fraught with more misery than ages of that which [the early American colonists] rose in rebellion to oppose...I tremble for my country, when I recollect that God is just, and that His justice cannot sleep forever" — followed immediately by William Wells Brown's pointing out the duplicity in Jefferson's denouncement of slavery: "But, sad to say, Jefferson is not the only American statesman who has spoken high-sounding words in favor of freedom, and then left his own children to die slaves." It is actually impossible *not* to acknowledge the deep, intrinsic hypocrisy that mars our nation's most beloved words — unless you either devalue the meaning of the words themselves (as when Senator John Pettit, arguing in 1854 in favor of allowing slavery in Kansas, called the Declaration of Independence "a self-evident lie," or when the fictional pro-slavery character Alfred St. Clare called it "one of Tom Jefferson's pieces of French sentiment and humbug" in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel "Uncle Tom's Cabin"), or unless you downplay the extent to which we have fallen short of those words' ideals (as is the case today, in recent school curriculums which have banned teaching that "slavery and racism are anything other than deviations from, betrayals of, or failures to live up to, the authentic founding principles of the United States, which include liberty and equality," as was recently mandated in a Senate Bill outlining the social studies curriculum in Texas). But to downplay the extent of our failures is also to downplay the accomplishments of our heroes, as you can't learn about our heroes until you learn about the threats to our liberties that they would give their lives to defy.

As to patriotic rhetoric being used as a justification for the necessity of violence, the most explicitly spelled out example I've seen is the essay "Can Slaves Rightfully Resist and Fight?" by Reverend George W Perkins (published in the first volume of "Autographs for Freedom," a collection of essays and literature compiled in 1853 by Julia Griffiths). Perkins states that as a minister, he cannot officially endorse violence,

but he looks to the example of the American Revolution, saying “If it was right in 1776 to resist, fight, and kill, to secure liberty, — it is right to do the same in 1852.” Perkins further states that the only reason why Americans would venerate the heroes of the American Revolution while simultaneously fearing and stifling violent slave insurrections is racism: “If these inferences appear startling and even horrible, why do they so appear? Is there any reason except the inveterate prejudice, which applies very different principles to the colored man and to the white man?” The same argument was used by the normally nonviolent William Lloyd Garrison in response to John Brown’s raid. While he felt that John Brown’s raid was “misguided” and “apparently insane,” he used a Revolutionary War metaphor to justify Brown’s ambitions, in a brief editorial he published in “The Liberator” the week after the Harpers Ferry raid: “Our views of war and bloodshed, even in the best of causes, are too well known to need repeating here; but let no one who glories in the revolutionary struggle of 1776, deny the right of the slaves to imitate the example of our fathers.” Frederick Douglass similarly invoked the revolutionary struggle as he increasingly endorsed the necessity of violent resistance, stating in his second autobiography, “My Bondage and My Freedom” in 1855, “If [a slave] kills his master, he imitates only the heroes of the revolution,” and stating in his Faneuil Hall speech in 1849, “When I consider...the history of the American people — how they bared their bosoms to the storm of British artillery, in order to resist simply a three-penny tea tax, and to assert their independence of the mother country — I saw, in view of these things, I should welcome the intelligence tomorrow, should it come, that the slaves had risen in the south, and...were engaged in spreading death and devastation there.”

The extent to which violence was justified and necessary in the fight against slavery was one of the principle issues on which the abolitionists disagreed. While John Brown and David Walker are notorious for espousing violence, Harriet Beecher Stowe is equally notorious for the *non*-violence she prescribed through her novel “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” to the extent that Uncle Tom’s name became synonymous with submission and deference. But I think it’s important to note that the negative connotations of Uncle Tom come mostly not from the novel itself but from later minstrel show versions of the novel, which were produced without Stowe’s consent. In the actual novel, the character Uncle Tom’s nonviolence was actually a powerful form of defiance against his oppressors. The first time Tom emphatically says no to a white man is when the brutally oppressive Simon Legree orders Tom to flog another Black person who was enslaved on Legree’s plantation. Tom refuses, telling Legree, “If you mean to kill me, kill me; but, as to raising my hand agin anyone here, I never shall — I’ll die first!” Stowe contextualizes Legree’s attempts to force Tom into committing violence by explaining that violence was frequently encouraged or forced amongst the enslaved people on a plantation as a way of further imbrutalizing and dehumanizing them: “Legree had trained [his two Black overseers] in savageness and brutality as systematically as he had his bulldogs; and, by long practice in hardness and cruelty, brought their whole nature to about the same range of capabilities. It is a common remark, and one that is thought to militate strongly against the character of the race, that the Negro overseer is always more tyrannical and cruel than the white one. This is simply saying that the Negro mind has been more crushed and debased than the white. It is no more true of this race than of every

