

**First  
Fridays**  
PRESENTS



Tim Rebers, *tenor*  
Maggie Rebers, *piano*

Friday, August 7, 2020 • 5 P.M.  
Grace Lutheran Church

# Welcome

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## Artist Biographies

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**Tim Rebers** is a singer/actor/composer. He has performed in opera, musicals, and plays with numerous companies including Skylight Music Theatre, Florentine Opera, Milwaukee Opera Theatre (MOT), Acacia Theatre, and Madison Savoyards. Tim also music directs and conducts; during the 2019-2020 season he created an accapella version of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Ruddigore* for Skylight/MOT, and music directed *She Loves Me* at Wisconsin Lutheran College, his alma mater. He performs in recitals and concerts frequently, often accompanied by Maggie. Tim recently composed two 10-minute operas for UW Milwaukee's opera studio with libretti by Alicia Berneche (with whom he wrote *Thank You. NEXT!* for MOT in 2016).

**Maggie Rebers** is a collaborative recitalist and chamber musician. Her passion is for live performance before intimate audiences through chamber music, specifically art song. Her goal is to bring high quality classical music to those who may not have access to it otherwise. She enjoys playing background music for parties and special events and maintains a small private piano studio. Maggie has performed in productions with Skylight Music Theatre, Milwaukee Opera Theatre (MOT), and Acacia Theatre. She has performed with both the Cabaret and Salon Recital Series at Skylight, as well as other local recital series.

# Program

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## *America, I Like You*

Songs by, about, and for Americans

Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin' – <i>Oklahoma!</i>	Richard Rodgers (1902-1979) & Oscar Hammerstein II (1895-1960)
It Was a Very Good Year	Ervin Drake (1919-2015)
Lucky to be Me – <i>On the Town</i>	Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)
I rise when you enter	Theodore Chanler (1902-1961)
Thought of My Thoughts	Kenneth Mahy (b. 1937)
Mr. Cellophane – <i>Chicago</i>	John Kander (b. 1927) & Fred Ebb (1928-2004)
<i>Old American Songs</i>	Aaron Copland (1900-1990)
The Boatmen's Dance (Minstrel Song-1843)	
The Dodger (Campaign Song)	
Brother Can You Spare a Dime?	Jay Gorney (1894[6]-1990) & Yip Harburg (1896-1981)
Waltz in Swing Time – <i>Swing Time</i>	Jerome Kern (1885-1945)
My Funny Valentine	Richard Rodgers & Lorenz Hart (1895-1943)
Blah, Blah, Blah	George Gershwin (1898-1937) & Ira Gershwin (1896-1983)

# Program (continued)

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A Song Without Words	Charles S. Brown (b. 1940)
What if...	Lee Hoiby (1926-2011)
Nocturne, Op. 13, No. 4	Samuel Barber (1910-1981)
Lady of the Harbor	Lee Hoiby
Hark, I Hear the Harps Eternal	Traditional, arr. Tim Rebers (b. 1984)

## Program Notes

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*Oklahoma!* (1943) was the first collaboration of composer Richard Rodgers and writer/director Oscar Hammerstein II. The show was a triumph on Broadway due to its innovative new style: fully integrated storytelling between music, singing, dance, pantomime, lyrics, and spoken dialogue. *Oklahoma!* was not the first to attempt such a feat (Hammerstein and Jerome Kern's earlier *Show Boat* was also a major first) but its critical and box office success (including a Pulitzer Prize) paved the way for a spate of similar, big-concept 'book musicals' that came to define the American musical for decades.

After Ervin Drake heard that a publisher friend of his would be meeting with Bob Shane of the Kingston Trio the following day, he wrote "It Was a Very Good Year" in an hour, and passed it along hoping to get it onto the Trio's next album. It worked, but the song didn't become a hit until Frank Sinatra recorded his memorable version with full orchestra on his album *September of My Years*. According to Drake, Sinatra heard the song on the radio while driving late at night and immediately pulled into a gas station to phone his friend and music arranger about adding the song to his album.