oppressed race, the world over.” In the end, Tom’s commitment to nonviolence is very much *not* a demonstration of submission to his white oppressors — it is a powerful form of protest through which he stands in solidarity with the members of his own race against the evils of white supremacy. But the character of “Uncle Tom” had a dual life which existed concurrently — the true meaning of the character as presented in Stowe’s novel, and the distorted version of the character presented in minstrel shows, which led to Uncle Tom’s name being used as an epithet or slur even until today. The fact that both conflicting visions of the character Uncle Tom existed at the same time is best demonstrated by the fact that Frederick Douglass himself used the term “Uncle Tom” as an epithet (ending his 1865 speech “What the Black Man Wants” by saying that one of the “delusions” about the Black man that was “swept away” by the war was that he “was a perfect lamb, or an ‘Uncle Tom’; disposed to take off his coat whenever required, fold his hands, and be whipped by anybody who wanted to whip him.”). And yet, Douglass was also very much aware of the original context and meaning of the character Uncle Tom in Stowe’s novel — in a chapter towards the end of his final autobiography in which he expresses gratitude to all those who influenced him and aided in the anti-slavery cause, Douglass acknowledges Stowe: “And what can be said of the gifted authoress of ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin,’ Harriet Beecher Stowe? Happy woman must she be that to her was given the power in such unstinted measure to touch and move the popular heart! More than to reason or religion are we indebted to the influence which this wonderful delineation of American chattel slavery produced on the public mind.”

While some of the narrated quotes in “Freedom Reigns” are brief, each one contains its own world, which shows a different aspect of the abolitionist movement, so here is some brief information about all of the quotes, in the order they appear in the piece:

- Frances Ellen Watkins Harper was a poet, as well as an activist for both abolitionism and women’s suffrage. While she was never enslaved herself, she grew up in a slave state surrounded by the atrocities of slavery. Her collection of poetry, “Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects,” was published in Boston in 1855, with a preface by William Lloyd Garrison. Her quote in “Freedom Reigns” comes from her 1857 speech “Liberty for Slaves.” Harper’s reference to an eternal law of liberty which is “antecedent to all human legislation” is related to the concept of “natural law,” a concept which was first introduced by Sir William Blackstone in his 1753 work “Commentaries on the Laws of England” and which become very important in the philosophy of abolitionism. Blackstone stated that slavery was “repugnant to reason, and the principles of natural law.” Blackstone’s description of “natural law” was important in the 1772 Somerset case which abolished slavery in England (although not its colonies), and it was also influential to Abraham Lincoln as he developed his own ideas about the legality of slavery.

- The David Walker quote is taken from his 1829 radical abolitionist treatise, “Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World.” Walker’s Appeal is remarkable not just for how strong and emphatic it is, but also how early in the abolitionist movement it was written — 1829 was before the first issue of *The Liberator*, before Nat Turner’s rebellion, and well before all of the writings of Frederick Douglass. Walker’s ideas influenced the trajectory of the whole abolitionist movement (Douglass acknowledged Walker’s

influence on him in multiple speeches throughout his life). In the quote in “Freedom Reigns,” Walker states “America is more our country, than it is the whites.” His appeal to the Black people of America to assert ownership over their nation is partly a protest against the American Colonization Society, an organization which felt that freed formerly enslaved people should be relocated to Africa.

- The William Lloyd Garrison quote is taken from his 1854 speech “No Compromise With Slavery.” In this quote Garrison is threatening to burn the Declaration of Independence, but the beginning of the paragraph from which the quote is taken makes clear that he is threatening to burn it not as a protest of the document itself but because he believes in its principles so strongly that he can’t bear to see those principles marred by slavery: “I am a believer in that portion of the Declaration of American Independence in which it is set forth, as among self-evident truths, ‘that all men are created equal’... Hence, I am an Abolitionist.” If threatening to destroy the Declaration of Independence seems radical and shocking, an interesting thing to note is that Abraham Lincoln also threatened to destroy the Declaration of Independence in an 1858 speech, if the principles in it did not apply to all Americans equally, saying: “If that Declaration is not the truth, let us get the Statute book, in which we find it, and tear it out! Who is so bold as to do it?”

- The Harriet Beecher Stowe quote is taken from the opening one of the final chapters of her novel “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” and it demonstrates the hopefulness and optimism which concludes the novel. While only one sentence is quoted in my piece, the sentence which follows in the book offers even more context for Stowe’s sentiments: “The longest way must have its close, — the gloomiest night will wear on to a morning. An eternal, inexorable lapse of moments is ever hurrying the day of the evil to an eternal night, and the night of the just to an eternal day.” Stowe’s quote is reminiscent of the saying “it’s always darkest before dawn,” which was also referenced by Horace Greeley in an essay he wrote for “Autographs for Freedom” in 1853: “Let the humane and hopeful strive, not despairing in the densest midnight, and realizing that the darkest hour is often preceding the dawn.” For the abolitionists, though, the familiar saying of the darkest night leading towards dawn was more than a cliché — it was the sincere conviction that every atrocity, every oppression, converted more people to the abolitionist cause. It was the same defiant optimism that caused Frederick Douglass to say his “hopes were never brighter” immediately after the Dred Scott decision. (An additional fun fact about the conclusion of “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” which is relevant to this program is that, in the novel’s climactic final scene when George Shelby liberates all of the enslaved people on his plantation, everyone joins in singing the hymn “Blow Ye, the Trumpet, Blow,” the same hymn which Frederick Douglass led the crowd in singing when the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect.)

- The William Wells Brown quote is taken from his 1853 novel “Clotel,” which tells the fictional story of an enslaved daughter of Thomas Jefferson. Brown’s novel mixes fact and fiction in his book, referencing many events and stories from newspapers of the time. As in “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” the plot is more a vehicle to share the atrocities of slavery and raise awareness for the abolitionist cause. The specific quote used, about

the “cradle of liberty” having “rocked the child to death,” shows the biting wit with which Brown turned familiar patriotic idioms into statements of protest. “Clotel” is considered the first novel published by a Black author in the United States (although Frederick Douglass’s novella “The Heroic Slave,” published in “Autographs for Freedom,” predated it by a few months). It is not a coincidence that “Clotel,” “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” and “The Heroic Slave” were all published within a year of each other — in the wake of the Compromise of 1850, including its Fugitive Slave Act which made the North considerably less safe for people escaping from slavery, there was an explosion of abolitionist literature in the North to protest what many saw as the slave power overtaking the whole country.

- The Charles Sumner quote, taken from the Massachusetts Senator’s 1860 speech “The Barbarism of Slavery,” is remarkable not just for the content of the words themselves, but for the circumstances under which he was able to return to the Senate floor to utter those words. In 1856, Sumner had delivered an anti-slavery speech, “The Crime Against Kansas” (written in protest of the Kansas-Nebraska Act), which so incensed the pro-slavery members of Congress that South Carolina Representative Preston Brooks retaliated by beating Sumner nearly to death with a metal-tipped cane on the Senate floor. Sumner would never fully recover, and the remainder of his life was spent in pain. As soon as he was able, though, he walked right back through the door of the building where he had been tortured and, in the face of the colleagues who had delighted in his torment, delivered an even more powerful, more strongly abolitionist speech, “The Barbarism of Slavery,” which contained the famous line, “Say, sir, in your madness, that you own the sun the stars, the moon; but do not say that you own a man, endowed with a soul that shall live immortal, when sun, and moon, and stars have passed away.” Sumner’s speech graphically depicted the physical and sexual violence of slavery. In an article about his speech the following day, The New York Times described the Senate’s reaction to Sumner’s speech: “It is pronounced the most ultra violent and offensive speech ever delivered in either branch of Congress.” Sumner’s fellow senators were more offended by Sumner’s depiction of atrocities than they were by the atrocities themselves. They were more incensed by his description of violence than they were by the fact that that violence existed in their country. They were willing to denounce his words as “violent,” when ironically, he was the one who had survived horrific violence at their hands, due to his willingness to fight against a system which inflicted violence on millions.