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Leonard Bernstein's first major success on Broadway was *On The Town* (1944) based on his ballet, *Fancy Free*, created with choreographer Jerome Robbins. Like *Oklahoma!* the show integrates elements of ballet into the storytelling. The show was a hit, and though Bernstein later became a household name, he was not well known at the time; he had only made his breakout conducting debut as a last minute replacement with the New York Philharmonic the previous month. Bernstein's style when writing for Broadway was a broadly American synthesis of classical and jazz techniques and idioms.

One of the lesser known mid-twentieth century composers, Theodore Chanler's reputation is mainly preserved through his small but excellent collection of song repertoire, and his association as pupil to the pre-eminent composition pedagogue, Nadia Boulanger. Chanler's song texts are frequently quirky or unusual, including multiple settings of epitaphs. "I rise when you enter" has the urgency and lyrical zest of a jazz-infused Tin Pan Alley love song, combined with a decidedly modernist, frenetic piano accompaniment.

Kenneth Mahy was born in China to missionary parents. After college, he spent four years as a chorus member and baritone soloist with the U.S. Navy Band Sea Chanters. He attained multiple degrees in both composition and vocal performance, and divided his time between teaching, concertizing, and composing. "Thought of My Thoughts" is a text by Hans Christian Andersen, translated by the composer. It is the fourth of his Four Love Songs, which were written between 1987 and 1990.

The duo of composer John Kander and lyricist Fred Ebb collaborated on numerous musicals including *Cabaret* (1966) and *Chicago* (1975), and the title song from the movie *New York, New York*. Their stage collaborations also regularly featured the talents of legendary producer/director Hal Prince and iconic choreographer/director Bob Fosse. Kander's jazzy score and Ebb's sardonic lyrics mesh perfectly with the gritty 1920s setting of crime-ridden Chicago.

Aaron Copland is among the most well known American classical composers (and student of Nadia Boulanger). His compositional style and affinity for American folk music have made him practically synonymous with 'American classical music.' His ballets *Billy the Kid* and *Rodeo*, orchestral suite of *Appalachian Spring*, his *Lincoln Portrait* and *Fanfare for the Common Man* have all created an indelible aural portrait of what the West and Great Plains sound like in films and the concert hall. Copland's two sets of Old American Songs (from 1950 and 1952 respectively; ten in all) exist in versions with either piano or orchestral accompaniment.

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Jay Gorney's family fled to America from a Russian pogrom when he was nine. At 14, he was playing piano in a nickelodeon in Detroit. After WWI, he moved to New York City and began his career as a song writer on Tin Pan Alley, where Ira Gershwin eventually introduced him to Yip Harburg (lyricist of *The Wizard of Oz*, and many other songs). Together in 1932 they wrote the unofficial anthem of the great depression, "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?," which Gorney partly based on a Russian lullaby from his childhood. The song was recorded by some of the biggest names at the time, including Al Jolson and Bing Crosby.

Jerome Kern composed for both stage and screen in a career spanning 40 years. He collaborated with many of the era's greatest librettists, including P. G. Wodehouse, Oscar Hammerstein II, Johnny Mercer, Ira Gershwin, and Yip Harburg. One of his greatest cinematic triumphs is the 1936 Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers musical comedy *Swing Time*. With librettist Dorothy Fields, he wrote some of his most well known songs, including "The Way You Look Tonight," which won the Oscar for Best Song. "Waltz in Swingtime" is an instrumental dance number for Astaire and Rogers, incorporating musical themes from several other songs in the score, and exhibits Kern's adept handling of both sophisticated European classicism and popular syncopated American styles.