- The Sojourner Truth quote is described in her “Narrative and Book of Life.” Sojourner Truth (along with her colleague Josephine Griffing) was in Angola, Indiana, in 1862, speaking at regular anti-slavery meetings. The local people tried very hard to suppress her words, even arresting her on the basis of an unconstitutional law they had passed “forbidding [Black people] entering the State or remaining in it.” After Truth’s arrest, she was scheduled to speak at another meeting in Angola, but the townspeople threatened to burn down the building if she spoke, to which Truth replied, “Then I will speak upon the ashes.” Josephine Griffing and the other women helping to plan the meeting dressed Sojourner Truth in excessively patriotic garb for the occasion (described by Truth as “a red, white, and blue shawl, a sash and apron to match, a cap on my head

with a star in front, and a star on each shoulder”). Truth stated that when she saw herself in the mirror, she was “fairly frightened,” saying “It seems I am going to battle.” When the women encouraged Truth to carry a weapon with her, she responded with the quote in *Freedom Reigns*: “I carry no weapon; the Lord will preserve me without weapons...” When Truth arrived in the hall where she was to speak, the event opened with a performance of *The Star-Spangled Banner*, which Truth says she “joined and sang with all [her] might.” It’s interesting to think about her emotions as she sang *The Star-Spangled Banner* that day, especially given the context of how she had reacted to superfluous patriotism and militarism immediately beforehand. I think it’s fascinating that while she eschewed the superficial trappings of jingoistic strength, she was still able to use the power of her voice to stake her place and her truth in a country which had tried to silence her.

- The final quote in “*Freedom Reigns*” is taken from the end of Frederick Douglass’s speech at the Cooper Institute in response to the Emancipation Proclamation. It’s one of my favorite Frederick Douglass quotes of all, because of both the hope and the condemnation he expresses for our country, in stating that it may one day live up to the ideals it has never yet attained, of becoming “the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave.” He uses future tense when describing the “glorious day when Slavery shall be no more in this country,” showing that the 1st of January, 1863, was just the first step of a long journey.

At the very end of “*Freedom Reigns*,” on the last few phrases of Edna Dean Proctor’s song, the melody changes from the tune of “*John Brown’s Body*” into the tune of “*The Star-Spangled Banner*.” The piano plays the final phrase of the *Star-Spangled Banner* melody by itself, so it’s intentionally ambiguous which set of lyrics you hear at the conclusion of the work — E.A. Atlee’s dark vision of America’s demise, or Francis Scott Key’s triumphant words of affirmation, which were echoed by Frederick Douglass in January of 1863. Which set of lyrics prevails depends entirely on (to paraphrase E.A. Atlee’s text) whether or not we are able to fight for justice on earth before daring to place our trust in God.

Another feature of our program is a setting of Frederick Douglass’s 1852 speech, “*What, to the American Slave, Is Your Fourth of July?*” in which Douglass explosively questions what the holiday means for those who are not free. This setting of Douglass’s July 4th speech was composed by James T. Dargan in 2021, commissioned by Juventas New Music ensemble for a performance this past summer.

In the words of composer James T. Dargan:

“Frederick Douglass was a brilliant complication of a man, and so his most well known speech is a thicket of tactical quotation and allusion, buzzing with Douglass’ own quick intelligence, and it was difficult to figure out how to prune it into a song. What I finally settled on was a scena, in which moods and textures change drastically with little

warning, but with a rising melodic motif that, to me, signifies the main question around which the speech revolves: what, to an enslaved person, does July fourth mean? One can immediately see how that question can be extrapolated to the larger one of: what does American pomp mean to those Black people, whose bodies and ancestors have been fed to this American machine?

“There is a hesitancy which exists in the speech. There are contradictory threads and tributaries roiling around in a mix in this speech, and I think it makes sense because Douglass himself was so complicated. But there is both this rolling momentous cadence that we’ve come to expect from Black orators and preachers right alongside this rhetoric that comes straight from Dryden and Pope. And I could, in my own mind, come up with possible reasonings for that. But because of all the different elements in this speech — all the different allusions and literary references, I had to heavily edit the text, and so it was quite a work trying to find a way to honor this text while also dissecting it. And eventually I was able to come to a text that made sense to set for me, and then it was just a simple matter of listening to the pitch and the rhythm inherent in the words that Douglass assembled, because he had, as all great orators do, an incredible ear. And so the rhythm of the first few notes in the piano and the voice are taken straight from reading the text, as are the pitches. The pitches came to me through just listening to and reading the lines that Douglass wrote. I hope that listeners can find a quote from a spiritual, one of my favorites, about half way through the song. Most of all, I hope that the message that Douglass delivers rings out purely, even down through the generations and the years in between him and us. And I hope that we actually do something about it.”

In our program, we are preceding and following Dargan’s setting of Douglass’s speech with a scripture reading and a hymn which are both quoted by Douglass in his speech. Immediately before Douglass’s speech, you will hear Psalm 137, a psalm in which the captive Israelites question how they can sing the songs of their people while held in bondage in a strange land. The parallels to American slavery are obvious, but what is interesting is that Douglass quotes most of Psalm 137 in his speech — but what he doesn’t speak out loud is the ending of the psalm, which contains a very violent threat of vengeance against the oppressors: “Happy is the one who repays you according to what you have done to us. Happy is the one who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks.”

Of Douglass’s choice to eliminate the violent ending of Psalm 137, Dargan states: “His choice to omit it is in line with the tension inherent in the speech; he’s constantly pulling back and reassuring his audience of the value of the American endeavor. He knows that even his literacy is a threat in a country which didn’t allow Black folk to read. His urge to placate is strong, but not surprising for a Black man of that time, but it’s frustrating to sense the thunder he avoided letting loose.”

The moment in Douglass’s speech where he reveals that he is preventing himself from letting loose the true thunder he wants to express (as alluded to by Dargan) is when he states: “O! had I the ability, and could I reach the nation’s ear, I would, today, pour out a

fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.”

Why Douglass might have held himself back from the true thunder he wanted to express in this speech is an interesting question. Whether due to the particulars of the audience or the occasion, the speech is less confrontational and more conciliatory than some of Douglass’s other speeches and writings of the time — to the extent that historian John Stauffer (in his book “Giants”) argued that the reason the speech is so much more well-known than Douglass’s other speeches is specifically because of its nonviolence, which makes it more acceptable to white audiences. Indeed, while the majority of the speech is a scathing portrayal of American hypocrisy, it also surprisingly contains some sentences that sound downright patriotic, such as: “Fully appreciating the hardship to be encountered, firmly believing in the right of their cause, honorably inviting the scrutiny of an on-looking world, reverently appealing to heaven to attest their sincerity, soundly comprehending the solemn responsibility they were about to assume, wisely measuring the terrible odds against them, your fathers, the fathers of this republic, did, most deliberately, under the inspiration of a glorious patriotism, and with a sublime faith in the great principles of justice and freedom, lay deep the corner-stone of the national superstructure, which has risen in grandeur around you.”

There is a secret current of foreboding swirling beneath the surface of Douglass’s apparent reverence for America’s forefathers, though. Not only does he use the term “your fathers,” or occasionally “the fathers,” to refer to the founders of our nation (never once “our fathers”), thus placing a separation between himself and the “glorious patriotism” he is invoking, but the patriotism itself contains an unspoken threat of radical revolution. Consider this sentence from Douglass’s second autobiography, “My Bondage and My Freedom”, which was published three years after his July 4th speech: “The slaveholder, kind or cruel, is a slaveholder still — the every hour violator of the just and inalienable rights of man; and he is, therefore, every hour silently whetting the knife of vengeance for his own throat. He never lisps a syllable in commendation of the fathers of this republic, nor denounces any attempted oppression of himself, without inviting the knife to his own throat, and asserting the rights of rebellion for his own slaves.” Therefore, when Douglass joins his audience in expressing “syllables of commendation” for the nations’ founders, stating “I cannot contemplate their great deeds with less than admiration...I will unite with you to honor their memory,” he is also thereby “asserting the rights of rebellion” for his own people. When he says of the founding fathers, “They seized upon eternal principles, and set a glorious example in their defense. Mark them!,” that final exclamation is both a command and a warning, the word “mark” meaning both to honor an occasion and to pay heed to a threat.

In the section of these notes pertaining to “Freedom Reigns,” I had discussed the three primary reasons why abolitionists invoked patriotic rhetoric in their writing (genuine