Richard Rodgers was one of the few Americans to ever win an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, Tony, and Pulitzer Prize. Before his name was forever linked with Oscar Hammerstein II, his longtime writing partner was Lorenz Hart, with whom he wrote many popular shows featuring songs that became notable jazz standards. "My Funny Valentine" originated from one of their most popular shows, *Babes in Arms*, and is emblematic of Hart's lyrical style as it combines wit and vulnerability in simple, yet sophisticated poetry.

Brothers George and Ira Gershwin were a song writing team of exceptional ability. Throughout the 1920s and 30s, George's music blended elements of jazz and ragtime with classical strains from Europe, as heard in his popular *Rhapsody in Blue*, *An American in Paris* and his *Piano Concerto in F*. While in Europe, he applied to study composition with Nadia Boulanger, but was refused as she claimed to have nothing to offer him. Ira's wry sense of humor can be seen in many of his comedic lyrics, and "Blah, Blah, Blah" is no exception as he mocks the lazy 'paint-by-numbers' approach to constructing love song lyrics in the films of the day.

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Charles S. Brown's "A Song Without Words" was published in 1974 and included in the Anthology of Art Songs by Black American Composers. As such, it is one of his more widely known works. A subheading below the title reads 'based on the singing of Blind Willie Johnson' — a noted slide guitar and gospel/blues singer who died in 1945. The song incorporates the use of 'blue' notes which are pitches bent between the standard western scale.

Lee Hoiby was born in Madison, Wisconsin and attended UW Madison for a time. Later at the Curtis Institute of Music, he was taught by Gian-Carlo Menotti. Though also a pianist by training, his compositions regularly feature voice: in opera, songs, and choral settings. "What if..." is a setting of a Samuel Taylor Coleridge poem with an evocatively dreamy quality, while "Lady of the Harbor" features part of Emma Lazarus' famed sonnet "The New Colossus" which is inscribed on the pedestal to the Statue of Liberty.

Samuel Barber was one of the most celebrated composers of the mid-twentieth century. He began composing at a very young age, and quickly achieved prominence, recognition and awards for his works. His songs were performed by many of the world's leading singers, and his compositions were commissioned and performed widely. He wrote operas, symphonies, and chamber works, including his famed *Adagio for Strings*, which has featured in multiple movie soundtracks. *Nocturne* is the fourth of his *Four Songs Op. 13*.

"Hark I Hear the Harps Eternal" is an American folk song first catalogued in the mid-1800s. The religious hymn is typical of many songs from this era with its reliance on the five tones of the major pentatonic scale (the hymn "Amazing Grace" is constructed from these same five tones). Tim Rebers' arrangement focuses on both the use of this pentatonic scale and the sound of open fourths and fifths. Two of the main textual images in the song are harps and water, and so the sound of harp arpeggios and glissandos and flowing water figure prominently in the piano accompaniment.



# GRACE

LUTHERAN CHURCH

**God's grace welcomes you**, no matter who you are or where you come from—and so do we. We believe that Jesus Christ is the true Savior of all people. He saves all lost sinners even without our help.

Whether you are a seasoned Christian, a curious observer with little religious background, or a spiritual person looking to return to the church, we invite you to Grace.

Founded in 1849, Grace Church has been a vital part of downtown Milwaukee and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod for over 170 years.

## Join us for Worship

Sunday morning at 7:45, 9:00, or 10:30 a.m.  
Monday evening at 6:30 p.m.

You can also join us at our second site in the Third Ward!

Sundays at 10:30 a.m.  
Broadway Theatre Center  
Second Floor in the Salon  
(158 N. Broadway, Milwaukee)

## Upcoming First Fridays Concerts

Friday, September 4  
No Concert

Friday, October 2  
Lake Cottage Duo  
*oboe & piano*

Friday, November 6  
Kyle Thompson  
*guitar*

Friday, December 4  
Duo Coriolan  
*cello & piano*

*Please note: due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, all 2020 concerts are subject to change. Concerts may be postponed, re-scheduled, or offered only via live-stream. Thank you in advance for your patience and understanding!*