reverence for American ideals, the desire to make the audience feel ashamed of their hypocrisy, or as a justification for the necessity of violent revolution in the fight for freedom). And my personal opinion, part of what makes Douglass's July 4th speech so shatteringly powerful in the American consciousness is that he used all three at once. I interpret Douglass's words as completely sincere when he says the nation's founders "ought to command respect" (I don't think it gives him enough credit to imply that he was anything less than sincere); but, as when Garrison threatened to burn the Declaration of Independence *because* he believed in its principles so strongly, Douglass's veneration of the founders is threatening *because* he believes in the righteousness of their radical fight for freedom. The complicated and contradictory aspects of the speech are partly due to the structure of the speech itself (it's an archetype known as an "American Jeremiad," as described in a 1978 book of that name by Sacvan Bercovitch, a speech which uses a common three-part rhetorical structure of reflecting on past American ideals, describing how the present has fallen short of those ideals, and then looking towards a more hopeful future. Douglass was a critical figure in adapting the Jeremiad's use for the Black community, as described in the book "The African American Jeremiad" by David Howard-Pitney). But more importantly, the contradictory passages of the speech are really a byproduct of what gives the speech its power: Douglass's ability to invoke both pride and shame in the listeners as they are engrossed in his description of both the grandeur and the hypocrisy of American liberty. And so, while the threat of violence may not be explicitly spelled out in this speech, it's there — and you can hear it if you're familiar with Douglass's other writings and influences. Just like when Douglass quotes psalm 137 and the psalm's vengeful conclusion hangs in the air as an unspoken portentous threat, when Douglass quotes the Declaration of Independence in the speech, I hear his echoes of David Walker and Walker's bellowing question of "Do you understand your own language?" And when Douglass states, "you can bare your bosom to the storm of British artillery to throw off a threepenny tax on tea," I hear the echoes of his Faneuil Hall speech, when he ended that same sentence with a threat of "death and devastation."

Following Dargan's setting of Douglass's speech, we will perform a strophic hymn setting of William Lloyd Garrison's poem, "God Speed the Year of Jubilee," set to music by composer Walter Saul. Douglass ended his July 4th speech with a recitation of Garrison's poem, which is an interesting choice on Douglass's part, because Douglass and Garrison were, at the time of Douglass's speech, at the most strained phase of their relationship. Garrison had been enormously influential in Douglass's life from the moment Garrison heard Douglass speak at an anti-slavery convention on Nantucket in 1841, launching Douglass's career as an orator. But the split between the two of them occurred at the beginning of the 1850s for several reasons (Douglass's changing constitutional views and his conversion to political abolitionism, his increased acceptance of the necessity of violent resistance instead of only moral suasion, his move to Rochester and the founding of his own newspaper, his increased independence from Garrison and his belief that the abolitionist movement should be led more by Black people). Therefore, giving Garrison the last word of his most famous speech when they were at the peak of their dispute is certainly interesting. Since the Garrison poem comes immediately after the part of the speech that would have been

the most antagonistic to Garrison (the section in which Douglass calls the Constitution a “glorious liberty document” — albeit only when “interpreted as it ought to be interpreted”), it seems like a very pointed way of paying tribute to Garrison while conceding nothing to him. But there’s another way of looking at it, which is that the most hopeful part of the speech, the vision of redemption that denotes the concluding section of the Jeremiad, or the “fervent aspiration” as Douglass calls it, is not in Douglass’s own voice but rather in the voice of a white man who was his intellectual rival, showing that the note of hope is perhaps less genuinely Douglass’s own personal expression. Garrison’s poem (as in the hymn “Blow Ye the Trumpet, Blow” which is also featured on our program) references “the year of jubilee,” the Biblical ideal of liberty proscribed in Leviticus 25, and it is a triumphantly hopeful vision of the day when the oppressed will be “from their galling chains set free.”

Composer Walter Saul wrote his setting of Garrison’s poem in observation of the July 4th holiday in 2020. Describing his inspiration for setting Garrison’s text, Saul states: “This has been a sober, reflective celebration of Independence Day. It is fascinating to realize that the United States of America is one of a very few nations that celebrates its birth by the mere *declaration* that we are free and a new nation, while other nations celebrate the day they actually won their independence on the battlefield. Since that Declaration, our nation has envisioned and brought many things to reality that have indeed blessed the world. But our nation has also trafficked in slavery legally for 244 years, from 1619 to 1863, ironically the same number of years that we have been a nation. And we have struggled through the present day to overcome our racism and prejudice against Black men, women, and children...[Garrison’s] poem casts the vision that I believe our nation must adopt and focus on to be truly godly and free. I was amazed that no one, to my knowledge, had ever set these powerful words to music, and so I celebrated Independence Day by investing the day writing a new tune to set this poem...I hope the words of William Lloyd Garrison will bring you hope and quicken your steps as they have done mine.”

Composer James T. Dargan is also featured on another piece on our program, which was commissioned especially for this occasion. Dargan’s new work, “All Things Return,” combines the words of 20th-century poet Angelina Weld Grimké with those of her great-aunt and namesake, abolitionist Angelina Grimké Weld. The poet Angelina Weld Grimké was of mixed race, and her Black identity and ancestry formed a major theme in her writing, along with themes of religion and spirituality. Dargan’s work uses Weld Grimké’s poems “Death” and “Vigil,” which explore life after death. The poem “Vigil” contains the line, “You will come back,” which is interesting in the context of her words’ being combined with that of her great-aunt, since familial descendancy is one form of “coming back” after death. And the work of the abolitionists being reflected in future Black artistic expression is another form of “coming back” after death.

Weld Grimké’s great-aunt Angelina Grimké Weld was a white woman who was born into a wealthy slaveholding family in the South. But she had the courage to turn away from

her upbringing and move to the North, devoting her subsequent life to the anti-slavery cause. In his work, Dargan uses excerpts of a 1835 letter Grimké Weld wrote to William Lloyd Garrison, which catapulted Grimké Weld into national renown in abolitionist circles (Garrison published the letter in his newspaper “The Liberator”). Grimké Weld wrote her letter to Garrison after he had nearly lost his life in a riot, in which a pro-slavery mob dragged him through the streets of Boston.

Dargan states of his work:

“Angelina Grimké Weld’s letter to her fellow abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison is an epistle in the vein of the New Testament, replete with biblical quotations, exhortation, and encouragement. Grimké urges Garrison and the abolitionists not to falter in the wake of the Boston Pro-Slavery Riot of 1835, and the music underneath the narrated excerpts from this letter takes its rhythm and resoluteness from a poem by Grimké Weld’s grand-niece, Angelina Weld Grimké; the poem is called Vigil, and it uses subtle but insistent repetition, the changing seasons, and the flight of migratory birds to communicate the cyclical nature of life and loss. A Taizé-like ostinato came to mind after reading Weld Grimké’s poetry, and it seemed a natural backdrop for Grimké Weld’s letter. From that germ, a calm song emerged; I hope that all who hear it are renewed in their strength for the good fight, and that it brings comfort. All gratitude to Julia Scott Carey for pointing me to both these great Grimké women, and for baiting my mind with this letter and these poems.”

In the final excerpt of Grimké Weld’s letter quoted in Dargan’s piece, Grimké Weld references her own first-hand knowledge of the “land of slavery, where rests the darkness of Egypt,” vowing that the abolition of slavery is “a cause worth dying for.” Grimké Weld’s personal knowledge of the evils of slavery (due to her Southern upbringing), and her unwavering firmness in spreading the message of those evils, made her unique among white abolitionists. Three years after her letter to Garrison had made her known among abolitionists, Grimké Weld would deliver an address in Pennsylvania Hall entreating her audience to read and distribute books about slavery, to “aid in scattering the living coals of truth upon the naked heart of this nation.” It was during the peak of the country’s efforts to suppress any discussion of the horrors of slavery — in 1837, abolitionist journalist Elijah Parish Lovejoy had been shot to death by a pro-slavery mob after their destruction of his printing press had failed to silence him; in 1836, the U.S. House of Representatives had enacted a “gag rule” blocking any anti-slavery petitions from being presented; and the year before that had been Garrison’s near-death experience in the Boston riot. But in spite of all this, Angelina Grimké Weld persisted. She said:

“To work as we should in this cause, we must know what Slavery is. Let me urge you then to buy the books which have been written on this subject and read them, and then lend them to your neighbors...But, it is said by some, our ‘books and papers do not speak the truth.’ Why, then, do they not contradict what we say? They cannot. Moreover the South has entreated, nay commanded us to be silent; and what greater evidence of the truth of our publications could be desired?”

As she spoke, the shouts and disruptions of a pro-slavery mob outside the building grew increasingly louder and more menacing. Then the mob began throwing rocks into the building's windows. But still, she spoke, knowing that every effort to suppress her words, every rock which shattered the glass of the windows, provided yet greater evidence of the truth of her message. The day after Grimké Weld's speech, the mob burned the building to the ground. Firefighters watched it burn, even as they fought the fire in the neighboring structures. But hidden among the building's ashes, there smoldered the living coals of truth — the truth so strong and prevailing that every effort to ban it, suppress it, gag it, and burn it, served only to expose its power.

Our program is bookended by two different settings of the poem "Songs for the People" by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (the same poet who authored the first spoken quote in "Freedom Reigns"). Harper's poem expresses the desire to "make the songs for the people," and it is a powerful statement about the unifying strength of music.

The first setting of "Songs for the People" on our program is by composer Rosephanye Powell, from her song cycle "Miss Wheatley's Garden." Powell's song cycle is named after America's first Black poet, Phillis Wheatley, who was enslaved in Boston in the eighteenth century. While none of the songs in Powell's song cycle are actually by Wheatley herself, Powell named her cycle after Wheatley as a tribute to Wheatley's legacy and influence, explaining: "I thought it befitting to title the work 'Miss Wheatley's Garden' in honor of Phillis Wheatley's works, which are the garden in which many generations of African-American women poets have grown and blossomed."

The second setting of "Songs for the People" on our program is by composer Mason Bynes, composed less than a year ago. Bynes says of her work: "This piece was written in the spring of 2021. It serves as a desperate call to action for humanity to come together again as we were grappling (and still are...) with the plights of the pandemic."

We also include three hymns which we invite the congregation to join in singing: "Giver of All That Crowns Our Days" (a hymn written in response to the Emancipation Proclamation by Oliver Wendell Holmes, to the tune of "Old One Hundredth," better known to us as the Doxology), "Trump of Glad Jubilee" (an abolitionist setting of the tune "My Country 'Tis of Thee"), and "I Am An Abolitionist" (William Lloyd Garrison's words set to — appropriately enough for New Years Day — the tune of "Auld Lang Syne").

Thank you so much for joining us today (and thank you especially to anyone who has read this far). I would like to thank our three brilliant guest artists for sharing their voices and their gifts with us today: Brianna J. Robinson, James Dargan, and Keidrick Roy.

SOURCES FOR HISTORICAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

(Note: the PDF version of this document includes hyperlinks to all the sources listed below. If you are reading this off of printed paper, you can find the PDF version on the Central Square Congregational Church's website.)

FREDERICK DOUGLASS: The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, My Bondage and My Freedom, Speech in Response to the Emancipation Proclamation, What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?, Lincoln Emancipation Memorial Speech, Speech in Response to the Dred Scott Decision, What the Black Man Wants, Frederick Douglass Monthly, Faneuil Hall speech

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: Emancipation Proclamation, Second Inaugural Address, July 10 1858 speech, Blind Memorandum, First Inaugural Address, Cooper Union Address, Gettysburg Address, Annual Message to Congress 1862, Lincoln-Douglas debates

ABOLITIONIST SONGSTERS, HYMNALS, AND ANTHOLOGIES: The Anti-Slavery Harp by William Wells Brown, The Harp of Freedom by George Whitefield Clark, The Liberty Minstrel by George Washington Clark, The Star-Spangled Songbook by Mark Clague and Andrew Custer, The Soldier's Companion from the American Unitarian Association, Anti-Slavery Melodies by Jairus Lincoln, The President's Proclamation by Edna Dean Proctor

FRANCES ELLEN WATKINS HARPER: Songs for the People, Liberty for Slaves speech, Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects

WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON: July 4th 1854 speech, No Compromise with Slavery speech, The Liberator (issues quoted include 1/2/63, 4/7/65, 10/21/59, and 11/18/59)

CHARLES SUMNER: The Crime Against Kansas, The Barbarism of Slavery

ANGELINA GRIMKÉ WELD: Letter to William Lloyd Garrison, speech in Pennsylvania Hall

ANGELINA WELD GRIMKÉ: Death, Vigil

WILLIAM WELLS BROWN: Clotel

HARRIET JACOBS: Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE: Uncle Tom's Cabin

DAVID WALKER: Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World

RALPH WALDO EMERSON: Boston Hymn

SOJOURNER TRUTH: Book of Life

JULIA GRIFFITHS: Autographs for Freedom Volume I, and Volume II

W.E.B. DU BOIS: Biography of John Brown

JOHN BRIGHT: The Struggle in America speech

1863 BOSTON MUSIC HALL JUBILEE CONCERT: program

JOHN STAUFFER: Giants: The Parallel Lives of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln, Battle Hymn of the Republic: A Biography of the Song That Marches On

JOHN BURT: Lincoln's Tragic Pragmatism

NED AND CONSTANCE SUBLETTE: The American Slave Coast

JAMES A. COLAIACO: Frederick Douglass and the Fourth of July